

2001 Killing a Heavenly High Immortal

“Make a bet with me, and we shall see,” Zhang Xuan said.
“Well, even if you refuse my bet and take me away forcefully, there’s nothing I can do. It’s just that I find it ludicrous how a Heavenly High Immortal from the Hall of Gods would actually fear a mere Lesser True Immortal cultivator like me. From the looks of it, it seems like the Hall of Gods isn’t anything impressive!”

“Lesser True Immortal realm?” Hearing those words, the trapped Elder Chou Huo immediately took a closer look, and it was only then that he noticed the change in Zhang Xuan’s cultivation.

This stunned him.

The battle earlier had placed him in such a dangerous position that he did not have the luxury of allowing his mind to wander at all. He never would have thought that Zhang Xuan would manage to achieve a breakthrough so quickly after leaving the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

If the information that they had received was true, Zhang Xuan should only have been at Dimension Shatter realm primary stage when he first entered the sect, but in slightly more than a day, his cultivation had risen all the way up to Lesser True Immortal.

But bro, no matter how I look at you, you seem to be interested in nothing but causing trouble. After tumbling from one mess into another, where in the world did you find the time to cultivate?

Does your cultivation rise just by you breathing?

More importantly... what do you mean by killing the other party with a book? Are you serious about this?

Having lived for over two hundred years, Elder Chou Huo had read several hundred thousand books, but he had never seen a single book that could kill a person!

“There’s no use provoking me,” the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert replied nonchalantly.

“I know that someone as powerful as you won’t fall for my provocation, but you shouldn’t look down on my determination either. If you don’t agree to my terms, I’d rather end my own life than go with you!” Zhang Xuan replied.

“End your own life?” The Heavenly High Immortal expert burst into laughter. “Do you honestly think that you will have an opportunity to do so before me?”

You seem to be blinded by your own arrogance,” Zhang Xuan replied with composed smile. “Didn’t those High Immortal-tier swords disappear before you knew it earlier?”

Those words made the Heavenly High Immortal expert’s eyes narrow in shock.

Indeed. With his strength, there was no need for him to waste his words with Zhang Xuan at all. He could have easily captured Zhang Xuan and dragged him over of the Hall of Gods, but the reason he had yet to make a move thus far was because those High Immortal-tier swords had disappeared way too bizarrely!

Even though he had been observing the scene the whole time, he was still unable to make sense out of what had happened!

As such, he had thought that there might be some stronger power lingering in the area, and he had devoted all of his attention to guarding against it. That was also why he had watched as his subordinates were killed before his eyes without making his move. He feared that if he revealed an opening, that power would devour him in an instant.

The Heavenly High Immortal harrumphed coldly. “I can make a bet with you, but you are to rely only on your own strength. If anyone intervenes at all, I can’t guarantee that I’ll keep my end of the bargain.”

He had gotten a thorough look at the young man's fighting prowess, and no matter what kind of trump card the latter had, it was impossible for the latter to kill him. His only worry was the 'expert' who had made all the swords disappear.

As long as that 'expert' did not appear, there would not be any problem at all.

Of course, even if the 'expert' did appear, the other party might not necessarily be a match for him. In this space, he was the absolute ruler. Unless one's cultivation had reached Semi-Divinity realm, no one would stand a chance against him.

In fact, he would not worry much even if Sect Leader Han of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion appeared before him! "Fine by me." Zhang Xuan nodded.

What he was going to do was, naturally, use the prowess of the golden page.

The reason he had bothered saying so much beforehand was because this folded space was concealed from the heavens, so he had no idea whether that would affect his ability or not.

Furthermore, considering how powerful the Heavenly High Immortal expert was, it was likely that he had many life preservation means. If he noticed the tremendous might of the golden page beforehand and made his escape before the golden page even came close, he might have ended up wasting the golden page for nothing!

That could have ended in a catastrophe, especially since he only had a single golden page with him at the moment. He only had one shot, so he had to do everything he could in order to increase his chances of success.

In any case, if this promise could delay the other party's movements by even a split second, it would still be worth the effort to do so!

"Fine, I'll stand here. Let me see what kind of means you have!" The black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert stood on the spot as he looked at Zhang Xuan nonchalantly.

Despite not moving in the least, in truth, he was driving his zhenqi furiously in order to defend against anything that came

his way. He was convinced that Zhang Xuan was setting this up in order to distract him, and he was prepared to counterattack as soon as the ‘hidden expert’ made his move.

“Here it comes then...”

With a thought, Zhang Xuan used the golden page that had formed earlier when he formally accepted Bai Ruanqing as his direct disciple. The Book of Heaven’s Path immediately shot out from his glabella and appeared above the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert in an instant.

“It’s really a book?” The Heavenly High Immortal expert was slightly taken aback.

He had honestly thought that it was just something ludicrous the other party had come up with on the spot in order to throw him off, but who could have known that it would actually be a real book!

He took a closer look at the book above him, wanting to determine what kind of artifact it was. Yet, to his astonishment, even with his eye of discernment, he was unable to see through its true nature!

He could not feel any energy pulsating from the book, making it seem as if it was an ordinary item. Yet, for some reason, he felt deeply pressured by its presence. It felt like he was standing before an inviolable being that he could not oppose no matter how he struggled.

“This is bad; I have fallen for that fellow’s trap! This isn’t a distraction but the real killing move!” The Heavenly High Immortal expert widened his eyes in realization.

He could not tell whether the book was a Semi-Divinity artifact or not, but one thing was for sure—it was not weak at all.

If the book smashed down on him, even with his current strength, he was not confident that he would be able to withstand it.

“Break!”

Without any hesitation, the Heavenly High Immortal whipped out a sword and charged right toward Zhang Xuan.

No matter what, he had to launch a pre-emptive move in order to protect himself!

Si la!

Due to his tremendous strength, several lacerations immediately appeared around the originally stable space. It felt like the entire folded space was starting to collapse.

“Crush him!” Zhang Xuan willed.

Hu!

The Book of Heaven’s Path swiftly descended from the sky.
Kacha!

It fell squarely on the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert’s head, causing it to burst apart.

Putong!

His corpse fell limply to the ground.

Elder Chou Huo immediately felt the force binding his body loosening, allowing him to move once more. However, the sight that had appeared before him shocked him beyond words. His face was completely pale, and his body simply trembled on the spot.

It would be no exaggeration to say that the Heavenly High Immortal expert wielded strength comparable to even their sect leader, but he had been killed by a single book...

It was a decisive kill, such that the other party could not even retaliate at all.

Elder Chou Huo’s eyes slowly fell on Zhang Xuan once more, but this time, his gaze was filled with deference.

Previously, he had only thought of Zhang Xuan as a junior, but at that very moment, the latter had already become someone equivalent to a peer to him. He silently swore to himself that he would never cross the terrifying young man before him.

“It succeeded!”

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief upon seeing that the Book of Heaven's Path had successfully rid him of his enemy.

He had worried that the golden page would not work properly—after all, the last time he used it was on a mere Dimension Shatter realm cultivator—so he had spent a lot of time trying to negotiate favorable terms that would raise its chances of success. But from the looks of it, there was no need to have done so at all.

The golden page was just as formidable as before!

No matter how powerful the enemy was, he would slay the other party with a single Book of Heaven's Path!

Zhang Xuan quickly flitted up to the deceased Heavenly High Immortal's side and flicked his wrist.

Hu!

The corpse was stowed into his storage ring.

Following which, he did the same for the other three Heavenly True Immortal experts.

Experts of their tier could be said to be walking treasure troves. As long as he could make use of them properly, he would be able to significantly increase the number of trump cards he had.

He did not think much of the matter in the past, but now that he had witnessed the tremendous strength wielded by those of the Hall of Gods, he knew that he had to be careful or else he might really lose his life.

Kacha!

With the death of the Heavenly High Immortal expert, there was no longer anyone to maintain the folded space. As a result, it swiftly collapsed.

The next moment, the bustling commotion of a lively street sounded in Zhang Xuan's ears. When he looked around him, he realized that he had returned to the street just outside the market.

Elder Chou Huo was standing nearby with a dazed look on his face.

After recovering from the earlier shock, Elder Chou Huo anxiously urged, “Elder Zhang, let’s return to the sect...”

That was simply too dangerous!

He had always taken pride in his own strength, but when he was faced with the earlier black-robed figure, he had tasted the helplessness of despair.

Even though the two of them were both Heavenly High Immortals, an unimaginable gap stood in between the two of them.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response to those words.

He did not have any golden pages left, so it was important for him to take caution. If he encountered any experts of the same caliber as the black-robed figure from earlier, he might just meet his end!

Receiving Zhang Xuan’s approval, Elder Chou Huo swiftly wrapped Zhang Xuan in his zhenqi, and the two of them quickly made their way toward the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

There was no guarantee when the Hall of Gods would send more people after them, so it was best for them to leave as soon as possible. As for Bai Ruanqing, she should be safe since she was not the target of the Hall of Gods. They could always inform her of what had happened through a Communication Jade Token afterward.

“Elder Chou Huo, I recall that you have mentioned that those of the Hall of Gods have always been cold-natured. What does that mean?” Zhang Xuan popped a couple Superior Immortal Pills into his mouth as he spoke.

“I don’t really know too much about the Hall of Gods myself, but I once heard Sect Leader Han mentioning that they select their members in the same way gu is bred. Those who eventually join their ranks are the survivors who have gone through countless battles and undergone the cleansing of blood time and time again. The process killed all their emotions, and

the only thing that remains in their minds is the will to accomplish whatever mission they are entrusted with. Aside from that, the concepts of camaraderie and so on don't mean a thing to them," Elder Chou Huo replied.

The Hall of Gods was an incredibly elusive existence on the Forsaken Continent, and this was actually the first time that he had met the members of the Hall of Gods. He did not think much of them when he first heard those stories, but only upon encountering them in person did he realize just what kind of monsters the Hall of Gods was filled with.

Take the Heavenly True Immortal whom Zhang Xuan had stabbed in the rear multiple times earlier. In truth, Zhang Xuan had not been fooling around when he did it back then. The attack was definitely fatal, but the Heavenly True Immortal, despite being caught off guard, had been able to maneuver himself at the last moment to reduce the damage as much as possible. Not only so, his fighting prowess seemed to only grow as he sustained more and more injuries, as if it was impossible to wear him down.

The same went for the one whose arm Zhang Xuan had severed. Losing an arm seemed to have only triggered his true fighting potential.

Only those who had gone through the most hellish of circumstances could possibly display such frightening tenacity in a battle.

"Did the Hall of Gods make a move because I have comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent and feared that my growth would pose a threat to their authority?" Zhang Xuan was a little confused by the situation.

When he first heard of the Hall of Gods, he had thought that the latter was a lofty organization that refused to involve itself with mortal affairs unless a person overstepped their bounds and challenged the gods. However, to dispatch such powerful experts to take his life as soon as they learned of his existence, was that not way beneath their standing?

Another detail that he noticed was that the black-robed figures were instructed to take him back alive, and they seemed to be

deeply fearful of accidentally taking his life. This did not make sense at all! If their goal was just to get rid of a potential threat, would they not have been much better off killing him on the spot?

“This... I’m afraid that I don’t really know, but I believe that to be the primary reason. Otherwise, Sect Leader Han wouldn’t have sent me to protect you around the clock,” Elder Chou Huo replied.

“Those who are aware that I’m the one who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent should only be limited to those among the Elder Council,” Zhang Xuan murmured with a deep frown. “How did the Hall of Gods know that it’s me? Furthermore, given by how quickly they acted, it seems like they were aware that I was in Wuhai City as well.”

This was indeed something that was worth thinking over.

He had checked the background of those present in the Elder Council with the Library of Heaven’s Path, and they were definitely trustworthy.

It was also in the spur of a moment that he had decided to head to the Wuhai City, and he did not give any indications beforehand. Unless he could figure out the truth behind this matter, he would not be able to rest easy.

“Let’s discuss it with Sect Leader Han. He might have some ideas in mind.” Elder Chou Huo was also unable to figure out the answers to those questions, so he could only reply with a shake of his head.

“Bai Ruanqing should still be cultivating in the silent chamber in the Ethereal Hall. I’ll have to trouble you to inform her that I have headed back to the sect,” Zhang Xuan said as he swallowed another two Superior Immortal Pills.

Elder Chou Huo replied with a nod before hastening his speed.

Ten minutes later, they were back at the Elder Council once more.

“You mentioned that the Hall of Gods has already sent assassins after Elder Zhang Xuan?”

Hearing Elder Chou Huo's report, Han Jianqiu's face twisted in shock.

"That's right," Elder Chou Huo replied. "They dispatched a Heavenly High Immortal and three Heavenly True Immortals."

"A Heavenly High Immortal and three Heavenly True Immortals?" Han Jianqiu recoiled in horror. He looked at the two of them with a look of disbelief. "Given that powerful line up, how did the two of you manage to escape from them?"

"It's truly an embarrassment to say this, but I wasn't of much help at all. It was Elder Zhang Xuan who pushed for a breakthrough to the Lesser True Immortal realm at that critical moment, and with the Tongshang Sword you have gifted to him earlier, he slew the three Heavenly True Immortal experts before... before..."

In the midst of his explanation, Elder Chou Huo turned to glance at the young man standing beside him, and all of a sudden, his entire body stiffened on the spot. His eyeballs nearly popped out from sheer shock.

"Y-you... When in the world did you reach the Heavenly True Immortal realm?"

2002 Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula

What Elder Chou Huo said was the truth.

He had followed Zhang Xuan in order to ensure the latter's safety, but of the three Heavenly True Immortals, the latter had individually killed one, impaled the second one that he was fighting with, and diced the last one into pieces.

Even the Heavenly High Immortal expert had been crushed to death by the latter's book.

Thinking back, he really was not of much use.

If there was anything that he had done, it was drawing a portion of the mobs' aggro.

It was also due to the lack of his contribution in the battle that he did not dare complain when the latter took all the drops away as well.

He could not help but wonder how the young man was able to advance his cultivation so quickly that he inadvertently shot a glance over... then he found himself shocked once more. Before he knew it, the young man's cultivation had risen from Lesser True Immortal to Heavenly True Immortal!

"I thought that I was still far too weak, so on the way back, I ate a couple of Immortal Pills and pushed for a couple of breakthroughs," Zhang Xuan explained.

If only he had raised his cultivation to Heavenly High Immortal realm prior to the assault, he would have been able to deal with those three fellows easily even if they had ganged up on him.

In view of his safety, he had kept munching on his Superior Immortal Pills while driving his Heaven's Path Divine Art on the way back. With his accumulation from the earlier battle, it did not take long for him to advance his cultivation all the way to the Heavenly True Immortal realm.

He did not reveal it previously out of fear that there might be spies from the Hall of Gods keeping track of his movements. He would not want to let the enemies know that he was in possession of such a formidable cultivation technique.

Now that he was back at the Elder Council though, he felt that he was finally safe once more, so he did not think that there was any need to conceal his cultivation. Who could have thought that he would have ended up frightening Elder Chou Huo?

“Ate a couple of Immortal Pills... and pushed for a couple of breakthroughs?”

Hearing how simple Zhang Xuan made his breakthroughs sound, Han Jianqiu, Elder He Tian, and the others nearly spurted blood on the spot.

Just a few hours ago, they had been slightly displeased by how playful Zhang Xuan was, choosing to sneak out of the sect instead of focusing on advancing his cultivation. Yet, within the four short hours that he had been out, he had successfully advanced his cultivation to the Heavenly True Immortal realm!

If what they had heard from Elder Lu Yun was true, the young man's cultivation should only have been at Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage a day ago!

What left them feeling even more frenzied was how insignificant the young man was making this accomplishment sound.

If the key to achieving breakthroughs was just to devour Immortal Pills, why isn't anything happening to us?

Han Jianqiu suddenly thought of an even more frightening notion, and he hurriedly said, “No, wait a moment. You mentioned that Elder Zhang Xuan fought off the experts of the Hall of Gods using the Tongshang Sword... Are you saying that he has tamed the sword as well?”

The Tongshang Sword was a treasure that he had acquired a couple of years ago, and he knew just how arrogant it was.

Even he would have to put in a great deal of effort if he wanted to tame it, and it was due to how troubling he thought

the process would be that he had chosen not to do so. How in the world did Zhang Xuan manage to tame the sword when his cultivation had only been at the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm back then?

More importantly... it only took him a few hours to do so!

“Yes. He had already tamed the Tongshang Sword when I saw it earlier,” Elder Chou Huo replied with a bitter smile.

It had been less than a day since he met Zhang Xuan, but with each event that happened, he felt like his confidence was swiftly getting shocked out of him.

Sighing deeply, Elder Chou Huo swiftly went through everything that had happened in detail.

When the elders heard how the Heavenly High Immortal expert had been able to subdue Elder Chou Huo with a mere finger, they were all shocked. Then, when they heard that Zhang Xuan had crushed the powerful Heavenly High Immortal expert with a single book, they were all rendered speechless.

“That book is actually a defensive artifact that my teacher left for me. It can only be used once, so I won’t be able to rely on it again in the future,” Zhang Xuan replied.

He could not possibly talk about the Library of Heaven’s Path, so he could only push everything on to his nonexistent teacher.

In any case, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had no qualms about their disciples coming under the tutelage of other experts as long as they remained loyal to the sect.

Hearing those words, the crowd nodded in realization.

All along, they had been intrigued by how a mere twenty-year-old young man could possess such powerful cultivation and deep comprehension of swordsmanship. When they heard that he actually had a teacher, it left them feeling greatly relieved.

Only under the tutelage of a formidable expert could anyone possibly possess such formidable capabilities at such a young age.

It challenged their very common sense to think that the young man could possibly get so powerful on his own.

“The Hall of Gods has always acted domineeringly, but usually, they can’t even be bothered to make a move on anyone beneath the High Immortal realm. It’s truly unheard of for them to dispatch a Heavenly High Immortal and three Heavenly True Immortals just to deal with a Pseudo Immortal. Not to mention, they even brought out a folded space to seal the surroundings...” Han Jianqiu frowned.

“More importantly, it shouldn’t be possible for the Hall of Gods to know of your identity and whereabouts. No one left the Elder Council after your departure, so it’s impossible for the information to have leaked out. As lofty as the Hall of Gods is, it isn’t omniscient!”

The Elder Council discussed the matter for quite a while, but they were unable to find a convincing explanation. As a result, they could only put their doubts aside for the time being.

“If the Hall of Gods dispatches assassins to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as well, will the sect be able to defend against them?” Zhang Xuan finally posed the critical question.

This was what he was the most concerned about. If the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was no match for the Hall of Gods, there would be no point in him seeking their protection. He would be much better off wandering the lands so that the Hall of Gods would not be able to find him easily.

Han Jianqiu pondered silently for a moment before responding grimly. “I don’t have an answer to your question, but it’s unlikely for what you are thinking of to happen. We are exiles of the Firmament, people who have been cast aside by the gods. We fear the gods, but we won’t let them walk all over us.

“It’s one thing for the Hall of Gods to attempt to assassinate you in the shadows, but if they make a move on the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, they will risk turning the entire Forsaken Continent against them. The Hall of Gods might be powerful, but even it would suffer great casualties if it made an enemy out of the entire Forsaken Continent!

“The Hall of Gods might attempt to send assassins into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion in order to claim your life, but you need not worry about that. Our sect has been reinforced by generations of predecessors, such that even their High Immortals won’t be able to breach our defenses!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. It was great to hear that he was still in safe hands for the time being.

Thinking back on what had happened, Han Jianqiu’s words did make sense. If the Hall of Gods truly did not fear the cultivators of the Forsaken Continent, those black-robed figures would not have bothered pulling him into a folded space before making a move!

“May I know if there are any High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals in our sect other than those in the elders’ library?” Zhang Xuan asked. “I need as many of them as possible. I still have some doubts concerning that realm, so it would be helpful to have as much reference material as possible.”

It was still best for him to grasp his own fate in his own hands. He did not feel too comfortable being too reliant on the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion for his own safety, so he knew that he had to become stronger as quickly as possible.

If he could just reach the High Immortal realm, the Hall of Gods could send as many experts as it wished, and it still would not worry him.

Thus, his priority at hand was to raise his cultivation to the High Immortal realm.

“All of the High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals we have are in the elders’ library,” Han Jianqiu replied with a shake of his head.

High Immortals were beings who stood at the zenith of the Forsaken Continent. Naturally, there were not that many of them around. Given so, it was inevitable that there were even fewer High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals lying around.

The entire sect only has ten High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals?”

“Yes.” Han Jianqiu nodded. “Other than the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula, which only the sect leader is qualified to cultivate, all of the High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals are stored in the library.”

“The Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up. “Do I have the right to view its manual?”

“As one who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, you are next in line to succeed the sect leader position, so there’s no doubt that you are qualified to learn the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula. However, the way that this cultivation technique is passed down is a little peculiar. It doesn’t have a specific cultivation technique manual to it. You’ll have to experience it for yourself in order to learn it. Follow me!” Han Jianqiu said as he rose to his feet and walked out of the Elder Council.

Zhang Xuan quickly followed behind him.

Soon, they were standing before a private chamber. Han Jianqiu took out his Sect Leader Token to release the seal surrounding the chamber before entering.

Within the chamber was a row of statues. With a quick count, there were exactly twelve of them. Each of them was holding a sword, and they were displaying a different sword art.

“Is this the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

“Indeed. The cultivation technique is the key to comprehending the Gods’ Sword Intent, and the secret behind it lies among the statues,” Han Jianqiu replied.

Zhang Xuan slowly assessed the twelve statues one by one. Each of them was standing in a different pose. There was nothing to indicate the flow of zhenqi, making it hard to believe that a cultivation technique was hidden among the statues.

“These twelve statues represent a sword maneuver each. These sword maneuvers are extremely bizarre, defying the very

physical constitution of a human. However, if you move in accordance with these sword maneuvers, your zhenqi will flow on its own, forming a cultivation technique... This cultivation technique is what we call the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula. It's not only the highest High Immortal realm cultivation technique of our sect, it's also the key to reaching the Semi-Divinity realm," Han Jianqiu explained.

Just as Han Jianqiu had said, the sword maneuvers were extremely bizarre. All twelve statues were bent at unbelievable angles that defied the very physical constitution of a human, such that they felt like they were some sort of abstract art instead of sword maneuvers.

"You should start by practicing this first maneuver. The maneuvers will get progressively harder as you continue. Back then, it took me three whole days before I finally mastered the first maneuver," Han Jianqiu said with a bitter smile.

"Three whole days?" Zhang Xuan asked as he looked at the first statue.

The maneuver required one to bend his back backward, and the sword would pierce right above one's head. It was an extremely awkward pose to look at, let alone trying to imitate it.

Yes, and this is the easiest one." Han Jianqiu nodded. "The second maneuver took me ten days, the third one took me a year... All in all, I took fifteen years to master all twelve maneuvers."

Considering that this was the highest cultivation technique left behind by their founder, it was already an amazing feat that he had been able to master it within fifteen years. He could be considered one of the more talented sect leaders in the entire history of the sect.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was only astonished by how long the other party had taken. Fifteen years, that was already three-quarters of his current age!

Noticing the bizarre look on Zhang Xuan's face, Han Jianqiu replied with a dignified harrumph. "You shouldn't

underestimate the difficulty of the cultivation technique. In the entire history of our sect, my feat of mastering all twelve maneuvers within fifteen years ranks me within the top ten sect leaders.”

Only the most talented sword practitioners could become the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion; the very rules of the sect had already determined that. If he did not possess superior capabilities, he would not have been the one in this seat!

Fifteen years did sound like a long time to spend on a single cultivation technique, but considering that it was the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula that they were talking about, it was already a formidable feat.

“Is that so?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully as he whipped out the Tongshang Sword.

He bent his back backward till it was parallel to his body before directing his sword upward. In an instant, he had already perfectly imitated the pose of the first statue.

Han Jianqiu’s eyebrows shot up.

Just a moment ago, he had said that it had taken him three days to master the first move when the other party copied it perfectly right away. This left him with a horrible premonition.

He cleared his throat as he awkwardly attempted to salvage his dignity. “Well, the first maneuver is the easiest of the twelve maneuvers. As someone who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, it’s expected of you to grasp it right away. However, the rest won’t be as easy as this...”

“Really? Let me give it a try.”

Zhang Xuan’s body began bending at an unbelievable angle, and before long, he had already perfectly imitated the second pose as well!

After that, he moved on to the third maneuver, the fourth maneuver, the fifth maneuver...

By the time Han Jianqiu regained his wits, Zhang Xuan was already at the tenth maneuver.

Han Jianqiu was frenzied. He wondered if it was because of people like Zhang Xuan that good cultivators eventually despaired and resorted to unorthodox arts.

He could still argue that Zhang Xuan was able to perform the first maneuver instantly because it was the easiest, but the latter continued and performed the other maneuvers without a hitch as well.

Could it be possible that the young man had practiced the maneuvers before?

But that should have been impossible!

Other than the generations of sect leaders, there was no way anyone else could have entered this private chamber! Huhu!

While Han Jianqiu was still trying to make sense out of this irrational situation, the young man went on to perform the two remaining maneuvers impeccably. As if he was unable to wrap his head around how anyone could spend so long to master these basic maneuvers, the young man turned to him and asked, “Did you really spend fifteen years on this?”

What could Han Jianqiu say in a situation like that?

It was just a moment ago that he had boasted about how he had only spent fifteen years mastering those twelve moves, and he had even gleefully bragged that he was amid the top ten. Yet, the young man in front of him had crushed this achievement of his in just fifteen short breaths.

He suddenly understood why there were recluses in the world. At this very instant, he felt like holing himself up as well!

Just as he was still wondering how he could flee from the current situation before him, the young man’s voice suddenly sounded once more. “Speaking of which, if you have practiced this cultivation technique for fifteen years, haven’t you realized that the sequencing of the maneuvers is actually wrong?”

“Wrong?” Han Jianqiu was stunned.

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Han Jianqiu was perplexed.

The difficulty of the maneuvers increased progressively as one advanced from one maneuver to the next. While he was cultivating the technique himself, he didn't feel awkwardness in the flow of his zhenqi or any discomfort either. More importantly, his cultivation and comprehension of swordsmanship swiftly surged when he cultivated in such a manner too.

Given so, how could the sequence be wrong?

“If you were to swap the first maneuver with the seventh maneuver, the rate which you are able to refine your zhenqi at will be much swifter. If you swap the eighth maneuver with the eleventh maneuver, you will be able to enhance the prowess of your Sword Intent. If you swap the sixth maneuver with the third maneuver, you will be able to sharpen your concentration to unprecedented levels...” Zhang Xuan said as he casually pointed his finger around.

Perplexed, Han Jianqiu quickly cultivated in accordance with the sequencing that Zhang Xuan mentioned.

Boom!

His zhenqi surged forth like a torrential river, swiftly pouring his energy into areas where he was unable to cultivate previously. At the same time, he could feel his conceptualization of swordsmanship deepening significantly with each move, causing his Sword Intent to be far sharper than before. He felt like he could sever the surrounding space with a simple slash of his sword.

“You're right...” Han Jianqiu was stunned.

It had been eighty years since he started cultivating this technique, but not once had it crossed his mind that the sequencing could have been wrong. What was even more

unimaginable to him was that the technique could actually be so much more powerful just by swapping a few of the sequences...

His mastery of swordsmanship, which had stagnated for quite some time now, had finally begun to advance once more.

The advancement was still very minor at the moment, but with time, it would snowball and gather greater momentum. One day, he might even comprehend the Gods' Sword Intent, just like the young man before him!

As he slowly recovered from his shock and excitement, he couldn't stop himself from gazing upon Zhang Xuan with an incredulous look.

He had spent fifteen years to master the twelve maneuvers, but the other party achieved the same within just fifteen breaths... And if that wasn't enough, the other party even managed to discern the flaws in the cultivation technique and listed out some practical steps for further improvement...

Whatever the thing standing before him was, there was no doubt that he wasn't human!

He was still thinking that luck played a huge part in the young man comprehending the Gods' Sword Intent, but given the current evidence laid out before him, the difference between them lay not in their luck but their talents. The young man simply possessed an inconceivably immense talent for swordsmanship!

In fact... there was no saying that the young man might even be able to rival the master of the Ethereal Hall!

Several thousand years ago, the master of the Ethereal Hall appeared out of nowhere. Within several short months, he had already swept across the entire Forsaken Continent and become an undefeatable existence. After which, he even barged into the Hall of Gods all alone and snatched the ■神 (God)_ character from it, thus establishing the Ethereal Hall-

Over the past several thousand years, there had been no one who was able to match the accomplishments of the master of

the Ethereal Hall... However, it seemed like that was just about to change!

At this rate, by the time the Azure Bridge opens once more and the geniuses of the Six Sects gather, our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would surely be able to acquire the best positions... Han Jianqiu thought as excitement flickered in his eyes.

In the past, even though their Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had acquired half a 'ㄗ 申 (God)1 character in the past, they were still unable to unite the Six Sects together due to their limited prowess. However, with Zhang Xuan on their side, they would surely be able to convince the remaining Six Sects to follow their lead!

He excitedly turned to look at Zhang Xuan, only to see the latter standing quietly on the spot, as if he had just received an epiphany.

Knowing that such epiphanies didn't come easily, Han Jianqiu quietly left the private chamber.

Just as Han Jianqiu had guessed, Zhang Xuan had indeed received an epiphany.

It was regrettable that the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula wasn't of much use to him in pushing for a breakthrough to High Immortal realm, but it did allow him to better control his Gods' Sword Intent.

He had used the golden page he had received from accepting Dan Xiaotian as his direct disciple to seal the Gods' Sword Intent that had rushed toward him back then. He had already managed to comprehend the entirety of the Gods' Sword Intent thus far, but due to the limitations of his cultivation and soul, he was still unable to bring out the full prowess of it.

However, when he practiced the twelve maneuvers he had just learned, he found that the Gods' Sword Intent was fusing together with his body.

In other words, the Gods' Sword Intent had truly become a part of him, and he could execute it as and when he liked. It was no longer limited by the strength of his body anymore.

That would explain why Han Jianqiu has mentioned that this cultivation technique is the key to comprehending the Gods' Sword Intent-

Feeling the changes in his body, Zhang Xuan thought.

If he could execute the full prowess of the Gods' Sword Intent when he faced the black-robed figures back then, he would have been able to defeat the Three Heavenly True Immortals even if he hadn't achieved a breakthrough to True Immortal!

That was just how powerful the complete Gods' Sword Intent was!

Gugugugugu!

As the Gods' Sword Intent flowed through his body smoothly, Zhang Xuan could feel his presence becoming sharper and sharper. It felt like his Sword Intent could pierce through the heavens at his will.

Hu!

As Sword Intent flowed relentlessly through Zhang Xuan's body, he felt his zhenqi morphing into a sword, and slowly, his body began to rise into the air.

"This is... flight!" Zhang Xuan's eyes gleamed in agitation.

Due to the increased spatial pressure in the Azure as compared to the Master Teacher Continent, only those who had reached High Immortals were capable of flight.

Zhang Xuan's cultivation was still only at Heavenly True Immortal at the moment, but through the Gods' Sword Intent in his body, he was able to morph his zhenqi into a sword and rise into the air. In terms of speed, he should be able to move even faster than Elder Chou Huo!

With my current means, I should be able to put up a fight against Heavenly High Immortals now! Even if I were to be faced with the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert from the Hall of Gods once more, I wouldn't as helpless as I was anymore...

Feeling the changes in his body, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

While he lamented the fact that he hadn't been able to find any High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals to compile his Heaven's Path Divine Art, nevertheless, these twelve maneuvers granted him a much deeper understanding of the Gods' Sword Intent.

With this, his fighting prowess was pushed to a much greater height!

Given his current fighting prowess, he figured that even Elder Bai Ye wouldn't be a match for him anymore.

Pulling his thoughts away from his cultivation, Zhang Xuan turned to his dantian and asked, "Dongxu Gourd, where are the swords you have swallowed? Did you leave one for me?"

He had this fellow devour his opponents' swords during the battle against the assassins from the Hall of Gods back then, and that had relieved him from much pressure back then... Well, it would have been much better if it hadn't devoured Elder Chou Huo's sword too.

Due to how urgent things were earlier, he didn't have time to enquire about its condition. Since he had some time on his hand now, it would be good to show some care and concern to the new 'legendary beast' he had just tamed.

Upon hearing Zhang Xuan's question, the Dongxu Gourd immediately backed away warily, "Hold it right there. Didn't you promise that you wouldn't make me spit out those swords? No backsies!"

"Of course, do I look like such a dishonorable person to you? I am just worried that you are going to get a tummyache after stuffing yourself so much," Zhang Xuan replied with a perfectly calm smile.

"Oh, that's nothing at all. I'm already done digesting all those swords," the Dongxu Gourd shook its bottom gleefully. "You are already done digesting those swords?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

He quickly took a closer look at the Dongxu Gourd, and the latter was lazing around his dantian, as per usual. It displayed no signs of discomfort, as if assimilating the tremendous

amount of energy from four High Immortal-tier swords was nothing to it at all.

“Forget it!”

Knowing that it was impossible for him to take back the swords the Dongxu Gourd had digested, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he flicked his wrist and took out the Tongshang Sword and several corpses.

They were the Heavenly High Immortal and three Heavenly True Immortals whom he had defeated earlier.

Weng!

As soon as the corpses appeared, a sword suddenly rushed right toward Zhang Xuan’s glabella.

It was the sword of the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal was using back then. It was too shocked by the sight of a book crushing its master to death that it failed to react even while it was being kept into a storage ring. Upon seeing its enemy once more, it immediately made its move to avenge its master.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan calmly raised his hand and pinched his fingers together. With perfect precision, the sword was pincerd right in between his fingers.

He might be helpless against a High Immortal-tier sword back when he was still at Pseudo Immortal realm, but now that he had raised his cultivation to Heavenly True Immortal and completely comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, not even Heavenly High Immortals would necessarily be a match for him. Naturally, dealing with a mere sword was well within his means.

“Y-you ...”

The sword could hardly believe what was happening.

It had only been an hour... How did this fellow become so powerful all of a sudden?

Zhang Xuan couldn’t be bothered to waste its time with the sword. While grabbing the sword with a hand, he swiftly

flicked several points of the sword with his other hand.

Sou sou!

As Sword Intent struck several points of the sword, the sword spirit could barely release a pitiful wail before dissipating into nothing.

Zhang Xuan could tell that the sword spirit was loyal to the Heavenly High Immortal, such that even if he were to tame it, there was a good chance that it might still betray him. He didn't want to be in a position where he would have to guard against his own sword turning against him while being in the midst of an intense battle with others.

In order to avoid trouble, he decided to wipe away the spirit existing within the sword with his Gods' Sword Intent.

"You... That's no different from crippling that sword!" Seeing his actions, the Tongshang Sword shuddered in shock.

Its strength was at the same level as the other sword, but its master was able to dissipate the spirit of the other sword within moments. Didn't this mean that its master wielded the ability to destroy it too?

It could understand why its master would want to destroy the other sword, but a High Immortal-tier sword without a spirit would have its prowess significantly diminished. It would be nothing but a slightly more resilient weapon.

"Don't worry, it isn't crippled for good," Zhang Xuan chuckled softly and he tapped his finger lightly on the sword.

Two breaths later, a crisp buzz reminiscent of the melodious singing of birds sounded from the sword. It sounded like the celebration of a new life.

"The sword has gained another spirit?"

Upon seeing this sight, the Tongshang Sword nearly plummeted from the sky.

It would have usually taken many years of nurturing for a sword to gain spirit. Yet, the young man was able to destroy a spirit with a flick of his finger and reconstruct a new one with another flick...

The Tongshang Sword couldn't help but tremble in fear as it recalled what it had done in the past.

The reason why it dared to act haughtily was because it knew that the sword would be ruined once it was gone. There was no sword practitioner who would willingly destroy their own sword.

But when it saw what Zhang Xuan did, it realized that it was actually expendable...

The heck, this fellow really couldn't be gauged by normal means. He was actually capable of bestowing spirits upon weapons!

In other words, its pride meant nothing at all before the other party. It seemed like it would have to make sure to lie low in the future, or else it wouldn't even know how it died.

At this moment, the Tongshang Sword had really submitted to Zhang Xuan in both body and soul. It dared not to harbor any thoughts of opposing the latter anymore.

“From now on, I shall call you... The Sword!”

Taming the weapon he had just enchanted with ease, Zhang Xuan looked at the weapon in his hand contentedly.

Just like the Tongshang Sword, it was another Heavenly High Immortal-tier weapon.

The Sword?”

The newly enchanted sword nearly plummeted from the sky upon hearing that.

Wasn't this name a little too flippant?

No matter what, it was still a High Immortal-tier sword, one of the strongest existence on the Forsaken Continent- How could it live with such a frivolous name?”

Unable to accept this, the sword protested, “Master, can I... request for another name? I think that the name you have come up with... is a little too casual!”

“Casual? This...” Zhang Xuan frowned a little. “Well, shall I call you Little Swordie instead?”

Putong!

The sword collapsed to the ground in despair and began wailing.

The heck! If this is going to be it, I might as well have just gone with the first name...

2004 Heading to the Starchaser Palace

With the death of their masters, the imprints on the storage rings were released. Thus, Zhang Xuan only had to drip his blood on them in order to tame them.

He quickly browsed through the contents of the storage rings, and soon enough, a bitter smile surfaced on his lips.

He thought that he would be able to gather quite a few treasures given how powerful his opponents were, but to his shock, they were appallingly poor!

Other than the High Immortal-tier swords which the Dongxu Gourd had already swallowed, there were only a couple of recovery pills, edible food, clear water, and a few sets of clean clothes.

Zhang Xuan continued looking through the contents of the storage ring, but there was nothing else that was of value. However, he did find something surprising in them.

This is... the Ethereal Token?

Did the experts of the Hall of Gods use Ethereal Tokens too?

That notion somehow didn't seem too convincing to him. It was hard to picture the lofty experts of the Hall of Gods utilizing a creation of what they presumed as 'inferior beings' of the Forsaken Continent!

Something felt rather bizarre here.

A frown furrowed his forehead as he picked up the Ethereal Token and tapped on it lightly. He slit the tip of his finger and dripped a droplet of blood on the token, intending to tame it and take a look at what was within. However, in the next moment, the Ethereal Token abruptly crumbled into innumerable pieces.

Seeing such a sight, Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed.

The Ethereal Token wasn't like the other artifacts, where it was possible for others to tame it after the original owner died. It was designed in a way such that it would be destroyed if anyone other than the original owner tried to claim possession of it.

In other words, he wouldn't be able to view what was within the Ethereal Token.

He tried maneuvering with the other three Ethereal Tokens, but they ended up disintegrating too. Left with no choice, Zhang Xuan could only give up on it.

“It seems that Kong shi's invention has been acknowledged by even the Hall of Gods...” Zhang Xuan murmured. He looked at the four corpses before him once more and smiled to himself, “Even though there's nothing valuable amongst their possessions, at the very least, their very bodies are already treasures!”

These bodies could be forged into Soulless Metal Humanoids, and that was already an invaluable treasure to him. “Time to get to work then.”

Sitting on the floor, Zhang Xuan drew his soul out of his glabella and began working on the corpses before him.

In the faraway sky of the Azure...

Jiya!

A door shrouded in shadows creaked open, and a black-robed figure rushed in anxiously. He walked right into the center of the dark hall. The area was illuminated by flickering candlelight, and the imposing back of a figure could be vaguely seen at the center of the room.

“Master,” the black-robed figure kneeled onto the floor and greeted subserviently.

“How did it go?” the imposing figure asked without moving in the least.

“It's a failure... The four of them have been wiped out!” the black-robed figure replied with a trembling body.

He dared not believe that it was possible for something to be true when he first received the news. He had to check several times before he could even process the information in his head.

That was a Heavenly High Immortal and three Heavenly True Immortals from the Hall of Gods! To think that they could be killed by a mere Pseudo Immortal...

Such a thing was completely inconceivable to him.

“They are dead?” the imposing figure remarked with a contemplative voice.

There wasn't the slightest surprise to be heard in his voice at all.

He nodded his head slightly as if he had expected such an outcome, and he said, “As expected of a person chosen by the heavens. He is indeed blessed with great luck... just like that man. However, the more that's the case, the more he moves my heart...”

The black-robed figure kept his head lowered in fright as he listened to his master's mutterings. He dared not to interject for fear of incurring his master's wrath.

“Where is he at the moment?”

“Master, he seems to have returned to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion,” the black-robed figure reported.

“Since he is back at the Sword Pavilion, there's no need to make a move on him for the time being,” the imposing figure instructed.

“Yes, master...” the black-robed figure replied subserviently. “If he chooses to never leave the Sword Pavilion, what should we do then?”

“He will have to come out soon,” the imposing figure replied confidently.

“Understood, master. I'll keep a lookout on him and make a move as soon as he leaves the premises,” the black-robed figure replied.

“Un. Dispatch more capable personnel the next time around. Same as before, I need him alive. It doesn’t matter whether he’s injured or not, but I want a breathing man presented before me,” the imposing figure instructed.

“Yes, master!” the black-robed figure replied with a deep bow before backing out of the room.

At the same time, the silhouette of the imposing figure gradually grew dimmer and dimmer before fading amidst the darkness of the room.

There was no way Zhang Xuan could have been aware of the happenings over at the Hall of Gods. At this very moment, he was pinching his glabella in distress as he rose back up to his feet.

“The corpses of the three True Immortal corpses are still within my means to refine, but I’m still a little too lacking to deal with the High Immortal corpse...”

It took only a few moments for him to refine the corpses of the three Heavenly True Immortal experts into Soulless Metal Humanoids, but when it came to the Heavenly High Immortal expert, no matter what he tried, it didn’t seem to work at all.

“My soul is still a little too weak at the moment...” Zhang Xuan shook his head sourly.

He had managed to find cultivation technique manuals to advance his zhenqi cultivation all the way to Heavenly True Immortal realm, but he wasn’t so fortunate when it came to his soul cultivation.

At the very moment, his soul cultivation was still only at Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm. Without the corresponding Heaven’s Path Soul Art, he was unable to make a breakthrough.

As the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion focused mainly on sword art and Sword Intent, there wasn’t any particularly high requirement on one’s soul energy. As such, there weren’t too many books regarding soul cultivation. Due to that, he was still a long way off from compiling his True Immortal realm Heaven’s Path Soul Art.

I should try to find ways to further my soul cultivation... Zhang Xuan thought as he kept the corpse of the Heavenly High Immortal back to his storage ring.

This wasn't just so that he could refine the corpse of the Heavenly High Immortal. It was a requirement for him to achieve a breakthrough to High Immortal as well.

Even though he hadn't managed to gather enough cultivation technique manuals to compile the High Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art yet, through the books he had gathered thus far, he was still able to gain some understanding regarding the cultivation realm.

Similar to his breakthrough to Ancient Sage back then, his soul, physical body, and zhenqi must be in perfect harmony in order for him to successfully reach High Immortal realm!

Such a problem didn't exist for others as they had never cultivated their soul in the first place as their zhenqi cultivation would have taken a far more dominant position. As such, it was much easier for them to harmonize their souls together with their zhenqi cultivation.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan would need to establish an equilibrium between his soul cultivation and zhenqi cultivation in order to achieve a breakthrough, and that could only be done by raising his soul cultivation up to par as well...

Thus, the most urgent matter at hand for him was to find soul cultivation techniques!

With such thoughts in mind, he walked out of the private chamber.

Since he had already mastered the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula and fully grasped the Gods' Sword Intent, there wasn't much reason for him to remain here anymore.

Han Jianqiu was standing outside of the private chamber when Zhang Xuan came out, and he hurriedly asked with a smile, "How is it?"

"It's still alright... Sect Leader Han, may I know which of the Six Sects specialize in soul arts?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before asking.

He had already browsed through all of the books in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and honestly, he bore no hopes that he could gather sufficient True Immortal realm soul cultivation techniques here. As most cultivators on the Forsaken Continent still focused on zhenqi cultivation, unless he were to find a sect that specialized in soul art, otherwise it would really be terribly difficult for him to find the necessary books to advance his soul cultivation.

“This...”

Not quite comprehending the rationale behind Zhang Xuan’s question, Han Jianqiu replied contemplatively, “If I have to name the power among the Six Sects that is the most skilled in soul arts, it would definitely be no other than the Starchaser Palace. They are capable of communicating with the gods, and they are even able to make use of tributes to allow gods to descend upon lower dimensions. I can’t think of any other power that is more skilled in the field of soul arts other than them.”

“Starchaser Palace?” Zhang Xuan nodded quietly.

He had heard the name of this sect far too many times in the past.

“Each of the Six Sects has its own field of specialty. Unlike the rest of us, the members of the Starchaser Palace aren’t exiles of the God Tribe but the indigenous population of this land. They are blessed with powerful souls at birth, so their field of specialty naturally gravitated toward soul arts.

“For our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, as you can see, we are more skilled in the field of sword, but in contrast, we are much lacking in the development of our souls. The Myriad Beast Hall, just as its name suggests, is proficient in the art of taming beasts. Every single one of their core disciples has at least a powerful beast as their companion, so their fighting prowess really isn’t to be underestimated.

“The Sevenstar Pavilion is the number one business on the Forsaken Continent. It acquires and sells all kinds of artifacts through its vast channels that spread across the entire continent. In terms of fighting prowess, it’s definitely unable

to match up to the other five sects, but its vast wealth is more than enough to prop it within the ranks of the Six Sects.

The Blackmirror Citadel specializes in the forging of weaponry and artifacts. Your Tongshang Sword is one of their masterpieces. Last but not least is the Evanescent Immortal Sect. They reside in the northernmost sea, and their disciples are incredibly skilled in movement techniques.”

Han Jianqiu quickly explained the backgrounds of the Six Sects in the Azure.

“I see,” Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

He had heard about the Six Sects quite a few times, and they were frequently mentioned in books as well. However, it was much more insightful to have someone who was knowledgeable about the Azure explaining it to him directly.

You mentioned that the members of the Starchaser Palace are from the indigenous population of this land and not exiles of the God Tribe. May I know what that means?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Most of the matters that he had gotten himself involved with recently somehow ended up being related to the Starchaser Palace in one way or another, and that had made him deeply interested in this power.

“As you might know, most of those living on the Forsaken Continent are people who have been exiled from the God Tribe. However, this piece of land wasn’t barren prior to our arrival. Those people who have been living here even before us are known as the indigenous population. The Starchaser Palace is a power formed by the indigenous population, and the source of their strength originates from their superior souls that allow them to communicate with even the gods,” Han Jianqiu explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

“Are you intending to learn soul arts?” Han Jianqiu asked.

“That’s indeed what I have in mind at the moment,” Zhang Xuan nodded. “I would like to make a trip over to the Starchaser Palace to take a look.”

“This...” Han Jianqiu frowned. “It’s a vast distance between the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and the Starchaser Palace. Even if you were to ride on an immortal beast, it would take you ten days at the very least to arrive there... Considering that you have already caught the eye of the Hall of Gods, and judging from how hostile the Starchaser Palace is toward outsiders, I don’t advise you to make this journey.”

Zhang Xuan nodded with a deep sigh.

He had also thought of these factors as well. Considering that it was an organization made solely out of the indigenous population, it wasn’t too hard to deduce that they weren’t too friendly toward the exiles who had claimed possession of their lands too.

It would be hard for him to convince them to allow him to access their repository of soul cultivation technique manuals.

Furthermore, it was very likely that the Hall of Gods was keeping a lookout on his movements, so leaving the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion at this juncture was an extremely dangerous move.

However, if he didn’t make this trip, he would never be able to advance his soul cultivation and eventually achieve a breakthrough to High Immortal realm!

It was a risky move, but he viewed it to be necessary as well. Wasting any time would just be giving the Hall of Gods more time to prepare itself, thus placing him in a worse position.

Besides, the Godblood Rock he had seen back at the Wuhai Market could very well be related to Luo Ruoxin. No matter what, he had to make a trip over to the Starchaser Palace to investigate the matter too.

As for the dangers, he was indeed a bit apprehensive at the notion of having to face the experts of the Hall of Gods. Without a doubt, he wasn’t a match for them at the moment. However, as long as he disguised himself well and made sure not to expose his Gods’ Sword Intent, it shouldn’t be too easy for the Hall of Gods to find him either.

“If you insist on heading to the Starchaser Palace, allow me to go with you then. While Du Qingyuan isn’t an easy person to deal with, I think I should at least be able to convince her to give you leeway to study their soul arts...” Han Jianqiu proposed.

With his Semi-Divinity realm cultivation and superior swordsmanship, even if he was unable to subdue the experts of the Hall of Gods, he should still at least be able to buy some time for Zhang Xuan to escape in dire situations.

However, Zhang Xuan shook his head and said, “It’s fine, I’ll head there alone.”

If Han Jianqiu were to follow him, the chances that they would be exposed would be much higher. He felt that he would be in a much safer position sneaking over discreetly.

More importantly, he was intending to look into the matter concerning the Godblood Rock and Luo Ruoxin. At least for the time being, he didn’t want too many people to know about it.

2005 All Hail Zhang Xuan

“It’s too dangerous!” Han Jianqiu exclaimed anxiously.

In response to Han Jianqiu’s worry, Zhang Xuan replied, “I am someone who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. Just like you have mentioned many times before, it’s only a matter of time before I become the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. How can I mature if I were to constantly remain under your protection? A sword practitioner should have the tenacity of a raging bull, charging down adversities without any hesitation. Fear would only fill my swordsmanship with hesitation.”

“But even so...”

Han Jianqiu wanted to protest, but he knew that there was some sense in what Zhang Xuan was saying.

It was often in times of danger that cultivators matured and rose to greater heights. Without facing adversities and putting one’s swordsmanship to the test, it was impossible for one to reach the peak.

It was not to say that being careful wasn’t important, but things that had to be done must be accomplished with gusto and spirit. Once a sword practitioner lost his decisiveness, his swordsmanship would only become dull and conventional.

There were such cases in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion too. A thousand years ago, there was a sect leader whose swordsmanship had reached an unsurpassable level, such that he had no rivals in the world. However, a small incident caused him to accidentally harm his closest friend, and under great self-reproach, he ended up doubting his own path. This seed of doubt swiftly grew, wavering his faith in the sword. Eventually, his very Sword Intent collapsed, resulting in the swift regression of his cultivation.

Eventually, he died a humble man.

There were bound to be many regrets and difficulties in life, but learning how to overcome them was the way how one could mature and grow. If someone who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent were to falter in the face of danger, he would never become a great person.

Protecting someone didn't mean sheltering him from all dangers in the world. It was to provide him with the necessary conditions required for him to mature and eventually become independent in the world

"I understand. I'll lend you the swiftest aerial immortal beast in our sect then," Han Jianqiu was still deeply apprehensive, but he knew that this was something he would just have to learn how to cope with.

"There's no need for that. That would be too eye-catching," Zhang Xuan replied. He contemplated for a brief moment before asking, "Are these any aerial immortal beasts residing around the area? I think I'll try to tame one myself."

He didn't know where the experts of the Hall of Gods were hiding, but riding an aerial immortal beast of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would simply be too eye-catching. That would be no different from declaring to all of them that he was leaving the safe grounds of the sect.

Since that was the case, he might as well discreetly leave and tame an aerial immortal beast while he was at it. That shouldn't hinder his journey by too much.

"You wish to tame an aerial immortal beast yourself?" Han Jianqiu was stunned. "Immortal beasts are known to be extremely arrogant, and taming them often takes a very long time. It isn't as easy as you think it out to be."

The aerial immortal beasts that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were rearing were all bought over from the Myriad Beasts Hall. Their members were completely focused on furthering their swordsmanship that practically none of them knew anything about beast taming at all.

Nevertheless, they were still aware of the difficulties in attempting to tame the immortal beasts.

Even the disciples of the Myriad Beasts Hall, who devoted their lives to learning to master their craft of beast taming, would take an incredibly long time in order to tame even a single immortal beast!

“I understand. I’m just intending on giving it a try,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

“This... I see that you have already made your mind. Since that’s the case, I won’t stop you either. This is a Protective Jade Token I have forged. In times of danger, you can infuse your zhenqi into it, and it’ll form a defensive light barrier around you. It will protect you from a single decisive strike by a Semi-Divinity realm expert.”

Seeing that Zhang Xuan’s mind was made up, Han Jianqiu shook his head helplessly before passing a jade token over. “Thank you,” Zhang Xuan replied as he accepted the Protective Jade Token.

“Regarding the aerial immortal beast you mentioned earlier, on the Ascendant Cloud Mountain roughly ten thousand li away from here, there are several High Immortal and True Immortal realm beasts... The Myriad Beasts Hall has sent their members over to tame them several times, but none of them have succeeded to date. You have to take caution if you really wish to head there!” Han Jianqiu advised.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

He moved on to clarify the location of the Starchaser Palace and enquire a few more questions, and once he received all the answers he needed, he quickly headed over to Dan Xiaotian’s residence.

By this moment, Bai Ruanqing had already received a message from Elder Bai Ye and returned back from Wuhai City. “Xiaotian, I have taken Ruanqing in as my direct disciple. From this day onward, she’ll be your senior.”

“Paying respects to Senior!” Dan Xiaotian clasped his wrist and greeted Bai Ruanqing.

“These are the cultivation techniques and sword arts you will be practicing in the future. Feel free to pose any doubts you

have,” Zhang Xuan said as he passed two jade tokens over to them with a flick of his wrist.

Embedded within the jade tokens were the cultivation techniques and some pointers regarding the direction they should focus on in the future.

Dan Xiaotian and Bai Ruanqing quickly immersed their consciousness into the jade token to take a look, and soon, they found themselves completely engrossed with what they were reading.

The cultivation technique and sword art recorded within the jade token truly an ingenious work. As long as they practiced it seriously, they would surely be able to advance their cultivation swiftly.

It didn't take them long to finish going through everything in the jade token, and they began posing the uncertainties they harbored in their minds.

Zhang Xuan answered their doubts one after another patiently.

After which, he swiftly entered the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's Ethereal Hall and purchased two bottles of Standard Immortal Pills and Superior Immortal Pills. Passing one of each to his two direct disciples, he said, “These are the Immortal Pills that the two of you will require for your cultivation. I hope that you'll be able to meet my expectations the next time we meet!”

By the time he finished arranging future plans for his direct disciples, dawn was already around the corner.

Before he knew it, he had already spent two days in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. That was quite a long period of time.

Fortunately, the time he had spent here had been quite fruitful as well. He managed to advance his cultivation to Heavenly True Immortal realm, and he had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent as well. At the same time, he tamed two High Immortal-tier weapons and refined three Heavenly True Immortal realm Soulless Metal Humanoids...

All in all, he had become much more powerful than before, and he was no longer completely helpless even against the top echelons of the Forsaken Continent anymore.

“We’ll not let down teacher’s expectations!”

Bai Ruanqing and Dan Xiaotian kowtowed deeply with reddened eyes.

Watching this sight, Zhang Xuan nodded his head in satisfaction.

His journey in the Azure was destined to be a short one, especially since his primary goal was to find Luo Ruoxin. It was not a part of his plan to take in any direct disciple at all, but he didn’t regret his decision.

Dan Xiaotian and Bai Ruanqing had fine youths with resilient characters, and he was very satisfied with them.

It was just a pity that he couldn’t bring them around like Zhao Ya and the others and teach them carefully. They could only rely on themselves in the future.

“Cao Chengli, I want you to take care of Xiaotian and Ruanqing after I leave. These are your cultivation techniques and pills. Stop lusting over women all the time and focus more on your concentration. Instead of hearing you talk about your sexual exploits and how you have conquered a hundred flowers or something, I hope to see substantial improvements in your cultivation the next time we meet. Is that understood?” Zhang Xuan called the bandit Cao Chengli over and lectured him.

“Cough cough... Young Master, I have actually conquered my thousandth flower already!” Cao Chengli replied with an awkward scratch of his head. Then, he peeked at Zhang Xuan curiously and asked meekly, “Just out of sheer curiosity, Young Master, but how many flowers have you conquered at the moment...”

Those words immediately turned Zhang Xuan’s face utterly black. This fellow sure was getting ahead of himself!

“I heard that you have been hopping across the doorsill recently? Just look at what is becoming of your manners! If I

were to ever find out that you have been conducting yourself in such a ridiculous manner, you can be certain that I'll break your darned legs!"

"I can't hop across the doorsill either?" Cao Chengli was appalled.

The left leg was a no-go, and the right leg was a no-go too... And now, he couldn't even hop across either! Was the Young Master thinking of keeping him out of the residence or confining him inside the residence for life?

Leaving Cao Chengli to reflect on his own wrongdoings, Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly once more before leaving the residence.

By the time the sun started rising by the horizon, he had already left the mountain gate, disappearing completely amidst the vast wilderness.

A moment after he disappeared, two elders suddenly appeared in midair. They looked at one another with utterly confused looks on their faces.

They were no other than Elder He Tian and Elder Chou Huo.

Han Jianqiu did permit Zhang Xuan to leave on his own, but eventually, he found himself unable to leave the latter to be. It was the safety of their future sect leader they were talking about here, nothing must go wrong!

Thus, as soon as Zhang Xuan left, he immediately arranged for the two elders to follow Zhang Xuan closely and protect him from the shadows.

Who could have thought that they would lose Zhang Xuan as soon as they left the sect...

"Quick, we have to find him!"

The two of them combed the area frantically in search of the young man, but the entire area was completely empty. There was no sight of Zhang Xuan to be seen at all.

Four hours later, the two of them had no choice but to return to the Elder Council awkwardly to report on their failure.

To think that two Heavenly High Immortals like them would lose sight of a Heavenly True Immortal... They had no idea how they could face the sect leader like that!

“You lost him?”

...

Han Jianqiu seemed to have guessed what had happened upon seeing their figures, thus sparing them from the agony of having to explain their own failure.

“This...”

Elder He Tian and Elder Chou Huo dared not to raise their heads.

“He knew that I would send the two of you to follow him, so he made countermeasures in advance...” Han Jianqiu sighed helplessly.

“He knew that we were following him?”

The two elders raised their heads simultaneously.

“This is the message he has left for the two of you,” Han Jianqiu said as he flicked two jade tokens into the hands of the two elders.

The two elders quickly infused their zhenqi into the jade token, and soon, Zhang Xuan’s voice sounded in the air, “Elder He and Elder Chou, there’s no need for you two to follow me. I’m capable of protecting myself. This is a sword art I have created for the two of you after analyzing the flaws in your swordsmanship. As long as you cultivate according to it, you should be able to bring your mastery of swordsmanship to greater heights...”

“This...”

They quickly peered into the contents of the jade token, and in the next moment, the two of them were shocked speechless.

The sword art in the jade token happened to resolve all of the flaws in their swordsmanship. As long as they practiced this technique diligently, they would be able to reach a higher level

in their mastery. In fact, it might even prop their cultivation to higher grounds even!

“H-how did you see through this?”

The two of them widened their eyes in disbelief.

It was only common sense for a sword practitioner to keep the flaws of his swordsmanship to himself. Such a thing was not something one could reveal even to one’s closest kin. Yet, all it took was a single duel for the young man to uncover the entirety of their flaws and figure out a feasible method to correct them...

They had known all this while that the sword practitioner who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent was bound to be exceptional, but this was way beyond their imagination!

One must know that every single move in a swordsmanship was like a gear in a complete system. Even if one were to become aware of a problem in this single gear, altering it haphazardly could cause even more trouble in the entire system instead.

It was for this reason that they dared not to correct their flaws despite being aware of the problems they posed. It was not that they didn’t want to do so but that they were unable to do so!

Yet, such a feat was achieved impeccably by the young man...

“How can we ever hope to repay this favor?”

The eyes of the two elders reddened in agitation.

They were intending on protecting the young man, but not only did the young man not need their help, he even gifted them with such a huge present. Words could hardly describe their current feelings.

“It isn’t just the both of you. Every single one of us received something similar too...” Han Jianqiu said as he looked out of the Elder Council with a deep look in his eyes.

It felt as if the young man was a deity who had descended upon them, bestowing them with his blessings before vanishing without a trace.

Elder He Tian and Elder Chou Huo looked around the room, and it was only then did they realize that the sect leader and the other elders had a jade token in their hands as well. Most likely, these jade tokens contained their flaws and the ways to resolve the issue.

“Cultivate well. Don’t let down his expectations of you!” Han Jianqiu said as he stood up. “Given Zhang Xuan’s capabilities, I believe that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would only soar to greater heights under his leadership.”

“Indeed!”

The others in the room nodded their heads in agitation.

It turned out that the appearance of a practitioner who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent wasn’t just a blessing to the sect but its individual members as well... As long as they could internalize Zhang Xuan’s teachings, they could pass the knowledge down to the disciples as well, and the fighting prowess of the sect would soar swiftly.

Just thinking about the matter left every one of them trembling in excitement.

A talented genius could ensure a sect’s prosperity for a generation, but a talented teacher could ensure the prosperity of the sect for generations to come!

“I have made up my mind!” Han Jianqiu suddenly declared with conviction.

As if knowing what was on Han Jianqiu’s mind, Elder He Tian asked in astonishment, “Sect Leader Han, are you certain

“Absolutely so,” Han Jianqiu replied. “I was still worried about his boastful temperament, so I thought that there’s a need to temper his character a little more before entrusting the sect to him. However, the fact that he’s willing to impart his teaching unreservedly to us shows that his mind is already in the right place. I believe that he’s ready!”

After saying those words, Han Jianqiu took out the token which represented his identity as the sect leader and held it in front of him.

His deep voice echoed loudly across the entire Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“From this day forth, Zhang Xuan shall be the new sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

2006 Huh? Who Is Zhang Xuan?

In the Core Disciple Sector of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

A young man was charging forward furiously with a sword in his hand when he suddenly released his grip, causing his sword to fly forth with astonishing swiftness. It pierced right into the bark of an old tree a far distance away.

“Senior He, are you practicing her techniques?”

A young man asked excitedly as he made his way over.

If Bai Ruanqing was here, she would have recognized the two people standing here. They were no other than He Jingxuan, the first ranker of the core disciples, and Hu Chen, the fourth ranker.

After the battle with Bai Ruanqing, He Jingxuan had been studying the two moves that he had lost to, and it was only till now that he finally made some progress.

“I must say that these two moves are true works of ingenuity. I am completely awed by just how beautiful and elegant such a simple move could actually be...” He Jingxuan sighed in amazement.

When he first encountered it, he thought that it was nothing more than a simple sword toss. But the more he tried to study it, the more fearsome he realized it was.

It was as if that single sword toss harnessed the secrets hidden in the crux of swordsmanship. He simulated many different scenarios in his head, but no matter what he did, he wasn't able to overcome that sword toss at all.

It was as if that single sword toss had collapsed every single possibility that lay ahead of him, sealing his fate to certain doom!

“If that wasn’t the case, we wouldn’t have all lost to her...”
Hu Chen replied gloomily.

Given the current circumstances, there was no way they couldn’t acknowledge Bai Ruanqing’s strength... But this only served to deepen their indignation. After all, it felt like Bai Ruanqing had nothing other than those two moves at all!

“Did you manage to find out who she learned those two moves from?” He Jingxuan asked.

“I have narrowed down the possibilities, and my guess is that she has learned them from ‘I Am Low Profile’, the person who has conquered the Inner Disciple Sector not too long ago!” Hu Chen replied.

“It’s him?” He Jingxuan frowned. “If I’m not mistaken, isn’t his cultivation only at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation?”

“He should have achieved a breakthrough to Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm not too long ago. In fact, based on what I have gathered thus far, it seems like ‘I Am Very Handsome’ who has defeated all of us back then is very likely to be him...” Hu Chen replied.

He was just about to move on to explain the rationale behind his deduction when a deafening voice echoed across the entire mountain range.

“From this day forth, Zhang Xuan shall be the new sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

“That’s the voice of our sect leader!”

“But what is it that he’s saying? Zhang Xuan will be our new sect leader? Who the hell is Zhang Xuan?”

He Jingxuan and Hu Chen were stunned.

It was not uncommon for an incumbent sect leader to step down and pass his position on to someone else. However, most of the time, the person to inherit the position would be an esteemed elder or someone deeply respected within the sect... But Zhang Xuan? Where did this fellow even come from?

Just as the two of them were wondering what was going on, Han Jianqiu's voice continued sounding on.

"I know that the name 'Zhang Xuan' is probably unfamiliar to most of you. He is both 'I Am Low Profile' and 'I Am Very Handsome', the person who has single-handedly defeated the Inner Disciple Sector and Core Disciple Sector within a single day!"

"I Am Low Profile?" He Jingxuan was stunned. "Didn't he just achieve a breakthrough to Pseudo Immortal realm not too long ago?"

It was unthinkable for a Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm to become the leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! One must know that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was one of the Six Sects, and it wielded more than enough power to sway the fate of the Forsaken Continent.

This was ridiculous!

"Zhang Xuan has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent. Even though his cultivation has only reached Heavenly True Immortal, with his superior might in swordsmanship, he has managed to slay a Heavenly High Immortal and three Heavenly True Immortals in succession. In the same cultivation realm, he possesses the strength to subdue the combined prowess of me and four other elders..." Han Jianqiu carried on to justify the rationale behind his decision.

"Wait a moment, he's at Heavenly True Immortal realm?"

"Did I just hear that he has slain a Heavenly High Immortal?"

"He actually managed to defeat Sect Leader Han and four other elders?"

He Jingxuan and Hu Chen stared at one another with widened eyes.

That fellow was actually that powerful? Were they really the same person?

Considering how that fellow was only at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation a day ago, it was already an incredible feat that he was able to reach Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm

within the span of a single day... So, what in the freaking world did Sect Leader Han mean by 'his cultivation has only reached Heavenly True Immortal'?

Furthermore... slaying a Heavenly High Immortal? How in the world was that even possible?

"The reason why I am saying all of this is to tell you all that it's out of my own volition that I chose to pass the role down to him. I hope that you'll support him as your sect leader and push our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to greater heights!"

After which, the voice gradually faded away.

Hu Chen looked at He Jingxuan in disbelief.

"I guess we should listen to Sect Leader Han's orders. From this day onward, our sect leader will be none other than Zhang Xuan!"

"But... We don't even know what Sect Leader Zhang looks like, or even how old he is!"

He Jingxuan and Hu Chen were deeply perplexed as to what they should make of the situation before them.

Even if you want us to follow this new sect leader, you should at least tell us what he looks like?

You aren't even providing us any information about him at all, so what do you expect to do?

In the Inner Disciple Sector...

Cao Chengli was currently seated before the entrance of the residence, studying the doorsill intensely.

I can't use my left leg, I can't use my right leg, and I can't hop either... It seems like I can only crawl in and out then... Cao Chengli shook his head helplessly.

At the moment, however, Han Jianqiu's voice sounded in the air.

"Our Young Master has become the leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, one of the Six Sects?" Cao Chengli toppled backward in shock.

He shook his head vehemently, as if trying to accept the information he had just received.

He knew from the very start, back when they were still at Xuanjiang City, that the Young Master was a formidable person, but he would have never thought that the Young Master would actually be this amazing of a figure!

It was just two days since they had arrived at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but he had already risen from the follower of an inner disciple to the leader of the entire sect...

How in the world did he even climb through the ranks so quickly?

The cultivating Bai Ruanqing and Dan Xiaotian were taken aback by what they had just heard as well. Slowly, their eyes began blazing with fiery passion.

Their teacher had become the leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

As his direct disciples, they couldn't afford to sully his reputation.

Thus, they had to work harder than ever!

The same sight was happening across the entire Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

In this very moment, every single disciple and elder etched a single name to their mind... Zhang Xuan!

This young man had appeared from nowhere, but within a short span of two days, he advanced from an insignificant figure whom no one knew about to become the esteemed leader of the sect!

There was probably no one in the world who had climbed to the top of the corporate ladder as quickly as he did!

“Elder Han, is it really wise to make such an announcement? Such a conspicuous move would only make the Hall of Gods more wary of Sect Leader Zhang!” Elder He Tian asked with a frown.

Since Han Jianqiu had stepped down as the sect leader, he was automatically demoted to the position of a core elder.

They had been trying their best to conceal Zhang Xuan's identity all this while so as to protect him from the Hall of Gods, but Han Jianqiu actually announced the matter publicly all of a sudden...

Was it really fine to do this?

"Elder He, the Hall of Gods has already made their move. It's too late for us to be trying to hide anything anymore.

Since that's the case, we might as well announce the matter and make it public. This way, even if the Hall of Gods wishes to make a move, they would have to consider whether it's really to their benefit to assassinate the new leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and risk drawing the wrath of the Forsaken Continent on them..." Han Jianqiu said.

If Zhang Xuan was a nobody, the Hall of Gods could have done anything they liked with him, and no one would have given a damn. After all, the world didn't have that much spare time to be overly concerned with someone who had no relevance to them.

However, it was different now that Zhang Xuan had become the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

If the Hall of Gods wanted to kill him, they better be prepared to offer an acceptable explanation to the entire Forsaken Continent.

Otherwise, the assassination of the leader of a top power would surely cause widespread panic. If the Hall of Gods was willing to go this far with the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it could very well do the same to the other five sects too.

While the Six Sects were rivaling powers to one another, they knew the importance of huddling together before a stronger enemy. And a tight collaboration among the Six Sects was definitely one of the situations which the Hall of Gods would have wanted to avoid.

Hearing that explanation, Elder He widened his eyes in realization.

The Starchaser Palace.

Beyond a door reminiscent of a full moon stood a lady. She was dressed in a white robe which contrasted beautifully against her cascading black hair, almost as if ink imprinted on a piece of paper.

She often spent her days gazing into the sky with a deep look in her eyes, as if she was trying to fathom the will of the world. It was no exception today either.

“Sect Leader!”

A maiden suddenly rushed through the full moon door and kneeled on the ground before the white-robed lady.

“What’s wrong?”

The white-robed lady turned around, revealing her moving beauty.

“We have just received news from our informants in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion—Sect Leader Han Jianqiu has stepped down from his position!” the maiden reported.

The Six Sects have their own information network. Through the Ethereal Hall, news could be delivered to all corners of the Forsaken Continent with unprecedented swiftness.

“Stepped down? What is that man thinking?” the white-robed lady frowned.

The reason why Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was able to rank within the top three of the Six Sects was tightly related to Han Jianqiu’s overwhelming might.

If such a powerful expert were to step down all of a sudden without a legitimate reason, it could cause the morale of the entire sect to plummet, and even a pandemonium wasn’t completely out of question!

“I’m not too sure. Based on the news we have received, the announcement came completely out of the blue, and there was no indication beforehand,” the maiden replied.

“I guess the successor must be the person who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent then. When is the inauguration happening?” the white-robed lady asked.

The only reason why Han Jianqiu would have made such a move was because he had found someone more suitable than himself for that position. And the only person who could have been more qualified than Han Jianqiu was no other than the expert who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent.

“That’s indeed the case. Sect Leader Han Jianqiu has mentioned that the new sect leader has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, and his name is...” the maiden pondered to jot her memory before replying, “... Zhang Xuan!”

“Zhang Xuan?” The white-robed lady widened her eyes.

Kacha! Kacha!

The stone pavement she was standing on began cracking.

The intense fluctuation in her emotions caused her to be unable to control the energy in her body for a moment.

“Sect Leader...”

Shocked, the maiden quickly lowered her head fearfully.

“It’s nothing. I just never thought that he would be so fast...” The white-robed lady quickly recovered from her abnormal condition, and the destruction of the stone pavement beneath her also halted as well. “Have our informants met the new sect leader yet? Do we have any information on how powerful he is?”

“The new sect leader has yet to appear in public view yet, but based on what Sect Leader Han Jianqiu has said thus far, this person’s cultivation is only at Heavenly True Immortal realm at the moment. Nevertheless, he managed to slay a Heavenly High Immortal and three heavenly True Immortals,” the maiden replied.

The informants that were undercover in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had relayed Sect Leader Han Jianqiu’s words in detail.

“Despite only being at Heavenly True Immortal realm himself, he managed to slay a Heavenly High Immortal?” the white-robed lady remarked with an incredulous expression on her face. “How long has it been since then? He grew so quickly within such a short span of time...”

Kacha! Kacha!

The stone pavement began to crack once more.

“Sect Leader Du... Are you acquainted with Sect Leader Zhang Xuan?” the maiden asked.

In her impression, their Sect Leader was someone who could remain calm even if the sky fell, but on this very day, she had already lost her cool twice.

The white-robed lady shook her head and quickly recovered from her daze. With a smile on her lips, she replied, “I wouldn’t say that we are acquainted, but I know someone who is. Call Wu Chen over!”

“Yes!”

The maiden backed out of the room, and a few moments later, she returned with an adolescent youth beside her. “Paying respects to Sect Leader Du!” the adolescent youth bowed deeply.

With her hands behind her back, the white-robed lady looked at him and remarked impassively, “He’s here.”

Those were two short words, but the adolescent youth seemed to immediately understand what the white-robed lady was driving at. His eyes immediately lit up, and he clasped his fist, “Sect Leader Du, I wish to pursue him. I’m willing to brave through flames and die for his sake. I beseech you to fulfill my wish.”

You wish to pursue him? Do you know where he is at the moment and how powerful he is?” the white-robed lady asked.

The adolescent boy shook his head.

“He’s currently the Sect Leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. He has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, and his cultivation has reached Heavenly True Immortal as well.

Furthermore, he has even managed to slay a Heavenly High Immortal as well,” the white-robed lady said.

“This...” The adolescent youth was shocked. With an unbelievable look on his face, he exclaimed, “He was able to grow

“Indeed. All along, I thought that the Spirit God has made a wrong judgement this time around. Just how can a person from a lower dimension possibly be qualified to win her fancy? However, it has become clear that he’s indeed someone who possesses extraordinary capabilities and talents. He wouldn’t pale in comparison even against Kong shi back

As the white-robed lady spoke, she walked through the full moon doors and said, “Let’s head to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion together. I’d like to verify if the newly-appointed Sect Leader is truly him or not.”

After saying these words, she suddenly vanished on the spot together with the adolescent youth.

2007 Ascendant Cloud Mountain

Forsaken Continent, Hall of Gods.

A tall silhouette flickered within a dim hall illuminated by only candlelights. Amidst the dim illumination, it was impossible to make out the appearance of the tall silhouette clearly.

A black-robed figure kneeled on the ground and greeted, “Master.”

“What is it?” an emotionless voice sounded from the tall silhouette.

“Sect Leader Han Jianqiu of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has stepped down, passing his position on to Zhang Xuan... Do we still proceed on with our initial plan?” the black-robed figure asked.

“He passed down his position?” the tall silhouette harrumphed coldly. “Interesting. Does he think that I’ll back down because of that? Pay that matter no heed. Capture that person as soon as he appears, understood?”

“But...” the black-robed figure hesitated. “If we were to touch a leader of the Six Sects, I fear that we might turn everyone against us...”

Peng!

Before he could even finish his words, he was sent flying backward. His body crashed into the ground, and fresh blood seeped from the corners of his lips. This single impact had caused his face to pale.

“Did I ask you to teach me what to do?” the tall figure narrowed his eyes coldly.

“I dare not to...” the black-robed man kowtowed again and again, knocking his forehead on the stone-cold floor in seek of

redemption.

“That better be the case. I’ll repeat myself just once more. No matter what, I want him to be presented before me alive. If anything were to go wrong, I’ll rip the skin off your flesh!” the tall silhouette waved his hand.

Hu!

As if an extinguished candle flame, he vanished on the spot.

The black-robed figure struggled to his feet. He wiped away the cold sweat trickling down his cheeks before quickly backing out of the room.

...

Wuhai City.

The disguised Zhang Xuan walked into Wuhai Market with widened strides.

After leaving the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he flew using the Gods’ Sword Intent for roughly ten minutes straight till he finally arrived here. As such, he was still unaware of the news that Han Jianqiu had passed down the position of the sect leader on to him.

“Is there anything you require?” the receptionist asked with a smile.

“I would like to rent an aerial beast,” Zhang Xuan replied with a cold voice.

He was currently disguised as a suave middle-aged man in his late thirties. He had a clean face and towering frame, but he emanated an aura of coldness that seemed to push others away from him.

To be honest, the Ascendant Cloud Mountain was not too far away from here, and it would only be a ten minutes journey with his flight ability. However, this was the place the Hall of Gods noticed and attempted to assassinate him.

