

1401 His Name Is Zhang Xuan

To share the same position as an insignificant figure who had not even reached the Saint realm yet... Hu Yiwei suddenly felt deeply stifled on the inside.

Forget it, I'll just ask my master when I return later on!

Hu Yiwei knew that he would only be lowering his status if he were to argue with a nobody. Furthermore, there was just a chance that what the other party said was true. If that was the case, his actions would only lead to others mocking Yang shi for being unable to keep his subordinates in check, thus bringing shame to his master.

Thus, he remained silent. However, as the indignation suffocating his chest continued to grow, he was eventually unable to keep his poise and harrumphed. "Young Master Feng Ziyi is an extraordinarily talented individual. Even if the Zhang Xuan person you spoke of is a direct disciple of my master, too, there is little doubt that Young Master Feng Ziyi is the senior."

Feng Ziyi was an extremely talented individual, such that even the core members of top Sage Clans would struggle to remain on par with him. On top of that, he was a hardworking person as well, knowing that he had to work hard to achieve what he wanted in life. It was due to the combination of his unyielding diligence and his superior talent that he was able to achieve the cultivation of Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm despite only being in his twenties.

Even if that Zhang Xuan fellow was Yang shi's student as well, there was no way he could possibly best Feng Ziyi's accomplishment!

"Our Young Master has never been defeated by his peers!" Sun Qiang waved his hand confidently.

He had been with the Young Master for so long, but when had the latter ever allowed himself to suffer the slightest grievance?

Those who dared stand against the Young Master eventually ended up becoming his student or grandstudent, or else they would find their reputation completely shattered, stripped of their master teacher identity even. No matter how powerful that Feng Ziyi fellow was, there was no way he could hold a candle to the Young Master!

Hearing the plump man's boasting, Hu Yiwei could not help but frown in displeasure. "Your Young Master has never been defeated by his peers? Humph! That's only because he hasn't met our Young Master yet!"

In the younger generation, the most talented offspring of the Sage Clans was indubitably Zhang Yu, but even he was nothing compared to Feng Ziyi. Even if that Zhang Xuan fellow the other party spoke of was truly powerful, there was no way he would be a match for Feng Ziyi!

Not wanting to waste his breath with the obstinate old man, Sun Qiang harrumphed. "It's pointless for you to quibble about it here. You'll know the answer very soon..."

In the midst of his words, however, an anxious voice suddenly interrupted them. "Elder Ge, a disaster has occurred!"

Following which, an elder rushed into the room in a fluster.

Seeing that the person who had rushed into the room was a managerial elder of the Hall of Integrity, Elder Ge asked with a frown, "What's wrong?"

For an elder to fly into such a fluster, something huge must have occurred.

"I-it's the bunch from the Physician Guild! All of them suddenly came to the Hall of Integrity as a group under Divine Healer Bai Yu's lead, and for some reason, they actually managed to make breakthroughs in their cultivation simultaneously! Now, we have more than a dozen elders undergoing the Dimension Sundering Ordeal. Due to the close proximity of their locations, the lightning tribulations began

fusing together with one another, and they are showing signs of running amok!” the elder reported with a pale face.

“They managed to make breakthroughs in their cultivation simultaneously?”

“You said that the lightning tribulations began fusing together with one another?”

Everyone jolted on the spot upon hearing that news. Even Zhan shi’s eyes were widening in utter horror, unable to believe what he had just heard.

The might of a lightning tribulation was, by no means, constant. If two people were to make a breakthrough simultaneously in close proximity to one another, the might of the lightning tribulation that they would draw in would not be as simple as just ‘one plus one equals to two’. Rather, the resonance between the lightning tribulations could cause the might of the lightning tribulation to compound to four or even more.

For this reason, cultivators would always avoid making a breakthrough at the same time as others, especially when the breakthrough would bring about a cultivation ordeal. Even if two cultivators had to make a breakthrough simultaneously, they would attempt to distance themselves from one another as much as possible so as to reduce the chances of the lightning tribulation fusing with one another.

Once any fusion occurred, the possibility of success would be near zero.

Yet, the Physician Guild actually had more than a dozen of their elders achieve breakthroughs simultaneously. As if that was not bad enough, they just had to make their breakthrough in the Hall of Integrity!

Just what did the Hall of Integrity do to you all to treat us like that?

Will you only be content after reducing us to rubble?

“I know most of the managerial elders in the Physician Guild. While most of them are indeed at Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm, a huge proportion of them have been stuck at the

realm for many years, such that any chances of a breakthrough would have been bleak at most. Why would they suddenly achieve a breakthrough together?” Zhan shi frowned in incomprehension.

Due to the poison that he had been afflicted with by Hu Yiwei, he often frequented the Physician Guild, and the elders had been collaborating together to study the poison in his body as well. Thus, over time, they had grown rather close to one another.

Most of the managerial elders had been too reliant on medicinal herbs and pills to push up their cultivation in their earlier years, which resulted in a lot of medicinal dregs being left behind in their meridians and veins. On top of that, too many years had gone by, and their vitality had already withered, thus making it nigh impossible for them to make a breakthrough anymore.

Why would they suddenly achieve a breakthrough all at once?

It was completely illogical!

The elder pondered for a moment as he reminisced on the sight that he had seen earlier before replying. “I have no idea. According to the rumors, it seems Divine Healer Bai Yu invited a freshman who is exceptionally skilled in medicine to conduct a lecture for them, but instead of conducting a lecture, the freshman offered them pointers on the various flaws they had in their cultivation, and this insight seems to have helped them to overcome their bottlenecks.”

“Freshman?”

“Offered them pointers?”

“Helped over a dozen Saint 7-dan cultivators overcome their bottlenecks simultaneously?”

The crowd froze upon hearing those words.

Even Hu Yiwei was completely flabbergasted by what he had just heard.

Even his master, Yang shi, would have great difficulty making more than a dozen Saint 7-dan pinnacle cultivators achieve a

breakthrough simultaneously!

“That is second-hand news that I have heard from the personnel in the Physician Guild, so I’m not too sure about the exact situation myself. However, with more than a dozen on them achieving a breakthrough simultaneously, the lightning tribulation has already grown to a scale that spans over five thousand mu! Not even the formation in the Hall of Integrity can withstand something of this scale!” the elder exclaimed anxiously.

“Let’s go take a look!” Knowing that there was no time to waste for this matter, Elder Ge hurriedly got up and rushed toward the Hall of Integrity.

Zhan shi and the others quickly followed behind him.

Sun Qiang hesitated for a brief moment before tagging along as well.

With how huge the matter was, the very first thought that came to his mind actually turned out to be the Young Master! It could not be that this was really the doing of the Young Master, could it?

...

It did not take long for the crowd to arrive at the Hall of Integrity. Looking at the ominous storm clouds looming over them in sky, covering the sun completely, everyone could not help but feel a little crazed inside.

It was true that the Hall of Integrity was the ideal place for any cultivator to face their cultivation ordeal in, but this... this was way out of proportion!

If it really fell, the entire Hall of Integrity could very well be zapped into ashes!

Elder Ge shuddered involuntarily in the face of the hulking lightning tribulation before him. In this instant, he could not help but marvel and, at the same time, fear the sheer prowess of the natural world. He turned his gaze to Zhan shi anxiously and asked, “Zhan shi, what should we do?”

It was just a moment ago that the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall had been reduced to rubble. If something happened to the Hall of Integrity as well, he might as well retire from being an elder right now!

“I have no idea.” Zhan shi shook his head grimly.

If the lightning tribulation had been any smaller, he might still have been able to forcefully dissipate it with his strength as a Saint 9-dan primary stage expert. However, what was before him had already grown to a scale of five thousand mu. Its might was so great that it could wipe him off the face of this world easily, so how was he supposed to dissipate it!

“If it really comes down to it, we might have to activate the Sanctum Custodian Formation of the Sanctum of Sages!” Elder Ge said grimly.

“Sanctum Custodian Formation? That won’t do.” As anxious Zhan shi was, he still rejected Elder Ge’s proposition. “The formation should only be used in the worst-case scenario, when the survival of the Sanctum of Sages is at stake. As powerful as the lightning tribulation is, it hasn’t reached that point yet.”

The Sanctum Custodian Formation of the Sanctum of Sages had been built painstakingly by generations of predecessors. Unless the Sanctum of Sages was on the verge of destruction, they were not to activate it.

As despairing as the massive congregation of ominous clouds was, it had not reached the level where the Sanctum Custodian Formation could be activated.

“If we don’t activate it, the Hall of Integrity will be a goner!” Elder Ge exclaimed in panic.

“This...” Zhan shi’s complexion turned awful. He pondered for a moment, but he was still unable to come up with a viable alternative solution. However, another thought came to his mind instead, and he hurriedly turned his gaze toward the elder who had reported the incident to them previously. “What is the name of the freshman who offered pointers to the dozen elders from the Physician Guild earlier, and where is he?”

Considering the freshman's ability to make more than a dozen Saint 7-dan pinnacle cultivators achieve a breakthrough simultaneously through his teachings, there was a chance that he just might have a way to deal with this stupendously massive lightning tribulation.

"I have no idea where he is at the moment, but I think I heard someone mentioning his name earlier."

The elder contemplated deeply for a moment before finally continuing.

"His name should be... Zhang Xuan!" "One mu = 666.6 square meters."

1402 Zhang Xuan Is Electrocuted

“Zhang Xuan?” Zhan shi was taken aback by that name.

He had just heard that name earlier. Was that not the name of the plump butler’s Young Master, Yang shi’s direct disciple?

The rest of the crowd were visibly startled as well. They turned to look at the plump butler standing not too far away, and to their surprise, not only was the latter not astounded by what he was seeing, he even seemed to be... heaving a sigh of relief?

To Sun Qiang, relief was indeed the emotion that he was feeling. He knew that there was no one other than the Young Master who would dare toy with such a thing!

In fact, he only would have been shocked if the culprit behind this had not been the Young Master!

Some days in his life, he could not help but feel really helpless at the plight he was in. All he wanted was to quietly fulfill his responsibilities as a butler, living a humble and peaceful life. But as if fate had played a trick on him, he just had to be paired with such a troublemaking Young Master!

Given how much the matter had blown up this time around, even he would have trouble resolving this dispute!

With such thoughts in mind, Sun Qiang slowly closed his eyes as resignation crept onto his face.

Low profile—these were the two words that the Young Master chanted every single day, but honestly speaking, everything that the latter did was simply contrary to those two words. In a way, it felt as if he was trying to humblebrag about his abilities!

It had really been hard on him over the past few months having to support such a person! Hai! But again, if it was an

easy task, the Old Master would have entrusted the Young Master to Hu Yiwei instead of him.

Upon learning the culprit behind the matter, Elder Ge was unable to hold back his rage any longer and roared furiously at Sun Qiang. “Just what the heck is your Young Master trying to do by making dozens of people achieve a breakthrough simultaneously?”

“This...” Sun Qiang scratched his head awkwardly.

To be honest, even after the many months that he had spent with the Young Master, he was still unable to fathom the latter’s thoughts.

“This isn’t the time to be pursuing responsibility for this matter,” Zhan shi instructed severely. “We need to hurry up and find the elders who are making a breakthrough this instant and convince them to suppress their cultivation and relocate before facing their cultivation orde...”

It would be impossible to make a cultivation ordeal disappear once it had been summoned, but it was still possible to delay the falling of the lightning tribulation by suppressing one’s cultivation temporarily. As long as they could buy sufficient time to get all of them to relocate, there was a chance they could undo the fusion of the lightning tribulations.

Boom!

But before Zhan shi could finish his words, a powerful shockwave suddenly rippled into the surroundings, and at the same time, a powerful burst of energy shot forth toward the storm clouds.

Huala!

The powerful burst of energy seemed to have successfully provoked the storm clouds. In the blink of an eye, the congregation of the storm clouds grew even denser and vaster.

“This...”

Seeing such a sight, everyone anxiously turned their gazes toward where the powerful burst of energy had originated, and their complexions immediately darkened.

It was from a Saint 8-dan pinnacle Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast! With a crazed look on its face, it was furiously sending more and more bursts of energy toward the storm clouds, almost as if it would not rest until the entire world was reduced to ash!

“The hell! Where in the world did that fellow pop out from? What the heck are the rest of you idling around for? Hurry up and stop it!” Elder Ge bellowed with a tone intermixed with fury and panic.

At the same time, he swiftly dashed forward to stop the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast from worsening the situation, but before he could come close to the latter, an elder who had been standing on top of the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast suddenly leaped up and sent a devastating surge of sword qi toward the storm clouds.

Kacha! Kacha!

That attack brought about an immediate response from the lightning tribulation. In an instant, the five thousand mu of storm clouds expanded to over six thousand mu.

Upon getting a closer look of the elder’s face, Elder Ge shrieked in horror. “Bai Yu, are you insane!”

The elder who had just launched the devastating surge of sword qi was none other than Divine Healer Bai Yu!

As a physician, Bai Yu was a man who had great compassion for all living beings in the world, such that he would hesitate to even crush an ant. Why would someone like that proactively seek to strengthen the lightning tribulation?

If my Hall of Integrity has wronged you in any way, we can always talk things out! There’s no need for you to go this far!

At this moment, Divine Healer Bai Yu, in the midst of his furious assault toward the storm clouds, suddenly caught sight of Elder Ge and the others, and his eyes immediately lit up. “Ge Xiong, you are here. Great! Hurry up, come and help me attack the lightning tribulation. Zhan shi, you’re here as well? Wonderful! Quick, we need help attacking the lightning

tribulation. We need to act fast; it will be too late once the lightning bolt falls!”

“Attack the lightning tribulation?” Elder Ge and Zhan shi widened their eyes upon hearing those words. They exchanged glances with one another, and they could see confusion in the depths of each other’s eyes.

Had that fellow gone mad from treating too many patients?

The more the lightning tribulation was attacked, the stronger the lightning bolt falling would be. At this rate, everyone would be electrocuted to death!

Hu hu hu!

Just as the crowd was completely bewildered by what Divine Healer Bai Yu was up to, the furious whistling of the wind suddenly sounded. Several figures were flying over from afar, and they were the elder in charge of the Hall of Propriety, Elder Hu Qing, Fei shi, and the entire Elite Division class.

Catching sight of a person amid the incoming group, Hu Yiwei immediately rushed forward to a young man’s side and clasped his fist. “Young Master.”

“Elder Hu? I thought that you’d left the Sanctum of Sages.” Feng Ziyi was slightly surprised to see the other party here.

“Ah, I still had some other matters to attend to. Have you heard that the Old Master has taken in a new direct disciple named Zhang Xuan?” Hu Yiwei asked.

“You are talking about Senior Zhang?” Feng Ziyi nodded. “I have heard of the matter. Senior Zhang is a man of great capability. In fact, if I’m not mistaken, he’s probably the one who is behind this lightning tribulation.”

As much as Feng Ziyi hated to admit it, deep down, he knew that Zhang Xuan was indeed stronger than him.

“Senior?” Hu Yiwei’s lips twitched.

That meant that what the fatty had said was true! His Young Master had really fallen to the position of a junior!

“But isn’t that fellow being way too negligent? He knew that those elders were going to achieve a breakthrough, so how could he still make all of them gather in the same location? How in the world does he plan to deal with such a huge lightning tribulation?” Hu Yiwei harrumphed angrily.

The more he thought about the matter, the more unreasonable he felt that Zhang Xuan fellow was.

Had it been just a moment ago, he might still have been able to forcefully dissipate the lightning tribulation with his cultivation. However, with the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and Divine Healer Bai Yu messing around with the storm clouds, that small hint of a possibility had been completely extinguished.

Even if he succeeded by some stroke of luck, he would be severely injured to the point where he could potentially be crippled for life.

He was not a master teacher, and he did not possess any compassion for the masses or that sort of value. Naturally, there was no way he was going to sacrifice himself for others.

“Negligent? Senior Zhang isn’t being negligent here. He’s intentionally strengthening the lightning tribulation!” Feng Ziyi replied with a hint of admiration in his eyes.

Back at the Hall of Propriety, he had nearly fainted from fear after seeing how huge Elder Liao’s lightning tribulation had become, too. However, after witnessing how it was so easily resolved, the fear of lightning tribulations had completely disappeared from his mind.

“He’s intentionally strengthening the lightning tribulation?” Hu Yiwei widened his eyes in incomprehension upon hearing those words. He could not understand what his Young Master was getting at.

“It might sound ridiculous to you, but Senior Zhang is capable of devouring lightning tribulations. Only when the lightning tribulation is large enough for him will he be able to have his fill,” Feng Ziyi explained calmly.

“Devouring... lightning tribulations?” Zhan shi and the others overheard Feng Ziyi’s words, and they nearly lost their balance and plummeted from the sky.

A lightning tribulation was a form of punishment from heavens! Standing against it was no different from standing against the heavens! Could such a thing really be eaten?

You must be pulling our legs!

Seeing the looks of disbelief amongst the crowd. Elder Hu Qing spoke up. “Feng Ziyi isn’t joking. Zhang shi really wields such a capability!”

“I also saw it with my own eyes, too,” Fei shi added. “Even though the lightning tribulation back at the Hall of Propriety wasn’t as large as the one before us, it was still immensely powerful. Nevertheless, Zhang shi was able to devour it with ease... and more importantly, he even scared the lightning tribulation off!”

“Scared the lightning tribulation off? Is it even possible for a lightning tribulation to be scared?”

The consecutive shocks that had been dealt to their minds left the crowd in a state of utter stupefaction.

The more they listened to the account of events from the group of eye-witnesses, the more they felt like they were listening to those exaggerated heroic tales that were spoken of in taverns. Rationally speaking, such a thing could not possibly be true, could it? But it did not make sense for so many esteemed figures to lie about such a matter.

After a brief moment of silence, Zhan shi stepped forward and said, “Where is Zhang shi at the moment? Bring us to him.”

After all that had been said, they still had not met that legendary freshman. Just what kind of person could that man who was already on everyone’s lips barely a month after enrollment possibly be?

“He’s currently with those elders who are facing their cultivation ordeal,” Feng Ziyi said as he pointed in a direction.

Everyone quickly turned their gazes over and saw a young man sitting cross-legged in front of several elders. His lips were opening and closing non-stop, seemingly lecturing the elders before him.

On the other hand, the managerial elders of the Physician Guild seemed to be almost intoxicated on the young man's lecturing. They were releasing their strength non-stop, as if fearing that their lightning tribulation would not be strong enough.

"He's Zhang shi?" Zhan shi asked with a hint of admiration in his voice.

Honestly, considering how the entire sky was crackling fearfully with lightning, and given the fearsome flashes of light every now and then, it was truly incredible how the young man was still able to continue conducting a lecture so composedly.

Even Hu Yiwei could not help but nod in awe.

Over the years, the only person that he knew who had the mental fortitude to remain calm even in the face of a cataclysm was his master!

It was no wonder that Zhang Xuan fellow had been able to win the Young Master's admiration. Just this deed alone was one that no ordinary man would be capable of pulling off. At the very least, he knew that he would not have been able to do the same.

"Look, look! Zhang shi is going to devour the lightning tribulation!"

Just as everyone was in a state of complete shock, the young man suddenly halted his lecture and stood up. With a light leap, he swiftly rose to an altitude just beneath the disquieting storm clouds.

From the position the young man was in, there was no doubt that he would catch the attention of the lightning tribulation and come under its attack.

"He will be zapped to death like that!" Zhan shi could not help but exclaim in trepidation.

“Heh, there’s no need to worry about that! I saw this sight earlier, and I can tell you for certain that Zhang Shi will dash into the midst of the storm clouds next. Before long, the storm clouds will swiftly contract and...” Seeing that Zhang Xuan had gone into motion, Zhang Yu turned to the crowd and began explaining confidently.

But the next moment, a bizarre expression surfaced on everyone’s faces. Perplexed by the odd response, Zhang Yu quickly turned his head toward the sky, and the sight that he saw made him freeze on the spot. “T-this...”

Before the young man in the sky could make a move, a powerful bolt of lightning had already zapped down on him.

Kacha!

The lightning bolt roasted the young man well, and a fragrant smell wafted through the area. All that might have been lacking at that moment was a pinch of cumin

“Is this... what you all mean by devouring the lightning tribulation?”

Zhan Shi and the others looked at those who had been full of compliments for Zhang Xuan earlier, speechless.

1403 Hu Yiwei's Doub

Before the lightning bolt fell, they were almost convinced by the others that Zhang Xuan was a living deity and that there was nothing in this world that he was incapable of. After all, even lightning tribulations were frightened of him! But the sight before them was clearly telling them that they had been deceived.

Was the young man not supposed to dive right into the storm clouds and make the lightning tribulation tremble in fear?

So, why would he end up being struck by lightning instead? From the looks of it, it seemed like he had no strength to go against the lightning tribulation at all.

“Maybe... he might still be in a period of adaptation? He should get better in a moment...” Zhang Yu proposed meekly.

Even though the situation had gone completely differently to what he had expected, he still had deep trust in Zhang Xuan's capability.

After all, what he had witnessed earlier was completely beyond reason.

But once more, before he could finish his words, Zhang Xuan was struck by another bolt of lightning. This time, the sheer might of the lightning was so great that it crushed him right back down to the ground, and his body convulsed uncontrollably as the lightning coursed through him.

Boom! Boom!

More and more lightning bolts zapped down on Zhang Xuan, and his convulsions grew more and more intense.

Elder Ge could not help but ask, “Should we... leap in to save him?”

Even he could not stand looking at the situation any longer. After all the praise that everyone had heaped on the young man, the latter turned out to be an utter disappointment.

“How do you want to save him?” Zhan shi asked with a bitter smile.

The lightning tribulation was already extremely powerful as it was, and their interference would only cause it to grow even stronger. They would only be worsening the situation if they leapt in recklessly!

“Then... are we to look as that lad gets electrocuted to death?” Elder Ge asked with a frown.

“This... I don't know either...” Zhan shi shook his head with a conflicted look on his face.

It was his duty to protect the students of the Sanctum of Sages as the deputy sanctum head, but this was the first time he had encountered such a powerful lightning tribulation. He had no idea how he could possibly stand against it.

While the crowd was looking on the situation helplessly, the one who was being ravaged by the violent lightning bolts, Zhang Xuan, was busy urging Vicious telepathically, “Are you done finding it yet? Hurry up!”

It was not that he did not want to dash right into the storm clouds to absorb the lightning energy, but it had not been easy for him to create such a massive congregation of storm clouds, and it was unlikely that he would be allowed to do so once more. Naturally, he had to make full use of this opportunity for Vicious to locate his upper body.

It was hard to tell when the lightning tribulation would flee once he started absorbing its energy, so Zhang Xuan had no choice but to allow the lightning tribulation to strike him.

It was fortunate that his physical body and Primordial Spirit had been tempered by lightning on many occasions, thus granting him an exceptional resistance against lightning. Even with the storm clouds relentlessly sending bolts of lightning his way, it would still be a while before his life was truly at risk.

“Master, I can sense my body distinctly—it's definitely here! But for some reason, I can't zone in on its exact location. It's

almost as if it's hidden within some folded space," Vicious replied in distress.

He was also feeling rather anxious, seeing his master being zapped by lightning in order to buy some time for him to locate his upper body, but despite searching far and wide, he was simply unable to locate it.

He was certain that his body was there, but for him to be unable to zone in on its location... most likely, it was located in a different dimension from that of the Sanctum of Sages.

"Folded space?" Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before his heart suddenly skipped a beat. "I recall hearing that the Inner Sanctum is located in a folded space. Could it be that your upper body is located there?"

Zhang Xuan had never fully explored the massive Sanctum of Sages, but he did get an overview of it from the sky. One thing that he had found rather peculiar was that he could not find any traces of the Inner Sanctum, and after asking around, he learned that it was actually located in a folded space. This was somewhat similar to the ancient domain that Ancient Sage Qiu Wu had left behind.

Vicious could clearly sense the presence of his body but was unable to find it. This would mean that there was a chance that it was hidden within a folded space, which would hinder Vicious from accurately pinpointing its location.

"There is such a possibility," Vicious replied.

"Alright. I'll absorb the lightning tribulation now, and we'll continue our search once I get to the Inner Sanctum."

Knowing that he might really be electrocuted to death if he allowed the lightning tribulation to continue striking him, Zhang Xuan pushed himself up from the depression he was in and dashed up into the sky, heading right toward the congregation of storm clouds.

Earlier, he had headed to the Physician Guild at Divine Healer Bai Yu's invitation in order to conduct a lecture concerning poison. However, when he saw that those attending the lectures were all Saint 7-dan pinnacle cultivators who were

just a step away from achieving a breakthrough, he could not resist making use of the opportunity to help them achieve a breakthrough.

He did not possess any manuals concerning the breakthrough from Saint 7-dan to Saint 8-dan, but through pointing out and resolving the main flaws in their cultivation, along with some assistance from the vine, it was not too difficult for him to help all of them to achieve a breakthrough.

All of that eventually culminated into the scene that nearly left Elder Ge fainting from shock earlier.

As expected of a lightning tribulation formed by more than a dozen cultivators undergoing their Dimension Sundering Ordeal simultaneously, the energy that it harnessed was indeed incredible. By diving right into the storm clouds and devouring the surrounding lightning energy furiously, it did not take him too long to fill the loop within his dantian. At the same time, he managed to raise his cultivation to the point where he was just a step away from making a breakthrough.

Very soon, the lightning tribulation came to realize that someone was stealing its energy and quickly fled in fright.

I managed to reach Half-Grand Dominion realm, Zhang Xuan thought.

Even though the lightning tribulation had fled very quickly, Zhang Xuan had still managed to make the final step forward and shatter his bottleneck, reaching Half-Grand Dominion realm.

From the looks of it, it was about time for him to really start looking for Grand Dominion realm cultivation techniques so that he could push for higher realms.

After entering the lightning tribulation, Zhang Xuan quickly changed his clothes and tidied himself, such that when the lightning tribulation left, he was no longer in the unkempt state that he had been in before when he descended from the sky. It was only then that he noticed that the crowd below were all dumbstruck.

To his surprise, Sun Qiang was among the crowd, too.

“Young Master!” Seeing that Zhang Xuan was fine, remaining as awe-inspiring as he usually was, Sun Qiang heaved a sigh of relief.

He quickly rushed forward, and with a flick of his hand, he took out a jade container and handed it over. “These are the pinnacle spirit stones that Elder Ge has prepared in order to compensate you!”

“Compensation? Pinnacle spirit stones?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

It had taken him so much effort just to earn one pinnacle spirit stones—while thinking of this, he suddenly recalled that Zhang Chun still owed him five—whereas a butler who had not even reached the Saint realm yet actually managed to find five so easily.

But the terms that Sun Qiang used, ‘compensation’... why would an elder feel compelled to compensate him?

“You are Yang shi’s direct disciple?” Just as Zhang Xuan was going to clarify the matter, a doubtful voice suddenly sounded.

Zhang Xuan turned his head and saw an old man walking up to him with a deep frown on his forehead.

“He’s Feng Ziyi’s butler, Yang shi’s subordinate.” Noting the hint of confusion in Zhang Xuan’s eyes, Sun Qiang stepped forward and introduced the man with a smile. “He’s currently under my command.”

“Yang shi’s subordinate? Under your command?” Zhang Xuan felt his head spinning wildly upon hearing those words.

The ‘Yang shi’ that had been coming from his mouth was a fake. It was already a huge blessing that he had been able to convince Feng Ziyi to trust him, but why would Yang shi’s subordinate be here too, and not to mention, be under Sun Qiang’s command?

Knowing that his butler was not a reliable person, Zhang Xuan turned to the old man and asked, “You are...”

“I am Hu Yiwei, Yang shi’s butler.” Hu Yiwei introduced himself before assessing the young man before him intently.

A moment later, he could not help but pose the doubt in his heart. “Zhang shi, pardon me for asking, but are you from the Zhang Clan?”

“I’m not.” Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

“You aren’t?” Hu Yiwei seemed to be a little surprised by the answer. “Zhang shi, if it’s not too much for me to ask, could I take a look at your hand? There’s a thought I have in mind that I would like to verify.”

“You want to borrow my hand?” Zhang Xuan was bewildered by Hu Yiwei’s bizarre actions, but after a slight pause, he still extended his hand.

The old man placed his fingers on his pulse lightly, seemingly trying to scan his vitals for certain signs. As time went by, the frown on the old man’s forehead grew deeper and deeper.

“This is weird. Are you really not from the Zhang Clan?”

“Are you referring to my bloodline? I am really not from the Zhang Clan, so I don’t have the bloodline of the Zhang Clan either,” Zhang Xuan explained as he retracted his hand.

Previously, he had already borrowed Zhang Jiuxiao’s blood essence to check this matter, and from the fact that there was no resonance between their bloodlines, it was clear that he was not an offspring of the Zhang Clan.

“Then, have you been afflicted with...” Hu Yiwei was just about to ask something when his words abruptly halted. A moment later, he shook his head and said, “Never mind, it’s not an important issue. I still have things to attend to, so I’ll take my leave for now!”

After saying those words, Hu Yiwei turned around, and with a slight flicker of his silhouette, he vanished from the spot.

1404 Tower of Master Teachers

His words sure were incoherent, Zhang Xuan remarked internally with a shake of his head.

He had thought that Hu Yiwei, as Yang Shi's butler, would surely be an imposing and formidable figure, but who would have thought that he was such an unreliable figure?

But speaking of which, it was a little coincidental that the Innate Fetal Poison suddenly worked up just as Hu Yiwei placed his fingers on his pulse earlier. It was fortunate that he managed to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison from thrashing around via his Heaven's Path zhenqi and the lightning energy that he had absorbed earlier, or else it truly would have been awkward if he was labeled a poison master as a result of that.

In any case, since Hu Yiwei had already left at a speed even faster than Luo Xuanqing's, Zhang Xuan could not be bothered to dawdle any longer on his affairs anymore. Thus, he turned his gaze to Sun Qiang and asked telepathically, "You said that these pinnacle spirit stones are Elder Ge's compensation. What happened?"

"It's like this..." Sun Qiang quickly filled Zhang Xuan in on what had happened earlier.

"Y-you gave away your identity... and even cleared the assessment of the Teacher Acknowledgement Hall?" Zhang Xuan nearly keeled over after hearing the entire account of events.

This butler of his sure was courageous!

Despite being a fake, he actually brazenly pointed his finger at the real one and accused the latter of being a fake instead. He really should have been counting his blessing that he was still alive!

“I’ll let this matter slide, but you’ll really have to rein yourself in more in the future. As you know, my teacher is a low-profile person and likes his peace, so it wouldn’t do for his butler to be so high profile. Understood?”

This had to be the reason the predecessors warned individuals against lying. Whether one liked it or not, it would always spiral out of control in one way or another.

While he was deeply frustrated by Sun Qiang’s actions, to be fair, the latter was only working within the web of lies that he had crafted, so it was not fair to pin the blame entirely on him. With all that had been said and done, it was already impossible for him to back out of this matter. All he could do at this point was quickly meet the requirements for unsealing the Sanctum Head Token before Yang shi found out about his existence.

“Zhang shi, regarding the lightning tribulation earlier...” Zhan shi walked over and began speaking.

To be honest, he was still a little overwhelmed by what he had seen earlier.

Considering the sheer scale of the lightning tribulation, it would not have been surprising if it had torn down the Hall of Integrity, but who could have known that the fellow would actually scare it away!

“It’s a technique that my teacher has imparted to me. It allows me to curb the might of a lightning tribulation, but at the same time, it deals grievous wounds to me. It’ll take me quite some time to recover from the wounds that I have sustained this time around,” Zhang Xuan explained.

At the same time, his face abruptly turned pale, and his body wobbled on the spot, seemingly ready to fall at any moment.

The keen-eyed Sun Qiang immediately caught the signal and rushed forward to support him.

“It’s a technique that our teacher imparted to you? Why didn’t he impart it to me too?” By the side, Feng Ziyi brooded unhappily over the unfair treatment between him and his senior.

He nearly died from the overwhelming might of a lightning tribulation back when he was facing his Leaving Aperture Ordeal. Yet, it turned out that his teacher actually possessed a technique to curb the might of a lightning tribulation... and his teacher had only taught it to his senior!

That would not do. He really needed to get in contact with his teacher soon to inquire about this matter.

Otherwise, he would just have to ask his senior to teach him!

They were from the same lineage anyway, so if his senior could grasp it, he would surely be able to do so, too!

“This...” Hearing those words, Zhan shi felt so stifled that his cheeks began twitching uncontrollably.

“Sanctum Head Zhan, this might not be the best occasion to ask about this matter, but I wish to enter the Inner Sanctum. May I know what conditions are required for that?” Knowing that the other party could tell that he was faking weakness, Zhang Xuan decisively changed the topic.

Through Sun Qiang’s introduction, he had come to learn that Zhan shi was the incumbent deputy sanctum head, so he made sure to put on a respectful attitude.

Even though he was the only candidate in line for the sanctum head position, he was still lacking in strength and capability to inherit the position, so it would not be convenient for him to flaunt his identity yet. Thus, he could only assume the identity as an ordinary student before the other party for the time being.

“You wish to enter the Inner Sanctum?” Not expecting to hear such a question, Zhan shi pondered for a moment before replying. “There are two conditions that you have to meet in order to enter the Inner Sanctum. Firstly, your age must not be over forty, and secondly, you have to achieve proficiency of 8-star in your primary occupation. Zhang shi is registered at our Sanctum of Sages as a master teacher, so in order to enter the Inner Sanctum, you have to clear your 8-star master teacher examination!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded.

Judging from Zhan shi's words, primary occupation clearly referred to one's main occupation, which was likely determined by which avenue one had enrolled into the Sanctum of Sages from. Bi Hongyin, for example, should have been nominated by the Demonic Tunist Guild, so she would have to achieve 8-star proficiency as a demonic tunist in order to enter the Inner Sanctum.

As Zhang Xuan had been nominated by the Master Teacher Pavilion, so his primary occupation was master teacher. In other words, having just his supporting occupation reach the proficiency of 8-star would not be sufficient. He would have to become an 8-star master teacher in order to be qualified to enter the Inner Sanctum.

In order to take the 8-star master teacher examination, I will require eight 8-star supporting occupations. Currently, the only 8-star occupations that I have are spirit awakener, physician, and formation master. As for beast tamer and demonic tunist, I should be able to acquire their emblems pretty easily as well... but even with that, I will still be lacking three supporting occupations! Zhang Xuan swiftly made a mental calculation and sighed.

He turned to Zhan shi and asked, "Sanctum Head Zhan, I am still lacking a couple of supporting occupations to clear the 8-star master teacher examination. May I know if there's a more efficient way for me to clear the examinations as quick as possible?"

At the current rate the news was spreading, not to mention that even Hu Yiwei was alerted of the matter, most likely, it would not take long for the real Yang shi to catch wind of the news.

And if he was not even an 8-star master teacher by the time Yang shi arrived, he would be in very deep trouble.

Well, considering his own talent, he was rather confident that even the real Yang shi would be more than glad to have him as his direct disciple, so the matter might not really as bad as he feared... but that would only be his final resort. After all, it would be unwise to leave one's fate to chance.

Furthermore, Luo Ruoxin had been punished by her own clan for revealing her reluctance to marry the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan, so he had to quickly gain sufficient strength in order to save her. As such, it was of the utmost importance for him to find Vicious' upper body so that he would at least have a powerful trump card to play should the situation truly turn awry.

Most importantly of all, there was a chance that he might be able to meet Luo Ruoxin if he entered the Inner Sanctum.

"You want to clear the examinations as quickly as possible?" Zhan shi frowned upon hearing those words.

"Due to the unique nature of the master teacher occupation, one must first meet a certain prerequisite in one's supporting occupations before one is allowed to take the promotion examination. Under normal circumstances, you would have to go around it systematically, clearing each of the supporting occupations individually before challenging the 8-star master teacher examination. However, the Sanctum of Sages happens to have a more efficient system to go around that, and that is... challenging the Tower of Master Teachers!"

"The Tower of Master Teachers?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Despite having read plenty of books in the Sanctum of Sages, he had never heard of the Tower of Master Teachers before.

"In essence, the Tower of Master Teachers is a trial. There are nine floors to it in total, the first eight of which are for the various supporting occupations you have studied before. Each of floor is guarded by the Inceptive Sage of the occupation, and as long as you can earn the other party's recognition, you will have cleared the floor, and the passageway to the next floor will open up. As for the ninth floor, it will be guarded by a young 8-star master teacher of the Sanctum of Sages. If you are able to clear his trial too, you will be granted the 8-star master teacher emblem," Zhan shi explained.

"However, I can tell you that the trial that you will face on every single floor will be of unimaginable difficulty. After all, the Inceptive Sages are representatives of the best of the younger generation in an occupation, so winning their

recognition and getting past them won't be an easy feat. In fact, in the several dozen millenniums since the founding to the Sanctum of Sages, there have only been three people who have cleared the Tower of Master Teachers!"

"Three people?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

To be able to receive the recognition of eight Inceptive Sages was, without a doubt, an incredibly arduous task. It was rather surprising to hear that there were a handful of people who had cleared this trial before.

"That's right. The first one to clear the Tower of Master Teachers was our Seventh Sanctum Head. Back then, he was still in his early thirties when he challenged it, and it took him three days to clear the entire tower and successfully become an 8-star master teacher. That incident eventually became a legend that students still speak of in admiration!"

"The second one was the current head of the Zhang Clan, Sword Saint Xingmeng. Like our Seventh Sanctum Head, he took just three days to clear the Tower of Master Teachers, and he was only in his early thirties, too."

"As for the last one..." At this point, Zhan shi could not help but shake his head bitterly before continuing. "Her record is far more frightening than her two predecessors!"

"Frightening?"

"Yes. In just four hours, she managed to dash up from the first floor to the ninth by forcing all of the Inceptive Sages to submit to her!"

Even though the incident had happened a few years ago, astonishment and wonderment still flickered across Zhan shi's eyes as he recalled the event. "More importantly, when that person cleared the Tower of Master Teachers, she was only seventeen years old!"

"Seventeen years old?" Zhang Xuan was astonished. "A seventeen-year-old 8-star master teacher? Could it be..."

He was already in his twenties, but he still was not an 8-star master teacher. On the other hand, the other party had already been an 8-star master teacher when she was seventeen years

old. At this moment, a figure could not help but float into his mind.

“You should have heard of her as well!” Zhan shi chuckled.
“She’s none other than the little princess of the Luo Clan!”

1405 Kill Him!

It's indeed Ruoxin! Zhang Xuan exclaimed inwardly.

Who else other than his girlfriend could have the ability to create a record that even Zhan shi was still shocked by and become an 8-star master teacher at seventeen years old?

However, as proud of Luo Ruoxin as he was, this matter also increased the pressure on him. His girlfriend had already been an 8-star master teacher for a couple of years, but he was only taking the examination now.

It seemed like he was really lagging behind. He would have to work much harder to make up for it.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan had fallen into contemplation after hearing of the various records concerning the Tower of Master Teacher, Zhan shi could not help but ask, "Does Zhang shi want to challenge the Tower of Master Teacher, too?"

"I do intend to." Zhang Xuan nodded. "But before that, I would like to browse through some books first so as to refresh my knowledge and prepare myself for the trial."

Not expecting Zhang Xuan to raise such a simple request, Zhan shi replied with a smile. "You wish to browse through some books? What books do you want to browse through?"

Putting aside the fact that the young man before him was Yang shi's direct disciple, just his ability to neutralize the lightning tribulation made him a person worth befriending.

Be it his friends or family, there were bound to be important people in his life who would have to face cultivation ordeals in the future. If he could just engage the help of this young man, he would be able to guarantee their safety, and there was nothing more valuable than that!

Knowing that Zhan shi was trying to express his goodwill toward him, Zhang Xuan requested, "Apothecary, painter, celestial designer, terpsichore, beast tamer, and appraiser; if it

isn't too much trouble, I would like to visit the respective libraries of these occupations!"

He did not like to be indebted to others, but he could not afford to waste time anymore.

"Oh? You wish to look through the books concerning your supporting occupations?" Zhan shi was slightly surprised for a moment before nodding. He had expected Zhang Xuan to request for permission to access part of the confidential book collection in the Sanctum of Sages. "That isn't a problem. If you simply wish to access the books of those supporting occupations, I can lend you my token for a while. This way, even if you haven't achieved an 8-star proficiency in those supporting occupations, you'll still be able to access the 8-star books. However, there will be a time limit on how long you can access those books for. For each supporting occupation, you will only have half a day, and I fear that even I cannot grant you any more time than that!"

Even as the deputy sanctum head, Zhan shi's authority in the Sanctum of Sages was still rather limited. It was already the limit of his authority to grant Zhang Xuan half a day of unrestricted access in each of the supporting occupations' libraries.

"Half a day? That's more than enough!" Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

To others, half a day was only barely enough to grant one an extremely rough overview of the entire occupation, but to him, that was plenty of time!

With so much time, he would definitely be able to transfer all of the books within a library into the Library of Heaven's Path

"That's a relief. Alright, here is my token!" With a smile, Zhan shi passed his token over.

"Thank you, Sanctum Head Zhan!" Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and uttered his words of gratitude.

Due to Zhan shi's help, he would be able to master the various supporting occupations in the shortest time possible and push for a breakthrough to 8-star master teacher!

“If there’s nothing else, I’ll be taking my leave.” With the token in his possession, Zhang Xuan hurriedly headed in the direction of the Hall of Erudition.

The first place he headed to after reaching the Hall of Erudition was the Apothecary Guild.

The token that Zhan shi had provided him truly worked wonders. It did not take too long for him to successfully access the library.

Four hours later, he was done browsing through all of the 8-star books. After spending roughly two hours more reinforcing his knowledge, he stood up and set forth for the Painter Guild.

Just like that, Zhang Xuan spent an entire day traveling between the various guilds. He would only spend a maximum of six hours in each guild, and just like that, in little more than a day, he managed to raise his proficiency in all of his supporting occupations, with the exception of poison master and soul oracle, to 8-star.

...

While Zhang Xuan was busy mastering his supporting occupations, Luo Xuanqing was finally done reinforcing his cultivation. In the depths of his eyes, one could vaguely see the intricacies of space twinkling brightly, reminiscent of a starry sky.

As a member of the Luo Clan, his comprehension of spatial laws was far deeper and more profound than that of other Saint 8-dan Dimension Sundering realm cultivators.

He closed his eyes slowly and focused his senses on perceiving the spatial energy coursing through his body. Some time later, a deep frown suddenly formed between his eyebrows, and he turned in a certain direction and roared, “Who is it?”

The space where his gaze fell was completely empty; there was not a single person to be seen. Even when scanning the area with one’s Spiritual Perception, there was nothing to be found.

But the next moment, bizarre folds began rippling from that empty space, and an elder slowly materialized.

“It seems like the Young Master’s bloodline has been completely awakened upon reaching the Dimension Sundering realm... Congratulations!” The elder clasped his fist while giving his congratulations.

Upon getting a closer sight of the elder’s figure, Luo Xuanqing heaved a sigh of relief before asking, “Elder Qi, what are you doing here?”

“The First Elder wishes to meet you!” Elder Qi reported.

“First Elder?” Luo Xuanqing subconsciously clenched his fists tightly as he asked, “Where’s my younger sister?”

“Young Master, you can rest assured that the little princess is doing perfectly fine. It’s just that she is under temporary confinement and is unable to communicate with the outside world at the moment. However, you can be certain that she isn’t injured at all. Besides, given her strength, not even the First Elder would be able to hurt her,” Elder Qi replied.

“Humph, that had better be the case!” Luo Xuanqing harrumphed coldly as the apprehension he felt within alleviated slightly.

In terms of cultivation, his younger sister was far from the very peak of the Master Teacher Continent, but when equipped with the Dimension Silencer, it was doubtful if even Zhang Xuan’s teacher, Yang Xuan, would be a match for her!

Naturally, the First Elder of the Luo Clan stood even less of a chance.

Knowing that his younger sister was safe, Luo Xuanqing turned to Elder Qi and instructed, “Bring me to the First Elder!”

With a nod of his head, Elder Qi flicked his hand lightly.

Tz la!

A unique energy began shrouding the space between the both of them, isolating them from the rest of the world. Following which, Elder Qi tapped his finger forward, and a light barrier

appeared right before them. A ripple diffused across the light barrier, and the silhouette of an elder gradually grew more and more clear.

It was the golden-robed elder who had witnessed Zhang Xuan standing against the lightning tribulation back then!

“Not bad, not bad!” Upon seeing Luo Xuanqing, the First Elder nodded in approval. “Your improvement is faster than I anticipated!”

“First Elder...” Luo Xuanqing spoke up anxiously, but before he could finish his words, the other party interjected.

“Alright, I know what you are going to ask, but now isn’t the time. I have two missions for you that you will have to accomplish as soon as possible!” The First Elder looked at Luo Xuanqing with such intent eyes that it almost seemed as if he would materialize through the light barrier and arrive right before them.

“First Elder, feel free to ask anything of me!” Luo Xuanqing took a deep breath before clasp his fist.

As an offspring of the Luo Clan, he was indebted to the Luo Clan for grooming him. Naturally, he was duty-bound to accomplish the missions that the Luo Clan assigned to him.

“Firstly, I want you to get on close terms with that young man who had helped you pass your cultivation ordeal,” the First Elder instructed.

“The young man who had helped me tide across my cultivation ordeal? Are you referring to Zhang Xuan? I can do that.” Luo Xuanqing nodded.

After everything Zhang Xuan had done for him, he already considered him a friend. Even without the First Elder’s instruction, he definitely would have gotten on close terms with him.

“Secondly... in the Qingyuan Empire, there’s a place known as the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. I want you to head there to conduct an investigation as soon as you get time. Based on what we have found, your younger sister went under a pseudonym during the period she was gone.”

At this point, a sharp glint flashed through the First Elder's eyes as he continued. "If my intuition is right, the person she likes is there as well. I want you to root that man out and kill him silently!"

"You want me to kill him?" Luo Xuanqing's body froze upon hearing those words. He hurriedly lifted his gaze and anxiously said, "But my younger sister has feelings for him! She will be devastated if we kill him!"

He knew his younger sister's temperament very well. She was an extremely obstinate person, and once she had decided upon something, she would never change her mind even till death. If that man whom his younger sister loved were to die, she would definitely go berserk!

"There's nothing that time cannot heal. I have seen plenty of cultivators who thought that their feelings for one another would last an eternity, but time makes everything fade. She'll eventually get over it. Furthermore, even if she doesn't understand, you should know how important the engagement with the Zhang Clan is!"

The First Elder paused for a brief moment before continuing. "The Zhang Clan was enraged to hear of the matter, and we anticipate that they will attempt to bring the marriage ceremony forward. There's a good chance that the ceremony will be held before the end of the year, so we need to make sure to kill that man before then to sever any thought of her getting together with him.

"Otherwise, neither you nor I will be able to shoulder the consequences! Even if your younger sister manages to get together with that man, she will still have to pay the price for her actions and live an entire life of misery! I trust that you don't wish to see your younger sister becoming an outcast of the Luo Clan and a sinner to all mankind!"

"I..." Luo Xuanqing clenched his fists tightly.

1406 Challenging the Tower of Master Teachers

Luo Xuanqing resented the idea of his younger sister becoming a sacrificial pawn in a political marriage with the Zhang Clan, but at the same time, he understood how important it was for this marriage to go through. Anyone who attempted to halt this marriage would be as good as the sinner of humanity.

If there was any other alternative, there was no way he would allow such a fate to befall his younger sister.

Luo Xuanqing was silent for a moment before saying, “I have already promised my younger sister not to investigate that man’s affairs, and I have no intention of breaking my promise to her. However, rest assured that I’ll get someone to look into it and make a move against that man in my stead!”

“You’ll get someone to do it in your place? Who is it? You should know how important it is to keep this matter confidential, or else we will be in deep trouble!” the First Elder said with a frown.

If it was found that the Luo Clan had attempted to kill the man whom the little princess loved, the Luo Clan would surely be condemned for its actions. Thus, it was imperative that they found someone trustworthy to carry out the job.

“The person I’ll be entrusting this matter to is a close brother of mine, so there’s no need to worry about him turning against us!” Luo Xuanqing replied. “He’s none other than the person whom you told me to get close to earlier, Zhang Xuan!”

“Him?” The First Elder was startled for a moment before he nodded slowly. “It’s indeed admirable how he dived fearlessly into the storm clouds in order to save you. Such relationships are hard-to-come-by, so treasure it well. However, you must make sure that the brother of yours doesn’t give anything

away, or else the little princess' rage will be hard for any of us to withstand!"

"Don't worry!" Luo Xuanqing nodded. "My brother, Zhang Xuan, has no ties with my younger sister at all. The both of them don't even know one another, so there's no way on earth he would possibly leak the information to her!"

"That would be for the best. This matter is of grave importance, so make sure to handle it promptly. I'll be waiting for your report."

Following which, the light barrier began flickering.

Hu!

The First Elder disappeared from both of their views.

Luo Xuanqing closed his eyes as unnerving tranquility floated in the air, reminiscent of the calm before a storm. Slowly, his body began to tremble uncontrollably, and a quivering voice came from his lips. "Elder Qi... there are so many experts in the clan, why is he entrusting this mission to me?"

If his younger sister ever learned that he had sent someone to kill the person she loved, that would probably spell the end of their kinship. They would never be able to return to the good old days.

"Sigh." Knowing what Luo Xuanqing was thinking, Elder Qi shook his head and said, "I know that it's hard on you, but the First Elder has his considerations for making such a choice, too."

"Considerations? Are my feelings part of his considerations? Or am I nothing more than a mere tool to the Luo Clan?" Luo Xuanqing's voice was suppressed, but the deep emotions behind his words seemed to be on the verge of bursting forth.

Elder Qi shook his head for a moment before quietly replying, "She's your younger sister. If you are the one to make the move, she will only consider it a personal conflict between the both of you. The rest of us can feign ignorance, and there will still be some ground for reconciliation between her and the rest of the clan. However, if she learns that that man was killed by the experts of our clan, this matter will be blown out of

proportion. She will become completely estranged from our Luo Clan! As one of the core members of our Luo Clan, you should be able to understand this logic.”

Geji! Geji!

The sound of Luo Xuanqing clenching his fists was not loud, but it echoed conspicuously amid the still air.

As a core member of the Luo Clan, how could he possibly be unaware of all this?

As a doting brother, this was not the first time that he had made a move against those foolish men who dared approach his younger sister. That’s why, if he made a move against that man, he would be able to take the full blame for doing so.

The Luo Clan would not be implicated, and its reputation would not be besmirched.

“Also, you should know what happened to the five elder brothers that came before you. Our Luo Clan owes you. Treat this as a trial. As long as you can accomplish what’s asked of you, no one will dare speak another word when you rise to the position of the clan head in the future. Otherwise, there’s no saying that dissidents will not start to act up...” Elder Qi continued.

“Enough!” Hearing about his five elder brothers, Luo Xuanqing’s eyes could not help but redden slightly.

A heavy silence drifted in the air for a while before it was broken by a sigh from Elder Qi. “Even if not for anyone else, you should think in their stead as well. I believe you know better than me what the right decision to make is.”

Once again, there was a long moment of silence before Luo Xuanqing finally muttered, “I’ll do it.”

“That would be for the best. Don’t drag it out for too long. It will only prolong your misery. And make sure that no one else hears of the matter,” Elder Qi said with a wave of his hand.

Following which, his silhouette suddenly faded before vanishing from the spot.

With his departure, the sealed space around them broke open, and the callings of the cicadas and beasts around him immediately gushed in.

Hu!

However, Luo Xuanqing remained completely motionless on the spot, seemingly deep in thought. A long time later, all of his emotions eventually converged into a long sigh.

“Younger sister, I’m sorry.”

Luo Xuanqing hated the notion of putting his younger sister through an arranged marriage, but admittedly, only the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan was worthy of her. On the other hand, the person she liked was a nobody from a Tier-1 Empire. Before behemoths like the Zhang Clan and the Luo Clan, that man was nothing at all.

“Even if I don’t make a move, the Zhang Clan will make a move, too! And once they do so, things could very well spiral out of control.” Luo Xuanqing shook his head.

There was no way he could miss that implied meaning behind the First Elder’s words.

The young prodigy of the Zhang Clan was as important to the Zhang Clan as his younger sister was to the Luo Clan. For the young prodigy’s fiancée to be stolen by another man was, no doubt, a slap to the Zhang Clan’s face. There was no way they would let that man get away scot-free!

If the Luo Clan were to make a move first, at least the Zhang Clan’s rage would be placated, and his younger sister would not be snubbed after marrying over.

Even though the Luo Clan and the Zhang Clan were both top Sage Clans whose names were echoed in unison, those who were in the upper society of the Master Teacher Continent were all deeply aware that the Zhang Clan commanded far greater influence and power than the Luo Clan.

“I guess there’s no choice but for me to play the villain.” Luo Xuanqing shook his head. “I’ll have to entrust this mission to someone reliable.”

After regaining composure, a glint flashed across Luo Xuanqing's eyes.

Given that Zhang Xuan already knew bits and pieces of this matter, there was no one more suited than him to carry this task out.

It was just that... this mission could be as good as throwing the other party into the abyss. Once his younger sister learned of the matter, there was no way she would let the other party go.

But in return, he would fully acknowledge the other party and protect him for life. As he rose in standing, he would make sure to compensate the other party for that.

This could both be an opportunity or a crisis for the other party.

Dashing straight ahead, it did not take long for him to arrive at Zhang Xuan's residence. After realizing that the latter had headed out, he quickly asked around for his whereabouts before heading off to the Hall of Erudition.

"Zhang shi isn't around anymore. He's headed off to the Tower of Master Teachers!"

"Tower of Master Teachers? Is he planning to clear his 8-star master teacher examination?" Luo Xuanqing was surprised to hear that.

As his younger sister had challenged the Tower of Master Teachers in her time as well, it went without saying that he was aware of this trial in the Sanctum of Sages. However, he did not think that Zhang Xuan would want to challenge it too.

Due to the massive uproar that happened as a result of the terrifyingly large lightning tribulation at the Hall of Integrity, it was no longer a secret that the culprit behind the incident, Zhang Xuan, was planning on challenging the Tower of Master Teachers.

Rather, it had already become public knowledge.

"It won't be easy to clear the Tower of Master Teachers. That fellow sure is daring!" Luo Xuanqing remarked with a shake

of his head before rushing in the direction of the Tower of Master Teachers.

The Tower of Master Teachers was indeed the most efficient way for one to be promoted to an 8-star master teacher, but if it was easy to clear, there would not only be a handful of successful challengers in the several dozen millenniums since the founding of the Sanctum of Sages.

In fact, he had thought about challenging the Tower of Master Teachers in the past, but eventually, he had decided against it because he knew that it would be impossible for him to accomplish with his current level of strength.

That trial not only required one to possess superior fighting prowess and talent. More than that, one's comprehension of the various supporting occupations had to have achieved an extremely high mastery as well... and this was exactly what had stopped many in their footsteps.

After all, not everyone was a true genius like his younger sister, capable of grasping anything in an instant.

Flitting forward, it did not take long for him to arrive before the Tower of Master Teachers. By the time he arrived, a huge crowd had already gathered around the area. Even the deputy sanctum head, Zhan Tiancheng, was standing close by with eyes filled with expectations.

At around this moment, someone amid the crowd shouted, "It's starting!"

Following which, the first floor of the Tower of Master Teachers lit up.

1407 Xingyun Puppe

“The first floor...” Luo Xuanqing turned to one of the managerial elders watching the commotion by the side and asked, “What will Zhang shi be challenging in the first floor?”

He knew that Zhang Xuan’s strengths mainly lay in formations, beast taming, and spirit enchantment. As long as one of these three was the challenge for the first floor, the other party would be able to clear it with ease.

Turning his head, the managerial elder’s eyes immediately twitched upon seeing Luo Xuanqing, and he hurriedly replied, “He’s challenging celestial designer first!”

“Celestial designer... So, the one guarding the floor should be... Jiang Feifei?” Luo Xuanqing’s face paled.

“The Inceptive Sage of the Celestial Designer Hall in the Sanctum of Sages is Jiang Feifei, so Zhang shi should be facing her,” the managerial elder replied nervously.

“That’s not good,” Luo Xuanqing muttered anxiously.

A freshman like Zhang Xuan might not have heard of Jiang Feifei, but there was no one in the Inner Sanctum who did not know who she was.

In fact, the Soulbinding Golden Bead that he had intended to use against the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast back then had been forged by her.

As one of the top three Sage Clans, the geniuses of the Jiang Clan were in no way inferior to him, and Jiang Feifei’s talent in the field of designing and creating artifacts was unmatched by any of her peers. The elders of the Sanctum of Sages’ Celestial Designer Hall were full of praise for her, and they believed that there was a good chance that she could become a 9-star celestial designer in the next few decades!

Even though it might seem as if it would not make much of a difference, the sequencing of opponents in the Tower of Master Teachers mattered hugely. The challenger should

always start with the easiest supporting occupation in order to boost their confidence before slowly moving on to the harder ones.

But with Jiang Feifei on the very first floor... it could be said that Zhang Xuan was facing hell mode right from the very start. There was no hope of victory at all!

It was doubtful whether his younger sister would be able to clear Jiang Feifei's trial or not, let alone Zhang Xuan!

And to face such an opponent on the very first floor was not confidence—it was blind recklessness!

In the midst of Luo Xuanqing's anxiety, he heard someone say, "Jiang Feifei has always been very strict on herself and those around her; she would never go easy on anyone. It seems like that fellow is going to be defeated right from the get-go."

Turning his head over, he saw an elder standing right next to Zhan shi, stroking his beard leisurely as he looked at the Tower of Master Teachers.

He was the managerial elder of the Celestial Designer Hall!

Clearly, he did not think that Zhang Xuan stood much of a match against Jiang Feifei.

Hearing those words, Luo Xuanqing's gaze slowly turned grim as he clenched his fists tightly. He could not help but sigh deeply as he thought, I don't know why that fellow is so eager to become an 8-star master teacher, but admittedly, he does possess both capability and wits. It's just a pity that my younger sister has an engagement with the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan, or else he would have been a good choice as well. It's truly a pity.

...

Entering the first floor of the Tower of Master Teachers, Zhang Xuan swiftly scanned his surroundings, and soon, he caught sight a young lady seated by the corner with a peculiar-looking artifact in her hands.

Her eyes were completely focused on the artifact, and with a small knife in her other hand, she seemed to be carving the

artifact. The movements of her hands were so fluid that it almost felt like she was painting a beautiful picture.

Without raising her head, the young lady quietly said, “Wait there for a moment. I’ll assess you after I’m done carving this.”

“Very well.” Zhang Xuan nodded as he waited patiently on the spot.

Even though the young lady had not looked up, it was not too hard to tell that she was likely a stunning beauty just by looking at her profile.

More importantly, she was actually a Saint 7-dan pinnacle expert, just like Zhang Chun!

Despite that, she still sat unreservedly on the ground, completely absorbed into her carving. Even Zhang Xuan was slightly impressed by the sheer intensity of her focus.

He lowered his head to take look at the object which she was carving, and while it was still too early to tell for sure, it seemed to be a small part of a celestial designer artifact.

The artifacts created by celestial designers were known for their exquisiteness. Every stroke of the knife from the young lady would cause a thin slice of metal to fall to the ground, and in just a few breaths, it had already formed a uniquely-shaped spare part. It connected perfectly with a larger artifact that she had before her, such that even the crevice between the two artifacts could not even be seen.

“What exquisite carving skills!” Zhang Xuan remarked in amazement.

Even though he did not have much experience with the work of a celestial designer, through the description of the books, he could tell that the carving skills of the young lady before him were top-notch, even among 8-star celestial designers!

To possess such skills at her age, it seemed like her title as the Inceptive Sage of the Celestial Designer Hall was not for show.

“I’m done!” After fixing the various spare parts together, the young lady heaved a sigh of relief before placing the item by the side. Following which, she stood up and said, “For the trial of the Tower of Master Teachers, you don’t have to best me. All you need to do is display capability worthy of my recognition!”

This was not a celestial designer examination but a master teacher trial. As such, the requirement was not so demanding as to require the challenger to display skills surpassing that of the Inceptive Sage.

“However, I have very high expectations, so know that it won’t be that easy to win my recognition!”

“Of course,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. “There’s no way it could be easy to win the recognition of someone who is capable of carving impeccably without drafting a blueprint beforehand.”

Usually, celestial designers would first draft a blueprint before carving the various parts of their artifact so that they would have a rough idea of the dimensions. However, the young lady was actually able to carve a spare part impeccably without any hesitation in her movement or referring to any blueprints.

Putting aside the young lady’s mastery as a celestial designer, just this feat in itself was sufficient to tell that she was a highly demanding person, possibly even a perfectionist.

So, how could it possibly be easy to clear the trial of a person like that?

“It’s good that you understand that. As you can see, I’m a very busy person, and I still have a lot of things to do, so let’s not waste any more time. I have a pile of materials over here, and we will both carve a puppet based on this blueprint I have over here. As long as the puppet you have created is able to withstand three hits from mine, it will be your victory.”

As the young lady spoke, she flicked her hand, and a pile of materials, carving knives, and a blueprint materialized on the ground.

The blueprint was filled with many intricate details and words. Without scanning it with one's Spiritual Perception, it would be impossible to interpret the microscopic words and details on the blueprint.

Putting aside the drawings of the spare parts and their joints, just the sheer number of words on the blueprint totaled over several ten thousand!

How complex... Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had seen plenty of grade-8 blueprints, but this was the first time that he had seen one that was this intricate.

"This is the blueprint of the Xingyun Puppet," the young lady said with a nod. "It's a grade-8 puppet, wielding strength comparable to a Grand Dominion realm master teacher.

"The foundation of its design lies in the stellar sky. Every single one of its parts represents a star in the sky, and since there are countless stars in the sky, the number of parts it includes is innumerable as well. As such, even with the blueprint to refer to, it harnesses countless possibilities. The slightest difference in the carving of the part could result in a vast disparity in its final fighting prowess!"

At which point, the young lady lowered her head to glance at the blueprint before continuing on. "I should take roughly a day to finish carving this puppet. I'll give you three days after I'm done, and if you still haven't finished it by then, you will have failed my test.

"You should also know that time is one of the primary assessment criteria of a celestial designer's mastery, so three days is already the longest I can offer you."

After the young lady was done with her explanation, she grabbed one of the materials on the ground and raised her head, preparing to begin her crafting. However, the next moment, she suddenly froze on the spot.

Unbeknownst to her, the young man before her had conjured over a hundred swords at some point in time, and every single one of them was busy carving a material with its sword qi. In

less than two breaths, a large heap of parts of varying sizes had piled up before the young man.

Then, the young man waved his hand.

Huala!

The freshly carved parts swiftly came together to form a puppet.

“Alright, I’m done!” Zhang Xuan said with a clap of his hand before raising his head to look at Jiang Feifei.

1408 I Did Go Easy On Her

“You...”

Seeing the neatly assembled puppet standing right in front of her, Jiang Feifei was visibly stunned.

Even with her fastest carving speed, she would still require an entire day at least, but how long did the other party take?

Ten breaths?

Eight breaths?

How could he carve such delicate parts precisely while manipulating so many swords at once?

“That’s not right.” After a moment of shock, Jiang Feifei swiftly noticed something was amiss, and she asked in a deeply perplexed tone, “My puppet doesn’t have any clothes, so how could yours be perfectly dressed?”

Under normal circumstances, the Xingyun Puppet should have been completely nude. Yet, the one carved by the young man before her was impeccably dressed—in fact, there was an ornament on its chest, and the ripples on its clothes flowed beautifully like real silk. This was completely at odds with the blueprint!

“Ah... I happened to have some additional time, and I thought that it would be inappropriate to display the body of a nude male puppet to a young lady like you, so I thought I would make a set of clothes for it. It doesn’t look too bad, right?”

Zhang Xuan replied with a gentlemanly smile.

A puppet it might be, but it would have been severe breach of etiquette if he had allowed it to appear nude before a young lady. As a civilized gentleman, it went without saying that he could not allow something as indecent as that to happen!

“You even had time to make a set of clothes for it?” Jiang Feifei’s body froze in sheer astonishment. She slowly

proceeded forward to take a closer look at the puppet that Zhang Xuan had crafted.

The puppet's clothes were in perfect harmony with its body. Every single stitch was done so impeccable that it was impossible to tell that it had been made with spare parts with one's eyes. In fact, even when she scanned the puppet's clothes with her Spiritual Perception, she could hardly tell the difference between them and real silk at all!

"H-how did you do it?" Jiang Feifei asked with eyes widened with shock. Her mind could hardly process what was going on.

In terms of carving speed, she could be said to be at the forefront of 8-star celestial designers, but even so, it would still take her at least an entire day to finish carving the Xingyun Puppet. On the other hand, the other party managed to complete it in just a few breaths... and to add insult to injury, its finish was actually far better than hers!

What was with this monstrous ability?

"After looking at the blueprint, I thought that it would be too troublesome and time-consuming to use a carving knife, so I decided to use my swords instead. Fortunately, it seems to have worked out fine," Zhang Xuan explained with a nod.

For a celestial designer to carve swiftly, there were only three requirements that they would have to meet. First and foremost, they needed to have a sharp memory that would allow them to remember every single detail on the blueprint impeccably on command.

Given that Zhang Xuan possessed the Library of Heaven's Path, he could retrieve the details of the blueprints on command, so that was not a problem for him at all.

Secondly, the celestial designer had to possess precise control over their movements and exertion of strength.

The Flowing Water Swordsmanship was known for its unparalleled defense, capable of even keeping the thinnest strand of Spiritual Perception at bay. As its practitioner, it went without saying that Zhang Xuan possessed near absolute control over his swords.

Thirdly, due to how precise and exhausting the job would be, one had to possess an exceptionally powerful soul and a sharp eye of discernment.

As a soul oracle, there was no way the resilience of Zhang Xuan's soul could possibly be lacking. As for eye of discernment, there was probably nothing in the world that could compete with the Eye of Insight.

Since Zhang Xuan had met all the criteria, it was a given that he would be able to carve swiftly.

"It's too early for you to celebrate. Just because you were able to carve your puppet so fast doesn't mean that it'll necessarily be strong!" Jiang Feifei harrumphed after hearing the explanation.

Being capable of crafting a puppet fast was indeed a formidable skill, but more important than that was for the various parts to be aligned in a manner that did not differ too much from the blueprint. Otherwise, it would be nothing more than random parts connected together to form a figurine; there was no way it could exert the exceptional strength that the Xingyun Puppet wielded.

"You don't have to worry about that. It would be a little troublesome and time-consuming to wait for you to craft a puppet, so why don't you suppress your cultivation to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle and test its strength yourself?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"You are asking me to fight with your puppet personally?" Jiang Feifei was taken aback by Zhang Xuan's proposal.

Had the other party gone mad?

She was a Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm expert! Even if she suppressed her cultivation to Saint 6-dan Grand Dominion realm, the strength that she wielded would still be unmatched by any other Saint 6-dan cultivators. Did the other party really think that a puppet he had crafted in just a few seconds would be able to match her?

Just what in the world was he thinking?

Noting the hesitation in Jiang Feifei's eyes, Zhang Xuan quickly added with a smile, "Indeed. There's no need to worry. I'll make sure that it holds itself back properly so that it doesn't injure you by accident."

"You..." Jiang Feifei nearly blew up on the spot.

What she meant was that the puppet could not possibly be a match for her, but this fellow actually thought that she was worried about being injured by the puppet.

His head was really in the clouds!

Initially, she had still had a good impression of the other party for his courtesy of clothing his puppet, but in that instant, every shred of goodwill that she harbored for the other party had vanished without a trace.

"Very well! I'll suppress my cultivation and test your puppet out personally. I won't make things difficult for you either. As long as it's able to withstand three blows from me, you will have cleared my trial!" Jiang Feifei harrumphed coldly.

She had no idea what the fighting prowess of the puppet that Zhang Xuan had crafted would be, but it would have to be extremely resilient to be able to withstand three blows from her.

If the other party's puppet was really that powerful, it would not be too much of a deal for her to acknowledge the other party.

"Great!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

After which, he walked over to his puppet and whispered a few words into its ears in a hushed tone. Then, he nodded, and the puppet took a step forward and assessed the young lady before it sharply.

"Humph!" Seeing that the other party was really so conceited as to have his puppet challenge her, Jiang Feifei harrumphed coldly.

She swiftly drove her zhenqi, and in the blink of an eye, her cultivation had already been suppressed down to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle.

Hu!

Right after she had suppressed her cultivation, she immediately saw a fist flying straight for her face.

The puppet had made its move!

“What?”

Jiang Feifei initially did not think that the puppet that had been crafted in a matter of seconds would be anything much, but the sheer might and speed of its punch left her face swiftly warping in astonishment. Despite being a Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle expert, she actually felt threatened by the puppet’s offense!

She hurriedly raised both of her hands to fend off the puppet’s punch.

Peng!

The palm and the fist collided, and a crushing shockwave rippled into the surroundings. Before Jiang Feifei could even react, she was flying backward at a furious speed as if a kicked ball.

Pu!

Her back crashed heavily into the wall, and crimson blood spewed from her mouth.

It was fortunate that she had released the seal that she had placed on her cultivation at the very last moment, or else the entire wall could have been knocked down.

“You have lost.”

Before Jiang Feifei could say a word, the puppet before her waved its hands with a forlorn expression, as if deeply regretting the fact that it had been born with such great strength that it would never find be able to find a proper opponent.

“You... are able to speak?” Jiang Feifei widened her eyes in disbelief.

Without a doubt, the Xingyun Puppet was indeed very powerful, but it should not have been capable of speech! Yet,

the one that the other party had crafted had actually begun speaking human speech. What the heck was going on?

There was a huge difference in a puppet that was unable to speak and one that was able to speak!

“Ah. I had some time after assembling it, so I enchanted it while I was at it,” Zhang Xuan explained.

“...” Jiang Feifei.

It took her some time before she was able to steady her breathing once more. “In less than ten seconds, not only did you manage to carve the puppet, you were even able to make some clothes for it and enchant it?”

Even with speed like hers, ten breaths would only be sufficient for her to carve two parts, and the puppet standing before her had to have tens of thousands of parts.

Was this not a little too exaggerated?

“Yes. I am the Inceptive Sage of the Spirit Awakener Guild, so I’m able to conduct spirit enchantment quite quickly,” Zhang Xuan explained. “So, have I cleared your assessment yet?”

“Of course,” Jiang Feifei replied with a bitter look on her face.

She had thought that it would take a miracle for the puppet to be able to withstand three blows from her, but contrary to her expectations, she did not even manage to withstand a single strike from the puppet.

There were no words that could describe how stifled she felt at that very moment.

But unbeknownst to her, the worst was yet to come.

Just as the other party was about to make his way up to the next floor, he suddenly halted his footsteps and glanced at the puppet that he had crafted with a disapproving look. “Didn’t I tell you to go easy on her? Why didn’t you heed my instruction?”

“I did go easy on her, I really did! How was I to know that she would be so weak as to be unable to withstand even a single punch of mine?” the puppet cried in indignation.

“...” Jiang Feifei nearly clawed her hair out.

1409 Forging a Weapon

After appeasing the indignant puppet, Zhang Xuan headed up to the second floor.

The assessment on the second floor wasn't regarding beast tamer, formation master, or the other supporting occupations he was more skilled in but blacksmith.

As soon as he entered the room, he immediately saw a young man standing before a cauldron. Holding a fiery red hammer in his hand, he struck a metal ingot relentlessly. Gradually, the metal ingot took shape, and a cold glint reflected off of it.

The Tower of Master Teachers required him to choose eight different supporting occupations, and just so to save him from putting in additional effort in the future, the supporting occupations that he chose were all those which he hadn't obtained the 8-star emblem yet.

Ever since he had cleared the 6-star blacksmith examination in Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he hadn't really touched it much anymore. This would be a good opportunity for him to raise his blacksmith rank up to 8-star.

Hu!

Noting Zhang Xuan's presence, the young man halted his hammering and introduced himself, "I am the Inceptive Sage of the Blacksmith Guild, Wu Youdao. The test I have for you is extremely simple. I have an ore over there, and as long as you can forge it into a Saint high-tier artifact within a single day, I'll deem you to have cleared my test!"

As the young man spoke, he gestured toward a weapon cauldron. In the weapon cauldron, Zhang Xuan found an ore floating amidst a fearsome inferno. The flames were so intense that heat waves rippled relentlessly from it, but even so, the ore still showed no signs of melting whatsoever.

"Is that the Violet Firmament Blazestone?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Violet Firmament Blazestone was known to be the hardest grade-8 ore to process. Even 8-star pinnacle blacksmiths would struggle to melt it down and refine it properly. Yet, the young man before him actually wanted him to refine such an ore!

It seemed like clearing the Tower of Master Teachers was truly not going to be easy.

Nevertheless, there was still an upside to this. While the Violet Firmament Blazestone was extremely difficult to process, it was an incredibly valuable material that could be easily forged into a Saint intermediate-tier weapon once refined and forged. Just by using a slightly more refined forging technique, it wouldn't be too difficult to forge a Saint high-tier artifact out of it.

In other words, the hardest aspect of the assessment lay not in the forging of a Saint high-tier artifact but the melting and smithing of the ore into a suitable weapon.

“Indeed. This serves to assess your understanding of processing ores and smithing. If you are unable to melt the Violet Firmament Blazestone within a day, I'll have no choice but to fail you.” Wu Youdao replied with a wave of his hand before turning his attention back to forging his weapon, not bothering to pay any heed to Zhang Xuan anymore.

“Alright.” Knowing that this was a part of the assessment, Zhang Xuan immediately dived straight to work.

He activated his Eye of Insight and began examining the Violet Firmament Blazestone carefully.

There was no problem with the heat conductivity of the weapon cauldron or the coal fueling the flames; it was just that the melting point of the Violet Firmament Blazestone was way too high. It would require the hottest of the earth flames in order to melt it, and that was a temperature that would be nigh impossible to reach even if a blacksmith were to pump his zhenqi into the flames as quickly as he could.

However, the young man hadn't given him a formation to retrieve earth flames to work with, so that would probably

mean that he would have to find some way to cope with the current materials he had at hand.

This will be really troublesome...

It must be said that this assessment was far more difficult than what Zhang Xuan had expected.

Nevertheless, there's no way I could let something like this impede my footsteps!

Were it to be any other 8-star blacksmith, they might have really felt utter helplessness at the situation. However, to Zhang Xuan, this actually wasn't too much of a problem at all.

He had gone through all of the books in the Blacksmith Guild, so his understanding of smithing had already reached a level comparable to 8-star pinnacle blacksmiths, perhaps on par with some 9-star primary blacksmiths even. Even without using the Library of Heaven's Path, there were at least several dozen methods he had at the top of his head to melt the Violet Firmament Blazestone.

With a leisurely chuckle, Zhang Xuan walked up to the cauldron and tapped his finger forward. Several dozen surges of zhenqi immediately shot forth from his finger and shrouded the flames.

Tzzzzzzzz!

Surrounded by Zhang Xuan's zhenqi, the flames suddenly surged in intensity, as if someone had breathed life into it. The crimson flames began taking on a blue tint, and the astounding heat that it emanated caused even the surrounding air to warp slightly.

That is... a grade-8 Spirit Gathering Formation? Upon seeing the sight, Wu Youdao halted his forging and exclaimed in astonishment.

Most formidable weapons would have unique formations carved onto them in order to reinforce their durability and bolster their fighting prowess. For this reason, most expert blacksmiths were highly skilled in formations too.

But to be honest, while he had expected the other party to attempt to toss in some kind of flame catalyst in order to bolster the intensity of the flames, he hadn't thought that the other party would actually dive straight into constructing up a mini Spirit Gathering Formation!

Furthermore, the other party actually managed to construct such a small-scale Spirit Gathering Formation with just his zhenqi... And more importantly, he did it within such a short period of time as well!

Tzzzzz!

With the massive influx of spiritual energy, the temperature of the coal swiftly rose. However, it was still some way off from reaching the level of heat required to melt the Violet Firmament Blazestone. Even though the violet ore reflected a brilliant blue-tinted light, there didn't seem to be too much change to its physical state under the searing flames.

It's not a bad idea to intensify the flames in the weapon cauldron by concentrating spiritual energy into it, but it's still insufficient to melt down an ore of the tier of the Violet Firmament Blazestone... Shaking his head, Wu Youdao was just about to turn his attention back to his weapon when the leg of the young man opposite of him suddenly sprung forth, kicking the weapon cauldron straight.

Dang!

A resounding metallic clang reverberated through the weapon cauldron. In the next moment, the flames within weapon cauldron began swiftly converging together at a single point, as if there was some kind of compelling force attracting them together. It took just an instant for the massive outburst of flames to be compressed down to a size reminiscent of the tip of a sword, and it began slicing the Violet Firmament Blazestone up into innumerable pieces.

That is... a fire concentration technique? But such a technique would require the cauldron's unconditional assistance! How in the world did he manage to pull it off?

Once again, Wu Youdao found himself dumbstruck.

Just as the name suggested, fire concentration technique was a skill that allowed one to focus the flames at a single point, thus driving the temperature up to an unbelievable degree. Indubitably, it was an extremely useful and effective technique, but unfortunately, it was a highly demanding exploit for both the cauldron and the blacksmith; the two would require a relationship of mutual trust and impeccable coordination in order to pull off a fire concentration technique. Considering that it had only been several dozen breaths since the young man opposite of him had only met the cauldron, how in the world did they manage to accomplish a fire concentration technique?

Just as Wu Youdao was completely flabbergasted by the situation, the weapon cauldron suddenly wobbled its massive body over to him and opened up its lid. A voice so deep that it was reminiscent of the rumbling of thunder echoed loudly in the room, “Lend me your Blue Incandescence Stone for a use!”

“Ah...” Not expecting his own weapon cauldron to speak to him in such a manner, Wu Youdao froze on the spot in shock. Before he could even answer, the weapon cauldron had already replied, “Thanks.”

After which, without even bothering to seek Wu Youdao’s agreement, it lifted up one of its tripod foot and stomped on the ground lightly.

Hula!

An ore immediately flew into its cauldron.

Xiong xiong xiong!

As soon as the flame came into contact with the Blue Incandescence Stone, the flames immediately burst forth, and the temperature began surging at an insane pace once more.

“You are going to snatch my ore for that guy’s sake?” Wu Youdao’s face twitched non-stop.

It had been many years since that weapon cauldron had acknowledged him as its master, and they had been constantly

together ever since then. He was only lending it out for the other party's temporary use, and yet...

Not only did the cauldron coordinate perfectly with the other party to execute the fire concentration technique, it even helped him steal his ore!

Do you still know who your true owner is?

While he was leaping with rage, the cauldron suddenly turned to look at Wu Youdao once more and said, "I'll need your blood now."

After which, the cauldron suddenly leaped into the air and descended onto the young man vertically downward.

Pu!

Struck squarely on his chest, a pool of blood spurted forth from Wu Youdao's mouth and landed right within the weapon cauldron, and the flames intensified for the third time.

Tzzzzzzzz!

With the multiple surges in the temperature, the Violet Firmament Blazestone was finally unable to retain its state any longer, and cracks began appearing on its surface. Following which, its tough exterior began to soften, showing signs of liquefying.

Seeing that it was a success, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. He swiftly shot forth a burst of zhenqi with a tap of his finger.

Hu la!

The ore in the cauldron immediately flew out, and with the hammer in hand, Zhang Xuan swiftly hammered on the ore with incredible deftness. Three breaths later, the forged weapon was plunged into a specially-concocted cold fluid.

A stream of white smoke rose amidst a resounding sizzle. Soon, Zhang Xuan fished out the completed product and remarked with a satisfied smile, "I'm done smithing!"

"You're done?"

Perplexed, Wu Youdao turned his head over to the completed product, and just a single look was more than enough to send

his cheeks into endless spasms, “Is that... even a weapon?”

What that was placed on the table wasn't a sword or anything that he would consider as a weapon. It was a perfectly square brick.

1410 Grooming Log of the Brick Master Blacksmith

Be it setting up a Spirit Gathering Formation to intensify the flames or concentrating the flames together to heighten the heat, the other party had already displayed a deep understanding of manipulation of flames, such that it was very likely that the other party was almost on par with him when in terms of proficiency in smithing.

But... why would he so slipshod when it came to forging the weapon?

That was a Violet Firmament Blazestone! It was an incredibly valuable ore even from the perspective of an Inceptive Sage like him! Even if it wasn't enough to forge a saber or a spear, there shouldn't be too much problem making a dagger out of it! And yet, of all possibilities, he chose to make a brick instead...

Wu Youdao's face twitched non-stop, and he felt himself getting a little short on breath from the sheer state of agitation he was in.

As the Inceptive Sage of the Blacksmith Guild, he had something that could be described as an extreme obsession with perfecting weapons. If there were to be the slightest millimeter of imperfection in his forging, he would simply melt down the entire weapon and redo it right from the start. In view that he was assessing another person's work, he had no choice but to tolerate slight imperfections in the other party's work... But this brick didn't have the slightest thing to do with a weapon at all, so how could he possibly accept this?

It was not as if the other party was a bricklayer, so why in the world did he choose to forge a brick?

"You can check on it. It should have reached Saint high-tier." Paying no heed to the frenzied look on Wu Youdao's face, Zhang Xuan said with a casual wave of his hand.

“Saint high-tier?” The last remark from Zhang Xuan was the very last straw for Wu Youdao. Unable to tolerate it any longer, he snapped, “What’s the use of a mere brick even if it has really reached Saint high-tier?”

On the other hand, facing Wu Youdao’s questioning, Zhang Xuan shook his head in disapproval, as if disappointed by the other party’s inability to recognize a treasure before his eyes, before picking up the metal brick from the table and said with a hint of pride, “Its uses are far greater than what you can imagine. It would be no exaggeration to say that it’s the most formidable weapon in the world!”

However, those words only seemed to further fan Wu Youdao’s rage, and it was to the point that he began laughing out of sheer anger, “The most formidable weapon in the world? Why don’t you show me just what is so formidable about the brick you have forged?”

There should at least be a limit to one’s lies! A perfectly square brick, bulky and heavy, lacking in reach and devoid of a sharp edge... How was one supposed to fight with such a weapon?!

“Do you still have any weapon forged out of Violet Firmament Blazestone? Whether my brick is truly strong or not, we’ll be able to tell with a swift test!” Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

“You want to test out your brick? Hmph, let’s do just that then!” As he said those words, Wu Youdao flicked his wrist and retrieved three weapons.

Saber, spear, and sword!

These were all forged out of the Violet Firmament Blazestone, and the overwhelming cold aura that emanated from them left one feeling as if one’s skin had been pierced through and that one’s blood was about to freeze over.

With just a look, it was apparent that all three of those weapons were of extremely high tier, wielding formidable strength.

The forging of these three weapons had taken Wu Youdao tremendous effort, especially with the processing of the Violet

Firmament Blazestone.

“As long as any of these three weapons of yours is able to withstand the might of my brick, I’ll consider it as my loss!” Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

“Very well. Let me see what kind of might does that brick of yours wield!” Hearing the arrogant words spoken by the young man before him, Wu Youdao harrumphed coldly.

With a flick of his wrist, his sword flew forth in Zhang Xuan’s direction.

In the face of the incoming sword, Zhang Xuan didn’t make any particularly large actions. Instead, with a simple fling of his sleeve, he flung his brick forward to fend against the sword.

Kacha!

The brick and the sword collided forcefully with one another, and in the next instant, the sword shattered into two with a resounding clang.

“This...” Wu Youdao widened his eyes in horror.

He had reforged this sword time after time in order to refine it into the sharpest and most resilient blade it could be. Yet, against a mere brick, it actually shattered in an instant! How could this be?

Hu!

To make things worse, the brick didn’t stop after shattering the sword. It swiftly flew for the saber and spear floating behind Wu Youdao. ‘Kacha! Kacha!’, two crisp echoes sounded the end of the other two weapons that Wu Youdao had forged with great difficulty.

“Y-you...” Wu Youdao’s teeth clattered at that sight, a little overwhelmed by the situation going on before him.

It was one thing for one of his weapon to be destroyed so easily, but for all three to be shattered by a simple brick so easily... No matter how slow-witted he was, it was more than obvious to him that there was something much deeper to the simple-looking brick before him!

It was at a completely different tier from the other weapons he had forged so far!

“A brick might lack a sharp edge, but its bulkiness allows it to overcome any weapon through sheer force.” Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan glanced at Wu Youdao with the air of an unfathomable expert.

“Weapons are tools intended to raise a cultivator’s fighting prowess. Their forms are only of secondary concern, what’s truly important are their might! While the Violet Firmament Blazestone allows for the forging of extraordinarily sharp weapons, there is a fatal flaw with such weapons—brittleness. They might still fare fine against other light weapons, but once faced with a heavy weapon, they would swiftly shatter like fragile crystals under the immense pressure exerted on them. Can a weapon that breaks in the middle of a battle be considered as a good weapon?”

“This...” Wu Youdao was stumped by those words.

He had used the Violet Firmament Blazestone to forge quite a few weapons, but just like what the other party had said, they were lacking in resilience. But he didn’t view this lack in resilience as a major problem—after all, there was no way they could be too fragile as Saint high-tier weapons. Furthermore, the strength of a sword lay primarily in its sharpness and flexibility, and it would be impractical to expect it to be resilient as well.

He thought that all weapons forged out of the Violet Firmament Blazestone would face this fundamental flaw, but who could have thought that this problem would be resolved easily just by forging a simple brick!

“How is it? Have I cleared your assessment?” Seeing that Wu Youdao was in a state of complete shock, Zhang Xuan shook his head before asking.

He had always been a humble person, and his purpose here was to clear the trial, not to traumatize others, so there was no need for him to add salt to the other party’s wounds.

“... Yes, you have cleared my assessment...” Wu Youdao replied in a deflated voice, a deep contrast against the confidence he had exuded earlier. With a frown on his face, he asked, “There should be no way to carve a formation on the brick, and furthermore, you were rather easygoing and leisurely in your hammerings too. So, how did manage to forge a weapon of this tier?”

Even with the superior sturdiness the brick wielded over his three weapons, it shouldn't have been possible for it to shatter all three of his weapons so easily. That could only mean that the other party's brick was of a far higher quality of his weapons.

In order to raise the tier of a weapon, the regulation of temperature within the weapon cauldron while the ore was being refined and the quenching process were of utmost importance. On the other hand, when it came to heightening its prowess, the forging process and carving of formations would be the key.

Generally speaking, the longer an ore had been hammered for, the more compact the material would be. Thus, weapons that had undergone a longer forging process would tend to be considerably more resilient.

However, the other party had taken three breaths to craft his weapon, using only half a breath to hammer each side of the metal ingot once in order to shape it into the form of a brick... So, how could it possibly be of higher tier than the weapons he had spent hours or even days forging?

“Are you interested in learning the secret behind my forging technique?” Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

“Please enlighten me!” Knowing that the other party possessed capabilities surpassing him in the field of smithing, Wu Youdao clasped his fist and bowed humbly, not daring to pull his weight.

“Even though the forging of the brick would appear simple and crude to untrained eyes, there's actually profound knowledge in it. None of the hammer strikes were done haphazardly; they were carefully controlled to ensure that they

are in alignment with the essence of smithing...” Picking the brick up, Zhang Xuan explained with a deep look in his eyes.

His understanding of smithing had already reached 8-star pinnacle—not to mention that what he had learned was the Heaven’s Path Smithing Art—so even the most casual of pointers from him could be deeply insightful to any 8-star blacksmith.

Just by listening to Zhang Xuan’s words for a while, Wu Youdao was left with nothing but awe and respect for him.

Despite the other party’s young age, his explanation of smithing was concise and spot-on. Through simple words, the other party was able to bring out the most profound of concepts, leaving him feeling deeply enlightened, as if many epiphanies were striking him one after another.

Very soon, the intricacies behind the mysterious brick forging techniques were deciphered to Wu Youdao.

“Farewell!” After finishing his piece, Zhang Xuan bade his leave and began heading for the third floor.

Seeing the young man off with his gaze, Wu Youdao swiftly ran through what he had just learned, and his eyes gleamed in excitement, “So, my conceptualization of smithing has been wrong all along. From this day onward, I shall smith swords and sabers no more and dedicate the entirety of my time and effort into forging bricks!”

What swords, sabers, spears... All those meant nothing to the absolute brick!

Offering the heaviest of offense and the sturdiest of defense, what other weapons could possibly compete with the brick? This was a weapon that was worth dedicating his entire life into pursuing!

With such a thought in mind, Wu Youdao swiftly took out several ores and began forging.

On the other hand, the culprit who had just led a talented blacksmith astray was currently heading up a flight of stairs, wondering, I took almost ten minutes before I could clear the

second floor... Is this a little too slow? I'll really have to speed up for the later floors...

And soon, he found himself standing before the Inceptive Sage of the Seer Guild.

What was unbeknownst to Zhang Xuan in this very moment was that he had unwittingly groomed a true brick master blacksmith. This was the very day that a certain man vowed that no other weapons other than a brick would be produced by his hands, and countless experts viewed it as the greatest of glory to obtain a brick personally forged by that man...

1411 I Want To Change My Clothes

“Zhang shi!” Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the Inceptive Sage of the Seer Guild quickly greeted him with a clasped fist.

“Is Elder Feng still doing well?” Zhang Xuan replied the greeting.

Back then, while he was in the Shrine of Seers, he had unwittingly destroyed the other party’s treasure and tore down the entire place. In the end, he even caused the other party to be struck by lightning too, and that had left him feeling deeply guilt-ridden.

“He’s in the midst of a seclusion at the moment.” the Inceptive Sage of the Seer Guild replied. “He seems to be a little down at the moment for some reason...”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly.

He could still remember the imposing air that Elder Feng carried with him when they had first met, and he couldn’t help but feel that he was the cause of the other party’s slump.

“I know that Elder Feng intends to take you in as his direct disciple, but still, as one of the guardians of the Tower of Master Teachers, I can’t be going easy on you. This is to uphold the integrity and sanctity of the trial.” the Inceptive Sage said.

“Of course, I understand.” Zhang Xuan replied with a polite smile.

Of the supporting occupations he hadn’t reached a proficiency of 8-star yet, poison master and soul oracle were automatically excluded from the list of choices, so he had no choice but to pick seer as well. While he hadn’t read any books regarding the occupation, he didn’t think that it would be too difficult for him to clear its trial...

“Good. The assessment will be very simple. The both of us shall be divining an event simultaneously, and as long as your conclusion is the same as mine, I’ll consider it as your victory.” the Inceptive Sage explained the rules.

It went without saying that the assessment for seers would be related to divining. While each seer possessed a different level of ability from one another, as long as their divination was right, they should still arrive at the same conclusion.

“Understood.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

“Alright. I’ll divine that you won’t be able to clear the Tower of Master Teachers today.” the Inceptive Sage said with a smile.

“You are going to divine that I won’t be able to clear the Tower of Master Teachers today?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

This was a paradoxical statement. Clearly, the other party was intentionally setting up a trap for him.

If he were to say something that he would be able to clear the trial, that would be at odds with the declaration made by the Inceptive Sage, thus spelling his instantaneous disqualification.

But even if he were to agree with the Inceptive Sage and temporarily clear this floor, the Inceptive Sage still had the option to choose not to ‘acknowledge’ his victory later on as long as there was a valid reason behind it. In other words, even if he were to clear the remaining six floors afterward, the Inceptive Sage could still revoke his acknowledgement under the grounds of his inaccurate divination, and thus, resulting in the overall failure of the trial.

This sure was a scheming move.

As expected of the Inceptive Sage of the Seer Guild, he sure knew how to corner others effectively.

“Indeed. As long as you agree with my words, I’ll let you pass right now.” the Inceptive Sage said with a smile.

To be honest, even though it wasn't exactly the young man's fault, he still couldn't help but feel that the young man had some blame to play behind the Shrine of Seers' collapse and Elder Feng's slump. As the Inceptive Sage of the Seer Guild, he felt that he should get back at the other party a little.

Otherwise, what would become of their dignity as the most mysterious Upper Nine Paths occupation?

"Can we divine something else instead? Pardon me, but I don't think that I'll be able to answer that question of yours!" Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Unfortunately, this is the only question I have for you." the Inceptive Sage said with a wave of his hand.

The other party possessed the Discarnate Constitution of Divination, which meant that it was impossible to predict anything that had him in the picture. As such, a competition with the other party would simply result in his divination running awry. Since that was the case, he decided to play it foul just this once.

And to be honest, he was also very curious to see how the young man whom Elder Feng was so obsessed with would deal with such a situation too.

"This is the only question you have for me? I see... Alright, I understand." Knowing that the other party was intentionally making things hard for him, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

With a thought, he accessed the Library of Heaven's Path in his mind.

Kacha!

Before the Inceptive Sage could process what was going on, his body suddenly went completely numb—a bolt of lightning had fallen on him. Following which, more and more bolts of lightning struck down furiously one after another on the Inceptive Sage, and before long, he was already lying on the ground convulsing non-stop.

"What's wrong?" Zhang Xuan immediately rushed forward with eyes widened in a mixture of astonishment and worry.

“Have you revealed too many secrets of the heavens that you are suffering heavenly retribution at this moment?”

“I...”

Kacha! Kacha!

The Inceptive Sage could barely force out a single word before another two streaks of lightning fell upon him, causing his body to spasm once more.

“It seems like you aren’t in a really good state to assess me at the moment. Since that’s the case, it doesn’t seem appropriate for me to impose on you any further. If you have no rejections, I’ll be heading up first, alright?” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

“No...”

Kacha! Kacha!

Under the furious assault of lightning bolts, even speaking a single word was extremely arduous to the Inceptive Sage.

“I’ll thank you for your magnanimity then. If I have a chance in the future, I’ll surely pay you a visit to relay my gratitude to you.” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist before heading up the stairs.

If the other party didn’t make things difficult for him, he still could have considered competing fairly with the other party. But since the other party was bent on cornering him, there was no reason for him to hold back either.

In the first place, the actions of seers could be considered as not too much different from petty theft from the eyes of the heavens, so the other party was just reaping what he had sowed.

“You...” the Inceptive Sage exclaimed in agitation, wanting to stop Zhang Xuan from heading up.

However, he noticed that the lightning bolt above him had grown more compact instead. Horrified, he hurriedly tried to flee, but he realized that no matter how agilely he moved, he was unable to escape from the lightning bolts at all.

Eventually, the resigned him could only find a place which was more comfortable for him to lie at, allowing the lightning bolts to ravage him with deadpan eyes.

On the fourth floor was the Inceptive Sage of the Painter Guild.

The moment Zhang Xuan stepped in, it felt as if he had stepped into an illusory world. Majestic mountains towered around him, creating a particularly aesthetic sight.

Knowing that he was in an 8-star painting, it didn't take long for him to escape from it, thus clearing the assessment.

The supporting occupation for the fifth floor was terpsichore, the one for the sixth floor was appraiser, and the one for the seventh floor was demonic tunist, and the one for the eighth was apothecary...

Having read all of the books for those occupations, Zhang Xuan was able to clear those floors extremely quickly. In just a matter of minutes, he was already right before the final floor. Taking a deep breath, he walked toward his final assessment.

Since he had already cleared the prerequisite eight supporting occupation, all he had to do was to clear the final cultivation assessment and he would be able to be promoted as an 8-star master teacher.

Pushing the door and entering the room, as soon as Zhang Xuan got a clear sight of the person in the room, a tight knit immediately surfaced on his eyebrows.

“It's you?”

The person before him was no other than the person who was viciously pummeled by the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast before, the Zhang Clan genius who owed him five pinnacle spirit stones—Zhang Chun!

“The Tower of Master Teachers requires an 8-star master teacher to invigilate the trial. Both Luo Xuanqing and I were qualified to be the invigilator, but it just happens that he has recently made a breakthrough to Dimension Sundering realm, thus exceeding the cultivation realm allowable for one to serve as an invigilator here. So, I'll be the one who is assessing you today.” Zhang Chun chuckled softly.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a jade container and flicked it over to Zhang Xuan's direction, “Here are the five

pinnacle spirit stones that I owe you.”

Catching the jade container, Zhang Xuan kept it into his storage ring without bothering to check on it. His eyes remained firmly on Zhang Chun as the knit between his eyebrows tightened.

Previously, he had the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast pummel the other party, so it could be said that there was a deep grudge in between the both of them. Now that there was such a good opportunity for the other party to exact vengeance, how could the other party possibly let him go easily?

The other party had already expressed his attitude clearly by returning the spirit stones—now that I owe nothing to you, I no longer need to have any reservations when dealing with you!

“May I know how will this assessment go?” Understanding this fact, Zhang Xuan heaved a deep sigh before asking.

“In order to become an 8-star master teacher, you need to possess strength equivalent to a Saint 6-dan Grand Dominion realm cultivator... Unfortunately, it appears that your cultivation realm is only at Half-Grand Dominion realm at the moment, so I’ll have to assess your strength personally to ensure that it has reached the required mark.”

A sharp glint flashed across Zhang Chun’s eyes as he looked at Zhang Xuan with a slightly unnerving smile, “Rest assured, my assessment will be very easy. As long as you can withstand three punches from me, I’ll consider it as your victory. If you fail to withstand it... I apologize, but I’m afraid that I’ll have no choice but to fail you!”

“Withstand three punches from you?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Considering how the other party had once fought him with his cultivation suppressed, the other party should have known his true fighting prowess. And to propose such a duel despite that... clearly, the other party had no intentions of suppressing his cultivation at all.

While Zhang Xuan had made considerable advancement in his cultivation and fighting prowess recently, he was still a far way off from matching up to the Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle Zhang Chun.

Zhang Xuan's mind swiftly whirred into action, but he was unable to find any way how he could clear this assessment fairly. Thus, after a slight moment of silence, he replied, "Fine by me. However, before the duel, I would like to change my clothes..."

"You want to change your clothes? Feel free." Zhang Chun was a little bewildered by Zhang Xuan's abrupt request, but he still waved his hands leisurely, not paying Zhang Xuan's request any mind.

After all, the crux of a duel lay in one's fighting prowess. It was not as if Zhang Xuan would be able to defeat him just by changing his clothes.

"Thank you." With a casual wave of his hand, Zhang Xuan set up an isolation barrier by the corner of the room and walked in.

1412 8-star Master Teacher

“Not even twenty minutes have passed so far, right?”

“Within such a short period of time, he actually managed to reach the ninth floor. T-this...”

Before the Tower of Master Teachers stood a group of spectating master teachers and members of other occupations, and every single one of their teeth were clattering from astonishment.

Their initial thought was that even if the young challenger was able to clear the trial, most likely, he would take several days at the very minimum, needing to overcome many difficulties before finally reaching the top. Yet, who would have thought that he would actually be able to reach the top within less than twenty minutes!

This meant that he had received the recognition of the Inceptive Sages of the eight supporting occupations within just two to three minutes after meeting each of them. Was that not too fast?

“Even though he has successfully reached the final floor, I don’t think things are optimistic for him,” an elder standing not too far away remarked grimly.

“Why would you say so?” Luo Xuanqing asked.

This brother of his had truly surpassed his wildest imagination. All along, he had thought that there was no one who could possibly best his younger sister’s record, but who knew that he would actually be able to reach the final floor so quickly?

The final floor was mainly a trial to assess the challenger’s cultivation, and considering Zhang Xuan’s frightening fighting prowess, it should be a walk in the park for him to clear the trial. Why would the elder say otherwise?

“From what I know, the person guarding the floor is Zhang Chun! I’ve heard that the both of them had some grudges with one another in the past,” the elder said.

“Zhang Chun?” Hearing that name, Luo Xuanqing was startled. He could not help but clench his fists tightly together. “Why would it be him?”

He knew about Zhang Xuan’s conflict with Zhang Chun as well, and if the latter was the one guarding the floor, it could prove hard for Zhang Xuan to clear the trial.

But under normal circumstances, considering that it was just a simple assessment of cultivation, it would suffice to find an ordinary 8-star master teacher to do the job. There was no need for a top-notch genius of the Zhang Clan to make a move himself.

“I’m not too sure about the details either, but it seems like he applied for the role himself,” the elder replied.

As one of the core members of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Chun had a massive intelligence network all over the Sanctum of Sages, allowing him to remain up to date with the various affairs going on. Considering that he had a grudge with Zhang Xuan, it went without saying that he would apply to become one of the guardians of the Tower of Master Teachers.

“Damn it. If that fellow makes things difficult for Zhang Xuan, I’ll surely give him a beating he will never forget once he comes out of the Tower of Master Teachers! If I don’t make him bedbound for at least half a year, my surname won’t be Luo!” Luo Xuanqing vowed viciously with gritted teeth.

He had been wanting to pummel Zhang Chun ever since achieving a breakthrough in his cultivation, but before he could make a move, he had ended up learning about his younger sister’s affairs, and in the midst of settling the matter, he had been forced to summon his lightning tribulation.

In the end, before he could make a move, the other party had ended up making the first move!

If that darned Zhang Chun intentionally made things difficult for Zhang Xuan and failed him, he would never let that bastard go!

If he did not beat that fellow up till the point where even his parents would not be able to recognize him, his name would

not be Luo Xuanqing!

“In the first place, the Tower of Master Teachers is known to be one of the hardest trials in the Sanctum of Sages. If Zhang shi clears it too easily, others will only question the legitimacy of the trial in the future...” Shaking his head, the elder was in the midst of his words when the ground suddenly began trembling.

Boom!

He quickly raised his head and saw a human-sized protrusion appearing on the walls of the ninth floor of the Tower of Master Teachers.

“Zhang shi has been beaten up!” the elder exclaimed.

Luo Xuanqing anxiously turned his gaze upward too.

Boom!

Another resounding explosion sounded, and the human-sized protrusion on the wall became even bigger. Stone fragments that had chipped off from the tower rained ceaselessly on the ground.

“Zhang Xuan,” Luo Xuanqing muttered worriedly as he contemplated rushing in to save the other party. However, the next instant, he suddenly noticed something that made his eyebrows shoot up. “Wait a moment, that body shape... doesn’t seem to belong to Zhang Xuan. The one who is being pummeled isn’t Zhang Xuan?”

“It isn’t Zhang Xuan?” Taken aback by those words, the elder turned his gaze upward once more, but before he could examine the protrusion on the wall clearly, the protrusion suddenly burst open.

Huala!

A silhouette burst forth from the protrusion, heading straight to the ground.

Peng!

He fell headfirst into the ground, leaving only a pair of legs trembling non-stop outside, reminiscent of a leek planted in

the ground. Judging from the clothes and the body shape... he was none other than the top-notch genius of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Chun!

“How can this be?” The elder’s mouth opened wide in shock.

He knew Zhang Chun’s strength very well. Even at Saint 7-dan pinnacle, he wielded strength that was comparable to ordinary Half-Dimension Sundering realm experts. Yet, facing a mere Half-Grand Dominion realm cultivator, he was actually pummeled right down from the ninth floor, even to the point where he was unable to gather the strength to steady himself through his ability of flight.

The elder rubbed his eyes forcefully, and he had to take several good looks at the situation before he was finally able to convince himself that he was not seeing things.

The elder was not the only one who was flabbergasted by the situation. Even Luo Xuanqing’s eyes were wide open.

Zhang Chun had been viciously pummeled the previous time he challenged Zhang Xuan with his cultivation suppressed. Could it be that he still had not learned his lesson and chose to suppress his cultivation yet again?

If that was the case, he really was a true masochist through and through!

Boom!

However, before he could think too much into it, the ground suddenly shook. A brilliant light burst converged from the surroundings toward the top of the Tower of Master Teachers, and a token materialized in midair.

8-star master teacher emblem!

“Congratulations to Zhang Xuan for successfully clearing the Tower of Master Teachers and being promoted to 8-star master teacher.” The voice reverberated throughout the Sanctum of Sages, echoing loudly in everyone’s ears.

“Zhang shi... has cleared the 8-star master teacher examination?” Within a certain room, Zhang Jiuxiao heard the voice from the sky and froze on the spot.

At the same time, the cultivating Chen Leyao's body also stiffened, and a hint of disbelief surfaced in her eyes.

The other party was only at Saint 4-dan Primordial Spirit realm pinnacle when they first arrived at the Sanctum of Sages, possessing a fighting prowess that was beneath hers. But in less than a single month, he was already an 8-star master teacher.

Even when witnessing everything unfolding with her own eyes, she still could not help but find it inconceivable.

Such scenes were happening throughout the entire Sanctum of Sages, especially with those cultivators who had entered the Sanctum of Sages together with Zhang Xuan. Shock was an understatement for what they were feeling at that moment.

Even Zhao Xingmo was completely rooted to the spot, incapable of speaking a word at all.

He had known from the very start that Zhang Xuan would accomplish great things in the future, but he had never thought that the latter would actually be able to become an 8-star master teacher within less than a month... and without attending a single lesson at that!

As an 8-star master teacher, that young man could already be considered a figure that stood at the very peak of the continent, qualified to enter the Inner Sanctum.

“Senior... sure is formidable!” Feng Ziyi's mouth was agape, too.

Previously, he had still thought that as long as he worked hard, considering that they were from the same lineage, he would be able to surpass the other party one day. However, the voice had clearly told him that the other party had already reached a level far beyond his reach, and it was nigh impossible for him to catch up now.

“It's no wonder Teacher would choose to take him in.”

With the other party's talent, it was no wonder his teacher would take in another disciple even after telling him that he would be the only direct disciple that he would accept.

Hu!

Reaching out to grab the floating 8-star master teacher emblem, a unique energy surged into Zhang Xuan's body.

Of course, there was no way he would be a match for Zhang Chun given his current strength. The reason he had been able to defeat the latter so easily was because he had let his clone out to take his place.

After absorbing the energy from the lightning tribulation, his clone had become so strong that even a Saint 7-dan pinnacle expert like Zhang Chun was bashed right into the wall with a single punch. By the third punch, the latter had already been completely knocked out, falling down from the Tower of Master Teachers helplessly.

“I have finally reached 8-star.”

Glancing at the emblem in his grasp, Zhang Xuan could hardly suppress the excitement in his heart. Just as he was about to stow it into his storage ring, his eyebrows suddenly shot up, and a token surfaced in his palm.

The Sanctum Head Token!

The token was emanating a warm glow, and it seemed like a seal placed on it was gradually undoing itself.

1413 The Location of Vicious' Upper Body

There were three conditions required to unsealing the Sanctum Head Token.

Firstly, his master teacher rank had to reach 8-star. Secondly, he had to cultivate his Eye of Insight up to the fourth realm, Demon Vanquisher. Thirdly, his cultivation had to reach Saint 8-dan!

He was still some way off from accomplishing the latter two, but with his master teacher rank reaching 8-star, he had already managed to activate a portion of the authority and strength harnessed within the Sanctum Head Token.

Knowing that this was not a good time for him to check on the changes in the Sanctum Head Token, he swiftly stowed both the token and the 8-star master teacher emblem into his storage ring before slowly descending down from the top of the Tower of Master Teachers.

“Zhang shi, congratulations on clearing the Tower of Master Teachers trial and breaking its record!” Zhan shi stepped forward and clasped his fist.

Even at this point, he still could not help but feel as if he was in a dream.

To clear all nine floors within twenty minutes, winning the acknowledgement of nine top geniuses of their Sanctum of Sages... that was a feat that even the little princess of the Luo Clan was incapable of!

“If I may ask, am I qualified to enter the Inner Sanctum now?” Zhang Xuan asked with a polite smile.

“Of course! If you wish to head there now, I can bring you over,” Zhan shi said with a nod. “To tell you the truth, there isn't much of a difference between the Inner Sanctum and the

rest of the Sanctum of Sages, perhaps except for the concentration in spiritual energy.”

“I understand, but I would still like to head there. I’ll be troubling you to lead the way then, Sanctum Head Zhan!”
Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

At the other party’s insistence, Zhan shi nodded with a hint of approval in his eyes. The young man had just challenged a major trial, but he still insisted on heading to the Inner Sanctum instead of resting. Perhaps it was the difference in attitude that made the difference between him and the rest of the students!

With such a thought in mind, he turned around and led the way forward, and Zhang Xuan quickly followed him.

“Zhang shi...” Seeing that Zhang Xuan was leaving, Luo Xuanqing hurried forward, wanting to talk to the young man about the matter concerning his younger sister. But at the last moment, he stopped himself.

Facing Zhang Xuan’s perplexed gaze, he waved his hand and said, “It’s fine. You should take a look around the Inner Sanctum first. I’ll look for you later at night.”

Considering that he was going to entrust the young man with a mission to kill the person whom his younger sister loved, he would have to ensure utmost secrecy for this matter. There were many experts present on the scene—some of them were adept in soul arts even—so it would be best for him to find the young man later on and speak to him in a more private environment.

After all, this was not a particularly honorable matter to speak of in public.

“Alright.” Zhang Xuan swiftly assessed Luo Xuanqing carefully and noted that the other party’s cultivation was already fully reinforced. He nodded with a bright smile before following Zhan shi to the Inner Sanctum.

The Inner Sanctum of the Sanctum of Sages was not located in any of the Five Halls but within a lake far away from the major infrastructure.

Zhan shi took out an insignia and waved it over the lake, and the seal cast over the lake swiftly came undone. Following which, a massive gate surfaced from the depths of the water, and particularly overwhelming spatial energy rippled forth from it.

“What formidable control of space!” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

He had already comprehended the 3-dan Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, which granted him a deep insight into the essence of space. But to his shock, even with the Eye of Insight, he was actually unable to see through the gate before him! This could only mean that the person who had set up the door had achieved a level of spatial manipulation comparable to 4-dan Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel or perhaps even 5-dan!

Folded spaces created by experts of that caliber were extremely steady, such that putting aside perceiving it, even if he really found their folded spaces, he would be unable to open them without using ‘keys’ such as the insignia that Zhan shi had used.

“This is the insignia required to open the doorway to the Inner Sanctum. All students of the Inner Sanctum have one, and it serves as a representation of their identity,” Zhan shi said as he passed the insignia over to Zhang Xuan.

Taking the insignia, Zhang Xuan lightly stroked its surface to feel its material before taking a closer look at it. There was a dense congregation of inscriptions on its surface, and surprisingly, these inscriptions bore a striking resemblance to the seal in the Subterranean Gallery that was used to cut off the otherworldly battlefields from the Master Teacher Continent.

They were marks of a Spatial Formation.

Dripping a droplet of blood on it to claim ownership of the insignia, Zhang Xuan placed it in his storage ring.

“Alright, let’s enter,” Zhan shi said as he led the way in, and Zhang Xuan quickly followed suit.

The moment Zhang Xuan stepped through the door, he felt as if he had been transported through space. Before he knew it, he was already standing within a building.

The very first thing that he noticed about his surroundings was that the concentration of spiritual energy was nearly twofold of that in the Sanctum of Sages. It was so concentrated that it felt as if it would form liquid spirit essence with just a simple grasp of his hand.

What was incomparably valuable in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy turned out to be commonplace here.

“It’s indeed a blessed land for cultivation!” Zhang Xuan remarked.

The higher the concentration of spiritual energy, the faster one would be able to cultivate. With how dense the concentration of spiritual energy was, even if one did not actively cultivate, the spiritual energy would still dive into one’s body through one’s acupoints of its own accord, pushing one’s cultivation up gradually.

If Zhang Xuan had been there right from the start, even without using a single spirit stone, he would still be able to reach his current level of strength within a single year... or perhaps even higher!

It was truly no wonder there were so many outstanding young experts in the Sage Clans. With decent talent and the best resources at their command, they would have to be a true sluggard to not achieve anything at all.

Noting Zhang Xuan’s astonishment, Zhan shi explained with a smile, “The most valuable resource in the Inner Sanctum isn’t the higher concentration of spiritual energy but the cultural atmosphere. Just by being here will grant one greater clarity of thoughts and a sharper spirit, thus enhancing one’s rate of cultivation and learning!”

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment after hearing those words before nodding.

The Inner Sanctum had been set up by Ancient Sage Bo Shang personally many years ago, and he had infused Kong shi’s will

into this very space. This will had been further enhanced by the countless geniuses who had studied and cultivated there over the past several dozen millenniums, thus creating a unique atmosphere in the area that made one subconsciously desire to learn, cultivate, and reach greater heights.

After allowing Zhang Xuan some time to soak in the area's atmosphere, Zhan shi said, "Let's go and pay our respects to Sage Kui's sculpture first!"

"Sage Kui's sculpture?" Zhang Xuan asked with a hint of confusion.

"Even though the folded space was set up by Ancient Sage Bo Shang, it's mainly due to Sage Kui that it's survived up till now, grooming many generations of experts!" Zhan shi explained.

"As you know, folded spaces are inherently unstable, and this is especially so for spaces such as this that harness such concentrated spiritual energy. In order to prevent any mishap from happening, some kind of order must be actively sustained in here, and if not Sage Kui's efforts over the many years, the Inner Sanctum would have long collapsed!"

Zhang Xuan nodded in response to those words.

In a sense, folded spaces could be compared to balloons. If they were not maintained carefully, putting aside growing larger, they would even slowly deflate as time went by.

The only reason the Myriad Anthive Nest, for example, had been able to remain so stable so far was due to the Myriad Anthive Queen sustaining it. Otherwise, it likely would have collapsed long ago.

The same went for the Mountain Gate.

It was due to the dissipation of Sage Kui's will that resulted in its swift collapse afterward.

Considering how spiritual energy was even more aplenty within this folded space, it went without saying that it would be even more prone to instability. There was no way such a space could be sustained for several dozen millenniums without a powerful will guarding it.

Soon, the both of them arrived before a massive sculpture.

The sculpture was dressed in a long robe, and there was a particularly gentlemanly and refined look on his face. He shared the exact same appearance as the Sage Kui that Zhang Xuan had seen back at the Mountain Gate, and the aura that he exuded was incredibly powerful.

Even though the will within the sculpture was incapable of materialization, unlike the Sage Kui in the Mountain Gate, the sculpture seemed to harness some kind of spiritual power. With just a look, a cultivator would feel their thoughts suddenly becoming lucid.

“As expected of the First Sanctum Head of the Sanctum of Sages...”

To be able to instill a slight hint of deference within him just through a mere sculpture, there was no doubt that the strength that Sage Kui wielded back when he was still alive far exceeded that of the deputy sanctum head standing before him.

Zhang Xuan took a step forward and bowed deeply to pay his respect.

Putting aside how powerful Sage Kui was, just on the grounds that he had cultivated many generations of experts, allowing mankind to enjoy several dozen millenniums of relative peace and prosperity without fearing the invasion of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, he was indeed worthy of respect.

Not to mention, he had received the other party's heritage, the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld.

However, it was a pity that despite the books that he had read over the past few days, he had not been able to find any that were related to optic arts. Otherwise, he surely would have perfected the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld and cultivated it well.

“Master, I sense my upper body!”

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, Vicious' voice suddenly sounded in his head.

“Where?”

Part of the reason he wanted to enter the Inner Sanctum was to find Luo Ruoxin, but the other part was to help Vicious regain his strength. Hearing that his upper body had been found, Zhang Xuan’s eyes could not help but light up in agitation.

“It’s inside this sculpture,” Vicious replied.

1414 Cultivation Technique

Fores

“In the sculpture?” Zhang Xuan was startled.

He found this matter a little hard to believe.

He would not have been too shocked if Vicious had told him that his upper body was placed within some ancestral hall or sealed deep underground, but to actually be hidden within Sage Kui’s sculpture...

How could that be?

Sage Kui was the direct disciple of Ancient Sage Bo Shang, which meant that he was Kong shi’s grandstudent. As the First Sanctum Head of the Sanctum of Sages, his hatred for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe was so deep-seated that it could be said to be carved right into his bones. If he could, he would have unhesitatingly wiped the entire Otherworldly Demonic Tribe off the face of the world.

On the other hand, as one of the strongest experts of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, Vicious’ body was bound to harness extraordinary power even upon death. In order to prevent it from landing back in the hands of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, the Master Teacher Pavilion would surely seek to destroy it. Taking a step back, even if they were unable to destroy it, the least they could do was seal it off and hide it where no one would ever find it. But instead of doing that, it was actually placed in Sage Kui’s sculpture.

Zhang Xuan could hardly comprehend the rationale behind such a course of action.

More importantly... despite storing Vicious’ upper body within it, not only did the sculpture not harness the slightest killing intent, it was even exuding a particularly soothing and refined aura. How in the world was this done?

Zhang Xuan could not help asking, “Is it possible for you to have made a mistake?”

It was not that he did not want to believe Vicious, but this matter was simply too hard for him to believe.

The only reason he was able to hide Vicious’ existence from others was through having the latter sealed in his Book of Heaven’s Path. It should go without saying that Sage Kui could not possibly have possessed the Library of Heaven’s Path, so there was no way he would have been capable of suppressing Vicious’ strength to the point where even his Eye of Insight was unable to sense it.

“If it was before fusing together with my head, it might still have been possible for me to make a mistake, but now... there’s no way I am mistaken!” Vicious replied affirmatively.

Before fusing with his head, due to his incomplete memory, he would still have been uncertain about many things. But in his current state, he was a hundred percent certain that his upper body was contained within the statue before them.

“This...” Hearing how certain Vicious was, Zhang Xuan frowned. “Let me take a look at it first.”

He activated his Eye of Insight and examined Sage Kui’s sculpture intently once more, and a moment later, he shook his head.

Even the generations of sanctum heads were unable to see through it; considering how the realm of his Eye of Insight was lower than theirs, it was not too surprising that he would be unable to see anything.

He stretched his hand out and touched the sleeves of the sculpture inconspicuously.

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven’s Path.

“A sculpture of Sage Kui forged personally by Sage Kui himself. Forged using Celestial Bluestone, it harnesses both Ancient Sage Bo Shang’s will and Vicious’ upper body. It is a

vital keystone in stabilizing the space in the Inner Sanctum and regulating the spiritual energy in the air...”

The description and origin of the sculpture was jotted in detail in the book.

It’s really inside! Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows scrunched up further.

There was no way the Library of Heaven’s Path could have made a mistake. Without a doubt, Vicious’ upper body was really in the sculpture.

But still, to use the skeletal frame of an Otherworldly Demon expert to stabilize the Inner Sanctum and yet still prevent its killing intent from permeating the area... Just how did they manage to do it?

“Zhang shi!” Seeing that Zhang Xuan had fallen into a daze, Zhan shi called out loudly.

“Pardon me, I was so overwhelmed by Sage Kui’s imposing disposition that I lost myself for a moment.” Zhang Xuan quickly clasped his fist and apologized.

This matter concerned Vicious, so there was no way he could say it aloud before Zhan shi. Nevertheless, it felt like there was more to this issue. He would have to first make sense out of the matter first before making a move so as to prevent any unnecessary implications from occurring.

“It’s fine, I understand that feeling. I was also stunned for quite a while myself when I first saw Sage Kui’s sculpture. It really felt as if an ancestor was standing right before me, imparting valuable knowledge!” Oblivious to Zhang Xuan’s true thoughts, Zhan shi let out a light chuckle.

Zhang Xuan nodded silently. At this point, a thought suddenly surfaced in his mind. If Vicious’ upper body has been sealed in Sage Kui’s sculpture and is suppressed by Sage Kui’s will, could this mean that it’s unable to develop a new will?

Each of Vicious’ body parts—be it the heart, finger, or head—had all birthed an individual consciousness of their own. However, under the constant suppression of Sage Kui’s will, there was a good possibility that the upper body might not

have been able to successfully birth a consciousness. This would mean that his Vicious would have a much easier time assimilating it.

Nevertheless, another major problem still stood in his way.

In order for Vicious to assimilate his upper body, the sculpture would first have to be destroyed. However, that could very well cause the collapse of the entire Inner Sanctum.

This was not an outcome that was acceptable to him. As the future sanctum head of the Sanctum of Sages, how could he destroy such a precious legacy left behind by his ancestors just like that?

“Zhan shi, may I know if there’s anywhere like a cultivation technique library in the Inner Sanctum? My cultivation has recently reached Half-Grand Dominion realm, but I still haven’t found a suitable Grand Dominion realm cultivation technique yet!”

“The Inner Sanctum doesn’t have any libraries, but it does have the Cultivation Technique Forest, which contains the heritages left behind by the predecessors. Students who have just entered the Inner Sanctum are usually brought there, and as for what they receive, that is dependent on their luck!” Zhan shi said.

“Cultivation Technique Forest?”

“Indeed. The cultivation techniques that are qualified to be passed down in the Inner Sanctum are all of Saint high-tier or Saint pinnacle quality at minimum, but as you know, each cultivator possesses a constitution unique to them. Cultivating a cultivation technique that complemented one’s strength could lead one to the very top whereas cultivating an incompatible cultivation technique could very well cause one’s cultivation to go berserk. As such, a cultivator mustn’t choose their cultivation technique just by the merit of the might it wields!” Zhan shi explained.

“The Cultivation Technique Forest is a place for cultivators to find out what cultivation techniques are suited for them and choose from them. All students in the Inner Sanctum get a

chance to enter the Cultivation Technique Forest to select among the cultivation techniques they are compatible with. Once they have made their choice, they will be unable to change it anymore!”

“I see.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Cultivation techniques were similar to occupations in the sense that they would be suited to some people but not others. As such, cultivators would have to assess their own aptitude and choose the path they wished to tread on. Of course, advice from seniors could prove to be useful, but ultimately, no one would be able to make the choice for them.

This was also the reason Kong shi promoted the idea of teaching an individual based on their talents. There was no way a systematic lesson plan could possibly cater to all students, and this would lead to some of their talents going to waste.

“If you wish to give it a try, I can take you there,” Zhan shi said.

“That would be deeply appreciated.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Other than learning of the location of Vicious’ upper body, another important motive for him going to the Inner Sanctum was to raise his strength.

Since Luo Ruoxin had been placed under house arrest by the Luo Clan, there was no way she would be there. Rather than wasting his strength searching all around for her, it would be far more practical for him to raise his strength so that he would at least have the ability to protect her when the time came.

“Please follow me,” Zhan shi said before leading the way forward.

Not too long later, they arrived in a place filled with stone tablets. Looking at it from afar, it really resembled a graveyard.

“This is the Cultivation Technique Forest. Every single tablet represents a certain cultivation technique. Drive your zhenqi and proceed through the forest slowly. Once you reach the end, the cultivation technique suited to you will jump out on

its own,” Zhan shi said. “There’s no need to feel tempted by other cultivation techniques in there. If they are unsuited for you, they are bound to inflict some grievous side effects on you, which will limit your future accomplishments. It simply isn’t worth it.”

“I understand. You mentioned that the suitable cultivation technique will jump out on its own?” Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

This was the first time he had heard of a cultivation technique jumping forward on its own, and he found the notion rather intriguing.

Usually, he would be the one who would be actively seeking out cultivation technique manuals to compile a complete Heaven’s Path Divine Art for him to cultivate, so he could not help but be a little curious as to just what kind of cultivation technique would be deemed suitable for him.

“That’s right. The Cultivation Technique Forest doesn’t just contain cultivation technique manuals but the wills of the predecessors as well. They are able to sense your constitution and your current cultivation technique as you walk through the forest, and if you aren’t able to meet their prerequisites, you won’t even be able to interpret the content on the stone tablet. This is a mechanism put in place to prevent greedy students from biting off more than they can chew,” Zhan shi said.

Even though the young man before him was an 8-star master teacher, he was still much too young. So, Zhan shi could not resist warning him beforehand.

In response to Zhan shi’s nagging, Zhang Xuan nodded with a smile. This was the usual concerned nagging that teachers would direct at their students. Thinking back, he often nagged at his students in such a way as well.

“Alright, I’ll head in to take a look.” Coming to understand what was with the Cultivation Technique Forest, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath and walked in unhesitatingly.

1415 Saint 6-dan Pinnacle

There was only one road through the Cultivation Technique Forest, and the both sides were completely filled with stone tablets. Taking a closer look, one could feel a few silhouettes moving on the surface of the tablets, seemingly practicing some sort of profound martial arts.

The movements of these silhouettes were extremely slow, and for some reason, it seemed as if they were cloaked with a layer of thin mist. Even if one were to examine the tablet closely, it would still be hard to perceive their movements distinctly.

However, Zhang Xuan didn't need to perceive their movements to learn what they were cultivating. All he really had to do was to direct a glance over at the stone tablets while muttering 'flaws!' in his mind.

Illusory Arcane Dragon Art, True Inferno Yang Formula, Xuanmin Ancestral Impact, Water Undulation Divine Art...

Books swiftly materialized in Zhang Xuan's mind.

There weren't just Grand Dominion realm cultivation technique manuals on the stone tablets; some were Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals as well. If one were to cultivate according to them, there was no doubt that one's cultivation would surely improve by leaps and bounds, granting one fighting prowess far exceeding that of their peers.

Those who were qualified to enter the Inner Sanctum were all geniuses, and those who were qualified to leave behind these cultivation technique manuals were, even more so, geniuses amongst geniuses, individuals who had stood at the top of their generation... Zhang Xuan thought as he slowly proceeded forward.

Through taking in the cultivation technique manuals into his Library of Heaven's Path, he was able to swiftly convert it into his own knowledge, thus allowing him to analyze the pros and cons of each cultivation technique swiftly.

While these cultivation techniques were far from matching up to top cultivation techniques like the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, to most 8-star master teachers, they could still be considered as invaluable treasures.

If any single one of them were to be taken out to the Master Teacher Continent, it would surely induce a massive fight over it as countless cultivators vied to lay their hands on it!

Of course, this could bring in the question of why the Inner Sanctum didn't open up the books to the public. The Sanctum of Sages did allow those whose main occupations were not master teacher to pick up a cultivation technique from the Cultivation Technique Forest as well so long as their main occupation had reached 8-star and they were qualified to enter the Inner Sanctum. Nevertheless, this didn't change the fact that it still wasn't accessible to most cultivators outside.

The reason for that was that the stronger a cultivation technique was, the more demanding it was on one's talent. If one simply didn't have the aptitude for the cultivation technique but still forcefully attempted to cultivate it, not only would one's cultivation not improve as swiftly as expected, more importantly. It could potentially leave major traumas on one's body, resulting in unpredictable consequences.

It was the same reason as why each occupation would only allow their members to view books corresponding to their current rank and below, and not those that were above their current rank. Without building up the necessary fundamental knowledge first, attempting to learn advanced content would, more likely than not, confuse one and possibly distort one's comprehension of the occupation.

There was an inherent tendency within humans to overestimate their abilities, so in order to prevent such tragedies from occurring, there was a need to regulate the flow of information and knowledge so as to ensure that they would only reach appropriate hands.

While others are spending numerous hours in here just to receive the recognition of one predecessor and obtaining his cultivation technique, I am already collecting nearly every

single one of the cultivation techniques... Zhang Xuan thought gleefully.

There was a diverse range of cultivation techniques here, and most of the stone tablets here were infused with the will of the creator of the cultivation technique too. Even if Zhan shi were here, he wouldn't be able to learn all of the cultivation techniques either.

However, Zhang Xuan was different. Wherever his eye could reach, those stone tablets within his range of sight would be automatically compiled into a book within his Library of Heaven's Path, and even their corresponding flaws would become apparent to him. As such, he was able to learn the cultivation techniques even without receiving the recognition from their respective creators.

Slowly walking forward, Zhang Xuan relentlessly took in all of the cultivation techniques inscribed on the stone tablets around him.

Over several dozen millenniums, the Cultivation Technique Forest had accumulated more than a thousand cultivation techniques, so it took quite a while before Zhang Xuan finally reached the end.

Compile! Zhang Xuan willed.

Countless books quickly gathered together within the Library of Heaven's Path, fusing together to form the Grand Dominion realm and Phantasmal Space realm Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Swiftly flipping open the two books before him to take a look, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but shake his head in slight disappointment.

Just like what he had guessed, the Grand Dominion realm Heaven's Path Divine Art had been fully perfected, devoid of any flaws, but the Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique still had quite a few mistakes here and there. Clearly, he hadn't collected sufficient Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals yet.

"How could Zhang shi... not receive the recognition of even a single predecessor at all?" Seeing that Zhang Xuan had walked

out of the Cultivation Technique Forest without inducing the slightest bit of response from the stone tablets, Zhan shi frowned in bewilderment.

Be it in terms of talent or fighting prowess, the young man before him had already reached an astounding level. Why would he receive no recognition from the predecessors of the Cultivation Technique Forest at all?

“I haven’t been driving my cultivation technique,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

His goal was just to collect the cultivation technique manuals in the Cultivation Technique Forest, so he chose not to drive his cultivation technique. As a result of that, he hadn’t received the recognition of any of the predecessors either.

Besides, the cultivation technique he practiced was the Heaven’s Path Divine Art! Which predecessor’s eyesight would be so bad as to dare to recognize him?

“You have to drive your cultivation technique while walking through the Cultivation Technique Forest in order to receive the recognition of the predecessors so that you can obtain their secret manuals! To simply walk through it just like that... You won’t be able to obtain anything like that!” Zhan shi exclaimed anxiously.

“It’s fine, I have already obtained what I wanted. May I ask if there’s any silent chamber here where I can cultivate in? I would like to digest what I have just learned. I think I might be able to make a breakthrough in my cultivation.” Knowing that it would be difficult for him to explain the matter to Zhan shi in a way that was acceptable to the latter, Zhang Xuan didn’t bother delving too deeply into the matter either.

“There’s a silent chamber right there. A Spiritual Gathering Formation has been inscribed in it; it can help you gather the surrounding spiritual energy.” Zhan shi said as he pointed toward a specific direction.

Since the Cultivation Technique Forest was a place for cultivators to pick up a cultivation technique and learn, the Inner Sanctum had also provided some silent chambers nearby

for cultivators who suddenly had a sudden stroke of inspiration to sit down and ponder over it.

Zhang Xuan directed a nod at Zhan shi before walking over to the silent chamber. He pushed on its entrance lightly and walked in.

Perhaps it was due to the presence of the Spirit Gathering Formation, the spiritual energy was even more concentrated than outside. At the same time, the silent chamber seemed to be made of some kind of unique material that completely isolated the space within from the external world, keeping all noises and even Spiritual Perception at bay, thus ensuring absolute silence to the cultivator inside.

Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan still swiftly took a look around the chamber, and only after ensuring that it was absolutely safe did he finally heave a sigh of relief. He flicked his wrist and took out the pinnacle spirit stones which Sun Qiang and Zhang Chun had given to him.

As his cultivation rose, the spiritual energy requirement of his Heaven's Path Divine Art had been steadily increasing too. Nevertheless, with ten pinnacle spirit stones on hand, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to push for a breakthrough straight for Grand Dominion realm pinnacle.

Grabbing the spirit stones tightly in his hand, he quickly went through the Grand Dominion realm Heaven's Path Divine Art once more as he conditioned his physical condition to his peak before finally starting his cultivation.

Gugugugu!

As if a lifted dam, spiritual energy swiftly gushed through the meridians in his body, and they were swiftly converted into Heaven's Path zhenqi, nourishing his entire body.

Kacha!

It didn't take too long for him to bash through his Half-Grand Dominion realm bottleneck, and his one-meter radius Dominion immediately began expanding, till the point that it covered a radius of ten meters around him.

Not only so, his Dominion was clearly much denser and heavier than that of ordinary Grand Dominion realm cultivators. Those who had unfortunately fallen into his Dominion would be completely frozen on the spot as if they had been shackled by heavy chains.

Even though its radius was only at ten meters, in terms of prowess, it was on par with even Grand Dominion realm pinnacle experts.

Continue!

Expecting at least this much from the Heaven's Path Divine Art, Zhang Xuan wasn't surprised in the least. With a slight smile, he continued his cultivation. Under the drive of his zhenqi, his cultivation swiftly rose, becoming stronger and stronger.

Grand Dominion realm primary stage!

Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage!

Grand Dominion realm advanced stage!

Grand Dominion realm pinnacle!

In just four hours, his cultivation had already reached Saint 6-dan pinnacle, just a step away from achieving a breakthrough to Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm.

With the breakthrough in his cultivation, his Dominion had grown larger enough to cover a radius of fifty meters, more than twofold larger than that of the twenty meters radius of an average Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivator.

Not only so, he also realized that the Dominion he created was an isolated space from the rest of the world. Any external Spiritual Perception that attempted to delve into his Dominion would be completely severed, as if falling into a folded space... From this phenomenon in itself, he could tell that his Dominion was already nowhere weaker than that of Saint 7-dan cultivators.

With my current strength, I should be able to subdue even Zhang Chun easily... Zhang Xuan thought with a smile.

With his cultivation reaching Grand Dominion realm pinnacle, the Phantasmal Space realm Zhang Chun was no longer a match for him anymore.

He didn't have to take a passive stance anymore.

But again, Zhang Chun probably hadn't recovered from being pummeled by his clone yet, and at the same time, Luo Xuanqing was also eyeing him tightly. Even if he didn't make a move, Zhang Chun probably didn't have any good days ahead of him anymore.

The spiritual energy harnessed within pinnacle spirit stones sure is immense! It took me only eight of them to up my cultivation by an entire realm!

It was no wonder why Luo Xuanqing, Zhang Chun, and the others were able to achieve breakthroughs so quickly, reaching such high cultivation realms at their young age. With such resources to support their growth, it would be hard for them to not to grow so swiftly!

While Zhang Xuan was busy raising his cultivation, Zhan shi was pacing outside the silent chamber with a tight knit between his eyebrows.

Whenever other students entered the Cultivation Technique Forest, they would drive their cultivation techniques as powerfully as they could, hoping to gain the recognition of as many predecessors as possible. Yet, that fellow simply took a walk through it before heading straight for the silent chamber...

Could it be that none of the cultivation techniques in the Cultivation Technique Forest caught his interest?

But that shouldn't be. Those are all Saint high-tier and Saint pinnacle cultivation techniques! It's more likely that he had driven his cultivation technique but failed to obtain the recognition of any of the predecessors... With such doubts in mind, Zhan shi turned his sights to the stone tablets by the side.

With just a single look, he suddenly froze on the spot.

The silhouette moving on the stone tablet had all stopped displaying their cultivation techniques. As if they were faced with something deeply frightening, they were shivering at the corner of the stone tablet, not daring to move or make any noise at all.

Suppression of Cultivation Technique, Inborn Deference of the Heart... This is the cultivation technique of an Ancient Sage? Could it be that... Zhang shi is the direct disciple of an Ancient Sage?

Zhan shi narrowed his eyes in astonishment as he clenched his fists tightly together.

1416 Accompany Me to the Zhang Clan

Most of the cultivation techniques in the Cultivation Technique Forest originated from Sage Kui and the others' lineages, so if an Ancient Sage level cultivation technique were to appear, the wills in the stone tablets would swiftly be suppressed.

For all of these wills to suddenly become like that after Zhang Xuan passed through the Cultivation Technique Forest... it could not be that the cultivation technique that he practiced had already reached such a level, could it?

If that was the case, it would be understandable why he was not interested in any other the techniques in the Cultivation Technique Forest!

Then, the reason he still chose to enter it would be to... source some inspiration from them?

Has Yang shi already reached such a realm? Zhan shi pondered in awe.

Zhang Xuan was Yang shi's student, so the fact that he was able to learn a cultivation technique of such a tier should mean that Yang shi had reached such a realm himself. Otherwise, it would mean that they had obtained the heritage of a true Ancient Sage.

Regardless of which one it was, this was a matter that he could not afford to speak of lightly.

This matter mustn't be leaked, Zhan shi thought warily.

If his deduction was true, he would have to warn Zhang Xuan not to carelessly display his cultivation technique in public, or else once the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe or some other greedy cultivators noticed it, his life could very well be danger.

Even though he had already reached Saint 9-dan in terms of his cultivation, the truth was that he was still only a half 9-star master teacher. A true 9-star master teacher was an existence that had already transcended the limits of the Saint realm.

Rumor had it that those who had reached that level would have their bodies tempered by Celestial Flames, thus cleansing their physical body and soul once more and refining them to a higher level of existence. With that, they would enjoy a massive increase in their lifespan!

At such a level of cultivation, they would be immune to poison. Even if they had been afflicted with some kind of deadly poison in the past, the Celestial Flames would also torch it clean, leaving no trace of it behind.

It was for this reason that he had been trying his hardest to push for a breakthrough over the years, but unfortunately, despite his hard work, he had not been able to make a breakthrough to Saint 9-dan intermediate stage.

At his cultivation realm, there was a huge rift even between each cultivation stage within a realm. Each breakthrough would require a massive accumulation in one's cultivation before one could attempt to make the leap forward.

Jiya!

Just as Zhan shi was still deep in thought, the door to the chamber suddenly creaked open, and a figure walked out.

Directing a glance over, Zhan shi's eyes immediately widened into full circles, and he nearly collapsed on the spot. "Zhang shi, y-your cultivation..."

It was only four hours ago that the other party had entered the silent chamber, so why would his cultivation suddenly leap from Half-Grand Dominion realm to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle?

That was practically equivalent to an entire realm. Was that not a little too fast?

Noting Zhan shi's expression, Zhang Xuan explained, "I had a sudden stroke of inspiration, so I was able to make a swift

breakthrough. However, I think my cultivation will slow down in the future.”

With sufficient spiritual energy, the Heaven’s Path Divine Art allowed him to advance his cultivation swiftly. However, as his cultivation grew stronger and stronger, the speed at which he could raise his cultivation was noticeably decreasing, so in a sense, his words could not be considered lies.

It took a while for Zhan shi to recover from his shock, and he could not help but give some advice. “It’s good that you are able to advance your cultivation so quickly, but you mustn’t rush things too much. If your cultivation increases too quickly, it could lead to your zhenqi becoming less compact and the foundation of your cultivation becoming unstable. That would lead to a great deal of trouble in the future.”

In truth, it was not too difficult for a cultivator to raise their cultivation swiftly. Consumption of pills, Cultivation Impartation, and the awakening of unique bloodlines and unique constitutions; any of those would allow one’s cultivation to reach unprecedented heights within a very short period of time. However, if one failed to reinforce one’s cultivation firmly before making a breakthrough, it would lead to the foundation of one’s cultivation becoming shaky, thus making it extremely difficult for one to push for a breakthrough in the future.

In a sense, this was similar to building a castle. If even the bottom layer was shaky and unstable, there would be a limit to how high it could rise in the future.

For this reason, even those who possessed unique bloodlines and constitutions would have to pause for a moment after accomplishing some breakthroughs to reinforce their cultivation firmly before pressing on.

“I know. I have reinforced my Half-Grand Dominion cultivation for roughly a day now, and it’s already about time for me to make a breakthrough.” Zhang Xuan nodded earnestly in agreement.

“A day?” Zhan shi’s cheeks twitched, and he staggered backward weakly, nearly falling to the ground from shock. He

could not help but ask, “How long have you reinforced your Saint 5-dan cultivation?”

Even for top-notch geniuses, it would take several months before they were able to fully reinforce their Half-Grand Dominion realm cultivation, and yet, the young man was actually saying that one day was enough. More importantly, he said such words with such a natural expression, as if saying this was to be expected!

Do you really need to be so traumatizing?

After a moment of pondering, Zhang Xuan replied in a regretful tone, “Saint 5-dan? I made my breakthrough to the Leaving Aperture realm the day that I enrolled in the Sanctum of Sages, but due to being plagued with work during that period of time, it ended up taking me roughly twenty days before I was able to make a breakthrough to Half-Grand Dominion realm.”

“Twenty days...” Zhan shi’s body began shaking intensely. Staring at Zhang Xuan intently, he asked, “Then... how long has it been since you started cultivating?”

“Since I started cultivating?” Not expecting such a question, Zhang Xuan did a quick calculation before replying, “Roughly thirteen months I think, a little more than a year!”

If he had not transcended over to the Tianxuan Kingdom but to the Sanctum of Sages, he would have been able to reach his current level of cultivation within just a month.

That was a hulking thirteenfold difference in time!

Just the thought of it was enough to leave him feeling deeply suffocated on the inside.

Zhan shi suddenly did not want to speak to the young man before him anymore.

To rise from Fighter realm all the way to Saint 6-dan pinnacle within just thirteen months, that was a speed that was even faster than the little princess of the Luo Clan! And yet, that fellow’s expression seemed to be saying that he was discontented with the speed that he was cultivating at.

Is it possible for anyone to get even more spoiled than that?

Oblivious to the thoughts running through Zhan shi's mind, Zhang Xuan asked, "Sanctum Head Zhan, do you have any Saint 7-dan cultivation technique manuals? Can I borrow them for a look?"

Since his cultivation had already reached Grand Dominion realm pinnacle, he needed to look around for Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals. If he could perfect the Saint 7-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art, he just might be able to use the last two pinnacle spirit stones to push for another breakthrough.

In any case, the higher his cultivation was, the safer he would be.

"Saint 7-dan cultivation technique manuals? I'm afraid that I don't have any of those with me at the moment. If you really need them, you can head over to the Corridor of Puppets. You'll be given a chance to choose from a collection of secret manuals if you clear the trial there," Zhan shi replied.

A Saint 9-dan cultivator like him would have no use for Saint 7-dan cultivation technique manuals, so naturally, he would not carry them with him.

"I see. Thank you for your suggestion." Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had been to the Corridor of Puppets twice, and considering the devastating destruction that he had caused over there, he felt really embarrassed to head there once more.

However, since the other party did not have any Saint 7-dan cultivation technique manuals with him, it would not be good for him to keep asking. Just as Zhang Xuan was about to ask another question, Zhan shi's eyebrows suddenly shot up. He flicked his wrist, and a Communication Jade Token appeared in his palm.

Taking a glance at the Communication Jade Token, he frowned in confusion. "Why would he be contacting me?"

Zhan shi tapped his finger on the Communication Jade Token, and the confusion on his face deepened. "Wait, he isn't looking for me but... you?"

“Someone is looking for me?” Zhang Xuan was startled.

“Who is it?”

“Jian Qinsheng,” Zhan shi replied.

“Jian Qinsheng is looking for me?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Jian Qinsheng was the descendant of the Third Sanctum Head, Jian Liushui, and Zhang Xuan had learned the Flowing Water Swordsmanship from him.

After unintentionally pummeling the Jian Qinsheng the previous time around, he had not heard any news from the other party. Why would the other party suddenly be looking for him at this moment, not to mention, even contacting Zhan shi to get to him?

“Let’s head out. He’s waiting for you outside,” Zhan shi said.

“Alright.” Zhang Xuan did not know why Jian Qinsheng was looking for him, but it was thanks to the latter allowing him to browse through his collection of sword manuals that he had achieved his current mastery of swordsmanship.

He felt deeply grateful to the other party’s generosity, so naturally, he would not turn down a meeting with the other party.

The two of them quickly left the Inner Sanctum, and as soon they stepped out of the door, they saw Jian Qinsheng standing in a gazebo just by the side of the lake. Upon seeing the both of them, Jian Qinsheng’s eyes lit up, and he quickly walked up to them.

“Zhan shi, Zhang shi!” Jian Qinsheng clasped his fist and greeted.

After trading some pleasantries, Zhang Xuan got straight to the topic at hand. “May I know the reason behind your visit?”

“This... Actually, I do have something that I need to trouble you on!” Jian Qinsheng spoke up with slight awkwardness in his tone.

“Zhang shi, are you willing to accompany me to the Zhang Clan?”

1417 The Zhang Clan's Clan Assembly

“You want me to accompany you to the Zhang Clan? Which Zhang Clan?” Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

“Is there a second Zhang Clan? It goes without saying that I’m referring to the number one Sage Clan in the world!” Jian Qinsheng harrumphed. “I’m about to head there soon, and I hope that Zhang shi can accompany me there.”

“Me?” Zhang Xuan was unable to keep up with the situation. “Pardon me, but why would you need me to head there with you?”

It was not like he was from the Zhang Clan, so there was no point in him heading there, right?

Besides, it was just a moments ago that he had given Zhang Chun a good pummeling, and to run to the enemy’s home base right after... He still had many good years ahead of him, and he did not want to die a premature death just yet!

“Well, it’s like this...” Jian Qinsheng’s face flushed slightly red before he started speaking. “In truth, I have some history with the Xingmeng Sword Saint of the Zhang Clan, and I once vowed that I would groom a successor who would surpass his. You should have met my students; none of them are really strong enough to shoulder this burden, so I can only hope for Zhang shi to make a move in my stead.”

If he had not really been cornered to this point, he never would have troubled the other party.

As fellow swordmasters, he and the Xingmeng Sword Saint had been rivals in the Sanctum of Sages, and they had competed with one another frequently. Eventually, he had become an elder of the Sanctum of Sages whereas the latter had returned to his clan to serve as the deputy clan head. In view of their identities, they could not compete like they did

back then anymore, so they agreed on competing through their students instead.

And in the previous few battles, his students had lost tragically.

The talent and bloodline of those in the Zhang Clan were simply too powerful. Even their aptitude toward swordsmanship was also far stronger than that of his students.

Initially, he had given up hope on this matter, but upon meeting Zhang Xuan, one of the few aspiring, young swordmasters outside of the Zhang Clan, he had suddenly seen a ray of hope. Unwilling to simply accept his loss just like that, he had chosen to buck up the courage to ask Zhang Xuan this favor.

Compared to the young man before him, all of his students were like frogs in a well. In fact, in terms of swordsmanship mastery, even he was not a match for the young man.

“What you mean is that you want me to challenge the Xingmeng Sword Saint in the capacity as the successor to your swordsmanship?” Zhang Xuan finally understood what was going on.

He had seen Jian Qinsheng’s students, and indeed, it would be rather embarrassing to bring them out in public.

Even the strongest Senior Xie had been utterly defeated by him with just a strand of hair, completely unable to retaliate.

“That’s not it. You wouldn’t be able to stand against the Xingmeng Sword Saint even with your current proficiency in swordsmanship. What I hope for you to do is to challenge his successor,” Jian Qinsheng said awkwardly.

Considering how the other party had not learned the slightest thing about swordsmanship from him—on the contrary, the other party even provided him valuable pointers to bringing his swordsmanship to another higher level—it was indeed a little embarrassing for him to ask the other party to act as his successor.

“This...” Taken off guard by the abrupt request, Zhang Xuan found himself at a loss.

Even though he was extremely displeased with how the Zhang Clan was treating Luo Ruoxin and wanted to teach them a lesson, he would still rather challenge them in his capacity as Luo Ruoxin's boyfriend than as Jian Qinsheng's successor.

Instead of turning down Jian Qinsheng's request immediately, Zhang Xuan frowned. "Elder Jian, if you wish to turn the tables on the Xingmeng Sword Saint, you should be able to win fair and square soon enough if you use the modified version of the Flowing Water Swordsmanship that I have given you to groom your successor. It shouldn't take too long for the effects to show, so there shouldn't be any need for you to be in such a rush, right?"

Out of guilt for destroying Jian Qinsheng's residence and unintentionally severely injuring the elder, he had altered the Flowing Water Swordsmanship and handed the manual over to Shui Qianrou.

Given Shui Qianrou's aptitude toward swordsmanship, as long as she cultivated the modified manual strictly, there should be a massive leap in her fighting prowess very soon. Considering how she was Jian Qinsheng's direct disciple, the honor and glory that he would derive from the victory should be far greater.

After all, even though it had only been less than a month since Zhang Xuan had come to the Sanctum of Sages, considering the various commotions surrounding him and his current identity as 'Yang shi's student', it was likely that the Xingmeng Sword Saint would swiftly realize that he was not Jian Qinsheng's student.

Once that happened, it would render Jian Qinsheng's efforts meaningless.

"The sword art that you have imparted to us is truly formidable, such that even I have benefited greatly from its ingenuity. If Shui Qianrou studies it diligently, she should be able to improve swiftly within a short period of time. However, I am indeed in a rush. The Zhang Clan's Clan Assembly is just about to start, and if I were to miss this one, I

don't know how much longer I'll have to wait for the next opportunity," Jian Qinsheng said.

"Clan Assembly?" Zhang Xuan was bewildered. "What does the Zhang Clan's Clan Assembly have anything to do with the challenge between you and the Xingmeng Sword Saint?"

This is a private grudge between you and the Xingmeng Sword Saint, right? Is there really a need for you to confront the other party during their Clan Assembly?

Or does this mean to say that you intend to wreak havoc in the Zhang Clan?

But if the Zhang Clan could be bullied so easily, there is no way it would have been able to survive so long and retain its position as the number one Sage Clan on the Master Teacher Continent!

"All of the top geniuses of the Zhang Clan would be returning to attend the Clan Assembly, so we'll be able to challenge their strongest sword practitioners if we challenge them at this event. Only when their best sword practitioners have been defeated can this be considered a victory for me!" Jian Qinsheng explained.

"And most importantly of all, if my successor can defeat all of the sword practitioners of the Zhang Clan during such an occasion, I will be able to embarrass the Xingmeng Sword Saint and force him to acknowledge his loss to me!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan was rendered completely speechless.

However, there was indeed some sense into what Jian Qinsheng was saying. If he wanted a good platform to defeat the Xingmeng Sword Saint once and for all, the Zhang Clan's Clan Assembly was definitely a good opportunity to do so.

If he could triumph over the Xingmeng Sword Saint before the entire Zhang Clan, he would be able to cleanse all of the humiliation that he had suffered thus far.

Of course, if he lost in such a setting, his reputation would be swept into the gutters.

“That’s equivalent to putting your reputation and honor on the line. The stakes are simply too high; I fear that I’m unworthy of your confidence.” Zhang Xuan pondered for a while, but eventually, he still decided to turn down the offer.

As much as he wanted to get back at the Zhang Clan, he did not dare gamble with Jian Qinsheng’s reputation and honor. While everything would be great and wonderful if he won, he could not bear to imagine the consequences if he lost.

As confident as Zhang Xuan was in his strength, the implications behind this matter was simply too big. As an outsider to the grudge, he was unwilling to shoulder such a heavy responsibility.

“Ah...” Hearing Zhang Xuan’s rejection, a bitter smile surfaced on Jian Qinsheng’s face. “It seems like my request is really a little too abrupt. It was indeed a little inappropriate of me to attempt to involve you in my private affair, and I apologize for that.”

He had only met Zhang Xuan once, and he had not imparted anything to the young man at all. On the contrary, it was the young man who had corrected the flaws in his cultivation, so in that sense, the young man could even be said to be his benefactor.

And instead of repaying the kindness of his benefactor, he had made such an inappropriate request to the other party. It was understandable why the young man would turn down his request.

“Elder Jian, you needn’t feel disheartened. If there’s still some time, I can offer some pointers to Shui Qianrou’s swordsmanship, and hopefully, she will be able to bring you glory during the Clan Assembly!” Zhang Xuan offered with a smile.

“I’m afraid that there’s no time for that anymore. The Zhang Clan’s Clan Assembly will be held a month from now, and I’ll have to start making my way over now in order to make it in time.” Jian Qinsheng shook his head.

Considering how the young man before him had been able to see through his flaws and offer pointers to correct them, there was no doubt that Shui Qianrou's fighting prowess would improve immensely under his guidance. However, it was a pity that time did not allow it.

"The Zhang Clan's Clan Assembly will be held a month from now?" Zhang Xuan was slightly intrigued. "Shouldn't the Clan Assembly be usually held during festive seasons and the like? Why now?"

He seemed to recall Zhang Jiuxiao saying that the Clan Assembly would be held during the start of the new year, and it would only be the eleventh month a month later. Did they bring their Clan Assembly forward?

"I heard that some unexpected situations occurred. It seems like the Zhang Clan decided to hold their Clan Assembly earlier to discuss the bringing forward of the matrimony with the Luo Clan!" Jian Qinsheng paused for a moment before adding, "However, that's just speculation on my part."

"The Zhang Clan intends to bring forward the matrimony with the Luo Clan?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

"Indeed. According to the rumors, it seems like the little princess of the Luo Clan has someone she likes, and that has provoked the ire of the Zhang Clan. Thus, they decided to bring forward the matrimony from the third month of the next year to the start of the year so as to prevent any unexpected situations from occurring." Jian Qinsheng told Zhang Xuan everything that he knew about the matter.

"Start of the year?" A bolt of lightning flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind as his clenched fists trembled intensely in agitation.

1418 Zhang Jiuxiao Acknowledges a Teacher

If it was the third month of the next year, considering how it was only the start of the tenth month at the moment, he would still have had five months to prepare. Given how swiftly his cultivation was growing, it would not have been too difficult for him to become the sanctum head of the Sanctum of Sages by then. However... if it was the start of the next year, he would only have two months to prepare. Time would simply be too tight for him!

It was just a moment ago that he had heard that the Luo Clan had grounded Luo Ruoxin, and the next instant, the Zhang Clan had already brought their Clan Assembly forward. Were they really in such a rush to marry Luo Ruoxin?

Those shameless bastards!

Zhang Xuan's face turned livid, and he felt raging fury burning in his chest, threatening to blow up at any moment.

Ever since his transcension over to this world, other than the incident where Lu Chong was nearly killed while trying to save him, he had never been so angry before.

To think that the number one Sage Clan of the Master Teacher Continent would completely disregard a young lady's feelings and forcefully push her into a marriage. How were they any different from petty bandits?

He had not wanted to blow things up out of proportion, but since they were this shameless, there was no need for him to hold back.

"Zhang shi..." Noticing the huge fluctuations in Zhang Xuan's emotions, Jian Qinsheng and Zhan shi were startled.

8-star master teachers possessed a transcendental state of mind, and they would be able to remain perfectly composed

even as mountains collapsed right before their eyes. Yet, why would the young man get so agitated all of a sudden?

Realizing that he had accidentally allowed his emotions to flow through, Zhang Xuan quickly reined in his rage and replied, "I'm fine."

Then, he turned to Jian Qinsheng and said, "Elder Jian, when are you heading off to the Zhang Clan?"

"Ah?" Not expecting the young man to ask such a question, Jian Qinsheng was dazed for a brief moment before he quickly replied, "I have already prepared an aerial saint beast, and I'm intending to set off right after this."

"Very well. I'll accompany you to the Zhang Clan," Zhang Xuan said affirmatively.

Hearing those words, Jian Qinsheng traded glances with Zhan shi. The situation was changing so quickly that he found himself being unable to keep up with it.

It was just a moment ago that the young man had said that he was unworthy of his confidence, clearly expressing his reluctance to be involved in this mess. Yet, in the blink of an eye, he had suddenly agreed to follow him to the Zhang Clan.

"After some careful thought, I feel that there's a dire need to teach the Zhang Clan a lesson and bring our Sanctum of Sages' Flowing Water Swordsmanship the glory that it deserves!" Zhang Xuan exclaimed with a grand wave of his hand.

Aren't you intending to hold a Clan Assembly to discuss the matter of marrying Luo Ruoxin at the start of next year?

Very well... I shall make sure to wreak havoc such that you won't even have time on your hands to broach that subject during the Clan Assembly!

"This..." Jian Qinsheng was deeply moved by Zhang Xuan's words.

Bliss had simply come too quickly to him. He had never thought that Zhang Xuan would suddenly accept his proposal just like that.

Just that... he was competing with the Xingmeng Sword Saint to settle a private grudge between the two of them. What did this have to do with the Flowing Water Swordsmanship of the Sanctum of Sages?

Despite the doubts in his mind, Jian Qinsheng was still delighted to have Zhang Xuan onboard with him.

The young man before him had comprehended two different Sword Quintessences, so it was likely that his aptitude in swordsmanship far exceeded even that of the Xingmeng Sword Saint's. With the young man making a move, he should be able to crush the Zhang Clan's morale and cleanse the shame that he had been put through over the years.

"It's truly wonderful that Zhang shi is willing to accompany me to the Zhang Clan. When would be a convenient time for you to set off?" Jian Qinsheng asked.

"I'll have to make some preparations beforehand, so let's set off tonight!" Zhang Xuan replied.

Luo Xuanqing had said that he had some business for him, and this could very well concern Luo Ruoxin. Thus, he felt that he should first listen to what Luo Xuanqing had to say before heading off to the Zhang Clan.

Hearing those words, Jian Qinsheng heaved a sigh of relief and said with a smile, "Very well. I'll be waiting for you in my residence, so come and find me there once you are ready!"

Zhang Xuan nodded in response before turning to clasp his fist toward Zhan shi. "Sanctum Head Zhan, I'll be taking my leave now."

"Un." Knowing that Zhang Xuan's mind was already made up, Zhan shi did not bother to dissuade the young man out of this. Instead, he said, "If the Zhang Clan makes things difficult for you, let me know. Rest assured that the Sanctum of Sages will definitely stand up for you!"

Zhang Xuan nodded with a smile in response to those words.

He had half expected Zhan shi to try and stop him, but looking at it once more now, how could the deputy sanctum head of

the Sanctum of Sages possibly be a cowardly person who was afraid of trouble?

As one of the two major subordinate powers of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, if the Sanctum of Sages were to cower in fear before a mere Zhang Clan, it really would not be worthy of the standing and prestige that the world had accorded it!

Hu!

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan quickly bade farewell and left. Not too long later, he arrived at his residence.

As soon as he landed on the ground, he was immediately welcomed by Sun Qiang.

“Young Master, Zhang Jiuxiao is here. He has been waiting for you for some time now.”

“Jiuxiao? I’ll go and take a look” Frowning, Zhang Xuan quickly made his way over to the main hall.

Entering the main hall, he saw Zhang Jiuxiao pacing around the room with an anxious look on his face. The latter visibly heaved a sigh of relief upon noticing him. He hurriedly walked up to him and clasped his fist. “Zhang shi!”

“Is this regarding your Clan Assembly?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“How did you know?” Zhang Jiuxiao was startled.

“Let’s put that aside for now. Are you here for that?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“That’s right. I’m here to thank you for the guidance that you have offered over the past few months. There’s no way I would have ever been qualified to attend such a major event without your help. To tell you the truth, I’m here to bid you farewell. My clan has already sent a saint beast over, and it’s currently waiting outside for me. Most likely, I won’t return to the Sanctum of Sages until next year,” Zhang Jiuxiao said.

As a member of the side family, he should not have been qualified to attend such a major event of the Zhang Clan, but under Zhang Xuan’s guidance, he had successfully enrolled

into the Sanctum of Sages as a student. That was the only reason that he had been invited to the Clan Assembly too.

As tight as his schedule was, he still felt compelled to pay one last visit to Zhang Xuan to express his gratitude prior to leaving. After all, none of this would have happened without the latter's help.

“You didn't mention this the last time we met. Why are you leaving for your Clan Assembly all of a sudden?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Despite his composed exterior, his heart was actually beating in trepidation. He was hoping that he would not receive the answer that he expected.

“To be honest with you, I'm not too sure either. I only received the notice to set off today. Those of the younger generation who are invited to the Clan Assembly must return to the clan within a month's time. I'm not too clear about the details, but it seems like they will be conducting some kind of selections. Zhang shi, you also know that I don't possess much standing in the Zhang Clan. It's already a huge blessing for me to even be invited into the Clan Assembly; there's no way that they would inform of something as confidential as that,” Zhang Jiuxiao said awkwardly.

It was not that he wanted to hide anything from Zhang Xuan, but he was truly ignorant of the matter.

“Alright, I understand.” Zhang Xuan waved his hand. “Take care of yourself. Most likely, I will be heading to the Zhang Clan too, so if you find out anything, do make sure to inform me!”

“Zhang shi, you're going to attend the Clan Assembly, too?” Zhang Jiuxiao was startled.

“Un, I'll be heading there to settle some affairs,” Zhang Xuan said. “This matter could very well draw the hostility of the Zhang Clan, but don't worry, I won't put you in a difficult position.”

Fearing that the other party would think that he was asking him to spy for him, Zhang Xuan swiftly reassured the other

party to allay his fears.

“Zhang shi, please don’t say such words. It’s only due to your guidance that I am what I am today. Otherwise, I could very well still be the self-assuming young man that I was back in Qingyuan City!” Zhang Jiuxiao exclaimed in agitation.

These were his earnest feelings. If not for the young man before him generously imparting invaluable knowledge to him, putting aside enrolling into the Sanctum of Sages, he would not have been able to clear Zhao Xingmo’s selections at all!

It was precisely due to this that he was filled with veneration for the young man before him.

“You’re too kind. As friends, it’s only right for us to help one another,” Zhang Xuan said.

“I would love to be friends with Zhang shi, but I know that I’m not good enough for that. Be it in terms of talent, knowledge, or eye of discernment, I am far beneath you. In fact, Zhang shi, I hope that you can take me in as your student!” Zhang Jiuxiao stepped forward and lowered his head deeply.

This was something that he had been thinking about since a very long time ago.

Having received the other party’s pointers in his swordsmanship and cultivation, the other party could already be considered half a teacher to him. At this moment, since he was already on the verge of leaving, he could not hold this urge of his back anymore.

“You want me to take you in as my student?” Not expecting to hear such words from Zhang Jiuxiao, Zhang Xuan widened his eyes slightly in astonishment.

1419 Help Me Kill a Man

While he might have offered a fair number of pointers to Zhang Jiuxiao, he had viewed the latter as a friend rather than a student all along. Who would have thought that the incomparably prideful genius would actually want to become his student instead?

“That’s right!” Zhang Jiuxiao replied with a resolute gaze.

The others might not know much about the young man before him, but having been with the latter ever since his time in the Qingyuan Empire, he still knew a fair bit about him. For one, he knew that, of the young man’s students, Zheng Yang had become the Progeny of Combat of the Combat Master Hall, Zhao Ya had become the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, and Yuan Tao was the most talented offspring and possibly the next clan head of the Yuan Clan.

Those were the only three students of the young man that he knew about, but just the three of them were already more than enough to shake the Master Teacher Continent at its core!

And it was one thing for his students to be formidable, but more than that, the young man himself was the only man to become a Celestial Master Teacher in the past several dozen millenniums after Kong shi!

Not to mention, he was the direct disciple of the most esteemed grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion.

There was no doubt that the young man possessed unimaginable potential within him. If he could become the young man’s student, he would be able to soar into the boundless sky along with him instead of remaining as a nobody in his clan.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before saying, “I don’t go easy on my students. Are you certain that you want me to be your teacher?”

“Yes, I am certain!” Zhang Jiuxiao replied.

“Very well. From today onward, you shall be my student!”
Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though Zhang Jiuxiao’s talent and bloodline were not on par with Zhang Chun, Zhang Feng, and the others, the greatest merit that he had over the rest of them was that he was incredibly tenacious. Under his guidance, the other party would surely be able to reach great heights.

However, he was only going to take in Zhang Jiuxiao as his student and not his direct disciple.

With so many uncertainties surrounding his life at the moment, he was not ready to commit to accepting another direct disciple.

“Thank you, Teacher!” A hint of slight disappointment flashed across Zhang Jiuxiao’s eyes when he heard Zhang Xuan address him as his student rather than his direct disciple. Nevertheless, he quickly kneeled onto the ground and kowtowed.

Being the student of a Celestial Master Teacher was a great honor as well. To him, this meant much more than becoming a core member of the Zhang Clan.

“I have a cultivation technique here. I want you to practice it well and reach Grand Dominion realm pinnacle before we reach the Zhang Clan!” With a tap of his finger, Zhang Xuan transferred a cultivation technique into Zhang Jiuxiao’s mind.

Currently, Zhang Jiuxiao was only at the Leaving Aperture realm, a huge way off from reaching the Grand Dominion realm. While Zhang Xuan had offered the other party pointers in the past, those pointers were intended to resolve the flaws in his cultivation rather than to enhance it. After all, Zhang Jiuxiao was not part of his lineage, so he was not obliged to impart anything to the other party.

But now that he had imparted a simplified version of the Heaven’s Path Divine Art to the other party, as long as he had ample resources, it would not be too difficult for him to push for a breakthrough of two cultivation realms within a month.

In a sense, this could be considered a trial for Zhang Jiuxiao as well. If the other party could not even achieve this much, he would not be worthy of being his student!

Hearing that he had to reach Grand Dominion realm pinnacle within a single month, Zhang Jiuxiao's cheeks visibly twitched. However, he swiftly gritted his teeth and replied solemnly, "Teacher, I won't let you down!"

The higher one's cultivation realm was, the more difficult it was to raise one's cultivation realm. Even for the geniuses of the Sanctum of Sages, it would take several months of cultivation for them to push for just a breakthrough in their cultivation stage. Nevertheless, since his teacher had already given him the instruction, he would just have to accomplish it regardless of the cost!

Boom!

Seeing the resolve in Zhang Jiuxiao's eyes, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. Just as he was about to issue a few more instructions, his mind suddenly jolted. A book had floated out from the shelves in the Library of Heaven's Path, and it slowly flipped open, revealing a golden gleam within it.

A golden page?

It had been so long since Zhang Xuan had taken in any students that he had nearly forgot that the Library of Heaven's Path still had such a function.

The power harnessed within each formed golden page was immense. Back then, he had planted one within Wei Ruyan in order to ensure her safety in the Poison Hall, and eventually, it had actually succeeded in killing one of the Four Eminences with ease. With the golden page as a trump card, there was no longer anything for him to fear in the Zhang Clan!

Hmph, Zhang Clan, just you wait! This time, I won't rest until my reputation as the God of Destruction is imprinted deeply into every single one of your minds!

Zhang Xuan's clenched fists trembled in agitation as a vicious glint flashed across his eyes.

...

Not too long after Zhang Jiuxiao left, Luo Xuanqing came over.

Upon seeing that Zhang Xuan was in his residence, Luo Xuanqing heaved a sigh of relief. Using a particularly complex set of hand seals, he sealed the surrounding space tightly before walking up to Zhang Xuan.

“Brother Zhang. As you know, I don’t like to beat around the bush, so I’ll just get straight to the main issue at hand. I want you to kill a man for me.”

“You want me to kill a man for you?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had thought that the matter that Luo Xuanqing was going to talk to him about was regarding Luo Ruoxin, but who would have thought that the latter would actually ask him to kill a man instead!

As a master teacher and a member of civilized society, he believed that violence should always be the last resort, and he always made sure to conduct himself as such.

Putting aside the couple of unfortunate accidents that would happen every now and then, the only time that he had truly played the role of an aggressor was when dealing with the Xuanyuan Kingdom.

“If possible, I would not make this request of you. But as long as this man remains alive, our Luo Clan will never be able to live in peace!” Luo Xuanqing shook his head and sighed deeply.

He would not make a move if there was another option, but this was a direct order from the First Elder, and he himself knew what was at stake. There was simply no way around it.

For his younger sister’s sake, he would have to carry this out!

“What kind of man could possibly wield so much influence over the Luo Clan?” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

As the second strongest Sage Clan on the Master Teacher Continent, the ranks of the Luo Clan were filled with countless experts. And yet, there was actually a man in the world who

could leave them feeling so uneasy? Just who could this incredible figure be?

Surely, he would be helpless before a person whom even the Luo Clan struggled to deal with!

“Do you still remember what I told you about my younger sister the previous time we met?” Luo Xuanqing asked.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

“She’s currently grounded in our clan. I recklessly summoned my Dimension Sundering Ordeal in hopes of gathering sufficient strength to save her, but... it’s a pity that I’m still far too weak,” Luo Xuanqing said with a solemn expression on his face.

Zhang Xuan nodded once more.

Even if the other party did not explain it to him, he had already guessed as much.

“Like I told you the previous time, the reason she’s being grounded is because the clan found out that there’s someone whom she already likes, and I requested you to help me investigate his identity, right?” Luo Xuanqing continued.

“Yes, I still remember that. I thought that there isn’t any concrete news concerning that man yet,” Zhang Xuan said with a frown.

The last time that the other party had spoken to him about this matter, he had nearly been shocked out of his wits.

Fortunately, it seemed like Luo Ruoxin had not revealed his identity.

Nevertheless, that matter still left him feeling deeply pressured. Eventually, in order to save time and become an 8-star master teacher as quickly as possible, he had ended up challenging the Tower of Master Teachers.

“I have managed to gather new intelligence regarding the matter. During the period that my younger sister disappeared, she seems to have resided in a place known as the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy for quite a long period of time. I suspect that that man might be there as well, so I hope that you

can head down there and root out that man,” Luo Xuanqing said.

“The Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy...” Zhang Xuan’s lips twitched inconspicuously upon hearing those words, and his pupils narrowed slightly. With a slightly astonished voice, he asked, “It can’t be that you want me to kill that man, can it?”

Judging from where the flow of the conversation was heading, it appeared that Luo Xuanqing was about to request him to assassinate himself!

He really had no idea what he should make of this situation.

While others might not know who the rumored lover of the Luo Clan’s little princess was, how could he possibly not know who that man was!

It was already hard on him to be asked to investigate and uncover his own identity, and now, he even had to assassinate himself as well. This was ridiculous!

“As expected of my brother! You understand me well!” Luo Xuanqing nodded in satisfaction.

“Why do you want to kill him?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown. “Won’t the little princess be upset if he were to be killed?”

Luo Xuanqing claimed that he doted on his younger sister, but here he was, plotting to kill the man his younger sister loved. Was that not hypocritical?

Was it that difficult to simply grant her this simple wish?

Would he only be happy after sending his younger sister down a road of tragedy, marrying a man who had never once appeared after their engagement?

“I know that she’ll be upset, but this involves...” Luo Xuanqing exclaimed in agitation, but halfway through, he suddenly froze. After which, he shook his head with a deep sigh, clearly not wanting to delve any deeper into this topic.

He raised his head to look at Zhang Xuan once more and said, “Just tell me whether you are willing to do it or not. As long as

you root out that man and kill him, I'll accord you the position of at least an elder in the Luo Clan!"

"Elder?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "I don't need anything like that. I only want to ask if the little princess knows if you are aiming to kill the man she loves. You do know that once she finds out about the matter, this will become a permanent rift in the relationship between the two of you. You'll never be able to go back to the old days anymore."

"I understand all of that, but... I have no choice!" the discomposd Luo Xuanqing cried out with reddened eyes.

"How can there be no other choice? At this rate, she'll become nothing more than a pawn for power! Why can't she pursue her own happiness? Does she really have no choice but to marry that young prodigy from the Zhang Clan?" Zhang Xuan exclaimed fervently.

Under Zhang Xuan's relentless questioning, Luo Xuanqing finally snapped. "Yes! She has no choice but to marry the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan! There's no other option for her to choose!"

1420 Xingmeng Sword Sain

“Why?” Zhang Xuan asked lividly.

To have to push his younger sister down a path that he knew she would never be happy with... No matter what, the Luo Clan was still one of the most powerful Sage Clan in the Master Teacher Continent. They might be second to the Zhang Clan, but they were definitely not subordinates of the Zhang Clan. Shouldn't they at least possess dignity worthy of their positions?

Honestly speaking, if he had not heard the news directly from the Young Master of the Luo Clan, he would have thought that he was hearing fake news!

That is your own younger sister! How can you possibly sacrifice her for a mere political marriage?

Realizing that he had lost himself in the moment, Luo Xuanqing forced himself to calm down before replying quietly, “There are some things that you aren't qualified to know given your current standing and identity. Even I only have a partial understanding of the matter.

“I only know that in order to push forward this marriage, our Luo Clan has already sacrificed far too much. If it fails to go through, not only will our Luo Clan be in deep trouble, even mankind could very well find itself facing a catastrophe!”

“Mankind?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in skepticism.

To say that the failure of the marriage going through would actually result in a catastrophe for mankind, was this for real?

Was it not making a mountain out of a molehill?

No matter how he looked at it, Zhang Xuan just could not help but find Luo Xuanqing's words utterly nonsensical.

Judging from the look on Zhang Xuan's face, Luo Xuanqing could tell that the other party would not agree to his request if he did not make things clear today. So, he hesitated for a short

moment before saying, “On the account that you are a trustworthy person and a brother of mine, I can share the news with you. However, this matter has major implications, so you mustn’t speak of it to another soul. Otherwise, it could possibly lead to a disastrous outcome!

“In truth, the marriage between the Zhang Clan and the Luo Clan concerns the secret behind the Celestial Amulet of Legacy!”

“Celestial Amulet of Legacy?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes slowly widened in astonishment as he heard those four words.

He had heard of the Celestial Amulet of Legacy before. It was an artifact left behind by Kong shi, and it served as a key to the Temple of Confucius where the Great Codex of Spring of Autumn lay. Was the marriage between the Zhang Clan and the Luo Clan really that important?

If Kong shi’s most powerful artifact was really at stake, then saying that the entire fate of mankind was at stake would really be no joke!

“Indeed! However, I only heard of this news while eavesdropping on the conversation between our First Elder and clan head, so unfortunately, I’m not too sure about the exact circumstances surrounding the matter,” Luo Xuanqing replied grimly.

That is my younger sister we are talking about! How can I possibly be willing to shove her into the embrace of a person she has no fondness for?

If not for the complicated circumstances surrounding the issue, putting aside him, not even the elders of the Luo Clan would allow this marriage to go through! After all, given his younger sister’s talent, there was a good chance that she could surpass even their ancestors!

Once that happened, what would the Zhang Clan count for?

Nothing at all.

Well, that was unless the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan was even more powerful than her.

But again, such a possibility was only minuscule at best. After all, in so many years, the only one whom he had seen come close to matching up to his younger sister was the young man standing before him, Zhang Xuan.

“Given what is at stake, regardless of whether it’s me or my younger sister, this is a responsibility that we won’t be able to escape from. More importantly, this matter involves her as well. In any case, that man has to be killed at all costs. However, I can’t do it myself, and there’s no one other than you that I trust enough to entrust such an important task in!” After saying those words, Luo Xuanqing directed a deep gaze at Zhang Xuan.

“This...” Zhang Xuan found himself at a loss for words.

He knew that Luo Xuanqing was in a difficult position.

Even though he was close to Yuan Xiao, Bi Hongyin, and the others, it was unfortunate that they were affiliated with other major powers. They could be trusted under normal circumstances, but if there was a conflict of interest somehow in the future, they could very well choose to sacrifice their friendship to support their own clan. After all, they would soon take on important roles within their own clans, and by then, they would be responsible for the overall welfare of their clan. With such a heavy responsibility on their shoulders, they would have no choice but to sacrifice their personal will at times.

Considering that the reputation of the Luo Clan and Zhang Clan were at stake for this matter, it would not be a good idea to entrust this matter to them.

And after eliminating them from the picture, the only one who could be trusted and would not have any conflict of interest was him.

“What’s your choice?” Luo Xuanqing asked intently.

“I’m sorry, but I’m afraid that I won’t be able to accept your request.” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Even if there are many things at stake, what does that have to do with me?

Why should I sacrifice my everything in order to fulfill others? Besides, to make me assassinate myself... How do you expect me to accept such a request?

“I want to know why.”

A deep frown appeared in between Luo Xuanqing's forehead. He thought that the young man would accept his request unhesitatingly, but he had been rejected instead.

Zhang Xuan paused for a moment, and eventually, he still decided against revealing his identity. “To tell you the truth, I have some urgent matters at the moment, and I need to head over to the Zhang Clan right now. I don't think that I'll have the time to head down to the Qingyuan Empire and assassinate that man.”

Even if he wanted to reveal his identity, this was not the right moment to do so! If he had to do it, it should be done before the Zhang Clan with him carrying the air of a conqueror!

“You need to head over to the Zhang Clan? For what?” Luo Xuanqing was visibly surprised to hear that news.

“The Zhang Clan is holding its Clan Assembly very soon, and Jian Qinsheng hopes that I can challenge the Xingmeng Sword Saint's successors so as to exact vengeance for the humiliation he has suffered in the past,” Zhang Xuan explained.

“Jian Qinsheng? That old sword freak? I do recall him having a grudge with the head of the Zhang Clan. Indeed, this is a good opportunity to put down the Zhang Clan, so you should definitely go.” Luo Xuanqing was dazed for a moment before nodding in realization.

“What happened between the two of them? Is their grudge really just due to the difference in the Sword Quintessences they have comprehended?” Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

The Sword Quintessence that Jian Qinsheng had comprehended was relating to the Flowing Water Swordsmanship, a defensive Sword Quintessence. Even though he had never seen the Xingmeng Sword Saint's swordsmanship before, it should be safe to assume that the

Sword Quintessence that the latter had comprehended was vastly different from Jian Qinsheng's.

Otherwise, the Zhang Clan's genius, Zhang Xu, would not have been rejected by the will of the Third Sanctum Head.

"Actually, it isn't that complicated. Do you know where the title 'Xingmeng Sword Saint' originated from?" Luo Xuanqing asked.

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

All he knew about the Xingmeng Sword Saint was that the latter was the incumbent head of the Zhang Clan, the father of the young prodigy. As for his true name and the origin of his nickname, he really did not know a thing at all.

"Could it be that his name is... Zhang Xingmeng?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

It would be truly hilarious if the head of the Zhang Clan, one of the top experts on the Master Teacher Continent, had such a feminine name.

"Of course not! In truth, the 'Xingmeng' in 'Xingmeng Sword Saint' refers to two different individuals. It's derived from taking the 'Xing' character from the name of the head of the Zhang Clan and the 'Meng' character from his wife's. When addressed separately, they are known as the Xing Sword Saint and the Meng Sword Saint. However, due to the overwhelming prowess from the combined might of their swordsmanship, which struck fear even in the hearts of the elders of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, they eventually came to be collectively known as the Xingmeng Sword Saint!" Luo Xuanqing explained.

Hearing that, Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

In order to become an elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, one's cultivation needed to have exceeded Saint 9-dan, and yet, the both of them were still able to instill deep fear into the hearts of such experts. It was already beyond Zhang Xuan's imagination how powerful they could possibly be.

“Indeed. Back then, the both of them traveled across the entire Master Teacher Continent as a pair, and there was nearly no one who could match them. Even your teacher is filled with praise for them! Eventually, the Xing Sword Saint inherited the position of the deputy clan head and received the deepest heritage of the Zhang Clan, thus pushing his strength and swordsmanship to greater heights. On the other hand, the Meng Sword Saint has rarely appeared since then, and as time went by, her previous reputation ended up being heaped on the Xing Sword Saint instead, resulting in very few knowing of her existence,” Luo Xuanqing explained.

As a core member of the Luo Clan, Luo Xuanqing was well-informed on those who stood at the top echelon of the Master Teacher Continent.

“I see. However, what does that have to do with Elder Jian Qinsheng? Could it be that he lost tragically to the Xing Sword Saint back then?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

If there was not a deep-seated grudge between the both of them, there should not be a need for Jian Qinsheng to make use of the Zhang Clan’s Clan Assembly to get back at the Xing Sword Saint, right?

That was almost as good as declaring his hostility toward the entire Zhang Clan!

“Lost tragically? Tragically is an understatement...” Luo Xuanqing shook his head.

“If the news I have is accurate, it would appear that Elder Jian Qinsheng used to be a fervent pursuer of the Meng Sword Saint!”

1421 Revelation

“Fervent pursuer...” Zhang Xuan was stumped into silence.

He had thought that it was just a simple rivalry, but to think that there would be so much drama behind it!

Then again, he should have thought of it.

Only such an emotion could possibly lead to so many years of persistence from Jian Qinsheng. For example, if he were to steal Luo Ruoxin away, the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan would surely challenge him frenziedly for decades or even centuries to come!

In the first place, those who practiced swordsmanship tended to be extremely obstinate and unyielding individuals, so how could they possibly be able to keep an open mind to other things?

“Indeed. I really have to say kudos to Jian Qinsheng’s obstinacy. Even now, he’s still unwilling to find another mate. Forget it, let’s not talk about them anymore. Well, I do understand that it’s important for you to head over to the Zhang Clan.” Luo Xuanqing was deeply conflicted.

Killing the man whom his younger sister had fallen in love with was important, but he was not willing to let such a good opportunity to humiliate the Zhang Clan go either.

Due to his younger sister, he had been tirelessly finding ways to put them down, and this was clearly a darn good occasion to do so!

“Indeed. Pardon me for not being of any help to you in this matter.” Zhang Xuan shook his head. A moment later, he raised his gaze once more and asked deeply, “Is it the Luo Clan’s or Zhang Clan’s intention to kill that man?”

“Is there a difference between the two? Even if we don’t make a move, the Zhang Clan will very soon make a move too. By then, things would only get far more troublesome.” Luo Xuanqing shook his head.

Ever since his younger sister had admitted her love for that man, that man's fate had already been sealed.

There was no way that the Zhang Clan and Luo Clan could allow this ticking time bomb to continue existing.

“Zhang Clan...” On the other hand, hearing that the Zhang Clan had intentions to kill him too, Zhang Xuan clenched his teeth in fury.

How can they have the cheek to call themselves the number one Sage Clan of the Master Teacher Continent when all they do is commit such despicable acts... Wait a moment, they are shameless, that's why!

It was one thing to force Luo Ruoxin to marry the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan, but now, they were even intending to kill him as well. Just how lawless could they get!

“It's fine.” Luo Xuanqing sighed deeply. “It goes without saying, but you must keep all of this a secret. No matter the circumstances, it mustn't reach the ears of another soul!”

“Don't worry, my lips are tightly sealed!” Zhang Xuan nodded. “Actually, I think that it would be good for you to discuss this matter with the little princess before making a decision. Otherwise, this incident could drive a wedge in the relationship between you and your younger sister.”

“Un.” Luo Xuanqing was silent for a moment before nodding slowly. “I'll think about that.”

The main issue was that his younger sister was still grounded, and he had no way to contact her, or else he definitely would have found a way to do so.

“I'll be taking my leave first then!” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist before heading for Jian Qinsheng's residence.

Luo Xuanqing watched as Zhang Xuan vanished in the night sky before he shook himself out of his daze. He left the residence, too, but instead of returning back to his own accommodations, he headed to the Hall of Integrity.

Walking up to the counter, he instructed, “I want detailed intelligence about the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy. It's

an organization located in the Qingyuan Conferred Empire.”

Since he was unable to engage Zhang Xuan’s help for that matter, he had no choice but to do it himself.

“Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy? Noted! Young Master Luo, please give me a moment. I’ll look it up right now!”

The attendant was a young lady in her early twenties, and recognizing Luo Xuanqing, she did not dare show the slightest bit of disrespect toward him. She quickly rushed into a room, and not too long later, she returned with a book in hand.

Any information concerning master teachers would have to be submitted to the headquarters, and considering that the Sanctum of Sages was a subsidiary organization of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, there were various channels that they could use to procure the information.

“The Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy is located in Hongyuan Tier-1 Empire, and the strongest expert there is only at Saint 1-dan pinnacle.” The attendant began to recite the information in the book.

“Only Saint 1-dan pinnacle?” Luo Xuanqing’s cheeks twitched.

Were his younger sister’s eyes not a little too poor?

Even the strongest expert in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy was only at that level! Just what charm did that man possess to be able to win her fancy, such that she would even go against the Luo Clan and Zhang Clan for him?

“It’s a low-ranked Master Teacher Academy capable only of grooming 6-star master teachers, so it’s inevitable that the cultivators there would be slightly lacking,” the attendant hurriedly replied.

“Where is it located?” Luo Xuanqing asked.

“It’s located more than a million li away from here. Saint 8-dan beasts require roughly half a month of flight in order to reach there. Here is a map for your reference,” the attendant said as she took out a map and showed it to Luo Xuanqing.

“Half a month? That’s still fine.” Luo Xuanqing heaved a sigh of relief.

If he could get to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy within half a month, he should be able to eliminate that man ahead of the Zhang Clan.

With a quick scan, Luo Xuanqing swiftly memorized all of the details on the map before turning around to leave. However, before he could walk out of the doorstep, he suddenly recalled a matter and turned around to ask, “Do you happen to have any information on some of the more outstanding master teacher from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy in recent years?”

Considering how his younger sister liked that man and was even full of praise for him, even if that man’s cultivation and master teacher rank were only so-so, he should still at least possess some exceptional talent in some fields!

In a small place like the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy, he should be able to shine like a pearl amid pebbles, catching the eyes of everyone.

The attendant pondered for a moment before replying, “I’m afraid that I’m unable to access that information with my level of clearance. If Young Master Luo isn’t in a rush, I can invite an elder over to help you check on the matter!”

She was only an attendant of the Hall of Integrity, so she could only look into more general information. In order to obtain more detailed information such as the names of the master teachers residing in a location, they would require the clearance of an elder.

After thinking about it for a brief moment, Luo Xuanqing nodded.

If he could find out the identity of the man whom his younger sister liked, he could assign others to do the job in his stead, thus avoiding the long journey down to the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy.

He waited for roughly an hour on the spot before an elder hurriedly walked out from one of the inner rooms of the Hall

of Integrity.

Whether it was Luo Xuanqing's standing as a core member of the Luo Clan or his notorious title as the King of Destruction in the Sanctum of Sages, he was not someone whom ordinary managerial elders could afford to offend.

The elder hurriedly walked up to Luo Xuanqing and retrieved a book from his storage ring. He took a moment to swiftly flip through the entire book before he closed it and said, "Young Master Luo, I have browsed through the records of all notable master teachers in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy over the past five years, and there is indeed one who enjoys great fame and prestige there."

"Enjoys great fame and prestige? Tell me more!" Luo Xuanqing's eyes immediately lit up.

"This master teacher came to fame roughly half a year ago. He originates from a humble Unranked Kingdom, and with his own strength, he slowly paved his way up through the ranks. He has successfully crashed two Master Teacher Pavilions, and he has foiled a major ploy from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and slain ten Otherworldly Demon Kings and one Otherworldly Demon Emperor, thus contributing immensely to mankind!

"Furthermore, he has successfully built a kingdom into an empire and groomed many talented students. Eventually, he even became the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy!" the elder said.

"No doubt about it, he must be the person I am looking for!"

Only their ancestor had ever successfully crashed a Master Teacher Pavilion before. The fact that the other party was able to do it too showed that he was a man of great talent. That aligned with his younger sister's description.

Most likely, that fellow was the person whom his younger sister liked!

"What's that person's name? Is he still in the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy?" Luo Xuanqing asked.

“This... Young Master Luo, I’m afraid that I don’t have the authority to track down his recent whereabouts. But as for his name, I think I should still be able to find it. His name is...”

As he spoke, the elder flipped open the book once more and took a closer look at the records. A moment later, his eyes narrowed in astonishment.

“Zhang Xuan!”

1422 I Thought Of You As My Brother, But You Flirted With My Younger Sister?

“Zhang Xuan?” Luo Xuanqing’s eyes narrowed as well. He anxiously turned his gaze over to the elder and asked agitatedly, “Which Zhang and which Xuan?”

“Zhang, as in the Zhang with the side characters of ‘bow’ and ‘long’, and Xuan, as in the Xuan from hanging on a noose.” the elder explained.

“The both of them have the exact same name? This... can’t be possible... right?” It was as if an explosion had occurred in Luo Xuanqing’s mind. With widened eyes, he staggered backward weakly, his face pale with disbelief.

That name was identical to that of his good brother. They couldn’t possibly... be the same person, right?

He had only hung out with Zhang Xuan because the young man’s temperament was to his liking, and to him, all that really mattered was that the young man wasn’t from the darned Zhang Clan. As such, he had never thought of looking into the young man’s origin.

Could he really be from Qingyuan Empire too?

If that was truly the case...

Wouldn’t that mean that the man he had been looking for was the very same person he had called his brother all this while?

Luo Xuanqing’s body trembled uncontrollably as the various scenes of how he came to meet Zhang Xuan flashed across his mind.

The first they met, the young man had said “Your sister” to his face and ended up being pummeled into the ground. After the incident, the young man suddenly became exceptionally nice

to him, never hesitating to offer a helping hand in his time of need. And all of this, it went without saying that he attributed them to his personal charisma...

But could it actually be because of his younger sister?

“Young Master Luo...” Noticing the huge fluctuations in Luo Xuanqing’s mood, the elder couldn’t help but quiver in fear, fearing that the other party would vent his anger on him.

“I’m fine, you don’t have to worry about me.” Luo Xuanqing exhaled deeply and calmed himself down. “I would like to look into the background of a student from our Sanctum of Sages’ Elite Division.”

“It should be much easier to obtain information on a student in the Sanctum of Sages. Young Master Luo, whose background do you want me to look into?” the elder asked.

“I want you to look into a student who has just enrolled into the Sanctum of Sages just earlier this year, Zhang Xuan!” Luo Xuanqing said.

“Actually, there’s no need to look up that. Zhang shi is the principal of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy that I have just spoken about.” Hearing that name, the elder couldn’t help but chuckle softly, and he remarked in admiration, “Despite coming from an Unranked Kingdom, Zhang shi has managed to progress this far within a short period of time, successfully becoming an 8-star master teacher when he had just barely stepped into his twenties. Due to his legendary accomplishments, Zhang shi is regarded as the new idol amongst the student populace of the Sanctum of Sages. In fact, the young lady who has attended to you earlier is his loyal fan!”

“Idol? Fan?” Luo Xuanqing quickly turned his gaze toward the young lady who had attended to him earlier and saw that the latter’s eyes were twinkling in reverence upon hearing her idol’s name being called. It was to the point that he could almost imagine saliva streaming down the corner of her lips.

“Damn it!” Luo Xuanqing bellowed furiously as he stabbed his fingers deep into the flesh of his palm. In this moment, he

felt as if a million ants were running across his scalp, and unimaginable rage bubbled furiously within him.

In less than a month after coming to the Sanctum of Sages, that fellow had actually seduced so many young ladies, converting every single one of them into his devoted fan. Given how his younger sister had no experience with the opposite gender, it was no wonder why she would end up falling into that fellow's trap!

I thought of you as my brother, but you flirted with my younger sister?

More importantly, you even acted so innocently before me... Zhang Xuan, just how much more shameless can you get?"

Luo Xuanqing couldn't stop his lips from quivering in shock. He felt like he had fallen into the other party's trap right from the very start.

"He intentionally got close to me in order to obtain news about my younger sister... This won't do. I must kill that despicable bastard!" Frenzied with fury, killing intent billowed through Luo Xuanqing's veins.

Previously, he was still a little hesitant at the notion of killing his younger sister's lover, but now that he knew who that man was and the despicable means that man resorted to, he couldn't suppress his fury any longer.

All along, you are the person whom my younger sister likes, and yet, you feigned ignorant whenever I brought up the topic, acting as if you were an outsider to the matter. To think that I actually thought of someone like you as my brother...

This must be the greatest stain of my life!

More importantly, I even foolishly told you everything I knew...

"It's no wonder why he turned down my request... How could he possibly kill himself?"

The more Luo Xuanqing thought about this matter, the more infuriated he became. If his emotions could materialize, the

area around him would be swiftly overwhelmed by a raging inferno and burned down to cinders.

“This isn’t good... Hurry up and get Elder Ge over! Tell him that the King of Destruction is going to destroy the Hall of Integrity!” Seeing that the young man’s strength was on the verge of bursting forth, the elder’s face immediately paled in fright, and he hurriedly turned his head around to instruct the female attendant.

As a managerial elder, his cultivation was only at Saint 7-dan, a long way off from matching up to Luo Xuanqing. If they were to go head-to-head with one another, there was no way he would be a match for the other party.

Sensing the dangerous aura shrouding around the young man before him, he couldn’t help but recall the various ‘incredible accomplishments’ of the young man before him. At this point, there was little doubt that the young man was going to do something very soon.

“Yes, elder!” the attendant hurriedly nodded. But as just as she was about to turn around and leave, Luo Xuanqing suddenly appeared right before her eyes. With reddened eyes, he roared, “Tell me, why do you revere that Zhang Xuan so much? Is he stronger than me? Is he more good-looking than me?”

In terms of strength, he was a Saint 8-dan expert whereas Zhang Xuan was only at Grand Dominion realm pinnacle. In terms of looks, that fellow was no different from a Fighter 1-dan to his Saint 9-dan! He just couldn’t understand why others would idolize that fellow instead of him!

“I-I-I... Wahhhhhhhhhhhhh!” Feeling the immense pressure that Luo Xuanqing was emanating, the young lady’s face paled in fright, and she began to bawl uncontrollably.

“Let go of her!” the elder bellowed angrily.

“I...” It was only in this moment that Luo Xuanqing finally regained his rationality, but even that was insufficient to quench the indignance that he felt inside.

To show a look of reverence when speaking of Zhang Xuan, only to be scared into tears when facing him... Why? WHY?!

The elder could guess what Luo Xuanqing was thinking of just by the look on his face, and he suddenly felt completely speechless.

Just by that terrifying look on your face, it would take a miracle for any girl to like you!

Take a look at Zhang Xuan! Even before the most frightening lightning tribulation, he was still able to stand firmly with a composed smile on his face, diving into it fearlessly and eventually send it fleeing even...

Now, take a look at yourself! How can you ever begin to compare with him?

“Forget it, I’ll kill that fellow right now!” Knowing that he wouldn’t be able to get an answer out of the female attendant’s mouth, Luo Xuanqing spat coldly as he dashed straight for Jian Qinsheng’s residence.

Now that he had found out that Zhang Xuan was the culprit who had seduced his younger sister, there was no reason for him to hesitate anymore! There would be more than enough time for him to think the matter through after smashing that fellow’s head into the ground!

It didn’t take long before he was standing right above Jian Qinsheng’s residence, and he bellowed loudly, “Luo Xuanqing is here to pay a visit to Elder Jian!”

His deep voice reverberated deafeningly throughout the entire residence, reminiscent of the rumbling of thunder.

“Luo Xuanqing, what are you up to this time around?” A mere instant after Luo Xuanqing’s loud voice echoed throughout the entire residence, an infuriated voice suddenly sounded.

Following which, a beautiful figure flew over.

Shui Qianrou!

“Qianrou... What are you doing here?” Luo Xuanqing was so surprised to see the young lady that the imposing disposition he carried a moment ago began withering away.

“Jian Qinsheng is my teacher, so there shouldn’t be any problem with me living in his residence, right?” Shui Qianrou

harrumphed coldly. “Like I have told you before, I don’t have the slightest bit of feelings for you. If you continue harassing me like this, I’ll have no choice but to call on my clan to deal with you!”

“I...” Luo Xuanqing was rendered speechless.

The truth was that when he boasted to Zhang Xuan back then that he had a beautiful girlfriend, he wasn’t entirely lying—it was just that his ‘beautiful girlfriend’ of his hadn’t accepted his confession yet!

And the ‘unbelievably beautiful girlfriend’ he had referred to then was none other than Shui Qianrou!

Luo Xuanqing was intending to say that he wasn’t here for Shui Qianrou but Zhang Xuan, but the latter’s words triggered the intense feelings of indignance within him once more, and he exclaimed, “Just what kind of man do you like? I can always change if there’s anything I’m lacking in!”

Given the outstanding and dashing man he was, why didn’t the other party like him? He simply couldn’t understand it!

“What kind of man do I like?” Shui Qianrou harrumphed coldly. “The man that I like must possess unparalleled talent in swordsmanship. He must possess utmost discerning eyes that are capable of seeing through and complementing all of my flaws, and more importantly, he must be able to impart to me profound swordsmanship...”

“Impart to you profound swordsmanship? It can’t be that...” Luo Xuanqing suddenly widened his eyes as he shook his head in disbelief, hoping that everything was just his imagination.

“That’s right, I like men who are like Zhang Xuan! As for you...” Shui Qianrou waved her hands disdainfully, “You should just give it a rest!” “Luo Xuanqing is asking him what are the Chinese characters for Zhang Xuan’s name to see if it might just be another person with a similar-sounding name. In Chinese, there are many words that have the same pronunciation but different meaning and characters. For example, 张 and 章 are both pronounced as Zhang and have the exact same intonation but have different meanings. For

Zhang (张), it consists of two parts, namely bow (弓) and long (长). As for Xuan, it could mean suspense or hanging, but perhaps the elder has some grudge with Zhang Xuan, he decides to describe it in the worst way possible by referring it to hanging.

1423 The Little Princess'

Reques

“You bastard!” Luo Xuanqing’s rage finally reached the peak and exploded.

It was one thing for the younger sister whom he doted on so dearly to be seduced by that fellow whose emotional quotient could be said to be pretty much zero, but to think that the goddess whom he had been infatuated with for so many years would actually be full of admiration for him too... At this moment, no words could begin to describe how crazed he felt on the inside.

I treated you as my brother, but you ended up seducing my younger sister and the person I love... Unforgivable!

“Zhang Xuan, you better scam out here right now!” Unable to hold it back any longer, Luo Xuanqing roared in fury.

Seeing how the other party’s words were getting more and more overboard, daring to threaten Zhang shi even, Shui Qianrou finally snapped, “Luo Xuanqing, Zhang shi has already left for the Zhang Clan together with my teacher. If you continue causing trouble around here, don’t blame me for activating the Sword Formation!”

What the heck is wrong with you?

I have already made everything clear to you, why are you still going on a rampage over here?

Previously, you claimed that as long as I were to meet someone I like, you would give up and back away quietly... I should have already made it very clear to you that I like Zhang shi, so why are you still causing such a huge commotion here, even threatening to beat him up?

Do you really think I dare not activate the formation on you?

If you were to continue causing trouble here shamelessly, I don’t mind teaching you a lesson!

After receiving Zhang Xuan's pointers, Shui Qianrou had become more highly regarded by Jian Qinsheng, such that she was even imparted with the method to control the formation inscribed into the residence.

"He has already left? Hmph, I'll just have to chase him back then!" Making a quick calculation, Luo Xuanqing realized that it was indeed very likely that Zhang Xuan had already left.

Thus, he immediately flitted off in the direction of the Zhang Clan without any hesitation.

"That madman..." Not expecting Luo Xuanqing to come over in the middle of the night to cause such a huge uproar, only to leave before finishing his piece, Shui Qianrou was rendered speechless.

She would have to be an utter fool to fall for a person that lacking in maturity!

In the end, Zhang Shi was the only one who could really be thought of as perfect.

Well, he would have been even more perfect if his words could have been any nicer... But again, geniuses tended to have extremely individualistic personalities, and she was perfectly fine with his personality too...

Oblivious to Shui Qianrou's fangirling, Luo Xuanqing dashed straight for three days and three nights, till the last droplet of zhenqi within his body had been depleted. But even so, he was still unable to find any traces of Zhang Xuan and the others.

Before long, he was completely sapped of his strength and had no choice but to come to a halt, and in the next instant, a mouthful of fresh blood spurted from his mouth.

He had been too overwhelmed with rage earlier that he was completely oblivious to his current physical state, but as soon as he came to a halt, he felt a feeling of weakness swiftly consuming his entire body, placing him on the verge of fainting.

Even as a Saint 8-dan expert, he was still incapable of maintaining flight at full speed for three days straight without any rest.

Not to mention, the consecutive shocks he had sustained earlier had caused his zhenqi flow to descend into severe disarray. If not for the strong cultivation foundation that he had built up over the years, his cultivation could have very well gone berserk.

From the looks of it, it seems like there's no way I'll be able to catch up with them anymore... Seated by the edge of a cliff, Luo Xuanqing panted heavily as he thought with gritted teeth.

Jian Qinsheng and Zhang Xuan had left on an aerial saint beast. As fast as he may be, if he couldn't see any traces of them after chasing them for so long, it didn't seem too plausible that he would be able to catch up with them anymore.

But... not only did that fellow dupe him, he even seduced his younger sister and his goddess! It would be hard to quell the burning rage within his heart if he couldn't at least give the other party a beating he would never forget.

Should I contact my clan and have them liaise with the Zhang Clan to deal with that fellow? A thought suddenly popped up in Luo Xuanqing's head.

As long as he told his clan that the person whom his younger sister liked had gone to the Zhang Clan, they would surely be able to make ample preparations to trap and eliminate that fellow! With the two most powerful Sage Clans moving in unison to deal with him, there was no way Zhang Xuan would be able to get away!

But somehow, the thought of Zhang Xuan dying made the usually decisive him hesitate a little somehow.

But the First Elder has also instructed me to get close and avoid any conflicts with him. Furthermore, he's the direct disciple of Yang shi too... Luo Xuanqing was in a dilemma.

It was imperative for him to accomplish the missions assigned to him by the clan, and the First Elder did give him two clear missions. One was to get on close terms with Zhang Xuan, and the other one was to kill the man his younger sister liked!

But now that the two of them turned out to be the same person... was he to get close to him, or should he kill him?

At the same time, he suddenly felt that it might have been a little too rash of him to conclude that Zhang Xuan was the person whom his younger sister liked. While it was true that the latter was from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy too, it could have just been a coincidence.

All of these thoughts swarmed Luo Xuanqing's mind at once, leaving him feeling deeply lost all of a sudden.

At this moment, his eyebrows suddenly shot up. He flicked his wrist, and a Communication Jade Token appeared in his palm.

Tapping his finger on it lightly, there was a light 'Hu!' before an incomparably beautiful and seemingly flawless figure appeared before his sight.

"Sis... Aren't you grounded by the clan? How did you manage to contact me?" Luo Xuanqing widened his eyes upon seeing the other party, and he asked in agitation.

The person who was at the other end of the Communication Jade Token was no other than his younger sister, the little princess of the Luo Clan!

"The clan might have grounded me, but sending out a message is nothing too difficult to me." the young lady replied.

After assimilating the Dimension Silencer, her comprehension of space could be said to have reached a level comparable to their founder. If she wanted to, she could easily decipher the seal which the First Elder and the others had set up without alerting them.

"That's a relief! I happen to have something I need to verify with you..." Heaving a sigh of relief, Luo Xuanqing was just about to begin speaking when the young lady before him anxiously waved her hands and interjected.

"Brother, I need you to hear me out first. Even back when we were still young, you have always been very doting of me, looking out for me at every corner and secretly getting me what I want, and I am really grateful for that. There is one

thing which I really need your help, and I hope that you can offer me your strength!”

Luo Xuanqing could roughly fathom what his younger sister was about to say, but facing her pleading and desperate eyes, he hesitated for a brief moment before eventually nodding in agreement, “As long as it’s within my means, I’ll do my best to help you.”

For his younger sister, he would even tread up a mountain of blades or dive into a sea of flames for her if he needed to!

Hearing those words, relief visibly flickered across the young lady’s face. “As you know, I already have someone that I like... Our clan has already dispatched some men to the place where I have been to, and there’s no doubt that they will attempt to kill him. I hope that you can protect him. Please, don’t allow any harm to come to him!”

“You want me to protect him?” Luo Xuanqing’s eyes widened in astonishment.

“That’s right.” The young lady nodded. “He’s only an ordinary cultivator. He shouldn’t lose his life just because I like him. This isn’t fair for him!”

She turned her gaze toward Luo Xuanqing, and with an expectant and pleading look in her eyes, she said, “Brother, you know that I have never pleaded anyone for anything, but just this once... I’m pleading with you, please protect him!”

“I...” Luo Xuanqing’s clenched fists trembled uncontrollably. He wanted to tell her that he had already promised the clan to kill that fellow, but in the end, he still held himself back at the very last moment.

In the end, he still couldn’t bear to see his younger sister unhappy.

He took in several deep breaths before nodding in resignation, “I’ll protect him...”

“I knew that you are the best! I’ll be entrusting him to you then.” A beautiful smile reminiscent of a flower bloomed on the young lady’s lips. “No matter what, please look after him and don’t allow anyone to hurt him...”

“I’ll have to go now. Even though I’m able to send messages out, the others might notice that something is amiss if I do so too frequently, and that could cause unnecessary complications.”

As she said those words, the young lady’s silhouette began to flicker, and it seemed as if her image would dissipate at any moment soon.

“Wait a moment! You told me to protect the person that you liked, but you haven’t told me what his name is and where he is at the moment.” Even though he had a good idea whom the person was, he still wanted to verify it with his younger sister.

“His name Zhang Xuan, and he’s currently in Qingyuan Empire!” the young lady’s voice drifted across with a tone filled with saudade and fondness before gradually dissipating along with her silhouette.

“As I expected!” Hearing his younger sister’s confirmation, Luo Xuanqing’s face turned frighteningly livid. “Zhang Xuan...”

Even Luo Xuanqing himself was unable to clearly discern his current emotions, whether it rage or indignance that he was feeling. But these emotions swarmed relentlessly to his mind and to his heart, leaving him feeling as if he would explode from them.

...

“Ah choo!”

Amidst the sky, Zhang Xuan was seated on the back of a saint beast when he suddenly sneezed. Rubbing his nose, a confused look appeared on his face.

“Is someone thinking of me again? Being too outstanding sure is troublesome, hai!”

1424 Studying the Sanctum Head Token

He had been sneezing ever since he left the Sanctum of Sages. The person who was thinking of him sure was persistent!

That's why I should maintain a low profile at all times. Otherwise, if Luo Ruoxin realizes that so many people like me, she won't be happy, Zhang Xuan thought with a nod.

And to be honest, he had indeed been much more low profile ever since he entered the Sanctum of Sages. The only time he had been high profile was when he challenged the Tower of Master Teachers.

Otherwise, how could the Cultivation Technique Forest and even the entire Inner Sanctum still be intact?

He had already been actively trying to play it cool!

Ah, it sure is tiring maintaining a low profile, Zhang Xuan thought as he rubbed his glabella.

If not for his wish to maintain a low profile, he would have simply taken Vicious' upper body out. At the very least, he would not have just stopped with challenging a mere Tower of Master Teachers and breaking a couple of records.

Do you know how difficult it was to suppress myself?

However, this worked out fine as well. It was aligned with his humble personality anyway.

Having spent a year as a cultivator, he understood the deep importance of maintaining a low profile. If he had gone around boasting about his strength and trump cards like his clone did, he probably would have already died.

After a brief moment of thought, he flicked his wrist, whipped out a token, and began assessing it closely.

It was the Sanctum Head Token that he had received from Sage Kui.

The first layer of the seal on it had unraveled back when he received his 8-star master teacher emblem after clearing the Tower of Master Teachers. However, he had not had the time to examine it closely back then. Since he had some time on his hand now, it would be a good opportunity to study its changes.

At this very moment, the Sanctum Head Token was emanating a warm glow. Stroking it lightly with his hand, he could immediately feel a will surging into his consciousness. Even though his physical body remained motionless in the real world, he felt as if his consciousness was being dragged into a peculiar space.

Hu!

The next thing he knew, Sage Kui was standing right before him with a faint smile on his lips.

“You sure became an 8-star master teacher fast. The rate at which you are growing has far surpassed my imagination!” A hint of approval could be heard in Sage Kui’s voice. “How far have you cultivated your Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld to? Let me take a look!”

“Regarding that... to be honest, I haven’t started cultivating that optic art yet,” Zhang Xuan replied awkwardly.

There were simply so many errors in that optic art that he could not bring himself to cultivate it. In fact, after he had obtained it, he could not even be bothered to give it a second glance.

Hearing those words, Sage Kui frowned. “If you don’t cultivate the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld, how are you going to remove the seals on the Sanctum Head Token and be officially inaugurated as the new sanctum head?”

The most crucial requirement for becoming the real sanctum head was the cultivation of the Eye of Insight to the realm of Demon Vanquisher, and it was impossible to reach that level without cultivating the optic art.

“I do want to cultivate it, but the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld is a little... Never mind! Do you have any optic arts with you? If possible, I would like to borrow a couple of

them for reference purposes!” Fearing that Sage Kui would be unable to take the trauma if he criticized the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld once more, Zhang Xuan swiftly changed his words.

The cultivation of the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld would only be a viable option to him after he successfully upgraded it into a Heaven’s Path battle technique. After all, he had no intention of cultivating a battle technique only to end up becoming color blind or even completely blind at that!

“Only my teacher, Ancient Sage Bo Shang, has the ability to create a battle technique as profound and abstract as optic art. There’s no way you will be able to find another optic art out there on the Master Teacher Continent!” Sage Kui shook his head. “May I know which part of the optic art you are confused about? Feel free to speak of it, and I’ll slowly explain it to you.”

“It’s fine. I’ll try deciphering it myself for now.” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

It seemed like, in terms of capabilities, Sage Kui still came nowhere close to comparing to Ancient Sage Qiu Wu. The latter’s fragmented souls were still capable of communicating with one another whereas the Sage Kui in front of him was clearly unaware of his conversation with the Sage Kui in the Mountain Gate examination.

“It’s fine?” A displeased look materialized on Sage Kui’s face. “What do you mean by that? In order to become the next sanctum head, you must cultivate the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld! I have spent many years cultivating that technique, and my insights will allow you to swiftly grasp the technique! Or perhaps, do you think that your understanding of the technique is even deeper than mine?”

“Elder, that’s not what I mean. To tell you the truth, there’s a doubt that has been in my mind for a while that I would like to clarify with you.” Knowing that Sage Kui’s time was probably limited, Zhang Xuan did not want to waste time talking about the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld. At this point, he suddenly recalled what he had noted back at the Inner

Sanctum, so he decided to make use of this opportunity to obtain some answers.

“Feel free to speak!” Hearing that Zhang Xuan had a question to ask him, Sage Kui flicked his hand behind his back grandly and assumed the image of a powerful expert.

“If I’m not mistaken, there’s a skeletal frame of an Otherworldly Demon Emperor in a sculpture of yours in the Inner Sanctum. I’m curious to know how you managed to suppress its aura to the point where it’s almost indiscernible.” Zhang Xuan revealed his doubts.

He had been wondering about this matter ever since leaving the Inner Sanctum, but he was just unable to make sense of it.

Since Sage Kui’s will had appeared before him once more, this would be a good opportunity for him to seek an answer to that.

“You know that there’s a skeletal frame of an Otherworldly Demon Emperor in my sculpture?” Sage Kui’s eyes widened in astonishment. In an instant, the image of a powerful expert that he had just built up shattered, and disbelief could clearly be seen on his face.

“Indeed. If I’m not mistaken, the Otherworldly Demon Emperor was an ancient figure in your era known as Vicious!” Zhang Xuan elaborated.

Considering that Sage Kui was Kong shi’s grandstudent, he should have heard of Vicious.

“You... know of Vicious?” Sage Kui’s cheeks began twitching.

“How did you manage to seal his upper body in your sculpture without any hint of his aura leaking out?” Zhang Xuan asked once more.

“This...” Sage Kui was stunned. Hearing the affirmative tone behind the young man’s voice, Sage Kui hesitated for a brief moment before sighing deeply. “Since you have already seen through this much, I guess there’s no harm in telling you the truth. You’re right, the skeletal frame that is sealed in that sculpture in the Inner Sanctum indeed belongs to Vicious. Many years ago, when I first found it, a will had already

developed within it. In order to prevent its resurrection, I could only make use of Kong shi's strength to suppress it."

"Kong shi's strength?"

"Yes. The Inner Sanctum is located in the very center of the formations of the Five Halls, and by using Kong shi's personal handwriting and the fortune harnessed in this very land, I was able to suppress it thoroughly, to the point where it's rendered completely helpless to retaliate," Sage Kui explained.

Hearing that, Zhang Xuan swiftly went through the relative position of the Inner Sanctum to the Five Halls, and indeed, the Inner Sanctum was located at the very center of their formations.

That would explain why it was so rich in spiritual energy and the overwhelming academic aura that lingered there.

"Back then, when Vicious fought against Kong shi, his strength had already reached a level surpassing all Ancient Sages on the Master Teacher Continent. At his peak, he was an entity whom none of us could match. In order to prevent his resurrection, I could only make use of all resources I had at my disposal to suppress him." Sage Kui shook his head.

After which, he turned a doubtful gaze to Zhang Xuan and asked, "The aura of the skeletal frame should have been suppressed to the point where it's completely indiscernible. How did you manage to notice it when your Eye of Insight is only at the third realm?"

There had been several generations of sanctum heads prior to him, and their mastery of the Eye of Insight had far exceeded his, but even so, they had been unable to notice the presence of the skeletal frame. Yet, the young man before him had actually noticed that something was in the sculpture and was even able to discern what it was clearly. How in the world did he manage to do it?

"I only managed to notice it by coincidence," Zhang Xuan replied perfunctorily, not bothering to explain.

"Regardless of how you noticed it, listen to my advice and don't even try to touch it. Even Saint 9-dan cultivators might

not necessarily have the strength to stand against it.” Seeing that Zhang Xuan was unwilling to talk too much about the matter, Sage Kui did not probe. Nevertheless, he still felt compelled to issue a warning.

“What if I have the confidence to tame the skeletal frame and prevent it from doing harm? Would it be fine if I take it out?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Given that he possessed the Book of Heaven’s Path, not to mention that Vicious’ head was under his control, he was very certain that he would be able to take down Vicious’ upper body too. However, he was just unsure if there was any way that he could retrieve the upper body without resulting in any adverse consequences for the Inner Sanctum.

“You want to tame Vicious’ skeletal frame?” Hearing those words, Sage Kui was clearly startled for a moment before he shook his head. “It’s good that you intend to contribute to mankind, but I can tell you for certain that it’s impossible. Even Kong shi failed to do it back then, so do you think that you’ll really be able to do it?”

1425 Who Is the Sanctum Head?

It was no wonder why Sage Kui didn't believe Zhang Xuan was able to do it. If even Kong shi was unable to accomplish that deed, there was little hope that anyone in the Master Teacher Continent would be able to do so.

Just the fact that Vicious was able to trap Kong shi back then was more than enough to show how powerful he was. Considering how Zhang Xuan's cultivation was only at a mere Grand Dominion realm pinnacle, it wouldn't make any difference no matter what kind of incredible means he had up his sleeves.

"You don't believe me?" Noting Sage Kui's expression, Zhang Xuan chuckled lightly and said, "Follow me!"

After saying those words, he retracted his consciousness back to his physical body and went into his Myriad Anthive Nest. Then, he grabbed the token tightly once more.

Boom!

A massive head appeared within the Myriad Anthive Nest. It floated quietly in midair, emanating a frightening aura.

"Master." Vicious greeted.

"T-this..." Sage Kui's will flickered wildly, nearly dissipating on the spot.

Having once suppressed Vicious, he could identify the latter's will and body with ease. Even though the massive head was a celestial designer artifact, the will and life within it was indubitably Vicious'.

To think that the legendary Vicious who had Kong shi trapped for three whole months in the ancient era would actually end up serving a young lad as his master...

“I have successfully tamed his heart, finger, and head, and I’m in the midst of collecting his other parts. Since his skeletal body with you, is there any way I can retrieve it safely? I think this would also be much safer in the long run as well.” Zhang Xuan said.

Naturally, the best case scenario was for him to retrieve the skeletal frame without causing the collapse of the Inner Sanctum.

In the very depths of his heart, he didn’t like causing destruction at all. Wherever it could be avoided, it should be avoided. Besides, once he became the sanctum head, the Inner Sanctum could be said to be under him as well, and destroying his own home base didn’t seem like a very good idea...

“T-this... This can’t be happening!” Sage Kui was still overwhelmed by the sheer shock of what he had seen, and his body flickered in and out of existence.

“He’s already right before your eyes, and I believe you can tell for yourself whether he’s really Vicious or not.” Seeing Sage Kui’s excessive reaction toward such a trivial matter, Zhang Xuan couldn’t help but shake his head in disapproval.

How in the world can you be shocked at every single thing? Are you sure that you are really Kong shi’s grandstudent... Somehow, it feels like you are a countryside bumpkin who hasn’t seen the larger world outside yet!

No matter how formidable Vicious was when he was alive, he had been divided into many pieces after his death, and every individual part wasn’t particularly powerful. As such, it shouldn’t come as much of a shock that he managed to tame them.

It took some time before Sage Kui finally recovered from his shock. With a bitter smile, he said, “Since you are capable of taming him, I guess there should be no harm handing the skeletal frame over to you. However, the seal to decipher it is rather complicated, so it might be quite troublesome on your part...”

“Please enlighten me.” Hearing that there was a method to retrieve Vicious’ upper body without causing any destruction, Zhang Xuan hurriedly clasped his fist.