In this world where only High Immortals were capable of flight, it would be simply too conspicuous if he were to fly right over to his destination.

Even when he was making his way to Wuhai City, he had made sure to fly close to the ground, under the cover of the lush greenery, even though he knew that it would slow down his speed significantly.

It might have been safer for him to travel by foot instead then, but he thought that the Hall of Gods might have placed sentries around the perimeter of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so he felt that it would be better for him to leave the area as quickly as possible back then.

“This way please,” the receptionist nodded.

Wuhai Market didn’t just deal with the sales of artifacts and the sort. It also offered its customers transportation service as well.

Following behind the receptionist, Zhang Xuan was soon led to the stables where the aerial beasts were kept. There was a massive ■兽 (Beast)’ character at the entrance.

Soon, an old man walked over and greeted Zhang Xuan, “Passenger, where will you be heading to?”

“Ascendant Cloud Mountain.”

“That will be ten Ethereal Coins!”

Very well.”

With a wave of Zhang Xuan’s hands, ten Ethereal Coins were delivered right into the hands of the old man. He had made sure to secretly exchange his Sword Pavilion Coins to Ethereal Coins as soon as he arrived at Wuhai City. He knew that he would stand out if he were to trade using Sword Pavilion Coins here even though it was an accepted currency,

The old man’s eyes immediately lit up upon seeing the money. He walked into the stables where the aerial beasts were kept and led one out.

“Let’s go!”

The two of them got onto the back of the aerial beast, and before long, they were well on their way to Ascendant Cloud Mountain.

Zhang Xuan took a look around him and saw that there were several other passengers riding on aerial beasts around him as well. Knowing that he wouldn't stand out amongst the crowd, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Following that, he turned his sights upon the young lad driving the aerial beast and noticed that there was an emblem pinned in front of his chest. There was a (Beast)' character on the emblem, similar to what he saw at the entrance of the stables.

Thus, he asked, "You are from the Myriad Beasts Hall?"

"I'm a menial disciple from the Myriad Beasts Hall. I'm getting ahead in my age, and it doesn't seem like I'm making too much progress in my cultivation either. So, the sect dispatched me here so that I can make a living for myself," the old man replied.

You were the one who tamed this aerial beast?" Zhang Xuan asked.

The disciples of the Myriad Beasts Hall were skilled in everything that was related to the beasts, and this included driving aerial beasts as well. Transportation was an extremely lucrative business on the Forsaken Continent since most cultivators here were incapable of flight.

Naturally, the Myriad Beasts Hall would capitalize on this to their advantage. As the facts would have it, a substantial amount of their income came from the sales of aerial beasts and transportation services provided by their disciples all over the Forsaken Continent.

Most small businesses wouldn't even earn ten Ethereal Coins within a month, but this was the cost for a to-and-fro trip to the nearby Ascendant Cloud Mountain.

"Of course not. How can someone of my cultivation possibly tame such a formidable aerial beast? The Wuhai Market bought it from the Myriad Beasts Hall. I'm just the person driving it around," the old man replied.

Zhang Xuan continued on to ask a few more questions, but perhaps because the old man was just a menial disciple, it turned out that he didn't know too much about the more in-

depth details of beast taming. The only skill that he had really grasped in his time there was how to drive aerial beasts around.

Seeing that he was getting nowhere, Zhang Xuan eventually gave up.

As one of the Six Sects, the Myriad Beasts Hall was a massive organization with at least ten thousand inner and core disciples. Given so, there must be a hulking number of menial disciples under them.

It was inevitable that the sect would be unable to devote too much time and effort to nurturing their menial disciples as well, so the things that they could learn were severely limited.

As the atmosphere between the two of them lightened up through their chatting, the old man advised, “Customer, where do you wish to land? The Ascendant Cloud Mountain is filled with many ferocious beasts, so I suggest for you not to proceed too deeply in. Otherwise, it might prove to be very dangerous...”

“Are you familiar with the Ascendant Cloud Mountain?” Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

“I’ve been there a few times,” the old man replied. “That place is really a playground for the beasts. The last time I was here, I explored its depths in hopes of taming a beast myself, but it nearly cost me my life...After that, I have never dared to come here anymore.”

As someone who had once aspired to be a beast tamer, he still wished to have a tamed beast of his own. It was just a pity that his strength was too weak, and he hadn’t properly learned the means of a beast tamer yet. Thus, it was simply too difficult for him to succeed.

“Shall we strike a deal? If you share some useful intel with me regarding the Ascendant Cloud Mountain, I can help you tame a beast,” Zhang Xuan suggested with a smile.

“Oh?” The old man was slightly surprised by Zhang Xuan’s offer. “Are you a core disciple of the Myriad Beasts Hall?”

“It doesn’t really matter who I am, right?” Zhang Xuan replied. “I have my own means. Don’t worry, I won’t lie to you.”

“I see...”

Considering how casually Zhang Xuan had passed him ten Ethereal Coins previously, it did seem like the middle-aged man was from an extraordinary background. Besides, even if the middle-aged man reneged on his words, he didn’t have much to lose anyway.

“Amongst the beast tamers, the Ascendant Cloud Mountain is also known as the Four Beasts Mountain. It’s a dangerous area which even beast tamers would be wary to enter, and the main reason behind that is because it’s the territory of four powerful immortal beasts.”

“Four powerful immortal beasts?”

“Indeed. These four immortal beasts have reached Heavenly High Immortal realm, and the strongest of them is a Serpentine Dragon. It’s a real Serpentine Dragon and not just mere offshoots of the Dragon Tribe that possess just a sliver of the Dragon Bloodline!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up a little.

There were several beasts he had tamed back at the Master Teacher Continent which had the word ‘Dragon’ in its name, but they were simply faraway distant relatives which possessed a hint of the Dragon Bloodline. Serpentine Dragons were not Pureblooded Dragons, but they could already be considered as a member of the Dragon Tribe.

As a true Serpentine Dragon, its fighting prowess definitely exceeded that of ordinary immortal beasts.

“What about the others?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“The second strongest is a Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, carrying the Phoenix Bloodline within it. The last two are namely a Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger and a White-eared Fox.”

The old man paused for a moment at this point before carrying on, “Speaking of which, it’s indeed a little weird. Even though the White-eared Fox is the weakest of the four immortal beasts, for some reason, even the strongest Serpentine Dragon heeds its words. The Myriad Beasts Sect have tried to tame the Serpentine Dragon several times, but each time, their plans were foiled by the schemes of the White-eared Fox, leaving them no choice but to leave in defeat.”

“White-eared Fox?” Zhang Xuan nodded contemplatively.

2008 Serpentine Dragon

There were several records regarding the White-eared Fox within the several million books in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

It was a powerful immortal beast that could reach High Immortal realm upon maturing. It was known to be particularly cunning, and as if reflecting that trait, it was skilled in constructing illusions, causing those who dared to approach it to lose sight of themselves. Even High Immortals were susceptible to its illusions.

There were many in history that had tried to tame a White-eared Fox, but to date, there had been no records of anyone who had succeeded in doing so.

Even the most formidable genius of the Myriad Beasts Hall had fallen in defeat before it.

For this reason, the White-eared Fox had been conventionally viewed by beast tamers to be ‘untamable’.

Considering that there was such a fellow on this mountain, it was no wonder why this region would end up being reigned by the beasts, such that major powers were unable to expand their influence into it.

“If you wish to tame any beast here, it would be best for you to steer clear from the territories of the four immortal beasts. Perhaps, you might still stand a chance at success like that. Otherwise, you will be putting yourself in a great deal of peril,” the old man advised kindly.

“Which areas are under the rule of the four immortal beasts?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“The Ascendant Cloud Mountain spans over several hundred li, and the four beasts rule over its four peaks...” As the old man spoke, he took out a map and began introducing the detailed locations of the four immortal beasts.

Zhang Xuan made sure to imprint the information on his mind.

He was able to gain a deep understanding of the various powers scattered across the entire Ascendant Cloud Mountain. Shortly after, a mountain shrouded amidst clouds came into sight.

The old man drove the aerial beast to land at the midpoint of the mountain as he said, "I can only send you up till here. Any deeper than this would be too dangerous..."

He couldn't help but feel as if countless crimson eyes were staring at him from the veil of the clouds, and this left him feeling deeply frightened.

He wasn't a particularly strong cultivator in the first place, and the aerial beast he was riding on wasn't skilled in battle either. His life would be at risk if he proceeded any deeper in.

"This place is fine too. I promised you that I'll tame a beast for you earlier, right? If you have some time to spare, it would be good if you can wait for me here," Zhang Xuan said with a smile. "You are serious about that?" the old man asked.

He thought that Zhang Xuan was just mentioning it in passing. Such a deal sounded too good to be true!

But even if Zhang Xuan did have the intent to help him, beast taming wasn't that easy that one would be able to do it just by sheer will.

Zhang Xuan didn't respond to the old man's question. Instead, with a smile on his lips, he picked up a stone and threw it toward the forest ahead.

Roar! Roar!

Alarmed by the rock, the call of countless beasts echoed in the air. Those hidden crimson eyes stepped out from the veil of the clouds.

Shockingly, they were all Dimension Shatterer realm beasts! There was a huge variety to them; some were skilled at flight whereas others were skilled at offense... Their faces were warped in savagery, and the stench of blood could be smelled from them.

"What?"

The old man's face paled. The aerial beast behind also used its wings to shield its face, not daring to face what was standing before it.

With so many Dimension Shatterer realm beasts upon them, it would only take a blink of an eye for them to be torn into shreds. They wouldn't even be able to escape!

If only he knew that this middle-aged man was so reckless, there was no way he would have accepted this job...

Just as the old man thought that certain death awaited him, the middle-aged man suddenly said, "There are many beasts for your picking here. Which one do you fancy?"

"Which one do I fancy?" the old man nearly fainted.

So what if I fancy any single one of them? Are you telling me to pick out the beast which I would become supper for? What a life I have lived! To think that I would meet my end like this...

"If you are going to give me a choice, I'd rather be eaten by that Fiery Eagle over there. The greatest dream of my life is to tame such a beast. Even if I am unable to do so, I guess it would be fine if my life comes to an end under its talons too..." the old man sighed deeply as he pointed toward one of the beasts.

"Fiery Eagle?" Zhang Xuan nodded, "Understood. It'll be the one then."

Hu!

In the next instant, Zhang Xuan vanished from the spot. While the old man was still wondering what was going on, a massive Fiery Eagle suddenly crashed into the ground right before him, causing him to recoil in horror.

"Hurry up and acknowledge him as your master," Zhang Xuan said from behind the Fiery Eagle.

Chirp!

The arrogant Fiery Eagle immediately lowered its head and bowed down to the old man.

The old man widened his eyes in utter bewilderment.

He might not be a true disciple of the Myriad Beasts Hall, but he had plenty of opportunities to witness full-fledged beast tamers moving to tame beasts before. The very act of the Fiery Eagle lowering its head meant that it was willing to pledge complete servitude to him... In other words, it was willing to become his tamed beast!

But how could this be?

Just by tossing the Fiery Eagle before him, the Fiery Eagle was already tamed?

When did beast taming become so easy?

“I have fulfilled my promise to you. Farewell!”

The old man was still wondering what kind of sorcery the middle-aged man had used in order to tame the Fiery Eagle when the latter’s voice suddenly sounded. Right after that, the latter warped into a streak of shadow as he charged right into the midst of the beasts.

Kacha! Kacha!

In just a few moments, the beasts, which were baring their fangs at them not too long ago, ended up lying subserviently like domesticated pets by the side. Their tongues were stretched out as if lapdogs trying to please their owners.

“I’ll choose you. Let’s go.”

Zhang Xuan casually picked a Greenspot Leopard and leaped onto its back. After which, the two of them charged toward the depths of the forest, disappearing amidst the clouds in a blink of an eye.

Watching as the middle-aged man’s silhouette vanished, the old man clutched his hair in frenzy. Even a long while later, he was still unable to regain his sanity.

That middle-aged man was actually able to make all of those Dimension Shatterer realm beasts submit to him willingly... Was that really humanly possible?

It didn't seem like the hall master of the Myriad Beasts Hall would possess such incredible capabilities either!

“I heard that the Myriad Beasts Hall has recently released an incredibly difficult test for its members. Regardless of who he is, as long as a beast tamer is able to tame any one of the four immortal beasts, he would be placed under consideration to become the next hall master... Could that middle-aged man be an elder from the Myriad Beasts Hall who has come here to take on the test too?” the old man wondered as he recalled the news he had heard just a few days ago.

Similar to how the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion chose its sect leader through the mastery of swordsmanship, the Myriad Beasts Hall followed a similar system as well.

Its sect leader was on the grounds of one's proficiency in beast taming and the strength of one's tamed beast...

Without a doubt, the four immortal beasts of the Four Beast Mountain were incredibly powerful, and taming them was an extraordinarily difficult feat.

Succeeding in such an accomplishment would prove one's capability in beast taming, and the sheer strength of any one of the four immortal beasts was enough to catapult one to the top of the Myriad Beasts Hall.

No one would question the sect leader chosen in such a manner.

“That must be the case...” the old man nodded affirmatively.

It was no wonder why the other party was so skilled in beast taming. Considering that he was an elder of the Myriad Beasts Hall which was one of the candidates to become the sect leader, it wouldn't be too surprising if he displayed extraordinary capabilities.

The Greenspot Leopard was extremely swift, such that its movements seemed almost as if it was traversing across the wind. In the blink of an eye, it had already flown past a mountain peak, swiftly advancing toward the mountain where the Serpentine Dragon was located.

Since he was here to tame a beast, it went without saying that he should tame the strongest of them all!

Not to mention, he was capable of voicing the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon too. This ability allowed him to curb those who possessed the Dragon Bloodline, making them much easier to tame than other immortal beasts.

The Greenspot Leopard was a beast native to the Ascendant Cloud Mountain, so there weren't too many who stood in its way as it sprinted by. Occasionally though, there would be a foolish beast who tried to hinder its passageway, but they would be cut down by a surge of sword qi.

It didn't take long for the Greenspot Leopard to arrive in the vicinity of the peak where the Serpentine Dragon resided.

It was at this point that it suddenly came to a halt.

It looked at the path ahead with wariness, hesitant on whether it should proceed ahead or not.

Knowing that this was an instinctive fear toward immortal beasts, Zhang Xuan leaped down the Greenspot Leopard and said, "It's fine, you don't have to push yourself. Have a good rest here."

He morphed his zhenqi into the form of a sharp sword and advanced toward the mountain peak.

Something is wrong...

After traveling for a while, Zhang Xuan suddenly came to a halt. A slight frown could be seen on his forehead.

The area around him was filled with trees, just like the areas he had passed through previously. However, through the Eye of Insight, he was able to discern some signs of human interference. There were quite a few formations and traps laid around the area.

It was very likely that these formations and traps were to corner the immortal beasts in the area so as to tame them... Could it be that someone had already beat him to it?

"Let me head over to catch a closer look..."

Exploiting the flaws in the set-ups, Zhang Xuan was able to weave through the formations and traps discreetly while making his way closer to the mountain peak.

Soon, he saw seven men hiding behind a massive boulder. One of them was holding onto a couple of formation flags as he swiftly set up a formation in the area discreetly.

“I’m done. All we have to do now is to lure the Serpentine Dragon over, and it’ll be trapped in our formation. Once we have it successfully trapped, it would be much easier for you to tame it. At the same time, this formation will protect us if anything were to go awry too,” the old man setting up the formation said with a sigh of relief.

You have my gratitude, Elder Liao,” a middle-aged man amidst the group clasped his fist and said.

You’re too courteous. Of the two candidates within the sect, I believe that you are more suited to become the sect leader. I have no doubt that the Myriad Beasts Hall would be able to advance to new heights under your leadership. We aren’t just helping you; it’s with the welfare of the entire sect in mind that we have chosen lend you a hand!” Elder Liao replied with a smile.

“I’ll have to work hard to meet up to your expectations then,” the middle-aged man chuckled softly before his expression turned serious once more. “Alright, I’ll lure it over right now.”

As he spoke, he took out a jade bottle and uncorked the cap.

A powerful smell immediately drifted into the surroundings.

Hiding not too far away from the group of seven, Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up, “That is... Dragon Blood?”

He couldn’t catch a good glimpse of whatever was in the jade bottle, but he was still familiar with the unique scent and aura diffusing into the surroundings.

Back then, in order to recover from his injuries, Sovereign Chen Ling had refined Dragon Blood. This scent from back then was similar to that from the jade bottle.

Furthermore, it seemed to have a much deeper aroma to it, indicating that the Dragon Blood was of greater purity! “Elder Yuan, is that the blood of a Pureblooded Dragon?” Elder Liao asked in astonishment.

He didn’t think that the middle-aged man would have such a treasure in his possession.

One must know that there wasn’t even a single Pureblooded Dragon on the Forsaken Continent, so it should have been impossible to acquire its blood. As such, despite being the authority on beast taming on the Forsaken Continent, none of the members of the Myriad Beasts Hall had seen a Pureblooded Dragon before.

“It isn’t the blood of a true Pureblooded Dragon but the refined blood of a Serpentine Dragon. I forcefully refined a bucket of Serpentine Dragon down to just ten droplets... It is still no match for the blood of a Pureblooded Dragon, but at the very least, it’s not that far away from it anymore,” the middle-aged man, Elder Yuan, replied with a hint of pride in his voice.

Refining Dragon Blood was one of the matters which was far more difficult to put into practice than it sounded.

Dragon Blood was known to be extremely volatile and violent. If an ordinary human were to ingest even a droplet of it, his entire body would explode on the spot due to the rampaging energy. Given so, refining the Dragon Blood was even more so difficult...

It must have taken a great deal of effort and time for Elder Yuan to come this far.

“Formidable!” Elder Liao nodded. “With such a thing, the Serpentine Dragon would surely be lured over. Once it tries to make a move on you, it would fall into our trap... Once that happens, it would only be a matter of time before you tame it!”

The reason why no one had been able to tame the Serpentine Dragon to date was due to how wary it was. It had never allowed anyone to corner it before. Thus, as long as they could corner the Serpentine Dragon, the rest should be easy.

Given the means of the Myriad Beasts Hall, taming a cornered beast shouldn't be too difficult.

Roar!

Just as they were talking to one another, a thunderous rumbling suddenly echoed from the sky. Raising their head, the crowd saw a massive Serpentine Dragon floating right above them. Its massive eyes that were reminiscent of glowing lanterns were fixed on the jade bottle Elder Yuan was holding.

The strongest Serpentine Dragon of Ascendant Cloud Mountain had indeed fallen for the allure of the Dragon Blood they had prepared!

“It's here...” Elder Yuan's body tensed in agitation as he gazed at the Serpentine Dragon.

2009 Tricked

Elder Yuan and the others didn't bother concealing their traces too much, so the Serpentine Dragon had also noticed their presence as well. Gazing upon them coldly, its voice resounded thunderously, "Human, did you think that you can lure me in with mere Dragon Blood?"

In face of the imposing Serpentine Dragon, Elder Yuan stepped forward calmly and said, "I know that you have already noticed us long ago. How could someone of your caliber be oblivious to the presence of intruders in your territory? I also know that the reason why you refused to appear is because you wanted to see the treasure we have to offer you!"

Incredible power gushed forth from Elder Yuan's body as he spoke, as if signaling that he was no pushover either.

"Heavenly High Immortal?" Zhang Xuan muttered beneath his breath.

Elder Yuan had an appearance that seemed as if he was in his early forties, but who could have thought that he was actually a Heavenly High Immortal expert! The aura he emanated was even stronger than that of Elder Chou Huo.

It was no wonder why so many elders had gathered here to support him. He did possess extraordinary capabilities.

"Everything else is just empty talk. If you want to tame me, you need to prove that you are even stronger than me!" the Serpentine Dragon harrumphed.

Considering how long these fellows had been lingering around the area, it was obvious to it that they were here to tame it. Just as what Elder Yuan had said, the reason why it chose not to make a presence till now was to see what kind of treasure they had come with to lure it in.

If the treasure they had prepared wasn't enough to win it over, it would just have its subordinates chase them away.

If they were sincere enough to bring something that could catch even its eye, it could at least consider facing them.

As one who possessed the Dragon Bloodline, it had never really feared a fight before.

“You wish to challenge my strength?” Hearing those words, Elder Yuan chuckled softly. “I admit that I am not a match for you in terms of strength. However, my capabilities don’t just stop at being able to refine Dragon Blood. I am also capable of refining the Dragon Bloodline within your body as well!”

“Refine my Dragon Bloodline?”

The Serpentine Dragon was stunned for a brief moment before its eyes narrowed in astonishment.

The reason why the Dragon Tribe was so powerful was mainly due to its Dragon Bloodline. If the other party was truly able to refine its Dragon Bloodline, there was a possibility that it might be able to overcome its bottleneck as a Serpentine Dragon and evolve into a true Pureblooded Dragon!

This was an irresistible offer to any single member of the Dragon Tribe!

“How can you prove that you possess such capabilities?” the Serpentine Dragon harrumphed.

“Shouldn’t this bottle of Dragon Blood more than sufficient as evidence? Given your eye of discernment, you should be able to tell that this Dragon Blood originated from a Serpentine Dragon like you. However, I was able to refine it to a level near to that of a Pureblooded Dragon, and that’s more than enough to prove my ability! This is a rare opportunity for you to evolve into a Pureblooded Dragon. It’s up to you whether you wish to grasp it or not!” Elder Yuan replied confidently.

An opportunity to become a Pureblooded Dragon was simply too great for anyone in the Dragon Tribe to resist. He didn’t believe that the Serpentine Dragon would be able to resist the allure.

“I must admit that you have brought an extremely moving proposition to me...” the Serpentine Dragon replied slowly. “However, even if what you said is true, you’ll still have to

prove your worth in order to tame me. Come, show me whatever capability you have in store. If you can't even stand your ground before me, you need not dream of returning back alive!"

Boom!

In the next moment, the Serpentine Dragon tore its claws down, causing the surrounding space to freeze. Rampaging might gushed into the surroundings, whipping up a furious storm.

"Formidable," Elder Yuan remarked with a light chuckle. "However, I knew that you would resort to this move. I have also prepared my hand as well."

With a wave of his hand, a round sphere appeared on his palm. It emanated a brilliant radiance.

"That's the Northern Sea Dragon Orb?" Elder Liao remarked in astonishment.

The other elders were also surprised by the artifact that Elder Yuan had just brought out.

The Northern Sea Dragon Orb was a treasure unique to the Northern Sea. It was an artifact that could produce lifelike illusions, and it was particularly deadly toward those of the Dragon Tribe.

It was said that the master of the Ethereal Hall had used this artifact to bait a Pseudo Dragon from the Hall of Gods out back then!

There was a strict hierarchy in the Dragon Tribe. Those who possessed only a sliver of the Dragon Bloodline couldn't even be considered as a part of the Dragon Tribe. Even the Serpentine Dragons were only the weakest members of the Dragon Tribe.

Towering above the Serpentine Dragons were the Pseudo Dragons, and last but not least, the Pureblooded Dragons. Even the weakest of the Pseudo Dragons was at Semi-Divinity realm, but the Northern Sea Dragon Orb was still able to lure it out from hiding. Just from this, it was apparent how deadly its charm was toward the Dragon Tribe.

That being said, the Northern Sea Dragon Orb was a particularly rare naturally occurring artifact, and the Northern Sea stretched on for millions of li, making it nigh impossible to find the Dragon Orb.

There were beast tamers who roamed the Northern Sea for their entire life, only to never catch a glimpse of it. As a result, its existence was highly controversial, and there were many who viewed it as an artifact that only existed in the legends...

Who could have thought that Elder Yuan would have actually managed to find one?

It seemed like he had really gone all out in order to tame this Serpentine Dragon!

With how prepared he was, the position of the sect leader was most likely his to take.

As soon as the Dragon Orb appeared, the eyes of the Serpentine Dragon in the air glazed over with confusion. It seemed as if it was in an intoxicated state.

“Hehe!”

Having expected such an outcome, Elder Yuan chuckled softly. He leaped into the sky, and with a flick of his wrist, he tossed the Northern Sea Dragon Orb toward the side. Utterly infatuated with the artifact, the Serpentine Dragon immediately chased after the Dragon Orb.

Huhuhu!

As Elder Yuan controlled the Dragon Orb, the Serpentine Dragon would move in accordance as well. Mirroring the Dragon Orb, the Serpentine Dragon twisted and turned its body, causing sonic booms to echo in the air from the sheer weight of its motions.

“That is... Teasing the Dragon!” Elder Liao exclaimed with glowing eyes.

“Those of the Dragon Tribe are known to be extremely haughty, and every single one of them is a huge bundle of pride. They would not submit to another even if they were defeated. The reason why Elder Yuan is using the Dragon Orb

to lure the Serpentine Dragon is to break its pride and crush its dignity. At the same time, this would deplete its stamina, thus leaving it powerless to retaliate later on...”

The crowd nodded in agreement.

There were different known ways to tame a Serpentine Dragon, but Teasing the Dragon was known to be the most efficient, especially since it tackled both the mental and physical state of the dragon.

The pride of a dragon would prevent it from submitting even when it was defeated and its life was at stake. Thus, it was to crush its pride and dignity first.

Huhuhu!

While they were chatting, the movements of the Serpentine Dragon grew more and more vigorous under the teasing of the Dragon Orb. It flew higher and higher, gradually pulling distance away from them.

It didn't take long for Elder Yuan and the Serpentine Dragon to become dots in the sky.

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but frown.

Something is wrong here...

He sensed that something was amiss, but he couldn't really tell what was wrong here. If he really had to point it out, it would be that... the Serpentine Dragon simply fell for everything too easily!

The old man that had ferried him over told him that the Myriad Beasts Hall had dispatched many experts to tame the Serpentine Dragon, only to end in defeat each and every time. Since that was the case, the Serpentine Dragon should have been guarded against Elder Yuan...

But why did the Serpentine Dragon still fall for the Dragon Orb so easily?

Was the Dragon Orb really that potent, or...

It's acting a little too recklessly. To be lured out by the Dragon Blood and challenge Elder Yuan so carelessly...

Zhang Xuan had tamed beasts possessing the Dragon Bloodline before, and he knew just how prideful they could be. As attractive as Elder Yuan's Dragon Blood was, it was not enough for the Serpentine Dragon to lose its rationality.

Furthermore, even if the Serpentine Dragon were to lose its cool, it should have made a move right away. There was no way it would have wasted its words on so much nonsense and ended up giving Elder Yuan an opportunity to exploit its weakness...

No matter how he looked at it, the situation seemed inconceivable to him.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan didn't rush to make a move. Instead, he chose to continue assessing the situation for the time being.

Unknowingly, Elder Yuan, who should have been baiting the Serpentine Dragon with the Dragon Orb, ended up getting further and further away from the surface, such that it was getting hard to see him.

Hu!

And at this vital moment, there was suddenly a surge of wind echoing in the air. A gray-robed elder was rushing in their direction.

Before even landing on the ground, the gray-robed elder had already spurted a mouthful of blood. There was a bloodied depression in his chest, and fresh blood was flowing down his body.

He was severely injured.

"Elder Liao, we need to leave right now!" the gray-robed elder exclaimed anxiously.

"Elder Wang, didn't you set off with Elder Liu to tame the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix? Why are you here? Where are the others?" Elder Liao asked anxiously as he quickly fed Elder Wang two pills in order to curb the latter's injuries.

The two candidates to become the sect leader were two of the more popular beast tamers. One of them was Elder Yuan, and

the other one was Elder Liu. As for the rest of them, they were just here to play a supporting role.

Elder Wang was one of the elders who had chosen to help Elder Liu tame the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix. Given so, why would Elder Wang suddenly appear here with such severe injuries?

“We have fallen for their tricks... the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, Serpentine Dragon, and Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger have banded together in order to deal with us. Elder Liu was killed on the spot, and the other elders had also sustained severe injuries. I’m the only one who has managed to escaped...” Elder Wang said as he recovered a little bit of his strength.

“The three immortal beasts have banded together? When did that happen?” Elder Liao asked anxiously with narrowed eyes.

“Just a moment ago! The other elders urged me to rush over to inform you while they hold them back. If not for that, they would have already been here by now!” Elder Wang exclaimed. “We must leave right now, or else it would really be too late...”

“Just a moment ago? That’s not right... Elder Yuan has just lured the Serpentine Dragon away, so how could it have collaborated with the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger over at your end?” Elder Liao shook his head in disbelief.

The Serpentine Dragon had been here for a while now, and its attention had been firmly caught by the Northern Sea Dragon Orb. How could it have banded together with the others then?

“Ah? The Serpentine Dragon is here? But that’s impossible!” Elder Wang exclaimed incredulously. “No matter what, we have to leave right now...”

Halfway through Elder Wang’s words, he suddenly narrowed his eyes as his body stiffened entirely. Tracing his line of sight, the crowd saw a Serpentine Dragon, a Phoenix, and a Swordfang Tiger soaring over from afar.

Their movements were so swift that it only took them a few moments to arrive above them.

“How could it be?” Elder Liao was stunned.

He quickly turned his gaze toward Elder Yuan’s direction and saw the latter still manipulating the Dragon Orb around to control the Serpentine Dragon.

How could another one appear at this moment? Could it be that... there were actually two Serpentine Dragons on the Ascendant Cloud Mountain?

2010 Beast Tamer Zhang in Action

“You scoundrel!”

The other elders roared in rage as they swiftly got into position to guard against the beasts.

The Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix released a shrill cry before it glided across the air, raining arrows of flame upon the elders. One of the elders was just about to soar into the air when a fire arrow pierced through his chest, pushing him back to the ground.

On the other hand, the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger charged right into the midst of the crowd. With a swift swipe, its claws tore through two elders, inflicting deep lacerations on their bodies.

Most of the elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall were at Heavenly High Immortal realm as well, but the three immortal beasts were blessed with superior constitutions that granted them far greater fighting prowess than that of human cultivators. It was not to say that the elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall were weak, but they were simply no match for the three immortal beasts. In just a few breaths, most of them were already lying injured on the ground.

“Activate the formation!”

Elder Liao knew that they would be defeated at this rate, so he immediately rushed over and stomped on the crux of the formation they had set up earlier.

Weng!

The formation whirred into action.

While trying to tame a beast, a beast tamer had to be prepared for the possibility that he could be killed as well.

Thus, beast tamers would usually set up multifunctional formations that could be used to trap the beasts, coordinate their strength together, and block the offense of the immortal beasts. Such flexibility would prove to be valuable in times of need, especially given how the situation could change in the blink of an eye.

After the formation was activated, the injured elders also quickly retreated into the formation as well.

“Do you really think that a formation that I permitted you to set up in my presence would really work?” the Serpentine Dragon sneered coldly before releasing a deafening roar that tremored the lands.

As if having received an order from the Serpentine Dragon, the earth began rumbling intensely, causing the formation flags of the formation which Elder Liao and the others were hiding in to collapse.

Colonies of ants rose from the places where the formation flags were previously planted!

The Serpentine Dragon had stationed these ants beneath the formation flags in advance so that he could deal with the formation whenever it liked.

With the collapse of the formation flags, the formation also lost its effectiveness too. As such, Elder Liao and the others were exposed before the three immortal beasts once again.

“We were too focused on trying to tame the Serpentine Dragon that we didn’t even notice that we have already fallen into their trap...” Seeing how they were completely encircled by the three immortal beasts and their subordinates, Elder Liao’s face paled in despair.

They had come here confidently, thinking that even if they were to fail in their mission, they would still be able to get away without any problem. Yet, they ended up falling for the other party’s ploy...

The White-eared Fox used its own ability to disguise itself into the Serpentine Dragon so as to lure the Northern Sea Dragon Orb away. On the other hand, the real Serpentine Dragon was

moving alongside the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger to assault the other group.

As soon as they were done, they immediately rushed over to crush their group as well...

Just like that, the tables were turned on them. A beast taming session turned into a massacre instead. They would have never thought that the beasts would use their own plans against them.

“The White-eared Fox told me that the humans are greedy. I was still harboring such reservations previously, but it seems like that’s indeed the case!” the Serpentine Dragon scoffed.

“If you haven’t divided your forces into two groups and directed that powerful offensive artifact toward the Nine-tailed Fiery Phoenix instead of just focusing it all on me, perhaps you might have still stood a chance.”

Just like how the Northern Sea Dragon Orb was prepared to deal with the Serpentine Dragon, what the other beast tamers had prepared to tame the Nine-tailed Fiery Phoenix was an extremely powerful saber to suppress it forcefully.

If the beast tamers had worked together, even if all four immortal beasts were to work together with one another, they would have stood a very good chance at victory. After all, the prowess of one of the Six Sects was not to be underestimated.

Yet, perhaps it was arrogance or simply foolish greed, they chose to split into two teams. Unfortunately for them, the White-eared Fox saw through their ploy and prepared a countermeasure beforehand. They would first suppress the team which possessed powerful saber before moving on to destroy the other group.

“We have really underestimated the enemies this time around...” Elder Liao said with a bitter smile.

None of the four immortal beasts were easy to tame. The very fact that Elder Liu and Elder Yuan had chosen to compete with one another to see who could tame one of them first was already an arrogant act in itself. They were assuming that success was already in their grasp.

As the saying went, ‘a proud general is bound to lead his army into defeat’. Such a fate was already destined from the moment that such a thought surfaced in their minds.

Putting everything aside, the strongest cultivator of them all, Elder Yuan, was still using the Northern Sea Dragon Orb to lure the White-eared Fox around, completely oblivious that the rest of the group had already been plunged in a perilous position... At this point in time, it was already clear who was really teasing who.

“Let’s just pit our lives against them. They might be powerful, but it won’t be easy for them to defeat us without some sacrifices!” Elder Liao said with determinedly.

He knew it would be difficult for them to escape given the current situation, so the only choice they had was to force their way through.

“Yes!”

The other elders nodded in agreement too. With a flick of their wrist, they took out a bag each roughly the size of their palm.

Hu!

Immortal beasts appeared all around them.

Is that the tamed beast sack?

Hiding by the corner, Zhang Xuan thought.

While they were making their way over, the old man had told him that the more qualified disciples and elders would have special tamed beast sacks, which worked in a similar fashion to his Myriad Anthive Nest. They could store their tamed beasts inside the sack and bring them along with them.

To be able to store the massive immortal beasts within it without sustaining any damage, the tamed beast sack was indeed an incredible invention.

Roar! Roar! Roar!

It was an immediate surge in the fighting prowess for the beast tamers. While the situation still didn’t look positive to them, at

the very least, it was certain that their enemies wouldn't be able to take them down easily.

“Block them!” Elder Liao and the others bellowed.

Most of the tamed beasts that were brought out were at Lesser High Immortal realm, but nevertheless, their fighting prowess wasn't to be underestimated. They swiftly charged into the air to fend off the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-tailed Fiery Phoenix, and the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger. They might not be a match for the three Heavenly High Immortal realm beasts, but at the very least, they should be able to keep them busy for quite some time.

“As immortal beasts, you lot willingly allow yourselves to be used by these lowly humans. I can imagine no greater shame than this,” the Serpentine Dragon harrumphed coldly.

It swallowed the Dragon Blood with a gulp, and in the next moment, an incredibly imposing aura gushed into the surroundings.

This aura was frighteningly powerful, inducing the beasts which the elders had just released to tremble nonstop. Every single one of them froze on the spot, having lost their will to fight.

It's the natural aura of intimidation that the Dragon Tribe possesses... Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

The dragons were also known as the Sovereign of the Beasts. The Dragon Bloodline represented supreme might and inviolable authority. There was no beast who wouldn't be intimidated by the airs of a dragon.

This was even more so for Pureblooded Dragons. Every single one of them was a born emperor, and there was no beast who would dare not to submit to them.

There was indeed a huge gap between a Serpentine Dragon and a Pureblooded Dragon, but after swallowing the concentrated Dragon Blood in the jade bottle prepared by Elder Yuan, the Serpentine Dragon's aura reached a level that was on par with even that of Pseudo Dragons.

As a result, none of the tamed beasts brought out by the elders dared to oppose it. It was innate deference toward a higher existence. Just like that, the tamed beasts were reduced to nothing more than decorative accessories on the battlefield!

Boom!

With all of the tamed beasts paralyzed with fear, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger made use of this opportunity to charge at the beast tamers.

The elders did their best to protect themselves, resorting to a collaborative formation even. However, the gap in fighting prowess between both sides was simply too great. Before long, they were already lying defeat on the ground. Blood flowing freely from the glaring wounds inflicted on their bodies.

“Capture them and bring them back to my lair. We’ll use them as hostages to exchange for the method to refine the Dragon Bloodline!” the Serpentine Dragon instructed.

Even though there was no way it would ever submit to a human, it was still moved by Elder Yuan’s earlier proposal. As such, it decided to use these humans as chips to negotiate with the other party.

There was no way Elder Yuan could disregard the lives of his peers. The deaths of these elders would be a heavy blow to the Myriad Beasts Hall, and for allowing his fellow elders to die in vain, Elder Yuan himself would lose prestige from the members of his own sect as well.

It was really foolish of the beast tamers to think that they could outsmart the four immortal beasts so easily... Zhang Xuan shook his head in lamentation.

It was no wonder why no one had managed to tame these immortal beasts all this while. They were simply too cunning!

From the start to the end, the four immortal beasts were in complete control of the situation. In contrast, it felt like the elders of the Myriad Beast Hall were being toyed with.

I should just focus my effort on taming another aerial immortal beast instead, Zhang Xuan thought.

He was indeed interested in taming the four immortal beasts, but that wasn't a necessity for him. All he needed was a medium for transportation. If need be, he could make do with an ordinary aerial immortal beast as well.

It was not because he didn't think that he wasn't a match for the four immortal beasts. With his Heavenly True Immortal realm cultivation, Gods' Sword Intent, and Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was rather confident that he would be able to defeat the Serpentine Dragon.

But if he were to do so, he could draw the attention of the Hall of Gods upon him. Furthermore, what he had to deal with over here wasn't just the Serpentine Dragon.

He had never been a selfless man. He would lend a hand to Elder Liao and the others if he was absolutely confident of success, but he wouldn't go to the extent of risking his life for mere strangers. Elder Liao and the others knew what they were getting themselves into when they made the decision to tame the Serpentine Dragon, so they should have been prepared for the worst too.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to depart from the scene, a voice suddenly sounded in his mind, "Master, if you capture that bird over there and feed me its blood essence, I think I might be able to break free of my seal and return back to my original body!"

"Return back to your original body?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

He quickly turned his consciousness to his dantian and saw the Dongxu Gourd pacing around anxiously. It had never been so riled up before.

Yes. My current appearance as a Dongxu Gourd is a form I assumed after my strength was sealed. My true body is a legendary beast that rules over the lands. Once I return to my true form, the likes of the Hall of Gods won't even pose a threat at all!" the Dongxu Gourd replied in agitation.

Zhang Xuan was silent for a moment before he asked solemnly, "Are you certain?"

The Dongxu Gourd wasn't very reliable, but there was no denying its tremendous prowess. That could be seen just by how it was able to devour and assimilate High Immortal-tier swords with ease.

The only thing that was lacking about it was its offensive ability. If it was really able to break free of its seal, it might turn out to be an incredibly powerful ally on his side!

Just the fact that it was able to induce fear in the Heavenly High Immortal from the Hall of Gods back then likely meant that it was an existence that had reached Semi-Divinity or even beyond.

“Of course! Are you looking down on me over here?” the Dongxu Gourd harrumphed disdainfully.

“Alright then...” Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath and made up his mind. Gritting his teeth, he walked out from his hiding position and shouted, “Hold it right there!”

His words immediately caught the attention of the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, Elder Liao, and the others present in the area. They were all surprised to see that someone was hiding in the vicinity.

“Heavenly True Immortal? Even someone of your caliber dares to appear before me as well? Capture him along with the rest!” the Serpentine Dragon harrumphed coldly with narrowed eyes.

For a moment there, the young man's sudden appearance made it apprehensive. It thought that someone who was able to hide beneath its eyelids was bound to be extraordinarily powerful. However, who could have thought that the other party would just be a Heavenly True Immortal?

It could easily slay numerous enemies of such caliber with just a swipe of its claws. Someone of that level couldn't possibly pose a threat to it at all.

Hu!

Upon hearing the instruction, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix glided over and breathed out blazing flames upon Zhang

Xuan.

Standing before the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix's assault, Zhang Xuan simply looked at the Serpentine Dragon and smiled, "You seem to be very confident in yourself. Since that's the case, shall we play a little game? Let's see if you are able to withstand this."

"Hah?"

The Serpentine Dragon had no idea what Zhang Xuan was trying to get at.

Is there something wrong with that fellow's head? Or is he struggling desperately in hopes of a miracle?

Thinking nothing of the matter, the Serpentine Dragon turned its head to the side and ignored Zhang Xuan's prattling. "Mou! Moo!"

It was as if the ground had split apart in that instant. The two frighteningly loud notes raised up a furious storm as they surged straight toward the Serpentine Dragon.

As soon as those two notes reached the Serpentine Dragon's ears, the latter felt as if its blood had frozen on the spot.

Its body convulsed uncontrollably as it began plummeting to the ground. *Padah!*

The Serpentine Dragon crashed into the ground.

2011 The Powerful Dongxu Gourd

“Boss...”

Not expecting the most powerful Serpentine Dragon to plummet from the sky with those two notes, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger were startled.

“It’s the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon!”

“He’s a Pureblooded Dragon?”

As they swiftly came to a realization, they looked at Zhang Xuan with horror reflected in their eyes.

As the top immortal beasts of the Forsaken Continent, they knew quite a fair bit about the Dragon Tribe. The Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon was a language that could only be spoken by Pureblooded Dragons, but the middle-aged man was able to voice those notes as well.

Wouldn’t that mean that he was actually a Pureblooded Dragon?

One must know that the significance of a Pureblooded Dragon was no different from that of a true god... How could they possibly dare to pick a fight with a god?

With an incredulous look on their faces, they looked as the middle-aged man walked up to the Serpentine Dragon and patted its head, “Good boy. Just listen to my words obediently, and you’ll be fine...”

“If you want me to listen to your words, why don’t you remove your sword from my neck first...”

The Serpentine Dragon attempted to struggle, but its body was still convulsing from the earlier impact from the two notes.

With a sheepish smile, Zhang Xuan withdrew the Tongshang Sword and placed it back to his storage ring.

There was a brief moment of silence before the Serpentine Dragon remarked, “You aren’t a real Pureblooded Dragon...”

“Keen eyes. I don’t deny what you have just said. However, it doesn’t change the fact that I’m capable of voicing the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“Furthermore, I am also able to refine the Dragon Bloodline in your body and increase your chances of achieving a breakthrough to higher realms.

He didn’t think that there was any point lying to the Serpentine Dragon. On the contrary, if he were to set up false expectations for the Serpentine Dragon, the latter might betray him in the future if it were to learn that it had been deceived.

There was another long moment of silence as the Serpentine Dragon tried to struggle free from the suppression of its bloodline, but it was to no avail. Eventually, it had no choice but to nod its head slightly, “I’ll submit...”

The Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon was an ability unique to the Pureblooded Dragon. It was a known fact that producing these sounds was fundamentally impossible for other beings other than the Pureblooded Dragons.

The Serpentine Dragon had no idea how Zhang Xuan was able to voice the Eight Note of the Heavenly Dragon, but this showed that even if he wasn’t a Pureblooded Dragon, it was likely that he possessed a significant relationship with the top echelons of the Dragon Tribe.

It viewed Zhang Xuan to be a superior being, and it didn’t think that it would be disgraceful for it to submit to a superior being.

Not to mention, the middle-aged man’s sword qi had already discreetly delved into the vitals of its body while it was immobilized. If it were to refuse the middle-aged man, it was likely that it would be torn apart from within.

While the middle-aged man before it appeared to be only at Heavenly True Immortal realm, the sheer power of his sword qi was really not to be underestimated. Even with the

resilience of its superior physique, it wasn't confident that it would be able to withstand the might of his sword qi.

"You have made a wise decision," Zhang Xuan replied as he proceeded on to seal a Soul Contract with the Serpentine Dragon.

To be honest, he wasn't completely confident that the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon would work, especially considering that the Serpentine Dragon was a true member of the Dragon Tribe. He was prepared to resort to brute force if he needed to, but to his delight, it worked much better than he had thought.

From the looks of it, even if his opponent was a Pseudo Dragon, he would still be able to subdue the other party easily with the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon too.

"This... The Serpentine Dragon actually submitted to him just like that?"

"Who is that middle-aged man?"

"I don't recognize him at all. He doesn't seem to be from the Myriad Beasts Hall..."

The severely wounded elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall looked at one another in bewilderment.

They thought that they were doomed this time around. Not even in their wildest dream did they expect that a True Immortal realm cultivator would suddenly come to their rescue and tame the Serpentine Dragon within a single minute...

One must know that Elder Yuan had spent many years refining the Dragon Blood and looking for the Northern Sea Dragon Orb. All in all, he had devoted thirty years of his life to ensure the success of this mission, and the sheer amount of resources he had expended for this was mind-boggling... But it still ended in a miserable failure.

In contrast, all this True Immortal realm cultivator did was to scream two notes, and the Serpentine Dragon just submitted to him just like that!

What was with this difference in treatment? This was too much!

“It’s only normal for a member of the Dragon Tribe to submit to one who is capable of voicing the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon.”

Even though the crowd was a little stifled by the abrupt twist in the situation, they weren’t too surprised by the outcome.

As elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall, they had also heard of the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon, and they knew that it signified the highest authority of the Dragon Tribe, the very will of the Pureblooded Dragons. There was no lesser being possessing the Dragon Bloodline that could oppose that innate suppression.

“You can rest for the time being. I’ll go and tame that Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix,” Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand as he walked toward the two utterly shocked immortal beasts in the sky.

The fact that the Serpentine Dragon had moved along with those two meant that they had close relations with one another. He knew that he would be putting the Serpentine Dragon in a spot by forcing it to make a move on those two, so the best he could do was to ask the latter not to interfere.

He would just have to tame the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix by himself.

“Thank you, master,” the Serpentine Dragon replied in gratitude.

It was indeed apprehensive that its new master would order it to make a move on the other two. That would have really put it on a spot. As a subordinate tamed beast, it would have no right to disobey its master’s order. However, having spent many years with the other two, while their usual relationship was similar to that of rivals, it couldn’t bring itself to betray them in such a manner either...

It was clear that its master was taking its feelings into consideration when he said those words.

You wish to tame me? The Empyrean Phoenix Bloodline runs in my blood, so that Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon of yours wouldn't work against me!" Hearing those words, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix sneered coldly.

The Dragon Tribe was known to be the Sovereign of the Beasts, but the Empyrean Phoenix Tribe wouldn't pale in comparison either. The Empyrean Phoenix Tribe was well-respected even in the Firmament, the world of the gods!

The Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon had the effects of suppressing other beasts, but it was completely useless against it.

As such, even though the human standing before it was able to tame the Serpentine Dragon, his means would never work against it!

"I don't need the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon to deal with you," Zhang Xuan replied calmly as he raised his hand upward.

The formation flags scattered all over the ground rose to the sky and floated in the surroundings.

"Activate!" Zhang Xuan bellowed as they rearranged themselves and plunged into the ground once more.

The ants had destroyed a huge portion of the flags, but there were still some of them that were undamaged. As they were plunged into the ground, a huge formation encompassing an area of more than twenty li immediately activated.

"It's an Isolation Formation?"

Everyone was surprised.

Even the Serpentine Dragon and the other two immortal beasts were perplexed as to what Zhang Xuan was attempting to do as well.

They had fully expected the middle-aged man to activate a Slaughter Formation or Illusion Formation in order to deal with them, but who could have thought that it would just be a mere Isolation Formation.

Such a formation would prevent anyone outside from peering into what was happening within the formation, but it didn't seem to be of much use in a battle!

“By aligning the formation together with the geography of the Ascendant Cloud Mountain, I should be able to maintain it for roughly thirty breaths...” Zhang Xuan muttered contemplatively before nodding with a smile. “That’s enough!”

“What’s enough? Do you mean to say that you are able to tame me within thirty breaths? Such blind arrogance!” the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix scoffed in fury.

Wasn't this little thing a little too conceited?

The only reason why you are able to tame the Serpentine Dragon so easily is because you are able to voice the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon. That has nothing to do with your cultivation or your true capabilities!

Do you think that a mere True Immortal like you would really be able to withstand the might of a Heavenly High Immortal like me?

Taming me in thirty breaths?

Dream on!

Hu!

Just as the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix was about to explode from fury, the figure on the ground suddenly blurred. Before it knew it, the arrogant middle-aged man was already standing right before it.

You are capable of flight?”

The Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix was stupefied.

It wasn't the only one who was surprised by that. Every single person and beast in the area were stunned by what they were witnessing. Not even the Serpentine Dragon had expected its master to be capable of flight!

While True Immortals were highly respected on the Forsaken Continent, such that they were even viewed as powerhouses in

some of the more remote territories, the ones that wielded the decisive power on the continent was still the High Immortals.

This wasn't just due to the difference in prowess but the ability of flight as well. Even if an army of True Immortals were gathered together, there was only so much they could do to deal with a High Immortal flying high in the sky.

This difference in mobility created a huge rift in their fighting prowess.

The middle-aged man before him was only a Heavenly True Immortal, so how was he able to fly as well? Furthermore, the speed of his flight was even faster than that of normal High Immortals!

“Make your move. I also want to see what you are capable of as well!” Zhang Xuan remarked as he drew the Tongshang Sword.

With a low growl, he slashed his sword toward the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix.

Since the Dongxu Gourd had said that is needed this fellow's blood essence, a battle was inevitable.

He could still tame the Serpentine Dragon using the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon, but against the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, such a mean wouldn't work. He could only resort to the good old Beast Pummeling Taming Method.

Besides, he had recently achieved a few breakthroughs, so this would be a good chance for him to test out his newfound strength!

The only issue with him fighting with his full strength was that he would risk exposing his true identity. To circumvent that issue, he sealed off the surroundings with an Isolation Formation, thus preventing any outsiders from peering into the happenings within.

Hula!

With the slash of Zhang Xuan's blade, a massive sword qi, several dozen zhang[1] in length, surged toward the Nineheaded Fiery Phoenix.

The Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix clearly didn't expect a mere True Immortal to dare make a move against it. On top of that, the might of the other party's attack had already surpassed its expectations.

Realizing that the other party wouldn't be an easy opponent, it chose to make a temporary retreat to evade the sword qi before opening its mouth once more to shower devastating flames upon its enemy.

In response to that, Zhang Xuan raised his blade to sever the flames into two. But before he could do so, the Dongxu Gourd suddenly rushed out from his dantian and declared valiantly, "Leave that bird to me!"

As it spoke, it dashed right toward the flames.

Hula!

The massive expanse of flames abruptly vanished into the Dongxu Gourd just like that.

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

This fellow was not just able to swallow weapons, it could swallow flames as well?

Zhang Xuan was not the only one to have such an appearance on his face. On the opposing side, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix was indescribably horrified.

Those possessing the Empyrean Phoenix Bloodline possessed superior aptitude toward the flame element. The flames that it produced couldn't be compared to that of ordinary flames. Not even High Immortals would have been able to fend against its flames with their zhenqi!

It was through the unique attributes of its flames that it was able to defeat the elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall so easily.

Yet, the Dongxu Gourd actually swallowed its flames so easily, rendering its attack completely ineffective...

How could this be?

"Let me see how much you can swallow then!"

Fsshhh fsshhh!

With a piercing shriek, all nine heads of the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix spat flames simultaneously. The nine bursts of flames converged together to form a fiery dragon that surged right toward Zhang Xuan, tearing open a vacuum in the air.

“Hot!”

Feeling the temperature of the flames, even Zhang Xuan, who possessed exceptional resistance to heat, was forced to retreat. He could fend against it with his Gods’ Sword Intent and Tongshang Sword, but even he would sustain some damage in the midst of doing so.

Would the Dongxu Gourd be able to swallow such flames too?

The apprehensive Zhang Xuan began driving his Sword Intent, intending to charge forward to assist if the Dongxu Gourd failed to stand its ground. On the other hand, even though it was standing right before the raging flame breath, the Dongxu Gourd simply shook its bottom leisurely.

Hu!

The incoming flames simply vanished once again. It took only a mere instant for the flames to be devoured clean.

Zhang Xuan was flabbergasted. He didn’t think that the Dongxu Gourd whom he had looked down on for the longest of time would actually prove to be such an invaluable ally!

Perhaps, the talent of the Dongxu Gourd lay in its ability to devour energy. If that was the case, it was likely that even his strongest sword qi wouldn’t be able to do a thing against the Dongxu Gourd...

It was no wonder why that fellow was so arrogant, acting so lackadaisically around him. It turned out that it really wasn’t afraid of him at all.

“No way... W-what kind of monster are you?”

Seeing how its flames were so easily devoured, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix felt unprecedented fear. Not only was the other party able to voice the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon, he even had a gourd that could devour its flames easily...

In its mind, Zhang Xuan's silhouette seemed to be becoming more and more enigmatic. Faced against a being that had surpassed its understanding, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix trembled with terror.

No matter how powerful that gourd is, it's no more than an artifact. It's bound to be under the control of that middle-aged man. As long as I can defeat him, that gourd wouldn't pose a threat to me anymore... the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix thought.

In its view, the Dongxu Gourd was reminiscent of what the Northern Sea Dragon Orb was to the Serpentine Dragon. It was an artifact specially prepared to curb its flames.

But no matter how powerful an artifact was, it was still a lifeless being. As long as it was able to defeat its owner, the artifact would be of no threat to it at all.

With such thoughts in mind, it flapped its wings and glided down toward Zhang Xuan, swiping its sharp talons toward him.

Si la!

As if ripped curtains, the sharp talons tore huge lacerations through space.

[1] A dozen zhang: ~40 meters

2012 Elder Liao's Reques

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“Ah...”

It was beyond Zhang Xuan's imagination that the Dongxu Gourd would actually be so powerful. At this moment, he was rooted to the spot as his mind struggled to make sense out of what had just happened.

He had really intended to fight a battle with the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, but each time he drove his Gods' Sword Intent, the battle would be interrupted somehow... Before he could even test his strength, his opponent was already lying on the ground fearfully.

“Hehehe!”

Having defeated the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, the Dongxu Gourd slit an opening on its body, causing its blood to spurt out like a fountain. Then, it devoured the blood happily.

“What are you doing?”

Feeling that it was growing weaker and weaker as blood seeped out of its body, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix's fear intensified. It tried to rise, but the Dongxu Gourd sitting above it was like a mountain pinning it to the ground. It was not able to move at all.

“Be good and stay still. I'll just drink for a bit.” The Dongxu Gourd shook its bottom as it drank large gulps of the Nineheaded Fiery Phoenix's blood.

Blood swiftly drained from the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix's body, such that it felt as if it would die from excessive blood loss at any moment. Unable to take it anymore, it turned to Zhang Xuan and exclaimed, “I'll acknowledge you as my master!”

It had no other choice.

It was a haughty existence, but it had never met such a bizarre gourd before. This was more frightening than anything it had ever gone through.

Not only was the gourd able to devour its flames, it was even gulping down its blood.

If it did not submit to the middle-aged man at this point, it would likely end up as a withered bird carcass on the ground.

Under any other circumstances, it might have adamantly stood its ground in view of its pride. However, thinking about how the strongest of their group, the Serpentine Dragon, had already submitted to the middle-aged man, it felt like it would not be that big a deal if it acknowledged the other party as its master.

“You wish to acknowledge me as your master?” Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly.

It had planned on using the Beast Pummeling Taming Method to force it to submit to him within thirty breaths, but now, it felt like everything had simply happened without him lifting a finger at all.

“Dongxu Gourd, stop what you’re doing.” Zhang Xuan walked up and ordered the Dongxu Gourd.

“Burp!” The Dongxu Gourd suddenly belched. “Master, I’ll go and digest it.”

After saying those words, the Dongxu Gourd vanished from sight. The next moment, it was already in Zhang Xuan’s dantian, snoring loudly as it slept.

Seeing how this fellow was still as unreliable as always, Zhang Xuan shook his head. With a tap of his finger, he sealed the Soul Contract with the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix.

After dealing with two beasts in quick succession, Zhang Xuan turned to the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger in the sky and asked, “What about you?”

The Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

It was only ranked third on the Ascendant Cloud Mountain. In terms of fighting prowess, it could not even begin to compare to the powerful Serpentine Dragon and Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix. Yet, those two did not even last a minute before they were tamed. What was it supposed to do in a situation like that?

Should it submit to the middle-aged man? Should it not submit?

If it did not submit, it was likely that it might end up getting floored like those two. After witnessing how the Nineheaded Fiery Phoenix had been pinned to the ground and drained of its blood, it had no wish to see it happening to itself too. If there was a choice, it would not want to be embarrassed in front of all of its subordinates in such a manner!

The Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger eventually made up its mind and said, "You used the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon to tame the Serpentine Dragon, and you subdued the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix through an artifact... I would like to have a proper battle with you using our true strength. If you can defeat me in a proper battle, I'll submit to you."

You wish to have a proper battle with me? That's fine by me!"

Relieved that he was finally getting some action, Zhang Xuan leaped into the sky. With a slash of his sword, the Gods' Sword Intent that had been bottling up in his body for quite a while was released like a raging current.

There was no sword afterimage or blur. The Tongshang Sword simply appeared right before the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger.

Puhe!

Before it knew it, the two fangs that protruded from the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger's mouth were sliced apart, and fresh blood spurted from its nose.

"I surrender! I'll acknowledge you as my master!"

Facing such a frightening sight, the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger felt cold sweat drenching its fur coat. It immediately lowered itself subserviently.

It had thought that the young man was someone who relied only on unorthodox means, but who could have known that his swordsmanship would actually be so formidable?

If it had not surrendered quick enough, putting aside its teeth, it might have lost its head.

The Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger was not the only one surprised by the situation. Even the Serpentine Dragon and the Nine-tailed Fiery Phoenix gulped in fright.

Honestly, they had felt a little indignant at having to submit to Zhang Xuan just like that. After all, the other party had only subdued them through the Eight Notes of the Heavenly Dragon and a particularly powerful gourd, so they did not think that the other party would really be powerful.

However, after watching this sight, they realized that even if the other party did not rely on anything else, they would still not be a match for him in terms of sheer strength!

That earlier sword was simply too powerful and profound, so they could not fathom themselves withstanding its might. Hu!

The Isolation Formation finally dissipated.

Thirty breaths were up!

“He has tamed all three of the immortal beasts?”

“How long did he take in total?”

Seeing how even the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger had submitted to him too, Elder Liao and the others became frenzied.

They were the top elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall, grandmasters of beast taming...

And those that had gone there with them were candidates in line for the position of hall master.

Yet, one team had ended up getting completely obliterated, and Elder Yuan had been lured away by the White-eared Fox, completely unaware that he was the one who was being played like a fool.

On the other hand, the middle-aged man had actually tamed the three immortal beasts in quick succession just like that.

It was as if he was the one from the Myriad Beasts Hall instead! They felt like they were still utterly lacking on the path of beast taming compared to the other party.

At that moment, all the beast tamers felt a suffocating sensation in their chests as they simply stared at the situation before them with mouths agape.

It was a while before Elder Liao could speak again. “The hall master once said that regardless of whether it’s Elder Yuan or Elder Liu, whoever manages to tame one of the four immortal beasts first will be qualified to inherit his position. However, now that one has been killed and the other one is still getting toyed with by the White-eared Fox, how do we report this matter to the hall master?”

“The main reason the hall master came up with this problem was to test their proficiency in beast taming and their strength. Those two factors are necessary if they wish to earn the support of the others in the sect. It’s clear that Elder Yuan and Elder Liu have already failed the trial. If anything, it’s this middle-aged man who has cleared the trial,” another elder replied in a hushed voice.

“What do you mean by that?”

Elder Liao and the others quickly turned their gazes over.

“What I’m thinking is that if this middle-aged man doesn’t have a sect yet, we can recruit him into the Myriad Beasts Hall. As long as he becomes one of our elders, given his superior beast taming skills and fighting prowess that can subdue a Heavenly High Immortal beast despite only being at the Heavenly True Immortal realm himself... I believe that no one will dare question his credentials to become our hall master!” the elder said.

“This...”

The crowd fell silent.

It was unprecedented for an outsider to be nominated to become their next hall master, but after witnessing everything,

they had no choice but to earnestly consider such a course of action.

The Myriad Beasts Hall was known for its superiority in beast taming, but this middle-aged man was easily able to outdo all of them. Even their hall master would pale in comparison to him!

If such a figure did not join their Myriad Beasts Hall, it would be a huge threat to them. If this middle-aged man simply joined any other sect or even established a sect of his own, the Myriad Beasts Hall could very well lose its standing on the Forsaken Continent.

You're right. We have to bring him into our Myriad Beasts Hall." Elder Liao nodded.

The others replied in agreement.

Having made such a judgement, Elder Liao was just about to approach the middle-aged man and propose something when the latter suddenly turned to them and said, "I have already tamed these beasts. They won't make a move on you anymore, so you are free to leave... But before you leave, there's something that I would have to trouble you for."

You have saved our lives, so feel free to make any request of us. As long as it's within our means, we won't turn you down!" Elder Liao bowed deeply.

Putting everything aside, it was a fact that this middle-aged man was their savior. If not for him, they would have ended up getting tortured to death by those three immortal beasts.

It was only right for them to repay the favor.

"I am a humble and low-profile person, so I don't wish to cause a huge fuss. Thus, I hope that you'll keep whatever has happened here a secret after you leave," Zhang Xuan said.

He had used the Gods' Sword Intent earlier and tamed the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger within a single move. Of course, he had made sure to conceal the aura of the Gods' Sword Intent, such that it was impossible to see through it easily. However, if rumors started spreading, it would not take long for the masses to draw the link.

Once the Hall of Gods caught wind of the news, danger would swiftly strike him once more. He knew that he was not fully prepared to deal with the Hall of Gods just yet.

Thus, he could only hope for those people not to spread the word around.

“This...”

The crowd had been wondering what the request would be when they heard those words, and they immediately nodded in approval.

If anyone else had tamed one of the four immortal beasts of Ascendant Cloud Mountain, they probably would have bragged about the matter for years, as if they would not rest till the whole world learned about the feat.

In contrast, this middle-aged man had tamed three of them, but he did not show the slightest complacency at all.

This low profile and steady personality was truly worthy of respect!

“May I know how I should address you?” Elder Liao asked curiously.

“I am Zh...” Zhang Xuan was just about to reveal his name when he realized that there was a good chance that the Hall of Gods had already learned of his true identity. Thus, he quickly changed his words and said, “... Zheng Yang.”

This was the first name that popped into his mind.

“So, it’s Brother Zheng Yang!”

Elder Liao’s mind swiftly churned as he tried to recall if he had heard this name anywhere else, but nothing came to mind. Unable to suppress his curiosity, he asked, “Brother Zheng, may I know which sect you are studying under at the moment?”

The first thing they should do was understand the other party’s background before proposing anything.

Zhang Xuan shook his head. “I am an unaffiliated cultivator.”

He was a core elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but due to his unique identity, it would not be convenient for him to reveal that. Not to mention, it would be meaningless if he assumed a traceable identity.

If the Myriad Beasts Hall started looking into the matter, he would only draw their suspicion more instead. Since that was the case, he might as well introduce himself as an unaffiliated cultivator.

In any case, there were many sword practitioners in the Azure. Even the experts of the Hall of Gods were equipped with swords. Besides, there were plenty of unaffiliated cultivators out there who were exceptionally proficient in the Way of the Sword, so his story was not completely impossible.

“Unaffiliated cultivator?”

On the other hand, the eyes of Elder Liao and the others lit up upon hearing those words.

If the middle-aged man had been from some other sect, it would have been inappropriate for them to try recruiting him. However, since he was an unaffiliated cultivator, there was no such issue.

This was an opportunity to join the Myriad Beasts Hall and even become their hall master. They believed that the middle-aged man would not turn down such an invaluable opportunity.

“Indeed.” Zhang Xuan nodded. “So, regarding the matter I requested earlier...”

“Brother Zheng, you need not worry. Since you have asked us not to talk about it, there’s no way we’ll expose the matter. It’s just that...” Elder Liao paused a little at this point.

“Just what?”

“Even if we don’t talk about this matter, it’s impossible to conceal the fact that three of the four immortal beasts of the Ascendant Cloud Mountain have been tamed. Once news starts spreading, people might learn that it was an outsider instead of the elders of the Myriad Beasts Hall who succeeded,

and that could cause quite the uproar,” Elder Liao replied awkwardly.

“What do you propose then?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

What the other party said made sense.

The Myriad Beasts Hall was the number one beast tamer sect in the world. Despite many years of preparation and dispatching so many elders, they had ended up returning in defeat. Instead, an outsider was the one who had tamed the immortal beasts.

How were they to explain this matter to their sect?

“Brother Zheng, would you be interested in following us to the Myriad Beasts Hall for a while? We’ll introduce you as one of our elders and show the three immortal beasts before everyone else. I know that it sounds a little counterintuitive, but this is the best way to avoid an uproar,” Elder Liao explained.

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“This...” Zhang Xuan didn't expect to hear such a request. He hesitated for a brief moment before replying, “To be honest with you, I'm intending to head north. There's something which I am rushing in time for...”

“Brother Zheng, it'll only take a little while. It won't delay you by too long... Besides, the Myriad Beasts Hall is also located north of here. It won't be too much of a detour,” Elder Liao said.

“If... I were to follow you back to the Myriad Beasts Hall in the capacity of an honorary elder, could I be so impudent as to request access to your elders' library? To be honest, I'm deeply interested in browsing through your sect's book collection in order to clarify some doubts in my cultivation,” Zhang Xuan asked.

As one of the Six Sects, the Myriad Beasts Hall should have a sizeable collection of cultivation technique manuals as well. If he could just pay a visit to their library, he might be able to gather more High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals, thus taking another step further to the completion of the Heaven's Path Divine Art.

The aim of his journey was to reach High Immortal realm anyway, and if this short detour would help him achieve his aim, it would be a good opportunity to go along with them.

Besides, he would have to acquire a few tamed beast sacks too. It would be as if he was begging to be noticed if the three immortal beasts were to follow him like that!

“Of course! As an honorary elder of our Myriad Beasts Hall, you are entitled to the same privileges as any other one of our elders. We'll provide you with free tamed beast sacks too so

that you can bring the three immortal beasts around with you conveniently. Not only so, on the grounds that you have successfully tamed three of the four immortal beasts, there is a good chance that you could be nominated to become our next hall master!” Elder Liao said with a light chuckle.

“I’d really appreciate the free tamed beast sacks, but as for the position of the hall master, I’m afraid that I’ll have to refuse,” Zhang Xuan replied.

He had no plans on settling down in the Azure. His main goal here was to find Luo Ruoxin, so anything aside from that was unnecessary. The reason why he had wanted to become the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion previously was in hopes that he would be able to tap into its influence, but that had proven to be an extremely risky move. It had brought the attention of the Hall of Gods upon him.

The more high profile he was, the more conspicuous of a target he would be to the Hall of Gods. Thus, he didn’t think that it would be wise of him to expose himself any more than this.

Hearing those words, Elder Liao frowned.

He didn’t expect the other party to be interested in a relatively inexpensive tamed beast sack, only to think nothing of becoming the leader of one of the Six Sects...

Wouldn’t the other party be able to acquire whatever he wanted if he were to become the hall master?

“We can discuss the details later on,” Elder Liao said with an awkward smile.

The matter was just a suggestion that the lot of them had come up with so far. The only one who had the power to make the final decision was the hall master. All they could do was to bring the middle-aged man over to their sect.

After coming to an agreement, Elder Liao and the others quickly focused on recuperating from their injuries. They had sustained severe injuries under the assault of the three immortal beasts earlier.

As for Zhang Xuan, he turned his attention to the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix to examine the latter's injuries.

There were nine huge bumps on its heads due to the consecutive strikes by the Dongxu Gourd. At the same time, its body appeared to be a little withered, and fresh blood was still trickling out from the deep cut it was inflicted with.

Given that the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix had already submitted to him, Zhang Xuan was obliged to treat its injuries. Thus, he took out a jade bottle and passed it over, "Drink this."

In case of emergency, he had made sure to prepare several more bottles of the gourd's bathwater prior to setting off.

The Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix unhesitatingly drank the water in the jade bottle, and in just a few moments, it had already fully recovered from its injuries. In fact, it appeared to be more energetic than before.

"Thank you, master," the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix replied in agitation.

Using its strongest Nine-headed Flame Breath had taken a toll on its body, and it had lost quite a bit of blood essence to the gourd earlier. Given the severity of its injuries, it thought that it would take at least a decade or so in order to recover back to its peak. Yet, who could have thought that a couple of clear water would actually bring it back to full health within moments...

This further affirmed its choice of acknowledging the man standing before it as its master.

"Call the White-eared Fox back," Zhang Xuan instructed.

"Yes!"

The Serpentine Dragon rose into the sky and roared ferociously, causing the ground to tremor ceaselessly,

Following that, the crowd saw the pair of human and 'dragon' returning back to the surface. Elder Yuan was still driving the Dragon Orb around, and sweat could be seen trickling down his forehead.

It was apparent that even up to this point, Elder Yuan hadn't realized that the 'Serpentine Dragon' he had been teasing was a fake.

"W-what? How is it possible that there's another Serpentine Dragon here?" Elder Yuan was stunned when he saw the real Serpentine Dragon.

Paying no heed to the astonished Elder Yuan, the Serpentine Dragon said, "White-eared Fox, the rest of us have already submitted to our master. What do you intend to do now?"

You have submitted to him?"

The White-eared Fox was stunned. Its figure swiftly morphed from that of a Serpentine Dragon to a massive gray fox. Despite being gray from head to toe, it had an eye-catching pair of snowy white ears. This was also probably where its name had come from as well.

The White-eared Fox contemplated deeply for a moment before lowering its back deeply, "I am willing to submit to him as well."

Three of the four immortal beasts ruling over the Ascendant Cloud Mountain had already submitted. Given that it was the weakest of them all and its illusion had already been exposed, there was no way it would stand a chance against the others.

Rather than to be killed, it might as well pledge its loyalty to the same master as well.

As the White-eared Fox submitted to Zhang Xuan as well, Elder Yuan finally came to realize what was going on, and he fell into a daze.

He thought he would be able to tame the Serpentine Dragon without any trouble, especially since he had devoted thirty whole years into making preparations for this single moment. Who could have thought that a single White-eared Fox would be able to foil all of his efforts...

More importantly, within this short period of time, this 'Zheng Yang' had already managed to tame the other three immortal beasts, thus becoming the biggest winner of this mission.

“What is more important than incentivizing the beast you intend to tame is to win its respect. The Northern Sea Dragon Orb and Dragon Blood you have prepared are indeed useful artifacts, but if you wish to truly win the respect of the beast you have tamed, you’ll have to prove yourself to it,” Zhang Xuan said.

One of the reasons why his Beast Pummeling Taming Method worked time and time again was because it proved his superiority in strength!

Treasures and the sort were just material possessions. They could be used to accrue goodwill with one’s tamed beast, but a relationship built solely upon goodwill was fragile. Ultimately, one would still have to prove his strength in order to take a dominant position in the relationship, or else there was no guarantee that one would be able to retain control over one’s beast!

“I understand... Brother Zheng, thank you for your guidance!”

Elder Yuan was one of the top geniuses of the Myriad Beasts Hall, or else he wouldn’t have become one of the candidates to become the hall master despite his young age. Zhang Xuan’s words had really opened his eyes to a very simple fact.

The Myriad Beasts Hall couldn’t compete with the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion in the field of swordsmanship, it was beneath the Starchaser Palace in the field of soul arts, its finances couldn’t match the Sevenstar Pavilion, and its movement arts were elementary compared to the Evanescent Immortal Sect...

All it had was its beast taming. For this reason, its disciples took pride in being able to tame beasts stronger than them. Such a mindset was ingrained so deeply in their mindset that none of them questioned it.

However, now that he looked back on it, it was utterly wrong.

The very foundation of a beast tamer was not his tamed beast but his cultivation. A tamed beast was only an auxiliary mean to enhance the fighting prowess of a beast tamer...

Elder Yuan had devoted thirty years of his life making preparations to tame the Serpentine Dragon, and the resources he had spent on it was unimaginable too... If he had devoted his time and resources to his cultivation instead, he would have been much stronger than he was at the moment. Everything wouldn't have ended up in futility.

“Let's go!”

Since their work here was done, the group swiftly packed up and began making their way back to the Myriad Beasts Hall.

Zhang Xuan felt that their speed of travel was too slow, and he got all of them onto the Serpentine Beast and proceeded swiftly ahead.

Three days later, the Myriad Beasts Hall finally came into view.

In terms of scale, the Myriad Beasts Hall paled nowhere in comparison to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. The entrance to the sect was a massive dragon head, and the buildings beyond formed the scales of the dragon. These buildings stretched on for hundreds of li, forming the body and tail of the dragon.

Looking at it from afar, the entire Myriad Beasts Hall looked like a living dragon that was prowling along the mountain range, biding its time before it soared into the vast sky once more.

Zhang Xuan had to admit that this was truly an impressive work of art. Even before entering the sect, the imposing presence of the sect would have already induced deference in the hearts of the visitors.

“How magnificent!” Zhang Xuan remarked as he looked upon the sight from the top of the Serpentine Dragon.

He couldn't help but recall how impressed he was when he first caught sight of the massive mountain gate and humongous sword located at the entrance of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. It seemed like none of the Six Sects were to be trifled with.

“It’s said that the founder of the Myriad Beasts Hall had managed to tame a Pseudo Dragon back in his time. All of these buildings were built in the era of the founder, and they were constructed to resemble the body of the Pseudo Dragon. As a result of that, the sect carries the imposing authority of the Dragon Tribe. Any beasts who come near the Myriad Beasts Hall would feel innate deference and dare not to wreak havoc,” Elder Liao explained solemnly.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

The Dragon Tribe was known as the Sovereign of the Beasts. Buildings that were built in imitation of their form would naturally gather Dragon Energy over time, inducing deference in the other beasts.

“Brother Zheng, you can rest here for the time being. I’ll report the incident to the hall master first,” Elder Liao led Zhang Xuan to a posh residence before clasping his fist and bidding farewell.

Since he was already here, Zhang Xuan decided to take a brief respite too. After the crowd from the Myriad Beasts Hall left, he instructed the four immortal beasts to take a rest outside before entering the residence.

He pondered for a brief moment before bringing the Dongxu Gourd out from his dantian.

“How are you feeling?”

Ever since this fellow had absorbed the flames and blood essence of the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, it had gone completely quiet. Over the past three days, there had been no movements from it at all.

“It seems like the blood essence from that bird is still lacking. I still need more energy...” the Dongxu Gourd sighed helplessly.

“You still need more energy? What’s going on?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

“As you know, I am a legendary beast who once ruled...” the Dongxu Gourd began on its long-winded story once more.

“That’s enough,” Zhang Xuan interjected sharply. “I know that you used to be very powerful. What I want to know is how did you end up getting sealed in your current body!”

Given how this fellow was able to devour High Immortal-tier swords and defeat the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix with ease, its prowess was really not to be underestimated.

What that had left Zhang Xuan perplexed was why the Dongxu Gourd would appear in the Master Teacher Continent in the first place. Given its prowess, it was apparent that it was a being that belonged to the Azure or the Firmament even.

Also, how did it end up in such a state?

“I have no idea either. My memories are a little hazy. I was already in a Dongxu Gourd when I woke up. My instincts tells me that I’ll only recover my memories once I return back to my full strength,” the Dongxu Gourd said.

Seeing how it was futile to get anything out of this fellow, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and said, “Forget it. Why don’t you tell me what do you need in order for you to break free of your current form instead?”

“The amount of energy I have gathered still isn’t sufficient for me to break free of my shell yet... However, if you could just feed me some Superior Immortal Pills, I just might be able to do it,” the Dongxu Gourd said.

“Superior Immortal Pills? How many do you need?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

He did have some Superior Immortal Pills on hand, but he didn’t have too many of it.

He had intended to acquire a hundred of them back when he paid a visit to the Wuhai City Ethereal Hall.

Unfortunately, the Ethereal Hall didn’t have enough supply to meet his demand, so he could only make do with what they had on hand. That being said, the Ethereal Hall promised to gather the remaining amount, and they would hold another transaction a few days later.

However, the assassination from the Hall of Gods happened right after that, and he was forced to leave the city in such a huge hurry that he hadn't managed to claim them yet.

Of the Superior Immortal Pills he had received, he had used quite a few of them himself, and he had given a couple of them to Bai Ruanqing and Dan Xiaotian for their cultivation too. As such, he only had five of them left in his possession.

He was intending to use them for the breakthrough of his soul cultivation, but if the Dongxu Gourd needed it, he had no qualms about giving them to it instead.

With the token which Kong shi had given him, gathering sufficient cultivation resources was no longer an issue to him anymore. As long as there was an Ethereal Hall nearby, he would be able to acquire almost anything he needed.

"I need roughly two hundred Superior Immortal Pills," the Dongxu Gourd said.

"Two hundred Superior Immortal Pills?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

He seemed to have underestimated the Dongxu Gourd's appetite yet again.

Even a major city like Wuhai City could only bring out twenty Superior Immortal Pills in a moment's time, but you are actually telling me you need two hundred of them...

Where do you expect me to find that many Superior Immortal Pills for you?

"I'll only become more and more indebted to Kong shi at this rate," Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella helplessly.

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There was no denying the Dongxu Gourd's strength. In any case, it would surely prove to be an invaluable fighting force if he could help it to break free of its seal.

Since Kong shi had given him a token that allowed him to acquire as many cultivation resources as he required, it shouldn't matter how much he took from the Ethereal Hall.

Superior Immortal Pills might be rare, but as long as he were to make the request, the Ethereal Hall would still gather the amount he demanded.

It was just that it would be slightly more troublesome.

However, it's probably impossible to use that token within the Myriad Beasts Hall... Zhang Xuan thought.

He figured that it was likely that the Myriad Beasts Hall would have its own 'local Ethereal Hall' as well, similar to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. The token which Kong shi had given him couldn't be used here.

It seemed like he would have to drop by a larger city after leaving the Myriad Beasts Hall.

There are simply too many things that I need to do. I'll have to move on quickly after I browse through the books here...

Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

While Zhang Xuan was still questioning the Dongxu Gourd, Elder Liao and the others had already arrived at the Myriad Beasts Hall's Elder Council.

"Hall Master Qin!"

Standing right in front of them was a middle-aged man who appeared to be in his early forties. Despite his seemingly young appearance, he emanated an aura of atrophy, reminiscent of one who had lived for a very long time.

“The beast core of the Eternal Youth Beast allows me to retain my youthful appearance, but my body is more honest than how I look. Given the severe injuries I have accumulated over the years, I’d only have another five more years to go before I succumb,” Hall Master Qin sighed deeply.

Turning to Elder Liao and the others, he asked, “How did it go? Are the results out yet? Who is the victor? Is it Yuan Zhou or Liu Ran who succeeded?”

Yuan Zhou was the one who had the Northern Sea Dragon Orb but was played like a fool by the White-eared Fox whereas Liu Ran was the elder who had been killed by the alliance of the three immortal beasts.

If not for his lifespan coming to an end, he wouldn’t be in such a rush to find a successor either, going to the extent of proposing such a dangerous trial.

“Hall Master Qin, neither of them succeeded!”

Elder Liao swiftly explained everything that had happened earlier.

“The unaffiliated cultivator known as Zheng Yang managed to tame the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger within two short minutes? And despite that, his cultivation is only at Heavenly True Immortal realm?” Hall Master Qin was bewildered by what he was hearing.

“That’s right,” Elder Liao replied with a nod. “Elder Yuan and Elder Liu have made a move personally, and many of us have followed along to assist the two of them, but even so, we still ended up sustaining huge losses... If news were to spread, it would surely be a huge blow to the Myriad Beasts Hall’s prestige. Thus, I invited Zheng Yang back to our sect. I was thinking that as long as we acknowledge him as one of our sect elders, not only would there be no harm to our reputation, it might even bring greater prestige to our sect!”

“I understand what you mean.” With a nod of his head, Hall Master Qin rose to his feet and began pacing around the room. “Due to my lifespan coming to an end, the Myriad Beasts Hall

has been in a weakened position compared to the rest of the Six Sects. The sect needs a young and powerful leader to lead it forward. If Zheng Yang is really as formidable as you put him out to be, I won't oppose to him becoming my successor.

“Not too long ago, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has announced that Han Jianqiu has stepped down as the sect leader, passing down his seat to a young man known as Zhang Xuan. As long as there's a suitable candidate, I don't mind giving up my position either. However, I would like to test him first.”

“Hall Master Qin, are you worrying that he might be from the Hall of Gods?” Elder Liao asked.

“The Hall of Gods has always taken on a lofty position on the Forsaken Continent, choosing to steer clear of conflicts and political struggles as long as it didn't touch on their bottom line. But for some reason, it has been showing ambitions of wanting to annex the Six Sects in recent years. I think that it's better for us to be cautious,” Hall Master Qin replied.

“I understand, Hall Master Qin. How do you intend to test him?” Elder Liao asked.

“Bring him to be Atrium of Myriad Beasts to meet the old ancestor. The old ancestor is particularly sensitive toward those from the Hall of Gods, so it should be able to see through him right away,” Hall Master Qin nodded.

“Understood. I'll have it done, Hall Master Qin!” Elder Liao replied.

The old ancestor that Hall Master Qin spoke of was a Blue Infernal Beast, and it was the tamed beast of the 17th Hall Master. It was nowhere close to being the strongest beast in the history of the Myriad Beasts Hall, but it was known to possessed spirituality unrivaled by any.

Those from the Hall of Gods usually emanated a unique aura that the Blue Infernal Beast was able to discern them by.

“As long as he isn't from the Hall of Gods, his capability in beast taming is enough for him to become the next hall master. Once he manages to reach Heavenly High Immortal realm, he

might be able to tame even stronger beasts. By then, our Myriad Beasts Hall wouldn't have to worry about being overshadowed by the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. The next time I meet Han Jianqiu once more, I would be able to tell him proudly that our Myriad Beasts Hall is filled with capable talents a well!" Hall Master Qin clenched his fists tightly.

Nodding in agreement, Elder Liao bade his farewell and backed out of the room. Two hours later, he returned with a conflicted expression on his face.

"How is it?" Hall Master Qin asked.

"I have heeded your instructions and brought Zheng Yang over to the Atrium of Myriad Beasts. However..." As Elder Liao recalled what he had witnessed earlier, his eyelids just couldn't stop twitching.

"However? Did the old ancestor say that he's from the Hall of Gods?"

"To be honest, I don't really know. The old ancestor made a huge fuss about wanting to acknowledge Zheng Yang as its master, and we had to drag it out in order to stop it from doing so..." Elder Liao said awkwardly.

"The old ancestor wanted to acknowledge him as its master?" Hall Master Qin was stunned.

"That's not all... As you know, the Atrium of Beasts Hall is where most of the beasts of our sect reside. After Zheng Yang took a short look around the area, there are already three hundred sage beasts and twelve immortal beasts that are intent on acknowledging him as their master. This matter has caused a huge uproar in the sect, and many elders are dissatisfied with it..." Elder Liao reported as he pinched his nose bridge in distress.

"Those beasts want to acknowledge him as their master? What's going on over here? I only told you to bring him over to the Atrium of Myriad Beasts, right? Why are those beasts acting in such a manner?" Hall Master Qin was a little overwhelmed by what he was hearing as well.

It should have just been a simple identity verification, but why would such a huge mess be stirred up within a short span of two hours?

The reason why the Myriad Beasts Hall was able to rise to the position as one of the Six Sects was because every single one of the elders, core disciples, and inner disciples had a tamed beast each. Through the tight coordination of the beast tamer and tamed beast, they had a decisive advantage over peers who were at the same cultivation realm as them.

If the beasts of the sect were to all submit to a single person, wouldn't the very foundation that made the Myriad Beasts Hall strong in the first place collapse?

This mustn't be allowed to happen!

“When the old ancestor heard that Zheng Yang was able to tame the Serpentine Dragon and the others within two short minutes, he scoffed at the story, thinking that it was a fib. Thus, he ordered the sage beasts and immortal beasts in the area to encircle Zheng Yang and teach him a lesson... I swiftly moved to stop them, but my strength was limited. Then, before I knew it, the situation has already become like that...”

Recalling everything that had happened earlier, Elder Liao was on the verge of bursting into tears. It was not as if he didn't want to stop the mess from happening, but what could he do against the old ancestor and hundreds of beasts?

And that Zheng Yang was even more of a monster. Despite facing so many opponents at once, he actually managed to floor all of them in less than three minutes... That wasn't all. It would be one thing if Zheng Yang was powerful, but as it turned out, all of the beasts which he had pummeled suddenly began groveling before him like a loyal lapdog, insisting on acknowledging him as their master...

Even the old ancestor was no exception to the rule either!

That was the tamed beast of a predecessor many generations before them... If the old ancestor were to acknowledge Zheng Yang as its master, what would become of their seniority?

It would be as if they had become his grand-grand-grand-grand... grand disciple all of a sudden!

His heart wouldn't be able to take it if he had to change from addressing the other party from 'Brother Zheng' to 'Old Ancestor Zheng' all of a sudden!

Hall Master Qin also didn't expect so many things to happen within two short hours. With a sharp intake of breath, he said grimly, "Bring me to him. I would like to meet him in person!"

...

"What a bother!"

Zhang Xuan looked at the massive congregation of beasts before him with a conflicted look on his face,

Elder Liao came by earlier to bring him over to what Atrium of Myriad Beasts. But shortly after he arrived at the destination, he suddenly came under the assault of these beasts.

In order to protect himself, he could only beat all of these fellows up. Then, before he knew it... all of them had already submitted to him!

It sure was hard to maintain a low profile!

But that being said, the matter that was bugging his mind at the moment was that he still had no idea what Elder Liao was up to.

Did the other party bring here to tame these beasts? But he already had the Serpentine Dragon and the others, so he didn't need these weaklings!

"All of you should disperse. I already have my tamed beasts, and I have no intention of accepting any more!"

If he were to tame all of these beasts too, he would pretty much be escorted by an army wherever he went. If so, how could he remain discreet?

The Hall of Gods would have come knocking before he could even get far!

“Even if you don’t accept them, you should at least accept me. My cultivation has already reached High Immortal realm. While my fighting prowess is nowhere on par with that of the Serpentine Dragon and the others, I am blessed with extreme spiritual sensitivity at birth. I have a sharp sense for danger, and I can warn you in advance!” the Blue Infernal Beast said with a smile as it walked over.

Zhang Xuan fell into deep thoughts upon hearing those words.

It was just as what the other party had said. Even though its cultivation was only at Lesser High Immortal, its senses were indeed extraordinarily sharp. It was able to move in advance to dodge the brunt of his attacks in advance in the face-off earlier. It would indeed be a valuable ally.

Very well, I’ll accept you as my tamed beast,” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Just as he was just about to seal the Soul Contract, a middle-aged man suddenly rushed into the room and called out, “Brother Zheng, please wait for a moment!”

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze over.

Following behind the middle-aged man was Elder Liao, and he quickly introduced, “Brother Zheng, this person over here is Hall Master Qin Yuan, the sect leader of the Myriad Beasts Hall!”

Nodding slightly, Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and greeted, “Paying respects to Hall Master Qin!”

“Brother Zheng, there’s no need for you to be so formal with me,” Hall Master Qin replied with a smile. “I have heard of your exploits from Elder Liao, and I am deeply in awe of your beast taming skills.”

As the leader of the Myriad Beasts Hall, there was hardly anyone in the Forsaken Continent who could compete with him in the field of beast taming. He thought that he had already reached the zenith in the field, but when he saw the middle-aged man before him, he realized that he still had a long way to go.

His prided beast taming skills were nothing much compared to that of the middle-aged man before him... They weren't worth a mention at all!

Initially, he thought that Elder Liao had exaggerated the matter quite a bit, but after witnessing the sight before him, he realized that he had been severely underestimating the capabilities of this Zheng Yang.

Several hundred beasts submitting to a single person simultaneously...

Even in the long history of the Myriad Beasts Hall, there had never been a single person who had accomplished such an illustrious feat before.

“Beast taming is actually not as complicated as many think it out to be,” Zhang Xuan remarked.

“It would be my delight to listen to Brother Zheng’s words of wisdom,” Hall Master Qin clasped his fist in response.

“Just like humans, beasts are beings with pride and dignity, and they should be treated as so too...” Zhang Xuan said slowly.

If he were to claim that he was the number two beast tamer on the Master Teacher Continent, there would be no one who would dare claim himself to be number one, not unless he wished to be beaten to death.

Seeing that the two of them were interested in listening to his teaching, his instincts as a teacher kicked up, and before he knew it, he was already lecturing them.

After listening to Zhang Xuan’s words for a moment, incredulity could be seen reflected in the depths of Hall Master Qin’s eyes.

He had studied the Way of Beast Taming for many years, and he had never thought it would be possible to interpret the art in such a manner. It was as if a brand new world had opened before him, bringing his understanding of beast taming to a whole new level.

Some time later, Elder Liao couldn't help but sent a telepathic message over, "Hall Master Qin, do you think that Zheng Yang is qualified to become the next sect leader?"

"Of course!" Hall Master Qin replied in agitation

The very fact that the old ancestor was willing to take Zheng Yang as its master showed that the latter wasn't from the Hall of Gods. On top of that, the latter had shown that he had unique insights regarding beast taming, and if his insights could be compiled and passed down to the later generations, it would surely bring the average capability of the beast tamers in the sect to higher grounds!

Given so, there was no doubt that this middle-aged man was the most suitable candidate to succeed him as the next hall master!

With such thoughts in mind, Hall Master Qin looked at the middle-aged man before him and asked with a quivering voice, "Brother Zheng, would you be interested to become the hall master and take charge of the entire Myriad Beasts Hall?"

"You want me to become the hall master?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

"I have only been here for two hours, but the current hall master was already asking me if I want to take his position..."

"Are the sects in the Azure so loose about the succession of leadership?"

2015 Double Kill

Back at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he had to slowly rise through the ranks, starting from pummeling the inner disciples before moving on to the core disciples, then the elders, and finally the sect leader. Despite moving along the conventional path with his swordsmanship, he was only given the position of a ‘potential successor’ instead of the ‘sect leader’ position...

On the other hand, he had only arrived at the Myriad Beasts Hall for two hours so far, but before he could make sense of what was going on here, he was already offered the position as the next hall master...

Was this some kind of new prank that cultivators played on one another in the Forsaken Continent?

This was one of the Six Sects they were talking about here! They were selecting a sect leader over here, not cabbages for dinner!

Or could it be that this Hall Master Qin actually had some sort of tragic history with the sect, so the other party wanted to destroy this wretched place of misery through his hands or something?

Otherwise, he could only conclude that this bunch of people were fools who could trust even an outsider to lead them!

If not for the fact that he had seen how majestic the entire place was, he would have really thought that he might have stepped into the headquarters of a multilevel marketing company!

“Indeed,” Hall Master Qin nodded earnestly as he looked at Zhang Xuan with intense eyes.

After meeting ‘Zheng Yang’ in person, he was certain that there was no one more suited to become the hall master than him.

An organization as large as the Myriad Beasts Hall was bound to already have all of its administrative processes down, so there was no need for the leader to be too involved in the day-to-day administration of the sect. There were elders who were specially assigned to handle those matters. When it came to major issues, there was the Elder Council whose primary purpose was to confer over strategic decisions.

To put it bluntly, the position of the sect leader was similar to that of a living mascot. They served to unite the sect members together as one and instill fear and deterrence in the enemies. Of course, it would be a huge blessing if a capable man were to become the sect leader, but otherwise, the sect would be able to function properly even without if the sect leader wasn't present.

Given so, someone who possessed superior beast taming skills like Zheng Yang would be the ideal candidate. If he could pass down his knowledge, the overall fighting prowess of the sect could be brought to greater heights.

On the other hand, seeing the earnest look on Sect Leader Qin's face, Zhang Xuan realized that he wasn't being pranked over here. There was no value in pranking him either.

He didn't rush into giving an answer, choosing to ponder carefully over the matter for a while before finally giving a response, "There are pressing matters which I have to attend to. I'll have to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars very soon, so I fear that I won't be able to remain here for too long. Furthermore, I'm completely ignorant about the management of a sect..."

He had taken on many leadership positions in the past, such as the principle of the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy and the head of the Zhang Clan, but he had never involved himself in its administration before. There were always people there to manage those matters for him. Thus, his efforts had always been directed toward his cultivation.

To be honest, he wasn't sure if he could really handle the troubles that came along with being the sect leader.

In response to that, Hall Master Qin replied, “In truth, I don’t know too much about the management of a sect either. The position of a hall master is mostly symbolic. Your very presence will reassure the disciples in times of danger, allowing them to fight bravely without defeat. At the same time, a powerful leader would grant us more bargaining power on a negotiation table. As for the miscellaneous affairs, you need not worry too much about it. The elders are there to deal with them.”

Zhang Xuan nodded slowly in agreement.

Seeing that he was receiving a positive response, Hall Master Qin pressed on, “Besides, if you are intending on heading to the Sea of Exiled Stars, you would have even more need for the identity as the leader of our Myriad Beasts Hall.”

Those words left Zhang Xuan tilting his head in confusion.

“The Sea of Exiled Stars is where the Starchaser Palace is located at. It consists of innumerable islands, and living on each of these islands are the indigenous population of the Forsaken Continent. They are an extremely exclusive group of people, and they tend to act hostile toward outsiders. There have been quite a few cases where those islanders have lynched visitors to death, and there are even High Immortals who have fallen victim to that as well,” Hall Master Qin explained.

“If you were to take on the identity of the leader of the Myriad Beasts Hall, your words would carry more weight. At the very least, no one would dare to make a move on you, and it would be much easier for you to get things done as well.”

Naturally, there was no one who would be foolish enough to offend the leader of the Myriad Beasts Hall. That would be as good as waging war on it.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

He had asked Elder Liao some details regarding the Sea of Exiled Stars on his way over, and it was exactly the same as what Hall Master Qin was saying at the moment as well.

It was rumored that some of the indigenous population practiced the art of slaughter, so their temperament tended not to be too good.

If he were to enter as a nobody, it would be hard for him to achieve his goal of accessing their libraries and uncovering clues regarding Luo Ruoxin there.

“If you become the hall master, you’ll be able to mobilize our informants hidden amidst the Sea of Exiled Stars, thus making it easier for you to gather information,” Hall Master Qin dropped another bait before Zhang Xuan.

“This...” Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up. “Since that’s the case, I guess I don’t really mind taking on the position then!”

It would indeed be difficult for him to investigate the information he required by himself. However, if he were to become the leader of the Myriad Beasts Hall, he would be able to tap into its vast intelligence network, thus making it far easier for him to gather information.

As the Myriad Beasts Hall had a monopoly in the business of transportation on the Forsaken Continent, its members were spread throughout the entire continent. There were many disciples just like the old man who had ferried him over to the Ascendant Cloud Mountain spread all over the continent.

Given so, Zhang Xuan could imagine that their intelligence network would be far more developed than that of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“That is wonderful news. I’ll make preparations now, and the inauguration ceremony will be held a month from now!” Hall Master Qin nodded.

“A month from now?” Zhang Xuan shook his head. “I can’t afford to wait that long. There’s no need to hold an inauguration ceremony either. It’s not convenient for me to show myself presently either!”

“It isn’t convenient for you to show yourself?” Hall Master Qin frowned.

They were an orthodox organization, not some shady demonic sect operating undercover to destroy the continent or

something. Surely there was no need to be so secretive about this!

“My cultivation is only at Heavenly True Immortal realm at the moment. While I am able to barely defeat Heavenly High Immortal realm beasts using my secret art, I fear that my cultivation is still too weak at the moment. I’m worried that I might catch the attention of the Hall of Gods if I were to stand out too much...”

At this moment, Zhang Xuan paused for a moment before adding, “I heard that the genius who comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had recently faced an assassination attempt from the Hall of Gods.”

It was better for him to be careful, especially since he didn’t have a golden page with him at the moment.

If the Hall of Gods were to dispatch numerous Heavenly High Immortal experts after him, he would be in a very dangerous position.

“The Hall of Gods?” Hall Master Qin narrowed his eyes coldly. “I have indeed heard of that matter from Han Jianqiu...”

Their informants had found that the Hall of Gods was becoming more active in recent years, and the news he had just received from Han Jianqiu affirmed his worries. This was also the reason why he was worried that Zheng Yang might be a spy from the Hall of Gods.

He had crossed blows with Han Jianqiu for many years now, and he had a good grasp of the latter’s temperament. He thought that it was weird for the latter to step down all of a sudden and nominate a young man as his successor.

It was only after enquiring about the matter did he learn from Han Jianqiu that the Hall of Gods had attempted to assassinate the disciple who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. The latter had only passed down the position of the sect leader to that disciple in hopes of protecting him.

To be honest, he hadn't expected the lofty Hall of Gods to lower their pride just to nip a potential threat in the bud... If an exceptionally talented individual were to emerge from the Myriad Beasts Hall, would the same situation occur as well?

Hall Master Qin pondered deeply over these issues before finally giving his response, "I think that your worries make perfect sense. Since that's the case, I'll put aside the inauguration ceremony for the time being and simply make an official announcement to declare that I will be passing the position of the hall master down to you. I'll introduce you as an ascetic core elder of our sect who has devoted all of his time to cultivation. Due to that, your cultivation has reached Heavenly High Immortal realm, and you wield capabilities beyond that of other core elders in our sect. That would help to justify how you were able to tame the four immortal beasts easily."

"Thank you for your consideration, Hall Master Qin," Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

If his cultivation was at Heavenly High Immortal, it would make much more sense for him to be able to tame the four immortal beasts. At the very least, the matter wouldn't be so astonishing as to catch the attention of the Hall of Gods.

"Un, it's no problem," Hall Master Qin nodded in response.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out his Sect Leader Token and floated it before him.

"Hear me, members of the Myriad Beasts Hall. I hereby officially declare that I'll be stepping down as the hall master, and the one who will succeed me is Elder Zheng Yang. Just earlier in the day, he has successfully tamed the four immortal beasts of Ascendant Cloud Mountain, and his prowess as a beast tamer is indubitably unparalleled..."

...

"We are going to have a new hall master too?"

"Why have I never heard of this Elder Zheng Yang before?"

"You buffoon, are you even listening to what Hall Master Qin was saying? Didn't he say earlier that Elder Zheng Yang is an

ascetic? Putting aside the elders, how many of the ascetics amongst the disciples do you even know?”

“Well, I guess you’re right...”

...

The abrupt announcement from Hall Master Qin caused all disciples and elders to halt whatever they were doing on hand and listen attentively.

There was no one amongst them who wasn’t curious about the mysterious Elder Zheng Yang who had just been chosen to become their next hall master.

That being said, due to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion setting a recent precedent, this announcement didn’t stir too much of an uproar from the disciples.

Ascetics were cultivators who had forgone all social interaction to devote themselves entirely to the refinement of their craft. There were plenty of ascetics in every sect, and given how this group of people usually conducted themselves, it was inevitable that they would be little known by their peers.

“The hall master is passing down his position just like that?”

Elder Yuan and the others knew that there was a chance that Hall Master Qin would pass down his position to Zheng Yang, but they didn’t expect it to happen so quickly!

It had only been two hours since Zheng Yang had arrived in their Myriad Beasts Hall, but the most powerful position in the sect was already passed on to him...

Why did the sect just have to be so damned efficient on a matter as important as this!

“Look, isn’t that the Serpentine Dragon?”

“It must be the one from the Ascendant Cloud Mountain. Look, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger are there as well...”

“They have indeed been tamed! The new Hall Master Zheng Yang sure is an amazing beast tamer!”

All of a sudden, Elder Yuan and the others heard a commotion outside. When they raised their heads, they saw the four immortal beasts they had encountered back at the Ascendant Cloud Mountain soaring through the air, flaunting Zheng Yang's accomplishments.

It was hard for the members of the sect to accept a little-known figure as their new leader all of a sudden, so they were still harboring some doubts and reservations. However, upon seeing this sight, it felt like all of their doubts were vanquished in an instant.

“Disciples of the Myriad Beasts Hall, I am Zheng Yang, your new hall master. I have made some modifications to the beast taming techniques you have been learning previously, so may I invite you to head over to where Elder Ying is to receive the improved version.”

Following that, the voice of the new hall master echoed in the air. His deep and steady tone was charismatic and confidence-inducing.

“An improved version of our beast taming techniques?”

“But the beast taming techniques of the Myriad Beasts Hall have been passed down for several millenniums now. Isn't it making light of them to alter them so casually?”

“I think so too...”

The disciples were a little perplexed at the sudden announcement they had received. They weren't too sure what they could expect from their new hall master.

Mu Xu was an inner disciple of the Myriad Beasts Hall. His ranking was in the mid-1000s.

Amongst the ten thousand inner disciples, his ranking still wasn't too bad. However, he was currently facing his greatest crisis ever since he joined the Myriad Beasts Hall...

He was on the verge of having his identity as an inner disciple revoked!

It was not because he had made some kind of mistake or anything. It was because he had failed to tame a single beast

whose cultivation was equivalent to him within the past three years!

According to the rules of the Myriad Beasts Hall, those whose age was beneath twenty and cultivation had reached Ancient Sage were eligible to become inner disciples, but they had to tame a beast whose cultivation equaled theirs within three years in order to retain their position.

Once the time was up, they would be automatically stripped of their identities as inner disciples, and in the worst-case scenario, they might even be asked to leave the sect.

Three years might seem like a long time, but in relevance to beast taming, it really wasn't much.

After all, taming a beast required one to find an appropriate beast, capture it, and nurture feelings with it... Each of these steps was easier said than done.

From the moment he was promoted to become an inner disciple, he had begun searching for a target, and it was just last year that he found a fitting target... An Ancient Sage Stonefire Beast!

The attribute of the Stonefire Beast was a perfect fit with the cultivation technique and movement technique he practiced. If he were to fight alongside it, his fighting prowess would surely be greatly enhanced... The problem was that the Stonefire Beast was simply too haughty. It refused to submit to him no matter what he did.

He had tried tempting it with all kinds of delicacies and treasures, but the Stonefire Beast wouldn't even spare him a glance, as if he didn't exist at all.

Over the span of a year, he had tried more than twenty different strategies, but none of them were effective at all.

And today was the very last day of the three years he had.

If he still couldn't succeed today, he would have his identity as an inner disciple revoked, and he would be forced to leave the sect in disgrace.

“I’ll have to give it my all!” Mu Xu gritted his teeth in determination as he walked into a room.

There was a massive cage in the room, and locked within it was a beast with lava-like skin. It stood proudly on the spot, not moving at all, reminiscent of a statue.

2016 Violence

“Stonefire Beast, I am here again. I know that it’s unlikely, but I still hope that I’ll be able to move you with this...” Mu Xu said with a bitter smile.

He took out a jade bottle and said, “This is a bottle of Blood Cleanser. It can nourish your meridians and make them more supple, allowing you to overcome your bottleneck more easily.”

The Stonefire Beast’s meridians were known to be extremely stiff, which made it extremely difficult for it to achieve a breakthrough after maturity.

The only way to resolve the problem was through the Blood Cleanser, which nourished one’s meridians.

Without a doubt, the Blood Cleanser was extremely alluring to it. The only issue was that the Blood Cleanser was simply too expensive!

He had to rush fifteen missions over the past half a year in order to earn enough money to purchase this bottle of Blood Cleanser. Every single mission that he took on was incredibly tough, such that he often survived only by a close shave. If not for his good luck, he would have returned to the dirt by now.

“Did you think that I would thank you for your gift? I suggest that you stop daydreaming. There’s no way I’ll submit to you. I would rather die than to serve a human!” the Stonefire Beast harrumphed coldly.

“Why are you so obstinate? Do you understand that your life is in my hands?” Seeing how the Stonefire Beast was still persisting on, Mu Xu sighed helplessly.

“What’s there to fear about death? Even if you were to kill me, I’ll be another proud Stonefire Beast eighteen years later! Even if it’ll bring me to my demise, I’ll never bow down to a human... Kill me if you will!”

After which, the Stonefire Beast turned its head to the side and fell completely silent.

You...”

Mu Xu glared at the Stonefire Beast with his sword trembling in his hands. However, the latter showed no signs of wavering at all, as if he truly had no qualms about dying at this very instant.

Seeing that the other party had no intention of submitting at all, Mu Xu shook his head helplessly. With a look in his eyes, he threw his sword aside and turned around to leave the room, “I have really lost against your obstinacy. I’ll be leaving the Myriad Beasts Hall tomorrow, so you are free to...”

But at this moment, a voice suddenly echoed in the air.

“Hear me, members of the Myriad Beasts Hall. I hereby officially declare that I’ll be stepping down as the hall master, and the one who will succeed me is Elder Zheng Yang...”

“Hall Master Qin is stepping down? But again, what does this have to do with me anyway? I’m going to have to leave the Myriad Beasts Hall tomorrow anyway...” Mu Xu muttered gloomily beneath his breath.

But soon after, another voice echoed in the air, “... I have made some modifications to the beast taming techniques you have been learning previously, so may I invite you to head over to where Elder Ying is to receive the improved version.”

“Modifications to the beast taming techniques?” Mu Xu suddenly halted in his footsteps. “I won’t be a disciple of the Myriad Beasts Hall tomorrow anymore, so I should take a look at them while I’m still qualified to...”

He didn’t bear much expectation at all, but nevertheless, he still went to look for Elder Ying to receive the improved beast taming techniques.

When he first laid his eyes on the improved beast taming techniques, his eyes widened in utter bewilderment. In truth, the modification was extremely simple, such that its essence could be beautifully summarized with just a single word...

Violence.

Basically, what it was saying was that when all other means failed, one could try to beat the beast till a near-death state. After that, offer the beast appropriate treasures to move it.

“Such pummeling method won’t work...”

It didn’t take long for Mu Xu to finish browsing through the contents, and he couldn’t help but sigh helplessly.

There were such pummeling taming methods within the sect as well, and he had tried them too. However, none of them worked. Not only so, he even infuriated the Stonefire Beast, and the latter nearly killed itself...

Blind violence wouldn’t resolve anything!

“Wait a moment. The hall master’s new beast taming technique must be used together with this pill,” Elder Ying, who was in charge of distributing the manuals, passed a jade bottle over as well.

“It must be used together with this pill?”

Mu Xu uncorked the lid of the jade bottle and took a look at its contents. However, he only plunged deeper into confusion.

It was only an ordinary recovery medicine! It wouldn’t even be too effective on a Saint 9-dan beast, let alone an Ancient Sage beast... The Ancient Sage beast would simply view it as an insult!

“Just give it a try,” Elder Ying advised.

Mu Xu pondered for a moment before nodding slightly. He was going to be evicted from the sect tomorrow anyway, so he could only clutch onto any opportunities available to him. Gritting his teeth, he thought, This will be the last time!

With the jade bottle in hand, Mu Xu returned back to his room and began executing the Beast Pummeling Taming Method he had just learned from the book on the Stonefire Beast.

After some incredible shaking and rattling, the Stonefire Beast was left lying on the ground with bleeding wounds all over. It looked as if it was going to die at any moment.

You have humiliated me. If you were to keep me alive, I swear I'll return everything to you tenfold!" the Stonefire Beast bellowed with a savage look on its face.

This was simply too much!

"Just a bit more!" Mu Xu muttered beneath his breath as he forcefully fed the pill into the Stonefire Beast's mouth.

Since he had already come to this point, he couldn't care less anymore. He could only pray that it would somehow work out.

You bastard, what did you just feed me? I'll slaughter you..." the Stonefire Beast cursed furiously.

But just as Mu Xu thought that it was all over, a shudder suddenly ran through the Stonefire Beast's body, and in the next moment, it suddenly looked at him with a bizarre look on its face.

"Master, I am your beloved Little Firefire. Please don't go... I'll become your good tamed beast..."

"Ah?" Mu Xu was stunned.

This transformation... What in the world happened?!

Nevertheless, Mu Xu quickly sealed the Soul Contract, and before long, he had already forged a telepathic connection together with the Stonefire Beast. Through this telepathic connection, he could even induce the death of the Stonefire beast with just a single thought.

But even after carrying all of this out, he was still a little dazed on the inside. He had been trying to tame the Stonefire Beast for more than a year now, but it had never worked out.

However, as soon as he carried the instructions provided by the new hall master, he succeeded in just ten short minutes...

What were the principles behind this beast taming technique?

But regardless of what the principles were, the fact that it worked was more than enough to testify that it was truly effective.

It seems like our new hall master is really a man of great capabilities! Mu Xu thought.

He couldn't help but recall the bitterness that had been weighing him down for a year now.

Putong! He fell to his knees.

Before he knew it, tears were already flowing down his cheeks.

In this moment, he swore that he would serve the new hall master with his heart from this day onward, and he would never question the latter's commands.

The same sight could be seen all around the sect.

There were those who thought that the new hall master was just another skilled beast tamer, and that his inauguration wouldn't bring about any difference to the sect. However, such thoughts were swiftly overthrown.

As the miraculous effects of the Beast Pummeling Taming Method started to show, the sect members began to understand why Hall Master Qin had chosen to give up his position to this Hall Master Zheng so suddenly...

Under the leadership of such a capable individual, there was no need to worry that the Myriad Beasts Hall wouldn't grow stronger!

I was still feeling a little indignant at the outcome, but now, I know that I'm still far too lacking as compared to him. It's the blessing of the Myriad Beasts Hall to have him as the hall master... Elder Yuan thought in agitation.

Had the middle-aged man not appeared out of nowhere, the chances were that he would have been the next hall master. As such, he couldn't help but feel a little resentful of the other party for snatching what that should have been his.

But as he witnessed the happenings around the sect, such a feeling had vanished without a trace.

The very foundation of the Myriad Beasts Hall was its superior proficiency in beast taming, so the most stable and effective way for the organization to grow was to further its mastery in beast taming. This was also why the generations of hall masters were chosen their proficiency in beast taming.

Elder Yuan knew that there was no way he would be able to do what Zheng Yang had done. In a sense, it was a blessing in disguise that things turned out the way they did.

“Hahaha, let’s see how Han Jianqiu dares to brag before me in the future. Our Myriad Beasts Hall has its own genius as well!” Elder Qin Yuan exclaimed excitedly.

It was just a few days ago that Han Jianqiu announced that there was a genius in their ranks that had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, and to be honest, he was extremely envious when he heard that. However, the Myriad Beasts Hall had finally found a genius of equal caliber as well...

With this, Han Jianqiu would have no more bragging rights than he did!

“After our hall master is done dealing with whatever matter he has at the Sea of Exiled Stars, I’ll arrange for a meeting between him and the new sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! That sect leader is indeed formidable to be able to defeat a Heavenly High Immortal as a True Immortal himself, but I don’t believe that he would be able to stand against the encirclement of four Heavenly High Immortal beasts simultaneously!” Elder Qin Yuan laughed heartily.

Ever since that day, Han Jianqiu had been bragging about that genius day in and day out, almost as if a grandfather showing off his grandson.

But no matter how powerful that genius was, there was no way he could withstand the combined assault from the Serpentine Dragon and the others!

Not to mention, Hall Master Zheng Yang was plenty powerful himself too, wielding strength matching that of a High Immortal despite only being at Heavenly High Immortal realm.

To be honest, he did suspect that Zheng Yang and Zhang Xuan might have been the same person for a moment, but considering the differences in their age, appearances, and names, there was no doubt that they were two separate people!

The Forsaken Continent was vast and boundless, so it wasn't impossible to find two extremely talented geniuses one after another.

Just wait and see, Han Jianqiu! Let's see if your Zhang Xuan is more formidable or our Zheng Yang is stronger!

On the second day after arriving at the Myriad Beasts Hall, Zhang Xuan visited Elder Qin Yuan with a slightly exhausted look on his face.

He had spent the previous day compiling his understanding of beast taming into books before distributing them around. At the same time, he also managed to browse through all of the books in the elders' library as well.

Just as he had guessed, there weren't enough High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals here for him to compile the Heaven's Path Divine Art, but it did grant him with a deeper understanding of the High Immortal realm.

"Hall Master Zheng, are you planning on leaving now?" Elder Qin asked.

"Un. I have urgent affairs to attend to, so I'm afraid that I can't delay my schedule any longer," Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

"I understand. Allow me to accompany you on your journey then," Elder Qin said.

"There's no need for that. With the Serpentine Dragon and the others with it, I believe that no one would dare to make a move on me," Zhang Xuan patted the tamed beast sack hanging on his waist and smiled.

After becoming the hall master, he was given his own unique tamed beast sack. His tamed beast sack was extraordinarily large in size, allowing him to store all four immortal beasts in without it getting too squeezey.

Elder Qin pondered over Zhang Xuan's words for a moment before nodding in agreement.

The other party was right. With the protection of the four immortal beasts, there should be no one who would dare to

make a move on him.

Not to mention, his identity had been kept a secret, and the other elders who knew about the matter had been strictly warned against speaking about it. Even if he were to leave right now, the others would only think that he was an ordinary Heavenly True Immortal. No one would have suspected that this middle-aged man would actually be the new hall master of their Myriad Beasts Hall.

“Hall Master Zheng, I’ll dispatch a disciple and an immortal beast to escort you then. We can’t allow you to drive the immortal beast on your own!” Elder Qin said.

It had become a known fact that the Serpentine Dragon had been tamed by the new hall master of the Myriad Beasts Hall. If he were to ride the Serpentine Dragon out at this moment, it would be as good as telling others that he was the new hall master. Thus, he could only use the ordinary aerial immortal beasts within the sect.

“Alright then,” Zhang Xuan accepted the proposal.

It didn’t take long for the arrangements to be completed, and soon enough, Zhang Xuan was already on his way northward.

Elder Qin had prepared a Lesser High Immortal realm beast for him, and the disciple driving it was a Heavenly True Immortal realm cultivator. It was the best that they could do without being too eye-catching.

They flew for three days straight.

“Hall Master Zheng, we’re not too far away from Biyuan City at the moment. The Sevenstar Pavilion of the Six Sects is situated there as well. It’s already the largest city within the region. If you wish to acquire anything from the Ethereal Hall, it would be the best place for you to head to,” the disciple driving the immortal beast said with a smile.

Over the past three days, the two of them got familiar with one another, and the disciple also learned about Zhang Xuan’s identity as the hall master too.

“The Sevenstar Pavilion?” Zhang Xuan muttered as he looked at the scenery ahead of him.

A hint of a massive city could be seen on the horizon. Just by its width, it was already apparent that it was many times larger than Wuhai City.

“Let’s head over to take a look,” Zhang Xuan instructed with a gleam in his eyes.

The Dongxu Gourd needed 200 Superior Immortal Pills in order to break out of its seal... Perhaps, he might just be able to gather the required number here!

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Han Jianqiu had formally introduced the Six Sects to him before. The Sevenstar Pavilion was known for operating the largest business and market in the Forsaken Continent, selling all kinds of powerful artifacts and weapons.

200 Superior Immortal Pills would be a massive wealth anywhere else, such that even a city of the scale of the Wuhai City didn't have it. However, if it was the Biyuan City, the heart of the operations of the Sevenstar Pavilion, it just might have such wealth.

It didn't take long for the immortal beast to land before the massive square within the city.

"Hall Master Zheng, that's the Sevenstar Pavilion," the disciple introduced with a smile.

He was extremely familiar with Biyuan City as he frequented this place.

Turning his gaze over, Zhang Xuan saw a cluster of buildings towering before him. All in all, there were seven of them, and they were positioned in a manner reminiscent of the Big Dipper Formation. Together, they formed a massive formation that harmonized together with the stars in the sky.

It seems like the Sevenstar Pavilion mustn't be underestimated either even though it mainly deals with commerce... Zhang Xuan thought.

There was bound to be something extraordinary about the Sevenstar Pavilion for it to become one of the Six Sects of the Forsaken Continent.

In terms of its infrastructure, the Sevenstar Pavilion didn't appear to be as imposing as the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion or the Myriad Beasts Hall. However, those who had some understanding of formations would know that it was no easy feat to align the cruxes of a formation together with the

stars in the sky, and that was exactly what the Sevenstar Pavilion did.

With the protection of this formation, it would be extremely difficult for anyone to harm the Sevenstar Pavilion.

“Hall Master Zheng, do you wish to enter the premises to take a look?” the disciple asked.

“It’s fine. May I know where the Ethereal Hall of the Biyuan City is at? Bring me over,” Zhang Xuan said.

There was no artifact or weapon that he needed to acquire, so he wasn’t too interested in exploring the Sevenstar Pavilion. Besides, if he were to enter the premises and the other party were to insist on him becoming their sect leader, what was he supposed to do?

Outstanding people simply stood out like fireflies in the night no matter where they went. Even if he tried to dim his glow, others would still be attracted to him like moths drawn to the flame.

It was more than enough for him to be the leader of two major powers! Any more than would just be plain troublesome.

“The local branch of the Ethereal Hall is located right next to the Sevenstar Pavilion,” the disciple replied.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze over and saw a tall tower located not too far away from the Sevenstar Pavilion. This tower wasn’t as imposing or bustling as the Sevenstar Pavilion, but its presence was still extremely conspicuous as well.

He quickly made his way over and entered the Ethereal Hall behind the crowd.

“How much does a True Immortal realm Ethereal Token cost?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“2700 Star Coins or Ethereal Coins!” the receptionist replied.

“I’ll take one,” Zhang Xuan replied as he heaved a sigh of relief.

As it turned out, the value of the Ethereal Coin here was roughly the same as that in Wuhai City. As such, 2700

Ethereal Coins was still well within his spending power.

After acquiring the Ethereal Token, Zhang Xuan rented a silent chamber. He instructed the disciple of the Myriad Beasts Hall to wait outside for him while he set up several Isolation Formations around the room before taking a seat.

Holding the Ethereal Token in his hand, he swiftly activated it before immersing his consciousness into it. Before long, he was already amidst the virtual Ethereal Hall.

He headed straight for the receptionist and passed Kong Shi's token over before saying, "I would like to purchase some cultivation resources."

Upon seeing the token, the attendant's eyes immediately widened in shock. She quickly told Zhang Xuan to "Please wait a moment" before hurriedly heading to the room behind the counter.

Soon, an elder walked over and bowed deeply to Zhang Xuan.

"Esteemed guest, the token you hold is the insignia of our hall master, which grants you the same privileges as our hall master within this store. May I know what you intend to buy?"

"I would like to purchase 200 Superior Immortal Pills," Zhang Xuan replied.

"200 Superior Immortal Pills?" the elder nearly leaped in shock.

For many years he had worked in the Ethereal Hall, but he had only seen customers purchasing at most ten Superior Immortal Pills in a single seating. Yet, for this young man to purchase 200 of them at once, was he planning on snacking on them during his leisure time?

It was important to note that Superior Immortal Pills were actually incredibly expensive. Each of them was listed at a price of 20,000 Ethereal Coins. To put it in other words, this was a massive transaction worth 4,000,000 Ethereal

Coins!

This amount of wealth was already more than enough for one to buy an entire city!

“Indeed. Don’t beat around the bush and tell me straight if it’s possible to make this transaction,” Zhang Xuan replied with a frown.

“This...” The elder hesitated for a moment before saying, “If we were to gather everything we have in Biyuan City, we should be able to put together 200 Superior Immortal Pills. However, we would have to report this transaction to the headquarters for approval before going ahead with it. Please give me a moment.”

“Un, feel free to do whatever you need to,” Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

After consulting the headquarters, the elder returned with a smile on his lips, “The headquarters have approved the transaction. Esteemed guest, you just have to activate the Teleportation Formation on your Ethereal Token in order to withdraw your goods!”

“I’ve troubled you,” Zhang Xuan nodded before retracting his consciousness from the Ethereal Hall.

Returning back to the silent chamber, Zhang Xuan tapped his finger on his Ethereal Token lightly.

Hu!

Twenty jade bottles materialized right before him. Each of these bottles contained ten Superior Immortal Pills each.

“Here are 200 Superior Immortal Pills. If you still aren’t able to break free of your seal after swallowing them... Well, just wait and see how I’ll deal with you then!” Zhang Xuan summoned the Dongxu Gourd out from his dantian and harrumphed.

“Rest assured, I am a legendary beast who has once ruled over the lands. I’m just temporarily trapped in this bizarre form. Once I gather sufficient energy, I would be able to break free of my seal and revert back to my almighty self...” the Dongxu Gourd boasted proudly.

“You can stop bragging now. Hurry up and get on with it,” Zhang Xuan waved his hand dismissively. He couldn’t be bothered to listen to the Dongxu Gourd’s boasting.

The Dongxu Gourd hopped over to the jade bottles, and with a sharp intake of breath, it swallowed all 200 Superior Immortal Pills at once.

Geji! Geji!

Despite swallowing everything at once, the Dongxu Gourd didn't seem to be stuffed in the very least. Instead, its aura grew stronger and stronger.

What the Dongxu Gourd had swallowed previously were Standard Immortal Pills, but these two hundred pills over here were all Superior Immortal Pills. The difference in the potency of the two pills was massive. Before long, the Dongxu Gourd began trembling nonstop.

Boom!

An indomitable aura burst forth from the Dongxu Gourd, causing spatial cracks to appear in the surroundings. It seemed like even the stable space in the Forsaken Continent was unable to withstand the overwhelming strength that the Dongxu Gourd was emanating.

“Remarkable...” Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

It looked like the Dongxu Gourd hadn't been lying to him.

Just by this aura itself, the Dongxu Gourd would definitely be able to defeat any High Immortal easily. At the very least, the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert he had encountered back then would be no match for it at all!

With this, he was assured that the 200 Superior Immortal Pills hadn't gone to waste!

It was fortunate that he had set up additional layers of barriers around this private chamber in advance, or else this commotion would have surely attracted many people over.

As the Dongxu Gourd gathered more and more energy, slight cracks began appearing on its top. The cracks slowly crept downward, and it looked as if the Dongxu Gourd was ready to break free at any moment.

“Soon...” Zhang Xuan watched the scene with bated breath.

To be honest, he was filled with curiosity as to what the Dongxu Gourd truly was. The latter had claimed that it was a legendary beast that ruled over the lands, but Zhang Xuan really could hardly imagine just what form it could possibly take.

Kacha! Kacha!

The cracks slowly inched downward, all the way till it reached its first bump before abruptly coming to a halt. Somehow, it wouldn't move any lower than that anymore.

At the same time, the aura the Dongxu Gourd was emanating began dying off.

“What's wrong?” Zhang Xuan asked in bewilderment.

“This...” the Dongxu Gourd chuckled in embarrassment. “I think that I might have underestimated the energy I require. I still need a little more than this... Why don't you get another 200 Superior Immortal Pills for me right now? I promise you that I'll really, really break free this time around!”

“Another 200 Superior Immortal Pills?” Zhang Xuan nearly fainted on the spot.

Did you think that Superior Immortal Pills were cheap sweets that you can buy as and when you like?

The heck! How could 200 Superior Immortal Pills not be enough for you? Are you a black hole?

Even though Kong shi's token allows me to purchase as many cultivation resources as I require, the problem here is that Biyuan City doesn't have that many Superior Immortal Pills to give me!

If I were to ask for any more than this, Kong shi might just start coming after me!

“Why don't you just hole yourself up in that gourd of yours for life?” Zhang Xuan scoffed speechlessly.

He was still thinking that he would no longer have anything to fear once the Dongxu Gourd broke free of its seal, but it seemed like his luck was really darned.

He must have been a fool to take the unreliable Dongxu Gourd's word for it!

"If you don't have any pills, weapons would do as well. You know, I have been quite interested in that Tongshang Sword of yours for some time now..." the Dongxu Gourd exclaimed anxiously.

Those words sent a shudder down the blade of the Tongshang Sword.

However, Zhang Xuan simply glared at the Dongxu Gourd coldly as he ordered it to get back into his dantian. Shaking his head in disappointment, he left the silent chamber.

His goal for dropping by Biyuan City was to release the Dongxu Gourd's seal, but it didn't seem like things would work out for now. Just thinking about the matter left him feeling a little glum inside.

"Hall Master Zheng!"

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the disciple from the Myriad Beasts Hall rushed forward to greet him.

"Let's get on our way," Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly, not bothering to explain the matter.

Since he was unable to release the seal on the Dongxu Gourd, he wasn't willing to waste any more time on this for the time being. It would be hard for him to gather any more cultivation resources from the Biyuan City's Ethereal Hall anyway.

He would just have to find some other way to get it done when he arrived at the Sea of Exiled Stars.

"Yes, Hall Master Zheng!"

The disciple clapped his hand, and the aerial immortal beast flew out from his tamed beast sack. He quickly leaped onto its back.

Zhang Xuan was just about to do the same as well when he suddenly narrowed his eyes in alarm. He could feel a chilling sensation engulfing his entire body.

This was the scent of danger.

“Damn it! Run...” Zhang Xuan shouted

But before he could finish his words, the body aerial immortal beast before him suddenly began bulging outward.

Boom!

It exploded into a mess of bloodied flesh and bits of bones.

The abrupt explosion of a Lesser High Immortal realm beast released a wave of energy so great that the disciple that was on its back was blasted into the air before crashing heavily onto the ground. There were many burn marks all over his body, and it was hard to gauge whether he was still breathing or not.

Peng!

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan drove his zhenqi and quickly formed a protective energy barrier around him to ward off the shockwave. Despite his swift reaction, he was still forced several steps back from the impact.

And before he could even recover, he felt another chilling sensation headed right toward his back once more.

Sou sou sou!

Six surges of energy darted right toward him from his front, back, left, right, top, and bottom, threatening to crush him.

“Darn it!” Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly as he whipped out the Tongshang Sword.

He quickly executed a defensive swordplay, forming a spherical layer of sword qi around him.

Peng peng peng!

The six surges of energy struck the spherical layer of sword qi he had formed around him like a truck, causing his hand to numb under the sheer impact. The six simultaneous blows from six different directions nearly caused him to blackout.

Pu!

After deflecting the sixth blow, a spurt of blood escaped from his lips. Even though he had managed to deflect the brunt of

the attacks, the sheer might of the offense had still jolted his innards, causing him to sustain some internal injuries.

“To be able to fend against my attack despite being caught off guard... You are indeed a worthy opponent,” a voice sounded.

Zhang Xuan quickly drove his Heaven’s Path zhenqi to recover from his injuries as he raised his head to look toward the origin of the voice.

There were three figures standing before him, and they all had youthful appearances. Despite their seemingly young age, their cultivations were at Heavenly High Immortal realm, similar to the black-robed figure he had faced from the Hall of Gods previously. However, these three had a more domineering presence, such that it felt as if they could tear apart space with just a wave of their hands.

This made Zhang Xuan’s body stiffened a little as it dawned upon him the situation he was in.

He quickly took a look around him and found that he had already been pulled into a folded space. Even the earlier explosion of the Lesser High Immortal realm beast had been confined within this folded space.

“Why did the three of you assault me?” Zhang Xuan questioned with a wintry expression on his face.

“Why? You should know that better than anyone else, right? Zhang Xuan!” the youth that stood at the forefront remarked coldly.

You are from the Hall of Gods?” Zhang Xuan asked.

He was confident in his disguise. Not even Hall Master Qin from the Myriad Beasts Hall had been able to see through it. Yet, the other party was able to point out his real identity right away without any hesitation.

He really couldn’t understand how did this happen. Just what about his disguise had given him away?

2018 Semi-Divinity Artifact

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He had made sure to proceed very carefully this time around ever since he nearly lost his life from the previous assassination. He used Luo Ruoxin's disguise amulet to alter his appearance, soul aura, voice, and even his bloodline. Whenever he used his Gods' Sword Intent, he tried his best to conceal the nature of his swordsmanship as well.

No matter how discerning the Hall of Gods was, he was confident that he would have been able to fool them!

Yet, he was still seen through so easily... Not to mention, the other party was affirmative that he was indeed Zhang Xuan, assaulting him without the slightest hint of hesitation.

Even if news of his whereabouts had leaked somehow, he would have expected the Hall of Gods to harbor some reservation upon seeing him.

Or could it be that the Hall of Gods had some unique means of tracking him? If so, that would really be a huge disaster!

"Indeed," the youth replied. "The fact that you were able to slay four of our warriors shows that you are fairly strong yourself. However, this will be where your luck comes to an end."

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan quickly assessed the current situation he was in.

Given his previous experience with the Hall of Gods, he knew that it would be impossible for him to break apart the folded space unless he were to kill these three Heavenly High Immortals in front of him.

He had faced only one Heavenly High Immortal the previous time around, but that was already more than enough to force him to a corner. Yet, he had to face three of them simultaneously this time around, and it was clear that every

single one of them was stronger than the black-robed expert he had faced previously.

This was really a disadvantageous situation for him.

“Let’s make a move together. If we were to fail this time too, our master will really kill us!” the youth said as he raised his palm and made the first blow.

His five fingers felt like five heavy mountains descending from the sky, crushing everything that stood in its way. At the same time, the other two also charged forth and flanked Zhang Xuan by his sides.

“Go!” Zhang Xuan immediately patted his tamed beast sack.

The four immortal beasts that he had tamed flew out.

The Serpentine Dragon charged toward the youth coming from the front whereas the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and the Seven-tailed Swordfang Tiger faced the other two Heavenly High Immortals coming from the sides.

“A child’s play!”

The youth coming at Zhang Xuan from the front was slightly surprised by the appearance of the four immortal beasts, but in the blink of an eye, he had regained his calm. With a light chuckle, he continued pressing his palm downward.

The Serpentine Dragon felt as if it was pinned to the ground by five towering mountains. No matter how it exerted its strength, it was unable to move an inch at all.

“Is it?”

While the leading youth in front was busy dealing with the Serpentine Dragon, Zhang Xuan made use of this opening to charge forward. Driving the Gods’ Sword Intent, it was as if his entire body had morphed into an incomparably sharp blade.

With his opponents being three Heavenly High Immortals from the Hall of Gods, he dared not to let his guard down at all. He had to eliminate one of them as soon as possible in order to even out the scales.

Otherwise, once they were to successfully encircle him, he would be placed in a difficult position.

Furthermore, he didn't have a golden page with him at the moment. If he were to be defeated here, it would really be the end of him!

“Formidable!”

The youth in front didn't expect Zhang Xuan to be able to have such a keen grasp of timing, making use of the exact moment he was subduing the Serpentine Dragon to execute his offense.

He immediately whipped out a sword to deflect Zhang Xuan's attack.

His sword felt chilling and sinister, leaving goosebumps rising all over one's body. Nevertheless, as soon as a sword was in his hand, his aura suddenly surged.

It was a Heavenly High Immortal-tier weapon!

In terms of its sharpness, it was even above that of the Tongshang Sword.

Weng weng!

The youth slashed his sword several times, releasing innumerable outbursts of sword qi that gushed right toward the charging Zhang Xuan.

If Zhang Xuan were to be struck by this attack, not only would his assault fail, most likely, he might even end up losing a limb as well.

“Hmph!”

Despite facing such an imposing attack, Zhang Xuan didn't retreat at all. Instead, with a furious war cry, he continued pushing his way forward.

“You are courting death!” the youth sneered coldly as he focused all of his strength on his sword, intending to overwhelm Zhang Xuan with this single blow.

But all of a sudden, his grip loosened.

The body of the youth froze on the spot.

To his horror, the Heavenly High Immortal-tier which he was brandishing imposingly a moment ago had vanished without a trace!

When did it happen?

Puhe!

Without his sword sustaining them, his sword qi swiftly dissipated as well. Before the youth could even react, Zhang Xuan's sword had already pierced into the youth's palm, skewering him all the way to up his shoulder.

“Break!”

Following that, he immediately infused sword qi into his sword frenziedly.

Peng!

With a resounding explosion, the youth's arm was blown into bits.

“AHHH!” the youth cried in agony as he hurriedly retreated.

Zhang Xuan intended to chase after the youth, but at the critical moment, he chose to back away instead.

Hu!

Right after Zhang Xuan retreated, several bursts of sword qi sliced through the area where he was standing a moment ago. When he glanced at the sides, he found the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and White-eared Fox lying on the ground feebly.

In that short encounter with the experts from the Hall of Gods, they had already sustained heavy wounds.

The ones who had just made a move on him were, of course, the other two youths.

He had barely managed to inflict a single strike on the leading youth when the two youths had already defeated all four of his tamed beasts... This was much faster than he had expected.

Furthermore, it didn't seem like they had sustained any injuries while defeating the four immortal beasts.

The situation really wasn't looking good at all. The leading youth might have lost an arm, but that only translated to a slight loss in fighting prowess. With the loss of his four immortal beasts, he was in an even more perilous position than before.

At this moment, the leading youth had already managed to regain his footing in the battle. He forcefully clotted the gaping wound on his shoulder in order to stop the bleeding before taking out a metal seal with a flick of his wrist.

As an Earthly High Immortal-tier artifact, this metal seal wasn't as powerful as the earlier sword. However, due to its heavy material, it felt frighteningly heavy.

“Go!” the leading youth tossed the metal seal out.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan immediately felt as if he was shrouded by a towering mountain. It felt like his body had been bound by some shackles which he was unable to struggle free from.

The Tongshang Sword was of higher tier than the metal seal, but the metal seal was simply too heavy. Even with Zhang Xuan's superior swordsmanship, it would be difficult for him to confront the metal seal directly. This was similar to how a rapier would never be able to best a mace in a direct clash no matter how powerful the rapier was.

“Hahaha! Let me see how you will deal with this!”

Seeing that Zhang Xuan had been shackled down by the pressure of the metal seal, one of the youths sneered coldly as they charged toward Zhang Xuan and thrust their palms toward him.

As long as they could incapacitate Zhang Xuan, they would be able to succeed in their mission. In any case, the only requirement they had was for the latter to not be dead, so it didn't matter how severely injured he was.

“You should watch with your eyes wide open then!”

As the palm thrust from the youth swiftly approached Zhang Xuan, the latter suddenly burst into laughter instead.

In the next instant, the metal seal in the sky suddenly vanished without a trace, causing the shackles weighing down Zhang Xuan to vanish. Making full use of this opportunity, Zhang Xuan immediately brandished his sword at the youth before him.

Puhe! Puhe! Puhe!

Just like that, the youth had all of his vitals punctured by a flurry of sword qi. With an indignant look in his eyes, he collapsed to the ground.

He wouldn't have expected the metal seal to vanish all of a sudden, freeing the young man who should have been immobilized. He also hadn't expected the young man to have charged up so many sword qi, waiting just for an opportunity to make his move.

Hu!

After slaying one of the youths, Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply, but he dared not to let down his guard.

In order to bait one of them, he intentionally withstood the pressure from the metal seal. Furthermore, in order to ensure a kill, he pushed his sword qi to his limits earlier, causing quite a few meridians to rupture.

He wasn't in a very good state, but he knew that this wasn't time for him to rest yet.

The other youth had noticed that he was in a weakened state, and it was apparent the other party just wasn't going to allow him to catch his breath. While he was making his move, the other party had already circled to his back to launch a devastating palm strike.

The powerful outburst of strength caused Zhang Xuan's body to ricochet into the air. The strike was so powerful that Zhang Xuan's body went completely limp as it flew across the air, seemingly having lost all senses.

It was as if that strike had killed him.

“What?”

The eyebrows of the youth shot up in alarm.

He had made sure to hold back earlier out of fear that he might accidentally bring about Zhang Xuan’s death. If the latter were to die, there was no way he would be able to face the master!

Yet, for Zhang Xuan’s body to go completely limp, could he have struck a vital and killed him by accident?

This couldn’t be! This mustn’t be!

He would be slaughtered if that was the case!

Hu!

Worried, the youth immediately rushed toward Zhang Xuan’s completely still body, wanting to see what was going on. However, his vision suddenly blurred as a figure appeared before him.

•You ...”

The figure standing before him was dressed in the exact same clothes as him, but the other party wasn’t a member of their group. He was one of the black-robed Heavenly True Immortal experts who had failed the previous mission!

Hula!

Just as the youth was wondering why this fellow would suddenly appear before him, he suddenly felt an intense pain in his throat.

He lowered his gaze to take a look... Padah!

His head rolled off his neck.

The truth was that Zhang Xuan had brought out not one but two Soulless Metal Humanoids. While the attention of the youth was captured by the first Soulless Metal Humanoid, the other one executed a sword art and lopped off the youth’s head.

Under normal circumstances, such a ploy wouldn’t have succeeded. However, all of the abrupt situations occurring one after another in quick succession had unnerved the youth’s

heart, causing his guard to be down for a brief moment. This created an opening for the Soulless Metal Humanoid to strike.

Pu! Pu! Pu!

In the next moment, however, Zhang Xuan's limp body crashed heavily onto the ground and coughed three mouthfuls of blood.

Through utilizing the Dongxu Gourd's ability and the Soulless Metal Humanoids, he had managed to take down two of his opponents within five breaths since the start of the battle. With this, he had finally managed to balance the scales.

But he had to put his own body on the line in order to do so, and he was on the verge of reaching his limits.

This was especially so when he intentionally took a palm from one of the youths in order to trick him.

If not for his Heaven's Path Divine Art and the other party holding back, he might have really lost his life then.

Zhang Xuan swiftly took out a jade bottle and gulped it down. Gradually, he could feel his injuries recovering. Heaving a sigh of relief, he turned his gaze to the final youth, the one who had lost an arm.

"Why does your master want to capture me?"

Even though Zhang Xuan had heard that it was due to him comprehending the Gods' Sword Intent, he didn't think that it made much sense.

The Gods' Sword Intent was indeed formidable, but it didn't seem likely for an organization as lofty as the Hall of Gods to stoop so low as to make a move on a mere True Immortal realm cultivator.

Furthermore, they seemed far too desperate to capture him alive.

The clues simply didn't link together. He felt that something was amiss, but he simply couldn't put his finger on what was wrong.

You aren't qualified to know," the youth replied coldly.

To be honest, he was taken aback by the situation as well. He would have never thought that a person who was an entire cultivation realm weaker than them would actually be able to lop off his arm and slay two of his peers within five breaths.

Realizing how fearsome the young man before him was, his face turned livid.

The master was already very displeased at the failure the previous time around. If he were to fail this mission as well...

He shuddered to imagine the fate that awaited him! The master possessed means that could make a person never so much in his life desire death!

Thus, he took a deep breath and narrowed his eyes.

“The master was right. You are a fearsome opponent. I didn’t want to use the treasure which the master has bestowed upon me on you, but it seems like I have no other choice now...”

With a flick of his wrist, a round plate-like object floated into the air. As soon as it appeared, cracks began appearing in the surrounding space.

“A Semi-Divinity artifact?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes narrowed into slits.

2019 Break Free

He had never seen Semi-Divinity artifact before, but the fact that the mere presence of that artifact induced the collapse of the surrounding space was indicative of its prowess. Furthermore, the intensity of the aura emanated by the artifact was very similar to that of Han Jianqiu. Without a doubt, it was definitely an artifact that had surpassed Heavenly High Immortal-tier!

The plate-like artifact emanated a brilliant glow that enveloped the area in brightness. Standing amidst the brilliant glow, Zhang Xuan felt his body stiffening up. He found that he was unable to move nor drive his zhenqi at all.

“You should be proud that you have forced me to use the Goldenspirit Lock,” the youth looked at Zhang Xuan with utter coldness in his eyes.

Just as Zhang Xuan had thought, the plate-like artifact was indeed a Semi-Divinity artifact—the Goldenspirit Lock!

This artifact could seal the lifeforce, soul, and zhenqi of an individual, locking it down in place.

“Break!” Zhang Xuan desperately drove his zhenqi in hopes of breaking free of these shackles.

But for some reason, no matter how he drove his energy, it felt like there was a powerful dam blocking his way. No matter how much momentum he had built up, he was unable to force his energy through at all.

Without any energy to sustain his body, there was no way he could fight. The only fate that awaited him was to be captured.

“Go!”

The Goldenspirit Lock slowly descended from the sky. Even before it could come into proximity, he could already feel tremendous force crushing down on him, causing fresh blood to spurt forth from his acupoints.

Weng!

A resounding buzz suddenly echoed in the air.

The jade token which Han Jianqiu had given him shattered in this instant, and a spherical light barrier swiftly formed around him.

Hu!

The formation of the barrier neutralized the pressure that was crushing down upon Zhang Xuan, allowing him to regain his footing. He quickly gulped down a bottle of the gourd's bathwater before he felt himself recovering a fair bit. Nevertheless, he still felt sapped of strength from head to toe.

He thought that he shouldn't be too far off from matching Semi-Divinity realm cultivators and artifacts since he was able to fight toe-to-toe with Heavenly High Immortal realm experts, but he realized he couldn't be more wrong than that. As soon as he came into contact with the Goldenspirit Lock, he realized that the difference between the two realms was far greater than what he could have imagined.

It was no wonder why the entire Azure was so fearful of the gods. Even a Semi-Divinity artifact was powerful enough to render High Immortals helpless in its presence.

“A protective amulet forged using a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator's blood essence? You sure do have quite a few good things on you. However, how long will your protective barrier last?” the youth laughed coldly as he continued infused his zhenqi into the Goldenspirit Lock.

Boom!

The artifact continued descending down upon Zhang Xuan, and the sheer pressure caused pitch-black lacerations to appear in the surrounding space.

Even the light barrier forcefully dented inward under the crushing force exerted by the Goldenspirit Lock, seemingly ready to burst apart at any moment. Zhang Xuan was still standing within the protection of the light barrier, but he could already feel a suffocating sensation seizing his chest.

This won't do. I'll die at this rate! Zhang Xuan thought.

The energy in the protective amulet was limited. Even though Han Jianqiu claimed that it was able to withstand an attack from a Semi-Divinity, he knew that it would only last till all of its energy was expended. Once the light barrier shattered, he would be a goner!

“What are you waiting for? Hurry up and devour that artifact up there!” Zhang Xuan exclaimed anxiously.

“It's too powerful... Unless you can halt its attack long enough for me to devour it whole, otherwise I wouldn't be able to handle the crushing pressure it was emanating either...” the Dongxu Gourd cried out indignantly.

“Halt its attack?” Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

If he was able to do so, he wouldn't have been cornered to such an extent either!

Knowing that he couldn't afford to hold back his trump cards anymore, Zhang Xuan shouted, “You should come out and help too!”

Hu!

His clone immediately materialized not too far away. With a disapproving frown etched on his forehead, he rammed his body furiously right toward the youth.

The crushing pressure emanated by the Goldenspirit Lock spanned over an area, which meant that his clone was affected by it too. However, it didn't seem to hinder his clone's movements by too much.

His clone was forged out of the Nine Hearts Lotus, which granted him an unbelievably powerful body. By the sheer strength of his body, his clone was able to remain unfazed before the immense pressure coming from the Goldenspirit Lock, thus minimizing the reduction in his fighting prowess.

“This is your clone?”

The youth didn't expect Zhang Xuan to have a clone so powerful that it could withstand the pressure from the Semi-Divinity Goldenspirit Lock. However, he quickly recovered

from his surprise and sneered coldly, “It won’t make a difference. Your fate is already sealed!”

As the youth spoke, he gathered his strength in his fist and executed a powerful punch right toward the clone.

Peng!

The powerful punch accurately struck the head of the clone.

Padah!

The head of the clone was crushed inward. But as if it was unaffected by the attack, the clone continued ramming forward with the same frightening momentum.

Kacha! Kacha!

The clone rammed right into the chest of the youth, causing numerous fractures on the latter’s ribcage.

You...”

The youth was taken aback by the sheer tenacity of the clone. When he raised his gaze once more, he was even more astounded to see that the latter’s head had already recovered back to normal, as if nothing had happened to it at all.

“This is...indestructibility?”

The youth narrowed his eyes as cold sweat poured down his back.

Indestructibility was said to be an ability that the gods possessed, but the other party’s clone actually reached such a frightening level... What was going on over here?

“I don’t believe it. There’s no way a mere clone could have reached the level of indestructibility!” the youth bellowed.

With a swift leap forward, his body warped into a blur as he charged right toward the clone. He only had a single arm right now, which placed him in a disadvantageous position. The appearance of the protective amulet and the indestructible clone had really taken him aback. Just the notion that he might fail his mission at this rate was enough to make him berserk.

No matter what, he couldn’t afford to fail here!

The youth flailed his arm so swiftly that it seemed as if several more arms had sprouted from his body. As his zhenqi gushed forth along with his movements, the surrounding air suddenly felt incredibly heavy.

Despite having one of his hands destroyed, it didn't seem like his fighting prowess had been affected by too much. The strength he could summon at his will was still as terrifying as before.

“Petty tricks! Just watch how I'll unravel your attack with a single move!” the clone declared proudly.

Without resorting to any technique or anything, he simply forcefully rammed his body toward the youth once again Peng peng peng peng!

The youth sank his fist into the clone's face, chest, belly, and all over. Innumerable depressions were appearing all over the clone at a rapid pace, but even something like this couldn't stop the clone's charge at all. Before he knew it, the youth had been knocked down by the clone's tenacious ram once more.

Pu!

Blood spurted from the youth's mouth as he was sent flying backward. In this very moment, he felt so indignant that he could explode on the spot.

What the heck? This wasn't a battle at all! The other party was simply exploiting the indestructibility of his body to charge all around...

This was the first time he felt so stifled ever since he started cultivating!

“If you are truly capable, why don't you stop ramming me with your shoulders and fight me in a proper battle!” the youth hollered angrily.

“You don't want me to ram you?” the clone tilted his head questioningly. “I'm fine with that too.”

Following that, the clone leaped up and sat right down on the youth.

Padah!

Feeling a searing pain on his face, the youth spurted blood.

I told you not to ram me, so you used your bottom to sit on my face instead? Do you have no dignity as an expert?

Hell, you are even worse than a common ruffian!

Watching as his clone fought with the youth, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Due to the youth having his hands full dealing with his clone, the pressure from the Goldenspirit Lock lessened significantly. This was the ideal time for him to make a move. With such thoughts in mind, he quickly exclaimed telepathically to the Dongxu Gourd, "What are you waiting for? Go!"

"Alright!"

The Dongxu Gourd rushed out from Zhang Xuan's dantian, and before the Goldenspirit Lock could even react, it had already vanished from the spot.

It was devoured whole just like that.

Kacha!

At the same time, the light barrier from the protective amulet also reached its limit and dissipated as well.

It was fortunate that he had moved quick enough, or else the Goldenspirit Lock would really be a huge pain to deal with!

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan turned to his clone and his youth as he quickly assessed how he could best intervene in the fight to help his clone defeat the last Heavenly High Immortal. But all of a sudden, the space above him suddenly began shaking intensely.

An indomitable aura was slowly leaking out into the surroundings.

Alarmed by this aura, both the clone and the youth halted their battle and turned their gazes to the sky.

A gourd was floating quietly in the air.

Devouring the Semi-Divinity artifact had provided it with the final push it required in order to break free of its seal. "That's

the culprit who devoured all of my artifacts?”

The face of the youth paled as his body trembled slightly.

His Heavenly High Immortal-tier sword, Earthly High Immortal-tier seal, and Semi-Divinity Goldenspirit Lock... They were all devoured whole by this fellow?

Was that fellow really just a gourd?

“Did it succeed?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up.

When he gave the Dongxu Gourd 200 Superior Immortal Pills earlier, the latter said that he was already on the verge of a breakthrough, just that he was lacking that one final push. Who could have thought that devouring the Semi-Divinity artifact would actually provide it with the momentum it needed to break free of the seal?

He couldn’t wait to see just what kind of legendary beast the Dongxu Gourd was to emanate such an imposing aura. Was it an Ancient Divine Dragon? A Taotie? A Pixiu?

Zhang Xuan stared at the scene intently with bated breath.

Based on the Dongxu Gourd’s self-introduction and his ability to devour artifacts and energy, he knew that the other party was bound to be an extraordinary beast. He had browsed through some relevant materials, and he eventually narrowed the selection to these legendary beasts.

Ancient Divine Dragons were blessed with the strength of a god at birth, making them frightening foes to make enemies out of.

Taotie was known for its ability to devour all matter in the world. It was born with an innate space within its stomach, allowing it to store any prey of any size.

Pixiu devoured their preys whole, never allowing anything to go to waste. The prey it consumed would eventually become parts of its body...

...

Regardless of which of the three it was, one thing was for sure. Once the Dongxu Gourd broke free of its seal, no one would

be able to stop its rise anymore.

Even if the Hall of Gods were to dispatch a real god to deal with him, he would have nothing to fear too!

Zhang Xuan couldn't stop trembling in excitement as he looked forward to much easier days ahead.

The aura that the Dongxu Gourd was emanating from above was still growing stronger by the moment, such that the folded space was starting to collapse inward. The cracks on the Dongxu Gourd's exterior began to creep further downward, and resounding 'Kacha! Kacha!' sounds could be clearly heard.

This... There's no way I can match something like this. I need to run away right now!

Seeing such a sight, the body of the youth tensed up. He immediately turned around and began tearing apart the folded space before him, intending to flee from the scene.

Even if he had to abandon his mission, he had to report to his master that the target possessed an overpowered artifact!

"Do you think that you can still get away?"

How could Zhang Xuan allow the youth to run away and tip off the Hall of Gods? He channeled his Gods' Sword Intent into the Tongshang Sword and drove it right toward the youth.

His clone, the Dongxu Gourd, the Soulless Metal Humanoid, and his protective amulet... He had displayed all of his trump cards to the other party. If he were to allow the other party to get away with his secrets, the Hall of Gods would be able to start making preparations to deal with him!

No matter what, he had to get rid of the youth by hook or by crook!

Ding ding ding ding!

Faced with Zhang Xuan's ferocious offense, the youth had no choice but to turn around and protect himself. With his forceful palm strikes, he was able to keep Zhang Xuan's sword qi at bay.

Despite the overwhelming prowess of the Gods' Sword Intent, Zhang Xuan's cultivation was simply a little too lacking. Faced against a powerful Heavenly High Immortal like the youth before him, he was unable to claim the decisive advantage.

Sou!

Seeing that the battle had resumed' the clone began ramming toward the youth once more. Before long, the youth suffered more fractures all over his body.

“AHHHHHHH!”

The youth felt so stressed inside that he felt like screaming hysterically.

He had never felt so stifled in his life before!

He had faced plenty of opponents that were stronger than him in his lifetime, and he had always been able to defeat them with ease. This was the first time he had felt so indignant fighting against someone of lower cultivation than him.

“At the very worst, I'll just bring you down with me!”

Seeing how the coordination between Zhang Xuan and his clone was swiftly improving, the youth realized that it was impossible for him to get away. There was a good chance that he would lose his life here.

Something within his snapped in that instant, and with a furious howl, he channeled all of his zhenqi into his dantian. He was planning on exploding his cultivation!

Even if he couldn't get away, he had to make use of such means to tell his master that this fellow was more frightening than they had thought!

“Sh*t!”

Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment. He hurriedly put up a defensive swordsmanship, forming a massive sphere of sword qi around him.

He couldn't hope to stop the explosion of an expert of such caliber. All he could do was to reduce the damage he would

sustain.

Boom!

Before the explosion even began, Zhang Xuan could already sense a heavy pressure caused by the extreme condensation of zhenqi within the youth's body. It was so heavy that even holding onto his sword felt extremely strenuous.

The blood in his body was forced against his veins and arteries, and it felt like they would soon break apart under the pressure.

“This is the prowess from a Heavenly High Immortal exploding his cultivation?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in disbelief.

This was the first time he saw a Heavenly High Immortal exploding his cultivation, and it was far stronger than he had thought.

Even though he had already infused his Gods' Sword Intent into his defensive swordsmanship, he knew that he would sustain severe injuries that he wouldn't be able to recover from in the short run if the explosion were to really occur.

The pressure only continued to grow stronger and stronger. Just when Zhang Xuan thought that he was going to succumb to it, all of the tension in the air suddenly vanished like a receding tide.

2020 Little Yellow Chick

“Could it be a feint?”

Alarmed, Zhang Xuan quickly raised his head to take a look.

It suddenly crossed his mind that the other party could have been pretending to explode his cultivation in order to find an opportunity to flee?

Zhang Xuan turned to the youth anxiously, but when he caught a clear glimpse of the latter’s appearance, his eyes nearly bulged out of their sockets.

The fellow who was trying to explode his cultivation had a fragment of a gourd in his head... And an entire half of his head had been blasted away!