“I sealed the skeletal frame using a spatial secret art so as to fuse it entirely with my sculpture. If you wish to separate the both of them, you must destroy it and...” In the midst of his words, Sage Kui’s will flickered once more, and before he could finish his words, he had already vanished from the spot with a light ‘hu!’, as if an extinguished candleflame.

It seemed like the shock he had received had far exceeded his tolerance limit, causing him to dissipate on the spot.

“You...” Zhang Xuan was frenzied.

Just what in the heck was wrong with these ancestors? How in the world could each of them be so unreliable?

Kong shi disappeared in the midst of his words, Ancient Sage Qiu Wu did so too, and now, even this fellow was doing it too...

Was it some kind of tradition for them to do that, or was this just a twisted sense of humor they had back in their era?

Forget it... Even though Zhang Xuan felt deeply stifled, he knew that there was no point for him to lose temper now especially since Sage Kui was already gone.

Thus, he could only rub his glabella and turn his eyes back to the Sanctum Head Token.

After the removal of the first seal, it had visibly become more smooth and radiant, and ripples of powerful energy could be seen flowing on its surface, reflecting the massive might that it wielded.

Is this... a Saint pinnacle artifact? Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up in excitement as he stroked its surface with his fingers lightly.

He wasn’t too sure just what tier the item was, but he was certain that it was far stronger than the Lingxu Sword in his possession.

If the two of them were to clash with one another, it was almost certain that the one to shatter would be his Lingxu

Sword... Just from that in itself, it could be seen that the token was definitely a Saint pinnacle artifact at the very minimum.

But perhaps it was due to the presence of the seal, despite its high tier, there wasn't the slightest hint of spirit infused into the token. Its only unique property seemed to be its resilient exterior and its peculiarly sharp tip.

Nevertheless, it could still display exceptional might when utilized in the right situation.

Even a Saint 8-dan cultivator could be easily cornered by the prowess of a Saint pinnacle artifact! As long as he were to use it well, he might be able to slay even the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast!

As expected of the personal artifact of the sanctum head, it was indeed no ordinary treasure.

I wonder what kind of changes would happen to the token once I unseal the second layer of seal...

The changes in the token after the unsealing of its first seal was already quite a huge surprise in itself, so Zhang Xuan couldn't help but wonder what would happen once the second seal was unsealed too.

While Zhang Xuan was chatting with Sage Kui and examining the Sanctum Head Token closely, in the Premier Hall of the Sanctum of Sages, where generations of sanctum heads and deputy sanctum heads resided, brilliant rays of light began bursting forth in close intervals, and the flurried chimes of a bell could be heard booming across the entire area.

"What's happening?" Zhan shi, Elder Ge, and the others hurriedly rushed over to the grand hall as they exclaimed in astonishment.

As a representation of the authority of the Sanctum of Sages, no one would ever dare to fool around here. Just what in the world could have happened to induce such a huge commotion?

"It's coming from the sculptures of the preceding sanctum heads!" an elder exclaimed.

Everyone hurriedly turned their sights over and saw the many sculptures of the many generations of sanctum heads shaking non-stop. The deafening bell chimes were echoing from them.

“The trembling of the sculptures should be a representation... of their shock? But what could have happened to leave them in such a state?” Elder Ge muttered in astonishment.

Every single generation of sanctum head was a top-notch expert, possessing experience and eye of discernment that far surpassed any other cultivator in the Master Teacher Continent. It was unimaginable just what kind of major incident could have happened to have placed them in such a state.

This was inconceivable!

“Could this mean... the Sanctum Head Token has surfaced?” A thought suddenly came to Zhan shi’s mind, and he muttered softly with a pale face.

“The Sanctum Head Token has surfaced? Do you mean that the Sanctum of Sages is about to usher in another true sanctum head?”

The many elders gathered in the area hurriedly turned their sights to Zhan shi.

Only a true sanctum head candidate would have the right to wield and control the Sanctum Head Token. If that artifact had surfaced once more, it would spell that the real sanctum head was on the rise as well.

“That’s right... That person should have received Sage Kui’s approval and successfully removed one of the seals on it. Otherwise, it shouldn’t be possible for such a huge commotion to occur.” Zhan shi nodded.

“But in order to become the sanctum head, one must possess the Eye of Insight! Just who could that person be?”

The faces of the crowd reddened in agitation.

Each time a real sanctum head appeared, the overall prowess of the Sanctum of Sages would surge forth, as if entering an era of swift development. It would be truly beneficial to them

with a true sanctum head were to appear at this moment and lead them forward, especially during this era which felt like the calm before the storm!

“The sanctum head candidate’s identity won’t be revealed until he fully awakens the Sanctum Head Token...” Zhan shi said grimly.

It was a tradition for the sanctum head candidate to conceal his identity until the inauguration ceremony. This served as a mean to protect the sanctum head until he gained the strength to protect himself.

Given the huge commotion that had occurred, it seemed like the sanctum head candidate had received the approval of the preceding sanctum heads, but the fact that he hadn’t revealed his identity yet likely meant that he wasn’t fully ready to succeed as the next sanctum head yet...

A moment later, Zhan shi instructed, “Go and check who recently made a breakthrough to Saint 8-dan or successfully became an 8-star master teacher...”

As the deputy sanctum head, he was still aware of the various conditions required to remove the seals on the Sanctum Head Token.

“Alright!” one of the elders hurriedly backed out of the room, and soon, he returned with a look of disbelief on his face.

“Reporting to Zhan shi, Yang shi’s student, Feng Zyi... has challenged the Tower of Master Teachers and cleared it!”

1426 Connate Sainthood

“Feng Ziyi also successfully cleared the Tower of Master Teachers?”

A wave of silence swept across the crowd. Zhan shi and the others were rendered speechless.

In the several dozen millenniums since the creation of the Tower of Master Teachers, there had only been three people who had managed to clear the trial. Just what in the world had happened recently? There had been two consecutive challengers, and both of them had actually cleared it.

“How long did he take?” one of the elders could not resist asking.

Zhang Xuan had used roughly fifteen minutes, so how long did Feng Ziyi take to clear it?

“Almost an entire day,” the elder who had gone out to investigate earlier replied.

“A day... His record might be beneath that of Zhang shi, but it’s definitely an outstanding achievement. Considering how the wills of the sanctum heads began reacting right after he became an 8-star master teacher... could he possibly be the sanctum head candidate?” Zhan shi deduced.

“I think it’s very likely!”

The other elders swiftly nodded in agreement.

Even though Zhang shi had cleared the Tower of Master Teachers very quickly, there was no peculiar phenomenon occurring right after he cleared it. On the other hand, just moments after Feng Ziyi became an 8-star master teacher, the wills of the sanctum heads began trembling in shock. Could it be that he had received Sage Kui’s recognition and become the only current candidate to the position of the sanctum head?

“But considering how Feng Ziyi is Yang shi’s direct disciple, it’s only a matter of time before he returns to the Master

Teacher Pavilion headquarters. Why would Sage Kui choose him as a sanctum head candidate?”

“I have no idea either. However, Sage Kui’s wisdom is not something that the likes of us can fathom, and perhaps, he might have seen something far beyond what we can see.”

“To be honest, if a sanctum head does appear in this generation, I would think that the likelihood of Zhang shi being him is higher. According to the rumors I have heard, he’s Feng Ziyi’s senior, and on the whole, the capability and the potential that he has displayed far surpasses that of the other students.”

“One of the requirements to becoming a sanctum head candidate is the possession of the Eye of Insight. No matter how talented Zhang shi may be, even if he’s on par with the little princess of the Luo Clan, as long as he doesn’t possess the Eye of Insight, all would be for naught!”

“That’s true...”

Frowns emerged on the elders’ faces as they heatedly discussed the issue with one another.

Both Zhang Xuan and Feng Ziyi were possible sanctum head candidates. It was still impossible for them to confirm which of the two it would be, but most of them were leaning toward Feng Ziyi.

“I think there’s at least a 90% chance that it’s Feng Ziyi. Zhang shi would likely be the one to succeed Yang shi’s position in the future, so there wouldn’t be a problem for Feng Ziyi to take on the role of our sanctum head.”

In the first place, the elders were all working on speculation, so even after a lengthy discussion, they were still unable to come to a conclusion.

Eventually, Zhan shi stepped forward and said, “Alright, there’s no point debating this anymore. We have narrowed the potential sanctum head candidate to just two people, and that’s good progress. For the time being, make sure that none of what we have discussed today gets leaked. Also, none of you

are to show any disrespect to the two of them, and make sure to satisfy every one of their requests wherever possible.”

The elders nodded. “Understood!”

...

The Zhang Clan was located a far distance away from the Sanctum of Sages. Even when riding on Jian Qinsheng’s tamed aerial beast, it would still take nearly an entire month to get there.

With too much free time on his hands, after he was done examining the sanctum head token, Zhang Xuan began reinforcing his cultivation.

It took him three days to fully reinforce his Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivation, and after that, he spent a couple more days retempering his physical body and Primordial Spirit. Afterward, he suddenly found himself at a complete loss over what he should do.

Eventually, he ended up spending most of his time discussing swordsmanship with Jian Qinsheng, and the latter benefited greatly from his unique and sharp insights regarding swordsmanship.

With that leisurely atmosphere, twenty days passed in a flash.

“We should be reaching the Zhang Clan in around two days’ time.” Studying the meandering mountain range and long rivers beneath them, Jian Qinsheng swiftly deduced their location, and he could not help but tremble in agitation.

Just two more days, and he would be able to cleanse himself of the humiliation that he had suffered so far. He would be able to trample that haughty and boastful Xingmeng Sword Saint beneath his feet. Just the thought of it was sufficient to leave surges of exhilaration coursing through his body.

“If we barge in on the Zhang Clan’s Clan Assembly and challenge them on such a grand occasion, wouldn’t it be in breach of the master teacher’s value of ‘propriety’?” Zhang Xuan asked Jian Qinsheng.

As much as he wanted to teach the Zhang Clan a lesson, he was also well aware of his identity as a master teacher. He had to pay careful heed to his standing and act within the scope of what was deemed appropriate by society.

“To tell you the truth, I’m not the one who initiated this challenge. On the contrary, they were the ones who invited me over to challenge them. The Zhang Clan’s Clan Assembly is more than just an occasion for the members of the Zhang Clan to gather and discuss major affairs; more than that, it’s also used as a platform for the Zhang Clan to reinforce their prestige and influence as the number one Sage Clan in the Master Teacher Continent!” Jian Qinsheng harrumphed coldly.

The Zhang Clan would usually send out invitations to others to attend their Clan Assembly.

The motive was simple—to display the overwhelming might of the Zhang Clan to the rest of the world!

If it had been in the past, Jian Qinsheng would have surely become nothing more than a stepping stone to further the Zhang Clan’s reputation. But now that he had Zhang Xuan, a one-of-a-kind genius who had successfully grasped two Sword Quintessences, on his side, no matter how powerful the younger generation cultivators of the Zhang Clan were, who could possibly be a match for him?

“Do they send out invitations to all major powers?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

“I’m not too sure either, but that does seem to be the case. For every Clan Assembly that they’ve hosted so far, they invited many people from all walks of life to participate. There were demonic tunists, apothecaries, blacksmiths, beast tamers... Most occupation guilds received a couple of invitations, and they dispatched their most outstanding juniors to attend. While the pretext was to have them observe the Clan Assembly, in truth, it was to allow those of the younger generation to spar with one another and further their experiences.”

Even though Jian Qinsheng did not like the Zhang Clan, he still could not help but remark, “Even though it’s clear that they were utilizing the Clan Assembly as a platform to boast

of their prowess, they are indeed a force to be reckoned with. There are simply too few in the younger generation who are able to match their counterparts in the Zhang Clan!”

“Most occupation guilds received a couple of invitations?” At this point, Zhang Xuan could not help but recall what he had heard from Bi Hongyin back then.

Back then, when the young prodigy was born, it seemed like they had invited quite a few renowned figures from the various occupations, and her teacher happened to be one of them.

“The previous Zhang Clan’s Clan Assembly happened twenty years ago, during the young prodigy’s full month celebration. Back then, the few students of mine were all defeated by a single person.” Recalling the situation back then, a bitter look appeared on Jian Qinsheng’s face.

Just the direct disciple of the Xingmeng Sword Saint had been enough to render all of his students completely helpless, and that incident had truly shredded his dignity into many pieces.

That matter had been on his mind throughout the years, bubbling furiously inside of him without any avenues to release it.

If not for meeting Zhang Xuan, there was a good chance that he would never have been able to exact vengeance in his entire lifetime.

“The young prodigy’s full month celebration... Speaking of which, since you attended the previous Clan Assembly, did you meet the young prodigy?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Of course I did! Even though he was still very young then, there was an imposing air shrouding him, as if the essence of the heavens was infused right into him. Just a glance at him left me trembling at my core, feeling deeply ashamed of my form.”

Recalling that sight from twenty years ago, Jian Qinsheng could not help but fall into deep thought. “Really, I just can’t understand why the Xing Sword Saint would be blessed with such luck. Not only does he possess amazing aptitude in swordsmanship, he also sure has a way with giving birth. I can

tell you that never in my life have I seen a child as talented as that boy!”

“A child who’s just barely a month old... just what kind of talent could he possibly have? Isn’t that a little too exaggerated?” Zhang Xuan’s complexion did not look too good.

If that child was really as outstanding as Jian Qinsheng made him out to be, his name would have resounded throughout the Master Teacher Continent by now. How could he not have appeared publicly even once?

“Exaggerated?” Jian Qinsheng shook his head. “It’s no exaggeration at all.”

“Oh?”

“What I’m saying really comes from the bottom of my heart. If you don’t trust me... let me ask you this. Have you ever heard of Connate Sainthood?” Jian Qinsheng asked.

“Connate Sainthood?” Zhang Xuan frowned, unsure of what that term was referring to.

“It refers to a person born intrinsically with Saint realm cultivation,” Jian Qinsheng said.

“Born with Saint realm cultivation? H-how could that be?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

It had taken him a great deal of effort in order to cultivate to Sainthood—just the fact that it had taken him more than six months to do so said a lot about the matter! And yet, there actually existed individuals in the world who were born with Saint realm cultivation? Surely not even the heavens would be so biased toward an individual?

At the very least, there was not a person whom he knew who was a Connate Saint, and this included Luo Ruoxin as well.

“Indeed. I couldn’t believe it the first time I saw it either, but the truth is as such,” Jian Qinsheng remarked deeply.

At this point, he could not help but recall something, and he remarked, “It might seem weird to say this, especially since the young prodigy was only a month old when I saw him, but I

must say that there's really some degree of resemblance between you and him..."

1427 It's Him?

“There’s some degree of resemblance between me and the young prodigy?” Zhang Xuan was startled for a moment before he shook his head bitterly. “How could that be?”

He had already checked it with Zhang Jiuxiao’s blood essence, and it had already been proven that he was not a member of the Zhang Clan.

Besides, if he really was the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan, how could he have ended up as an orphan in the Tianxuan Kingdom without a single person looking for him at all?

Furthermore, the fact that the young prodigy was a Connate Saint further disproved that hypothesis. Zhang Xuan could still remember that he had only been at Fighter 3-dan Zhenqi realm when he first transcended to the Master Teacher Continent, so how could he possibly be the young prodigy?

Well, the young prodigy might have been a person blessed by the heavens... but so what?

He would make sure that anyone who dared vie with him for Luo Ruoxin would end up crawling around the floor, searching for his shattered teeth!

“I’m not saying that you are from the Zhang Clan, just that the look in your eyes really resembles that of the young boy I saw back then. But of course, considering how long it has been since then, I think my memory could be failing me too.” Jian Qinsheng shook his head and chuckled softly.

Considering the talent that the young prodigy harnessed, he would surely be put under the tightest guard of the Zhang Clan and put through the strictest of education. There was no way that he would have been allowed to roam outside and become an itinerant cultivator!

Unless the Zhang Clan had their heads kicked by a donkey, there was no way that they would allow such a thing to happen!

...

While Jian Qinsheng was chatting with Zhang Xuan on the back of the aerial saint beast, a figure was swiftly flitting toward the cloud-shrouded Zhang Clan, and it did not take long for him to arrive at its doorstep.

The figure handed a name scroll over and clasped his fist.

“Yang shi’s butler Hu Yiwei requests an audience with the head of the Zhang Clan!”

It was none other than the man who competed with Sun Qiang for the position of Yang shi’s butler, the Left Guardian of the Poison Hall, Hu Yiwei.

In this instant, he looked completely exhausted, and even his aura seemed to be a little unstable.

After leaving the Sanctum of Sages, he did not rush off to look for Yang shi but headed for the Zhang Clan. Looking back, he had been flying for roughly an entire month now.

“Please give me a moment!” Hearing that the visitor was Hu Yiwei, one of the guards hurriedly rushed in, and not too long later, he returned and ushered Hu Yiwei in. “Elder, this way please!”

“Yes.” Hu Yiwei followed the guard into the courtyard, and after a few twists and turns, he finally arrived at a rather spacious room.

In the room, a middle-aged man sat on the main seat, and there was a fatigued look on his face. Upon seeing Hu Yiwei, the middle-aged man stretched his hand forward and said, “Brother Hu, it has been long since we last met. Please, take a seat.”

“Paying respects to Sword Saint Xing!” Not daring to carelessly take a seat even at the other party’s invitation, Hu Yiwei respectfully clasped his fist and bowed down.

He was a 9-star poison master who was capable of causing devastating damage with a wave of his hand, but before the middle-aged man, he dared not pull his weight.

Putting aside swordsmanship, just in terms of fighting prowess, he was far from a match against the middle-aged man standing before him.

“There’s no need to stand on ceremony!” The middle-aged man waved his hand.

“I’m here to ask about my master’s whereabouts. Half a year ago, when I parted with him, he said that he was heading for the Zhang Clan.” Hu Yiwei lifted his head and asked, “May I know if he’s here at the moment?”

“Yang shi is indeed here, but he’s currently in seclusion. I’m afraid that this wouldn’t be a good time to contact him,” the middle-aged man replied.

“Seclusion?” Hearing those words, a hint of anxiety flashed across Hu Yiwei’s face. It seemed like he had something to say, but he had no idea how he should bring it up.

“What’s wrong? Feel free to speak your mind...” Seeing through Hu Yiwei’s thoughts, the middle-aged man frowned.

Hu Yiwei hesitated for a moment before gritting his teeth with determination and revealing, “It’s like this... Just a while ago, I found a talented young man who is in his early twenties, and while I’m not too sure about it, I seem to have vaguely sensed the presence of the Innate Fetal Poison that I planted twenty years ago!”

“The Innate Fetal Poison that you have planted?” Hearing those words, the middle-aged man immediately stood up from sheer agitation, and his body trembled non-stop. Seemingly unable to believe what he had just heard, he anxiously asked, “Are you certain about it?”

“It has been years since I planted the poison, and it has been whittled down to the point that it’s extremely weak, but still, I don’t think I would make a mistake recognizing it. I’m quite certain of it,” Hu Yiwei said with an affirmative nod.

“What’s his name, and where is he now?” the middle-aged man asked in agitation.

His previous composure had vanished without a trace, and his voice had become a little hurried.

“His name is Zhang Xuan, and he’s currently in the Sanctum of Sages,” Hu Yiwei said.

“Zhang Xuan? His name is a little off, but his surname is still Zhang.” The middle-aged man frowned for a moment before a thought seemed to have suddenly struck him, and his eyes lit up in excitement and agitation. “It must be him. There’s no doubt about it—it must be him! Quick, invite him over to the Zhang Clan...”

Halfway through his instruction, the middle-aged man suddenly halted for a moment before shaking his head. “No, that would take too long. I’ll head over there myself!”

As he said those words, he walked down from his seat as he whipped out a Communication Jade Token and sent a message through it. Not too long later, a middle-aged lady flew over in a fluster.

Even though age had left its marks on her, one could still vaguely see traces of the ravishing beauty that she had been in her youth from her face and figure.

On top of that, she also carried a sharp disposition reminiscent of an unsheathed sword that would split one in two in an instant.

Sword Saint Meng, Wang Mengya!

“There’s news on him? Is that true?” With reddened eyes, Sword Saint Meng questioned him with a deeply apprehensive look, as if frightened to raise her expectations only to have everything come crashing down on her once more.

The middle-aged man gestured to Hu Yiwei and said, “Brother Hu said that he encountered a talented young man in his twenties in the Sanctum of Sages, and he sensed the Innate Fetal Poison that he planted back then in him.”

Sword Saint Meng anxiously turned her gaze toward Hu Yiwei to seek confirmation.

“Madam, I can swear on the heavens that my words are true.” Hu Yiwei bowed deeply to Sword Saint Meng before swiftly going through what he had said earlier once more.

By the end of it, Sword Saint Meng's body was already shaking uncontrollably, and her eyes were glistened with tears. With a hoarse voice, she turned to her husband and said in agitation, "It must be him; it's definitely him! I'll be heading off to the Sanctum of Sages right now. Are you coming with me?"

"Of course I'm coming as well!" the middle-aged man exclaimed.

"The Clan Conference is just about to begin. Aren't you afraid that your old ancestor will be angry if you, the clan head, aren't around?" Sword Saint Meng harrumphed.

"We have given up so much for the clan that we should at least be entitled to this much selfishness! We have been searching for him for so many years, and this is the only time we have received concrete news on his whereabouts. If anyone stops me from making my way over, I swear that I'll slice him into shreds!" The middle-aged man flung his hand backward furiously as a domineering aura flowed forth from him.

The Sword Intent that poured out from him at that instant felt as if it would soar into the heavens and pierce through the boundless sky.

"Indeed, we have already done enough for the clan... So many years have passed since then, and we still don't know whether he's living well or starving." At this point, Sword Saint Meng found herself unable to continue any further, and she lowered her head quietly.

Droplets of tears dribbled down from her cheeks to the floor.

Seeing this, the middle-aged man wrapped his arm around his wife's shoulders and said, "Let's go."

Then, he waved his free hand.

Boom!

A furious roar sounded, and a saint beast swiftly appeared right before them. With a leap, Sword Saint Xing and Sword Saint Meng leaped onto its back.

“Brother Hu, I hope that you can keep what you have just said confidential. Also, I hope that you can keep our whereabouts a secret as well!” Standing on top of the aerial beast, the middle-aged man clasped his fist.

“Sword Saint Xing, please rest assured. I won’t speak a single word of this matter before others!” Hu Yiwei nodded.

He knew that the unbelievably powerful couple standing before him would surely chase him to the end of the world until he was finally escorted to his grave should he reveal a single word about the matter, so without the slightest bit of hesitation, he accepted their requests.

“You have my gratitude for that. If that person you spoke of is the person we have been searching for, the both of us will surely pay you a visit another day to thank you,” the middle-aged man said. “Also, you need not worry about Yang Shi. He’s currently cultivating in the Zhang Clan, and I can tell you for certain that his safety is guaranteed. You can stay here without worry; I have already informed him to look for you once he’s out of his seclusion!”

“Thank you, Sword Saint Xing!” Hu Yiwei clasped his fist.

“Un.” The middle-aged man nodded before tapping his feet lightly.

Hula!

The next instant, the saint beast immediately surged forth toward the skyline, heading in the direction of the Sanctum of Sages.

Shortly into their flight, they saw a saint beast flying in the opposite direction as them.

Recognizing the saint beast, the middle-aged man’s eyebrows knitted together.

“It’s Jian Qinsheng’s Cloudlight Saint Beast!”

1428 The Five Classifications of Swordsmanship

“Jian Qinsheng, that obstinate fellow? Let’s take a detour around him. If we bump into him, we will end up wasting a great deal of time. Right now, I only want to meet Zhang Xuan.”

The Meng Sword Saint nodded in agreement.

“Alright.”

Knowing that an encounter with Jian Qinsheng would probably dredge up all of their old grudges and stall them significantly, the middle-aged man tapped his feet lightly.

The aerial saint beast that they were riding on immediately dived into the clouds, disappearing without a trace.

“Hmm?”

In the portable room on the Cloudlight Saint Beast, a deep frown suddenly appeared on Jian Qinsheng’s forehead.

“What’s wrong?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Under normal circumstances, no one would keep their Spiritual Perception active at all times, so he did not notice the saint beast ahead of them diving into the clouds.

“It seems like a rather powerful aerial saint beast that was in our path has flown away.” Jian Qinsheng shook his head. “It’s fine! It’s good that it didn’t notice us, or else we would have been in deep trouble.”

As the head of the Zhang Clan, the Xing Sword Saint had multiple saint beasts under his command, and the one that he was currently riding on happened to be one that Jian Qinsheng did not recognize. On top of that, they were quite some distance away from one another, so Jian Qinsheng was unable to accurately discern the people riding on the saint beast.

There was, however, only one thing that Jian Qinsheng was certain of—the saint beast that had just moved out of their path possessed far greater strength than the Cloudlight Saint Beast that he was currently riding on.

To wield greater strength and yet simply turn around and leave, it was likely that the other party had not noticed them. Otherwise, they would have been in for a tough battle.

Even though his cultivation had reached Saint realm and he could fly freely without fear of plummeting to the ground, it was still rather disadvantageous for them to fight against a powerful aerial saint beast in the skies. If it was possible to avoid a fight, it would be best to do so.

“That’s fortunate!” Having understood this, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Deciding not to pay too much heed to the saint beast that had been in their path earlier, Jian Qinsheng swiftly confirmed their location and said with a chuckle, “We’re not too far away from the Zhang Clan anymore. As long as we speed up a little, we should be able to arrive in half a day’s time!”

“Elder Jian, since we are going to compete with the Zhang Clan in the field of swordsmanship, may I know what outstanding sword practitioners there are in Zhang Clan and what kind of Sword Quintessence they have comprehended?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Know one’s strength and one’s opponent, and one would attain a hundred victories in a hundred wars! He did not think that there were any sword practitioners in the same cultivation realm who were capable of matching him, but it was still best to tread carefully. Otherwise, if he ended up being defeated by those small fries... what right would he have to challenge that young prodigy and vie for Luo Ruoxin’s hand in marriage?

He only had a single goal for this trip to the Zhang Clan—establishing dominance!

As such, nothing could go wrong.

Even if that young prodigy appeared in the Clan Assembly, he would ensure that the other party learned of his prowess!

“Currently, in the younger generation of the Zhang Clan, the person who possesses the deepest understanding of swordsmanship is Zhang Xu. The Xingmeng Sword Saints once offered him pointers in his swordsmanship.” Jian Qinsheng harrumphed. “He’s also the fellow who came to my residence before, wanting to access my library, only to be chased away by me.”

“Zhang Xu?” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding.

He had heard of the matter between Zhang Xu and Jian Qinsheng from Shui Qianrou, and it was precisely due to that incident that led to him thinking that Jian Qinsheng had an eccentric temper.

From the looks of it now, it was rather clear that it was not on a whim that Jian Qinsheng chased Zhang Xu away. Given the deep grudge between him and the head of the Zhang Clan, it was only natural that he would not be too fond of the offspring of the Zhang Clan.

“That’s right. In total, Sword Quintessences can be divided into five main classifications. The Old Sword Maestro’s devastating offensive swordsmanship and Ancestor Liushui’s impregnable defensive swordsmanship correspond to Strength and Defense respectively. Other than that, there are also Dexterity, Speed, and Void,” Jian Qinsheng explained grimly.

“Void?” Hearing a foreign term, Zhang Xuan could not help being confused.

He could roughly comprehend what Dexterity and Speed entailed, but what would Void be?

“To be honest, I don’t have a clear grasp of what Void is at the moment either. In the present day and age, it could be said to be somewhat like a legend among sword practitioners. Rumor has it that Kong shi reached this level back then, and with just a casual swing of his blade, even if his swing wasn’t fast, was lacking in strength, and was riddled with loopholes, his slash would still, by some inexplicable phenomenon, be able to overcome his opponent’s move with ease!” Jian Qinsheng explained.

“Only that which is truly non-existent can be considered as void. If my guess fails me not, in order to comprehend a Void Quintessence, one must fuse the other four Quintessences together. However, just comprehending a single Quintessence would already take a sword practitioner an entire life’s worth of time and effort. To comprehend four at once... to be honest, other than Kong shi, I don’t think that there’s anyone in this world who is capable of doing that.”

“I see.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had comprehended two Sword Quintessences, and in the field of swordsmanship, he was by no means weaker than Jian Qinsheng. Even though the latter’s description was very vague, he was still able to form a decent picture of what the latter was talking about.

While Sword Quintessence was commonly known as the pinnacle of swordsmanship on the Master Teacher Continent, it did not mean that it was the end of the road for sword practitioners. Those who had achieved Sword Quintessence would only come to realize that there were limitations to the current path of swordsmanship that they were pursuing, and there was still a greater peak above them. Most likely, the Void Sword Quintessence was a concept that would push one closer to that peak.

“The Sword Quintessence that the Zhang Clan specializes in is Speed. The swordsmanship that they execute pushes their speed to the extremes, to the point where the concept of time seemed to fall apart. It is due to this that the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship is deeply feared on the Master Teacher Continent.”

“Speed?” Zhang Xuan’s face turned grim.

The Zhang Clan’s unique bloodline was capable of controlling the flow of time—he had experienced that for himself, and without a doubt, it was an incredible ability.

Most likely, the Speed Sword Quintessence that they comprehended had something to do with their unique bloodline.

As the saying goes, of all martial arts in the world, there is no might that cannot be overcome; only true speed stands undefeated!

Speed would always be one of the crucial factors that determined the outcome of a battle.

For example, as powerful as Zhang Xuan's Sea Severing Sword was, it required lengthy preparation before it was ready for execution. If his opponent moved fast enough, it was possible to his opponent to interrupt him in the midst of his preparation.

“Indeed. The speed of their swordsmanship tears down the very boundaries of time, such that even the Flowing Water Swordsmanship wouldn't be able to hold its grounds too long against it before being breached. On top of that, any attempts to launch a counterattack would only be rendered futile by their absolute speed. This is also the reason my students suffered a tragic loss the last time around.” Jian Qinsheng shook his head.

Even though he knew where the foundation of the Zhang Clan's swordsmanship lay, he simply was not able to find a sure-proof way to break it.

“If that's the case, doesn't it mean that it's impossible to achieve victory?” Zhang Xuan frowned. If even you are completely helpless against the Zhang Clan's swordsmanship, even if I'm slightly stronger than you, it should be impossible for me to win against them too, right?

“It wouldn't be easy to achieve victory, but it's definitely not impossible. Other than the Void Sword Quintessence, the remaining four types of Sword Quintessences are able to curb one another. By itself, it would be difficult for your Strength Sword Quintessence to stand against the overwhelming speed of the Zhang Clan. However, if it is used together with the Flowing Water Swordsmanship as well, there is a good chance that you will be able to overcome their Speed Sword Quintessence!” Jian Qinsheng said.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan frowned in confusion.

It was just a moment ago that he felt that it would be difficult for him to achieve victory because it would simply take too long for him to charge up sufficient momentum to launch the Sea Severing Sword. How would the Flowing Water Swordsmanship make any difference?

“You are cornered by your own train of thought!” Seeing how even the usually knowledgeable young man would have his moments of foolishness, Jian Qinsheng could not help but chuckle softly. “By itself, the Flowing Water Swordsmanship isn’t sufficient to fend off the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship for too long, but all you need is just to stall your opponent for several breaths! As long as you can gather sufficient strength during this period of time to launch the Old Sword Maestro’s ultimate technique, you should be able to subdue your opponent easily!

“The Speed Sword Quintessence is formidable, but it isn’t infallible. Before the might of your sword art, there’s no doubt that you will be able to easily subdue your opponent!”

“This...” Widening his eyes in realization, Zhang Xuan could not help but burst into laughter.

Indeed! He had been thinking of the two Sword Quintessences as separate entities, so he had failed to consider this point.

As long as he could use the two Sword Quintessences with one another, their might could be brought up to a whole new level.

The tight defense of the Flowing Water Swordsmanship and the crushing power of the Old Sword Maestro’s sword art...

As long as he could buy sufficient time to launch the Sea Severing Sword, no matter how fast his opponent was able to move, the other party would still be rendered completely powerless under the relentless onslaught of sword qi!

1429 Arriving at the Zhang Clan!

“So, when fighting with those of the Zhang Clan, you can use the Flowing Water Swordsmanship to first protect yourself as you prepare for a counterattack with the Sea Severing Sword. As long as you time your blade well, even Zhang Xu will struggle to match you!” Jian Qinsheng said.

Even though none of his students were able to deal with the sword practitioners of the Zhang Clan, the young man before him had the ability to do so.

As someone who had comprehended two different types of Sword Quintessences, the young man’s mastery of swordsmanship was far above his. As long as the young man was able to complement his two Sword Quintessences with one another impeccably, he would be invincible among his peers.

Even if the young man faced the Xingmeng Sword Saint at the same cultivation realm, Jian Qinsheng was confident that the young man would be able to eventually achieve victory!

Unless the Xingmeng Sword Saint had managed to comprehend two Sword Quintessences as well, he would not stand a chance against the young man at all.

“However, I would also like to highlight that Zhang Xu is only the strongest sword practitioner from the Zhang Clan who has enrolled into the Sanctum of Sages, so he might not necessarily be the best sword practitioner in the Zhang Clan. Thus, you mustn’t underestimate your opponents once we are there!”

At this point, Jian Qinsheng’s expression suddenly turned grim. “This is especially so for the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan. So far, there’s still no concrete news about him yet, and if I’m not mistaken, there’s a good chance that he might appear in this Clan Conference. After all, this is a good

opportunity for the Zhang Clan to build up the reputation of the young prodigy ahead of the marriage with the Luo Clan's little princess!"

"Young prodigy?"

"Indeed. The previous Clan Conference held by the Zhang Clan was during the young prodigy's full month celebration, and it served as a declaration of strength to the rest of the world. In the twenty years since then, there has been absolutely no news about the young prodigy, so I suspect that this is an intentional ploy from the Zhang Clan in order to build a powerful entrance for him. As long as the young prodigy is able to display overwhelming strength during this Clan Conference, the prestige of the Zhang Clan will be brought to an entirely different level!" Jian Qinsheng said.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

The other party was right.

Considering the usual shameless shenanigans that the Zhang Clan resorted to, this was indeed something that sounded like what they would do.

Intentionally hiding the young prodigy from view so as to create some controversy and confusion, only to bring him out at the crucial moment so as to solidify their reputation once and for all.

Connate Saint... To be honest, it would be a lie if Zhang Xuan said that he did not feel the slightest bit of stress at having to face the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan.

After all, Luo Ruoxin had been able to reach a realm far higher than the current him despite not being a Connate Saint.

Considering the talent and resources that the young prodigy had at his disposal... just what kind of realm could he have reached by now?

Noticing the unnatural look on Zhang Xuan's face, Jian Qinsheng attempted to console him. "You don't have to worry too much about the young prodigy. It isn't much for you to lose to him. Not even Kong Shi was born as a Connate Saint;

even if you can't compete with him, no one will say anything about it!"

However, Jian Qinsheng's consolation only served to make Zhang Xuan's complexion even more awful.

Losing to that fellow who was only good for bragging?

Dream on!

"Elder Jian, do you happen to have any Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals?" Zhang Xuan asked grimly.

He had already reinforced his Saint 6-dan Grand Dominion realm cultivation for more than twenty days. Since it was likely for the young prodigy to appear, he would really have to think of a way to make a breakthrough in preparation of a fight against the other party.

Otherwise, he probably would not stand a chance at all.

"Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals? I only happen to have one of them, and it was left behind by my ancestor." Knowing that the young man had an interest in reading, Jian Qinsheng was not surprised by the request at all.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a book and passed it over.

"Thank you!" Zhang Xuan took the book and collected it into the Library of Heaven's Path.

It was indeed a Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manual, and it was of a particularly high tier. What was unique about this cultivation technique was that it harnessed Sword Intent, so it was probably a unique cultivation technique passed down in the other party's lineage.

With a thought, Zhang Xuan swiftly compiled the various Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals that he had together.

There's still a flaw in the Saint 7-dan Heaven's Path Divine Art... Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had already gathered quite a few Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals a while back and compiled them

into a Heaven's Path Divine Art, but due to the limited number of books in his possession, there had still been several flaws with it.

Perhaps due to the high tier of the cultivation technique manual from Jian Qinsheng, it had managed to resolve most of the flaws, leaving just a single one behind.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to take a closer look at the flaw and ponder on how it could be resolved, he suddenly heard Jian Qinsheng's voice once more. "Oh right, I almost forgot about it. You won't be challenging the Zhang Clan under the identity as my student but as my senior from the same lineage!"

"Senior?" Surprised by those words, Zhang Xuan raised his head to look at Jian Qinsheng.

"You were able to learn the Flowing Water Swordsmanship just by studying the '劍' (Sword) character on the wall; this is a feat that even I'm incapable of pulling off, so naturally, I am unqualified to have you treat me as your teacher. Since that's the case, it's much better to have you come as my senior instead. This way, it will be less likely for us to get exposed," Jian Qinsheng said.

Considering how his mastery of swordsmanship was not even close to matching up to the young man's, it would clearly be inappropriate to have the young man play the role of his student.

Just the fact that the young man had learned the Flowing Water Swordsmanship through comprehending the '劍' (Sword) meant that the young man had inherited his ancestor's most direct heritage. From such a viewpoint, it was not exactly wrong for him to address the young man as his senior.

Understanding Jian Qinsheng's intentions, Zhang Xuan nodded.

To him, the identity that he used to enter the Zhang Clan did not matter at all. As long as he could teach them a lesson, he would not mind anything at all.

After explaining what needed to be explained, Jian Qinsheng said, "Alright, I think you should rest for a moment. Things will get really hectic once we arrive at the Zhang Clan."

Zhang Xuan nodded silently before closing his eyes to condition his state.

Not too long later, his body suddenly jolted, and soon after, he felt an immense pressure crushing down on him from the air. He hurriedly opened his eyes, and soon, he heard a voice booming across the air. "May I know which friend is approaching? Please report your name so that we can register you."

Through the windows, Zhang Xuan could see several old men standing atop another aerial saint beast some distance away, and they were currently looking at them with clasped fists.

It was difficult for him to gauge how powerful they were from where he stood, but he could sense that their power had locked down the surrounding space, making it impossible for them to barge past them.

"I am Jian Qinsheng from the Sanctum of Sages. I have been invited here by the Xing Sword Saint, and here is my invitation letter!" Jian Qinsheng flicked his wrist and tossed a jade token over.

One of the elders caught the jade token and examined it carefully before replying, "Ah, so it's Sword Saint Jian! I'm deeply apologetic for our rudeness. This way please!"

"I'll be troubling you then!" Nodding, Jian Qinsheng prompted the saint beast beneath him to slowly continue moving forward.

Zhang Xuan took a look at the scenery ahead, and he soon noticed a massive city appearing on the horizon.

This city was located against the mountains, which bestowed it with a majestic aura. There were many formations erected all over it, such that it would be nigh impossible for Saint 9-dan or even real 9-star master teachers to breach it.

"The base of the Zhang Clan is also known as Dracotiger City. The formations cast over the city were personally set up by the

ancestor of the Zhang Clan, and the prowess they harness is unimaginable,” Jian Qinsheng explained through zhenqi telepathy. “The group that we encountered earlier are the elders of the Zhang Clan. Even though it might appear that they are welcoming their guests, the truth is that they are flaunting their strength to the rest of the world so as to construct an inviolable image.”

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Through tapping into the prowess of the surrounding formations, the elders emanated an aura that felt as if they wielded absolute control within the area. Those whose mental resilience was slightly weaker might even have found themselves feeling deferential toward the Zhang Clan, giving up all thoughts of resistance against them.

And once this thought was born within one’s mind, it would be hard to overlook it anymore.

“What huge airs they are putting up! To be flaunting their strength even to their guests... Really, where did they learn their manners?” Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly as he glanced at the massive formations ahead of him.

Proper etiquette dictated that a host should offer the most earnest welcome to their guests, but instead of doing so, the Zhang Clan chose to put down their guests instead. This felt extremely distasteful to Zhang Xuan.

Very well! Since this is the game you want to play, let’s see how far you can go!

Staring at the formation intently, Zhang Xuan willed in his mind, Flaws!

Hu!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven’s Path.

1430 Challenging the Formation

“Grade-9 Defensive Formation Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation, set up by the old ancestor of the Zhang Clan. The formation harnesses the might of both dragons and tigers, and for this reason, it’s also known as the Dracotiger Formation. The might of the formation makes it difficult for Saint 9-dan cultivators to overcome it. Flaws: No.1, it requires a high input of spiritual energy in order to sustain the formation. No.2, the heart of the formation is sustained by a Dragon Spirit and a Tiger Spirit. While this allows the formation to be more flexible to different situations, it also means that the formation will be swayed by the wills of the two spirits. No.3...”

Information concerning the formation surged into Zhang Xuan’s mind.

All in all, there were seventeen flaws to the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation.

As a grade-9 formation, it had already developed its own spirit. As time went by, the spirit would gradually grow stronger and stronger, and it would instinctively remove or mitigate any perceived flaws that it noticed. As a result of that, even if one knew the flaws of the formation, it still would not be easy to exploit them.

This formation can be considered one of the stronger ones even among grade-9 formations, Zhang Xuan grimly remarked in his heart.

The formation turned out to be far stronger than he had expected.

While he had not seen the blueprint of any grade-9 formations yet, the might and transformations harnessed within the formation before him had already far surpassed his imagination.

I'll have to study it carefully first.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to take a closer look at the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation, the elder who had spoken to them earlier suddenly flew over and clasped his fist.

“Esteemed guests, please hand over your storage rings. Please rest assured that we'll seal them right before you so as to ensure that we won't inspect or take anything from them, and we'll return them to you when you leave.”

“You want us to hand over our storage rings?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Several of his secrets were concealed within his storage ring, and he brought it wherever he went. Yet, to have to hand it over just to enter the Zhang Clan... was this not a little too domineering?

The elder nodded. “Indeed. This is a rule in the Zhang Clan—if you wish to step across the Dracotiger Formation, you'll have to hand over your storage rings. Don't worry, the Zhang Clan has everything you need. You will be able to use our items easily once you familiarize yourself with them, so there's no need to worry.”

Noticing the awful look on Zhang Xuan's face, Jian Qinsheng took out his storage ring and passed it over to the elder as he explained the matter telepathically to him. “This isn't a rule imposed just by the Zhang Clan; most major blessed lands have such restrictions as well. Outsiders are expected to take off their storage ring, and in more extreme cases, they might be prohibited from bringing their weapons along.”

He had been to the Zhang Clan before, so he was well aware of the rules.

Many other major organizations, such as the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, enforced similar rules, too.

Firstly, it was a symbol of respect to the host. Secondly, it was to avoid possible menace from getting into the base.

Many years ago, there had been a master teacher who had been blackmailed by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to bring a storage ring filled with a massive army of Otherworldly

Demons into one of the strongholds of humanity. That incident had resulted in huge losses for that stronghold, and they had almost completely been wiped out.

Considering that the Zhang Clan was the number one Sage Clan of the Master Teacher Continent, they were definitely one of the major targets that the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe would want to bring down. Even if they were confident in their strength, it would still be best for them to maintain a high level of wariness.

Watching as the elder took the ring from Jian Qinsheng and sealed it without peeking into what was inside, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown, “What if I refuse to hand over my storage rings?”

Stored in his ring was Vicious’ head, the Qiu Wu Palace, and many other secrets; he could not afford to let any one of these secrets get exposed!

Even though the elder had said that he would only seal the storage ring, there was still a good chance that something might go wrong should he leave the storage ring with the other party. Furthermore, considering that the purpose of his visit was to challenge the Zhang Clan, there was no guarantee that the latter would not attempt to peek into his storage ring after a falling out, and that could place him in grave danger.

As unlikely as those scenarios were, Zhang Xuan still felt that the Zhang Clan was too shameless to be trusted.

“It’s fine if you don’t want to leave behind your storage ring. As long as you can clear our ‘Formation Trial’, you’ll be permitted to bring your possessions into the Zhang Clan,” the elder replied nonchalantly, not showing the slightest hint of anger at Zhang Xuan’s rude question.

It appeared that there were quite a few guests before him who had refused to leave behind their storage rings too, and the elder was accustomed to dealing with such problems.

“Formation Trial?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

“The Zhang Clan has a Defensive Formation which is able to detect and fend off both cultivators and spatial artifacts. If

anyone attempts to barge through the formation with a storage ring in possession, they will find themselves completely suppressed by the formation, even if they are a Saint 9-dan cultivator. Formation Trial simply means walking through the formation with a spatial artifact in your possession,” Jian Qinsheng said.

While he was speaking, another group of cultivators, who were unwilling to hand over their storage rings just like Zhang Xuan, began making their way toward the Defensive Formation.

Recognizing the other party’s identity, Jian Qinsheng said in a hushed voice, “That’s an elder from the Empire Alliance. He wields strength that’s on par with me.”

Hu la!

The instant the elder stepped into the formation, his surroundings immediately burst into flames. A golden-crimson dragon of flames dived down from the heavens, and its sharp talons tore through the air, crushing the space around the elder so tight that it robbed his ability to breathe.

Shocked by the destructive might wielded by the formation, panic visibly appeared on the elder’s face. He hurriedly flicked his wrist to draw a sword before swinging it desperately, sending a furious torrent of sword qi forward.

Despite the elder’s lack of composure, the strength that he wielded was remarkable. Not even the mighty Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast would not dare face him straight on.

Even so, the strength that he commanded was trifling before the massive flame dragon. In just two clashes, he was already struck in the head and plummeted straight down from the sky, charred.

At the same time, under the raging assault of the flames, the storage ring that he wore also exploded, and the possessions that he had stored within it fell and scattered all over the ground. Due to the lingering heat and shockwave from the clash with the flame dragon, quite a number of them ended up sustaining severe damage.

After which, the flame dragon dissipated into nothingness, and the formation reverted to its original form. One of the Zhang Clan elders walked over to the Empire Alliance elder with an impassive look on his face.

“Now that you don’t have a storage ring anymore, feel free to enter.”

The Empire Alliance elder meditated for a moment to recover from the injuries that he had sustained before walking into the Zhang Clan with an awful look on his face.

And as expected, the formation didn’t launch any attacks toward him anymore.

“Jian Qinsheng’s face paled upon seeing that sight, and he quickly turned to Zhang Xuan. “Zhang shi, you should hand your storage ring over. They will definitely prepare a suitable sword for you later on, so you don’t have to worry about not having a suitable weapon for the fight.

An elder whose strength was on the same level as him did not even manage to survive two blows in the formation before being knocked out! Even if the young man before him was a prodigious swordmaster, his cultivation was simply far too lacking. He would surely be ravaged should he challenge the formation!

The elder shot an impassive glance at Zhang Xuan and said, “Hand over your storage ring or attempt to barge through the formation—the choice is up to you. However, I would just like to say that the Zhang Clan won’t be responsible for the consequences.”

He believed that the young man would know what was best for him, especially after witnessing what had happened to the Saint 8-dan elder from the Empire Alliance.

“The Zhang Clan won’t be responsible for the consequences?” Zhang Xuan raised his head and asked earnestly, “Are you certain?”

The elder frowned upon hearing such a bizarre question, unsure of what the young man was getting at. Nevertheless, he still nodded. “I’m sure.”

“Are you qualified to speak on the behalf of the entire Zhang Clan?” Zhang Xuan continued asking.

“Cough, cough, Zhang shi. The elder over there is the Third Elder of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Wuchen.” Horrified, Jian Qinsheng hurriedly explained to Zhang Xuan, “Given his position, he’s definitely more than qualified to speak on the behalf of the entire Zhang Clan!”

“The Third Elder of the Zhang Clan? His words should carry some weight then.” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding slowly.

A smile crept on his lips as he turned to the Zhang Wuchen and said, “I have made up my mind. Since you have said that the Zhang Clan won’t be responsible for the consequences, I shall... challenge the Formation Trial!”

In the Zhang Clan, the ranking of the elders was decided by their strength, and the seniority of their positions was proportionate to the authority that they wielded. Considering that the elder before him was the Third Elder of the Zhang Clan, he certainly had the authority to speak on behalf of the entire clan.

“You are going to challenge the Formation Trial?” Jian Qinsheng’s face paled. With a deeply anxious look on his face, he urged, “Zhang shi, you mustn’t!”

1431 Dragon Spirit Tiger Spiri

In this very moment, Jian Qinsheng felt as if the world had gone insane.

It was just a moment ago that you saw a Saint 8-dan expert attempting to barge through the formation, only to be roasted crispy on the surface and succulent on the inside, ready to be plated and served. Despite that, you still made the decision to challenge the Formation Trial too... Is it really worth going that far for a storage ring?

Furthermore, it's not as if it isn't going to be given back to you!

This is just a temporary deposit, and the same rules apply to everyone as well. There is really no need for you to cause trouble right now; we aren't even in the Zhang Clan yet!

You'll only die tragically at this rate!

“Be my guest!”

The Third Elder, Zhang Wuchen, didn't expect that the young man before him would be so insolent. He nonchalantly gestured for the young man to go ahead while standing idly on the spot.

Nodding, Zhang Xuan began making his way over to the formation.

“Zhang shi!” Jian Qinsheng rushed forward to stop Zhang Xuan.

“It's alright, I'm just giving it a try.” Knowing that Jian Qinsheng was worried about him, Zhang Xuan assured him with a bright smile.

Jian Qinsheng stared at Zhang Xuan for a moment, and through the determined look in the young man's eyes, he could

tell that the young man had already made up his mind. Thus, he could only sigh deeply and take a step back, “Be careful.”

The formation’s attack only served as a warning against those who infringed on the rules of the Zhang Clan, so Zhang Xuan’s life wouldn’t be in any danger. At most, he would only suffer some pain.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan leaped forward and flew for the formation.

Hong long long!

In the instant that he stepped into the formation, a massive dragon immediately materialized. However, it wasn’t a flame dragon this time around but a water dragon.

The dragon formed in the formation wasn’t a real dragon but a spirit. It harnessed the power of the Five Elements, thus allowing it to change its form and attribute at will.

The congregation of water formed a being reminiscent of a true dragon, and as soon as it appeared, a towering wave immediately covered half of Zhang Xuan’s vision. At the same time, an overwhelming pressure weighed down on the surroundings, causing the earth to tremble ever so slightly non-stop.

Flames could burn everything down to cinders, creating barren lands where no life could survive in. Flood was equally frightening as well. The excessive concentration of water vapor in the air left one feeling as if one’s lung would burst, leaving one sputtering for oxygen.

“It’s a water dragon...” Jian Qinsheng’s face turned pale, and his body trembled in agitation.

Over 90% of a human’s body was made up of water, so those who commanded water would actually be able to cause far more damage to a human as compared to those who commanded flames.

“This is the punishment for your arrogance!” Zhang Wuchen flung his sleeves backward and harrumphed coldly.

Even the renowned swordmaster, Jian Qinsheng, whose name was sung alongside that of their clan head had chosen to obediently hand over his storage ring, and yet, this fellow just had to choose the difficult way out of this... It was as if he was asking to be walloped!

Knowing that the formation would surely teach the arrogant young man a lesson, Zhang Wuchen couldn't be bothered to look on any longer, so he turned to Jian Qinsheng and asked, "Sword Saint Jian Qinsheng, is he your student?"

"He... is my senior!" Jian Qinsheng replied awkwardly.

On the journey here, he had spent much time conversing with the young man on the subject of swordsmanship, and he had benefited greatly from the young man's deep insight. Despite the difference in their age, the young man could already be considered as half a teacher to him.

He dared not even contemplate the possibility of the young man being his student, let alone say something as ridiculous as that out loud.

This was also the reason why he changed his mind eventually, deciding to have Zhang Xuan appear before others as his senior instead.

"Senior?" Zhang Wuchen's eyebrows shot up in amazement. "That young man is your senior?"

Seniority in the lineage usually came with the connotation of being more powerful and skilled. Just what qualifications could that young man possibly have to be considered as Jian Qinsheng's senior?

"Third Elder, I'll have to ask you not to look down on him. My senior might be still young and weak, but with sufficient time, he'll surely astound the entire continent!" Noticing Zhang Wucheng's doubt, Jian Qinsheng shook his head and said.

"Astound?" Zhang Wuchen couldn't help but sneer. "To challenge the formation when he knows that he doesn't stand a chance at all, is that how he astounds others?"

Even a Saint 8-dan pinnacle expert was left on the verge of death from the powerful assault of the formation, and yet, a mere Grand Dominion realm cultivator like him still insisted on challenging it. No matter how one looked at the matter, it was pretty obvious that the fellow had a screw loose in his head!

Astound... More like aghast!

“Is the Third Elder doubting my words?” Noticing the disdainful look on Zhang Wuchen’s face, Jian Qinsheng frowned in displeasure.

“Of course...” Zhang Wuchen harrumphed coldly.

Just as he was about to remark that Jian Qinsheng’s judgement had been clouded by his age, he suddenly stiffened up on the spot. His eyes were fixated at the sight in front of him, and his pupils dilated into large circles. The words he had been wanting to say choked his throat, leaving him feeling so suffocated that he could die of asphyxiation.

“What’s wrong?” Noticing that there was something wrong with Zhang Wuchen’s expression, Jian Qinsheng traced his gaze and looked over as well, and in the next instant, his body also stiffened.

In the formation, not only did the massive water dragon not assault the young man who dared to challenge the formation, it was even rubbing its huge head against the young man’s robe, as if an adorable pet!

On the other hand, the young man snapped his finger, and a wooden stick that he had conjured out of nowhere suddenly flew outward. The water dragon immediately turned around and dashed out to catch the wooden stick between its teeth before dashing back to pass it into Zhang Xuan’s hands. Then, it stuck out its tongue playfully, as if a dog fawning upon its owner.

But with a displeased expression, Zhang Xuan shook his head in disapproval and tossed out the wooden stick once more, “Too slow, faster!”

Sou!

The water dragon burst forth once more, and this time, before the wooden stick could even fall on the ground, it had already caught it in between its teeth and flew back to Zhang Xuan.

“This is more like it...” Zhang Xuan finally gave it a nod of approval. “Alright, retract the formation. I want to enter.”

Roar!

The water dragon hurriedly nodded, and it raised its talon and swiped it down forcefully. In the next instant, a surge of flowing water appeared beneath Zhang Xuan’s feet, and it extended along with his footsteps like a bridge.

“Junior, we can go in now.” Noting the new identity he had adopted, Zhang Xuan beckoned for Jian Qinsheng to enter as well before placing his hands behind his back and walking forward leisurely.

“You...” Not expecting the formation spirit to fawn on him as if a lapdog, Zhang Wuchen’s face turned incredibly livid. He hurriedly flew toward the formation while exclaiming in a fluster, “Wait a moment...”

“Noisy!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand in displeasure.

Kacha!

In the next moment, Zhang Wuchen saw the massive water dragon diving straight toward him with alarming speed. Completely caught off guard by the sudden turn of events, Zhang Wuchen didn’t even manage to react before he was struck head-on and smacked right down onto the ground.

“This...” Watching as Zhang Wuchen convulsed helplessly on the ground, Jian Qinsheng felt a hoarse sensation at the back of his throat. With rather stiff movements, he walked into the formation in a daze and followed behind Zhang Xuan, as if a puppet under control.

Back in the Sanctum of Sages, he had heard several rumors that the young man was a rare prodigy in formations as well, and from the looks of it now, the rumors were definitely no exaggeration.

To think that the young man would be able to tame the Dracotiger Formation which the old ancestor of the Zhang Clan had set up personally in the blink of an eye...

Just how many more insane abilities did he have up his sleeves?

...

“Third Elder!”

The other elders in the surroundings saw the earlier happenings as well, and they hurriedly rushed over to pluck Zhang Wuchen out of the ground.

“That fellow actually tamed the formation spirit? How in the world did he manage to do that?” Straightening his back, Zhang Wuchen gazed at the young man who was leisurely making his way through the formation, and his teeth couldn’t help but clatter in disbelief.

The Dracotiger Formation was formidable, but there were still cultivators in the world who would be able to pass through the formation easily even if they didn’t hand over their storage ring. One such person was the grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, Yang Shi!

Each time he came here, it was as if the formation couldn’t register his presence at all, allowing him to pass through it without any obstruction.

There were also those who were able to barge right through it through sheer force. The head of the Yuan Clan boasted a defense so powerful that he was impervious to the attacks of the formation spirits, allowing him to walk right through the formation unharmed.

But never had anyone managed to tame the formation spirit into a loyal lapdog and even play fetch with it... This was really challenging the boundaries of his rational mind!

However, there was one thing that the young man had overlooked—the formation spirit of the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation was constantly changing. Just because the young man had managed to tame a single spirit didn’t

mean that he had gained absolute control over the entire formation yet.

“Even if he has managed to win over the Dragon Spirit, there’s still the Tiger Spirit ahead...” Zhang Wuchen muttered beneath his breath.

And as if responding to his words, a ferocious tiger suddenly materialized in the air. Raging inferno wrapped around its body, granting it a presence reminiscent of a Qilin.

It was the other spirit of the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation—Tiger Spirit!

It was formidable that the young man had managed to tame the Dragon Spirit, but the Tiger Spirit was the stronger of the two, and it was known for not conforming to authority as well.

Zhang Wuchen was deeply interested to see just what the young man would do in the face of such a situation.

Roar!

The moment the Tiger Spirit materialized in the air, it immediately let loose a ferocious howl and tore its claws down upon Zhang Xuan.

The overwhelming strength behind the Tiger Spirit’s attack caused the structure of the surrounding space to collapse, and as if a calamitous tornado, a ferocious surge of might crushed right down on Zhang Xuan.

In the face of this surge of might, a hint of trepidation surfaced in the eyes of the water dragon as it trembled on the spot, not daring to take a single step forward.

The two spirits in the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation weren’t of equal standing and strength; there was a clear hierarchy between the Tiger Spirit and Dragon Spirit.

Just as Zhang Wuchen thought that the young man would be subdued by the Tiger Spirit, the young man suddenly took a single step forward and tapped his feet lightly on the ground.

Boom!

Amidst a deafening rumble, and the entire formation began shaking non-stop. At the same time, the Tiger Spirit hurriedly retracted its attack, and it began trembling in fear.

The Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation shrouded many towering and majestic buildings and the instability of the formation caused the buildings below to shake intensely as well, seemingly ready to be collapse into rubble at any moment.

“No! The many millenniums of heritage of the Zhang Clan!”
Zhang Wuchen’s eyes widened in horror.

1432 The Magnanimity of the First Elder

Tens of thousands of years of prosperity had allowed the Zhang Clan to grow to a scale that was even larger than that of the capitals of Conferred Empires. Even though the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation had been constructed against the mountain and covered a vast area, it only guarded the entrance to the city.

Nevertheless, the prowess of the formation was not to be underestimated. It was only under its protection that the Zhang Clan was able to remain standing for so many years, overcoming multiple crises without anyone successfully shaking its core.

Thus, everyone thought that as long as the formation erected by the old ancestor stood, the city would be unshakable. Yet, who could have known that a mere Grand Dominion realm pinnacle fellow would actually be able to render it on the verge of collapsing with just a stomp of his feet?

“Stop it!” Zhang Wuchen yelled in agitation.

However, it was already too late. With one last violent tremble, the formation finally reached its very limit and burst apart, bringing down innumerable buildings along with it.

A cloud of dust swept across the area, and countless shadows flitted out from the many buildings in a hurry, staring dumbfounded at the devastation before them, completely oblivious to what was happening.

Padah!

Zhang Wuchen suddenly felt strength receding from his entire body, and he collapsed weakly to the ground.

In this moment, he finally understood why the young man asked if he was able to speak on the behalf of the Zhang Clan.

It seemed like he had known that this would happen right from the start!

The collapse of their Defense Formation and the destruction of innumerable buildings... Even if he was the Third Elder of the Zhang Clan, this was not something that he could take responsibility for!

It would be no joke to say that this was a tight slap to the Zhang Clan's face, an irredeemable botch on its reputation!

At the same time, Jian Qinsheng could not help but flinch at the destruction before him as well.

It was true that he hated the Xing Sword Saint for stealing the person he loved, and he desired nothing more than to embarrass the Zhang Clan. However, to destroy the other party's Defense Formation before even officially entering the city and even bring about the collapse of so many buildings, raising such a huge commotion...

Even he was unable to avoid feeling frightened jitters in his heart.

He could not help but wonder if it was really the right choice for him to have invited the young man along.

"This..." Zhang Xuan was also a little startled by the happenings before him, but unlike the rest of the crowd, he quickly nodded in realization.

He had never seen any grade-9 formations in action before, so he did not have a clear gauge of their strength. He had not thought that the collapse of the formation would actually bring about such a powerful explosion.

But, so what? What was done was done. In the first place, his goal was to wreak havoc in the Zhang Clan, and since the so-called Third Elder had said that the Zhang Clan would not take any responsibility for whatever happened in the formation, there was no reason for him not to pull his punches.

He should just let himself loose!

If he could not force the so-called young prodigy out to face him, he would not be called Zhang Xuan!

...

“Third Elder, what’s happened?”

A powerful gust of wind blew over, and following which, a figure suddenly appeared right before the scene of devastation. His face twitched upon seeing the extent of the destruction before him, and he hurriedly turned to question Zhang Wuchen.

“First Elder, I was collecting the storage rings here when a person who is supposedly the senior of the Sanctum of Sages’ Jian Qinsheng suddenly insisted on challenging the Formation Trial, and the next thing I knew, this had already happened!” Zhang Wuchen swiftly went through the events that had just occurred.

“This was caused by someone who challenged the Formation Trial?” The First Elder was also visibly stunned by the matter.

He quickly turned his sights over to Zhang Xuan, only to see the young man looking back at him with a nonchalant expression. There was not the slightest hint of nervousness or fear that would usually be on the face of one who had done wrong. A frown emerged on his forehead as he asked, “May I know who you are?”

“I am Zhang Xuan, Jian Qinsheng’s senior. I came to the Zhang Clan this time around to test the Zhang Clan’s famed swordsmanship,” Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

“Zhang Xuan?” The First Elder muttered the name beneath his breath before waving his hand lightly. He turned to another elder and said, “Wuzhen, bring Zhang Xuan and Sword Saint Jian Qinsheng to our guest rooms to rest.”

“What? But First Elder...” Hearing the First Elder instructing Zhang Wuzhen to bring the culprit behind the destruction to their guest rooms, completely paying no heed to the collapsed formation and buildings, Zhang Wuchen could not help but panic.

“Enough. Since our esteemed guest has cleared the Formation Trial in accordance to the rules, regardless of the outcome, we’ll have to accept it,” the First Elder lectured.

The First Elder had an impassive expression on his face that made it extremely difficult to read his mood, so it was hard to figure out whether he had truly chosen to let this matter go or was simply suppressing his rage.

Zhang Wuchen clenched his fists tightly for a moment before eventually relenting with a nod. “Yes.”

As indignant as he felt, there was nothing he could do either.

In the Zhang Clan, the word of the First Elder was the law. No one would dare to question his command.

On top of that, the clan head had needed to leave a while ago on urgent business, so the one who truly called the shots in the Zhang Clan at the moment was the First Elder.

“First Elder, it’ll take us several months in order to reconstruct the destroyed formation.” One of the elders could not help but ask, “In the meantime, what do we do about the storage rings of the guests?”

The formation was used in order to determine whether the guests had brought any spatial artifacts along with them. Now that it had been destroyed, it would be hard for them to check the guests who arrive subsequently. What should they do?

“All those who have traveled far and wide to come to the Zhang Clan are our esteemed guests. The collection of the storage ring is more of a formality from our old ancestor rather than a safety concern, and all this while, I have thought that it was rather inappropriate to treat our guests so rudely.

“Because it has been part of our tradition for so many years, I didn’t want to abruptly bring up this matter and cause contention within the clan. However, since our young friend over here has helped us destroy it, this could be a blessing in disguise. There’s no need to rebuild the formation. Please return the storage rings that all of you have collected so far to the guests,” the First Elder said with a smile.

“Return the storage rings? But...” Not expecting the First Elder to make such a call, the elder’s face warped in horror.

Considering how many outsiders there were visiting the Zhang Clan, would they not be in deep trouble if even one of them

bore malicious intentions toward them?

“There’s no need to worry. Since our Zhang Clan is famed as the number one Sage Clan in the Master Teacher Continent, I believe that no one will overstep their boundaries here either!” The First Elder flung his sleeves majestically, revealing deep confidence and pride.

“This... Yes, I understand!” Feeling the powerful aura that the First Elder was emanating, the elder hesitated for a moment before eventually nodding.

As expected of the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, he does have the magnanimity of a large clan. Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had thought that he would be criticized for his actions, but it seemed like the other party had no intentions of doing so. Not only that, he even made use of this opportunity to implement such a change.

Through doing so, not only would he be able to preserve the reputation of the Zhang Clan as the number one Sage Clan on the Master Teacher Continent, at the same time, the world would also be awed by his magnanimity. This was truly two birds in a stone.

On top of that, it would also reinforce the strong image of the Zhang Clan, thus instilling deference in others.

It seems like the Zhang Clan isn’t all that bad. The young prodigy of the Zhang Clan could learn a thing or two from his elders, Zhang Xuan remarked internally.

The young prodigy of the Zhang Clan was engaged to Luo Ruoxin, but not once had he appeared before Luo Ruoxin or done anything for her at all. This had reinforced the reprehensible image of the young prodigy in Zhang Xuan’s mind, which also led him to feel that the Zhang Clan was a den of despicable individuals. After all, they allowed the young prodigy to act as he pleased, showing completely no regard for others at all.

However, after seeing how the First Elder dealt with the situation, he suddenly felt that his perception might have been mistaken.

Perhaps, the Zhang Clan was not completely irredeemable.

Maybe, the young prodigy was just an exception.

The elder whom the First Elder had instructed earlier, Zhang Wuzhen, walked up to Zhang Xuan and Jian Qinsheng and said, “This way please.”

Seventh Elder, Zhang Wuzhen.

“Thank you.” Nodding, Jian Qinsheng quickly followed behind the other party, and Zhang Xuan followed suit.

After the three of them left, Zhang Wuchen walked over to the First Elder and asked doubtfully, “The formation is a symbol of the Zhang Clan’s many years of history. Are you really going to let it go... just like that?”

“What else are you going to do? Are you going to teach him a lesson?” The First Elder shot a glance over.

Zhang Wuchen’s face flushed crimson upon hearing those words.

“As a clan of master teachers, our Zhang Clan must pay careful attention to rules and propriety. If we don’t even follow our own rules, how can we expect others to follow them? Since Zhang Xuan was able to overcome our formation with his own ability, we have no choice but to let it go. No, not only should we let it go, I also want you to make this matter known to every single member of our Zhang Clan so that they can learn from it,” the First Elder said.

1433 Is It Not Him?

“Make this matter known to every member of our Zhang Clan?” Zhang Wuchen was taken aback for a moment before his eyes narrowed in realization. “You mean to... incite our clan members?”

As the entrance formation to the Zhang Clan, the Dual Spirit Heaven Dominating Formation could be said to be a symbol of the Zhang Clan’s dignity. If it was made known that it had been destroyed by a twenty-year-old lad, the other clan members would surely be trembling with rage.

Hearing those words, the First Elder chuckled softly as he remarked with a deep look in his eyes, “The Zhang Clan has been in a high position for far too long. It’s about time to stir the pot a little so as to get them riled up. Only when every single individual of the Zhang Clan is powerful can the Zhang Clan truly prosper and incite fear in others. In comparison to that, the destruction of the formation is nothing at all.”

“I understand.” Realizing the First Elder’s intentions, Zhang Wuchen nodded in awe.

As expected of the First Elder. Every single move that he made was profound and meaningful, bringing the greatest benefit to the Zhang Clan.

The seeming infallibility of the Defense Formation had left the members of the Zhang Clan feeling so safe that they were beginning to lose their wariness. However, this was only a false sense of security, and this could pose a great danger to the Zhang Clan. If enemies were to assault the Zhang Clan, they would surely strive to swiftly uncover and exploit the flaws in the Defense Formation like Zhang Xuan did.

It would have been sheer foolishness if the members of the Zhang Clan were to stand idly and leave their fates up to the resilience of the Defense Formation.

On the contrary, without the formation, the members would be forced to constantly keep their guard up, ready for a battle at any time. It was exactly such an environment that would place the Zhang Clan in a much safer position.

In a sense, this was similar to learning how to swim. If one relied on swimming floats all the time, there was no guarantee that they would be there when one truly needed them. It was only by taking away the floats that would one be able to truly learn to swim.

If the Zhang Clan hoped to retain its position as the number one Sage Clan in the Master Teacher Continent, it would do much better investing in its talents than its defense formations and whatnot. In crucial situations, it was always the people who made the difference.

“Go and have it done.” Seeing that Zhang Wuchen understood what he was getting at, the First Elder also chose not to explain any further. He was silent for a brief moment before adding, “Also, I want you to look into Zhang Xuan’s background.”

“Yes, First Elder!” Zhang Wuchen nodded before turning around and leaving.

Not too long later, he returned with a jade token in hand.

As the number one Sage Clan in the Master Teacher Continent, their intelligence network was not to be underestimated. It was a walk in the park for them to uncover Zhang Xuan’s profile, which was well detailed in the Master Teacher Pavilion’s records.

“A new student of the Sanctum of Sages this year, and he successfully cleared the Tower of Master Teachers within fifteen minutes. On top of that, he pummeled Zhang Chun and Zhang Feng and his brothers with Luo Xuanqing. Wherever he steps, destruction follows.” Reading the details on the records, the First Elder’s lower jaw nearly fell to the ground.

Even the most talented genius of their Zhang Clan was incapable of such a fate, so how did the young man manage to pull it off?

“Yang shi’s student... Yang shi has been in our Zhang Clan for more than half a year now, so when did he take in this student of his?” The First Elder frowned in thought.

Even though Yang shi’s whereabouts remained a huge mystery to the world, as the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, he was still privy to some inside information.

Yang shi had been in seclusion in their Zhang Clan for half a year, and he had not left since then. Just when did the other party take in such a formidable student whose talent outshone even that of the geniuses of the Zhang Clan!

“Yang shi does have a student, and if I’m not mistaken, his name should be Feng Ziyi,” Zhang Wuchen said.

“I know of Feng Ziyi—I have met him once. He’s indeed quite a talented young lad, but even so, his aptitude is only slightly above that of Zhang Chun and the others. If Yang shi truly had such a talented disciple, why haven’t I heard of him before?” The First Elder was deeply perplexed.

Yang Xuan had close relations with their Zhang Clan, and if he truly had such a talented disciple, there was no reason the Zhang Clan would be completely unaware of it!

“Possessing unparalleled talent and having the surname of Zhang, could he possibly be...” Suddenly recalling a matter, an excited glint flashed through Zhang Wuchen’s eyes.

“Impossible,” the First Elder interjected affirmatively. “I saw his soul lantern extinguishing with my own eyes a year ago. There’s no way he could still be alive.”

“But... the clan head and Sword Saint Meng have been reluctant to believe that news, and they are still searching for him even now. In fact, isn’t the reason they left in such a hurry earlier because they obtained some news concerning him?” Zhang Wuchen said hesitantly.

“Even if they aren’t able to divine the future, experts of their level still possess intuition far beyond that of ordinary cultivators. They are able to sense things just by their gut feeling, and given how certain they are that he isn’t dead... there might be a good chance that he’s really alive!”

Hearing those words, the First Elder pondered for a moment before replying, “The bond of blood is an inexplicable relationship. It is true that cultivators of their caliber are able to perceive the status of those who are closely related to them, but I was the one who was monitoring his soul lantern, and there’s no doubt that it has extinguished. Considering that he was just an ordinary mortal, there’s just no way he could have survived!”

At which point, the First Elder released a deep sigh filled with lamentation, and he stared at the sky above, deep in thought. A moment later, he muttered quietly, “I guess there’s no harm trying.

Turning his gaze back to Zhang Wuchen, he continued. “Check where Zhang Xuan is from and whether he has any family members or not.”

“Understood!” Zhang Wuchen clasped his fist politely before leaving.

This time, he was gone for a while longer. It took roughly four hours before he finally returned. “Reporting to the First Elder, Zhang Shi comes from a remote kingdom in the Qingyuan Empire, where not a single master teacher exists. Furthermore, according to the records of the Master Teacher Pavilion, it appears that he’s an orphan without any kin, and he happens to be twenty this year!”

“Remote kingdom... Ancient domains? Could it be...” The First Elder widened his eyes in astonishment, not daring to believe what he had just heard. “But that shouldn’t be possible!”

He shook his head vehemently as he paced around the room. A moment later, he suddenly turned his gaze toward Zhang Wuchen and instructed, “Wuchen, I want you to find a way to get Zhang Xuan into the ‘Blood Reservoir’ and see if there’s any resonance.”

“The Blood Reservoir is a place where the offspring of the Zhang Clan are able to awaken their bloodline, but you should also know the circumstances surrounding that person. Even if he isn’t dead, it’s impossible for any resonance to occur

between him and the Blood Reservoir,” Zhang Wuchen said in incomprehension.

“I know that, but he’s not a person whom we can gauge by normal standards. He’s the most talented person our clan has seen in the past several dozen millenniums. His very presence in the Blood Reservoir should be able to trigger some kind of phenomenon. As long as there’s the slightest reaction, we should be able to confirm his identity,” the First Elder replied.

“I see... Consider it done.” Zhang Wuchen nodded.

“Make sure to conduct this in utmost secrecy. Don’t let anyone learn of it, and this is including Zhang Xuan. Observe him from the shadows, and report any movements he makes to me,” the First Elder said.

Zhang Wuchen nodded once more before taking his leave.

The First Elder watched intently as Zhang Wuchen’s figure disappeared into the distance. An unreadable light flickered in the First Elder’s eyes as he seemed to muse over something of vast importance, and a moment later, he began making his way toward the depths of the Zhang Clan.

Not too long later, he arrived before a door.

It was an average-sized round door, and it was seamlessly shut with the rest of the chamber.

From the outside, it would appear that there was nothing extraordinary about this chamber, but when one tried to extend one’s Spiritual Perception in, one would realize that it was completely impossible to perceive what was inside. It was as if the interior of the chamber was completely isolated from the rest of the world.

The First Elder paced outside the stone chamber for a while. He considered knocking on the door, but eventually, he held himself back.

According to what Yang Shi said, he should be coming out in a few days’ time. It would be unwise to interrupt him at this crucial moment. If something were to go wrong with his cultivation, not even I would be able to bear the consequences,

the First Elder thought as he retracted his hand, shaking his head quietly.

Yang shi was currently in seclusion within the stone chamber before him. The First Elder intended to come over to see if Yang shi was out of his seclusion so that he could inquire about Zhang Xuan's background, but seeing that the doors were still tightly shut, he eventually gave up on the idea.

Yang shi's seclusion this time around was simply too important, such that even despite the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, he did not dare interrupt the other party abruptly. Otherwise, if the other party's efforts ended in failure due to him, he would become a sinner of mankind.

However, it was fortunate that Yang shi had said before that his seclusion would only last half a year at most, so the other party should be coming out very soon.

With such thoughts in mind, the First Elder turned around and slowly walked out.

...

Meanwhile, after receiving the orders from the First Elder, Zhang Wuchen immediately headed for the guest rooms.

After that speculation surfaced in his mind, he could not help but wonder about the capabilities that Zhang Xuan wielded.

Flitting swiftly ahead, before he reached his destination, he encountered the flustered Seventh Elder anxiously heading his way. As soon as the latter noticed him, the latter exclaimed in desperation, "Third Elder, a disaster has happened!"

Zhang Wuchen's heart skipped a beat as an ominous sensation loomed above his heart. "What happened?"

1434 Greetings, I Am Kong shi

“I don’t know how to explain the situation to you... Third Elder, follow me! You’ll know once you see it for yourself!” Elder Wuzhen struggled internally to find a way to describe what he had just seen, and eventually, he chose to simply bring the other party to the disaster instead.

Swiftly dashing forward, the two of them soon arrived at the guest rooms.

As the number one Sage Clan of the Master Teacher Continent, the Zhang Clan would welcome many challengers and visitors alike every year into their city. The so-called guest rooms were actually an entire district covering a huge area, allowing them to accommodate many guests concurrently.

Right after arriving in the square just outside the guest rooms, Zhang Wuchen could not help but notice something that was simply too visibly different from before. He halted in his footsteps and pointed in a certain direction.

“Where did the sculptures go?”

What should have been erected in the square was a row of sculptures of the notable ancestors of the Zhang Clan. Every single one of them had achieved incredible feats in their lifetime, making great contributions to mankind. As such, sculptures had been created of them so that generation after generation of the Zhang Clan’s offspring would honor their deeds.

The reason the sculptures had been placed in the square near the guest rooms was to show off the massive contributions that the Zhang Clan had made to mankind, and that they had played a huge role in ensuring the continued peace of the Master Teacher Pavilion throughout the many years.

Strength was not the only reason the Zhang Clan had been able to rise to become the number one Sage Clan. More importantly, it was their willingness to charge into the depths of danger and sacrifice themselves for the sake of mankind that had enabled them to rise to their current standing.

The deference that the guests had toward the Zhang Clan was not just due to their strength; it was due to their accomplishments and contributions too.

And yet, all of the sculptures that represented that had actually vanished without a trace, leaving behind a massive hole in the ground. What in the world had happened?

“This is the very matter that I wanted to tell you...” With a face that was twisted like a bitter gourd, Elder Wuzhen looked as if there were a million words that he wanted to say but did not know where to start. After a long moment of contemplation, he eventually gestured forward and said, “Forget it, I think you should just take a look for yourself!”

Seeing Elder Wuzhen’s reaction, Zhang Wuchen felt even more perplexed. He quickly walked forward, and a short distance away from the square, he heard a hoarse and rather rigid voice.

This voice did not sound as if it had come from a human. Rather, it seemed like it was produced by some kind of mechanical system, and it felt extremely unnatural.

“Books and plays sway the heart—settle on the road that paves straight ahead. Kindness and evil come in circles—alas, the path to virtue remains tough indeed!”

The hoarse voice continued. “I am Zhang Lingran, the 157th generation of offspring of the Zhang Clan. I lived in the era more than twenty thousand years ago, and my greatest achievement was charging into the Subterranean Gallery alone to slay three Otherworldly Demon Emperors, thus foiling their plan to invade the Master Teacher Continent. I have also slain four Saint 9-dan beasts with a single slash of my sword and fought with the Malevolent Eminence for seven days straight before eventually defeating him. Since everyone is interested

to hear, why don't I share those incidents in greater detail with you?"

"Zhang Lingran? Ancestor Lingran?" Hearing that voice, Zhang Wuchen's lips immediately twitched in astonishment.

He quickly walked over, and at the bend, he saw a bunch of guests surrounding a sculpture.

As if someone had breathed life into it, the sculpture began sharing the various ups and downs in his life, and his lively expression had the crowd around him completely captivated. From time to time, thunderous applause would echo from them.

"This..." Zhang Wuchen's eyebrows leaped around the place, and he nearly fell to the ground.

The reason there was a plaque placed next to each of the sculptures was to inform the onlookers of the outstanding contributions that they had made in their lifetime. But to think that they would actually come to life and recite those contributions themselves!

Suppressing the urge to go on a frenzy, Zhang Wuchen stared intently at the sculpture of Ancestor Lingran.

The latter's hands and legs were flying around the place, gesturing desperately like a storyteller as if he was afraid that the crowd would not be able to understand his descriptions. Unfortunately, this also meant that the lofty aura he had assumed just a moment ago had vanished without a trace.

"I am Zhang Xiaosuo, the 212th generation of offspring of the Zhang Clan. I was once the deputy clan head of the Zhang Clan, and the battle techniques I have created have spread far and wide across the Master Teacher Continent, practiced by countless cultivators even to this day..."

"I am Zhang Mofeng, the 225th generation of offspring of the Zhang Clan. I left many astounding records in the Sanctum of Sa... Hey, don't run away! You'd better stop right now and listen to my story, or else I'm going to beat you up..."

Moving ahead, Zhang Wuchen saw two more sculptures. One of them was explaining his affairs to the audience around him,

just as Ancestor Lingran was doing, whereas the other one was chasing a guest furiously, just a short step away from tearing the other party's ears to force him to listen to him.

"What the heck is going on?" Zhang Wuchen scratched his head in complete bewilderment.

Proceeding ahead, he saw one of the ancestral sculptures sitting on one of the guests, reciting his story with a ferocious look on his face. Unable to stand it any longer, he turned around and demanded an explanation from Elder Wuzhen.

These ancestral sculptures were physical representations of the outstanding accomplishments and contributions achieved by the Zhang Clan over the years, and they formed the basis of the Zhang Clan's prestige and reputation. It was one thing for them to come to life, but to be bragging about their own accomplishments...

Not to mention, they were even pummeling those who were unwilling to listen to their story.

"E-earlier, I brought Zhang Shi here to introduce the various glorious accomplishments achieved by our ancestors," Elder Wuzhen said with a pale face. Perhaps out of astonishment, he was stuttering a little. "T-then... this just somehow happened!"

"How could this just happen somehow?" Zhang Wuchen bellowed furiously. "I want you to recount everything that happened earlier to me thoroughly. Don't even leave the slightest detail out!"

"Y-yes! After I introduced him to the sculptures, I suddenly recalled some matters and lamented at how our heritage is slowly fading away. None of those of the younger generation are interested in learning about the affairs of the ancestors, and they have barely any respect or admiration for them," Elder Wuzhen explained slowly.

Those of the younger generation were much more impetuous than their predecessors. He had brought many guests to visit the sculptures, but very few of them would choose to stop by the sculptures and patiently read the various accomplishments

achieved by the Zhang Clan's ancestors. Most of them felt that there was no purpose in listening to the deeds of the dead.

This had left Elder Wuzhen deeply displeased for a very long period of time, which eventually led to him complaining about the matter to Zhang Xuan.

“After saying those words, Zhang Shi said that he had a way to reverse such a situation, so... he began touching each of the sculptures in order to enchant them,” Elder Wuzhen said with a deeply stifled face.

Looking back, it seemed like he was the trigger behind this incident. If not for his lamentation, the other party would not have made such a move.

It truly was a calamity. After those sculptures were enchanted, they had begun stopping the guests to explain their deeds to them... and what was worse was that the guests were forced to listen! The entire area had descended into chaos.

“This...” Zhang Wuchen nearly spurted blood.

The sculptures had been left here in order to let the guests know of the various accomplishments and sacrifices that the Zhang Clan had made for mankind, but for them to be pulling the ears of others and reciting their tales gleefully... how was that different from boasting?

“Wait a moment... There should be quite a number of sculptures in the square, right? Do you mean to tell me that he enchanted all of them in a single breath?” Zhang Wuchen suddenly realized that, and his eyes widened in disbelief.

There had to be at least a hundred predecessors who had their sculptures, names, and accomplishments left in the square, so it would have been impossible for even a 9-star spirit awakener to enchant all of them. Yet, it seemed like he had succeeded in enchanting all of them. To make things even more exaggerated, every single one of them was actually capable of independent thought!

“Indeed, and that's not all...” Elder Wuzhen suddenly recalled a certain matter, and a shudder ran through his body.

“That’s not all?” Zhang Wuchen felt as if his mind was going to explode from the sheer scale of trouble this was.

He quickly followed behind Elder Wuzhen to a certain area, and the latter suddenly stopped and gestured in front.

“Regarding that... it’s right ahead. I simply don’t dare to comment too lightly on this matter, so you should take a look for yourself.”

With eyes filled with doubt, Zhang Wuchen walked forward, and shortly after passing by a bend, before he could even scan his surroundings, a deep and heavy voice suddenly sounded in the air.

“Greetings, I am Kong shi...”

Putong!

Zhang Wuchen fell onto the floor.

1435 Fearsome Spirits

As a clan of master teachers, on top of their ancestors, it was natural that they would also pay respects to Kong shi as well. Earlier, Zhang Wuchen had been so shocked to see all of the sculptures coming to life that he had not even contemplated this possibility—or rather, such a thing was simply too ridiculous for him to believe to be true.

So, the sheer horror he felt upon hearing that voice nearly jolted his Primordial Spirit into dissipation.

He anxiously turned his head, and his heart nearly stopped. He saw Kong shi's sculpture standing before a group of guests, introducing himself warm-heartedly.

Zhang Wuchen felt hoarseness at the back of his throat, and he widened his eyes in shock as he asked, "He enchanted Kong shi's sculpture as well?"

In this very instant, he saw the entire world spinning around him.

That was Kong shi, the man whom no human on the Master Teacher Pavilion did not respect! Even if it was just a sculpture of him, no one would even dream of desecrating it in the slightest. And yet, to actually enchant it...

"It's not just Kong shi," Elder Wuzhen said as he pointed in another direction

Zhang Wuchen quickly turned his head over and saw the founding father of the Zhang Clan seated on the ground, lecturing a group of guests. The founding father clearly grew more and more passionate as he spoke, to the point where there was absolutely no doubt that saliva would have splattered out of his mouth had he possessed any in the first place.

"Ridiculous! This is completely ridiculous!" Zhang Wuchen bellowed in frenzy.

The reason the sculptures were erected in the square was to display the Zhang Clan's strength and contributions to the rest of the world. While the sculptures were indeed speaking of true incidents, still... this was simply too embarrassing!

This was not just a showcase anymore but cheap bragging!

And most importantly of all... why in the world did that fellow enchant Kong shi's sculpture too?

Was there a single person in the Master Teacher Continent who did not know of Kong shi's existence? Was there any need to introduce him at all?

The predecessors of the Zhang Clan were awe-inspiring figures who induced respect in those standing before them, but in that very moment, with them reciting their accomplishments blatantly in such a manner, they seemed more like proud kids showing off their accomplishments.

Where was the honor in this?

What would become of their reputation?

"Destroying the formation as soon as he arrived, and playing with the ancestral sculptures in the guest area and making them out to be fools... That fellow is clearly here to wreak havoc!" Zhang Wuchen was so angry that he was on the verge of exploding.

While most guests were there to challenge the Zhang Clan, the deference in their eyes was clear; it was almost as if they were entering the royal palace to meet the emperor. This was because, regardless of whether they were able to triumph over the offspring of the Zhang Clan or not, there was still no denying the strength and influence that they wielded in the Master Teacher Continent.

Yet, not only was that fellow devoid of the slightest respect for the Zhang Clan, he even brought mayhem over, causing the situation to spiral out of control.

That damned b*stard...

"There's no way he could be that person! There's just no way that he could be..." Zhang Wuchen shook his head

relentlessly.

Those of the Zhang Clan had always been upright and honorable individuals, so how could that person possibly pull off something like that?

Therefore, there was just no way on earth that he could be that person.

And as long as he was not that person, he would be able to teach the other party a lesson, carving deep in his mind that the Zhang Clan was not to be humiliated by anyone!

“Get the spirit awakeners of our clan over and have them destroy the spirits in the sculptures.” After some time, Zhang Wuchen finally calmed down, and he swiftly issued a set of instruction to resolve the situation.

Naturally, since it was possible to enchant spirits into objects and artifacts, it was possible to destroy the spirits as well. However, it would be best to have spirit awakeners do the job, or else there was a good chance that they could accidentally damage the sculpture.

Elder Wuzhen hurriedly nodded before relaying the instruction to another member of the Zhang Clan.

Soon, two elders rushed over to the scene in a hurry.

“Third Elder, Seventh Elder!” the two elders greeted.

“Elder Wu and Elder Mo, we’ll be troubling you on this matter.” Zhang Wuchen clasped his fist.

The reason the geniuses of the Zhang Clan were skilled in most of the major occupations was because they had recruited plenty of experts from each of those occupations. Both Elder Wu and Elder Mo were 9-star spirit awakeners, and they were famed figures even in the Spirit Awakener Guild headquarters.

“Don’t worry, Third Elder. This is no major issue!” Elder Wu chuckled as he stroked his beard leisurely, emanating an air of confidence. “I’ll have the spirits in the sculptures destroyed right now and have the sculptures return to where they should be!”

“Un.” The Third Elder nodded.

Even though he was extremely assured by the prowess of the two elders, he still felt that he should oversee the situation by the side. After all, these sculptures had been passed down through the generations by the predecessors. There was simply no replacement for them.

“Let’s deal with this one first...” Elder Wu took a look around the place before walking over to Zhang Lingran’s sculpture.

His Primordial Spirit dove out of his glabella and dived into the sculpture.

Hu!

Zhang Lingran’s sculpture immediately stopped speaking, and it froze motionlessly on the spot, as if the spirit within it had been completely destroyed.

“Alright, it’s done!” Returning his Primordial Spirit to his body, Elder Wu chuckled softly.

Spirit enchantment was an extremely delicate process, such that even 9-star spirit awakeners would have to proceed with it carefully, especially when dealing with important artifacts. However, if it was just destroying spirits, they could do it with ease.

Seeing how simple the process was, the Third Elder heaved a sigh of relief.

Since the sculptures of the predecessors would not be damaged in the process, it should be safe to leave them be. As long as the spirits were destroyed swiftly, the damage to Zhang Clan’s reputation would be kept to the bare minimum.

“I’ll be troubling the both of you with this matter then,” the Third Elder said once more politely.

“This is no trouble at all; there’s no need to stand on ceremony! I’ll have all of the spirits destroyed swiftly, too.” Elder Wu waved his hand casually, and he began making his way over to the other enchanted sculptures.

However, halfway through his motion, he suddenly caught sight of the frozen Elder Mo in his peripheral vision. Glancing over, he saw that the latter’s eyes were widened in horror.

Perplexed, he asked, “What’s wrong?”

“Your head...” Elder Mo exclaimed anxiously.

“My head?” Bewildered by that remark, Elder Wu swiftly scanned his body with his Spiritual Perception, and the next instant, his knees caved in, and he nearly collapsed to the ground.

He found that innumerable cacti and flowers had sprouted on his head, and they were growing bigger and bigger by the moment at an ever-increasing rate!

Coming to realize what was going on, Elder Mo exclaimed in agitation, “You didn’t manage to destroy the spirit completely earlier! It managed to dive into your Primordial Spirit, and it’s planning on vying with you for the control of your body!”

Previously, Elder Wu had sent his Primordial Spirit into the sculpture to destroy the spirit within it, and he thought that he had succeeded. Little did he know that not only was the spirit not destroyed, it had even made use of this opportunity to sneak a seed of itself into his Primordial Spirit to take root.

Just that single moment of carelessness was more than sufficient to place Elder Wu in the precarious situation that he currently was in.

Of course, with Elder Wu’s strength, it would be impossible for the spirit, which was much weaker relatively to him, to successfully possess his body. Nevertheless, it was still embarrassing for him to walk around with a head covered with cacti and flowers. This would be more than enough to provide him with an entire lifetime worth of shame!

“Damn it!” Coming to realize what had happened as well, Elder Wu’s body trembled in fury. As if responding to his rage, the cacti on his head also quivered non-stop

He swiftly scanned his Primordial Spirit, and a moment later, he said, “This spirit has taken root in my Tianhai acupoint, so I won’t be able to deal with it alone. I need you to help me destroy it using your ‘Qinzheng’s Ethereal Destruction Art’!”

“Very well!” Elder Mo nodded.

He walked up to Elder Wu, and taking in a deep breath, he sent a rapid wave of soul energy into the latter's Tianhai acupoint.

Padah!

With a sound reminiscent of a needle popping a balloon, it sounded like something had been destroyed.

Elder Wu swiftly inspected his Primordial Spirit before heaving a sigh of relief. "Phew, it seems like it has been completely destroyed this time around... Ah?"

Before he could finish his words, he caught sight of a cactus sprouting on Elder Mo's head. Lush like a bright green hat, it covered the entirety of Elder Mo's head.

"Y-you..." Elder Mo was also shocked beyond words.

All he had done was use his soul energy to vanquish the spirit. Fearing that the spirit would plague him, he had even made sure to retract his soul energy immediately upon contact! How in the world did he fall for the spirit's assault, too?

"What in the name of heavens is going on here?" Elder Mo was really on the verge of tears.

While other spirit awakeners were able to easily destroy any spirit just by suppressing it with their Primordial Spirit, they had actually ended up being possessed by it instead. As 9-star spirit awakeners, this was a situation that never should have happened to them!

Yet, both of them had actually fallen for the same thing.

Just who in the world was the culprit that had enchanted such an irksome and troublesome spirit?

Just as the duo was completely crazed by the situation before them, not knowing what they should do, the cacti on their heads suddenly shuddered a little before voicing out a series of words that vaguely sounded like human speech.

"I am Zhang Lingran. Is there anything I can help you with?"

"..." Elder Wu.

"..." Elder Mo.

“...” Zhang Wuchen.

1436 Zhang Ziqing

It took a very long time before Elder Mo finally managed to eliminate the cactus fully from his head. The two 9-star spirit awakeners stared at the many sculptures not too far away, and apprehension and fear inconspicuously flickered across their eyes.

They had complete confidence in their spirit enchantment ability, but they had never met with something as bizarre as this before. There were many different spirit enchantment techniques in the world, so there were significant variations to the spirits that each spirit awakeners could create. Each of these variations had their own strengths and flaws, but when it came to the spirits in the sculptures before them... it was hard for even them to believe it, but it seemed like the spirits were completely flawless!

No matter what kind of means they used against the spirit, the spirit would be able to put up its guard against it and even retaliate!

It was to the point where they almost felt utterly helpless before it.

“Is there any other way to resolve this issue?” After waiting for almost an hour but having none of the spirits of the sculptures destroyed, Zhang Wuchen couldn’t sit still anymore.

“This...” Hearing those words, Elder Wu’s face immediately flushed red in embarrassment. He awkwardly turned to Zhang Wuchen and clasped his fist, “Third Elder, I’m afraid that the both of us aren’t skilled enough to resolve this situation. Pardon me if I may ask, but in which master spirit awakener’s hands were these sculptures enchanted?”

“They were enchanted by... a sword practitioner from the Sanctum of Sages, Zhang Xuan!” Zhang Wuchen replied awkwardly.

“Zhang Xuan?” Elder Wu and Elder Mo traded glances, and they could see the confusion in each other’s eyes.

They did know a thing or two about the few extraordinarily talented spirit awakeners in the world, but never had they heard of this name before!

Furthermore... a sword practitioner? What the heck was that?

“His spirit enchantment differs vastly from the style that we have learned, so I’m afraid that there’s very little that we can do to help. If I may suggest, Third Elder, why don’t you look for the person in question? Most likely, he’s the only one who will be able to stop all of these sculptures.” Elder Wu hesitated for a moment before saying.

Considering how even 9-star spirit awakeners like them were helpless before these sculptures, most likely, only the person in question would have the capability to stop the sculptures.

Hearing those words, the Third Elder couldn’t help but rub his glabella.

To think that the lofty Zhang Clan would be unable to resolve the problem brought about by a young lad! If it were to be made known to outsiders that they had to plead with the other party to resolve the situation, it would surely impair the Zhang Clan’s reputation.

But from the current look of things, they would only be in a worse position if they were to allow the sculptures to continue messing around.

“Wuzhen, lead the way...” Sighing deeply in resignation, Zhang Wuchen waved his hand and said.

Knowing how serious the matter was, Elder Wu hurriedly led the way forward.

The Third Elder quickly followed too, and after a moment of hesitation, Elder Wu and Elder Mo decided to follow too.

They were interested to see the man who was able to enchant a spirit so powerful that even was able to render them completely helpless against it.

“Zhang Shi and Jian Qinsheng have come here to challenge the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship, so they are staying in the competitors’ residences.” Elder Wuzhen explained while making his way over.

There were countless visitors who would come to the Zhang Clan every single day. Some came to challenge the Zhang Clan whereas others came to pay a visit... In order to better differentiate between the types of visitors, the locations of their accommodations were divided by the intentions behind their visit.

Considering how Jian Qinsheng had a private grudge with their clan head, it went without saying that the place he resided in was the challengers’ accommodation.

There were also many other experts living in those accommodations, and their field of specialties ranged from swordsmanship, spearmanship, and saber arts to fist arts, palm arts, so on and so forth... You name it, there they would be.

Of course, there were also plenty of occupational experts too.

“Quick, let’s go over and take a look. Someone is challenging Zhang Ziqing!”

“Zhang Ziqing? You mean the talented young lady who’s renowned as the number one genius painter in the Zhang Clan?”

“Indeed! She started learning painting when she was just three; by seven, she has reached Infused Intentions, Breathtaking Verisimilitude by nine, Spirit Wisdom by twelve, Suspended Imagery by fifteen, and while she’s only eighteen this year, and she’s already capable of painting at the level of Evocative Vividness! Even the head of the Painting Guild is filled with praises for her! He views her as the number one genius in painting in the past several thousand years... Not only so, there are hardly any peers who could compete with her in zither and chess either. Just who could be so blind as to challenge her?”

“I’m not too sure either, but it seems to be a guest named... Zhang Xuan. From what I heard, that fellow saw that there

were several people vying for her paintings, so he walked up to take a closer look. It seemed like he said some awful sounding words that caused Zhang Ziqing's rage to flurry, thus eventually leading to the challenge!"

"Awful sounding words?"

"I'm not too sure about it either, but that fellow seemed to have said that her foundations in painting were pathetic, and he even offered to teach her. Given that Zhang Ziqing is the number one genius of the Painter Guild, one of the famed prodigies of the Zhang Clan, it's only natural that she would be enraged by those words..."

As Zhang Wuchen headed forward, he could hear the surrounding crowd discussing heatedly.

"Let's head over to take a look..."

They had come here to find Zhang Xuan, but who could have thought that the young man would get himself embroiled in another mess before the matter regarding the sculptures could even be settled yet?

Following the footsteps of the crowd, they soon found Zhang Xuan standing in the midst of a square. Jian Qinsheng was standing by the side with his hand on his forehead, revealing a look of distress. The other star of the show, Zhang Ziqing, was glaring at Zhang Xuan with a face reddened in fury, and her body was trembling non-stop.

"You wish to compete with me in the field of drawing?"

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up nonchalantly as he asked.

"What are the stakes? If there are no stakes, I have no interest in wasting my time with a nameless nobody."

He had heard that there were many people vying for the work for this young lady, so he came here in hopes of seeing a work that could astound him. However, after taking a closer look, he couldn't help but shake his head in disappointment.

It was indeed amazing that the young lady of her age was able to draw out a Evocative Vividness painting, but at the same time, it was precisely due to her young age and lack of experience that caused her conceptualization to be extremely

immature, resulting in her expression of emotions being rather forced and awkward even.

In a way, this was similar to how most beautiful poems from his previous world that were able to last through the ages were those that were crafted from the poet's own experiences and emotions. Only through personal experience would one really be able to create a work so vivid that others would be able to image and conceptualize, granting it great meaning and thus longevity through the ages. On the other hand, those who drew solely through imagination would risk their feelings and imagery being underdeveloped, and as a result, it was inevitable that their conceptualization would be slightly lacking,

Had it been anyone else, given Zhang Xuan's low profile personality, he wouldn't even have bothered to waste his words. It was in view that the other party was a genius of the Zhang Clan that he couldn't resist giving a few feedbacks.

But who could have thought that the other party would suddenly rage at him like that?

"You..." Zhang Ziqing stared at Zhang Xuan so intensely that it almost felt like her eyes could kill.

The young man before her was simply too maddening. It was one thing for him to say that her painting was a complete nonsense, but to claim that she was a nameless nobody on top of that... Know that I, Zhang Ziqing, am a famous figure even in the Painter Guild! I'm a person whom no one in the upper society didn't know of... Just who do you think you Zhang Xuan are?

To declare that you wouldn't compete with me without anything on the stake... Are you even qualified to be saying such words?

"Fine, I'll place a stake! This picture is known as the "Winter Snow Treading Portrait". This is a masterpiece I have drawn last year in winter. As long as you can triumph over me, I can give it to you for free!" As angry as Zhang Ziqing was, she could tell that the young man might really walk away if she were to refuse to make a bet.

Thus, she flicked her wrist, and a scroll appeared in her hands.

Unrolling it freely, a world of drifting snow and utmost coldness materialized before her eyes. It felt as if one would sink into that endless world of chill with just a single look.

Seeing her taking out that painting, the crowd released shock exclamations before looks of envy appeared on their faces.

“For Ziqing to be provoked into taking out that painting, it seems like she’s really angry this time around!” Zhang Wuchen remarked while stroking his beard.

“Indeed. That is the single painting that Ziqing fancies the most, and she has always regarded it as her prized possession. There was once a master of the Painter Guild offered fifty pinnacle spirit stones for it, but even so, she still refused to sell it!” Elder Wuzhen nodded.

The painting was the work Zhang Ziqing produced under her best state, and it was unknown when she would be able to create a masterpiece of this caliber once more. As such, she treasured this painting as if it was her child, and even the elders of the Zhang Clan didn’t get too many chances to see it. Yet, to think that she would take it out as a stake for this challenge... It seemed like she was really provoked this time around.

“You sure as a stingy fellow!” On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was still wondering what Zhang Ziqing would put on the line when he saw that it was only a painting, and he couldn’t help but shake his head in disappointment. “Don’t you think it’s embarrassing for a genius of the Zhang Clan like you to try to hoodwink me with such an inferior painting? Let’s just do this instead. If you were to lose to you, you have to give me one pinnacle spirit stone!”

“One pinnacle spirit stone?” Those words made Zhang Ziqing subconsciously clench her fists tightly together. Spitting through gritted teeth, she asked, “Are you certain?”

“Un.” Zhang Xuan nodded nonchalantly.

To him, the possession of the greatest value was spirit stones. As for a mere painting... he could always draw it out himself

whenever he wanted it, so it held little value to him.

1437 Wu Dao Mirror

Seeing how that fellow was unable to see through the value of her work and simply deemed it as an inferior good, Zhang Ziqing harrumphed angrily. “Fine, one pinnacle spirit stones then! If you lose, I won’t demand anything but a formal apology.”

“Apologize? That’s impossible.” Zhang Xuan shook his head. “I have never lost in a challenge before. If you wish to challenge me, hurry up and get along with it. I still have much more important things to handle, so I don’t have much time to spare you.”

“You... Fine!” Zhang Ziqing took in a deep breath and suppressed her emotions before looking at Zhang Xuan once more. “Just like how it’s impossible to objectively determine which martial art is superior, it’s also extremely difficult to discern between the quality of paintings of the same level. After all, everyone’s preferences are shaped by their experiences and personality, so naturally, what appeals to each person can be vastly different. In order to ensure the fairness of our challenge, I have an artifact here known as the ‘Wu Dao Mirror’, and it’s able to accurately determine the superiority and inferiority of a painting without the slightest discrepancy!”

As she said those words, she whipped out a round copper mirror, and it immediately floated quietly in the air.

“Wu Dao Mirror?” Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

“Indeed. This is an artifact created by the founder of the Painter Guild, Founder Wu Dao. It’s capable of discerning the true level of a painting accurately. Even though the artifact I have over here is just an imitation, it’s still more than enough to discern paintings of our level!” Seeing how the young man did not know this at all, Zhang Ziqing’s displeasure and scorn visibly deepened.

The Wu Dao Mirror was an artifact that had been created by the founder of the Painter Guild, and it was capable of

discerning the level of any painting in the world. Of course, the original artifact was stored within the guild, so the one in Zhang Ziqing's possession was just an imitation created by an expert. Nevertheless, it was still more than capable of impeccably discerning paintings of the eighth level.

"Can you allow me to take a closer look at the artifact?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Here you go!" Knowing that the other party would surely have to check the artifact in order to ensure the fairness of the assessment, Zhang Ziqing flicked her wrist, and the Wu Dao Mirror flew over.

Zhang Xuan placed his finger on the mirror momentarily before pushing it back to Zhang Ziqing, saying, "Alright, I'm done checking on it. Can we begin now?"

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path, and a swift glance through it allowed him to confirm the capability of the artifact in assessing the level of a painting.

"You're already done examining the mirror?" Zhang Ziqing was taken aback.

It was just a moment ago that they young man did not even know what the Wu Dao Mirror was, and yet, after the briefest contact with the mirror, he had already pushed the mirror back to her, saying that he was done checking on it.

Are you kidding with me?

"This Wu Dao Mirror you have over there was created by 9-star Painter Zhi Yang three hundred years ago. It was forged out of the Golden Pearl Ore, and there are thirty-seven formation marks harnessing the power of painting conceptualization inscribed on the mirror. The spirit infused into the mirror embodies Elder Zhi Yang's deep comprehension of paintings, so it will indeed be fair to use this artifact as the judge for this competition!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

"Y-you... How did you know?" Zhang Ziqing was astonished.

This Wu Dao Mirror had been stored in the Painter Guild ever since it was forged, and only upon hearing that the Zhang

Clan's Clan Conference was coming up and that there would be challengers did she apply with her teacher to take it out.

It had taken her great effort in order to assimilate the artifact before she was able to learn this information, and yet, with just a single glance, the other party was already able to recite it with ease.

Not even her teacher was capable of this!

“Oh. I happen to be an appraiser too, so I was able to recognize it with just a look,” Zhang Xuan replied with a casual wave of his hand.

“Appraiser?” Zhang Ziqing was even more bewildered upon hearing this.

Given that the other party had not even heard of the Wu Dao Mirror before, it was a ridiculous notion for him to be able to identify the background of the Wu Dao Mirror in her possession.

This isn't an ability that appraisers possess! Who do you think you are trying to fool?

Then again, Zhang Ziqing knew that this was not the time to dwell on such matters. Thus, she flicked her wrist, and a piece of white paper appeared on her table.

Different from the xuan paper that painters usually used, this white paper had a glossy surface that seemed as if ink would be unable to soak through it.

“This is known as the ‘Legacy Paper’. It's made out of the fresh blood of saint beasts and tempered using the Legacy Rock. Paintings that are made on it are able to easily last a dozen millenniums without the slightest loss in color. For this reason, every single sheet of Legacy Paper is worth a huge fortune,” Zhang Ziqing said.

At the back of the crowd, Zhang Wuchen nodded.

Paper to a painter was rather similar to a sword to a sword practitioner. The higher the grade of paper was, the more the conceptualization in their artwork would be able to be brought out.

The Legacy Paper was considered a prized possession to all painters in the world. Due to its low production, even 9-star master teachers would only choose to use them on important occasions. The fact that Zhang Ziqing was willing to take it out for this challenge reflected how seriously she took the matter.

A thought flashed across Zhang Wuchen's mind, and the truth suddenly dawned on him.

Most likely, the news of the formation collapsing has reached her ears, and it just happened that the other party criticized her painting at this moment. Thus, she decided to take this opportunity to teach the other party a lesson!

The news that the Defense Formation of the Zhang Clan had been destroyed by Zhang Xuan four hours ago had already spread far and wide across the entire Zhang Clan. Those of the younger generation should have already heard of the matter by now.

As a person who took pride in her identity as a member of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Ziqing surely felt angered by Zhang Xuan humiliating the Zhang Clan. As such, she decided to use this matter to teach that young man that there were just some people in the world whom he could not afford to offend!

Otherwise, considering that this was the guest area, how could she, as one of the top geniuses of the Zhang Clan, possibly come here? Not to mention, to so 'coincidentally' get into a fight with Zhang Xuan at that?

Coming to realize this, Zhang Wuchen immediately did a quick scan around the room, and a moment later, he shook his head.

Noting Zhang Wuchen's actions, Elder Wuzhen could tell what he was thinking, and he sent a telepathic message over. "With all of them here, it seems like Zhang Xuan will be in for some misfortune."

"This is fine, too." Zhang Wuchen harrumphed. "It's about time for that fellow to learn that the members of our Zhang

Clan are no pushovers so that he will learn to tone down that haughtiness of his.”

Most of the top figures of the younger generations had come over to watch the show, so it seemed like the First Elder’s plan was working as expected.

Given that Zhang Xuan was here to challenge the Zhang Clan in the first case, it was perfectly fair for the younger generation of the Zhang Clan to challenge him back!

Hu!