He was smashed to death by the gourd before he could gather sufficient power for an explosion!

It was no wonder why the explosion halted all of a sudden...

“How could this be...” the youth muttered indignantly with his dying breath.

Putong!

His corpse fell from the sky.

He had considered the possibility that he might be killed by Zhang Xuan, but never had he thought that he would be killed by a fragment of a gourd in such a manner...

What a huge embarrassment!

On the other hand, after confirming that the youth had died, Zhang Xuan quickly turned his sights toward the Dongxu Gourd with excitement gleaming in his eyes, “Has it broken free of its seal yet?”

Following that, he saw a golden irradiance as brilliant as the blazing sun engulfing the surroundings. After which, a silhouette reminiscent of a canary slowly unfurled its wings.

Shrouded by the flames, it was impossible to tell what it was right away. Nevertheless, from the imposing air it emanated, one could feel that it was an extremely powerful beast.

It was no wonder why it was able to devour Heavenly High Immortal-tier and even Semi-Divinity artifacts easily... The Dongxu Gourd really wasn't bragging at all. Even if it wasn't a legendary beast that had ruled over the lands, there should be very few in the Azure that could hurt it.

"I have succeeded! I'm finally out of this darned shell..."

Hearty laughter echoed in the air as shadows flickered amidst the radiance. Slowly, the brilliance died down, and the silhouette in the air became clearer and clearer.

Zhang Xuan's clone also quickly turned his sights over. He had known the Dongxu Gourd for quite some time too, and he was extremely curious to find out just what kind of monster was sealed within it.

Hu!

The light finally dissipated entirely, leaving the silhouette concealed amidst it in plain sight.

"You are... the legendary beast who used to rule over the lands?"

Upon catching a clear look at the Dongxu Gourd's appearance, Zhang Xuan nearly bit down on his own tongue.

"Why? Do I not look like it?"

A little yellow chick which looked as if it had just broken out of its shell waddled its way over. Its head was tilted upward, making it seem as proud as a peacock.

Zhang Xuan and his clone rubbed their eyes, but the sight before them still remained the same. The sheer ridiculousness of the situation nearly made them tug their hair out.

Where is the promised Ancient Divine Dragon?

Where is the promised Taotie?

Where is the promised Pixiu?

Instead of all of that, you are actually a little yellow chick instead?

Just tell me, what the hell about you resembles a legendary beast?

“Are chickens considered legendary beasts too?” Zhang Xuan uttered in disbelief.

The Dongxu Gourd had boasted so much in the past that it had unknowingly built up great expectations in him for the revelation of its true form.

But it actually turned out to be a little yellow chick instead? The hell!

If it was a dragon or the sort, how awe-inspiring it would be for him to ride on it and dominate anyone who dared to cross him? Not even the Hall of Gods would dare to mess around with him!

What was he supposed to do with a chick like this? Toss it at his enemies and hope that it could fluff them to death?

You are the one who is a chicken, your entire family are chickens!” the little yellow chick scoffed furiously. Tilting its head up proudly, it said, “I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands. I am... As for what I am, I haven't recovered my memories yet so I can't say for sure, but I am very certain that... I. Am. Not. A. Chicken!”

“Whatever,” Zhang Xuan waved his hand dismissively.

He didn't want to think or argue about this matter anymore. He felt like he might really suffer a mental breakdown if he were to continue harping on this matter.

He turned to look at the surrounding folded space instead and noted that it was already on the verge of shattering apart. So, he quickly kept his clone, his tamed beast, and the corpses of the three youths into his storage ring.

Then, he shot a look at the little yellow chick, and anger began boiling within him again.

With an impatient voice, he harrumphed, “We'll talk later. Get back to my dantian for now.”

“I have already broken free of my seal. I don’t need to return to your dantian anymore,” the little yellow chick replied smugly.

“Get your ass back in there!” Zhang Xuan picked up the little yellow chick with two of his fingers and spoke sharply. “Otherwise, you’ll be going into my storage ring instead!”

“Fine!”

The little yellow chick meekly returned back into Zhang Xuan’s dantian.

Hu!

Barely after these were all done, Zhang Xuan suddenly found that he had returned back to the street outside the Ethereal Hall. Just like before, no one had noticed the intense battle that had just happened here not too long ago.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan rushed over to the disciple from the Myriad Beasts Hall and noted that while the latter was severely injured, he was still breathing. Thus, he fed the latter a bottle of the gourd’s bathwater and instructed him to recuperate well.

After that was done, he began reflecting on what had happened over the past few days.

He had made sure to disguise every single aspect of himself, such that there was no trace of the original Zhang Xuan to be seen in him anymore. Yet, those from the Hall of Gods were still able to find him...

Just what were they basing their search criteria on?

And how could they be certain that they had gotten the right person?

As long as Zhang Xuan was unable to figure this out, he would never know when he would be in danger.

After the disciple had recovered a fair bit, Zhang Xuan instructed him grimly, “You should return to the sect. I’ll be fine on my own.”

After which, he dived into the crowd, and not too long later, he had already assumed a different appearance.

He wanted to check if the Hall of Gods was really able to see through his disguise.

Thus, he chose to linger around the vicinity where he was assassinated for more than two hours, but there were no more assassination attempts. If the Hall of Gods was really able to see through his disguise, they would have noticed him and struck again by now.

That shouldn't be it then... Zhang Xuan thought.

Thinking back, if the Hall of Gods was really able to see through his disguise, they should have made a move on him back when he first left the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

I really have no idea at all... But since they aren't able to see through my disguise, I guess I should still be fine for the time being... Zhang Xuan sighed helplessly.

He returned back to the Ethereal Hall and booked another silent chamber.

He quickly set up a series of Isolation Formations and the sort around before bringing out the little yellow chick once more.

“What abilities do you have, and how strong are you at the moment?”

He thought that he shouldn't jump into assumptions about this fellow. It would be best for him to clarify the situation first. After all, the Dongxu Gourd was also much more powerful than it looked as well.

If he could find out what the little yellow chick was capable of, he would know how he could utilize it in a battle.

“My abilities?” the little yellow chick cocked its head to the side. “I don't really know either.”

“Are you able to fly?” Zhang Xuan asked.

The little yellow chick tried flapping its tiny wings.

Paji!

It crashed back to the ground.

“I don’t think so,” it replied.

“What about your fighting prowess?”

Pah!

In the next instant, a slap flew right toward the little yellow chick. It was sent twirling into the air before crashing into the wall.

“It’s a no then. What about your strength?”

Feeling as if he was staring right into the abyss of despair, Zhang Xuan brought out one of the corpses of the Heavenly High Immortals and tossed it on the little yellow chick.

The little yellow chick was immediately crushed to the ground. A tiny claw could be seen trembling at the very corner of the corpse...

Ten minutes later, Zhang Xuan was really on the verge of a mental breakdown.

“Is this the strength you used to ‘rule over the lands’?”

This fellow had been boasting about how powerful it was since a long time ago, but it turned out to be such an adorable and harmless beast instead... What was even more ridiculous was that it didn’t seem to possess any strength at all. It was a being which any cultivator could easily stomp to death!

That being said, there was indeed one thing that was noteworthy about it—its recovery ability. Even when it was smacked and crushed under a High Immortal, it swiftly recovered from the damage it had sustained.

“I... I’m sure that I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands! It’s just that... I have just broken out of my seal, and my energy is exhausted. I just haven’t recovered yet! Why don’t you bring me another 200 Superior Immortal Pills, no, make it 200 Premier Immortal Pills instead! I should be able to recover quite a bit after that...”

The little yellow chick flailed its wings around anxiously.

“200 Premier Immortal Pills? Why don’t you go to hell instead?” Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

It was already difficult enough for him to procure 200 Superior Immortal Pills, and this fellow wanted him to gather 200 Premier Immortal Pills...

I really should smack that idea out of your mind...

As stifled as Zhang Xuan was, he knew that there was a good chance that what the little yellow chick was saying was true. After all, it was able to devour even a Semi-Divinity artifact in its sealed state. There was no way it could possibly be ordinary!

“Since you are my tamed beast, you should have a fitting name too. I can’t possibly keep calling you Dongxu Gourd or little chick,” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and said.

“Un un!” the little yellow chick nodded in agreement. “It must be that I still have some seals which I have yet to release yet, so I’m still not sure what exactly I am either. However, if one is for sure, I’m definitely not a chicken! I must be a legendary beast who once ruled the lands, a powerhouse in this world!”

No matter how powerful a chicken was, it couldn’t possibly be capable of devouring a Semi-Divinity artifact whole!

As such, it was extremely opposed to its master calling it a chick.

Thus, it looked at its master with a hopeful look, hoping that it would come up with an imposing name for it.

“No matter whether you are a real chicken or not, it’s a fact that you look like a chick at the moment. You have also claimed that you are a legendary beast, a ruler of the lands. Since that’s the case, why don’t we call you...”

Zhang Xuan pondered very deeply at this moment before his eyes lit up in excitement, “Supercock!”

...

The little yellow chick collapsed to the ground.

Are you sure that this is an appropriate name for a legendary beast?

An extremely powerful human is known as Superman. An extremely powerful male chicken is simply known as Supercock.

2021 The Premature Emergence of the Azure Bridge

It took a lot of arguing before the little yellow chick managed to convince Zhang Xuan to go with ‘Little Chick’ instead, and words couldn’t begin to describe how happy it was with it,

Given how tragic its master’s naming sense was, it was already a huge blessing that it was let off with just ‘Little Chick’. Otherwise, if it had to go with what Supercock or Little Chirpchirp or that sort, it would never be able to live with it!

How would it be able to face its fellow legendary beasts in the future with such a disastrous name?

“I am the legendary beast who rules over the Nine Heavens and Ten Continents, Primordial Ancient Dragon, Ao Tian[1]!”

“I am the legendary beast who has scorched the Great Barren Wilderness and vaporized innumerable oceans, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, Huo Qianyu[2]!”

Then, when it finally came to its turn to introduce itself...

“I am the legendary beast *****, Supercock!”

Its body would really wither just by how naughty it sounded!

What the heck was this...

How did it land itself such an unreliable master?

At this point, Little Chick couldn’t help but lower its head to take a closer look at itself...

Heck, I really do look like a chick... the kind which had just crawled out of its egg at that!

Furthermore, I don’t have any memories of what I am either... Just what kind of legendary beast am I?

Little Chick fell into deep contemplation.

Paying no heed to the little yellow chick which was pondering over its reason of existence, Zhang Xuan took out the corpses of the three Heavenly High Immortals whom he had just killed.

Similar to those he had defeated previously, these three didn't have anything valuable in their storage rings either. The only things of value were their very bodies.

To be honest, he was feeling very worried about his current plight. Till now, he still didn't know what it was that gave him away, and that left him deeply insecure. He had never craved power this much ever since he started cultivating!

In any case, if he could turn these Heavenly High Immortals into Soulless Metal Humanoids too, he would be in a much safer position. If he had an army of them previously, he could have lined them up before him to form a line of defense when that youth tried to explode his cultivation earlier.

...

In the Hall of Gods...

A towering silhouette flickered into existence once more at the center of the room.

"Yet another failure?" the silhouette remarked coldly as a pair of cold eyes pierced through the black-robed man kneeling before him.

"Yes..."

The black-robed man trembled.

"I have underestimated him. A person chosen by the heavens is indeed blessed with great luck..." the silhouette remarked coldly. "You'll be making a move personally then. If you were to fail, don't bother coming back to look for me. End your own life there and then! Also, I want you to investigate what trump cards he has that allowed him to take down even three of our Heavenly High Immortals!"

“Yes, master!” the black-robed man nodded before subserviently retreating out of the room.

“Hold on for a moment!” the silhouette suddenly raised his hand. “Announce the decree of the Hall of Gods. The Azure Bridge shall descend half a month from now!”

“Half a month? The Azure Bridge going to descend prematurely?” the black-robed man asked.

Usually, it would still take quite a while longer before the Azure Bridge descended. For it to appear half a month from now... Wasn't that a little too fast?

“Since the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has confirmed him as their sect leader, their intention is likely to have him join as a challenger. If we were to leave it as it is, it'll still take some time before the Azure Bridge finally descends. He might achieve a breakthrough to High Immortal during this period of time, and if so, none of you will be able to match him anymore,” the silhouette said.

With a cold gleam in his eyes, he said, “He mustn't be allowed to succeed by any means, or else all of you will be killed!”

“Yes, I understand,” the black-robed figure replied grimly before leaving the room.

...

A slender boat floated in the air just above the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Standing atop of it was a lady, and standing behind her was an adolescent youth.

“Palace Chief Du, what are you doing here?”

A figure suddenly appeared in front of the boat—Han Jianqiu.

“I have come for your newly-appointed sect leader,” the lady replied with her hands behind her back.

She was no other than the chief of the Starchaser Palace, Du Qingyuan!

“Our newly-appointed sect leader?” Han Jianqiu frowned.

“Indeed. Can you invite him out to meet me?” Du Qingyuan replied with a nod.

“This...” Han Jianqiu paused for a brief moment before replying, “Palace Chief Du, my apologies but our sect leader is currently practicing the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula. He’s in a crucial moment in his cultivation, so it’s not convenient for him to meet any guests at the moment.”

He knew that it was of utmost importance for him to keep the news that Zhang Xuan had left the sect a secret. Otherwise, if the Hall of Gods were to somehow hear of the matter, they would surely make a move.

Zhang Xuan was their greatest hope at achieving a breakthrough at the Azure Bridge, so he would do anything to protect the young man.

“He’s in seclusion?” Du Qingyuan frowned.

She knew that the sect leaders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would practice the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula. There was nothing wrong with Han Jianqiu’s words, so she didn’t harbor any doubts regarding his words either.

Thinking back, Han Jianqiu had gone through that phase as well, and he was gone into seclusion for fifteen whole years.

No matter how talented Zhang Xuan was, it was unlikely that he would be able to master the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula too quickly either. It was really bad timing. As the chief of the Starchaser Palace, she couldn’t possibly spend years waiting here for him to come out of seclusion.

“Do you have his portrait by any chance? I would like to take a look,” Du Qingyuan asked.

With a doubtful look on his face, Han Jianqiu asked, “Pardon me, Palace Chief Du, but I must ask for your purpose for seeking our sect leader.”

As the palace chief of the Starchaser Palace, one of the Six Sects, Du Qingyuan was a lofty figure that stood at the peak of the Forsaken Continent. Before Zhang Xuan became the sect leader, he was nothing more than an insignificant figure living in a small town. Given so, it was unthinkable for the two of them to be associated with one another.

“I just found his name extremely familiar. He seems to be an acquaintance of mine, so I would like to verify if it’s really him,” Du Qingyuan replied.

If Zhang Xuan was here, he would recognize Du Qingyuan to be the ‘deity’ whom Sovereign Chen Yong had summoned back then through the ritual of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

Back then, in order to save Sovereign Chen Yong, Zhang Xuan requested Du Qingyuan to take Sovereign Chen Yong’s soul away with her. Using some sort of secret art, Du Qingyuan managed to reconstruct a new body for Sovereign Chen Yong, and the latter was currently the very adolescent youth standing right behind her.

“Our sect leader is an acquaintance of yours?” Han Jianqiu frowned.

As unlikely that it sounded, he couldn’t help but recall how adamant Zhang Xuan was regarding his decision to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars. Not too long after, Du Qingyuan made the long journey here to look for Zhang Xuan too... Could the two of them really be acquainted with one another?

Han Jianqiu hesitated for a moment before flicking his wrist.

A jade token appeared in his grasp. He tapped on the jade token lightly, and Zhang Xuan’s portrait floated into the air. “This is our sect leader, Zhang Xuan.”

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and the Starchaser Palace couldn’t be said to be on friendly terms. Nevertheless, while Du Qingyuan could be rather difficult at times, she wasn’t an unreasonable person. Considering the implications, it was unlikely that she would try to harm their sect leader.

Not to mention, he didn’t tell her where Zhang Xuan was heading either. Thus, it shouldn’t matter whether she knew of his appearance or not.

“Indeed!” Upon seeing the portrait, Du Qingyuan’s eyes lit up.

Behind her, the adolescent youth, Wu Chen, trembled in agitation.

“Is our sect leader the acquaintance Palace Chief Du is looking to?” Han Jianqiu asked.

“Indeed. We have met each other once before...” Du Qingyuan nodded. After which, she turned to the adolescent youth behind her and said, “Wu Chen, if you wish to stay here, I can talk to Elder Han on your behalf.”

“Thank you, Palace Chief Du!” Wu Chen clasped his fist in gratitude.

“Un!” Du Qingyuan nodded.

Just as she was about to continue speaking, her eyebrows suddenly shot up. At the same time, Han Jianqiu’s eyes widened slightly as well. A moment later, their faces paled at the same time.

“The Azure Bridge is going to descend half a month from now?”

“That’s way too fast!” Han Jianqiu’s body stiffened.

The Azure Bridge was the only path into the Hall of Gods, and it only descended once every century. Once they missed the occasion, they would have to wait another hundred years.

If the Azure Bridge were to descend on its usual timing, Zhang Xuan would definitely have more than enough time to cultivate to Heavenly High Immortal realm. That would significantly boost his chances of clinching the rights to challenge the Hall of Gods.

With his superior swordsmanship, Zhang Xuan would have been in a good position to snatch the other half of the ‘神 (God)’ character for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

But if the Azure Bridge were to descend in half a month from now, the other party wouldn’t be able to make it in time at all!

Not to mention, the other party had already embarked on his journey to the Sea of Exiled Stars. They didn’t know where the young man was at the moment, and they had no way of getting in touch with him at the moment either...

The situation wasn’t looking good at all.

“Let’s enter the Ethereal Hall!”

Without any hesitation, Han Jianqiu took out an Ethereal Token and immersed his consciousness into it. Du Qingyuan quickly did the same as well.

This was the Ethereal Token which only the top experts of the Forsaken Continent were bestowed with. The purpose of it was to provide a convenient platform for them to gather and discuss major issues.

Of course, there was no guarantee that the Ethereal Hall would be a secure place to communicate as it wasn’t something under the control of their sect. This was also why they would preferentially meet in person when it came to discussing major issues.

However, since this was just a simple meeting to discuss the rough plan regarding a known issue, it shouldn’t pose too much problem.

Within a sealed room in the Ethereal Hall, figures appeared one after another. The other sect leaders had clearly received the same news as well, so they swiftly made their way into the Ethereal Hall as well.

Once the leaders of all Six Sects were present, Han Jianqiu shot a sweeping glance across the crowd before asking, “What are your current plans regarding the Azure Bridge?”

“The descent of the Azure Bridge is an important affair, so we have to deal with it carefully. Elder Han, hasn’t the new leader of your Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent? Why isn’t he here?” an elder glanced over and asked.

Due to Han Jianqiu’s announcement a few days ago, it had already become a known fact throughout the Forsaken Continent that the new sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Zhang Xuan, had grasped the Gods’ Sword Intent. That should be more than enough to qualify him to participate in this meeting.

“He’s in seclusion at the moment, so I couldn’t disturb him,” Han Jianqiu replied.

“What about your newly-appointed Hall Master Zheng Yang?” the elder turned his gaze to Elder Qin Yuan.

“He... is also in seclusion as well!” Elder Qin replied grimly.

“They are both in seclusion?” the elder frowned in displeasure.

“It’s only once in every century that the Azure Bridge would descend, granting us an opportunity to challenge the Hall of Gods. Yet, the two of the most hopeful sect leaders are in seclusion at the moment... What should we do then?”

There was a great deal of excitement when they heard the news about the inauguration of two new sect leaders, but how could the two of them be in seclusion during such a crucial moment?

“We’ll try and see if we can get in touch with our sect leader and inform him of this matter. Meanwhile, the rest of you should quickly pick out the strongest and most talented members in your sects as well. Ten days from now, we’ll meet at the Heaven Anchoring Boulder in the Sea of Exiled Stars. Before the Azure Bridge appears, we should verify the strength of each sect before deciding on the leader of the expedition,” Han Jianqiu said.

“Sounds fine. It’s settled then.”

The crowd nodded.

This was indeed the best they could do at the moment.

The Hall of Gods was located above the Sea of Exiled Stars, so the Azure Bridge appeared here as well. Thus, it was decided to be their gathering area as well.

“It’d be easier for us to devise a strategy if we gather together in advance too...”

At this moment, a voice suddenly echoed from the entrance of the room. Following that, a tall figure appeared within the room.

Upon seeing this figure, the crowd quickly rose to their feet and clasped their fists, “Hall Master Kong!”

The person who had just arrived was no other than the master of the Ethereal Hall!

“Un, there’s no need to stand on ceremony. I have just heard the news as well. Please dispatch the top experts of your sects to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder as soon as possible. Once the leader of the expedition has been chosen, I’ll have a personal chat with him to fill him in on the details concerning the Azure Bridge and the Hall of Gods,” Hall Master Kong said.

After which, he turned to Han Jianqiu and smiled, “I’m looking forward to meeting your new sect leader, Zhang Xuan. Please do introduce me to him when he arrives at the Heaven Anchoring Boulder. I am expecting great things out of him.”

“Definitely, Hall Master Kong. I’ll bring him over to express our gratitude to you for your help all along,” Han Jianqiu replied with a nod.

[1] Ao Tian means looking upon the heavens haughtily.

[2] Huo Qianyu means Thousand Flaming Feathers, kind of.

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“Alright, we shall meet at the Heaven Anchoring Boulder then!” Hall Master Kong chuckled softly before leaving the area.

The others also departed the room one after another.

After leaving the Ethereal Hall, Du Qingyuan swiftly regained her consciousness. Standing on the boat, she looked at Han Jianqiu and clasped her fist. “Elder Han, I have to return to my sect to select a suitable group of cultivators. Farewell!”

She had hoped to meet Zhang Xuan there, but the matter concerning the Azure Bridge was more important. In any case, the latter was bound to be there for the descent of the Azure Bridge, so there was no need to rush the matter.

“Farewell!” Han Jianqiu nodded.

“This boy over here, Wu Chen, is a close friend of Sect Leader Zhang. I’ll have to trouble you to take care of him well,” Du Qingyuan said with a smile.

Following which, she drove her boat toward the north, and in just a moment, it had already vanished from view.

“You are acquainted with our sect leader?” Han Jianqiu looked at the adolescent youth before him doubtfully.

Wu Chen nodded in response.

“I see. Come with me then,” Han Jianqiu said.

With a wave of his hand, he propped the adolescent youth into the sky, and they flew back into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion together.

Zhang Xuan was not in the sect at the moment, so they had to find a way to inform him of this important news.

Just that... how could they do so?

It had been several days since Zhang Xuan had left for Starchaser Palace, so he could be anywhere. He was out of range of their Communication Jade Tokens, so their hope was to reach him through the Ethereal Hall.

But what if he never entered the Ethereal Hall and missed the information that they were trying to relay to him?

Since he's heading to the Sea of Exiled Stars, he should be able to catch wind of the news there, Han Jianqiu thought.

He did not know where Zhang Xuan was exactly at the moment, but as long as the latter was heading to the Sea of Exiled Stars, that would simplify matters.

As long as one of them headed there in advance, they should be able to reach him via the Communication Jade Token once they were in range.

Having decided on a course of action, Han Jianqiu immediately returned to the sect to choose the candidates that would be heading over to the Heaven Anchor Boulder.

The greatest restriction to entering the Azure Bridge was that one's cultivation must not exceed Heavenly High Immortal. In other words, Semi-Divinity realm experts were forbidden from passing through the Azure Bridge!

Furthermore, one's age must not be beyond one hundred.

These two tight restrictions effectively eliminated a huge chunk of the top experts in the Six Sects. Even in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, there were not many suitable candidates.

Han Jianqiu quickly browsed through the list of candidates and nominated a few as potential substitutes should they fail to find Zhang Xuan. Then, together with Wu Chen and a few others, they got onto an aerial immortal beast and began making their way over to the Sea of Exiled Stars.

...

The same sight was also happening in the Myriad Beasts Hall.

Their hall master had gone missing, and they could not get in touch with the other party. Thus, they could only gather a

search party to look for him.

...

Exhaling a deep breath, Zhang Xuan rose to his feet.

After a great deal of hard work, he had finally managed to forge the three Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators from the Hall of Gods into Soulless Metal Humanoids. However, due to the limitation of his soul cultivation, the final product was incomplete, so the strength of the Soulless Metal Humanoids was still rather lacking.

Nevertheless, with these three additional Soulless Metal Humanoids, as long as the Hall of Gods did not dispatch Semi-Divinity realm experts for him, it would not be easy for them to take him down.

Just as Zhang Xuan was walking out of the room, Little Chick suddenly waddled up to him.

“Master, I was thinking very very deeply earlier, and I think I know what my ability is!”

Little Chick flapped its tiny wings arduously as it tried to get onto Zhang Xuan’s shoulder. It looked at Zhang Xuan with beady eyes filled with confidence.

“What’s your ability?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“I can eat.” Little Chick cocked its head proudly. “If you can bring me another Semi-Divinity artifact, I’ll be able to devour it whole...”

“...“Zhang Xuan clutched his chest.

He had always been the one to anger others, but ever since he met this darned chick, he felt as if his blood pressure had been shooting up.

Just what did he do so wrong for the heavens to bring such a dastardly fellow to his side?

If it had been any other ordinary immortal beast, he would have long tossed the other party away. But what could he do? This chick happened to be a legendary beast that made a good pot of nourishing chicken soup when boiled...

Thinking back, if not for this fellow's help in devouring his enemies' weapons, he might have just lost his life to those experts from the Hall of Gods. In a sense, he did owe his life to this little yellow chick.

Fine! I'll tolerate you for now!

"Other than eating, do you have any other offensive abilities? I remember how you were able to knock the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix into submission back when you were still a gourd. Do you have any powerful moves similar to that?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"Ah, I don't think I can do that anymore. The only reason I was able to knock that bird out is because the gourd I was sealed in was exceptionally tough. Otherwise, I wouldn't have had trouble trying to break free from it... Wait, I swallowed the flames that bird vomited out back then, right? I think that I might still be able to do that," Little Chick said.

"Oh? You are still able to devour flames?" Zhang Xuan nodded slightly.

He tapped his tamed beast sack and summoned the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix.

"Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, use flamethrower on Little Chick!" Zhang Xuan ordered.

Yes, Master!"

Devastating flames blasted forth from the nine heads of the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and they converged on the little yellow chick on the floor, drowning it in searing heat.

It took quite a few minutes before the flames were finally put out.

A little ashen ball could be seen lying amid the black ashes. Vaguely, one could smell the scent of delectable meat from it.

"Ah?" Zhang Xuan's eyelids twitched wildly.

Was that chick... well done?

Did the other party not just say that it was still able to devour flames?

Why was it so easily cooked then?

Not to mention, its flesh smelled incredibly fragrant. It caused saliva to drip from the edges of his mouth...

“Master, I didn’t know that it would be so weak...” The Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix jolted in fright.

Considering how this little yellow chick had come out of the gourd, the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix had expected the other party to be an incredibly powerful beast despite its seemingly innocent exterior. Yet, who could have known that it would start giving off such a delicious scent once it was seared?

It really had no intention of cooking its master’s tamed beast!

“I didn’t know either...” Zhang Xuan sighed helplessly.

He stretched his hand over to check if the little yellow chick was still alive. If it had really lost its life, even though it did smell quite delicious, he would just bury it out of respect for it although it would be a waste of food...

Right as Zhang Xuan’s finger touched the charred chick, the sound of a ceramic shattering echoed in the room.

Kacha! Kacha!

Cracks appeared on the charred exterior. Whoosh! A yellow silhouette popped out from within.

This time, the little yellow chick seemed to have grown a little rounder than before. Not only so, it was starting to emanate a slight aura.

It flapped its wings and rose into the air without any difficulty. With smooth movements, it landed on Zhang Xuan’s shoulder.

You... have you reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

After being seared by the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, this little yellow chick had grown from a powerless chick to a Heavenly High Immortal realm chick!

It had reached the same level as the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix!

“Indeed!” Little Chick nodded gleefully.

“So, the key to unlocking you is torching you with flames? Got it. Let’s continue then!”

With eyes glowing with excitement, Zhang Xuan instructed the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix to continue breathing flames on the little yellow chick.

But not too long later, they stopped.

It seemed like Little Chick’s cultivation would only advance on the first encounter with the flame. Anything more than that would be ineffective.

“Forget it. It’s good enough that you are at the Heavenly High Immortal realm and that you are able to devour weapons,” Zhang Xuan said.

He continued testing it, and to his horror, it turned out that the little yellow chick’s fighting prowess was really no different from before. Despite being a High Immortal, with its small wings and claws, it might not even be a match for a True Immortal. Seeing this, he could only shake his head and sigh deeply.

In any case, it was already good enough that Little Chick was able to devour weapons. This ability could work wonders during battle. There was no need for him to greedily wish for more.

Thus, he placed Little Chick back into his dantian and the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix back into the tamed beast sack before leaving the room.

He walked over to the receptionist of the Ethereal Hall and said, “I would like to rent an aerial immortal beast. May I know where I should head to?”

His Serpentine Dragon was already plastered with a tag that said ‘I am the tamed beast of the Myriad Beasts Hall’s hall master’, so there was no way he could bring the other party out too carelessly. On the other hand, ordinary immortal beasts were simply too slow.

Thinking back, he should have tamed a few more aerial immortal beasts back when he was still at the Ascendant Cloud Mountain!

Back then, he did not think that there was a need to take so many beasts along with him, but it seemed like it was always best to prepare spares.

“You wish to rent an aerial immortal beast? There aren’t too many of them even in our Biyuan City, and most of them fly a specific route... May I know where you wish to go?” the receptionist asked with a polite smile.

“I intend to head north to the Sea of Exiled Stars,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“North?” The receptionist frowned a little. “It’s uncommon for people to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars, so there aren’t too many aerial immortal beasts heading there. Let me check for you...”

Following which, she lowered her head and swiftly flipped through a book. A moment later, she said with a smile, “There’ll be a Lesser True Immortal realm aerial immortal beast heading to the Sea of Exiled Stars three days from now. It’ll only take a month for you to arrive at your destination.”

“A month?” Zhang Xuan frowned. “Is there no faster aerial immortal beast than that?”

He was not willing to waste so much time traveling.

The Hall of Gods had already noticed him, and there was no knowing when the next assassination attempt would be.

He had to head to the Starchaser Palace as soon as possible to gather the soul cultivation technique manuals required for him to achieve a breakthrough.

If he could ride on the Serpentine Dragon, it would only take seven days at most for him to arrive at his destination! A month was simply too long!

Hearing those words, the receptionist shook her head and said, “I’m afraid that there aren’t any other alternatives. The locals living in the Sea of Exiled Stars aren’t too welcoming toward

outsiders, so it's rare for anyone to head there. Furthermore, the flight services of aerial immortal beasts are expensive, so there aren't too many riders..."

Most powerhouses had their own tamed beasts to ride on, and those who had reached the High Immortal realm were able to fly on their own. There was no need for them to ride on aerial immortal beasts.

Besides, those from the Sea of Exiled Stars were hostile toward outsiders. Only large cities like Biyuan City would have a flight route there.

"How much would it cost if I individually rented a High Immortal realm beast to head toward the Sea of Exiled Stars?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"This..." The receptionist did not have a response for Zhang Xuan's question. "I have never come across that query before. I'll check with our elder for you."

She turned around and left.

Not too long later, she returned with an elder behind her.

"Sir, are you heading toward the Sea of Exiled Stars?" the elder asked.

Zhang Xuan nodded. "Do you have any High Immortal realm beasts for rent?"

There aren't any High Immortal realm beasts for rent, but I have just heard that those from the Sevenstar Pavilion intend to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars as well. They will be setting off tomorrow, and the tamed beast they are riding on will allow them to reach their destination within five days!" the elder replied with a smile.

"Five days?" Zhang Xuan was slightly stunned.

That was even faster than the Serpentine Dragon!

Most likely, the immortal beast was at the Heavenly High Immortal realm as well.

"Indeed," the elder replied with a nod.

“I’ll have to trouble you to explain how I can share a ride with them.” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

The speed of the immortal beast was ideal for him. However, this also meant that the identities of those who were going to ride on the immortal beast were anything but ordinary. He would likely have to fork out a heavy price for the ride.

2023 I Need to Earn Money

Through challenging the inner disciples and core disciples, he had earned quite a number of Sword Pavilion Coins back in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. However, as he thought that he did not have much use for them, he had spent most of his wealth on Immortal Pills for Dan Xiaotian and Bai Ruanqing.

As such, while he was not exactly poor, the amount of money he had left was definitely insufficient for him to strike a deal with the Sevenstar Pavilion.

However, since it was guaranteed that he would be able to purchase a ride on the immortal beast as long he had enough money, everything else would be simple to deal with. He would just have to find a way to earn some money.

With such thoughts in mind, he looked at the elder and asked, “How much will it cost?”

“It’s the personal mount of the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, and considering the location is the faraway Sea of Exiled Stars, it’ll cost at least 20,000 Ethereal Coins,” the elder replied after a swift calculation.

“20,000 Ethereal Coins?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even the True Immortal realm Ethereal Token only cost 2,700 Ethereal Coins. With 20,000 Ethereal Coins, one would be able to buy even a High Immortal-tier weapon.

It was indeed very pricy.

“Yes.” The elder nodded. “Well, I’ll be frank with you. I’ll be taking half of the sum as commission. However, you should know that without my introduction, even with 20,000 Ethereal Coins, you might not be able to strike a deal with the Sevenstar Pavilion on your own!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

He was an outsider, and he did not know anyone in the Sevenstar Pavilion. Without the elder, putting aside striking a deal with them, he would not even be aware of this piece of information.

“I understand. I’ll go and prepare the money now.” Zhang Xuan nodded as he turned around and walked back into the private chamber in the Ethereal Hall.

Safety came first. As long as he could avoid getting found by the Hall of Gods, spending that bit of money was nothing at all.

As for how he would earn his money, wherever there was an Ethereal Hall, there would be public duels as well. Considering how he was invincible in his cultivation realm, it was a piece of cake for him to earn his money!

As long as he did not reveal his Gods’ Sword Intent, the Hall of Gods should not be able to find him.

He quickly set up a few Isolation Formations within the silent chamber before immersing his consciousness into the Ethereal Token.

The layout of the virtual Ethereal Hall was similar to the one in the real world. He quickly made his way over to the dueling ring.

As one of the largest cities on the Forsaken Continent, the Biyuan City was filled with experts. While True Immortal realm cultivators were already considered to be in the top echelon in smaller cities like Wuhai City, over here, there were so many of them that it was hard to believe that they were a rarity in other parts of the continent.

As such, the dueling rings were filled to the brim.

After registering at the receptionist, Zhang Xuan waited roughly ten minutes before being ushered toward the dueling ring.

The receptionist turned to the elder and asked curiously, “Elder, is the Sevenstar Pavilion really sending people to the Sea of Exiled Stars?”

The Starchaser Palace was known to have bad relations with the other five sects, so why would the Sevenstar Pavilion send its men over?

“It’s confidential news, so make sure not to spread it around. It’s said that the sect leader is heading over there to discuss something important,” the elder replied.

He was the person in charge of managing the Biyuan City’s Ethereal Hall, and his cultivation had long reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm, making him a highly esteemed figure there. However, he was still not privy to the matters happening within the Sevenstar Pavilion.

“Oh...” Hearing that it was confidential, the receptionist did not dare probe any deeper into it. With a chuckle, she changed the topic and said, “I wonder if that fellow will be able to raise 20,000 Ethereal Coins in time...”

“Heh!” the elder scoffed. “Other than High Immortals, it’s impossible for anyone to fork out such a huge sum!”

“Then...” The receptionist blinked, surprised by the elder’s reaction.

“I’m just letting him know that he should know his place and back off. It would only take a month riding on a normal aerial immortal beast, and it would only cost two hundred Ethereal Coins. On the other hand, going with the Sevenstar Pavilion will cost him 20,000 Ethereal Coins. There’s no one who would pay a hundred times the price just to save twenty days of travel!” The elder shook his head.

Those at their cultivation realm could easily spend months in seclusion for their cultivation. Only a madman would spend so much money just to save twenty days!

“Well, that’s true...” The receptionist nodded in agreement. “Thinking about it, based on his tone, it doesn’t seem like he has the money, so he’s intending to head off to earn a bit of money first.”

The elder harrumphed in response. “The fastest way to earn money in the Ethereal Hall is through the dueling ring. However, even with the stakes multiplying with each victory,

he will have to win many rounds consecutively. Even the core disciples from the Sevenstar Pavilion who frequent our dueling rings find it hard to win four rounds consecutively, let alone him!”

As the Sevenstar Pavilion was located in proximity to Biyuan City’s Ethereal Hall, the disciples of the Sevenstar Pavilion often frequented the place.

The registration price is five Ethereal Coins. Even if he manages to win five rounds back-to-back, that would only be eighty Ethereal Coins. He’s still a long way off from reaching his goal of 20,000 Ethereal Coins,” the receptionist replied with a chuckle.

The initial cost for joining the dueling ring was set to not be too high, just five Ethereal Coins. This was to attract more people to participate in the duels.

If one won a round, the stakes would immediately double. The next challenger would have to pay a corresponding price in order to join the battle.

The elder nodded with a smile. “Alright, I’ll be heading back to rest now. Call me if anything else happens.”

Following which, he turned around and returned to his room. However, barely after he took a few steps, another receptionist rushed over anxiously and shouted, “Elder!”

“What’s wrong?” The elder frowned.

“Just earlier, someone has won ten consecutively rounds in the dueling ring!” the receptionist exclaimed.

“Ten rounds?” The elder was taken aback. “It’s been a long time since anyone has been so successful in the dueling ring. Is he a core disciple from the Sevenstar Pavilion?”

In Biyuan City, those who could possibly win ten rounds consecutively were, more often than not, core disciples of the Sevenstar Pavilion.

These experts would make an appearance from time to time, but they would rarely participate in the duel. After all, it would be simply too unfair for the other cultivators. It would be like a

professional fighter going on stage to challenge amateurs; it would not reflect well on them even if they did win.

“According to Zhao Meng, he isn’t a core disciple from the Sevenstar Pavilion!” the receptionist replied.

Zhao Meng was one of the core disciples of the Sevenstar Pavilions, and his ranking was rather high.

“I see...” The elder was stunned for a moment before quickly rushing back to his room. “I have to head over to take a look!”

He took out his Ethereal Token and immersed his consciousness into it. Before long, he was standing within the virtual Ethereal Hall.

With a few steps, he made his way over to the dueling ring.

Atop the dueling ring, there were two figures fighting one another barehanded.

The gray-robed fighter on the left was launching a series of powerful palm strikes. In response, the fighter on the right swiftly treaded around the battlefield nimbly, dodging the attacks.

“Isn’t that gray-robed fighter over there the top ranker of the Sevenstar Pavilion’s core disciples, Meng Han?”

“I never thought that he would come here personally!”

“Well, the other fighter up there has already won twelve rounds consecutively with ease, and three of his opponents were fellow core disciples from the Sevenstar Pavilion. As the top ranker of the core disciples, he probably feels obliged to make a move to protect the reputation of the Sevenstar Pavilion.”

Barely after arriving at the dueling ring, the elder could already hear such discussions all around.

“This is already the thirteenth round?” The elder was stunned.

He vividly recalled the receptionist reporting to him earlier that someone had won ten rounds consecutively. When did it turn into winning twelve rounds consecutively?

“He must have won two more rounds while I was looking for you...” Beside him, the receptionist from earlier had a look of disbelief on her face. “But that doesn’t seem right either. It hasn’t even been a single minute since I left the Ethereal Hall to look for you!”

The elder’s lips twitched.

This fellow actually defeated two more opponents on the dueling ring within a single minute!

“Look!”

While the elder was trying to rationalize how such a thing could have been possible, the fighter who had been dodging the palm strikes all along suddenly executed a punch.

Peng!

The top ranker of the Sevenstar Pavilion’s core disciples, Meng Han, collapsed to the ground as his body convulsed uncontrollably. Taking a closer look, his head was dented inward.

“Even Meng Han has been defeated so easily?” The elder was taken aback.

Meng Han had been at the top of the Ethereal Hall’s dueling ring ranking for at least three years, but who would have thought that even he would fall to a single punch?

This was too anticlimactic!

Not only was the elder shocked by what he was seeing, the rest of the crowd was stunned as well.

For such a powerful person to be defeated within a single move... it was hard to believe that this was really happening.

...

In the Elder Council of the Sevenstar Pavilion...

Peng peng peng peng!

Two middle-aged men were exchanging blows with one another. Shockwaves rippled from their clashes, causing the

inscriptions on the surrounding formations to glow from time to time as they neutralized the incoming force.

The two of them appeared to be in their forties or fifties, but their cultivation had already reached Heavenly High Immortal. Every move that they made seemed to sway the forces of nature.

Hu!

Eventually, the green-robed elder managed to get close enough to launch a direct jab toward the gray-robed elder's neck, stopping just the distance of a single finger away.

"I have lost..." The gray-robed elder surrendered.

"It was a good fight!" the green-robed elder replied cheerily before turning to the crowd. "Is there anyone else who wishes to have a match with me?"

Silence.

An elder stepped forth and announced, "Since that's the case, I hereby declare that Elder Hong Wu has won the tournament. I'll be bringing him with me to the Sea of Exiled Stars!"

This elder was the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, Kui Xiao!

"Yes, Pavilion Master Kui!"

The crowd clasped their fists.

Two hours ago, Kui Xiao had ordered for all elders whose cultivation had reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm and were beneath hundred years of age to gather together in this hall. He had made all of them fight one another in a round-robin tournament, and eventually, it was this Elder Hong Wu who had emerged victorious.

As such, there was no one who had any issues with Kui Xiao's verdict.

There are some things that I would like to tell Elder Hong Wu privately. The rest of you are dismissed for now,"

Pavilion Master Kui said with a wave of his hand.

The crowd nodded before leaving the hall.

But before they could walk out, an elder suddenly rushed over and reported, “Pavilion Master Kui, something has happened!”

“Oh?” Pavilion Master Kui frowned.

The elder who had just walked into the hall was the First Elder of the Sevenstar Pavilion. Even though the other party’s cultivation was beneath his, the other party was still one of the strongest Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators on the Forsaken Continent.

Given his strength, there were very few things in the world that could faze him. Yet, for the other party to rush over so anxiously... it had to be something of vital importance.

“An expert has appeared in Biyuan City’s Ethereal Hall. This expert has challenged many opponents consecutively, but there’s no one who is able to stand against him. So far, he has already won thirteen rounds. Our core disciple, Meng Han, challenged him as well, but even he was defeated with a single punch,” the First Elder reported through zhenqi telepathy.

“Even Meng Han wasn’t a match for that person?” Pavilion Master Kui was clearly a little surprised.

Meng Han was not just the top ranker of the Sevenstar Pavilion—he was also his direct disciple! It was very likely that Meng Han would eventually rise to the position of the First Elder or even succeed his position!

Given Meng Han’s strength, he should have been invincible existence when facing others at the True Immortal realm, but he had ended up getting defeated within a single punch? Was this for real?

Unable to remain calm before a bizarre situation like this, Kui Xiao said with a wave of his hand, “Let’s head over to take a look.”

“Yes!”

The First Elder quickly brought out the Ethereal Tokens that he had prepared beforehand.

Taking one of the Ethereal Tokens, Kui Xiao was just about to enter the Ethereal Hall when he suddenly recalled something.

He turned to Elder Hong Wu and said, “You should come along with us, too.”

As he spoke, he threw an Ethereal Token over.

Yes, Pavilion Master Kui!” Elder Hong Wu replied as he caught the Ethereal Token.

Considering how this expert was able to defeat even Meng Han with ease, he was curious just how powerful the other party was.

“What’s the name of the person who defeated Meng Han?” Pavilion Master Kui asked as he dripped a blood droplet on the Ethereal Token to activate it.

“His name seems to be...” The First Elder paused for a moment to ponder for a moment before replying. “Liu Yang!”

2024 Dragon Transformation Palm

“Liu Yang?” Kui Xiao frowned.

This name... he had never heard of it before!

“Let’s head in to take a look.”

Knowing that it was much more effective for them to head in to take a look instead of asking all sorts of questions outside, Kui Xiao quickly immersed his consciousness into the Ethereal Token.

Over at the dueling ring, he swiftly caught sight of a young man scanning through the crowd intently. “Is there anyone else who would have to have a battle with me?”

There was no response.

The other party had won fourteen rounds so far, defeating even the number one core disciple of the Sevenstar Pavilion.

Knowing the strength that the other party wielded, there was no way they would be so naive as to think that they would stand a chance against a monster of that caliber.

Thus, no one was willing to step onto the stage.

“Allow me to give it a try!” Elder Hong Wu declared.

It was just a moment ago that he had challenged all the elders and defeated them. He was still overflowing with fighting will.

“Be careful,” Kui Xiao advised.

The registration was swiftly completed, and before long, Elder Hong Wu was already assessing the opponent before him on the dueling ring.

The other party seemed to be in his twenties, but that being said, it was extremely easy to disguise one’s appearance in the Ethereal Hall. As such, it was futile to attempt to assess another person through his appearance in the Ethereal Hall.

However, most youngsters were reluctant to disguise themselves as elderly, and elderly disliked the notion of passing themselves off as youngsters.

Furthermore, through the other party's mannerisms, Elder Hong Wu could gauge that the person standing before him was unlikely to be too old, perhaps fifty at most!

Elder Hong Wu sent a zhenqi telepathic message. "I am Hong Wu from the Sevenstar Pavilion. Is there any chance that we might be acquainted with one another?"

"Hong Wu?" The young man on the other side shook his head. "I don't think that I know you."

Hearing those words, Elder Hong Wu's eyebrows shot up a little.

Even though he was not as famous as the Semi-Divinity realm Pavilion Master Kui Xiao, he was still a highly renowned figure within the Sevenstar Pavilion. There was hardly anyone in Biyuan City who did not know of him.

Yet, this person did not seem to recognize him at all.

Was he not a local of Biyuan City?

The young man seemed to have figured out something from Elder Hong Wu's slight facial movements, and after a slight moment of hesitation, he said, "As long as you are willing to fork out 2,560 Ethereal Coins after your loss, I don't mind saying that I know you if it's important to you."

Beyond the tenth round, the Ethereal Coins on stake would not double anymore, or else it could reach ridiculous amounts that no one would be able to afford.

In other words, all the matches beyond the tenth round had only brought Zhang Xuan 2,560 Ethereal Coins each.

Having won fourteen rounds consecutively so far, he had a total of 15,353 Ethereal Coins. He was not too far away from his goal of 20,000 Ethereal Coins.

Those words made Elder Hong Wu's face collapse. He quickly shook his head and said, "Make your move!"

A person like you who doesn't know how to talk must not have any friends at all!

If you know me, so be it. If you don't know me, so be it too... Why do you have to make it sound like I'm begging you to notice me?

More importantly, why are you speaking as though my loss is already guaranteed? You might be the one losing 2,560 Ethereal Coins, just so you know!

Elder Hong Wu could not be bothered to waste his breath anymore. His silhouette blurred as he charged forward at an incredible speed. Raising his palm, he leaped up and thrust a palm strike toward Zhang Xuan from above.

Flowerless Palm!

The zhenqi gathered within the palm strike swiftly crept toward the young man like strands of vines.

Even though his cultivation had been lowered to the True Immortal realm, he was still able to bring out the true strength behind his Flowerless Palm. Countless vines shot forth and entangled themselves around the target. There was no incredible might nor decisive momentum, but the palm strike seemed to wrap around its target like a specter, binding him.

It was through this move that he had been able to emerge victorious over the many elders previously!

"Not too bad!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

The skills of the opponent whom he was facing at the moment could be said to be the strongest of the fourteen matches that he had fought so far.

The same as before, he retaliated with a single palm strike.

Against an opponent of the same cultivation realm, he would not even need to rely on his Library of Heaven's Path in order to defeat the other party.

Huala!

It was as if his palm strike carried blazing flames, burning all the vines.

This anomaly caused Elder Hong Wu to narrow his eyes in shock. The next instant, he felt some kind of peculiar energy bogging down his body, leaving him unable to move at all.

Padah!

The palm strike struck his head squarely, and his lifeless corpse collapsed to the ground.

After knocking out his opponent, Zhang Xuan found that his fortune had indeed grown by another 2,560 Ethereal Coins, causing him to heave a sigh of relief. He turned his attention to the crowd once more and said, "Alright, who else wants to have a battle with me?"

He had already gathered 17,915 Ethereal Coins so far. He just needed to defeat one more opponent in order to raise 20,000 Ethereal Coins!

"Even Hong Wu ended up losing so quickly?"

Beneath the dueling ring, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao took a sharp breath.

Elder Hong Wu had just fought all the elders in the Sevenstar Pavilion, and he had not even faced a single defeat. Yet, when faced with this fellow, he was defeated within a single punch!

Just who in the world is this person? Pavilion Master Kui Xiao frowned. He's probably not from our Sevenstar Pavilion. Otherwise, we should have long heard of him.

The fact that the other party was able to enter the True Immortal realm Ethereal Hall showed that his cultivation had reached the True Immortal realm. If put in the Sevenstar Pavilion, the other party would be a core disciple at the very least.

Given how the other party was able to defeat the top ranker Meng Han and Elder Hong Wu so easily, the Sevenstar Pavilion would definitely have noticed him a long time ago if he was a core disciple of the sect. There was no way that he could have remained unnoticed!

"Liu Yang..." Kui Xiao pondered for a long time, but no similar name came to his mind.

Seeing that no one was stepping forward to accept Liu Yang's challenge, the First Elder hesitated for a moment before leaping into the ring. "I'll try facing him."

Even though his cultivation was at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, in terms of prowess, he was far stronger than Elder Hong Wu. It was only because his age had exceeded a hundred years old that he was unable to challenge the Azure Bridge.

Nevertheless, seeing how this Liu Yang was able to defeat Elder Hong Wu so easily, he could not help but wonder how he would fare against the young man.

In the ring, Zhang Xuan's heart had been leaping in trepidation when no one was stepping forward after some time, so he was particularly relieved when he saw Elder Hong Wu stepping forward. With a deep sigh of relief on the inside, he beckoned with his hand and said, "Let's begin."

He was determined to get this over and done with as quickly as possible so that his opponent would not have a chance to back out. Otherwise, he just might fail to raise enough Ethereal Coins.

As for why he had gone with the name 'Liu Yang'...

Well, he had no choice. His usual choice of names such as 'I Am Low Profile' and 'I Am Very Handsome' were simply too indicative of his true identity. Thinking back, since he had blurted out 'Zheng Yang' back at the Myriad Beasts Hall, instead of burning his brain cells trying to come up with a refreshing, creative name, he might as well just use another of his direct disciple's names.

As long as he did not choose Zhao Ya or Wei Ruyan, it should be fine.

This was so much less stressful.

"Let's begin then." The First Elder of the Sevenstar Pavilion nodded.

From the very start, he launched a powerful frontal strike.

In an instant, dozens of palm afterimages appeared in the air. They were connected to form something reminiscent of a chain.

Dragon Transformation Palm!

It was said that upon reaching Major Accomplishment, the practitioner would be able to warp their palm into a divine dragon and bring devastating damage upon their enemies.

“Formidable. I never thought that he would have trained the technique to such a level within the past few years. He’s already close to reaching Major Accomplishment.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao nodded.

Ever since he achieved a breakthrough from the Semi-Divinity realm, he had rarely fought with High Immortal realm experts like the First Elder. As such, he had no idea what kind of level the other party had reached.

Thus, when he saw this move, he could not help but nod in approval.

The Dragon Transformation Palm was one of the most difficult battle techniques to cultivate in the Sevenstar Pavilion, but he was still able to achieve such a high level of mastery in it. To be honest, not even Pavilion Master Kui Xiao had absolute confidence in achieving victory.

“It’s just a pity that he’s beyond a hundred years old. Otherwise, Elder Hong Wu would surely be unable to defeat him.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao shook his head in lamentation.

It was impossible to reach the Semi-Divinity realm just through normal cultivation. It did not matter no matter how talented one was.

The only way was to enter the Azure Bridge and venture into the Hall of Gods!

The main reason that he was at his current realm was because he had been able to enter the Azure Bridge a hundred years earlier.

There was no doubt that Elder Hong Wu was not too bad either, such that there was no one currently in the Sevenstar

Pavilion who could match him. However, the other party was still a little lacking compared to him back then.

“Of the Six Sects, only the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is in a slighter better position,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao remarked.

The greatest goal of those from the Six Sects was to enter the Hall of Gods and snatch the (God)’ character.

Snatching the 1 神 (God)_ character was not just an act of vanity that brought pride and honor to one’s sect. More importantly, this (God)’ character was also the key to reaching Semi-Divinity.

Sects without it could only rely on the centennial descent of the Azure Bridge to push for a breakthrough. If not for the Azure Bridge, even if a sect was filled with monstrous geniuses, none of them would ever have the chance to peer into the Semi-Divinity realm.

The founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had once snatched half a 神 (God)_ character from the Hall of Gods, and it was for this reason that their Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula, when trained to the limits, could allow one to surpass the limits of a High Immortal and become a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator!

The chances were slim, but nevertheless, it still represented a ray of hope.

On the other hand, the Sevenstar Pavilion and other sects did not enjoy such privilege at all.

As for the Ethereal Hall...

It was known that it had managed to snatch an entire 神 (God)’ character, but the entire organization remained veiled in mystery. There was no one who knew where its headquarters were and how many experts it had.

But one thing was for sure. The leader of the Ethereal Hall who had snatched an entire 神 (God)1 character back then, Hall Master Kong, definitely had the ability to raise Semi-Divinity realm experts and even beyond that!

These thoughts swiftly flitted through Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's mind before he turned his sights to the dueling ring once more.

After executing the Dragon Transformation Palm, the First Elder seemed to have morphed into a soaring dragon, bolting from place to place with a speed so swift that it was nigh impossible to accurately determine his whereabouts.

The crowd felt as if they were seeing a massive dragon towering on top of the dueling ring, treading around the place and launching attacks from all directions. It was such an impressive sight that it was hard to tear one's eyes away from the battle.

Not bad! Zhang Xuan thought.

There were indeed plenty of formidable experts on the Forsaken Continent.

After fighting fifteen rounds, he was starting to think that this was all the experts of Biyuan City, so he could not help looking down on this new challenger. However, it seemed like this new challenger was instead a worthy opponent.

Putting everything aside, just the other party's palm strike was a joy to behold. Even for him, if he showed the slightest gap, there was a chance that he could lose the battle.

Zhang Xuan activated the Eye of Insight, and before long, he was able to discern some of the flaws in the other party's moves. Using his finger as a sword, he jabbed forward with incredible speed.

In order to avoid revealing his identity, he still chose not to use the Gods' Sword Intent for this move. That being said, he did infuse the crux of the Heaven's Path Sword art into it.

This single jab carried a transcendent aura to it. It appeared to be a simple move, but somehow, it was impossible to predict its trajectory, as if it did not follow a predetermined path as the laws of the world would have enforced. If there was one word to describe it, it was simply unfathomable.

As soon as it appeared, it seemed to gravitate toward the offensive trajectory of the Dragon Transformation Palm.

Hu!

Mysteriously, it felt as if the dragon in the sky was drawn to the finger jab as well. It simply continued rushing toward the sword qi, as if a moth drawn to a flame.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan could not help but chuckle.

This was a move that he had casually come up with after being inspired by how Elder Yuan used the Northern Sea Dragon Orb to tease the Serpentine Dragon.

In this case, he used his sword qi to form a gravitating power that capitalized on the momentum of the Dragon Transformation Palm to draw it toward his finger jab, causing the other party to lose control of his own body.

“Go!”

Zhang Xuan’s sword qi shot forth.

Boom!

A resounding explosion echoed in the air, causing the entire dueling ring to tremble nonstop.

The First Elder never would have thought that the other party would use the momentum of his own palm strike to control his movements. Everything happened so swiftly that before he could even recover, a stabbing pain had already pierced his throat.

Lowering his head, he realized that the other party’s sword qi had sliced through his neck.

“What a formidable offense. I have never seen swordsmanship like this before...”

With a creak, the First Elder’s head fell to the ground with a bewildered look on his face. Soon after, his body collapsed into a heap as well.

Even at the moment of his death, he dared not believe that his ultimate technique had been undone by a mere surge of sword qi.

“This...”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's body stiffened. He was so shocked that he could hardly speak a word at all.

To be able to neutralize the Dragon Transformation Palm and kill the First Elder within a single move... just who the hell is this fellow!

With such fighting prowess, would I stand a chance against him if I stepped forward?

2025 I'll Let You Choose Your Favorite Way to Die

“Finally! I have gathered all of the Ethereal Coins I need!”

Zhang Xuan was overjoyed to see the starting digit of the balance of his Ethereal Card growing from a T to a ‘2’.

He had thought that he would have scared away the cultivators from the Ethereal Hall due to the overwhelming prowess he had displayed, but from the looks of it, it seemed like he had been overthinking the matter.

It seemed like there were plenty of masochists there who enjoyed being killed by him after all!

The elder in charge of the Ethereal Hall’s dueling ring looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, “Do you wish to continue?”

“There’s no need for that anymore.” Zhang Xuan waved his hand with a smile as he walked out of the dueling ring.

“Wait a moment!” A figure suddenly leaped onto the dueling ring. “I would like to have a duel with you!”

He was none other than Pavilion Master Kui Xiao.

He was usually unfazed by most matters, but after witnessing the defeat of the First Elder, his fighting will had been ignited for the first time in many years. He wanted to know how well he could fare against such a powerful opponent.

Yet, who would have thought that right after he registered at the counter, the other party would suddenly withdraw from the dueling ring and leave!

You can’t just excite me and leave me hanging right after!
That’s unfair!

“I still have matters to attend to, so pardon me for not being able to entertain your request.” Zhang Xuan waved his hand leisurely.

After earning the amount of money that he needed, he did not have any motivation to carry on fighting. It was not as if he was a battle maniac after all; he would only fight when there was a need for him to do so.

“Have a duel with me first before leaving. I want to see just how powerful you are,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said as he released a surge of zhenqi to block Zhang Xuan’s path.

A thought had arisen in his mind after witnessing how this young man defeated Elder Hong Wu and the First Elder with ease.

“I’m not free,” Zhang Xuan replied impatiently.

He was in a rush to deliver money to the elder so that he could head to the Sea of Exiled Stars with those from the Sevenstar Pavilion. It would be a tragedy if he somehow missed them due to getting delayed here.

“Then I’ll have to ask you to make time for me!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao scoffed as he launched a palm strike toward Zhang Xuan.

His palm strike was not as imposing as the Dragon Transformation Palm, but the sheer sharpness of the attack made it a huge threat. It was aimed at a point that left Zhang Xuan with no choice to retaliate. If the latter continued hesitating, he would surely be injured.

The abrupt assault made Zhang Xuan frown in displeasure. He tilted his body slightly as he took a small step to the left. It was an extremely minor movement, but it effectively unraveled Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s palm strike.

You have really keen eyes!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s eyes gleamed with excitement.

It was no wonder the other party was able to defeat the First Elder so easily. The other party’s ability to overcome his attack with minimal movements was truly a beautiful work of art. He never would have expected someone to be capable of something like this.

To untrained eyes, it would have appeared nothing more than a mere sidestep, and it was excessive to be so impressed by such

a simple movement.

However, as the person behind the palm thrust, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was well aware that his move had a total of 136 transformations in order to deal with all kinds of scenarios. No matter how his opponent reacted to his palm strike, he would have a way to press on and eventually corner his opponent!

Yet, that single move was completely out of the calculations of his transformations. This was because that location happened to be the blind spot of his attack, such that his energy would not be able to flow smoothly if he attempted to force that attack.

Just like that, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's palm strike fell empty.

He could not imagine how powerful the young man's intuition and reflexes were in order to make such a sharp judgement in the midst of a battle.

Intrigued, he began on his next move.

On the other hand, seeing how the other party was practically throwing himself at him in order to stop him from leaving, Zhang Xuan said with a frown, "If you insist on it, I'll have to ask you to pay me 2,560 Ethereal Coins."

It was surprising how quickly the situation had turned around. Initially, he was worried that he was scaring customers away with his overwhelming might, but who could have thought that this fellow over here would be drawn to his strength instead, desperately trying to keep him there.

"If you can take me down, I'll give you 10,000 Ethereal Coins!" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao harrumphed coldly.

What did mere Ethereal Coins matter? He had mountains of those in his storage ring! As the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, any problem that could be solved with money was not a problem to him at all!

He would pay any amount of money as long as he could explore the depths of the other party's strength!

“10,000 Ethereal Coins?” Zhang Xuan was stunned. “You are being too kind. How can I accept so much money from you?”

Normally, he would only earn 2,560 Ethereal Coins each time around. Thus, he was a little taken aback to see the price getting jacked up fourfold all of a sudden.

“We can talk about that after you have defeated me!”

Huhuhu!

Seeing how the other party was acting as if he had already won the battle, Pavilion Master Mo Xiao’s face turned livid. With a roar, he thrust his palm forward with a speed two times faster than before.

But with just very slight movements, Zhang Xuan was able to avoid his moves with ease. He placed his fingers under his chin contemplatively as he asked, “Since you are willing to pay so much, I shouldn’t take advantage of you... Alright, feel free to tell me how you wish to be defeated. I’ll try to fulfill your request as best as I can!”

“What?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao nearly fainted on the spot.

You are asking me how I wish to be defeated?

What the heck do you mean by that?

Are you trying to tell me that you are so powerful that there are plenty of methods you can use to defeat me?

You must be joking!

“There’s no need to get too excited. You are still rather powerful, so the choices you have are quite limited,” Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

As the saying went, ‘the customers are the masters’. What else could he possibly do after the other party offered him 10,000 Ethereal Coins?

Nowadays, the service was much more important than the product. Since he was accepting so much money, he would have to make sure the other party enjoyed the entire process thoroughly.

“Limited?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao gnashed his teeth together in fury.

So, you are saying that even though I am strong, you still have several ways that to defeat me? Very well, let me see what you capable of then!

Feeling so stifled that he could explode, Pavilion Master Kui was just about to speak when the other party beat him to it.

“Indeed. All in all, there are just 173 options... There’s the ‘a fist smashing your head’ package, ‘a palm blasting off your head’ package, ‘sword qi severing your neck’ package, ‘a leg crushing your heart’ package... If physical means aren’t enough to satisfy for you, I also offer various soul and mind crushing services as well. May I know which one you prefer?”

“173 options?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao nearly spurted blood.

When the other party said limited, he had thought that it would be less than ten, but it seemed like he was being too optimistic.

Was this fellow being serious?

Those who could defeat him in a battle, even in the same cultivation realm, could be easily counted on two hands, but this fellow was actually asking him to choose a way to die while fighting with him?

“If you are that capable, why don’t you kill me right now?”

By this point, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao could not be bothered to waste his breath with the other party. He channeled his energy into his palm and pressed it down upon his opponent.

This was his strongest battle technique... Bolting Lightning Clutching Cloud!

The execution of this technique produced a deafening rumble reminiscent of thunder. If one achieved a mastery of Major Accomplishment in the technique, one would be able to even shatter lightning bolts and dissipate clouds with a single palm strike.

He would not execute this palm strike easily because there was no one within the sect who would be able to withstand it.

However, he simply could not stand just how arrogant the fellow before him was, so he decided to execute his trump card.

Huala!

His palms descended like two massive mountains, crushing everything in its pathway. The surrounding space seemed to have frozen under the sheer pressure, rendering those that stood in its path incapable of fleeing.

But Zhang Xuan chuckled softly on the spot, seemingly oblivious to the overwhelming strength of this attack.

You wish to be killed right now? That's easy."

So, he made a move.

Hu!

In contrast to Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's offense, Zhang Xuan's palm strike appeared to be weak and powerless, reminiscent of a light breeze.

Pah!

Before the two palms could collide, Zhang Xuan's palm was already right above Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's head. The latter's vision immediately went black as the palm smashed his brain right into his chest.

Putong!

A corpse fell to the ground.

"It sure is weird. I offered him so many services, but all he wanted was to be killed right away... I guess that masochistic fellow just couldn't wait for the climax," Zhang Xuan muttered beneath his breath as he walked out of the dueling ring.

To be honest, the other party was plenty strong. Without using the Library of Heaven's Path, he had to admit that he had been pressured slightly by the other party's offense.

However, facing numerous assassinations from the experts of the Hall of Gods had allowed his comprehension of battle to deepen significantly. Even without the Library of Heaven's

Path, there was no one in the same cultivation realm who could be a match for him anymore.

It was with such confidence that he had dared step into the dueling ring and face any opponent.

2026 Are You Willing to Become an Elder?

In the real Ethereal Hall, a pale-faced elder looked at the receptionist beside him and anxiously urged, “Quick, check who that person is!”

He was the elder of the Ethereal Hall who had demanded 20,000 Ethereal Coins from Zhang Xuan in exchange for a trip on the Sevenstar Pavilion’s immortal beast to the Sea of Exiled Stars. It was unbelievable, but he had just witnessed an individual winning sixteen consecutive battles without sustaining the slightest bit of damage!

He had not been told that the last two opponents were the First Elder and the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, but through their battle techniques, he was still able to deduce a thing or two.

In other words, someone had just thrashed the entire Sevenstar Pavilion in Biyuan City’s Ethereal Hall!

Even the Semi-Divinity realm Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was not a match for the young man...

This news would surely cause a huge uproar across the Forsaken Continent!

“Elder, the other party seems to have used some kind of Isolation Formation that prevents us from tracing the details of his Ethereal Token. We were only able to deduce that he’s likely in one of the private chambers of our Ethereal Hall, but we still can’t confirm his identity,” the receptionist reported.

They had checked on the other party as soon as he defeated Meng Han, the top ranker of the Sevenstar Pavilion’s core disciples, but it was as if the other party had predicted that they would make such a move and set up an Isolation Formation in advance. As such, they were only able to gather his rough location.

“There is a total of 13,700 private chambers here... Start sieving through the records to narrow down the targets to those who have reached the True Immortal realm and whose timeline coincides with that of Liu Yang’s arrival. I want a list of their names as soon as possible,” the elder instructed.

It was infeasible to check all the private chambers one by one, but there were methods to narrow the targets down.

“After you find him, make sure to accord him the highest level of hospitality. Don’t let him leave by any means. I’ll come right over to pay my respects to him,” the elder said.

A person who could defeat the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion was bound to be an extraordinary figure, even if the latter’s cultivation was lowered to the True Immortal realm.

The receptionist nodded, but just as she was about to get to work, the young lady managing the front reception suddenly called out. “Elder, the young man who intends to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars is looking for you urgently...”

“He’s looking for me?” The elder waved his hand impatiently. “Tell him that I’m not free. I won’t waste my time entertaining him if he doesn’t have the money!”

What was more important at the moment was for him to find that expert. He did not have any time to waste on a mere True Immortal realm lad!

“He said that...” The young lady paused for a brief moment before continuing. “He has already managed to gather the required Ethereal Coins. He’s here to pay the sum.”

“He has already gathered the required Ethereal Coins?” The elder was stunned.

A thought suddenly flashed through his mind, and he felt as if his mind had just gone through a mini explosion. His eyes widened as he muttered beneath his breath, “Could it be him?”

He immediately turned to the young lady and exclaimed, “Hurry up and invite him in!”

True Immortal realm—check!

Thinking about it, the other party had told him to wait for a moment, then Liu Yang had suddenly appeared in the Ethereal Hall's dueling ring and won sixteen matches straight... And right after the duel ended, the other party came rushing over to tell him that he had raised the required money. Timing—check!

More importantly, Liu Yang had said that he had earned enough and would not be fighting anymore after winning the fifteenth round...

Doing a quick calculation, the accumulated earnings at the fifteenth round happened to be slightly more than 20,000 Ethereal Coins!

Price—check!

While he was still in the midst of his contemplation, Zhang Xuan walked into the room and passed a card over.

“Here's the 20,000 Ethereal Coins,” he said.

The elder quickly snapped out of his daze and received the Ethereal Card with both of his hands. Checking the contents, there were indeed 20,000 Ethereal Coins inside! His body tensed up a little as he nervously asked, “May I know... how I should address you? Don't be mistaken, it's not that I'm trying to probe into your identity or anything! It's just that... I'll need to introduce you to the Sevenstar Pavilion later on, so I'll have to know your name and your background...”

“Of course, of course!” Zhang Xuan nodded. “I am Liu Yang.”

Putong!

The collapsed elder struggled a little as he rose back to his feet. As he looked at the young man before him, he could feel his eyes slowly becoming a little moist.

If only he had known that this fellow was so formidable, he never would have thought of profiting off him!

Who could have known that this ordinary-looking young man would actually be able to defeat the entire Sevenstar Pavilion?

“Were you the one in the dueling ring earlier?” The elder eventually popped the question.

“You mentioned that it would cost 20,000 Ethereal Coins, and I couldn’t think of a better way to raise the money within such a short period of time. So, I could only try my luck at the dueling ring. It’s fortunate that my opponents weren’t very strong, or else I really would’ve had trouble trying to raise the money!” Zhang Xuan replied with a bright smile.

Since he did not reveal his Gods’ Sword Intent or expose his identity as the head of the Myriad Beasts Hall, it should be fine for him to admit to this.

After all, he could not possibly not lift even a finger just to avoid the Hall of Gods, right?

“Your opponents weren’t very strong?”

The elder swayed a little on the spot as he tried to hold back the blood welling up at the back of his throat.

Do you know whom you just fought against? Are you honestly saying that the First Elder and the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion aren’t strong at all?

What would be considered strong in your eyes?

“If only I’d known that you were this powerful, I never would have dared demand money from you,” the elder muttered in a daze beneath his breath and sighed deeply. Lifting his gaze once more, he looked at the young man before him and said, “... Rest assured, I’ll contact the Sevenstar Pavilion right now!”

As he spoke, he quietly passed the Ethereal Card back.

It was not that he was not interested in the money, but he did not dare accept it!

If he offended an expert of this caliber, he could imagine that the life ahead of him would be a living hell!

The elder took out a Communication Jade Token and wrote a few words on it. A few moments later, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, “Elder Liu, the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion wishes to meet you personally. Shall we head there?”

As soon as the elder reported what that had happened earlier, the other party had immediately requested for him to take

Zhang Xuan over.

Naturally, the elder immediately understood what was going on. He knew that the young man before him was going to undergo a massive change in his standing, so he unhesitatingly changed his form of address to 'Elder Liu' as well.

"Alright." Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Sevenstar Pavilion was located relatively close to the Ethereal Hall. Within ten minutes, they were already on their way into the Celestial Dipper Palace, the central hall of the Sevenstar Pavilion.

Sitting in the middle of the room was Pavilion Master Kui Xiao, the First Elder, and Elder Hong Wu. Upon seeing the two of them walking over, they centered their gazes upon Zhang Xuan.

The figure in the virtual Ethereal Hall was young, but the person standing before them was even more so. All in all, he appeared to be no more than thirty years in age.

He was only in his twenties, but he had already reached the Heavenly True Immortal realm and become so powerful that even they were not a match for him in the same cultivation realm.

"Are you the person who won sixteen matches earlier in the Ethereal Hall?" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked.

As the other party's appearance in the Ethereal Hall and in reality was different, they could not really be sure if they were the same person.

"Yes." Zhang Xuan nodded. "I have some urgent matters that require me to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars as soon as possible. Pavilion Master Kui, would it be fine if I shared a ride with you? I'll compensate you according to the market price."

On the way there, the elder had already told him that the person whom he would be meeting was Pavilion Master Kui Xiao of the Sevenstar Pavilion!

Had it been in the past, he would still have had some deference for Semi-Divinity realm experts. However, after meeting Han Jianqiu and Qin Yuan, killing four Heavenly High Immortals from the Hall of Gods, and witnessing Little Chick devouring a Semi-Divinity artifact, his deference was slowly wearing off.

You are heading to the Sea of Exiled Stars, too?” Pavilion Master Kui frowned upon hearing those words. “Brother Liu, may I ask which sect you are from? Pardon my ignorance, but I don’t recall having heard your name before.”

Out of fear of crossing the indigenous population, the experts of the Forsaken Continent would rarely make their way over to the Sea of Exiled Stars. However, the other party actually intended to make his way on his own accord...

This reminded him of the matter concerning the Azure Bridge. Could the young man before him possibly be a genius from some other sect?

If that was the case, Elder Hong Wu would not stand a chance at all!

It was not that easy to advance to the High Immortal realm, but if a sect devoted all of its resources into grooming a single person, it should not be too difficult!

Naturally, such a talented young man was worth a sect investing all its resources into!

Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and said, “I am an unaffiliated cultivator.”

If he said that he was from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, the other party would immediately think of the Gods’ Sword Intent. If he said that he was from the Myriad Beasts Hall, the other party would immediately think of the newly inaugurated sect leader...

Instead of going to the trouble of trying to explain himself later on, it would better for him to maintain a low profile.

Shortly after he caused a commotion in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he faced an assassination attempt from the Hall of Gods. The same happened after he got too high profile in the Myriad Beasts Hall...

So, what he had to do right now was conceal his glow so that others would not notice him too much.

“Unaffiliated cultivator?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s eyes immediately lit up. Then, a slight frown emerged on his forehead as he asked, “May I know the reason behind your visit to the Sea of Exiled Stars, Brother Liu?”

“It’s to resolve my private business,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“Private business...” Hearing those words, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao finally heaved a sigh of relief.

Since it was a private business, it had nothing to do with the Azure Bridge. That being the case, the young man should really be unaffiliated with any of the other sects.

Pavilion Kui Xiao looked at Zhang Xuan with piercing intensity as he asked, “Since you are an unaffiliated cultivator, Brother Liu, may I know if you are interested in joining our Sevenstar Pavilion?”

“Joining the Sevenstar Pavilion?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

What was with this sudden invitation?

He was rather certain that he had maintained a low profile ever since he arrived in Biyuan City!

All he did was fight sixteen battles earlier on and defeat a bunch of not-too-strong opponents. Surely battles of that caliber would not be enough to catch the attention of the leader of one of the Six Sects!

“Indeed. As long as you become an elder of our Sevenstar Pavilion and represent our sect in a battle, I’ll gather all of the resources of the sect to help you reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm within ten days!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao offered with a shrewd gleam in his eyes.

You would help me reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

There were two reasons he was in such a hurry to head to the Sea of Exiled Stars. One was to uncover the secrets behind the Godblood Rock, and the other was to gather soul cultivation techniques to raise his soul cultivation so that he could achieve

a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm as soon as possible!

After facing two assassination attempts from the Hall of Gods, it would be a lie to say that he was not concerned. He felt a heavy pressure prompting him to raise his fighting prowess as quickly as possible.

Thinking back, he had been in the Azure for more than twenty days now, but he had only managed to raise his cultivation from Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage to the Heavenly True Immortal realm. How slow and pathetic!

After all, there was a time difference between that of the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent. Twenty days here was equivalent to more than half a year in the latter world.

“That’s right!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao nodded.

There was no True Immortal who would not be tempted by an offer to achieve a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm!

“You mentioned earlier that he wanted me to represent the Sevenstar Pavilion in a battle. May I know what the battle’s regarding? Will I face any danger?” Zhang Xuan asked.

There was no such thing as a free lunch in the world.

It was no easy feat to help someone raise their cultivation up to the Heavenly High Immortal realm. Since the other party was willing to offer him something as attractive as this, it was likely that the other party had to gain something out of it as well.

“Rest assured, it’s just a duel among the Six Sects. Everyone will be of the same cultivation realm, and there won’t be any danger. If you surrender, no one will go too far,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said. “Furthermore, if you do it well, I’ll nominate you as my successor. You’ll inherit my position in the future, becoming the leader of the Sevenstar Pavilion!”

The purpose of the battle was to determine the leader of the expedition, so they would stop wherever appropriate. There would not be any danger at all.

As for entering the Azure Bridge and challenging the warriors of the Hall of Gods...

This was a rare opportunity to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. It might be dangerous, but the rewards were definitely worth the risks!

Both he and Hall Master Qin Yuan from the Myriad Beasts Hall had reached their current realms by surviving the trip to the Azure Bridge.

As long as the other party reached the Semi-Divinity realm, he was bound to become the leader of the Sevenstar Pavilion. There was no one who would possibly oppose it.