While the both of them were secretly talking to one another, Zhang Ziqing flicked her wrist, and a brush materialized in her hand.

“That’s the ‘Empyrean Saint Fox Brush’, made using the tail of the Empyrean Saint Fox! In terms of value, it far exceeds that of the Legacy Paper!”

“To take out two invaluable treasures, one after another... it seems like the fellow whom Zhang Ziqing is facing is going to be utterly humiliated!”

“That might not necessarily be the case. Considering how he chose to accept Zhang Ziqing’s challenge despite having seen her mastery in painting, it’s likely that he has some skills in painting as well. Perhaps, he might have artifacts that are even more formidable than that!”

“Well, that’s true too...”

Upon seeing the brush that Zhang Ziqing had taken out, a huge commotion immediately broke out amid the crowd.

Those who had been invited there by the Zhang Clan were all the top talents in their fields. While they might not necessarily have been painters, they would still have heard of some of the more renowned artifacts in painting.

The Empyrean Saint Fox Brush happened to be one such artifact. Even when looking across the entire Master Teacher Continent, there were very few brushes that could compete with it.

“The time limit is when this incense finally burns out. If you fail to complete your painting by then, it will be considered as your loss,” Zhang Ziqing said casually as she took out an ink slab.

As she dabbed her brush in the ink slab, she lightly flicked her finger, and the incense stick at the center of the courtyard immediately lit up, emanating a slight fragrance.

Since this was a challenge between the two of them, it was a given that there should be a time limit. Otherwise, one party would be able to postpone the challenge indefinitely under the pretext that they had not finished their painting yet.

“Very well,” Zhang Xuan replied.

Judging from the rate at which the incense was burning, it appeared that they had less than an hour to finish their painting. And to be honest, it was no easy task to create a satisfactory painting within an hour’s time.

“Let’s begin then.” Seeing that the young man had agreed to it, Zhang Ziqing lightly tapped her brush on the Legacy Paper, and a beautiful stroke of ink flowed out from the tip.

1438 Zhang Xuan Is Going to Get Serious

“That is... the Snowearth Painting Technique!”

“Legend has it that back then, while Founder Wu Dao was observing the swallows in the air, he noted how their claws sunk deeply into the snow-laden earth, and inspired by that, he created the Snowearth Painting Technique. Paintings that are produced using this painting technique tend to have deeper conceptualization, and even before the final artwork is completed, just the painting process itself is enough to grip the hearts of the viewers!”

“This painting technique has been passed down through the years, but only a small handful of incredibly talented painters are able to learn it. Who could have thought that not only would Ziqing be able to learn it, she’s even able to execute it so smoothly? Without a doubt, this duel is going to end in our victory!”

“From the looks of it, unless that fellow is able to produce a painting of the ninth level, or else there’s no way he would be able to achieve victory...”

...

A commotion broke out in the surroundings.

The instant that the young genius of the Zhang Clan made her move, the crowd was immediately captured. Be it her brush, paper, ink, painting technique, or even state of mind, there was simply no flaw that one could pick with her painting. It was so impeccable that even naysayers could only sigh in awe at that sight.

Not bad. Zhang Xuan also nodded in approval.

As an 8-star painter himself, his eye of discernment far exceeded that of the crowd. Naturally, he was able to tell that

the young lady before him would not be an easy opponent to deal with.

In fact, her skills were even above that of the Inceptive Sage of the Painter Guild, whom he had faced back at the Sanctum of Sages.

Even though there were plenty of incredible geniuses all over the Master Teacher Continent gathered in the Sanctum of Sages, the Inceptive Sages there did not necessarily represent the pinnacle of their corresponding occupation.

For example, even though Zhang Feng was the Inceptive Sage of the Spirit Awakener Guild, wielding incredible spirit enchantment abilities, if he competed with the genius who had just entered the Spirit Awakener Guild headquarters, Wang Ying, he would still pale slightly in comparison. Otherwise, the elders of the Spirit Awakener Guild would not have had to lower themselves to seek Zhang Xuan's help.

The same applied here.

Even though the Inceptive Sage of the Painter Guild in the Sanctum of Sages was a rare genius in painting, it was still rather clear that he paled in comparison to Zhang Ziqing.

Huala!

Zhang Ziqing's brush seemed to dance nimbly in the air, creating a sight that pleased one's eyes. Despite her relaxed movements, every single movement that she made was pinpoint accurate, impeccably controlled without the slightest deviation. Every single brush stroke that materialized on the piece of paper seemed to emanate an intoxicating radiance, drawing one deeper and deeper into the world that Zhang Ziqing was creating under her hand.

“Zhang shi... She has already drawn so much! You should get started, too, or else you might really lose the challenge!”

While Zhang Xuan was still leisurely observing Zhang Ziqing, an anxious voice suddenly sounded next to him.

Turning his head, he saw Jian Qinsheng clasp his forehead helplessly.

“There’s no need to panic.” Zhang Xuan took a glance at the incense stick and saw that there was still plenty of time for him to work, so he waved his hand leisurely, paying no heed at all to Jian Qinsheng’s concern.

He was an efficient painter, capable of finishing a painting within just ten to twenty breaths. There was no need for him to rush at all.

On the other hand, Jian Qinsheng suddenly recalled that the young man before him had defeated the Inceptive Sage of the Painter Guild in the Tower of Master Teachers, so he decided not to say too much about the matter. “It’s good that you’re confident. Cough cough, Zhang shi, is it fine if I discuss something with you meanwhile?”

“Junior, feel free to speak your mind!” Zhang Xuan said.

Jian Qinsheng pondered for a moment to sort out his words before speaking carefully. “It’s like this. You’re currently a representative of the swordsmanship of our Sanctum of Sages, so if possible, can you not dabble too much in the other supporting occupations?”

To be honest, he was starting to regret bringing that fellow here!

They should have been there to challenge the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship, but before they could face any of the Zhang Clan’s sword practitioners, the young man had already torn down the other party’s formation and enchanted all of their sculptures. And now, he was even challenging one of the Zhang Clan’s geniuses in painting.

Formations, enchantment, painting, and appraising... at this rate, will anyone still remember that you are a sword practitioner?

So, I’m begging you, can you pay some heed to your identity before doing anything else?

You are currently my senior! Is it really fine for you to be showing off in the other occupations as well?

“This... I guess I have been acting a little carelessly ever since arriving in the Zhang Clan.” Hearing those words, Zhang

Xuan scratched his head in embarrassment. “Pardon me, it seems like I have been lacking thought in my actions.”

He had been so focused on trying to put down the Zhang Clan that he almost forgot the primary reason he was at the Zhang Clan. He was supposed to challenge the top sword practitioners of the Zhang Clan so as to cleanse Jian Qinsheng’s humiliation, and it was indeed inappropriate of him to allow his attention to wander to other stuff. Others would think that he was just a jack of all trades, specializing in nothing at all.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan had caught his drift, Jian Qinsheng nodded in relief. “It’s fine. It’ll do as long as you remember our primary purpose here.”

While he did feel a little uncomfortable at seeing the young man dabbling in other occupations and provoking the Zhang Clan at every turn, by no means was he mad at the young man. Rather, his feelings were still more sided toward gratitude. After all, if not for the young man, there was a good chance that he never would have found an opportunity to get back at the Xing Sword Saint.

“I understand. I’ll keep that in mind.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

At this moment, a resounding round of applause suddenly broke out around them.

“Amazing! She’s already going to finish her work soon!”

“What marvelous artwork! Fairy Ziqing, would you consider selling your painting to me?”

“To be able to finish such a beautiful piece within a short period of time, as expected of the top genius of the Painter Guild!”

...

Impassioned discussion could be heard from the surroundings. Zhang Xuan glanced over and saw that Zhang Ziqing had already put down her brush, and a completed painting showed its form to the world.

It was a bamboo painting.

There was no other greenery or plant to complement the beauty of the bamboo, but what was particularly striking about it was how each of the towering, emerald bamboo culms seemed to rise out of the surface of the painting. They shuddered in response to the light breeze whisking across the square.

It felt like each of the dozen or so bamboo culms had their own life and emotions, their own unique form and soul. As such, despite the lack of any other complementing details in the painting to act as contrast with the bamboos, the painting did not feel monotonous at all. If anything, each individual bamboo seemed to contrast with one another.

To be able to bestow your painting life... Not too bad! Zhang Xuan nodded in approval.

He had thought that he would be able to win with just a casual drawing, but from the looks of it, things would not be as easy as he thought.

The young lady's caliber was much higher than he had expected.

Painting did not necessarily have to be complicated. Just because a painting was more colorful and intricate did not mean that it would be of a higher level. Just like how the greatest sound was soundless and the greatest form was formless, most masterpieces tended to be exceptionally simple as well.

In a sense, this was similar to how it was easier to gauge a chef's ability through having them prepare the simplest of dishes.

In fact, the simpler the painting was, the more it would reflect the painter's capability.

If one were to just take a brief glance at her artwork, its simplicity would make it appear to be just at the level of Reality Depiction. But in truth, if one examined it closely, one would realize that every single one of these bamboo culms was so detailed that it was almost as if they were all alive.

Rather than calling it a work of art, it would be more accurate to say that new lives had been created.

If not for Zhang Ziqing's young age and the limitations of her cultivation, she would have already been able to produce pinnacle artwork and take the final step forward to become a real 9-star master teacher.

It's no wonder others said that it would be difficult to triumph over her without a painting of the ninth level, Zhang Xuan thought.

Given the quality of Zhang Ziqing's artwork, it would really require a true ninth level painting in order to outdo her.

“What? Does Zhang shi intend to admit defeat?”

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, a young lady's voice sounded.

Turning his head over, he saw Zhang Ziqing looking at him with a cold sneer on her lips.

She finally understood why the young man chose to gamble with just a pinnacle spirit stone instead of with her painting. Considering how valuable her painting was, the young man might not necessarily have been able to come up with something of equivalent value to it once he lost!

In the end, he was just preparing an escape route should things not go in his favor.

“Admit defeat? Why would I do that?” Zhang Xuan shook his head. “I do acknowledge that your painting is not too bad, and out of respect for you as a painter, I'll be getting serious.”

As he said those words, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and whipped out a sword. He test-swung it in the air before shaking his head and stowing it back into his storage ring. After which, he took out another sword and swung it, but he also shook his head and placed it back into his storage ring.

He repeated the same action another three times before he finally seemed to have found a sword to his liking. He swiftly scanned his surroundings before stomping his feet lightly on the ground.

Hula!

A stone next to his leg flew up, catching everyone's attention in an instant.

"I'm going to start now," Zhang Xuan said casually as he drove his sword toward the stone.

"You aren't going to use a brush or the Legacy Paper to compete with me... but a mere sword and stone?" Zhang Ziqing widened her eyes in disbelief.

In an instant, she felt as if the other party was intentionally trying to humiliate her, and a burst of rage surge through her veins.

1439 It's Zhang Xuan's Victory?

She was the number one genius of the Zhang Clan, as well as one of the top geniuses of the Painter Guild. It was already an insult for her to lower her standing to compete with a nameless nobody, but the other party was even taking the entire challenge as a joke, doing whatever he pleased without any regard.

Is this what you meant by getting serious?

Which painter doesn't use a brush and paper in their painting but a sword?

While Zhang Ziqing was feeling so stifled that she could have exploded on the spot, Jian Qinsheng's body also trembled upon seeing the sight, and he nearly spurted blood.

It was just a moment ago that he had told the other party that he had come here as a representative of the Sanctum of Sages' swordsmanship when the next moment, he really used a sword to paint.

The blade of a sword was sharp and cold, making it far more difficult to draw and paint using it compared to a brush.

My intention was only to remind you of your own identity and responsibility so that you wouldn't lose sight of your goal due to these insignificant matters.

I didn't ask you to make things difficult for yourself and put yourself at risk of losing a challenge!

The young lady is equipped with the Empyrean Saint Fox Brush and Legacy Paper, and she has even executed the formidable Snowearth Painting Technique. On the other hand, as if an ordinary sculptor, you chose to carve a stone instead. Do you really have to take the challenge so lightly?

In this moment, despair was written all over Jian Qinsheng's face. Without a doubt, it was their loss this time around.

He could not even bear to bring himself to look on anymore.

“Could that fellow’s brain possibly be rusty?” Zhang Wuchen was also shocked to the point where he could not close his mouth.

He had seen plenty of lunatics, but he had not seen one who was so mentally challenged before!

To paint using a sword... just what kind of lunacy was that young man up to this time around?

“Most likely, he feels that he’s unable to surpass Ziqing, but at the same time, he doesn’t want to embarrass himself,” Elder Wuzhen hypothesized.

“That could possibly be the case.” After some thought, Zhang Wuchen was still unable to decipher Zhang Xuan’s intentions, so he could only nod in agreement.

As the number one painting genius of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Ziqing’s aptitude in painting far surpassed that of her peers, and her skills were on par with most veteran 8-star pinnacle painters. Even if the young man had successfully cleared the Tower of Master Teachers, the crowd still did not think that it was likely for him to emerge victorious.

Since the young man was unable to win, the only way he would be able to save some of his pride was to mess up the entire challenge. This way, even if he lost, he could still shirk the responsibility to his brush and paper.

Coming to realize the young man’s motive, Zhang Wuchen shook his head as he shot the young man another glance, and once again, he found himself in a flabbergasted position.

Wielding a sword in his hand, Zhang Xuan’s sword tip was more than a chi away from the stone. He swung his arms non-stop, covering the stone with a barrage of sword qi. But for some reason, all of the sword qi seemed to brush past the stone, not leaving the slightest mark on it.

To the crowd, it appeared as if he was possessed by some kind of spirit. There was not a single person in the square who could comprehend what he was up to!

“Could that fellow possibly... have gone mad?”

“I think so, too. Otherwise, why the heck would he suddenly dance with his sword at this moment?”

The only expressions that could be seen on the crowd’s faces were dumbstruck looks.

Most of them were from privileged backgrounds, and they had been blessed with the opportunity to see all kinds of painting techniques from master painters. Some painters preferred a more refined painting method, some adopted a wilder painting technique, some were fond of a more flirtatious painting style, and some chose a more stable and dignified painting manner.

With Zhang Ziqing, for example, every single one of her brush strokes was elegant, making it a pleasure to behold. On the other hand, the young man before him was dancing around wildly as if he was suffering from a stroke, and to make things worse, he was not leaving the slightest mark on the stone at all. Did he come here just to fool around?

Even Zhang Ziqing could not help but rub her eyes, wondering if she was seeing things.

It was just a moment ago that the young man had haughtily declared that he had never lost in any challenges before, and all of a sudden... he had suddenly become a madman prancing around the area?

“I’m done!”

While the crowd was still in a stunned state, the young man exhaled deeply and wiped off the sweat from his forehead before wearily flicking his sword back into his storage ring.

Hula!

The stone fell onto a table not too far away, just beside the Bamboo Painting that Zhang Ziqing had created.

“You’re done?” Zhang Ziqing exclaimed in astonishment.

She subconsciously glanced at the incense stick that she had lit earlier, and it happened to extinguish at this very moment.

The young man did manage to finish his work on time, but... just what the heck was with that stone?

I'm competing with you in the field of painting, not sculpting! Furthermore... even if we were competing in the field of sculpting, you have to at least leave some marks on the stone in order for it to even be considered a 'sculpture'. Every single person here can testify that your sword hasn't touched the stone at all, so... what the heck are you up to?

More importantly... all you did was randomly swing your sword for around ten to twenty breaths? You didn't even do anything at all, so how did you get so tired that even your face has turned pale?

Even if you want to act, at least do it in a more convincing situation than this! It's almost as if you are taking all of us for fools!

Unable to stand it, Zhang Ziqing turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Are you certain that this is the work you wish to challenge me with? If you aren't done yet, I don't mind giving you more time!"

Since she was competing with the young man, it would only be worthwhile for her if she defeated the young man when the young man was in his peak state. If the young man's condition had been a little off in the past hour, she did not mind giving him another chance to showcase his true capability.

"There's no need for that. I'm already done painting," Zhang Xuan said with a chuckle. He gestured forward gentlemanly with his hand and said, "We should get the Wu Dao Mirror to check on our work now."

"Check?" Seeing the smile on the young man's face, Zhang Ziqing's cheeks could not help but quiver in frenzy.

All you did was carry a slab of stone over! Even though you did swing your sword wildly for roughly twenty breaths, you didn't leave the slightest mark on it. Do you honestly think your slab of stone is able to match my pinnacle eighth level painting?

I really want to pry open your brain and see where you get your confidence from!

“Indeed.” Zhang Xuan nodded. “Of course, if you admit defeat, we can simply skip the checking phase.”

“Admit defeat?” Zhang Ziqing nearly burst into laughter.

You want me to admit defeat to a mere stone?

You must be off your rocker! Have you not taken your medicine today?

“Indeed! You should have seen with your own eyes how much effort I put in to complete this masterpiece. I think it would be impossible for me to produce a second one like this within a short period of time!” Zhang Xuan said with an air of solemnity. He gazed into the distance, and the solitude of a man who stood at the top of the world could be seen reflected in his eyes.

“Effort?”

“Masterpiece?”

The crowd nearly fell to the ground hearing those impetuous words.

The young man did not even leave the slightest mark on the stone, such that not even the slightest dent or chip could be seen. If this could be considered a masterpiece, then even a dog could be considered a master painter!

And the young man still had the cheek to say effort...

Effort my ass!

Seeing how fearless the young man was, Zhang Ziqing harrumphed in displeasure. “Are you sure you want to use the Wu Dao Mirror?”

“Of course!” Zhang Xuan exclaimed with a wave of his hand, assuming the disposition of a true expert.

“Very well... I’ll make you concede to me!” Zhang Ziqing harrumphed coldly.

She waved her hand, and the Wu Dao Mirror appeared once more. She stretched her finger forward and tapped the Wu Dao Mirror lightly, and a brilliant ray of light immediately reflected from the mirror.

“Junior Zhang Ziqing beseeches the Wu Dao Mirror to help assess the mastery of the paintings we have before us!”

Hu la!

In an instant, the Wu Dao Mirror was brought to life. It emanated a radiance of seven colors, which swiftly shrouded the Bamboo Painting.

A short moment later, a voice emerged from the Wu Dao Mirror.

“Bamboo Painting. The bamboo culms are infused with life, and a breeze whispers amid the mountain, thus placing the painting in harmony with nature. It’s neither abrupt nor excessive, a truly rare pinnacle eighth level masterpiece!”

Upon hearing the judgement, Zhang Ziqing visibly heaved a sigh of relief, and a look of pride surfaced on her face.

The fact that she had received such an appraisal from the Wu Dao Mirror meant that even if her Bamboo Painting still was not at the level of her ‘Winter Snow Treading Portrait’, it did not pale too much in comparison to it.

Knowing that everything was in her grasp, Zhang Ziqing shot Zhang Xuan a haughty glance. “Humph, let’s see how the Wu Dao Mirror will judge your work!”

Tzzzzz!

After assessing her work, the Wu Dao Mirror began scanning the stone on the table too.

All of a sudden, it paused for a brief moment before resuming its scanning once more.

As if it could not fully perceive the artwork before it, it scanned the stone for the third time.

Only then did it finally come to a halt, and the voice from before appeared once more. “This painting is truly a one-of-a-

kind masterpiece. I hereby judge this painting to be superior to the one from before!”

“Superior?” Zhang Ziqing staggered on the spot, and her eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets.

She could not help but wonder if she was hearing things.

Why would the Wu Dao Mirror suddenly say such incomprehensible words?

That shabby stone had just been picked off the street, so how could it be a one-of-a-kind masterpiece?

“What is going on here?”

Zhang Wuchen and the others were dumbstruck, too.

1440 M-Marriage?

“Wu Dao Mirror, you said that... I have lost?” Unable to accept what she had just heard, Zhang Ziqing asked once more.

“Indeed. Even though his artwork utilizes the simplest drawing method, it harnesses the very essence of painting. I can tell you that this is a feat which even the average 9-star painter would be incapable of. Your painting is indeed not too bad, but it pales far in comparison to his.” Wu Dao Mirror replied.

Artifacts on such a level already possessed their own consciousness and were able to interact with humans.

“But all he did was to swing his sword a few times, and he didn’t even leave a single mark on the stone... How could this be something which even 9-star painter would be unable to match up to?” Zhang Ziqing felt like clawing her hair in frenzy.

You can’t just spout nonsense like that! All of us are looking over here!

Everyone here can testify that all that fellow did was to pick up a mere stone and swing his sword at it... Not the slightest bit of his sword qi had nicked the stone, and the stone looked the exact same as when he had picked it up. Where was the drawing you spoke of then?

“Come closer and examine it carefully, you will surely be able to notice its ingenuity.” Noting Zhang Ziqing’s incomprehension, the Wu Dao Mirror simply left these words behind before falling silent. Its voice carried a dreamy tone to it, seemingly still deeply immersed in the beauty of the artwork it had just seen.

Zhang Ziqing hesitated for a moment before walking over to the table. She lowered her gaze to examine the stone in closer detail.

There was still some dirt stuck to the surface of the stone, but other than that, there was nothing particular to note about it, “There’s nothing here at all...” Even after a close-up look, Zhang Ziqing was still unable to find any marks that could have been left behind by the earlier burst of sword qi, so she couldn’t help but feel even more perplexed.

Thus, she released her Spiritual Perception to take an even closer look at the stone.

What that was not visible to the eye, perhaps, it would be visible to her Spiritual Perception.

“Hm?”

As soon as her Spiritual Perception wrapped itself around the stone, Zhang Ziqing’s body visibly stiffened, and her body began trembling non-stop, “T-this...”

Her lips quivered ceaselessly, fully displaying her disbelief at what she was seeing.

“What’s wrong?” Noticing the peculiarity with Zhang Ziqing, Zhang Wuchen and the others frowned as well.

They extended their Spiritual Perception toward the stone too, and what they saw left them frozen on the spot.

“Indeed. This stone is an artwork which I drew out using my sword. The stone that I picked up earlier has, in fact, been reduced to dust and is currently stored in my storage ring, and the one right before your eyes is a painting...” Seeing that they had managed to notice what was different about his stone, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

While it might appear as if he was just wildly releasing a barrage of sword qi earlier, leaving nary a mark on the stone at all, in truth, he was creating an exact replica of the stone that was earlier seen.

Back when he was just a 7-star painter, he had already comprehended Suspended Imagery, allowing him to paint on mid-air. Naturally, now that he was an 8-star painter, his proficiency in it was much higher than before.

Even though the painting was created by sword qi, it would still be difficult even for a 9-star painter to discern its true form without taking a closer look with his Spiritual Perception.

It was to the point where even the two elders of the Zhang Clan, Wuchen and Wuzhen, despite watching the entire process from the start to the end, didn't notice the slightest anomaly with the stone. They couldn't have imagined that the stone that was picked up from the ground had already vanished altogether, and what was right before their eyes was actually a painting!

“To think that we didn't notice that the stone is actually a painting...”

“Ziqing was able to grant life to the bamboo, making it appear real, but he has already transcended that level. Under his deft hand, the distinction between reality and painting has been torn down, confounding everyone with his artwork...”

Coming to realize the situation, Zhang Wuchen and Zhang Wuzhen were trembling in disbelief.

Real 9-star painters were indeed capable of producing artwork that seemed so lifelike that it completely fused into the real world, making hard for one to determine what was real and imaginary. Just that... no one thought that the young man would be capable of the same feat too.

Could it be that he was already a 9-star painter?

If that was the case, wasn't it a little too terrifying?

“I... have lost!” Zhang Ziqing reached out to stroke the stone, only to find that its texture was also of no difference from that of a real stone. Without using her Spiritual Perception, there would really be no way for her to discern that it was just a mere drawing.

In that instant, her face flushed completely pale.

All along, she had thought the other party was just messing around, but who could have thought that he had been painting seriously? Furthermore, his artwork was of such a high caliber that no one was able to discern it.

It was no wonder why the Wu Dao Mirror had declared the match to be her loss... She did indeed lose, and it was an utter defeat at that. From the very start, she never stood a chance against him.

“If you are able to create an artwork of such a tier with just your sword... just what kind of paintings would you be able to produce with a brush in hand then?” Unable to take it any longer, she turned her gaze to the young man and said.

Previously, when the other party said that he was going to get serious, she thought that he would really go all out. Yet, contrary to her expectations, he whipped out a sword instead of a brush. If the young man was already able to produce such an artwork far beyond her capabilities with a sword in hand... she really shuddered to imagine just how formidable his painting prowess would be with a brush in hand.

“I wasn’t lying to you when I said that I was going to get serious. I did give my everything in this painting, and I wasn’t going easy on you by using a sword.” Noting the young lady’s astounded face, Zhang Xuan explained with a smile. “I must admit that you have a deep understanding of painting. Otherwise, I would have simply painted with just a blade of grass instead of with my sword. Actually, as long as you put your heart into your painting, it doesn’t really matter whether you are wielding a brush or a sword.”

“Blade of grass?” Hearing that the young man was actually intending to use something like that to compete with her, Zhang Ziqing’s face twitched a little. “How were you intending to paint with that?”

“Simple.” Zhang Xuan quickly took a look at his surroundings before tapping his finger lightly. In the garden not too far away, a blade of grass flew over and fell into his palm. Following which, he flicked the blade of grass lightly.

Hu la!

The water in a nearby pond immediately rose up and lightly soaked the blade of grass. Following which, he began moving the blade of grass slowly in the air.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

The surrounding air grew increasingly viscous along with Zhang Xuan's movements, and in just a short moment, a majestic flowing river appeared before everyone's eyes. It raced rapidly with a ferocious roar, and it felt as if it would overflow and flood the entire square in an instant.

"Using just water, he was able to draw out a river flow using Suspended Imagery?" Zhang Ziqing gulped down a mouthful of saliva.

She would always need to use the most valuable brush and ink in her artworks as she felt that these were necessary tools in order for her to truly bring out the essence of her painting and pieces that she would be satisfied with. However, after watching the other party's creation, she realized that her line of thought might have been too shallow.

Painting didn't necessitate the use of a brush. Look closely, and the entire world would be a brush and a canvas! There was no element which one couldn't incorporate into one's painting!

So, this was a true prodigy's interpretation of painting... as well as the true essence of painting.

"The conception behind this river painting of yours is also of a much higher level than my Bamboo Painting!" Zhang Ziqing shook her head and sighed deeply. As reluctant as she was to admit it, the young man was indeed far ahead of her in the field of painting.

Even this river painting which he had created at a whim was far more profound than the Bamboo Painting which she carefully produced with all her might.

"Ah, you need not get so disheartened. I was able to deepen my understanding of painting significantly while drawing out the stone, and that's the only reason why I'm able to create a decent painting with just a blade of grass now..." Zhang Xuan explained.

He hadn't drawn much after assimilating 8-star painter books, and the earlier drawing of the stone was the first time he had drawn seriously in a long while. This practical experience had

granted him a much deeper insight into painting, thus bringing his mastery to a deeper level.

And it was with this experience that he was able to surpass Zhang Ziqing with a work he painted at a whim.

“You managed to deepen your understanding of painting while drawing out the stone?” Zhang Ziqing nearly keeled over.

She had always prided herself on her unparalleled talent in painting, but it seemed like she was really no match against the young man before her. The gap between them was so huge that for the first time in her life, she felt a hint of despair and helplessness, as if she was in a race, facing a rival whom she would never be able to catch up with.

All of a sudden, a young man amidst the crowd shouted out, “Fairy Ziqing, I remember that you once said that if anyone of the younger generation surpasses you in the field of painting, regardless of whom the person is, you would marry him without any hesitation... Does that vow still holds now?”

“This...” Zhang Ziqing was visibly stunned by that remark for a moment.

She couldn't help but turn her gaze to Zhang Xuan, and a frown slowly deepened itself on her forehead.

1441 Zhang Jiang

Known as one of the most talented female offspring of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Ziqing was a celebrity among the younger generation. On top of that, she had a graceful disposition and ravishing looks, which led to her having many suitors. Each day, there would be many men who tried to approach her, hoping that they might just luck out and win her fancy, and this had become a major source of annoyance for her.

As such, she had once declared that no matter who the person was, as long as his age was not beyond thirty and he was able to surpass her in the fields of zither, chess, and painting, she would marry that man without any hesitation.

While she did say such words, it was just to stop others from harassing her. After all, she did not think that there would be anyone in the world who could best her in those three fields.

But who could have thought that there would a man who was actually able to triumph over her in the field of painting so easily?

Even though this fellow's personality isn't too good, and his words are very jarring, there's no denying that he's a person of great ability. It might not be too bad to marry him.

Such was the thought that flashed across Zhang Ziqing's mind upon hearing someone amid the crowd reminding her of the matter.

Never in her life had she contemplated the notion of marrying any man before as she had always felt that they were all unworthy of her consideration, but if it was this man... she might just be able to grudgingly accept it.

As soon as such a notion took root in her mind, it swiftly grew at a pace where even she was unable to repress it anymore. Thus, she turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "May I know if Zhang Shi is skilled at the zither too?"

“I do play it from time to time,” Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

Well, he was actually an 8-star demonic tunist, but it would still be best for him to keep a low profile.

“Then... what about chess?”

“I’m afraid that I don’t know a thing about it.” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had learned many occupations, but chess simply was not in the set of skills that he was interested in, so he had never really sought to learn it. As such, it could be said that he knew next to nothing about it.

“It’s fine, I can teach you. Does Zhang shi want to drop by my humble abode to have a further discussion about the arts?” Zhang Ziqing asked with a slightly reddened face.

The intention behind her words was very clear. In a sense, this could already be considered as good as a confession.

“Discussion about the arts?” Zhang Xuan frowned a little before shaking his head. “It’s only out of convenience that I have picked up those arts, and I consider them a pastime. I have already spent two days studying painting, and pardon me, but I’m afraid that I have no interest in devoting any more time into it.”

He was here to face slap the Zhang Clan and force the young prodigy to appear, so how could he possibly have any spare time to learn about the arts or the whatnot?

Besides, I can further my understanding of the arts just by collecting the relevant books. Do I need to waste my time discussing them with you?

Hearing the young man’s rejection, Zhang Ziqing’s complexion immediately turned rather awful. However, she swiftly noticed a certain detail in the young man’s statement, and she could not help but ask, “Did you say that you have only spent two days studying painting?”

“I’d reckon so.” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding. “I think that should be roughly it.”

The only reason he had learned painting was to meet the prerequisites required for his master teacher promotions. He had spent roughly two hours for each level, so to reach 8-star, it would have taken him around sixteen hours. Even adding up the time he had taken to browse through painting books and practice hands-on painting, the duration still should not exceed two days.

However, being the humble man that he was, he chose to round the number up.

“You have only studied painting for two days, but you were able to achieve such a deep understanding of painting?” Zhang Ziqing was unable to believe the words the young man was spouting.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was not willing to dwell too much on such a useless topic, so he reached out his hand and demanded, “Since you’ve lost the bet, it’s about time for you to pay up what you owe me.”

It was only because of the pinnacle spirit stone that he had accepted the challenge. Since he had won the challenge, it was a given that he should claim his rightful reward.

“The bet...” Recalling their bet, Zhang Ziqing could not help but chuckle at how trivial the matter was. “You should have heard what the young man said earlier. As long as any one is able to best me in painting, zither, and chess, I will marry that person without any questions asked. Considering how you are far beyond me in the field of painting, as long as your mastery in zither playing and chess are decent... I can consider spending the rest of my life with you...”

As her voice trailed off, Zhang Ziqing’s face reddened in embarrassment.

For a lady, it was already very bold for her to speak of such an embarrassing matter so forthrightly.

“What are you talking about? Are you trying to talk your way out of paying me my pinnacle spirit stone?” Seeing that the young lady had no intention of paying the pinnacle spirit stone, Zhang Xuan’s eyes immediately bulged in fury.

They had already agreed upon it prior to the duel; there were so many eye-witnesses around them that could testify to that! How could she renege on her promise after losing the bet... and not to mention, even force him to marry her?

You must be dreaming!

“Ah?” Zhang Ziqing was startled by the unanticipated response.

Nothing was going as she had imagined.

“A loss is a loss. No matter what, you must pay me one pinnacle spirit stone!” Zhang Xuan exclaimed indignantly. “Don’t bother coming up with excuses. There’s no way I’m going to let you avoid payment today!”

“You...” Zhang Ziqing nearly lost her sanity in that instant.

In the young man’s eyes, was she not even worth a single pinnacle spirit stone?

If others learned that she, one of the top geniuses of the Zhang Clan, had been snubbed over a mere pinnacle spirit stone, she would become the laughingstock of the entire Master Teacher Continent!

“T-this... Zhang Xuan’s mind really works in a very odd manner!” Zhang Wuchen could not believe what he was hearing. It took a very long moment before he was able to mutter those words.

“Indeed. This is the first time I’ve seen someone daring to reject Ziqing, and not to mention... with such an absurd reason at that!” Elder Wuzhen also found the situation inconceivable.

As the saying goes, even the mightiest of heroes are unable to overcome the ordeal of a beauty.

With Zhang Ziqing’s capabilities and looks, she was a person who commanded countless pursuers in the upper society, and yet, she had been rejected for a mere pinnacle spirit stone.

Taking a step back, if the young man had really married Zhang Ziqing, given the latter’s connections in the Zhang Clan, he would have been able to obtain all of the pinnacle spirit stones that he wanted in the world!

So, was it not simply irrational to fuss over a single pinnacle spirit stone?

After a moment of thought, with a shake of his head, Zhang Wuchen remarked, “Most likely, he doesn’t want to have any ties with the Zhang Clan!”

Someone as talented as Zhang Xuan could not possibly be a fool, so there was no way he would be unable to comprehend the intention behind Zhang Ziqing’s words. Nevertheless, he still chose to say those maddening words. From this, it was apparent that he did not want to be too deeply involved with the Zhang Clan.

...

Perhaps Zhang Xuan’s rejection of Zhang Ziqing had provoked the other geniuses of the Zhan Clan—a young man flew forth from the crowd and landed right in the center of the square. “Zhang Xuan, I am Zhang Jiang from the Zhang Clan. I would like to challenge you.”

“What do you want to challenge me in?” Zhang Xuan asked leisurely.

He would have to be blind to not notice the younger members of the Zhang Clan lurking all around the crowd. He knew that they were trying to put him down, presumably due to what had happened to the Defense Formation at the entrance earlier on. However, since the purpose behind his visit to the Zhang Clan was to stir the pot as much as possible, he did not mind having them coming at him.

“I don’t have many talents, but I do have some confidence in my beast taming ability. Since you dared to insult an esteemed member of our Zhang Clan, I hope that you have the guts to accept my challenge too!” Zhang Jiang said with fury burning in his eyes.

In contrast to Zhang Jiang’s hostile attitude, Zhang Xuan’s response was rather placid, as if he was completely unperturbed by the other party’s words. “How do you wish to compete?”

“Simple. Three years ago, the Zhang Clan managed to capture a ferocious saint beast. Till now, no one has been able to tame it, and even I have failed against it. As long as you can successfully tame that saint beast, I’ll accept my defeat,” Zhang Jiang said.

“What if I can’t tame it?” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Judging from what Zhang Jiang was saying, he seemed to be implying that it would be his loss if he failed to tame the saint beast, but this would be an unfair challenge. The fact that Zhang Jiang was unable to tame the saint beast showed that the saint beast was a tricky fellow to deal with. If he failed to tame the saint beast, it could only mean that the saint beast was beyond their abilities to deal with; it did not necessarily mean that Zhang Jiang’s beast taming skills were superior to his.

While Zhang Xuan was confident in his beast taming skills, the effectiveness of his tricks was limited to beasts who possessed the Dragon Bloodline or were slightly weaker than him. Against those that were much stronger than him, he had no foolproof method of taming them.

“I heard that you were able to easily tame the spirit in our Defense Formation, so you shouldn’t have any trouble taming a saint beast, right?”

A smile crept onto Zhang Jiang’s lips as he continued. “I have been with the saint beast for three days so far, but our intimacy is already at twenty-five points. If you can reach a level of intimacy exceeding that within three days, I’ll admit that you are superior to me!”

“Twenty-five points?” Hearing that there was a fairer basis for comparison, Zhang Xuan finally nodded in agreement.

“Then... if I tame the saint beast, will I be able to take it away with me?”

This was something that had to be discussed beforehand. After all, this saint beast belonged to the Zhang Clan, so naturally, they would have to discuss its allocation beforehand, or it could lead to unnecessary complications.

“Even though this saint beast was caught by the clan head, if you are able to tame it, it should be fine for you to take it away!” Zhang Jiang said.

At this point, a vicious glint flashed across his eyes before he continued. “If you lose the challenge, I won’t demand any pinnacle spirit stones or the like from you. However, I want you to kneel down, apologize to Ziqing, and scam right out of the Zhang Clan!”

1442 Do You Want to Exact Vengeance?

“Very well, I accept your challenge.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

While he wasn't too sure whether he wielded the ability to tame the saint beast or not, he didn't think that it would be too difficult for him to surpass the record of the young man before him.

Not to mention, the saint beast was captured by the father of the young prodigy. Perhaps, if he could tame that saint beast, he might just be able to lure the young prodigy out?

And what better way was there to exact vengeance for Jian Qinsheng than to pummel the son of his nemesis?

Well, if that young prodigy still didn't dare to appear even after that, surely at least the father would appear? While it would be regrettable not being able to beat up the young prodigy, beating up the father would at least help alleviate some bit of his rage... After all, who asked him to bear such a shameless son? And as the saying goes, ‘the son errs, the father's mistake’!

“Let's begin then!” Seeing that he had managed to obtain Zhang Xuan's agreement, a hint of excitement flashed across Zhang Jiang's eyes. With a wave of his hand, an elder behind him hurriedly left the area.

Not too long later, the elder returned back to the square, and with a wave of his hand, a massive black cage appeared before everyone's eyes.

The cage spanned roughly forty meters in length, and mysterious-looking inscriptions marked its surface. It was apparent that some powerful formation had been cast on it so as to prevent the lifeform imprisoned within it from escaping.

Within the cage, a saint beast which bore some resemblance to a lion could be seen lying on the ground. It lazily scanned its

surroundings for a moment before closing its eyes and returning back to sleep.

The saint beast wasn't too large in size, spanning only four meters from head to tail. Its appearance wasn't particularly frightening, and its aura wasn't particularly overwhelming either, but for some reason, upon seeing the saint beast, the crowd in the area narrowed their eyes in astonishment.

“It's the Inferno Qilin!”

“This is the legendary saint beast whose cultivation reaches Saint 9-dan at maturity! They are extremely rare beings, and even throughout the entire history of the Master Teacher Continent, there have been very few cases of them being caught and tamed... It's no wonder why even a beast taming genius like Zhang Jiang would be helpless before it!”

“If I could tame a saint beast like that, I would instantaneously gain the prowess comparable to a Saint 9-dan expert!”

“Hah, easier said than done! The Ancient Qilin Bloodline runs through the veins of the Inferno Qilin, and its ego is much bigger than whatever you can ever imagine. Putting aside taming it, you would have difficulty just trying to approach it! If it's really that easy, Xingmeng Sword Saint wouldn't have to resort to imprisoning it in the Zhang Clan for three years straight!”

“That's true...”

After the shock of seeing the Inferno Qilin with their own eyes, the faces of the crowd gradually turned grim.

“Third Elder, should we stop the challenge?” Elder Wuzhen hesitated for a moment before directing this question to Zhang Wuchen.

“It's fine, let them be.” Zhang Wuchen shook his head.

“But... in order to tame the Inferno Qilin, Zhang shi would have to enter the metal cage. As soon as he does so, he would come under its frenzied assault! Over the past three years, the Inferno Qilin has already hurt thirteen 9-star beast tamer! Considering how Zhang shi is here to challenge our swordsmanship, if it were to get out that he was injured by our

saint beast... I fear that this might reflect badly on our Zhang Clan!" Elder Wuzhen said.

He was not making a mountain out of a molehill. While others might not be aware of the circumstances surrounding the Inferno Qilin, he knew full well how vicious that fellow could be.

It was simply too difficult a fellow to deal with!

No matter what kind of delicious food or treasures one placed in front of it outside the cage, it wouldn't even bother shooting it a second glance. And when one attempted to enter the cage to negotiate with it, one would swiftly come under assault too... It was precisely due to this that many 9-star beast tamers were injured by it over the past three years. Clearly, Zhang Jiang had malicious intentions in mind when he made such a challenge to Zhang Xuan. He was intending to make use of this huge fellow to teach the other party a lesson!

"I can tell what that fellow Zhang Jiang is thinking of. If it really comes to a precarious situation, I'll step in." Zhang Wuchen said.

How could he possibly have risen to his current position if he couldn't even discern the intentions of a young lad? The reason why he chose not to say anything about the matter was because Zhang Xuan had simply brought too much shock to them. He wanted to let things run for the moment so that he could get a clearer gauge of Zhang Xuan's abilities and determine a suitable course of action for dealing with that young man.

"This... Alright, I understand." Hearing how even the Third Elder had already granted his implicit approval to the matter, Elder Wuzhen decided not to think too much into the matter anymore.

He turned his gaze to Zhang Xuan and saw that the young man was in deep contemplation, seemingly trying to figure something out.

Inferno Qilin...

In this moment, Zhang Xuan was standing motionlessly on the spot, gathering every piece of information he had regarding the saint beast from the Library of Heaven's Path.

The saint beast's vicious nature was described within the beast tamer books he had browsed through. All it took was putting a few links together for him to deduce Zhang Jiang's ulterior motive.

This fellow doesn't possess the Dragon Bloodline, and the strength it wields is far beyond my ability to deal with either. It really won't be easy for me to tame it... Zhang Xuan rubbed in glabella in frustration.

To be honest, if he knew that he had to face a saint beast of the Inferno Qilin's caliber, he would have never accepted the duel in the first place. While his Beast Pummeling Taming Method was indeed formidable, it didn't seem too likely that it would be effective against such a powerful fellow.

Would the Inferno Qilin even be willing to allow him to approach it?

Given his current strength, it was much more probable for him to be roasted to crisp before he could even get close to it!

How was he supposed to tame the Inferno Qilin like that?

"Roasted to crisp?" At this point, Zhang Xuan glanced at the fearsome flames burning on the Inferno Qilin and abruptly froze on the spot, as if a sudden epiphany had come to him.

"Are you ready yet? Can we start now?" Seeing how Zhang Xuan was frozen on the spot as if a block of ice after seeing the Inferno Qilin's prowess with his own eyes, a gleeful smirk inconspicuously emerged on Zhang Jiang's lips as he urged impatiently.

"Sure, let's start." Zhang Xuan raised his head and nodded without any hesitation. "Open the cage."

Seeing how swiftly the young man had replied to him, Zhang Jiang was slightly taken aback. He was expecting the young man to be hesitant from fear.

Nevertheless, he soon burst into laughter and nodded, “Very well!”

No matter whether Zhang Xuan really had a plan in mind or it was all false bravado, everything would eventually come crumbling before the superior prowess of the Inferno Qilin!

Zhang Jiang waved his hand, and the elder who had brought the metal cage over previously quickly walked forward and pressed his palm against the cage. In an instant, a door appeared on the cage. It wasn't too big nor too small, perfect for a grown man to pass through. Naturally, a saint beast of the Inferno Qilin's size wouldn't be able to pass through it.

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan began walking toward the door.

“Zhang shi...” Jian Qinsheng hurriedly stepped forward to dissuade the young man against participating in this challenge.

He might not know too much about beast taming himself, but he did have a clear understanding of what kind of person Xing Sword Saint was. That fellow was a particularly boastful and haughty person, always wanting to show off at every turn. However, that fellow did wield abilities was indeed able to match up to his boasting... and if even that fellow was unable to tame the Inferno Qilin, it must truly be a difficult saint beast to deal with then.

To walk in and confront such a fearsome saint beast straight on... That was simply too dangerous!

“Rest assured!” Zhang Xuan turned around and directed a confident nod at Jian Qinsheng. “I'll use my sword to make them learn of the greatness of the Sanctum of Sages' swordsmanship!”

“What?” Jian Qinsheng was taken aback by Zhang Xuan's reply. He waved his hand in a fluster and said, “No, that's not what I mean...”

It was just a moment ago that he thought the other party was dabbling in too many things, diluting his identity as a sword practitioner of the Sanctum of Sages, so he stepped in to remind the other party of the matter previously...

But this time, he was stopping the other party because he was truly worried!

A saint beast of that caliber was already frightening enough when motionless; if Zhang Xuan were to execute his swordsmanship before it, wouldn't he be killed?

"It's fine, it's fine. I understand." Zhang Xuan waved his hand perfunctorily before leaping right into the cage.

Hu hu hu!

As soon as he stepped into the cage, it was as if he was transported into another world. Waves of searing heat gushed at him relentlessly, seemingly vowing to burn him down into cinders. The blistering heat accumulated within this cage distorted the space so much that there was nothing one could see that wasn't warped, making it hard to perceive size and distance.

The Inferno Qilin thrives off earth flames. Its body is able to produce a massive cloud of flames on thought and reduce everything within a three hundred li radius into ashes. Due to its high aptitude for destruction, not even the powerful Sage Clans dare to offend it easily... Recalling the description concerning this saint beast, Zhang Xuan nodded.

To be perfectly honest, it seemed like the only clan that wielded the power and resources to trap this massive fellow for three years straight was the Zhang Clan. Had it been any other clans, whatever artifact that they were using to imprison it would have been burned down into ashes by now.

Hu!

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thoughts, he suddenly felt the surrounding temperature growing higher and higher. Upon realizing that there was a foreign intruder, the Inferno Qilin, which had been lying lazily on the ground all this while, suddenly revealed a hint of savagery in its eyes, and it began making its way over slowly.

"Inferno Qilin, I believe that you should be able to tell that I'm not from the Zhang Clan." Watching as the Inferno Qilin made its way over threateningly, Zhang Xuan showed no signs of

fear. Instead, a warm smile formed on his lips as he said, “An esteemed like saint beast like you have been imprisoned in a cage for three long years by the Zhang Clan, stripped of your honor and dignity. At this point, I only have a single question for you...

“Do you want to exact vengeance?”“This is the belief that the parent is responsible for disciplining their children and imparting to them the right values in life. If they fail to do so, and their children end up committing malicious actions, they would have to shoulder the blame for that.150km

1443 I Can Help You Achieve a Breakthrough!

The Inferno Qilin finally halted upon hearing those words. Seeing this, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he continued. “Just like you, I also hate the Zhang Clan with a passion. If you don’t want to be trapped and tortured anymore, I can bring you out of here. Together, we’ll make a huge uproar in the world, and if you wish, we can even destroy the Zhang Clan too...”

“Destroy the Zhang Clan? Just... what does that fellow intend to do?”

Upon hearing those words, Zhang Wuchen and Elder Wuzhen felt their hair standing on end, and they nearly fainted on the spot.

What in the world are you doing? You’re supposed to tame the Inferno Qilin! Why are you bringing the Zhang Clan into the equation?

Well, a mere Saint 9-dan beast won’t pose much of a threat to our powerful Zhang Clan, but still... if it goes on a rampage and relentlessly emanates its flames in the middle of the city, we will be put in a difficult position!

More importantly... our reputation would be completely ripped to shreds!

With awful looks on their faces, the two elders turned their gazes to Zhang Jiang and saw that the young man’s face had already turned pale in fright.

“Humph! If that fellow really manages to tame the Inferno Qilin and cause a mess in the Zhang Clan, I’ll hold you responsible for the damage!” Zhang Wuchen flung his sleeves coldly and harrumphed.

“But...” Zhang Jiang wanted to protest, but meeting with the wintry gazes of the two elders, he could only lower his gaze meekly and accept their judgement. “I understand...”

Seeing how

the young man before him was speaking such big words, the Inferno Qilin sneered in disdain. “Destroy the Zhang Clan? Are you sure you have the guts and strength to challenge the number one Sage Clan on the Master Teacher Continent?”

If it was one of the minor clans, it could still afford to run rampant for a while, but in here... even it had no choice but to lie low!

Putting everything aside, just the man who had captured it and brought it to its current prison had been able to suppress its flames with a flick of his hand. If that man had truly intended to kill it, it would have fallen at a single slash of his!

“The Zhang Clan is indeed powerful, with many experts filling its ranks. However, as a clan of master teachers, it has to obey by the rules. If they truly had no regard for the rules, they would have already tortured you into submission. There is no way you would be able to lie here peacefully and live your days quietly,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Humph!” The Inferno Qilin turned its head away.

It was furious at the Zhang Clan’s act of imprisoning it, but it had to admit that the Zhang Clan had never treated it too poorly. Otherwise, there were many ways they could have forced it into submission, such as completely halting any spiritual energy from getting to it and depriving it of food and drink. Even though it would not have succumbed to those cheap tricks, still, its life could have been made a living hell.

And the reason for that was because the Zhang Clan was a clan of master teachers. There were rules that they had to obey, or else they would risk losing their prestige and honor that they had built up over the many years.

No matter how powerful a clan was, if it paid heed only to the ends and not the means, it would be nothing more than a tyrant. A powerful clan that paid attention to only the ends and not the means would be nothing more than a tyrannical monster, and tyranny could only get one so far.

Besides, if the Inferno Qilin did not choose to serve the Zhang Clan willingly, it would be a ticking time bomb waiting to explode at any moment. If it acted up while its master was away, perhaps killing a few of the younger offspring secretly, that would cause far greater damage to the Zhang

Clan!</p><p>Seeing that the Inferno Qilin was listening to his words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he continued his persuasion. “I can bring you out to pummel the person who has landed you in the plight you are in. Not only that, I can even cleanse your bloodline, bringing you to greater heights!”</p><p>“Cleanse my bloodline? You?” the Inferno Qilin harrumphed coldly. A flame cloud immediately rose from its body, and the already blistering heat in the surroundings further intensified.</p><p>Kacha!</p><p>Zhang Xuan felt a deeply stifling sensation in his chest choking him from within. It felt like he would be reduced to ashes should the wrong words come out from his mouth.</p><p>“Indeed. Do you doubt my words?” Despite knowing he was knee deep in danger, Zhang Xuan did not show the slightest hint of nervousness. Instead, a confident smile materialized on his face. “I can prove it to you.”</p><p>“Prove it to me?” The Inferno Qilin frowned.</p><p>“Indeed. I am only a Grand Dominion realm cultivator, an individual who poses no threat whatsoever to you. Whether I’m lying or not, you should be able to tell with a swift look. Think about how long you have been imprisoned here. Don’t you desire to attain more power and make those who have humiliated you pay the price for their actions? Or are you satisfied being treated as a tool for the beast tamers of the Zhang Clan to test their skills on you? Are you really fine with allowing the Zhang Clan trample all over your dignity?”</p><p>Zhang Xuan lifted his gaze to look right into the Inferno Qilin’s eyes as he further enticed it with his voice. “The opportunity is right before your eyes; it’s your choice whether you want to seize it or not. But know that if you were to let it slip, such an opportunity might never come once more.”</p><p>“This...” The Inferno Qilin fell into deep contemplation, and confusion could be seen reflected in its eyes.</p><p>But at this moment, someone amid the crowd shouted, “Agree to his request!”</p><p>It was from Zhang Ziqing.</p><p>Her shout immediately caught the attention of the crowd, and many gazes fell upon her.</p><p>“Ah...” Seeing that she was suddenly

in the spotlight, Zhang Ziqing widened her eyes in realization at what she had just done, and her face immediately flushed red. At the same time, her hands trembled in shock as she muttered, “Demonic tunist?”

The words that she had just spoken simply escaped from her throat before she could even notice it. The young man’s voice seemed to carry some kind of unique quality to it that drew her into a confounded state, compelling her to bend to his will.

And the fact that the young man was able to pull this off showed that he was not an amateur in demonic tunes as he had earlier claimed. On the contrary, he was an expert whose mastery in the occupation far surpassed hers!

Otherwise, there was no way a demonic tunist prodigy like her would have fallen for his beguilement and even shouted out such embarrassing words.

What was even more unfortunate was that she was the only one who had fallen for his demonic tunes. There were plenty whose cultivation was far lower than hers amid the crowd, but none of them had fallen for his demonic tunes.

She knew that this was not due to Zhang Xuan acting against her, but rather, her high affinity toward demonic tunes had worked against her. It was precisely due to her sharpness toward music that resulted in her being subconsciously swayed by Zhang Xuan’s demonic tunes in her moment of carelessness, thus resulting in that embarrassing event.

In a sense, this is similar to how skillful musicians were able to hear subtle differences in the melody where an ordinary man perceived no difference in the tune at all.

The young man’s demonic tune was directed solely toward the Inferno Qilin, so the effects on others were not too pronounced. It was only due to her innate sensitivity toward music that resulted in her falling for it. To others, there were completely no effects whatsoever... well, for the time being, that was.

As time went by, the others would also slowly find themselves unwittingly sinking into the young man’s demonic tune, too.

After recovering from her shock, Zhang Ziqing gritted her teeth in fury.

Humph! Despite possessing such deep capabilities in demonic tunes, he still claims that he’s just an amateur in it.

His claim that he doesn't know chess is probably a lie, too!

She had already lost to the young man in the field of painting, and it was apparent that she would be no match for him in terms of zither skills. All that was left was chess, and it was honestly hard for her to believe that the young man before her did not know a thing about chess at all.

She would have to make sure to challenge him after he was done taming the Inferno Qilin!

Paying no heed to Zhang Ziqing, Zhang Xuan continued his persuasion. "What's your decision? It's just a try, and it won't cause the slightest damage to you at all. On the contrary, if it succeeds, you will gain the power to escape from this confinement. So, why are you still hesitating?"

Just as Zhang Ziqing had guessed, he was not only using demonic tunes but also Impartation of Heaven's Will.

With the two abilities stacked on top of one another, further augmented by his Celestial Master Teacher aura and Heart of a Teacher, as powerful as the Inferno Qilin's will might have been, it was already starting to be swayed.

After a long moment of contemplative silence, the Inferno Qilin eventually nodded. "Very well, I'll just give you one chance."

It had been trapped for far too long. It would be for the best if it could achieve a breakthrough and escape... and if this young man dared to lie to it, it did not mind devouring him whole!

"You are indeed a wise beast!" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he flicked his wrist.

A jade bottle materialized in his hand, and shaking it lightly, a pill dropped into his other hand. "This pill is able to cleanse your bloodline. Once you eat it, I guarantee that you'll be able to achieve a breakthrough within ten minutes!"

"Breakthrough?" The Inferno Qilin lowered its gaze to eye the pill in the other party's palm.

It was a golden pill, and it emanated an alluring fragrance. Rich spiritual energy shrouded its body, but other than that, there did not appear to be anything extraordinary about it.

1444 The Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's Breakthrough

Hu! The Inferno Qilin picked up the golden pill and squeezed it lightly. The longer it stared at the pill for, the more perplexed it became. No matter how he looked at it, the pill was just an ordinary Energy Replenishment Pill; there was nothing unique about it at all! While it was true that it harnessed quite a substantial amount of spiritual energy within it, to a beast of its caliber, it was not even worth a mention. Yet, the young man said that this pill would help it achieve a breakthrough? Was the young man taking it for a fool? “You’ll be able to make a breakthrough just by consuming it. Don’t hesitate anymore, such an opportunity doesn’t come every day!” Noting the skeptical look on the Inferno Qilin’s face, Zhang Xuan urged. The Inferno Qilin hesitated for a moment before tossing the pill back to Zhang Xuan and harrumphing, “I’ll never eat a pill of dubious origin. Who knows whether it has been poisoned or not?” Even the Zhang Clan was unable to make it achieve a breakthrough, so how could a mere twenty-year-old brat possibly do any better than that? Besides, it had already taken a close look at the pill, and other than the spiritual energy within it being a bit more concentrated than usual, there was nothing unique to it. It would still be fine if it failed to achieve a breakthrough after consuming the pill, but if some kind of formidable poison that was undetectable to it were to be concealed in the pill, it would be in for a tragedy. This was a risk that the Inferno Qilin wasn’t willing to take. “Poison?” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock upon hearing those words, and he exclaimed

with a deeply aggrieved voice, “Are you doubting my integrity? There’s no way I would do something as despicable as that! Besides, I am only at Grand Dominion realm! Do you think that I would be able to use any poison that would be capable of fazing you in the least? Not to mention, there’s nothing I would gain from harming you!”

The Inferno Qilin fell silent after hearing those words. Indeed, the young man didn’t have the ability nor motive to poison it. But humans were known to be a particularly scheming and devious race. Who could tell what kind of deeper plots that fellow could be hatching in the shadows? In any case, it seemed like an utter foolish act as to consume something of unknown origin.

Thus, it decided not to pay the young man any more heed, and it lay back down on the ground lazily, preparing to drift off to sleep.

Seeing such a sight, Zhang Xuan harrumphed indignantly, “Since you don’t believe me, I’ll just have to prove it to you then!”

As he said those words, he flicked his wrist. Hu la!

A massive Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast materialized on the spot. “Master!” the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast lowered its head and greeted Zhang Xuan humbly. “Eat this pill. I’ll help you achieve a breakthrough!” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked the golden pill in his hand over.

“Yes, master!” the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast nodded its head. Without any hesitation, it opened its mouth and swallowed the golden pill.

Gu gu gu!

As rich spiritual energy burst out from the pill, a look of pleasure surfaced on the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast’s face. However, contrary to its expectation, the long-awaited surge of energy that would take him on a ride toward a breakthrough didn’t appear.

The pill didn’t seem to be as effective as it thought it would be.

“Master...” the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast turned a perplexed gaze at Zhang Xuan. “Calm down, everything is under

control.” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he flicked his wrist once more. Hualala! More than a hundred swords materialized in the air. After a swift shuffling in the air, they formed a bridge by connecting their ends to one another. “Lie down on my swords,” Zhang Xuan instructed. Even though the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast was perplexed by the intention behind Zhang Xuan’s action, it still obediently flew over and lay down flatly on the bridge of swords. Due to the long and slender body frame of the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, the scene of it lying flat on the bridge of swords somehow bore a striking resemblance to a skewered sausage. “Good,” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. With a wave of his hand, he formed numerous threads of zhenqi to secure the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast in place, ensuring that it wouldn’t fall from the bridge of swords. After which, he turned to the Inferno Qilin and said, “This medicine of mine is particularly difficult to assimilate. I’ll require your Qilin Flames as a medium in order to fully break down the contents of the pill. Since you don’t trust me, why don’t you allow me to prove you wrong by lending me your flames?” Even though the Inferno Qilin appeared as if it was sleeping, it was actually sneaking curious glances over to see what the young man was up to. Succumbing to its intrigue to find out what would happen to the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, it eventually gave a nod of agreement. While it dared not to casually eat the young man’s pills, lending the latter its flames wasn’t much of a deal. And if the pill really harnessed the miraculous effects of allowing it to achieve a breakthrough, perhaps it might not be that bad of an idea to ally with the young man. After giving a nod of agreement, the Inferno Qilin opened its mouth, and crimson flames burst forth from it. In the blink of an eye, its flames had already swept across the entire cage. “This side, this side! Direct it straight toward the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast!” Zhang Xuan

instructed.

&Tzzzzzzzzzz!

Those flames were at a temperature which warped even the surroundings out of shape. As soon as they fell on the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's back, a resounding sizzle echoed in the air.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan also began to rotate the sword, as if barbecuing a meat skewer.

“...”

Outside the cage, Zhang Wuchen and the others glanced at one another with stupefied looks on their faces.

Even the genius beast tamer, Zhang Jiang, wasn't able to make sense of the situation at all.

It was apparent to everyone that the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast was Zhang Xuan's tamed beast. As a mere Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivator, that fellow really should be counting his blessing for being able to tame a Dimension Sundering realm pinnacle saint beast... So, why was he roasting it right now then?

The flames of the Inferno Qilin was more intense than the hottest earth flames; even Saint high-tier artifacts would melt swiftly under its searing heat! No matter how powerful the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast was, there was no way it would be able to survive for too long when exposed to such overwhelming heat. At this rate, it might just really die!

Is this what he means by displaying his swordsmanship?

Jian Qinsheng muttered in utter disbelief.

It was just a moment ago that the young man said that he would bring glory to the Sanctum of Sages' swordsmanship, so Jian Qinsheng simply assumed that the young man was going to use his sword to clash with the Inferno Qilin face on. Yet, it turned out that he was only using it as a skewer stick for his tamed beast so as to give it a good roasting...

Can you get any more misleading than that?

&Tzzzzzz!

Under the blazing heat, oil began to seep out on the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's skin, and a peculiarly appetizing meat aroma wafted in the air.

“Master...”

The Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast was beginning to reach its limits. It tried to thrash its body around, but the zhenqi threads

had bound it in a way that prevented it from effectively exerting its strength, thus rendering its efforts futile.

Seeing that its life was hanging by a thread, despair surfaced in the depths of its eyes.

“Grit your teeth and endure it! If you wish to make a breakthrough, this is pain that you must overcome!” Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message over.

“Netherworld Azure Dragon Beasts harness the coldness of the netherworld in their bodies, thus their cultivation are also leaning toward the cold attribute too. While the Qilin Flames are at odds with your primary attribute, it can help to neutralize any blockages in your meridians and cleanse your bloodline, allowing you to push right for a breakthrough!”

The pill which Zhang Xuan took out previously was infused with his Heaven’s Path zhenqi, so naturally, it had the effect of cleansing bloodlines too. Unfortunately, its effectiveness was extremely limited on the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, whose cultivation was much higher than him.

In other words, from the very start, his promise of allowing the Inferno Qilin to achieve a breakthrough just by eating the golden pill had been a big fat lie. His true purpose was to make use of the intense heat of the Qilin Flames to refine the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast’s bloodline and grant it the momentum to overcome its Saint 8-dan pinnacle bottleneck!

“I understand!” Realizing that its master was doing all of this for it, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast gritted its teeth tenaciously and endured the excruciating pain.

When the flames dived into its body, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast felt the blood coursing through its body bubbling furiously, threatening to evaporate dry at any moment. A feeling of frailty gradually rippled through its body, and its consciousness was beginning to slip away from it.

Just when it was on the verge of caving in, the pill that it had swallowed previously suddenly released a burst of soothing energy which maneuvered the flames in its body to knock open all of the bottlenecks within its body.

As a result of that, its turbid blood began to turn clearer as

well.</p><p>It’s working!</p><p>The eyes of the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast twinkled in excitement.</p><p>Even though it had absolute trust in its master, relief and exhilaration still gushed in upon seeing the changes occurring within its body. From the looks of it, it should be able to achieve a breakthrough very soon.</p><p>Thus, it gathered all of its grit and forced itself to persevere on. Eventually, its suffering paid off.</p><p>Three minutes later, it felt the invisible ceiling that had capped its cultivation at Saint 8-dan pinnacle was beginning to loosen, and cracks were gradually creeping all over it.</p><p>“Now!” All of a sudden, its master’s voice echoed loudly in its ear.</p><p>Without any hesitation, it gathered all of its remaining energy together as it released a majestic roar.</p><p>Boom!</p><p>Even the sturdy metal cage rattled under the deafening roar!</p><p>Kacha!</p><p>Kacha!</p><p>The power that the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast harnessed within its body began to surge to a new peak, and eventually, as if its body couldn’t contain that power anymore, a tremendous burst of energy shot upward into the clouds.</p><p>“It managed to pull off a breakthrough... The golden pill could actually allow one to achieve a breakthrough?” Retracting its flames, the Inferno Qilin couldn’t help but freeze on the spot.</p><p>It was still deeply skeptical when the young man said that the golden pill would allow it to achieve a breakthrough within ten minutes, but from the looks of it now, it was apparent that the young man wasn’t lying...</p><p>The golden pill was truly a miraculous pill!</p><p>It hurriedly turned its gaze over to the young man, only to see that the latter completely preoccupied with controlling the hundred of swords he had brought out. The jade bottle that he had taken the golden pill out from previously was currently placed on the ground not too far away from the young man, open for anyone to take.</p><p>“Hehe, it’s all mine!” A glint flashed across the Inferno Qilin’s eyes as it flicked its paw.</p><p>Hu!</p><p>In the blink

of an eye, the jade bottle was already in its grasp. Taking a look inside, he saw that there were seven golden pills inside. Without the slightest bit of hesitation, it swallowed all of them down.</p>

1445 Submit To Me!

“You...”

In the midst of retracting his swords, Zhang Xuan happened to chance upon this sight, and he froze on the spot.

“I must say that I’m really thankful for your generous gift, but you need not put on an act anymore. I know your motive. You speak of helping me exact vengeance, but in the end, aren’t you just trying to make me submit to you? I can tell you this loud and clear right now—dream

on!”

Driving its Qilin Flames to break down the contents of the pill, the Inferno Qilin looked at Zhang Xuan and sneered coldly, “We, of the Qilin Tribe, and proud and noble beasts. How can we possibly submit to a mere human?”

Hidden under those impassioned and rousing words was the ugly intention of the human to enslave it.

Given how it refused to submit to even the head of the Zhang Clan, how could it possibly willingly submit to a mere Grand Dominion realm brat?

You must be kidding me!

The only reason why it chit-chatted with the other party for so long was because it was bored with its confined isolation, and it wanted to chat with someone a bit. Who could have thought that the young man would actually bring him some unexpected gains?

The Inferno Qilin had been paying close attention to the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast. While the latter’s cultivation had indeed reached Saint 8-dan pinnacle, it was limited by the potential of its bloodline. Achieving a breakthrough for it would be a feat nearly as difficult as scaling the heavens.

Yet, just by consuming the golden pill, it managed to push through its bottleneck and rise to the next realm... From this, it was certain that the pills in the jade bottle did harness mystical effects. Even if they weren’t as effective on it, it would still benefit greatly from consuming them.

At the very least, pushing for a breakthrough of a small cultivation stage shouldn’t pose too much

trouble!</p><p>“My pills!” Paying no heed to the Inferno Qilin’s taunting, a look of absolute horror appeared on Zhang Xuan’s face.</p><p>“I have already swallowed them, what are you going to do about it? Make me spit them out?” the Inferno Qilin taunted coldly.</p><p>You deserved it for placing a treasure like that before me unguarded.</p><p>It’s not as if I’m bounded by the code of honor or those rubbish principles that you master teachers follow. Survival of the fittest; since I was able to snatch it, it goes without saying that it’s mine!</p><p>“No, that’s not what I mean...” Zhang Xuan exclaimed in a fluster as he shook his head hurriedly.</p><p>“Like I give a damn as to what you mean! Since I have presented me with such fine medicine, I’ll let you off the hook this time around. Scram out of this cage right now, or else, don’t blame me for getting nasty on you!”</p><p>The Inferno Qilin swung its thick tail menacingly before returning back to the area where it had laid down on earlier.</p><p>“I...” The Inferno Qilin’s words did little to cool down the agitated state Zhang Xuan was in. He continued exclaiming anxiously, “I’m not concerned about you taking my pills but... I only have a single one of that breakthrough pill, and I have already fed it to the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast!”</p><p>“A single one?” Those words immediately left the Inferno Qilin halting in its footsteps. It turned his head around and asked doubtfully, “If you only have a single one of those breakthrough pills, what are the other pills you have stored in that jade bottle of yours then?”</p><p>“Those... are all poison!” Zhang Xuan exclaimed.</p><p>“Poison?” The Inferno Qilin was visibly startled for a moment before it clicked its tongue in disdain. “Don’t think that you can get me to spit out those pills just because you said that they are poison. Let me tell you this, I have already assimilated those pills into my body!”</p><p>Even if the young man felt indignant at having his pills eaten by it, surely it didn’t have to come up with such a ludicrous lie!</p><p>It had made sure to scan the pill carefully with its Spiritual

Perception prior to consuming it, and it was certain that those seven golden pills were identical to the one the young man had offered it previously. If they were really poison, his tamed beast should have been dead by now!

And besides, who in the world would place a pill intended for achieving breakthroughs into a bottle filled with poisonous pills? What if one were to consume the poison by accident? At least put some effort into crafting out your lie! I can't feel your sincerity at all!

Hearing those words, the young man's face immediately turned white, and he lowered his gaze despondently as he muttered, "You have already assimilated the pills? Oh no, this is a disaster..."

"Enough of your act. Get out of here right now, and I'll spare..." Fed up with the young man's theatrics, the Inferno Qilin harrumphed coldly and turned its body around.

But halfway through its motion, it suddenly froze up entirely, and an intense pain abruptly exploded through its innards.

Kacha!

Kacha!

It was a kind of sensation that felt as if someone was tugging desperately at the two ends of its heart in opposite directions, attempting to rip it apart.

At the same time, the Inferno Qilin felt a flowing current of power seeping into the thinnest meridians in his body and gnawing at his nerves viciously, causing an unending wave of pain to assault his senses.

Facing such a situation, the Inferno Qilin panicked.

Qilin Flames were capable of turning anything to cinders. As such, most poisons would be reduced to ashes before they could do any harm to its body, so why would its body suddenly be tormented by great pain all of a sudden?

Tzzzzzzzz!

While it was still deep in thought, the pain assaulting him from the inside swiftly intensified, sweeping through every nook and cranny of his body like an unstoppable flood.

Padah!

The Inferno Qilin collapsed weakly to the ground, devoid of even the strength to get back to its feet.

"It's

definitely the golden pills that I have just eaten. Damn it!” the Inferno Qilin cursed with his clattering teeth.

It was very certain that the cause of the pain was the golden pills that it had just eaten. When it was assimilating the pills earlier, several surges of energy burst forth from them and converged together before diving into the narrowest meridians in its body to lie in wait.

“Y-you poisoned me!” the Inferno Qilin glared at the young man before it in fury.

Everything was as clear as day to it now.

The young man had intentionally placed the jade bottle on the ground in order to prompt it to steal it from him.

By doing this, not only would he not be infringing on his dignity as a master teacher, he would be able to corner it too. More importantly, it wouldn’t have anyone to blame because it was due to its own foolishness that it leaped ahead of itself and snatched the pills...

Indeed, there was nothing more frightening than a shameless master teacher!

“You should have just asked me instead of leaping forward to snatch it! Why are you so reckless? Those pills are poisonous, you know!” Zhang Xuan exclaimed with a hint of helplessness in his voice.

“You...” Trembling with fury, the Inferno Qilin found itself at a loss for words.

What else could it say? All the young man did was to place the jade bottle beside it. In the first place, the young man had offered the golden pill to him at one point in time, and it refused it. After which, it was also the one who snatched away the jade bottle and downed its content...

From the perspective of the outsiders, the young man hadn’t done anything morally questionable at all from the start to the end!

Directing a vicious glare at Zhang Xuan, the Inferno Qilin growled, “Give me the antidote!”

Since the young man had such a poison in his possession, it didn’t make sense for him to not have the antidote.

“To be perfectly honest with you, I don’t have any antidote for that poison. However, I do know of a method to alleviate the effects of the poison...

As long as you submit to me, I can help you!” Zhang Xuan said with a look of difficulty. “You want me to submit to you? Dream on!” After despicably luring it into eating the poison, that fellow still wanted it to submit to him? The Inferno Qilin nearly exploded on the spot. Malicious killing intent burst forth from it as it roared ferociously, “Even if I were to die today, I shall bring you down together with me!” Boom! The Inferno Qilin leaped into the air, and it swiped its hoof down on Zhang Xuan. In an instant, flames surged to every corner of the cage, and an overwhelming burst of energy which was powerful enough to even rip pitch-black rifts in space tore through the air, descending down upon the young man. Padah! But before the attack could reach, the Inferno Qilin suddenly plummeted from the sky, crashing heavily onto the ground. Its body convulsed ceaselessly from the excruciating pain coursing through its innards, and white foam was leaking out from the corner of its mouth. The poison was simply too potent that it had exceeded its tolerance limit. Zhang Xuan walked up to the Inferno Qilin and gazed down on the latter impassively. He shook his head and persuaded, “Submit to me. You’ll only die at this rate.” “You want someone who possesses the Ancient Qilin Bloodline like me to submit to a filthy and despicable human like you? Dream on!” the Inferno Qilin roared with gritted teeth. The lineage of the Qilin Tribe could be traced back to the ancient times, and the Qilin Tribe had been a dominant power even in the era where powerful beasts roamed the surface of the Master Teacher Continent. While the purity of its bloodline was lacking as compared to its ancestors, there was no way its pride would allow it to submit to a mere human! It would rather die than to submit to them! Otherwise, the Zhang Clan wouldn’t have been completely helpless despite having captured it for three whole years. “I guess there’s no choice then...” Zhang Xuan shook his head. He was

just about to further goad the Inferno Qilin on with his words when an oppressive pressure suddenly weighed down heavily on him from above. In an instant, even his breathing had become laborious.

Raising his head, he saw dark, ominous clouds swiftly filling the previously clear sky. Lightning crackled angrily from within, as if heralding the arrival of a catastrophe.

“Is this the Saint 9-dan Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment

1446 Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal

Saint 9-dan Macrocosm Ascendancy realm. Macrocosm refers to the entire spatial world we perceive formed by the three dimensions. Those who had reached this realm would be able to wield an understanding of space far greater than at Dimension Sundering realm, allowing them to dictate the changes in the spaces around them, granting them the strength required to stand at the very peak of the Master Teacher Continent.

Zhang Xuan thought that it would be a huge blessing if he could help the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast rise to Half-Macrocosm Ascendancy realm, but perhaps due to the firm foundation it had built up over many years, it was actually able to crash down two bottlenecks in rapid succession using the Qilin Flames, charging up to Saint 9-dan in a single breath!

The ability to dictate space was a skill that should be unique only to the heavens themselves. Those who sought to steal this ability from them would have to suffer an equivalent punishment for their actions.

As such, the ordeal that one had to face at this level was exceptionally formidable.

If Dimension Sundering Ordeal was difficult, the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal would be despair-inducing.

To make a comparison, even the might of ten Dimension Sundering Ordeal wouldn't come close to matching up to the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal.

Tzzlala!

In barely the blink of an eye, the ominous clouds in the sky had already covered an area of four to five thousand mu around them, and it was still expanding at a frightening rate.

“This is really a disaster...” Outside the cage, Zhang Wuchen and Elder Wuzhen were trembling in horror.

The both of them had been through the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal themselves, and even with their current cultivation realms, they would still shudder at the notion of facing it once more... One must know that the prowess of the ordeal was, in fact, comparable to a full strength attack by an expert surpassing Saint 9-dan.

And for such a powerful lightning tribulation to be called in the middle of their city... The entire guest area could very well be reduced to cinders!

That young man had already destroyed countless buildings near the entrance formation previously, and now, he was going to destroy their guest accommodations as well?

That Zhang Xuan was really a symbol of misfortune!

How were they to explain this to their clan head when he returned?

“Everyone, hurry up and evacuate this area!” Knowing that the crowd standing within the perimeter of the lightning tribulation would only induce it to grow stronger and stronger, Zhang Wuchen immediately instructed.

Sou sou sou!

Realizing the dangers, the crowd also didn't dare to linger in the area.

They hurriedly flitted as far away from the guest area as they could.

There was no way to stop the lightning tribulation—it would only grow stronger the more they tried to curb it. It was one thing if they succeeded in eliminating the lightning tribulation once and for all, but if they were to fail, the entire city could very well be reduced to ashes...

“That Zhang Xuan is really a herald of misfortune... He should have known better than to allow his saint beast to achieve a breakthrough here!” Zhang Wuchen spat through gritted teeth.

Whenever the Zhang Clan had anyone who was on the verge of making a breakthrough to Macrocosm Ascendancy realm, they would make sure to prepare a location for him in advance, and in some cases, set up formations even in order to ensure that the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal wouldn't cause too much damage to the surroundings. Yet, this fellow actually brought one right into the middle of their home base...

Considering how many guests there were here, there was no way they would be able to protect all of them! If any of them were to lose their life while under the Zhang Clan's care, it would really be a huge smirch on the Zhang Clan's reputation.

Taking a step back, even if no life was lost in this catastrophe, the massive damage that it would sustain as a result of the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal would still make it a laughingstock on the Master Teacher Continent!

"Zhang Xuan, hurry up and bring your tamed beast out of here. There's a Dracotiger Mountain not too far away with specialized formations that could help your tamed beast deal with the lightning tribulation!" Unable to take it any longer, Zhang Wuchen urged anxiously.

At the very end of the city was a place known as the Dracotiger Mountain. It was used by the Zhang Clan as a specialized ground for their offspring to deal with their cultivation ordeals. For this purpose, there were plenty of formidable formations set up around the area, and while it wouldn't help to fend off the lightning, it would at least suppress the growth of inner demons within the cultivator's mind, thus allowing him to focus his full attention on coping with the lightning tribulation.

As long as he could get the saint beast there, the Zhang Clan would be able to avert this crisis.

"Very well..." Zhang Xuan shot a glance at the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast before nodding his head.

But just as he was about to instruct the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast over to head over to the place which Zhang Wuchen had spoken of, a powerful surge of might suddenly burst forth from behind him.

Following which, the Inferno Qilin's furious bellow sounded in the air, "Since I'm going to die anyway, I might as well bring down all of you bastards along with me!"

Flames began emanating from the Inferno Qilin's body.

"This is really bad..." Zhang Wuchen was horrified to see this sight.

Due to being plagued with lethal poison, the Inferno Qilin had already resolved itself for death. As such, it had chosen to use its full strength to further provoke the lightning tribulation so as to bring down the darned Zhang Xuan and the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast together with it.

As it was standing at the very center of the lightning tribulation, the instant that it drove its strength, the lightning tribulation was immediately rumbled furiously in response to its provocation.

Wuuuuuuuuu!

In the blink of an eye, the five thousand mu field expanded to cover over ten thousand mu, and there were no signs that its growth was going to stop anytime soon either.

If the lightning tribulation had only covered the guest area previously, at this moment, it was covering a huge chunk of the area where the Zhang Clan's offspring resided in too.

"You... Well done!" Seeing how cooperative the Inferno Qilin was at such a crucial moment even without having him to prompt for it, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in delight.

Given the size of the lightning tribulation, it should be comparable to at least ten pinnacle spirit stones at the very least. If he could devour it, his cultivation would definitely surge to higher realms.

"Hahaha, I want all of you to suffer along with me!"

Completely oblivious to Zhang Xuan's thoughts, the Inferno Qilin was only focused on a single matter this very instant—making the lightning tribulation grow as large as possible. Roaring furiously, it released every last bit of energy it had within it.

In the midst of doing so, it realized that the release of its strength seemed to lessen the excruciating pain from the poison, so it gritted its teeth and pushed itself on.

Kacha! Kacha!

Even before the lightning could fall, the overwhelming pressure it emanated had already destroyed the formation cast on the cage. At the same time, countless buildings also caved in to the pressure and collapsed abruptly.

“Master, what should I do?” Seeing how his Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal had gone completely out of control, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast couldn’t help but cower back in fear.

It had been too focused on pushing for a breakthrough that it overlooked the possible consequences of his action. It had never thought that things would get to this point.

If even its master was helpless before this situation, it would really be electrocuted to death.

“There’s no need to panic. Continue drawing in the lightning tribulation. The larger it is, the better it’ll be.” Zhang Xuan instructed before flying over to Zhang Wuchen and the others’ side.

“Third Elder, Seventh Elder.” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and greeted.

With his current cultivation realm, he could walk around freely without catching the attention of the lightning tribulation.

“Do you have any ways to resolve this situation?” Zhang Wuchen asked grimly.

If the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast didn’t leave right now, everyone would be doomed once the lightning tribulation fell!

“I do have an idea in mind, but I would require a few things to carry them out. Do you happen to have Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm, Saint 8-dan Dimension Sundering, and Saint 9-dan Macrocosm Ascendancy realm cultivation technique manuals? I need as many of them as possible!” Zhang Xuan asked urgently.

Since the lightning tribulation was already prepared for his consumption, it went without saying that he needed to have the cultivation techniques required to up his cultivation too. Otherwise, he would be wasting this precious source of energy!

“Cultivation technique manuals? What do you need those for?” Zhang Wuchen was taken aback by Zhang Xuan’s abrupt request.

The matters that had occurred at the Sanctum of Sages had been classified as confidential, and students had been sternly warned not to let this matter out. Of course, it would only be a matter of time before it spread amongst the top brass of the major clans, but for the time being, Zhang Wuchen was still unable to fathom the notion of the young man making use of the lightning tribulation to push for breakthroughs.

“There’s no time to explain it to you! I need you to bring them to me right now. This is the only way we can resolve the crisis standing before us, or else... I’m afraid that there would be nothing I could do either!” Zhang Xuan said with even greater urgency in his voice.

“This... I do have a few Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals with me at the moment. I was planning to impart them to my students, so I have been bringing them along with me... As for Dimension Sundering realm cultivation technique manuals, almost all of them are all locked in the clan’s book vault, and I’m afraid that even with my authorization as the Third Elder, I still can’t bring you in. Only those amongst the top brass of the Zhang Clan are authorized to access it, and even so, they could only pick out a single cultivation technique from there. Even I am no exception to the rule!” Zhang Wuchen paused for a moment before eventually replying.

Those who had reached Dimension Sundering realm could already be considered as individuals who had reached the apex of the Master Teacher Continent. As such, despite being the Third Elder of the Zhang Clan, he only had several of them in his private collection. And as for the clan’s secret art, it went

without saying that there was no way he would be able to show them to an outsider!

“I guess I would have to make do with Phantasmal Space realm cultivation technique manuals then...” Seeing that the lightning was about to fall at any moment, Zhang Xuan knew that he didn’t have much time to waste. Thus, he waved his hand and urged, “Hurry up and take them out. I just have to take a swift glance at them!”

“Un.” Seeing that the young man had an idea in mind, Zhang Wuchen didn’t dare to waste any time. Flicking his wrist, a bunch of books appeared before him. Five thousand mu is equivalent to $3,333,333\text{m}^2$. Five thousand mu is equivalent to $6,666,666\text{m}^2$.

1447 Please Take Me In!

There weren't too many books amidst that pile, numbering just roughly twenty to thirty of them. After scanning through them, a deep frown surfaced on Zhang Xuan's forehead.

They were all relating to Saint 7-dan Phantasmal space realm, but those books were not something which Zhang Xuan would even call cultivation technique manuals. If he really had to give a name to it, they were more like 'assignment booklets'.

Written on those books were what that appeared similar to assignment questions which teachers would pass down to their students in his previous life. All in all, there was only a single book that could be said to be useful.

"This..." Zhang Xuan shot a deep look at Zhang Wuchen.

"It's against the rules to impart the Zhang Clan's cultivation techniques to outsiders, so I can only show you these. Nevertheless, it's still quite a formidable cultivation technique, suited for cultivators of any attribute to practice..." Noting Zhang Xuan's gaze on him, Zhang Wuchen explained with an awkward chuckle.

"..." Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

Unlike in academies, the cultivation techniques that were passed down in clans were limited in variety. As all members of the Zhang Clan shared the same bloodline, they were likely to be similar in terms of attribute and could cultivate the same cultivation technique.

At the same time, honorary elders who chose to ally with the Zhang Clan were likely to already have their own cultivation techniques and lineage as well. As such, despite the Zhang Clan's influence and standing in the Master Teacher Continent, its collection of cultivation technique manuals was actually not too big.

"If that's the case, do you have any physical body cultivation technique or soul cultivation technique?" Zhang Xuan

hesitated for a moment before asking.

The massive lightning tribulation was like a big feast to him; he might just regret it for life if he couldn't make good use of this opportunity to push for a breakthrough or two.

"I do have quite a few physical body cultivation techniques here!" Elder Wuzhen flicked his wrist, and a pile of books numbering over a thousand appeared right before him.

"I also have a few soul cultivation technique manuals with me." Zhang Wuchen said as he took out a pile of books too.

As they weren't confidential secrets arts of the Zhang Clan, there was no problem with him showing these books to Zhang Xuan.

Seeing that these two fellows were finally reliable for once, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He swiftly shot a glance at those books and collected them into the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Alright, I'll go and fend off the lightning tribulation!" Saying those words, Zhang Xuan leaped up and soared right into the midst of the storm clouds.

"W-what? He's going to fend off the lightning tribulation? This..." Zhang Wuchen and Elder Wuzhen were visibly shocked by Zhang Xuan's abrupt actions.

Even Zhang Ziqing's face had turned pale in horror.

They thought that the young man would have a good solution to deal with the lightning tribulation, but he ended up dashing over blindly instead. Wasn't that as good as courting death?

...

Huala!

Zhang Xuan dashed right into the dark clouds.

At the same time, he swiftly compiled the physical body cultivation technique manuals and soul cultivation technique manuals he had gathered into a higher tier Heaven's Path Golden Body and the Grand Dominion realm Heaven's Path Soul Art.

“I probably won’t be able to finish absorbing a lightning tribulation of this size, and if it were to really fall, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast would lose its life... Alright, you lot, come out as well!”

Looking at the storm clouds which extended past the horizon, Zhang Xuan knew that no matter how huge an appetite he had, it would be impossible for him to devour it clean within a short period of time. Thus, he chose to bring out his clone, the Dongxu Gourd, and the vine out too.

“What a splendid lightning tribulation this is!”

Looking at the sheer scale of the storm clouds that had congregated in the area and feeling the immense lightning energy harnessed amidst it, his clone, the Dongxu Gourd, and the vine couldn’t help but release an excited shriek as they dashed right in.

Zhang Xuan didn’t slack around either. He drew out of his Primordial Spirit and began furiously devouring in the lightning energy around him. At the same time, under the effects of the Mind of Void, his body also began drawing in the lightning energy and cultivating the Heaven’s Path Golden Body instinctively too.

Some time later, as per the norm with previous lightning tribulations, it fled in fear after realizing that there were several mysterious powers robbing its energy. Zhang Xuan swiftly kept his clone, the Dongxu Gourd, and the vine back into his storage ring before heaving a sigh of relief.

He assessed his gains during this period of time, and he couldn’t help but nod in contentment.

His soul cultivation had successfully reached Grand Dominion realm pinnacle. At the same time, his physical body had also surpassed its previous bottleneck, reaching a level comparable to half-Saint pinnacle artifacts.

With the current resilience of his physical body, even if he were to stand completely unguarded before a Saint 7-dan cultivator, the latter would still be unable to harm him in the slightest.

In the truest sense, he could be said to be a human-shaped weapon.

And that wasn't the happiest news yet.

It seems like the Innate Fetal Poison has been further suppressed as a result of my breakthrough!

He realized that the more lightning energy he absorbed, the more he was able to suppress the Innate Fetal Poison. After digging into the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal, it had been forced to cower quietly by a corner, not daring to move in the slightest.

It seems like the lightning energy harnessed within cultivation ordeals is indeed highly beneficial to me. I must make sure to look for more in the future... Zhang Xuan thought as he casually shot his glance downward to take a look.

And what that came into his sight left his eyelids twitching in horror.

The resplendent guest accommodations of the Zhang Clan had been replaced by rubble.

Even though Zhang Xuan had charged up to absorb the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal, the lingering might that the lightning tribulation emanated was still too powerful. At the same time, these buildings had quite some age to them, so they eventually succumbed to the pressure.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned his gaze to Zhang Wuchen and the others, and just as he had expected, he saw that they had an awful look on their faces. He couldn't help but shudder a little.

To think that he would actually reduce this place to ruins just like that! This was really... really... exhilarating!

With the mess that he had caused, even if the young prodigy were to continue holing up wherever he had been hiding for all those years, surely Xing Sword Saint should show up?

“Zhang shi, thank you for helping us resolve the lightning tribulation. Otherwise, our Zhang Clan would have been in deep trouble...” Clenching his trembling fists tightly, Zhang Wuchen suppressed his anger and clasped his fist.

No words could describe what he was feeling at this moment.

Even though the lightning tribulation was brought here by that young man, he had only done so in order to tame the Inferno Qilin. Not to mention, this incident had happened under his watch, so he also had to take responsibility for this incident too.

It would only reflect badly on him and the Zhang Clan if he were to push the blame to Zhang Xuan right now.

It was truly fortunate that the problem was resolved in the end, or else the consequences would be truly dire. Not only would the guest area be destroyed, a huge part of the Zhang Clan's establishment could have been reduced to ruins too!

At the very least, this was all he could tell himself to soothe his indignant heart right now.

Zhang Wuchen turned his gaze to Zhang Jiang and bellowed furiously, "Zhang Jiang, for acting on your own accord, you have to take responsibility for the mess that you have caused. I hereby order you to return back to your residence and await your punishment. Until any further orders are given, you are not to leave your room!"

"Yes..." Clenching his fists tightly, Zhang Jiang lowered his head despondently. Turning around, he was just about to return back to his residence when he suddenly recalled something and halted in his footsteps. He hurriedly turned back around and clasped his fist humbly toward Zhang Wuchen and said, "I have no qualms about being punished for this matter, but... my duel with Zhang Shi isn't over yet! Third Elder, I beseech you to give me some time to wait for the results. Once the results are out, regardless of whether it's my loss or victory, I'll make my way over to the Hall of Punishments to take responsibility for my recklessness..."

He recalled that his duel with Zhang Xuan was still ongoing, and if he was going to be punished for this matter, the least he could do was to make things difficult for Zhang Xuan too.

"Results?" Zhang Wuchen frowned.

“That’s right, Third Elder. I have made a bet with Zhang Shi whether he would be able to reach a higher intimacy level with the Inferno Qilin than me within three days. However, looking at how fixated the Inferno Qilin was in dragging that fellow down to the depths of hell with it, I don’t think that we would need three days to determine the victor...” Zhang Jiang hurriedly explained.

Just by how Zhang Xuan had resorted to schemes to poison it, there was no way the Inferno Qilin would feel the slightest shred of goodwill toward it. If a saint beast could submit to a man like that even after all that had happened, there would really be no need for beast tamers in the world! Everyone would have just become a poison master instead!

Just like humans, saint beasts had their own pride too. They would only submit to people whom they recognize, and naturally, for a person like Zhang Xuan who resorted to underhanded means such as poisons and schemes... Only someone with a loose screw would be willing to acknowledge such a person as their master!

This was especially so for a fiery-tempered saint beast like the Inferno Qilin. Using underhanded means against it would only intensify its hostility, making it nigh impossible to tame it.

Hearing the conversation between the two, Zhang Xuan couldn’t help but scratch his head in embarrassment.

He thought that he could win the Inferno Qilin’s respect by having the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast achieve a breakthrough before it, thus convincing it submit to him. However, just by looking at how the Inferno Qilin didn’t hesitate to provoke the lightning tribulation just to deal with him, most likely, it would be impossible for him to tame it anymore!

“Forget it, I admit...” Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan was just about to admit his defeat when he suddenly felt a slight warmth on his leg.

Turning his head over, he saw the Inferno Qilin lying right next to him, licking him with its tongue. With a face filled with respect and awe, it pleaded, “Master, please take me in!”

1448 Your Teacher Is Here!

“Ah?” Zhang Jiang’s body froze upon hearing those words.

Zhang Wuchen and the others also stared at one another blankly.

What was wrong with this fellow? It was just a moment ago that it declared impassionately that those of the Ancient Qilin Bloodline weren’t to be sullied, and if it could, it would have probably slaughtered Zhang Xuan without any hesitation. Yet, why would it suddenly cast away its pride and end up kneeling on the floor subserviently all of a sudden?

Zhang Xuan was also clearly taken aback by the abrupt change in attitude by the Inferno Qilin too. He had to stare intently at the Inferno Qilin for a long while before he was able to convince himself that it was the same arrogant beast that he had dealt with just a moment ago. With a bizarre look on his face, he asked, “Are you certain that you want to acknowledge me as your master?”

“Yes! I swear on my Ancient Qilin Bloodline that I’ll heed any commands that master instructs me without any complaints!” the Inferno Qilin anxiously nodded its head, as if fearing that the young man before it would change his mind.

“Alright then.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

A mere instant after giving his two words of approval, he immediately saw a droplet of blood harnessing the Inferno Qilin’s soul diving gently into his glabella.

And with their master-servant relationship being sealed by a soul contract, he swiftly became cognizant of the massive fellow’s thought process.

Under normal circumstances, the Inferno Qilin would have never submitted to anyone. However, when it saw him diving into a lightning tribulation so powerful that even it would have fled in fear, it changed its mind.

While saint beasts were born physical constitutions that were far stronger than humans, their Primordial Spirits were much weaker in contrast. As such, they possessed natural deference toward lightning, and those who were able to conquer lightning were not too much different from deities in their eyes. As such, just on the basis that the young man was able to chase it away the lightning tribulation so easily, it didn't seem too bad of an idea to become his tamed beast...

Furthermore, since the other party was able to help the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast achieve a breakthrough, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to do the same for it too!

The thought process of beasts was sometimes just much simpler than humans. It was not to say that they were less intelligent, but the way that they perceive friends and foes was much more straightforward as compared to humans.

"I don't believe it... How can this be?!" Seeing that the Inferno Qilin had actually acknowledged Zhang Xuan as its master, Zhang Jiang's face turned as white as a sheet of paper.

That was a saint beast which even their clan head was unable to tame! Yet, to be able to win its loyalty within just a short twenty minutes...

Not to mention, it was just a moment ago that the Inferno Qilin was baring its fangs at Zhang Xuan, dying to rip the young man into shreds... Why would it suddenly change its attitude all of a sudden?

Do you know that your abrupt change in attitude has put me in a spot? Not only have I lost the duel, the clan head would also punish me severely for this once he returned!

He had to pay a heavy price in order to capture that huge fellow! If he were to learn that it had fallen into the hands of an outsider...

Pu!

Zhang Jiang's face reddened from all of the frustration bottled up within in, and a spurt of blood escaped from his lips.

"You are an Inferno Qilin, a beast who possesses the noble Ancient Qilin Bloodline!" Zhang Jiang couldn't help but

exclaim in agitation.

“So what if the noble Ancient Qilin Bloodline flows through my veins? Zhang Shi is an outstanding young talent who’s both righteous and humble. Such a person is worthy of me devoting my entire life into pursuing!” The Inferno Qilin shot a haughty look toward Zhang Jiang, fully expressing its delight in becoming Zhang Xuan’s tamed beast.

“You...” Zhang Jiang nearly collapsed to the ground.

What happened to your pride? What happened to your dignity?

It wasn’t too long ago that you were screeching impassionately about how you would rather die than to submit yourself up to another and be sullied, and all of a sudden, you are acting in such a manner... It can’t be that your soul has been swapped with another person’s, can it?

“Since you have acknowledged me as your master, then I guess it would be inappropriate for me not to bestow you with a greeting gift, right?” Completely ignoring the blood-spurting Zhang Jiang, Zhang Xuan snapped his finger with a slight smile.

With an expectant look, the Inferno Qilin waited excitedly for its master present when all of a sudden, it felt a surge of energy gushing out from the depths of its dantian. Under the surge of energy, it found its meridians, which were previously riddled with blockages here and there, were being swiftly knocked open

“This is... the lethal poison from before?” The Inferno Qilin widened its eyes in disbelief.

The sensation of the energy coursing through its body was very familiar—it was the exact same feeling it felt when the poison in the pills diffused throughout its entire body. Just that, instead of wreaking havoc this time around, this surge of energy was clearing away all of the bottlenecks limiting its cultivation, thus pushing it toward a higher realm!

To turn a lethal poison into a tonic with just a mere thought, this was a feat which even 9-star master teachers were incapable of!

The Inferno Qilin found itself trembling uncontrollably in agitation.

It was at this very moment that it truly realized how wise of a decision that it had just made.

It was an instinctive action that it chose to acknowledge the young man as its master, but who could have thought that the capabilities the young man wielded would be far beyond its imagination.

Possessing the Ancient Qilin Bloodline, it was blessed with superior prowess at birth, putting it at a much higher starting point at the others. But at the same time, this overwhelming strength had become its limitation too.

Without a doubt, the Qilin Flames was the strongest weapon that it wielded, but it was also precisely how powerful it was that it was hard to bring it under control, thus making it nigh impossible for Inferno Qilin to cultivate the smaller and thinner meridians in its body. As a result, its rate of cultivation had been very slow.

However, in this very moment, that surge of energy was helping it to pave open all of these smaller and thinner meridians, thus clearing all of the bottlenecks in its way!

In an instant, the Inferno Qilin felt that the invisible ceiling capping its cultivation was starting to loosen up, and it would be able to push for a breakthrough at any moment.

“Master...”

“Hurry up and make a breakthrough. Don’t waste this precious opportunity,” Zhang Xuan interjected nonchalantly.

“Yes!” Knowing that this wasn’t the time for sappy words, the Inferno Qilin closed its eyes and drove the energy in its body.

Boom!

A powerful pressure swept across surroundings, and in this instant, the Inferno Qilin appeared to be an indomitable conqueror.

“The Inferno Qilin... is going to make a breakthrough too?”

Zhang Wuchen's face immediately warped in absolute shock. With a tearful look, he exclaimed, "Zhang shi, please take the Inferno Qilin away from here. The Zhang Clan can't take another lightning tribulation! On behalf of Zhang Jiang, I'll formally concede defeat to you, alright?"

Just the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's breakthrough was sufficient to turn the entire guest area into ruins. If the more powerful Inferno Qilin were to make a breakthrough too... the entire Dracotiger City could very well be turned into ruins!

"Ah... There's no need to worry. It's currently at Saint 9-dan advanced stage, so it won't draw in any lightning tribulation!" Zhang Xuan explained awkwardly.

Through the soul contract, he was able to accurately perceive the Inferno Qilin's currently cultivation realm and strength—Saint 9-dan Macrocosm Ascendancy realm advanced stage!

Even when utilizing the momentum granted by his zhenqi, it would only be able to push for a breakthrough to Saint 9-dan pinnacle at most... And based on what he knew, just like with Saint 8-dan, there was no lightning tribulation between each cultivation stage within Saint 9-dan.

"That would be for the best..." Zhang Wuchen suddenly recalled that the Inferno Qilin's current cultivation realm and heaved a sigh of relief.

Once bitten, twice shy. Perhaps it was due to the fright from seeing what happened with the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast that he became particularly sensitive to this issue.

Indeed, a breakthrough of a cultivation stage within Saint 9-dan wouldn't draw in any lightning tribulation.

As Zhang Wuchen finally calmed down, many questions began floating in his mind. So, with a slightly intrigued voice, he asked, "Even a breakthrough of a cultivation stage within Saint 9-dan is as difficult as attempting to scale the heavens... If I may just ask, how did Zhang shi manage to induce a breakthrough in it?"

The Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's breakthrough could still be attributed to the strong foundations it had built up prior

to its breakthrough and Zhang Xuan's deep understanding of it... But considering that he had just tamed the Inferno Qilin and hadn't had a chance to understand its constitution on a deeper level yet, how in the world did he manage to induce a breakthrough within it too then?

If that young man really wielded the ability to induce breakthroughs in saint beast as and when he liked, he could pretty much tame any saint beast that he wanted!

"This... I guess it can all be attributed to luck. The Inferno Qilin happens to have made sufficient accumulation over the years, so by using some special means, I was able to tap into its potential and help it push for a breakthrough. Things wouldn't have proceeded as smoothly as this if I had been dealing with another saint beast instead." Zhang Xuan explained.

There was no way he could reveal the existence of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, or else it could bring him great trouble in the future. Ultimately, everything still boiled down to low profile and humility! Those were the two greatest virtues in the world, after all!

"Pardon me, it seems like I have lacked consideration in my words." Seeing how the young man was beating around the bush, Zhang Wuchen realized that his actions may appear as if he was probing into the other party's secrets, so he hurriedly apologized.

Following which, he clasped his fist and smiled, "I have heard news from our younglings in the Sanctum of Sages that your teacher is Yang shi, Yang Xuan. Is that true?"

"My teacher is indeed Yang Xuan," Zhang Xuan replied.

At this moment, he wasn't ready to throw out his identity as Yang Xuan's student yet. Considering the abilities that he wielded despite his low cultivation realm, there was no telling that greedy individuals would attempt to do him harm so as to uncover his secrets.

Hu Yiwei wasn't around anyway, and they weren't at the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters either. Even the

Sanctum of Sages was unable to uncover the authenticity of his identity, so surely it wouldn't be too difficult to fool the Zhang Clan too?

"No wonder..." Zhang Wuchen nodded in realization. "May I know if Zhang shi knows where Yang shi is currently at?"

"My teacher has always been a free man, wandering the lands without allowing himself to be restrained by anything. As such, I'm afraid that I am unaware of his whereabouts either." Zhang Xuan replied.

Zhang Wuchen was slightly taken aback for a moment before finally understanding why Zhang Xuan had come to the Zhang Clan and yet, instead of paying a visit to his teacher, chose to wreak havoc here. It turned out that he was unaware that his teacher was right in the Zhang Clan!

"It's truly a work of coincidence that you came at this timing. Yang shi is currently in seclusion in the Zhang Clan, and I believe that he could be coming out very soon. The two of you will soon be able to reunite with one another!" Zhang Wuchen said with a smile.

"Yang shi is here too?" Zhang Xuan asked with a surprised smile on his face, but on the inside, his blood had already run cold.

1449 Blood Reservoir

All along, he had been openly using Yang shi's name in order to conceal the existence of his Library of Heaven's Path. Yet, who could have thought that by some mysterious workings of the world, a character whom he had created at a whim turned out to be truly existent... and not only so, he was even a grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, one of the strongest experts in the world!

It was already extremely awkward for him to be faking as the other party's student, but who could have thought that the other party would even be in the Zhang Clan?

If the both of them were to meet, wouldn't his fake identity be exposed on the spot?

Before Zhang Xuan could say a word, Zhang Wuchen had already asked with a frown, "Yang shi?"

"Ah, look at what I'm saying. It's been too long that I have last met teacher that I accidentally addressed him wrongly by mistake!" Zhang Xuan hurriedly glossed over his mistake.

He had been too overwhelmed with shock that he unintentionally addressed Yang Xuan as 'Yang shi' instead of 'teacher'.

"Un, Yang shi has been in seclusion at our Zhang Clan for more than a half a year now, so it's indeed been quite some time since the two of you met," Zhang Wuchen nodded in agreement, seemingly accepting Zhang Xuan's excuse.

"Would it be inconveniencing my teacher if I were to visit him while he's in the midst of his seclusion?" Zhang Xuan looked at Zhang Wuchen and asked.

Considering how Zhang Wuchen knew that he was 'Yang shi's student', and that given the fact that Yang shi was currently in the Zhang Clan, it was weird that no one had called Yang shi over yet. There could only be two possibilities for this. Firstly, Zhang Wuchen was trying to sound him out. Secondly, Yang

shi was in the midst of a crucial point of his cultivation and was unable to leave his seclusion just yet.

Regardless of which of the two it was, they worked out to Zhang Xuan's advantage.

"Yang shi did instruct us not to allow anyone to interrupt him while he's in his cultivation. However, he should be coming out in a few days' time. If Zhang shi is in no rush to move, you should be able to reunite with Yang shi." Zhang Wuchen said.

"Ah, that's a relief. I'm in no hurry to leave, so I guess I'll impose on the Zhang Clan while waiting for my teacher to come out of his seclusion then." Zhang Xuan nodded as he secretly heaved a sigh of relief on the inside.

It seemed like he still had a few more days to spare. However, to be safe, he should still hasten his plan. As soon as he lured the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan out and pummeled him, he should leave straight away. Otherwise, it could pose to be a huge trouble if he were to bump heads with Yang shi!

"May I know where my teacher is in seclusion at the moment? I'll just head over to pay my respects first without interrupting him," Zhang Xuan asked.

The least he could do was to first confirm the enemy's location. This way, he would know where he should flee to if he were to hear that the other party had come out of seclusion.

"I'm afraid that I don't really know. Only the First Elder is aware of where Yang shi had gone into seclusion at." Zhang Wuchen shook his head and replied.

"You don't know?" Zhang Xuan shook his head in feigned disappointment.

While the two of them were still speaking, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and the Inferno Qilin were finally done with their breakthroughs. Incredible energy pulsated from their bodies, and it felt as if it would burst out of their bodies at any moment.

The surrounding crowd couldn't help but eye the two Saint 9-dan beasts gathered around Zhang Xuan warily, apprehensive

of the strength they wielded. Even Jian Qinsheng was a little agitated too.

One must know that even the deputy sanctum head of the Sanctum of Sages was only at Saint 9-dan primary stage, but Zhang Xuan, despite being a student, had already tamed a Saint 9-dan primary stage and a Saint 9-dan pinnacle beast... What this meant was that there was effectively no one else who could stand against him in the Sanctum of Sages anymore!

With such strength at his disposal, he was more than qualified to become an elder of the Sanctum of Sages!

At the same time, conflicted looks appeared on the faces of the Zhang Clan's offspring. They had come here to teach Zhang Xuan a lesson, but after witnessing the formidable capabilities he wielded in painting and beast taming, they found their resolve wavering.

Zhang Ziqing and Zhang Jiang could already be considered as the two most talented individuals amongst them, but nevertheless, they didn't even come close to being a match to Zhang Xuan. If they were to challenge the young man at this point, they would only be embarrassing themselves and sully the reputation of the Zhang Clan further.

As a result, this led to an awkward standstill... Well, awkward for everyone except for Zhang Xuan.

He was simply happy to have his moment of peace. After all, fending off all those pesky challengers was exhausting on his part too!

There was only one opponent he was interested in here, and that was the little prodigy. The rest were simply too weak to even catch his interest.

"Zhang shi, the guest area is already not suited for your accommodation anymore. I happen to have another residence prepared. Allow me to bring you over." Seeing that the geniuses of the Zhang Clan had thoroughly lost their fighting will, Zhang Wuchen couldn't help but sigh deeply on the inside.

“Another residence?” Zhang Xuan pondered for a brief moment before nodding, “I’ll be troubling Third Elder then.”

Indeed. With the current state of the guest accommodations, there was no way he could stay here anymore.

“It’s no trouble at all. Follow me.” The Third Elder nodded.

After instructing Elder Wuzhen to fix up the guest accommodations as soon as possible, he swiftly headed into the distance.

Before leaving, Zhang Xuan didn’t forget to impart the method to stopping the sculptures to the two 9-star spirit awakeners, and before their shocked gazes, he departed into the distance.

Not too long later, he arrived at the residential area of the Zhang Clan members.

“Sword Saint Jian Qinsheng, you can use this room for the moment. After I settle in the other guests, we’ll be holding the tournament for the younger generation. Following that, we’ll be hosting a socializing session so that everyone can exchange cultivation insights and catch up with one another!” After landing in a residence, the Third Elder explained the upcoming events for the day with a smile.

“Alright, thank you.” Jian Qinsheng nodded.

He had been to the Zhang Clan for three times now, but this was the first time he had entered the residential area of the Zhang Clan’s core members.

In a sense, he was benefitting from Zhang Xuan’s halo.

The spiritual energy here wasn’t as rich as that in the guest area, but there was a unique aura in the air which seemed to energize one’s body and mind, enhancing one’s rate of cultivation.

“Zhang shi, will you accompany me to take a walk around?” After settling Jian Qinsheng down, Zhang Wuchen turned to Zhang Xuan and asked.

“I’ll be pleased to,” Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

It just happened that he wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the Zhang Clan in the off case that he ever needed to snatch his bride away from them. Since Zhang Wuchen was inviting him for a walk, there was no reason for him to turn him down.

Even if there was danger, he had the Inferno Qilin and the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast to guard him. Besides, he was a guest, and the Zhang Clan seemed to value their reputation too much to make a move on their guests.

“This way, please.” Zhang Wuchen gestured with a smile before leading the way forward.

This time, they didn’t fly in the air but walked instead.

After everything that had happened, the sun had already set. A crescent moon was accompanied by a sky of twinkling stars in the night sky, showering the world with a dim, cold light. Somehow, everything appeared particularly cold and forlorn on this very night.

The two men walked along the pavement, one at the front and one at the back.

Silence drifted between the two men before Zhang Wuchen suddenly asked with a casual tone, “Zhang shi, where did you come from? Do you have any siblings?”