“I’ll become your successor and inherit your position in the future? It’s fine, I won’t need that.” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Then, a thought suddenly came to his mind, and he looked at Pavilion Kui Xiao with a smile. “However, since you said that the battle won’t be dangerous, I don’t mind becoming an elder of the Sevenstar Pavilion... and as an elder, I should be able to access the libraries of the Sevenstar Pavilion, right?”

2027 Could He Be Zhang Xuan?

“Of course!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao nodded.

There were many books in the Sevenstar Pavilion due to the nature of its operations—all of them were pretty much goods that could be sold. As an elder and possibly the future pavilion master, the other party was, of course, qualified to browse through their book collection.

“Then it won’t be a problem then. I’ll agree to it.” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

As long as he could reach the High Immortal realm, he would be in a much safer position against the Hall of Gods. It could be said that pretty much all the problems that he was facing at the moment would be resolved.

If the other party was able to help him reach the High Immortal realm as quickly as possible, he did not mind doing a favor for them. He was already an elder in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and the head of the Myriad Beasts Hall. He did not mind taking on another role.

In any case, he was assuming a persona at the moment. At the very most, he would just have to get his clone to disguise himself as him later on.

On the other hand, seeing that the other party was agreeable, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao heaved a sigh of relief.

As the information that was going to be relayed afterward involved the confidential issues of the Sevenstar Pavilion, it would be inconvenient for those from the Ethereal Hall to remain there for too long. Thus, the Ethereal Hall elder bade farewell and left.

After the elder left, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao flipped his wrist and took out a jade bottle. “This is a High Immortal-tier Breakthrough Pill. It’ll increase the chances of achieving a

breakthrough to High Immortal realm for you by twenty percent. Since you have already reached the Heavenly True Immortal realm, as long as you prepare yourself well, it shouldn't be too difficult for you to make a breakthrough!”

Even though it was just twenty percent, this difference could easily spell a vast difference to many.

Not to mention, the young man before him clearly possessed exceptional mastery in his cultivation technique and battle technique. With the help of the Breakthrough Pill, it was a sealed deal that the other party would achieve a breakthrough!

“You have my gratitude.” Zhang Xuan received the jade bottle gratefully.

He had never seen it in person before, but from the books he had read, he knew just how valuable the Breakthrough Pill was.

A single pill was equivalent to the price of a High Immortal-tier artifact!

It was really a huge favor to receive such an invaluable pill from the other party. It seemed like he would have to do his best in the later fight.

“There's no need to stand on ceremony! There's a private chamber in our sect that is forged solely out of Calmheart Stone. If you cultivate in there, not only would you not be affected by inner demons, your chances of achieving a breakthrough will also be increased significantly. Elder Liu, feel free to tell me if you would like to use that chamber. I can take you over right now,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

“There's no need for that... I only have some doubts regarding my cultivation, so I would like to browse through some books to resolve it. May I know where the library of the Sevenstar Pavilion is located? I would like to head there to look,” Zhang Xuan replied.

As someone who cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was unaffected by inner demons. Thus, he had no need for the private chamber made of Calmheart Stone.

The only time that it had happened was an unfortunate mishap, and it had been resolved by the pendant that Luo Ruoxin had given him.

“You wish to browse through some books?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao had thought that the young man would immediately consume the Breakthrough Pill, but who could have known that the other party would have the patience to resolve the doubts in his heart first?

He could not help but nod in approval.

To be able to resist the temptation of rushing into a breakthrough and instead bide his time till he found the most suitable method to do so... It was no wonder this young man was so powerful!

With this, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao felt much more assured. He turned to the First Elder and said, “First Elder, I’ll be troubling you to take Elder Liu there.”

At this point, Pavilion Master Kui pondered deeply for a moment before adding, “If there’s a need for it, he’s also authorized to view the confidential books in the hidden chamber!”

“Yes, Pavilion Master Kui,” First Elder replied with a nod.

The Sevenstar Pavilion had its own lineage and heritage, but it would still collect books of all sorts for auctioning purposes. As such, their collection was really one to behold.

It was just that the auctions that they held were often for the top echelons of the Forsaken Continent, so the books that they dealt with contained the secret arts of other sects. As such, the disciples and elders were forbidden from accessing that content, or else it could undermine the credibility of the organization as a business partner.

However, given how matured this young man was, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao did not think that there would be any problem allowing the young man to access this collection, especially if the other party needed them to push for a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm.

Of course, this was in consideration of the fact that the Azure Bridge was about to descend, or else he would never have made such an exception.

The libraries were all located in the Celestial Authority Palace. Following the First Elder, he was soon inside the elders' library.

“Feel free to look around. I'll be heading back now, but please do inform any of the nearby disciples to call me if you need any assistance,” the First Elder said before taking his leave.

Zhang Xuan finally took a good look at his surroundings.

This library was much more spacious than that of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Proportionate to its size, there were many more books there as well. All kinds of cultivation technique manuals could be seen placed neatly atop shelves. Its collection was much more diverse than that of the Myriad Beasts Hall and Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

It did not take long for him to collect all the books on the first floor.

He quickly proceeded on to the second floor, then to the third floor.

Within six hours, he collected every last book that could be found there into the Library of Heaven's Path. Following which, he headed to a nearby private chamber and looked through his gains.

“There are some True Immortal realm soul cultivation technique manuals here, but not enough for me to compile a Heaven's Path Soul Art...”

The books in the Sevenstar Pavilion covered many different fields. All in all, there were several hundred books regarding soul cultivation techniques, but that was still insufficient for Zhang Xuan.

As High Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals, while the collection in the Sevenstar Pavilion was indeed larger, there were only thirty or so books. He was still a long way off from compiling the corresponding Heaven's Path Divine Art.

“From the looks of it, it isn’t too possible for me to make a breakthrough in the short-term...” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he rubbed his glabella.

It seemed like he would still have to make a trip to Starchaser Palace after all.

...

While Zhang Xuan was in the library, the atmosphere in the Celestial Dipper Palace was particularly heavy.

“Pavilion Master Kui, do you intend to substitute me with that outsider?” Elder Hong Wu’s face was incredibly livid. “Pardon my insolence, but I can’t accept your judgement!”

“You have fought the warriors of the Hall of Gods before, but you can’t even withstand a single blow from the other party. What about my judgement are you unable to accept?” Pavilion Master Kui frowned.

“He isn’t from our Sevenstar Pavilion. What right does he have to be bestowed with the centennial opportunity to challenge the Azure Bridge?” Elder Hong Wu replied indignantly.

“That person claims to be an unaffiliated cultivator named Liu Yang, but the truth is that we know nothing about his background. We have instructed our intelligence team to look into him, but so far, they haven’t been able to uncover anything about him. If he turns out to be an expert from the Hall of Gods in disguise, this could potentially become our undoing! No, this won’t do. I need to force him to spit out his true identity!”

There was no way someone who was so powerful would be able to remain completely unknown. But given the vastness of the Sevenstar Pavilion’s intelligence network, if there was anything that could be uncovered about Liu Yang, they should have uncovered it by now.

It was as if this fellow had appeared out of thin air!

Such a situation was really worrying.

After all, the outcome on the Azure Bridge would determine how the next hundred years of their sect would be. If anything happened, there was a good chance that their Sevenstar Pavilion would be dropped from the ranks of the Six Sects.

“I have fought the warriors of the Hall of Gods before, and his battle techniques and cultivation technique are all unlike theirs,” Pavilion Master Kui replied with a shake of his head.

“But that being said, it’s likely that Liu Yang is an alias he has assumed. I have already instructed the First Elder to investigate him based on his appearance. We should be able to get some results soon enough.”

As the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was not so negligent as to disregard these doubts.

The very act of nominating ‘Liu Yang’ to the Azure Bridge was as good as declaring his intention to make the other party the successor of the Sevenstar Pavilion. Naturally, he had to exercise the highest level of vigilance regarding the matter.

Hu!

Right after those words were spoken, the First Elder walked into the hall.

“How did it go?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked.

“I have already relayed the instructions to all the branches of our Sevenstar Pavilion, but none of them have any information about a genius who shares the same appearance and soul aura as Liu Yang,” the First Elder replied.

The Sevenstar Pavilion was very different from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Just as it was a sect, it was also a multicity corporation that had countless branches all over the Forsaken Continent.

For this reason, its intelligence network was also quite developed.

“Nothing at all?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao frowned. He pondered for a moment before asking, “Where are Sect Leader Zhang Xuan and Hall Master Zheng Yang’s portraits and soul auras?”

“They are over here,” the First Elder said as he passed two jade tokens over.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao tapped on them, and two figures immediately materialized in the air. They were Zhang Xuan and the Zheng Yang that he had disguised as!

As Zhang Xuan had stayed in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion for some time, it was not too surprising that the other powers had managed to obtain his portrait and soul aura. However, he had only been at the Myriad Beasts Hall for a single day, and he had hardly met anyone. Yet, the Sevenstar Pavilion had somehow obtained his details...

It had to be said that its intelligence network was extremely fearsome!

Seeing Pavilion Master Kui examining the appearances and soul auras of the two intently, the First Elder asked, “Pavilion Master Kui, are you suspecting that Liu Yang might be either Sect Leader Zhang or Hall Master Zheng in disguise?”

Pavilion Master Kui nodded in response.

“I know that Sect Leader Zhang is a Heavenly True Immortal realm cultivator, which tallies with Liu Yang’s description. However, the former is known for his unparalleled swordsmanship whereas Liu Yang was able to defeat both you and me with his bare fists. It doesn’t seem very likely that they are the same person,” the First Elder said with a frown.

“As for Hall Master Zheng, according to the news we have received thus far, his cultivation is at Heavenly High Immortal, and due to that, he was able to tame the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and the others with ease. Since that’s the case, it’s even more unlikely for him to be Liu Yang. Besides, I examined their soul auras carefully, and it’s clear that they are three different individuals.”

The First Elder was simply unable to understand the basis behind Pavilion Master Kui’s suspicion.

“There’s a plant that grows only in the City of Collapsed Space called Transmogrification. It allows a cultivator to alter their appearance and soul aura,” Pavilion Master Kui

explained. “I have seen this plant in person once, but I was unable to obtain it.”

“Pavilion Master Kui, you are suspecting that Liu Yang might have consumed Transmogrification?” the First Elder asked.

“I’m not implying that. I’m just trying to tell you that just it’s possible to disguise one’s appearance and soul aura. Just because the two of them appear and feel completely different from one another doesn’t necessarily mean that they are two different people,” Pavilion Master Kui replied calmly. “It’s just that... I can’t help but find it a little queer.”

“Queer?”

“It was just a few days ago that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion found itself a sect leader who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, and not long later, a formidable genius who possesses unparalleled beast taming skills emerged amid the Myriad Beasts Hall. Then, all of a sudden, an invincible True Immortal realm cultivator whom none of us are a match for appeared in our city...” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao shook his head.

“Don’t you think that it’s too much of a coincidence for all of them to appear like that?”

Those words stumped the First Elder.

He had not paid much attention to this matter before, but thinking about it, it did seem rather suspicious.

Under normal circumstances, it would already be a huge blessing if geniuses of such caliber appeared once every few centuries. Yet, within a short span of ten or so days, three of such figures suddenly emerged.

There was indeed something really unnatural about this situation.

“Pavilion Master Kui, do you find Liu Yang suspicious, too?” Elder Hong Wu’s eyes lit up hopefully upon hearing those words.

He had thought that the pavilion master had gotten a little too excited by the appearance of such a formidable expert, to the

extent that the latter was ignoring the possible threats. However, it seemed like he had underestimated the shrewdness of the man who had ruled over the Sevenstar Pavilion for many years.

At the very least, the points that were listed out were not things that he had considered before.

“Well, I wouldn’t really say that I’m suspicious of Liu Yang...” Pavilion Master Kui shook his head. “I asked the elder of the Ethereal Hall about how he came to know Liu Yang earlier. According to what he said, Liu Yang was initially intending to rent an aerial immortal beast to get to the Sea of Exiled Stars as soon as possible, and it was the elder who recommended that he join our ride.

“However, the Ethereal Hall hiked up the price by quite a bit in order to earn a commission for their service, and this forced Liu Yang to head to the dueling ring. From this, the rationale behind his appearance in the dueling ring doesn’t seem to be to capture our attention, and he doesn’t seem to have any interest in the Sevenstar Pavilion. Furthermore, based on how he has conducted himself before us thus far, it doesn’t seem like he’s even aware that he defeated us in the dueling ring.”

“This...” Pavilion Master Kui’s analysis left the First Elder and Elder Hong Wu a little lost for words.

2028 Head Whipping Cultivation Method

As they recalled those bitter memories in that dueling ring, it did seem like the other party had not given a damn about who they were.

Based on their encounter with Liu Yang, the latter was not a completely tactless person. If the latter had known their true identities in advance, he would not have thrashed them so mercilessly.

Everything that had happened seemed to suggest that Liu Yang had not approached them intentionally, which meant their conspiracy theories did not hold.

“It could also be that he’s shrewd enough to have set all of this up in order to fool me...” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao shook his head grimly. “That was also why I gave him the Breakthrough Pill and promised to help him achieve a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm. I wanted to gauge how he would react when I held him in high esteem... but instead of making more requests, he asked me for permission to access our repository of books.”

The First Elder and Elder Hong Wu fell silent.

It seemed like the pavilion master had been thinking about this matter right from the start. His every single action had another motive behind it.

The fact that the pavilion master had given Liu Yang a Breakthrough Pill and promised to help him reach the High Immortal realm showed just how highly the pavilion master regarded him. Liu Yang should have caught the drift as well, and under such circumstances, it was likely that any request, even if it was slightly overboard, would be accepted.

But it was as if Liu Yang was completely oblivious to all of that. As though a fool, all he requested was access to their

library.

Of course, knowledge was an extremely valuable asset to a cultivator, but it had to be slowly accumulated over time. It was not as if one could attain enlightenment after reading for a couple of hours.

As such, Liu Yang's request was nothing compared to what he could have asked for.

Pavilion Master Kui turned to the First Elder and asked, "What is Liu Yang doing at the moment?"

"He's still reading in the library. He isn't out yet," the First Elder replied, clasping his fist.

"I see... Since that's the case, try to find out what books he's reading, compile a list, and submit it to me," Pavilion Master Kui instructed.

"Yes' Pavilion Master Kui!" the First Elder replied before taking his leave.

A few moments later, the First Elder returned with a conflicted look on his face.

"How did it go?"

"Well... Pavilion Master Kui, this is the recording from the library. You should take a look at it personally," the First Elder replied with a reddened face.

Perplexed, Pavilion Master Kui took a jade token from the First Elder's hand, and with a tap, its contents immediately floated into appearance.

In the recording, Liu Yang could be seen standing in the middle of the library, whipping his head everywhere.

The recording was roughly ten minutes long, and throughout those ten minutes, he did nothing but whip his head. If a shelf had ten rows of books, he would whip his head ten times toward the shelf before moving on to the next one.

"This... Is he having a stroke?"

Pavilion Master Kui and Elder Hong Wu were stunned.

Was the young man not planning to browse through their collection of books?

Why was he shaking his head around with such a serious look on his face?

It was almost as if he was a young lad trying to practice his head whipping skills to charm the ladies...

Unable to comprehend the reason behind Liu Yang's actions, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao could only say, "Continue keeping tabs on Liu Yang."

But even as more recordings were brought into the Celestial Dipper Palace, they showed nothing more than Zhang Xuan's frenzied head whipping.

"It doesn't seem like he's trying to steal the secrets of our Sevenstar Pavilion either..." The First Elder squeezed these words out from his stifled chest.

If the young man was planning to steal their secret arts, he would surely take out their books and secretly copy them down so that he could study how to decipher them later on. However, all this young man did was whip his head for four hours straight, not bothering to browse through any of the books.

If it was possible to steal a sect's secrets just by whipping one's head, there would not be any secrets in the world anymore.

"There must be some kind of reason for him to continue whipping his head for four hours straight... Let me give it a try!" Elder Hong Wu said.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a couple of books and placed them around him. Following which, he took a deep breath before whipping his head in the same manner as Zhang Xuan in the recording.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the First Elder hurriedly turned their gazes over and asked, "How is it? Did you notice something peculiar?"

“My head... giddy. I want to puke!” Elder Hong Wu said with difficulty.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the First Elder.

It was only at the sixth hour that Liu Yang finally halted his head whipping. He sat down on the floor and closed his eyes, seemingly at rest.

“Finally...”

The crowd heaved a sigh of relief.

They were getting light-headed just by seeing that fellow whip his head all around. They really had no idea how anyone could continue whipping their head like that for six hours straight...

“He’s cultivating!” Elder Hong Wu exclaimed.

It was likely that the young man was exhausted, and he was planning to recuperate a little after shaking his head for so long.

“Wait... Is he consuming a Superior Immortal Pill?”

In the recording, not too long after Liu Yang sat down, he began consuming pills. One pill, two pills, three pills... After eating five Superior Immortal Pills straight, he suddenly rose to his feet.

“As a Heavenly True Immortal, is he really able to assimilate that much medicinal energy?” The First Elder’s face paled.

Superior Immortal Pills were a cultivation resource that was effective even on High Immortal realm experts. Even he would have to take at least ten days to assimilate the energy from a single one properly. Considering the other party was only at the Heavenly True Immortal realm, consuming five of them at once was tantamount to suicide!

Was the young man not afraid of stuffing himself to death?

“Is he intending on pushing for a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao remarked with a frown.

But at that moment, Liu Yang suddenly rose to his feet.

Hu hu hu!

His palm began moving around with astounding ferocity.

“Is that... my Dragon Transformation Palm?” The First Elder was stunned.

The move that the young man was executing was the Dragon Transformation Palm that he specialized in, but somehow, the other party’s movements were much swifter and smoother.

He had cultivated the battle technique for many years before he was able to master it, but the young man was already able to execute it better than him on his first try.

All of a sudden, he felt as if his years of hard work had all gone to waste.

“No, something is wrong... Isn’t he executing this portion a little wrong? Eh? Why does it feel like his version is much more logical? It seems to be far stronger than the original,” the First Elder remarked in bewilderment.

As someone who had immersed himself in mastering the Dragon Transformation Palm for many years, he could tell that the young man’s execution of the technique diverged from the original secret manual. But for some reason, it seemed to flow even more smoothly. It was almost as if the other party was using the original version whereas what he had was the pirated version!

“Let me give it a try,” the First Elder said as he rose to his feet.

He executed the Dragon Transformation Palm according to how the young man did.

Hong long!

With a resounding echo, a surge of zhenqi gushed through his body, and an indomitable aura could be felt from him. “This is...Major Accomplishment?”

The First Elder felt as if he was going bonkers.

Even though he had spent many decades studying the Dragon Transformation Palm, he knew that he was still a far way off from reaching Major Accomplishment. He was famed for

being the only cultivator in the Sevenstar Pavilion who had mastered the technique, but in truth, he had already resigned himself to being unable to reach Major Accomplishment in his lifetime.

Yet, who could have known that he would be able to achieve a breakthrough just by imitating the other party's movements?

This was a little too fast!

At this moment, the person in the recording switched from executing the Dragon Transformation Palm to the Flowerless Palm.

This time, it was Elder Hong Wu's turn to be stunned. Soon enough, he began imitating the young man's movements. Hong long!

Similarly, it did not take him too long to surpass the current bottleneck that he was facing.

Soon after, the young man began executing Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's Bolting Lightning Clutching Clouds, and just like the other two, shortly after Pavilion Master Kui Xiao imitated the young man's movements, he achieved a breakthrough.

It took a while for Pavilion Master Kui Xiao to recover from his shock, and he muttered to himself, "Just by shaking his head for six hours, he managed to grasp the most profound battle techniques of our sect and even improved them, making them even more powerful than before. Could it be that whipping one's head can clear one's mind, allowing one to learn battle techniques faster than normal?"

But he had secretly tried it earlier, and it had only caused his head to spin, leaving him unable to see anything clearly. How did the young man do it?

"He must have used some kind of secret art to accelerate his learning..."

"But he didn't browse through any of the relevant books at all! How did he manage to learn all of our techniques?" Elder Hong Wu was perplexed.

Throughout the entire six hours of head whipping, the young man had not touched a single book, so how could he have learned their techniques? Not to mention, he had even reached Major Accomplishment in them within such a short span of time. They had sunk decades into their battle techniques in order to reach their current levels!

Pavilion Master Kui paused for a moment before saying, “It could be that he secretly learned them while we were fighting with him... There are incredibly talented people out there who are able to remember every single detail of a battle technique just looking at its execution. It was said that Hall Master Kong possessed such an ability.”

This was the only way he could reason this out.

Otherwise, it made no sense for the other party to be able to learn all their battle techniques and even master them to such a formidable degree just by whipping his head around.

Right at that moment, the First Elder’s anxious voice echoed once more. “Pavilion Master Kui... look!”

Pavilion Master Kui raised his head. In the recording, after executing the Bolting Lightning Clutching Clouds, Zhang Xuan clenched his fists together and began executing yet another set of battle techniques.

“This is... Red Dust of Ten Thousand Li?”

“River of the Purple Sun?”

“Dawn of the Hundred Canaries?”

“Obliteration of All Trails?”

The trio spat out the names of the top battle techniques of the Sevenstar Pavilion one after another. It was as if the young man in the recording had turned into the founder of the Sevenstar Pavilion. All sorts of battle techniques and cultivation techniques seemed to flow right out of him, and every single one of them had reached Major Accomplishment.

Utter silence.

It took a while before Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s hoarse voice sounded in the air. “There is a total of twenty-three top-notch

battle techniques in our Sevenstar Pavilion. In history, the elders and pavilion masters who were able to master even one of them left their mark on history, becoming famed figures whose names were recited by others even after their death. Yet, he actually managed to master all twenty-three of them?”

The Sevenstar Pavilion had quite a few battle techniques that were on the same level as the Bolting Lightning Clutching Clouds, but they were all extremely difficult to cultivate. Every single one of them would take a great deal of time and effort in order to interpret and master.

In order to master the Bolting Lightning Clutching Clouds, Pavilion Master Mo had gone through a lot of trouble. He had specially paid a visit to the highest peak of the Forsaken Continent to examine thunder and lightning. He had also ventured into the Western Regions in search of a cloud-shaped accessory. He had even entered the City of Collapsed Space in order to seek the answer to a doubt he had regarding the battle technique, and he had nearly lost his life there!

On the other hand, the young man had only whipped his head for six hours, and he had already mastered everything. Furthermore, all the battle techniques that he had executed were far stronger than what Pavilion Master Kui Xiao remembered.

In other words... it seemed like the young man had found the flaws in them and corrected all of them!

Was it really possible for a human to be that talented?

“If he becomes our leader, our Sevenstar Pavilion could very well become the Sevenstar God Pavilion in the near future...” Elder Hong Wu could hardly close his agape mouth.

“Become our leader?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao looked at Elder Hong Wu curiously. “You aren’t going to beat anymore?”

It was just a moment ago that Elder Hong Wu had said that he was going to beat the young man up until the latter confessed his true identity.

“This...” Elder Hong Wu’s face reddened. “Even though I’m an entire cultivation realm stronger than him, there’s no way I could be a match for him...”

He might not be as discerning as Pavilion Master Kui Xiao, but he knew where he stood. Given the other party’s superior battle senses and top-notch battle techniques, there was no way he could be a match for the other party even though his cultivation was higher.

If they really fought, it would have surely ended in a tragic defeat for him.

He stood no chance at all. He would only be making a joke out of himself if he challenged the other party.

“Considering that he’s able to defeat you despite being a cultivation realm weaker, if he successfully achieves a breakthrough to reach Heavenly High Immortal... is there any chance that we could win the fight against the other Six Sects and secure the best position?” The eyes of the First Elder lit up.

“This...” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao fell into deep thought.

“Sect Leader Zhang Xuan from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, so there’s a good chance that he’ll be able to match High Immortals despite only being at the True Immortal realm himself. As for the newly-appointed Hall Master Zheng Yang of the Myriad Beasts Hall, the fact that he was able to tame the Serpentine Dragon and the others shows that he’s no weakling either... Nevertheless, if Liu Yang is neither of them in disguise, he should still be able to stand his ground against them!”

The First Elder pondered over those words for a moment before remarking, “Actually, isn’t there a very easy way to verify the matter? Pavilion Master Kui, you could just enter the Ethereal Hall and ask Elder Han Jianqiu and Elder Qin Yuan!”

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“Ah, I forgot that there was that as well.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was stunned for a moment before nodding in agreement.

Indeed. He could simply check with those two to see if Liu Yang was either one of those two in disguise.

In consideration of their relations, especially during such a critical period, Han Jianqiu and Qin Yuan would not maliciously lie to him.

With such thoughts in mind, he took out the special Ethereal Token that was exclusive to the top echelons of the Forsaken Continent and immersed his consciousness into it.

Within the Ethereal Hall, he shook the bell at the very center of the area. A moment later, the summoned Han Jianqiu and Qin Yuan appeared before him.

“Pavilion Master Kui, do you need anything from us?” Qin Yuan asked with a wave of his hand.

“May I know if the two of you recognize this person?”

With a tap of his finger, a silhouette appeared in the air. It was the image of Zhang Xuan in his current disguise.

“I don’t recognize that person.”

One after another, Han Jianqiu and Qin Yuan shook their heads.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao heaved a sigh of relief before turning his gaze to Han Jianqiu. “Brother Han, may I ask if Sect Leader Zhang Xuan is currently in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?”

“Our sect leader is currently practicing the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula, and he should be able to achieve a breakthrough very soon. Naturally, he’s in our sect at the moment. Where else could he possibly be?” Han Jianqiu

frowned. “Pavilion Master Kui, may I ask why you are asking this question?”

Naturally, there was no way he could compromise Zhang Xuan’s safety by revealing that the latter was not in the sect. He could not allow any more mishaps to occur before the Azure Bridge descended.

“It was just a casual question,” Pavilion Master Kui replied after receiving a firm response from Han Jianqiu. Following which, he turned to Qin Yuan and asked, “Then, Brother Qin, may I ask if Hall Master Qin Yuan is in the Myriad Beasts Hall at the moment?”

“Of course!” Qing Yuan’s eyebrows shot up. “Our hall master has just tamed the Serpentine Dragon and a few other immortal beasts, so naturally, he has to work on their coordination in preparation for the duel in a few days. Do you suspect that I’m lying to the group, Pavilion Master Kui?”

“No, that’s not what I mean.” Pavilion Master Kui shook his head. “I was just asking due to some doubts I have in my mind. Your answers have clarified my doubts, and for that, I thank you. Apologies for calling you two here on such short notice, but that’s all I wanted to ask. I still have some other business to attend to at the moment, so I’ll be taking my leave.”

Knowing that those two were still cultivating in their respective sects, Pavilion Master Kui left the Ethereal Hall as a relieved man.

Returning to the central hall, he told the two elders staring at him intently, “Sect Leader Zhang Xuan and Hall Master Zheng Yang are currently in their sects. I think that there’s a really good chance that Liu Yang is an unaffiliated cultivator.”

The First Elder nodded. “It’s hard to believe that someone who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent or is so capable in beast taming would possess such extraordinary means as to learn battle techniques with just a single glance as well.”

There were many geniuses in the world, but none of them were talented in everything.

It was hard to believe that a person could be so proficient in so many arts at once.

If there was really such a person, their name would have long spread far and wide across the Forsaken Continent!

“Since that’s the case, we should spare no resources in grooming Liu Yang,” Pavilion Master Kui declared with a hearty laugh.

Previously, when he heard the news that someone in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, he had felt deeply envious.

But it seemed like the heavens were kind to their Sevenstar Pavilion as well. At this crucial moment, a genius possessing such extraordinary capabilities appeared right before them!

Considering how this young man was able to master the twenty-three top-notch battle techniques of the Sevenstar Pavilion, once he successfully achieved a breakthrough, there was no one in the world who would be able to stop him!

Even the famed Sect Leader Zhang Xuan who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent might not necessarily be a match for him!

Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply before walking out of the library.

Even though browsing through the library of the Sevenstar Pavilion did not induce any growth in his cultivation, he had gained a deeper understanding of battle techniques, thus furthering his fighting prowess.

This was especially so for the twenty-three battle techniques that he had just learned. They were lacking compared to his Gods’ Sword Intent, but if he mastered them, they would surely prove to be formidable weapons at critical moments.

Barely after leaving the room, the First Elder walked over and said, “Elder Liu, Pavilion Master Kui wishes to meet you.” Zhang Xuan quickly followed the First Elder to the Celestial Dipper Palace.

“Elder Liu, you have browsed through an entire night’s worth of books. May I know if you have had any breakthroughs? If

there's any help that we can provide that would aid you in achieving a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm, feel free to tell us," Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said with a smile.

"My zhenqi cultivation and physical body are already up to par, but my soul is still a little too weak at the moment to achieve a breakthrough," Zhang Xuan said.

If he could raise his soul cultivation to the True Immortal realm, even without the High Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art, he should still be able to achieve a breakthrough using the Breakthrough Pill.

It was just a pity that even though he had collected quite a few soul cultivation techniques in the Sevenstar Pavilion, there still was not enough.

"Your soul is still slightly weak at the moment?" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao widened his eyes in realization.

It was no wonder the young man did not consume the Breakthrough Pill right away to push for a breakthrough. In the end, it was because he felt that his soul was still not up to par.

"It's not too easy to cultivate one's soul. However, you are in luck. One of the treasures of our Sevenstar Pavilion, the Sevenstar Immortal Grass, happens to be exceptionally nourishing to the soul. Shall I take you over to give it a try?"

"Sevenstar Immortal Grass?" Zhang Xuan repeated the unfamiliar term in confusion.

He had browsed through many books ever since he arrived in the Azure, but he had no recollection of this medicinal herb at all.

Yes. It's no exaggeration when I say that it's the foundation that has allowed us to stand as one of the Six Sects for the past several thousand years. It's the crux that has sealed our luck, allowing us to groom generation after generation of capable disciples," Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

The Sevenstar Immortal Grass was a medicinal herb that had absorbed the energies that had gathered from the seven celestial stars above through the sect's formation. It emanated

a calming aura that relieved any disturbances in one's mind. For this reason, despite the Sevenstar Pavilion being located in the midst of a bustling city, those in its premises would feel as if they were standing in the midst of serene nature.

Such an environment allowed the disciples of the Sevenstar Pavilion to focus their attention on cultivating without being disturbed by mortal distractions. It was through this that they were able to stand alongside the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and the other sects.

“I’ll be troubling Pavilion Master Kui then.” Zhang Xuan bowed deeply.

He was not accepting favors from them blindly. He had noticed that they were peeping on him earlier, and in order to repay the favor, he had intentionally executed their improved battle techniques at a speed slow enough for them to follow.

In a sense, it was equivalent to him imparting those moves to them.

“It’s no trouble. As an elder of the Sevenstar Pavilion, this is one of the privileges that you are entitled to,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao replied before leading the way forward.

Soon, they arrived in the area that corresponded to the Polaris of the Sevenstar Pavilion.

It was a vast courtyard.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao released the seal around the courtyard, and a seven-colored immortal grass came into appearance.

It had seven leaves, and every single one of them glistened with a different color. They swayed under the tug of the light breeze, and slight ripples could be vaguely seen in the surroundings.

Astonishingly, this single feeble-looking plant had reached Heavenly High Immortal-tier!

Zhang Xuan walked up to the immortal grass to take a closer look, and his eyes could not help but light up. “It’s indeed extremely nourishing to the soul.”

In just a few moments after entering the courtyard, his soul, which had been stuck at the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm for some time, was on the verge of achieving a breakthrough.

As expected of the treasure of the Sevenstar Pavilion, it was indeed an invaluable resource!

“This is the Sevenstar Immortal Grass. Most of the elders who have reached the Heavenly True Immortal realm choose to achieve a breakthrough here. Under the protection of the immortal grass, they are unperturbed by inner demons, thus making their soul more wholesome,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

The Sevenstar Immortal Grass was rather similar to the Bodhi Tree that he had planted in his Myriad Anthive Nest back on the Master Teacher Continent. It was extremely effective in nourishing one’s soul. If he cultivated near it, even without a True Immortal realm soul cultivation technique, it should not be too difficult for him to achieve a breakthrough in his soul cultivation!

“There are still two more hours before dawn, so you can use this time to cultivate here. We’ll be heading off to the Sea of Exiled Stars at daybreak,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said before leaving the area.

After his departure, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out several formation flags.

Weng!

With a light flick, the formation flags flew all around the courtyard and got into position. Right after, a brilliant semispherical light shone in the surroundings, isolating his aura entirely.

Naturally, he had obtained these formation flags from Elder Liao back at the Myriad Beasts Hall. The latter was skilled in setting up formations, so he had plenty of such equipment.

After finishing his preparatory work, Zhang Xuan sat down on the floor cross-legged and began drawing his soul out from his glabella.

Gugugugu!

As he began driving his soul cultivation technique, he could feel the energy from the immortal grass surging into his soul.

But a moment later, a frown emerged between his brows.

The energy in the surroundings was extremely plentiful, similar to the Lake Eyes back at Huanyu Empire. Under normal circumstances, even if he just immersed his soul in such an environment, his soul would gradually be nourished.

But for some reason, even though he was already driving his soul cultivation technique, he found that he was suddenly unable to assimilate the energy that he had absorbed.

Thus, he turned his gaze to the immortal grass, only to see the latter swaying nonstop. The next instant, the energy in the surroundings that was nourishing his soul suddenly vanished without a trace.

“What’s going on here?” Zhang Xuan’s face darkened.

The situation was very clear. The Sevenstar Immortal Grass was the reason behind this anomaly.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan brought his soul back to his body and walked closer to the immortal grass, wanting to see what was going on.

However, barely after he took a step, the spiritual energy in the surroundings jolted a little. That familiar calming energy that was nourishing to souls had returned.

With narrowed eyes, Zhang Xuan drew out his soul through his glabella once more, but just as he was about to absorb the energy, it suddenly vanished again.

When Zhang Xuan brought his soul back to his body, everything reverted to how it had been.

“This fellow is really trying to play with me...” Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure.

He did not have any True Immortal realm soul cultivation techniques with him, so if he wished to make a breakthrough,

he would need to have plenty of energy to nourish and cleanse his soul so as to make it purer. Only then would he be able to overcome his current bottleneck.

He had thought that he should be able to achieve a breakthrough easily given the massive amount of energy the immortal grass was emanating, but who would have thought that the latter would play hide-and-seek with him?

If he cultivated while his soul was within his body, not only would his rate of cultivation be much slower, it might also affect the level of his breakthrough.

It seems like Pavilion Master Kui hasn't been completely honest with me. This Sevenstar Immortal Grass isn't just an ordinary herb that nourishes one's soul, Zhang Xuan thought.

Putting aside his cultivation for the time being, he walked over to the immortal grass.

Bending his knees, he reached out to touch the immortal grass, hoping to use the Library of Heaven's Path to confirm the latter's attributes and properties. However, with a light sway, the immortal grass suddenly vanished right before his eyes. Before he knew it, it suddenly appeared several dozen meters away.

"What?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had never thought that the immortal grass would actually be able to run away on its own. Thus, he walked over once more and reached out to touch it.

Hu!

The immortal grass bolted off to the opposite end of the courtyard. It was as if his touch was poisonous, so it was desperately trying to avoid him.

"So, you want to play? Interesting," Zhang Xuan murmured with a smile.

Of course, it could not possibly be that easy to deal with a Heavenly High Immortal-tier medicinal herb. He would have to win it over first.

"Let's see where you can escape to!"

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan made his move. He rushed over to grab it, but all of a sudden, blurry shadows flashed across his eyes.

The seven-colored leaves abruptly extended through the ground and rose from beneath his feet, wrapping thick vines around his wrists and ankles.

Hula!

Caught off guard, Zhang Xuan was raised upside down into the air.

2030 Eating the Immortal Grass

In the Celestial Dipper Palace, the First Elder looked at Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and said, “Even though the Sevenstar Immortal Grass is the treasure of our sect, it has quite an eccentric temperament. It doesn’t even pay much heed to you even though you are the head of our Sevenstar Pavilion. Is it possible that it will make a move on Elder Liu?”

The Sevenstar Immortal Grass had been around since the founding of the sect, and it had lived for several thousand years since then. Its long life had resulted in its haughty personality, such that it would not show much respect even toward the sect leader of each generation.

Considering how young Elder Liu was, as well as the fact that his cultivation was only at the Heavenly True Immortal realm, would the immortal grass make things difficult for him?

“It’s not as if you have never interacted with the immortal grass before. It’s just a little playful. After it’s had its fun, it will release its soul-nurturing energy.” Pavilion Master Kui chuckled softly. “Considering Elder Liu’s achievements despite his young age, it’s inevitable that he might get a little complacent. Facing a small hiccup here and there will be good for building his character, and it will be helpful for tempering his soul.”

“I see.” the First Elder nodded slowly in agreement.

However, Elder Hong Wu was still a little worried about the matter. “I don’t think that there’s too much of a problem for the immortal grass to tease Elder Liu. What I am afraid of is that Elder Liu might destroy the immortal grass out of rage. That would really be a catastrophe!”

Even though it had not been long since he met this young man, he knew that the other party was not an easy character to deal with.

Otherwise, the other party would not have defeated all of them so easily back in the Ethereal Hall.

“Rest assured. The Sevenstar Immortal Grass has lived for several thousand years, and it resides in the area where the energies in the Sevenstar Pavilion converge. Even I would be unable to capture it, let alone the Heavenly True Immortal realm Elder Liu. In the entire Forsaken Continent, other than Hall Master Kong, I can think of no other person who possesses the capability to harm the immortal grass!” Pavilion Master Kui stroked his beard as he spoke.

The Sevenstar Pavilion consisted of seven major palaces, and these palaces occupied corresponded to the positions of the seven stars. The center of the seven stars was the Polaris, which corresponded to the courtyard where the immortal grass resided.

While the immortal grass had been nourishing everyone in the Sevenstar Palace, at the same time, the spirit, mind, and psyche of everyone in the Sevenstar Palace were nourishing it as well. This was also how a mere plant like itself was able to reach Heavenly High Immortal-tier.

Hearing those words, Elder Hong Wu heaved a sigh of relief.

If even a Semi-Divinity realm expert like the pavilion master was unable to capture the Sevenstar Immortal Grass, the others would stand even less of a chance.

“Nevertheless, just to be safe, I discreetly left a Communication Jade Token that’s directly connected to a Record Crystal inside the courtyard. It will allow me to view what’s going on in there in the form of a recording, so if anything does happen, we’ll be able to intervene right away,” Pavilion Master Kui said with a chuckle.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a Record Crystal and infused his zhenqi into it. Brilliance immediately glowed before a scene rose from the Record Crystal, revealing the bare outline of the courtyard.

However, the scenery was completely cloaked with mist, leaving them still unable to discern what was happening

within.

“This is... an Isolation Formation?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was stunned.

He had done this before in the past, and such a situation had never happened before. For the connection to be abruptly terminated... could this be Liu Yang's doing?

But this should not be! There were many formations cast over the courtyard, such that overlapping an Isolation Formation on top of it was no easy feat. Even he would have to take a long time studying the existing formations in order to figure out a feasible way to set up another Isolation Formation there! How did the other party manage to do it?

Furthermore, it had not been long since they had left the courtyard.

This was way too fast!

“We won't be able to see what's happening inside with the Isolation Formation around the area. Most likely, Elder Liu doesn't want us to see him embarrassing himself inside...” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao sighed deeply as he moved to keep the Record Crystal back into his storage ring.

However, the First Elder suddenly exclaimed with a grave expression at that moment.

“Look, the mist is moving!”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao glanced over to the recording once more, and indeed, the mist was drifting around. It was apparent that there was some kind of fight occurring behind the veil of mist.

Vaguely, they could see cracks appearing on the ground, and the crisp chirping of a young chick could be heard as well. Surges of energy were gushing around the area. It was apparent with a look that it was an extremely intense battle.

“This...”

The First Elder and Elder Hong Wu glanced at one another in bewilderment.

They knew that the immortal grass was playful; they had gone through that themselves. But... what was with the chirping of the young chick?

Did Elder Liu bring a chick in as well?

Seeing the facial expressions of the other two, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao chuckled softly, "Don't worry, the immortal grass won't go so far as to harm Elder Liu..."

But before he could finish his words, the mist suddenly parted slightly, revealing the scene within to them...

With a napkin placed neatly before his chest, a young man was seated on the ground with a pair of chopsticks in his hands. There was a campfire and a metal pot in front of him. The water in the metal pot was already boiling, and within the water, they could see a stalk of Sevenstar Immortal Grass turning completely red due to the high heat.

It was being cooked.

The Sevenstar Immortal Grass struggled with all its might, trying to escape from the pot, but a little yellow chick floating amid the boiling water as well would peck it down every time it tried something.

Eventually, the immortal grass simply stopped struggling at all. As if cooked seaweed, it drifted around the pot lifelessly. It was a surprisingly sad sight.

The young man flicked his wrist and took out a small bowl. In there, he added sesame oil, salt, chili paste, peanuts, vinegar, and a few other seasonings before mixing them well. After that, he plucked out a leaf from the immortal grass, dipped it into his specially crafted homemade sauce, and swallowed it with gusto.

A moment of silence lingered among Pavilion Master Kui and the others as their eyes slowly widened into bulging circles.

"No, this won't do... Quick, we need to save the immortal grass!"

It took a while before they finally recovered from their shock, and they quickly rushed out of the hall.

In the blink of an eye, they arrived back at the courtyard. There, they saw the furiously sweating Zhang Xuan.

“You came just in time. Come, join me! It doesn’t taste too bad.” Zhang Xuan stood up and passed them a pair of chopsticks warmly.

“You ...”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao walked straight over to the hot pot to fish the immortal grass out from the boiling water. The immortal grass looked incredibly withered, not moving in the least. Of its initial seven leaves, four of them had been plucked off.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao quickly placed it down gently before checking its vitals. After confirming that it was not dead yet, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Unable to tolerate this, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, “Elder Liu, the Sevenstar Immortal Grass is the treasure of our Sevenstar Pavilion! How could you eat it?”

I brought you here in order to absorb the energy emanated by the immortal grass so that you could nourish your soul, but you ended up cooking it as if you are in a hot pot store!

More importantly, it should have been extremely difficult for anyone to capture the Sevenstar Immortal Grass. Not even Pavilion Master Kui Xiao himself was certain he could capture it. How did the other party manage to put it into the pot? Furthermore, the temperature of boiling water wouldn’t even harm a True Immortal. How did he manage to cook the Heavenly High Immortal-tier immortal grass?

“I tried to absorb its energy to nourish my soul, but it simply wouldn’t allow me to. Not only that, it even made a move on me... I tried warning it several times, but it wouldn’t listen. So, I had no choice but to cook and eat it!” Zhang Xuan said.

If not for Little Chick pecking on it, honestly, Zhang Xuan was not entirely confident that he would have been a match for it. In fact, the suggestion to cook it and eat it had come from Little Chick as well.

If he simply absorbed the Sevenstar Immortal Grass' energy, while he would be able to achieve a breakthrough, it would take quite a long time. Eating it would be far more efficient.

And just as Little Chick had said, with the first leaf he ate, his soul cultivation had successfully made a breakthrough to the True Immortal realm. Following which, he had eaten three more leaves, and that had advanced his soul cultivation all the way to the Heavenly True Immortal realm.

To put it in other words, as long as he could harmonize his soul energy and zhenqi impeccably, he would be ready to push for a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm!

On the other hand, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was frenzied. "You knew how invaluable the Sevenstar Immortal Grass is, but you still cooked it and ate it. Do you really have nothing you would like to say for yourself?"

As the treasure of the Sevenstar Pavilion, generations of pavilion masters had treated the Sevenstar Immortal Grass with utmost respect, not daring to offend it. Yet, this fellow had actually tucked into it... Did he not feel guilty at all?

"Anything that I would like to say for myself?" Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding. "Well, it's not too bad... It tastes like seaweed, but the texture is more QQ[1]!"

"... "Pavilion Master Kui was speechless.

"Rest assured. Since I have eaten it, I'll surely restore its vitality," Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

He knew what Pavilion Master Kui was worried about. He had just been teasing them when he spoke about the flavors earlier, but thinking back, it might not have been a very funny joke for them given the current situation.

He first stowed the swimming Little Chick back into his tamed beast sack before carrying the entire pot of boiling water over to the Sevenstar Immortal Grass.

Tzla!

He poured the water on the immortal grass.

The withered immortal grass was not scalded by the hot water. Instead, it seemed to have absorbed some sort of mystical power that caused its withered leaves to unfurl themselves once more. The four eaten leaves also began budding, and it seemed like they would grow back anytime soon.

Such a sight made Pavilion Master Kui Xiao, the First Elder, and the others stunned.

Was it possible for an immortal grass of the tier of the Sevenstar Immortal grass to grow back so quickly after being eaten?

“It’ll take roughly a month before it fully grows back,” Zhang Xuan said. “In truth, this immortal grass is rather similar to sweet potatoes. Even after it’s harvested and eaten, it can be regrown. Since that’s the case, it would be a waste not to eat it.”

He had not been sure about the attributes of the immortal grass initially, but after touching it, through the Library of Heaven’s Path, all of its secrets were unveiled before him.

Even though the Sevenstar Immortal Grass was incredibly haughty, ultimately, it was just another medicinal herb. The fundamental purpose of a medicinal herb was to be eaten.

Usually, if four of its leaves were eaten, it would take at least a hundred years for it to grow back. However, through the nourishment of the chicken soup broiled using Little Chick, most of its damage could be repaired within a few breaths.

“This...” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s lips twitched.

Now that he thought about it, he remembered his predecessor telling him that the Sevenstar Immortal Grass could be eaten. However, it had been so long since anyone had managed to capture it that such a thing had been erased from everyone’s mind!

A Semi-Divinity realm expert like him was unable to do anything to the Sevenstar Immortal Grass, but this True Immortal realm young man actually managed to capture it and boil it in a pot of soup.

It was hard to believe such a thing had happened even when he witnessed it with his own eyes.

Knowing that the immortal grass was fine, everyone heaved a sigh of relief.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao assessed the young man before him curiously and asked, "Elder Liu, may I ask how effective the immortal grass is?"

"It's not too bad. My soul has been nourished to a satisfactory level," Zhang Xuan replied.

"That's good. It's already dawn, let's set off now, shall we?" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked.

Since the young man had received what he wanted, there was not much point remaining there anymore. After all the shocks they had been through, the sun had already risen.

Zhang Xuan nodded quietly in response.

There were eight aerial immortal beasts prepared specifically for this journey. All eight of them were pulling a massive carriage that was still extremely spacious even after the entire group got into it.

Peering through the windows, Zhang Xuan noted that the speed of the carriage was even faster than that of the Serpentine Dragon.

After confirming that the general direction was indeed headed to the Sea of Exiled Stars, he turned his attention away from this matter and began cultivating. Over the next two days, he successfully reinforced his soul cultivation.

It's about time for me to try pushing for a breakthrough to High Immortal realm, Zhang Xuan thought as he took out the Breakthrough Pill that he had received from Pavilion Master Kui Xiao.

His zhenqi, physical body, and soul cultivation had all reached the Heavenly True Immortal realm, so he was literally prepared in body and in soul.

As long as he could reach the High Immortal realm, he would finally have the power to protect himself in the Azure. Even if

he came under the assault of Semi-Divinity realm experts from the Hall of Gods, he would not be utterly powerless anymore!

[1] QQ is a Taiwanese term that describes the texture of soft yet chewy food, such as the texture of noodle and glutinous rice balls. Basically, the food should be soft but still offer some resistance to the bite.

2031 High Immortal Realm!

The only caveat with the current plan was that he had not compiled a perfect High Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art. He also was not sure if he would be able to do so in the near future.

I can't afford to wait that long anymore...

As his cultivation progressed, it was only natural that the number of cultivation technique manuals that he had would reduce. He could not possibly stop cultivating just because he was unable to compile a perfected Heaven's Path Divine Art, right?

It was time for him to overcome his fears!

Besides, he had also advanced through the realms of Ancient Sage back when he was on the Master Teacher Continent even though he had not managed to compile the corresponding Heaven's Path Divine Arts.

Perfection or safety, this was the trade-off that he had to make at this moment. Currently, he viewed the latter as a more urgent need.

If he did not raise his cultivation fast enough, disaster would soon befall him. He did not think that he would be able to avoid the Hall of Gods for too long.

"I should start."

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan uncorked the jade bottle and swallowed the Breakthrough Pill inside of it.

Boom!

The rich energy harnessed within the pill gushed through his entire body, leaving him feeling as if a flame had been ignited within his body.

He focused his attention on concentrating all his zhenqi toward overcoming the bottleneck that hindered his path to becoming a High Immortal.

The Heaven's Path Divine Art was like a key to the gate between each cultivation realm. As long as he acquired this key, no matter how heavy the gates were, he would be able to open them with ease. However, since he did not have the key with him right now, he had no choice but to crush the gate with brute strength!

As long as he could gather sufficient energy to build up enough momentum, he would be able to reach the High Immortal realm.

Weng!

A resounding reverberation echoed as zhenqi gushed forward to break down the wall. Blood immediately spurted out from Zhang Xuan's lips.

It's more resilient than I thought...

He had thought that it should not be too difficult for him to reach the High Immortal realm with his current cultivation, but the bottleneck was like a secure metal vault. No matter how hard he charged into it, it simply would not budge.

“Are you trying to achieve a breakthrough via brute strength?”

Noticing what Zhang Xuan was trying to do, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the others were appalled.

The High Immortal realm was one of the hardest obstacles for a cultivator to overcome on the Forsaken Continent. There were many experts who had devoted their lives to uncovering tricks and methods to overcome this bottleneck. Yet, this fellow actually wanted to overcome it with brute strength!

This was as good as trying to knock down a hundred-meter-thick wall on a steed!

How could it be possible?

If it was possible to do it through brute strength, those cultivators stuck at the Heavenly True Immortal realm would not have been at such a loss as to what they could do!

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan realized that his attempts were not working well, so he turned to the crowd and asked, “Do you, by any chance, have any Premier Immortal Pills?”

Superior Immortal Pills were insufficient for him to build up enough momentum to achieve a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm. If he wished to succeed, he would need something even more potent.

“I have two of them,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said as he took out a jade bottle.

There were not many Premier Immortal Pills on the Forsaken Continent. Even as the head of the richest organization in this world, he did not have many of them.

“I’ll repay the favor to you after we arrive at the Sea of Exiled Stars,” Zhang Xuan said as he took the jade bottle without any reservations.

He knew that these two Premier Immortal Pills would play a vital role to him in achieving a breakthrough. Without any hesitation, he took out the two pills and popped them into his mouth.

“...“Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s eyelids twitched in shock.

Even a Semi-Divinity realm expert like him would take at least three days to assimilate the energy in a Premier Immortal Pill, but the young man before him, a Heavenly True Immortal, actually swallowed two of them at once.

Was he not afraid of blowing up?

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao walked over to Zhang Xuan and ordered the others, “Everyone, focus your attention and keep a close lookout!”

Such a forceful breakthrough came with huge risks. They would have to keep a close lookout so that they could intervene in time if the young man’s cultivation was about to go berserk.

The First Elder, Elder Hong Wu, and the others quickly gathered around.

This young man before them was the hope of the Sevenstar Pavilion. Be it Sect Leader Zhang Xuan or Hall Master Zheng Yang, the likes of them could not possibly be a match for this

monstrous genius. Thus, they were willing to give their all to protect him.

Boom!

As the two Premier Immortal Pills melted, Zhang Xuan felt a tremendous amount of energy flooding through his meridians.

If the Breakthrough Pill had generated a river within his body, after consuming the two pills, the river had evolved into a massive tsunami that charged right toward the resilient gates of High Immortality.

Boom boom boom!

With each attempt to crush the gates, Zhang Xuan would suffer significant damage due to the recoil. Blood was flowing from his nose, mouth, and ears, but even after several tries, the gates still refused to open. He had sustained significant injuries, and his body was on the verge of collapsing.

Thus, he quickly took out a jade bottle filled with the gourd's bathwater, and only then did he feel himself recovering a bit. He gritted his teeth tightly together as a determined glint shone in his eyes.

Hu!

With a whip of his hand, he took out several more jade bottles. An incredible amount of energy was emanating from these bottles.

Those bottles contained the blood essence of the Heavenly High Immortals from the Hall of Gods!

Prior to forging the corpses of those Heavenly High Immortals into Soulless Metal Humanoids, he had gathered their blood essences and stored them safely in jade bottles. These blood essences harnessed the power of those Heavenly High Immortals, so they were overflowing with energy.

Peng!

Uncorking the jade bottles, the blood essences quickly morphed into mist before flowing into his body through his acupoints.

A crimson glow appeared on the surface of Zhang Xuan's skin, and his body was starting to show signs of drying up. It seemed like he had gathered so much energy within him that the energies accumulated within his body were trying to devour him instead.

“Humph!”

With a cold harrumph, Zhang Xuan bore the tearing pain and drove his True Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art to its limits. He forcefully took control of the energies rampaging within his body and channeled them toward the gates once more.

Jiya!

With the sheer amount of energies gathered, the gate began to waver.

It's working! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He quickly gathered the energies back together to make one attempt after another.

To be honest, the bottleneck to the High Immortal realm was much more terrifying than he had thought.

He had gathered so much energy within on him that he was starting to lose control even with the Heaven's Path Divine Art. He had thought that he would be able to achieve a breakthrough easily after going so far, but even after so many attempts, it still was not fully torn down yet.

This was probably the greatest hurdle that he had faced in his cultivation so far.

“It'll be difficult for him to achieve a breakthrough in the future if he doesn't succeed the first time. We must lend him a hand!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao ordered.

He placed his hand on Zhang Xuan's back and infused a surge of pure energy right into the latter's body.

He had seen plenty of geniuses who had anxiously rushed to push for a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm only to end in failure. Most of them would try again later in their lives, but the difficulty was really on a whole new level then,

such that most of them ended up never managing to make a breakthrough.

Once the energies within the young man's body calmed down, it would be hard for him to achieve a breakthrough in the future. If so, their hopes at the Azure Bridge would be shattered.

Thus, even if they had to gather the strength of everyone present, they needed to ensure that the young man was successful in his breakthrough!

Hearing those words, the First Elder and the others quickly gathered around.

Tzzzzzz!

They channeled their zhenqi into Zhang Xuan's body, and their zhenqi was immediately assimilated into the roaring tsunami of energies within the latter's body, enhancing its might and momentum.

“You have my gratitude.”

Zhang Xuan did not think that they would go so far to help him achieve a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm, and he could not help clenching his fists tightly in agitation. He swiftly asserted his control over the augmented tsunami of energies and channeled it toward the gates once more.

Geji! Geji!

The gate wavered even more. With the assistance of those experts, Zhang Xuan could feel his bottleneck loosening significantly.

However, the toll of having so many different energies on his body was also starting to show as well. Cracks were starting to surface on his body, signaling that he was on the verge of suffering a physical breakdown.

Zhang Xuan immediately swallowed several more bottles of gourd's bathwater before focusing his attention back on his breakthrough.

Boom!

After innumerable attempts, the gates were finally forced open, allowing the surge of energies to burst through. As those energies quickly circulated around his body, Zhang Xuan's aura surged.

High Immortal realm, reached!

With the aid of the Breakthrough Pill, High Immortal realm blood essence, Premier Immortal Pills, and zhenqi from Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the others, he had finally succeeded!

Gugugugu!

The zhenqi within his body swiftly condensed together to become even more concentrated and powerful. As this concentrated zhenqi flowed through his body, the heavy injuries that he had sustained in the midst of the breakthrough swiftly healed up.

At the same time, his soul and body were being nourished as well.

“What pure zhenqi this is...”

As energy flowed through his body, Zhang Xuan felt vigor like he had never experienced before.

It was no wonder why High Immortals were so much more respected than True Immortals. The strength that he wielded was at least several times stronger than before.

As he did not have any more Premier Immortal Pills, he could only drink more blood essences from the Heavenly High Immortals in order to sustain his breakthrough. It took roughly a dozen bottles before his zhenqi finally settled down.

While he did manage to reach the High Immortal realm, due to the lack of the corresponding Heaven's Path Divine Art, he was unable to progress any further than that at the moment.

Nevertheless, even though he was only at the Lesser High Immortal realm, the strength that he wielded was not something that should be underestimated.

If he was faced with those three Heavenly High Immortals who had made an attempt on his life once more, even without

relying on any external help or trickery, he would still be able to easily smack them to death.

Barely after Zhang Xuan's cultivation settled down, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's voice sounded. "It's a relief that everything went well..."

Zhang Xuan raised his head and saw the elders who had helped him earlier looking at him with pale faces. The zhenqi in their bodies was on the verge of depleting entirely.

"I am extremely grateful to all of you for your help." Zhang Xuan bowed deeply.

If not for their unreserved assistance in devoting their zhenqi for his use, there was no way he would have been able to achieve a breakthrough to the Heavenly High Immortal realm.

He quickly passed a bottle of gourd's bathwater to each of them and said, "Drink it. It'll heal your injuries."

The crowd accepted the bottles and quickly drank the water. A tinge of redness quickly returned to their pale faces.

The swift depletion of energy had resulted in some hidden traumas in their bodies, and those injuries would often prove difficult to recover from. However, the gourd's bathwater had helped them recover from them in an instant.

They were still feeble from the lack of energy, but they were still able to recover quickly.

"This medicine..."

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the others were bewildered. The water that they had just drunk was more effective than any recovery medicines that they had consumed.

"It's a recovery medicine I have specially concocted. Drink it if you sustain any difficult injuries," Zhang Xuan said as he took out several more bottles of the gourd's bathwater and distributed it among the crowd.

Considering how far they had gone to help him, he would not be stingy with them.

Following that, as the crowd from the Sevenstar Pavilion consumed all kinds of pills to recover their energy, Zhang Xuan also sat down to reinforce his cultivation.

It took three days for everyone else to recover completely from their previous exertion. At the same time, Zhang Xuan also managed to reinforce his Lesser High Immortal realm cultivation.

“Is there no cultivation ordeal for achieving a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm?” Zhang Xuan asked curiously.

On the Master Teacher Continent, those whose cultivation had reached Saint 5-dan would draw in a cultivation ordeal. It was hard to imagine there would be no cultivation ordeal for reaching the High Immortal realm.

“The Forsaken Continent is the land that the gods have abandoned. Even though there are no longer any gods here, it’s still an extremely powerful dimension. High Immortals aren’t powerful enough to sway the laws of the world yet, so the heavens won’t send heavenly retribution upon them,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said. “The only case where one will face a cultivation ordeal is probably when one attempts to make a breakthrough to become a real god.”

“Become a real god?”

“As exiles, we are unqualified to become real gods. If we attempted to make a breakthrough, it would immediately draw backlash from the Hall of Gods. The heavens would also feel threatened by the act and invoke heavenly retribution upon the cultivator. A lightning tribulation would be the least of one’s worries; there would be heavenly flames and heavenly obliteration as well. There are many talented individuals on the Forsaken Continent who have attempted a breakthrough, only to lose their lives tragically in the end,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said with a bitter smile.

“Thus, the strongest realm on the Forsaken Continent is Semi-Divinity. Semi-Divinity is ultimately just a pseudo god, an existence that comes nowhere close in comparison to a real god. Besides, one needs to tap into the powers of the Hall of

Gods in order to reach Semi-Divinity. This is not a feat that one can achieve with sheer talent!”

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“Tap into the powers of the Hall of Gods?” Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

“To become a god, one must acquire the acknowledgement of the gods,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao explained. “This is also why those of the Six Sects struggle so hard to enter the Hall of Gods to snatch the (God)’ character. Even just half a (God)’ character represents the qualification and possibility to reach the Semi-Divinity realm.”

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

It was no wonder those of the Six Sects were so intent on snatching the (God)’ character. He had thought that it was just because they were vain and wanted to use the character in their names, but who would have thought that it was the foundation to ascend to greater heights?

At the same time, he realized why he had managed to become the hall master and elder of the Myriad Beasts Hall and Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion respectively so easily.

Most likely, they were entrusting their hopes to him. If he successfully snatched a 申 (God)’ character from the Hall of Gods, those who were stuck at Heavenly High Immortal would finally be able to make a breakthrough to greater heights. Their lifespan and fighting prowess would be greatly increased.

“I heard that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has only acquired half a character, which is why they can only use it on the Sword God Hall instead of in their sect’s name,” Zhang Xuan said contemplatively. “Does this mean that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion possesses the means for one to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, too?”

They do, but the difficulty is much greater. Throughout the entire Forsaken Continent, the only power that has managed to acquire an entire (God)' character is the Ethereal Hall. In other words, it's likely that they have the greatest number of Semi-Divinity realm experts. This is also why none of the Six Sects dare to oppose it," Pavilion Master Kui Xiao explained.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Each of the Six Sects had their own defined territories, and the other sects would be unable to interfere in their affairs. On the other hand, the Ethereal Hall was a power that wielded influence across the entire Azure. It turned out that this single 神 (God) character was the key.

"If it's impossible to achieve a breakthrough without the 神 (God) character... Pardon me for asking this, but it seems like your cultivation has long reached the Semi-Divinity realm—how is that?" Zhang Xuan asked in bewilderment.

All three heads of the Six Sects that he had met thus far were Semi-Divinity realm experts. If it was impossible to make a breakthrough without that character, how did they manage to reach their current realm?

"This is why we looked for you," Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said with a smile.

"Oh?"

You might have heard about how the Azure Bridge leading to the Hall of Gods descends every hundred years. Those on the Forsaken Continent are able to reach the Hall of Gods via this bridge and possibly snatch the 神 (God) character. For each battle one won, one can absorb a sliver of Aura of Divinity, which is the key to achieving a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. I was one of the challengers a hundred years ago!" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

"One can absorb a sliver of Aura of Divinity by winning a battle? Then... what if one loses a battle?"

Those who lose their battles usually lose their lives as well."

“Lose their lives?” Zhang Xuan was astonished. “So, this means that each of the current heads of the Six Sects have won a match?”

Han Jianqiu, Qin Yuan, and Kui Xiao were all Semi-Divinity realm experts. Even though he had not met the leaders of the three remaining sects, it was likely that they were not too weak. Did they manage to win their battles as well?

Honestly, this was a little hard for him to believe. He had fought with the experts of the Hall of Gods before, and he knew just how frightening they were.

It was no exaggeration to say that they were nigh invincible in their power class. Even Han Jianqiu and Kui Xiao would not stand much of a chance against them!

It might still be possible for the two of them to win out of sheer luck, but it felt like too much of a coincidence for all six heads of the Six Sects to win their battles!

“The heads of the Six Sects did win a match each against the warriors of the Hall of Gods, but they aren’t from the same batch of challengers. Take Du Qingyuan from Starchaser Palace for example, she reached the Semi-Divinity realm a thousand years ago. There have been quite a few challengers from Starchaser Palace in the years since, but none of them have managed to survive the battle.”

“A thousand years ago?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment. “Are Semi-Divinity realm experts able to live that long?”

Most High Immortals could only live up to three hundred years, but Du Qingyuan had actually reached the Semi-Divinity realm a thousand years ago. Did this not mean that she had lived for a whole thousand years?

That would be equivalent to ten thousand years on the Master Teacher Continent!

This was really frightening.

Usually, Semi-Divinity realm experts can only live for five hundred years at most, but those from Starchaser Palace are a little unique in terms of their constitution. They enjoy a far

greater lifespan than the rest of us. Despite that, it's clear that Du Qingyuan is swiftly approaching her end. It's likely that she only has a few more years ahead of her. Like her, Hall Master Qin Yuan is also reaching the end of his lifespan," Pavilion Master Kui said with a shake of his head.

Thus, they hope that a new Semi-Divinity will appear in their sects this time around. Otherwise, the fragile balance of power maintained among the Six Sects will shake..."

Zhang Xuan nodded slowly in agreement.

He could finally see why Qin Yuan had unhesitatingly passed down the position of hall master to him.

With his lifespan coming to an end, Qin Yuan could only entrust his hopes to him and pray that he would be able to clear the Azure Bridge and successfully become a Semi-Divinity expert, thus becoming a pillar to prop up the Myriad Beasts Hall for the next five hundred years.

Although the situation among the Six Sects was relatively peaceful, they knew that this would swiftly change as soon as one of them displayed any sign of weakness.

Even if the other sects did not make a move on them, they would lose their resources and talents to the other powers. As time went by, they would eventually become a second-tier power, and their prestige would become a thing of the past.

Zhang Xuan suddenly recalled something. "Pavilion Master Kui, you mentioned earlier that there will be a duel with others from the Six Sects, and there will be no danger. May I know what that means?"

Thinking back, it was weird that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao had asked him to participate in a duel against the other powers instead of challenging the Azure Bridge. After all, the reason Pavilion Master Kui wanted him to join the Sevenstar Pavilion was likely because he wanted him to become the Sevenstar Pavilion's representative on the Azure Bridge.

"Weren't you wondering earlier why there were Semi-Divinity realm experts in all of the Six Sects?" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said. "There are five warriors guarding the Azure Bridge.

If you can achieve victory in the duel among the Six Sects, you will be able to become the leader of the expedition. If so, you will be entitled to leave the other five members to deal with the five warriors while you enter the Hall of Gods right away. In other words, you will have won a battle even without having to fight. Through that, you will have effectively gained the qualification to make a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm!”

The expedition leader will be able to enter the Hall of Gods without fighting at all? Wait a moment, what happens to the other five members who have to fight against the warriors of the Hall of Gods?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Chances are that they would lose their lives,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said grimly. “In view of this, if all the disciples are equally powerful, the duel will be skipped. The position of the expedition leader will be selected through a specific sequence. It’s the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s turn to become the expedition leader this time, and it will be the Myriad Beasts Hall’s turn the next time around, and after that will be our Sevenstar Pavilion’s turn. This arrangement maintains the balance of power among the Six Sects. On top of that, it also unites us together against the Hall of Gods.

“Of course, there are cases where there’s a great disparity in power. If so, the sequence will be disrupted. This is to allow the genius to conserve his strength in the earlier stages and save his energy for snatching the (God)’ character from the Hall of Gods.

“There are also extreme cases like in Hall Master Kong’s generation. Due to his overwhelming strength, even if he didn’t take on the position of the expedition leader, he would still have been able to clear the Azure Bridge and enter the Hall of Gods with ease. Such circumstances often give rise to more Semi-Divinity realm experts. Even if all six don’t succeed, there will still be at least two or three of them.”

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Even if they alternated the expedition leader each and every time, due to the lifespan of a Semi-Divinity realm expert being

only five hundred years, there would be a period of time where a sect would be without a Semi-Divinity realm expert.

That would mean a period of vulnerability for the sect, and things could easily go wrong during that time. Thus, there was still a need for them to compete over the position of the expedition leader despite the current arrangements.

This was why those from the sects bestowed him with the position of an elder and willingly provided him with all kinds of resources. Clearly, they wanted him to vie for the position of expedition leader in their stead.

As long as there was someone to guard their sect, everything else was of secondary importance.

After finishing his piece, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao looked at Zhang Xuan expectantly. “Elder Liu, you must give it your all. We’ll also be providing you with whatever support you require to reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm as soon as possible.”

Even when he challenged the young man with his cultivation suppressed to the True Immortal realm, the latter was able to defeat him without the slightest hint of exhaustion. Most likely, he should be able to crush the candidates from the other sects with ease!

It was a done deal for him to reach the Semi-Divinity realm. He might even be the ray of hope for them to snatch a •卒申 (God)’ character for their sect. If so, the continued prosperity of their Sevenstar Pavilion would be ensured!

“Rest assured.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

If not for the other party sacrificing themselves for him, he would not have been able to achieve a breakthrough and become a High Immortal.

This favor was more than enough for him to put his all toward helping them.

Having understood the situation, Zhang Xuan turned his attention back to reinforcing his cultivation.

Meanwhile, the aerial immortal beast sped ahead, and in less than half a day, a massive ocean came into sight.

“We have finally arrived at the Sea of Exiled Stars.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao stood up.

Zhang Xuan also walked over to the window to take a look.

He could see deep blue water beneath him. Looking into the distance, it felt like the ocean was fusing together with the sky, and they were currently traversing in a mystical space that existed between the sky and the ocean.

Traveling alongside them were all kinds of fish and birds, painting an incredibly beautiful sight.

“So, this is the Sea of Exiled Stars?” Zhang Xuan was amazed.

To think that the experts of the Forsaken Continent were unwilling to step foot in such a beautiful world.

“Indeed. At nighttime, the ocean beneath will look as if stars have fallen into it, inducing the urge to chase after them. Sometimes, if you travel fast enough, you might even be able to catch up with them. This is probably the reason behind the name of Starchaser Palace,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

“But nature tends to manifest danger amid beauty. The only reason we haven’t been attacked yet is because we are currently on a carriage carrying the insignia of the Sevenstar Pavilion, and it’s being pulled by many High Immortal realm beasts. Ordinary cultivators would never be able to make it this far. Most of them would have already encountered innumerable dangers, so how could they be in the mood to enjoy the beauty?”

“I see,” Zhang Xuan replied deeply.

It would be foolish to underestimate what lay beneath the surface of calm waters. It was likely that there were countless powerful beasts hiding within the Sea of Exiled Stars.

Those who dared step into their territory recklessly would find themselves in great danger.

Watching as the immortal beasts around him slowly venturing into the depths of the Sea of Exiled Stars, Zhang Xuan could

not help but ask, “Where is Starchaser Palace?”

“At the center of the ocean, there’s a massive island known as Starchaser Island. Starchaser Palace and the indigenous population of the Forsaken Continent all reside there,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao explained.

The immortal beasts continued ahead. After advancing roughly two thousand li, Zhang Xuan could see a lot of beasts prowling beneath them in the ocean, seemingly contemplating launching an assault.

If not for Pavilion Master Kui Xiao releasing his aura as a Semi-Divinity realm expert to deter them, it was likely that some immortal beasts would have already made a move on them.

It was no wonder no one dared to approach this area. Putting aside the threat from the indigenous population, just these immortal beasts were enough to make any cultivator stop in their footsteps.

Around half a day later, a massive island finally came into view.

It was several thousand li in width, and there was a humongous, bustling city located at its center.

From afar, one could feel a unique aura shrouding the city, forming some sort of force field that deterred others from approaching.

This aura feels a little familiar...” Zhang Xuan was a little taken aback.

He was certain that he had felt this unique force field somewhere before. Thus, he activated his Eye of Insight to take a closer look.

Boom!

His eyes narrowed his astonishment as his body tensed in agitation.

“Isn’t this the aura from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?”

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A familiar energy was being emanated by that massive island. It was the killing intent unique to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe!

The reason he did not notice it immediately was because the killing intent lost its violent nature when mixed with the mercury-like spiritual energy of the Azure, making it feel warm.

In any case, the presence of the killing intent meant that there were Otherworldly Demons on the island. Could the ‘indigenous population’ that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao had spoken about refer to them?

That would explain the origin of the Otherworldly Demons!

They must have somehow slipped into the Master Teacher Continent by breaching the dimension barrier, thus bringing a huge catastrophe upon the lifeforms there.

With such thought in mind, Zhang Xuan quickly took a closer look at the figures walking around the massive city, but what he saw simply left him even more bewildered.

They were all roughly the size of ordinary humans, and there was nothing odd about them. They did not have the bloodthirsty and savage presence of Otherworldly Demons.

Could his senses have been off?

Back when I was in the Kunxu Domain, the Otherworldly Demons that were exposed to the mercury-like spiritual energy lost their bloodthirsty and violent nature. This is probably the cause of the anomaly, Zhang Xuan thought.

Ancient Sage Yan Qing and the others had done experiments on the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to test out their tolerance

to the mercury-like spiritual energy, and they had proved that those who managed to withstand the ordeal would gain properties similar to those of ordinary humans.

“Starchaser Palace is located at the very center of the island. If we fly in directly, we might end up sparking a conflict, so we’ll get off just ahead,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao told Zhang Xuan.

The aerial immortal beast pulled the carriage down, and soon, they landed on a platform.

As soon as they landed, a group of metal-armored guards marched over.

Elder Hong Wu walked over and passed his token over. The guards took a look at the token before opening a path ahead.

With a sharp glint in his eyes, Zhang Xuan assessed the two guards in front of him carefully.

Just as he had guessed, they were indeed Otherworldly Demons who had absorbed the mercury-like spiritual energy.

Furthermore, they dressed the same as the ‘deities’ from the heavens who had descended to the Master Teacher Continent.

Could they be on the receiving end of the rituals conducted by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe on the Master Teacher Continent?

If that was the case, could the ‘female deity’ who had taken Sovereign Chen Yong away and claimed that she knew of Luo Ruoxin’s whereabouts possibly be an expert from Starchaser Palace?

It seemed like he would have to look into this matter then.

“Our Sevenstar Pavilion has a branch here. Elder Liu, I’ll take you there before helping you gather the items you require to achieve a breakthrough to the Heavenly High Immortal realm,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

The group quickly made their way down the streets.

The city was extremely large, boasting a scale greater even than that of Biyuan City. If Zhang Xuan had not been too confident in his deduction earlier, he was certain of it now that he was making his way through the streets.

Those living here on Starchaser Island were all Otherworldly Demons.

Their bloodthirst and savagery had been neutralized by the mercury-like spiritual energy, but they remained a deeply belligerent race. As such, they were extremely hostile toward outsiders.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao noticed that Zhang Xuan was looking around, so he sent a telepathic message over. “Even though we have a branch here, we are still deemed as outsiders. We do conduct trade with them, but we don’t have any close ties in the city. We also don’t intend to put too much focus on building relations here, or else it might just backfire on us.”

Zhang Xuan could relate to those words. It was not that the Otherworldly Demons were heartless creatures that only knew of slaughter, but it was a fact that they did have warlike tendencies.

If things did not go according to their wishes, their primary instinct was to resort to violence, especially if the other party was not one of their own. As such, it was not easy to forge relations with them.

Given so, it would be best to minimize interactions to the bare minimum, or else it would only spell trouble.

This was the same for Zhang Xuan. He was an invincible existence back on the Master Teacher Continent, but over here, there were probably plenty who were able to defeat him. Thus, it was best for him to exercise prudence.

After walking for roughly two hours, a Sevenstar Pavilion branch came into sight. Just like the headquarters located in Biyuan City, there were many treasures on display, but their tiers clearly paled in comparison.

As soon as they stepped in, the manager immediately received them warmly and prepared the best accommodation for them.

“Elder Liu, you should rest here for the time being. I’ll go and prepare the resources you need,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

“If I may ask, what do you intend to prepare?” Zhang Xuan asked curiously. “Even though Lesser High Immortal and Heavenly High Immortal are cultivation stages in the same realm, it shouldn’t be too easy to achieve a breakthrough from one to the other within a short period of time. However, it sounds like you have a way that will allow me to achieve a breakthrough quickly.”

Achieving a breakthrough to the High Immortal realm was indeed the greatest hurdle, but it was not as if the path ahead would be easy. Achieving a breakthrough from the Lesser High Immortal realm to the Heavenly High Immortal realm was no simple task.

If one described the True Immortal realm as a pond, the High Immortal realm would be an ocean. It was not too difficult to fill up a pond, but filling up an ocean was truly troublesome. One would have to pay a heavy price if one wanted to hasten the process.

Furthermore, what he was lacking at the moment was not just cultivation resources but cultivation technique manuals as well!

No matter how large an ocean was, as long as one had a river constantly flowing into it, it was only a matter of time before it filled up.

However, he had not even constructed a river to his ocean yet. If he relied on rainwater falling into it, how long would it be before it was filled to the brim?

Under such circumstances, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao claimed that he would be able to help him achieve a breakthrough. Thus, Zhang Xuan could not help but be curious about what was it that made the other party so confident.

“It’s said that a Semi-Divinity realm beast once appeared in the Sea of Exiled Stars. As long as I am able to capture it and procure its blood and beast core, it shouldn’t be too hard for you to reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao revealed his thoughts.

“A Semi-Divinity realm beast?” Zhang Xuan frowned. “Didn’t you mention that one needs to challenge the Azure Bridge in order to reach the Semi-Divinity realm?”

Based on what had been said thus far, it sounded like the slots to challenge the Azure Bridge were dominated by the Six Sects. It did not seem likely that those from the Beast Tribe would have an opportunity to slip in.

Upon hearing the question, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao quickly looked around him warily before sending a telepathic message over. “That’s indeed the case, but there has been an exception to that recently. Two months ago, in a certain part of the Sea of Exiled Stars, the sky has collapsed, and something fell to the ground. It touched the rocks nearby, turning them fiery crimson in color. No flames and weapons were able to harm the rocks at all. If Heavenly High Immortal realm beasts come into close contact 偷h it, they have a chance of achieving a breakthrough to the Semi^ Divinity realm.”

“Rocks? Could they be Godblood Rocks?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment as his body tensed up.

The other reason he had come to the Sea of Exiled Stars was to investigate the origin of the Godblood Rock. He had not thought that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao would have known of its existence.

If the fact that those rocks had turned into Godblood Rocks was not conclusive of anything yet, the fact that even immortal beasts were achieving breakthroughs should at least mean something.

“You know of Godblood Rocks?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao turned his gaze over.

“I’ve heard of them before.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

“I read about them in the ancient records. Those rocks are likely Godblood Rocks. If we can capture those Semi-Divinity realm beasts and procure their blood and beast cores, even if it isn’t sufficient to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, it should at least be enough for you to make a breakthrough to the Heavenly High Immortal realm,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

As the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, he possessed vast knowledge about artifacts and treasures.

Even without a suitable cultivation technique, the young man should still be able to achieve a breakthrough to the Heavenly High Immortal realm with just the blood and beast cores.

It was just that...

Hunting down Semi-Divinity realm beasts was easier said than done. Putting aside their strength, if they attempted to run away, he was not absolutely confident that he would be able to catch up to them.

Thus, it was only a possibility. He could not guarantee that it could be done.

“May I know where those rocks are located?” Zhang Xuan asked.

He found it hard to curb his agitation, especially since this matter concerned Luo Ruoxin.

“I’m not too sure about the exact location, but I spotted a Semi-Divinity realm beast not too far away from here. If we want to know the location of the Godblood Rocks, we’ll just have to capture that beast and question it. I intend to head over to test out its strength right now. It would be best if it’s weak enough for me to subdue,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

Even among Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, there were bound to be differences in their strength.

He had reached the Semi-Divinity realm many years prior. Even though he was not a match for Han Jianqiu, those beasts that had reached the Semi-Divinity realm two months ago should be well within his means to deal with.

As long as those beasts did not possess an overpowered bloodline, he was confident that he would be able to capture them.

“I’d like to follow you to take a look,” Zhang Xuan said.

You wish to come along?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao frowned.

“Rest assured. Even though my cultivation is only at the Lesser High Immortal realm at the moment, I do have my own self-preservation means. Even if the other party is stronger than me, I’m confident that I’ll be able to get away with ease,” Zhang Xuan assured Pavilion Master Kui.

“Is that so?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao hesitated for a moment before nodding grimly. “Alright then!”

He thought that it would be a good opportunity for this young man to witness the strength of Semi-Divinity realm experts as well so that he would be prepared should he face one of them in the future. At the very most, he would just have the latter watch from afar to avoid getting implicated in the fight.

“Let’s head over then,” Pavilion Master Kui said.

He lowered his cultivation to the Heavenly High Immortal realm before soaring into the sky.

Zhang Xuan quickly followed him.

His cultivation had already reached the High Immortal realm, so even if he did not utilize the Gods’ Sword Intent, he would still be able to maintain his flight.

They traveled for roughly four hours, till all that was around them was water.

The sky had already darkened, and just as Pavilion Master Kui Xiao had said earlier, the starry sky reflected on the clear ocean felt as if the stars had really fallen into the water. These stars drifted across the surface of the water, and it felt as if one could pluck them with the stretch of a hand.

The two of them waited patiently for a moment before a small boat drifted over.

“Pavilion Master Kui...”

Standing atop the boat was an elder dressed completely in green.

Zhang Xuan took a look at the person before him, and he realized that he was unable to see entirely through the person before him. This elder had reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm as well, and his strength was likely higher than that of the First Elder.

“How is it?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked.

The elder clasped his fist and said, “Pavilion Master Kui, I placed the item that you gave me into the depths of the ocean a month ago, and it was indeed effective. That Semi-Divinity realm beast arrived here a few days ago, but it was extremely wary. It hasn’t made a move yet.”

“Good. Any beast that is able to survive in the ocean and reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm is bound to have a sharp sense of danger. Otherwise, it would have died long ago,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said with a smile, not surprised by what he had just heard.

The world of the beasts was even cruder than that of humans. A beast would have to survive till the Heavenly High Immortal realm before having a chance to reach the Semi-Divinity realm.

Those who could live up to that stage were the cream of the crop, possessing an exceptional nose for danger. Otherwise, they would have long fallen prey to other beasts.

“Pavilion Master Kui, I have already set up the formation. As long as we continue biding our time, it will only be a matter of time before the Semi-Divinity realm beast strikes. However, I’m not too sure how long it will take,” the elder replied.

“It’s fine. Let’s head over to take a look!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao replied as he landed on the boat.

Zhang Xuan quickly followed suit.

2034 Elder Feng Qian

“Elder Liu, this person here is Elder Feng Qian from our sect. Elder Feng, this young man here is Elder Liu. He’ll be representing our sect for the Azure Bridge.” Pavilion Master Kui quickly introduced the two to one another.

“Elder Liu Yang!” Elder Feng Qian greeted Zhang Xuan, but a slight frown could be seen on his forehead.

He had thought that the young man beside the pavilion master was just a disciple, but who would have thought that he was their candidate for the Azure Bridge?

That decision meant that this young man was the top cultivator among those younger than a hundred.

But this young man was only in his early twenties!

When had the Sevenstar Pavilion become such a weak organization?

“Since Elder Liu was chosen as the candidate for the Azure Bridge, I believe that you possess extraordinary abilities. It happens that I have some confusions about my cultivation that I would like to consult you on,” Elder Feng said with clasped fists.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao could tell what Elder Feng was trying to do, but he did not interject.

As long as Zhang Xuan survived the Azure Bridge, he was bound to become the next head of the Sevenstar Pavilion. On the other hand, Elder Feng was the closest aide of the pavilion master, tasked with the responsibility of carrying out missions in the shadows. For a smooth succession to occur, Zhang Xuan would need to acquire Elder Feng’s approval.

Thus, this was a good opportunity for Elder Liu to win Elder Feng over to his side and build authority within the sect.

If he could not even win the support of Elder Feng, it would be difficult for him to acquire the support of the entire sect. If so,

his seat as the pavilion master would not be stable.

“Feel free to speak,” Zhang Xuan said with a nod.

“I have cultivated the Sevenstar Palm to 3-dan thus far, but I found that I was unable to advance its mastery any further. May I ask if you have any good suggestions, Elder Liu?” Elder Feng asked.

The Sevenstar Palm was one of the strongest battle techniques of the Sevenstar Pavilion, and many of the elders had cultivated it before.

Before Zhang Xuan could respond, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao interjected. “Isn’t the question you have asked far too general?”

It was understandable that Elder Feng would want to test Zhang Xuan’s right to become the next pavilion master, but at the very least, the question should be more detailed!

There must have been several hundred reasons for one to be unable to cultivate beyond 3-dan Sevenstar Palm, and Elder Feng did not even bother to specify his own physical condition. How was anyone supposed to answer this question?

Not even Pavilion Master Kui Xiao himself would be capable of answering such a question.

“It’s fine, Pavilion Master Kui.” Zhang Xuan raised his hand with a smile. Following which, he turned to Elder Feng and said, “If I’m not mistaken, you suffered severe internal injuries that nearly led to your death eighty-one years ago, right?”

“That’s right.” Elder Feng nodded as he shot a glance at Pavilion Master Kui Xiao.

Eighty-one years ago, he had been chased by his sworn enemies and nearly lost his life. It was Pavilion Master Kui Xiao who had saved him, which had led to him pledging his loyalty to the man. Throughout the years, he had willingly served the Sevenstar Pavilion from the shadows, resolving all possible threats that the sect faced.

This matter was one of the confidential secrets of the sect, but who would have thought that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao would

trust the young man so much as to tell him this as well?

“I didn’t tell him that.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment as well upon hearing Zhang Xuan’s words.

This fellow did not even know who you are before meeting you earlier! I also have no idea how he knows about the matter eighty-one years ago!

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was just about to ask Zhang Xuan how he knew about that matter when the latter continued speaking. “There was no need for anyone to tell me that. It’s obvious with just a glance. Back then, through the use of many precious treasures and medicinal herbs, you managed to recover your cultivation.

“However, the fact is that the injuries you sustained then have left a heavy trauma on your body. When your zhenqi flows through your Zhenhai and Jiangyong Acupoints, you feel a numbing sensation jolting through your body, but these two points happen to be crucial for the cultivation of the Sevenstar Palm. Given the blockage of your acupoints and the numbing sensation that hinders your movements, it’s a given that you would be unable to cultivate the 4-dan Sevenstar Fist!”

“How did you...” Elder Feng widened his eyes in disbelief.

Those were his greatest secrets, and he had never mentioned it before Pavilion Master Kui Xiao before. Yet, this young man was able to point them out accurately. Was the young man really able to see through him?

“Not only so, your left arm has been getting more and more stiff throughout the years, such that it isn’t obeying your control anymore, right?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Elder Feng’s expression darkened.

The young man was absolutely correct.

He had no idea why, but his left hand had started to suffer sudden bouts of twitching in the last two years before turning incredibly stiff. He had tried all kinds of means to resolve this issue, but it was not working at all. He had even consulted

many famous physicians, but none of them were able to see through his affliction. How did this young man know about it?

“The cultivation technique that you started cultivating with is the Emerald Ripple Art. It was created by a predecessor when he was suddenly inspired by the currents flowing through the Emerald Ripple Sea. However, after suffering severe injuries eighty-one years ago, you felt that this cultivation technique wasn’t strong enough for you, and it just so happened that your zhenqi had been completely depleted. Thus, you forcefully changed your cultivation technique to the Grand Solar Art.

“The might of your blows did grow stronger, but your meridians, which have been nourished by the water attribute of the Emerald Ripple Art, were suddenly exposed to the fire attribute of the Grand Solar Art. This is equivalent to casting a bright sun over lush fields without providing it with sufficient water. What do you think would happen?” Zhang Xuan explained with a slight smile.

Realizing where he had gone wrong, Elder Feng narrowed his eyes in astonishment. “The fields would dry up and crack, thus becoming infertile...”

“The infertility of the lands is the least of your worries. As time goes by, it’ll turn into a land of death where no life can thrive!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Land of death where no life can thrive? Surely it isn’t as serious as that.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao frowned.

He did know about Elder Feng changing his cultivation technique. In fact, the Grand Solar Art had come from him.

Back then, he had tried to convince the latter out of it as he was well aware of the risks of abruptly changing one’s cultivation technique, but the latter’s mind had been made up. The latter had been willing to go to any lengths as long as he could have his vengeance.

Eventually, he had given in and bestowed the latter with the Grand Solar Art. He had paid close attention to Elder Feng’s physical condition while the latter cultivated, and things did go

wrong on several occasions. However, using his prowess as a Semi-Divinity and many valuable medicinal herbs, he had made sure to nourish the latter's body properly to resolve the traumas.

He had thought that the problem had been resolved, but who could have known that they had not resolved the root of the problem at all?

“There's a limit to what a human body is able to tolerate.” Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back as he spoke.

The severe injuries he sustained back then destroyed his vitals, and under such circumstances, he should have been carefully nourishing his body to slowly recover his strength. Yet, he chose to forcefully change his cultivation technique. It's really a blessing that he didn't die on the spot! Even I can hardly imagine the amount of treasures you wasted in order to nourish him!

“I'll be perfectly honest with you here. The stiffening of your arms is just the initial symptoms. Within two years, the stiffness will spread to your legs, and your spine will begin to distort, making it difficult for you to walk. If you fail to resolve it within five years, your progressively weakening meridians will eventually collapse under your own strength, causing your cultivation to dissipate.”

Elder Feng frowned. “Is what you said... true?”

It was true that the young man had managed to see through the stiffness in his left arm, but that did not mean that he would unconditionally believe everything that the young man said.

After all, this was too shocking!

Other than the occasional problems his left arm caused him, he did not feel like his condition was too severe. As such, it was hard for him to believe that his cultivation would dissipate within five years.

“If you don't trust me, we can conduct a quick test,” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked his finger lightly.

This was a simple move without any sword qi or zhenqi imbued into it. The finger felt as a light tap on Elder Feng's

shoulder, but the latter's entire body immediately jolted. As if someone had petrified him on the spot, his entire body stiffened. Perspiration rained down his cheeks as he instinctively took a step back to retreat.

However, before he could even back away, Zhang Xuan's finger had struck forward once more to tap the center of his chest.

This single tap produced a slight jolt in Elder Feng's body, causing him to experience a tearing pain in his meridians.

Pu!

A mouthful of blood spurted from his lips. The sheer pain caused his wrinkles to sag a little, making it seem as if he had aged a decade in an instant.

Zhang Xuan retracted his finger and asked, "How are you feeling?"

"I... I could feel that my meridians are on the verge of shattering..." Elder Feng gasped frantically for air as he replied with eyes widened in fright. He looked at the young man before him for a moment before quickly clasping his fist. "Elder Liu, I beseech you to point a way out for me. If you save me, I'll pledge my loyalty to you and serve you as the next pavilion master with my utmost dedication!"

The fact that the young man was able to peer through his problems and even determine the reasons behind his afflictions showed that the young man was indeed a person of great capabilities. He would have no qualms serving a man like that.

"The solution is very simple. You just have to cultivate your Emerald Ripple Art once more," Zhang Xuan said with a light chuckle.

"Cultivate the Emerald Ripple Art once more? How... how is that possible?"

The one who had spoken this time around was not Elder Feng but Pavilion Master Kui Xiao. He found Zhang Xuan's words incomprehensible.

Putting aside the fragile state of Elder Feng's meridians, if the latter cultivated the Emerald Ripple Art right now, there was a good chance that it might cause a conflict with the Grand Solar Art. The slightest carelessness could cause his cultivation to go berserk or even result in his death!

"Of course, I don't mean the Emerald Ripple Art that you have practiced before. What you'll be practicing is the one that I have modified," Zhang Xuan said.

He flicked out a jade token and quickly placed his finger on it lightly. A sliver of his consciousness slipped into the jade token and imprinted the modified Emerald Ripple Art on it. Following which, he passed the jade token to Elder Feng.

Accepting the jade token, Elder Feng took a look at the contents of the jade token, and unwittingly, his zhenqi actually began to flow in accordance to the circulation pathway written on it. A moment later, he spurted out three mouthfuls of black blood.

In an instant, his body feel much lighter and more relaxed than before. The bottlenecks that had limited him before had loosened, and his arm was not as stiff.

"So fast..." Elder Feng clenched his fists tightly as he looked at the young man in front of him with a mixture of respect and horror in his eyes.

He knew his own physical condition well. Just by cultivating the cultivation technique that the other party had given him for a moment, his condition had improved significantly. He knew that as long as he cultivated strictly in accordance to it, he would be able to make a full recovery very soon!

A problem that had troubled him for eighty-one years and had consumed innumerable treasures from the sect had actually been resolved with just a quick glance from the young man.

Such a thing was really unthinkable!

Elder Feng was not the only one who was surprised by the situation. Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was equally dumbstruck as well.

He had been worried that Liu Yang would be too young to win the support of the sect, but given his capability, it seemed like his worries were needless.

The young man's talents didn't just stop at his ability to learn battle techniques swiftly. The young man's grasp of the Way of the Medicine had also reached an unthinkable level, such that he could think of no one who could compete with him.

"Alright. As long as you follow that cultivation technique properly, you should be able to recover from your affliction within half a year. In fact, you might even be able to raise your cultivation to new heights," Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

This matter was a walk in the park for him, so he did not mind offering the other party his assistance.

Elder Feng had been using a battle technique all this time in order to induce the movement of the boat, so he had been able to compile a book regarding him in the Library of Heaven's Path to see through all the afflictions affecting him. With all the secret manuals that he had browsed through recently, it was not too hard for him to come up with an appropriate solution.

"Thank you, Elder Liu!" Elder Feng bowed deeply.

Zhang Xuan knew that he had already won Elder Feng over, so there was no need to harp on about the matter. Thus, he pointed to the area ahead and asked, "The formation and seal right ahead were left by you, right?"

While the three of them were chatting, the boat had already traveled yet another two hundred li forward. They had arrived in a region where the ocean surface looked no different from that of a mirror.

"This area is known as the Sea of Little Mirror. The formation and seal I have left behind are indeed hidden here," Elder Feng said with a nod of his head.

There were unique ores in the Sea of Little Mirror that lured a certain lifeform to gather in huge clusters within the region, thus creating a reflective surface on the surface of the ocean.

The formation and seal that he had set up were so discreet that not even Semi-Divinity realm experts would be able to notice them easily. How did the young man notice them?

Just as Elder Feng was pondering over this question, the young man suddenly continued speaking. “The Double Ripples Water Formation is indeed able to camouflage itself in water, making it hard for anyone to notice it. Its might is also one to behold. However, it’s still a little too weak to trap a Semi-Divinity realm beast. More importantly... the opponent is a lifeform whose native habitat is the water. It will be extremely sensitive to the flow of water currents. As soon as the opponent notices the presence of the formation, it will be able to make use of the ripples to propel it away.”

You are able to see through my formation?” Elder Feng was stunned.

2035 The Wonders of the Sea of Little Mirror

The Double Ripples Water Formation used specially forged water droplets as formation flags. It would flow along with the water current, such that even the Spiritual Perception of a Semi-Divinity realm expert would not be able to perceive its presence.

On the other hand, this young man was able to see through it as soon as he arrived in the area, and he could even point out the flaws in the formation. His eye of discernment was truly terrifying!

“Elder Liu, the Semi-Divinity realm beast that we are aiming for is a Blackback Tortoise. It’s known for its humble speed. The Double Ripples Water Formation is ideal to trap the opponent,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao interjected.

Since they were aiming to take down a Semi-Divinity realm beast, it was only normal that they would do their homework in advance. They had considered the possibility of the beast making use of the ripples to flee, but since their target was a Blackback Tortoise, they decided to go ahead with it anyway.

Due to the bulky body of the Blackback Tortoise, it was unable to utilize the flow of water to accelerate its speed. As long as they controlled the ripples well enough, they would be able to form a tight barrier to trap the Blackback Tortoise.

“The Blackback Tortoise is skilled in defense but not speed. Considering its massive physique, it’s indeed not a bad idea to use the Double Ripples Water Formation against it. However, we should not forget our environment here. We are currently in the Sea of Little Mirror, and there’s a brilliant moon hanging above us,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Hmm?”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng were slightly flabbergasted by Zhang Xuan's words. They had no idea what the latter was getting at.

Aren't we talking about the formation and the Blackback Tortoise? What does this have to do with the Sea of Little Mirror and the brilliant moon above?

"Have you ever considered the possibility that the Blackback Tortoise isn't just keeping its distance out of wariness? Don't you think that it's possible that it has already noticed the formation you have set up, and it's biding its time for the opportune moment to strike?" Zhang Xuan asked.

He had already harbored his doubts when Elder Feng said that the beast was extremely wary.

Semi-Divinity realm beasts were already the most powerful existence in the Sea of Exiled Stars! Was there a reason for it to be so wary when there were only so few things in the world that could hurt it?

If it was just a moment of hesitation, it might still have been wariness, but to stay away for so many days... it was clear that there was more than met the eye!

After checking the formation and location in person, he finally came to a realization.

"What do you mean by that?" Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked in intrigue.

He was unable to figure out how all of that came together.

"You should know why the Sea of Little Mirror is reminiscent of a mirror. Due to the unique ores in the region, a certain lifeform known as the Silverleaf Mayfly gathers within the water in huge clusters," Zhang Xuan said.

The other two nodded in agreement.

They had heard of the Silverleaf Mayfly before. It was a creature so small that it appeared no different from a speck of dust. Nevertheless, through sheer numbers, it was able to create a silver reflective surface on the Sea of Little Mirror.

“These Silverleaf Mayflies prey not on coral nor animal but the energy within a certain kind of ore. This entire area is filled with these ores, which keeps the Silverleaf Mayflies clustered in this area, thus producing this mystical sight,” Zhang Xuan said.

Elder Feng nodded in agreement. He had been there for quite some time, and he had investigated the area thoroughly, so he knew that what Zhang Xuan was saying was true.

“These Silverleaf Mayflies are not usually much of a threat, but if the ores they feed on start tremoring, can you imagine what will happen?”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao pondered for a moment before replying, “If they feel like their livelihood has been threatened, they will surely fall into a pandemonium. Most of them will probably rush over in an attempt to salvage the situation.”

There were no beasts that would not be worried if their source of food was being threatened.

“Indeed. They would be stirred into motion in the hope of salvaging the situation. With so many Silverleaf Mayflies moving at once, are you certain that your Double Ripples Water Formation would still be useful?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Elder Feng fell into deep thought as he quickly reanalyzed the situation.

The Silverleaf Mayflies were the size of a speck of dust, so if it was just a couple of them moving around, it would not cause too much trouble. However, if all of them, covering the entire Sea of Little Mirror, were to begin moving at the same time, even the strongest of formations would collapse under a stampede of such scale.

Putting aside capturing the Blackback Tortoise, they might even be trapped there as well!

“But those ores have been buried deep in the seabed for many years, and they have never moved before. It doesn’t seem likely that anything peculiar will happen all of a sudden. Furthermore, what does this have to do with the full moon?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked.

If something was going to happen to the ores, it would have happened long ago. How unlucky would they have to be for a mishap to occur while they were here?

“It’s true that nothing has happened so far, but it doesn’t mean that nothing will happen in the future,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Furthermore, if what I’m thinking of occurs, you will be the trigger of it all!”

“We will be the trigger?”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng found themselves getting more and more confused by what Zhang Xuan was getting at.

How in the world are we the trigger? We haven’t done anything here that would warrant something like that!

“The Blackback Tortoise fancies shiny objects. If I’m not mistaken, what you have planted in the depths of the ocean to bait it is some kind of invaluable diamond crystal, right?”

Zhang Xuan said.

“I’m guessing that the diamond crystal you used emanates a light that is even brighter than that of the Night Illumination Pearls underwater, such that it will be perfectly visible even ten thousand li away. Well, you probably need at least that much if you wish to draw the attention of the Blackback Tortoise. However, have you considered where the energy for the light emanated by the diamond crystal comes from? Even Night Illumination Pearls have to absorb the light from the sun in order to shine. Considering how bright the diamond crystal is, where does its energy come from then? Even if it has energy stored within it, there is no way it will be sufficient to last for so many days.

“You might think that it could be from the Silverleaf Mayflies, but I can promise you that if you dare absorb even a sliver of energy from them, they will cluster up and devour you whole on the spot!”

“This...” The two of them were stumped by Zhang Xuan’s question.

To be honest, they had thought that they absorbed the energy from the Silverleaf Mayflies, but it seemed like that was not the case. It was indeed a question worth considering. Given how all light was reflected off the surface of the sea, everything beneath the surface was bound to be pitch-black.

And if it was not sunlight that was fueling it, what else could be?

Seeing that he had managed to get them thinking, Zhang Xuan continued. "I'll give you the answer. "The diamond crystal is drawing energy from the ores. During the night of the full moon, the Silverleaf Mayflies are in their weakest state, and they will frenziedly devour energy from the ores in order to replenish their energy. However, right now, the diamond crystal is competing with them for energy as well. The amount of energy that can be absorbed from the ores at any particular moment is limited, so such a situation could easily result in a huge problem. In the best possible scenario, there will just be tremors underwater, causing the waters to become choppy. In the worst-case scenario, a massive whirlpool will occur in the Sea of Little Mirror, devouring everything in the area!"

Hearing those words, Elder Feng pondered for a moment before asking, "If that happens, my formation will indeed lose its prowess. However, won't the Blackback Tortoise be affected by the commotion and be unable to escape as well?"

It was true that a stampede from the Silverleaf Mayflies spelled trouble for his formation, but such a situation would not be advantageous to the Blackback Tortoise either. Given so, why would it wait till the night of a full moon in order to strike?

"Unable to escape?" Zhang Xuan burst into laughter. "You are underestimating the Semi-Divinity realm Blackback Tortoise! It's a being that boasts unparalleled defense! Even during the stampede of the Silverleaf Mayflies, by its sheer weight, it will still be able to push its way through and devour your diamond crystals within three breaths.

"It won't be able to assimilate those high-tiered diamond crystals swiftly though, which means that the Silverleaf

Mayflies will still be able to sense the power from the ores coming from the Blackback Tortoise. In other words, it will then become the ‘culprit’ that was vying against the Silverleaf Mayflies for energy. Given so, how do you think those Silverleaf Mayflies will react?”

“The Silverleaf Mayflies will attack the Blackback Tortoise, right?” Barely after saying those words, Elder Feng suddenly narrowed his eyes as he finally understood what was going on. “What you mean is that the Blackback Tortoise has already noticed my plans, and it’s intentionally waiting till the night of the full moon not just to destroy my formation and acquire the diamond crystal but to make use of this opportunity to devour the Silverleaf Mayflies as well... and perhaps, even me too?”

The Silverleaf Mayflies might be able to hinder the movements of the Blackback Tortoise, but there was no way that they would be able to pose a threat to it. In the long term, they would become nothing more than prey to it.

At the same time, they would be trapped amid the stampede of the Silverleaf Mayflies, unable to escape. Under such circumstances, there was a good chance that they might turn from predators to prey!

If so, that would really be terrifying!

All along, they had thought that they were in control of the situation, but who could have known that they had already unwittingly fallen into the other party’s trap?

Your strength isn’t enough to catch its eye. If it really wanted to go for you, it would have long made its move. Most likely, its target is Pavilion Master Kui!” Zhang Xuan said.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was stunned.

“If I wasn’t here, you would probably be underwater by now, camping in the vicinity of the Double Ripples Water Formation, waiting for the Blackback Tortoise to fall for the trap, right?” Zhang Xuan said with a smile. “If the Silverleaf Mayflies rushed over to you at that instant, you would surely be pushed to a corner. After all, you don’t possess the same defensive capabilities as the Blackback Tortoise. It wouldn’t

take long for them to successfully seal your acupoints, weakening you for a fair amount of time.”

Hearing those words, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s body stiffened.

He knew that what the young man said was true. If the young man was not there, he would have dived into the water with Elder Feng in preparation for the moment that the Blackback Tortoise fell into their trap.

If the Silverleaf Mayflies stampeded at that moment, with their dust-like physique and sheer numbers, it would be difficult for him to defend against them all at once. It would not take long for them to seal his acupoints, preventing him from driving his zhenqi in the short-term.

After all, he was not so fortunate as to possess the impermeable shell of the Blackback Tortoise!

Of course, that much would not be able to defeat a Semi-Divinity realm expert like him. It was only a matter of time before he freed himself from the restraints of the Silverleaf Mayflies. However, if the Semi-Divinity realm beast made use of his moment of weakness to assault him...

He shuddered thinking of the consequences!

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao swiftly formed a simulation in his head based on the situation that Zhang Xuan had predicted, and slowly, he could feel his body turning colder and colder.

Even by positive estimates, the chances of him being killed by the Blackback Tortoise were at least eighty percent!

Such situations could not possibly happen by coincidence, especially when Semi-Divinity realm experts were involved.

Most likely, it was just as Zhang Xuan had said. While they were laying a trap for the Blackback Tortoise, the latter was doing the same. It seemed like they had really been outwitted. There was no greater ingenuity than a scheme that caused one’s target to leap into it willingly.

If they had not noticed it, the ones who were hunted would have been them. Even if they managed to get away using all

sorts of trump cards, they would have been mortally wounded! Just thinking about the possibilities sent shivers down his spine.

After a long moment of silence, Elder Feng asked, “Elder Liu, what should we do?”

At this moment, he had unconsciously placed Elder Liu on a higher pedestal than even Pavilion Master Kui Xiao himself. Somehow, his first reaction had become to turn to Elder Liu for advice.

“Do you have any more of the water droplet formation flags that you used to set up the Double Ripples Water Formation?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“I do,” Elder Feng replied.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out several dozen water droplets.

Even though they looked the same as ordinary water droplets, they were indeed formation flags. Due to their unique nature, they were able to meld into the water. Nevertheless, as long as they were in position, one would be able to activate those formation flags to bring out the power of a formation anytime.

“Good. Since the Blackback Tortoise believes that it has us in its grasp, we’ll just have to alter the formation accordingly to turn the tables,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Go!”

With a wave of his hand, he scattered all the water droplets in Elder Feng’s hand into the water.

Hula!

The next moment, the dozens of water droplets vanished beneath the silvery surface of the Sea of Little Mirror.

“This...”

Seeing how the young man shot out all the water droplets at once without any hesitation, Elder Feng was stunned yet again.

This was the first time that he had seen anyone setting up a formation like that! Was this not being a little too haphazard?

“It’s fine now. Let’s head down to wait for the Blackback Tortoise,” Zhang Xuan said with a light chuckle.

“Just like that?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao still felt a little insecure.

“Yes. We’ll move according to the former plan and wait for the Blackback Tortoise to appear. Make sure not to make any other movements or else we might spark its suspicion,” Zhang Xuan said.

Looking at the confident look on Zhang Xuan’s face, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao hesitated for a moment before nodding slightly. “We’ll move according to Elder Liu’s plan.”

“Yes, Pavilion Master Kui!” Elder Feng nodded.

They quickly drove the boat toward the center of the Sea of Little Mirror.

“We have arrived,” Elder Feng said.

With a grasp of his hand, a small passageway appeared on the surface of the water. He stowed the boat away before diving in.

Zhang Xuan and Pavilion Master Kui Xiao followed closely behind him, venturing into the depths of the dark sea.

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The water on the surface was glistening and slightly choppy, reminiscent of a living being. In contrast, the seabed was utterly quiet, devoid of any underwater currents at all. It felt as quiet as a silent chamber.

There was a brilliant glow right beneath them coming from the diamond crystal they had planted beforehand, so they simply had to head in the direction of the light.

The way in which Elder Feng had set up everything was extremely meticulous. He had made it seem as if the diamond crystal was a natural gemstone that lived in the earth's vein, and the only reason it had exposed itself was due to a crack in the earth's vein.

If one had not known that it was all artificially set up, one might have been fooled into thinking that it was the work of nature, thus losing one's wariness around it.

“We'll hide here.”

They stopped at an area not too far away from the diamond crystal. With a wave of his hand, Elder Feng produced a mini whirlpool and dived into it. Zhang Xuan and Pavilion Master Kui Xiao followed closely behind him.

As soon as they entered, the whirlpool vanished, and it looked as if the three had never been there.

“This is... a Spatial Formation?”

It was no wonder Elder Feng was so confident that the Blackback Tortoise had not noticed them. It turned out that he had prepared a Spatial Formation in advance. As long as one could not find the crux of the formation to destroy the structure of the Spatial Formation, it would indeed be extremely difficult to notice them.

But while outsiders were unable to sense their presence, they were able to see what was happening outside clearly with their eyes.

Looking at the dazzling glow emanated by the crystal, Zhang Xuan could not help but exclaim, "It must have been hard for you to find that diamond crystal!"

This diamond could not be melted down to forge weapons, but there was no doubt that it was one of the most beautiful objects across the entire Azure. Just this single one would cost an astronomical price, likely surpassing even the value of a Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifact!

What made it even more difficult to acquire was that it was incredibly rare. Throughout the history of the Forsaken Continent, such crystals had only appeared thrice, and even the largest of them was only the size of a longan.

However, the one before him was even larger than a fist. With this, its value was truly inestimable!

The Sevenstar Pavilion had really gone all out to bait the Blackback Tortoise!

"In order to acquire this diamond crystal, we had to mobilize over ten thousand people and expend a lot of resources." Pavilion Master Kui nodded in response.

He had been the one to plan this operation from the start to the end.

It was true that the cost was frightening, but it would all be worth it if they could capture a Semi-Divinity realm beast.

Putting aside its blood essence and beast core, even its skin and bones could be used to forge precious treasures. If they auctioned the completed products in the Sevenstar Pavilion, they would surely be able to recoup their losses and even earn ten times the amount they had invested!

Two months ago, the only Semi-Divinity realm beasts that the entire Forsaken Continent had seen were all from the Hall of Gods. They had never been spotted anywhere else before, so no one had successfully hunted one.

As such, if they could become the first ones to do so, even if it was just out of the novelty factor, they would definitely be able to make a killing by selling its products.

Furthermore, the beast core and blood essence of a Semi-Divinity realm beast were very likely to be able to raise one's cultivation. In this world where strength reigned mighty, cultivators were willing to pay any price as long as they could advance their cultivation.

As such, the Sevenstar Pavilion had started making preparations as soon as they caught wind of the news that Semi-Divinity realm beasts had started appearing in the Ocean of Exiled Stars. Regardless of whether Zhang Xuan had appeared or not, they would still have gone on with the hunt.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Most probably, only the unbelievably rich Sevenstar Pavilion could afford to invest so many resources into an operation like this. The rest of the Six Sects would risk emptying out their treasuries if they tried it.

Of course, the Ethereal Hall likely had the resources to pull off something like that as well, but it was hard to say for sure given how elusive it was. It had branches in all second-tier cities and above, but the location of its headquarters and its actual military might remained a mystery.

Hong long long!

While they were chatting with one another, the full moon rose into the sky. A jolt abruptly shook the surface of the sea, as if an earthquake had happened.

The water began to billow, causing the mirror-like surface to distort continuously and create bizarre light patterns all around.

In this moment, it felt as if all the stars had dived into the sea to frolic around.

"It's beginning," Zhang Xuan muttered softly.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng nodded in agreement.

Just as Zhang Xuan had said, something was happening in the Sea of Little Mirror as a result of the rise of the full moon. The Silverback Mayflies were moving around in a panic, causing the choppy waters to turn turbulent. If they had continued using the Double Ripples Water Formation, it would have been rendered ineffective by now.

“It’s coming...” Elder Feng’s voice sounded.

Raising their heads, the crowd saw a massive sea tortoise slowly swimming over from afar.

This sea tortoise was humongous in terms of physique. Just its width was already more than a hundred meters long. It looked like a massive submarine diving through the water, pushing aside the Silverback Mayfly horde that stood in its way with its sheer weight.

“It has indeed reached the Semi-Divinity realm,” Zhang Xuan murmured.

The movements of this sea tortoise were heavy and slow, but in terms of strength, it was on par with Pavilion Master Kui Xiao. If they clashed head-on with one another, even the three of them combined were unlikely to be a match for it.

Zhang Xuan’s cultivation had already reached the High Immortal realm, and he was confident that he was invincible within this realm. However, the gap between a High Immortal and a Semi-Divinity was simply too great.

On any other occasion, he would have already fled as far as possible in the face of an expert of such caliber. He would not have dared to confront it directly!

“Prepare to activate the formation,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said grimly as he drove his energy to its limits. He was ready to make a move alongside the formation to deal this massive fellow a lethal blow.

It was impossible to tame a beast in such a cultivation realm. Instead of wasting his effort, he would rather strike it down directly.

“Something’s not right...” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

“What’s not right?”

The other two turned their heads.

The Blackback Tortoise was already extremely close to them. If they did not activate the formation right now, it was highly likely that the Blackback Tortoise would simply rush over and devour the diamond crystal. Once it fled the area of effect of the formation, all their preparations would be rendered useless!

“The Blackback Tortoise is after the diamond crystal, and the situation it was intending for has come to be. Shouldn’t it rush right over to snatch the diamond crystal? Why is it still loitering around the area, as if it’s waiting for something? Don’t you think that it’s bizarre?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Well...”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng thought about it once more, and indeed, something was a little weird.

The massive Blackback Tortoise was in a good position to devour the diamond crystal whole right away, but instead of doing so, it was circling around the area as if it had not noticed it at all.

Its plan was to snatch the diamond crystal and kill Elder Feng and Pavilion Master Kui Xiao by capitalizing on the stampede of the Silverback Mayflies, and the opportunity to do so was right in front of it. Yet, it was refusing to make a move.

“Hehe, no wonder it has been heading in this direction all this while. It turns out that it has noticed this thing. As the saying goes, ‘a man will die for his greed, and a bird will die for food’. Beasts are ultimately no more than beasts. To lose its life over a mere diamond... Tsk tsk. It would be rude for me not to make a move when such a massive prey is right before me...”

While the three were trying to figure out the reason behind this anomaly, a voice suddenly sounded from above. Following which, a brilliant ray of light shone down from the surface.

A figure had dived into the water, parting the silvery mirror on the surface to allow some light in momentarily.

“A Semi-Divinity realm expert?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

The figure that had entered the water was actually a Semi-Divinity realm expert as well, just like Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the Blackback Tortoise!

That would explain why the latter had kept circling around the area instead of devouring the diamond crystal right away. It seemed like it was baiting this fellow into making a move!

“It’s the head of the Blackmirror Citadel, Bai Xuansheng!” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was stunned for a moment before sending a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan to explain the situation.

Zhang Xuan assessed the newcomer as he muttered, “The head of the Blackmirror Citadel?”

Of the Six Sects, Blackmirror Citadel was known for its expertise in crafting weapons. The Tongshang Sword was said to be the work of one of the blacksmiths of the Blackmirror Citadel. Who would have thought that he would meet their head over here?

“Why is he here?” Elder Feng was taken aback by the current situation.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao shook his head and said, “Since we were able to acquire the intelligence that Semi-Divinity realm beasts have started appearing in this region, it isn’t too surprising for the others to be able to do so.”

There was no one who did not know how valuable Semi-Divinity realm beasts were. Just like how the Sevenstar Pavilion wanted to hunt one down, the same went for the other powers.

“Do we activate the formation?” Elder Feng asked with a livid expression.

With the abrupt appearance of Bai Xuansheng, all their previous plans had been messed up.

“Hold on for the time being...” Zhang Xuan raised his hand. “I have modified the Double Ripples Water Formation to make

it even more stable, such that it will be able to stand its ground even amid the stampede of the Silverback Mayflies. However, in return, it has become much more difficult to activate it, such that I'm the only one here who is able to do it. For now, we should keep it as our trump card."

Trump card?"

"Previously, I thought that the Blackback Tortoise was making use of the full moon to lure Pavilion Master Kui Xiao in. However, now that I think about it, such a plan is infeasible. There's no way it would have known for sure that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao would be coming. ••

"On the other hand, Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng has been following him for quite some time. Most likely, its target has been him all along," Zhang Xuan remarked with a smile.

He had already heard the news that the Azure Bridge was descending in advance on his way here. Even if the Blackback Tortoise knew of the news and predicted that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao would make his way here, there was no guarantee that the latter would arrive prior to the full moon.

If so, it would have been meaningless for it to bide its time here. After all, its plans would unravel as soon as the night of the full moon arrived. In other words, the one whom the Blackback Tortoise was baiting had never been Pavilion Master Kui Xiao!

With the appearance of Citadel Lord Bai, the final piece of the puzzle clicked into place.

Most likely, the Blackback Tortoise had noticed both the diamond crystal and Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng, so it had intentionally lured the latter here in order to make use of the stampede of the Silverback Mayflies to kill him!

Hong long!

While they were talking, the tremors intensified. As the diamond crystal absorbed more and more energy from the ores, the Silverback Mayflies moved in greater fluster. All those movements caused cracks to appear on the seabed.

Paying no heed to Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng, the Blackback Tortoise looked around it and realized that the Double Ripples Water Formation still had not been dispelled. A hint of worry appeared in its eyes as it realized that things were not going exactly to its plan.

However, it knew that it could not afford to wait any longer. Thus, it dived forward with its massive body.

Hu!

As if it had teleported, it arrived right before the diamond crystal in an instant and devoured it whole.

“Is this what you mean by not fast?” Zhang Xuan’s lips twitched in horror.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao had told him that this humongous sea tortoise was only known for its defensive prowess, but its speed was severely lacking. He had taken that information for granted, thinking that it made perfect sense.

Who could have known that such a heavy creature would be capable of charging at such speed?

Its speed was faster than him even when he used all his strength!

If they really fought one another, a ram from the Blackback Tortoise at that speed might have just taken him down!

“This...”

With an awkward look on his face, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao turned his gaze toward Elder Feng.

“I... It didn’t move this quickly the last time I met it. It traveled at a speed roughly the same as mine,” Elder Feng hurriedly explained.

Naturally, he had investigated what the Blackback Tortoise was capable of prior to setting up a trap for it. In fact, the entire trap had been built in order to capitalize on the slow speed of the Blackback Tortoise.

They did not expect it to have been concealing its true strength the whole time!

“It’s much smarter than I thought,” Zhang Xuan said with a bitter smile.

It actually knew how to hide its true abilities and bide its time in order to lure others into a deadly trap. While this Blackback Tortoise might have appeared to be a little dull, it was far more cunning than it appeared.

Indeed, those who were able to reach the Semi-Divinity realm really should not be underestimated!

“What should we do now?” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao asked.

“Since the Blackback Tortoise has already made its move, we should let the two of them fight one another and be the ones to reap the rewards of their effort!”

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Based on his previous plan, once the Blackback Tortoise walked into their ambush, they would immediately activate the formation, and with the strength of the Silverback Mayflies and Pavilion Master Kui Xiao, they would swiftly take it down. In fact, even capturing it alive would not have been out of the question!

The appearance of Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng was outside their expectations, but it did not affect them too much.

Instead, it would just make things simpler for them. They could reap the reward once the two of them tired one another out.

While they were chatting with one another, the Blackback Tortoise swallowed the diamond crystal whole, but the diamond crystal continued to absorb the energy from the ores nonstop.

This provoked the Silverback Mayflies into action. They immediately began flocking over, causing the surrounding water to billow deafeningly.

The Blackback Tortoise was not the only one who came under their attack. Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng also suddenly found himself swarmed by innumerable Silverback Mayflies, forcing him to release his zhenqi and form a protective barrier around himself.

Caught off guard by this abrupt situation, Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng took a look around him before looking downward. "Friends hiding below, let's take down this Blackback Tortoise together. Given its size, there's more than enough to go around!"

His voice caused the surrounding water to billow, and it arrived in the ears of Zhang Xuan and the others clearly.

“He’s found us?” Elder Feng was stunned.

“That’s not necessarily the case. Since the Blackback Tortoise was able to notice that there’s something amiss about the diamond crystal, as a Semi-Divinity realm expert, Citadel Lord Bai might have noticed something as well. Most likely, he’s trying to coax us out to deal with the Blackback Tortoise alongside him... It’s fine, just ignore him,” Zhang Xuan replied with a shake of his head.

Given how conspicuous the diamond crystal was, the chances were that someone would have dug it out by now. It was too much of coincidence for it to appear there at such a moment, especially since the Blackback Tortoise was attracted to shiny things.

With such evidence, it was not difficult for Bai Xuansheng to figure out that someone else had laid a trap there to ambush the Blackback Tortoise.

It was just that he did not know whom the other party was and what power they belonged to.

Boom!

The Blackback Tortoise saw that the formation did not activate even after the shout, but it was extremely certain that there was someone hiding there. The fact that those that were hiding there did not make a move despite an invitation from a Semi-Divinity realm expert likely meant that they were confident of dealing with it.

With this, it knew that if it really fought against this first Semi-Divinity realm expert and exhaust itself, there was a good chance that it might lose its life. Thus, with a furious roar, it rammed its body right toward Bai Xuansheng.

This time, it moved with even greater speed. Before one could even blink, its massive body had materialized right in front of Bai Xuansheng. Its humongous physique left one feeling as if a comet was crashing right toward one.

This ram wielded the ability to destroy even a Heavenly High Immortal in an instant.

“Let’s see who is stronger!” Bai Xuansheng seemed to have expected this move from the Blackback Tortoise, and he burst into laughter.

He swiftly conjured a massive shield right before him.

As soon as the shield appeared in the water, it immediately lengthened itself until it was over several hundred meters in width and height, the same size as the Blackback Tortoise. As the two collided with one another, a resounding reverberation reminiscent of the chime of a bell echoed loudly in the air. The Silverback Mayflies in the surroundings were immediately jolted into powder.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s eyes narrowed. “That shield is a Semi-Divinity realm artifact?”

He had known Bai Xuansheng for many years, and they were extremely familiar with one another. They had fought several times before, and they were equally matched in terms of fighting prowess.

When did the other party gain a Semi-Divinity realm artifact like that?

With such an artifact in hand, there was no way that Pavilion Master Kui Xiao would stand a chance against him anymore!

It was no wonder he dared to challenge the Blackback Tortoise without any preparation. With just this artifact in hand and his superior cultivation, he was more than capable of standing his ground against it!

“Lock!”

After blocking the Blackback Tortoise’s ram, Bai Xuansheng laughed once more, and he rotated the shield in his hand.

Hula!

It immediately scattered into something reminiscent of a fishnet. Innumerable metal chains darted forth and wrapped themselves around the Blackback Tortoise, locking it firmly in place.

It turned out that this Semi-Divinity realm artifact was a weapon with flexible form!

This is bad. At this rate, the Blackback Tortoise will really be his!” Elder Feng exclaimed in panic.

The Sevenstar Pavilion had prepared nearly an entire month for this, and the Blackback Tortoise was already well within their reach. They never would have thought that someone else would snatch their prey at a crucial moment like this!

“There’s no need to panic. If it was that easy to capture the Blackback Tortoise, it would already be dead by now,” Zhang Xuan consoled with a smile.

Right after he had said those words, the Blackback Tortoise suddenly opened its mouth, and the diamond crystal floated out of its body.

The appearance of the diamond crystal immediately illuminated the dim surroundings, but this time, it seemed to shine with even greater splendor than before.

Hong long long long!

At the same time, the tremors in the surroundings became more intense. Frenzied currents tore through the water, stirring up massive waves on the seabed.

Somehow, the Blackback Tortoise was increasing the rate at which the diamond crystal was absorbing energy from the ore!

Huhuhu!

As the tremors grew even more violent, the Silverback Mayflies flew into even greater frenzy. They immediately charged over with utmost desperation, swarming the Blackback Tortoise and the diamond crystal in an instant.

“Damn!” Seeing this, Bai Xuansheng’s face turned livid. “Scram, you pests!”

He waved his hand furiously to fend off the Silverback Mayflies as he tried to pull the steel chains that he had wrapped around the Blackback Tortoise. However, it felt as if he had lost the connection with his Semi-Divinity realm artifact, leaving him unable to control it!

Huala!

Just like that, his Semi-Divinity artifact lost its effectiveness and fell through the body of the Blackback Tortoise and collapsed at the bottom of the ocean.

“Elder Liu, what’s going on?” Even Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was unable to make sense of the situation.

A Semi-Divinity artifact should have been extremely powerful, not to mention that it possessed its own consciousness. How could it be rendered ineffective just because it was swarmed by a large number of Silverback Mayflies, such that it even lost the ability to fly?

“Most artifacts are forged with metal, and that chain he is holding is no exception. While Silverback Mayflies are living beings, they do have an extremely high level of metal content in their bodies. Otherwise, they wouldn’t have been able to form such a bright reflective surface on the water!” Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

“These Silverback Mayflies might be small, but they emit a unique force field that they use to communicate with one another. It’s due to this force field that they are able to maintain a huge, orderly formation. Any weapon, when coming into proximity with such sheer number of Silverback Mayflies, will find the connection between its body and its spirit obstructed due to the compounded force field, thus sealing off its strength. The Blackback Tortoise must have known about this, which is why it intentionally lured Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng here.”

The other two were stunned.

They never would have thought that the tiny Silverback Mayflies would be capable of neutralizing the effects of Semi-Divinity realm artifacts.

If they headed over, would their acupoints be sealed, resulting in them losing their fighting prowess, too?

“It’s no wonder they say that those unfamiliar with oceanic creatures should stay away from the water. It seems like there are many baffling wonders underwater that are beyond our

imagination...” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao shook his head and sighed.

The Sea of Exiled Stars was rumored to be not beneath the City of Collapsed Space in terms of danger, but as a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, he had thought that there was nothing much for him to fear anymore. After all, even the strongest beast living in the waters would only be at the Semi-Divinity realm, just like him.

However, it seemed like strength was not enough to guarantee one’s survival. If one let one’s guard down, it was only a matter of time before the oceanic creatures devoured one alive!

Naturally, as a beast native to the Sea of Exiled Stars, the Blackback Tortoise was well aware of these creatures, which was why it had chosen to lure Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng over and lure him into using his weapon. It was all in order to cripple him!

“It’s about time. Elder Feng, may I trouble you to release the seal on this Spatial formation?” Zhang Xuan said.

Elder Feng was slightly taken aback by the abrupt request. He was just about to nod and get into action when the young man suddenly shook his head. “Never mind, we won’t make it in time at this rate. I’ll do it myself.”

After saying those words, he took a step forward and stomped lightly on the ground.

Weng!

A huge whirlpool immediately appeared above the hidden Spatial Formation, forming a passageway similar to what they had come in through.

Seeing such a sight, Elder Feng’s jaws slackened. For a very long time, his mouth remained agape.

He had put in a lot of effort to set up this formation, and even with the insignia controlling the formation in his hand, he knew that he would not be able to stop it all of a sudden. Yet, the other party had actually managed to do it with just a simple stomp of his foot...

Was such a thing possible?

Before Elder Feng could recover from his shock, the young man raised his hand toward the opened passageway and grasped upward.

Hu!

The next instant, the falling Semi-Divinity metal chains vanished from sight.

“Close!”

After taking away the metal chain, the young man stomped his foot once more, and the Spatial Formation whirred back to action. Once more, the three of them vanished from the seabed.

“You snatched Citadel Lord Bai’s Semi-Divinity artifact?”

Elder Feng and Pavilion Master Kui Xiao looked at one another in horror.

Do you know just how valuable Semi-Divinity artifacts are? Such an act is practically no different from making enemies out of the Blackmirror Citadel!

Besides, can an artifact of such a tier really be put in one’s storage ring so easily?

Even if you managed to store it in there, if the artifact resists, it will still be able to break out of your storage ring and flee!

The two of them were not the only ones who were taken aback by the situation. Above, Bai Xuansheng was on the verge of descending into lunacy.

It was one thing for him to lose control of his artifact, but he had never thought that those fellows hiding below would actually snatch his weapon without the slightest hesitation!

That weapon was something that their Blackmirror Citadel had paid a heavy price and even reneged on their promise in order to acquire! For it to be stolen away just like that... he felt like he would go insane in that instant!

“Who the hell are you all? Give my weapon back!” Bai Xuansheng roared furiously as he attempted to dash to the

seabed.

The Spatial Formation had only opened up for a brief instant, such that even with his cultivation, all he had seen was a palm reaching out. He had not been able to catch a clear glimpse of who was hidden inside.

But no matter who the culprit was, whoever dared to steal his weapon would have to pay with their life!

However, how could the Blackback Tortoise allow Bai Xuansheng to move as he wished? It had not been easy for it to strip the latter of his Semi-Divinity realm weapon, so there was no way it would allow the latter to have any chance of acquiring it back!

Thus, without any hesitation, it dashed right toward him.

This time, before striking its target, it retracted its head into its shell.

Kacha!

The unbelievably resilient tortoiseshell crashed right into Bai Xuansheng, causing the latter's face to turn ghastly pale. That strike had shattered a number of his ribs, and a spurt of fresh blood escaped from his mouth.

They were both Semi-Divinity realm experts, and Bai Xuansheng's cultivation was a little higher. However, he was still unable to withstand such heavy ramming from the Blackback Tortoise!

Peng peng peng!

Having managed to pull off a successful heavy strike, the Blackback Tortoise continued with its offense, leaving Bai Xuansheng with no choice but to continuously retreat. He desperately summoned his zhenqi to form a barrier in front of him so as to guard against the Blackback Tortoise's attacks.

He had to block a series of consecutive attacks before he finally managed to catch a breather to regain his footing. Just when he thought that he could turn the tables around, an incredibly brilliant crystal appeared right in front of him. Its blinding light left his eyes slightly glazed.

In that instant, Bai Xuansheng's soul nearly escaped from his body. He immediately tried to back away, but it was already too late. The surrounding Silverback Mayflies had already encircled him.

His zhenqi barrier was swiftly devoured, and before he could retaliate, the Silverback Mayflies had already squeezed their way into his acupoints.

“My strength!”

The sealing of one's acupoints was no different from stripping a train of its engine. Bai Xuansheng was suddenly in a position where he was no longer able to drive his zhenqi properly. This abrupt loss of energy caused his body to plummet downward.

Peng!

Making use of this opportunity, the Blackback Tortoise gathered its momentum and rammed over once more.

The flustered Bai Xuansheng immediately gathered all his physical might to defend against the attack.

Kacha! Kacha!

Without the augmentation from his zhenqi, his hands swiftly fractured inch after inch as he was blasted right into the seabed, creating a massive crater beneath.

2038 Pay Respects to Your New Master, Little Tortoise

“Powerful...”

Witnessing such a scene, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng felt their bodies turning cold.

They could not help but imagine themselves being in the same position as Bai Xuansheng.

They had been confident in their ploy against the Blackback Tortoise, especially since they had devoted many resources and spent months preparing for it. They had thought that with all they had done, it should not have been too difficult for them to capture the Blackback Tortoise. However, little did they know that the other party was simply going along with them in order to lure them into its trap.

Honestly, Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng was truly a formidable cultivator. If not for the aid of the Silverback Mayflies, there was no doubt that the victor of the duel would have been Bai Xuansheng.

However, the environment always played a key factor in the outcome of a battle. Bai Xuansheng failed to take this into consideration, so he ended up landing himself in such a tragic state within a few blows.

Had Elder Liu not seen through the Blackback Tortoise’s ploy in advance, they would have charged right into the trap and ended up in the same position as Bai Xuansheng, or perhaps even worse!

Hong long!

Even after successfully launching a powerful attack, the Blackback Tortoise did not let down its guard. Instead, it dived back into his tortoiseshell and continued ramming toward Bai Xuansheng.

Til kill you!”

For the roles of the hunter and the hunted to be reversed all of a sudden, Bai Xuansheng was incredibly indignant. With a ferocious roar, he brought out three swords and drove them forward.

As expected of the head of the Blackmirror Citadel, the three swords were all at Heavenly High Immortal-tier!

Ding ding ding!

The swords clashed against the shell of the Blackback Tortoise, but they did not even leave a scratch or hinder its speed at all.

Bai Xuansheng narrowed his eyes. In the face of such a situation, what choice did he have other than to turn tail and flee?

He had lost his Semi-Divinity artifact, his arms and ribcage were fractured, and his innards were jolted. If this continued, he would die for sure!

Boom!

Before Bai Xuansheng could get far, the Blackback Tortoise struck his back once more, smashing him all the way into the ground.

“We have to make a move right now!” Zhang Xuan remarked as he released the Spatial Formation and rushed out.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng, who had been watching the situation intently, quickly dashed out from their hiding spots.

They knew that Bai Xuansheng would really lose his life if they continued biding their time. The Sevenstar Pavilion was not close with the Blackmirror Citadel, but they had no intention of letting Bai Xuansheng die like that, especially given the recent movements from the Hall of Gods.

The Blackback Tortoise immediately noticed the presence of Zhang Xuan and the others, but it did not rush into making a move. Instead, it waited patiently to see what they were up to.

“Pavilion Master Kui, we’ll be counting on you,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Un, don’t worry.” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao nodded as he charged forward as if a bolt of lightning.

He swiftly channeled of his energy in his palm, generating a surge of energy so immense that the surrounding water began bubbling nonstop. All the Silverback Mayflies that were gathered around the Blackback Tortoise immediately dissipated into ashes under the outpour of energy.

On the way to the Sea of Exiled Stars, in repayment for helping him achieve a breakthrough, Zhang Xuan had given Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the others some pointers on their battle techniques. Even though it had only been a few short days, they managed to make massive advancements in their fighting prowess.

It was the same Bolting Lightning Clutching Clouds as before, but it was at least two times stronger! Lightning crackled from his hands, making it seem as if he was the God of Thunder.

Sensing danger, the Blackback Tortoise immediately retracted its body back into its shell and revolved its body. As a result, the lightning in Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s hands simply scorched the surface of the shell before being deflected away.

The attack had failed to inflict any internal injuries to the Blackback Tortoise.

“That tortoise is formidable,” Zhang Xuan murmured.

Not only was it fast, it also possessed a massive tortoiseshell that allowed it to easily deflect any sharp strikes. Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was not weak by any means, but it was apparent that even he was having trouble trying to hurt the latter!

In the blink of an eye, those two had already exchanged more than ten blows. The sheer might from their confrontation caused the Sea of Little Mirror to boil up. Steam rose endlessly from the surface of the water.

The shockwaves from the duel between two Semi-Divinity realm experts were more than enough to destroy everything within a radius of ten thousand li.

If not for the fact that they were underwater, this battle would have drawn many experts to the area.

Spectating the battle in wonderment from the side, Elder Feng could not help noticing a peculiar detail, and a frown formed on his forehead. He turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, “Why doesn’t the Blackback Tortoise use its ram against Pavilion Master Kui?”

When the Blackback Tortoise was fighting with Bai Xuansheng earlier, it had relied heavily on its powerful rams in order to cripple the latter. Yet, when faced with Pavilion Master Kui Xiao, it seemed to be taking a more passive role in the battle, primarily focusing on defending against the other party’s attack.

“It’s apprehensive of the Double Ripples Water Formation, so it doesn’t dare make a reckless move,” Zhang Xuan said with a light chuckle.

Elder Feng widened his eyes as he came to a realization.

The Blackback Tortoise was truly a wary individual. The area where it moved around throughout the battle had been outside the perimeter of the formation, such that the formation would not be able to hurt it even if they activated it now.

“No, that’s not right... Wasn’t it waiting for the Double Ripples Water Formation to activate earlier to trap Citadel Lord Bai so that it could kill him? Doesn’t that mean that it isn’t afraid of the formation?” Elder Feng asked.

“Well, the situation is slightly different now. It might still have been able to squander its energy carelessly earlier, but it can’t afford to do so anymore,” Zhang Xuan replied.

Those words made Elder Feng frown.

This huge fellow had simply been ramming its humongous body around, not bothering to use its zhenqi or any of its other talents. It should have plenty of strength left in it, so why did Elder Liu make it sound as if it was already in a drained state?

“Those Silverback Mayflies are capable of rendering even a Semi-Divinity artifact powerless. It’s true that the Blackback Tortoise’s defense is impressive, but do you really think that it

wouldn't suffer any damage when it has been the main target of the Silverback Mayflies throughout the battle?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Even at this moment, there were still plenty of Silverback Mayflies attached to the body of the Blackback Tortoise. Considering how they were able to bring down a Semi-Divinity artifact, it was impossible for the Blackback Tortoise to be completely unaffected by them even with its powerful defense.

"Since that's the case, why don't we join in the battle too?"

Hearing that the Blackback Tortoise was swiftly getting worn down, Elder Feng heaved a sigh of relief as a glint flashed across his eyes.

Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "No rush. Since it's biding its time, we should do the same."

Having complete trust in the young man, Elder Feng did not question his judgement and continued spectating the battle.

During this period, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the Blackback Tortoise exchanged another twenty blows. The former's offense had clearly become a little wearied, lacking the ferocious aggression from before. Similarly, the latter seemed to be extremely exhausted, taking in large breaths of air.

At this moment, the Blackback Tortoise opened its mouth once more.

Hu!

The diamond crystal that had done in Bai Xuansheng earlier flew out from its mouth and headed right toward where Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was.

"Humph!"

There was no way Pavilion Master Kui Xiao would not be guarded against this move after witnessing what had happened to Bai Xuansheng, but just as he was able to dodge to the side, a shadow suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Don't dodge it."

It was Zhang Xuan.

With a light smile, he reached forward and grabbed the diamond crystal.

Hu!

The diamond crystal immediately vanished from sight. He had thrown it into his storage ring.

“This...”

This time, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao was not the only one who was taken aback by the situation. Even the Blackback Tortoise was visibly stunned.

The reason it had endured so many blows was to wait for an opportunity to toss the diamond crystal toward its enemy, but who could have known that this fellow would suddenly appear from nowhere to throw it into his storage ring?

This was no ordinary diamond crystal. It harnessed a tremendous amount of energy, producing light that could even be seen from ten thousand li away! How could the storage ring possibly not explode from something like that?

If it was possible for them to keep it with a storage ring, they would have already done so! Why would they bother going through so much trouble to dodge to the side?

Seeing through the Blackback Tortoise’s bewilderment, Zhang Xuan asked with a smile, “Are you wondering why I am able to keep this diamond crystal in my storage ring?”

With a flick of his wrist, the diamond crystal immediately materialized above his hand, floating quietly in the air.

“W-what?” The Blackback Tortoise widened its eyes in disbelief. “You actually managed to tame the diamond crystal?”

In order to make use of the power of the diamond crystal to lure the Silverback Mayflies, it had burned its blood essence after swallowing the diamond crystal in order to forcefully tame it...

But in the blink of an eye, the diamond crystal had become another person's property!

While the diamond crystal was not a weapon, something of its tier was bound to already possess its own spirit. Once it had pledged loyalty to a master, unless its master died, it would never switch allegiance. Just what in the world did the young man do?

"I did. I killed the spirit in the diamond crystal and reenchanting a new one. Naturally, who else would the new spirit submit to other than me?" Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

Then, he flicked his finger.

Weng!

The diamond crystal flew right toward the Blackback Tortoise before glowing even brighter than before.

Hula!

The agitated Silverback Mayflies immediately rushed over and encircled the Blackback Tortoise tightly.

"I underestimated you lot," the Blackback Tortoise said as it stared deeply at Zhang Xuan.

Without any hesitation, it turned around to flee.

Its initial plan had been to take down Pavilion Master Kui Xiao as well, and by devouring the two of them, it would have been able to raise its cultivation. However, its plan had been foiled by this young man.

At this very moment, its energy was nearly entirely depleted, so it had no choice but to flee for the time being.

"Don't you think that it's too late for you to think about leaving only now?" Zhang Xuan remarked as he took a step forward.

Weng!

The billowing sea immediately quietened down, as if it had been sealed by some kind of power. Even the rampaging Silverback Mayflies had fallen silent.

Shocked, the Blackback Tortoise quickly picked up speed to ram its way outward, but it was swiftly rebounded by some sort of barrier. Its face turned livid as it uttered in disbelief, “What kind of formation is this? How can it be so powerful?”

It had made sure to examine the area carefully before, and it was certain that the formation that had been prepared for it was the Double Ripples Water Formation. While that formation was able to trap it for a brief moment, as long as it charged its way out desperately with all of its might, it would still be able to make a safe getaway.

So, what the hell was this?

He had actually been rebounded by the barrier even though he had already put all of his strength behind the collision. What kind of formation was this?

All formations would require energy to sustain them. There were no clear pulsations of energy in the area, so how was such a resilient barrier formed?

“The Double Ripples Water Formation is just an ordinary Confinement Formation. It wouldn’t have been able to trap you. So, I made some modifications to it, expanding its area and prowess. All this while, the formation has been absorbing the energy released by the three Semi-Divinity realm fighting here. For this reason, unless I release this formation personally, it’ll be no different from three Semi-Divinity realm experts blocking your pathway. You don’t stand a chance at all,” Zhang Xuan explained.

Since the formation that Elder Feng had prepared was insufficient, he had no choice but to modify it slightly.

The main reason he had not interfered in the fight so far was to allow the formation to gather more energy, such that it would reach a level where the Blackback Tortoise was no longer able to breach the barrier. Only with this would they be able to hold the swift Blackback Tortoise there.

“The formation has been absorbing our released energy? Who the hell are you?”

The Blackback Tortoise tried a few more times, but it was just as Zhang Xuan had said. Even if it was at its full strength, it still would not have been able to breach the barrier. Knowing that it did not stand a chance at all, its face turned extremely livid.

The cultivation of the young man before it was not too high, but he was able to tame the diamond crystal and set up such a powerful formation. It was as if he was the true mastermind pulling the strings behind the scenes, and everything had gone according to his calculations! Just who in the world was this person?

The Blackback Tortoise was still thinking that it would be able to make its name through this battle in the Sea of Little Mirror so that no humans would dare disturb it anymore, but after all the scheming that had gone around, it had still ended up being done in.

“You want to know who I am?” Zhang Xuan looked at it and smiled. “Little Tortoise, acknowledge me as your master. Acknowledge me as our master, and I’ll tell you who I am.”

2039 Are You Willing to Become Our Sect Leader?

“Acknowledge him as its master?”

“Elder Liu intends to tame the Blackback Tortoise?”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng looked at one another in horror.

Semi-Divinity realm beasts were incredibly proud. Even after all the preparation they had done, they dared not think that it would be possible for them to tame the Blackback Tortoise... Moreover, why would the other party submit just because it was told to do so?

Even if Hall Master Zheng Yang from the Myriads Beasts Hall was there personally, there was also no guarantee that he would be able to tame the Blackback Tortoise!

Just as they had guessed, as soon as it heard Zhang Xuan's words, the Blackback Tortoise's face immediately darkened. Reminiscent of a volcano on the verge of an explosion, it spat, “You want me to acknowledge you as my master? You'll first have to prove yourself!”

Boom!

With a roar, it charged right toward Zhang Xuan furiously.

“Seal!”

Without taking even a step, Zhang Xuan tapped his finger lightly.

Hula!

Energy swiftly gathered within the formation, pinning the humongous Blackback Tortoise down. As if a fish in frozen water, no matter how it struggled, it was unable to break free.

“Submit to me or face death!” Zhang Xuan said after sealing the Blackback Tortoise's movements.

“Kill me if you can!” the Blackback Tortoise scoffed as it dived back into its shell.

As a Semi-Divinity realm beast, its shell was comparable to that of a Semi-Divinity artifact, making it nigh indestructible. As long as it were to hole itself inside its shell, there was nothing the other party could do after trapping it.

Semi-Divinity realm beasts had their own pride and honor. How could it possibly acknowledge a human so much weaker than itself as its master?

Not to mention, the formation that was trapping him had to be sustained with sufficient energy. As long as it held on for long enough, the formation would collapse on its own, allowing it to get away.

“Do you think that I’m helpless against you just like that?” Zhang Xuan had long guessed that the Blackback Tortoise would make such a move, so he clapped his hands and said, “Little Chick, it’s your turn to receive our guest!”

“Coming!” The little yellow chick waddled its way out.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng blinked.

Were they seeing thing? A Heavenly High Immortal realm little yellow chick?

It was true that the cultivation of the chick was not too low, but it was only the size of a palm! What could it possibly do against the Blackback Tortoise?

Paying no heed to their shock, Little Chick waddled its way up the back of the Blackback Tortoise, but after climbing for a long while, a water current suddenly swept it off its feet, causing it to fall off. It had to hurriedly flap its thumb-sized wings desperately before finally getting back on.

The same thing happened a couple more times.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng were literally tearing clumps of hair out.

Was this little creature really capable of dealing with the Semi-Divinity realm Blackback Tortoise?

What a joke!

Cooped in its shell, the Blackback Tortoise also secretly peeked out from its shell, and it was stunned when it saw a little yellow chick climbing up its shell.

You can try to tame me, but you can't insult me!

No matter what, I'm still a Semi-Divinity realm beast, one of the strongest existences on the Forsaken Continent! Even those two Semi-Divinity realm experts ruling over two of the Six Sects are no match for me...

There are so many ways you could have used to attempt to tame me, but you actually brought me a chick instead!

It would be one thing if it was a really hot chick—that would still come under the Art of Seduction—but what the heck is this?

The hell, who brings out a real chick in battle?

The Blackback Tortoise was stifled.

If not for the fact that it was in a weakened state and was unable to breach the seal, it would have rammed the fool who dared use such a strategy against it through the Eighteen Levels of Hell!

Meanwhile, Little Chick continued falling a few times, and eventually, it gave in. It turned to Zhang Xuan and yelled, "Don't you know that chicks are bad in water? Instead of standing there like a fool, why don't you come over and help!"

Zhang Xuan. Didn't you swim perfectly well in boiling water the last few times?

Mentally reminding himself that it was futile to bicker with an idiot, he walked up, grabbed the little yellow chick by its neck, and threw it upward. "Go!"

Hu!

Piang!

Little Chick crashed on top of the back of the Blackback Tortoise and rolled off a little.

“Hurry up and make your move,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Rest assured, leave it all to me!” Little Chick nodded.

Standing atop the hundred-meter-wide tortoiseshell, it abruptly opened its tiny mouth.

Hu!

Its fingernail-sized mouth opened several hundred meters wide and chomped down on the massive tortoiseshell, swallowing it whole.

It formed a bizarre sight... it was as if yellow fur had grown all over the tortoiseshell instead.

“There, I’m done.” The little yellow chick fluttered its tiny wings triumphantly.

“What are you doing? I’m telling you to help me tame it! Why are you swallowing it instead?” Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

This fellow sure was unreliable!

I needed you to help me scare it into submission, not swallow it whole! What do I have to gain from having it eaten by you?

He quickly leaped up to the head of the inflated Little Chick and smacked it. “Spit it out. Now!” “Alright, alright!” Little Chick harrumphed indignantly as it spat out the Blackback Tortoise.

By this moment, the massive Blackback Tortoise was already on the verge of dying. It stuck its head out from its shell with a dazed look on its face.

Who am I? Where am I?

“Submit to me,” Zhang Xuan ordered.

Those words immediately snapped the Blackback Tortoise out of its daze. With an indignant look, it roared, “You’re dreaming!”

“Fine.” Zhang Xuan turned to Little Chick and said, “You can continue eating it.”

So, the little yellow chick opened its mouth wide once more.

“W-wait! I... I... I’ll submit to you!” the Blackback Tortoise cried out desperately.

It had no choice but to submit. It did not fear death, but if others learned that it had been eaten by this little chick, the imposing reputation that it had built up over the years would really go to ruins!

“That’s more like it!” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction as he quickly carried out the acknowledgement ritual.

Seeing this, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and Elder Feng widened their mouths in disbelief.

It was tamed just like that? Was that little yellow chick really so formidable?

They had honestly thought that the young man had brought out the Little Chick in order to disgust the Blackback Tortoise, but who could have known that such a small creature would actually have the capacity to swallow the massive Blackback Tortoise? That should have been physically impossible!

And now that they thought about it... could this Little Chick be the reason that the young man had been able to snatch away Bai Xuansheng’s Semi-Divinity metal chain earlier?

Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief after the Soul Contract had been sealed. He took a look at the Blackback Tortoise and said, “You are too big at the moment. Make yourself smaller!”

Yes, Master!”

The Blackback Tortoise immediately contracted its body until it was around two meters in diameter.

Zhang Xuan waved his hand and took out a few bottles of chicken soup. “Drink this.”

The Blackback Tortoise dared not to disobey its master’s orders. It immediately swallowed the chicken soup, and a moment later, its eyes widened in bewilderment.

In truth, it had been in a terrible state from the prolonged battle. The continuous ramming had taken a toll on it, causing it to sustain severe internal injuries. Furthermore, the

continuous attacks from the Silverback Mayflies had caused significant damage.

It had never thought that it would be able to recover in an instant just by drinking a few bottles of chicken soup.

It could almost feel vitality gushing through its body! It was really the chicken soup of life!

Could the little yellow chick be a divine beast? Could my master actually be a god?

The gaze that the Blackback Tortoise looked at its master with was different from before.

The initial reason it chose to submit was because it thought that it would be much more humiliating for it to die at the hands of a chick than to submit to a human... but right now, it realized that there was more to this young man.

The fact that the little yellow chick was able to swallow it so easily meant that it was no ordinary Heavenly High Immortal. In terms of abilities, the other party definitely far surpassed him.

Considering how it was already at the Semi-Divinity realm, any beings that were so much stronger than it could only be true divine beasts.

The fact that its master was able to tame a divine beast, even though it might still be young at the moment, meant that he was no ordinary human!

Paying no heed to the shocked Blackback Tortoise, Zhang Xuan leaped down to the seabed and held the three Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords that Bai Xuansheng had brought out earlier between his fingers and flicked them several times. A moment later, a metallic reverberation echoed from their bodies, reminiscent of cries of pleasure.

Those three swords had submitted to him.

Hu!

He stowed them into the storage ring.

After that was done, he took out a tamed beast sack and moved the Blackback Tortoise and Little Chick into it. Then, he turned to Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and said, “This diamond crystal is something you paid a heavy price to acquire.

I’ll return it to you now.”

While he did play a vital part in ensuring the success of the hunt, he still felt guilty about cutting in line to tame the Blackback Tortoise. On the other hand, however, he was planning on leaving the Blackback Tortoise to guard the Sevenstar Pavilion after he left the Azure, and that would definitely be much more beneficial to the Sevenstar Pavilion.

After all, no amount of money could possibly buy one Semi-Divinity realm guardian.

That being said, he would feel guilty about taking away the diamond crystal given its sheer value, so he chose to return it.

“This...”

Receiving the diamond crystal, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s face reddened a little.

He had been confident in his strength and the operation he had planned. He had thought that it would be easy for him to slay the Blackback Tortoise, but little did he know that he would almost lose his life there.

On the other hand, the young man before him had used only a single formation and a chick, and he had easily tamed the Blackback Tortoise.

It seemed like he had severely underestimated the prowess of this young man.

“How should we deal with Citadel Lord Bai?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Bai Xuansheng was still lying unconscious amid the mud of the seabed. He had sustained far too severe injuries from the ramming of the Blackback Tortoise to recover in a moment’s time.

“If he finds out that we have tamed the Blackback Tortoise, the relationship between the two sects would surely sour. We

should just leave right now,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao said.

They had only appeared after Bai Xuansheng was knocked out, which meant that the latter should not know that they were involved in the matter.

No matter what, the Blackmirror Citadel was still a trading partner of the Sevenstar Pavilion, so it would not be good to fall out with them.

Not to mention... they had taken away Bai Xuansheng’s Semi-Divinity artifact. If the latter demanded it after he awoke, they would be placed in a dilemma.

Since that was the case, they might as well quickly evacuate the area!

“Leave right now?” Zhang Xuan thought deeply for a moment before walking over to Bai Xuansheng’s side. He plucked the other party out from the mud and took his storage ring off.

“Who dares to...” Bai Xuansheng was jolted awake by someone taking away his storage ring, and he immediately bellowed furiously. But before he could even open his eyes, he felt a sharp pain at the back of his head.

Putong!

He fainted once more.

Zhang Xuan retracted his palm calmly. With the storage ring in hand, he leaped over to Pavilion Master Kui Xiao’s side and said, “Let’s go.”

Considering how this fellow was able to casually bring out a Semi-Divinity artifact and three Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords, there was no doubt that he was extremely wealthy.

It would be a pity to leave such drops lying around!

“This...”

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao shook his head helplessly. He did not think that Zhang Xuan would be so greedy. Eventually, he held himself back from saying anything.

Together, the three of them swam to the surface of the water.

As they left the Sea of Little Mirror, they noticed a full moon reflected on the silvery surface of the water, and they could not help but feel a cold chill.

Those mirrorlike Silverback Mayflies were insignificant creatures in their eyes, but who could have known that they would actually be so frighteningly powerful?

In armies, they could take down even a Semi-Divinity artifact without any issues!

If not for the young man beside them discovering it in advance, they might have ended up in Bai Xuansheng's position, or perhaps, even on their way to meet their maker!

As such thoughts flashed through their minds, they could not help but glance at the young man beside them.

Pavilion Master Kui Xiao turned to Elder Feng and asked, "What do you think?"

"He has far surpassed my expectations." Elder Feng nodded. "I'm willing to submit to him."

"Good," Pavilion Master Kui Xiao replied with a smile.

Following which, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Elder Liu, I have a request to ask of you."

Zhang Xuan frowned slightly in response.

"May I know if you are willing to take over my position as the head of our Sevenstar Pavilion?"

2040 Vacant Sea

Not expecting such a request, Zhang Xuan was taken aback for a moment before hurriedly shaking his head. “My apologies, but I’m too used to wandering the lands. I’m afraid that I don’t have the capability to become the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion.”

It was not that he was uninterested in becoming the pavilion master—the Sevenstar Pavilion was known to be the richest organization on Forsaken Continent after all! But he was already the head of the Myriad Beasts Hall, and it would be inappropriate for him to take on another leadership position in the Sevenstar Pavilion.