“I am an orphan. I don’t even know who my parents are, let alone my siblings.” Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

Even the previous him had no idea whom his parents are, so of course, he would have even less of an idea over here.

“An orphan, huh...” Zhang Wuchen muttered beneath his breath before realizing that he had allowed his thoughts to wander. So, he quickly pulled his attention back and carried on asking, “Since you are an orphan, why is your surname Zhang? Who gave you your name?”

“Hmmm...” Zhang Xuan pondered contemplatively before shaking his head. “It has been too long. I don’t remember anymore.”

In the first place, the memory he had inherited from the previous him wasn’t complete, so how could he be aware of

such complications?

Based on the memories of the previous him, it seemed like he had been hung on a noose looped over a tree when he was very young and nearly lost his life, and the man who had saved him bestowed him with the character, 'Xuan'. As for why his surname was Zhang... well, beats him too.

What was important to him was that his Zhang was not the same Zhang as the Zhang of the Zhang Clan.

“You can't remember anymore? Your parents must have departed while you were very young...” Zhang Wuchen remarked. Then, he abruptly chuckled softly before asking, “Then Zhang shi, what do you think of our Zhang Clan? Do you have any interest in joining our ranks?”

“Thank you for your goodwill, but I'll have to turn down that offer.” Zhang Xuan replied firmly.

After forcing Luo Ruoxin to marry a man who had never taken responsibility for her and despicably scheming to kill him, they still had the cheek to ask him to join them? Dream on!

“I see...” Not expecting the young man to reject his offer so affirmatively, Zhang Wuchen was left in a slightly awkward position.

Silence drifted between the both of them for quite some time before Zhang Wuchen caught something ahead of him, and he heaved a sigh of relief. “We're here!”

“Here? Where?” Taken aback, Zhang Xuan raised his head and saw two massive characters appearing before his eyes.

“Blood Reservoir!” “Xuan has the meaning of 'hanging' in Chinese.

1450 He Isn't! 1

Those two characters were written using a rather ancient script. That being so, there didn't seem to be any particular might or power to them. In fact, looking at them from afar, they would have looked like the scrawlings of a child who had just learned calligraphy.

But taking a closer look, one would notice that there was a unique aura imbued in those words. This was an aura that carried the scent of history, signifying the existence of an artifact that transcended through time. It had existed since ancient times, and it felt like it would continue on for many years to come. Just by looking at it, one's will seemed to drift through history, seemingly undergoing a baptism of time.

“Where is this place?” Zhang Xuan asked in astonishment.

“This is the place where the offspring of the Zhang Clan awaken their bloodlines. As long as one is of the Zhang Clan, their bloodline would be awakened by entering the Blood Reservoir, and be it their comprehension of cultivation or their understanding their occupations, they would soar by leaps and bounds!” Zhang Wuchen said.

“Awaken their bloodlines?” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in realization.

It was no wonder why those two words would leave him feeling so temporally disorientated. In the first place, the Zhang Clan's bloodline was relating to the control of time, so naturally, a place where their bloodlines were activated would surely have intricate ties to the Time Quintessence.

“Zhang shi, are you interested in heading in to take a look?” Zhang Wuchen asked with a smile.

“Head in? Am I allowed to go in?” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

It was obvious how important the Blood Reservoir would be to the Zhang Clan, and yet, to invite an outsider like him in...?

“Our Blood Reservoir is only effective on offspring of the Zhang Clan. Outsiders won’t be affected by it, and similarly, they wouldn’t affect it either. Don’t worry, it’s not a big deal to go in to take a look. It’s not uncommon for some guests of the Zhang Clan to request to take a look at our renowned Blood Reservoir, and from time to time, we would bring them over for a tour too.” Zhang Wuchen nodded.

Of course, those were all lies. The Blood Reservoir was a forbidden land for the Zhang Clan, such that even offspring of the Zhang Clan would have to receive permission from the elders first before they could be granted access. The reason why he created that load of nonsense was to dispel the other party’s suspicions.

“I see.” On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was completely oblivious to the Third Elder’s intention.

All that was on his mind at the moment was curiosity as to what would be inside the Blood Reservoir.

Considering that it was a place where unique bloodlines could be awakened, perhaps entering the grounds would grant him a deeper understanding as to the abilities of the Zhang Clan. This might put him in a better position to deal against the young prodigy in the future.

“Let’s go!” Seeing the complete lack of suspicion on Zhang Xuan’s face, Zhang Wuchen heaved a sigh of relief. He walked up to the seal in front of the gates, took out his token, and pressed it against the seal lightly.

Weng!

The massive gates to the Blood Reservoir slowly creaked open.

After Zhang Wuchen walked into the room, Zhang Xuan warily followed suit too. As soon as he stepped across a formation barrier erected all around the Blood Reservoir, his body immediately jolted.

It was a rather perplexing sensation that was extremely difficult to describe, but if he really had to put it in words, it

would be that there was a difference in the flow of time. He could feel an incongruity in the flow of time around him

Perhaps it was because he was too accustomed to the natural flow of time that he had never really perceived it before, but as soon as he stepped into the Blood Reservoir, the difference became very apparent to him.

“This is...” Zhang Xuan asked questioningly.

“This is a folded space which our predecessors left a long time ago. It harnesses the quintessence of time. The flow of time within this space is random; it would be fast at one moment and slow at the other, so it’s common for those who have entered this area for the first time to feel a little uncomfortable. However, once the bloodline of a Zhang Clan offspring fuses together with this space, he would immediately find himself descending into the river of time. In that state, the offspring’s perceived time would slow down, granting him the span of a year within a single month outside. This would mean that the offspring has more time to comprehend his supporting occupations and cultivation. But of course, as the difference in the flow of time only applies to the soul, so there would be no difference in his real cultivation and mastery during this period of time.” Zhang Wuchen explained.

“So, they would be able to study for a year when only a month has passed outside?” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

Even if they couldn’t achieve any concrete growth in their cultivation during this period of time, it was still an extremely formidable ability.

A year in a month, that would mean a temporal slowdown of twelvefold. In other words, the offspring of the Zhang Clan who had awakened their bloodline would be able to study at a rate twelve times faster than others as long as they were in the Blood Reservoir...

It was no wonder why the Zhang Clan had far more geniuses than the Luo Clan! Just this Blood Reservoir was enough to cement their position as the number one Sage Clan of the Master Teacher Continent!

Eye of Insight! After recovering from his shock, Zhang Xuan discreetly activated his Eye of Insight and began scanning the Blood Reservoir in detail.

The folded space that formed the Blood Reservoir was indeed significantly different from those he had seen in the past. Under the Eye of Insight, he saw many layers of light overlapping on one another, reminiscent of a rainbow. They were all flowing in a single direction, albeit there being some differences in their speed. If one were to move along with the flow of light, one could clearly sense a change in the flow of time around them.

However, these flowing currents of light were intangible existences. They could neither be touched nor even affected. In fact, without staring intently at them, it would be hard for even Zhang Xuan to perceive their existence, let alone fuse into them and alter their speed.

While Zhang Xuan was proceeding ahead, Zhang Wuchen was observing him discreetly by the side, and the knit on his eyebrows was slowly growing deeper and deeper.

There isn't the slightest bit of anomaly on him... Could he not be it?

Previously, both he and the First Elder had suspected Zhang Xuan of being the person who had gone missing, and that was the reason why they intentionally brought him to the Blood Reservoir to verify their doubts.

Upon entering this room, ordinary Zhang Clan members, even if those who had never been to the Blood Reservoir before, would find their bloodlines being activated and fall into an unconscious state. Their Primordial Spirit would be brought into the unique flow of time, granting them more time to learn and cultivate.

But it was clear that the Blood Reservoir wasn't reacting to the young man at all. It seemed like not only did the young man not possess the Zhang Clan's bloodline, he didn't have anything much to do with the Zhang Clan at all.

Right, his Primordial Spirit... A thought came into Zhang Wuchen's mind.

Even if something were to happen to the bloodline of a Zhang Clan offspring, he would still be able to achieve resonance with the Blood Reservoir through his Primordial Spirit or soul. After all, even if a person were to change everything of his, he still couldn't change his soul.

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Wuchen stepped forward and suggested with a smile, "Zhang Shi, the Blood Reservoir harnesses the Time Quintessence. You'll need to be in your Primordial Spirit form if you wish to get a closer look at it. Why don't you try it? Perhaps, you might just be able to comprehend something from it."

"Primordial Spirit?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding. "Got it."

Possessing the means of the soul oracles, he had cultivated his soul into a gigantic form, but after learning the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, he had gained the ability to morph its size freely. Given so, it would be nigh impossible for even a cultivator of Zhang Wuchen's caliber to see anything wrong with his Primordial Spirit, so there was nothing for him to conceal either.

And it just happened that he wanted to explore the secrets of the Time Quintessence harnessed within the Blood Reservoir too.

Sitting cross-legged on the ground, Zhang Xuan drew his Primordial Spirit out from his glabella.

And indeed, the sight that he saw as a Primordial Spirit was vastly different from that he saw with his physical eye. In an instant, it felt as if he had been plunged into the midst of a frosty winter, and what that somewhat resembled snowflakes could be seen drifting all around him.

Zhang Xuan instinctively understood that these snowflakes were a physical manifestation of time created by the Blood Reservoir, so he reached his hand out and attempted to grasp them.

Hula!

His hands simply passed through the snowflakes,

...

The Blood Reservoir isn't reacting to his Primordial Spirit either. Is there really no hint of the Zhang Clan bloodline in him at all?

Meanwhile, Zhang Wuchen was assessing the reaction of the Blood Reservoir intently, and a hint of disappointment surfaced in his eyes.

If the young man was really a member of the Zhang Clan, he would surely be able to affect the surrounding physical manifestation of the Time Quintessence and even absorb it into his soul. Yet, for his hands to simply pass right through them, there could only be one possibility...

He was completely unrelated to the Zhang Clan!

It seemed like all of their deductions had been off.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Wuchen shook his head before calling out to Zhang Xuan, "Zhang shi, it's time for us to leave."

"Leave?" Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan swiftly returned his Primordial Spirit to his body and stood up.

"Un. Even though the Blood Reservoir is open to outsiders, it's still a forbidden ground of the Zhang Clan, so there's a limit on how long you can stay in here," Zhang Wuchen said with a wave of his hand.

"This..." Seeing the stern look on Zhang Wuchen's face, Zhang Xuan found himself being rendered speechless.

It was not as if I was the one who had requested to enter the Blood Reservoir! You pulled me in here, and barely after staying here for five minutes, you suddenly urged me to head out with such an austere look on your face, as if I'm causing trouble for you...

Really, every single person of the Zhang Clan should really bring a screwdriver wherever they go so that they could tighten up the screw that keeps getting loose in their head!

“Farewell!” Seeing that the smile had completely vanished from Zhang Wuchen’s face, Zhang Xuan couldn’t be bothered to stay on any longer either. So, he turned around and left.

If you don’t want me to see, so be it. It’s not as if I really wanted to see it anyway! Hmph!

“I’ll have to report this matter to the First Elder...”

Shortly after Zhang Xuan left, Zhang Wuchen quickly left the Blood Reservoir as well. He shut the massive gates well before flying swiftly in the direction of the First Elder’s residence.

He had left too quickly that he didn’t realize that the Time Quintessence in the Blood Reservoir was shuddering non-stop. As if having witnessed something terrifying, it dared not move in the least

1451 He Isn't 2

Flitting forward, he soon found himself where the First Elder was.

“How is it?” the First Elder asked.

“He isn't!” Zhang Wuchen shook his head.

“He isn't?”

“I took him to the Blood Reservoir, but there was no reaction at all. I tried testing his Primordial Spirit too, but he was unable to retain the physical manifestation of the Time Quintessence. That should be more than enough to verify that he isn't a member of the Zhang Clan!” Zhang Wuchen swiftly filled the First Elder in on what he had seen in the Blood Reservoir.

“It seems like I have been thinking too much into it.” The First Elder shook his head as his eyes turned cold. “Since he's completely unrelated to our Zhang Clan, dispatch someone to challenge him in swordsmanship so as to teach him that there are powers whom he can't afford to offend. Also, with all the mess that he has made in our Zhang Clan, you must make sure to resolve the issue well. He mustn't be allowed to leave easily, otherwise what will become of the dignity of our Zhang Clan?”

That young man had destroyed their entrance formation, made the sculptures of their predecessors run amok, and caused the collapse of their guest area. If not for the hint of doubt at the back of their minds, there was no way that they would have allowed the young man to do as he pleased!

The Zhang Clan could not appear weak before others, or else the powers that had chosen to ally with them would lose confidence in their leadership!

“That fellow has tamed the Inferno Qilin. I fear that if we push him too far... he might just cause some mishap,” Zhang Wuchen replied hesitantly.

While that fellow appeared to be a mere Grand Dominion realm cultivator, he had tamed the Inferno Qilin, whose cultivation had reached Saint 9-dan pinnacle. If he really caused an uproar, while the Zhang Clan would be able to suppress it eventually, it would have to pay quite a heavy price to do so!

“Simple.” The First Elder placed his hands behind his back and harrumphed coldly. “Have the inner clan members suppress their cultivation and challenge him with a bet. Force him to remain in the Zhang Clan and devote his entire life to serving it. Since he has taken away our clan head’s saint beast, how can we allow him to walk away just like that? And if he loses the bet fair and square, we will also be able to explain the matter to Yang shi.”

It was true that master teacher clans were bound by principles and rules, but that did not mean that they were foolishly honest people.

Putting aside those destroyed buildings, just talking about the Inferno Qilin itself, the Zhang Clan had devoted unimaginable resources over the prior three years in order to tame it—just the fact that they had brought in 9-star beast tamers one after another should make that very apparent. How could they simply gift it to Zhang Xuan just like that?

Not to mention, it was obvious that the young man had come with the intention of challenging the Zhang Clan!

Honestly speaking, if not out of deference for his identity as Yang shi’s direct disciple, they would have had him captured and forcefully retained!

“You’re right.” Zhang Wuchen looked at the First Elder and asked, “Who will be a suitable candidate for dealing with him then?”

For a clan to continue growing stronger and stronger and eventually reach the top, they had to resort to underhanded means from time to time. There were simply some problems that could not be resolved otherwise, so this was something that could not be helped.

The First Elder pondered for a moment before nodding. “Zhang Xu, Zhang Hen, and Zhang Qin should be fine. Their understanding of swordsmanship has reached a decent level, and their strength is formidable for their level. It shouldn’t be too difficult for them to deal with a Grand Dominion realm lad.”

“Very well. I’ll instruct them to challenge Zhang Xuan later on,” Zhang Wuchen replied. “How is the preparation for the Clan Assembly coming along? When will it be held?”

The reason they had gathered all of their outstanding clan members and the experts of every occupation was to conduct their Clan Assembly. Since most people had arrived, it was about time to hold the Clan Assembly.

“We’ll be conducting it once day breaks. As you know, this involves the marriage with the Luo Clan, so we can’t afford to have any hiccups!” the First Elder said as a glint flashed across his eyes.

“I understand. Just that, the young prodigy is still missing to date, so...” Zhang Wuchen said hesitantly.

“Like I have said, we’ll be using this Clan Assembly as a platform to conduct a tournament, and the person who finishes in first place will marry the little princess of the Luo Clan in place of our young prodigy. There’s no time to be wasted, or else things might just spiral beyond our control!” the First Elder said grimly.

“I guess that’s the only way around it.” Zhang Wuchen nodded. Clasp his fist, he bowed deeply and said, “I’ll make arrangements right now. However, I think challenging Zhang Xuan should still come after the Clan Assembly. Otherwise, Zhang Xu and the others could be disadvantaged during the tournament.”

“Alright, I’ll leave it up to you to determine the specifics.” The First Elder nodded before falling silent.

...

While they were discussing Zhang Xuan, the man himself had already returned back to his residence. While he was making

his way in, he saw a human silhouette heading his way.

The human silhouette clasped his fist and greeted, “Teacher!”

It was Zhang Jiuxiao.

“What are you doing here?”

“I heard of the commotion that you’ve caused,” Zhang Jiuxiao replied with a bitter smile.

This teacher that he had just acknowledged caused turmoil like there was no tomorrow. He had been causing a ruckus ever since he arrived at the Zhang Clan, and if not for the First Elder holding everyone back, someone might have just assassinated him by now.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan waved his hand to signify that it was nothing before asking hurriedly, “Why is your clan in such a hurry to conduct the Clan Assembly?”

Without a doubt, the reason the Clan Assembly had been brought forward was because of Luo Ruoxin. However, that was all he knew at the moment.

Even now, he still was not too sure just what kind of despicable plan the Zhang Clan was hatching this time around!

“I just finished looking into the matter. It seems like there’s only one reason the Clan Assembly has been brought forward—it seems like the clan is intending to hold a selection to select another person from the younger generation to marry the little princess from the Luo Clan,” Zhang Jiuxiao replied.

“Select another person to marry the little princess?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows leaped up in astonishment. With his fists tightly clenched, he asked, “What about your young prodigy? Isn’t he supposed to be the little princess’ fiancé?”

“Based on rumors that have been going around, the young prodigy has gone missing. No one knows where he is. However, with the marriage with the little princess of the Luo Clan coming right up, there’s no time to be lost. Thus, the elders decided to find the most outstanding talent of the younger generation in the Zhang Clan to take his place and

marry her.” Zhang Jiuxiao revealed all that he knew about the matter.

“Screw this!” Zhang Xuan felt blood rushing to his head, threatening to take his sanity away.

It was already shameless for them to force a marriage on Luo Ruoxin, and now, they were even randomly finding a replacement for the young prodigy just because the latter willfully went missing.

Had they ever considered the Luo Clan’s feelings before doing this? What did they take Luo Ruoxin to be?

“How can they take the marriage with the Luo Clan so lightly?” Zhang Xuan roared in fury.

This was truly the most ridiculous thing that he had ever heard! How could the Zhang Clan even think of finding someone to replace the young prodigy in the marriage? Was this not a complete lack of respect for the other party?

“It seems like the Zhang Clan has no choice in this either. I’m not too sure about it, but it appears that there’s something much more important tied into this. In any case, one thing is for certain. The Zhang Clan is determined to go through with this marriage, and they won’t allow anyone to foil it!” Zhang Jiuxiao said.

“When will the tournament be held?” Zhang Xuan asked with a livid expression.

Zhang Jiuxiao clearly felt a cold killing intent leaking from Zhang Xuan’s body, and he shuddered slightly in fear. A bad premonition suddenly surfaced in his head, and he hurriedly exclaimed in horror, “Teacher, there will be many experts at the tournament! You mustn’t act recklessly! Otherwise... I fear that you might be placed in a precarious situation!”

He knew the personality of his teacher very well; obstinate and fearless, never hesitating to go through with whatever he believed in despite the risks. Back in the Qingyuan Empire, he had also stood against the emperor and a vice pavilion master without any hesitation.

However, the Zhang Clan could not be placed on the same level as the likes of the Qingyuan Empire. As the number one Sage Clan, the Zhang Clan was one of the strongest powers on the Master Teacher Continent. If his teacher interfered during the tournament, the Zhang Clan would not allow this matter to be resolved peacefully.

Not even a Saint 9-dan pinnacle expert would be able to survive the wrath of the Zhang Clan.

Knowing what Zhang Jiuxiao was thinking of, Zhang Xuan replied with a sinister smile, “Rest assured, I won’t be the one causing trouble. The one who will be causing trouble is you!”

“Me?” Zhang Jiuxiao was taken aback.

“Indeed. I want you to participate in the tournament and win the champion seat!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand grandly.

1452 The Eighth Direct Disciple

“Me? Champion?”

Zhang Jiuxiao was stunned. He hurriedly shook his head and said, “How can I possibly become the champion?”

He was currently only at the Grand Dominion realm. Even if he immediately made a breakthrough to the Phantasmal Space realm, he would still be far from matching up to Saint 7-dan pinnacle experts like Zhang Chun and Zhang Feng. It was doubtful whether he could clear the first match or not, let alone vie for the champion seat. This was something that he did not even dare dream of!

It was already a wonder to him how he, a member of the side family, was able to attend such an important clan event. Obtaining the champion seat on top of that was something that he did not dare dream of!

“Nothing is impossible in this world. As long as you trust me, I can grant you strength far surpassing the other members of the Zhang Clan within a short period of time,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“This...” Seeing that Zhang Xuan was not joking around, Zhang Jiuxiao replied with a bitter look on his face. “Of the younger generation, the strongest individual that I know of, Zhang Chun, has already reached Half-Dimension Sundering realm. According to the rumors, there might even be others who have already reached the Dimension Sundering realm. Against them... I am simply far too lacking at the moment!”

It was not that he did not believe the young man before him, but some things were simply impossible.

He knew full well how large the gap between Saint 6-dan Grand Dominion realm and Saint 8-dan Dimension Sundering realm was. Against a real Dimension Sundering realm expert,

even if there were a thousand of him, he would only be able to run for his life!

Besides, the core members of the Zhang Clan were top-notch geniuses, and it was questionable whether combat masters of the same level would be able to compete with them or not! Thus, the chances of him achieving victory was pretty much zero!

“There’s no need to put yourself down like that. Just the fact that you have chosen to acknowledge me as your teacher means that you have far better eyes than the others,” Zhang Xuan said.

“It’s my honor to be able to become your student, but still...” Zhang Jiuxiao’s face still as bitter as a bitter gourd.

He would have loved to be confident as well, but the tournament was the very next day, and his current strength was just too...

“I know what you’re worried about.” With his hands placed behind his back, Zhang Xuan turned to look at Zhang Jiuxiao. “I, Zhang Xuan, have risen through the ranks from the Tianxuan Kingdom. Within less than fourteen months, I have advanced by cultivation from Fighter 3-dan to Saint 6-dan pinnacle. All in all, I have seven direct disciples.

“My first disciple, Zhao Ya, is the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court.

“My second disciple, Wang Ying, has entered the Spirit Awakener Guild, and she’s a strong candidate to becoming their future hall master.

“You have met my third disciple, Liu Yang, before. Even though his whereabouts are unknown at the moment, he’s a person with both guts and determination. I have no doubt that he will find his own way in the future.

“My fourth disciple, Zheng Yang, is currently the Progeny of Combat of the Combat Master Hall, in the line of succession to becoming its next hall master!”

Zhang Xuan slowly walked toward Zhang Jiuxiao as he spoke, and the presence he exuded seemed to grow taller and taller.

“My fifth disciple, Yuan Tao, is the young master of the Yuan Clan. Possessing the purest Emperor’s Bloodline of the Yuan Clan, he’s in the line of succession for the position of its clan head.

“My sixth disciple, Lu Chong, will be inheriting the heritage of soul oracles, and his comprehension of soul arts will be matched by none in the world!

“My seventh disciple, Wei Ruyan, is the newly-appointed head of the Poison Hall. Possessing the Innate Poison Body and Poison Soul Constitution, only the foolish would dare stand in her path!

“All seven of my direct disciples have achieved great accomplishments and made me proud. The reason I took you in as my student is because I bear great expectations of you too, but are you going to retreat in the face of my high expectations?”

At this point, Zhang Xuan was already standing right before Zhang Jiuxiao. Their heights did not differ too much from one another, but for some reason, it felt as if he was towering over Zhang Jiuxiao. There was a sharpness in his eyes that seemed to peer right into the depth of one’s soul.

“I...” Zhang Jiuxiao’s hands were trembling non-stop. At this point, he could not even tell whether it was excitement or trepidation anymore.

He had known that his teacher had quite a few direct disciples, but he had not known that they were all such formidable figures!

The young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, the Progeny of Combat of the Combat Master Hall, the head of the Poison Hall, the young master of the Yuan Clan... All of these titles were not beneath that of the deputy clan head of the Zhang Clan, and yet, they were all his students!

If he had not heard it with his own ears, this was something that he never would have believed!

Hearing all those exploits left his blood running wildly in excitement. He desired to become as powerful as the rest of

them, but at the same time, he could not help but doubt himself. Was he really able to reach such a height, too?

But even that hint of doubt was swiftly eliminated from the back of his mind. His teacher was a man of great ability, someone who had redefined what was impossible over and over again.

Since such a great figure was willing to believe in him, why should he not believe in himself?

If he truly wanted to make it big, this was the leap of faith that he would have to take!

Seeing that fighting spirit that was ignited in Zhang Jiuxiao's eyes, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. He looked Zhang Jiuxiao straight in the eye and threw out the very last bomb. "If you can win the champion seat in the tournament, I'll take you in as my eighth direct disciple."

"Eighth direct disciple..." Zhang Jiuxiao's breathing hastened upon hearing those words, and his face reddened in agitation.

He could not believe what he was hearing.

The only other Celestial Master Teacher that the world had ever known was Kong shi, and of his seventy-two direct disciples, even the weakest of them had successfully become an Ancient Sage!

In fact, even the founder of the Sanctum of Sages, the legendary Ancient Sage Bo Shang, could not be considered one of his stronger direct disciples!

From this, it could be seen just how formidable a thing it was to become the direct disciple of a Celestial Master Teacher.

The young man standing before him was a Celestial Master Teacher, too, and while his seven direct disciples were still little known figures on the Master Teacher Continent, there was little doubt that they would rattle the continent at its core in the near future. If he could become the eighth direct disciple of the young man, his future would be boundless!

Even the founder of our Zhang Clan didn't possess extraordinary bloodline from birth. It was only after he

reached the pinnacle that his abilities were passed down generation after generation through his bloodline! So what if I'm from the side family? That doesn't mean that I'm unable to surpass the others and reach the very top!

The more Zhang Jiuxiao thought about the matter, the more excited he felt.

Kings, dukes, generals, and ministers, did they only attain the influence that they possessed because power and nobility was etched into their bloodline?

Who said that one's bloodline would determine one's final destination?

If that was the case, despite so many outstanding geniuses possessing the purest of bloodlines being born in the Zhang Clan over the past several dozen millennia, why had none of them been able to surpass the founder?

Of the seventy-two Sages of Kong shi, none of them had been born with powerful innate bloodlines!

Success did not hinge on one's bloodline but relentless hard work and perseverance! It was only with the grit to push through the tough and unyielding will to forge a way to the top that the slim chance of getting a glimpse at the peak would open up to one.

Of course, a good teacher to point out the right way was crucial, too!

Right now, those two factors were already in place. He had the best possible teacher in the world, and he also had the grit to climb to the top. Now, he just had to make the journey there! As long as he could clear this trial and become his teacher's eighth direct disciple, a whole new world would appear before him!

"Teacher, what do I have to do? Just give me your instructions, and I'll definitely achieve it!" Deciding to leap right in, Zhang Jiuxiao looked at Zhang Xuan with burning passion in his eyes.

"Good!" Seeing that the young man had made up his mind, Zhang Xuan nodded. "Alright, kneel down and pay respects to

me!”

“Right now?” Zhang Jiuxiao was taken aback. “Won’t I be qualified to become your eighth direct disciple only after I emerge as the champion in the tournament?”

He dared not believe his ears. It was just a moment ago that his teacher had said that he would only take him as his direct disciple after he became the champion of the tournament. It should have been something very far away and uncertain, so why would...

In response to Zhang Jiuxiao’s doubt, Zhang Xuan directed a confident smile at Zhang Jiuxiao and said, “Since I said that I’ll make you the champion of the tournament, you’ll definitely emerge as the champion. What harm is there in conducting the acknowledgement ceremony in advance?”

Hearing those words, Zhang Jiuxiao felt goosebumps rising on his skin, and his heart began beating faster and faster in agitation.

The unwavering confidence of his teacher had eliminated every shred of uncertainty from his mind. He felt that as long as his teacher said that he could do it, he would definitely be able to achieve it.

All of a sudden, those insurmountable mountains that had once stood in his path did not seem impossible to scale anymore.

Zhang Jiuxiao kneeled onto the floor and conducted eight resounding kowtows before solemnly rising to his feet, completing the teacher acknowledgement ceremony.

“Teacher, what should I do now?” he asked.

Since his teacher had such deep confidence in him, he clearly had a plan in mind.

“Currently, your cultivation is only at the Grand Dominion realm. If you wish to win the tournament, you will have to raise your cultivation swiftly. It would be nigh impossible to push your cultivation up to Saint 8-dan within a single night, unless...”

At that point, Zhang Xuan paused for a moment as he looked in a certain direction.

“... we make use of the Zhang Clan’s Blood Reservoir!”

1453 Bloodline Enhancement

“Blood Reservoir?” Zhang Jiuxiao scratched his head in embarrassment upon hearing those words. “That’s a place where only the core members of the Zhang Clan are allowed to enter. Someone like me isn’t qualified to enter at all...”

The Zhang Clan’s Blood Reservoir was a place of utmost importance. Only those whose bloodline had reached a certain level of purity would be allowed to enter the area and cultivate. People like him had no rights to enter at all.

“I’ll bring you in,” Zhang Xuan said.

If he wanted to raise Zhang Jiuxiao’s cultivation from Saint 6-dan Grand Dominion realm to a level where he could subdue experts of Zhang Chun’s level, normal training methods wouldn’t work at all. After all, the other party didn’t possess the Library of Heaven’s Path and couldn’t cultivate the Heaven’s Path Divine Art. On the other hand, the cultivation of its simplified version took a significantly longer period of time.

Given so, there was only one last resort—using the Zhang Clan’s Blood Reservoir to alter the flow of time!

With this, they would be able to increase the time on their hand by twelvefold, thus raising the possibility of success significantly.

“You’ll bring me in?” Zhang Jiuxiao was taken aback. “Aren’t there seals and formations preventing unauthorized personnel from entering?”

If everyone could enter the Blood Reservoir of the Zhang Clan so easily, the Zhang Clan would probably have been destroyed a long time ago!

Considering how his teacher was an outsider who had just arrived in the Zhang Clan, how could he possibly be able to enter the Blood Reservoir, let alone bring him in?

“I might have no way to enter it if it had been a while ago, but right now, it isn’t a problem anymore!” Zhang Xuan harrumphed.

Previously, when Zhang Wuchen led him in, he had taken a close look at the formation. Despite its ingenuity, it was still exposed to be riddled with flaws under the discerning gaze of the Library of Heaven’s Path. Just using any single one of those flaws was enough for him to sneak in without catching anyone’s notice.

“Let’s go!”

Without much explanation, Zhang Xuan led the way forward.

It didn’t take too long for them to arrive before the entrance of the Blood Reservoir once more.

“This is the place!” Taking in a deep breath, Zhang Xuan circled around the entrance before stopping at a certain spot and tapping lightly on the formation before him.

Weng!

There was a slight buzz, and the massive gates sealing the Blood Reservoir slowly opened. At the same time, a small opening appeared in the entrance formation as well.

“Hurry up and enter!” Zhang Xuan quickly walked in, and Zhang Jiuxiao followed closely behind him.

The formation quickly closed up once more, and from the outside, it was impossible to tell that someone had been here.

“This is the Blood Reservoir?” As soon as Zhang Jiuxiao stepped in, he immediately felt his cells trembling in excitement and his Primordial Spirit shaking non-stop.

“Not bad. Try activating your bloodline and see if you can harmonize with the Time Quintessence in here,” Zhang Xuan instructed.

“Yes, teacher!” Zhang Jiuxiao nodded before swiftly sitting on the ground to meditate. He activated his bloodline and attempted to forge a connection with the surrounding Time Quintessence.

But soon, he stood up with an awful look on his face.

Till this instant, he finally understood why those of the side family like him wasn't allowed to enter the Blood Reservoir. It wasn't that the Zhang Clan was miserly and was discriminating against them but that... their bloodline was simply too thin!

Even if they were to enter the Blood Reservoir, they would still be unable to fuse together with the Time Quintessence and cultivate like the inner clan members.

And since they couldn't do it, there was no point for them to waste their time coming here either.

"Teacher..." Zhang Jiuxiao looked at his teacher with a look of guilt on his face.

His teacher had gone through all the trouble of bringing him here, but in the end, due to his own problems, he was unable to trigger the Blood Reservoir. Even though this was something which he couldn't control either, he felt like he had let his teacher down.

"Calm down." Seeing that Zhang Jiuxiao was unable to forge a link with the Time Quintessence, Zhang Xuan frowned. "For the time being, you should carry on cultivating first. I'll think of a solution."

"Yes, teacher!" Zhang Jiuxiao closed his eyes and began cultivating.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and began scanning the area.

Beautiful flowing currents reminiscent of rainbows could be seen all around him, but as if oil floating on top of water, Zhang Jiuxiao was simply unable to immerse himself within it no matter how he tried to activate his bloodline.

"It's due the lacking purity of his bloodline..." Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Time Quintessence in the Blood Reservoir was left behind by the founder of the Zhang Clan as a gift to his descendants. While Zhang Jiuxiao possessed the Zhang Clan's bloodline

too, it was so thin that he couldn't even activate its ability. As a result, the most he could do was only to draw the rainbow toward himself, but immersing himself completely into it was far beyond his means.

"If only his bloodline is a little purer..." Zhang Xuan couldn't help but think.

In the midst of his lamentation, his Library of Heaven's Path abruptly jolted. Following which, a golden page materialized before his eyes before flying forth with a resounding whistle, heading straight for the cultivating Zhang Jiuxiao.

"Shit..." Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in shock.

The Book of Heaven's Path was a weapon which even 9-star poison masters were completely helpless before. Given Zhang Jiuxiao's current strength, there was no way he would be able to withstand it!

He hadn't thought of killing anyone, so why would it fly out all of a sudden?

Zhang Xuan tried to stop the golden page, but it was already too late. It dived right toward Zhang Jiuxiao's glabella, but instead of smashing him into meat paste, it slipped into his mind instead.

Following which, he clearly saw the surrounding Time Quintessence bubbling furiously, gushing toward the meditating young man in the fastest time possible.

"Is this... Bloodline Enhancement?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes, clearly shocked by the effects produced.

It was just a moment ago that he wished for Zhang Jiuxiao's bloodline to be purified when the golden page suddenly flew forward... Could it be that other than rising his Soul Depth, assimilate the content of the books in the Library of Heaven's Path for his own, sealing Vicious, and crushing others to death, it had the ability to enhance one's bloodline too?

If that was the truth, it would be truly fearsome!

One must know that he had studied unique bloodlines several times, but even with the help of the Library of Heaven's Path,

he was still unable to find a feasible way to purify them. Who could have thought that the golden page would actually wield such a capability?

“Teacher, my bloodline...”

At this moment, Zhang Jiuxiao had also sensed the changes ongoing in his body, and he trembled in agitation despite not being too sure what was going on.

“I have helped you purified your bloodline. Here are some pinnacle spirit stones. Use them and quickly make a breakthrough!” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked his wrist and tossed over all three of the pinnacle spirit stones he had left.

Even though he had taken Zhang Jiuxiao as his direct disciple, he still didn’t feel too comfortable speaking about the golden page before him. Thus, he decided to simply circumvent the topic altogether.

“Yes, teacher!” While Zhang Jiuxiao had no idea how his teacher managed to do it, he knew that this wasn’t the time to be asking about it.

Grabbing one of the pinnacle spirit stones tightly in his hand, he closed his eyes and began furiously absorbing the spiritual energy inside.

Hong long long!

Due to the enhancement in his bloodline, the rate at which he absorbed spiritual energy became much faster than before. All of the meridians which had been blocked previously swiftly cleared up, and it almost seemed as if cultivation bottlenecks was a concept that didn’t apply to him.

Kacha! Kacha!

In the blink of an eye, he had already successfully reinforced his recent breakthrough to Grand Dominion realm.

Knowing that Zhang Jiuxiao had stopped due to the lack of a suitable cultivation technique, Zhang Xuan swiftly tapped his finger and imparted to him a simplified version of the Grand Dominion realm Heaven’s Path Divine Art.

With the enhancement in the purity of his bloodline, Zhang Jiuxiao was finally able to draw the surrounding Time Quintessence into his body, and he used this twelvefold slowdown in time to comprehend the cultivation technique he had just been imparted with.

It didn't take him too long to fully grasp it.

At this point, Zhang Jiuxiao was intending to break out of the unique state he was in to make the breakthrough in his cultivation, but Zhang Xuan stopped him. Instead, he imparted to him a simplified version of the Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm Heaven's Path Divine Art as well.

While this cultivation technique had yet to reach the level of a true Heaven's Path cultivation technique yet, it only had a single flaw. Even though it was difficult for Zhang Xuan to swallow, to Zhang Jiuxiao, it could already be considered as an incomparably ingenious cultivation technique.

Still, this single flaw made the simplified Heaven's Path Divine Art derived from it needlessly more complex than it should be, thus making it significantly more difficult to comprehend.

1454 The Tournament Begins

This time, Zhang Jiuxiao spent a much longer time than before. It was only till the sun had risen in the east did Zhang Jiuxiao finally open his eyes, and a sharp brilliance could be seen reflected in his eyes.

“How is it?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Teacher, I have managed to grasp the cultivation technique all the way up to Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle. I believe that I shouldn’t take me too long to reach it if I were to start cultivating now!” Zhang Jiuxiao replied excitedly.

Even though the Blood Reservoir was able to grant a cultivator the time of an entire year within the passing of a month in the real world, this temporal distortion only applied to one’s consciousness. It wasn’t, in the truest sense, a slowdown of time.

As such, while Zhang Jiuxiao was able to achieve a deep understanding of Grand Dominion realm and Phantasmal Space realm by making use of the twelvefold time, in truth, his real cultivation hadn’t changed at all. He was still the same Grand Dominion realm primary stage cultivator he was when he first entered the Blood Reservoir.

Nevertheless, having fully familiarized himself with the cultivation technique, he should be able to raise his cultivation swiftly if he were to start cultivating now.

It was also using such a method that the offspring of the Zhang Clan was able to constantly stay above the geniuses of the other clans.

Zhang Xuan took a look at the sky, and after confirming the time, he frowned, “The sun has already risen, so the tournament should be starting very soon. There isn’t any time for you to cultivate anymore; we have to head there right away. While making our way over, grab onto one of the

pinnacle spirit stones I have given you and cultivate. Try to at least make a breakthrough before the tournament begins.”

If Zhang Jiuxiao had been any faster in his comprehension of the cultivation techniques, they might still have been able to make it in time. However, it seemed like his expectations were too high after all.

At this current time, they didn't have any time to dilly dally anymore. It seemed like the only thing they could do was to try to have Zhang Jiuxiao raise his cultivation as much as possible while they make their way over.

“Alright.” Knowing that there was no time to be wasted, Zhang Jiuxiao nodded. Grabbing a pinnacle spirit stone tightly in his hand, he absorbed the spiritual energy in it swiftly as he hurriedly followed behind his teacher.

“The place where the tournament is held is the sparring grounds in the Zhang Clan. However, teacher, outsiders are prohibited from entering the sparring grounds, so I fear that you might not have the authorization to enter the grounds as an outsider!” Zhang Jiuxiao said hesitantly after leaving the Blood Reservoir.

Even outsiders weren't allowed to spectate this internal tournament, so there should be little doubt that his teacher wouldn't be able to enter either.

“Are clan members allowed to bring their subordinates into the sparring ring?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

“Of course. Injuries are common in such tournaments, so they would have to bring someone in to take care of them.” Zhang Jiuxiao nodded.

“Very well. I'll play as your subordinate and enter the sparring grounds together with you then!” Zhang Xuan said.

“This won't do! You are my teacher, how can I treat you as my subordinate? Something like that is simply too...” Zhang Jiuxiao seemed to be put in a spot.

It would be deeply insolent of him to regard his teacher as his own subordinate! There was no way he could do something as unfilial as that!

“Even though you have gone through the cultivation techniques several times in your head, it’s still inevitable that you might accidentally make some mistakes while cultivating them. To be safe, you’ll need me to offer you pointers on the spot,” Zhang Xuan said.

Zhang Jiuxiao might have grasped the cultivation method of the simplified version of the Heaven’s Path Divine Art all the way up to Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle, but there would still be all kinds of practical issues that he might face while cultivating his way up. To be safe, it would be best for Zhang Xuan to be around to offer pointers and ensure that nothing went awry.

“I understand!” Understanding his teacher’s intentions, Zhang Jiuxiao hesitated for a moment before nodding in agreement.

“Un.” With a slight jolt, Zhang Xuan’s appearance swiftly morphed into that of a yellow-skinned old man.

As formidable as his disguise art was, there were simply too many experts in the Zhang Clan. If he were to feign as a subordinate, at least no one would pay much attention to him. On the other hand, if he were to feign as Zhang Jiuxiao and participated in the tournament on his behalf, there was a good chance that he would be swiftly exposed.

If it was truly that easy to impersonate as one of the core members of the number one Sage Clan, it would have been destroyed ages ago!

It was precisely for this reason that Zhang Xuan had no choice but to raise Zhang Jiuxiao’s cultivation and have him make a move in his stead.

On the other hand, seeing how even he was unable to recognize the disguised Zhang Xuan, Zhang Jiuxiao heaved a sigh of relief. After which, he swiftly led the way forward to the sparring grounds.

“Zhang Jiuxiao, it would be best for you not to use your bloodline in the tournament later on, or else it would be difficult to explain the vast difference in the purity of your bloodline,” Zhang Xuan instructed.

If it were to be known that there was actually a way to raise the purity of one's unique bloodline, all Sage Clans on the Master Teacher Continent would swiftly go into a frenzy.

Once that happened, there could be deep trouble.

In any case, it was just an internal tournament. It shouldn't come to the point where he would need to use his bloodline ability.

"Rest assured, teacher!" Understanding the possible implications of the matter, Zhang Jiuxiao nodded grimly in response.

...

Gathered in the Zhang Clan's sparring grounds were all of the talented members of the younger generation.

The First Elder was seated at the topmost seat, and seeing the spirited and confident looks on the faces below, he nodded his head in approval.

Typically speaking, most clans tended to decline over time, whether it was due to their talent pool drying up or a culture of complacency going around the younger generation. However, even after several dozen millenniums of heritage, while the offspring of the Zhang Clan was indeed a little spoilt, most of them were still driven to grow stronger.

It was precisely with such a culture that the Zhang Clan was able to remain at the very top over so many years, their position unmovable by anyone.

"In this tournament, we'll be competing not in supporting occupations or any other capabilities but true fighting prowess. Those who believe that they have the strength to challenge the ring, step forward. Those who lack trust in their strength, back off. Every single one of you will be able to utilize any means in your possession, but if I were to find that any of you have resorted to depraved arts prohibited by the Master Teacher Pavilion such as poison and the sort, not only will you be eliminated from the tournament, don't expect me to let you off easily either!" the First Elder's voice boomed across the entire

sparring field as he glanced down on the faces beneath imposingly.

“Yes!”

The crowd beneath replied resoundingly.

In this tournament, occupational means were fair game, meaning that participants were allowed to use demonic tunes, celestial designer creations, tamed beasts, so on and so forth... But poison and the sort were not allowed for very obvious reasons.

“Alright, I hereby declare the start of the tournament!”

Huala!

As those words were spoken, the eight dueling rings on the sparring field immediately sprung to life. The Zhang Clan offspring who were in for the first round swiftly leaped onto their respective rings.

“Dueling Ring D, fourth battle, Zhang Linqing and Zhang Jiuxiao!”

After three matches, an elder supervising the duel shouted to the crowd.

Hula!

Zhang Linqing leaped onto the dueling ring and drove his zhenqi, revealing his Saint 6-dan Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivation.

Even though he was one of the sidelined members in the Zhang Clan, unable to access the better resources, he was still in a much better off position than Zhang Jiuxiao.

“Where’s Zhang Jiuxiao? Does he dare not face his challenge?” Zhang Linqing glanced around the area after noting that Zhang Jiuxiao was nowhere to be seen.

He had looked into his opponent for the match beforehand. The other party was just an offspring of the side family who had managed to get into the Sanctum of Sages by some stroke of luck, thus winning himself an invitation to the Clan

Conference by sheer luck. Otherwise, given his identity, he wouldn't even be allowed through the main door!

Thus, in his view, this duel was just for show. He would be able to advance up easily without much trouble.

“I know who Zhang Jiuxiao is. He's a mere Leaving Aperture realm pinnacle cultivator... He probably is shuddering somewhere in fear at the notion of facing Linqing, not daring to show up at all!”

“He's from the side family after all, what can we expect from him?”

“Elder Fengchen, I don't think that fellow will be showing up anymore. Let's just declare it as his loss.”

Seeing that Zhang Jiuxiao was nowhere to be seen, a huge commotion broke out amidst the crowd below.

A mere offspring of the side family, even if present, would stand no chance of advancing through the ranks. Since that was the case, they might as well just declare his loss straight instead of wasting time here.

After all, how could an offspring of the side family possibly compare up to core members like them?

“I'll give him a tea's time. If he isn't here after that, I'll take it as he has forfeited the match,” the person presiding over the duel, Elder Fengchen, waved his hand to suppress the commotion and said calmly.

There was an elder supervising each of the dueling rings in order to ensure the fairness of the duels.

Even though Zhang Jiuxiao hadn't appeared yet, from the official rules, they would still have to give him some time before considering it as a forfeit.

“This is pointless. It's obvious that that fellow had fled in fear!”

“It's just a few minutes, what are you getting so anxious about? Actually, I'd love to see him appear and challenge Linqing. It would be fun to see him struggling desperately...”

The Zhang Clan members beneath the dueling ring chuckled softly in disdain.

The clear hierarchy in the Zhang Clan had put them in a position of superiority from birth. So, to them, those of the side family were complete nobodies who weren't even worth a mention.

“It seems like he really won't be coming after all...”

Time crept by amidst those chatters, and very soon, a tea's time was up. Seeing that there was still no one in sight, Elder Fengchen shook his head and declared, “Since Zhang Jiuxiao isn't here yet, I'll take it as he has...”

“Pardon me, I'm late!”

At this moment, a voice suddenly sounded from the sky above.

Following which, a tall and slender figure descended onto the dueling ring. 15 minutes

1455 First Round, Victory

Boom!

The impact from falling onto the dueling ring jolted a cloud of dust into the air.

Zhang Jiuxiao wiped away the sweat on his forehead.

It was fortunate that his teacher had pushed him forward for a significant part of the journey, or else they really would have failed to make it in time.

He looked below the dueling ring and saw that the middle-aged man whom his teacher was disguised as was currently standing by an inconspicuous corner, smiling at him. Then, he turned his eyes to Zhang Linqing and said, “I should have made it in time, right?”

“So what if you have made it in time?” Zhang Linqing shook his head with a sneer as he raised up a single finger.

Zhang Jiuxiao tilted his head in confusion, unsure about what that finger gesture meant.

“Against you, a single move is all I need!” Zhang Linqing declared proudly. “Even if your cultivation has reached Grand Dominion realm primary stage, it’s still nothing at all to me. Let me show you the difference between the core members of the Zhang Clan and those of the side family like you!”

After saying those words, Zhang Linqing took a step forward, and six shadows immediately appeared all around him in the blink of an eye. With a seemingly light downward thrust of his palm, a ferocious might burst forth.

It might have appeared as if his attacks lacked skill and preciseness, but the palm strike had, in actuality, sealed the surrounding space, making it impossible for others to escape from it.

“Formidable!” Zhang Jiuxiao nodded.

As expected of a member of the main family. He was not to be underestimated!

Any other Grand Dominion realm primary stage cultivator might have panicked in this situation, but Zhang Jiuxiao had already deepened his understanding of cultivation up to Saint 7-dan pinnacle in the Blood Reservoir. On top of that, having been taught by Zhang Xuan, his understanding of battle techniques did not even pale in comparison to top Zhang Clan geniuses like Zhang Chun, so naturally, he would not fall for such a simple move.

Thus, he lightly took a step backward and drifted out of range of the palm strike. At the same time, he still continued holding the pinnacle spirit stone tightly in his left hand, furiously absorbing spiritual energy from it.

While the speed of his retreat could not be said to be fast, it still caused Zhang Linqing's attacks and possible follow-ups to fall empty.

In other words, his first move had ended in a complete failure, failing to harm Zhang Jiuxiao in the least or achieve any strategic purpose.

Zhang Linqing harrumphed. "I'll admit, you do have some means, but this is as far as you'll go!"

He had not expected this nobody of the side family to actually be able to find the opening in his attack and evade his offense. With a livid expression, he turned his palm into a claw and struck forward.

Tzzzzzzzzzz!

Zhang Jiuxiao immediately felt as if his body had been bound by a rope, and a powerful force pulled his body toward Zhang Linqing.

Given the huge disparity in power between the both of them at the moment, he knew that it would be disadvantageous for him to get into close-quarters combat with Zhang Linqing. Thus, taking a deep breath, he drew the spiritual energy from the pinnacle spirit stone in his hand with greater intensity before and roared, "Come on, make a breakthrough!"

Zhang Jiuxiao's aura burst into the clouds, and following which, his strength began to surge forth. In the blink of an eye, he had already torn down the bottleneck before him to rush straight toward Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage.

This breakthrough had caused his aura and fighting prowess to rise by nearly twofold, allowing him to hold his own against the powerful might that Zhang Linqing was using to pull him in.

“You are still able to make a breakthrough?” Zhang Linqing widened his eyes in astonishment.

He knew that Zhang Jiuxiao had only achieved a breakthrough to Grand Dominion realm primary stage in recent days, so he should still have been busy reinforcing his cultivation during this period of time. Yet, he had actually managed to find enough momentum within him to make a breakthrough in the midst of their duel!

However, so what if he had reached Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage?

He was still a far way off from reaching the pinnacle!

“Don't you think it's a little too late for you to be sharpening your edge?” Zhang Linqing sneered coldly as he drove the zhenqi in his body with greater ferocity, causing the prowess of his tug to intensify.

Ji ji ji!

Deep gorges emerged on the surface. Zhang Jiuxiao found himself succumbing to the strength once more, and his body began to be gradually dragged in Zhang Linqing's direction.

Zhang Linqing had been at Grand Dominion realm pinnacle for quite a number of years now, and he had already familiarized himself fully with his cultivation technique and abilities. As such, his movements were extremely fluid, completely devoid of the stiffness that those who had just reached the realm would have.

“Too late? You should learn to hold your tongue until the very end!” With a sneer, Zhang Jiuxiao threw the pinnacle spirit

stone back into his storage ring before abruptly stomping his feet forcefully.

Boom!

Two massive pits appeared on the ground, and Zhang Jiuxiao's forward moving body immediately stabilized on the spot.

His strength might still have been a little lacking against the other party at Grand Dominion realm primary stage, but intermediate stage was more than enough!

Even though the core members of the Zhang Clan were capable of challenging opponents beyond their cultivation realm, one would do well not to forget about the incredible purity of his bloodline at the moment. Even without activating the ability of his unique bloodline, it would still enhance his physical abilities significantly, such that defeating an opponent of two cultivation stages higher than him would not pose too much of a problem!

“What?” Zhang Linqing could hardly believe his eyes. He tried to further intensify the strength of his pull, but the other party did not budge in the slightest.

In this moment, he realized that he had been underestimating his opponent all this while. The smug look on his face was replaced with grimness, and transforming his claw into a punch, he dashed forward to strike.

In the depths of his heart, he still felt that it was beneath him to be fighting against an offspring of the side family, but after the previous two blows that they had traded, he had no choice but to recognize the possibility that he might lose this match if he did not get serious.

And that was not something that he could accept.

Boom!

As his punch surged forth, a sphere of power that somewhat resembled the shape of an umbrella appeared at the tip of his fist, crushing the surrounding air so much that it creaked furiously in protest, on the verge of crumbling apart at any moment.

“It’s a Saint high-tier battle technique, Fist of Void!”

“This is a fist that channels all of the strength a cultivator harnesses in their body through a unique method and releases it in a single burst. The overwhelming strength in the resulting punch can even cause a void to be created in the air, making it a technique that’s extremely difficult to defend against!”

“That’s a technique that only the core members of the Zhang Clan are able to practice. A mere offspring of the side family like him probably hasn’t even seen it before. Let’s see how he plans to deal with something like that!”

Everyone’s eyes were gathered upon Zhang Jiuxiao, curious to see how the young lad would fare against an attack of this caliber.

On the other hand, Zhang Jiuxiao completely disregarded the commotion around him. In this moment, there was not the slightest hint of nervousness or anxiety in his heart. Before the overwhelming attack rushing toward him, he slowly closed his eyes instead.

Through his Spiritual Perception, he could feel the other party’s fist art growing slower and slower, almost like an old man practicing the Taiji Fist.

So, this is the benefit of possessing a pure bloodline, Zhang Jiuxiao thought as an excited smile crept onto his lips.

He had not fully awakened his enhanced bloodline yet, but he could already feel the groundbreaking changes in his body.

Zhang Linqing’s attack was impressive, but to him, it appeared as if it was moving in slow motion, allowing him to uncover all of the flaws in it easily.

Teacher once said that to deal with such a forceful attack, all that has to be done is to strike its crux and tear it apart, Zhang Jiuxiao thought as he utilized his finger as a sword and tapped it lightly ahead of him.

Huala!

Before Zhang Jiuxiao’s finger could reach Zhang Linqing, a crack already appeared in the latter’s Fist of Void, and like

fragile glass, the umbrella-shaped sphere of power swiftly shattered. A look of horror appeared on Zhang Linqing's previously triumphant face.

Peng!

Struck in the middle of his chest, Zhang Linqing fell forcefully onto the ground. Excruciating pain engulfed every inch of his veins, and a gush of fresh blood spilled out of his mouth.

"Y-you..." Zhang Linqing stared at the young man before him in disbelief.

He knew just how powerful his Fist of Void was, and under normal circumstances, not even a Saint 7-dan Phantasmal Space realm primary stage cultivator would have dared to face it head-on. Yet... not only did his opponent do so, he even overcame it with ease!

From this, it was apparent that the other party had already reached a level far beyond his.

Was this really the strength that an offspring of the side family should possess?

It was illogical! How could he be so strong?

"You have lost."

Instead of answering Zhang Linqing's questions, Zhang Jiuxiao placed his hands behind his back and gazed down at him nonchalantly.

While Zhang Jiuxiao was standing imposingly before his opponent, beneath the dueling ring, a certain middle-aged man was trembling uncontrollably with rage.

That moronic show-off! He could have settled this duel in a single move, and yet, he just had to waste his effort and use three instead. Why the heck did I accept such an unreliable disciple? In some of the Asian countries with significant Chinese population, it isn't a rare sight to see old men practicing the Taiji Fist in the parks. The Taiji Fist is known for its slowness as its aim is not quick movements but harmonizing with nature, neutralizing attacks by going with the flow instead of against it.

1456 I Can Make a Breakthrough Now!

While Zhang Xuan was on the verge of spurting blood, the other core members in the sparring grounds had their mouths hanging agape, unable to speak a word at all.

Given that Zhang Jiuxiao was an offspring of the side family and was far weaker, they had thought that Zhang Linqing would be able to destroy him in an instant. Who could have known that after three moves, Zhang Jiuxiao would be the one standing triumphantly on the stage?

Not expecting such a conclusion either, Elder Fengchen was stunned for a moment before he remembered his role and hurriedly announced, “Zhang Jiuxiao... has won.”

In his long life, there had only been an occasion or two where he had seen a cultivator defeating an opponent far stronger than him with just a single finger.

But again, anything could happen in the dueling ring. It was not all that uncommon for weaker cultivators to defeat stronger opponents, and as such, while he did find it rather incredible, he did not think too much into it.

“Next round, Zhang Lin and Zhang Fengyun!”

After achieving victory, Zhang Jiuxiao headed down from the dueling ring and sat down to rest. He took out the pinnacle spirit stone once more and absorbed the spiritual energy within it to convert it into his strength.

What he was lacking the most at that moment was time, so he could not waste even a single second.

On the other hand, after being helped down from the dueling ring, Zhang Linqing immediately found himself surrounded by his peers.

“What happened up there?” a tall young man asked.

As everything had happened too quickly, and Zhang Jiuxiao had struck his opening squarely, most of those within the crowd did not manage to make sense out of what was happening.

“There’s something weird about that fellow...” Zhang Linqing shook his head.

To be honest, even he himself was still unable to understand how he had lost.

His cultivation was higher than the other party’s, and the battle technique that he had executed was far superior as well, yet it had still ended in his loss. He really found himself unable to come to terms with it.

A cold harrumph suddenly sounded, and a slender young man walked over. “To think that an inner clan member like you would lose to a mere member of the side family. Linqing, you have really disgraced all of us this time around. If I were in your place, I would have killed myself out of embarrassment!”

“Zhang Quanyi, what do you mean by that?” Zhang Linqing’s face turned livid with rage.

“Nothing. I just feel embarrassed on your behalf,” the young man named Zhang Quanyi replied with a look of disdain.

“You...” Zhang Linqing clenched his fists tightly in anger.

Zhang Quanyi had come from the same lineage as him, and the both of them had often argued with one another. As angry as he felt at the moment, he found himself unable to speak a single word of rebuttal after the tragic loss that he had suffered.

Thus, he took a few deep breaths and replied coldly, “If I remember correctly, you will be facing him next, right? I hope you remember what you have said here and don’t disgrace yourself later on!”

“Disgrace myself? You must be joking! Is there even the slightest possibility that I will lose against a mere Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage cultivator?” Zhang Quanyi waved his hand furiously, and an indomitable aura burst forth from his body.

“Half-Phantasmal Space?” Zhang Linqing narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

He had often fought with the other party, and their cultivation had always been equal to one another. How did the other party achieve the breakthrough after just a night of absence?

Even though there was only a cultivation stage of difference between Grand Dominion realm pinnacle and Half-Phantasmal Space realm, in truth, there was a world of difference between the two realms.

“Indeed! What’s most important to a cultivator is their cultivation! Before true strength, skills and battle techniques mean nothing at all. If your cultivation had been at Half-Phantasmal Space realm, do you think that the fellow would have been able to withstand your Fist of Void?” Zhang Quanyi sneered coldly.

“This...” Zhang Linqing’s body stiffened.

The other party was right. If his attack had been any stronger, even if Zhang Jiuxiao had struck his opening, the latter’s finger would only have been snapped in two. There was no way his attack would have been neutralized!

“Rest assured. Even though we are rivals, no matter what, we are still from the same lineage. Since you have been bullied by an outsider, I’ll surely exact vengeance for you!” Zhang Quanyi sneered coldly as he turned his gaze in Zhang Jiuxiao’s direction, and a cold light flickered across his eyes. “I won’t be as soft as you later on. I’ll make sure to defeat him in a single blow!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Linqing was silent for a moment before nodding slightly.

Having fought with Zhang Quanyi for many years, he knew just how powerful the other party was. Now that the other party had taken a step ahead of him and reached Half-Phantasmal Space realm, he should be able to subdue that fellow from the side family with ease!

The tournament continued, and it was roughly an hour later before the second round commenced. As expected, Zhang

Quanyi was indeed paired with Zhang Jiuxiao.

Just as he had said previously, Zhang Quanyi used his full strength as soon as he got onto the field. It was hard to tell whether he did it intentionally or not, but he executed the Fist of Void as well.

The mighty force commanded behind the fist caused even the seal cast on the dueling ring to waver slightly. Zhang Jiuxiao frowned in the face of the fist. Instead of launching a counterattack as he had done with Zhang Linqing, he chose to take evasive measures this time around.

“Do you think that I’d allow you to dodge my attack that easily?” Zhang Quanyi sneered coldly.

Utilizing his newfound abilities as a Half-Phantasmal Space realm cultivator, he sealed the surrounding space completely, such that even one’s Spiritual Perception would not be allowed to enter or leave the space.

“It seems like I won’t be able to match him with my current level of strength...” Seeing that the enemy’s palm was going to fall on him at any moment, Zhang Jiuxiao muttered beneath his breath. “Since that’s the case, I’ll just have to make a breakthrough!”

Boom!

Before Zhang Quanyi could even react, he suddenly felt a powerful force bursting forth from the young man in front of him. In the blink of an eye, that Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage fellow had already successfully taken a step forward into Grand Dominion realm advanced stage.

With the advancement of his cultivation, Zhang Jiuxiao’s strength had risen by leaps and bounds once more. He swiftly raised his hand and retaliated against the Fist of Void with a punch of his own.

Peng!

The two fists collided, and both parties were pushed back simultaneously.

“How is this possible?” Zhang Quanyi widened his eyes in disbelief.

He had clearly seen the young man making a breakthrough to Grand Dominion realm intermediate stage while he was battling with Zhang Linqing earlier, so how could he continue making a breakthrough right now?

Not even Cultivation Impartation could be this fast!

“I don’t believe it!” Zhang Quanyi roared as he dashed forward once more.

This time, he chose not to use the Fist of Void but the battle technique that he specialized in.

Hu hu hu!

Flitting swiftly around the dueling ring, Zhang Quanyi’s afterimages filled the entire area, forming a circular cage that trapped Zhang Jiuxiao in place.

Saint high-tier battle technique, Revolving Dragon Art!

This battle technique was aligned with the essence of a Confinement Formation, and once executed, even his long-time rival, Zhang Linqing, would find himself in a pickle. Even if Zhang Jiuxiao had made a breakthrough, he was still only at Grand Dominion realm advanced stage. There was no way that he could escape from there!

“What swift movements!” Trapped at the center of the circle, Zhang Jiuxiao felt himself being deprived of not just spiritual energy but oxygen as well, and giddiness was starting to fill his head. His face soon turned grim.

“You should be glad that you have managed to force me to the point where I have to use this move. You’ll be able to boast about this to others for the rest of your life!” Zhang Quanyi sneered coldly as he thrust his palms several times.

Peng peng peng!

From the whirling shadows around him, several palms suddenly struck Zhang Jiuxiao without any forewarning, and he ended up being struck squarely before he could even react.

“Heh, rest assured. I won’t let you lose that easily. I’ll slowly drive it deep into your mind that there’s no way mere offspring of the side family like you will be able to stand against core members like us!” Zhang Quanyi smirked as he continued his attack.

At this moment, Zhang Jiuxiao was still fumbling around, unable to find an opportunity to counterattack.

“Aren’t you good at making breakthroughs? Why don’t you make a breakthrough right now?” Seeing the awful complexion on the young man’s face, Zhang Quanyi burst into laughter.

You had your fun making breakthroughs earlier, didn’t you?

Why don’t you do it again?

Zhang Jiuxiao patted his forehead in realization. “Oh, you’re right. I could just make a breakthrough, right? How silly of me!”

Following which, before Zhang Quanyi could even process what was going on, the aura of the fellow trapped at the center suddenly surged once more, and in just half a breath, he had already overcome his bottleneck and reached Grand Dominion realm pinnacle.

The next instant, Zhang Quanyi suddenly felt a powerful force grabbing his neck. Like a rabbit, he was lifted up into the air.

1457 Breakthroughs Are as Easy as Drinking a Cup of Water 1

Not expecting the other party to be able to continue achieving breakthroughs and even grab his neck in a single move, Zhang Quanyi struggled with all of his might, as if a fish being pulled onto the shore.

He had just mocked Zhang Linqing and sworn to defeat Zhang Jiuxiao a moment ago, but everything had gone contrary to his expectations.

Was that man really a member of the side family?

Even the most talented members of the main family were not able to make breakthroughs so frighteningly fast!

“He made two consecutive breakthroughs in a match?” From beneath the stage, Zhang Linqing saw the sight and staggered in shock, nearly fainting in that instant.

He had thought that he had only lost to Zhang Jiuxiao by a hair’s breadth, but who would have thought that the other party had much more in him? Before he knew it, the other party was already of the same cultivation realm as him!

To make the breakthrough to Grand Dominion realm, Zhang Linqing had prepared for two whole years and paid a hefty price, but the other party did the same within just a short hour.

Was he still a human?

An uproar broke out amid the crowd below, and even the supervising Elder Fengchen found his throat turning dry.

He had been in the clan for many years, and he had seen plenty of outstanding geniuses. There had also been quite a few who had made breakthroughs in their cultivation during crucial moments in a battle and successfully turned the tables

on their opponents, but... to achieve a breakthrough on a whim, and not to mention, in short intervals one after another, this was really the first one that he had seen!

This was not talent anymore but absurdity!

“That dimwit! If he had followed my instructions, he should have already reached the Phantasmal Space realm by now. To still be at Grand Dominion realm pinnacle... just how did I manage to get myself this fool of a disciple?”

In contrast to the shocked crowd, Zhang Xuan was berating Zhang Jiuxiao beneath his breath, angered by his latest disciple's slow progress.

Given the enhancement in Zhang Jiuxiao's bloodline, its partial awakening in the Blood Reservoir, and the impartation of the simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was bound to be able to make consecutive breakthroughs one after another. But an hour had already passed, and he had only raised his cultivation by three stages. This was too freaking slow!

Had he known that the fellow was actually such a dunce, he never would have accepted him as his direct disciple!

This was an embarrassment, a permanent smirch on his clean record!

...

On the highest platform erected on the sparring grounds, the First Elder was currently stroking his beard calmly while overlooking the duels when an elder suddenly rushed in and whispered something into his ears.

“You said that... an offspring of the side family has managed to advance into the third round?”

“That's right, First Elder!” The elder nodded. “That person is Zhang Jiuxiao. His first opponent was Zhang Linqing, a Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivator from the main family. At the start of the match, Zhang Jiuxiao was only at Grand Dominion realm primary stage, but in the course of the battle, he managed to overcome his limits and make a breakthrough, thus defeating the latter in a single move!”

“The fact that he’s able to make a breakthrough in the midst of a battle shows that he’s a person of incredible mental resilience. There aren’t too many members in the Zhang Clan who are able to do that. It seems that even though Zhang Jiuxiao is from the side family, he’s a talent that we should keep our eyes on.” The First Elder nodded in approval.

It was a consolation to him to see how outstanding the younger generation of the Zhang Clan was.

The elder continued his explanation. “You’re right, First Elder. In the second round, Zhang Jiuxiao was faced with Zhang Quanyi, a Half-Phantasmal Space realm cultivator from the main family. He made a breakthrough once more to Grand Dominion realm advanced stage, eventually forcing Zhang Quanyi to execute the Saint high-tier battle technique, Dragon Revolving Art...”

The First Elder nodded again. “The Dragon Revolving Art can be considered one of the stronger Saint high-tier battle techniques. I have seen Zhang Quanyi before; he’s a decently talented individual who will become a valuable asset to the Zhang Clan in the future.”

A moment later, he glanced at the elder with a look of confusion. “If Zhang Quanyi used the technique while activating his bloodline ability, while its offensive power might be a little lacking, it should have been able to reach a speed far beyond Zhang Jiuxiao’s ability to deal with, especially given the significant gap between both of their cultivation. How did Zhang Jiuxiao manage to emerge victorious?”

“This... It’s just as you’ve said, Zhang Jiuxiao was cornered by the technique... so he made another breakthrough and rose to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle,” the elder said with a bitter smile.

“He made another breakthrough?” The First Elder was stunned. “You mean to say that Zhang Jiuxiao was at Grand Dominion realm primary stage early in the morning, and he managed to make three consecutive breakthroughs and is

currently a Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivator right now?”

“Not only so... Based on what we’ve heard, he was only at Leaving Aperture realm pinnacle a few days back,” the elder said.

“To be able to rise to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle that swiftly... that’s one whole cultivation realm! Where’s that lad?” the First Elder asked anxiously.

“He’s on Dueling Ring D, in the midst of fighting against Zhang Ningxin!”

“Zhang Ningxin? The talented grandson of Elder Wuxiao? He should have reached Phantasmal Space realm primary stage, right?” the First Elder asked as he turned his gaze over to Dueling Ring D.

“Indeed. The person standing opposite to him is Zhang Jiuxiao,” the elder said.

The First Elder took a closer look and saw that the person facing Zhang Ningxin was a young man in his mid-twenties.

The young man’s cultivation was only at Grand Dominion realm pinnacle, and it did not seem that he had practiced any particularly profound battle techniques either, causing his fighting prowess to be slightly lacking. However, his combat sense and ability to adapt in battle were formidable. Zhang Ningxin’s attacks were sharp and powerful, such that any other Grand Dominion pinnacle cultivator facing him would have succumbed by now, but the young man was always able to dodge at his attacks at the critical moment in inconceivable ways.

After watching for a while, a deep frown appeared on the First Elder’s forehead as he asked, “Don’t you find it weird? Given how he’s able to dodge Zhang Ningxin’s attacks with ease, he must have already seen through his attacks. Since that’s the case, why doesn’t he try to counterattack?”

So far, the two of them had already traded more than a dozen blows, but despite possessing the higher cultivation, Zhang Ningxin did not appear to be in an advantageous position in

this duel. It was as if he was being read like a book; the weaker Zhang Jiuxiao would always move according to whatever attack he was planning to make and dodge it in advance. But since Zhang Jiuxiao had the ability to read Zhang Ningxin's moves, why did he not attempt to counterattack?

It would be foolish to take a constant defensive stance in a battle; defense should only be considered a temporary approach in order to find the perfect opportunity to counterattack. No matter how well Zhang Jiuxiao was dodging Zhang Ningxin's attacks, it was only a matter of time before he slipped up.

Noticing the same problem, the elder pondered for a moment before replying, "I think... he probably has no way to counterattack. After all, there's a huge disparity in their strength."

"No way to counterattack..." the First Elder repeated those words before a thought suddenly came to his mind, and he narrowed his eyes in shock. "No, you're wrong. It isn't that he has no way to counterattack but that... that..."

At this point, the First Elder found himself unable to continue speaking anymore, as if he could hardly believe the thought in his mind.

"What?" The elder looked over with a doubtful look.

"The reason he isn't exerting any strength is so as to conserve it to push for a breakthrough to Half-Phantasmal Space realm!" the First Elder exclaimed with tightly-clenched fists.

"He's conserving his strength?" The elder was stunned. "Didn't he just make a breakthrough to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle?"

"It's precisely because he has just made a breakthrough and depleted his energy that he has to save up as much of it as possible in order to build up the momentum required to push for a breakthrough to higher realms," the First Elder said hoarsely. "Look at his left hand. From the very start of the battle, he has not opened his grip even once!"

"You're right!" The elder nodded in realization.

Zhang Jiuxiao had been placed in several seemingly precarious situations under Zhang Ningxin's relentless offense, but even so, he had still kept his left hand firmly by his side, not releasing his grip at all.

He had thought that this was a battle plan that Zhang Jiuxiao was using, so he did not pay much heed to it then.

“What he's holding in his palm is a pinnacle spirit stone,” the First Elder said.

The elder was stunned for a moment before quickly activating his Spiritual Perception. Upon clearly seeing what was in Zhang Jiuxiao's hand, he widened his eyes in disbelief and said, “Does this mean to say that while coping against Zhang Ningxin's offense, he's still absorbing energy from the spirit stone and raising his cultivation?”

“Isn't that obvious?” the First Elder said with a quivering voice.

He had seen plenty of formidable geniuses in his time, but he had never seen one who was that confident in himself!

To be cultivating in the midst of a battle against an opponent far stronger than him... Was he not afraid of death, or did he simply have that much confidence in his strength?

“You are courting death! I was still planning on hiding it, but you are forcing my hand!”

While the two old men were still in shock, on the dueling ring, Zhang Ningxin suddenly bellowed furiously, and his aura began surging up.

“Zhang Ningxin is going to make a breakthrough, too?” the elder exclaimed hoarsely.

1458 Breakthroughs Are as Easy as Drinking a Cup of Water 2

They had expected Zhang Jiuxiao to make a breakthrough first after learning that he was cultivating in the midst of the battle, but who would have thought that Zhang Ningxin would beat him to it?

A powerful might rippled through the dueling ring as massive spurts of spiritual energy descended from the sky, diving into Zhang Ningxin's glabella. His strength swiftly grew stronger and stronger, to the point where his aura felt reminiscent of a titan.

"Zhang Ningxin reached Phantasmal Space realm primary stage quite some time ago. He should have been able to achieve a breakthrough three months ago, but he chose to suppress it till now!"

"The more a cultivator tries to suppress their breakthrough, the greater the momentum and strength they will gain right after the breakthrough. Given that Zhang Jiuxiao has barely been coping with Zhang Ningxin's attacks all this while, after his breakthrough, he will stand even less of a chance."

"The gap between Grand Dominion realm pinnacle and Phantasmal Space realm intermediate stage is simply too huge. There's no way Zhang Jiuxiao can win now!"

"Heh, isn't that fellow good at making breakthroughs? Try to match that then!"

Such words could be heard from the crowd below.

The news of Zhang Jiuxiao's consecutive breakthroughs had already spread far and wide among the core members of the Zhang Clan, causing the attention on Dueling Ring D to far

exceed that of the other dueling rings. It was no joke to say that everyone's eyes were currently on this battle.

Everyone had been to see if the offspring of the side family would be able to continue his miraculous breakthroughs, but no one had ever thought that Zhang Ningxin would beat him to it!

A powerful gush of zhenqi flowed through Zhang Ningxin's body, causing a sound reminiscent of the rapid tides of a river to fill the air. Standing at the very center of the dueling ring, Zhang Ningxin looked at Zhang Jiuxiao with coldness in his eyes. "You must be proud. Despite being a mere offspring of the side family, you were able to force me into using my trump card."

Hula!

Without waiting for Zhang Jiuxiao's response, his claws flew forth, launching another round of offense.

With his cultivation reaching Phantasmal Space intermediate stage, his fighting prowess had almost been doubled. Even as the claw was still making its way to him, Zhang Jiuxiao felt like a massive hand was holding his body in place, and no matter how he struggled, he was unable to break free from it.

In his current state, even if he was still able to see through the flaws in Zhang Ningxin's attacks, he was no longer able to evade them in advance.

Jiya!

Zhang Jiuxiao's body was slowly lifted into the air.

"Aren't you good at making breakthroughs? Come on, make a breakthrough for me, won't you?" Zhang Ningxin sneered.

It was one thing for Zhang Jiuxiao to be able to achieve successive breakthroughs within the Grand Dominion realm, but a breakthrough to the Phantasmal Space realm would require a much higher command of the spatial laws, so how could it possibly be that easy?

If it was that easy, the number of clan members who had successfully reached Phantasmal Space realm beneath thirty

would be far more than fifty!

Despite being trapped in place, there was not the slightest sign of panic to be seen on Zhang Jiuxiao's face. Instead, he shook his head with a frustrated frown on his face. "I would love to make a breakthrough to, but I just haven't fixed some of the details yet."

"Fixed? What details do you need to fix for a breakthrough?" Zhang Ningxin burst into laughter. "Hilarious! Stop putting up that fake bravado of yours. It's clear that you have already lost the momentum required for a breakthrough. If you had accumulated enough, a breakthrough would come easily to you."

A breakthrough was something that came naturally once a person's cultivation had reached a certain point. As long as a cultivator's accumulation and comprehension had surpassed a certain point, they would be able to make a breakthrough.

If one could achieve a breakthrough by fixing details as you have said, everyone would be an expert!

Zhang Jiuxiao shrugged nonchalantly at Zhang Ningxin's questioning. "I really am fixing some details. I can't help it if you don't believe me."

"Humph, try fixing all you want then. If you have the ability to make a breakthrough, I suggest you do it now. Otherwise, this match will have to end right here..." Zhang Ningxin could not be bothered to waste his breath anymore, so he began tightening the force of his grip.

Jiya! Jiya!

A loud creaking sound reverberated in the air as the pressure on Zhang Jiuxiao's bones intensified.

"Sigh, I intended to find a way for me to achieve a breakthrough silently so that I wouldn't draw too much attention, but you just had to force me to make a breakthrough like that..."

"Silently?"

"Catch too much attention?"

“Is that fellow’s head still fine?”

“He’s currently only at Grand Dominion realm pinnacle; what would be so eye-catching about him achieving a breakthrough to Half-Phantasmal Space realm?”

The crowd was rendered dumbstruck by those ridiculous words.

As expected of an offspring of the side family, he sure was lacking in worldly experience! There would be several dozen members of the Zhang Clan who made a breakthrough to Half-Phantasmal Space realm each year; that fellow was simply making a big fuss out of nothing!

On the erected platform, the elder asked, “First Elder, do you think that he’ll really be able to make a breakthrough to Half-Phantasmal Space realm?”

It had not even been an hour since the young man had raised his cultivation from Grand Dominion realm primary stage to pinnacle. To be honest, it seemed a little too convenient for him to be able to make a breakthrough to Half-Phantasmal Space realm right now.

“I can’t tell. Under normal circumstances, rising to a new realm would require a massive amount of accumulation and familiarization ahead of the breakthrough. Considering how Zhang Jiuxiao made several breakthroughs not too long ago, I don’t think that it’s very likely for him to be able to push his cultivation up any further,” the First Elder analyzed contemplatively.

It was no wonder the First Elder would think as such. Such a rate of breakthrough was simply completely unheard of!

Hong long long!

“Forget it, I can’t lose the tournament just over something like that!”

Before the First Elder could finish his words, on the dueling ring, Zhang Jiuxiao shook his head in regret as he opened his arms wide, and all of a sudden, his body jolted. Following which, a resounding buzz echoed as an immense surge of energy exploded.

His aura began surging swiftly, rising at an unstoppable pace as if a raging storm.

Huhuhu!

In this moment, even the sky above the sparring ground seemed to have darkened, and a huge congregation of dark clouds swiftly gathered above.

“T-this...” Seeing the gathering of the clouds, the First Elder’s face paled in shock. “He isn’t making a breakthrough to Half-Phantasmal Space realm but... straight to Phantasmal Space realm primary stage?”

Only a breakthrough from Half-Phantasmal Space realm to Phantasmal Space realm primary stage would draw in a lightning tribulation! The fact that the dark clouds had started settling in meant that Zhang Jiuxiao had completely circumvented the Half-Phantasmal Space realm to make a breakthrough to Phantasmal Space realm primary stage directly!

It was no wonder he said that he needed to fix some details.

A breakthrough to the Phantasmal Space realm meant that he had to face the Phantasmal Space Ordeal, so of course, he would need to fix some details and make some preparation!

Boom!

In his moment of shock, lightning had already started gathering in the sky, ready to fall at any moment.

“You...” Zhang Ningxin did not expect the other party to actually make a breakthrough to the Phantasmal Space realm and draw in a lightning tribulation. His palm trembled in fright, and he nearly lost control of his zhenqi.

“Even if you have made a breakthrough, I’ll just have to defeat you before you face your lightning tribulation!” Forcefully calming himself down, a cold glint flickered across Zhang Ningxin’s eyes.

Boom!

He gathered all of the strength in his palm and struck down on Zhang Jiuxiao.

At that moment, the lightning tribulation had yet to fully gather. He wanted to make use of this opening where Zhang Jiuxiao was in a vulnerable position to subdue him, and victory would be his to claim!

Kacha!

But before Zhang Ningxin's palm strike could even reach its target, a streak of lightning fell on his head, causing smoke to rise from his head.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted out of his mouth as his body swayed weakly from side to side. Disbelief could be seen reflected in his eyes as he gasped. "How could the lightning bolt be so powerful when the lightning tribulation hasn't fully formed yet? There's no way the Phantasmal Space Ordeal could be this powerful!"

"Who told you that this is the Phantasmal Space Ordeal?" Zhang Jiuxiao shook his head.

Following which, a sound reminiscent of snapping bamboo echoed from his body.

Phantasmal Space realm primary stage!

Phantasmal Space realm intermediate stage!

Phantasmal Space realm advanced stage!

Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle!

Half-Dimension Sundering realm!

In an instant, he had already reached Half-Dimension Sundering realm, and he was on his way to making a breakthrough to the Dimension Sundering realm!

In other words, this lightning tribulation was actually the Dimension Sundering Ordeal!

1459 Irreplicable

“The Dimension Sundering Ordeal?”

“How could that be possible?”

“Leaping two cultivation realms in a single breath...”

Everyone was stunned.

Even the First Elder was shocked beyond words. His cheeks were puffed crimson in agitation, and he opened and closed his mouth several times, but he was still unable to find his voice.

It was just a moment ago that he had said that it was not too likely for the young man to make a breakthrough to the Phantasmal Space realm, but who would have thought that the other party would actually rocket right up to the Dimension Sundering realm!

It was a common saying in the Master Teacher Continent that formidable geniuses were able to achieve breakthroughs as easily as drinking water... but not even drinking water would be as fast as this!

Was the young man really an offspring of the side family and not the young prodigy in disguise?

“This is... This can't be... This is impossible!” Zhang Ningxin's face had turned completely pale in shock, and he retreated several steps while shaking his head in disbelief.

For a Grand Dominion realm pinnacle cultivator to charge straight toward the Dimension Sundering realm... It was no wonder the other party said that he had to fix some of the details so as to avoid drawing too much attention. This was no longer at the level of drawing attention; this was at the level of stroke-inducing!

To actually step across an entire realm... How in the world did he manage to do that?

In order to advance from Phantasmal Space realm primary stage to intermediate stage, Zhang Ningxin had spent many

long months cultivating, and he had paid a hefty price to obtain the resources needed for him to hasten his cultivation. Yet, the other party had actually managed to make the breakthrough in an instant.

The frustration he felt left him on the verge of spurting blood.

At this point, it seemed more like he was the one from the side family whereas the other party was from the main family!

While the crowd was shocked beyond words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

This is more like it.

Back when Zhang Jiuxiao was cultivating, he had noticed that there was a tremendous surge of energy lying dormant within Zhang Jiuxiao, ready to burst forth at any moment.

During the previous break, Zhang Xuan had used the Library of Heaven's Path to analyze the surge of energy before telling Zhang Jiuxiao the way in which he could draw out that surge of energy. However, he had not thought that Zhang Jiuxiao would be able to push right for the Dimension Sundering realm.

If I'm not mistaken, this surge of energy was left in him after his bloodline was purified and partially awakened in the Blood Reservoir last night, Zhang Xuan thought.

Previously, he had used the golden page to enhance Zhang Jiuxiao's bloodline, and at this moment, the purity of his bloodline was likely to exceed even that of the legendary young prodigy.

With the current level of purity of his bloodline, not only would he be able to effectively absorb the Time Quintessence in the Blood Reservoir and activate it, he would also be able to raise his cultivation explosively, just like how Zhao Ya and Yuan Tao had done in the past.

As the time that he had spent in the Blood Reservoir was severely limited, not to mention that he had spent most of the time going through the Saint 6-dan and Saint 7-dan cultivation techniques from Saint 6-dan to Saint 7-dan, he had not noticed the presence of the energy lying dormant in his body.

It was only after he achieved a breakthrough to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle that Zhang Xuan noticed it. Thus, he had told Zhang Jiuxiao to use a special method to activate it, but he did not think that it would be so effective.

In the blink of an eye, he had broken through the bottleneck of the Phantasmal Space realm and rushed right for the Dimension Sundering realm.

Most geniuses of the Sage Clans would have their bloodlines activated from a young age, and they would slowly use the energy to raise their cultivation. On the other hand, Zhang Jiuxiao's bloodline had only been activated after he reached the Grand Dominion realm, so the sheer scale of the energy that he had in there was not too difficult to imagine.

As expected of the bloodline of the strongest Sage Clan... Zhang Xuan thought in envy.

But of course, what's more important is that he has simulated the cultivation to the Phantasmal Space realm in his consciousness prior to his breakthrough, thus allowing him to control the energy within his body effectively. Otherwise, such swift successive breakthroughs would have been extremely hard to achieve, and in the worst-case scenario, his energy might even have run amok, causing him to literally explode.

While the energy from his bloodline was a reason behind his swift breakthrough, equally important was how familiar he had become with the Phantasmal Space realm Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Otherwise, tapping on this huge reserve of energy all of a sudden could really pose to be a great danger. In the worst-case scenario, he might have blown himself to dust.

It could be said that this swift breakthrough was really dependent on luck and timing, and it was irreplicable. Not even Zhang Xuan himself would be able to do the same.

I need to quickly make a breakthrough, too. Otherwise, it will be too embarrassing if I can't even match up to my own students, Zhang Xuan thought awkwardly.

Even a student whom he had just taken in was stronger than him. Could it be that he was more suited to be an educator than a cultivator?

Seeing the people around him overtake him had really left with a deep feeling of defeat.

If not for Sun Qiang serving as a counter-benchmark for him, he really would have thought that he was not suited for cultivation.

However, there's still a flaw in my Phantasmal Space realm Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Recalling the cultivation technique that was still incomplete despite all of his efforts to perfect it, Zhang Xuan frowned.

He would have loved to make a breakthrough if he could, but until his cultivation technique was impeccable, he was too disgusted by the flaws in it to cultivate it.

Given how many experts there are around here, as long as I can access their collection of cultivation technique manuals, it shouldn't be too difficult for me to fill in that one last flaw. Given so, I should be able to reach Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle within the next few days! Zhang Xuan tossed aside his concerns and turned his gaze back to the dueling ring.

More and more storm clouds were gathering in the area, ready to fall at any moment.

In this moment, everyone in the sparring grounds was already panicking. No one was fighting anymore, and they had all fled out of the radius of the lightning tribulation, assessing the situation warily from a distance away. Even the First Elder had backed out of the area with a livid expression.

Watching as the storm clouds grew larger and larger, Zhang Jiuxiao was starting to panic. He anxiously sent telepathic messages over to Zhang Xuan. "Teacher, what should I do?"

"You are my direct disciple. You have to overcome this lightning tribulation with your own strength!" Zhang Xuan replied sternly with a wave of his hand.

He would not mind helping others tide through their lightning tribulation but not his own direct disciples.

As dangerous as lightning tribulations were, they could be considered a trial to the cultivator. This was an experience that was crucial to make cultivators mature and grow. After all, Zhang Xuan could not always be around to cover his students from their lightning tribulations, so he could not allow them to become dependent on him.

“I understand!” Seeing the determined look on his teacher’s face, Zhang Jiuxiao realized that there was no room for negotiation on this matter. Thus, he gritted his teeth and turned his gaze back to the sky.

“Follow what I have taught you, and you should be able to overcome the lightning tribulation with ease!” Zhang Xuan instructed.

Back when they were in the Blood Reservoir, he had imparted not only the simplified Heaven’s Path Divine Art but also a way to deal with the lightning tribulation.

While Zhang Xuan’s method of dealing with lightning tribulations was something that others could not learn, he was still able to tally the insights of predecessors to devise a set of strategies that a cultivator could use to minimize the risk of the lightning tribulation.

“I understand.” Knowing that he only had himself to count on, Zhang Jiuxiao took in a deep breath and roared loudly before dashing right into the sky.

From how he was willing to venture alone to the Qingyuan Empire just to vie for the slot to the Sanctum of Sages, it was not too hard to tell that he was a tenacious person full of grit.

His teacher had already handed him all the tools that he needed; what he needed to do now was take the last step forward with his own strength!

Tzla tzla!

Seemingly provoked by Zhang Jiuxiao’s actions, the lightning tribulation crackled in fury. An eight-meter thick lightning bolt descended from the heavens.

Gritting his teeth tightly together, Zhang Jiuxiao dashed fearlessly toward it.

Boom!

By the time the lightning bolt dissipated, Zhang Jiuxiao was already lying on the ground, his body scorched with severe burns. His body was convulsing slightly, seemingly having sustained severe injuries.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan felt compelled to dash forward to support his student, but at the last moment, he forced himself to stay put and averted his gaze.

He must survive this with his own strength. Only then will he mature and become independent.

Zhang Xuan believed that grooming a student was similar to raising a child. It was fine to guide them on every step of their journey when they were still younger and unprepared, but eventually, they had to learn to face the world on their own.

While he had only taken in Zhang Jiuxiao a day ago, he believed that Zhang Jiuxiao was already ready for it. If anything, this trial was what he needed in order for him to affirm his own strength and gain confidence in his capability. It would sever the inferiority complex that he had always felt as an offspring from the side family, allowing him to stand on his own two feet.

It was also with similar reasons that he had sent his other students out to venture out and find their own paths and reasons to fight.

Parents love their children by planning ahead for them.

Teachers love their students by creating opportunities for self-discovery so that they can learn and mature.

Currently, Zhang Jiuxiao had reached this important juncture in this life. Charge through it, and he would be like a fish morphing into a divine dragon, soaring into the boundless heavens where the sky was the limit.

On the other hand, if he failed, naturally, Zhang Xuan would step in and save him, but by then... he would no longer be

worthy of remaining as his direct disciple.

1460 Zhang Xuan Disappeared

“If Zhang Jiuxiao is able to survive this lightning tribulation, there will be no need to hold the tournament anymore,” Zhang Wuchen mumbled as he looked at the overcast sky above crackling with lightning currents.

“Indeed.” The First Elder nodded in agreement. “This lightning tribulation is clearly far stronger than that of ordinary Dimension Sundering Ordeals, such that even Saint 8-dan intermediate stage cultivators would find it hard to survive it. If he can emerge from it alive, he will indubitably be the number one figure of the younger generation!”

At their level of cultivation, they could already gauge the prowess of a lightning tribulation with just a glance.

Zhang Jiuxiao’s lightning tribulation was as vast as an ocean, spanning a ridiculous size. Just the sheer prowess that was harnessed within the storm clouds was enough to leave goosebumps rising on their arms.

If the young man could survive something of this tier, it would effectively mean that even the currently speculated strongest individual of the younger generation, Zhang Chun, would not be close to being a match for him, thus placing him firmly in the top seat.

“How did an offspring of the side family like him manage to grow so quickly?” Zhang Wuchen was still unable to accept the sudden turn of events.

The First Elder shook his head and said, “That is a question we’ll have to ask him once he overcomes the lightning tribulation.”

While the two of them were speaking, the second streak of lightning was gradually forming.

Kacha!

This time, it was not just an ordinary lightning bolt. There was the cold glint of a weapon harnessed within it as it streaked downward, tearing through the space that stood in its way, leaving behind a dark gash in its wake.

“That’s the Lightning Warrior of the lightning tribulation...”
One of the elders amid the crowd gulped in horror.

If lightning tribulations were considered to be a simple punch, the emergence of a Lightning Warrior would be equivalent to the usage of a weapon.

Though they were both lightning bolts, there was a vast difference in their prowess.

“Come!” Swallowing a pill that his teacher had given to him, Zhang Jiuxiao’s injuries swiftly recovered. With a furious roar, he whipped out a Saint high-tier weapon and drove it straight toward the lightning tribulation.

The strongest weapon that he had previously was only at Saint intermediate-tier, but for successfully getting into the Sanctum of Sages, the clan had gifted him with a Saint high-tier artifact, and in this crucial moment, he decided to take it out without any hesitation.

Kacha!

As the Saint artifact collided with the Lightning Warrior, it was split in two in an instant. Despite that, the might of the lightning bolt did not seem to weaken in the slightest.

Zhang Jiuxiao did not seem to be surprised by that at all. He spread open his fingers and formed a semispherical barrier of zhenqi above him.

When the lightning struck the barrier, a deafening explosion erupted, and a powerful shockwave burst through the sparring grounds, shaking the dueling rings intensely.

It was very fortunate that they were in the sparring grounds, so many Reinforcement Formations were in place. Otherwise, everything could have reduced to rubble from that single lightning bolt.

Peng!

Eventually, Zhang Jiuxiao managed to fend off the Lightning Warrior, but the sheer intensity of the lightning still seared his arms black. At the same time, He was pushed deep into the ground like a heavy cannonball, creating a huge pit above him.

“Could he have been electrocuted to death?”

“He shouldn’t have, right?”

“This lightning is simply too fearsome. Even the managerial elders of the clan wouldn’t be able to survive something of this scale! Considering how he has just barely made a breakthrough, not to mention that he even leaped an entire realm without reinforcing his cultivation at all... things really don’t look too optimistic.”

“Let’s hope that he’s fine. Even though he might be from the side family, it’s still a blessing for the clan to have someone as talented as him in our ranks. Nothing can happen to him!”

Such words could be heard from the clan members all around as apprehension and nervousness colored their faces.

While there was significant internal rivalry within the Zhang Clan, the individual members still celebrated the rise of new geniuses instead of suppressing them. This was because they knew full well that the prosperity of the clan was dependent on the number and quality of the talents that they had, and only when the clan remained strong would there be good days ahead for them.

Hu!

While everyone was staring intently in worry, Zhang Jiuxiao leisurely flew up from the bottom of the pit.

The current him was charred black from head to toe. Nevertheless, resolve still could be seen reflected on his face. It seemed like he was devoid of any fear toward the lightning in the sky.

Hong long long!

The third lightning bolt was about to fall very soon.

The Dimension Sundering Ordeal consisted of three lightning bolts, and each of them was stronger than the last. Countless

experts had fallen to it in history.

“The third lightning bolt is not only powerful—it also harnesses a Heart Ordeal in it. Being from the side family, Zhang Jiuxiao has never undergone proper training to temper his mental resilience before, so it won’t be easy for him to overcome his inner demons,” the First Elder remarked worriedly.

“Indeed. To overcome this hurdle, on top of possessing great strength, he must have an unwavering will. I fear that he might not be ready for this yet,” Zhang Wuchen replied apprehensively.

If this genius who had just barely emerged through the ranks were to fall to the lightning tribulation, it would really be a huge loss to the Zhang Clan.

“However, a lightning tribulation of this scale is no longer something that we can interfere in. Let’s do this then. Go and look for Zhang Xuan, and if he can help us settle the lightning tribulation and save Zhang Jiuxiao... we can let everything that he has done previously go,” the First Elder said.

Based on what Zhang Wuchen had told him, he realized that Zhang Xuan was indeed Yang Shi’s student. Considering how he was able to resolve even the devastating Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal of the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast with ease, as large as Zhang Jiuxiao’s Dimension Sundering Ordeal was, it should not be too difficult for him to chase it away as well.

“Very well!” Knowing how important this matter was, Zhang Wuchen quickly flew toward Zhang Xuan’s accommodation, and it did not take long for him to arrive at his destination.

“Hmm? He isn’t around?” Zhang Wuchen swiftly swept through the accommodation with his Spiritual Perception, but Zhang Xuan was nowhere to be seen.

With a frown, he pushed open the door and walked in.

“Elder Wuchen.” Jian Qinsheng stood up.

“Do you know where Zhang Shi is?” Zhang Wuchen got straight to the topic at hand.

Back then, he had brought Jian Qinsheng and Zhang Xuan here together, and after taking the latter to the Blood Reservoir, Zhang Wuchen had left him to return here alone. Under normal circumstances, he should have obediently stayed put in his residence or at least stayed within the vicinity, so why was he nowhere to be seen?

Jian Qinsheng pondered for a moment before saying, “Zhang Shi was taken away by you last night, and I heard that he met Zhang Jiuxiao later on and went out with the latter.”

Zhang Jiuxiao had come here to look for Zhang Xuan, and later on, the two of them had left and never come back. For Zhang Wuchen to be looking for Zhang Xuan at this moment, could something have happened?

“Wait a moment, are you saying that Zhang Jiuxiao... came to look for Zhang Xuan last night?” Zhang Wuchen narrowed his eyes at this surprising information. “Just to verify, are you speaking of the offspring of the Zhang Clan’s side family who has gotten into the Sanctum of Sages, Zhang Jiuxiao?”

“Of course, it’s not a habit of mine to memorize the names of the offspring of the Zhang Clan otherwise!” Jian Qinsheng harrumphed.

“How does Zhang Jiuxiao know Zhang Xuan?” Zhang Wuchen could hardly believe what he was hearing.

The new, rising genius of the Zhang Clan was actually acquainted with the dastardly Zhang Xuan?

“How am I supposed to know that? In any case, they are very close to one another!” Jian Qinsheng replied impatiently.

“Alright, I understand. Sorry for imposing on you.” With a look of disbelief on his face, Zhang Wuchen quickly flew back to the sparring grounds.

In the time that he had spent looking for Zhang Xuan, the lightning bolt in the sky had already finished charging up, and it surged down with a deafening rumble.

In an instant, Zhang Jiuxiao suddenly found himself standing confusedly in the midst of a junction, and his soul flickered

weakly in uncertainty, on the verge of being extinguished at any moment.

He was just an ordinary member of the side family. In the behemoth known as the Zhang Clan, he did not have the slightest shred of standing, dignity, or even presence. Even if he had died in the Qingyuan Empire, it would not have caused the slightest ripple in the Zhang Clan.

Just like how he had been born a nobody, he would have died a nobody as well.

It was his teacher who had placed control of his life back in his hands.

His teacher had helped him get into the Sanctum of Sages as a student, and after which, he had even bestowed him with the strongest bloodline.

Since my teacher said that I can overcome the Dimension Sundering Ordeal, I'll be able to do it. No, I must do it! Even if it costs me my life, I cannot disappoint him!

Such was the strong will that burned in Zhang Jiuxiao's heart, and it brought unimaginable strength to his body. Astonishingly, it actually caused the lightning ordeal to simply slip right past his body, unable to cause the slightest harm at all.

The First Elder narrowed his eyes. "This is... the power of the bloodline? And it's even purer than mine? But... this is impossible!"

1461 Surviving the Lightning Ordeal

The activation of Zhang Jiuxiao's bloodline happened so silently that it was hard for anyone to discern anything. However, due to the purity of the First Elder's bloodline, he immediately felt a faint resonance with Zhang Jiuxiao.

And to his shock, he found that the bloodline that Zhang Jiuxiao possessed was even stronger than his!

In the entire Zhang Clan, his bloodline was only second to the deputy clan head, the Xing Sword Saint. For an offspring of the side family to be able to suppress his bloodline... even after double checking it multiple times, he still found the matter inconceivable.

The First Elder's body stiffened in astonishment. I have only seen this level of purity in the young prodigy before. Could it possibly be him?

The young prodigy had been born with a bloodline comparable to the founder of the Zhang Clan, and due to that, he had directly been chosen as the next clan head, and a life of greatness lay ahead of him.

However, it was a pity that a certain incident had occurred, and shortly after... he had gone missing!

Given how pure Zhang Jiuxiao's bloodline was, could it possibly be him?

No, that's not right. Zhang Jiuxiao is already in his late twenties whereas the young prodigy should only be twenty this year. There's a huge difference in their age, so they can't be the same person. Also, it doesn't make sense for us to have missed the high purity of his bloodline in the past!

Offspring of the Zhang Clan, regardless of whether they were from the main family or the side family, would have their bloodline checked at birth. In fact, there were some top

geniuses whose bloodline purity could be checked through a unique method even while they were in their mother's womb. Naturally, Zhang Jiuxiao would have gone through such a check, and it would have been detailed in the records.

If the young man really possessed such a pure bloodline, there was no way that he could have been overlooked!

Or could the First Elder have remembered incorrectly and unintentionally overlooked this genius of the Zhang Clan?

“Wuzhen, head to the Hall of Rituals and bring Zhang Jiuxiao's record over to me,” instructed the First Elder as turned his head.

“Yes!” Hearing the First Elder's command, Elder Wuzhen hurriedly left the area.

It did not take long for him to return with a book in hand.

Zhang Jiuxiao's record was stored in the archive room for the side family in the Hall of Rituals, so it had not been too difficult for him to find it. The First Elder hurriedly took the record and flipped it open. “The age indeed doesn't tally. His soul is stable, perfectly fused with his body, so the possibility of him being possessed by another person is zero. During the previous check, he only possessed the lowest bloodline that isn't even worth mentioning. How is there such a huge difference now?”

The First Elder swiftly finished looking through the record, and he could not help but shake his head in incomprehension.

A unique artifact was employed in order to check the bloodline of the Zhang Clan members so as to avoid human error and oversight. As such, the chances of any errors occurring were as good as zero. Besides, if someone with such a pure bloodline had been born, the Hall of Rituals would have responded through some kind of phenomenon, such as how the entire hall rattled and Kong shi's sculpture rose when the young prodigy was born.

All in all, there was simply no way that an offspring with a bloodline that pure could have been born without them

realizing, lying low for more than twenty years before suddenly dazzling their eyes with his brilliance!

“I want you to investigate Zhang Jiuxiao’s complete history, compile it into a report, and bring it to me!” the First Elder instructed.

The Zhang Clan’s intelligence network was not to be scoffed at, and the fact that Zhang Jiuxiao was a master teacher made it even easier to look into his affairs. Thus, it did not take long before Elder Wuzhen returned once more with a book in hand.

The First Elder swiftly browsed through the content within, and he could not help but fall into deeper confusion.

It did seem like Zhang Jiuxiao was quite a talented individual, but to put it in Zhang Clan’s standards, it was still rather lackluster. The turning point seemed to be around three to four months ago, when his rate of cultivation suddenly quickened. Nevertheless, it still had not reached a level where the Zhang Clan would need to pay much attention to him..

Zhang Wuchen walked up and worriedly reported, “First Elder, I found out that just last night, Zhang Jiuxiao went to look for Zhang Xuan. Not only so, Zhang Xuan is currently not in the accommodation that we have assigned him.”

“Zhang Jiuxiao met Zhang Xuan last night?” The First Elder was bewildered to learn of the association between the two. He stroked his lower jaw and pondered for a moment before remarking, “Zhang Xuan seems to have come from the Qingyuan Empire as well...”

He had looked through the intelligence that the Zhang Clan had acquired on Zhang Xuan as well, and considering how Zhang Xuan also hailed from the Qingyuan Empire, it was likely that the both of them had gotten acquainted with one another then. Thinking about it, they did enter the Sanctum of Sages together, so it was impossible for the both of them not to know about one another.

The First Elder pondered for a while longer, but he was still unable to figure out what was happening. He rubbed his glabella and instructed, “Don’t tell anyone about this matter

yet. For the time being, dispatch some personnel to continue looking for Zhang Xuan—don't let him cause any trouble in the clan!"

To be honest, even he had to admit that the fellow named Zhang Xuan was a top genius, be it in terms of his mastery as a master teacher or the skills that he had displayed in his supporting occupations. Alas, it was a huge pity that he simply loved causing damage everywhere he went!

In less than a day after arriving at the Zhang Clan, he had already induced a huge commotion. Countless buildings had already fallen victim to his tyranny. No one would be able to take it if he was allowed to continue wreaking havoc in the clan!

"Understood!" Zhang Wuchen nodded before swiftly leaving the area.

After handling these issues, the First Elder turned his gaze to the lightning tribulation once more and saw that Zhang Jiuxiao had already survived the final streak of lightning. Gradually, the ominous clouds were starting to clear up.

The Dimension Sundering Ordeal had left Zhang Jiuxiao in a battered condition. Whether it was his physical body or his soul, they were in an unprecedentedly fragile condition. Despite so, his aura was quickly surging toward a greater height, and at the same time, a mysterious bundle of energy seemed to be manifesting within his body, ready to burst forth at any moment to cause great destruction.

"That's the power of Dimension Sundering... He has successfully made a breakthrough!" the First Elder exclaimed in agitation.

To be able to reach such a level below the age of thirty, Zhang Jiuxiao was indubitably the most talented offspring of the entire Zhang Clan.

Hu!

The First Elder quickly flitted down from the platform that he was on to stand before Zhang Jiuxiao. He whipped out a pill

and said, “Hurry up and swallow this. It’ll help you recover swiftly from your injuries.”

“Thank you, First Elder!” Zhang Jiuxiao took the pill.

It was a grade-9 pill that had tremendous effectiveness in recovering the wounds sustained by the body and soul.

However, Zhang Jiuxiao did not rush into consuming it. He quickly thanked the First Elder before fumbling his way over to a middle-aged man, and with an excited look on his face, he said telepathically, “Teacher, I have succeeded!”

“Yes, I saw it. Swallow the pill that the First Elder has given you and quickly recover from your injuries. Its effects are so-so, but it’s exactly what you need in your current state,” Zhang Xuan replied telepathically with a nod. “Also, given how huge a commotion you have caused, the First Elder is bound to ask about the matter. As you know, I like to be low profile and don’t wish to reveal my identity, so think well before you speak, got it?”

“Yes, Teacher!” Zhang Jiuxiao hurriedly nodded.

Following that, he swallowed the pill, and the fatigue and aching pain he was suffering significantly lessened. He quickly sat down and channeled the medicinal energy within the pill throughout his body. In less than an hour, he had already recovered from most of his injuries.

Seeing that Zhang Jiuxiao was done recuperating, Elder Wuzhen flew over and said, “Zhang Jiuxiao, the First Elder is looking for you.”

“Understood!” Zhang Jiuxiao nodded.

He shot an inconspicuous glance toward his teacher behind, only to see the latter looking focused at the ground, seemingly dazing off.

Knowing that his teacher did not want to attract too much attention to himself, he turned around and instructed, “You should return to the accommodation first. I’ll head over after meeting the First Elder.”

“Yes!” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist politely.

He was acting as Zhang Jiuxiao's subordinate at this moment, so naturally, his actions had to be fitting of one as well.

As every offspring that had come to the tournament had brought some of their subordinates along, Zhang Wuchen did not think much of their interaction. He led the way forward, and Zhang Jiuxiao followed closely behind him.

They left the sparring grounds and headed toward the center of the city.

In that moment, Zhang Jiuxiao was feeling deeply nervous inside.

As an offspring of the side family, he had never been in such close proximity to the main family before.

Putting everything aside, just the formations set up around the area were enough to trap those who did not know their way around for life.

Zhang Wuchen came to a stop before a hall. "The First Elder is right inside."

"Understood." Zhang Jiuxiao assessed the building before him. It was a vast hall, reminiscent of a guest lounge of some sort.

Without much hesitation, he made his way inside.

Barely after stepping through the door, just as he wanted to scan his surroundings, he suddenly felt a powerful pressure crushing down on his body.

Boom!

It was an aura filled with malicious intent, reminiscent of a vicious beast baring its fangs at someone. It engulfed his surroundings in an instant, leaving him feeling as if he would be torn to shreds.

"What?" Sensing a powerful force heading his way, Zhang Jiuxiao's body stiffened.

1462 Professionally Humble

The force in the hall did not show the slightest hint of mercy. If Zhang Jiuxiao remained rooted to the spot, he could very well lose his life.

Knowing that there was no time to be lost, Zhang Jiuxiao took a deep breath and quickly retreated.

Peng!

He found his back pressed against the door. Only at that instant did he realize that the door behind him had been closed and sealed with multiple layers of formations. Even with his strength as a Dimension Sundering realm cultivator, he was still unable to inflict the slightest bit of damage to it.

“Darn it!” Knowing that it was too late for him to dodge, Zhang Jiuxiao flicked his wrist and retaliated with a palm strike of his own.

Boom!

His palm collided with the assailant’s.

Kacha!

Zhang Jiuxiao immediately felt a crushing pressure on his chest that pushed out all of the oxygen in his lungs. The injuries that had barely recovered from the earlier lightning tribulation tore open once more, and a searing pain engulfed Zhang Jiuxiao’s body.

“Dimension Sundering realm primary stage?”

However, this exchange of blows did give Zhang Jiuxiao an idea of the strength of the assailant—the other party was at Dimension Sundering realm primary stage as well.

“Humph!”

Since they were of the same cultivation realm, there was nothing for him to fear. With a forceful push against the

ground, Zhang Jiuxiao leaped upward as he directed a barrage of palm strikes in the direction of the assailant.

Hula!

It took just an instant for raging air currents to fill the room completely, as if a brewing tornado. Powerful bursts of might were shot forth here and there, inducing ceaseless sonic booms.

Even though Zhang Jiuxiao had barely reached Dimension Sundering realm primary stage, the simulation that he had gone through in the Blood Reservoir had allowed him to fully grasp his strength up to Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle. He had also tried to simulate a breakthrough several times then, and this had given him some experience in driving the power of Dimension Sundering. As such, his movements were still considerably fluid, devoid of the usual stiffness that a cultivator unaccustomed to their strength would have.

Boom boom boom!

Zhang Jiuxiao's counterattack was swift, but his assailant was even faster. The latter successfully fended off all of his palm strikes without sustaining the slightest bit of damage.

Nevertheless, while he was in the air, he was able to catch a good sight of the person who had assaulted him.

The other party was dressed in a rather loose-fitting robe, making it hard to gauge his exact physique. At the same time, he was wearing a mask, which blocked even Spiritual Perception from looking beneath it. All in all, that individual felt like a particularly enigmatic figure.

"Who are you? Why are you in the First Elder's residence?" Zhang Jiuxiao asked with narrowed eyes.