“That definitely isn’t the case. If you are lacking in capability, then I should be utterly ashamed of myself,” Pavilion Master Kui Xiao replied bitterly.

A strong leader was integral to a powerful organization. Considering how the young man was able to tame the Blackback Tortoise easily, there was really no candidate more suitable than him.

“Elder Liu, I humbly beseech you to lead our Sevenstar Pavilion.” Elder Feng clasped his fist as well.

“This...” Zhang Xuan was conflicted.

First the Myriad Beasts Hall, and now, even the Sevenstar Pavilion was acting in such a manner.

Why was it so difficult for him to be an ordinary elder?

Was it his fault that he was so outstanding?

Thinking about it, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was still the best of all. He could just remain an innocent honorary elder, unburdened by the weight of an entire sect.

Noting Zhang Xuan’s hesitation, Pavilion Master Kui Xiao pressed on. “There’s a limit to the lifespan of Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, so I won’t be able to protect the Sevenstar

Pavilion for too long. However, Semi-Divinity realm beasts are known for their longevity. This is especially so for the Blackback Tortoise, which is rumored to be able to live for several thousand years. If you become the sect leader and leave the Blackback Tortoise to guard our sect, we won't have to worry about our security for the next several thousand years!"

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded.

The Azure was nothing more than a pit stop for him. It was only a matter of time before he approached the Hall of Gods in search of Luo Ruoxin. In the first place, he was already planning to leave the Blackback Tortoise behind to guard the Sevenstar Pavilion.

After all, he was indebted to the Sevenstar Pavilion for all their help.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding. "I don't mind becoming the sect leader, but I'm too used to living a carefree life. I won't be getting too involved with the affairs of the Sevenstar Pavilion."

"There isn't a problem with that. The role of the sect leader is just to serve as a strong front to deter aggressors. You can leave the affairs of the sect to the First Elder." Pavilion Master Kui Xiao's eyes lit up after hearing Zhang Xuan's agreement, and he laughed heartily in response.

Elder Feng brought out the boat once more, and the three of them quickly got on it and headed back to Starchaser Island.

Some time later, Zhang Xuan arrived back at his accommodation in the Sevenstar Pavilion's branch. He brought the Blackback Tortoise out from his tamed beast sack and had it let out some of its blood for him. Then, he sat down cross-legged on the floor and absorbed a droplet of the Blackback Tortoise's blood into his body.

Tzzzzzzzzzz!

As soon as the droplet of blood entered his body, Zhang Xuan could feel all his muscles coming to life. A terrifying surge of

energy gushed through his meridians and gathered in his dantian.

With a reddened face, he hurriedly drove his zhenqi to assimilate the energy.

“This won’t work. Without a High Immortal realm cultivation technique, it won’t matter no matter how much energy I absorb.”

He had thought that even without a cultivation technique, he would still be able to force a breakthrough by gathering sufficient energy via the energy in the blood of the Semi-Divinity realm beast. However, that was easier said than done.

It was likely that he would first explode into bits before he could even raise his cultivation!

“Since I’m unable to raise my cultivation, I should nourish my body.”

Knowing that it was futile to raise his zhenqi cultivation in such a manner, he could only turn his attention to something else.

The Blackback Tortoise was known for its defense, and its blood essence and extremely useful in nourishing one’s body. Controlling the energy from the blood droplet through his meridians, his physical body swiftly grew stronger.

Two hours later, the might of his physical body could already rival that of Heavenly High Immortals!

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan took out the Semi-Divinity metal chain from his storage ring next.

With the threat of the little yellow chick and him pointing out the flaws reflected in the Library of Heaven’s Path, it did not take long before Zhang Xuan managed to tame it as well.

You are called Little Tortoise, and you are called Metal Chain.” Zhang Xuan formally announced the names of the two Semi-Divinities.

A certain Little Tortoise.

A certain Metal Chain.

After all that was done, Zhang Xuan let the Serpentine Dragon and the others out.

“This is the blood essence of a Semi-Divinity realm beast. Each of you will have ten droplets each. Whether you will be able to make a breakthrough or not is up to your capability,” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked the blood essence of the Blackback Tortoise over to them.

Those few beasts had all reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm, and their bloodlines were extremely powerful. If they consumed the blood essence of a Semi-Divinity realm beast, they might be able to take another step forward.

It would be best if they could make a breakthrough, but otherwise, there was no huge loss.

The Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and the others quickly bowed their heads in gratitude as they swallowed the blood essences.

Four hours later, they managed to advance their cultivation significantly, but they were still unable to overcome the final bottleneck limiting them.

It seemed like it was not that easy to reach the Semi-Divinity realm after all, or else there would not have been so few of such experts in the world. Seeing that they had reached their limits, Zhang Xuan returned them to the tamed beast sack before taking the Blackback Tortoise out once more.

“I want you to recount to me how you were able to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm and where you managed to do it,” Zhang Xuan instructed.

This was the primary reason he had chosen to tame the Blackback Tortoise instead of killing it. Ever since he learned the details surrounding the Godblood Rock, he had been wondering if it had anything to do with Luo Ruoxin.

“I achieved a breakthrough over in the Vacant Sea,” the Blackback Tortoise revealed.

Vacant Sea?”

“Un. It’s roughly two million li away from here. It’s an empty region of the ocean. There are no islands or humans in the area, and that’s where it got its name from,” the Blackback Tortoise explained.

“It’s far away...” Zhang Xuan frowned. “How did you manage to achieve a breakthrough then? Based on what I know, only those have challenged the Azure Bridge are able to make a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.”

“It’s true that it’s impossible for those who haven’t challenged the Azure Bridge to reach the Semi-Divinity realm, but two months ago, I unintentionally swallowed a droplet of fresh blood, and before I knew it, I’d already reached the Semi-Divinity realm.”

“A droplet of fresh blood?” Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly together.

“A Semi-Divinity realm expert was conducting some kind of ritual above the Vacant Sea, and shortly after, a crack appeared in the sky, and a figure fell down. That figure seemed to be injured, and fresh blood was dripping from her body onto the surface of the sea. I and a few other Heavenly High Immortal realm beasts drank her blood and successfully reached the Semi-Divinity realm shortly after...”

The Blackback Tortoise quickly went through his story.

“A figure? What did that figure look like? Do you know where she went afterward?” Zhang Xuan asked anxiously.

“She’s a young lady. I wasn’t able to catch a clear glimpse of her appearance, and I’m not too sure where she went.

After drinking her blood, I immediately fainted from the sheer energy it harnessed. When I came to, I was already at the Semi-Divinity realm. To be honest, I’m not too sure how it happened either,” the Blackback Tortoise replied awkwardly.

Only some time after reaching the Semi-Divinity realm did it deduce that it had something to do with the young lady who had appeared from the sky that day. Most likely, she was a true god. That would explain why her blood harnessed so much

power, allowing it and a few other Semi-Divinity realm beasts to successfully make a breakthrough.

“Does she look like this?” Zhang Xuan quickly flicked his finger and drew out Luo Ruoxin’s portrait in midair.

“I can’t remember anymore...” The Blackback Tortoise shook its head. “For some reason, my memories of her are a little hazy.”

It distinctly remembered seeing the young lady descending from the sky, but other than her gender, somehow, it was unable to recall her appearance, physique, or anything else. Its mind would simply draw a blank each time it tried to think about it.

Most likely, that was the doing of the young lady.

Zhang Xuan erased the portraits and instructed, “Take me over to the Vacant Sea you spoke of.”

The Blackback Tortoise was horrified. It quickly explained, “There were a few more Semi-Divinity realm beasts who achieved a breakthrough that day. It’s very dangerous to head over there right now!”

It might have managed to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, but it was well aware that it was not the strongest in the Vacant Sea. Those who had swallowed more blood that day were much stronger than it, which was also why it had swiftly left the region after regaining consciousness.

It would be too dangerous to head over there!

“I understand your concerns, but this is a trip that I have to make,” Zhang Xuan said firmly.

Without a doubt, what had allowed the Blackback Tortoise to achieve a breakthrough was the blood of a god. The incident had happened two months ago, which translated to roughly six hundred days on the Master Teacher Continent. It matched the time that he first met Luo Ruoxin.

There was a good chance that the god who had descended from the sky was Luo Ruoxin!

However, he would only be able to verify it if he headed over personally.

Seeing that its master's mind was made up, the Blackback Tortoise thought about the little yellow chick and the Semi-Divinity artifact in its master's possession, and it felt a lot more assured than before. "Alright then..."

"Let's go!" Zhang Xuan could not bring himself to wait even a moment longer. Leaping onto the back of the Blackback Tortoise, he quickly sent a telepathic message to Pavilion Master Kui Xiao to inform the latter before quickly heading in the direction of the Vacant Sea.

As a Semi-Divinity realm beast, the Blackback Tortoise sped through the water swiftly like a bolt of lightning. Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators would often require at least a day to travel a distance of two million li, but with the Blackback Tortoise traveling at its maximum speed, it only took half a day for him to arrive at his destination.

Floating in the air, Zhang Xuan gazed down at the Vacant Sea from above.

Just as the Blackback Tortoise had described, there was not a person or an island to be seen. All that could be seen was the ocean, which seemed to merge together with the sky at the horizon.

However, unlike the deep blue water in the other parts of the Sea of Exiled Stars, the water here had a slight tinge of redness to it, giving it an eerie undertone. It felt like some kind of tragedy had happened there.

The water in this region used to be deep blue in color, but ever since that young lady's blood dripped into the water, the area turned into such a state. It hasn't been able to revert back to its original state even after the passing of two months," the Blackback Tortoise said.

Nodding slightly, Zhang Xuan carefully activated his Eye of Insight and entered the water to take a closer look.

The slightly red ocean water was surprisingly abundant in spiritual energy, making it feel like a blessed land. It had

nourished the beasts and plants living in the area, making them far stronger than those in the other parts of the ocean.

Most likely, this had something to do with the blood of the god.

Zhang Xuan swam all the way of the bottom of the ocean, and over there, he found a couple of crimson-colored rocks. They were the Godblood Rocks he had seen at the Wuhai Market previously.

There were not too many of such rocks, and most of them did not harness as much power as the one he had seen previously.

Zhang Xuan casually placed his hand on one of the rocks and used the Library of Heaven's Path to analyze it. The compiled book was the same as before, reflecting just the name, Godblood Rock.

Zhang Xuan swam around the area and noticed that the area tinged with redness wasn't too vast. He turned to the Blackback Tortoise and asked, "Where did that figure appear back then?"

"It appeared south of where we currently are... But Master, I recommend you don't head there. The area is currently dominated by the Three Shark Brothers. They were the ones who chased me away back then," the Blackback Tortoise said with a reddened face.

"Three Shark Brothers?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"They are the conquerors of the Vacant Sea. They were already extremely powerful at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, such that I was never a match for them. Back then, in view of my powerful defense and the fact that I've never provoked them, we never crossed one another..."

"However, after consuming the blood and achieving a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, they grew much stronger than before, even more so than me. In order to claim the blood lingering in the region for themselves, they forced me out of the area I previously resided in. As I was no match for them, I had no choice but to leave," the Blackback Tortoise said.

“You are saying that... all three of them have reached the Semi-Divinity realm?” Zhang Xuan’s face darkened.

2041 Conquerors of the Ocean

Yes, Master!” the Blackback Tortoise said with a nod.

It was still able to stand its ground against Pavilion Master Kui Xiao and the others, but it was truly helpless against those sharks.

As they were all native to the Ocean of Exiled Stars, they knew the strengths and weaknesses of each other very well. Had it not left the Vacant Sea, it would have already died.

“Not only are they at the Semi-Divinity realm, they are also stronger than me. I specialize in defense whereas they specialize in offense. If that Semi-Divinity realm cultivator who stalked and fought me earlier was encircled by them, I doubt that he would have even lasted three breaths before he breathed his last!” the Blackback Tortoise said.

Zhang Xuan’s eyes narrowed into slits upon hearing those words.

Bai Xuansheng might not have been the strongest among the heads of the Six Sects, but he was not the weakest either. For someone of his prowess to be unable to survive even three breaths before those sharks... it seemed like they were indeed fearsome adversaries!

“Master, why don’t we just drop the idea. It won’t be too late to head there after you achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm,” the Blackback Tortoise pleaded desperately.

Even though its master had many tricks up his sleeves, and the little yellow chick was a formidable beast, it still could not help but feel a little insecure. After all, they were going to face three Semi-Divinity realm beasts at once. Even if the little yellow chick was able to swallow one of them, they would still have to deal with the other two.

Zhang Xuan paused for a moment before saying, “You should return to the tamed beast sack for a moment. I’ll head there discreetly. I’ll just take a look and leave without alarming them.”

He had already gone all the way there, so how could he leave without properly investigating the matter?

The Blackback Tortoise did not specialize in stealth, so it was easy for any other Semi-Divinity realm beasts to detect its presence. On the other hand, he could conceal his aura just by driving the Heaven’s Path Divine Art. He was confident that he would be able to hide himself even from those three sharks that the Blackback Tortoise spoke of.

Seeing that it was impossible to convince its master otherwise, the Blackback Tortoise returned to the tamed beast sack with a helpless sigh.

After that was done, Zhang Xuan quickly reined in his aura and erased his presence before warily proceeding in the direction that the Blackback Tortoise had pointed out to him before.

He held his breath carefully as he allowed the water currents to carry him across the murky seabed. Fortunately for him, the seabed of the Vacant Sea was filled with taller seaweed and coral, making it easier to him to hide his silhouette.

As he proceeded forward, he wondered, If Luo Ruoxin was the one who had entered the Azure from here through a breach in the dimension barrier... who received her?

If the young lady whom the Blackback Tortoise spoke about was referring to Luo Ruoxin, who was the one who had summoned her?

So far, the only ones he knew that were capable of conducting rituals to summon deities and gods were the Otherworldly Demons.

But why did this person summon her, and how did she sustain wounds so heavy that she lost so much blood, changing in the ocean?

Everything regarding Luo Ruoxin revolved within his mind like an unsolvable memory, leaving him feeling deeply frustrated.

He was starting to find it hard to understand the young lady whom he loved.

Sighing deeply, he took out the crimson pendant hung in front of his chest. He closed his eyes and focused his consciousness on the spiritual energy within. Slowly, he could feel it becoming warm.

It seems like this has something to do with her, Zhang Xuan thought as he continued speeding ahead.

Ten minutes later, he finally came to a halt in a trench at the bottom of the ocean.

Based on what the Blackback Tortoise had said, this trench was where the base of the three sharks was located.

Zhang Xuan peered in and noted that the color of the water was even redder. At the same time, the spiritual energy felt even more abundant. Lush plants intercrossed one another as they crept out from within, creating a dense shroud.

This must be where the bulk of the scattered god blood is.

The concentration of spiritual energy there was greater than the surroundings, hinting that it was where the spiritual energy was originating from. Furthermore, he could feel the pendant growing hotter.

If he wanted to investigate the matter further to see if Luo Ruoxin was tied to it, this would probably be it.

Of course, given that it was highly likely that there were three Semi-Divinity realm immortal beasts inside, Zhang Xuan was in no rush to charge right in. Instead, he hid behind a boulder outside the trench to observe the situation.

The dense shroud of greenery blocked much of what he could see, but vaguely, he could still see innumerable life forms swimming about. However, there were no clues that indicated where the base of the sharks was at.

He had spoken with the Blackback Tortoise on the way here, and it seemed like the latter had been attacked by those three because it had refused to become their subordinate.

If not for its tough shell and swift speed, it might have died to them.

Even though they had fought before, the Blackback Tortoise did not know much about the base of those three sharks. As such, it was unable to provide any useful details.

There's no helping it.

Seeing no merit in biding his time there, Zhang Xuan stealthily walked alongside the walls of the trench and slipped in.

The trench was reminiscent of a mountain valley that extended into unknown depths. The sunlight was unable to reach in there, so it was pitch black.

With Zhang Xuan's current cultivation as a High Immortal and his Eye of Insight, he was able to navigate within such darkness without a problem. Leaning close to the walls of the trench, he gradually proceeded deeper in.

The trench was eerily quiet.

At some point, all the aquatic creatures that he had seen previously seemed to vanish from sight, as if he had proceeded into some kind of death zone.

Zhang Xuan was confident that he could hide his presence even in the face of Semi-Divinity realm beasts, so he did not pay it much heed. He continued observing his surroundings closely and advanced deeper in.

It might have been due to the effects of the god blood lingering in the area, but the plants in the area were both thick and resilient. Even someone of Zhang Xuan's fighting prowess was unable to easily pull apart a casual vine lying around.

In other words, its resilience was already on par with an average True Immortal-tier artifact!

The effects of the god blood are indeed formidable. Not only does it allow High Immortal realm beasts to reach a previously

unreachable level, even the plants have also been significantly strengthened.

The deeper he proceeded in the trench, the more concentrated the surrounding spiritual energy became. He could feel his cells leaping in excitement, craving to devour the energy lingering around.

However, he knew that he would be immediately discovered if he acted as such, so he made sure to hold himself back. After swimming another two thousand meters deeper, he finally arrived at the seabed.

Moving alongside the walls of the trench, he noticed a massive cavern.

He activated the Eye of Insight and examined it closely before nodding. “This should be the base of the three sharks...”

There was a particularly oppressive aura coming from within, and this aura somewhat resembled what he felt from the Blackback Tortoise and Pavilion Master Kui Xiao. Most likely, the three Semi-Divinity realm sharks were inside.

He touched the crimson pendant hanging in front of his chest once more and realized that it was burning hot. The heat only further intensified as he approached the cavern.

Could it be that... there is still god blood here that hasn't been devoured by those sharks yet?

The rule behind the response of the pendant seemed rather straightforward. The higher the concentration of god blood, the more heat the pendant would emanate. Given how hot the pendant was, it seemed very likely that there was still some god blood that had not been assimilated!

If he could find it, he might just be able to find a way to confirm whether it had come from Luo Ruoxin or not!

There's no choice—I can only take this risk! Zhang Xuan thought with gritted teeth before slowly swimming toward the cavern.

The cavern was roughly several hundred meters wide.

After proceeding a little further in, he noticed quite a few aquatic creatures lined up in neat formations within the massive cavern.

Taking a closer look, he realized that even the weakest of them was at the Heavenly True Immortal realm. As for High Immortals, there must have been at least several hundred of them.

Several hundred High Immortal realm beasts... Zhang Xuan's heart skipped a beat.

Was this formation not already stronger than that of any one of the Six Sects?

“With the strength of our kings, we'll be able to rule over the Ocean of Exiled Stars and ensure that no humans are able to encroach on our territories!”

“That's right! Our kings have already reached the Semi-Divinity realm, a level comparable to the leaders of the humans' Six Sects. Once they pass down the command, we'll slaughter all humans who dare to invade the ocean to show them who's boss!”

Several beasts cried out passionately.

Zhang Xuan looked at the very front of the formation and saw three massive thrones erected in the deepest depths of the cavern.

Three sharks were seated on the thrones, each of them emanating tremendous pressure.

Semi-Divinity realm experts!

Each of them possessed strength greater than that of the Blackback Tortoise.

If even each of them was that powerful, it was terrifying to imagine just how powerful their collaboration would be.

The reason we have gathered all of you here today is to warn all life forms that the ocean belongs to us. For many years, humans have encroached on our territories and stolen our resources. We shall let those thieving scoundrels know that we

shall tolerate their acts of transgression no more, and any trespassers will be massacred without any mercy whatsoever!”

The shark sitting in the middle spoke with a voice that reverberated loudly throughout the entire cavern.

“Our king speaks nothing but the utmost truth! The ocean belongs to us!”

“We have to stop the tyranny of the Six Sects, especially that of Starchaser Palace!”

Those sentiments were echoed by the rest of the aquatic creatures, and they cheered fanatically in support of the movement.

Are they planning to formally create their own power? Zhang Xuan thought with a frown.

There was no doubt that there were many powerful aquatic creatures in the ocean, but none of them had reached the Semi-Divinity realm before. As such, they did not have the strength to oppose the Six Sects.

However, with three Semi-Divinity realm experts suddenly appearing, the ambitions of the High Immortal realm aquatic creatures could not be suppressed anymore.

Thus, they intended to rally the aquatic beasts together to construct a power that could stand against the Six Sects.

That would explain why he had seen so many aquatic creatures earlier, but they simply vanished from sight later on. Most likely, he must have caught them while they were answering the summons and rushing over.

“Our first target should be Starchaser Palace. Their Starchaser Island is located at the center of the Ocean of Exiled Stars. I have discussed this with the other two kings, and we intend to launch a surprise assault to let them know that we, the aquatic creatures, aren’t to be trifled with! As long as we can show sufficient might, none of the Six Sects will dare make a move on us!” the shark seated on the middle throne said imposingly.

The ocean was rich with resources, and the beast cores of many of the aquatic creatures were beneficial to a cultivator’s

breakthrough. As such, despite the dangers lurking in the area, the Six Sects dispatched their disciples for hunting missions from time to time.

This was especially so for Starchaser Palace. Living on a lone island, it was inevitable that they were reliant on the ocean around them for resources.

If they wished to rally all the aquatic beasts together and command deference from the Six Sects, there was no better target than Starchaser Palace!

A catfish with multiple ears voiced its concerns regarding the issue. “My king, it would be most convenient for us to make Starchaser Palace our first target, but I believe that there’s a need for us to think things through first. Based on the results of my investigation, the person who summoned that young female god two months ago was none other than Palace Chief Du Qingyuan of Starchaser Palace!”

2042 The Unreliable Chick

“She’s the one behind that matter?” The shark seated on the middle throne was somewhat taken aback by that news. “Are you certain of it?”

The reason the three of them had been able to achieve a breakthrough was due to the blood droplets of the young female god falling into the sea.

“My king, I dispatched my 100,000 subordinates to look into the matter, and I am absolutely sure of it!” the catfish replied affirmatively.

The shark in the middle took a while to calm itself down before harrumphing. “Humph! So what if she’s able to summon a god? Based on what I saw that day, shortly after entering the Forsaken Continent, the god broke open the surrounding space to head somewhere else, and she hasn’t appeared ever since. As long as a god doesn’t get involved in the battle, we still stand a good chance in a war against the Six Sects!”

“Our Big Brother is right! Even the gods who have descended to the Forsaken Continent find their strengths significantly lowered here,” the shark seated on the left remarked smugly. “It’s for this reason that no gods will descend and interfere in the affairs here other than the Hall of Gods. Even if Starchaser Palace is able to communicate with the gods, it’s unlikely that they have the ability to rally the gods to fight on their behalf!”

“Since that’s the case, what do we have to fear? No matter how powerful the head of Starchaser Palace is, she’s nothing more than an individual. With the combined prowess of us three, killing her will be a walk in the park!”

The fact that the heavens have allowed us to achieve a breakthrough shows that fate is starting to favor us oceanic creatures. We should seize the day instead of allowing this rare opportunity to slip through our fingers!” the shark seated on the right added in agreement. “Our era is swiftly arriving!

How many of us aquatic creatures have those humans slain in the past? We shall return the favor twofold! We'll let them know that we aren't to be belittled!"

"We aren't to be belittled!"

Those words immediately sparked the blazing passion among the aquatic creatures. Be it the prawns, octopuses, crabs, oysters... All of them trembled in agitation upon hearing those words.

For the past several thousand years, the Six Sects of the humans had held the dominant position on the Forsaken Continent. As a result of that, the aquatic creatures had not dared step on land easily for fear of getting killed. But now that they had the backing of Semi-Divinity realm experts as well, they had nothing to fear anymore!

Hiding at the back, Zhang Xuan murmured with a frown, "The head of Starchaser Palace?"

Starchaser Palace had been founded by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. Considering that Luo Ruoxin was the Spirit God, it was only natural for her to answer their summons!

If what was said about Luo Ruoxin was right, it was likely that Palace Master Du Qingyuan had summoned her down to the Azure. Right after that, Luo Ruoxin had descended further down to the Master Teacher Continent in order to snatch the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn.

From the looks of it, getting in touch with Palace Master Du Qingyuan will be the crux of learning the truth behind everything!

He had rushed over there after deducing that the Godblood Rock had something to do with Luo Ruoxin, but it seemed like his focus had been wrong.

If Du Qingyuan was the one who had summoned Luo Ruoxin, how could she not know who and where the latter was?

I should return for now, Zhang Xuan thought to himself after learning of this critical piece of information.

Putting aside the fact that there were three Semi-Divinity realm beasts there, just the several hundred High Immortal realm ones were enough to overwhelm him!

The main reason he had sought the true origin of the god blood was to verify if Luo Ruoxin had really been to the Azure and, from there, determine where she had gone. Since he had been able to acquire the news from Palace Master Du Qingyuan, there was no need for him to remain there anymore.

After all, there was no need for him to expose himself to needless danger.

So, Zhang Xuan slowly backed away, and just as he was about to retreat from the cavern, he suddenly felt a pulsation of spiritual energy coming from within. This pulsation of energy caused the pendant around his neck to tighten a little. A frightening amount of heat was being emanated from it.

He quickly turned around and saw the shark seated at the centermost throne bringing out a crimson droplet of blood before all the aquatic creatures gathered there.

The droplet of blood was roughly the size of a sesame seed, but even so, the amount of energy that it emanated was alarming. It was as if an entire world had been compressed into it. If such an amount of energy was released, the entire ocean would immediately descend into turmoil!

“This is the god blood,” the centermost shark said as it rose from its throne. “This is the key that allowed us to reach the unattainable Semi-Divinity realm. Pledge your loyalty and serve us with devotion, and you will not be let down by what you receive!”

“My king, we are willing to pledge our lives to you!”

The appearance of the god blood caused the eyes of the aquatic creatures to light up as they roared in excitement.

Even a droplet of blood from a true god was enough for them to push for a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm. There was no doubt that it held great allure to all life forms.

Seeing that it had managed to rouse the morale of the aquatic creatures, the centermost shark nodded in contentment.

Through a mixture of fear tactics and incentives, it was confident that their subordinates would serve them loyally.

Those who have reached Semi-Divinity realm really mustn't be underestimated, Zhang Xuan thought warily.

Their strength was one thing, but he had never thought that the sharks would be so skilled in the art of commanding as well. It seemed like human cultivators had really been underestimating the intelligence of other life forms all this while.

I should leave!

There was no doubt that Zhang Xuan was interested in the god blood, but he knew that it was impossible for him to obtain it given his current strength. The risk was too great for him to bear.

Besides, there was no need for him to make a move personally. There was no doubt that Starchaser Palace and the rest of the Six Sects would deal with the three sharks once they learned of the matter. They could not risk the aquatic creatures forming a power of their own.

By then, he could simply lend them a hand in dealing with the sharks.

“Who is it?”

Boom!

A deafening voice reminiscent of rumbling thunder tremored through the entire cavern, causing rock fragments and dust to fall to the ground.

Following that, three boundless auras burst forth.

What's going on? Zhang Xuan thought with a frown.

He had been suppressing his aura the whole time, such that it should not have been possible for the other party to notice him easily. Besides, even if the other party did notice him, it should have happened as soon as he entered the cavern. Why would such a thing happen just as he was about to leave?

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan turned his head around, only to nearly faint in horror.

At some point in time, the god blood that was floating right before the eyes of the aquatic creatures had vanished without a trace, causing a huge panic within the cavern.

The three Semi-Divinity realm sharks flew into a fit of rage. They released their powerful auras, displaying their determination to rip the culprit into shreds.

“There!”

A voice echoed in the air all of a sudden.

In response to that, a shot of water current burst forth and struck the ceiling of the cavern, causing rock fragments to fall to the ground.

Tracing the shot of water current, Zhang Xuan lifted his head to take a look. What he saw nearly caused his to keel over.

In the corner of the cavern, a little yellow chick was frantically flapping its wings to maneuver through the water. At the same time, loud burps were escaping from its mouth. The energy of the god blood could be felt pulsating within its body.

It was obvious who the culprit who stole the god blood was.

“I’m not going to accompany your suicidal tendencies...”

What else could Zhang Xuan do in a situation like this other than turn tail and flee?

This fellow was really an idiot!

There were three Semi-Divinity realm beasts and several hundred High Immortal realm aquatic creatures there, and that dumb chick had still gone forward to devour their god blood. Was that any different from committing suicide?

“Master, wait for me!”

Before Zhang Xuan could get far, the little yellow chick cried out loudly, and the next moment...

It had already caught up with him.

“The might of the god blood is greater than I thought. I am at my limit and can’t really move anymore. I’ll need to rest for a while...”

Hu!

Right after saying those words, the little yellow chick dived right into his tamed beast sack.

Looking around him, Zhang Xuan saw a whole army of aquatic creatures staring at his revealed profile with stunned looks on their faces, and he nearly burst into tears.

My heavens, just what did I do so wrong to deserve such a punishment?

You sure have it easy, going to sleep and dumping all the responsibility to me. What am I supposed to do now?

Zhang Xuan cursed beneath his breath. He really wanted to roast that damned chick alive.

But he knew that it was only possible if he got out there alive. Without any hesitation, he immediately executed his Heaven's Path Movement Art and fled.

If he waited any longer, he would lose his life.

“Capture him!”

“How dare a human come here and steal our god blood? Kill him!”

“Let's make meat paste out of him to feed the dogs!”

“You buffoon, we don't have dogs underwater! You can feed him to me instead!”

The aquatic creatures bellowed in frenzy.

It was not too long ago that they had declared confidently that they would expel the humans from the ocean, yet a moment later, one of them infiltrated their nest and stole their god blood. It was inevitable that they were infuriated.

Boom boom boom!

As Zhang Xuan fled, innumerable surges of energy kept exploding around him, leaving goosebumps rising all over his arms. He really wanted to burst into tears.

I am just an innocent bystander! I swear that I'm not the culprit behind this. Why won't any of you believe me?

The gray shark seated on the lift throne rose up and scoffed in fury. “Did you think that this is a place where you can come and go as you please?”

With a whip of its tail, it appeared right before Zhang Xuan to block his escape.

There was no doubt that Zhang Xuan’s Heaven’s Path Movement Art was formidable, but his movement speed was severely impeded due to the viscosity of the water. On the other hand, the opponents that he was facing had spent their lives in the water, and their physiques were adapted for gliding through the water.

As such, he had no speed advantage whatsoever before the other party!

“You thieving human, you shall pay for your foolishness!”

The gray shark whipped its powerful tail toward Zhang Xuan with crushing might that caused even the surrounding space to collapse. There was no doubt that even the current Zhang Xuan did not have the ability to withstand such a powerful strike!

The threat of a Semi-Divinity realm beast that specialized in offense was indeed far greater than that of the Blackback Tortoise!

In this moment, Zhang Xuan panicked a little.

He had always been proud of his speed, but in the water, it was as if he was a crawling snail competing against a sprinting hare.

Turning to take a look, Zhang Xuan saw that the huge army of High Immortal realm aquatic creatures was glaring at him ferociously. The other two Semi-Divinity realm sharks had also darted over to him with killing intent flaring from them.

Zhang Xuan’s reaction was quick, but it was inevitable that he was handicapped against the aquatic creatures in a race underwater. Before he knew it, he was already tightly encircled.

“Go!”

Knowing the urgency of the situation, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist.

Hu hu hu hu hu!

Five Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords appeared before him.

With an upward flick of his finger, these five swords, imbued with the Gods' Sword Intent, pierced toward the tip of the cavern.

The Semi-Divinity realm shark before him was simply too powerful, so there was no way he could afford to face it directly. At the same time, he would be pushed back into the cavern, thus losing all chances of fleeing.

Thus, he could not afford to be bogged down here!

Since he was surrounded from all four directions, the only way he could escape was through the ceiling of the cavern!

If he could knock a way out for himself, he would be able to get to the trench, and utilizing the cover of the plants, he might just be able to get away safely!

It would be hard to find his tiny figure amid the massive ocean filled with all kinds of huge creatures. As long as he could get out of this cavern, with his disguising ability, there was a good chance that he would be able to make a successful escape!

2043 Encirclement of the Sharks

Boom!

The five Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords released their Gods' Sword Intent simultaneously, their combined might surpassing even that of his Sea Severing Sword. In an instant, a passageway that he could escape through was drilled in the ceiling.

Zhang Xuan immediately made his way in.

As soon as he dived into the passageway, a loud explosion echoed beneath him. The space where he was standing at previously had been utterly decimated.

“I need to hurry up!”

Zhang Xuan knew that his time was limited before those aquatic creatures beneath caught up with him. Thus, he infused his energy furiously into the five swords, turning them into drills that reduced the ceiling to dust upon contact.

It did not take long for the water to turn murky.

“Where do you think you're going!”

Boom!

A furious howl echoed through the passageway, and Zhang Xuan could feel the entire cavern trembling.

The sharks clearly did not expect Zhang Xuan to dive right into the ceiling. Nevertheless, they quickly pursued him.

Due to Zhang Xuan's small stature, the passageway that he had dug out was not big enough for the sharks to pass through. As such, they had no choice but to use their own strength to ram their own way out.

It took three breaths and a continuous infusion of zhenqi for Zhang Xuan to escape from the other end. As soon as he broke

out, he swiftly stowed his swords away before charging right into the coral and vines in the trench.

Before he could get too far, a resounding explosion echoed from the cavern beneath. Amid the murky waters mixed with sediment, a shark charged out furiously. It opened its mouth and spat out a jet of water.

Boom!

The jet of water dashed upward with astounding momentum, tearing apart even the plants that Zhang Xuan thought were incredibly resilient with ease.

“Parry!”

Seeing that it was impossible for him to evade the jet of water in time, Zhang Xuan took out the Tongshang Sword and slashed his blade down furiously with a livid look on his face.

The sword qi collided with the jet of water current, causing Zhang Xuan to feel a tearing pain between the webbing of his finger. While he did manage to deflect the enemy’s attack, it had also left him with a stifling ache in his chest, causing him to tumble backward uncontrollably.

“Powerful!” Zhang Xuan’s body stiffened a little.

This was the first time that he had faced off with a Semi-Divinity realm expert in the truest sense.

Even when he tamed the Blackback Tortoise previously, he had tapped into the strength of the little yellow chick in order to subdue it. It was one thing to see a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator in action, but it was another matter to experience it firsthand!

Even though he had managed to achieve a breakthrough to the Lesser High Immortal realm, and his physical body had managed to reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm, he felt like he still could not withstand a single attack from the enemy!

Zhang Xuan quickly regained control of his tumbling body before dashing outward once more.

If even facing a single Semi-Divinity realm expert was so fearsome, he could not imagine having to deal with three of them at once. Furthermore, there were still several hundred High Immortal realm aquatic creatures lying in wait for him.

His only option was to run!

“From the moment you dared steal our possession, your fate was sealed!”

A thunderous roar echoed from above.

Alarmed, Zhang Xuan raised his head, only to see another shark charging at him with its mouth wide open, revealing innumerable sharp teeth that emanated cold glints.

While one of the sharks was pursuing him, the other two had dashed out from the cavern with even greater speed to block his way from the front!

At the same time, an even more powerful jet of water shot toward him from above.

Knowing that he was in a terrible position, Zhang Xuan did not dare hold back. With a flick of his wrist, he took out the Semi-Divinity artifact that he had tamed previously and compressed it together to form a massive barrier.

A deafening explosion happened right after.

The shockwave blasted all the surrounding plants and rocks into dust.

Under the recoil, Zhang Xuan felt both of his arms going numb, as if he could not raise them anymore.

While the Semi-Divinity artifact did allow him to withstand their offense, the attack had still jolted his innards, causing him to sustain severe internal injuries.

“What the hell was that?” Zhang Xuan felt like he was on the verge of a mental breakdown.

He had only gone there to scout out the area, not to alarm the enemy, and he had indeed managed to achieve what he had set out to do. The saying was really true; all it takes is a lousy teammate to bring down an entire team!

“A Semi-Divinity artifact?” Seeing the shield that Zhang Xuan had brought out, the eyes of the sharks shone in excitement. “A droplet of god blood in exchange for a weapon. I guess that’s not too bad a deal!”

As powerful as the god blood was, all they needed was a single droplet of it in order to reach the Semi-Divinity realm. Beyond that, it was not of much use.

However, if they could tame a Semi-Divinity artifact as well, there was no doubt that their fighting prowess would rise by leaps and bounds!

Boom boom boom!

The three sharks continued bombarding the shield from all three directions, determined to break it down.

Even though Zhang Xuan was still holding on for the time being, he felt as though he was going to be paralyzed under the series of impacts. He immediately bellowed, “Blackback Tortoise, hurry up and get me out of here!”

Hu!

The Blackback Tortoise of roughly a hundred meters in length abruptly materialized, and as soon as it appeared, it dashed directly upward with Zhang Xuan on its back.

Its speed was much faster than that of Zhang Xuan’s, but it was still unable to outrun the three sharks. The three sharks continued pouring attacks down upon them, and it felt like the entire ocean would be destroyed at this 怦

“Old Tortoise, I never thought that you would choose to submit to a human instead of us. You are truly the black sheep of all aquatic creatures!”

“I would have understood it if you submitted to an expert, but he’s only a Lesser High Immortal... It’s as if you are regressing with time!”

“What a fool. We let you off, but you chose to come back. Since that’s the case, don’t expect us to show any mercy. You can be buried here together with that new master of yours!”

Cold sneers echoed all around them. Seeing how their old foe, the Blackback Tortoise, had submitted to the young man before them, the three sharks could not help but mock it.

As the Blackback Tortoise sustained more and more damage, its speed reduced visibly. Before they could even get out of the trench, it had already sent a telepathic message over. “Master, I fear that we won’t be able to get out of here at this rate...”

The reason it had been able to escape previously was because it had escaped as soon as the confrontation started, and the three sharks had no intention of going that far against it.

But this time, its master had stolen the sharks’ god blood and reduced their base to a pile of rubble...

There was no way that the sharks would let them off!

“You’re right. It doesn’t seem like we’ll be able to get away at this rate,” Zhang Xuan murmured in agreement as he quickly assessed the situation around him.

While they were clashing with the three Semi-Divinity realm sharks, the High Immortal realm aquatic creatures that he had seen in the cavern earlier had already moved to seal all possible escape routes.

In other words, they would be tied down no matter where they headed to, and eventually, they would come under the tight encirclement of the three sharks.

“What should we do?” the Blackback Tortoise asked worriedly.

It had warned its master time and time again not to go there, but he just would not listen! In the end, disaster really did strike.

Was it really going to die at the hands of the three sharks that it had gone through so much in order to escape from previously?

“Since it’s impossible for us to get away, we’ll just have to make a stand,” Zhang Xuan said as he stood up on the back of the Blackback Tortoise.

The opponents might be three Semi-Divinity realm experts, but he had a Semi-Divinity realm artifact, a Semi-Divinity

realm tamed beast, a clone, and many Soulless Metal Humanoids. They would not be able to bring him down easily!

You wish to fight against them?” The Blackback Tortoise shuddered in fear. “How? I can only hold back one of them for a short while...”

“It’s fine. Just hold back one of them while I try to kill the other. As long as we can kill one of them swiftly, we should be able to make them hesitate...” Zhang Xuan bit his lips.

The three sharks had allied themselves with one another and proclaimed themselves as ‘brothers’, but he was betting that their relationship was one of convenience rather than true kinship.

If that was really the case, as long as he could slay one of the sharks, the other two, as well as the several hundred High Immortal realm aquatic beasts around, would have to think twice before making a move.

That would provide him an ideal opportunity to make his escape!

In any case, his goal was to get out of there safely rather than to get rid of all his opponents.

“Very well then!”

Gritting its teeth, the Blackback Tortoise retracted its neck and limbs into his tortoiseshell before charging right toward one of the sharks.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan morphed his shield into a massive web of metal chains as he charged forth along with it as well.

Your opponent is me!”

But before he could get far, a shark charged right in his direction and swept its tail toward him.

Zhang Xuan immediately converged the web of chains together to deflect the attack, but the powerful impact still slammed him into the wall, creating another huge depression in the trench.

“Humph!”

Wiping the fresh blood from the corner of his lips, Zhang Xuan brought out a Soulless Metal Humanoid and commanded it to charge toward the shark.

“You have a helper? Hah!” Without any hesitation, the shark opened its mouth wide and crunched down on the Soulless Metal Humanoid. “What you have here isn’t a helper but food!”

“That depends on whether you are able to digest it or not!” Zhang Xuan smirked.

Boom!

The Soulless Metal Humanoid exploded on the spot.

“Pu!”

Due to the massive explosion, the shark spurted a mouthful of blood and threw out one of its sharp teeth, leaving it in an unkempt state.

“How dare you hurt me? I’ll tear you apart!”

Feeling a stinging pain within its body, the shark was infuriated.

It had not sustained such injuries since reaching the Semi-Divinity realm!

Sou!

It charged right toward Zhang Xuan with its mouth wide open, seemingly intent on devouring him.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan’s eyelids were twitching in disbelief. “That darned shark’s still fine after suffering an explosion within its body?”

That was a Heavenly High Immortal realm Soulless Metal Humanoid, and its explosion should have destroyed everything within a radius of hundred meters. The explosion had occurred within the body of the shark, but all it had done was to spurt a mouthful of blood and shed a single tooth.

Were Semi-Divinity realm beasts really that resilient?

Zhang Xuan immediately morphed the metal chains into a massive shield in order to block the shark's bite. He was just about to toss yet another Soulless Metal Humanoid into the other party's mouth when he saw the final shark circling behind him.

"Damn it, I guess I can only use my clone!"

Zhang Xuan knew that it was impossible for him to face two Semi-Divinity realm experts simultaneously in his state. He could very well die at this rate!

Desperate, he was thinking of bringing out his clone and Vicious as well to support him when the shark behind suddenly came to a halt.

Following that, a resounding voice echoed across the entire trench.

"Halt!"

Boom!

The one who had made the command was the shark that had sat on the centermost throne back in the cavern, the strongest among the three.

The shout made the shark, which was intent on swallowing Zhang Xuan whole, retreat slightly, and the other one that was battling with the Blackback Tortoise also paused its offense.

"Big Brother, this human dared barge into our territory and steal our god blood. This is an unforgivable crime! We have to teach him a lesson!" the shark that had lost a tooth cried indignantly.

"Big Brother, I agree with our Second Brother. Why should we show these b*stards any mercy? They might have many means up their sleeves, but with our combined might, we should be able to destroy them easily!" the other shark facing the Blackback Tortoise exclaimed in agreement.

"Shut your mouths!" the shark that the other two addressed as Big Brother bellowed.

After silencing the other two, it turned to Zhang Xuan and assessed him carefully with its massive eyes.

Perplexed by the current situation, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes and warily drove his zhenqi, fearful that the other party was just buying time to assault him.

But the next moment, the massive shark before him suddenly kneeled down and exclaimed, “Your humble subordinate pays its respect, Master!”

2044 Taming the Sharks

“Master?”

“Humble subordinate?”

The Blackback Tortoise and Zhang Xuan glanced at one another, completely taken aback by the abrupt twist.

The sharks had been dying to tear them apart a moment ago, so why would one suddenly turn into his subordinate?

The ones who were shocked by the situation were not just limited to those two. The other aquatic creatures swarming the area were stunned as well.

Their kings had always hated humans with a passion, such that there was no doubt that they would have incited a genocide if they could. Just a moment ago, they had even been discussing a scheme to teach the Six Sects a lesson. Why would one of the kings suddenly change its mind?

Not to mention, its body was bent perpendicular as if it was a set square, and it even called the human that stole their god blood its master.

“Big Brother, why are you acknowledging this measly being as your master?”

The other two sharks could hardly believe what they were hearing.

“Shut your mouth!” the ‘Big Brother’ shark roared angrily. “Get over here right now and pay your respects to Master!”

Those two sharks had no idea what their Big Brother was up to, but they dared not disobey its command. With a shake of their tails, they swam all the way up to Zhang Xuan. They shot a hesitant glance at their Big Brother once more, and after seeing the look on the latter’s face, they trembled fearfully and hurriedly bowed down. “Your humble subordinates pay its respects, Master!”

“This...” Zhang Xuan had no idea what to make of the current situation. After a moment of hesitation, he said,
“Acknowledge me as your master.”

Regardless of whether they were putting on an act or not, they would no longer be able to do anything once they were bound by Soul Contracts.

“Yes!”

To Zhang Xuan’s surprise, the ‘Big Brother’ shark offered its blood essence without any hesitation. As for the other two, they were indecisive for a moment, but after a piercing glare from the ‘Big Brother’ shark, they quickly offered their blood essence.

Zhang Xuan accepted their blood essences and completed the Soul Contract. As telepathic connections were formed among them, he realized that the sharks really were not plotting anything at all. They were earnestly acknowledging him as their master.

“This...”

It was just a moment ago that they had been trying to tear one another apart when all of a sudden, they had become his tamed beasts. This peculiar situation left Zhang Xuan feeling deeply confused.

Could it be that... he was actually very charismatic, such that they could not help but submit to him after witnessing his splendor?

But he had not intentionally released any imposing aura or the like!

The ‘Big Brother’ shark noticed Zhang Xuan’s bewilderment and explained, “It’s all due to the bestowment of the god blood that we were able to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. Master, you carry a token of the god with you, so it’s our duty to serve you!”

“A token of the god?”

Zhang Xuan subconsciously lowered his gaze to look at the crimson pendant hung around his neck. He would usually

place it within his clothes, but due to the intense heat from reacting to the god blood, he had hung it outside his clothes instead.

“That’s right,” the shark replied respectfully.

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in realization.

He had guessed previously that the god blood was related to Luo Ruoxin, and this verified his guesses.

It was through consuming the fresh blood that Luo Ruoxin had spilled into the ocean that these tortoises had managed to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. As such, they held natural deference toward anything related to her.

Regardless of how that happened, it was a huge relief that he was finally out of danger. He quickly drank a bottle of chicken soup to heal his injuries before turning to the ‘Big Brother’ shark. “Dismiss the others. There are a few questions that I would like to ask you.”

The sharks quickly passed down the orders.

The High Immortal realm aquatic creatures could sense that their previously agreed upon plans would go awry if they scattered right now, and they felt incredibly indignant about it. However, they did not dare go against the Semi-Divinity realm sharks, so they could only leave the area with reddened eyes.

After all the aquatic creatures evacuated the area, Zhang Xuan turned to the three of them and nodded wisely. “Since you have submitted to me, I should bestow names upon you so that I can better address each of you. You will be Shark One, you will be Shark Two, and you will be Shark Three.”

The three shark brothers were befuddled.

Paying no heed to the constipated looks on the trio’s faces, Zhang Xuan continued grimly. “I want you to recount to me in detail how the head of Starchaser Palace conducted a ritual to the heavens to summon a god, how the god descended to the world, and where the god eventually went.”

“It all happened two months ago.” Shark One began to recount what happened that day. “The head of Starchaser Palace suddenly appeared in the Vacant Sea. Back then, we didn’t know it was her. We were only furious to see a human trespassing into our territory, so we assaulted her. Due to the disparity in strength, we were all defeated.”

Considering how they were all only at the Heavenly High Immortal realm back then, it was inevitable that they were not a match for Palace Master Du Qingyuan.

“Following which, she used our fresh blood as a tribute for her ritual to tear apart the heavens and summon a god. Her first attempt failed, so she pushed herself to her limits and tried a second time. She probably expended all her energy in the midst of doing so as her appearance swiftly withered to that of an old granny, and it looked as if she would pass away from her frailty. All of us thought that it would be the end like that, but who could have known that... a god would really appear at that moment?”

As Shark One spoke about the god, its body trembled uncontrollably. It was hard to tell whether its reaction was out of fear or agitation.

“I can’t really say for sure, but it seems like even the second ritual was only a partial success. Perhaps it was due to the lacking strength of the head of Starchaser Palace, or the dimension barrier was simply too resilient, but the god was still unable to pass through it and descend upon our world. So, the god forced her way through the dimension barrier, and she succeeded in the end. However, she ended up paying a heavy price for it. Her forceful actions resulted in a severe backlash from the heavens of the Forsaken Continent, causing her to lose a fair bit of blood.

“As tributes for the ritual, the three of us were in the vicinity when the god breached the dimension barrier and came over. When we saw the blood from the god dripping in the ocean, we thought that this might be a golden opportunity for us. Thus, we drank a droplet of blood each, and before we knew it, we fell into a deep sleep. So, we don’t really know what happened after that...”

You don't know what happened afterward? Earlier, didn't you say that the god left afterward?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

"I was the one who saw that..." Shark Three spoke up. "I was more timid than the other two, so I hesitated quite a bit before swallowing the god blood. I vaguely saw the god placing her hand on the body of the head of Starchaser Palace, and the latter slowly reverted to her youthful form. They exchanged a few words, and shortly after, there seemed to be another ritual elsewhere summoning the god. Another dimension rift appeared, and the god left the Forsaken Continent through it."

"There was another ritual elsewhere?" Zhang Xuan fell into deep thought.

If that was the case, it was very like that other ritual was conducted by Sovereign Chen Yong to summon Luo Ruoxin to the Master Teacher Continent.

Thinking back, it could be due to the backlash from consecutively breaching two dimension barriers that Luo Ruoxin's strength had been severely limited when she first descended to the Master Teacher Continent. As a result, she had been forced to impersonate a 6-star master teacher until she finally regained her strength.

Of course, this was just speculation. As for the exact circumstances, he could only verify it with the head of Starchaser Palace in person.

Zhang Xuan took out Luo Ruoxin's portrait in order to verify with the three sharks if they were the same person, but just as had happened with the Blackback Tortoise, even though the three sharks could vaguely remember what had happened, they were unable to recall the physical characteristics of the god other than her gender.

"Then, how did you know that this is a token of the god from back then?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

"The god used that pendant to force her way through the dimension barrier back then. It was as bright as the sun—all of us witnessed it clearly—so there's no way we wouldn't recognize it," Shark One replied.

They might have forgotten the physical characteristics of the god, but they could never forget the splendor of her might.

Given that the ritual was incomplete, it should have been impossible for the god to descend upon the Forsaken Continent. It was by using the might of the pendant to rip open the dimension barrier that she managed to pass through eventually.

It was for this reason that they felt deep fear toward the prowess of the pendant and dared not make a move.

Even a droplet of blood from the god was enough for them to make a breakthrough. Considering how this young man had a token of the god in his possession, it was likely that he had deep ties with the god.

If they wished to reach anywhere higher than Semi-Divinity realm in the future, this young man would be their greatest bet.

Pride and backbone?

All of that meant nothing in the face of the superior might commanded by the gods.

Does this pendant have the ability to tear open the dimension barrier? Zhang Xuan wondered as he held the crimson pendant tightly in his grasp.

It still felt warm. He tried infusing his zhenqi into it, but nothing happened.

He tried using the Godblood Rock, Eye of Insight, and his own zhenqi on the crimson pendant, but there was simply no response. If not for the wonders it had displayed from time to time, he would have really wondered if it was just an ordinary pendant.

It might be because my cultivation is still lacking... Zhang Xuan shook his head as he thought about the time his cultivation went berserk.

Given that Luo Ruoxin had entrusted this artifact to him, there was bound to be something extremely important about it. The fact that it was able to suppress the inner demons that

threatened to collapse even the Library of Heaven's Path spoke a lot about it.

“Since the three of you have submitted to me, you will be following me from this day onward. There are many things that I'll require your help with, and you can rest assured that you'll be handsomely rewarded for your service,” Zhang Xuan said as he tucked the crimson pendant safely back inside his clothes.

With the loyalty of these three sharks, he would be under the protection of four Semi-Divinity realm beasts. Adding in the Semi-Divinity artifact in his possession as well, even the Hall of Gods would have to think twice before making a move on him!

Zhang Xuan took out a bottle of chicken soup and passed it over to the injured shark for it to recuperate from its injuries.

After that was done, he continued asking them a few questions regarding the god blood.

He learned that of the entire Vacant Sea, the only ones who had successfully made a breakthrough were the three sharks and the Blackback Tortoise because they had been the closest when that incident occurred. Shark One had acted quickly back then to store an additional droplet of god blood, but that had eventually ended up as chick fodder.

As for the rest, they had diffused all over the Vacant Sea. While the diffused god blood did strengthen the aquatic creatures and plants living in the region, it was not sufficient for them to make a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.

Zhang Xuan had intended to study the remaining god blood to double confirm the issue, but since there was none left, he could only drop the idea.

Another option was for him to force Little Chick to spit it out... but that did not seem viable.

Following that, Zhang Xuan procured quite a bit of blood from the three sharks and fed them to the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and the rest, but they were still unable to make a breakthrough.

It seemed like it was not that easy to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. It would take a lot more than the blood essences of other Semi-Divinity realm experts in order to take that final step forward.

After that was done, Zhang Xuan moved Shark Two, Shark Three, and Blackback Tortoise into the tamed beast sack before riding Shark One back to Starchaser Island.

...

While Zhang Xuan was exploring the Vacant Sea, the group from the Myriad Beasts Hall, which was still on the way to Starchaser Island, received a message from the Sevenstar Pavilion.

“Elder Qin Yuan, what’s wrong?” Elder Liao asked.

With his eyes still fixated on the Communication Jade Token in his hand, Elder Qin Yuan replied, “I received a message saying that the Sevenstar Pavilion has just chosen a new pavilion master...”

Elder Liao was surprised by the abrupt news, and he asked, “Who is it?”

“It’s a young man named Liu Yang. His cultivation is at the Lesser High Immortal realm, but he managed to master all the battle techniques of the Sevenstar Pavilion within a very short period of time. His talent in the field of martial arts is said to be unrivaled, and his cultivation is exceptional!” Elder Qin Yuan said.

Who would have thought that shortly after they found a highly talented hall master, the Sevenstar Pavilion would find a worthy successor as well!

As the saying went, ‘heroes rise in times of trouble’. Perhaps this was a premonition that a huge crisis was awaiting them in the near future.

“Liu Yang... I don’t think I have heard of that name before,” Elder Liao muttered contemplatively.

The same news had reached the ears of the group from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion rushing toward Starchaser

Island as well.

The group consisted of only Han Jianqiu, First Elder He Tian, and a few others.

One thing of note was that the adolescent youth, Wu Chen, who had traveled all the way to Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion in search of Zhang Xuan, was part of the group as well.

“Not too long after we established Zhang Xuan as our new sect leader, the Myriad Beasts Hall and the Sevenstar Pavilion rushed to do the same as well...” Han Jianqiu shook his head after receiving the news.

“Rushed to do the same as well? What do you mean by that?” First Elder He Tian asked doubtfully.

“A few days ago, the Myriad Beasts Hall nominated a middle-aged man named Zheng Yang as their new hall master.

Just a moment ago, I received a message from the Sevenstar Pavilion saying that Kui Xiao has stepped down, and he has passed his position on to a young man named Liu Yang!” Han Jianqiu said.

“Zhang Xuan, Zheng Yang, Liu Yang...” Hearing those three familiar names, a bad premonition gripped Wu Chen as his lips began twitching uncontrollably. With a look of disbelief on his face, he murmured, “It can’t be that... they are all the same person?”

2045 Paying Respects to the Palace Master

There must be at least billions of people on the Forsaken Continent, so it was inevitable that some of them would share the same names. But for the other two rising stars of the other sects to have the same names as Zhang Xuan's direct disciples?

There was no way such a coincidence could possibly happen!

While others on the Forsaken Continent might not know of Zhang Xuan's direct disciples, Wu Chen was familiar with them. It was no easy feat to ascend to the Forsaken Continent. It was already incredible that Zhang Xuan had been able to make his way up there with his own strength, so how could he possibly be able to bring his direct disciples along with him?

Not to mention, it was hard to believe that even his direct disciples would grow as monstrously fast as him!

In other words... he suspected that 'Zheng Yang' and 'Liu Yang' were Zhang Xuan's aliases!

Thinking back to the days on the Master Teacher Continent, Zhang Xuan had always liked to take on new personas, such as Yang Xuan, Luo Tianya, and Sun Qiang... What better way was there for a humblebragger to humblebrag than this?

Sharply catching Wu Chen's murmurings, Han Jianqiu turned his gaze over and asked, "They are the same person? What do you mean by that?"

"No, it's nothing much." Wu Chen shook his head. "It was just a casual remark."

"I see." Han Jianqiu nodded a little before remarking, "It seems like there will be a commotion at the Azure Bridge this time. I wonder how Zhang Xuan will fare against Zheng Yang and Liu Yang. To be honest, I'm looking forward to seeing

those three geniuses going against one another in the dueling ring.”

“It will indeed be an interesting match.” Elder Liao nodded in agreement.

Wu Chen’s eyes darted downward, and he murmured with an even softer voice that only he could hear, “It’s indeed something worth anticipating. It’s just that I wonder if the person-in-question feels the same way...”

Half a day later, Zhang Xuan arrived back at Starchaser Island.

“Paying respects to Pavilion Master Liu.” Kui Xiao clasped his fist.

He had thought that the young man had just gone around touring the area, oblivious to the fact that he had just made a round trip to the highly dangerous Vacant Sea.

“Pavilion master?” Zhang Xuan frowned at that title.

“I have just instructed the elders to officially relay the message to the other five sects. From this day onward, you will officially be the incumbent head of our Sevenstar Pavilion!” Kui Xiao said with a cheery smile. “There’s no need to worry though. I’ll be supporting you as an elder.”

Zhang Xuan did not expect everything to proceed so swiftly, and he could not help but shake his head.

However, since he had already given his word to Kui Xiao, he would not back out anymore. Besides, his influence as the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion would make it much easier for him to move around the Forsaken Continent.

He would just have to leave the Blackback Tortoise with them before leaving the Forsaken Continent in order to repay them for this favor.

“How is the relationship between the Sevenstar Pavilion and Starchaser Palace?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“On the whole, Starchaser Palace doesn’t really have friendly relations with any of the other five sects. The Sevenstar Pavilion liaises with Starchaser Palace regarding business

matters, but other than that, I'm afraid that we don't have any informal connections with them," Elder Kui Xiao replied.

"In other words, we aren't close to them at all?" Zhang Xuan asked with a deep frown.

"It wouldn't be wrong to say that." Elder Kui Xiao nodded. "However, it doesn't mean that it's impossible to bargain with them. As the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, as long as what you request isn't overboard, they will still try to accommodate your request to uphold some basic formalities."

Even if the two sects were not close with one another, as fellow heads of the Six Sects, they still had to give each other some leeway. After all, there was no saying when they would require each other's help, especially since there was a greater threat looming above them.

It would be unwise to cause a fallout over minor issues.

"I wish to pay a visit to the head of Starchaser Palace to ask about some matters," Zhang Xuan said.

"If you are just asking some questions, it shouldn't be too much of a problem." Elder Kui Xiao nodded. "As long as it doesn't involve their rituals and the gods, I don't see any issues in that. As you know, Starchaser Palace's greatest strength is its ability to reach out to the gods. Naturally, that's a confidential matter to them, and it would be unwise to ask them to share such sensitive matters."

Back then, when the heads of the Six Sects were gathered together to discuss their plans for the Azure Bridge, Hall Master Qin Yuan had just broached the subject a little, and that had nearly landed them in a fight.

As long as the young man did not touch this sensitive topic, everything should be fine.

"This..."

Those words left Zhang Xuan completely wide-eyed.

Those two were the exact things that he wanted to ask the head of Starchaser Palace about!

Taking the young man's response into sight, Elder Kui Xiao's eyes widened as well as he carefully asked, "Pavilion Master Liu, do you intend to ask them about that?"

"Well, there is something extremely important to me that I really need to verify with Palace Master Du," Zhang Xuan replied hesitantly. "Do you know how I can get into contact with her?"

Even though Elder Kui Xiao had already discouraged him, he still wanted to give it a try.

If he visited her and asked her in his capacity as the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, it was more likely that he would receive a favorable response compared to him probing around as a disciple.

Seeing that the young man's mind was made up, Elder Kui Xiao rubbed his temples in exasperation. It was just a moment ago that he had officially announced that he was passing down his position to this young fellow, and this young fellow was already starting to stir trouble.

Eventually, though, out of consideration that the young man was already the pavilion master, he still spoke up. "It's not too difficult to get in contact with her. I should be able to help you arrange a meeting. However, Pavilion Master Liu, you must exercise the utmost prudence. Palace Master Du is a very hot-tempered person. If you get into a verbal disagreement with her, I will have to ask you to calm down and consider the interests of our sect..."

To be honest, he was not too worried about the young man's safety. Du Qingyuan was a formidable cultivator, but their new pavilion master had a Semi-Divinity artifact and the Blackback Tortoise with him. If a battle really broke out, the one who would be in a disadvantageous position might not necessarily be him.

That being said, it was still best to avoid a conflict altogether. As heads of their respective powers, their relationship with one another would dictate the future relationship between their respective powers.

“Rest assured, I would just like to ask some basic questions. I have no intention of burning bridges,” Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

He had always gone with the mentality of an eye for an eye. He would not cause trouble if the other party did not provoke him, not to mention that the relationship between the two sects was at stake.

“That’s a huge relief!” Elder Kui Xiao patted his chest in relief upon receiving that promise. “Alright then, I’ll help you contact her right now.”

After that, he took out a Communication Jade Token and tapped it lightly.

A few moments later, he raised his head and said, “Pavilion Master Liu, she has agreed to a meeting with you. However, she requests for the meeting to be in Starchaser Palace.”

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

The location did not matter to him.

Under Elder Kui Xiao’s lead, the two of them quickly made their way through the island, and soon enough, they were already standing right before the massive gates of Starchaser Palace.

Unlike other sects, Starchaser Palace appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary palace. It was located at the center of the massive city, just like the Sevenstar Pavilion, but its form was nowhere near as imposing as the latter’s seven towers.

However, if one took a closer look, one would realize that the spiritual energy within millions of li was surging endlessly toward this very palace, forming an enormous formation.

It was probably due to such a firm foundation that the Starchaser Pavilion had been able to thrive despite being surrounded by powerful aquatic creatures.

Elder Kui Xiao handed the greeting scroll over, and the two of them were immediately granted entry to the palace. Led by a female attendant, they were taken from corridor to corridor before eventually being settled within a spacious guest hall.

They waited for a short while before another female attendant entered the guest hall and said, "Pavilion Master Liu, our palace master wishes to have a private meeting with you. I'll have to ask Elder Kui Xiao to rest here for the time being."

"I understand." Elder Kui Xiao nodded.

He knew that the young man had something confidential that he had to discuss with Du Qingyuan, so it was not convenient for him to be listening in as well. Thus, Elder Kui Xiao told the young man to take care of himself before settling back down in the chair.

Zhang Xuan followed the female attendant out of the guest hall, and passing through the corridor, he soon arrived before a private chamber.

The interior of the chamber was deathly silent, and there was a massive veil at the center of the room that hindered one's sight.

A calm voice sounded from beyond the veil. "To what do I owe this visit, Pavilion Master Liu? I just received news regarding your inauguration, and I didn't think that you would come knocking shortly after.

The Sevenstar Pavilion has always been a trading partner of Starchaser Palace. I reckon that a matter that requires Pavilion Master Liu to request a meeting with me so urgently is something of vital importance. I'll try my best to fulfill your request as long as it's something within my means."

Zhang Xuan was slightly displeased to see that the head of Starchaser Palace was putting on airs with him by facing him through a veil. He had never heard that Du Qingyuan had such a habit, so he could not help but think that the latter was trying to test or mock him.

Nevertheless, he clasped his fist and said, "I do have an urgent request that requires your assistance, Palace Master Du."

The person beyond the veil nodded. "Feel free to speak your mind."

"Palace Master Du, I heard that you have conducted a ritual two months ago for a god to descend upon the Forsaken

Continent. I would like to ask some matters regarding the god,” Zhang Xuan said.

Since he was already there, he was determined to clarify the doubts in his mind.

“I have no idea where you received the news from, Pavilion Master Liu, but I am unaware of what you are speaking of. Given so, I fear that there’s nothing I can tell you,” the person beyond the veil replied coldly.

A frown appeared on Zhang Xuan’s forehead, and he said, “I have visited the Vacant Sea personally to investigate the matter, and there are witnesses stating that you visited the area two months ago. You conducted a ritual in order to summon a god, and the ritual failed, resulting in the god incurring some severe injuries while trying to barge her way through.”

“Pavilion Master Liu must have heard wrongly. I have been cooped myself in Starchaser Palace for years, and there’s no way I could have been at the Vacant Sea. I’m afraid that I know nothing of what you are saying at all,” the person beyond the veil replied. “If you are here to grasp at straws, I’m afraid that I don’t have time to accompany you, Pavilion Master Liu. Xiao Qing, send off our guest!”

The female attendant from before immediately walked over and gestured outward. “Pavilion Master Liu, this way please.”

“Since you are reluctant to share about that matter, Palace Master Du, I will have to ask you to pardon my discourtesy!”

Without even sparing a glance at the female attendant, Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly before abruptly rising to his feet.

He knew that there was a chance that Du Qingyuan would feign ignorance of the matter, but since this matter concerned Luo Ruoxin, even if he had to flip the entire Starchaser Palace upside down, he was determined to uncover the truth.

He might still have thought twice in the past, but with five Semi-Divinities protecting him, he definitely possessed the means to force the other party to speak!

He was more than willing to wait for any other matter, but for this single issue, he could not allow himself to wait any longer.

“Discourtesy?” The voice beyond the veil turned wintry.
“Pavilion Master Liu, are you intending to make Starchaser Palace your enemy?”

“I have no intentions of doing so. All I wish is for you to satisfy this little bit of curiosity of mine, Palace Master Du,”
Zhang Xuan replied with a wave of his hand.

Hula!

The four Semi-Divinity realm beasts appeared in the room simultaneously.

“Invite Palace Master Du over here!”

Yes, Master!”

Even though the three sharks and the Blackback Tortoise were aquatic creatures, having reached their current cultivation realm, they were more than capable of surviving on land as well. It was just that their strength would be slightly crippled as a result.

Hong long!

With the four aquatic creatures releasing their might at once, a tremendous energy burst right into the clouds. “Audacious!”

The person on the other side of the veil clearly did not think that the new head of the Sevenstar Pavilion would be so brazen as to make a move in her own territory.

Huala!

Several Heavenly High Immortal realm elders burst into the room, causing a powerful burst of wind to sweep inward.
“Send out those intruders,” Zhang Xuan ordered calmly.

Peng peng peng peng!

All the elders who had just entered flew outward simultaneously and crashed to the ground, sustaining severe injuries.

There was simply too huge a gap between High Immortals and Semi-Divinities. Even though these aquatic creatures were only able to bring forth at most eighty percent of their strength

on land, they were still a force far surpassing what those Heavenly High Immortals could deal with.

Hu!

While Shark One knocked those Heavenly High Immortals back, Shark Two, Shark Three, and the Blackback Tortoise dashed forward to encircle the figure beyond the veil. With their combined strength, they swiftly bound the other party and brought her before Zhang Xuan.

“You aren’t Palace Master Du Qingyuan? Who are you?”

Facing the young lady before him, Zhang Xuan questioned her with a deep frown.

The young lady before him was dressed in a light purple dress, and she boasted a curvaceous figure. Her appearance was reminiscent of that of a twenty-five years old, so her actual age was definitely beneath a hundred years. Furthermore, her cultivation was only at the Lesser High Immortal realm!

Of course, someone of Du Qingyuan’s means would be more than capable of concealing her age and cultivation, but it was obvious that the young lady before him harbored great fear of him despite the bravado that she was putting on. How could she possibly be the head of Starchaser Palace?

Not to mention, Du Qingyuan was rumored to be an expert even stronger than Elder Kui Xiao. Even if she was not the strongest within the Six Sects, she would definitely rank within the top three!

2046 Guests From the Hall of Gods

“You dare wreak havoc in Starchaser Palace... Are you trying to incite a war?” the young lady roared with a reddened face.

She never would have thought that the newly-inaugurated Pavilion Master Liu of the Sevenstar Pavilion would be so unreasonable, completely disregarding the etiquette between sects and capturing her without any hesitation.

Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up upon hearing those words. He took a step forward imposingly and glared at the young lady coldly. “I don’t think your audacity is anywhere beneath mine. I earnestly sent a request for an audience with Palace Chief Du, but you tried to play me off with a mere substitute. Is this a provocation directed toward the Sevenstar Pavilion? Are you trying to incite a war?”

No matter what, he had come as a representative of the Sevenstar Pavilion, having made a formal request and submitted a name scroll at the entrance. Yet, it was one thing for Palace Master Du not to meet him, but they had even tried to hoodwink him with a fake. Was this not as good as making a fool out of him?

It was no wonder they refused to allow Elder Kui Xiao to come along with him!

It was obvious that they were taking advantage of him for being green and not knowing the real Du Qingyuan!

“You...” The young lady trembled fearfully.

She seemed to have many words on the tip of her tongue, but nothing came out of her mouth.

She knew that Starchaser Palace was at fault.

“Where is Palace Master Du? Get her to meet me right now, and I’ll drop this matter. Otherwise, if this matter blows up,

none of you will be able to take responsibility!” Zhang Xuan harrumphed as he swept a threatening gaze across the room.

He was not too sure of the reason, but it seemed like Du Qingyuan was unwilling to meet him. Otherwise, she would not have allowed her subordinates to play such a trick on him. Given so, it was apparent that talking would not suffice, so he chose to put up a strong front in order to force Starchaser Palace to bring out Du Qingyuan.

No matter what, he was determined to acquire information regarding Luo Ruoxin!

The young lady clenched her teeth tightly, but she did not say a word at all.

“Keeping silent, aren’t we? If that’s the case, I won’t be standing on ceremony anymore,” Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

The four Semi-Divinity realm beasts immediately released their auras, crushing the surrounding cultivators to the ground.

As powerhouses of the Sea of Exiled Stars, these four beasts had their hands stained with fresh blood. Their auras carried frightening killing intent that left the weaker-willed panting for breath.

“Pavilion Master Liu, please quell your rage!”

At this moment, a voice sounded from the distance. Right after, a Heavenly High Immortal realm old lady dressed in a robe flew into the private chamber.

“I am the First Elder of Starchaser Palace, Zhao Yue. This young lady over here is our palace master’s direct disciple, Chu Yin. Please pardon her if she has offended you in any way!”

Zhang Xuan gazed at the old lady intently, indicating for her to go on.

“Palace Chief Du has some matters to attend to, so she isn’t in Starchaser Palace at the moment. We feared that there might be unease if those coming here from the other sects learned of the matter, so we chose to suppress the news for the time

being. I beg for pardon for this matter.” First Elder Zhao Yue clasped her fist.

Those words caused a frown to be etched on Zhang Xuan’s forehead.

It should not be anything much for the head of a sect to not be in, so was there really a reason to conceal such a trivial matter?

On the contrary, such a move would only lower Starchaser Palace’s credibility if it was exposed, thus achieving the opposite effect!

Besides, even if the head was not in, there were still many elders to attend to administrative affairs. With the mechanisms driving the daily functions of the sect still present, it was unlikely for any mishaps to occur!

It was not as if other powers would send in their troops to wreak havoc as soon as they realized that the head of the sect was not around!

First Elder Zhao Yue noticed Zhang Xuan’s doubt, and she clasped her fist with a bitter smile. “We have our own reasons for coming up such a flawed solution... I humbly ask for Pavilion Master Liu’s understanding.”

“Reasons?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Pardon me, but it isn’t convenient for me to speak about this matter. Since our palace master isn’t present at the moment, I would like to ask you to come back on another date, Pavilion Master Liu. Our sect has indeed made a mistake, and you can be assured that our palace master will offer you a satisfactory explanation when she returns!” First Elder Zhao Yue said.

Zhang Xuan looked intently for a moment longer to assess the sincerity of the other party’s response before eventually nodding. “It’s fine, I don’t intend to take the matters that happened today to heart. However, I would like you to inform me as soon as Palace Master Du returns to Starchaser Palace.”

He was just there to inquire about Luo Ruoxin; he had no intention of turning Starchaser Palace against the Sevenstar Pavilion. Since the other party had already lowered their

stance, it would only seem petty of him to continue pursuing the matter.

With a wave of his hand, he returned the four Semi-Divinity realm beasts to his tamed beast sack.

“Farewell.”

After that, he turned around and left the private chamber.

As soon as he returned to the guest hall, Elder Kui Xiao immediately stood up and walked over anxiously.

“I felt pulsations of energy coming from where you were earlier. What happened?”

He was afraid that the young man before him had come to blows with Palace Master Du Qingyuan, and this had left him feeling deeply uneasy.

“I’ll fill you in on the details once we return,” Zhang Xuan said instead of explaining on the spot.

With this, the two of them left Starchaser Palace.

However, after they had flown just a short distance away, Zhang Xuan abruptly came to a halt.

“Pavilion Master Liu...” Noticing that the young man’s complexion did not look quite right, Elder Kui Xiao asked in bewilderment, “Just what in the world happened earlier? Did you meet Palace Master Du? What was with that pulsation of energy earlier?”

It could not be that they had really come to blows, right?

Pavilion Master Liu, you promised me that you wouldn’t act recklessly!

“I didn’t meet Palace Master Du.” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He filled Elder Kui Xiao in on the entire story.

“You said that Palace Master Du wasn’t in the sect, so her direct disciple impersonated her and met you in her stead?” Elder Kui Xiao was stunned by the turn of events.

It was not too rare for a sect leader to be out. The fact that the two of them were at Starchaser Palace at this very moment served as a perfect example.

Was there really a need for them to get someone to impersonate her?

Something really felt amiss!

It did not make sense for a sect with millenniums of history behind it to not know the common protocols and end up making such a foolish move!

“I also think that something is off. Elder Kui Xiao, you should return to the Sevenstar Pavilion for the time being. Meanwhile, I’ll head back to Starchaser Palace to scout the situation,” Zhang Xuan said.

No matter how he looked at it, it was clear that something was happening within Starchaser Palace. The situation that had happened just a moment ago was simply too baffling. It was something that never should have happened in the circle they were in!

Palace Master Du was the only person who knew about the details regarding Luo Ruoxin’s descent, so he had to find her no matter what it took!

“I’ll go with you!” Elder Kui Xiao said worriedly.

“I’m afraid that something might happen while we are away. Someone needs to be there to take charge of the situation in case something occurs,” Zhang Xuan replied grimly.

Hearing those words, Elder Kui Xiao did not insist. “Alright then. You must take care!”

If Starchaser Palace was acting so weirdly in their own headquarters, something major must really be happening. It would indeed be unsafe if there was no Semi-Divinity realm cultivator in the Sevenstar Pavilion to stand guard.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan leaped into a remote alley, and when he walked out once more, his appearance had already changed completely. He was no longer Liu Yang.

After completing his disguise, he quickly made his way back to Starchaser Palace.

This time, instead of walking in through the main entrance, he snuck in stealthily. His concealment would allow him to hide from Semi-Divinity realm experts, let alone the bunch from Starchaser Palace. It did not take him long to return to the private chamber that he had entered previously.

He discreetly flew in and hid among the beams in the ceiling.

The elders whom he had knocked out of the room had disappeared, and even the traces of battle had vanished.

The only ones left around were Elder Zhao Yue and Chu Yin.

“First Elder, this really won’t do! If even Pavilion Master Liu was able to see through my disguise, those people will definitely be able to do the same!” Chu Yin said worriedly. “I am able to put on my teacher’s voice, but I am unable to imitate my teacher’s disposition and aura.”

“I know that it’s impossible for you to imitate our palace master impeccably, but we have no other choice. We can only stall for as much time as possible!” the First Elder said.

“I understand... What should I do then?” Chu Yin bit her lips nervously.

“This is a jade token containing our palace master’s zhenqi. As long as you hold it in your palm and activate it, you’ll be able to bring out the aura of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, similar to that of our palace master,” First Elder Zhao Yue said.

“I’ll try my best then.” Chu Yin nodded hesitantly.

She held the jade token in her grasp, and the next moment, her aura changed. It was as if she had turned into another person. Her disposition became extremely cold, keep others a distance away from her. At the same time, a power that the ordinary would not dare think of approaching burst forth from her.

“No matter what happens, you might make sure to rein in your emotions. Don’t worry if you find yourself in a tight spot; I’m there to support you if need be...” First Elder Zhao Yue added.

Before she could finish her words, a powerful aura suddenly materialized in the courtyard just in front of the private chamber.

The First Elder's voice trailed to a halt as her face darkened. She hurriedly urged Chu Yin to the other side of the veil.

Barely after they were done with that, a calm voice echoed across the courtyard. "May I hear Palace Master Du's decision?"