Hu!

Instead of answering his question, the assailant raised his palm and sent another palm strike over.

The other party's movements were rather gentle, thus making it appear as if his palm strike did not harness much force.

However, the goosebumps that rose on Zhang Jiuxiao's arms in response to the palm strike told a very different story.

Knowing that the assailant would not give himself away that easily, Zhang Jiuxiao could not be bothered to ask anymore. Raising his hands, he charged forward to face his opponent directly.

While his talent might have been lacking in comparison to Zhang Xuan, no matter what, he had still been a famed genius back in the days when he was still in the Qingyuan Empire. Naturally, his aptitude for combat was decent.

Furthermore, the current him had already undergone one-to-one lessons with Zhang Xuan, and that had brought his proficiency in combat to a whole new level.

In the blink of an eye, he had already exchanged eight blows with the masked assailant. While there seemed to be many times where Zhang Jiuxiao was in peril, he was always able to slip out in the crucial juncture, thus averting the danger in the end.

Even though the battle was difficult for Zhang Jiuxiao, the masked man was not faring too well either. Zhang Jiuxiao had just made a breakthrough and was still injured, but no matter what, he had still received Zhang Xuan's individual tutelage.

It would be no exaggeration to say that Zhang Jiuxiao's current combat skills were ranked among the top in the Master Teacher Continent, even if they still came nowhere to Zhang Xuan's. As such, in just a few blows, the masked assailant was already struggling to keep up.

"Heh!" Knowing that he was getting cornered, the masked assailant suddenly sneered coldly.

Following which, a powerful aura burst forth from his body, and his silhouette suddenly blurred like a specter. The next instant, he was already standing before Zhang Jiuxiao with his palm thrusting forth at an incredible speed.

Peng!

Unprepared for this, Zhang Jiuxiao was sent flying by that palm strike, and he crashed into the wall behind him.

“Bloodline ability! You are from the Zhang Clan?” Zhang Jiuxiao exclaimed in shock.

He was certain that the ability that the masked assailant had just used was the unique ability of the Zhang Clan’s bloodline!

“Humph!”

However, there was still no response from the masked assailant. Instead, the latter flitted forward again, and the surrounding time seemed to have slowed down in contrast to his movements. Before Zhang Jiuxiao could realize it, he had already been struck squarely once more, and a mouthful of blood escaped through his lips.

The Zhang Clan’s bloodline allowed one to struggle free from the restraints of time and move at a speed faster than the limits of a human. To the eye of an outsider, it would appear as if Zhang Jiuxiao had slowed instead and was unable to keep up with the masked assailant.

This won’t do. At this rate, I’ll really be beaten to death by that fellow!

After sustaining a few more punches, Zhang Jiuxiao felt his body swiftly creeping toward its limits. He knew that he would not survive a few more punches, and his eyes reddened in agitation.

He had come here to meet the First Elder, but instead of finding the First Elder, he had found himself faced with a masked assailant. Every single move that the latter executed was deadly, aimed right at his vitals, and if this continued, he really might lose his life!

I can’t afford to hold back anymore.

Knowing that this was no time for him to be holding back his strength, Zhang Jiuxiao took in a deep breath and closed his eyes.

He began driving his bloodline, and in an instant, everything before him suddenly seemed to have started playing in slow motion.

This was the ability of the Zhang Clan’s bloodline!

He had been unable to use it in the past, but as his bloodline became purer, he found himself being able to activate the ability with just a simple thought.

As the surroundings slowed down, the movements of the charging masked man immediately came into sight. Everything that he had not been able to perceive previously appeared before him with the utmost clarity.

“Humph!” Zhang Jiuxiao raised his foot and sent a powerful kick over to the other party.

Peng peng peng peng!

Leg, palm, fist, finger... all sorts of attacks rained down on the masked assailant like a storm. The masked assailant never thought that Zhang Jiuxiao would be able to move even faster than him, and before he could even react, he had already been struck numerous times.

His body was forcefully pushed back, and with a spurt of blood, his back slammed heavily into the wall.

“Die!” Knowing that there was a time limit to how long he could keep his unique bloodline activated for, Zhang Jiuxiao had absolutely no intention of holding back.

If he showed mercy to the assailant now, he could very well lose his life once the duration of his unique bloodline went into cooldown.

He was not so kind as to give his life up for a stranger who wanted his life!

Peng peng peng peng!

A barrage of attacks fell on the masked assailant, completely overwhelming the latter, leaving him no room to counterattack at all. But just as Zhang Jiuxiao was about to launch the decisive move, a huge surge of power suddenly burst forth from the assailant before him, knocking him away.

Following which, Zhang Jiuxiao felt an unbelievably strong power holding his body in place, rendering him completely unable to move.

“W-what? How can you be so powerful?” Zhang Jiuxiao narrowed his eyes in horror.

He had already reached Dimension Sundering realm primary stage, but even so, the power emanating from the masked assailant was still able to render him completely helpless. This meant to say that the person was at least at Saint 9-dan... or perhaps even higher than that!

A person wielding such strength could be considered one of the strongest figures in the clan, but it was incomprehensible why such a powerful person would go to the extent of masking himself and attempting to assassinate him!

“Enough, let’s stop here.” The masked assailant’s deep voice reverberated across the room.

Following which, the masked assailant’s aura continued to surge, and in just the blink of an eye, it had already reached a level that Zhang Jiuxiao had never before dared fathom.

“This voice...” At that moment, what had caught Zhang Jiuxiao’s attention was not the overwhelming strength of the masked assailant but the familiarity of his voice.

He raised his head, only to see the masked assailant taking off his mask, revealing a very familiar face.

“First Elder, you...” Zhang Jiuxiao was stunned.

How could the vicious assailant whose every move had been aimed at his vitals, determined to drag him down into the depths of hell, be the First Elder?

“Your bloodline is purer than even mine... Tell me, Zhang Jiuxiao, how did you do it?” the First Elder asked in a calm, inquisitive voice, devoid of any malice or hostility.

“You were... testing me out earlier?” Zhang Jiuxiao widened his eyes in astonishment as cold sweat trickled down his back.

It was just a moment ago that his teacher had reminded him to maintain a low profile, but he had already given himself away!

It seemed like he really had much more to learn from his teacher.

His teacher had been able to keep his identity as the Celestial Master Teacher under wraps from the rest of the world for such a long period of time, but he could not even keep his bloodline concealed for more than a day. Indeed, when it came to being humble and low profile, he still had a long way to go!

1463 I Have a Humble Teacher

“I could already tell while you were facing your lightning tribulation that your bloodline is even purer than mine, but I simply found it too hard to believe then that I wanted to test it for myself to confirm the matter. To think that it would really be true!” the First Elder replied.

He stared deeply into Zhang Jiuxiao’s eyes, seemingly trying to peer deep into the latter’s soul as he said, “I have looked into your background. Your Zhang Clan bloodline should have been so thin that it’s nearly negligible, so how did it become so pure?”

This was a matter that had been bugging his mind all this while.

Such a thing had never happened in the history of the Zhang Clan.

“I...” Zhang Jiuxiao stopped for a brief moment as he swiftly went through the excuse that he had prepared in advance before saying, “To be honest, I’m not too sure either. It simply happened shortly after I achieved a breakthrough to the Grand Dominion realm. All of a sudden, my bloodline just grew purer and purer...”

While Zhang Jiuxiao was indeed an offspring of the Zhang Clan, he was simply too far off from the main family, so he hardly knew anything about the bloodline. In any case, his understanding of the topic was bound to be beneath that of the First Elder. Instead of wracking his brain in search of a flawless story, he might as well feign ignorance and let the First Elder fill up the gaps on his own.

That would be more believable than any story that he could cook up.

“Are you saying that your bloodline was hidden too deep in your body, so it could only be awakened after you cultivated to a certain level?” the First Elder asked contemplatively with a deep frown.

Such a situation was not too uncommon with unique constitutions. Most unique constitutions lay dormant within the cultivator’s body, awakened only when the cultivator finally reached a certain level of strength. Otherwise, it would be nigh impossible to detect the presence of the unique constitution within his body.

Zhang Jiuxiao ruminated deeply on the First Elder’s words before nodding slowly in agreement. “That... I’m not too sure how it works, but that does seem to be the case!”

“That’s impossible!” The First Elder abruptly shook his head. “The Zhang Clan’s bloodline harnesses the Time Quintessence, so there’s no way it could possibly circumvent the detection of our artifacts!”

As a clan specializing in the interpretation of Time Quintessence, the First Elder was certain that their means of measuring the purity of a Zhang Clan offspring’s bloodline were infallible. In a sense, this was similar to how a person looking at the night sky would never miss a comet streaking across the darkness.

Besides, due to the unique nature of the Zhang Clan’s bloodline, the possibility of it being awakened reduced exponentially as one advanced past his twenties. Considering how Zhang Jiuxiao was already nearing his thirties, even if the Zhang Clan were to devote all of its resources into helping him, it would still take a grueling amount of time and effort in order to awaken it. So, how could Zhang Jiuxiao’s bloodline possibly awaken within such a short span of time, not to mention, even achieving breakthroughs all the way to the Dimension Sundering realm?

“Besides, I can sense lingering traces of the Time Quintessence that should only have been in the Blood Reservoir infused in your bloodline. Clearly, you have been tempering your bloodline at the Blood Reservoir! An offspring

of the side family like you shouldn't be qualified to enter the premises of the Blood Reservoir, and I haven't found any records approving your entry to the Blood Reservoir. So, tell me, Zhang Jiuxiao, how did you get into the Blood Reservoir?" the First Elder questioned in a sharp voice.

At the same time, the pressure that he exerted through his aura also grew significantly stronger, causing the air in the room to suddenly grow thinner.

Putting aside the fact that the Blood Reservoir only worked on offspring with sufficiently pure bloodlines, even offspring whose bloodlines had met the mark would have to absorb the Time Quintessence under the guidance of an elder, or else they would risk their cultivation going berserk.

It was in view of such dangers that access to the Blood Reservoir was limited to even the core members of the Zhang Clan. Yet, somehow, Zhang Jiuxiao had still managed to get in and even successfully tempered his bloodline!

"I..." Cold sweat began trickling down Zhang Jiuxiao's forehead as he fell silent.

It felt almost as if the First Elder's eyes were able to see right through all of his deception and falsehood. He knew that he could not give away his teacher's participation in this matter, but at this moment, he felt as if he had already been cornered.

"I have also looked into your performance after entering the Sanctum of Sages. Your cultivation did grow faster a little, but it was still within a normal range, not too different from the average genius of our Zhang Clan. The anomaly only started last night! You left your accommodation and disappeared for the entire night, and when you appeared once more, you suddenly started pushing for consecutive breakthroughs, reaching your current realm in the blink of an eye."

At this point, the First Elder looked at Zhang Jiuxiao with perfectly calm eyes as he spoke particularly unnerving words to the latter. "There are very few people in this world who are able to blatantly lie to my face, so I suggest you think carefully about how you should speak in order for me to believe you."

A shudder ran through Zhang Jiuxiao's back.

The discerning eyes of a high-ranked master teacher were not to be underestimated. The old man standing before him was a true 9-star master teacher, a person who stood at the very zenith of the Master Teacher Continent.

One had to weather countless storms and survive multiple catastrophes in order to reach that position of power, and it would have been nigh impossible for one to do so without learning how to read into the hearts of others.

Zhang Jiuxiao fell into deep panic as he realized the quandary that he was in. However, at the same time, he could not help but feel a little awe for his teacher. How did Teacher manage to do it?

His teacher had come a long way without revealing his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher to anyone. Through this, one could see how well he was able to reel in his thoughts and conceal himself.

On the other hand, when he attempted to hide his bloodline, all it took was half a day for him to be caught.

"I only want to hear the truth. You need not fear me; I don't mean any harm to you. However, I need to know what's going on within the Zhang Clan in order to ensure that no harm comes to it. I know that you have your own secrets that you have to keep, so the least I can promise you is that what you say to me today will not be heard by a third person, and I'll make no attempts to dig this matter up any further after this." Seeing that Zhang Jiuxiao's will was wavering, the First Elder pushed a little more.

"Alright then..." After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Jiuxiao finally caved in. He realized that there was no other way out of this, so he swiftly sorted out what he should and should not reveal before saying, "To tell you the truth, First Elder, the reason I have been able to come this far today is because I have found myself a good teacher!"

"Found yourself a good teacher?" The First Elder frowned.

“Indeed. My teacher is a highly talented man who is unmatched by any other that I have seen in this world. It might seem like I am exaggerating when I say this, but I believe that his capabilities would even match Kong shi’s back then! It was he who taught me how to fight and purified my bloodline, allowing me to rise to the top. Without him, I would be naught but an ordinary man!”

As Zhang Jiuxiao began speaking, the pressure that had been weighing on his mind gradually dissipated as his words grew more and more impassioned, clearly reflecting the respect and awe that he had for his teacher.

“You believe that the capabilities of your teacher are comparable to Kong shi’s?” Hearing those words, the First Elder could not help but shake his head.

There was no one in this world who could match Kong shi—there was no questioning this fact.

But from the earnest emotions tinged within Zhang Jiuxiao’s words, the First Elder could see that the young man indeed believed that to be the case.

Nevertheless, this did make perfect sense. Without a good teacher, how could an ordinary side family member possibly be able to overpower even him when the two of them were fighting at the same cultivation level.

The First Elder pondered for a brief moment before saying, “I know of all of the 9-star master teachers on the Master Teacher Continent. May I know which friend of mine your teacher is?”

In his view, in order to bring about such a massive change in Zhang Jiuxiao, at the bare minimum, the teacher whom the latter had spoken of had to at least be a 9-star master teacher.

And there were only so many 9-star master teachers on the Master Teacher Continent. Even if he did not know Zhang Jiuxiao’s teacher in person, he should have heard of that person’s name at the very least. Just who in the world possessed such great ability to be able to achieve what even he would be unable to accomplish?

“I beg of the First Elder’s pardon. My teacher is an extremely low-profile individual, and he doesn’t wish for me to speak of his name to others. As his student, I am deeply reluctant to go against his will!” Zhang Jiuxiao clasped his fist.

He was not really lying when he said this.

Even if the conflict between his teacher and the Zhang Clan had not occurred, his teacher still would not have wanted to see his name being tossed around. After all, his teacher had always been a low-profile person, so such ostentatious actions would only draw his ire.

“Low-profile individual...” The First Elder swiftly went through all of the 9-star master teachers, and there were none that fit that requirement. He shook his head and said, “Since that’s your teacher’s will, it would be inappropriate of me to ask you to reveal his identity. Nevertheless, the fact that your teacher possesses the ability to purify your bloodline to this extent and bring about such tremendous growth in your cultivation is more than sufficient to show that he’s a person of great capabilities, very possibly ranking amid the top of the Master Teacher Continent!”

Even he, despite being the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, did not possess the ability to induce such massive changes in a seemingly average talented individual. In fact, not even Yang shi would be capable of doing so!

But Zhang Jiuxiao’s teacher had managed to do it, and that was more than enough proof of his capabilities!

The true experts lurked in the shadows. While Yang shi was reputed as the number one expert of the world, the First Elder knew that there were definitely other experts in the Master Teacher Continent who could stand on par with or even above him!

The Master Teacher Pavilion might have been the largest and most powerful organization on the Master Teacher Continent, but not even it had the ability or resources to keep track of every single expert on the continent!

1464 Marry Her!

“Yes, I have no doubt that my teacher is the number one teacher in the world!” Hearing the First Elder’s compliment, Zhang Jiuxiao nodded readily in agreement.

Putting him aside, even his seven seniors were figures who would rattle the entire continent in the near future!

Considering how each and every one of his teacher’s students was so outstanding, who could dare claim to be able to rival him?

Listening to Zhang Jiuxiao’s response, the First Elder naturally attributed it to the innate respect that a student would have toward their teacher, and he simply smiled politely at those words, not bothering to refute them. He flicked his wrist and passed a token over. “Since your teacher wishes not for his identity to be revealed, I won’t question you any further on the matter either. However, the fact still remains that he has helped us groom such an outstanding offspring in our Zhang Clan, so there’s no questioning that he’s a great benefactor of our Zhang Clan!

“This is our highest honorary guest token of our Zhang Clan; I hope that you can pass it over to him in my stead. As long as he holds this token in hand, any member of the Zhang Clan who encounters him will have to accord him the utmost respect and fulfill his demands to the best of their ability!”

“Thank you, First Elder!” Seeing that the other party had chosen not to pursue this issue, Zhang Jiuxiao heaved a sigh of relief and took the token.

Despite the small size of the token, it was actually much heavier than it looked. It carried an air of history to it, reminiscent of an ancient artifact. With just a glance, it was apparent that it was an extremely valuable item.

“In the entire history of the Zhang Clan, we have only given out this honorary guest token thrice. It’s in view of the fact that

he's your teacher and his ability to groom you to be such an outstanding individual that we have decided to show the utmost goodwill of our clan," the First Elder said grimly.

In terms of the sheer purity of bloodline, Zhang Jiuxiao could be said to nearly be on par with the young prodigy back then. With such a figure amid their ranks, it seemed like the Zhang Clan's greatness would be secured for the next millennium to come. Not only so, the issue that they had been worrying about all along would also be successfully resolved!

On this in itself, Zhang Jiuxiao's teacher was indeed a benefactor of the Zhang Clan.

Putting aside an honorary guest token, as long as the other party's demands were not too overboard, the Zhang Clan would surely try their best to fulfill his needs.

"I understand!" Zhang Jiuxiao nodded.

Considering that his teacher was a Celestial Master Teacher, he was bound to be a figure who would stand at the very top of the Master Teacher Continent in the end. Naturally, it was only right for the Zhang Clan to fawn over him.

"I won't pursue the matter concerning the identity of your teacher, but there's one matter that I need you to explain to me." The First Elder looked at Zhang Jiuxiao sternly before continuing on. "I heard that you were with the Sanctum of Sages' Zhang Xuan last night. Do you know where he is at the moment? Also, what were the both of you doing?"

That Zhang Xuan was truly the herald of catastrophe. The Zhang Clan had to tread carefully around him, or else, before they knew it, everything around them would be turned to rubble. Naturally, they had to keep a close eye on his whereabouts so as to guard against him.

As for associating Zhang Xuan together with Zhang Jiuxiao's teacher... honestly speaking, such a thought had never flashed across the First Elder's mind.

In his view, Zhang Xuan could only be considered a slightly more talented youngster. How could he possibly be able to

achieve something that even he and Yang shi were incapable of pulling off?

Not to mention, considering how talented Zhang Jiuxiao was, he surely did not have to take someone younger and weaker than him as his teacher!

“Te... Zhang shi is a close friend of mine. I visited him last night in order to ask him about some matters, but we went our separate ways shortly after. I’m not too sure about where he went afterward,” Zhang Jiuxiao replied.

“You aren’t too sure?” the First Elder asked with a frown. He was just about to continue questioning Zhang Jiuxiao when he suddenly raised his eyebrows. Following which, he whipped out his token and took a swift glance at it before turning his gaze back to Zhang Jiuxiao. “You have just undergone the lightning tribulation and utilized your unique bloodline, so your body is currently quite frail. For the time being, you can use this room to recuperate from your injuries. I have some matters to attend to at the moment, so I’ll have to take my leave for a short while.”

After which, the First Elder took out a pill and passed it over to Zhang Jiuxiao. “This is a pill specially forged for our clan members. It has the effect of allowing one to quickly recover from the side effects of activating one’s unique bloodline. Under normal circumstances, a Zhang Clan member who has activated their bloodline would have to recuperate for an entire month before they regain their fighting prowess and are able to continue cultivating, but this medicine allows one to make a full recovery within just ten days! Of course, given the higher purity of your bloodline, you should be able to recover fully within just three days!”

Just like the Luo Clan, the activation of the Zhang Clan’s bloodline would require at least a whole month’s rest before one was able to make a full recovery.

In view of this problem, for many generations, the Sage Clans had been trying to formulate a medicine that could alleviate this problem, and after much research, they had finally managed to create this pill. It could allow one to swiftly

recover from the side effects of the activation of their unique bloodline, but unfortunately, the medicinal herbs required to forge the pill were simply too valuable, such that, unless it was an extremely important situation, not even core members of the Zhang Clan like Zhang Chun were allowed to use one.

Only the older generation of the Zhang Clan had access to the pill.

It was only upon hearing those words that Zhang Jiuxiao finally realized how exhausted and fatigued he was. He had been so preoccupied with dealing with the First Elder that he had not realized that his body was completely sapped of energy. Thus, he swallowed the pill without any hesitation.

As soon as the pill melted within his body, a warm and powerful surge of medicinal energy suffused his entire body, slowly replenishing his depleted energy. Gradually, his withered aura recovered.

“What a fine medicine!” Zhang Jiuxiao could not help but exclaim as he felt his injured body and depleted bloodline recovering at a visible pace.

“It indeed is!” Seeing how fast Zhang Jiuxiao was recovering, the First Elder nodded in satisfaction. After which, he turned around and left the room.

Not too long later, he encountered Zhang Wuchen, who was heading in his direction, and he immediately asked severely, “Has Zhang Xuan returned to his accommodation?”

“Yes, I have just checked on it,” Zhang Wuchen said. “Has Zhang Jiuxiao explained the reason behind his sudden surge in cultivation?”

“It seems like he has acknowledged a formidable expert as his teacher,” the First Elder said.

“An expert?”

“Yes. I have no idea what means that person used, but he was actually able to alter the purity of Zhang Jiuxiao’s bloodline. I can’t say for sure at the moment, but I suspect that there’s a spy in our clan!” The First Elder harrumphed coldly.

“Someone discreetly took Zhang Jiuxiao into the Blood Reservoir in order to temper Zhang Jiuxiao’s bloodline... This means that there’s someone on the inside liaising with Zhang Jiuxiao’s teacher!”

There were currently two possibilities. Either Zhang Jiuxiao’s teacher was an elder of the Zhang Clan, or Zhang Jiuxiao’s teacher was liaising with someone within the Zhang Clan to access the Blood Reservoir.

Furthermore, since Zhang Jiuxiao did not leave the clan last night, his teacher was likely to currently be in the clan as well.

Regardless of which of the two possibilities it was, it meant that there was someone in the Zhang Clan working behind their backs.

“The art of removing a unique bloodline and grafting it over to another individual is an ability that very few people in the clan know of. Do you suspect that it’s one of them?” Zhang Wuchen exclaimed in shock.

“It’s hard to say for sure. This art has been passed down since ancient times, so even I can’t say for sure whether the art has been leaked out to others or not. However, I have already prepared countermeasures against the matter. In the honorary guest token that I have passed to Zhang Jiuxiao, I have hidden just a tinge of my will. If a foreign hand comes into contact with it, I’ll be alerted of the matter immediately,” the First Elder said with a wave of his hand.

“Then... how should we deal with Zhang Jiuxiao?” Zhang Wuchen asked.

“I have checked his bloodline, and there’s no doubt that he possesses the purest bloodline in the Zhang Clan at the very moment. Regardless of how he obtained his bloodline, he is already one of the top geniuses of our clan. From this day onward, the Zhang Clan shall devote its resources into grooming him so as to push him toward a breakthrough to Saint 9-dan or even higher before the end of the year. Afterward, we shall have him take the young prodigy’s place in the engagement,” the First Elder said.

“Given his strength, there’s probably no one in the younger generation who’s able to match him. He’s indeed the best choice we have to complete the engagement we have with the Luo Clan,” Zhang Wuchen said with a nod. “Then, what about his relationship with Zhang Xuan?”

“Based on what I’ve gathered so far, it seems like the both of them are only acquaintances, so there’s no need to be too concerned about that. Bring me to meet him! If he’s willing to pledge loyalty to the Zhang Clan and support Zhang Jiuxiao, he will indeed become an invaluable asset to our Zhang Clan. Otherwise, we’ll have to send him on his way as soon as possible so that he doesn’t cause any more damage!”

At this point, the First Elder’s eyes turned cold as he continued. “Even if he’s Yang Shi’s student, I have no mercy whatsoever toward those who intend to harm the Zhang Clan!”

1465 A Challenge from Zhang Xuan

Oblivious to the huge commotion that his disappearance had caused to the upper echelons of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Xuan reverted to his original appearance and returned to his accommodation.

He had not been out for too long, just from the previous night till the morning, but out of fear that Zhang Jiuxiao would err in his cultivation, he had been watching over the latter very intently. As a result, he was feeling rather spent at the moment.

“Zhang shi, one of the genius sword practitioners of the Zhang Clan has come to visit, and he has been waiting for you for quite a while now!”

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked into the main hall, Jian Qinsheng immediately walked over to inform him.

“A challenger has come knocking? Got it.” Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

With Zhang Jiuxiao’s abrupt breakthrough to the Dimension Sundering realm, there was no longer any meaning in continuing with the tournament—its goal had already been met. Given so, it was indeed about time to move on to the next activity.

Zhang Xuan followed Jian Qinsheng into a room and saw three young men standing within it. Their taut backs and sharp auras made it feel as if they were three swords towering on the spot, biding their time for the correct moment to reveal their sharp edges.

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked in, the three young men immediately turned their heads over, and one of them stepped forward. “Are you Zhang Xuan? I heard that you are here to challenge our Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship.”

This young man had a thin frame, slightly resembling a sickly young man. There was a red mole at the side of his lips that gave his face a rather incongruous feeling on the whole.

“Indeed,” Zhang Xuan said as he leisurely walked to the main seat and sat down. He glanced at the trio before him casually as he discreetly drove his zhenqi to recover his strength.

“I am Zhang Xu, and these two beside me are Zhang Hen and Zhang Qin. We have spent several years studying swordsmanship together, and we would like to challenge you to a fair duel!” the red mole young man, Zhang Xu, said.

“Fine by me!” Zhang Xuan nodded. “Are you all intending to come at me one at a time, or do you want to save some time and come at once?”

When Zhang Xuan agreed to follow Jian Qinsheng to the Zhang Clan, other than to cause the Zhang Clan some trouble so as to get back at them for making light of Luo Ruoxin, he had also been interested to see just what level their swordsmanship had reached and just what was so special about the Speed Sword Quintessence.

“Arrogant!” Zhang Xu spat coldly.

It was one thing for the young man to ignore them when he came in, walking straight to the main seat as if they did not exist at all, but now, he was even claiming that he could deal with all three of them at once! This was a huge blow to their pride, and displeased looks appeared on the faces of the trio.

“Considering how you are Yang Shi’s direct disciple and the successor of the Flowing Water Swordsmanship, your swordsmanship shouldn’t be too bad. Allow me, Zhang Qin, to challenge you first!”

Unable to take on any longer, Zhang Qin took a step forward and flicked his sword, which produced a metallic reverberation in the air.

“Before we fight, do you dare accept my bet?”

“Bet? What do you want to bet on?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“I do know some things regarding you. From the moment you came to the Zhang Clan, you have been causing great damage here and there,” Zhang Qin said. “The Defense Formation that protects the entrance of the Zhang Clan and the guest area has been completely ruined by you.

“While the First Elder and the other seniors are magnanimous enough to let those matters pass, I’m not so kind as to simply let someone who wreaked havoc in the Zhang Clan get away scot-free.

“Thus, what I propose is very simple. We’ll have a duel on our swordsmanship, and if our Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship proves to be superior to yours, you’ll have to vow to devote your life to the Zhang Clan, never to betray it. On the other hand, if you emerge victorious, our lives will be yours to deal with. At the same time, we’ll also forget about the damage that you have caused the Zhang Clan so far!”

“You want me to vow to devote my life to the Zhang Clan?” Zhang Xuan nearly burst into laughter.

From those words, it was apparent that the duel was merely a cover. In truth, the Zhang Clan was just using it as an excuse to force him to swear loyalty to them.

Otherwise, how could those three of the younger generation possibly be qualified to make a call on such an important matter?

“Do you accept the bet or not?” Zhang Qin sneered.

“I’m fine with it, but I’m afraid that your lives mean nothing at all to me. So, I want you to fulfill two of my demands if I win instead,” Zhang Xuan said nonchalantly.

Zhang Qin immediately shot a glance at Zhang Xu to seek his opinion on the matter, and the latter raised his hand and said with a frown, “Speak.”

Clearly, Zhang Xu was the de facto leader of the trio.

“Firstly, I wish to browse through the manuals of your Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Our Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship was created by our founder, and those who doesn’t possess the Zhang Clan bloodline won’t be able to practice it. If you wish to see it, I can show you the manuals. However, how much you manage to comprehend will be up to your own aptitude,” Zhang Xu said with a nod.

It would be nigh impossible to practice the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship if one did not possess the bloodline required for it. Even if they showed it all to the young man, it was unlikely that the young man would be able to make sense of it. As such, there were no qualms about showing the young man the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship’s manuals.

“Good!” Zhang Xuan nodded. “As for the second point, I want to challenge your clan head, the Xing Sword Saint, to a sword duel with his cultivation suppressed to my level!”

Even if he could not challenge the young prodigy, the least he could do was challenge the Xing Sword Saint and help Jian Qinsheng vent his frustrations.

Even though he was not too sure how proficient the Xing Sword Saint was in swordsmanship, he did not think that the latter would still be a match for him after he browsed through the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship manuals and comprehended three different types of Sword Quintessence.

“You wish to challenge our clan head?”

The second request placed the trio on a spot as they glanced at one another with uncertainty.

They were only members of the Zhang Clan; they could not possibly make a decision on behalf of their clan head.

“If you need to, go ahead and contact the person who sent you here to see if that can be done. If you are able to accept my second demand, I’ll take you up on your bet. Otherwise, I don’t think that there’s any reason I should waste my time here with you all!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand casually.

Those words made the trio gnash their teeth together in anger. Zhang Xu suppressed his rage and spat out, “Very well, wait here a moment.”

Zhang Xu walked out of the room, and as soon as he was outside, he immediately took out his Communication Jade Token to send a message over.

“Zhang shi, you mustn’t agree to their duel!” During this period of silence, Jian Qinsheng anxiously sent a telepathic message over.

“Didn’t you invite me here to compete against their swordsmanship?” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

“There’s a trap with their words. They said ‘if our Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship proves to be superior to yours’ rather than that if they were to defeat you. If they dispatch the First Elder against you and defeat you using the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship, won’t that still count as their victory?” Jian Qinsheng remarked anxiously.

While Zhang Qin might have appeared a little reckless, his words had been carefully crafted to corner Zhang Xuan.

Based on what he had said, it meant that Zhang Xuan would only be victorious if no one was able to defeat him using the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship. Their defeat would only represent their individual loss, and they could bring in more proficient sword practitioners to challenge him. As long as one of their members defeated him eventually, it would mean that it was their victory!

Clearly, those were terms that were deeply unfair to Zhang Xuan!

“It’s fine. I only worry that they dare not challenge me,” Zhang Xuan replied nonchalantly.

How could he possibly miss such an obvious verbal trap himself? The reason he had gone along with it was because he wanted to see just how formidable the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship was!

Besides, if he was going to make a move, he might as well go all the way and grind fear deep into their minds!

While he was exchanging messages with Jian Qinsheng, Zhang Wuchen seemed to have received a reply on his end too.

...

“Competing with the clan head? Does he really think that he will be able to defeat Zhang Xu and the others?” Zhang Wuchen shook his head.

“Regardless of who wins, this matter concerns the clan head, and it would be inappropriate for us to speak on his behalf. I’ll send a message to the clan head and have him decide on the matter,” the First Elder said.

He might have been the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, but he would be overstepping his boundaries if he made a promise on behalf of the clan head. No matter what, he still had to consult the clan head on this matter

“That’s a good decision. Given that it has been less than two days since our clan head left, he shouldn’t be too far away. If we send a message over right now, he should be able to receive it easily,” Zhang Wuchen said with a nod of his head.

...

In the skies countless li away from the Zhang Clan, an aerial saint beast was surging ahead. Two figures could be seen standing on its back, a middle-aged man and a middle-aged lady. The middle-aged man seemed to have sensed something and took out a jade token.

The beautiful middle-aged lady standing beside him turned her gaze over and asked, “What’s wrong?”

“It’s nothing much. The Third Elder sent a message to me, saying that Jian Qinsheng has brought a talented sword practitioner this time around, and that fellow demanded to challenge me if he manages to emerge victorious over Zhang Xu and the others.” The middle-aged man shook his head with a light chuckle.

“Zhang Xu has received both our impartation, so there are very few sword practitioners of the same cultivation level who will be a match for him,” the middle-aged lady remarked. “It’s already questionable whether he’s able to defeat Zhang Xu, but he still dares challenge you. It seems like the person whom

Jian Qinsheng has brought over this time around is quite a haughty individual!”

“Hahaha, it’s good for youngsters to have such gusto!” The middle-aged man chuckled heartily, not offended by the fact that a junior had brazenly challenged him to a duel.

“That being said, Jian Qinsheng isn’t a reckless individual. Since the sword practitioner whom he brought over dared to issue such a challenge, that person might just possess the skills to back those words. Ask him what the name of the sword practitioner is. The both of us know most of the outstanding sword practitioners of the younger generation, so I’m really quite curious about just who is so confident as to challenge you to a battle,” the middle-aged lady said.

“Let me ask!”

The middle-aged man sent a message back, and a moment later, his jade token trembled. A name surfaced on the jade token, and upon seeing it, the middle-aged man’s body froze on the spot.

“What’s wrong?” the middle-aged lady asked, bewildered by her companion’s response.

With a hoarse voice, the middle-aged man replied, “The Third Elder said that the person who seeks to challenge me... goes by the name of Zhang Xuan!”

1466 Next!

“Zhang Xuan?” The middle-aged lady was taken aback by that name as well, and her body stiffened. “Is it the same person whom Hu Yiwei spoke of?”

“Jian Qinsheng came from the Sanctum of Sages as well, so the person he brought is most likely him. To think that we missed each other by such a close shot!” the middle-aged man exclaimed with a bitter smile.

The reason why they had ignored the objections of the elders within the clan to head to the Sanctum of Sages was to find Zhang Xuan and see if he was the person whom they had missed for twenty whole years... But who could have thought that the person they were looking for would actually head to their clan instead!

If they hadn't chosen to willfully leave the clan back then, they might have already met him by now!

More importantly, on their way here, they even encountered Jian Qinsheng's aerial saint beast, but as if fate was playing a trick on them, they missed him just like that.

Had they known this would happen, they should have paid a greeting to Jian Qinsheng when they heard that he was in the vicinity.

“Since he's in the Zhang Clan, let's hurry back now!” the middle-aged lady urged anxiously.

It was fortunate that they had found out early, or else it would be too late for tears once they reached the Sanctum of Sages, only to find out that the person they were looking for wasn't there.

Hula!

Hearing the order, the aerial saint beast they were riding on hurriedly made a u-turn and flew its way back to the Zhang Clan.

“Quick, ask the Third Elder what kind of person Zhang Xuan is, what he looks like, and how his personality is!”

Seeing that the saint beast was swiftly making its way back, the middle-aged lady heaved a sigh of relief. She turned her gaze back to the middle-aged man and asked anxiously.

As if having guessed what his wife was worrying over, the middle-aged man took her hand and squeezed it tightly before saying, “Rest assured. Since Hu Yiwei has confirmed it, there’s a good chance that it’s the real one this time around.”

The middle-aged lady looked at her husband, but she couldn’t help but shake her head, “I know, but I still can’t help but worry...”

“In the past two decades that we have spent looking for him, we have been disappointed so many times, so what does one more count as? Besides, even if it isn’t him, he’s bound to have some kind of relationship with our child!” the middle-aged man said.

“Not to mention, the chances are pretty high this time around. Otherwise, how could he be so formidable as to astound even Hu Yiwei if he hasn’t inherited my genes?”

“Pfft!” Hearing those words, the middle-aged lady’s worried frown collapsed into laughter, and she patted her husband’s chest and said, “Stop getting narcissistic over here!”

Hu!

The Communication Jade Token flickered once more as information was sent over. The middle-aged man tapped on it lightly, and a video slowly played out before the duo.

The video showed a young man walking majestically into the Zhang Clan’s Defense Formation, and shortly afterward, the Dragon Spirit submitted to him, and the Tiger Spirit dissipated into nothing. A short moment later, countless buildings collapsed behind him.

At this point, the young man slowly turned his body around, revealing what that would have been considered as a nonchalant face if not for the slight hint of haughtiness and glee in his eyes.

“It’s him! It must be him!” Upon seeing the young man’s appearance, the middle-aged lady’s body jerked in astonishment. She clasped her mouth with her hands, seemingly unable to control her rampaging emotions.

“But his appearance looks neither like yours nor mine. I don’t think...” the middle-aged man said with a deep frown.

But before he could finish his words, the middle-aged lady had already interjected in agitation, “His appearance might not bear much resemblance to yours and mine, but his eyes are the exact same as how I remembered them to be when he was younger. I am certain of it, there’s no way I can be wrong about this!”

For the past twenty years, she had seen that pair of eyes thousands of times in her dreams, to the point that they were carved right in her mind. His appearance might have changed drastically over the years, but she was certain that those pair of eyes definitely belonged to her son!

Not only so, there was also an instinctive jolt in her heart when she first caught sight of him, and she believed that her feeling wouldn’t lie to her.

Perhaps this was the natural bond between a parent and a child, a connection that couldn’t be severed even with time.

“But... the Third Elder has brought him over to the Blood Reservoir, and it was shown that not only does he not possess our Zhang Clan bloodline, but even his soul showed no signs of resonating with the Time Quintessence as well. It’s almost certain that he has nothing to do with our Zhang Clan!” the middle-aged man was comparatively more rational as he tried reasoning with his wife.

“Blood Reservoir?” the middle-aged lady scoffed in utmost derision. “Those bastards actually still have the cheek to talk about that? Have they forgotten how they have treated my ill-fated child back then? Even if he has survived the ordeal, there’s no way he would have any Zhang Clan bloodline in him, so it goes without saying he has nothing to do with your Zhang Clan anymore! But my blood still flows in his body, and I know for sure that he’s my child!”

“Since you are certain about it, that should probably be the case then. However, it appears that Zhang Xuan is a particularly worrisome individual. In less than a day since he has arrived in the Zhang Clan, he has already raised a couple of incidents, resulting in many buildings being torn to the ground!” Seeing how adamant his wife was on the matter, the middle-aged man wisely decided not to argue with her on this matter.

He continued to browse through the remaining content on the token and shook his head, “It seems like the First Elder has decided to have Zhang Xu and the others teach him a lesson so as to make him learn that the prowess of our Zhang Clan.”

“The prowess of your Zhang Clan? How dare that Zhang Wuheng lay his hands on my son? If a strand of hair were to fall from my son, I swear on my name, Wang Mengya, that I’m going to tear down your Zhang Clan’s ancestral hall!” the middle-aged lady narrowed her eyes menacingly as a domineering aura burst forth from her body.

Under the tremendous pressure of her aura, the aerial saint beast stiffened in fright, and it ended up plummeting for several hundred meters before it finally managed to find the strength within itself to remain afloat.

“I understand your feelings, but there’s no meaning in us arguing about all this right now. We have to see with our own eyes to confirm whether Zhang Xuan is truly our son or not!” the middle-aged man said as he patted his wife’s back to calm her down.

After which, he instructed the aerial saint beast beneath him to speed up back to the Zhang Clan before falling silent.

...

“Our clan head has already agreed to your demand! As long as you are able to defeat us, he’ll face you in a swordsmanship duel!”

Zhang Xu and the others walked back into the room.

“Good! Let’s not waste any time and get on with it then!” A smile crept on Zhan Xuan’s lips as he stood up and walked to

the center of the room. He beckoned toward the trio with his finger as he asked, “Who’s going first?”

“Me!” Zhang Qin stepped forward with a powerful bellow.

With a simple flick of his wrist, a white trail was dragged out along with the motion of his sword.

“Formidable...”

Even though the battle hadn’t started at all, Jian Qinsheng could tell from Zhang Qin’s simple gesture that none of his students would be able to match up with the latter,

“I’ll suppress my cultivation down to your level right now.” Zhang Qin took in a deep breath and suppressed his cultivation down to the same level as Zhang Xuan, Grand Dominion realm pinnacle.

“Draw your sword!” Zhang Qin said as he pointed his sword toward Zhang Xuan.

“There’s no need for me to use my sword to deal with you. My fingers will suffice!” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he raised his forefinger and middle finger up.

A surge of zhenqi flowed in between his fingers, forming a projection of roughly three chi long, around the same length as a sword.

“You’re courting death!” Seeing how Zhang Xuan dared to underestimate him, Zhang Qin harrumphed in anger.

He unhesitatingly drove his sword right toward Zhang Xuan.

Tzla!

In an instant, it seemed like time had frozen. Both Zhang Qin’s silhouette and his sword seemed to vanish from sight, undetectable through both sight and Spiritual Perception.

“Zhang shi, be careful!” Jian Qinsheng could immediately tell that Zhang Qin had already executed the Speed Sword Quintessence, and he swiftly sent a telepathic message over to warn Zhang Xuan.

Most of his students had lost to this very sword move. In fact, most of them didn’t even have time to put up their defenses

before they were defeated.

And to make things worse, Zhang Qin had used his strongest move right from the start. There was a good chance that Zhang Xuan would be caught off guard and wounded by the move...

If that were to happen, things could get really troublesome!

Peng!

Just as Jian Qinsheng was panicking, a dull thud suddenly sounded. Following which, the vanished Zhang Qin was suddenly sent flying out of the battlegrounds, and he fell headfirst into a nearby wall. On the other hand, Zhang Xuan appeared as if he hadn't moved at all, and a calm expression could be seen on his face.

“Easier than I thought. Next!” “Three chi ~ 1 meters

1467 The Zhang Clan's Swordsmanship

“You...”

Seeing the upside-down, already fainted Zhang Qin, the looks of Zhang Xu and Zhang Hen's face froze in place. In this moment, they found themselves unable to utter even a single word.

All along, they felt that no matter how talented Zhang Xuan was in swordsmanship, there wouldn't be too much of a disparity between his skills and theirs. After all, they were also renowned swordsmanship geniuses themselves too!

Yet, who could have thought that despite Zhang Qin using his full strength right from the start, he would still be defeated in just a single move! Not to mention, the other party didn't even use his sword qi—he simply sent a kick right over... and it was all over!

“Let me try your skills!” Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xu bucked up his courage and walked forward.

He knew Zhang Qin's fighting prowess very well. While the latter paled in comparison to him in swordsmanship, he could still be considered as a top-notch expert. Despite so, Zhang Xuan still managed to defeat him without drawing his sword. Given so, there was no way Zhang Hen would stand a match against him.

Thus, he decided to step forward and face the other party.

But in this moment, Zhang Hen stepped forward as well and said, “Allow me to fight him first. Even if I can't defeat him, I'll at least force him to execute his swordsmanship. This way, you'll stand a better chance at victory!”

“Don't bother. The both of you can come at me together!” Seeing how the two young men were bickering with one another as to who should go first, Zhang Xuan waved his hand

impatiently. “I still have to cultivate, so I don’t have the leisure to be spending my time fooling around with you two!”

As he spoke, he opened up his acupoints to absorb the rich spiritual energy in the surroundings.

“Hmph! Since that’s what you asked for, don’t blame us for not going easy on you then!” Knowing the limitations of their strength, Zhang Xu and Zhang Hen didn’t turn down Zhang Xuan’s offer due to their pride.

They shot a glance at one another before walking up to the middle of the room together.

“Considering your earlier move, it would indeed be difficult for us to defeat you individually. Just to avoid any contention later on, while the both of us will be coordinating with one another against you, the moves we will use would still be in the scope of the Zhang Clan swordsmanship, so there won’t be any breach in the rules!” Zhang Xu said.

After which, he clasped his fist and bowed slightly as a show of courtesy toward his opponent.

“Let’s start!” Zhang Xuan said impatiently.

He had known all along that the Zhang Clan was shameless, so they were bound to find all kinds of excuses to put a righteous name to whatever they did. As such, he couldn’t be bothered to argue with Zhang Xu on what constituted as fair play.

Zhang Xu and Zhang Hen swiftly suppressed their cultivation down to Grand Dominion realm pinnacle, and with a powerful push, they dashed forward in diverging directions and flanked Zhang Xuan from both sides. A screeching moan echoed loudly in the air as they slashed their swords viciously down upon Zhang Xuan.

On the surface, it might appear as if there was nothing unique about their swordsmanship, perhaps a little slow even, but their attacks were ingeniously directed right at Zhang Xuan’s blind spots. No matter how he attempted to maneuver out of the situation, they would still be able to swiftly alter their moves accordingly and continue cornering him further.

True speed wasn't just about swinging one's sword in the fastest way possible but launching effective attacks in rapid succession.

"This is... the Xingmeng Swordsmanship!" Qin Jiansheng exclaimed in astonishment.

The Xingmeng couple were known for their astounding expertise in swordsmanship. Just the fact that even Yang Shi was full of praises for them was sufficient to show just how powerful they were.

The swordsmanship that Zhang Xu and Zhang Hen were pulling off at the moment was a sword art that the two of them had come up with. While this sword art wasn't as fast as the other moves in the Zhang Clan swordsmanship, its sharp movements and flexibility in adapting to any situation made it a frightening adversary to face.

Putting everything aside, if the two of them were of the same cultivation realm as him, even he would have no choice but to admit defeat to them!

The Xingmeng Swordsmanship was named after its two creators, and its conception was centered around the capricious nature of life, an endless series of ups and downs, as if a mere dreamy illusion. If executed well, putting aside its astounding physical prowess, it had the ability to sway one's Primordial Spirit and place one into an unstable state of mind. Just on this basis, those of weak minds would stand no chance against it at all!

"Your swordsmanship is not too bad!" Zhang Xuan nodded his head slightly in approval.

The swordsmanship of the duo left Zhang Xuan with a disoriented feeling as if he was transcending through history, watching as countless dynasties rose and fell before his eyes. Countless grand buildings ascended and collapsed before his eyes... Wealth and power, these were things that humans had always been fixated with, but in the face of time, it seemed like none of these mattered at all. Even the greatest of splendor would eventually be buried under the sands of time.

Had it been anyone else facing such an attack, no matter how resilient their mental fortitude was, they would still find themselves in a distraught state under the attack. However, Zhang Xuan was an exception to the rule.

Not even inner demons were able to faze him, let alone an attack of this caliber!

He remained perfectly conscious before the attack of the duo. As if a mere spectator of those passing sights, he calmly tore his sword through facade after facade, seemingly tearing down dynasty after dynasty.

Pu! Pu!

Zhang Xu and Zhang Hen's faces paled as blood spewed from their lips. They found that their swords had, at some point in time, flown out of their grip and plunged into the wall behind them, trembling ceaselessly from the impact.

As powerful as their collaborative swordsmanship was, it was simply still too weak before Zhang Xuan. He was able to easily destroy their conceptualization and inflict grievous damage on them.

"We have lost..." Zhang Xu muttered despondently as he retreated several steps back.

At this point, it was clear that they didn't stand a chance against the young man before him at all.

He thought that after comprehending the Speed Sword Quintessence and inheriting the clan head's swordsmanship, he would be matchless amidst the younger generation. But before this young man, all of his strength that he had taken pride in just seemed so laughable, as if he was just a small kid playing house.

The young man's comprehension of the sword had exceeded them by far too much, to the point where he didn't how he could start breaching the gap between them.

"You have lost," Zhang Xuan said. "I hope that you will carry out your end of the bet and bring me to browse through your Zhang Clan swordsmanship manuals."

While he did manage to get some insight as to what the Speed Sword Quintessence consisted of from his brief clash with Zhang Xu and the others, he would still have to browse through the books in question in order to compile a Heaven's Path Sword Art and learn it.

“Don't worry, I'm not one to break my promises,” Zhang Xu shook his head and said. “However, you are only allowed to browse through our books for at most two hours. I'm afraid that this is the longest duration I can buy for you given the limitations of my authority!”

While it was indeed impossible for those who didn't have the Zhang Clan bloodline to learn the Zhang Clan swordsmanship, no matter what, they couldn't have outsiders browse their manuals so casually and spread it around. From the very start, Zhang Xu had already decided to grant Zhang Xuan only two hours at most when he promised the latter's request.

Within such a short period of time, it would be impossible for anyone to make sense of something as profound as the Zhang Clan swordsmanship.

“It's fine.” Knowing Zhang Xu's intentions, Zhang Xuan couldn't be bothered to say anything more.

In any case, he only needed to sweep his gaze past a book in order to collect it into his Library of Heaven's Path. Two hours should be more than enough for him to take everything away.

“This way, please.”

Seeing that Zhang Xuan had agreed to it, Zhang Xu and the others swiftly led him over to a vast hall. Within the hall was a room which bore some resemblance to the one which Jian Qinsheng had brought him to back in his residence. At the very center of the room as a massive ‘**劍**’ (Sword) character.

This ‘**劍**’ (Sword) character had a vastly different aura from the ones left behind by the Old Sword Maestro and Jian Liushui. It was a sensation a little like a flitting surge of light, somewhat similar to that of lightning, and it felt as if it would slip away as soon as one averted one's gaze away from it.

“Here are the manuals which our founder has left behind. If you possess the aptitude to our Zhang Clan swordsmanship, you’ll be able to naturally grasp it. Otherwise, there’s nothing I can do to help you either,” Zhang Xu said.

“Un.” Zhang Xuan waved his hand perfunctorily in response.

The more profound a school of swordsmanship was, the greater the importance a sword practitioner’s aptitude played in comprehending it. For something of the level of the Zhang Clan swordsmanship, without a certain level of disposition toward it, it would be impossible for one to comprehend it.

Similar to that of the Sword Lagoon, beneath the ‘劍’ (Sword)’ character, there were many texts detailing the insights that preceding sword practitioners had grasped while practicing the swordsmanship so as to inspire the later generations.

With a swift sweeping glance, Zhang Xuan collected all of these texts into a book into the Library of Heaven’s Path.

He lightly flipped the compiled book open and began browsing through it.

“He can’t really be trying to learn our Zhang Clan swordsmanship, can he?” Seeing the serious look on Zhang Xuan’s face, Zhang Qin turned to Zhang Hen and whispered worriedly.

The current Zhang Qin had already awoken from the blow he had sustained in the duel he had with Zhang Xuan previously. While his head was still hurting a little from the impact, he was already able to function as per normal.

“Our clan head is famed to be the most talented swordmaster in our clan over the past few millenniums, but nevertheless, it still took him three months before he could comprehend the Speed Sword Quintessence. There’s no way that fellow will be able to make sense out of our profound Zhang Clan swordsmanship in just two hours!” Zhang Hen replied calmly, completely unworried about this matter.

“Besides, he doesn’t possess our Zhang Clan bloodline, so there’s no way he’ll be able to comprehend the conceptualization of time in our swordsmanship!”

Zhang Xu also joined the conversation and analyzed, “Most likely, he just wants to browse through our books so as to uncover the flaws in our swordsmanship and gain an advantage in future duels!”

“Flaws? Our Zhang Clan swordsmanship has been practiced by many generations of predecessors, but no one has ever been able to truly curb our swordsmanship before. How can there possibly be flaws in our swordsmanship?” Zhang Qin scoffed.

Kacha!

Barely after those words were spoken, a crisp echo sounded. The alarmed crowd quickly raised their heads to search for the source of the sound, and very swiftly, they noticed a slight crack in the ‘劍’ (Sword) character in the middle of the room.

1468 Fusion of Quintessences

As soon as that crack appeared, the destruction could no longer be curbed. It swiftly grew larger and larger, and in less than two breath, it had already covered the entire character with a weblike pattern.

“This... What’s going on?” Zhang Xu and the others leaped in fright.

It was still doing fine just a moment ago, so why would the character be ruined all of a sudden?

“It’s you?”

The first one who came to be was Zhang Qin, and he hurriedly turned his head over to Zhang Xuan.

That fellow had been causing damage wherever he went, so there was no one else other than him! But still, to be able to reduce the ‘劍’ (Sword) character to such a state just by looking at it... It seemed like they had really been underestimating that fellow!

In this very moment, Zhang Xuan’s eyes were tightly shut. A powerful burst of imposing Sword Intent shot forth from his body into the sky, reminiscent of a powerful sword ascending toward the heavens. The Sword Intent he was releasing grew stronger and stronger at the moment, almost as if he was going to slice the heavens into two.

Weng weng weng!

The swords hanging on the wall began trembling non-stop, as if some kind of pressure was pressing down heavily on them, inducing the deepest of fears in them.

Not only so, Zhang Hen and the other also felt themselves losing control over the sword qi in their bodies, drawn toward the young man standing before them. It was as if there was some kind of massive magnet within the young man’s body,

wielding naturally command over all of the sword qi surrounding him.

“That is... Sword Quintessence?” Zhang Hen’s face paled.

“That can’t be! We have all comprehended Sword Quintessences, and there’s no way it could be so powerful!” Zhang Hen exclaimed in disbelief.

To be able to stand out amidst the Zhang Clan offspring in the field of swordsmanship, it went without saying that they had already comprehended Sword Quintessences. Even against the seniors of the Zhang Clan, they would still be able to stand their grounds.

But back when they were comprehending their respective Sword Quintessence, they didn’t induce such a frightening phenomenon either!

It was one thing to command the servitude of all swords, but to overpower their command over their sword qi and even induce cracks in the ‘劍’ (Sword) character... One must know that they had comprehended Sword Quintessence themselves, and the ‘劍’ (Sword) character was left behind by the founder of the Zhang Clan!

This was already far beyond what an ordinary Sword Quintessence could do.

“Wait a moment! Could this be... Fusion of Quintessences?” Zhang Xu suddenly thought of something, and he couldn’t help but widen his eyes in astonishment.

“Fusion of Quintessences?”

The other two turned their heads over, unable to comprehend the term which Zhang Xu had just used.

“I believe you should have also heard that there are five categories of Sword Quintessences,” Zhang Xu said.

The other two nodded their heads.

Sword Quintessences could mainly be divided into Strength, Defense, Dexterity, Speed, and Void. This was something

which all swordmasters, which had comprehended at least a Sword Quintessence, would know of.

“It’s not too difficult for those who possess particular aptitude toward swordsmanship to comprehend a Sword Quintessence, but progressing beyond that would be of great difficulty, such that there are hardly any cases in the world. It’s rumored that both our clan head and Sword Saint Meng have comprehended two Sword Quintessences,” Zhang Xu continued with a slight hoarseness in his voice.

“However, there are also a few astoundingly talented swordmaster who has managed to advance beyond that... As long as one comprehends three Sword Quintessences, the individual Sword Quintessences would begin to fuse with one another, and the phenomenon is known as the Fusion of Quintessences! Any expert who manages to pull off this feat would find their mastery of swordsmanship progressing by leaps and bounds, reaching a level unimaginable by any sword practitioner...”

Hearing those words, Zhang Hen and Zhang Qin’s bodies quivered intensely as a look of disbelief surfaced on their faces, “Do you mean to say that... Zhang Xuan has managed to comprehend three Sword Quintessences?”

“How is that possible? He’s only twenty this year! Even if he were to start learning swordsmanship back in his mother’s womb, there’s no way he could possibly be able to pull this off!”

Even grasping a single Sword Quintessence had already taken them many years, and picking up a second Sword Quintessence would only be manyfold of that difficulty because one would have to consciously cast away one’s habits and fighting style in order to pull off a different style. Yet, for a twenty-year-old lad to master three Sword Quintessences and even pull off the Fusion of Quintessences... How could there be someone that monstrously talented in the world?

This was terrifying!

“Other than that, I can’t think of any other reason as to what is happening anymore!” Zhang Xu shook his head. At this point,

he pondered for a moment before continuing on, “If it’s really Fusion of Quintessences, the ‘劍 (Sword)’ character should reform very soon after it absorbs the further refined Sword Intent that Zhang Xuan is emanating...”

“Reform?”

The two of them were slightly surprised to hear those words.

“Even though our founder has already comprehended the Speed Sword Quintessence when he left behind this character, he knew that his mastery of swordsmanship wasn’t any close to perfection. Thus, he designed this character to fall apart automatically when an offspring of the Zhang Clan reaches a higher level of mastery than him in Speed Sword Quintessence, and it would be replaced with the other party’s deeper comprehension... I have heard of this matter directly from the clan head, so it should be true,” Zhang Xu said.

The reason why the founder had left behind the ‘劍 (Sword)’ character was so as to aid his descendants to be able to better grasp the Speed Sword Quintessence that he had passed down... But would his comprehension really be the best way to comprehend the Speed Sword Quintessence?

Of course not!

To put it plainly, this character only showed a path that a sword practitioner could take to comprehending the Speed Sword Quintessence. There was nothing to say that this path was the shortest or even the best one for one to take, and the founder recognized the limitations of his own comprehension too.

And the fact that the ‘劍 (Sword)’ character was cracking at this instant also proved that point as well.

If the power of the world was the greatest treasure that every man sought for, Quintessences could be considered as the pathway leading to the treasure. There were countless paths that one could take to the treasure, and as long as one knew the general direction, one would eventually reach the destination by pushing forth...

But every path was unique, and the amount of treasure one could toil back would depend on the path one had taken as well. Some paths were narrower than the others, so the amount of treasure they would be able to bring back home would be lesser. If a more convenient and wider path were to be found, wasn't the most natural thing to do was to make the switch over?

Huala!

While the three of them were speaking, the '剑' (Sword) character finally reached its limits and shattered apart.

Weng!

In the moment that the character shattered, another new surge of Sword Intent gushed into the clouds, and the overwhelming pressure held them perfectly in place. Following which, the Sword Intent that suffused the room began swiftly gathering on the wall, where the shattered '剑' (Sword) character previously was.

Tzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzzz!

In the blink of an eye, a new, massive character had already appeared on the wall.

From afar, the character, be it its shape, size, or form, was perfectly identical to the one before it. There was no discernible difference at all.

"What's going on?" Zhang Qin turned to Zhang Xu and asked, a little taken aback by the situation.

The replacing '剑' (Sword) character turned out to be perfectly identical to the previous one... Did this character really surpass the one that their founder had left behind?

"Don't use your eyes to see it. Use your Sword Intent to perceive it!" Seeing the uncomprehending look on Zhang Qin's face, Zhang Xu shook his head and explained.

"Use my Sword Intent to perceive it?"

Zhang Qin and Zhang Hen glanced at one another in confusion. They still weren't able to understand what Zhang

Xu was saying.

“In other words, look inward into your Sword Intent to feel the character on the wall!” Zhang Xu explained patiently.

“I see... I’ll give it a try.” With still a slightly perplexed look, Zhang Qin turned to the Sword Intent in his body and slowly extended it outward into his surroundings.

Very soon, his Sword Intent came into contact with the character on the wall, and in that instant, he froze on the spot.

It was almost as if the character had imprinted itself in his head as soon as he perceived it. Even though it appeared to be identical to the one before on the surface, the imposing air that it commanded previously had alleviated significantly.

In fact, it felt far simpler and purer than before, and the reduced complexity of the intent behind the character seemed to be more in harmony with the world.

Harnessing the very same concept of speed, but the reformed ‘劍 (Sword)’ character before him guided him right toward the core of the Speed Sword Quintessence.

It was almost as if he had turned into the concept itself, swimming amidst an ocean of sword qi.

Unknowingly, tears began trickling down Zhang Qin’s eyes as his body quivered from agitation. “I have actually erred so much in my comprehension of the Speed Sword Quintessence...”

To be able to perceive the crux of the Speed Sword Quintessence with his senses, he would have no regrets in life even if he were to drop dead in this instant!

This was what he was feeling in this instant.

It was only upon perceiving the character before him did he realize how laughable the diligence he had put into refining his swordsmanship over the years was.

If their founder’s comprehension of the Speed Sword Quintessence were to be described as a small hole barely big enough for a human to pass through, the one before him would

be the same as a vast passageway big enough for multiple horse carriages to charge their way through side by side!

If he were to use this feeling to practice his swordsmanship, he would definitely be able to improve at least two times faster than before!

For a twenty-year-old young man to be able to achieve a higher level of understanding of the Speed Sword Quintessence than them and even their founder within less than ten minutes...

This was inconceivable!

At this point, Zhang Qin couldn't help but turn his gaze toward the young man, only to see that the latter had finally lifted his head. He couldn't tell what was in the young man's mind, but an air of solitude, as if an expert who would never find an equal to converse with, seemed to flow from his body.

1469 Phantasmal Space Realm Pinnacle

“It’s too simple...” Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed.

Usually, even with the insights of many predecessors serving as a foundation, it would still take some time for him to achieve a breakthrough. However, this time around, everything had gone so smoothly that he had achieved a breakthrough within a few minutes without even realizing it. This was really at odds with his humble and low-profile personality.

He had been planning on holding it off for at least an entire hour so that the others would not be surprised—after all, it would not do for him to be too eye-catching. But who would have thought that it would be so easy, that just by swiftly browsing through the compiled book, he would somehow achieve a breakthrough?

Nothing seemed to be going his way that day.

Was it really that difficult for the world to just allow him to achieve a breakthrough a little slower so that he could maintain a low profile?

Was it really that difficult to be ordinary?

More importantly... why in the world did that ‘劍’ (Sword) character shatter while he was practicing his swordsmanship? What if the Zhang Clan demanded compensation?

Forget it! Since it has already come to this, there’s no point keeping a low profile anymore! Zhang Xuan thought with a shake of his head. Breakthrough!

Without any hesitation, he released the overwhelming energy that had been generated from the fusion of his Speed Sword Quintessence and the other Quintessences.

Hong long!

As his aura gushed into the sky, a furious gale whipped up in the surroundings as ominous clouds began gathering above. At the same time, Zhang Xuan's cultivation, which had remained stagnant for quite some time, began to surge forth, reminiscent of grass rising in the early spring or a butterfly breaking free of its cocoon.

“This is... the Phantasmal Space Ordeal? He's going to make a breakthrough?”

Zhang Xu and the others could hardly believe what they were seeing.

Not only did that fellow manage to master the Zhang Clan swordsmanship, he was even going to break his Grand Dominion realm bottleneck!

“This is a disaster! We are currently at the very center of the Zhang Clan; we can't allow his cultivation ordeal to fall here!”

Recovering from his shock, Zhang Xu suddenly realized the implications of Zhang Xuan's breakthrough and yelled in horror.

There was no doubt that lightning tribulations were among the most frightening forces on the Master Teacher Continent. While the devastation that they brought differed according to the cultivation realm, the main headache lay in that it was nigh impossible for an external party to control the damage—any attempts to interfere in the cultivation ordeal would only cause it to grow stronger!

It was already bad enough that the fellow had induced a Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal in the outer perimeters of the city, but they were currently in the clan vault, where countless secret manuals and heritages were stored!

Buildings could still be rebuilt, but these secret manuals and heritages could very well disappear for good once destroyed!

If Zhang Xuan failed to deal with the lightning tribulation carefully, this could pose a heavy, irreversible blow to the entire Zhang Clan!

Kacha!

The ominous clouds above their heads continued to grow denser at a terrifying pace, and a suffocating pressure crushed down on them, stifling them.

In the face of such stupendously great power, Zhang Xu could not help but tremble in fear.

He had seen plenty of Phantasmal Space Ordeals in the past—not to mention that he had even undergone one himself—but the storm clouds gathered before him were on a completely different level from what he had seen before. The wild lightning energy that crackled within them carried power that not even the Dimension Sundering Ordeal could compare to. In fact, in terms of the intensity of the lightning energy, it was already on par with the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal!

There was little doubt that the entire area would be reduced to dust if it really fell!

And the worst thing was that the lightning tribulation was still growing stronger!

Was this really just a Phantasmal Space Ordeal?

“How can it be so powerful?”

Watching the sight from the corners, the First Elder and Zhang Wuchen were stupefied by what they were seeing as well.

The power that the storm clouds harnessed was so great that it had already exceeded what they could cope with. At the same time, the formations protecting the vault were also creaking in protest under the pressure, on the verge of dissipation.

They quickly turned their gazes to the young man, but they did not see fear in the young man’s eyes. Instead, what they saw was intense excitement.

“He should be able to deal with it, right?” Zhang Wuchen asked worriedly.

“The cultivation ordeal that the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast underwent was slightly weaker than this, but he did manage to resolve it quite easily, so I don’t think this will be too much of a problem for him,” the First Elder replied uncertainly.

While the lightning tribulation drawn by the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's breakthrough had been powerful, it had still been slightly lacking compared to what was currently before them. Nevertheless, since the young man had been able to resolve the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal so easily, this should not pose a problem either.

Otherwise, he would not have been so confident.

"That would be for the best." Zhang Wuchen nodded hesitantly.

He had heard that the young man had resolved quite a few lightning ordeals to date, but he still could not help but feel a little worried. However, there was nothing that they could do, so they could only watch helplessly by the side and pray for the best.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was looking at the dense storm clouds above him as he scoffed in his mind. It seems like that fellow knows that it's my lightning tribulation, so he called everyone that's available over to join the party!

His recent absorption of the lightning tribulations seemed to have really angered the other party, such that the other party had been biding its time for this very day. Seeing that he had finally achieved a breakthrough, it immediately summoned everything that it had to put together something that was even more powerful than the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal.

However, this just so happened to work in Zhang Xuan's favor. The more lightning energy there was for him to absorb, the better it would be for him. With the sheer amount of lightning energy in the storm clouds, he should be able to push for a breakthrough straight to Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle!

There had still been a flaw in the Phantasmal Space realm Heaven's Path Divine Art previously, but the comprehension of the Speed Sword Quintessence happened to hold the key to resolving the flaw, allowing him to cultivate it without any worries.

“Come!” Zhang Xuan roared excitedly as he pushed himself off the ground to dive right into the storm clouds.

With a wave of his hand, his clone, the gourd, and the vine appeared around him. At the same time, he also separated his Primordial Spirit from his physical body, and together, they began digging into the feast of lightning energy around them.

Geji! Geji!

Zhang Xuan’s cultivation sprinted ahead, rising furiously to Phantasmal Space realm primary stage.

Phantasmal Space realm intermediate stage!

Phantasmal Space realm advanced stage!

Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle!

In less than two minutes, he had already reached Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle, a mere step away from reaching Half-Dimension Sundering realm.

At the same time, his Primordial Spirit also grew more wholesome. Even without cultivating the Phantasmal Space realm Heaven’s Path Soul Art, the sheer amount of energy that his Primordial Spirit had absorbed had already granted it strength equal to Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle.

Furthermore, under the tempering of the lightning energy, his physical body had gained a brilliant glow, as if it was made out of the toughest metal in the world. In terms of resilience, he would definitely be on par with any Saint pinnacle artifact.

But I have barely absorbed only a fifth of the energy in the lightning tribulation...

Zhang Xuan’s cultivation surged at an unprecedented rate, but the lightning energy around him was still showing no signs of declining. He could not help but frown in apprehension.

In the past, the lightning tribulation would swiftly flee in fear after realizing that it was being rapidly absorbed, not daring to fight back at all. But now... his cultivation had already risen by an entire realm, but there were still four-fifths of the lightning tribulation left. It appeared that the lightning tribulation was going to go to the very ends with him today.

Of course, his clone, the gourd, and the vine were absorbing the surrounding lightning energy furiously as well, but their efforts did not seem to pose too much of a threat to the lightning tribulation.

If it comes down to it, I might have to find a way to push for a breakthrough to the Dimension Sundering realm!

Making a rough estimate, a breakthrough to Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle would have taken him at least a hundred pinnacle spirit stones ordinarily, but the scale of the lightning tribulation before him had far exceeded what he had seen in the past.

At the current rate that they were absorbing its energy at, they would not be able to scare the lightning tribulation away.

To make matters worse, his body and Primordial Spirit were already reaching their absorption limits. Unless he made a breakthrough, he would not be able to absorb any more lightning energy.

However, the problem was that he had not read any Dimension Sundering realm cultivation techniques yet, so he had absolutely no idea how he should cultivate and push for a breakthrough.

With this, Zhang Xuan was caught in a dilemma.

In the past, his problem had always been a lack of spirit stones to fuel his cultivation, but at this moment, the problem was that he had too much spiritual energy to absorb. To make matters worse, as this was his cultivation ordeal, he could not simply stop absorbing and take his leave.

...

Beneath the storm clouds, the First Elder and the others heaved a sigh of relief after watching Zhang Xuan dive into the midst of the lightning tribulation as he had done during the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast's Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal.

Since he had been able to send the lightning tribulation fleeing the previous time around with this move, he should not have too much trouble doing the same.

“That fellow’s aptitude toward swordsmanship is formidable, and it seems like his mastery in his other supporting occupations isn’t too bad either. It’s no wonder he was able to catch Yang Shi’s eye and become his direct disciple. However, this bad habit of his of inducing cultivation ordeals wherever he goes really needs some changing!” The First Elder sighed with a shake of his head.

Other cultivators would slowly take their time to prepare for their cultivation ordeal before summoning it. They would go around borrowing artifacts and buying pills before searching for a fitting location where they could face their lightning tribulation quietly. Nevertheless, they would still proceed very warily, fearing that something would go wrong. On the other hand, that fellow simply achieved a breakthrough wherever and whenever he wanted to, paying completely no heed to the time, place, and occasion at all.

It was really a wonder to him how someone with that fellow’s personality had managed to live for so many years without being beaten to death!

While the First Elder’s thoughts were wandering, a rift suddenly appeared in the midst of the storm clouds above. Following which, a head popped out.

With a smile, the head asked, “First Elder, may I know where your Zhang Clan’s library is?”

“Library?” The First Elder was slightly taken aback by the abrupt question before replying with a deep frown. “Why do you want to know that? The Zhang Clan’s library is a place that only members of the Zhang Clan are allowed to enter.”

Why would that fellow ask that question in the midst of dealing with his cultivation ordeal?

1470 Sprouting of Killing Inten

“This lightning tribulation is simply too huge. I don’t think that I’ll be able to deal with it at my current strength. So, I was hoping to borrow some Dimension Sundering realm cultivation technique manuals from the Zhang Clan to push for a breakthrough... or else, I fear that your Zhang Clan might be destroyed if the lightning tribulation falls as it is!” Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly.

“Are you threatening me?” the First Elder asked lividly.

“Of course not!” Zhang Xuan shook his head. “However, the lightning tribulation is simply too huge. I fear that I won’t be able to keep it under control!”

At this moment, the storm clouds seemed to have finished charging up their energy and sent a bolt of lightning down on Zhang Xuan’s popped out head.

Alarmed, Zhang Xuan hurriedly retracted his head back into the storm clouds.

Kacha!

The lightning bolt streaked all the way down to the ground, tearing through the formations to strike down on the ‘劍’ (Sword)’ character in the vault.

The lightning tribulation would only strike the cultivator who was undergoing his cultivation ordeal. While Zhang Xuan was hiding inside, there would be very little that it could do.

Naturally, when Zhang Xuan emerged from the storm clouds, it tried to attack him as furiously as it could.

The First Elder clenched his fists tightly together in frustration.

Had it been anyone else, he surely would have dashed right up to crush that person to death. However, he knew that if he

charged into the lightning tribulation, it would cause it to intensify, and perhaps, he might even become a target of the lightning tribulation as well, thus placing him in a worse position.

Thus, he gritted his teeth and harrumphed coldly. “I can make an exception for you if you really want to browse through our Zhang Clan’s secret manuals. However, my condition for you is that you have to become a member of our Zhang Clan. Take it or leave it!”

His voice reverberated all the way up to the clouds.

“You want me to become a member of the Zhang Clan?” Zhang Xuan’s head popped out from the storm clouds once more. “Forget what I just said then. I’ll find a way to deal with the lightning tribulation myself!”

Considering how shameless the Zhang Clan was, there was no way that he would demean himself by joining their ranks!

Kacha!

Another bolt of lightning zapped down, and Zhang Xuan hurriedly pulled his head back into the storm clouds, dodging it by just a hair’s breadth.

Boom!

Another cluster of buildings was destroyed.

“Y-you! If you have guts, face your own lightning tribulation yourself! Stop hiding cowardly inside the storm clouds!” the First Elder roared frenziedly.

“Face my own lightning tribulation? Very well then!” Zhang Xuan replied calmly as he dashed out of the clouds and took a position right beneath the storm clouds.

He could not absorb any more lightning energy, so there was no point in him remaining in the storm clouds. Since that was the case, it was indeed worth a try for him to face it head on like an ordinary cultivator. Perhaps, he just might be able to tide through it like that.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As soon as Zhang Xuan came down, the lightning tribulation seemed to have found an outlet for its rage, and many bolts of lightning immediately streaked down furiously.

As dozens of lightning bolts, each roughly the width of a water vat, gathered together, the devastating force that they commanded was so great that a massive, pitch-black spatial rift was torn in the surroundings.

“This is too much!” Not expecting the lightning tribulation to come at him with such zeal, Zhang Xuan leaped in fright.

He hurriedly raised his hands to fend against the lightning bolts.

Boom!

The two forces collided, but Zhang Xuan swiftly found himself being overwhelmed and knocked into the mud from the formidable force of the lightning. However, that was not the end of it yet.

Many more streaks of lightning continued to fall, causing the earth to tremble as formations and buildings collapsed one after another.

In terms of the devastation, it was much worse than when Zhang Xuan had just popped out his head.

“Damn it!” the First Elder cursed furiously. His teeth were gnashed so tightly together that they would chip at any moment.

If the lightning tribulation was allowed to continue as it was, in less than five minutes, the entire city would cease to exist.

To think that the number one Sage Clan in the Master Teacher Continent would be threatened by a mere Phantasmal Space realm lad like that but still be completely helpless to retaliate... Raging fury bubbled within him as he glared at the young man in cold hostility.

“First Elder, what should we do now? He’s currently in the midst of his lightning tribulation, so it’s inconvenient for us to interfere, but if it gets out that our Zhang Clan was destroyed

by a Phantasmal Space Ordeal...” Zhang Wuchen exclaimed, panicking.

If it was a true Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal or something even stronger that had destroyed Zhang Clan, that would have been more acceptable, but it was a mere Phantasmal Space Ordeal. If it became known that the Zhang Clan had been destroyed by something of this caliber, the clan would lose the trust and confidence of its subordinate powers!

“We only have two options at the moment!” the First Elder spat as he stared at Zhang Xuan with a wintry look.

“One, we could grant him entry to the library and have him deal with the lightning tribulation.”

“But the library contains all of the precious secret manuals that the Zhang Clan has accrued over the years! If he enters those grounds, the lightning tribulation will surely follow him, and by then, everything will be destroyed! That would be equivalent to ruining the very foundation that built up the Zhang Clan! This won’t do...” Zhang Wuchen anxiously rejected the First Elder’s words.

They could indeed make an exception to the young man considering the dire circumstances, but the problem was that the lightning tribulation would follow him no matter where he went! If they allowed him into the library, there was little doubt that the library would be completely wrecked! If so, how could they face their ancestors and everyone that was in the Zhang Clan?

If they lost even their cultivation technique manuals, the Zhang Clan would be crippled for good!

“We only have the second option then,” the First Elder mumbled with his eyes narrowed coldly. “Kill Zhang Xuan! That’s his cultivation ordeal, so it will surely dissipate once he’s dead!”

“Kill Zhang Xuan?” Zhang Wuchen was slightly astonished at the start, but he soon fell into deep contemplation.

Making light of a master teacher’s life was a taboo to the Master Teacher Pavilion, but it had to be said that it was the

best solution available to them.

Since the lightning tribulation had come due to the young man, as long as the young man died, the lightning tribulation would swiftly scatter as well.

“But... Zhang Xuan is Yang shi’s student! If we kill him just like that, I fear that we will incur Yang shi’s wrath!” Zhang Wuchen said worriedly.

They were well aware of Yang shi’s strength. Killing his direct disciple would be infringing on his bottom line, and a falling out with him could result in massive losses for the Zhang Clan. Even as elders of the Zhang Clan, that was something that they could not take responsibility for.

“Are we to let that fellow fool around just out of fear of Yang shi’s wrath? Do you have any better ideas?” The First Elder flung his sleeves furiously.

“This...” Zhang Wuchen fell silent.

To be honest, there were no other solutions that he could come up with.

“Didn’t he say earlier that he requires Dimension Sundering realm cultivation technique manuals? Since that’s the case, why don’t we give them to him first and get back at him after the lightning tribulation passes? Since he has made such a demand, he probably has an idea in mind,” Zhang Wuchen said hesitantly after some thought.

To be honest, be it taking the young man to their library or killing him, both were rather bad options. In any case, their main goal at the moment was to resolve the lightning tribulation. As for the problem of their secret manuals leaking out, they could always find some way to force the young man to join their Zhang Clan afterward as long as they successfully overcame the crisis right before them.

“What’s the use of bringing him Dimension Sundering realm cultivation techniques? Is he going to make a breakthrough to the Dimension Sundering realm on the spot? Besides, what if he brings in the Dimension Sundering Ordeal after his breakthrough? Wouldn’t the lightning tribulation simply grow

even larger and more uncontrollable?” the First Elder hissed furiously.

He did not think that providing the young man with Dimension Sundering realm cultivation technique manuals would resolve the problem.

Even if the young man managed to achieve a breakthrough to the Dimension Sundering realm by some chance, that could potentially place them in greater danger.

Perhaps, the young man might even be thinking that the Phantasmal Space realm was not strong enough to destroy them and wanted to give them an even bigger one!

If they agreed to his request, they might just bring about the Zhang Clan’s demise!

Hong long long!

While the two of them were speaking, lightning bolts continued streaking down with increasing intensity, and many more formations and buildings collapsed around them.

Fortunately, the storm clouds in the sky seemed to have dissipated slightly.

At that moment, the young man standing in the midst of this disaster, Zhang Xuan, was still completely charred black, and a look of exhaustion could be seen on his face.

Even though he had successfully made a breakthrough to Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle and absorbed a fair portion of the lightning tribulation, it was still much too powerful for him to deal with.

“We should do it now. There are many cultivators that succumb to their cultivation ordeal each year. Considering the sheer strength of this cultivation ordeal, surely Yang shi will be unable to say anything if his direct disciple falls to it,” the First Elder said with a cold glint in his eyes.

1471 Exposed Identity

Just like there were those who successfully cleared their cultivation ordeal, there were also those who fell to it. While the Phantasmal Space Ordeal was not the most frightening of the various cultivation ordeals, there were still plenty of cultivators who would fall to it each year. Besides, given the monstrous scale of the cultivation ordeal there, even if the young man was zapped to death, Yang Shi would only be able to blame his beloved disciple for acting too arrogantly.

Of course, they would also have to make sure to put on a convincing act so as to not give themselves away!

Zhang Wuchen was silent for a moment before softly asking, “What should we do?”

While the First Elder’s actions infringed on the values that master teachers embraced, in order to protect the Zhang Clan, there was no other choice.

Zhang Xuan had only been in the Zhang Clan for a day so far, but he had brought great losses to them. If they allowed him to continue acting as he pleased, their entire heritage could very well be wiped cleanly away, and they would soon become a thing of the past.

“Seal his movements and render him incapable of dodging the lightning bolts. Given the current state he’s in, he won’t be able to withstand the might of the lightning tribulation,” the First Elder said coldly.

While Zhang Xuan wielded extraordinary prowess for a cultivator of his level, he was still far too weak to be dealing with such a powerful lightning tribulation. As long as they were to bind his movements and allow the lightning to ravage him, he would surely drop dead soon enough!

“We have to move quickly. If he summons the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and Inferno Qilin, we’ll lose our chance to strike!”

Those two saint beasts were both Saint 9-dan Macrocosm Ascendancy realm experts. Once those two noticed that something was amiss, they would surely cook up a huge commotion. While they would not have any problem suppressing them eventually, such an incident would surely produce doubts in Yang Shi's mind.

"I understand!" Zhang Wuchen nodded.

"I want you to operate our clan formation and grant the lightning tribulation greater power. Meanwhile, I'll seal the space around Zhang Xuan so as to prevent him from fleeing!" the First Elder instructed grimly.

Zhang Wuchen shot a sweeping glance at the widespread destruction around him and heaved a deep sigh before slowly nodding his head.

As long as that young man remained alive, their Zhang Clan would not survive this calamity. Instead of waiting for their own doom, they might as well make the first move!

It's been twenty years since our clan has faced such a catastrophe, Zhang Wuchen thought grimly as he flitted toward the central tower of the clan.

Twenty years ago, the wife of their clan head, the Meng Sword Saint, had gone on a rampage and destroyed innumerable buildings, and more than half of the elders had been injured while attempting to subdue her. While the scale was much smaller this time around, and no elders had been harmed yet, there was no question that this incident had brought great shame to the Zhang Clan.

Boom!

Controlling the formation, Zhang Wuchen channeled the surrounding spiritual energy toward the storm clouds, and in just a few moments, the weakening storm clouds abruptly buffed up once more.

What's going on? The charred Zhang Xuan noticed the anomaly with the storm clouds as well, and his eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

It was already difficult enough for him to cope with the lightning tribulation as it was, but why would abruptly buff up at this point once more?

Activating his Eye of Insight, he quickly scanned his surroundings and saw that the formation of the Zhang Clan was focusing its spiritual energy toward the storm clouds, causing the lightning tribulation to strengthen rapidly.

Is the Zhang Clan planning to make a move on me?

The truth was clear to Zhang Xuan, and his face immediately darkened. He hurriedly leaped up, hoping to dive into the lightning tribulation to avoid the lightning bolts, but in the next moment, he felt his body being held firmly in place. It was as if heavy chains were wrapped around him, binding him firmly on the spot, preventing him from making the slightest move.

Spatial Suppression... Zhang Xuan's eyes widened in horror as he realized what was going on.

A formidable expert had sealed the space around him completely. Even though he had reached Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle, and his comprehension of spatial laws surpassed even that of Dimension Sundering realm experts, he was still completely helpless before this power!

The gap in their absolute strength was simply too great for him to defy the Spatial Suppression.

Hong long long!

With his body bound in place, Zhang Xuan could only watch helplessly as rumbling thunder crescendoed amid the storm clouds above him, a sign that another powerful bolt of lightning about to descend upon him.

There's no way I'll be able to survive such a powerful force, Zhang Xuan thought as he desperately attempted to struggle free of his bindings. However, even as veins popped up on his temples and sweat drenched his clothes, his body still would not budge at all.

His body might have reached a level of resilience comparable to Saint pinnacle artifacts, but what he was facing was a

lightning tribulation surpassing the might of a Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal. If it really fell on him, not even an immortal would be able to bring him back to life!

It's him... Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned his head around and saw the First Elder standing inconspicuously a distance away, looking at him with a frighteningly impassive expression.

There was no doubt about it—this First Elder of the Zhang Clan was prepared to kill him!

At this rate, I might really die here! I have to find some way to stall the lightning or at least slow down its charging! Zhang Xuan swiftly quelled the panic in his heart and began analyzing his situation calmly.

With his current strength, it would be impossible for him to free himself from the bindings of someone as powerful as the First Elder. The only thing he could do was slow down the buildup of lightning or possibly neutralize the main bulk of its force!

And there was only one way to go about doing that... frenziedly absorbing the lightning energy harnessed within the storm clouds!

My clone, gourd, and vine are currently still absorbing energy from the lightning tribulation, but they won't be able to keep up with how fast the Zhang Clan's formation is supplying energy to it, unless...

Knowing that there was no time to be wasted, Zhang Xuan could not care less about the consequences of his actions anymore. With a thought, he swiftly drew out his Primordial Spirit from his glabella.

Spatial Suppression was more effective on corporeal bodies than incorporeal ones. As such, his Primordial Spirit would likely be able to gather sufficient strength to break free of the restraints that the First Elder had cast on his surroundings.

Hula!

As soon as Zhang Xuan drew out his Primordial Spirit, he immediately dived straight toward the storm clouds.

What's that? A Primordial Spirit?

Controlling the space around Zhang Xuan, he immediately noticed the emergence of a foreign object within his sphere of control. He swiftly extended his Spiritual Perception to the area, and his eyes narrowed in astonishment.

No, that's no ordinary Primordial Spirit. You... are a soul oracle?

Zhang Xuan had spent some time learning how to morph his Primordial Spirit to appear like that of an ordinary cultivator, but ultimately, there was still a fundamental difference between his soul and those of other cultivators due to him practicing soul cultivation techniques.

He might have been able to hide it from other cultivators without much of a problem, but to the First Elder, a 9-star master teacher, his disguise was clearly lacking.

Soul oracles had once betrayed humanity, and not even the Master Teacher Pavilion was able to tolerate their existence. Was that fellow not a master teacher, a direct disciple of Yang Shi's?

How could he possess the means of a soul oracle?

"Hold it right there!" the First Elder bellowed as he thrust a palm strike forward, hoping to knock the Primordial Spirit out of the sky.

Si la!

A spatial rift was immediately ripped open as a powerful surge of searing yang energy burst forth toward the Primordial Spirit.

Due to the nature of their occupation, soul oracles were extremely vulnerable to yang energy. Just exposure to an environment rich in yang energy was enough to weaken them considerably, let alone the condensed surge of yang energy that the First Elder had shot out.

However, Zhang Xuan's Primordial Spirit was not even afraid of lightning, so how could it possibly fear yang energy? With just a slight shudder, he temporarily phased his Primordial

Spirit out of existence, thus causing the burst of yang energy to shoot right past him.

Following which, he continued dashing straight for the storm clouds.

“This...” Not expecting that an attack of his full strength would fail to hurt the other party, the First Elder’s complexion turned awful.

The reason he had been unwilling to openly make a move against Zhang Xuan previously was because he was Yang shi’s student and a master teacher, but since it had been exposed that he was a soul oracle, there was no need for him to hold back anymore.

Si la!

With a tap of his finger, a surge of sword qi shot forth from his fingertip.

The space standing in its path was ripped apart as if it was just a flimsy sheet of paper. As if breaking through the barriers of time, the sword qi seemed to suddenly materialize right before Zhang Xuan’s Primordial Spirit, leaving him with a burning sensation.

Seeing how persistently the First Elder was biting at him, refusing to let him go, Zhang Xuan’s face darkened as well. Turning around, he used his finger as a sword to face the First Elder’s sword qi.

Ding!

The two surges of sword qi clashed with one another. While Zhang Xuan’s strength was far beneath that of the First Elder, he still barely managed to breach the gap through his deeper understanding of swordsmanship and redirected the opposing sword qi. As a result of the clash, the First Elder’s sword qi ended up being deflected right into the storm clouds.

Hong long!

Coming under the aggression of another cultivator, the lightning tribulation immediately grew in size. Following

which, a thick bolt of lightning flowed down the trajectory of the sword qi to strike the First Elder.

“What!” The First Elder’s face twitched in horror.

1472 I'll Tame You Too

The First Elder had thought that he would be able to kill the other party easily with his sword art, but who could have known that the other party would redirect his strength into the lightning tribulation instead?

It was a taboo to intervene in the cultivation ordeal of another cultivator. If someone did intervene, not only would it grow in size and intensity, it would even launch a barrage of destructive attacks on the aggressor.

It was for this reason that he did not dare stop the falling lightning bolts despite the devastating damage they had been causing to the city. He did not think that he would actually slip up just like that.

Knowing that he would be zapped to death if he did not defend against the bolt of lightning falling on him, the First Elder could not afford to focus his attention on dealing with Zhang Xuan anymore. He swiftly flicked his wrist and sent a powerful palm strike forward.

Kacha!

The clash between the ferocious bolt of lightning and the First Elder's mighty palm strike induced ripples of shockwaves to diffuse into the surroundings, resulting in the complete collapse of all buildings and formations in the vicinity.

As powerful as the lightning strike was, the First Elder was even stronger. As a 9-star master teacher, his cultivation had already surpassed the bottleneck of Saint 9-dan; there was no way a bolt of lightning of this caliber would be able to hurt him.

Hu!

While he was fending off the lightning, Zhang Xuan made use of this opportunity to slip his Primordial Spirit into the storm clouds and vanished from sight.

To slip into the lightning in his Primordial Spirit form... isn't he courting death?

The First Elder could hardly believe what he was seeing.

Previously, he had thought that the other party was dashing toward the storm clouds in order to conceal his true goal, but to think that he was really planning to get into the storm clouds!

Due to the strong yin attribute of a soul oracle's Primordial Spirit, soul oracles were deeply fearful of lightning. Was diving right into the storm clouds not as good as committing suicide?

Regardless of whether he's seeking his own death or not, since he's a soul oracle, the Master Teacher Pavilion will not fault me for killing him!

The First Elder harrumphed as he turned his gaze to Zhang Xuan's still-trapped physical body with his eyes filled with killing intent.

In the first place, it was his duty as a master teacher to slay all soul oracles that came his way!

He had still had some considerations about laying his hands on the young man in the past, but given the current situation, there was no need for him to hesitate anymore!

He swiftly gathered sword qi at his fingertip once more, preparing to reduce the young man's physical body into meat paste so that his Primordial Spirit would have nowhere to return to, but before he could make his move, another thick bolt of lightning zapped down in his direction.

"You..."

The First Elder's hair immediately stood on end, and he hurriedly used his sword qi to fend off the lightning bolt.

Boom!

The collision of the forces ended with the triumph of the First Elder's sword qi, but at the same time, it seemed like the lightning tribulation had determined him to be its primary

target. It relentlessly sent bolts of lightning one after another toward him, leaving him a little flustered.

What a relief that everything worked out according to plan! Zhang Xuan thought as his Primordial Spirit gazed down at the situation.

Given his current strength, he was absolutely no match for the First Elder. Even if he hurled all of his means toward the latter, he still would not stand the slightest chance. Thus, he was left with no choice but to intentionally release a slight hint of his soul oracle aura in hopes of drawing the First Elder's attack toward him and redirecting it toward the lightning tribulation.

Once the First Elder got caught up with the lightning tribulation, even if he was one of the strongest experts in the world, it still would be no easy feat for him to struggle free of its pestering.

But this lightning tribulation is ultimately still a threat to me, so I'll have to deal with it as soon as possible. Given what's happened so far, there's no way I'll be able to deal with it face-on. I guess there's only that way then, Zhang Xuan analyzed.

Knowing that he had gotten the First Elder off his back for the time being, Zhang Xuan hurriedly turned his attention toward the storm clouds.

So far, he only knew of one feasible way to get rid of the storm clouds—absorb its energy furiously until it finally fled in fear.

However, his body and Primordial Spirit were already in a bloated state, and he had no cultivation technique that he could use for a breakthrough either. To make matters worse, time was not on his side. All it would take was a split second of freedom from the lightning tribulation for the First Elder to destroy his physical body.

“Absorb!” Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth viciously, and with a deep roar, he began devouring the surrounding lightning energy as if a massive whale swallowing water.

Geji! Geji!

As Zhang Xuan began absorbing the lightning energy unreservedly, his Primordial Spirit, which had already reached ten meters in height due to his reckless absorption of energy in the past, swiftly broke free of its bottleneck and began growing once more at an unprecedentedly rate.

It was only out of fear that his Primordial Spirit would grow too big and be unable to fuse back into his body properly, as had happened several times in the past, that he had not dared to absorb energy recklessly anymore. However, given the predicament that he was in, he could not care about that anymore. If he could not control the lightning tribulation soon, he would be the one to lose his life!

Tzzzzzzz!

Energy gathered around him at an ever-increasing rate, and very soon, a vortex appeared in the ocean of lightning energy with him at the very eye, supplying him with seemingly endless energy.

Eleven meters!

Twelve meters!

Thirteen meters!

...

In less than a minute, his Primordial Spirit had already grown to a size of twenty meters. Even amid the vast expanse of storm clouds, he still towered like a giant.

“I can still continue on, you know? At the very most, I’ll just perish together with you!” Zhang Xuan sneered coldly.

He could sense that the arrogant lightning tribulation, which had been determined to claim his life from a moment ago, had grown a little hesitant. The lightning energy in his surroundings had visibly grown quieter than before, and the storm clouds were trembling a little, seemingly out of fear.

It had thought that by gathering all of its kin and friends, it would be able to get rid of this fellow once and for all.

However, not even in its wildest dreams could it have imagined that the young man would actually have such a

trump card up his sleeve, allowing him to take in lightning energy endlessly, as if a black hole. At this rate, its entire tribe might just lose their life!

Hu!

Decisiveness is a mark of a true hero. Fully understanding this logic, the lightning tribulation did not spend too long hesitating before it decisively chose to turn around and flee.

Knowing that it would react in such a manner, Zhang Xuan swiftly sent a telepathic message to it.

“Do you think that I’ll allow you to get away after everything that you’ve done? Mark my words, if you flee right now, I’ll vow to sap you dry every time you appear in this world! If you don’t want that to happen, you’d better listen to my instructions right now. I have some things that I want you to do for me!”

He had no idea whether the lightning tribulation was capable of comprehending his words or not, but he was certain that it possessed its own consciousness. Otherwise, it would not have been scared into fleeing each time it encountered him.

...

It has finally stopped its attacks...

Beneath the storm clouds, the First Elder finally managed to catch a breather from the relentless assault of the storm clouds.

As powerful as he was, it was still difficult to cope with the seemingly endless barrage of attacks from the lightning bolts, not to mention that each lightning bolt was by no means weak. Even at this moment, he could still feel his heart pounding in discomposure.

He might have succumbed to the lightning bolts if the lightning tribulation had continued striking him at that rate, but since it had stopped, it probably would not attack anymore. Thus, he quickly turned his gaze over to Zhang Xuan’s physical body with animosity reflected in his eyes.

“From the moment you began practicing the arts of soul oracles, you should have known that this was the outcome that

you would face!” The First Elder harrumphed as he thrust a palm strike toward the young man’s motionless body.

The killing intent behind the First Elder’s attack immediately triggered the Mind of Void, and Zhang Xuan’s body instinctively attempted to move to dodge the attack. However, the First Elder’s Spatial Suppression was still locking him firmly in place, rendering all of his struggling futile.

Kacha!

At this moment, once again, before the palm strike could reach Zhang Xuan, a streak of lightning bolted down toward the First Elder.

Unlike the ones that the First Elder had faced before, this very lightning bolt was several times larger and stronger, to the extent that it seemed as if it would combust the surrounding air. It was the kind of attack that fully displayed the overwhelming prowess of nature in subduing everything that dared defied it, leaving those standing against it feeling utterly helpless and despaired.

This...

Goosebumps rose all over the First Elder’s body from the sheer danger he felt from the bolt of lightning.

I did attack you earlier, but I didn’t do it on purpose! You also had your vengeance striking me again and again, so surely you don’t have to be so perverse as to come after me again and again, right? Or will you only be happy after you send me down to my grave?

Furthermore... I can understand why you would want to strike me, but the person who has summoned you here is just over there, sleeping with his eyes closed. Shouldn’t you strike him as well?

As stifled as the First Elder was, he knew that he would have to focus all of his strength into dealing with it, or else even with his cultivation realm, he would still sustain severe injuries from it. Thus, he swiftly redirected the might of his palm strike over to deal with the lightning bolt.

Si la!

As the two powers met one another, a devastating shockwave rippled into the surroundings, tearing open a massive spatial rift at the center and disintegrating everything that it came into contact with.

“Cough cough cough cough!”

Eventually, the First Elder did successfully withstand the lightning bolt, but he still sustained a certain degree of damage. Charred marks could be seen all over his body.

I have to kill that b*stard before this lightning tribulation dissipates!

Knowing that it would be dangerous if several more lightning bolts of this caliber fell on him, the First Elder clenched his jaw furiously and sent a punch toward Zhang Xuan.

But as if the lightning tribulation was intent to protect Zhang Xuan, it struck down rapidly on the First Elder once again before the punch could connect.

Kacha! Kacha!

Smoke rose from the First Elder’s convulsing body. The frenzied elder turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan once more, only to see that the latter had opened his eyes at some point in time and was looking straight at the storm clouds.

“I’ll leave him to you for the time being. I’m going to rest for a moment.”

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan made use of the shockwave from one of the lightning bolts to break free of the Spatial Suppression before leisurely making his way down to the ground.

1473 She's Your Teacher's Wife-to-Be!

“You...” The First Elder would have clawed his hair from the insanity that was happening before his eyes if his hands had not been too preoccupied with dealing with the lightning bolts.

This is your freaking lightning tribulation!

I'm here to kill you, not to help you fend off your tribulation!

The First Elder was seething with so much fury that he was even contemplating the possibility of casting aside his defense just to kill that b*stard young man, but before he could make up his mind, another bolt of lightning was already heading his way.

It was a much larger one this time around, and before he could even come close, the overpowering energy harnessed within it was already threatening to tear him apart.

Thus, he had no choice but to continue focusing his strength into dealing with the lightning bolts.

Swiftly, his body grew more and more charred, and his aura was beginning to wither as well.

This lightning tribulation was even more powerful than the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal. While the First Elder had already reached a level surpassing the Macrocosm Ascendancy realm, it was still extremely difficult for him to deal with something of this caliber.

It did not take long before he felt his blood beginning to sizzle from the lightning that had bypassed his defense and seeped into his body, and even his internal organs sustained some degree of damage as well.

“First Elder...”

At this point, Zhang Wuchen returned from the command tower as well. He had expected to find a dead Zhang Xuan

lying on the ground upon his return, but contrary to his expectations, not only was the young man still alive and jumping, it was the First Elder instead who was struck till he was on the verge of death.

This sight left him frozen on the spot, unsure of what he should do.

“Don’t bother with me, hurry up and kill that Zhang Xuan! Once he’s dead, the lightning tribulation will dissipate!” the First Elder shrieked anxiously as he defended against yet another bolt of lightning.

“Y-yes, I understand!” Knowing that the situation was urgent, Zhang Wuchen quickly turned his gaze to Zhang Xuan.

At this moment, the latter was already sitting on the ground. As if a drunk man, his body swayed uncontrollably on the spot, and from time to time, a spasm would run through his body in the form of a shudder. It was a truly bizarre sight to behold.

“Quick, kill him!” the First Elder urged.

Upon hearing the command, Zhang Wuchen gritted his teeth and dashed over.

Kacha!

Before Zhang Wuchen could reach Zhang Xuan or even comprehend what was happening at all, he found himself abruptly collapsing powerlessly onto the ground, his body charred from head to toe. A bolt of lightning had fallen on him too.

“Argh! Just what the heck is going on here!” the First Elder howled in frenzy.

Really, why did it feel like the lightning tribulation was protecting that fellow?

In normal cultivation ordeals, the lightning tribulation would be dying to eradicate the cultivator who had summoned it... so why in the world was the lightning tribulation protecting this young man so desperately? It was obvious that it was striking down on anyone who dared make a move on him!

And this was not all...

While the lightning tribulation tortured us with its unending barrage of lightning bolts, it actually left you to rest leisurely on the ground... what the heck is this?

Zhang Wuchen was caught off guard by the abrupt assault, but he swiftly recovered and continued dashing toward Zhang Xuan. He knew that he had to kill the young man for everything to end. However, before he could get to the latter, yet another bolt of lightning fell on him once more, crushing him back down to the ground.

Not only that, as if it was frightened that he would get back up, the lightning tribulation sent countless bolts of lightning down upon him in rapid succession, such that in the blink of an eye, Zhang Wuchen's body had already scrunched up together, and an aroma was wafting from his barbecued body.

“...”

The First Elder's clawed at his hair.

The lightning tribulation was definitely doing it on purpose—definitely!

“First Elder, Third Elder...”

At this moment, the commotion had already drawn in another dozen Zhang Clan elders, and when they saw the sight before them, their mouths opened in shock.

The First Elder's face paled upon seeing them, and he hurriedly bellowed, “Don't come over...”

Unfortunately, his warning came too late. Before the group of elders could grasp the First Elder's warning, a cluster of lightning had already fallen on them

And just like that, the group of elders fell helplessly from the sky onto the ground, forming a particularly miserable sight.

“Why? Why!”

Looking the collapsed elders around him, and then the utter ruination that extended to the horizon, the First Elder screamed in deep agony.

Twenty years ago, Sword Saint Meng had gone on a rampage and caused great damage and injured many of the elders, but compared to what was happening at that moment, the destruction back then was nothing at all.

Something of this caliber could no longer be termed as destruction—it was annihilation!

“Zhang Xuan, our Zhang Clan will never forgive you for this! I will never forgive you for this!” the First Elder shrieked furiously as a mouthful of blood spilled out of his mouth.

The spewed blood seemed to have alleviated the stifled sensation in the First Elder’s chest significantly, and he immediately pushed against the ground and flitted in Zhang Xuan’s direction.

Even if I die from the lightning tribulation today, I swear that I’m going to rip you apart!

Hulala!

In the midst of his movements, lightning continued falling relentlessly on the First Elder’s body. In response to that, the First Elder scrunched his body as tightly as possible to protect his vitals and reduce the area of contact with the lightning bolts. He would still sustain severe injuries despite so, but with his cultivation, he would still be able to last for a quite a while.

Regardless of how severe the injuries that he sustained were, he was determined to kill the young man and terminate that madness!

Once the young man was killed, everything would be resolved!

That fellow...

On the ground, the giddy-headed Zhang Xuan watched as the desperate First Elder placed his life on the line in order to get to him, and he could not help but shake his head.

Has that old fellow lost his mind?

In truth, Zhang Xuan was in a bad state as well. If the First Elder really got to him, he was in no position to retaliate.

In order to curb the lightning tribulation, he had ended up absorbing far too much lightning energy into his Primordial Spirit. While he still did manage to fit his Primordial Spirit back into his body through the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, the imbalanced power between his Primordial Spirit and his body still left him with near-intolerable vertigo, such that even standing up was a difficulty for him.

“Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, Inferno Qilin, go and ward him off for me!”

Knowing that he was in no state to escape, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in frustration as he issued an order to his tamed beasts.

Hu hu!

The two beasts materialized from the Myriad Anthive Nest and swiftly charged toward the First Elder in order to stop him in his tracks.

“Don’t block my way, or else I’ll show you two no mercy either!” The First Elder glared at the two saint beasts with eyes even colder than the most cold-blooded of beasts.

He tapped his finger forward, and two massive palm prints immediately fell toward each of the two saint beasts.

Geji! Geji!

The Inferno Qilin and Netherworld Azure Dragon beast did not back down from the First Elder’s offense. With the strongest attacks they had, they collided head-on with the two palm strikes, and a sea of flames swiftly engulfed the surroundings with an explosion.

Huala! Huala!

With the widespread destruction that was happening, even Zhang Jiuxiao, who was currently recuperating from his wounds, was jolted awake. The room that he was in was one of the very few buildings that were still standing due to the powerful formation protecting it, but when he walked out of the room and saw countless heaps of rubble replacing the majestic buildings that had once towered in their very exact spot, he immediately fell into a daze.

Teacher... A thought suddenly came to Zhang Jiuxiao's mind, and he immediately rushed for the center of the commotion.

Very soon, he saw a pale-faced Zhang Xuan sitting on the ground, wobbling feebly on the spot, and he hurriedly dashed over to support the latter's body.

"T-this... Teacher, are you fine? What happened?" Zhang Jiuxiao asked worriedly.

While he was a member of the Zhang Clan as well, he had always been belittled and neglected as a mere offspring of the side family. The Zhang Clan had never seemed to consider him as one of their own, and in reciprocation to that, Zhang Jiuxiao had never strongly identified as a member of the Zhang Clan. His loyalty toward the Zhang Clan could only be considered shallow at best.

As such, while the magnificent city being reduced to rubble did leave him rather appalled, what he was more concerned about was the feeble state that his teacher was in.

"I'm fine. It's just that I'm a little unaccustomed to this... I'll be alright after some rest." Zhang Xuan waved his hand weakly.

A soul too powerful would have problems fusing back with its body; this was something that he had realized a long time ago. For this reason, he had been careful to avoid taking in excessive spiritual energy into his soul.

Had it not been an emergency, he never would have resorted to such a course of action.

Hearing that his teacher was fine, Zhang Jiuxiao heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Teacher, I'll protect you!"

"Thank you." Zhang Xuan nodded before closing his eyes. He swiftly drove the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel in order to reduce the pressure that his Primordial Spirit was exerting on his body.

But even so, the splitting headache that felt as if his brain was being grated still refused to subside. Realizing that it would be difficult for him to recover in the short run, he shook his head and opened his eyes once more.

He knew that it would not be so easy to resolve this problem. Otherwise, he would not have fainted from this issue back then.

“Zhang Jiuxiao, given everything that has happened, there’s unlikely to be any room for reconciliation between me and the Zhang Clan anymore. Thus, there are some matters that I will have to entrust to you in advance,” Zhang Xuan said grimly.

“Teacher, please speak!” Zhang Jiuxiao replied.

“Given the purity of your bloodline, I reckon that the Zhang Clan will likely send you to marry the little princess of the Luo Clan. If that happens, you mustn’t accept it at any cost,” Zhang Xuan said.

“I understand!” Zhang Jiuxiao nodded. After which, he waited for his teacher to continue, but the latter did not continue speaking. Perplexed, he asked, “Teacher, is that all? If I may ask, why can’t I marry the little princess of the Luo Clan?”

His teacher had used such a grave tone just to inform him of such a minor matter.

“Why? That’s because...” Zhang Xuan looked at Zhang Jiuxiao intently before continuing.

“The little princess of the Luo Clan is your teacher’s wife-to-be!”

1474 Zhao Ya's Call For Help

“Wife-to-be?” Zhang Jiuxiao was stunned.

Given the widespread fame of the little princess of the Luo Clan, Zhang Jiuxiao had naturally heard of her. He also knew that the little princess was engaged to the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan... but who would have thought that his teacher was the man who stood between the both of them!

This explained why the little princess would say that there was someone whom she fancied. No wonder his teacher would go around tearing down everything in the Zhang Clan! In fact, thinking back, his teacher had pummeled him the first time that they met.

In the end, this was the actual reason behind everything!

“Teacher, rest assured! Now that I know the little princess of the Luo Clan is your wife-to-be, I won't overstep my boundaries even if I'm beaten to death!” Zhang Jiuxiao hurriedly clasped his fist.

A teacher for a day, a father for life[1]. Since his teacher was equivalent to his father, his teacher's wife-to-be would be his future mother. Even if someone inflated his guts to ten times the size, he would never dare to marry his mother!

“Good. Just keep that in mind!” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Knowing that he could not remain like that, despite the giddiness he felt, Zhang Xuan still wobbled up to his feet. All of a sudden, he sensed something and swiftly flicked his wrist, and a token appeared in his palm.

The Sanctum Head Token.

In this moment, the token was emanating a faint light, as if something had brought it to life.

He had encountered this situation once in the past, and that was when he had successfully become an 8-star master teacher and deciphered the first seal on the token. Could it be that the second seal had been removed?

Zhang Xuan swiftly took a closer look at the Sanctum Head Token, and he could vaguely sense a powerful aura leaking from it.

There are three conditions that have to be met in order to awaken the Sanctum Head Token. Firstly, becoming an 8-star master teacher. Secondly, achieving the cultivation of Saint 8-dan.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

While I have yet to fully made a breakthrough to Saint 8-dan, in terms of fighting prowess and comprehension of spatial laws, even a true Saint 8-dan expert would be no match for me. Perhaps this has led the Sanctum Head Token to conclude that I have cleared the second condition, thus deciphering the second seal.

While the requirements to unsealing the Sanctum Head Token appeared to be fixed, it still depended on the exact conditions that Sage Kui had imposed on the Sanctum Head Token to gauge if those requirements had been met.

Perhaps, the token gauged whether an individual had reached Saint 8-dan by measuring their zhenqi. If that was the case, it would not be too surprising for the token to decide that Zhang Xuan had reached Saint 8-dan—after all, he was a cultivator of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, which put him far in front of his peers.

Let me see what is beneath the second seal...

The deciphering of the first seal had turned the token into a powerful weapon and granted him greater control over it. Given so, the deciphering of the second seal should have some kind of reward as well.

Thus, Zhang Xuan immersed his consciousness into the seal, and a few lines of information swiftly surfaced in his mind.

This...

Zhang Xuan had thought that the deciphering of the second seal would turn the Sanctum Head Token into an even more powerful weapon that would help him out of his current situation, but that was not the case.

What was hidden beneath the second seal was a Teleportation Formation that brought one into a hidden dimension left behind by the founder of the Sanctum of Sages. Contained in it was the heritage of the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld and the insights regarding it left behind by the predecessors.

This was indeed great for deciphering the third seal, but to the current him, it was not of much use at all.

What he needed right now was the strength to go against the First Elder.

He had to resolve the issue with the Zhang Clan once and for all, or else given the influence that the Zhang Clan wielded in the Master Teacher Continent, even if he escaped for the moment, he would not be able to escape forever. Furthermore, there was no saying that the Zhang Clan might even use his students as hostages against him.

Not to mention, this Teleportation Formation was an only one-time use. Once he activated it, it would lose its effectiveness. So, he should at least prepare himself before heading over and aim to master the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld in a single push!

More importantly, he was in no state to cultivate. The giddiness that he was experiencing from the incompatibility between his Primordial Spirit and his body made even standing up difficult for him, let alone practicing a profound optic art!

Boom boom boom!

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, sonic booms in the air abruptly drew his attention back to reality. Lifting his gaze, he saw the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and the Inferno Qilin being forcefully knocked back. In their clashes with the First Elder, the both of them had sustained significant injuries.

As powerful as the two saint beasts were, they still came nowhere close to matching up to the First Elder of the Zhang Clan

If not for the latter being constantly struck by lightning, they would have long fallen in defeat.

Zhang Xuan took a look at the storm clouds above and shook his head. The lightning bolts won't last for too long either...

The continued release of lightning bolts had almost completely depleted the lightning tribulation, and its might was already beginning to wane.

From the looks of it, it would only be able to deal a couple more lightning bolts before dissipating for good.

Xiong xiong!

At this moment, the Inferno Qilin finally released its trump card. Tapping into the very last hue of Qilin Flames that it harnessed, it shot several searing flame dragons toward the First Elder simultaneously. The scorching heat of the attack swiftly charred the ground black and dyed the sky crimson. At the same time, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast made use of this opportunity to sneak behind the First Elder to launch a secret assault.

The collaboration between the two beasts would leave even a real 9-star master teacher in a fluster, but the First Elder did not show a hint of panic. He calmly sealed the space behind him before dispelling the flames before him with several palm strikes, thus neutralizing their assault with ease.

As the lightning tribulation grew smaller and smaller, the strength that the First Elder could exert became greater and greater. Previously, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and the Inferno Qilin had still been able to stand on equal grounds with the First Elder, but it was clear that the tables were swiftly tilting in the First Elder's favor.

"Master, we aren't a match for him. You have to quickly find a way to leave this area!" the Inferno Qilin urged Zhang Xuan anxiously through their telepathic link.

Zhang Xuan nodded.

While this was the first time that he had encountered a battle of this caliber, he was still able to tell that it was only a matter of time before his two tamed beasts fall in defeat, and there was no doubt that the First Elder would reap his life the moment that happened.

“I have to leave right now,” Zhang Xuan muttered as he leaped into the sky and flew in the opposite direction. However, before he could get far, he suddenly wobbled in the middle of his flight before crashing back down to the ground.

“Teacher!” Zhang Jiuxiao hurriedly rushed forward to support Zhang Xuan.

“I’m fine,” Zhang Xuan said as he rubbed his head.

It seemed like he would not be able to leave until he resolved the problem concerning the incompatibility in his Primordial Spirit and physical body.

Suppressing the giddiness in his head, he looked up and saw that the First Elder was closer to him than before. The storm clouds in the sky had already depleted all their energy and were beginning to dissipate.

“Scram!” Without the lightning tribulation to keep him in check, the First Elder roared furiously as he decisively released two palm strikes with his full force harnessed in them.

Boom! Boom!

The overpowering palm strike struck the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and Inferno Qilin into two separate rubble piles. The impact of the attack caused all of the injuries that they had sustained throughout the battle to relapse all at once, and they swiftly lost their consciousness.

After knocking out the two beasts, the First Elder turned his menacing gaze toward Zhang Xuan. Recalling the humiliation that he had sustained within this short period of time, a cold sneer crept onto his lips as he uttered, “Zhang Xuan, it’s time for you to meet your maker!”

The First Elder tapped his finger, and a surge of sword qi tore its way toward Zhang Xuan.

Weng!

Before it could strike Zhang Xuan, a token abruptly appeared in the midst of the sword qi's path, neutralizing it entirely as if a barrier.

Zhang Xuan knew that he would not be able to withstand the First Elder's attack in his current state, so he decisively threw the Sanctum Head Token out.

"First Elder of the Zhang Clan, I, Zhang Xuan, am an 8-star master teacher recognized by the Master Teacher Pavilion. Even if I have erred, you should seek recompense through reporting me to the Master Teacher Pavilion. You should be well aware that only the Master Teacher Pavilion is qualified to pass judgement on master teachers! Are you planning on turning a blind eye to the rules of the Master Teacher Pavilion?" Zhang Xuan bellowed imposingly.

"Master teacher? You actually have the cheek to call yourself a master teacher?" Those words reignited the First Elder's rage once more.

How could a person who practiced the unorthodox arts of the soul oracle have the cheek to proclaim himself as a master teacher?

Definitely, he would report this matter to the Master Teacher Pavilion and have them thoroughly investigate the matter, but before that, he would first have this young man killed in order to quell the burning rage in his heart!

"Die!" the First Elder bellowed as he crushed his palm down upon Zhang Xuan.

Hu!

The palm strike first collided with the Sanctum Head Token, and unable to withstand the might of the palm strike, it was knocked right back into Zhang Xuan's hands. Following which, the First Elder firmly pushed on with his palm strike, as if he would not rest until he finally reduced Zhang Xuan into meat paste.

"You..."

Zhang Xuan panicked.

His words had not worked. It was clear that the First Elder would not rest until he was dead. At the same time, the intolerable giddiness consuming his mind rendered him completely incapable of fight and flight.

In this desperate moment, he flicked his finger.

Boom!

A massive head materialized right before him, crushing heavily down on the First Elder.

While the actual fighting prowess of Vicious' head could not even compare to a Saint 8-dan expert, its sudden appearance and its sheer weight, coupled with the exhaustion and injuries that the First Elder had accumulated from dealing with the lightning tribulation and Zhang Xuan's two tamed beasts, actually managed to catch the First Elder off guard and suppress him temporarily.

"Teacher..." Upon seeing the head that his teacher had brought out, Zhang Jiuxiao widened his eyes in absolute horror.

He anxiously turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan, only to see the latter abruptly flicking his wrist to whip out a jade token.

It was a Communication Jade Token with particularly intricate inscriptions on it.

It was shimmering with a light glow, as if some kind of important information was being transmitted.

Zhang Xuan tapped his finger lightly on it.

Weng!

An indistinct face appeared on the surface of Communication Jade Token. Despite the blurriness of the image, one could still tell that the other party was an indescribably beautiful young lady.

Zhang Jiuxiao was captivated by the face for a short moment before coming to a delayed realization that the other party was his First Senior, Zhao Ya!

While he had not seen Zhao Ya in person before, he had heard much about her beauty.

In this very moment, Zhao Ya's face was colored in distress, and with a deeply frightened voice, she exclaimed, "Teacher, save me!"

Poof!

The image abruptly vanished from view, and following right after, the Communication Jade Token shattered with a light explosion.

[1] This saying means that even if a person only serves as your teacher for a day, it's only right to respect him just like how you respect your father for life.

1475 Pursuing Zhang Xuan

“Zhao Ya...”

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly as a violent aura quietly leaked out from his presence.

Under normal circumstances, due to the incredible distance, it should have been impossible for his Communication Jade Token to receive Zhao Ya’s message. Most likely, the message had come from Chen Leyao instead. She had probably received Zhao Ya’s call for help and used a special method to store her message and forward it to him. However, at the same time, the burden on the Communication Jade Token was likely so great that it ended up shattering.

Just what in the world had happened for her to send such a message to him?

Was she not the celebrated young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court? Could this mean that something had happened to the Glacier Plain Court?

“Teacher...” Zhang Jiuxiao said anxiously.

“Something has happened to your First Senior. I’m going to save her,” Zhang Xuan said with narrowed eyes. At that moment, his back suddenly straightened up as if a taut pillar that would shoulder even the weight of the world fearlessly.

He did not know what had happened to Zhao Ya, but as her teacher, he would protect her even if he had to venture up a mountain of blades and descend into a sea of flames to do so!

“But... how are you going to save her?” Zhang Jiuxiao asked worriedly.

He knew that this First Senior of his was the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, and in terms of fighting prowess, she was likely to be above him and his teacher. Given so, would his teacher really be of much help there?

To make matters worse, the other party had only said three words, “Save me, Teacher”, so they had no idea what had happened at all, let alone prepare for a rescue operation!

“No matter what, as a teacher, I won’t allow the slightest harm to come to my direct disciples. This doesn’t just apply to her but you as well. This is my promise to all of you!” Zhang Xuan said.

Following which, he flicked his wrist and took out his Sanctum Head Token.

I thought that this one-time teleportation wouldn’t be of much use, but it has really come at a timely moment, Zhang Xuan thought.

When he deciphered the second seal on the Sanctum Sage Token, he had found a Teleportation Token that would transport him to a hidden dimension in the Sanctum of Sages. Initially, he had thought that it was of little use in his current situation, but from the looks of it now, it was just what he needed!

In order to find out the full story, he would have to first return to the Sanctum of Sages to figure out what had happened, but even if he rode on the Inferno Qilin, it would still take him at least half a month to return to the Sanctum of Sages.

Considering the danger that Zhao Ya was in, he could not afford to waste that much time!

However, it would be different with this Teleportation Formation. He would be able to return to the Sanctum of Sages instantaneously without wasting any time!

“Jiuxiao, I’ll be leaving first. Tell Jian Qinsheng that I’m sorry that I failed to accomplish what I promised him. If I have a chance in the future, I’ll make sure to teach that Xing Sword Saint a lesson in his stead,” Zhang Xuan said as he gripped the Sanctum Head Token in his hand tightly.

Jian Qinsheng had brought him here in the hope that he would defeat the Zhang Clan’s swordsmanship in his stead and bring honor back to him. While he did manage to defeat Zhang Xu and the others, he did not manage to compete with the head of

the Zhang Clan in a duel, so strictly speaking, he had not fully completed the task that he had set out to achieve.

However, the matter with Zhao Ya was much more important than anything else. He had no choice but to abandon everything else.

“Yes, Teacher!” Zhang Jiuxiao hurriedly nodded.

Suppressing the giddiness in his head, Zhang Xuan swiftly infused his zhenqi into the Sanctum Head Token, and in the blink of an eye, the Teleportation Formation on it was activated.

Weng!

A brilliant burst of light swiftly swallowed Zhang Xuan whole.

“Inferno Qilin, Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, Vicious, we’re leaving!” Zhang Xuan yelled as he waved his hand.

Huala!

The two saint beasts and Vicious immediately disappeared from the spot. Following which, Zhang Xuan’s silhouette swiftly turned incorporeal as well before vanishing without a trace.

“An Otherworldly Demon... He’s an Otherworldly Demon! Damn it!”

Right after Zhang Xuan disappeared from the spot, the First Elder emerged from the pit that he had been crushed in and howled frenziedly.

Even though he had no idea what exactly the giant head crushing down on him was, he could still clearly feel the aura and bloodline of an Otherworldly Demon Emperor from it!

In other words, not only was Zhang Xuan a soul oracle, he was also allied with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe... or perhaps, he might even be an Otherworldly Demon himself!

For an Otherworldly Demon to disguise as a master teacher... the only ones who were capable of this feat were the Otherworldly Demon Emperors!

The truth could not have been any clearer now—Zhang Xuan was definitely an Otherworldly Demon Emperor in disguise! This would also explain why he was so bent on destroying the Zhang Clan!

Given the grudge between mankind and the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, it was no wonder Zhang Xuan would desire to destroy the number one Sage clan!

As soon as the First Elder rose from the ground, he immediately extended his Spiritual Perception to the surroundings in order to find Zhang Xuan. However, no matter how he looked, there was not the slightest trace of the young man to be found.

“Where is he?” The First Elder turned a hostile gaze toward Zhang Jiuxiao, his voice dripping with killing intent.

He had seen how close Zhang Jiuxiao was with Zhang Xuan with his own eyes.

“Te... Zhang shi has used a Teleportation Formation to leave this area!” Zhang Jiuxiao replied with a slightly dazed look on his face, as if he was still trying to make sense out of what had happened.

“That’s impossible!” the First Elder exclaimed with bloodshot eyes. “Teleportation Formations can only be set up by Saint 9-dan cultivators, not to mention that a heavy price has to be paid with each activation. Not even the Zhang Clan has the resources to use it lightly, so how could that fellow possibly be able to teleport away?”

Teleportation Formations involved the warping of space to swiftly transport an individual from one end to the other. While 9-star formation masters were able to set up Teleportation Formations, such extreme warping of space was not easy to pull off and required a heavy price to be paid in order to accomplish it. Even as the number one Sage Clan on the Master Teacher Continent, they could not afford to use it lightly.

Otherwise, their clan head would not have left on a saint beast earlier.

Thus, how could that fellow manage to leave on a Teleportation Formation?

Zhang Wuchen flew over and said, “It was really a Teleportation Formation. I saw the disturbances in space with my own eyes.”

He had sustained severe injuries from the lightning bolt earlier, but after some recuperation, he had managed to recover sufficiently to move around.

Nevertheless, given the tattered condition that he was in, it would take at least half a month of recuperation in order for him to return to his peak state.

Hearing Zhang Wuchen’s words, the First Elder swiftly scanned the surroundings once more and noted that Zhang Xuan’s aura had indeed disappeared without leaving a trail. Gritting his teeth, he spat hoarsely, “To possess such a powerful formation despite his young age and low cultivation realm, there’s no doubt that he’s an Otherworldly Demon Emperor!”

If he still had not been too sure previously, this was more than sufficient evidence to prove his hypothesis!

Despite being in his early twenties, he possessed strength far superior to those of his peers, wielded the means of soul oracles, was capable of utilizing Otherworldly Demons’ means... and now, it had been found that he even had a priceless Teleportation Formation on him! This showed that not only was he an Otherworldly Demon Emperor—he was a rather high-ranked one too!

It was ridiculous that Yang Shi would take in an Otherworldly Demon Emperor as his student!

“I, Zhang Wuheng, in my capacity as the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, command all Zhang Clan members and subordinate powers to devote all resources to pursuing Zhang Xuan. Regardless of the means they use, they are to kill him on the spot so as to safeguard the security of the Master Teacher Continent!” the First Elder bellowed.

Weng!

As those words were spoken, a token flew into the air. It emanated a light glow that swiftly shrouded the entire city.

In an instant, every member of the Zhang Clan received the First Elder's orders.

A decree from the First Elder was only second to the clan head's decree. Once issued, all clan members were to obey it without any questions!

“Devote all resources into pursuing Zhang Xuan?”

While everyone was still bewildered by the command, the furious voice of a lady suddenly boomed across the air.

“Zhang Wuheng, you brazen skunk!”

1476 Yang shi Is Out of Seclusion!

Hong long!

Shortly after those words were spoken, the crowd suddenly felt a heavy pressure from the sky pushing down on them. Following which, a middle-aged lady flew straight over with a sword in hand.

Before she even arrived, the crowd could already feel the sharpness of her sword qi. It felt almost as if their flesh was being torn to shreds.

The First Elder felt his goosebumps rising, and he hurriedly clasped his fist. “Meng Sword Saint...”

But before he could finish speaking, the sharp glint of a sword was already flying straight toward him.

Peng!

The First Elder was immediately sent flying before tumbling along the ground. At the same time, a bloodied wound appeared on his chest.

“You!” Not expecting the Meng Sword Saint to make a move on him without any hesitation right after returning, the First Elder was so furious that he nearly exploded on the spot.

He struggled to his feet agitatedly, and flicking his wrist, he whipped out a sword before charging right at the Meng Sword Saint.

“Zhang Wuheng, are you challenging me to a fight? It has just been a few days since we last met, but it seems like your guts have grown quite a bit!” The Meng Sword Saint harrumphed coldly as she gracefully flicked the sword in her hand.

Tzzzzzz!

The next instant, the First Elder suddenly found himself turning uncontrollably on the spot, as if he was trapped in a

vortex. Sword punctures swiftly appeared all over his body, and crimson blood spurted from each of those punctures.

The First Elder was one of the top experts on the Master Teacher Continent, but he was still rendered completely helpless against the Meng Sword Saint's swordsmanship.

Peng!

The next instant, the First Elder found himself crashing into a heap of rubble, and he coughed up large mouthfuls of blood.

After all he had gone through earlier, he was already severely injured. Thus, when the Meng Sword Saint launched an assault on him, he felt his entire body going entirely limp, devoid of the slightest strength.

"Cough cough!" Awkward coughing echoed across the air, and a middle-aged man descended from the sky. "My wife, why don't you listen to the First Elder's words first?"

"Clan head!"

Upon seeing the middle-aged man, the elders in the area hurriedly clasped their fists and bowed deeply.

The head of the Zhang Clan, the father of the famed young prodigy, the Xing Sword Saint.

Upon learning that Zhang Xuan was currently in the Zhang Clan, they had rushed back as fast as they could, so they had been able to return within a relatively short period of time. However, it seemed like they were still too late.

"Listen to his words? What else is there to listen to? Didn't you hear the decree he made earlier?" the Meng Sword Saint bellowed with a dark look on her face.

"It's precisely because I heard it that I didn't stop you from making a move on him earlier! But look at the state he's in... If you continue hitting him, he really might lose his life! Why don't we first calm down and listen to the full story before deciding on what to do?" Xing Sword Saint said as he stroked his wife's back to calm her down.

Meng Sword Saint shot the First Elder a wintry glare before flinging her sleeves furiously. "Humph!"

Seeing that his wife had stopped her attacks for the time being, the Xing Sword Saint secretly heaved a sigh of relief before turning his gaze toward the First Elder. With an authoritative voice, he questioned, “What happened? Why did you issue a decree ordering for Zhang Xuan’s death?”

“Clan head!” Zhang Wuchen quickly stepped forward and said, “That Zhang Xuan has been willfully destroying everything that he set his eyes upon after coming to the Zhang Clan. It was only after being left with no choice that the First Elder issued such a decree!”

“Willfully destroying everything?” The Xing Sword Saint raised his eyebrows. “Are you saying that all of this rubble is his doing?”

He had been rather perplexed to see the state that the Zhang Clan was in, but who could have thought that it would actually be Zhang Xuan’s doing!

“Indeed, he’s the culprit behind this!” Zhang Wuchen spat with gritted teeth. “Look at what he has done to our many millenniums of heritage!”

“This...” The Xing Sword Saint was visibly dazed for a moment. He subconsciously turned to his wife and muttered, “That really resembles you...”

His wife was a walking wrecking ball, often causing destruction wherever she went. Her rampages had not stopped even after marrying into the Zhang Clan, and it was to the point that the elders often kept a close eye on her in order to keep her in check. Who would have thought that Zhang Xuan’s prowess in destruction would actually be a level above hers?

“Isn’t it just a couple of buildings? To kill a person over a couple of rocks and stones... is this the magnanimity that you should have as elders of the Zhang Clan? If you are that afraid of your buildings being torn down, why don’t I just help you demolish your ancestral hall so that you don’t have to worry about it anymore?” Meng Sword Saint harrumphed as she wrapped her sword qi around her body, seemingly showing the members of the Zhang Clan that she was not joking around.

What the heck is this?

You are going to kill my son over just a couple of collapsed building?

Very well, just watch as I dig up the tombs of your ancestors then!

“It’s not just about the buildings...” The First Elder’s deep voice sounded.

At this point, he had finally managed to recuperate enough to talk. He knew that the Meng Sword Saint was a lunatic who would not hesitate to destroy their ancestral hall, so with a flushed face, he hurriedly spoke up to stop her.

“What else is it then?” The Meng Sword Saint glanced down at the First Elder with narrowed eyes.

“I know what you’re thinking. You must be suspecting that Zhang Xuan is him... but I can tell you for certain he isn’t! I have already tested his bloodline and soul, and it’s been proven that he doesn’t have the slightest hint of a relationship with the Zhang Clan!” the First Elder quickly said.

“Bloodline? How can you have the cheek to talk about bloodline before me?” The Meng Sword Saint widened her eyes in agitation as she shouted furiously.

“Fine! Putting that aside, I sensed traces of a soul oracle in his Primordial Spirit, and he even brought out an artifact of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe! This should show that there’s a very high chance that he isn’t a human but an Otherworldly Demon in disguise!” The First Elder quickly changed his words.

“Soul oracle?”

“Artifact of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?”

The Xing Sword Saint and Meng Sword Saint were taken aback upon hearing those words, and they swiftly exchanged glances with one another.

They had suspected that Zhang Xuan might be their missing child, but if he was a soul oracle...

“Indeed! I believe I need not say more about the depraved arts that soul oracles practice. I’m very certain that his Primordial Spirit is not one of an ordinary cultivator but that of a soul oracle. Even if you doubt me on that, there’s no questioning that the artifact he used to attack me is one of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. The pit over there was caused by that artifact, and the killing intent of the Otherworldly Demons is still lingering!” the First Elder said as he pointed in a certain direction.

The Xing Sword Saint and Meng Sword Saint turned their gazes over.

The pit was roughly several dozen meters deep, and while it appeared ordinary at first glance, with their sharp eye of discernment, they were still able to sense the faint aura of an Otherworldly Demon lingering within it.

The artifacts of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe could only be driven using the Zhenqi of Slaughter, which only Otherworldly Demons possessed, so it was impossible for a human to activate it. Could Zhang Xuan really not be their child but an Otherworldly Demon in disguise?

“It’s indeed the aura of an Otherworldly Demon.” The Xing Sword Saint nodded in confirmation before asking the First Elder. “What happened?”

“It’s like this...”

The First Elder quickly explained the swordsmanship duel, the sudden breakthrough, and the cultivation ordeal in detail.

“A Phantasmal Space Ordeal that brought a lightning tribulation even stronger than a Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal?” Upon hearing the full story, the Xing Sword Saint quickly looked at the marks of lightning strikes all around him before falling into deep thought.

There was no doubt that his child would have achieved great things if he was still alive, but to draw in such a powerful lightning tribulation in his Phantasmal Space Ordeal, not to mention successfully clearing it... this was something that he simply could not fathom even with the wildest of imagination.

Could the other party really be an Otherworldly Demon in disguise, just as the First Elder had said?

The Meng Sword Saint harrumphed. “Isn’t he Yang shi’s student? We should be able to uncover the truth by asking him!”

“Indeed, we will know the truth just by asking him about him.” The Xing Sword Saint nodded. “However, Yang shi is currently still in seclusion, so it isn’t a good time to disturb him...”

Hong long!

Before he could finish his words, an overpowering aura gushed into the clouds. It emanated such a powerful pressure that it immediately silenced the entire surroundings.

“Yang shi is out...”

Upon feeling this aura, everyone’s eyes immediately lit up. The Xing Sword Saint and the others quickly headed off in a certain direction, and the other elders followed suit.

Soon, they saw an old man floating in midair. The energy in his body was fluctuating greatly, making it hard to determine his current level of cultivation.

“Yang shi!”

The crowd quickly clasped their fists upon seeing the old man.

“Un.” Yang shi nodded with a faint smile.

After trading some pleasantries, the First Elder got to the matter at hand.

“Yang shi, pardon me, but there’s a question that I have to ask you. There’s a young man going by the name of Zhang Xuan who claims to be your student. May I know if that’s true?”

1477 He Isn't My Student

“I only have one student, Feng Ziyi,” Yang shi replied with a frown.

“Zhang Xuan isn't your student?”

Everyone was taken aback, especially the First Elder and Feng Wuchen. They could not help but stare at one another with widened eyes.

They had asked about this matter previously, and from the start to the end, Zhang Xuan had claimed to be Yang Xuan's direct disciple, inheriting the exclusive arts of his lineage. Was this all a lie?

“I have been busy over the years, so I haven't had any time to accept any other students. You should be well aware of this yourselves. What's wrong? Did someone claim to be my student?” Yang shi asked.

“Indeed. This Zhang Xuan person claimed to be your direct disciple, and just a moment ago, he was even wreaking havoc in the Zhang Clan!” the First Elder reported.

“Someone claimed to be my direct disciple?” Yang shi's face immediately darkened. “Where is this Zhang Xuan person you spoke of?”

Lineages were of the utmost importance in the Master Teacher Continent. Naturally, claiming to be another's student was an extremely disrespectful action and considered a taboo.

Furthermore, from the sound of it, that person had been throwing his name around to cause trouble, and this was something that Yang Xuan could not accept.

“He has already left via a Teleportation Formation!” the First Elder replied awkwardly.

“Teleportation Formation? What happened?” Yang shi asked with a frown.

Thus, the First Elder went through the entire story once more.

“You are saying that a young lad who has just achieved a breakthrough to the Phantasmal Space realm was able to withstand a cultivation ordeal that wielded prowess surpassing that of a Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal? Not only so, he was able to triumph over the geniuses of your Zhang Clan, be it in terms of swordsmanship, painting, enchantment, appraising, and so on?” Yang shi was slightly taken aback by what he had heard.

“That is indeed the case!” The First Elder nodded. “It’s understandable for him to possess astounding abilities in a field or two, but to show such high expertise in so many fields at his age... I believe that there’s a high chance that he’s an Otherworldly Demon in disguise!”

“It’s indeed possible for an Otherworldly Demon Emperor to disguise as a master teacher, but it’s irrational for an Otherworldly Demon Emperor to act so ostentatiously.” Yang shi shook his head, disagreeing with the First Elder’s point of view.

While Otherworldly Demon Emperors were able to disguise as master teachers, their disguises were not infallible. To prevent being exposed by 9-star master teachers, they would definitely try their best to lie low as much as possible. There was no way that they would drop by the Zhang Clan and cause such a huge commotion.

After all, was that not as good as exposing himself?

If that was the case, what was the point of disguising himself in the first place?

Unconvinced by Yang shi’s words, the First Elder argued, “If he isn’t an Otherworldly Demon, how could he possibly be able to utilize the means of a soul oracle? How could he possibly be able to activate an artifact of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?”

“To pretend to be my student and wreak havoc here, and the possession of the knowledge of soul oracle arts too... that young lad seems to be quite an interesting figure. I would very much like to meet him. Do you know where his Teleportation Formation leads to?” Yang shi asked with a soft chuckle.

The First Elder shook his head. “I’m afraid that we aren’t able to tell!”

If it was an ordinary Teleportation Formation, they might still have been able to fathom a guess. However, the Teleportation Formation that Zhang Xuan had used was extremely advanced, such that even an expert of the First Elder’s caliber was not able to interpret it at all, let alone guess where the young man had teleported to.

“You aren’t able to tell?” Yang shi frowned. “Where did he he teleported from? Bring me over. I want to take a look.”

The First Elder and the others quickly led the way, and it did not take long for them to reach where Zhang Xuan had teleported away from.

Yang shi lowered his head to study the area, but the more he looked, the deeper the frown of his forehead became. A moment later, he turned to the First Elder and asked, “Did the other party have a token that resembles something like this in hand when he teleported?”

He tapped his finger lightly in front of him, and an illusory image of a token that emanated a light golden glow appeared in midair.

“Indeed, he did have this artifact with him.” The First Elder nodded. “He used it to dodge my sword qi, so I believe that it should be a Saint pinnacle artifact at the very minimum!”

The young man had used this token to block his attack earlier, so he had a particularly deep impression of it.

“Is that so...” Hearing the First Elder’s confirmation, the frown on Yang shi’s forehead seemed to have further deepened.

Realizing that there was something amiss with Yang shi’s expression, the First Elder asked, “Yang shi, do you recognize this token?”

“Recognize? If Zhang Xuan really has this token in hand, just as you have said, there’s a good chance that he might be...” At this point, Yang shi abruptly halted his words. There was a short moment of silence before he waved his hand. “Never

mind, this isn't a good time to speak about it. I'll have to confirm it with my own eyes first!"

The implications regarding the Sanctum Head Token were simply too great, such that even he did not dare speak of it lightly, especially since he was a grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters. Even if he claimed it to be a mere hypothesis on his part, others would likely take his words as the truth due to the lofty position that he was in, and if it turned out that he was wrong, it could possibly lead to dire consequences.

However, speaking of the token, he knew that the Sanctum Head Token was distributed by Sage Kui himself, and there was no way that Sage Kui could have made such a major slip up as to pass down the sanctum head position to an Otherworldly Demon. Even if Sage Kui existed just as a sliver of will now, he had still been a powerful expert back in his era, as well as one of the very few possessors of the Eye of Insight. It was unthinkable that Zhang Xuan would be able to fool him if he truly was an Otherworldly Demon.

While Yang shi was still deep in thought, Hu Yiwei suddenly rushed over and greeted, "Old Master, you are finally out!"

"Un." Yang shi nodded. Through his sharp eye, he was able to tell that Hu Yiwei had something on his mind, so he asked, "What's wrong?"

"Old Master, I was in the Sanctum of Sages a while back, and I found a student named Zhang Xuan. I found the Innate Fetal Poison that I planted back then in his body..." Hu Yiwei quickly relayed what he had found.

"Innate Fetal Poison? He's the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan?" Even Yang shi was taken aback by that revelation. He turned to look at Sword Saint Xing at the others.

At that moment, he could not help but feel a little dazed by the situation.

On top of being the sanctum head of the Sanctum of Sages, a soul oracle, and an Otherworldly Demon, that Zhang Xuan

person was actually the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan too? Just what was wrong with that fellow?

Was he suffering from dissociative personality disorder?

Yang shi pondered for a moment before speaking. “Since his identity as my student has been proven false, I believe that there’s a need to look deeper into the matter to verify the authenticity of his other identities. Sword Saint Xing and Sword Saint Meng, the both of you shouldn’t get your hopes up too much for the time being. We all know the circumstances surrounding the young prodigy, and the chances of him surviving are extremely slim. Why don’t you allow me to meet him first and verify his identity before deciding on anything?”

“I’m going with you!” Sword Saint Meng said firmly. “I feel like I’ll regret it for life if I don’t at least meet him in this moment!”

This was the best lead that she had found relating to her child in the past two decades. Even though the First Elder and the others had found evidence that suggested the contrary, she was still reluctant to accept it until she verified it with her own eyes.

Understanding Sword Saint Meng’s feelings, Yang shi nodded. “That’s fine with me. I don’t think that it’s possible for Hu Yiwei to be wrongly about this—that young lad’s surname also happens to be Zhang, and he comes from the ancient lands. Everything seems to fit together like pieces of a puzzle. It will indeed be hard to accept it unless you verify it with your own eyes.”

“Yang shi, could it be that... you know where he has teleported to?” Sword Saint Xing suddenly asked at this moment.

“If the First Elder is right about the token, I think I have a good idea where he has teleported to.” Yang shi nodded. “If my guess is right, he should have returned to the Sanctum of Sages!”

“Sanctum of Sages?” Sword Saint Xing’s lips twitched upon hearing those three words.

He and his wife had rushed to the Sanctum of Sages after hearing Hu Yiwei’s news, but halfway through their journey, they had heard that Zhang Xuan was in their Zhang Clan, so they had rushed all the way back. Yet, Yang shi was now telling them that he had gone back to the Sanctum of Sages?

Just how could their luck be so bad, missing him each and every time?

“If I recall correctly, the Zhang Clan doesn’t have a Teleportation Formation leading to the Sanctum of Sages or anywhere in its vicinity. Since that’s the case, I’ll first teleport to the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters and teleport to the Sanctum of Sages from there. The journey should take one day, thus saving us much time,” Yang shi said.

The Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters had Teleportation Formations leading all over the Master Teacher Continent, not to mention that the Sanctum of Sages was its subsidiary. As such, it would be faster to take this detour instead.

Considering the severity of this matter, it would be best for them to resolve it as quickly as possible.

“Alright, Yang shi. We’ll follow you!” Sword Saint Xing nodded.

1478 Ninth Netherworld Dimension

The world spun around Zhang Xuan, leaving him in a constant state of vertigo, when all of a sudden, he fell to the ground with a resounding crash.

The teleportation had left him in such a disorientated state that he could not keep track of the flow of time; a second could have passed, but it could have been a year. Everything around him just kept changing, and the surrounding space warped like there was no tomorrow.

Eurgh!

Zhang Xuan found himself retching for a long while.

After meditating for a while, the discomfort alleviated a little. Recalling the experience that he had just undergone, a bitter smile appeared on his face.

No wonder it's impossible to make Teleportation Formations commonplace. There's no way weaker cultivators would be able to survive something like this!

He had been wondering for a long while why the Master Teacher Pavilion had gone to the extent of building branches all over the continent but not built Teleportation Formations along with that. However, this single experience had him completely convinced about the impracticality of the matter.

His physical body was comparable to a Saint pinnacle artifact, but despite that, he still ended up retching at the end of it.

Other cultivators, especially those beneath Saint 8-dan, might very well find their own bodies disintegrating into dust from the sheer pressure caused by the Teleportation Formation.

He was still feeling deeply uncomfortable due to the incompatibility between his body and Primordial Spirit, but he knew that there was no time to be wasted. Thus, he slowly got to his feet and scanned his surroundings.

Where is this place?

Based on the information on the Sanctum Head Token, this should have been a hidden dimension left behind by Sage Kui. Only potential sanctum head successors who had fulfilled the first two conditions would be qualified to enter this space.

It's a folded space!

Upon taking a closer look, Zhang Xuan swiftly found that the fabric of space there was much weaker compared to that of the Master Teacher Continent, and the concentration of spiritual energy was rather low.

The ground that he was currently standing on was a round platform with a particularly profound formation inscribed on it.

To be able to teleport him right into a folded space, it was apparent that the Teleportation Formation on the Sanctum Head Token was a rather formidable one.

Walking down from the round platform, Zhang Xuan carefully explored the area, and he soon found a manor with lush greenery growing around it. There was a small stream flowing not too far away from it, giving it the feeling of a tranquil garden away from the secular world.

Walking into the manor, the first thing that Zhang Xuan saw was a hulking stone tablet, and carved on it were the words 'Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld'!

Glancing lower down on the stone tablet, he found smaller words inscribed below, detailing the various circulation pathways required to cultivate the optic art. It was even more detailed than what Sage Kui had imparted to him before.

"Welcome to the Ninth Netherworld Dimension!"

Just as Zhang Xuan was taking in the content on the stone tablet into the Library of Heaven's Path, a light voice suddenly filled the air.

Recognizing the voice, Zhang Xuan asked as he looked around his surroundings, "Sage Kui?"

“There’s no need to look for me. All that is left of me here is a slight sliver of my will, and I’m already unable to manifest in a physical form anymore!” the will said with a slight desolate edge to its tone. “The fact that you were able to come to this dimension means that you have already successfully deciphered the first two seals and are qualified to practice the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld!”

“Qualified?”

“Indeed. The optic art manual that I have given to you is correct, but it isn’t detailed enough for you to successfully master the optic art. It’s not that I’m intentionally making things hard for you, but in order to master the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld, you will have to cultivate it in a certain environment. Otherwise, it would be nigh impossible to succeed!” Sage Kui said.

“A certain environment?” Zhang Xuan was bewildered by those words.

It was just a mere optic art, why would it still need a certain kind of environment in order to cultivate it?

“There are nine levels to the heavens, and similarly, there are nine levels to the netherworld. In order to master the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld, you will have to be in an environment that emulates the environment of the netherworld. The environment stimulates your Eye of Insight and draws out the potential into it, and it’s for this purpose that this very folded space was created,” Sage Kui explained.

“I see!” Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Having browsed through countless cultivation technique manuals, there were indeed some unique techniques that required cultivation in a specific type of environment in order to master them.

For example, some fire attribute techniques could be mastered much more easily when cultivated in locations in close proximity to the earth flames. Similarly, there were also ice attribute techniques where cultivating them in icy lakes would enhance their prowess significantly.

Since the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld was a technique on par with the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, its cultivation was bound to be difficult as well. Otherwise, the generations of sanctum heads would not have failed to fully master the optic art.

“In this folded space are Beguilement Formations, Illusory Formations, Hidden Formations, and the like. There won’t be any danger, but without a sharp eye, it’s impossible for you to overcome those obstacles and get to the exit! You will have to rely on cultivating your Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld to sharpen your eyes so as to find the flaws in those formations and overcome them,” Sage Kui said.

“This is manual that my teacher left behind back then, and the others are the insights left behind by generations of sanctum heads. You can refer to them, but ultimately, you will still have to comprehend it by yourself in order to grasp the technique!”

Hula!

As Sage Kui spoke, a few more stone tablets appeared in the courtyard of the manor.

Zhang Xuan swiftly swept his gaze over the optic art manual and insights in order to collect them into the Library of Heaven’s Path.

Compile! Zhang Xuan willed.

Hu la!

A new book materialized before Zhang Xuan’s eyes. He swiftly flipped it open to browse through it, and what he saw caused an involuntary sigh to escape from his lips.

As expected of a top-notch optic art... even with the insights from the previous generations of sanctum heads, it was still a long way off from being perfected.

The Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld did improve significantly after several of the flaws were resolved. With this, I should be able to master the optic art faster. Yet, its cultivation is still highly damaging to the eyes, which means that there’s a high chance that I’ll turn blind if I really master the technique!

The greatest hesitation behind why Zhang Xuan refused to cultivate the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld was not just because it was imperfect but because there was a high likelihood of going blind cultivating it.

Even the very creator of the technique, Ancient Sage Bo Shang, was not spared from the eventual tragedy of going blind, and Zhang Xuan had no intention of walking in the same footsteps as his predecessor.

Zhang Xuan continued examining the optic art a little longer, but unable to figure out a feasible method to resolve the underlying issues, he shook his head and said, “I don’t have any intention of cultivating the optic art for the time being. Can you allow me to leave this folded space first?”

“You want to leave? There’s only one chance for you to get into the Ninth Netherworld Dimension. If you don’t cultivate your Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld to the fourth realm now, it will be hard for you to grasp it in the future!”

Not expecting the young man to be thinking of leaving when he had only just entered the area, Sage Kui advised him with a frown.

The position of the sanctum head was at stake here. Was the young man not acting a little too carelessly?

“Elder, a student of mine is currently in great peril. As her teacher, I can’t ignore her safety for the sake of my own cultivation. I wish for your understanding on this matter!” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

He did not know what Zhao Ya was facing at the moment, so he could not afford to waste his time there. He had to find Chen Leyao as soon as possible to find out more about the situation before devising a plan to save her. Even if he could cultivate the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld safely, it was likely that he would take quite some time to master it, so he could not afford to do it right now.

“You said that your student is in danger?” Sage Kui looked at Zhang Xuan. “Are you certain that you wish to give up this rare opportunity for the sake of your student?”

“Elder, I can’t leave my student in peril!” Zhang Xuan replied resolutely.

If he had to compromise Zhao Ya’s safety in order to master the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld and become the next sanctum head, he would throw away those opportunities in a heartbeat!

While it was true that becoming the sanctum head would give him an edge when asking for Luo Ruoxin’s marriage in hand, he was not willing to sacrifice his student’s life for it!

Sage Kui was silent for a long while before nodding slightly. “To be willing to give up on so much for your student, you are really a good teacher!

“However, rules are rules. There’s only one chance to enter the Ninth Netherworld Dimension, and I can’t change the rules just because of the circumstances you are in, so you won’t be able to return here once you leave.

“However, the lengths you are willing to go for your student is truly respectable. Thus, if you are able to comprehend the fourth realm of the optic art outside, I’ll grant you an opportunity to comprehend the fifth realm!”

1479 Too Far

“An opportunity to comprehend the fifth realm?” Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback.

“Indeed. The fifth realm of the Eye of Insight is known as Phantasmagoric Construct. An illusory world created through the eye, this technique allows one to plunge even experts surpassing Saint 9-dan into living hell, a nightmare that they will never awake from. Back then, with this very technique, my teacher, Ancient Sage Bo Shang, eradicated over a million Otherworldly Demons with just a single glance, creating an undefeatable legend!

“Under normal circumstances, it’s impossible for one to comprehend this realm without being in the Ninth Netherworld Dimension, but in view of the fact that you are leaving in order to save your student, I’ll make an exception just for you. As long as you can comprehend the fourth realm, Demon Vanquisher, and decipher the final seal on the Sanctum Head Token, I’ll grant you an opportunity to comprehend the fifth realm,” Sage Kui said.

“Thank you, elder!” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and bowed deeply to Sage Kui.

It did not seem likely that he would ever master the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld, but nevertheless, he was still very appreciative of the kindness and opportunity that Sage Kui had given him.

Lineages were important within the Master Teacher Continent, and those who were willing to go to great lengths for their teacher or students were highly respected.

For his student, Zhang Xuan was willing to give up on this precious opportunity to master the Divine Eyes of the Ninth Netherworld. To a potential sanctum head, this was really a huge sacrifice. Once he left the Ninth Netherworld Dimension, there was a high chance that he would never comprehend the

fourth realm of the Eye of Insight, thus missing the opportunity to become the real sanctum head.

“There’s no need to thank me. It’s not too difficult to leave this area; you just have to return to the round platform that you were on when you first teleported in and will to leave this area with the Sanctum Head Token in hand. You will automatically be teleported out,” Sage Kui said.

“Thank you!” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Without any hesitation, he turned around and walked toward the round platform. He took out his sanctum head token and grasped it tightly.

Weng!

A powerful force tugged at his body, and with a slight jolt, he disappeared from the spot.

Watching as Zhang Xuan left without the slightest hint of hesitation, Sage Kui muttered, “A teacher should have a compassionate heart. To be willing to give up so much for his student, perhaps he might just be able to lead the Sanctum of Sages to unprecedented heights...”

Compassion might seem to be of little importance to those in important positions, playing a secondary role to one’s capability. However, it was often the mark of a truly great leader as those with great compassion would find it easier to win others over. Given how the young man before him was able to stick unwaveringly to his beliefs, decisively abandoning all else to protect what he deemed to be the most important to him, he would likely rise to a great height in the future.

He might even surpass the many generations of sanctum heads before him!

Hu!

Unaware of Sage Kui’s high evaluation of him, Zhang Xuan found himself crashing onto the floor once more.

This time, perhaps because the distance teleported was shorter, he did not feel as much discomfort as before, and the temporal disorientation that he had experienced previously did not

come. He shook his head lightly before slowly getting to his feet. When he saw familiar sights in his surroundings, he subconsciously heaved a sigh of relief.

Just as he had thought, he had returned to the Sanctum of Sages.

He was currently in the Inner Sanctum, not too far from Sage Kui's sculpture, which held Vicious' upper body.

Could it be that... the so-called Ninth Netherworld Dimension is actually within Sage Kui's sculpture? Zhang Xuan frowned.

Since he had appeared there, the folded space that he had been in should not be too far away. Could it be that it was hidden within the sculpture, just like Vicious' upper body?

Forget it! I should first look for Chen Leyao to understand the situation regarding Zhao Ya first!

Knowing that this was no time to allow his mind to wander, he quickly took out the Inner Sanctum token and walked over to the exit before swiping it in the air lightly.

Si la!

A rift appeared in space. Zhang Xuan walked into the rift and left the Inner Sanctum.

The sun had already set outside, and the Sanctum of Sages was particularly quiet. This peace felt peculiarly out of place to Zhang Xuan, especially considering what he had just encountered in the Zhang Clan.

He quickly figured out the direction to Chen Leyao's residence and flew over.

"Zhang shi, you..." Chen Leyao was astounded by Zhang Xuan's sudden arrival.

When she sent the message earlier, the young man had still been several million li away. To arrive before her in just a few minutes... even someone as calm as her could not help but be flabbergasted.

"What happened to Zhao Ya?" Zhang Xuan asked anxiously.

“I don’t know.” Chen Leyao shook her head grimly. “I was in the midst of my cultivation when I suddenly received that message from the young court chief. I knew that you weren’t in the Sanctum of Sages, so I could only send her message to you via the formation. Unfortunately, the transmission stopped after she’d barely said a few words.”

From the looks of it, it seemed like Chen Leyao was perplexed by the matter as well.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before asking, “Aside from Zhao Ya’s message, is there any news from the Glacier Plain Court?”

“As soon as the transmission from the young court chief was terminated, I immediately sent a message to my sisters in the Glacier Plain Court, but the responses that I received were that everything was fine, and the young court chief hadn’t left the Glacier Plain Court,” Chen Leyao replied. “Could it be a false alarm?”

“Impossible!” Zhang Xuan immediately refuted Chen Leyao’s guess.

He knew Zhao Ya well. She would never call for his help unless she was in a truly dire situation.

Something was definitely amiss.

“Then... what do you plan to do?” Chen Leyao asked with a frown.

To be honest, she was more inclined to believe that the young court chief was still safe. After all, the latter’s position was second only to the court chief, so there was no way that the Glacier Plain Court would remain idle if the latter was in danger.

Still, given that a cry for help had been sent, it would be foolish to simply shrug the matter off.

Zhang Xuan pondered in silence for a long while before demanding with narrowed eyes, “Bring me to the Glacier Plain Court!”

“You want to go to the Glacier Plain Court?” Chen Leyao was taken aback. “Right now?”

“That’s right!” Zhang Xuan nodded resolutely.

“But the Glacier Plain Court is several million li away from here! It will take at least a month even if you ride on a Saint 9-dan beast. If the young court chief is really in danger, it will be too late by the time we arrive,” Chen Leyao said.

The distance from the Sanctum of Sages to the Glacier Plain Court was further than the distance from there to the Zhang Clan. It would take more than a month, and if something had really happened to the young court chief, everything would be over by the time they arrived.

“A month?” Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly.

A month was indeed too long.

Since Zhao Ya had sent such an urgent message over, there was no way that she could hang on for that long! However, there was no way for him to cover several million li swiftly, unless...

“Are there any Teleportation Formations in the Sanctum of Sages that lead straight to the Glacier Plain Court?” Zhang Xuan raised his head and asked.

Having used a Teleportation Formation before, he knew that it was possible for it to cover a journey that would usually take a month in just a few breaths. If there was a Teleportation Formation in the Sanctum of Sages that led to the Glacier Plain Court, he would be able to resolve this conundrum.

“I’m afraid there aren’t.” Chen Leyao shook her head. “The Glacier Plain Court has only constructed Teleportation Formations to a few powers that it is closer with, and this doesn’t include the Sanctum of Sages. In fact, my sisters and I had to take aerial saint beasts over back then.”

Considering how a Teleportation Formation would allow a cultivator to instantaneously teleport from one place to another, unless the two powers had close ties with one another,

there was no way that they would build a Teleportation Formation between them.

Otherwise, the other party could potentially make use of the Teleportation Formation to cause harm.

“Then, what’s the closest teleportation location to the Glacier Plain Court from the Sanctum of Sages?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“That would be the Yuan Clan, but still, it would take half a month from the Yuan Clan to get there,” Chen Leyao said hesitantly.

She understood how the young man before her felt, but the Glacier Plain Court was located in the frosty lands at the very north of the continent, so there was no way one could get there easily!

“Half a month... That’s still too long! Since you know the specific location of the Glacier Plain Court, is it possible for me to just construct a Teleportation Formation to take us there directly?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

1480 Heaven's Path

Teleportation Formation Ar

Yuan Tao was in the Yuan Clan, so he would not face any problems teleporting into their clan. However, the half a month that it would take to travel from the Yuan Clan to the Glacier Plain Court was much too long!

Since there was no other more convenient Teleportation Formation for him to take... why not just construct one?

“You wish to construct a Teleportation Formation?” Chen Leyao was startled by the unexpected suggestion.

Following which, she shook her head bitterly and said, “Teleportation Formations can only be constructed by real 9-star formation masters, especially since they require a deep comprehension of space in order to build them properly. On top of that, their structure is incredibly intricate, requiring complex calculations that must be perfectly precise. Even the slightest error in a calculation could cause a vast difference in the end result!

“I have never seen the construction of the Teleportation Formations in the Glacier Plain Court before, but I have had the opportunity to see how they repaired one. Back then, our Glacier Plain Court hired three 9-star formation masters, and despite their collaboration, it still took them three whole months before they completed the calculations required to calibrate the Teleportation Formation! Putting aside our lack of strength and comprehension of formations, even if we do have the ability to set up a Teleportation Formation, there's no way we could build it swiftly!”

Putting aside everything else, just the calibration of the Teleportation Formation to the determined destination was enough to take them several months of calculations. For a distance of several million li, the slightest difference in

calibration could lead to a massive deviation in the final destination!

All in all, with all of these factors at play, the construction of a Teleportation Formation was bound to be a highly time-consuming project. It would not help their current situation.

Otherwise, the Master Teacher Pavilion would have already set up Teleportation Formations all over the continent. There would not just be a couple of them located in the major powers in the continent, such that most average cultivators had seen them before.

“Three months?” Zhang Xuan felt yet another headache assaulting his already hurting head.

If it took that long to repair a formation, its construction was bound to take even longer.

Was there really no way for him to reach Zhao Ya quickly?

Zhang Xuan pondered for a long moment before his eyes suddenly lit up. It might take others a long time to complete the calculations required to calibrate the formation, but I should be able to shorten the process significantly!

Regardless of what formation one wanted to set up, one would have to first take the environment into account and assess how the formation should best be set up in order to align it with the surroundings before placing down the formation flags.

For this reason, setting up formations, especially higher-grade ones, often took formation masters a great deal of time. They had to use their compass to make all kinds of measurement, such as the direction, concentration, gradient of spiritual energy in the surroundings, the effects the surrounding geography would have on the formation, and so on. However, Zhang Xuan was different! With his Library of Heaven's Path, he would be able to resolve the problems through simple trial and error. There was no need for him to go to great lengths calculating this and that!

Since he could do so for other formations, naturally, he would also be able to do the same for Teleportation Formations!

With this thought in mind, Zhang Xuan decided to dive straight to action.

“Let’s go, we’re heading to the Hall of Erudition! I’m going to see if there are any books relating to Teleportation Formations that I can refer to. It would be best if I can set one up, but if that fails, I’ll just have to find another solution,” he said.

“Study? Right now?” Chen Leyao asked with twitching lips.

Putting aside how difficult it would be to set up a Teleportation Formation, just the manipulation of space required for its construction was more than enough to leave any ordinary formation master utterly helpless. Was it not a little too late to start studying?

Instead of pursuing something futile, would it not have been much wiser to set out that instant?

“We have no time to waste, hurry up!” Without explaining anything, Zhang Xuan took the lead and walked out.

He had been to the Formation Master Guild branch in the Hall of Erudition once and even taken the 8-star formation master examination there, so he knew the route there very well.

While Chen Leyao had no idea what Zhang Xuan was thinking, she knew that everything he did was to save their young court chief, so she eventually chose to follow him as well.

It did not take long before the two of them were standing before Elder Su of the Formation Master Guild.

Elder Su was the person who had supervised his 8-star formation master examination back then, so he was still a more familiar figure to Zhang Xuan.

“Elder Su, I would like to browse through books relating to Teleportation Formations. May I ask if there are such books in the Formation Master Guild?” Zhang Xuan revealed the purpose of his sudden visit.

“Teleportation Formations have always been an important research topic for the Sanctum of Sages. In fact, during Sage Kui’s era, the Sanctum of Sages was even reputed to be the

number one authority in this field! He has left behind many books regarding the topic, and if you wish to browse through them, I can take you there!” Elder Su nodded.

Zhang Xuan was already an 8-star formation master, so he was qualified to look through those books.

“I’ll be troubling Elder Su then!” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

It did not take long before they arrived in the library. Heading in the direction that Elder Su had pointed toward, Zhang Xuan soon saw multiple shelves storing countless books relating to Teleportation Formations.

The Sanctum of Sages had never lacked geniuses, and while the field of Teleportation Formations was particularly profound, there were still plenty of talented individuals studying the subject, hoping to further it. As such, there were many books relating to how a Teleportation Formation could be set up, how the location could be calibrated, how the space should be manipulated, and so on.

Zhang Xuan swiftly swept his gaze through those books and collected them into the Library of Heaven’s Path.

Compile!

A new book materialized, and Zhang Xuan quickly flipped it open.

Heaven’s Path Teleportation Formation Art... Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Perhaps because there were ample books in there, he managed to compile the Heaven’s Path Teleportation Formation Art. Tapping his finger lightly on it, the knowledge immediately flowed into his head, assimilating with his previous understanding of formations.

Previously, he had already finished browsing through all 8-star formation master books, which granted him knowledge of formations that was on par with 9-star primary formation masters. On top of that, his mastery of the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel had also reached the third realm. Thus, while Teleportation Formations was a rather difficult subject

for most to comprehend, he did not have much trouble understanding its content.

It did not take long before he fully grasped the Heaven's Path Teleportation Formation Art.

Knowing that he was ready, he quickly walked out of the library, and after finding Elder Su, he asked, "Elder Su, do you have any grade-9 formation flags on hand? I would like to borrow them!"

Teleportation Formations were all grade-9 formations, so naturally, they required grade-9 formation flags in order to set up.

"I don't have any grade-9 formation flags on me!" Elder Su shook his head and apologized.

He was only an 8-star formation master, so how could he possibly have any grade-9 formation flags on hand?

"Do you happen to know of anyone who has grade-9 formation flags?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Grade-9 formation flags..." Elder Su pondered for a moment before replying. "If I'm not mistaken, our deputy sanctum head, Zhan shi, should have some. Other than that, I'm afraid I don't really know anyone else who has them!"

"Zhan shi?" Zhang Xuan nodded slowly.

He had met Zhan shi once. Back then, he had just cleared the Master Teacher Tower, and the other party had taken him into the Inner Sanctum and given him his Inner Sanctum token. Considering how he was a Saint 9-dan expert and the deputy sanctum head, it did make sense for all of the grade-9 formation flags of the Sanctum of Sages to be with him.

After all, others did not even possess the strength to control them.

In the past, the Sanctum of Sages had been an extremely powerful organization with plenty of 9-star master teachers in its ranks. However, due to the lack of a powerful sanctum head to lead them for many years, it had declined greatly, such that

it could not compete with the more powerful Sage Clans in terms of absolute strength.

Nevertheless, its rich heritage, vast connections, and the very fact that it was a direct subsidiary of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters still gave the Sanctum of Sages a lot of influence and authority in the Master Teacher Continent.

Swiftly making sense of the situation, Zhang Xuan asked, “Elder Su, I’m really grateful for your help today. Do you know where the deputy sanctum head is at the moment?”

“He should be in the Sanctum Head Hall. You can try looking for him there!” Elder Su said with a smile.

“Very well!” Zhang Xuan called for Chen Leyao, and the both of them swiftly headed over to the Sanctum Head Hall. However, barely before he took flight, he suddenly felt a chilling sensation over his entire body.

He quickly sidestepped in midair.

Tz la!

Barely after he did so, the space where he was standing before was suddenly ripped open by a surge of sword qi. The sword qi surged straight for the ground, tearing out a deep gorge.

“I’m going to kill you!”

Following which, an infuriated bellow echoed. Taken aback, Zhang Xuan quickly turned his head over, only to see a young man standing not too far away, glaring at him with infernos blazing in his eyes.

“Luo Xuanqing, are you insane?” Zhang Xuan bellowed furiously.

1481 Luo Xuanqing's Wrath

The person who had assaulted him was none other than his future brother-in-law, Luo Xuanqing!

Before he went to the Zhang Clan, he had helped Luo Xuanqing deal with his lightning tribulation, and as a show of trust in him, the latter had also confided in him his plans to assassinate him and tried to entrust the task to him. They had been as close as real brothers then! Why would Luo Xuanqing suddenly turn against him now?

If not for his recent breakthrough, which allowed him to dodge swiftly, he might have sustained heavy injuries by now!

“Die!” Luo Xuanqing bellowed.

Boom!

With a deafening roar, Luo Xuanqing flitted forward like a streak of lightning, and in the blink of an eye, his punch was already right before Zhang Xuan.

He had already reinforced his Dimension Sundering realm cultivation completely, allowing him to call forth far greater strength than before. For one, the sheer might of his strength had compressed the space so much that Zhang Xuan felt as if someone had lifted a metal sheet and was hurling it at him.

“Are you out of your mind?” Zhang Xuan did not expect the other party to make a move on him without any hesitation, using such a vicious technique toward him. His hair immediately stood on end.

At this moment, he had not fully fused his Primordial Spirit and physical body together, and if not for his tenacity pushing him on, he would have already fainted.

While he had recovered sufficiently to move about, he could only summon a fifth of his original strength in his current state. Thus, he had no choice but to evade Luo Xuanqing's attack.

Kacha!

Barely after he had dodged, a resounding explosion echoed, and another dimension rift was torn open where he had been standing at previously.

Luo Xuanqing's Saint 8-dan cultivation, paired together with the innate comprehension of space due to his Luo Clan bloodline, granted him tremendous fighting prowess. Even ordinary Saint 8-dan pinnacle experts would not stand a chance against him!

Si la!

Despite his strike missing, Luo Xuanqing continued rushing at Zhang Xuan, launching attack after attack frenziedly.

His silhouette seemed to be weaving through the very fabric of space, shockingly moving at a speed faster than even the Heaven's Path Movement Art. In the blink of an eye, he was already standing right before Zhang Xuan once more, not giving the latter any chance to take a breather.

"I went to the Zhang Clan because I had something up. I really didn't have time to kill your target for you!"

Thinking that Luo Xuanqing was angry at him for not helping him assassinate himself, Zhang Xuan anxiously tried to explain himself as he dodged from side to side.

Unfortunately, the explanation only seemed to have provoked Luo Xuanqing further.

After seducing my younger sister, how dare you act as if nothing is wrong at all?

You shameless cad!

"You b*stard!" Luo Xuanqing roared angrily as he thrust both of his palms toward Zhang Xuan.

Puhe!

In that instant, Zhang Xuan felt the surrounding space collapsing on him, rendering him immobile.

If not for his current condition, he definitely would have been able to break Luo Xuanqing's Spatial Seal even with his

Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle cultivation. However, the giddiness plaguing his head was already making it an arduous task for him to remain in the sky. He was in no position to protect himself.

Peng!

A punch sunk into Zhang Xuan's chest, causing his face to turn pale. He was rammed right into the ground, creating a huge pit beneath him.

“Please, I'm begging you all, don't fight here, alright? We have just fixed this place...” Elder Su cried desperately as he watched the battle between the two.

The Formation Master Guild would be destroyed each time the King of Destruction descended upon them. It was one thing if the two of them had gone there to take an examination, but why the heck did they have to choose to fight there?

Just how in the world did our Formation Master Guild offended the two of you for you to do this to us?

Paying no heed to Elder Su's cries, after punching Zhang Xuan into the ground, Luo Xuanqing pushed himself against thin air and whizzed right toward him once more.

Peng peng peng peng!

It was as if Luo Xuanqing's arms had multiplied into eight; countless punches just kept raining down upon Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan was completely incapable of dodging the punches at all. Under the furious barrage of attacks, blood spurted from his lips.

“Stop it, are you insane?” Zhang Xuan hurriedly drove his zhenqi to heal his wounds as he bellowed angrily.

Just how had he hit Luo Xuanqing's nerves this time around?

They had parted on a good note, so why would the other party suddenly assault him as if a madman without saying a single word at all?

“Insane? If I'm insane, you are the one who has driven me so!” With reddened eyes, Luo Xuanqing charged forward and

sent a kick toward Zhang Xuan.

“You...” Knowing that he would sustain severe injuries if he was hit, Zhang Xuan suppressed his giddiness and waved his hand.

Boom!

The space before him collapsed slightly, warping Luo Xuanqing’s kick away from him.

While he might only be at Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle, as one who had cultivated the Heaven’s Path Divine Art and the Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, he was already able to go toe-to-toe with ordinary Dimension Sundering realm pinnacle experts. As powerful as Luo Xuanqing was, if he used his Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven’s Path, the other party would not stand a chance at all.

Padah!

Luo Xuanqing’s kick ended up striking the ground, sending a massive tremor through the earth as a huge crater was formed on the spot.

After missing his strike, Luo Xuanqing huddled his body together and rammed it right toward Zhang Xuan.

Peng!

Zhang Xuan wanted to dodge, but another sudden bout of dizziness caused his reaction to be delayed, resulting in him being struck squarely in his chest.

Hong long long!

As if a steel plow, he rolled several rounds on the ground, tearing a gorge several dozen meters long.

A sweet sensation welled up at the back of his throat, and yet another mouthful of blood spewed from his mouth.

“Hmm?”

After spurting the blood, Zhang Xuan suddenly froze on the spot, seemingly realizing something.

There was no doubt that Luo Xuanqing's attacks were very powerful, and the words that he had said were also filled with anger toward him, but Zhang Xuan found that the other party's attacks were, in fact, superficial. The impact of his blows did not sink deep into his body to puncture his organs and ruin his physiological functions. In other words, he would only sustain external injuries from the assault, and this was far from sufficient to claim his life!

Furthermore, his attacks also seem to be hastening the fusion between my body and my Primordial Spirit.

On top of that, Zhang Xuan also realized that Luo Xuanqing's attacks were highly beneficial to him. The two heavy blows that he had sustained had alleviated the giddiness in his head significantly, and his body did not feel as heavy and hard to maneuver as before.

It looks like he isn't really trying to kill me... Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he no longer tried his best to dodge Luo Xuanqing's attacks.

At the same time, he could not help but become even more bewildered as to what Luo Xuanqing was up to.

Peng peng peng peng!

As Zhang Xuan was not dodging anymore, all of Luo Xuanqing's attacks fell squarely on his body. While the powerful might striking his body caused him excruciating pain, his overpowered Primordial Spirit was also slowly fusing together with his physical body once more, alleviating the discomfort and heaviness he felt.

Every single move that Luo Xuanqing has executed harnesses the energy of space, and it's precisely this energy that is resolving the incompatibility between my body and my Primordial Spirit. Zhang Xuan was able to swiftly make sense of the situation.

It might not have been an intentional action on Luo Xuanqing's part, but perhaps due to his Luo Clan bloodline, every single strike of his caused some spatial energy to seep into his body, which aided in pushing for the fusion.

He had been deliberating over this problem for a very long time, not knowing how to resolve it, but who could have thought that suffering a beating from Luo Xuanqing would actually be the key to it?

All along, he had been the one to pummel others in order to treat them of their ailments...

What goes around does come around after all!

Peng peng peng!

Soon, upon seeing that Zhang Xuan had been completely disfigured from his pummeling, the heavily panting Luo Xuanqing finally came to a halt.

It had to be said that Zhang Xuan was really resilient to beating. He had expended all of his strength punching that fellow, but even at the end of it, that fellow was still standing as if nothing had happened at all. From the looks of it, that fellow's defenses were at least on par with Yuan Xiao's.

Stretching his fatigued body, he lay down on the rubble not too far away from where Zhang Xuan was.

“You must make sure to treat my younger sister well! If I ever learn that you have let her down, I'll make sure to kill you with my own hands!”

“Y-you...” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

1482 Luo Xuanqing

It was just a moment ago when he had still been wondering which screw was loose in Luo Xuanqing's head to suddenly pummel him relentlessly like that, but those words had cleared all doubts in his mind. It was not that Luo Xuanqing's violent streak was acting up once more, but that... he had found out about the relationship between Luo Ruoxin and him!

He had thought of telling Luo Xuanqing about this matter in the past, but every single time, he would stop at the final moment because he had no idea how he should broach the subject. Yet, to think that the other party would actually find out about it himself... In that moment, he was so shocked that it felt as if his mind would blow up.

Just as he was about to ask how Luo Xuanqing found out about that matter, it suddenly dawned on him that Luo Xuanqing had already stumbled onto the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy lead. It would not be too hard to trace him down from there, especially since he was the principal!

“Xuanqing, I...”

Abruptly placed in such a situation, Zhang Xuan had no idea what he should say.

It was true that he had gotten close with Luo Xuanqing in order to get to Luo Ruoxin, so it was understandable that he would be unhappy to learn of his ulterior motive.

The other party had thought of him as a true friend, but it turned out that he was only getting close to him in order to flirt with his younger sister. Who would be happy about that?

“My younger sister's talents are both a gift and a cursing. Throughout her life, she has never met anyone whom she could truly call a friend. While the entire Luo Clan treats her well and respects her, it's that attitude of theirs that created an invisible boundary between her and the others, effectively isolating her. Every night, I would see her sitting alone on the

roof, watching her gaze at the starry night sky. You can't even begin to imagine how forlorn her profile looked.

“Despite being her elder brother, I was unable to assuage the loneliness she felt, so I could only use all of my strength to protect her and offer her the best. I have always thought that her loneliness would dissipate once she found someone whom she loves, and I have always envisioned the person whom she would fancy to be someone stronger than her, possessing astounding capabilities unmatched by anyone else in the world... but who would have thought that she would end up choosing you!”

Paying no heed to Zhang Xuan's shock, Luo Xuanqing gazed deeply at the starry sky above and muttered to himself.

“I...” Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly.

Indeed. When he first got together with Luo Ruoxin, the latter's cultivation had been far above his, such that it would be no exaggeration to say that they were from two entirely different worlds.

To this day, he still could not say that he was worthy of her.

But one's feelings simply did not obey rational logic. The fondness that he felt for Luo Ruoxin would not vanish just because of the gap in their standing.

In fact, from the moment that he first set eyes on her, he had felt an inexplicable feeling of intimacy to her, as if they were meant to be. It took only an instant to realize that she was the missing piece that he had been looking for his entire life, and he would never feel whole without her.

“I have been thinking about this matter over the past few days. My younger sister really likes you, and the notion of you getting together with her doesn't seem as revolting as I thought it would be. At the very least, I'm familiar with you! While you do get into trouble often, you tend to be unreliable at times, your words sound like a pile of dog sh*t, and you are doltish at times, on the whole, I'm still quite satisfied with your capabilities!” Luo Xuanqing continued.

“...” Black lines streaked across Zhang Xuan's face.

Big bro, are you praising or berating me?

Get into trouble often? To think that I would hear such words from the likes of your mouth!

Unreliable? How am I unreliable?

You are the one who is unreliable!

Also, my words sound like a pile of dog sh*t, and I am doltish at times? You are the one who is doltish!

“It’s a known fact that my younger sister has successfully assimilated the Dimension Silencer and is the number one genius of the Luo Clan. Even compared to the young prodigy of the Zhang Clan, he’s lacking in comparison. Not only so, her looks are also top-notch, almost as if she was the favored one of the heavens... but I know that she isn’t happy. A heavy responsibility weighs down her shoulders, and no matter how she struggles, she’s unable to free herself of the constraints fate has shackled on her,” Luo Xuanqing said with a heavy voice.

“If she’s unable to struggle free out of the shackles of fate, then at the very least, I hope that she will be granted the joys of a passionate love. I want her to be with someone she loves and not someone she’s engaged to!”

Hearing the thoughts of his future brother-in-law, Zhang Xuan said, “I understand. Don’t worry about the engagement, I’ll deal with it!”

As long as the young prodigy did not appear, the Zhang Clan would be dispatching Zhang Jiuxiao for the engagement. Given the fact that Zhang Jiuxiao was his student, it would be for him to decide whether the engagement went ahead or not.

So, there would not be much of a problem regarding that.

Unless... the shameless young prodigy appeared at that moment!

“You’ll deal with it? How do you intend to deal with it?” Luo Xuanqing scoffed. “If the engagement could be resolved that easily, given my younger sister’s strength, she would have

broken free of it by herself. Would she be placed in such a quandary over it?"

"I don't understand. If your younger sister doesn't will for it, she could always choose not to marry. Why is this such an issue?" Zhang Xuan asked.

He could understand that it was political marriage with much on the line, but if both the groom and the bride refused to marry, surely the marriage would be called off. What was so difficult about this matter?

"It seems like you are really unaware of it. This marriage isn't just a simple political marriage between both clans. More important than that..." At this point, Luo Xuanqing suddenly paused. A moment later, he shook his head and said, "Forget it, you wouldn't understand even if I told you. I once promised the elders in my clan that I would kill the man whom my younger sister loves, but you are simply too strong. So, it's not that I didn't try to kill you but that I'm unable to do it. Thus, I have not ignored the order from my clan."

"Ah..." Zhang Xuan was dazed.

In the end, the reason the other party seemed so desperate to kill him was because of the orders from his clan!

It would be best if he could accomplish his mission, but if he could not do it, there was nothing that could be done.

"However, since I was able to uncover your identity, it shouldn't be too difficult for the elders in the clan to find out about it as well. I do not hope to see the person my younger sister likes to die so young." Luo Xuanqing stood up and placed his hands behind his back.

"She told me to take care of you and not allow you to come to harm. Your strength is currently not beneath mine, so it's already beyond my capability to take care of you. However, you have to know that powerful clans possess many means to deal with a person. Be careful!"

"Thank you for your reminder!" Zhang Xuan clasped his hand.

Were it anyone else, he would have long let out the Inferno Qilin and the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast. There was no

way that he would have allowed the other party to beat him up like that.

With these two saint beasts on his side, even the experts of the Luo Clan would have difficulty killing him!

Even in the worst-case scenario, he would still be able to escape.

“Don’t die,” Luo Xuanqing muttered before dashing ahead, disappearing into the night sky.

“Jeez...” Zhang Xuan shook his head as he used his zhenqi to swiftly heal his injuries before slowly standing up.

He knew just how much Luo Xuanqing doted on his younger sister, so upon hearing that a person whom he had trusted so deeply turned out to be his younger sister’s lover, it was no wonder he was so furious.

For someone as hot-tempered as Luo Xuanqing, it must have taken a lot of self-restraint for him to hold himself back so much.

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly and muttered, “Don’t worry, I’ll definitely treat Ruoxin well. I won’t let the slightest harm come to her!”

No matter how much effort he would have to put in, as long as he could be together with Luo Ruoxin in the end, he would not utter a single word of complaint!

This was his promise to Luo Xuanqing, as well as his promise to Luo Ruoxin and himself!

“You are good brother,” Zhang Xuan said.

Between his responsibilities to the clan and his younger sister, he eventually chose to side with her younger sister. Such an action could be considered a betrayal to the Luo Clan, and as someone who had grown up as the Young Master of the Luo Clan, this was definitely not an easy decision to make.

“Alright, I should get to looking for Zhan shi now!”

After resting for a moment, Zhang Xuan finally recovered fully from his injuries. Without any hesitation, he flew straight

for the Sanctum Head Hall.

1483 You Should Stay Here For a While!

In the Sanctum Head Hall, Zhan shi was pacing around with a tight frown on his forehead.

“Elder Ge, how do you view this matter?”

In the main hall, an elder was seated in one of the chairs, holding a Communication Jade Token in his hands with an unreadable expression on his face.

The head of the Hall of Integrity, Elder Ge.

“Zhang Wuheng has led the Zhang Clan for many years, and he’s very particular about the Zhang Clan’s reputation on the Master Teacher Continent. Since he passed a decree in his capacity as the First Elder, Zhang Xuan must have really done something unforgivable to the Zhang Clan,” Elder Ge said severely.

They had some formal ties with the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, and they knew the latter to be a rational and dignified individual. For him to fly into such a rage and send a message to them overnight, even requesting for their help to apprehend Zhang Xuan, it seemed like that fellow had raised quite a storm in the Zhang Clan this time around.

“I am of the same view as you, but no matter what, he’s still Yang shi’s student,” Zhan shi said with a frown.

“So what if he’s Yang shi’s student? All are equal in the eyes of the law! Back then, when Kong shi’s direct disciple made a grave mistake, he was also punished before the crowd. As talented as Zhang Xuan may be, I think his arrogance is clear for us all to see. Just look at what he has done in his time here. I’m not in the least surprised that he would wreak havoc in the Zhang Clan! Since Elder Wuheng has already made this request of us, why don’t we help him apprehend Zhang Xuan? This way, not only will we be able to win the Zhang Clan’s

favor, it'll also show the impartiality of our Sanctum of Sages in not blindly siding with our students," Elder Ge said.

"What you have said does make some sense. While I'm still not too sure what Zhang Xuan has done in the Zhang Clan, we can't just one-sidedly cover up for him. For the time being, you should dispatch some men to investigate what happened at the Zhang Clan, as well as whether Zhang Xuan has really utilized some means of teleportation that allowed him to secretly return to the Sanctum of Sages. Also, if you catch sight of Zhang Xuan, apprehend him right away. No matter what, we have to offer an explanation to the Zhang Clan, so we can't let him slip away at this point in time," Zhan shi instructed.

Previously, he had thought that Zhang Xuan might be a potential candidate to becoming the Sanctum Head, but the investigation over the past month had left him more and more convinced that it would be Feng Ziyi instead. Given so, there was no point offending the powerful Zhang Clan over a mere Zhang Xuan, especially given the weakened state that the Sanctum of Sages was in.

"Alright, I'll have it done!" Elder Ge nodded as he got to his feet, preparing to head out.

However, at this moment, knocking suddenly sounded on the door.

"Is Zhan shi inside? I am Zhang Xuan, and I have something that I need your help with!"

"Zhang Xuan? He actually came knocking of his own accord?"

The two elders glanced at one another in astonishment.

That fellow was way too gutsy!

It was just a moment ago that they had been discussing how they should go about apprehending that lad when he suddenly came rushing over in the next moment.

"Given how he was able to escape from right beneath Elder Wuheng's nose, he must possess some kind of extraordinary technique. Later on, I'll try to sound him out to see if things

are really as Elder Wuheng made them out to be. If it's proven true, I want you to quickly control the formation in this room so as to prevent him from getting away, alright?" Zhan shi sent a telepathic message to Elder Ge.

Elder Ge quickly nodded in response.

After swiftly sorting out their plans, Zhan shi spoke up with a slightly louder voice. "Please enter!"

Jiya!

The door open, and Zhang Xuan walked in.

"Zhang shi, Elder Ge!" Zhang Xuan was slightly surprised to see that Elder Ge was around as well, but he did not neglect to greet the latter.

After trading some pleasantries, Zhan shi looked at Zhang Xuan intently and asked, "May I know the reason behind your late-night visit?"

"I am currently studying 9-star formations, and I am having some trouble procuring grade-9 formation flags to test out a formation. I heard that Zhan shi is adept in formations, so I came over hoping to get some from you. If it's required, I don't mind paying any price to purchase them," Zhang Xuan said.

"Grade-9 formations flags? I do have some with me, and if Zhang shi really needs them, it's not a problem for me to give them to you either. Just that..." Zhan shi directed a doubtful look toward Zhang Xuan before continuing. "Grade-9 formations require some degree of spatial manipulation in order to set up, so they are exceptionally difficult to construct. Considering Zhang shi's current cultivation realm, you should still be unable to utilize them, right?"

Grade-9 formations exploited the secrets of space, allowing the formation master to create spaces that were entirely isolated from the environment, thus granting a larger variety of effects.

In order to be able to set up even the simplest grade-9 formation, one's cultivation had to be at Saint 9-dan at the very minimum. Zhan shi had studied grade-9 formations for

over a hundred years now, but even so, it was highly difficult for him to set up the most basic of grade-9 formations. Considering how the young man before him had only recently cleared his 8-star formation master examination, as well as the fact that his cultivation was still far from reaching Saint 9-dan, it seemed a little too early for him to start trying to set up grade-9 formations.

“I just want to try out some of my theories that I thought of in a moment of inspiration. I’m not expecting immediate success,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

While he did learn Heaven’s Path Teleportation Formation Art, due to the limitations of his cultivation and a complete lack of experience in the field of Teleportation Formations, he was not so naive as to think that he would be able to succeed on the first attempt. At the very least, he felt that it would take two or three tries before he succeeded.

“It’s always good to explore new things!” Thinking that Zhang Xuan was serious about learning and researching, Zhan shi nodded in approval as he picked up his teacup and sipped on it. “There are roughly a hundred basic grade-9 formations. May I know which one Zhang shi is studying at the moment? As you know, the effects of formation flags can differ greatly due to their properties, and it would be a disaster if the formation flags rebounded on you while you were constructing the formation!”

Due to the immense power that grade-9 formations wielded, it was important to pay careful attention while treading around it. The slightest mistake could lead to the massive power it harnessed running amok, so at the very least, the preparatory work should be as perfect as it could get so as to avoid a disaster.

“Regarding that... I intend to set up a Teleportation Formation,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Teleportation Formation?” Taken aback, Zhan shi nearly spurted tea out of his mouth. Looking at Zhang Xuan as if he was looking at a monster, he exclaimed in shock, “Teleportation Formations are difficult to learn, even by the

standards of grade-9 formations. Are you sure that you're going to start with that?"

Teleportation Formations could be further divided into various other levels, such as the transmission of information, long-distance projection of images, teleportation of non-living beings, and last but not least, the teleportation of living beings.

Transmission of information was at the most basic level; those 3-star to 4-star formation masters who specialized in this field would be able to construct them. As for projection of images, that would require a 6-star or 7-star formation master at the minimum. The teleportation of non-living beings was slightly harder, but 8-star formation masters who specialized in that field should be able to pull it off with sufficient effort.

And as for the teleportation of living beings... there were simply too many factors that one had to pay attention to, especially since the teleportation conditions had to be carefully controlled so that the person teleporting would not be injured. Even 9-star formation masters would have trouble coping with the many issues that could arise from the construction of a Teleportation Formation, let alone a Phantasmal Space realm 8-star formation master like the young man before him.

It was just like a person who had not even learned to walk yet was attempting to spread his wings and soar into the sky.

Noticing the incredulous look on Zhan shi's face, Zhang Xuan swiftly explained, "I actually possess exceptional sensitivity toward spatial laws, and I have spent quite some time studying the topic. It's because I've met a bottleneck in my studies that I would like to try setting it up so as to verify some of my hypotheses!"

He could not reveal the existence of the Heaven's Path Formation Art, so he could only use such vague terms to pass it off.

"Exceptional sensitivity toward spatial laws?" Zhan shi and Elder Ge traded glances before nodding inconspicuously.

They had still been harboring some doubts toward the message that they had received from Zhang Wuheng earlier, but

considering the conversation about Teleportation Formations... it might just be true that the young man had teleported back into the Sanctum of Sages to flee from the Zhang Clan!

This was especially so given Zhang Xuan's abrupt arrival. Based on what they knew, the young man should have been in the Zhang Clan at that moment, and that was at least a month's journey away from the Sanctum of Sages.

Thus, Zhan shi paused for a brief moment before asking, "Right, didn't you head to the Zhang Clan a while back? Did Jian Qinsheng not return with you?"

"I had some urgent matters to attend to, so I came back in advance. Elder Jian should be coming back very soon," Zhang Xuan replied.

"Urgent matters? Is this relating to the Zhang Clan?" Zhan shi asked with a frown.

Knowing that it would be impossible for him to conceal the conflict with the Zhang Clan, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before admitting, "I did get into a conflict with the Zhang Clan, but I'll resolve it once I manage to clear the urgent matters I have at hand!"

"It's good that you intend to resolve the conflict with the Zhang Clan..." Seeing that the matter had been verified, Zhan shi did not hesitate to take action. "... but my apologies, Zhang shi. I'll need you to remain here for the time being!"

As he said those words, he waved his hand and swiftly sealed the space in the room.

Zhang Xuan found his body being locked in place, unable to move in the slightest.

1484 I Am Really Not Free

“What do you mean by this?” Feeling his entire body being bound in place, as if shackled with heavy chains, Zhang Xuan’s face darkened.

He would have understood it if Zhan shi had refused to lend him any grade-9 formation flags, but what did the latter mean by making a move on him?

“The First Elder of the Zhang Clan, Zhang Wuheng, has sent a message over, requesting for the Sanctum of Sages to hand you over for wreaking havoc in their territory. I thought that there might be some misunderstandings, but since you have admitted to it, I’m afraid that it’s our responsibility to hand you over to the Zhang Clan to face the consequences for your actions,” Zhan shi said.

“Rest assured though, since you are a student of the Sanctum of Sages, we’ll definitely try our best to protect you. It’s also with you in mind that we chose such a course of action. The Zhang Clan is a behemoth on the Master Teacher Continent, and the longer you drag this matter on, the more unlikely it’ll be for you to reconcile with them. You should take this opportunity to resolve the conflict with them once and for all; Elder Ge and I will be helping you by the sidelines.”

“The First Elder of the Zhang Clan?” Zhang Xuan frowned. “Pardon me, but I still have some matters that I need to attend to, so I don’t have time to wait for them to come over!”

Zhao Ya’s life was at stake, so there was no time to be lost. Otherwise, he would not have teleported back using the Sanctum Head Token.

All in all, he had already wasted more than ten minutes there. A second wasted meant a second longer Zhao Ya would be danger. If he did not rush, he would regret it for life if something were to really happen to Zhao Ya!

Besides, the conflict between him and the Zhang Clan was not something that could be resolved with just a couple of words. Zhan shi might have been the deputy head of the Sanctum of Sages, but even his words would not be strong enough to resolve the situation.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's obstinate words, Elder Ge harrumphed. "That isn't up to you! Whether you like it or not, you will be waiting here obediently till the Zhang Clan arrives!"

As he spoke, he flicked out his wrist and whipped out a rope, which tied Zhang Xuan up real tight.

"I assure you two that I won't implicate the Sanctum of Sages in the conflict between the Zhang Clan and me, and I'll pay a visit to the Zhang Clan in the near future to resolve the conflict. For the time being, I really have urgent matters to attend to, so I ask of you two to let me off," Zhang Xuan said anxiously.

"No matter what kind of urgent matters you have at hand, you won't be going anywhere till the problem with the Zhang Clan is resolved," Zhan shi replied sternly. "Elder Ge, take him down for the moment. I'll inform Elder Wuheng right now to send his men over!"

"Yes!" Elder Ge nodded. With a pull, the rope tied around Zhang Xuan immediately tightened, sinking into his flesh.

"Since you aren't going to let me off, I'll have to beg your pardon for what I'm about to do..."

Seeing that the other party had their minds set on sending him over to the Zhang Clan, not leaving any room for discussion at all, Zhang Xuan knew that it was meaningless for him to say anything else.

Shaking his head, he said, "Inferno Qilin, I'll be leaving them to you!"

Hong long!

The next moment, an Inferno Qilin appeared before everyone's eyes. The moment that it appeared, a powerful burst of flames gushed outward, leaving the room feeling as if it was a furnace.

With just a light flick of its hoof, the rope binding Zhang Xuan fell to the floor.

Hu la!

After cutting the rope, the Inferno Qilin's powerful hoof thrust forward once more.

Peng! Peng!

Before Zhan shi and Elder Ge could even react to the situation, they were smashed right into the wall, plastered to it as if a lizard. A powerful impact reverberated through their bodies as fresh blood trickled down their lips.

The Inferno Qilin was a Saint 9-dan pinnacle beast possessing the Ancient Qilin Bloodline, and it possessed strength far beyond that of ordinary cultivators. While it had sustained considerable damage in its fight with the First Elder earlier, even in its wounded state, it was still an adversary far beyond the means of Zhan shi and Elder Ge to deal with.

Not expecting the young man to bring out such a powerful tamed beast, Zhan shi's face immediately turned livid. He swiftly tapped on the space ahead of him as he bellowed, "Activate!"

Weng!

The formation in the room swiftly whirled into action. A powerful pressure crushed down from the surroundings, suppressing the Inferno Qilin tightly.

They had planned to use this formation to trap Zhang Xuan, but it seemed like they would have to deal with this massive fellow before deciding anything.

If they allowed the beast to run rampage, it would not be long before the Sanctum of Sages was reduced to dust.

Roar!

Trapped in the formation, the Inferno Qilin released a furious bellow. It swept its tail forth with formidable force, but its tail was swiftly impeded with spatial ripples in the air.

The formation in the Sanctum Head Hall was something left behind by their ancestors, and its might was not to be underestimated. As powerful as the Inferno Qilin was, it was still unable to struggle free of its restraints in the short-term.

“Capture Zhang Xuan first! Once we subdue him, his tamed beast won’t dare to do anything!” Zhan shi bellowed furiously.

Knowing that they would not stand a chance once the Inferno Qilin struggled free from the formation, he immediately rushed forward to grab Zhang Xuan and hold him hostage.

As the saying went, ‘To take down a den of bandits, subdue the chief first!’

No matter how powerful the Inferno Qilin was, it was still nothing more than a tamed beast. Once its master was taken hostage, there would be nothing that it could do.

“Humph!”

It was already enough for him to come under attack from the elders of the Zhang Clan, but to think that even the elders of the Sanctum of Sages would be so eager to apprehend him... With an ireful wave of his hand, he commanded coldly, “Take down those two fellows!”

Hu!

The next moment, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast materialized and grabbed forward.

Peng! Peng!

Zhan shi and Elder Ge were swiftly sent flying once more.

“Saint 9-dan? Wasn’t it at Saint 8-dan pinnacle just a month ago?” Elder Ge widened his eyes in horror.

He had experienced the frightening strength of the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast once before, but back then, it had only been at Saint 8-dan pinnacle. How did it manage to make a breakthrough in just a single month?

There was a nearly unbridgeable rift between Saint 8-dan and Saint 9-dan. This final step was one that was exceptionally difficult to make, but once a cultivator managed to pass the

threshold, their fighting prowess would be at a whole new level.

Elder Ge was not the only one shocked. Zhan shi also felt as if his head was exploding, as if he was going mad.

It was already a shocker to see that Zhang Xuan had a Saint 9-dan beast with him, but to bring out two at once... just how in the world did he tame those beasts?

It was no wonder he could wreak havoc in the Zhang Clan and still manage to get away scot-free. With just these two saint beasts, it would be difficult for the ordinary guards of the Zhang Clan to stop him!

“Hold it right there!” However, knowing that this was not the time to be shocked. Zhan shi flicked his wrist and wielded his sword.

With just a simple slash, a barrage of sword qi had already burst forth, sealing the movements of the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast. It was initially planning on charging forth to continue the pummeling, but under the onslaught of sword qi heading its way, it could only stop and defend against it for the time being.

The Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast had only reached Saint 9-dan recently whereas Zhan shi had already been in this realm for many years. Not to mention, he even wielded his sword and used a battle technique, so the fight ended in a stalemate for the time being.

“Don’t bother too much with them, help the Inferno Qilin break free of the formation first. Strike there!” Knowing that the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast was at a disadvantage strength wise, Zhang Xuan quickly issued an instruction while pointing to a certain location in the room.

Knowing the severity of the situation, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast also hurriedly rammed its way toward the area that Zhang Xuan had pointed out, and with a powerful whip of its tail, it struck the spot with absolute precision.

Kacha!

A crisp echo sounded in the air, followed by intense tremors. The trapped Inferno Qilin swiftly tore free of the formation, and at the same time, the Sanctum Head Hall succumbed to the pressure and began collapsing.

As soon as it was free from its restraints, the Inferno Qilin immediately launched a vicious counterattack, as if to cleanse itself of the humiliation that it had just suffered. With a ferocious roar, it rammed right through Zhan shi's defensive swordsmanship, and raising its hoof, it thrust it down forcefully on the two elders.

Padah! Padah!

Zhan shi and Elder Ge hurriedly raised their arms to cushion the blow, but the colossal strength behind the hoof was too much for them to bear. Their backs gradually bent under the astounding might as the creaking of bones sounded in the air, ready to snap at any moment.

Saint beasts had always possessed an advantage in terms of strength over cultivators of the same tier. This included even the powerful combat masters, let alone them.

Sensing that he was swiftly reaching his limit, Elder Ge bellowed, "Zhang Xuan, do you know what you are doing? This is the Sanctum of Sages, the root of countless powerful experts! Do you understand the consequences of laying your hands on a deputy sanctum head and an elder? Don't let your own recklessness compel you to make a decision that you'll regret for life!"

1485 Surrender or Die!

Hearing that Elder Ge wanted to pin such a heinous crime on him, Zhang Xuan could not help but scoff on the inside. Nevertheless, he still waved his hand and ordered, “Inferno Qilin, stop.”

As awful as Elder Ge’s words sounded, they also made sense.

The Sanctum of Sages was the highest academy on the Master Teacher Continent. Even though its standing was not on par with the Master Teacher Pavilion, and its strength had declined over time, its prestige and rallying power were still not to be underestimated.

In the first place, making a move on the incumbent deputy sanctum head and an elder could already be considered an extremely contemptible action. If it were to be known that he had severely wounded or even killed them, he could be making himself an enemy of the entire upper echelon of the Master Teacher Continent!

Roar!

Upon hearing the command, as infuriated as the Inferno Qilin was, it did not dare go against Zhang Xuan’s order. Thus, it reluctantly retracted its hoof and backed off.

Zhan shi and Elder Ge heaved a deep sigh of relief. It was only at this moment that they suddenly realized that their robes were completely soaked in sweat.

Had the Inferno Qilin continued its attack, even if they walked out of there alive, they could have ended up being crippled for life.

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan suppressed his emotions before stepping forward and clapping his fist. “It’s not my intention to make a move on the two of you. However, I really do have urgent matters to attend to, and I can’t afford to waste any time. I beg your pardon for this.”

He was deeply displeased by Zhan shi and Elder Ge's actions, but this was not the time for him to fall out completely with them. The Zhang Clan was already on his back; he did not need to add the Sanctum of Sages into his list of pursuers.

Zhan shi shot a slightly apprehensive glance at the Inferno Qilin before harrumphing coldly. "Humph!"

He felt infuriated inside, but there was no way he could vent his rage. All along, he had viewed Zhang Xuan as someone who was within his control, but who would have thought that in a month of absence, the other party had already become a dragon soaring in the sky, far beyond his reach?

"Allow me to reassure you that I'll personally resolve the unhappiness with the Zhang Clan in the near future, so there's no need to worry about that. The reason I'm here today is to borrow the 9-star formation flags, and I hope that Zhan shi can grant my request!" Zhang Xuan said.

Zhan shi looked at Zhang Xuan deeply for a long moment before sighing deeply and saying, "Very well then, I'll take your word for it. I hope that you won't let me down."

Following which, he flicked his wrist and took out over a hundred formation flags. Every single one of them was made of a particularly resilient material. It was clear that they were all high-tier.

Grade-9 formation flags!

With the Inferno Qilin and the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast watching from the side, Zhan shi felt that Zhang Xuan would order his tamed beast to snatch the formation flags from him by force if he refused. Rather than suffer for nothing, he thought that it would be wiser to hand them over first.

"Thank you, Zhan shi."

Zhang Xuan took the formation flags and examined them closely. After verifying that these formation flags were indeed suited for the construction of Teleportation Formations, he heaved a sigh of relief before turning his head toward the collapsed doorway. "Come in!"

It was only upon hearing Zhang Xuan's words that Zhan shi and Elder Ge realized that there was someone standing by the doorway. She was the genius from the Glacier Plain Court who had just enrolled earlier in the year, Chen Leyao!

At that moment, the young lady was staring at the rubble lying around the place with widened eyes. When she caught sight of the trail of blood trickling down from Zhan shi and Elder Ge's lips, she could not help but clasp her agape mouth in shock.

They were only there to borrow formation flags, not to raid the place. Was it really necessary to go so far?

How were they supposed to resolve the situation peacefully now that such a situation had happened?

However, she also knew that it was meaningless to think too much about it now—what was done was done. Thus, she quickly walked over to Zhang Xuan.

Paying no heed to Chen Leyao's shock, Zhang Xuan hurriedly sent a telepathic message over. "Tell me the exact location of the Glacier Plain Court."

Without any hesitation, Chen Leyao quickly informed Zhang Xuan of the exact location of the Glacier Plain Court telepathically. "It's located in the extreme north..."

"Got it!" After hearing the location from Chen Leyao, a map swiftly surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind as he quickly gauged the distance and direction of the destination from the Sanctum of Sages.

When setting up a Teleportation Formation, especially for ones with intended destinations as far as the one that Zhang Xuan was going to set up, there could be no mistake in the direction at all. Otherwise, even the slightest degree of deviation in the calibration could possibly result in the result being off by countless li.

After calculating for roughly five minutes, Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply in relief before flicking his fingers.

Hu!

The formation flags that he was holding with his other hand immediately flew all over the place.

Weng!

As soon as they took their places, energy ripples began diffusing into the surroundings, forging a rather stable folded space. However, before it could fully take shape, it abruptly exploded.

First attempt, fail!

My strength is still insufficient.

Sensing that single attempt had taken away half of his total zhenqi, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

There was no mistake in his setting up of the formation flags and manipulation of energy earlier. In fact, the reason behind his failure was not because he had made any mistake but because he was not able to supply sufficient energy for the creation of the formation!

With his Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle cultivation, Heaven's Path zhenqi, and deep comprehension of space, his fighting prowess was at least on par with Dimension Sundering realm pinnacle experts. However, it was still insufficient for him to construct a Teleportation Formation.

“Now!”

While Zhang Xuan was still deliberating over what alternatives he could use in order to resolve the lack of energy, he suddenly heard a bellow from behind him. The next moment, Zhan shi and Elder Ge charged forward simultaneously.

The cold shimmer of a sword flashed across the room, freeing the two of them of the Inferno Qilin's control. Following which, the two of them swiftly fled into the air.

The Inferno Qilin and the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast had been so focused on their master that they were caught off guard by the duo's abrupt movements. They had to block their attacks in a fluster, so they failed to keep them from getting away.

In the sky, Zhan shi flicked his wrist and whipped out a token. Following which, with a resounding voice that echoed clearly to the corners of the Sanctum of Sages, he declared, “All elders of the Sanctum of Sages, hear my words! Zhang Xuan and his tamed beasts have audaciously made a move against me and Elder Ge, so I hereby declare him to be an enemy of the Sanctum of Sages. All of you are to immediately move out and apprehend him, and should he try to retaliate, you are permitted to take extreme actions... even at the cost of his life!”

As the deputy sanctum head, he could be considered the face of the Sanctum of Sages. Even if his pride could take it lying, he could not allow the long history of the Sanctum of Sages to be besmirched in his hands!

Hong long!

As soon as the decree was passed, a huge commotion broke out within the Sanctum of Sages. Countless figures emerged in the air, easily numbering in the tens of thousands.

Earlier, during the battle with the Inferno Qilin, Zhang Xuan had known that things could turn out bad if people started gathering there, so he had discreetly set up an isolation formation in the room in order to prevent any sound from getting out. As a result of that, despite the entire room collapsing, it had not caught anyone’s attention.

However, the decree that had just been passed had reached the ears of every single elder and student in the Sanctum of Sages, so they swiftly flew up in order to see what was happening.

“This is bad... Inferno Qilin, hurry up and knock him down!”

Not expecting Zhan shi to suddenly act in such a way, Zhang Xuan’s face darkened. He hurriedly ordered the Inferno Qilin to make a move.

“Roar!”

With a furious roar, the Inferno Qilin dashed into the sky and raised its hoof, preparing to knock Zhan shi down back onto the ground.

“Guardian Formation!”

Grasping the Deputy Sanctum Head Token in his hands tightly, Zhan shi swiftly activated the power in it, and a blinding burst of light suddenly flashed into the surroundings, seemingly communicating with a dormant ancient power in the Sanctum of Sages.

The surrounding space suddenly seemed to have been frozen solid, such that even the Inferno Qilin ended up freezing in place, unable to move in the slightest.

“Guardian Formation?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

The Sanctum of Sages had declined considerably over the years. The lack of a legitimate sanctum head had resulted in its inability to draw in and retain talents, resulting in an endless spiral of weakness. As a result, even the strongest expert within its ranks at the moment was only at Saint 9-dan primary stage.

However, this had not always been the case. There was a period of time when the Sanctum of Sages had stood at the very peak of the Master Teacher Continent, second only to the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters!

After all, every single true sanctum head had possessed the Eye of Insight and was an expert that had exceeded Saint 9-dan, reaching a realm unthinkable to most. Even the First Elder would amount to nothing much before their eyes!

The Guardian Formation that they had left behind was the ultimate trump card of the Sanctum of Sages. Even if the Zhang Clan dispatched all of its forces over, it was questionable whether they would be able to breach it or not, let alone a mere Inferno Qilin!

It was also for this reason that the Sanctum of Sages had been able to remain standing even after all these years, retaining its prestige. Otherwise, given the weakness of the current deputy sanctum head, they would have been destroyed by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe long ago!

Sensing the despairing power of the formation, the Inferno Qilin anxiously sent a telepathic message over to Zhang Xuan.

“Master, I’m unable to breach this formation! At this rate, we might all lose our lives here!”

Tzzzzzzz!

While the formation was trapping the Inferno Qilin, the other elders of the Sanctum of Sages also made their way over, and they swiftly took their positions behind Zhan shi.

“Zhang Xuan, surrender now or die,” Zhan shi said impassively as he gazed down upon the young man below him with utterly cold eyes.

1486 Grand Formation of the Sages

Ever since the founding of the Sanctum of Sages many millenniums ago, this was the very first time that a student had laid their hands on the deputy sanctum head, as well as the first time that someone had utterly destroyed the Sanctum Head Hall.

If something like that could be pardoned easily, how would the deputy sanctum head and the elders keep students in line in the future?

“Zhang shi, what do we do now?” Seeing the huge array of elders and students floating above them and the Guardian Formation sealing the space around them, Chen Leyao’s face paled in fright as she trembled uncontrollably.

Even though she had been through many battles as a genius of the Glacier Plain Court, this was her first time facing something as huge as this!

To stand singlehandedly against the entire Sanctum of Sages, this was unprecedented in history!

“What else can we do? Once we are caught, it will be impossible for us to save Zhao Ya!” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The situation with Zhao Ya was far more urgent, so he could not afford to waste any time there. Not to mention, just by looking at the faces of Zhan shi and the others, it was apparent that he would be done in for good if he was captured.

Thus, he could not surrender. Otherwise, there would be no second chance for him!

Until he had met all three conditions, he could not show the Sanctum Head Token to the others, or else it would be considered forfeiting his right to succession. This was the rule that Sage Kui had imposed to ensure that each generation of

sanctum head truly possessed the capability to lead the Sanctum of Sages to greater heights.

As such, it seemed like he had no choice but to fight it out.

Understanding this, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to the already activated Guardian Formation and uttered softly, “Flaws!”

Following which, a book materialized in the Library of Heaven’s Path. Tapping on it lightly, the knowledge within it swiftly flowed into his mind.

“Heaven Weaving Formation, grade-9 pinnacle formation... Truly formidable!”

The Guardian Formation of the Sanctum of Sages had been left behind by Sage Kui, and it had been enhanced by many sanctum heads over the years.

Every single generation of true sanctum head possessed the Eye of Insight, which allowed them to easily pick out flaws and resolve them. After many millenniums of improvement, the formation could already be considered as the crystallization of the wisdom of the top experts of the Master Teacher Continent. Of course, it still could not be considered flawless in the eyes of the absolute Library of Heaven’s Path yet, but it was very close to that.

Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up. Only seven flaws. This must be the fewest flaws I’ve seen among higher grade formations...

But no matter how few flaws were in the Guardian Formation, that did not make the slightest difference to what Zhang Xuan was about to do.

“Inferno Qilin and Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, I’ll be counting on the two of you to defend against the lot of them and break this formation. I need to continue studying the Teleportation Formation!” Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan sent the information regarding the flaws of the Heaven Weaving Formation over to the two saint beasts via their telepathic link.

“Roar!”

Upon receiving the message, the two saint beasts roared furiously.

They had already known that their master possessed extraordinary eyes at seeing things despite his young age, but who would have thought that he would actually be able to find so many flaws in a formation that was completely unfathomable to them?

Alone, these flaws might not amount to much, but when put together, they were confident that they would be able to shake its foundations.

On the other hand, seeing that Zhang Xuan was still busy examining the formation flags despite the warning that he had issued, Zhan shi narrowed his eyes threateningly. “Zhang Xuan, I acknowledge the strength of your tamed beasts, but before the Guardian Formation, they are nothing at all. I advise you take a good look at your current circumstances before making a decision...”

“Roar!”

But before he could finish his words, the Inferno Qilin abruptly broke free of its restraints, and with a deafening bellow, it thrust its massive hoof in a certain direction.

At the same time, the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast glided along the ground as it dashed right into a certain building not too far away.

The core reason behind the strength of the Guardian Formation lay in the fortuitous aura that the Sanctum of Sages had accumulated over the many years, as well as the spiritual energy that had gathered in the area through the earth veins below.

The Inferno Qilin struck at one of the center points of the formation whereas the Netherworld Azure Dagon Beast crashed right into a spot where the spiritual energy drawn in through the earth veins accumulated, causing the spiritual energy to dissipate into the surroundings immediately.

With two critical strikes on its vitals, the incredibly powerful Heaven Weaving Formation swiftly deflated as if a balloon

leaking air, losing the imposing might that it had commanded just a moment ago.

Hong long!

The energy that had frozen the surroundings earlier spurted out, falling right upon Zhan shi and the others.

“This... this is impossible!” Zhan shi uttered with his eyes widened in disbelief.

In the past several millenniums, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had attempted to attack the Sanctum of Sages thirteen times, but each and every single time, they had ended up fleeing without achieving anything. While it would be too much of an exaggeration to say that the Heaven Weaving Formation was unbreachable, still, there were few experts in the world who were capable of overcoming it!

And yet, those two saint beasts actually deciphered it so easily. How in the world did they manage to do it?

“Stop them!” Knowing that there was no use getting nervous, the person in the air flicked his wrist and thrust his palm downward.

Saint pinnacle battle technique, River Flipping Palm!

This was a move created by the Fourth Sanctum Head. It was a strike that descended from the heavens, wielding strength far beyond one’s imagination. Augmented by the fortuitous energy that was billowing out from the ground, this technique could strike down even a Saint 9-dan intermediate stage cultivator in a single blow.

Unfortunately, his opponent was no Saint 9-dan intermediate stage cultivator but the Inferno Qilin.

Paying completely no heed to the palm, the inferno Qilin simply charged right into it, as if it was no threat at all.

Hong long!

The palm fell on the Inferno Qilin’s head, but as if striking a Saint pinnacle artifact, it simply jolted Zhan shi’s palm numb. The next moment, its head crashed right into Zhan shi’s chest, forcefully pushing him away.

Sou!

Zhan shi's figure was sent flying, surging into the distance as if a shooting star.

“Zhan shi!”

Not expecting the Inferno Qilin to be so powerful, Elder Ge and the others hurriedly put their might together and charged forward to suppress it.

In response to their aggression, the Inferno Qilin roared furiously, and in the blink of an eye, its figure had already expanded to roughly forty meters tall. With this towering physique, it rammed right toward the group of elders.

Huala!

Tzzzzzz!

Elder Ge and the other elders were simultaneously knocked flying, and their brows and hair were charred black.

What was truly fearsome about the Inferno Qilin was not its hooves or tail but its body!

Tempered day and night by the Qilin Flames, its body had grown to become as strong as a Saint pinnacle artifact. Its ram would render even a Saint 9-dan cultivator powerless, let alone those elders.

“Is that really Zhang shi's tamed beast?”

“How could it be so powerful?”

“To outright defy and even utilize violence against the deputy sanctum head and the elders, does Zhang shi intend to betray the Master Teacher Pavilion?”

The students that had gathered around to spectate the sight were all flabbergasted by what they were seeing.

In their eyes, the deputy sanctum head, Elder Ge, and the others were figures far out of their league, perhaps invincible even! Seeing these figures standing completely helpless before a saint beast was something that they never could have dreamed off, and it seemed to shatter all of their previous notions of greatness of these elders.

But more important than that, to make a move against the elders of the Sanctum of Sages could already be considered an act of defiance against the authority of the Master Teacher Pavilion. No matter what, the Sanctum of Sages was still a subsidiary of the Master Teacher Pavilion and was protected by it. Did Zhang Xuan no longer want to remain as a master teacher?

“Damn it, damn it!”

While spurting large mouthfuls of blood, Zhan shi flew back to the Sanctum of Sages from the distance, and before reaching the area, he bellowed furiously, “Elders of the Sanctum of Sages, heed my command! Form the Formations of the Sages and subdue the Inferno Qilin together!”

Seeing how the Guardian Formation had been destroyed and the elders were falling from the sky one after another, Zhan shi could not take it any longer.

If he did not punish Zhang Xuan, the entire Sanctum of Sages would become a joke! As the deputy sanctum head, he could not allow the legacy of the organization to be destroyed under his leadership!

“Yes!” the elders replied resoundingly.

Following which, they swiftly scattered around to get into their positions. Putting their strength together, they formed something that resembled a fish net in the air.

“It’s the Formation of the Sages...”

Chen Leyao’s face paled in fright as she hurriedly turned to the young man before her, who was still busy trying to figure out how to make the Teleportation Formation work.

“Zhang shi, this isn’t good. Run!”

1487 We're Leaving

Other than the Guardian Formation, the next strongest trump card of the Sanctum of Sages was the Formation of the Sages formed by the elders.

This formation allowed all of the elders to channel their powers together to launch a devastating attack, thus making it a highly fearsome weapon.

Putting aside Zhang Xuan, even the Saint 9-dan beast might not necessarily be a match against the Formation of the Sages.

Huala!

Before Chen Leyao could finish her words, the net in the sky had already finished forming, sealing the entire area.

“Roar!”

Sensing danger from the newly formed net, the Inferno Qilin roared ferociously and charged right for it, intending to ram it down before it stabilized.

Huala!

The net that extended across the entire sky formed a massive network of zhenqi. It gathered together under Zhan shi's manipulation, instantaneously forming a pulse of energy that raced right for the charging Inferno Qilin.

Boom!

As if a forlorn boat drifting in the stormy oceans, the Inferno Qilin swiftly found itself overwhelmed by the tremendous might in the pulse. The pulse shoved it right into the ground, raising a huge cloud of dust above it.

Roar!

The Inferno Qilin bellowed angrily as it struggled desperately against the raging pulse battering on it, but it was unable to break free of it at all.

While most of the elders hadn't reached Saint 9-dan, their combined prowess, which was further augmented by the unique energy seeping out of the Sanctum of Sages, still formed a force which even the Saint 9-dan pinnacle Inferno Qilin was unable to match.

It was only after a massive pit had been blasted in the ground did the pulse finally slow to a halt. The Inferno Qilin spurted a mouthful of golden blood as it attempted to return to its feet, only to find itself too wounded to stand.

"Hmph!" Seeing that they had finally managed to down the Inferno Qilin, Zhan shi swiftly turned his gaze coldly toward another direction as he prepared the formation for another attack.

Huala!

Another white pulse of energy burst forth, headed in the direction where Zhang Xuan was standing.

In terms of might, it was far stronger than the one which had struck the Inferno Qilin earlier. If it were to really strike Zhang Xuan, he would die without any doubt!

"Master!"

The alarmed Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast immediately dashed back, but it was still a step too late. Before it could reach its master, the white pulse of energy had already swallowed the young man whole.

"Zhang Xuan..." Not too far away, Chen Leyao watched the sight in utter shock. A sudden feeling of weakness consumed her legs as she fell onto the ground, paralyzed.

From where she stood, she could clearly feel the energy pulsating from the attack. It was a force which even her teacher, a Saint 8-dan pinnacle expert, wouldn't be able to withstand.

Would the young man really die like that?

"He actually didn't dodge?" Up in the sky, Zhan shi couldn't help but freeze in astonishment as well.

While the attacks launched by the Formation of the Sages were incredibly powerful, they needed considerable time to charge up. He had expected Zhang Xuan to flee before the attack fell, and he was banking on the shockwaves of the pulse to incapacitate that fellow instead.

But who could have thought that that fellow would remain rooted to the spot, allowing the pulse to strike directly on him!

“Hmph, he deserves it! Given the heinous deeds he has committed, destroying the Guardian Formation and tearing down the Sanctum Head Hall, not even Yang shi would be able to speak on his behalf!” Elder Ge harrumphed as he discreetly shot a glance toward Zhan shi.

He knew that the latter was still harboring some reservations toward this matter. After all, Zhang Xuan was Yang Xuan’s direct disciple, and it was hard to tell what that legendary man would do once he heard of this matter.

However, they couldn’t be blamed for this matter either. There are many students here who could testify that the actions that they had made were out of self-defense. To actually dare to run rampant just because he had tamed a strong beast, that fellow deserved to meet with such an outcome!

“I’m not worried about that. It’s just that it’s saddening to see someone as talented as him passing away just like that...” Zhan shi shook his head.

As high as Yang shi’s standing was on the Master Teacher Continent, he was still a person who respected the rules. Considering the actions that Zhang Xuan had done, there was no way Yang shi could still side with his direct disciple!

But... that young man was truly extraordinarily talented. It was a huge loss for mankind to lose such a talent.

“Given that fellow’s character, his talents would only eventually become a huge scourge to humanity!” Elder Ge harrumphed.

What was the use of being talented?

If he were to devote his capabilities to doing evil, his talent would only turn out to be a bane for mankind.

In the history of the Master Teacher Continent, there was no lack of talented geniuses who ended up straying from the right path due to their difficult temperament.

“I guess you’re right...” Zhan shi shook his head, deciding not to think too much into it anymore. “Clear up the place. We have to report this matter to the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters as soon as possible.”

“Yes!” Elder Ge replied.

He lowered his head to look at the rubble below when he suddenly caught sight of something that made his eyes narrow in shock. He nearly lost control of himself and plummeted to the ground.

“What’s wrong?” Zhan shi frowned.

“Zhan shi... look!” Not knowing how he should explain the matter, Elder Ge anxiously exclaimed as he pointed to the ground.

In a huge pit in the ground where the energy pulse had struck previously, Zhang Xuan stood completely unharmed. There were dozens of formation flags planted in front of him, and light was shimmering off their surface. The space around the pit was rippling a little, emanating warm energy.

“That’s... Teleportation Formation? He managed to construct it?”

There was no mistaking it—the formation constructed by those formation flags was definitely a Teleportation Formation! Not only so, the space around the formation was considerably stable, which meant that there wasn’t the slightest mistake in the construction!

It was one thing for a mere Phantasmal Space realm cultivator to emerge completely unharmed under the attack of the Formation of the Sages, but to successfully construct a Teleportation Formation in the meantime as well...

Was this for real?

“Inferno Qilin, Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, and Chen Leyao, come over. We’re leaving!”

The young man in the pit chuckled softly before turning his gaze to the sky, “Zhan shi and fellow elders of the Sanctum of Sages, I really have to thank you all for your energy. Otherwise, god knows how long it would take for me to finish this formation... Alright, I still have things to attend to, so I’ll be taking my leave first. Let’s meet again in the future!”

After saying those words, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and kept his two saint beasts into the Myriad Anthive Nest. At the same time, he quickly grabbed Chen Leyao and wrapped her in his zhenqi before activating the Teleportation Formation. A brilliant light shrouded the both of them, and they immediately vanished from the spot.

“Don’t let him get away!” Dumbfounded by the sight before him, it took some time before Zhan shi could think once more. He shouted angrily as he dashed right for the Teleportation Formation, intending to head into it as well so as to chase Zhang Xuan.

However, just as he was getting close, he suddenly noticed a surge of energy swiftly swelling up in the formation, reminiscent of a full dam that was on the verge of collapsing. Following which...

Boom!

In the next moment, the formation abruptly collapsed. Dozens of formation flags were rooted off the ground and swept into the surroundings, causing the Teleportation Formation to vanish altogether. Everything happened so swiftly that it was almost as if the formation hadn’t appeared in the first place at all.

“The Teleportation Formation he created has a self-destruction sequence too?” Zhan shi felt as if his sanity was on the verge of crumbling.

Naturally, he was a skilled formation master himself, or else he wouldn’t have grade-9 formation flags in his possession.

For the young man to be able to create a Teleportation Formation under their attack and even embed a self-

destruction sequence with it... Wasn't he able to do a little too much within too short a period of time?

With the destruction of the Teleportation Formation, there was no way they would be able to figure out where he had been teleported to and chase after him anymore.

They had lost their only lead to the young man.

Glancing at the rubble all around him, Zhan shi's eyes turned wintry.

“That fellow's escape will eventually culminate into a catastrophe for mankind. Elders and students of the Sanctum of Sages, hear my command! From this day onward, if anyone were to catch sight of Zhang Xuan, report upward without any delay! If there's a chance to strike, kill him without any hesitation!”

1488 City of Glacier

Hula!

Amid intense wobbling, Zhang Xuan crashed down onto the floor and spurted a mouthful of blood.

Just like the previous time around, he felt his entire body aching as if it had been ripped apart many times over. Multiple lacerations could be seen all over his body.

In truth, with his current strength, it should have been impossible for him to construct a Teleportation Formation. However, knowing that the matter with Zhao Ya could not be delayed, he could only take a gamble and face Zhan shi and the other elders' attack face on, hoping to successfully redirect the force into the formation to activate it.

Fortunately, things did work out as planned.

The combined might of the elders of the Sanctum of Sages formed a surge of energy that even the Saint 9-dan pinnacle Inferno Qilin was unable to withstand. With such immense power being infused into the formation, the formation immediately received sufficient energy to be activated.

It was with this that Zhang Xuan managed to flee from that dire situation.

But while the activation of the Teleportation Formation was a success, he also sustained unprecedentedly severe injuries in the midst of carrying out his plan.

Putting aside the severe vertigo caused by the long-distance teleportation, just the redirection of the elders' attack was more than sufficient to make his innards churn around, inflicting grievous internal injuries on him.

Furthermore, while he did redirect the attack away from him, lingering shockwaves from it still managed to slip into his body, gnawing at him from within. Even with the Heaven's Path zhenqi, it would be hard for him to recover quickly.

Peng!

Zhang Xuan tried to struggle to his feet when he heard another dull thud beside him. Turning his head over, he saw that Chen Leyao had fallen beside him. Her injuries were astonishingly more severe than his.

Her body was covered with cuts, and her breathing was very weak. It seemed as if she might stop breathing at any moment.

No matter what, she was only at the Leaving Aperture realm. While the Teleportation Formation that Zhang Xuan had created was far more stable than that of other Teleportation Formation, it still was not something that she was able to endure.

In view of this, Zhang Xuan had tried his best to cover her with a thick layer of his zhenqi so as to protect her during the teleportation, but it seemed like he had still underestimated the strain of the teleportation.

He quickly looked at Chen Leyao's condition, and after confirming that her injuries were treatable and would not leave behind any permanent issues, he heaved a sigh of relief.

What a relief...

He slowly stood up, but as soon as he began moving, his injuries relapsed, causing him to spurt two mouthfuls of blood.

This was probably the worst injury that he had sustained ever since he started cultivating.

He struggled his way up to Chen Leyao, and with a few flicks of his fingers, he sent several surges of zhenqi into her meridians, mending her wounds.

Watching as her complexion gradually improved and her wounds closed up, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before quickly treating himself.

He spent ten minutes driving his zhenqi three circulations around his body before the excruciating strain that he felt in his body finally alleviated considerably.

While he had not fully recovered yet, he could already move around without much problem.

I should stop taking such risks in the future, or else I really might lose my life like that one day, Zhang Xuan thought.

Just thinking of what he had gone through was enough to leave his heart beating in trepidation. Everything turned out well in the end, but had he made the slightest mistake, he could have lost it all then.

It was reassuring to see that Lady Luck was still shining down on him.

He turned his gaze to look at Chen Leyao once more and saw that the latter was still unconscious. Nevertheless, her breathing had steadied considerably, and those glaring wounds from before had already vanished.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a pack of silver needles, and after infusing his zhenqi into them, he inserted them all over her body.

Having read all of the 8-star physician manuals in the Sanctum of Sages, even without using the Library of Heaven's Path, he possessed abilities on par with a 9-star physician. Chen Leyao had only fainted due to the trauma from the jolt in the spatial disturbance. With her injuries out of the way, it was not too difficult to rouse her consciousness.

As expected, the moment that the silver needles were inserted, Chen Leyao's eyebrows fluttered for a moment before she slowly opened her eyes.

She was dazed for a moment before she slowly sat up and gazed at her surroundings with a wondrous look on her face, muttering, "I'm still alive..."

The severe pressure that had pressed down on her during the teleportation had left her feeling as if death was swiftly encroaching on her, and she had never thought that she would survive the ordeal.

Hearing Chen Leyao's response, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "I'm around. How could I possibly allow you to depart to the other world under my watch?"

Then, his tone turned slightly more serious before continuing. "Alright, I need you to help me see where we currently are and

how far we are from the Glacier Plain Court!”

“Un.” Chen Leyao nodded as she got to her feet. With a leap, she headed into the sky and scanned her surroundings. A look of disbelief crept onto her face as she exclaimed, “This... is the suburbs of the City of Glacier? We managed to get here so quickly?”

The first experience at teleportation would often leave one with a feeling of spatial and temporal disorientation. Even Zhang Xuan was no exception to this rule, let alone her.

“City of Glacier?” Hearing that this foreign term, Zhang Xuan frowned. “How far is that from the Glacier Plain Court headquarters?”

He had strictly followed the directions given by Chen Leyao during the construction of the Teleportation Formation. Could something have gone wrong?

Noticing the frown between Zhang Xuan’s brows, Chen Leyao quickly clarified, “The Glacier Plain Court headquarters is right within the City of Glacier. There’s a Sect Formation that prevents any outsiders from teleporting right into the city, so the coordinates that I gave you were the suburbs instead. I really didn’t think that you would be able to teleport here so accurately!”

As one of the top powers on the Master Teacher Continent, there was no way it would allow unidentified personnel to teleport straight into their sect. If they had really attempted that, they might have lost their lives before they could even get to the young court chief.

However, Teleportation Formations were known to be highly unstable. Often, the destination tended to diverge from the location set by quite a bit, especially for long-distance Teleportation Formations. Yet, in the first try, the young man was actually able to calibrate the Teleportation Formation to the exact spot that she had given!

That was something that even 9-star pinnacle formation masters would find it hard to achieve!

In fact, 9-star formation masters would usually leave a portal artifact at the destination of their Teleportation Formation in advance so that they would be able to lock onto the destination with greater certainty.

To be able to achieve such precision with nothing but coordinates and mental calculation... that young man's capability was truly inconceivable!

Did he really know nothing about Teleportation Formations before this and spent just a couple of minutes learning it?

Hearing that they were in the vicinity of the Glacier Plain Court headquarters, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. "Alright! Since we're here, let's quickly enter the city. We need to find a way to figure out what's happened to Zhao Ya!"

"Un."

Just by how the young man was willing to turn against the entire Sanctum of Sages to save his student, his determination to rescue his student was clear to see. Without wasting any time, Chen Leyao immediately flew over to a city wall not too far away.

Due to the City of Glacier being occupied by the powerful Glacier Plain Court, despite its eternal frost, it was still one of the largest cities in the Master Teacher Continent. There were towering walls surrounding the massive city, and perhaps because the night setting in, the city gates were tightly shut, turning away all visitors.

However, with her token as one of the inner disciples of the Glacier Plain Court, Chen Leyao was still able to gain entry with ease.

Snowflakes drifted quietly into the city, adding on to the knee-high piles of snow shoved to the sides of the street. Despite the piercing cold, the streets were still vibrant and lively. Huge crowds milled about the area, and from time to time, there would be a carriage passing by.

Chen Leyao glanced at Zhang Xuan and asked, "Zhang shi, shall we head straight into the Glacier Plain Court?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head in response.

“Why not?” Chen Leyao asked in incomprehension.

Was the reason they had gone through so much trouble rushing there not to get to the young court chief as quickly as possible? Why was the other party suddenly backing out after reaching their destination?

“The important matter at hand is not to enter the Glacier Plain Court but to find out what has happened so as to make preparations in advance. Otherwise, if we slip in carelessly and something goes wrong, not only will we be unable to save her, we might even lose our lives,” Zhang Xuan said with a deep frown on his forehead.

“What could go wrong in the Glacier Plain Court? Or could it be... Zhang shi, do you mean to say that...”

Chen Leyao was stunned for a moment as realization fell on her like a bucket of ice-cold water.

“... something bad has happened within the Glacier Plain Court?”

1489 My Name Is...

She had asked close sisters of hers within the Glacier Plain Court about the young court chief, but the replies that she had received all said that nothing had happened. But thinking about it, that did not make sense at all! How could something possibly happen to the young court chief, a person whose standing was only beneath that of the First Elder, without anyone noticing?

There were only two possibilities to explain this peculiar situation.

One, the young court chief was lying.

Two, the crisis happened from within the sect, and someone was intentionally suppressing the news.

Thinking about it now, the young court chief should have informed the elders and the experts within the Glacier Plain Court directly in order to deal with the crisis instead struggling to send a message to trouble her relatively much weaker teacher. After all, that would have been the most rational thing to do!

Clearly, it appeared that there was no one she could trust within the Glacier Plain Court!

This realization made goosebumps rise all over Chen Leyao's body as she shook her head in disbelief.

She had only known that the young court chief was facing some kind of danger, but she had not really thought that deeply into the matter before. This also explained why Zhang Shi was against having her recklessly contact the Glacier Plain Court!

"I understand that you are a member of the Glacier Plain Court. If this matter puts you in a spot, I can deal with it myself. However, I still have to ask of you not to reveal my whereabouts to anyone!" Zhang Xuan turned to Chen Leyao and clasped his fist.

If something had really happened within the Glacier Plain Court, it would indeed be too much to ask of her to choose between him and the Glacier Plain Court. Instead of putting her in a spot, it might be better for her to stay out of this matter altogether. That way, she could at least feign ignorance and steer clear of trouble.

“This...” Chen Leyao was stumped.

Her previous realization had also led her to a certain deduction. If it was true that the Glacier Plain Court had turned hostile toward the young court chief, there was only one person who wielded the ability to pull it off... the First Elder!

For as long as she could remember, the First Elder had been responsible for managing everything in the Glacier Plain Court. Be it internal or external affairs, everything was decided upon her words. For this reason, even though she was not the court chief, her position was as good as that.

If her previous guesses were correct and someone inside had indeed tried to make a move on the young court chief, the culprit was most likely the First Elder herself! No one had the ability to conceal anything happening within the Glacier Plain Court from the First Elder, and if the matter truly had nothing to do with the First Elder, she definitely would have stepped in and saved the young court chief by now!

But if the First Elder was truly the culprit... as a disciple of the Glacier Plain Court, could she really disobey her commands?

“Don’t worry, I understand. Farewell!” Not wanting to put Chen Leyao in a spot, Zhang Xuan turned around and walked away.

However, barely after he took a couple of steps, Chen Leyao suddenly rushed over from behind and stopped him. With a resolute look on her face, she said, “Wait a moment! The young court chief is an amiable person, and I am also indebted to Zhang shi. I wish to lend you my aid in rescuing the young court chief... even if this means going against the First Elder!”

Zhang Xuan looked at Chen Leyao deeply and asked, “Have you thought it through? This matter could have severe implications. You do understand that there’s no turning back from this, right?”

Chen Leyao sighed before nodding grimly. “I understand!”

She had grown up in the Glacier Plain Court, and naturally, she was greatly attached to it. However, the young man before her was the person who had modified the Glacier Plain Court’s cultivation technique and saved many of her sisters from meeting a premature death, and the young court chief seemed to be a kind person as well. More than that, she was also deeply in awe at how the young man was willing to stand against the Sanctum of Sages for the sake of his student. She earnestly hoped to lend him her strength.

“Very well, allow me to thank you on Zhao Ya’s behalf then!” Seeing that the other party had made up her mind, Zhang Xuan nodded. “Is there anyone in the Glacier Plain Court whom you are closer with that has a high standing? I think we should start tackling the matter from there. Perhaps, we might be able to find some clues.”

First and foremost, he would have to uncover what had happened to Zhao Ya before he could start designing some countermeasures.

But to hear about matters in the Glacier Plain Court, it went without saying that they would need someone on the inside.

Chen Leyao pondered for a long while before saying, “Those who are closer to me are of the younger generation, so I doubt that they will know much about the plight of the young court chief. However, there’s a certain elder whom I happen to be closer with. She has always been very caring to me, so I think I could try asking her.”

“Elder? What’s her cultivation realm?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Saint 8-dan advanced stage. She isn’t too strong among the elders, but she’s in charge of managing the basic necessities in the Glacier Plain Court. If something has happened to the young court chief, I think she would know,” Chen Leyao said.

“I see. Very well, bring me to meet her!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even though the elder whom Chen Leyao spoke of did not have too high a position, being in charge of the basic necessities, she should have a good grasp over the happenings in there.

If something had happened to Zhao Ya, she definitely would have heard of it.

“Considering how night has set in, I think she should be resting in her accommodation at the moment. However, her accommodation is located in the depths of the Glacier Plain Court, so it might not be easy to slip in at the moment,” Chen Leyao said with a deep frown.

Judging from the time, the Glacier Plain Court would have already closed its gates. As such, it would not be easy for them to get in.

“Can you invite her out for a meeting?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Chen Leyao shook her head and replied, “It won’t be easy. The rules of the Glacier Plain Court are enforced quite strictly. Even though she’s an elder, she still won’t leave the Glacier Plain Court easily. However, she will head out at dawn to procure fruits, vegetables, and the sort, so we should be able to get to her then!”

“Dawn?” Zhang Xuan frowned. “There’s still six more hours before dawn. Too many things can happen within six hours; I can’t wait that long. Is there any other way to get to her?”

Time was of the utmost importance. Until they finally uncovered what had happened to Zhao Ya, they could not waste a single second.

“This...” Chen Leyao fell silent.

She had always been one of the more obedient ones in the Glacier Plain Court, so she had no experience of sneaking out at night before. As a result, she found herself completely stumped by Zhang Xuan’s question.

“The elder you spoke of should have a certain supplier whom she works with in order to procure rations for the Glacier Plain

Court, right?”

“As one of the top powers on the Master Teacher Continent, the Glacier Plain Court only takes in high-quality rations that are cultivated by professionals and contain minimal impurities,” Chen Leyao said. “To be honest, I’m not too sure whom the supplier is, but from what I know, the only supplier in the City of Glacier that has the ability to meet the Glacier Plain Court’s needs is the Han Clan! They are also the largest clan here.”

The larger a power was, the more stringent their demand on rations would be. In order to cultivate their younger generation, it was important to pay careful attention to their diet, so they would not simply purchase any food from roadside vendors.

Besides, this was also a security issue. Otherwise, if someone laced their vegetables with poison, would the entire organization not be done in?

As such, it was certain that they would have a specific supplier.

“The Han Clan? Do you know where they live?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Understanding Zhang Xuan’s intention, Chen Leyao nodded. “Yes, I know where they are.”

It might be difficult for her to invite the elder out, but if the supplier was the one to do the inviting instead, it should be much easier.

“Lead the way!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

The two of them swiftly strode through several streets, and roughly ten minutes later, a resplendent manor appeared before their eyes.

“Zhang shi, this is the Han Clan!” Chen Leyao introduced.

“Un.” Zhang Xuan nodded as he examined the massive manor before him.

To be qualified to supply rations to one of the top powers of the Master Teacher Continent, the Han Clan was certainly

quite a powerful clan.

“Send in a name scroll!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand.

It was clearly not viable to barge into the clan. Besides, if he caused a huge commotion, it could cause more trouble than it would be worth. For the time being, it would be best to get the person-in-charge to meet him willingly.

“Name scroll? Do I put down my name?” Chen Leyao was taken aback.

While she was indeed one of the more talented disciples in the Glacier Plain Court, the other party was a figure who was able to talk on equal terms with an elder of the Glacier Plain Court. Considering the ungodly hour that they had come knocking, it was not too likely that they would be able to meet the master of the manor.

“Use my name instead!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Yours?” Chen Leyao widened her eyes in astonishment.

While Zhang Xuan was the young court chief’s teacher, this was something that was only known by very few members of the Glacier Plain Court, so he did not have much fame. And more importantly, he had just gotten into a conflict with the Sanctum of Sages, so was it not too dangerous to use that name?

“Pardon me for saying this, Zhang shi, but I don’t think your name will work either...”

However, before she could finish her words, Zhang shi suddenly turned around, and a foreign face came into her sight—the other party had morphed his appearance into that of a middle-aged man with yellowish skin tone. With a perfectly nonchalant expression, he said, “From now on, my name is...

“Yang Xuan!”

1490 Han Shuiliu

“Yang Xuan?” It took a moment before Chen Leyao processed what Zhang Xuan was saying, and she was nearly scared out of her wits. “Y-you... are going to use Yang shi’s name?”

Yang Xuan—there was no way she could not have heard of this name before.

The number one grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters that carried the reputation of being the number one expert of the Master Teacher Continent, he was a figure that most could only look up to... but Zhang Xuan was going to use his name?

Even if he’s your teacher, you can’t just borrow his name like that, right?

“This is the only way we can get the head of the Han Clan to meet us,” Zhang Xuan said. “Given that Zhao Ya is his grandstudent, he should be fine with it... I guess.”

Chen Leyao was still a little uncertain about this matter.

The young man before her was simply too daring.

It was one thing to make a move on the elders of the Sanctum of Sages, but to act as his own teacher as well... It would still be fine if he did not get exposed, but if others found out about it, this was a matter that would bring even the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters into the picture!

All of a sudden, Chen Leyao found herself regretting having agreed to help him.

At this rate, there was no telling what kind of mess this brazen man would stir up.

“Don’t worry, it’ll be fine!” Seeing Chen Leyao’s expression, Zhang Xuan could tell what she was worried about, so he waved his hands reassuringly.

He was already accustomed to impersonating Yang Xuan, and he was confident that he would be able to deal with whatever

the other party threw his way.

Given the current circumstances, his name would not be of much use. However, if he brought the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters' Yang Xuan into the picture, he would be able to swiftly get people to do his bidding, and that should allow him to quickly uncover Zhao Ya's whereabouts.

In any case, the real Yang Xuan should still be in seclusion in the Zhang Clan. Considering how the other party still had not emerged when he left, it was unlikely that the other party would be out anytime soon. Given so, there was nothing for him to worry about.

“Very well then...” Knowing that she was already onboard this darned ship and was unable to back down anymore, Chen Leyao resignedly took out a scroll and began writing on it.

“There's no need to write Master Teacher Pavilion. Just the two words, ‘Yang Xuan’ will do!” Zhang Xuan instructed.

“Very well!” Chen Leyao was not sure why Zhang Xuan would make such a request, but she felt that the other party would have his own motive for making such a request, so she took out a new scroll and began writing on it once more.

After she was done, she walked up to the door and knocked on it.

Jiya!

A guard opened the door and shot Chen Leyao a questioning gaze.

“Our old master wishes to pay a visit to your master! I ask of you to pass this name scroll to him,” Chen Leyao said as she passed the scroll over.

“Look at the time! Our old master is already resting in his room, so if you have any business, please return tomorrow!” The guard shook his head, refusing to take the name scroll.

At the guard's rejection, Chen Leyao flicked her wrist and flashed a token to the guard. “I advise you take the name scroll and have your master take a look at it. Should there be any

delay in this matter, a mere guard like you won't be able to take responsibility!"

"You are an inner disciple of the Glacier Plain Court?"

The guard might not know who Yang Xuan was, but he could at least recognize the token. Alarmed, he hurriedly accepted the name scroll and said, "Please wait here in our main hall for a moment. I'll relay your name scroll to the master!"

A person whom even an inner disciple of the Glacier Plain Court had to address as 'old master' must at least be the equivalent of an elder at the very least. A guard like him could not afford to offend such a figure.

"Un."

Chen Leyao put away her token before walking back to Zhang Xuan and taking her position behind him. Under the lead of the guard, the two of them slowly made their way into the courtyard and took a seat in the main hall.

After preparing some tea for the two guests, the guard quickly rushed over to the clan head's room.

Despite the late hour, the clan head had yet to turn in for the night, still busy discussing something with the clan elders. The guard quickly walked into the room and clasped his fist.

"Master, someone requests your presence!"

"At this hour? Who is it?" the head of the Han Clan, Han Shuiliu, asked with a frown.

"This is his name scroll." Not daring to say too much, the guard quickly passed the name scroll over.

Han Shuiliu took the name scroll and opened it slowly. There were only two words written on it—Yang Xuan.

"Yang Xuan?" Han Shuiliu was bewildered to see such an uninformative name scroll. "What kind of background does that person have?"

The purpose of a name scroll was to express one's identity to the other party, so he had never seen such a name scroll consisting of just a single name before.

The guard pondered for a moment. “He’s a middle-aged man dressed in a master teacher robe. He doesn’t have an emblem on, so I’m not too sure what his master teacher rank is...”

“A master teacher without an emblem?” Han Shuiliu was even more perplexed.

Master teachers would usually pin their emblem on their chest to allow others to recognize them. To hand over a name scroll consisting of just a name and not pin his emblem on his chest, and more importantly, to come knocking at such an ungodly hour... just who could that fellow be?

“He’s probably some arrogant brat who came to try his luck.” Unable to make sense of the situation, Han Shuiliu placed the name scroll on the table and instructed, “Tell him to come again tomorrow morning and send him away!”

“But Master, that Yang shi’s subordinate is an inner member of the Glacier Plain court!” the guard quickly said.

“His subordinate is an inner member of the Glacier Plain Court?” Han Shuiliu’s expression froze in place. “A master teacher, Yang Xuan... Could it be... could it be...”

As he muttered beneath his breath, his face gradually warped into one of utter shock.

“... him?”

“Clan head, who are you talking about?” one of the elders asked.

The other elders who had been conferencing with Han Shuiliu earlier also shot doubtful gazes over.

Han Shuiliu turned to the elders and said, “If I recall correctly, the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters has a legendary grand elder whom few have ever met, and his name happens to be Yang Xuan. Could that person be him?”

“Grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters? That’s a figure who lives in the clouds—there’s no way he would pay a visit to mere mortals like us.” The elder shook his head.

While their Han Clan was of considerable standing in the City of Glacier and wielded considerable influence in the Glacier Plain Court, still, in comparison to the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, it was not even worth mentioning.

There was no way a grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters would pay them a visit, let alone hand over a name scroll. The very notion of this was simply too ridiculous to be true!

“I also don’t think that it’s likely, but that person is a master teacher and is named Yang Xuan. I can’t think of another person who fits...” Han Shuiliu shook his head. “I think you should all come out to greet him with me. It’s one thing if he isn’t that man, but if he really is and we fail to welcome him properly, our Han Clan would be in jeopardy.”

It was relatively common to see two people with the same name on the Master Teacher Continent, but Yang Xuan was a rather rare name, and he did not know of another master teacher who went by that name.

While he felt that the matter was very unlikely, he did not want to take chances. As a small clan, it was best for them to tread carefully.

“Un!”

The other elders nodded as they swiftly followed Han Shuiliu out of the room. Soon, they arrived in the main hall and saw a middle-aged man with slightly yellowish skin sitting by the side, nonchalantly sipping on his tea.

As soon as he entered the room, Han Liushui immediately clasped his fist and asked, “May I know if you are Yang shi?”

His cultivation had already reached Saint 8-dan pinnacle, but to his astonishment, he was unable to gauge the depths of the other party’s cultivation. His aura felt ordinary, but hidden amid the ordinary was a certain vibe that sent shudders running through his heart.

It was hard to describe that feeling, but it was like facing a dormant volcano. One might not even pay it a second glance

usually, but once it began erupting, it would definitely end with a catastrophe.

Even with the combined might of the entire Han Clan, Han Shuiliu was not sure if he would be able to stand against him.

“I happened to pass by this area, and there were some things that I would like to enquire about. Pardon me for imposing on you at this hour, “Zhang Xuan said as he slowly rose to his feet.

It was the same gesture that Han Liushui had done, clasping of fist, but there was a natural air of loftiness in his actions. It was not an intentional action, but it seemed to emanate the air of a lonesome expert.

Expert! He must definitely be an expert! Han Liushui narrowed his eyes in shock.

1491 Three Birds with One Stone

While the other party had not revealed his exact strength so far, much could be said just by the natural majesty that he commanded. It was clear that he had experienced the vicissitudes of life and braved through countless storms.

Even if the other party was not the legendary Yang shi, it was likely that he was of considerable standing, someone a small clan like them could not offend.

Understanding this, Han Shuiliu immediately humbled himself and said, “Yang shi, there’s no need to stand on ceremony! It’s the honor of our Han Clan to have you here. May I know what you need to ask of us? As long as it’s within the means of our Han Clan, we will definitely try our utmost to accomplish it!”

“It’s nothing much. I happened to be passing by the area when a saint beast attempted to attack me, so I swiftly subdued it. But in light of the fact that it wasn’t an intentional act on its part and that it expressed willingness to submit to me, I decided to treat its injuries. However, I never bring medicine on me during my travels, and I happened to hear that the Han Clan has an inventory of medicinal herbs, so I came over hoping to request some!” Zhang Xuan said with a slight smile.

“Medicinal herbs?” Han Shuiliu nodded. “May I know what saint beast it is, and what kind of medicinal herbs does it require?”

As each saint beast had its own constitution, the medicinal herbs they required to treat the same injury could be different. For one, fire attribute medicinal herbs would be more effective for the Inferno Qilin whereas the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast would do better with cold attribute medicinal herbs.

Only by learning what kind of saint beast they were dealing with would they be able to retrieve the medicinal herb that it required.

“It’s them...” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked his wrist, and two saint beasts immediately appeared right in the middle of the main hall.

As soon as they appeared, a fearsome aura immediately filled the room, leaving one feeling as if the entire main hall would be flipped upside down.

“Saint 9-dan Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast?”

“Saint 9-dan pinnacle Inferno Qilin?”

“He was actually able to injure those two saint beasts without sustaining any injuries?”

...

Seeing the two massive fellows appearing all of a sudden, the room suddenly plunged into silence. The elders of the Han Clan began shivering involuntarily out of fear.

It was just a moment ago that some of them had felt that the clan head was making a big fuss by coming over to greet the guest personally, but after seeing the two gigantic saint beasts, such thoughts were utterly vanquished from their minds.

To be able to wound Saint 9-dan beasts so easily, not to mention the utter nonchalance he had when speaking of the matter, as if it was nothing at all... just how powerful was he?

Just imagining it was enough to make their guts churn in horror!

“I’ll require a Rubysun Grass, Amityfire Flower, Green-leafed Violet Stem, Pristine Vine...”

“... That should be all.” After stating roughly a dozen medicinal herbs, Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed, “Their injuries are truly regrettable. I failed to control my strength well and accidentally exerted a tenth more, resulting in this unfortunate outcome. It seems like I really should pay careful attention to this in the future!”

Just by exerting a tenth more strength, he was able to cause this much damage to the two Saint 9-dan beasts?

Han Shuiliu gulped unconsciously. He swiftly went through the herbs that the other party had stated, and a moment later, his complexion suddenly turned a little awful. With a slightly hesitant voice, he clasped his fist and said, “Yang shi, regarding those medicinal herbs...”

“Rest assured. Since I’m asking for them, I’ll compensate you according to the market rate,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

“That’s not what I mean,” Han Shuiliu quickly clarified. “Of the medicinal herbs that you have listed, I’m afraid that we can only procure seven of them. It might be beyond our means to procure the other eight...”

“You can only procure seven of them?” A frown slowly etched its way onto Zhang Xuan’s brows. It was a subtle gesture, but it fully displayed his displeasure.

In an instant, the surrounding air turned viscous, stifling the breath of everyone in the room.

A powerful aura that seemed as if it would tear even the world apart abruptly burst forth from the middle-aged man.

Geji! Geji!

Under this suffocating aura, Han Shuiliu and other elders could not stop trembling. It was as if a mountain was sitting on their shoulders, pushing them down onto the ground.

“Ah. Pardon me, my thoughts wandered...” Just as they were about to reach their limits, the frown on the middle-aged man suddenly cleared, turning back into a slight smile.

And just like that, the tempest that they were in vanished altogether, as if the pressure they had felt earlier was just a figment of their imagination.

“I-it’s fine...”

As the pressure vanished, Han Shuiliu and the other elders swiftly noticed that their robes were firmly clinging onto their sweat-soaked backs, and they could hardly suppress their shock.

“I didn’t mean to alarm you. I was just thinking of how inconvenient it would be for these two pitiful fellows to recover without the required medicinal herb that I lost control of myself for a moment.” Zhang Xuan shook his head apologetically. “As the saying goes, ‘worry provokes mayhem’.”

After experiencing the fearsome might of the middle-aged man, how could Han Shuiliu dare to say no anymore? Gritting his teeth, he said, “Actually, Yang shi, there might be a way to procure those herbs. Our Han Clan might not have them, but the Glacier Plain Court might have them. If you really need them, Yang shi, I’m willing to enquire on your behalf. Given our Han Clan’s relationship with the Glacier Plain Court, this shouldn’t be too difficult!”

“Is that so?” Zhang Xuan shot a glance at Han Shuiliu.

“Yes, Yang shi!” Han Shuiliu nodded. “Our Han Clan has always been responsible for procuring the rations of the Glacier Plain Court, so we have a close working relationship with Elder Bai. Given our ties, it shouldn’t be too difficult to engage her help for this matter!”

“I’ll be counting on you, Clan Head Han! I don’t mean to urge you, but I require the medicinal herbs as soon as possible. Is it possible for you to contact Elder Bai and have her send the medicinal herbs over right now? While the injuries sustained by these two saint beasts might not be too severe, it might leave behind some trauma if their treatment is delayed for too long!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Of course, of course! That won’t be a problem at all! Yang shi, please give me a moment as I contact Elder Bai right now to have her deliver the medicinal herbs!” Han Shuiliu swiftly nodded.

“Also, I don’t like to cause a huge fuss over nothing, so…”

“I understand! I’ll make sure to keep your identity a secret!” Han Shuiliu replied before swiftly taking his leave.

At the same time, the other elders swiftly got into action as well. They arranged for the other party to take a seat in the

most resplendent room in the Han Clan and readied their finest tea.

How impressive...

Watching as everything unfold before her eyes, Chen Leyao was shocked beyond words. Her red lips remained agape for a very long time.

What incredible slyness this was!

Through showcasing the Inferno Qilin and the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast, not only was he able to fully convince the Han Clan of his standing, he was also able to make use of this to utilize the Han Clan's connections to gather the medicinal herbs required for their recovery... and more importantly, he even managed to use it as an excuse that was not too abrupt to have them invite Elder Bai over!

Three birds with one stone!

In comparison, her initial thought of Zhang Xuan requesting the Han Clan to help them contact Elder Bai was truly crude and possibly infeasible.

After all, for an unfathomably powerful master teacher to name an elder of the Glacier Plain Court and request to meet her... such an action would surely draw suspicion.

And once the news reached the ears of the Glacier Plain Court, it would surely alarm them.

By using his tamed beasts as an excuse, he was able to conceal his true intention and achieve his goal without drawing any suspicion. This was truly cunning!

Had she not seen Zhang Xuan altering his appearance, she would have thought that Yang shi had come in person!

While sipping leisurely on the fine tea prepared, roughly ten minutes later, Han Shuiliu suddenly walked in with a middle-aged lady wearing a hat.

"Yang shi, Elder Bai is here!" Han Shuiliu swiftly walked forward and clasped his fist.

Zhang Xuan nodded, but just as he was about to speak, the middle-aged lady suddenly frowned as she caught sight of the young lady standing beside him and asked, “Leyao, what are you doing here?”

1492 Earth Vein Lotus

Chen Leyao had gone to the Sanctum of Sages; this was something that the entire Glacier Plain Court knew. Why would she suddenly appear here when barely three months had passed since then?

“Elder Bai, I have followed Yang shi here in order to... deal with some matters!” Chen Leyao swiftly got up and greeted Elder Bai.

This was the elder whom she was closest with in the Glacier Plain Court. She didn't wish to lie to her.

“Yang shi?”

At this moment, Elder Bai finally turned her gaze toward Zhang Xuan.

The middle-aged man before her didn't seem to be too old, but his cultivation was like an abyss. She found that she was unable to gauge the depth of his strength.

“I have heard of many Yang shis, may I know who you are?” Elder Bai frowned in hostility.

Chen Leyao was one of the disciples which the Glacier Plain Court had devoted its resources to grooming, and yet, instead of cultivating diligently in the Sanctum of Sages, this fellow actually brought her back here. This had made her a little displeased.

“I am Yang Xuan,” Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

“Yang Xuan? Which Yang Xuan?” Elder Bai replied instinctively when a moment later, her eyebrows shot up as she uttered in astonishment, “Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters' Yang Xuan?”

“Hahaha!”

Zhang Xuan didn't respond to Elder Bai's question, choosing to chuckle softly instead. He stood up and said, “Elder Bai, you have a glowing complexion, but it seems like you have an

energy clot in your Tuihai acupoint, resulting in a clash in the searing and cold energies in your body. If I'm not mistaken... the hair beneath your hat has already on the color of snow, am I right?"

"You..." Elder Bai widened her eyes in shock.

She had always appeared before others with a hat on her head in order to conceal her snowy hair, and even the disciple whom she favored the most, Chen Leyao, was unaware of this matter. Yet, the middle-aged man before her was able to see through it with a simple glance?

"There's no need to get nervous. Execute a punching routine." Paying no heed to Elder Bai's shock, Zhang Xuan took two steps forward as he spoke with a calming voice.

Upon hearing those words, Elder Bai's expression suddenly turned dazed for a moment, and before she realized it, she had already executed a punch.

Upon realization of what had just happened, her face turned livid in anger and embarrassment, but just as she was about to berate the other party, the other party had already begun speaking once more, "You have practiced your Arctic Arcane Art since young, and as you have never come into contact with the opposite gender, guarding the purity of your yin through such, you were able to bring out the full prowess of the cultivation technique. However... have you noticed that you are unable to advance your cultivation by even the slightest bit anymore? No matter how many pills you consume or how many master teachers you consult, you just aren't able to make the breakthrough to Macrocosm Ascendancy realm!"

"You... How did you know?" Horrified by having her secrets exposed by a stranger, Elder Bai couldn't help but take a step back.

It had been a long while since she had reached Saint 8-dan pinnacle, but for some reason, she was simply unable to make a breakthrough to the next realm. She had tried many methods, but all of them turned out to be futile in the end. By now, she had already completely given up hope.

Just that, she had only mentioned this matter to the elders whom she was closest with in the Glacier Plain Court, and yet, for a stranger to know of all this as well... Did he really analyze all of this from her punch?

Surely there would be no one in the world with such penetrating eyes!

“Macrocosm in Macrocosm Ascendancy realm refers to the spatial world we perceive that is formed by the three dimensions. In order to grasp the concept of the macrocosm, one must possess a deep understanding of the spatial laws. While the Arctic Arcane Art is indeed a fairly powerful cultivation technique, it would require one to use frost as a catalyst to induce an impetus for a breakthrough to the Macrocosm Ascendancy realm, but such a method of breakthrough happens to be incompatible with your disposition. As a result, it caused an uneven distribution of the hot and cold energies in your body, and the strain your body is under has resulted in the premature whitening of your hair...”

At this point, Zhang Xuan raised his eyelids and asked, “Do you experience feelings of irritation when you cultivate at night, resulting in your inability to calm down? Does your body experience inner heat seizures from time to time?”

“This... Yes, that’s true...” Elder Bai was intending to refute his words, but after a slight moment of hesitation, she eventually nodded in admittance. With a doubtful look, she asked, “Yang shi, may I know what do you mean by disposition? I have practiced the Arctic Arcane Art for more than a century now, but nothing has happened in the past. Why would the issue of incompatibility suddenly crop up at this moment?”

Since the other party was able to see through the root of her problem, she felt that this could be a good opportunity to resolve this long-term ailment that had put her through great suffering. Thus, she decided to not to conceal it anymore.

Just that, what the other party had said left her feeling slightly perplexed.

She had cultivated the Arctic Arcane Art for many years now, and never had she faced any problem with it. Why would there be an incompatibility all of a sudden?

And also, what did the other party mean by the word, ‘disposition’?

“By disposition, I’m referring to the force field that you generate around you. It’s something that’s affected by the cultivation technique you practice, your personal habits, and even your surroundings!” Zhang Xuan explained. “Your constitution harnesses the yin attribute, so it’s indeed suited to cultivate the Arctic Arcane Art.”

“Then...” Elder Bai frowned in confusion.

Even Chen Leyao had no idea what Zhang Xuan was driving at too.

It was just a moment ago that he said that her disposition wasn’t compatible with the cultivation technique, so why would he say that her constitution was compatible now?

“Calm down and allow me to explain. There’s indeed no problem with your constitution; the problem lays in the change in your disposition!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Change in my disposition?”

“Indeed. If I’m not mistaken, after your cultivation reached Saint 8-dan, did you start cultivating a Earth Vein Lotus in your own residence?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“That... Yes, that’s right!” Elder Bai nodded.

“The seeds of the Earth Vein Lotus does have the effect of eternalizing one’s youthful appearance, so it’s a popular plant to cultivate amongst the ladies. I can understand why you would want to cultivate one as well, but do you know that the Earth Vein Lotus doesn’t just survive by taking in the energy from the earth veins? More than that, it requires the nourishment of earth flames in order to mature! While it only takes in a small flicker, that’s already more than sufficient to change the environment you live in, causing the surrounding force field to take on a fire attribute. A day or two wouldn’t cause too much harm, but with your Arctic Arcane Art and

cold attribute constitution, a huge problem would arise when you are exposed to such an environment in the long run!

“The fire attribute will slowly accumulate within your body. If you are married, you might still be able to expel it out, but the act of guarding the purity of your yin has also caused the fire poison to be trapped in your body as well. As a result, when you cultivate the Arctic Arcane Art, your cold energy would collide with the fire poison accumulated in your body, resulting in your hair taking on a snowy color. At the same time, the clots resulted from the clash causes your zhenqi to be trapped as well. As a result, no matter how you cultivate, you aren’t able to achieve a breakthrough...” Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed deeply.

“This...” Elder Bai’s eyes widened in shock as she staggered weakly backward.

She couldn’t say for sure whether the other party was right or not, but it was indeed true that there was an Earth Vein Lotus planted in her courtyard, and there were also several clots in her meridians that impeded her flow of zhenqi. Thinking back, her condition also seemed to have started after she began cultivating the lotus...

Could the other party be right?

“What should I do then? Yang shi, please enlighten me!” At this point, Elder Bai already harbored no doubts about the capabilities of the middle-aged man before her.

Previously, she still thought that it was impossible for that legendary man to come to a place like this, but the very feat that the middle-aged man standing before her had achieved, discerning the root of her ailment with absolute ease, showed that his eye of discernment far surpassed that of common 9-star master teachers... She couldn’t fathom anyone else other than that legendary man who would possess such incredible capabilities!

“Simple. Destroy the Earth Vein Lotus you have planted in your courtyard and soak yourself in the Glacier Lake for a whole month. Not only will your afflictions be resolved, you’ll

also have no trouble reaching Macrocosm Ascendancy realm afterward!”

At this point, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly before continuing on, “Alternatively, if you aren’t able to endure a month in the Glacier Lake, you can also find a man to reconcile your yin and yang. You should be able to resolve the problem within three days!”

“This...” Elder Bai’s face reddened upon hearing those words, and she hurriedly shook her head. “I’ll endure a month in the Glacier Lake!”

Having lived a life of purity up to this day, she wouldn’t break something she had insisted on just because of her affliction, especially when there was an alternative solution.

There was a brief moment of silence before Elder Bai spoke up once more, “Yang shi, given your standing and strength, even if your saint beasts are injured, you should be more than capable of treating them without medicinal herbs, right? Besides, even if you require medicinal herbs, you also don’t need me to deliver it personally either, right? May I know the reason why you have invited me over in such a roundabout manner?”

While everything seemed to fit rationally, as an elder of one of the powerful Glacier Plain Court, Elder Bai was highly experienced and worldly. On top of that, the fact that Chen Leyao was together with him was a huge anomaly too. Putting all of the clues together, she was able to keenly notice that something was amiss.

1493 Threa

She was not considered to be too powerful among the elders of the Glacier Plain Court, and under normal circumstances, even till the day of her death, it was highly unlikely for her to come into contact with someone of Yang shi's level.

However, with the fact that Chen Leyao was with him and the message that Clan Head Han Shuiliu had sent over, everything seemed to be pointing toward that direction.

“Elder Bai is indeed a candid person!” Knowing that it was impossible to conceal it anymore, Zhang Xuan chose to admit to the matter frankly. With a smile, he shot a glance at Han Shuiliu and the other elders of the Han Clan and said, “Clan Head Han, you have my gratitude for relaying the message.”

“Yang shi, there's no need to stand on ceremony. It's the Han Clan's honor to be able to work on your behalf!” Han Shuiliu quickly clasped his fist respectfully.

The middle-aged man standing before him was a grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters! Given that even Elder Bai had acknowledged it, his identity could not possibly be fake. If it were to be known that the Han Clan had some ties with Yang Xuan, even if it was just a brief contact, its standing could be elevated to a whole new level!

For one, its enemies would hesitate to challenge them for fear of retribution from Yang Xuan.

“Un.” Zhang Xuan nodded before he retracted his smile, looked away, and fell silent.

Seeing the look on his face, Han Liushui swiftly understood what was going on and quickly clasped his fist. “There are still a couple of matters that we have to attend to, so we'll be taking our leave now.”

After saying those words, he left together with the elders.

Clearly, the words of thanks that Yang shi had said earlier were an indirect way of dismissing them. If they did not leave

soon, they could very well incur his rage.

Soon, only Elder Bai and Chen Leyao were left in the room.

Turning away, Zhang Xuan walked over to the main seat and sat down before turning his gaze back to Elder Bai. “Since Elder Bai has already guessed it, I shan’t beat around the bush anymore. Zhao Ya is my grandstudent!”

There was still no discernible change in his expression, but for some reason, the air around him suddenly grew pressurizing.

“The young court chief... is Yang shi’s grandstudent?” Elder Bai was alarmed.

Clearly, this was the first time that she had heard of this matter.

“Indeed. How has she been doing? I wish to hear nothing but the truth,” Zhang Xuan said.

“This...”

Elder Bai’s face paled. She was at a loss as to how she should respond to Zhang Xuan’s question.

“I received a message saying that she’s in danger. Since she’s the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, I believe you should know the truth very well!” As Zhang Xuan spoke, one could hear his voice growing more and more wintry. He tapped his finger on the table periodically, but as time went by, this seemingly simple gesture seemed to carry a tinge of impatience and even fury to it. “You know my identity. Every move I make represents the will of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters. I don’t want to cause too much trouble, which is why I chose to come to the Han Clan to invite you over. Otherwise, if I were to go straight to your First Elder and question her on the matter, I believe there is anyone in this world who would dare snub me!”

“I...” Elder Bai quivered in fear.

The very fact that the other party had not taken out his identity token nor marched straight into the Glacier Plain Court was a sign that he intended to resolve this matter discreetly without alarming too many master teachers.

Otherwise, given his identity, a single command would be all it took for the Glacier Plain Court to cease to exist.

“I’ll give you some time to think it over, but know that my patience has its limits. If you can’t give me the answer I want, the Glacier Plain Court will be my next destination. Someone as intelligent as you should understand what kind of implications will arise from that without having me to explain it.”

“I understand...” Elder Bai felt a cold shudder running through her spine upon hearing those words. She hesitated for a brief moment before gritting her teeth in determination.

“Something did happen to the young court chief. Earlier in the afternoon, the First Elder passed a decree commanding the Fourth Elder, Fifth Elder, and Seventh Elder to make a move together in order to suppress and imprison her in the Chanting Serenity Hall, not allowing her to leave the area or even communicate with anyone. This matter is the highest secret of our Glacier Plain Court, and not even elders are allowed to speak of the matter, or else... they will be killed without fail!”

“Chanting Serenity Hall? But that’s a place where prisoners are locked in! Just what kind of mistake did the young court chief make to deserve such treatment?” Chen Leyao exclaimed in astonishment.

While she had guessed that something might have happened within the Glacier Plain Court, she could still hardly believe her ears when hearing of it from Elder Bai.

The Chanting Serenity Hall was a place used by the Glacier Plain Court to imprison sinners, and most of those who were placed in there were those who had committed unpardonable crimes. Before she left the place, the young court chief had still been the hope and future of the Glacier Plain Court. So, why would she be imprisoned all of a sudden?

“Leyao, you also know that my identity is rather awkward in the Glacier Plain Court, so I don’t really know much about what’s happening among the upper echelon within the court. I don’t know what kind of mistake the young court chief has made, but it’s a fact that the three elders have apprehended the

young court chief and bound her in the Heaven Sealing Lock,” Elder Bai replied.

“Heaven Sealing Lock?” Zhang Xuan’s body tensed up upon hearing those three words.

He had read a brief introduction about the artifact in a book back in the Sanctum of Sages. The Heaven Sealing Lock was a kind of torture tool used only on the most contemptible of sinners. Not only would the individual’s meridians be sealed, preventing them from exerting any strength, they would also have to suffer grievous pain each and every day.

Never had he imagined that Zhao Ya would one day be subjected to such a vile torture tool!

This was truly intolerable!

Feeling the icy-cold aura that the middle-aged man before her was emanating, Elder Bai instinctively cowered backward in fear before quickly adding, “Yang shi, despite what has happened, I ask you to rest assured that there’s no threat to the young court chief’s life. Just earlier on, the First Elder instructed me to prepare some fine dishes to deliver them to the young court chief periodically so as to ensure that she doesn’t starve.”

She had no idea why the First Elder would make such a move on the young court chief, but judging from the First Elder’s attitude, it did not seem like she truly intended to harm the young court chief. Thus, there should not be any threat to the young court chief’s life at all. Most likely, it was just some kind of punishment.

“Bring me to meet her!” Zhang Xuan ordered with a wintry voice.

“Meet her? This...” A look of hesitation surfaced on Elder Bai’s face. “The First Elder is supervising her imprisonment personally at the moment, and only during mealtimes am I able to get close to her. Otherwise, not even I’ll be able to get past the security the First Elder has set up...”

“I understand. You just have to bring me to the Glacier Plain Court and direct me to the Chanting Serenity Hall, that’s all.

You don't have to bother about what happens afterward.”
Zhang Xuan waved his hand impatiently.

As long as he could uncover where Zhao Ya was, with his ability, he should be able to figure out a way to save her.

Of course, he would have to clarify what had happened with Zhao Ya in person first before proceeding with any further action.

If it turned out to be some kind of training to temper Zhao Ya's mind and body, no matter how much he doted on her, he would not get in the way.

A look of deliberation appeared on Elder Bai's face as she lowered her gaze in uncertainty.

Knowing that Elder Bai was worried of the consequences of her action, Zhang Xuan coldly added, “If you are reluctant to do it, it's fine by me as well. I'll just have to walk into the Glacier Plain Court through the main gates and demand Zhao Ya's release. However, I'm sure you understand the differences between the two courses of action!”

“I...” Elder Bai had truly been put in a tough position.

If she brought the other party in, that would be equivalent to betraying the First Elder. But if she refused, the other party was a grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters! If he blew his top, it could bring endless calamity to the Glacier Plain Court.

The Glacier Plain Court might even be destroyed!

The other party was simply too strong. Even as a lone individual, it was questionable whether the entire Glacier Plain Court would be a match for him!

“Rest assured, I only want to pay a visit to my grandstudent so as to clarify the situation. If she has indeed erred, I have no intentions of covering up for her. However, if I find out that the fault lies in the Glacier Plain Court, I might have to pay that so-called First Elder of yours a visit and have a good talk with her about revising the rules!” Zhang Xuan said with narrowed eyes.

It was still the same nonchalant voice that he was speaking in, but amid the nonchalance was an unconcealable air of dominance.

It felt like the other party would teach the Glacier Plain Court an unforgettable lesson if they had wronged Zhao Ya in the slightest.

“This...” Hearing those words, Elder Bai could tell that the other party had already made up his mind. “Very well. Yang shi, I’ll bring you in!” “This term, Chanting Serenity, is a reference to the chanting sessions that occur in Buddhist temples. If you have been to a Buddhist ritual, you might have chanced upon monks hitting temple blocks rhythmically while chanting sutras. In this context, the act of chanting is aimed toward soothing the vile thoughts that a person might harbor.

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“You have my gratitude, Elder Bai.”

Seeing that the other party had agreed to it, Zhang Xuan stood up calmly as he discreetly sent a telepathic message to the young lady behind him. “Chen Leyao, you are an inner member of the Glacier Plain Court, so it’s best for you not to follow me anymore. Also, after I leave, don’t linger around in the Han Clan. Leave the city first and wait for my notice.”

Due to Chen Leyao’s identity, she would be put in a tough position if something happened between him and the Glacier Plain Court afterward.

As for getting her to leave the city for the time being, that was on the off chance that his identity was exposed. This way, she would be in a much safer position.

“I understand.” Chen Leyao nodded.

After issuing those instructions, Zhang Xuan had the Netherworld Azure Dragon Beast and the Inferno Qilin move back into the Myriad Anthive Nest before following Elder Bai out of the Han Clan, heading straight toward the Glacier Plain Court.

He had already fed the two saint beasts the medicinal herbs that the Han Clan and Elder Bai had prepared, and using his Heaven’s Path zhenqi in unison with the treatment, they were recovering fast. Nevertheless, it seemed like they would still need two to three days before they were able to make a full recovery.

I should avoid bringing them out unless when I’m truly cornered.

In the fight with the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, the two saint beasts had already sustained considerable injuries. After which, they had clashed with Zhan shi and the others, and the Inferno Qilin had even suffered the might of the Formation of

the Sages directly. If not for their formidable physical resilience, they would have lost their lives by now!

While the Heaven's Path zhenqi could heal all injuries, it was a pity that his cultivation was only at Phantasmal Space realm pinnacle, so the effectiveness of his zhenqi on the wounds of Saint 9-dan cultivators was severely limited. Not to mention, the two saint beasts also possessed hulking physiques, so even if he expended all of his zhenqi on them, he still would not be able to nurse them back to full health.

This meant that he should avoid bringing the two of them out unless the situation was truly dire.

After flying for a moment, the two of them arrived before a huge cluster of buildings. At this point, Elder Bai turned her gaze over and said, "Yang shi, we have arrived at the Glacier Plain Court. It has limited access to outsiders, so I'll have to beg for your pardon in advance."

"It's fine." Zhang Xuan waved his hand as he examined his surroundings quietly.

Most of the buildings ahead of him seemed to be made of a crystalline material, and they emanated a faint, forlorn light beneath the starry night sky. White snow drifted amid these crystal buildings, and there were some beautiful ice sculptures that could be seen here and there. It felt as if one had stepped into a world created of snow and ice.

"That's a relief!" Hearing that the middle-aged man did not mind, Elder Bai heaved a sigh of relief.

She walked over to the gates, where two disciples of the Glacier Plain Court were stationed.

"Greetings, Elder Bai. May I know who the person beside you is?" Recognizing Elder Bai, the two disciples quickly greeted her before directing doubtful gazes at the unfamiliar face beside.

"He is Han Chu of the Han Clan. He's here to deliver resources, and we happen to have some important matters to discuss too," Elder Bai replied.

“I see!” Hearing that the other party was from the Han Clan, the two disciples swiftly opened up the pathway for the both of them to enter.

Zhang Xuan followed closely behind Elder Bai while advancing forward.

An air of serene silence drifted within the Glacier Plain Court. There were not too many people around. After walking for some time, they finally arrived at an independent residence.

“This is where I live. Given my current authorization, I’m afraid that I can only bring Yang shi up to this point. Even I don’t have access to places beyond here,” Elder Bai said as she pushed open the door and headed in.

“It’s fine.” Zhang Xuan nodded. “You just have to tell me where the Chanting Serenity Hall is. As for the rest, I’ll deal with it myself.”

He had never intended to have Elder Bai lead him straight in. Firstly, that would be putting the latter on the spot, and secondly, the more people there were, the easier they would be spotted.

“The Chanting Serenity Hall is southwest from here, roughly ten li away...” Elder Bai quickly explained the rough location and the appearance of the building.

Carefully remembering everything that Elder Bai had said, he headed into a room in the residence and set up a formation around him so as to prevent any outsiders from getting in before drawing his Primordial Spirit out.

The Glacier Plain Court was filled with experts. With his current strength, it was impossible for him to get to Zhao Ya discreetly without alarming anyone, so he could only depend on his Primordial Spirit.

His Primordial Spirit was formless and intangible, which would allow him to bypass most formations and sentries, thus giving him a better chance of reaching the Chanting Serenity Hall safely.

However, his Primordial Spirit was still a little too big at the moment, so he would have to be careful.

After leaving the formation that he had constructed, Zhang Xuan made sure to stick close to the surface as he discreetly left the residence.

Through his deep understanding of formations and the utilization of his Eye of Insight, he was able to bypass the surrounding formations without much problem. He advanced roughly ten li before a tall building came into his sight.

This should be the Chanting Serenity Hall!

The building before him fitted the description that Elder Bai had given him, so it should be where Zhao Ya was imprisoned.

What a formidable formation!

Examining the building closely, Zhang Xuan swiftly realized that there was an active formation shrouding the building, and if he just looked at it in terms of prowess, it was only slightly beneath that of the Sanctum of Sages' Guardian Formation.

As formidable as it is, it has far more flaws than the Sanctum of Sages' Guardian Formation. It won't be difficult for me to slip past it...

In the eyes of others, the powerful formation cast over the Chanting Serenity Hall might appear to be unbreachable, but in Zhang Xuan's eyes, it was riddled with loopholes. As powerful as it was, there were simply too many ways he could use to circumvent it.

He began making his way toward the formation, preparing to slip in, but just as he was about to make a move, he heard footsteps crunching on snow from afar. He quickly dove into the pile of snow not too far away to hide himself.

Just a moment after he was fully concealed, he immediately saw two figures appearing before him.

They were both female, and from their backs, it was difficult to gauge their age. Nevertheless, from their revealed skin, it was apparent that that they were not too young.

They are strong!

Even though the two of them were not intentionally showcasing their strength, Zhang Xuan could still feel

imposing might harnessed within their bodies. This was especially so for the lady standing on the left. Her strength could not compete directly with the First Elder of the Zhang Clan, but at the very least, she was around Zhang Wuchen's level, which meant that she was an expert who had surpassed Saint 9-dan.

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. Could she be the First Elder of the Glacier Plain Court?

He had intended to find Zhao Ya discreetly without anyone noticing, but he had ended up meeting this fellow first.

If she truly was the First Elder, he would be in deep trouble if he was noticed by her.

At the very least, he did not wield the power to oppose her yet.

“How is it? What did she say?”

While Zhang Xuan's mind was still wandering, he suddenly heard the ‘First Elder’ speaking in a hushed voice.

“She isn't giving in yet!” the other figure replied.

The ‘First Elder’ harrumphed coldly. “Humph, she has no choice in this matter. It is because I was too lenient the previous time around that her mother managed to get away. It won't happen again!”

“But... if she doesn't cave in, we can't just continue keeping her imprisoned like this either!” the other figure said.

“Don't worry, I have my own ways. For the time being, we should first lock her up for two days and make her suffer a bit!” The ‘First Elder’ waved her hand and said, “Right, doesn't she have a teacher? It seems like she does respect him quite a bit. Try to find a way to capture him here and use him as a hostage to force her to comply!”

“Her teacher? You mean Zhang Xuan? But he's the benefactor of our Glacier Plain Court!”

“What about that? You also know how important this matter is. As long as we succeed, the Glacier Plain Court will be able to be brought to a whole new level. I won't allow anyone to

stand in the way at this point in time!” The ‘First Elder’ flung her hand backward majestically.

Hidden in the snow, Zhang Xuan’s face darkened upon hearing those words. They intend to capture me?

The fluctuations in Zhang Xuan’s emotions swiftly caught the ‘First Elder’s’ attention. She immediately turned her head around and stared intently at the pile of snow where Zhang Xuan was hiding in.

“Who is it?”

1495 Teacher, I Miss You

“What?”

Under the ‘First Elder’s’ gaze, Zhang Xuan’s Primordial Spirit stiffened. He quickly curled up and drove his Soul Depth to enter the state of Heart of Tranquil Water, concealing every last hint of emotion and aura he was emanating.

Despite the massive size of his Primordial Spirit, after cultivating the Heaven’s Path Divine Art and undergoing the tempering of multiple lightning ordeals, it had already grown as wholesome as a crystal. As long as he did not intentionally release any trace of himself, it would be difficult for Saint 9-dan cultivators or even experts stronger than that to notice his presence.

“What’s wrong, First Elder?” Surprised by the abrupt actions of the First Elder, the other figure quickly turned her head around to examine the surroundings as well.

With her keen eyes, the First Elder examined the pile of snow closely and even scanned the area using her Spiritual Perception, but in the end, she could not find anything at all. Thus, she could only rub her glabella and say, “It’s nothing much. It might be due to my lack of sleep recently that I’ve gotten a little too sensitive.”

She was certain that she had felt some fluctuations in the surroundings earlier, but when she tried to check it, the presence had vanished altogether. However, she did not think that there was anyone in this world who was capable of escaping her detection, so since she was unable to find anything, it could very well just have been her imagination.

Seeing that the First Elder had not found anything, the other party replied with a chuckle, “While the security of the Glacier Plain Court can’t be compared to that of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, it still isn’t a place that just anyone can enter. First Elder, you need not think too much about it!”

“Un.” The First Elder nodded slowly before continuing to advance toward the Chanting Serenity Hall.

She really is the First Elder!

When the duo was finally some distance away, Zhang Xuan rose from the pile of snow and gazed at the two distant figures with narrowed eyes.

From their conversation, it seemed like they were trying to force Zhao Ya to do something, but she was unwilling to carry it out, thus resulting in a conflict.

Given Zhao Ya’s personality, if she’s willing to go so far as to oppose the First Elder, the matter that they want her to carry out is probably nothing good.

To think that the Glacier Plain Court, one of the top powers of the Master Teacher Continent, would actually stoop so low as to coerce its own young court chief into doing something that she was unwilling to do. Not only so, they actually had no qualms about holding him hostage so as to threaten her. Were they not being a little too despicable?

Let me head over and take a look, Zhang Xuan thought as he proceeded forward silently.

Very soon, the gates of the Chanting Serenity Hall came into Zhang Xuan’s sight. He saw the First Elder and the other figure walk up to the gates, and the First Elder tapped her finger lightly in the air. A token materialized right in front of her, and following which, a rift swiftly opened up in the formation, creating a passageway for them to pass through.

The duo made their way through the rift, and as soon as they stepped in, it started closing.

Alarmed, Zhang Xuan hurriedly rushed forward, and fortunately, before the rift could fully close, he managed to slip in. As soon as he entered, he abruptly felt his connection with the external world being severed, as if he had entered a folded space.

It was actually a decoy? Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

He had thought that the Chanting Serenity Hall was just a building with a powerful defensive formation around it, but who could have thought that the formation was actually just a distraction. Even if he had breached the defensive formation, he still would not have found anything in it at all.

Rather, the true Chanting Serenity Hall was located in a folded space!

Furthermore, this folded space was extremely stable, similar to the place where he had discovered the Dongxu Gourd back then. Even if he used his Eye of Insight, if he did not know the exact location of the folded space beforehand, it would have been nigh impossible for him to find it!

Calming his astonishment, Zhang Xuan swiftly assessed his surroundings.

The folded space that he had entered was not too big. In essence, it was actually not much different from entering a larger room. Were it not for the fact that he had comprehended the 3-dan Heavenly Art of Dimension Unravel, he would have thought that he had walked through a doorway into a building instead of being transported into another dimension.

While scanning his surroundings, he slowly advanced forward.

As he was within a folded space, he dared not make any big movements for fear that it would cause a spatial disturbance. Otherwise, once the First Elder noticed his presence, he would not be able to escape.

As such, it took him five whole minutes just to advance ten meters. As soon as he arrived by the doorway to the main hall, he could hear the infuriated voice of the First Elder.

“I have told you many times, this is the only way to fully awaken the Pure Yin Body! Why are you so obstinate about this?”

A bell-like voice yelled back, “There’s no way I’ll do it! Even if I’ll never awaken my Pure Yin Body, I still won’t do it!”

Hearing the bell-like voice, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. I’m really at the right place...

He could tell that the owner of the voice was none other than Zhao Ya.

Even though it had been half a year since they had last met, her voice was still fresh in his mind. There was no way that he would recognize it incorrectly.

Zhang Xuan sneaked in the main hall and carefully moved behind a particularly thick pillar before warily taking a glance forward. He saw Zhao Ya sitting on the ground. Unlike what he had expected, there were no shackles on her body.

It seems like Elder Bai isn't aware of the exact situation either...

Previously, Elder Bai had said that she was bound by the Heaven Sealing Lock, but that was nowhere to be seen at all. Perhaps, there might be some error in the information that she had received.

"I'll give you some time to think it through. However, you should know that I have already failed once, and I'll never allow it to occur again. You may refuse if you want to, but I have plenty of ways to change your mind. I would prefer it to not come to that, but if you push me, I will have no choice!" the First Elder said as she flung her sleeve.

"There's no need for that. Give me all the time you want, and I'll still make the same choice!" Zhao Ya replied obstinately.

"Very well! Let me see how long you can hold out for then!" Harrumphing coldly in anger, the First Elder turned around and stomped away.

The other elder in the main hall glanced at the departing First Elder and shook her head. "You are also well aware of the First Elder's temperament, so why do you still choose to go head on against her?"

"Second Elder, you need not say anything else. There's no way I'll compromise on this matter!" Zhao Ya said resolutely.

"Since she's able to awaken your unique constitution, naturally, she wields the ability to destroy it too. That person is an example of that. Are you really going to walk down the same path as her?" the Second Elder exclaimed anxiously.

“Even if I am crippled, I will have no regrets at all!” Zhao Ya replied with an air of valiance.

This was simply how she was. Once she had set her mind on something, no amount of persuasion would make her change her decision.

In fact, thinking back on it, it was precisely due to that attitude of hers that initiated the series of events that eventually led to her becoming Zhang Xuan’s student.

“Jeez, you... Forget it! Just give the matter some good thought, alright?” Seeing how adamant the young lady was on her stance, the Second Elder shook her head before heading out.

Seeing that the two elders were walking over, Zhang Xuan quickly went into the wall and remained completely motionless, not even daring to look at all.

Experts of the First Elder’s caliber possessed a keen sensitivity that allowed them to perceive the presence of others just by sheer instinct. Even if he remained perfectly calm, the First Elder might still be able to sense his gaze.

“Hmm?”

Just as Zhang Xuan had managed to seal his aura completely, the First Elder arrived before the pillar, which he was hidden in, and shot a perplexed look at it.

“First Elder?” the Second Elder called out from behind.

The First Elder shook her head and said, “It’s nothing. It’s just that I have been getting a rather weird vibe today, as if someone is following me!”

“Following you? How could that be? Even that Zhang Wuheng wouldn’t be able to follow you without getting noticed!” The Second Elder chuckled away the First Elder’s concerns.

“That’s true...” The First Elder nodded. Still feeling a little uneasy from the feeling that she had been getting, she instructed, “Just to be safe, I want you to help me conduct a

quick survey of the surrounding area. If you were to notice anything, report to me immediately!”

The intuition of an expert of her caliber was rarely wrong. Since she had felt something, something had to be going on.

Perhaps, someone might really be observing every single one of their actions.

“Very well.” Understanding her concern, the Second Elder nodded lightly before the two of them left together. Returning to the entrance, they took out their tokens and swiped them lightly. The next moment, they vanished from the spot.

Seeing that the two of them had left, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. As he slipped out from the pillar that he was hidden in, he saw Zhao Ya staring dazedly at a book in front of her. Soft whispers escaped from her mouth.

“Teacher... I really miss you...”

1496 Art of Harvesting

This lass!

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan flew over and glanced at the book Zhao Ya was staring at.

To his surprise, it was actually his handwritten manual.

That was the cultivation technique that he had prepared for her while they were still in the Tianxuan Kingdom in order to resolve the afflictions that she was suffering from as a result of her unique constitution. To the current her, this book was of no use anymore.

Nevertheless, the book was still in pristine condition. There was not the slightest hint of a crumple on its pages. Clearly, it had been stored and treated with the utmost care.

Back then, when he gave this manual to her, he had requested that she destroy it after she had memorized the content, but who would have thought that she would have kept it to this day!

As the saying went, ‘a young lady metamorphoses at eighteen’.

Over the past half a year, the young lady had grown taller, and her disposition had become more refined and graceful. The awakening for her Pure Yin Body had also made her much more beautiful than before.

In terms of looks, the only person whom Zhang Xuan knew that could triumph over her was Luo Ruoxin.

It seems like the Glacier Plain Court had indeed treated her fairly well in the past half a year, or else there was no way that she would have been able to awaken her unique constitution to such an extent.

Zhang Xuan proceeded on to assess the young lady with his keen eyes.

But a moment later, a deep frown emerged between his brows.

Even though the young lady was not physically bound, her cultivation seemed to have been restricted by some kind of power. The current her was no different from an ordinary mortal, possessing not the slightest hint of zhenqi.

“Teacher, are you... still doing fine?”

While Zhang Xuan was trying to figure out what was going on with her, he suddenly heard the young lady’s voice once more.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan replied, “I’m doing perfectly fine!”

“Who is it?” Hearing a response to her words, Zhao Ya was alarmed. She quickly leaped to her feet and crossed her arms before her chest, taking up a defensive posture.

“Who else can it be other than me?” Zhang Xuan replied as he gradually revealed his figure.

After being tempered by lightning, his Primordial Spirit had grown so consolidated that he could materialize it if he wanted to let his presence be known. The only issue with it was that he was more than twenty meters tall, reminiscent of a giant.

“Teacher...” Seeing the familiar face and aura of the young man before her, Zhao Ya’s eyes reddened in agitation.

Day after day, the young man had never left her mind. There were countless words that she had bottled up in her mind, vowing to say to the young man when they were finally reunited. Yet, when the moment came, she found her mind going completely blank, rendering her incapable of constructing her sentences.

“Un, it’s me. Tell me, what’s going on over here.” Knowing that this was not the time to be catching up on times, Zhang Xuan asked grimly, “Aren’t you the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court? Why would you be imprisoned here?”

He first had to make sense of what was going on before he could concoct a plan to save her.

“Teacher... is it really you? Wait... d-did you hear what I just said then?” Instead of answering Zhang Xuan’s question, Zhao Ya’s face reddened in embarrassment.

“What?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“It’s... it’s nothing!” Zhao Ya swiftly waved her hand as she sneaked a peek at her teacher’s face. Seeing that the other party did not take the matter to heart, she heaved a sigh of relief.

Falling to her knees, she kowtowed deeply and said, “I know that it’s unfilial to place you in such grave danger, but I really am unable to think of another way to resolve this problem. So, I could only ask of you to save me!”

“Since I’m here, I’ll definitely help you. Tell me, what’s going on?” Zhang Xuan asked.

The reason he was willing to go to the extent of offending the Zhang Clan and the Sanctum of Sages was to save her, but still, he would first have to understand the situation before making his move.

“I... accidentally discovered a secret of the Glacier Plain Court.” Zhao Ya bit on her lips tightly. “My mother is actually the previous court chief of the Glacier Plain Court!”

“Your mother?” Zhang Xuan was taken aback by the abrupt revelation.

How did Zhao Ya’s mother come into the picture?

Zhao Ya was the daughter of the City Lord Zhao Feng of Baiyu City, and she had a butler called Yao Han—Zhang Xuan knew that. But thinking about it, it did seem like he had never heard anything about Zhao Ya’s mother before.

To think that her mother would actually be the court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, a power on par with Tier-1 Sage Clans! How did the court chief of the Glacier Plain Court end up getting together with a minor city lord in somewhere as remote as the Tianxuan Kingdom and even have a daughter together?

“In the Glacier Plain Court, every single generation of court chief must possess the Pure Yin Body, and my mother happens to have it!” Looking at her teacher, Zhao Ya revealed everything that she knew without any hesitation.

“Back then, due to some incident, my mother departed from the Glacier Plain court and sealed her own cultivation, fleeing to an ancient ground where no master teacher exists, Tianxuan Kingdom. It was there that she met my father, and the both of them happened to have many common interests. Love eventually blossomed from their relationship, and they married one another.

“However, while giving birth to me, she failed to rein in her power properly, resulting in a leak in her powers. The Glacier Plain Court swiftly found her, and in order to prevent any harm from coming to me and my father, she willingly surrendered and returned with them.”

“You said that your mother was brought back to the Glacier Plain Court?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

“Yes. Just like me, she’s imprisoned somewhere in the Glacier Plain Court as well. To this day, I have been unable to find her!” Zhao Ya clenched her fists in indignation.

From a very young age, her father had shared many stories about her mother with her, and the bits and pieces of those stories formed an image of a loving and doting mother in her mind. The very idea that her mother was suffering in the Glacier Plain Court left her feeling distressed, but despite her efforts, she had been unable to locate her whereabouts.

“Is it because of that that you were captured here?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even if the previous court chief was Zhao Ya’s mother, that should not have been a reason to imprison Zhao Ya as well.

After all, the Glacier Plain Court was banking on the rise of a court chief to bring them to greater heights. It had not been easy for them to find a person with the Pure Yin Body, so surely, they would not be so foolish as to sever their own hopes!

“That’s not it. The reason I was captured is because I found out about the final step to awakening the Pure Yin Body!” As Zhao Ya spoke, her face turned livid, and her clenched fists began trembling by her sides.

“What is it?” Zhang Xuan asked, slightly bewildered by Zhao Ya’s response.

Considering how Zhao Ya would eventually have to fully awaken the Pure Yin Body before taking over as the court chief, there should not have been any reason for the First Elder and the others to imprison her just because she had found out about it prematurely.

“The Pure Yin Body is a manifestation of the purest yin in the world within the body of a female,” Zhao Ya said. “Even across the entire Master Teacher Continent, it’s rarely seen. As of this moment, the only ones who possess such a constitution are most likely my mother and me. Once fully awakened, the Pure Yin Body will allow one’s cultivation to surge straight up. Regardless of whether it’s battle techniques or cultivation techniques, one will be able to grasp them swiftly with minimal effort.

“However, there’s always an equalizing power in the world. The world will never allow an individual power to grow beyond a certain point, similar to the saying, ‘A lonesome yin never grows; an individual yang never flourishes’!

“The yin and yang in this world don’t exist as separate entities. They are complementary powers, born and destroyed in pairs. Despite the opposing nature of the two forces, they are necessary for the existence of the other...”

Recalling what she had read, Zhao Ya trembled slightly. “So, the final step to awakening the Pure Yin Body is the amalgamation of yin and yang to reconcile the two together!”

“Amalgamation of yin and yang?”

“Un. Other than female disciples practicing yin attribute cultivation techniques, there are also a small handful of male disciples practicing yang cultivation technique,” Zhao Ya replied. “In order to achieve the full awakening of the Pure Yin Body, I’ll have to regard them as mere cauldrons and harvest the yang energy in their bodies!”

“Regarding humans as cauldrons? The Glacier Plain Court actually has such vicious practices?” Zhang Xuan was

astonished.

Regarding a human as a cauldron meant treating them as a tool to harvest energy. Once the victims had been sapped dry, they would wither and pass away. This was exactly the kind of practice that the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters abhorred and forbade. In fact, the reason the soul oracles had been vanquished back then was due to their malevolent arts that allowed for the possession of other cultivators and the forging of cultivators as Soulless Metal Humanoids!

To think that the Glacier Plain Court's final step to awakening the Pure Yin Body would actually be something like that.

It was really too frightening!

“Indeed. I rejected that course of action, and as a result of that, the First Elder ordered for my imprisonment, hoping to force me to change my mind through this!” Zhao Ya aid.

1497 Heaven Sealing Lock

“I see!”

Putting together what he had just heard with the conversation between the First Elder and Zhao Ya, Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

Such an art of harvesting would mean treating living humans as mere tools to further one’s cultivation, and it would lead to the deaths of many innocent individuals.

For someone as prideful and righteous as Zhao Ya, there was no way she could accept such a course of action.

“My mother was also reluctant back then, which was why she eventually chose to seal her cultivation and flee from the Glacier Plain Court,” Zhao Ya said.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

As one of the strongest powers in the Master Teacher Continent, the Glacier Plain Court was bound to possess some means to track down their disciples, not to mention that Zhao Ya’s mother possessed the Pure Yin Body. Once she exerted her strength, the Glacier Plain Court would be able to swiftly pick it up and find her. The only way she would be able to really get away was to seal her own cultivation!

This was similar to how Luo Ruoxin had to seal her own cultivation in order to get away from the Luo Clan.

However, due to the dire situation that he had been in back at the Qiu Wu Palace, she had chosen to release her seal so as to subdue the Skyleaf King and save him. This had led to the Luo Clan finding her whereabouts, and she had been left with no choice but to leave his side.

And shortly after, he had met with Luo Chengxin in the Qingyuan Empire.

“I also think that such a practice is abhorrent. Don’t worry, if you are reluctant to do it, no one will be able to force you into

it. I'll bring you away right now!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand with unquestionable dominance.

So what if this is the Glacier Plain Court?

If my student is reluctant to learn your damned arts, no one will be able to force her into it!

Not even the heavens will be able to make her to do something against her will!

"Teacher..." Feeling the deep concern that her teacher had for her, Zhao Ya's eyes reddened.

Her teacher had been several million li away, but as soon as he received her message, he had immediately rushed over and appeared before her within less than two hours. Such actions spoke much louder than any words ever could.

"Alright, let's leave the folded space first before deciding on the next course of action!" Zhang Xuan said.

He reached out to grab Zhao Ya, intending to pull her up and take her away, but contrary to his expectations, he found his Primordial Spirit being dragged down to the ground instead.

"What's going on?"

Considering how Zhao Ya did not possess any cultivation at the moment, he should have been able to lift her up easily with just a finger. But for some reason, no matter how he tugged and pulled, the young lady remained firmly rooted to the spot, as if she was one with the room.

"Teacher, my zhenqi has been sealed by the Heaven Sealing Lock," Zhao Ya uttered weakly as her face abruptly paled and her breathing hastened.

As if some kind of excruciating pain was assaulting her, her body collapsed weakly to the ground and scrunched up together.

"Your zhenqi has been sealed by the Heaven Sealing Lock?" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in utter horror, and in that instant, he nearly exploded from rage. "You are telling that the First Elder fused the Heaven Sealing Lock with your body in order to seal your meridians?"

He had already heard from Elder Bai previously that it was very likely that the First Elder had used the Heaven Sealing Lock on Zhao Ya, but when he saw that there was nothing binding her body, he had heaved a sigh of relief. He had thought that the First Elder was unwilling to go to that extent in view of their relationship, but who would have thought that the latter would be worse than he thought? That wretched hag actually fused the Heaven Sealing Lock into Zhao Ya's body!

The Heaven Sealing Lock was a torture tool that even Saint 9-dan experts were apprehensive of. It could inflict great pain on a cultivator just by using it to bind their limbs, but to go to the extent of fusing it into the body to seal the meridians... the slightest mistake could have led to the utter destruction of her meridians. Her cultivation would have been completely destroyed, turning her into a cripple!

"Yes, that's right," Zhao Ya replied feebly.

Her body twitched uncontrollably on the ground, and her breathing was growing weaker and weaker. It seemed as if the excruciating pain was going to rob her of her consciousness very soon.

"Damn it! I'll take that seal off you right now!" With an awful look on his face, Zhang Xuan hurriedly rushed forward to touch Zhao Ya's body, intending to use the Library of Heaven's Path in order to uncover the flaws of the Heaven Sealing Lock.

However, when there was no jolt in his head, he realized that he was currently only in his soul form!

While he could collect books into the Library of Heaven's Path through his Primordial Spirit's gaze, due to his incorporeal form, he was unable to truly touch an object, so he was unable to compile a book to analyze Zhao Ya's current condition.

Unless... Zhao Ya could stand up and execute a battle technique!

However, given her current circumstances, that was off the table.

As infuriated as Zhang Xuan was, he knew that rage would be of no use to him at the moment. He quickly released his grip and instructed, “Don’t try to drive your zhenqi, and if possible, don’t exert any strength derived from your cultivation at all!”

Nodding slightly, Zhao Ya quickly halted her flow of energy. Five minutes later, the pain finally receded. By then, her clothes were already soaked with her own sweat.

“I’m fine...” Zhao Ya struggled to her feet weakly.

“The Heaven Seal Lock is fused into your body, sealing your meridians. Not only will you be unable to use your strength, there mustn’t be another external force acting on you either, or else it will immediately trigger the punishment, plunging you into excruciating pain!” Zhang Xuan said.

The First Elder sure was callous.

To disallow her from exerting any energy and preventing anyone from saving her... this was really a dead end. Until the Heaven Seal Lock was removed, there would be nothing he could do.

Knowing that the thing he had to do first was to remove the Heaven Seal Lock, Zhang Xuan said, “Try to execute a punching routine for me!”

“Yes!” Zhao Ya nodded as she executed a light punch.

While she did not use much strength in that punch, it still left cold sweat pouring down from her head, and her face turned pale from exhaustion.

Weng!

Fortunately, the effort was not wasted. A book materialized in Zhang Xuan’s head.

He quickly flipped it open.

“Zhao Ya, the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court... Flaws: 1, the Pure Yin Body has only been awakened to the seventh level. 2, her meridians have been sealed by the Heaven Sealing Lock, preventing her from exerting any strength. 3...”

After browsing through the content of the book, Zhang Xuan's face turned even darker.

The book did mention the Heaven Sealing Lock, but it only depicted Zhao Ya's current condition, not the flaws of the lock.

In other words, the book compiled on Zhao Ya only showed him the flaws regarding her cultivation. Even though the Heaven Sealing Lock was mentioned, it was more of a passing remark, containing no useful information as to how it could be removed at all.

It seemed like even the Library of Heaven's Path did not possess the ability to fathom something beyond direct contact with him!

Unless I'm able to find the exact location of the Heaven Sealing Lock in her body and come into contact with it or... get the First Elder to remove it personally, I won't be able to do anything about it! Zhang Xuan thought as his complexion turned more and more awful.

What the First Elder did was no different from planting a bomb in Zhao Ya's body. She was the only one who could resolve it, and if anyone else touched it, it would immediately blow up!

"Teacher..." Zhao Ya turned her gaze over.

"Don't worry. Since I've said that I'll save you, I'll definitely do it. Follow me," Zhang Xuan said before heading forward, and Zhao Ya quickly followed along.

As long as she did not utilize the strength derived from her cultivation, she would not come under the punishment of the Heaven Sealing Lock. In other words, while she did not possess any cultivation at the moment, she was at least able to walk around like an ordinary mortal.

Soon, they arrived at the entrance, where the First Elder had left from. Zhang Xuan gazed at the formation before him and lightly muttered, "Flaws!".

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

While it was difficult to find the folded space from the outside, finding a way out from the inside was much easier.

After swiftly browsing through the book, Zhang Xuan found a flaw in the formation and focused his soul energy on that single point.

Kacha!

A crack swiftly appeared in the previously stable space, and it swiftly grew larger and larger before forming a huge crevice.

“It’ll mend itself very soon, so we need to leave quickly!” Zhang Xuan instructed before leaving the folded space.

Zhao Ya also quickly followed him.

As soon as the two of them walked out of the folded space, they saw the spatial crevice behind them swiftly closing up and vanishing without a trace.

Seeing that they were finally out of the Chanting Serenity Hall, Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings, and seeing that no one was around, he heaved a sigh of relief.

“We’ll be heading toward Elder Bai’s residence...” Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message over.

1498 Confront the First Elder!

It appeared that the First Elder was extremely confident in her defensive measures, so she did not station too many sentries in the vicinity of the Chanting Serenity Hall—or perhaps, she was afraid that planting sentries in the area would give it away. As such, there were only a couple of normal disciples patrolling the area.

With his exceptionally large Spiritual Perception, Zhang Xuan was able to detect the presence of the few sentries stationed in the area and avoid them in advance.

Without taking too long, they arrived at Elder Bai's residence very soon.

“Is teacher's physical body in here?”

Entering the residence, Zhao Ya scanned her surroundings curiously. Following which, she heard one of the doors creak open, and a middle-aged man with yellowish skin walked out.

“Grandteacher!” Astonished, Zhao Ya quickly bowed deeply to pay her respects.

The other party was none other than her teacher's teacher, Yang Xuan!

“Un!” ‘Yang shi’ nodded.

“Grandteacher, why... are you here? Where's teacher?” Zhao Ya asked in bewilderment.

She had clearly seen her teacher's Primordial Spirit entering the room, but why would it be her grandteacher walking out instead?

“After receiving your message, your teacher came to request for my help,” ‘Yang shi’ explained with a wave of his hand.

“Don't worry, your teacher is in a folded space that I have created, so he'll be fine. He's still a little too weak at the

moment, so he won't be able to deal with the current situation.”

“Thank you, grandteacher!” Seeing that her even her grandteacher had chosen to make a move, Zhao Ya heaved a sigh of relief.

What she was the most afraid of was something happening to her teacher while he was trying to save her. With her grandteacher's strength, they should be safe now.

After becoming the young court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, she had swiftly learned about the true identity of her grandteacher. He was one of the three grand elders of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, as well as one of the strongest experts on the Master Teacher Continent. Even the First Elder would have to bow down to him if she was there.

“Zhang Xuan has already told me about your situation. Follow me, I want to take a look at the Heaven Sealing Lock on you,” Yang shi said with a wave of his hand.

“Yes!” Zhao Ya hurriedly nodded before entering a room.

The two of them sat down, and ‘Yang shi’ placed a finger on Zhao Ya's wrist.

As time passed, the frown on her forehead grew deeper and deeper.

Naturally, this ‘Yang shi’ was none other than Zhang Xuan. The reason he had chosen to conceal his true identity from Zhao Ya was out of fear that she would panic after learning the truth.

Given Zhao Ya's current standing, she likely knew of the true identity of her ‘grandteacher’ already. If she learned that her teacher was actually her grandteacher as well, her state of mind could be rattled. This could become an unstable variable that would potentially expose him when he made use of Yang shi's identity as a chip against the Glacier Plain Court later on.

Even if he wanted to tell the truth to Zhao Ya, it should only be done after they had escaped from the Glacier Plain Court. Otherwise, the slightest mistake on their part could lead to their descent into the abyss.

After all, the man whom he was attempting to impersonate was one of the strongest experts in the world, Yang Xuan! He could not afford to make a single mistake!

In order to use the Library of Heaven's Path through touch, he would have to knock Zhao Ya out first. However, from the looks of it, even if he did so, he would likely get the same results as before. If he truly wanted to find the flaws of the Heaven Sealing Lock and resolve it, he would have to slice apart the Zhao Ya's flesh and touch the lock directly!

Zhang Xuan retracted his hand and asked, "How did the Heaven Sealing Lock get into your body?"

Zhao Ya pondered for a moment before speaking. "The Heaven Sealing Lock is slightly different from the one created by the Blacksmith Guild. It's forged out of the threads produced by the Icy Silkworm. After the elders subdued me, the First Elder had the Icy Silkworm bite my finger and dive into my body. Before I knew it, I was already in my current condition."

After suppressing her, the elders had sealed her powers entirely, rendering her completely helpless. Thus, she could only helplessly watch as the Icy Silkworm crawled its way into her body.

"Icy Silkworm?" A deep frown appeared on Zhang Xuan's glabella. He contemplated for a moment, but he was still unable to fully make sense of the situation, so he said, "Let's try this then. I'll send a surge of zhenqi through your body, and if I am able to locate the Icy Silkworm, I'll try to eliminate it."

He had never heard of the Icy Silkworm in his life before, so he could not say for sure what would work. In any case, he had to give it a try.

"Alright!" Knowing that her grandteacher would not hurt her, Zhao Ya extended her wrist out once more.

With a flick of his finger, Zhang Xuan sent a surge of zhenqi into her meridians.

"Hmm?" Feeling the meridian that had entered her body, Zhao Ya could not help but raise her eyebrows in astonishment.

The quality of the zhenqi that had just entered her body was extremely familiar to her. It was almost identical to that her teacher's, the only differences being that it was even purer, more soothing, and stronger.

Well, Teacher did come from grandteacher's lineage, so it shouldn't be surprising that the nature of their zhenqi is similar to one another... Zhao Ya rationalized with a nod of her head.

Those of the same lineage would likely possess similar constitutions, and if they practiced the same cultivation techniques, the nature of their zhenqi would also be similar.

Soon, after driving his zhenqi through Zhao Ya's body once, Zhang Xuan's face turned even more grim.

The Heaven Sealing Lock created by the Icy Silkworm had turned all of Zhao Ya's meridians and even her dantian into ice! If she attempted to drive her zhenqi, she would be putting herself at risk of shattering her meridians, and the injuries that she would sustain as a result of that could very well claim her life!

Even though he had only sent in a small surge of zhenqi in, and he had made sure to move extremely carefully, he still nearly caused her meridians to rupture. If he attempted to remove the Heaven Sealing Lock forcefully, chances were that Zhao Ya would lose her life before the problem could be resolved.

What a vicious tool... Zhang Xuan could not help but curse the First Elder with all of the expletives that he could think of in his mind.

Who would have thought that the person in charge of a major power would actually use such ruthless means on her fellow people? This was unforgivable!

Suppressing his raging fury, Zhang Xuan asked, "Has the First Elder ever said how the Heaven Sealing Lock can be resolved?"

With his current means, there was nothing he could do to resolve the Heaven Sealing Lock. Even with the Heaven's Path zhenqi, there was nothing he could do.

If the Icy Silkworm had still been alive, he could have tried to poison it to death. However, based on what he had found, it had already fused into her meridians and was shrouded with thick ice. If he attempted to break the ice to get to it, that could potentially cause Zhao Ya's already fragile meridians to collapse entirely.

In other words, he was completely helpless.

"I don't think so. All she said was that she would help me resolve the problem once I took the final step to awaken my Pure Yin Body," Zhao Ya said with a shake of her head.

After pondering for a moment, Zhang Xuan was still unable find a feasible solution. Shaking his head, he said, "It seems like we'll have to ask her in person then!"

The longer the Heaven Sealing Lock remained in Zhao Ya's body, the greater the damage it would cause to her body. They would have to get rid of it as soon as possible.

From the current looks of it, the only one who wielded the ability to resolve Zhao Ya's condition was the First Elder. So, the most direct and effective solution would be to question her and have her reveal the cure to her condition.

Just that...

After what had happened to Zhao Ya's mother, the First Elder must have hardened her heart to take such extreme means. It would not be easy to get her to reveal the cure.

There's no way she will reveal it if I ask her and Zhang Xuan; if things go badly, we might even come to blows. However, it will be different if I confront her as Yang Xuan! Zhang Xuan thought with narrowed eyes.

He was currently assuming the identity of Yang Xuan from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters. Even if the other party was the First Elder of the Glacier Plain Court, she would still have to show some respect!

"Zhao Ya, you should wait in my folded space for the time being. I'll be heading over to meet the First Elder of your Glacier Plain Court!" Zhang Xuan stood up with a fling of his sleeves.

Since he was there to save Zhao Ya, naturally, he would have to resolve her affliction too before taking her away. Since he could not think of any other solution, he could only take a gamble.

If he pulled it off, he might just be able to fool the First Elder and obtain the solution to Zhao Ya's problem.

But if he was discovered... Well, he had no qualms with reducing the Glacier Plain Court to ruins!

1499 Elder Qu of the Master Teacher Pavilion Headquarters

In the conference room of the Glacier Plain Court, on the main seat, the First Elder was looking at a jade token in her palm. There was another elder who was sitting quietly by her side, seemingly patiently waiting for the First Elder to be done.

Hu!

Placing down the jade token, the First Elder turned her gaze toward the elder sitting beside her.

The elder also turned his gaze over and said, “You should understand now, right?”

“Yes, I do!” The First Elder nodded grimly.

“Good. The reason I was sent here was to explain this matter to you in detail. It should be obvious even without me saying it, but nothing can go wrong this time around. This matter concerns the survival of mankind, so no mistakes will be tolerated. Otherwise, not just your Glacier Plain Court, none of us will be able to bear the consequences!” The elder stood up and placed his hands behind his back.

With a slightly uneasy expression on his face, he gazed upward and said, “Success or failure, everything banks on this. I don’t wish to see everything falling apart due to the inability of your Glacier Plain Court!”

“Don’t worry, I have already locked her up in the Chanting Serenity Hall and planted the Heaven Sealing Lock in her body. Most likely, we should be able to make her give in within three days. As long as she awakens her unique constitution, the plan should be able to move on without any problems!” The First Elder stood up and clasped her fist.

“That would best be the case!” The elder nodded. “Alright, I’ll be taking my leave now. I hope to hear good news from you!”

The elder turned around and headed to the door. However, barely after taking two steps, a soft voice suddenly sounded from the doorway. It was not too loud, but it seemed to dive right into one’s eardrums, making it impossible not to hear what was being said.

“Master Teacher Yang Xuan seeks an audience with the First Elder of the Glacier Plain Court!”

“Yang Xuan?” The First Elder narrowed her eyes in astonishment.

Not too far away, the elder also halted his footsteps upon hearing that voice from astonishment. With a voice carrying a hint of disbelief, he muttered, “Why would Grand Elder Yang appear here?”

“Elder Qu, this...” The First Elder hurriedly looked at the elder before her with a look of apprehension.

“Grand Elder Yang has always roamed the lands freely, such that even our deputy pavilion master is unaware of his whereabouts. I’m also not too sure why he would suddenly appear here either. Hurry up and invite him in!” Elder Qu urged.

“Alright!” Knowing the other party’s standing in the Master Teacher Continent, the First Elder dared not keep him waiting. She quickly walked over to the doorway to the conference room and clasped her fist. “First Elder of the Glacier Plain court, You Ruoxin, pays respect to Yang shi!”

Hu!

A moment after those words were spoken, a figure slowly descended from the sky. The speed of his flight was not too fast, but his movements exquisitely avoided all of the dangers from the defensive formations cast around the area. It was as if his eyes could see all imminent dangers, allowing him to avoid them in advance.

You Ruoxin anxiously lowered her head subserviently.

As the person-in-charge of the Glacier Plain Court, she knew full well how formidable the formation that was set up around the conference room was. Yet, it seemed as if it was nothing more than child's play to the other party. He could simply walk straight through it without sounding any warning alarms, making it impossible to guard against him. Without a doubt, the man before her had reached a level far beyond her imagination.

The figure in the sky landed gently on the ground.

The First Elder You Ruoxin carefully raised her head to assess the person standing before her. He had slightly yellowish skin, and his outward appearance was similar to that of a person in his late thirties or early forties. He had exceptionally deep eyes that seemed to conceal all of his emotions and thoughts. It was impossible to gauge the extent of his strength just from the aura he emanated, and even when she attempted to weigh him up through discreetly extending her Spiritual Perception to him, she shockingly found that she could not even perceive his presence at all.

Despite so, You Ruoxin narrowed her eyes and asked, "You aren't Yang shi... Who in the world are you?"

She had never met Yang Xuan in person before, but she had heard some rumors about him and his appearance. From what she knew, Yang Xuan should have been in his fifties with a flowing white beard, and that was completely at odds with the person standing before her.

"I take on many identities as I roam around the world. Do I have to inform you of every single one of them in advance?" 'Yang shi's' face darkened as a powerful aura burst forth from his body.

In this moment, it felt as if the entire conference room would collapse under the pressure of his aura.

"I dare not!" You Ruoxin hurriedly lowered her head fearfully. She quickly turned her gaze toward Elder Qu, only to see the latter slowly walking toward her.

“Grand Elder Yang does assume many different identities as he roams the world, but when he pays a visit to another in his capacity as a master teacher, he would appear with his real face. You aren’t Yang shi, who in the world are you? Do you know the crime of impersonating a grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters?” Elder Qu uttered sharply as he looked straight at ‘Yang shi’.

You Ruoxin might not have met Yang Xuan before, but he had!

But the middle-aged man before him, be it in terms of appearance or aura, was completely different from the Yang shi whom he knew, so how could they be the same person?

If they were really the same person, he would relinquish his eyes!

“Hmm?” Hearing the words spoken by Elder Qu, ‘Yang shi’s’ heart skipped a beat.

The person before him was dressed in a master teacher robe, and pinned on his chest was a master teacher emblem with nine stars glistening on it. The word ‘headquarters’ could be seen at the bottom of his emblem, indicating his identity as a member of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters.

Why would there be a 9-star master teacher from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters in the Glacier Plain Court?

Of course, this ‘Yang shi’ was still Zhang Xuan. After moving Zhao Ya into the Myriad Anthive Nest, he quickly asked Elder Bai for the First Elder’s location, and without bothering to hide his tracks, he had flown right over.

He had thought that with the unique properties of his Heaven’s Path zhenqi and his deep experience in disguising, he would be able to scare the First Elder right from the get go and convince her that he was Yang Xuan. Who could have thought that there would actually be a master teacher from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters around?

Just what kind of bad luck was this?

He had barely started his act, but the tables had already turned against him.

Coming from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, the person before him was bound to have met the real Yang Xuan before. How was he supposed to continue acting?

While Zhang Xuan's heart was beating in trepidation, he did not allow his emotions to show on his face. With a slight flick of his finger, he sent a surge of sword qi right toward Elder Qu.

This surge of sword qi was infused with the essence of the Speed Sword Quintessence. As if slicing right through the fabrics of time, as soon as it escaped the tip of Zhang Xuan's finger, it immediately appeared right before the other party's face,

“Hmm?”

Not expecting the imposter to make a move on him right after having his identity exposed, Elder Qu's face darkened. With a swift flick of his hand, a light barrier appeared on the surface of his skin.

Hu!

Elder Qu thought that the sword qi would collide with his light barrier, but contrary to his expectation, it dissipated upon contact with the light barrier, as if it had never been there in the first place.

The sword qi carried no offensive power at all—the other party was testing him!

Everything had happened so quickly that he had failed to tell that it was just a mere test.

Narrowing his eyes, Elder Qu was about to berate the other party when the fake Yang Xuan before him suddenly frowned. Gazing down on him coldly, the other party sent a telepathic message to him. “Qu Buping, have you resolved the problem of meridian distortion in your Streaming River Art, or have you recovered from the trauma you sustained in the battle against Emperor Baiyu? Otherwise, what gives you the guts to doubt my identity?”

“Ah?”

The words that Elder Qu was just about to speak fell back down his throat, and he froze on the spot.

The Streaming River Art was a cultivation technique that he had created. It allowed a cultivator to drive their zhenqi forth relentlessly, as if a flowing river, granting them immense might. Unfortunately, it had a fatal flaw. The Streaming River Art placed great strain on one's meridians, and if one used it for too long, it could cause one's meridians to become distorted.

This was similar to how if a river current was too strong, it would cause its meanders to distort out of shape.

The cultivation and physical condition of 9-star master teachers were top-notch secrets, and they would never reveal a word about the cultivation problems they were facing to others. Otherwise, should the Otherworldly Demons catch wind of it, it could potentially pose a security threat. Yet, the middle-aged man before him actually knew of his past afflictions and even the trauma that he had sustained in his fight against Emperor Baiyu.

If that was the case, could he really be Yang shi?

But what about his completely different disposition and appearance then? This did not make sense!

While Elder Qu was still trying to make sense of the situation, someone spoke.

“I have recently made a breakthrough in my cultivation, which resulted in my appearance and disposition being vastly different from what it used to be. I don't blame you for failing to recognize me!”

1500 I Have Brought Her Away

“You managed to achieve a breakthrough?” Elder Qu was stunned for a moment before widening his eyes in disbelief.

Ever since Kong shi and his direct disciples disappeared, something seemed to have vanished from the face of the Master Teacher Continent. In fact, in the past ten millenniums, there had not been a single known case of anyone successfully achieving a breakthrough to that realm.

It was for that reason that Yang shi had to roam the world, in search of a fortuitous encounter to take the final step forward.

Could it be that his effort had paid off?

If that was really the case, it would really be a huge blessing to the Master Teacher Pavilion and mankind!

A master teacher of that caliber was bound to have a far deeper understanding of cultivation than the rest of them, and just a simple pointer from him could benefit one immensely. Under his guidance, the prowess of mankind would be brought to a whole new level!

Just that... even if Yang shi had reached the level, he should not have changed to the extent where even he could not recognize him anymore!

“Indeed. I was unable to solve your distorted meridian and trauma in the past, but those no longer pose a problem to me anymore!” Seeing the hesitation in the other party’s eyes, Zhang Xuan decisively pressed on.

At the current moment, what was truly important was not whether the other party believed in his identity or not but to scare him into not daring to make a move first. After all, his goal was just to obtain the key to resolving the Heaven Sealing Lock from the First Elder. Once that was done, he would be able to make his escape right away.

And once he was gone, it would not make any difference whether the other party realized that he was a fake or not.

After all, once he reverted to his original appearance, the other party would not be able to find him anymore.

“They don’t pose a problem to you anymore?” Those words caused a jolt in Elder Qu’s heart. “Do you mean to say that... you have found a way to resolve the issues I am facing?”

“That’s right. The Streaming River Art allows a cultivator to pump their zhenqi through their meridians swiftly, but if a cultivator drives their zhenqi through his meridians with too much force for a prolonged period of time, the impact will injure their foundations and distort their meridians. Once the problem sets in, it is difficult for normal herbs to resolve it. However, if there is a purer surge of zhenqi flowing through one’s body to continuously nourish the meridians, the problem will be resolved once and for all,” Zhang Xuan said lightly.

Due to the limitations in his cultivation and experience, it would be difficult for him to resolve the usual cultivation problems that Elder Qu was facing. However, if it was just regarding the recovery of meridians... that was simply too easy for him!

The Heaven’s Path zhenqi was capable of recovering all damage sustained by the meridians and reverting them back to their initial condition. The problem that Elder Qu was facing was just a mere distortion of the meridians. With a sufficient infusion of Heaven’s Path zhenqi, it should not be too difficult to heal the other party.

Hearing ‘Yang shi’s’ proposed solution to the matter, Elder Qu shook his head helplessly. “I understand that, but where am I to find purer zhenqi?”

He had sought out many 9-star physicians for the condition he was in, and there were a couple of them who had proposed such a solution. However, he was already a 9-star master teacher himself, and in terms of the purity of zhenqi, there was barely anyone in the world who could surpass him. Where was he to find someone whose zhenqi was far purer than his?

“Try this...” Zhang Xuan had been waiting for those words.

With a flick of his finger, a surge of zhenqi shot over.

Perplexed, Elder Qu raised his hand and gathered the surge of zhenqi that Zhang Xuan had shot over on his fingertip. Taking a closer look at the surge of zhenqi, he could not help but narrow his eyes in astonishment.

That surge of zhenqi was rather weak—in terms of prowess, it was only comparable to that of a Phantasmal Space realm cultivator. However, the purity of the surge of zhenqi was spectacular. Just being in contact with it left Elder Qu feeling as if his cells were pulsating in exhilaration. His instincts told him that if he fused this surge of zhenqi into his cells, he would be able to easily resolve his injuries.

Under the nourishment of zhenqi of such purity, his distorted meridians would swiftly revert to normal, and his fighting prowess would soar by leaps and bounds.

Elder Qu could not help but ask, “Where did this surge of zhenqi come from?”

“I refined it. However, I have only figured it out up to Phantasmal Space realm so far. With time, I should be able to further raise its realm, but for the time being, you will just have to make do with it. I still have a few more surges here. You should test the effects first to see if it works on your injuries,” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked a few more surges of zhenqi over.

“Much thanks!” Elder Qu swiftly caught the surges of zhenqi that Zhang Xuan had shot over. Extending his Spiritual Perception to study the surges of zhenqi closely, he was astounded to realize that he could not find the slightest impurity in the zhenqi.

Taking in a deep breath, he tapped his finger on the surges of zhenqi gathered on his fingertip and allowed them to flow freely into his body.

Tzzzzzzz!

As soon as those surges of zhenqi entered Elder Qu’s body and fused together with his distorted meridians, those dried up

meridians swiftly puffed back up as if a sponge taking in water. In just a few moments, the distortions were straightened back up, allowing zhenqi to flow through his meridians unhindered once more.

“This...” Elder Qu’s body trembled in agitation.

If the appearance of the surges of zhenqi had reignited the hope of the recovery of his distorted zhenqi, the confirmation that the surges of zhenqi were indeed able to repair the damage sustained by his body brought him indescribable ecstasy.

While the distortions of the meridians would not affect his strength too much at the start, if the condition persisted, it would gradually cause his cultivation to decline. However, if he could resolve the problem, he would be able to remain in his peak state at all times. Perhaps, he might even have a chance to make a breakthrough in the future!

Clenching his fists tightly, he could not help but reassess the middle-aged man before him once more warily.

In the depths of his heart, he still did not think that the other party was Yang Shi. However, given how the other party was able to see through the underlying traumas that he was suffering from and even resolve them, there was little doubt that the other party was one of the top powerhouses of the Master Teacher Continent!

Even at the very least, the other party had to be an expert of the same caliber as him, if not higher!

Watching as Elder Qu took his zhenqi into his body, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly and said, “Elder Qu, you should be able to trust my words now, right?”

Everything that he had said with Elder Qu earlier was through zhenqi telepathy—even if You Ruoxin was the First Elder of the Glacier Plain Court, she still was not qualified to learn of the condition of a 9-star master teacher from the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters.

After seeing that he had managed to deal with Elder Qu for the time being, he turned his gaze to You Ruoxin and said, “The reason I have paid your Glacier Plain Court a visit this time

around is to ask you for a favor. I ask of you to let my grandstudent off the hook!”

“Grandstudent? Yang shi, please feel to speak of any request that you have!” Seeing that Elder Qu had fallen silent after trading some telepathic messages with the middle-aged man standing before her, You Ruoxin could not help but feel a little nervous on the inside.

She had never met Yang shi before, but as an elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters, there was no way Elder Qu could not possibly fail to recognize Yang shi. So, for the latter to fall silent after trading a few telepathic messages, it was likely that they had touched on some confidential secrets concerning the Master Teacher Pavilion that she was not privy to.

In other words... there was a very good chance that the middle-aged man standing before her was truly Yang shi!

A grand elder of the Master Teacher Pavilion headquarters... Even if someone were to inflate her guts ten times over, she would not dare offend someone of that standing!

Seeing that Elder Qu was not interfering anymore, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a nonchalant but imposing voice, he said, “My grandstudent, Zhao Ya, was once recognized as the young court chief of your Glacier Plain Court. But earlier today, I received a message saying that you have imprisoned her and used the Heaven Sealing Lock to seal her meridians. Thus, I came over intending to plead on her behalf. I ask of the First Elder to free her shackles and return her freedom!”

“Zhao Ya? She’s... Yang shi’s grandstudent?” You Ruoxin nearly leaped up in fright.

Was Zhao Ya not the student of the unaffiliated cultivator ‘Zhang Xuan’? If Zhao Ya was Yang shi’s grandstudent, did that not mean that Zhang Xuan was Yang shi’s direct disciple?

“First Elder!”

In You Ruoxin’s moment of astonishment, a panicked cry sounded. The Second Elder rushed over, and upon seeing that

there were two foreign faces in the conference room, a hint of hesitation flickered across her face. Nevertheless, she still quickly rushed over to the First Elder's side.

“What's wrong?” Seeing the fluster that the Second Elder was in, You Ruoxin could not help but frown deeply.

“Bad news! The Chanting Serenity Hall's formation is still completely intact, but Young Court Chief Zhao Ya... has gone missing!” the Second Elder exclaimed with a pale face.

“You said that Zhao Ya has gone missing?” You Ruoxin narrowed her eyes in horror. Her first thought was to rush over to check on the formation at the Chanting Serenity Hall when a thought came to her mind, and she slowly turned her head toward the middle-aged man in the conference room. “Yang shi...”

Zhang Xuan flung his sleeves back and said impassively, “Indeed. I have brought her away.”