A few figures walked over with deliberate footsteps. There were five people in total. The one leading the group was a gray-robed middle-aged man whose cultivation felt like the boundless ocean, making it nigh impossible to gauge the extent of his strength.

"They..." Glancing at the guests outside, Zhang Xuan's body trembled a little from disbelief as he murmured, "Hall of Gods?"

2047 The Strongest Fist Reigns Mighty

He had crossed blows with those from the Hall of Gods twice and even slain a couple of their Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators. As such, he already had a deep understanding of them.

The five fellows in front of him emanated a unique aura that felt both sharp and disconcerting. With just a glance, there was no doubt that they were from the Hall of Gods.

“A Semi-Divinity realm cultivator accompanied by four Heavenly High Immortals... What a line-up!” Zhang Xuan’s eyes narrowed into slits.

The cultivators from the Hall of Gods possessed extraordinary strength, such that even their Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators wielded strength that allowed them to withstand the might of Semi-Divinity realm experts!

As such, it did not take too much imagination to fathom just how formidable a force this group of people was.

Even if Palace Master Du was there, she would probably have had difficulties dealing with them. Of course, that was not to say that she would not be able to win the battle—they were in the heart of Starchaser Palace after all, her territory.

It was just a matter of how high a price she would have to pay for victory.

The accumulation of the Six Sects over their thousands of years of existence was not to be underestimated.

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, for example, only had one Semi-Divinity realm expert, Han Jianqiu, so it might seem like the current force that Zhang Xuan commanded could easily overwhelm them. However, if he really dared invade the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, the one who would end up dead in the very end would be him.

Just the countless Sword Intents stored in the Compendium of Sword Wisdom would be more than enough to overwhelm his four Semi-Divinity realm beasts! Not to mention, the sect was protected by the founder's Gods' Sword Intent as well.

This was why the Hall of Gods dared not cross the Six Sects easily. While its strength was a notch higher than that of the Six Sects, it was not so absolute as to be able to destroy the Six Sects with ease.

Of course, the Six Sects would not use these trump cards easily too, especially since most of them were only one-time use. If the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion tapped into the prowess of the Compendium of Sword Wisdom, it would effectively be destroying their own heritage, preventing the knowledge of the predecessors from being passed down to the later generations.

For this reason, unless it was in a time of crisis, no one would think of utilizing these trump cards.

For Starchaser Palace to be able to survive despite not being on friendly terms with the other five sects, there was no doubt that they had such trump cards as well. Just their ability to communicate with the gods was one perfect example. While it would be far too arrogant to expect the gods to fight for them, the gods might have granted them powerful artifacts in return for their offerings.

"I have already thought it through, and it'll be difficult for Starchaser Palace to accede to your request," replied the voice beyond the veil.

Her voice was much more stable than before, carrying the weight that a sect leader should have.

"Difficult?" The middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods chuckled lightly to himself. "You should be aware that there's a limit to the patience of the Hall of Gods. If you don't grasp this opportunity now, you will have to face the consequences in the future."

"Is that so? There's one thing that I am very curious about that I hope you can enlighten me on. The Hall of Gods has always

been a lofty existence, never interfering in the secular affairs of the Forsaken Continent. Why are you seeking out our Starchaser Palace at this juncture?”

“There’s no need for you to ask any questions. You’ll know what you need to know. We are just carrying out the orders of our master,” the middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods replied without the slightest change in his expression.

“Don’t delude yourself. The Hall of Gods always gets what it wants. Even if you turn us down, we have plenty of means to achieve our goals. The only reason we gave you a day to consider the matter is because we don’t wish to dye your beautiful island crimson. I advise you not to test us.”

There was a brief moment of silence in the air before the voice beyond the veil sounded once more. “I don’t deny it. We won’t stand a chance against the powerful Hall of Gods. However, if you make such a big move, the lofty reputation of the Hall of Gods will be tarnished.”

“Are you worrying about us?” The middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods burst into laughter. “Reputation means nothing to existences like us. Even without it, who would dare question our authority? Starchaser Palace might have its trump cards, but make no mistake, it wouldn’t take us too much effort to crush you beneath our feet!”

Reputation was only important between equal existences. To behemoths whose every footstep quaked the world, what did the mere opinions of ants count for?

Before absolute strength, those doubtful voices meant nothing at all.

What airs the Hall of Gods is putting on! Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly as he gazed upon the happenings from above.

Those words sounded very jarring to his ears, but he knew that there was a sliver of truth in them.

It reminded him of the Manchu[1] in his previous life. Those who dared keep their hair would not be able to keep their

heads. Through absolute force, they forced the territories that they annexed to bow to their culture.

It was clear that this was the stance that the Hall of Gods was going with.

This was a world where the strongest fist reigned mightily!

“Do you really intend to make a move against Starchaser Palace?” The person beyond the veil clearly did not expect to hear such words, and her voice began to quaver a little.

“We don’t need to make a move personally. All we have to do is kill you, the backbone of Starchaser Palace, and I believe that there will be many sects who will be more than willing to deal the finishing blow so that they can replace you,” the middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods pointed out coldly.

If Starchaser Palace lost its Semi-Divinity realm expert, it would gradually lose its say in the matters of the world, and it would be forced to compromise again and again. Eventually, it would come to a point where it fell out of the top echelon.

This was simply reality.

“You...”

The person beyond the veil fell silent. A moment later, she said, “I’m willing to make compromises but the item you requested is the foundation of our Starchaser Palace. Even I don’t have the right to make such a decision individually.”

“What Palace Master Du means to say is...”

“Give me another day. I’ll discuss the matter with the elders of the sect and give you a satisfactory answer tomorrow,” the person beyond the veil said.

“You want another day?” The middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods sneered coldly. “Even if I give you another day, I doubt that a fake like you will gain the authority to make the call. Isn’t that so?”

Hula!

Right after those words were spoken, a surge of sword qi burst forth and sliced the veil in two, revealing Chu Yin’s silhouette.

You...”

Seeing that she had been exposed, Chu Yin’s body trembled in fear.

She had thought that her impersonation was close enough to fool the other party, but it seemed like the other party did not fall for it at all.

“Are you wondering how I knew that you were a fake?” The middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods harrumphed coldly.

Chu Yin could not help but clench her fists tightly as she stared anxiously at the person before her, and First Elder Zhao Yue’s body stiffened in horror as well.

“Yesterday, when Palace Master Du said that she would give me an answer a day later, I knew what you lot were up to. Did you really take us, the warriors of the Hall of Gods, for fools?” the middle-aged man scoffed.

“I was just playing along with you to see how far you’d go! That being said, I must admit that I am impressed. Despite your young age, you can impersonate Du Qingyuan rather well. I can tell that you have put quite a bit of effort into it!”

“If you knew from the start, then...” Chu Yin was taken aback.

Since they had known right from the start, why did they still agree to give them an additional day to discuss the matter? Why did they choose to reside in Starchaser Palace for another day instead of forcing them to hand over the artifact?

“It’s very simple. I wanted you to hand the item over yourselves. We already knew of Du Qingyuan’s departure, and we have dispatched our men to deal with her. Most likely, that palace master of yours has either been captured or killed,” the middle-aged man replied.

“The reason we chose to stay here is just to numb you all. Did you really think that such cheap ploys would work on us?”

Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue’s faces turned utterly pale as they subconsciously retreated several steps.

If that was the case... did it not mean that their palace master was in danger?

[1] The Manchu, who ruled over China during the Qing Dynasty, had a unique hairstyle for males where they would shave the front and leave a ponytail at the back. Those who have watched Return of the Pearl Princess, Empresses in the Palace, or Story of Yanxi Palace might find them familiar.

2048 The Warriors of the Hall of Gods

Seeing that words were unnecessary at this juncture, the middle-aged man waved his hand and ordered, “Capture them all!”

The four Heavenly High Immortals behind him immediately marched forward.

“Protect the First Elder!”

In response, more than a dozen Heavenly High Immortal realm elders rushed into the private chamber from all directions.

Three minutes later, all the elders from Starchaser Palace were lying on the ground, every single one of them incapacitated.

Despite being fellow High Immortals, the warriors from the Hall of Gods were simply much more powerful than ordinary sect elders. They simply were not on the same footing as one another, so the outcome of the battle was decided right from the start.

At the same time, Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue were captured as well.

“Bring them back. It would be best if we can capture Du Qingyuan, but if they fail, we’ll use these two as hostages to force her to submit!” the middle-aged man ordered before turning around to leave.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan slowly drove his zhenqi as he prepared to make his move to save the crowd from Starchaser Palace from the hands of the Hall of Gods.

He had refrained from making a move so far in hopes of seeing what trump cards the group from the Hall of Gods was capable of. After all, this was the first time that he would be facing a Semi-Divinity realm expert from the Hall of Gods, so he knew that he should only make a move when he was

confident of victory. Otherwise, not only would he be unable to save the rest, he would also place himself in deep danger.

Unfortunately, the group from Starchaser Palace never managed to force the Semi-Divinity realm expert into making a move.

Despite the uncertainties involved, Zhang Xuan knew very well that he could not allow the Hall of Gods to take away these people. For one, it would put Du Qingyuan in danger, and that would make it difficult for him to acquire the information he required.

Not to forget, he had a grudge with the Hall of Gods. He was not too sure what the Hall of Gods was up to yet, but there was no harm getting in the way of what they were doing.

Zhang Xuan discreetly took out the Tongshang Sword and the other four Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords. He was intending to quickly assassinate the four Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators from the Hall of Gods before focusing on the Semi-Divinity realm expert.

But before he could make a move, a sharp gust of wind sounded from the distance, and right after, an overwhelming pressure crushed down on the private chamber.

Another Semi-Divinity realm cultivator? Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

He quickly halted his circulation of zhenqi and continued concealing his aura.

Who is it?

The middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods also noticed the intruder, and he quickly scanned his surroundings intently.

A warm and soothing voice filled the air. "Friend, don't you think you are going too far a little? I'll have to ask you to free those from Starchaser Palace."

Following that, an old man dressed in green descended upon the entrance of the private chamber before making his way in.

This old man appeared to be in his sixties, and he had a flowing beard that gave him a sagely presence.

Just like what Zhang Xuan had perceived earlier on, his cultivation was at Semi-Divinity realm, and his aura felt incredibly deep, reminiscent of peering into the abyss. It was likely that he was stronger than even Han Jianqiu.

Is he from the Evanescent Immortal Sect? Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had met four heads of the Six Sects thus far, leaving only the faces of Palace Master Du and the sect leader of the Evanescent Immortal Sect a mystery to him.

The only reason Shark One, Shark Two, Shark Three, and the Blackback Tortoise were able to achieve a breakthrough was due to the god blood, and given the nature of the Hall of Gods, it was not too surprising for them to have Semi-Divinity realm cultivators in their ranks.

Other than them, the heads of the Six Sects should have been the only Semi-Divinities in this world.

It was clear that the old man who had just appeared was not an ally of the Hall of Gods, and bewilderment could be seen reflected in the eyes of Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue.

So, the only one that was left was the head of the Evanescent Immortal Sect.

The middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods harrumphed coldly. "You want me to free them? You'll have to prove yourself worthy of uttering those words first!"

Hu!

Two of the Heavenly High Immortals from the Hall of Gods raised their swords and drove them right toward the old man.

Even though the two of them did not intentionally coordinate with one another, their Sword Intents seemed to fuse together, producing a force that ripped a void in the space before them.

In terms of mastery of swordsmanship, these two would not pale in comparison to First Elder He Tian and the others from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

Sensing the pressure produced by those two, Zhang Xuan could not help but clench his fists tightly.

He had made great advancements in his cultivation recently, making him nearly invincible among all High Immortals. Nevertheless, he had to admit that the might produced by the two of them was indeed formidable. If used well, it could have potentially forced him into a corner.

Even a Semi-Divinity realm beast like the Blackback Tortoise would have some difficulties dealing with it.

Thus, Zhang Xuan focused his attention on the old man, wanting to see how the latter would deal with a situation like this.

Hu!

In his eyes, he could see a hint of a smile creeping onto the lips of the old man as he made a move. The old man raised his palm and waved it lightly.

Peng! Peng!

The two Heavenly High Immortals from the Hall of Gods were immediately sent crashing heavily onto the ground. Their faces turned ghastly pale as fresh blood spurted from their lips.

It was just a single move, but those two had already sustained severe injuries!

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes.

He had thought that the old man was only slightly stronger than Han Jianqiu, but it turned out that he was underestimating the other party a great deal.

It was hard to believe that what had appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary wave of a hand boasted such unbelievable might!

After knocking out the two Heavenly High Immortals, the old man quickly advanced toward the other two Heavenly High Immortals holding Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue before waving his hand lightly once more.

It was a deceptively simple move consisting of innumerable transformations. The two Heavenly High Immortals tried to retaliate, but everything they tried was easily countered.

Peng peng!

With another two hollow thuds, those two were sent crashing onto the ground as well with severe injuries. Judging from their wounds, they would not be able to participate in the battle in the short term.

“There’s no need to worry anymore,” the elder said with a smile as he freed Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue from the energy binding them with a flick of his finger.

“You have our deepest gratitude for saving our lives.” The two of them hurriedly bowed deeply.

“It’s what I should do,” the old man replied with a faint smile before finally turning his gaze toward the middle-aged man standing in the room. “You can make your move.”

“You aren’t too weak after all,” the middle-aged man remarked with narrowed eyes.

He did not expect that the intruder would actually have the ability to incapacitate his Heavenly High Immortal realm subordinates so easily. Even he would have taken some time before he could incapacitate them.

Before he could give this matter any deeper thoughts, the old man before him had already begun charging right toward him.

In response, the middle-aged man darted forward to receive his blows.

Boom boom boom!

The duel between the two Semi-Divinities caused innumerable rifts to appear in the surrounding space. It was fortunate that there was a formation protecting the private chamber, or else the whole of Starchaser Island would have been riddled with innumerable holes by the time they were done with their battle.

Zhang Xuan knew that it was hard to come by a battle involving two such powerful experts, so he activated his Eye of Insight and observed the situation closely.

The middle-aged man’s moves were sharp, forceful, and fatal, but the old man was able to deflect them through ingenious

maneuvers.

In a few moments, they were already engaged in an intense fight against one another, and surprisingly, they seemed to be equally matched with one another.

But why do the moves executed by this old man seem so familiar to me? Zhang Xuan pondered with a frown.

The moves of the old man appeared to be simple on the surface, but they were all aimed at the crux of his opponent, making them incredibly hard to defend against. It was clear that the old man lost out to the middle-aged man in terms of strength and zhenqi purity, but as the battle continued, it was the middle-aged man who was forced back again and again.

It was clear who was in an advantageous position by now.

The old man's battle techniques are a little similar to the simplified Heaven's Path battle techniques, consisting of the condensation of profound concepts within simple moves in order to draw out greater prowess in battle, Zhang Xuan thought.

Slowly, he realized that the feeling of *deja vu* stemmed from the similarities in their battle techniques. His fighting style was also centered around searching for and striking his enemy's weaknesses.

It looks like he's going to win... Zhang Xuan nodded.

Barely after such a thought appeared in Zhang Xuan's head, the middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods was struck squarely in his chest, forcing him to retreat several steps.

"You b*stard! Let's see how you will deal with this then!"

With a furious roar, the middle-aged man took out a sword and channeled his sword qi into it before charging forward at an incredible speed.

Judging from the momentum, this seemed to be the strongest move that the middle-aged man had in his arsenal. He was determined to bring down the old man with this.

With a grim look on his face, the old man was just about to make his move as well when the silhouettes before him

abruptly blurred. The middle-aged man, along with the four Heavenly High Immortals, vanished from view simultaneously.

“I’ll spare you this once. Pray that you never meet me again...”

With those words lingering in the air, the group from the Hall of Gods escaped from Starchaser Palace.

“This...”

Taken aback by the use of such a cheap feint from the lofty Hall of Gods, the old man chuckled quietly beneath his breath before shaking his head lightly. He flew into the air to observe the surroundings a while, and only after confirming that the group from the Hall of Gods had left the area did he return back to Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue’s side.

“Elder, thank you for saving our lives!”

The two of them clasped their fists and bowed deeply.

“There’s no need to stand on ceremony. I only came to lend my aid to Starchaser Palace under the orders of our hall master,” the old man replied with a smile.

“Hall master?”

The two of them glanced at one another in confusion for a moment.

The First Elder clasped her fist once more and asked, “May I have the honor of knowing your name and the sect you are from?”

As the First Elder of Starchaser Palace, Zhao Yue knew all the top experts from the Six Sects. Yet, she did not recognize the old man before her. Furthermore, despite being a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, the other party still was not the leader of the power he was in.

Just how formidable would the organization behind him be?

“Of course! I am Fu Chenzi,” the old man said with a hint of pride as he stroked his beard. “I am an elder from the Ethereal Hall!”

“The Ethereal Hall?”

Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue were taken aback.

Despite all their guesses, they did not think that the old man would actually be from the Ethereal Hall!

Zhang Xuan was taken aback as well.

He knew that the Ethereal Hall founded by Kong shi was filled with many experts, but who could have known that the Semi-Divinity realm experts in their ranks would actually be this powerful?

As expected of a power that had received an entire (God)’ character.

“Indeed.” Elder Fu Chenzi nodded. “Hall Master Kong has been keeping a close eye on the movements of the Hall of Gods, and noticing that it was intending to lay its hands on Starchaser Palace, he sent me here as support. It is truly fortunate that I came in time, or else the consequences would have been dire...”

“It’s indeed a huge relief. Elder Fu, I’ll have to trouble you to relay our gratitude to Hall Master Kong as well.” First Elder Zhao Yue clasped her fist.

“You are too courteous,” Fu Chenzi replied with a nod.

Switching to a more serious look, he looked at First Elder Zhao Yue and said with a hint of confusion, “The Hall of Gods has always steered clear of secular affairs. Pardon me, but may I know the reason they have chosen to approach Starchaser Palace at this juncture?”

“This...” First Elder Zhao Yue hesitated a little.

Noticing the look of difficulty on the other party’s face, Fu Chenzi added, “Treat it as if I never asked that question if it’s not convenient for you to speak. It’s just that I’m a little worried about Palace Master Du. It’ll be hard for me to make a move without knowing the exact details of the current situation.”

“First Elder, Elder Fu is our savior...” Chu Yin looked at First Elder Zhao Yue.

Their current priority should be to save their Palace Master. There was no way they would be able to do it with their current strength, so they could only rely on the old man before them.

Thus, Chu Yin could not understand why First Elder Zhao Yue was still hesitating at this moment despite their current plight

“...I guess we have no other choice.” First Elder Zhao Yue nodded with a wry smile. “Since Elder Fu is an expert from the Ethereal Hall, there’s no harm in filling him in on the details.”

Even though the Ethereal Hall was a mysterious entity on the Forsaken Continent, it had always moved with the interests of the continent at heart. There had never been any rumors about it being affiliated with the Hall of Gods, and it had never acted improperly.

As such, it should be safe to assume that the other party was trustworthy.

“In truth, the Hall of Gods has approached our Starchaser Palace in hopes of obtaining our greatest treasure.”

Your greatest treasure?” Fu Chenzi asked with a frown.

“Indeed. It’s the altar that Starchaser Palace uses for its rituals,” First Elder Zhao Yue explained.

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“Altar?” Fu Chenzi’s eyebrows shot up.

The reason Starchaser Palace was deeply feared by the other sects was due to its ability to communicate with the gods through its rituals.

Such rituals would require not just appropriate offerings but an altar to hold the offerings as well.

To think that the Hall of Gods would attempt to take this away from Starchaser Palace!

The altar is the very foundation of Starchaser Palace, so how could we give it away to others easily? Thus, our palace master tasked us with the responsibility of stalling for time while she finds a suitable place to hold a ritual in order to report this matter to the gods so that they can redress our grievances!” Chu Yin explained.

“I see...” Fu Chenzi nodded in realization.

Hiding on the beams in the ceiling, Zhang Xuan’s eyes widened in comprehension as well.

He had been wondering why Starchaser Palace would have a disciple impersonate Du Qingyuan all along, and this turned out to be the real reason.

With the Hall of Gods keeping a close eye on Starchaser Palace, there was no way it would allow Du Qingyuan to hold a ritual to report the incident to the gods. Thus, the latter could only find a remote location to conduct the ritual. In order to buy time for her, they chose to have Chu Yin impersonate her in hopes that the Hall of Gods would not notice anything amiss.

It was just a pity that the Hall of Gods seemed to have seen through them right from the start.

“Elder Fu, it’s likely that my teacher is still being pursued by the warriors of the Hall of Gods. I beseech you to save her!”

Chu Yin kneeled down and implored.

“I will not hesitate to help her if I am able to,” Fu Chenzi replied grimly. “However, you’ll have to tell me where she has headed to and where she intends to hold the ritual. Or else, I’m afraid that there’s nothing I can do.”

“This...”

Knowing the severity of the matter, Chu Yin looked at First Elder Zhao Yue, and the two of them fell into deep thought.

Their palace master’s destination was confidential, and the latter had instructed them not to tell anyone prior to her departure.

“The Hall of Gods has already uncovered your goal, and most likely, they have already dispatched their men to apprehend Palace Master Du. She’s likely in deep danger. I won’t be able to help her until I know where she currently is,” Fu Chenzi said grimly.

“I believe you should know better than anyone the importance of Palace Master Du and the altar to Starchaser Palace. If you lose both of them, there’s a good chance that Starchaser Palace will fall to ruin. This is not something that the Ethereal Hall wishes to see.”

Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue clenched their fists tightly.

They knew that there was some truth in what Fu Chenzi had said.

Losing their altar would be as good as losing their greatest trump card. That would be equivalent to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion losing its Gods’ Sword Intent.

If something happened to their palace master at such a time, Starchaser Palace would definitely fall into turmoil. The aquatic creatures that it had offended over the years would make use of this opportunity to massacre everyone on Starchaser Island!

Thus, no matter what happened, they had to make sure to protect their palace master and the altar!

First Elder Zhao Yue hesitated for a moment longer before carefully speaking. “Elder Fu, it’s not that we don’t trust you, but revealing the whereabouts of our palace master can have severe consequences. We have to consider this matter carefully!”

Fu Chenzi looked at the two of them silently for a moment before slowly nodding. “Since this is the will of Starchaser Palace, I’ll keep my hands out of this matter and return to the Ethereal Hall.”

Following which, he turned around to leave the private chamber.

The abrupt departure of Fu Chenzi caused First Elder Zhao Yue to panic. She hurriedly exclaimed, “Please wait for a moment!”

If something really happened to their palace master, this old man before them was their greatest hope. If he left just like that, there was a good chance that their palace master might really lose her life in the hands of the Hall of Gods!

Fu Chenzi halted his footsteps and looked at the duo.

“Elder Fu, may I see your identity token?” First Elder Zhao Yue asked carefully.

“I understand your apprehension. That isn’t a problem at all,” Fu Chenzi replied as he whipped out a token.

Inscribed on the back of the token were the characters 通神 (Ethereal)’. These characters carried a deep conceptualization behind them, such that even painters at Zhang Xuan’s caliber would not be able to imitate the calligraphy.

“It’s indeed the Elder Token of the Ethereal Hall!” First Elder Zhao Yue visibly heaved a sigh of relief.

“Thank you, Elder Fu!”

Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue clasped their fists as they voiced their gratitude.

I should follow him to take a look...

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan drifted out of the private chamber like a light gust of wind before quickly heading in the direction that Fu Chenzi disappeared.

His goal at Starchaser Palace was to find Du Qingyuan to uncover the truth behind Luo Ruoxin. Since the latter was likely in the City of Collapsed Space, there was a need for him to make his way over there as well.

Otherwise, if the latter was killed before he could even meet her, he would really lose the final clue linking him to Luo Ruoxin.

Fu Chenzi's traveling speed was formidable. By the time Zhang Xuan left Starchaser Palace, the other party had already completely vanished from sight.

Eye of Insight!

The next moment, the slight disturbances in the air that Fu Chenzi left behind as a result of his movements appeared clearly before Zhang Xuan's eyes.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly followed the trail.

It did not take him long before he was out of the perimeters of Starchaser Island. As he proceeded, several more trails appeared before his eyes. It seemed like there were a few others trailing Fu Chenzi as well.

These trails are from those five fellows from the Hall of Gods. Weren't they incapacitated by Fu Chenzi earlier? Zhang Xuan frowned.

Did they use some kind of secret art that allowed them to swiftly recover? In any case, the fact that they were following Fu Chenzi did not bode well.

I have to quicken my pace, Zhang Xuan thought anxiously.

Whether those five had been camping in wait to follow Fu Chenzi to where Du Qingyuan was or something else, one thing was for sure—Du Qingyuan's whereabouts had already been leaked to the Hall of Gods.

Knowing that his speed was severely lacking compared to those Semi-Divinity realm experts, Zhang Xuan quickly

brought out Shark One and urged it to rush forward.

Half a day later...

After traveling for over a million li, the trail suddenly vanished.

Zhang Xuan instructed Shark One to come to a halt and return to the tamed beast sack before he began examining the surroundings.

He was in the midst of a barren desert. Yellow sand filled his entire sight, and it seemed as if there was no end to it.

The trail stops here... Could it be that the City of Collapsed Space lies within the yellow sand? Zhang Xuan wondered.

The fact that the trail stopped there likely meant that he was not too far from the City of Collapsed Space anymore. Thus, he tried to recall the details regarding the City of Collapsed Space from the books.

The City of Collapsed Space is an ancient domain that has existed ever since the time where the indigenous population ruled the entire Forsaken Continent. It's hidden amid a vast desert...

Zhang Xuan hurriedly sieved through all the information in his head.

The books in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall, and Sevenstar Pavilion all had some records regarding that place.

It should be in the vicinity then...

Zhang Xuan surveyed the area around him, and all of a sudden, his eyebrows shot up. He began walking in a certain direction, and before long, he was standing before a sand dune.

To the naked eye, it would seem as if there was nothing peculiar about this place. However, if one perceived the surroundings carefully, one would feel a prehistoric aura hidden beneath the yellow sand. A world that had vanished from the eyes of the world was hidden under his feet.

Zhang Xuan slowly took a walk around the sand dune as he carefully examined it.

Then, he took a step forward toward it and stomped his feet down forcefully.

Hu!

A powerful suction force appeared, causing him to instantaneously fall through space.

Zhang Xuan quickly steadied his figure before breaking his fall to float in the air. By the time he looked at his surroundings once more, he found that he was no longer in the desert anymore.

Right before his eyes was a massive, dilapidated city suffused with a breath of history. It was almost as if he had stepped into a brand-new world.

The area was completely barren. There were no plants thriving in the area, and beneath him was a murky swamp. It felt as if he would have been swallowed whole if he had fallen in earlier.

This is the City of Collapsed Space? Zhang Xuan's expression turned grave.

He had long heard that this place was fraught with dangers, and from the looks of it, that was indeed the case. What was surprising to him was that he had envisioned the City of Collapsed Space to be an actual place on the Forsaken Continent, but it turned out to be in a folded space in the desert instead.

He quickly took a sweeping gaze around him.

The path that he had entered through had already vanished without a trace. Even with his sensitivity toward space, he was unable to find any traces of it.

In other words, he was trapped in the City of Collapsed Space. He had to find a different exit if he wanted to get out of there.

I'll just have to deal with it when I get to that. For now, I should focus my efforts on finding Du Qingyuan, Zhang Xuan thought as he tossed aside all of his negative emotions.

Looking at the massive city before him, he slowly made his way in.

Weng!

Before he could even reach the city, he suddenly felt a bone-chilling sensation behind him. The next instant, a surge of sword qi burst out of the marsh toward his chest.

At the same time, another burst of sword qi fell from the ceiling.

It was clear that these two were coordinating with one another to kill him in a single move.

An ambush? Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes slightly.

He had been so focused on following Fu Chenzi that he did not expect that he would fall into an ambush here!

2050 The Disdainful Clone

“The Hall of Gods, huh?” Zhang Xuan immediately identified his assailants.

The disconcerting killing intent and the sharp precision that seemed as if it had been carefully measured with a ruler, these were traits that were unique to the sword practitioners of the Hall of Gods.

More importantly, the angle, positioning, and attack timing that they had coordinated with one another were truly sharp, such that even Semi-Divinity realm experts would find it hard to avoid their offense. The only ones he could think of that were capable of such a feat were those from the Hall of Gods.

“Only two Heavenly High Immortals, eh?” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Ten days ago, he would have been completely helpless against such a line-up, but to the current him, they were no longer a problem for him to deal with anymore.

However, while there were only these two on the surface, there was no saying that the Semi-Divinity realm middle-aged man was not lying in wait around as well.

Thus, Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message to the four Semi-Divinities in his tamed beast sack to prompt them to be ready to strike at any moment. At the same time, he brought out the Tongshang Sword and released the Gods’ Sword Intent to seal away the surroundings.

“Gods’ Sword Intent? You are the new sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Zhang Xuan?”

Those two assailants were alarmed, and the one above immediately turned tail to flee.

If the young man before them was still at Heavenly True Immortal realm, he would have given it his all to take him down. However, the young man had already reached High Immortal realm!

Taking into consideration that the previous two assassinations had failed as well, it did not take him long to figure out that the opponent standing before them was not someone whom they could defeat.

What he had to do right now was inform their leader of the news as soon as possible!

If he could capture this young man, the merit he would earn would be far greater than acquiring the altar of Starchaser Palace!

“It’s too late!” Zhang Xuan remarked lightly.

Zhang Xuan’s sword descended like a gust of wind. It appeared to be slow on the surface, but that single move effectively sealed away all his routes of escape.

He was trapped.

Pu!

A bloodied slit appeared on the glabella of the Heavenly High Immortal above, and just like that, his soul dissipated, sealing his fate.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan quickly grabbed his falling corpse and threw it into his storage ring.

All in all, from the moment those two attempted to assassinate him till the Heavenly High Immortal above was killed, not even a single breath had passed. At the same time, though, the sword qi from the Heavenly High Immortal below had arrived right before him.

Ding!

Just as it seemed as if the sword qi was going to pierce through Zhang Xuan’s chest, a gourd suddenly materialized right before him and blocked the sword qi.

“Damn it! Break!”

With gritted teeth, the Heavenly High Immortal below drove his zhenqi to his limits, hoping to pierce through the gourd. However, it was as if the gourd was as resilient as a fortified

city wall. Even when pouring in his full strength, he was still unable to breach it.

“Could that be a Semi-Divinity artifact?” The Heavenly High Immortal jolted in fear.

He was at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, and the sword in his hand had reached the same tier. Given so, it should have been impossible for any Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifact to stop his attack.

Yet, a mere gourd managed to block him from advancing any further. He dared not imagine just what tier the artifact was at!

“It’s impossible. There’s no way I can defeat a monster like this. I need to get away right now!”

Knowing that it was impossible for him to pull off the assassination alone, he immediately turned tail. But before he could even turn around, his vision suddenly went dark.

A gourd was flying right toward his face.

With just a single strike, the shape of the gourd was imprinted right into the head of the Heavenly High Immortal. With indignation reflected in his eyes, his body began falling helplessly downward.

To think that a Heavenly High Immortal realm expert like him would die to a mere gourd...

Hu!

Zhang Xuan quickly threw his body into his storage ring as well.

Despite having defeated two Heavenly High Immortals, he did not show the slightest hint of joy. Instead, he scanned his surroundings warily.

A few breaths passed, but there were no movements at all. Slowly, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

“It seems like these two are the only ones lying in ambush!”

There was a possibility that the entire group that he had encountered earlier would be lying in wait for him, but since

they had not appeared after so long, it appeared that there was no one else.

Otherwise, they surely would have exploited the opening that he had shown while he was dealing with those two Heavenly High Immortals to strike.

“These two might have been left behind to serve as sentries to alert them in case anything happens. If that’s the case, the others must have gone on ahead to find Du Qingyuan and the altar...”

He pondered for a moment before nodding slightly. “I made sure to seal the surrounding space before killing these two, so I doubt that any energy pulsation or information has managed to get out. If so, the others shouldn’t have noticed my presence yet...”

Hu!

An identical figure swiftly appeared by his side.

It was his clone!

After taming those four Semi-Divinity realm beasts, he had passed some of their blood along to Vicious and his clone. Due to the lack of a cultivation technique, Zhang Xuan was unable to continue his cultivation. However, such a problem did not apply to his clone, and the latter had already reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm.

Needless to say, his clone was stronger than him yet again.

“You’ll take one while I’ll take the one,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Alright!”

Catching Zhang Xuan’s drift, his clone nodded.

The next moment, he had already morphed his appearance to match the Heavenly High Immortal who had his head smashed in with a gourd.

While his clone did not have a disguise amulet, the Nine Hearts Lotus granted his body a property reminiscent of water. He could freely morph into any form that he wanted. That was

also why he could easily reform his body even when it had been dented inward.

After changing his appearance, his clone quickly put on the other party's clothes before suppressing the pulsation of his soul energy to the minimum.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan took on the appearance of the other warrior. With two light taps of his finger, he made the two swords of the Heavenly High Immortals submit to him.

His disguise was flawless, such that it was impossible for one to see through even if one checked his bloodline. However, there was still some degree of discrepancy regarding his clone's disguise, such as his soul aura.

Nevertheless, the mere fact that they were holding onto the swords of the two Heavenly High Immortals should be enough to make up for that.

Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifacts were known to possess their own spirits, making them extremely hard to tame. As long as they saw that they were wielding the swords of the two Heavenly High Immortals, it was unlikely that they would conduct a thorough check.

After they were done, Zhang Xuan double-checked their disguises and made some additional adjustments. It was only when he was unable to see any more loopholes that he finally gave a nod of approval.

He took the lead forward, and his clone quickly followed behind him.

In order to ensure that these two Heavenly High Immortals would be able to find them afterward, the Semi-Divinity realm middle-aged man who had left earlier made sure to leave some marks behind. Thus, it was not too difficult to trace them.

Proceeding ahead, it did not take too long for them to enter the ancient city.

The dilapidated city walls emanated an air of degeneration, leaving one with a heavy feeling on the inside. The environment felt inexplicably stifling, leaving those walking in the area with some difficulties breathing.

Even someone of Zhang Xuan's caliber felt his cultivation being suppressed significantly, rendering him incapable of exerting his full might.

A thought came to Zhang Xuan's mind, and he slit a small incision on his arm.

Tzzzzz!

As soon as the incision was made, the air of degeneration in the surroundings immediately corroded the area of the wound, hindering his recovery.

Zhang Xuan quickly drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi to ward off the air of degeneration and heal his injury, but some time later, he shook his head helplessly.

Usually, such minor injuries would take less than a breath to heal up entirely. Yet, even after driving his Heaven's Path zhenqi for a few minutes, the incision was still showing no signs of recovering at all.

There was indeed something deeply unnerving about this place.

It was no wonder Elder Bai Ye was unable to recover from his injuries, leaving him with no choice but to wait for his death. Most likely, it was the work of this air of degeneration.

Zhang Xuan took out a jade bottle and poured out a bit of chicken soup on his wound, and a trail of black smoke immediately rose from it.

Following that, the incision quickly healed up.

It seems like I should proceed carefully here and try my best not to get hurt, Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

Other cultivators were not as privileged as him in having Little Chick's broiled soup. In other words, once they got injured, their bodies would immediately be assailed by the air of degeneration, causing their injuries to progressively worsen. Eventually, they would die a tragic death.

"I'll pass you a bottle just in case!" Zhang Xuan said as he tossed a bottle over to his clone.

Since the Heaven's Path zhenqi did not work for him, it was likely the same for his clone. It would be a great deal of trouble for his clone if he got injured.

His clone caught the jade bottle, but he did not store it right away. Instead, he looked at Zhang Xuan with a disdainful expression before slicing his arm with a surge of zhenqi from his fingertip.

Puhe!

A glaring, deep laceration immediately appeared on his clone's arm, causing fresh blood to spurt out.

Zhang Xuan frowned upon seeing this situation. He had no idea what his clone was up to.

The next moment, however, his clone began driving the zhenqi in his body.

Tzzzzzzz!

A trail of black smoke was expelled from the laceration, and the wound swiftly healed up as if nothing had happened in the first place.

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows twitched.

"I don't need this thing."

Placing his hands behind his back, his clone looked at him and shook his head. "Weakling."

Zhang Xuan. Would you die if you stopped bragging for a day?

Feeling deeply stifled on the inside, Zhang Xuan decided to ignore his clone and proceed ahead.

Despite the air of degeneration within the ancient city, there was still some lush greenery in between the ruins. It felt like a new spring was gradually setting in on this land of devastation.

Life sprouting in a land of death, it was as if the world was displaying the power of nature to wash away all devastation and heal the lands.

These medicinal herbs growing amid the air of degeneration possess exceptionally potent medicinal energy, and they are remarkably diverse in terms of their types. It's no wonder so many experts are drawn to the City of Collapsed Space despite the dangers involved.

If one forged a pill out of the medicinal herbs that were found there, the pill would surely be far more potent than usual.

While tracing the footsteps of those from the Hall of Gods, Zhang Xuan did not neglect to collect the medicinal herbs that were conveniently within his reach.

Hu!

Not too long later, a cluster of collapsed buildings came into sight.

This place was different from what he had seen previously.

The places that he had walked through earlier were tattered from the wear and tear of age, but this cluster of collapsed buildings had many fresh imprints on it. It felt as if someone had just laid waste to it.

“A battle has just happened here,” Zhang Xuan remarked.

With his sharp eye of discernment, he could tell that these imprints were at most an hour old. Otherwise, under the air of degeneration lingering in the area, even the fresher imprints would swiftly have become worn out, making it impossible to tell the difference.

“Could it be that the lot from the Hall of Gods have managed to catch up with Fu Chenzi, or did they manage to find Palace Master Du?” Zhang Xuan wondered worriedly.

The fact that there were fresh signs of a battle there meant that two parties from different factions had encountered one another.

Zhang Xuan halted his footsteps, wanting to take a closer look at the marks to see if he could acquire any useful information from them.

However, he suddenly felt cold sweat raining down his body. A powerful burst of energy had descended from above. Zhang

Xuan quickly backed away as he brought out six swords to form a protective layer around his body.

Ding ding ding ding!

A series of sounds reminiscent of the pitter-patter of rain echoed in the air. Lowering his head, Zhang Xuan saw a large group of black shadows diving out from the ground, like an army of specters escaping from the depths of hell.

2051 Inner Demons Flower

The dark shadows before him appeared similar to mist, as if they had no tangible form. However, their strength was not to be underestimated. They would be able to stand their ground even against Zhang Xuan's sword qi.

With a grim look on his face, Zhang Xuan muttered, "Could they be... Degeneration Beasts?"

He had read about Degeneration Beasts in the books before.

It was a unique lifeform in the City of Collapsed Space, rising and nurtured from the air of degeneration lingering in the area. They were known to be extremely vicious. Those that encountered one would find the air of degeneration seeping into their body, corroding their organs and even zhenqi.

To make matters worse, it was nigh impossible to expel the air of degeneration from one's body.

Elder Bai Ye had likely been wounded by a Degeneration Beast back then.

"Let me see how powerful you are!"

After confirming the other party's identity, Zhang Xuan brandished his Tongshang Sword and launched dozens of surges of sword qi right toward the Degeneration Beasts.

Waves of Swords!

This was a sword art that was not too difficult to grasp. As long as a cultivator had sufficient zhenqi, they should be able to learn it easily.

But as one advanced further in this technique, one would realize that there were many technical details that one had to take note of while executing the sword art, and these details could only be refined slowly by the sword practitioner themselves through endless trial and error.

As such, it was known to be one of the hardest sword arts to master.

In the long history of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, there were not many who had managed to master this technique, but Zhang Xuan was definitely one of them.

Carrying might greater than that of ordinary Heavenly High Immortals, the dozens of surges of sword qi fell on the Degeneration Beasts.

Peng peng peng!

The Degeneration Beasts were immediately blasted into bits, and the collapsed buildings behind them were further devastated.

“It doesn’t seem like they are very powerful...”

Seeing how he was still able to kill each of them with a surge of sword qi, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. However, before he could even lower his sword, the black shadows before him began wriggling once more. The dissipated Degeneration Beasts swiftly reformed and continued with their offense.

“Complete physical immunity?” Zhang Xuan’s face darkened.

He did not think that these Degeneration Beasts would be capable of regenerating so swiftly, such that his sword qi was completely useless against them.

“Are they more vulnerable toward soul-related attacks?”

He quickly drew his soul out from his body and executed a palm strike against the Degeneration Beasts.

Heavenly Demon Great Sorrow Palm!

This was the ultimate art of Ancient Sage Qiu Wu, but he had modified it to be far stronger than the original. It was one of the rare battle techniques that combined physical offense with soul offense. Its prowess would be greater enhanced when executed in his soul state, allowing him to deal irreparable damage to souls.

His palm strike successfully tore the Degeneration Beasts apart, but just like before, it took only a few breaths for them to recover fully.

Zhang Xuan took a deep breath. He tried a few more means, but nothing was effective on the Degeneration Beasts.

This time, he was at a complete loss.

If these beasts were able to regenerate no matter what he threw at them, there was no way he would be able to defeat them. Eventually, even his seemingly boundless zhenqi would be worn down as well!

“Eye of Insight!”

After activating the Eye of Insight, he finally saw what was wrong.

Every time a Degeneration Beast was killed, the surrounding air of degeneration would nourish it, allowing it to regenerate and come back to life.

“These Degeneration Beasts can be said to be the very manifestation from the air of degeneration lingering in the City of Collapsed Space.” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in realization. “As long as the air of degeneration continues lingering in the area, it’ll be impossible to defeat these Degeneration Beasts...”

No wonder he was unable to eliminate these things despite all the means he had utilized. Rather than saying that they were beings thriving on the air of degeneration, it would be more accurate to say that they were the air of degeneration itself. Unless one completely rid the area of the air of degeneration, these beings would be indestructible.

“If that’s the case, the only way to deal with these Degeneration Beasts is to distract them.”

He released another barrage of sword qi once more, but this time, his target wasn’t the Degeneration Beasts but the already tattered buildings around them.

Boom!

Rock fragments scattered around the area as the buildings collapsed further, causing new marks to appear on them.

As soon as the new marks appeared, the air of degeneration immediately concentrated around them in order to corrode

them as well. Making full use of this opportunity, Zhang Xuan quickly slaughtered the Degeneration Beasts with a few bursts of zhenqi.

This time around, just as he had expected, they were not able to regenerate. More precisely, the rate of their regeneration was much slower than before.

“I should quickly press on. It won’t take long before new Degeneration Beasts form, and they will be in greater quantities than before,” Zhang Xuan remarked.

There was really something weird about the City of Collapsed Space.

Even though the new marks on freshly destroyed buildings would swiftly draw the air of degeneration to them, the problem was that this method could not be used too many times. Furthermore, as the corrosion spread, the air of degeneration would grow stronger and stronger, causing the number of Degeneration Beasts that lingered in the area to increase.

In other words, while it was possible to escape from a crisis by breaking some of the buildings, it also meant placing those who came after in greater danger. The air of degeneration would simply grow stronger and stronger till no one was able to deal with it anymore.

“I really wonder where the air of degeneration originates from. This has already surpassed the comprehension of High Immortals and even that of Semi-Divinities...”

Zhang Xuan quickly shook the thought out of his head before proceeding onward.

With his previous experience with the Degeneration Beasts, Zhang Xuan and his clone flew forward stealthily. They did not even dare pick the medicinal herbs on the ground anymore.

After advancing for another ten minutes, they suddenly sensed a furious outpour of zhenqi ahead of them. It seemed like there was a fight going on.

Zhang Xuan shot a glance at his clone before carefully proceeding forward. Circling around the wall, they saw two

figures ahead of them.

They were the other two Heavenly High Immortals who had barged into Starchaser Palace with them!

Of those two, one of them had lost an arm whereas the other one had a glaring wound right across his chest. Due to the corrosion from the surrounding air of degeneration, their wounds had started festering, resulting in a pungent smell filling the entire area.

“To hell with you!”

“You b*stard, I’ll rip you into shreds!”

The two of them roared furiously as they brandished their swords against one another.

They were of roughly equal strength to one another, so it was hard to tell who held the upper hand in the battle.

“Why are they fighting one another?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had thought that it would be either Fu Chenzi or Du Qingyuan, but who would have thought that these two Heavenly High Immortals had started fighting one another instead? Not to mention, they were even dealing such vicious blows against one another.

This was hard to comprehend.

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes and exclaimed, “No, it’s likely that they have fallen into an Illusory Formation...”

He had encountered quite a few cultivators from the Hall of Gods thus far, and they were known to be perfectly rational, never allowing emotions to get in the way of their work. Yet, these two were frenziedly trying to rip one another apart, directing every attack at each other’s vitals. It was clear that there was something influencing their minds.

Chances were that there was an Illusory Formation in the area.

Zhang Xuan quickly activated his Eye of Insight and scanned the surroundings, but soon, his eyebrows shot up in bewilderment.

As a veteran formation master, his comprehension of formations definitely ranked among the top in the Forsaken Continent. If there was an Illusory Formation in the area, there would have been some disturbances in the surrounding spiritual energy. There was no way he would have missed that with his Eye of Insight.

Yet, everything was serene in his Eye of Insight. There was no disturbance in the surrounding energy, and he could not find any formation flags or a formation core.

“Without formation flags and a formation core, it can’t be an Illusory Formation. If so, what else could it be?”

Zhang Xuan quickly scanned the surroundings once more, and soon, his attention fell upon several uniquely-patterned flowers not too far away.

These flowers were dyed a bewitching red, and they were scattered around the ruins in radial symmetry. Through the Eye of Insight, he could see the flowers breathing in air of degeneration from the surroundings.

“These are... Inner Demons Flowers!”

Inner Demons Flower was a legendary plant that emanated a unique aura that gave birth to inner demons within one. It was similar to the Bloodsoaked Stone in terms of effects. Under normal circumstances, however, these flowers would not take effect even if a cultivator came in close proximity to it. It would only react when it came under attack.

Could it be that these cultivators launched an attack on these Inner Demons Flowers, leading to the flowers retaliating against them?

But as warriors of the Hall of Gods, they should not be so foolish as to indiscriminately attack other lifeforms, especially in a place as dangerous as the City of Collapsed Space!

“No, that isn’t right.” Zhang Xuan examined the situation closely for a moment before coming to a conclusion. “It’s a trap someone set up beforehand, and these two simply stepped into it.”

He noticed several spheres of energy implanted right before these Inner Demons Flowers, such that if someone approached the region, these spheres of energy would swiftly blast apart, drawing the aggression of the flowers.

It was likely that these two Heavenly High Immortals had fallen for that trick, thus landing them in their current state.

“Is it the doing of Du Qingyuan?”

Du Qingyuan knew the dangers that lurked in the City of Collapsed Space, but she still insisted on coming over. This suggested that she might be familiar with the environment here, and she intended to utilize it to her advantage in order to get rid of her enemies.

“Regardless of the truth, it’s good news for me anyway.”

Having made sense out of the situation, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He continued ahead, but he made sure to make a detour to avoid the Inner Demons Flowers.

However, barely after flying several meters forward, he suddenly halted.

“This won’t do. It’s a huge waste to leave just like that. Those two were going to die anyway, so I might as well just do it!”

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan released dozens of surges of zhenqi into the surroundings.

Weng!

With a stomp of his foot, a spherical barrier appeared around the two Heavenly High Immortals, protecting them from the aura of the Inner Demons Flowers.

Slowly, the two Heavenly High Immortals were freed from their unnatural states, and the crimson tinge in their eyes gradually faded.

“What happened?”

“Just what were we doing...”

Regaining their wits, the two of them stopped their swords.

While the two of them were still in a daze trying to figure out what had happened to them, Zhang Xuan, disguised as a warrior of the Hall of Gods, walked over and said, “You were fighting against one another due to the effects of the Inner Demons Flowers in the area!”

“Inner Demons Flowers...”

Realizing how close they had come to killing one another, the injured duo felt cold sweat pouring down their heads.

They had heard about the fearful reputation of the Inner Demons Flower as well, but they had never thought that they would fall prey to it.

“I’m afraid that the effects of the Inner Demons Flowers might still be lingering in your bodies. In order to prevent the two of you from hurting anyone else, I’ll have to ask you to pass your swords over to me for the time being,” Zhang Xuan instructed firmly.

Those words brought frowns to their foreheads.

“Hurry up. If you succumb to the Inner Demons Flowers once more, all of us might just end up dying here!” Zhang Xuan berated furiously as he reached out to snatch their weapons.

The two of them had already been severely weakened due to their earlier battle, so they did not even manage to react when Zhang Xuan snatched their weapons. Before they knew it, their weapons in his hands.

You...”

Seeing how the other party had snatched their weapons forcefully, a displeased frown appeared on their faces.

“I didn’t want to make such a move either. I’m doing this so that we can all get out of this darned place alive.” Zhang Xuan chucked their swords into his storage ring before patting their shoulders to console them.

Afterward, he leaped into the air and flew away, leaving the dumbfounded duo with a few last words. “Alright, the two of you can have fun here...”

Pop!

The barrier that Zhang Xuan had set up earlier burst apart, allowing the aura of the Inner Demons Flowers to slip in once more.

“What are you doing?”

Sensing the changes in their states of mind, the two warriors of the Hall of Gods were completely flabbergasted.

Did that fellow not go there to save them?

Why would he suddenly expose them to the aura of the Inner Demons Flowers once more?

Furthermore, what did he mean by having fun? What was fun about their situation?

But those thoughts only lingered in their minds for a moment before they were brought into an illusion once more. Before long, their eyes turned red, and they began charging at one another again.

Peng peng peng peng!

Even without weapons, they were not pulling their punches. Every single strike they dealt was deadly, such that it could take the other party's life if their moves connected.

Pu pu pu!

Before long, the two of them spurted a mouthful of blood and collapsed to the ground simultaneously. From the looks of it, they were already goners.

Even at their deaths, they could not figure out why their comrade would leave them to kill each other after taking away their weapons.

“There's nothing to watch, let's go!”

Knowing the outcome that awaited them, Zhang Xuan could not be bothered to waste his time with them and proceeded straight ahead.

Since they were going to die, it would be a waste to leave their weapons there. As for their corpses... he already had plenty of Heavenly High Immortal bodies in his storage ring, so he did not have to top up at the moment.

2052 The Assault From Zhang Xuan and His Clone

Proceeding forward, it was obvious that Zhang Xuan's clone had toned down quite a bit. It was not showing its usual smugness and narcissism at all.

It seemed like the eeriness of the City of Collapsed Space had surpassed his expectations as well.

It was little wonder why few would dare venture in here. Just the air of degeneration lingering in the area would already be fatal to most cultivators.

Through the Eye of Insight and Library of Heaven's Path, Zhang Xuan was able to foresee most dangers in advance and circumvent them, thus sparing him from much trouble. Nevertheless, over the course of less than ten li, he had still ended up being attacked thrice and nearly fallen into a trap twice.

That being said, they overcame the challenges and marched on. Soon, they sensed an intense pulsation of energy just ahead of them.

Zhang Xuan and his clone exchanged glances before stealthily advancing.

A vast square came into view.

On the left was a lady dressed formally with a copper mask on her face. There was an altar floating quietly not too far away from her with sky blue flames blazing on it. It seemed like the ritual had already begun.

Her hair was fluttering in the air as she infused all her zhenqi into the altar, causing the surrounding space to distort.

On the right was a familiar face—the middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods. He was staring at the altar with utterly cold eyes.

Fu Chenzi?

Not too far away, there was a figure lying diagonally on the ground. Fresh blood was spurting from his chest, indicating the severity of his injuries. It was none other than Fu Chenzi from the Ethereal Hall.

Zhang Xuan had guessed that Fu Chenzi might have encountered the middle-aged man along the way, but who could have thought that the latter would have sustained such severe injuries?

Could that copper-masked lady be Palace Master Du Qingyuan? Zhang Xuan thought as he looked over.

He could not tell what the ritual was for, but he could sense overwhelming zhenqi surging through the copper-masked lady's body. Judging from her strength, it was apparent that she had already reached the Semi-Divinity realm.

The only lady of the Six Sects who had reached this realm was Du Qingyuan, so the person before him was likely her.

The middle-aged man gazed at Fu Chenzi coldly and said, "Does your master intend to make an enemy out of the Hall of Gods as well?"

Zhang Xuan was a little perplexed.

He had not watched the entire battle earlier, but should Fu Chenzi not be stronger than the middle-aged man? It was true that anything could happen in a battle, but considering that he was joining hands with Du Qingyuan now, it was hard to believe that he would end up sustaining such a severe injury.

Otherwise... could it be that the middle-aged man had intentionally admitted defeat so as to allow Fu Chenzi to lead the way?

Such was not completely implausible.

Through his interactions with them, he felt that the Hall of Gods was unscrupulous in the means they resorted to in order to achieve their goals, and even sacrificing themselves was not beyond them. It was not unthinkable for them to use such a ploy.

“If you could do anything—cough cough—to our hall master, you would have long made a move!” Fu Chenzi scoffed coldly as he coughed out blood. Following which, he turned to the copper-masked lady with difficulty and warned, “Palace Master Du, you must be careful. He has a Semi-Divinity artifact with him!”

The copper-masked lady did not bother responding to Fu Chenzi’s warning. Instead, she continued looking at the middle-aged man with cold killing intent in her eyes.

Hu!

A massive palm that cast a shadow over the lands suddenly appeared in the sky, crushing down with incredible might.

Great Azure Palm, not bad!” The middle-aged man laughed loudly as he charged forth with a sword in his hand.

Ding!

Holding back the massive palm in the sky with the sword in one of his hands, he raised his other hand and thrust a palm strike right toward the nearby altar.

You are courting death!” the copper-masked lady spat coldly.

In retaliation, she thrust a flurry of palm strikes toward the middle-aged man. As a result of her relentless attacks, the surrounding space was strained into distortion, making it seem as if the entire area was going to explode from the shockwave.

However, with speed as swift as lightning, the middle-aged man was able to skillfully maneuver through her palm strikes without sustaining any damage.

“Palace Master Du, you seem far weaker than how the rumors made you out to be. Is it the effects of the ritual? Well, regardless of what it is, it’s a fact that you aren’t a match for me in your current state. Hand over your altar obediently, and I can consider sparing your life. Otherwise, don’t blame me for not going easy on you!” The middle-aged man smirked.

Known to be one of the strongest experts of the Six Sects, Du Qingyuan’s strength was so great that even the middle-aged man was not entirely confident that he would be a match for

her. Yet, for some reason, even though the other party's attack seemed powerful on the surface, it felt like there was no substance behind them.

Could she have depleted her strength due to the ritual and resorted to putting on an act to scare him off?

In any case, this worked in his favor. As long as he could successfully obtain the altar, the contribution that he had made to the Hall of Gods would surely earn him an advancement in his cultivation!

On the other hand, the copper-masked lady paid no attention to the middle-aged man's words and continued her offense.

The flames burning on the altar were growing more and more brilliant by the moment, as if a connection was swiftly being forged with the Firmament.

“Since you don't know your place, don't blame me for not going easy on you!”

Seeing how the copper-masked lady refused to give up on the ritual, the middle-aged man sneered coldly as he raised his palm.

Hu!

A halberd materialized right in his hand. With a powerful leap, he pierced the halberd toward the other party furiously.

Wuuuuuuuuuuuuuu!

A massive tear in space appeared along the trajectory of the halberd. After being infused with the energy of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, the tip of the halberd emanated a menacing glow, as if it would reduce anything before it to dust.

A Semi-Divinity artifact? Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

He could tell that the halberd was no ordinary Semi-Divinity artifact. Even the metal chain that he had with him was a notch weaker than it. It seemed like it was still possible for there to be huge disparities in the might of Semi-Divinity artifacts.

Sensing the tremendous power behind the halberd, the copper-masked lady could not keep her cool anymore. With narrowed

eyes, she abruptly turned her head and glanced at the altar not too far away from her.

“Even if I die, I’ll drag you down with me!”

With a furious roar, she reached out toward the altar and grasped at it.

Hula!

The sky-blue flames on the altar shot over and formed a blazing wall of fire right in front of the copper-masked lady.

If the middle-aged man wanted to get to her, he would have to first destroy the altar.

However, the mission that his master had passed down to him was to acquire the altar, so the altar would have been completely useless once it had been destroyed. Thus, he could not possibly choose such a course of action.

He pulled back his halberd and glared at the copper-masked lady with narrowed eyes. “You darned spinster!”

You can rest assured that I’ll destroy the altar with my own hands before I die. I’ll be letting my predecessors down, but I believe that they wouldn’t want to see the treasure of our Starchaser Pavilion falling into the hands of a bunch of beasts! Just try me!” The copper-masked lady laughed manically.

In terms of strength, she was definitely no match for the middle-aged man before her. To make matters worse, the middle-aged man even had a Semi-Divinity artifact with him. There was no way she stood a chance.

Since that was the case, the least she could do was ensure that the other party did not get what he wanted. She knew that he wanted the altar, and that meant that she was able to caution him using it.

“Humph!”

With tightly clenched fists, the middle-aged man glared at the copper-masked lady with a terrifying look on his face. A moment later, however, the frown between his brows loosened, and a sadistic smile crept onto his lips. “Since that’s the case, perhaps I should start with him first!”

Hong long!

The halberd immediately changed its target toward the old man lying feebly on the ground—Fu Chenzi.

Fu Chenzi's face paled. He tried to gather his strength to protect himself, but due to the severity of his injuries, he was unable to even push himself off the ground.

With a desolate look on his face, he turned to the copper-masked lady and cried out, "Palace Master Du, hurry up and leave! With the altar in your hands, he won't dare make a move on you. There's no need to worry about me..."

The copper-masked lady clicked her tongue in irritation before grabbing the altar and dashing in front of Fu Chenzi.

"Continue what you were doing if you really want the altar to be destroyed, so..."

Hu!

The halberd halted in midair. "You b*tch..."

The middle-aged man was so furious that he could have exploded on the spot. Tremendous might crackled around the halberd, causing a shockwave to ripple into the surroundings. Even though he had halted his attack, the sheer momentum of it had already caused the ground around him to crack.

Peng!

At this critical moment, the face of the copper-masked lady suddenly turned ghastly pale. A spurt of fresh blood escaped from her lips, and she fell forward, crashing heavily onto the ground.

With a look of disbelief in her eyes, she turned around and saw the severely wounded Fu Chenzi rising to his feet, wiping away the blood trickling down his lips.

"My sincere apologies, Palace Master Du. We can't afford to allow the altar to be damaged in any way, so we could only resort to trickery. I hope that you can understand where we are coming from."

With a swift series of movements, Fu Chenzi extinguished the sky-blue flames on the altar and sealed it with his zhenqi,

making it impossible for the copper-masked lady to control it anymore. After that, he stowed the altar into his storage ring.

You b*stard,” the copper-masked lady cursed furiously. “Even the lofty Ethereal Hall has decided to bow down to the Hall of Gods as well?”

Never in her wildest dreams did she expect that even Fu Chenzi, who had pitted his life to protect her earlier, would actually be in cahoots with the Hall of Gods! Everything that had just happened was an act!

Even Zhang Xuan, who was hiding to the side, could not help but recoil a little at the sight.

He had thought that it was weird how the middle-aged man had allowed Fu Chenzi to defeat him so easily back at Starchaser Palace. His initial assumption was that the middle-aged man was taking a step back to bait Starchaser Palace into making a move so that he could track them down and eventually get to where Du Qingyuan was.

However, the issue with that hypothesis was that there was no guarantee that Fu Chenzi would be heading to where Du Qingyuan was and that Starchaser Palace would even make a move at all.

After all, this was a battle of time. If Starchaser Palace could last long enough for Du Qingyuan to complete her ritual and acquire the protection of a god, the tables would be turned. The middle-aged man did not have the luxury to be wasting time on an uncertain possibility.

This drew his attention to Fu Chenzi’s words and actions. After all, without Fu Chenzi’s intervention, the middle-aged man would not have been so successful in finding Du Qingyuan.

He had a feeling that Fu Chenzi had been playing on the worries of Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue back then in order to pressure them into revealing Du Qingyuan’s whereabouts, and that had brought up a sliver of doubt within him that Fu Chenzi might have been working together with the Hall of Gods.

However, he had swiftly tossed the notion away because he did not think that an elder of the Ethereal Hall would have colluded with the Hall of Gods!

“Since the altar is already in our hands, there’s no reason for us to keep her alive any longer.” The middle-aged man harrumphed.

“Indeed.” Fu Chenzi nodded in agreement.

He channeled his energy into his palm to execute a decisive blow on the copper-masked lady, but at this crucial moment, footsteps suddenly echoed in the air.

Huhu!

Two figures appeared in the square.

They were two of the four Heavenly High Immortals subordinated to the middle-aged man.

“Have you cleared away that pest who was following us?” the middle-aged man asked nonchalantly.

“That pest is extremely cunning. He seemed to know that we were lying in wait for him, so he fled before we could even make a move,” one of the Heavenly High Immortals replied awkwardly.

“He fled?” the middle-aged man asked with a hint of displeasure in his tone.

“If I’m not mistaken, that person seems to be the new head of the Sevenstar Pavilion. It won’t be too easy to get rid of him,” Fu Chenzi said with a shake of his head.

“The new head of the Sevenstar Pavilion,” the middle-aged murmured with a frown.

“Un. I felt that his rise was a little too abrupt, similar to that of Hall Master Zheng Yang and Sect Leader Zhang Xuan. As such, I tried looking into his background, but I haven’t been able to gather anything so far,” Fu Chenzi said grimly.

“However, we don’t have to pay him any heed. Let’s take the altar back to our master first. We’ll deal with that fellow in due course.”

“Yes, this matter takes priority.” The middle-aged man nodded. He shot a glance at the copper-masked lady once more and said, “Let’s head out after you get rid of her.”

Very well!” Fu Chenzi nodded.

The two Heavenly High Immortals suddenly stepped forward at this moment and said, “Please allow me to do it. I wish to redeem myself for failing to capture Pavilion Master Liu Yang...”

Following which, one of them quickly moved over to the copper-masked lady’s side whereas the other one remained beside the middle-aged man.

“I’ll leave it to you then.” The middle-aged man nodded before turning around to leave the area. Hu!

All of a sudden, two powerful surges of sword qi burst forth simultaneously. They were directed right toward the backs of the middle-aged man and Fu Chenzi respectively.

The two Heavenly High Immortals, who were Zhang Xuan and his clone in disguise, had made their moves. The middle-aged man and Fu Chenzi were completely caught off guard by this assault, such that the sword qi pierced a gaping hole through their bodies in an instant.

“You ...”

Not expecting their own subordinates to assault them, the faces of the middle-aged man and Fu Chenzi warped in disbelief.

2053 The Price of Bragging

“Kill him!” Zhang Xuan roared.

Even though the middle-aged man and Fu Chenzi had been inflicted with fatal wounds, as Semi-Divinity realm experts, if they were allowed to regain their footing, they would still be able to bring devastating might upon them in an instant.

Thus, Zhang Xuan unhesitatingly opened his tamed beast sack.
Huala!

The Semi-Divinity metal chain immediately flew forth and bound the middle-aged man tightly.

At the same time, the Blackback Tortoise and Shark Three charged toward the middle-aged man whereas Shark One and Shark Two moved to support Zhang Xuan’s clone in dealing with Fu Chenzi.

While their strength was diminished on dry land, the fighting prowess they displayed was still extremely terrifying. In an instant, many bloodied punctures appeared all over the middle-aged man, and his arms were jolted apart by the powerful body tackle.

Everything happened so abruptly that the middle-aged man was overwhelmed by the current situation. Nevertheless, he swiftly recovered from his shock and made his move. With powerful killing intent gushing out of him, he summoned his halberd to knock away three Semi-Divinities encircling him.

Puhe!

Unfortunately for him, the movements of his halberd abruptly came to a halt as a Heavenly High Immortal realm corpse suddenly blocked its way.

Clenching his fists tightly, the middle-aged man willed his halberd to pierce right through the corpse and come to his aid, but before that could be done, a tremendous of energy abruptly bubbled within the corpse.

Boom!

The corpse blew apart, causing the halberd to be jolted back by the shockwave. It wavered uncontrollably in the air as it struggled to regain its balance in the midst of the frightening gale.

The Semi-Divinity halberd was indeed a force to be reckoned with, but the sheer force from the explosion from a Heavenly High Immortal still jolted its spirit, confusing its senses for a moment.

It took it quite a lot of effort for the halberd spirit to regain itself, but just as it was about to rush forward to help, another corpse appeared and exploded right in its face.

After facing three consecutive exploding corpses, the halberd spirit finally reached its limit and fell from the sky. It seemed like it would temporarily be incapacitated.

These explosions did not cause any harm to the Semi-Divinity halberd at all, but the spirit inside had already been worn out, such that it was no exaggeration to say that the weapon had been ruined.

Meanwhile, the middle-aged man was continuously being struck by the four Semi-Divinity beasts. Finally, with a decisive ram from the Blackback Tortoise, his head sank into his shoulders, and his body fell to the ground with a loud thump.

All in all, from the moment that the battle started to the moment that the middle-aged man dropped dead, only three breaths had passed.

It was indeed an incredible feat to be able to defeat a Semi-Divinity realm expert from the Hall of Gods within three breaths, but one had to know that Zhang Xuan had expended three Heavenly High Immortal corpses and mobilized a Semi-Divinity artifact and two Semi-Divinity realm beasts for this battle.

Zhang Xuan was probably the only person in the world who could make such an extravagant move.

While they were dealing with the middle-aged man, over on the other side, Shark One, Shark Two, and the clone were charging right toward the collapsed Fu Chenzi.

It did not matter whether Fu Chenzi was from the Ethereal Hall or the Hall of Gods. Since he had already bared his fangs at Du Qingyuan, there was no need for them to hold back.

Hu!

The clone rushed right up to Fu Chenzi and wrapped the latter tightly in his embrace, making sure to lock all his joints so as to prevent him from moving.

Meanwhile, Shark One and Shark Two rained ferocious attacks down upon the old man. Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist to bring out seven Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords, and these swords swiftly moved to encircle the other party, forming what was reminiscent of a silvery net around him.

Fsh fsh fsh fsh fsh!

Sword qi rained down on Fu Chenzi furiously.

Before he could even recover his footing in the battle, his body had been sliced apart, leaving slabs of meat and a pool of fresh blood on the spot where he had formerly existed.

Zhang Xuan had not bided his time in vain. He had observed the earlier battle carefully and analyzed all the weaknesses of Fu Chenzi and the middle-aged man, which had allowed him to design a plan that would allow him to take these two Semi-Divinity realm experts down swiftly with the least cost.

Seeing that everything had worked out fine, he heaved a sigh of relief.

His glance moved toward Fu Chenzi's corpse as he murmured, "Did this fellow betray the Ethereal Hall?"

Having used the Library of Heaven's Path to check on Fu Chenzi, there was no doubt that the latter was an elder of the Ethereal Hall. If so, why would he help this middle-aged man, who was a warrior of the Hall of Gods?

Did they have some kind of secret deal, or was he actually a spy from the Hall of Gods that had been tasked with

infiltrating the Ethereal hall?

There was also the possibility that the Ethereal Hall might have submitted to the Hall of Gods, but Zhang Xuan did not think that the possibility was too likely. After all, the Ethereal Hall had already acquired an entire ‘?\$(God)’ character, and there was nothing that could shake their position on the Forsaken Continent anymore.

There was no reason the Ethereal Hall would collude with the Hall of Gods!

Not to mention, Kong shi was the current head of the Ethereal Hall.

Zhang Xuan had thought of keeping Fu Chenzi alive in order to interrogate him, but he dared not take any chances when dealing with Semi-Divinity realm cultivators. If he did not kill them while he had the chance to, there was no knowing what they would pull from their pockets later on. He could not risk them getting away and revealing his other identities and trump cards.

Knowing that he would not receive any answers just by pondering over the matters like this, Zhang Xuan turned toward the severely wounded copper-masked lady and clasped his fist. “Palace Master Du, I am the new head of the Sevenstar Pavilion, Liu Yang. Allow me to treat your injuries.”

Fu Chenzi had dealt the other party a fatal blow, and if she was not treated quickly, she could very well lose her life.

Zhang Xuan took out a jade bottle, but just as he was about to pass it over, the copper-masked lady suddenly thrust a sword right toward him.

“What?” Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

He hurriedly retreated, but the next instant, the copper-masked lady suddenly dissipated into a layer of mist, vanishing completely from sight.

Knowing that the other party was executing some sort of movement art, Zhang Xuan shouted, “Palace Master Du?” However, it was already too late. The copper-masked lady was no longer around.

“She is probably afraid that I would harm her as well...”

Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Considering how the other party had just been backstabbed by Fu Chenzi, whom she was trying to protect, it was inevitable that she would be wary of him as well, even if he had just saved her from the two experts from the Hall of Gods.

He might attempt to exploit her at a time like that. Given that this was a critical period for Starchaser Palace, she could not afford to take that risk.

After all, the Sevenstar Pavilion could not be said to be in friendly relations with Starchaser Palace, but he still took the risk to venture into the dangerous City of Collapsed Space to save her. Not to mention, he had even brought out a Semi-Divinity artifact and four Semi-Divinity realm beasts.

It would be hard for her not to be skeptical.

Just that, the altar was still there.

She had put her life on the line in order to prevent the altar from falling into the hands of the other party. Why would she abandon it now?

With a helpless sigh, Zhang Xuan walked over to the middle-aged man whom he had just killed, took his storage ring, and claimed possession of it. Only then did he finally walk over to take a closer look at the altar.

The sky-blue flame was still burning on it. It emanated an aura that made one tremble, almost as if it was forging a connection with a god from the Firmament.

This made Zhang Xuan frown.

Based on what he had seen thus far, the copper-masked lady was in the midst of conducting a ritual when she was attacked, and she had not had a chance to complete it yet. So, the ritual should have come to an immediate halt as soon as she fled.

Yet, contrary to his expectations, the sky-blue flame was still burning with fervor. This was as inexplicable as a flame still blazing on even though there was no longer any firewood for it to feed on.

“Extinguish!”

With a flick of his finger, Zhang Xuan put out the sky-blue flame. With his Eye of Insight, he examined the altar that was famed for being able to reach the gods, such that even the Hall of Gods would go to such lengths to acquire it.

At first glance, it looked similar to the altar that Sovereign Chen Yong had used back then to summon a deity from the Azure. It had a very old aura to it, indicating that it was an ancient artifact that had been passed down from generation to generation.

Zhang Xuan reached out to touch it. His eyes first widened a little before he helplessly burst into laughter.

“To think that they’ve all been fooled by that fellow!” Zhang Xuan chuckled as he shook his head.

He wanted to see just what was so precious about the altar that Fu Chenzi and the middle-aged man would go to such lengths in order to acquire it, but to his amusement, the altar was actually a fake!

It seemed like Fu Chenzi was not the only good actor after all.

That being said, he had to admit that the altar was indeed really well made, such that he was unable to see through it with his Eye of Insight. If not for the Library of Heaven’s Path, he might not have noticed the anomaly.

Shark One waddled over and said, “Master, there’s god blood smeared on the surface of the altar.”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan took a closer look and saw a layer of faint crimson inscriptions on the surface. Vaguely, he could hear a faint hum echoing from the inscriptions that quivered his soul.

Zhang Xuan took out the crimson pendant and placed it close to the inscriptions. As expected, the pendant began to heat up in resonance with the inscriptions.

“It’s indeed god blood...” Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply.

It was no wonder they were unable to see through the altar. Starchaser Palace had gone to the extent of using the

invaluable god blood to create the effect of an ongoing ritual so as to confound their senses!

“But if this altar is fake... where’s the real one?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Considering how Du Qingyuan had put her life on the line in order to distract the Hall of Gods from pursuing the real altar, where could the real one be hidden?

“Forget it. There’s no point thinking about all of this right now. My priority at the moment should be finding Palace Master Du. She is my only clue to Luo Ruoxin...”

With a flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan stowed the altar and the corpses of the two Semi-Divinity realm experts into his storage ring. Then, together with the four Semi-Divinity realm beasts and his clones, he quickly darted in the direction that the copper-masked lady had disappeared in previously.

“Palace Master Du has sustained severe injuries, so it’s unlikely that she will have been able to get too far. Help me search for her together,” Zhang Xuan instructed.

Just like that, the group of six quickly combed the area.

Due to the rubble lying all around the City of Collapsed Space, there were many spaces where one could hide. If Zhang Xuan had to search the place all alone, who knew how long he would have to take?

Considering the dangers lurking in the area, it would be wise for him to quickly get it over and done with so that he could leave the area.

“Master!”

Around three minutes later, the Blackback Tortoise came before him and pointed in a direction.

The group headed in said direction, and through the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan quickly noticed that something was amiss.

There were no distinctive marks left in the area, but the spiritual energy there was considerably more concentrated

than elsewhere. Not only so, the spiritual energy also felt as if it had been refined.

“She should be in the vicinity. It’s likely that she’s unable to control her strength from leaking out due to the severity of her injury,” Zhang Xuan said with a nod.

The copper-masked lady had been struck in her vitals, causing her to be in a very precarious state. She had made sure to conceal her tracks properly, but she was still unable to control her cultivation properly in order to stop her zhenqi from leaking out of her body.

Considering that the air of degeneration lingering in the area, her injuries would only continue to worsen. At this rate, she would really die.

Thus, it was of paramount importance for him to find her as soon as possible so as to ensure her survival.

Otherwise, everything would have been for naught.

Zhang Xuan quickly scanned the surroundings, but he was unable to find anything at all.

“Searching for her like this won’t do. Since she’s wounded, it’s likely that she’ll draw the surrounding air of degeneration to her. We should be tracing the movement of the air of degeneration instead...”

This, Zhang Xuan waved to his clone and said, “Hey, come here!”

With a deep frown, his clone came over.

“Stay very still and make sure not to move at all,” Zhang Xuan said as he took out the Tongshang Sword and pierced it right into his clone.

Puhe!

A gaping hole immediately appeared in his clone’s chest.

“I need you to walk around the area to test out the concentration gradient of the air of degeneration. The quicker the wound corrodes, the higher its concentration is,” Zhang Xuan said.

Zhang Xuan's clone was speechless.

The heck!

You are the one who wants to find the concentration gradient of the air of degeneration, so shouldn't you be stabbing yourself? Even if you are afraid of pain, you have so many tamed beasts with you too... Why the hell are you stabbing me?

"Well, none of us have the ability to expel the air of degeneration from our bodies." Zhang Xuan shrugged casually. "You are the only one who wields this amazing ability, so it goes without saying that this task should fall to you.

"This matter is completely decided based on our expertise and not because you pissed me off with your bragging earlier. I'm not the type of vindictive person who would settle personal grudges through such despicable means!"

The lips of Zhang Xuan's clone twitched.

Well, you look exactly like the type of vindictive person who would settle personal grudges through despicable means to me right now!

All I did was brag a little bit, right? Do you really need to go to such lengths?

2054 Palace Master Du's Ritual

As he spoke, black smoke was flowing out from the clone's wounds. Just like before, his body was automatically expelling the air of degeneration that had seeped into his wounds.

“What a pity that such wounds don't last too long on my body. I don't think that I'll be able to determine the concentration gradient of the air of degeneration for you at this rate... Ah!”

With a cry of agony, the clone lowered his head, only to see Zhang Xuan's sword lodged in another part of his body.

You don't need to worry about that. It'll be tiring, but I'm willing to take up the responsibility of ensuring that there are plenty of wounds on your body so that you can get the job done,” Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

With veins bulging at his temples, the clone felt tempted to smash Zhang Xuan's head in.

With a helpless sigh, he dragged his wounded body around the area to test the concentration gradient of the air of degeneration.

Just as Zhang Xuan had guessed, there was indeed a visible difference in the concentration of the air of degeneration in the area. It did not take the clone too long to find the region where the concentration of air of degeneration was the highest.

What was surprising was that it was located in a region that had very little rubble but plenty of plants.

Thick vines could be seen creeping up the walls and covering the roofs.

Having narrowed down the location, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He quickly scanned his surroundings for a moment before bringing out over a hundred formation flags with a flick of his

hand. With a tap of his finger, all the formation flags flew out and planted themselves in the surroundings, forming a wind wall.

After this was done, Zhang Xuan flew up into the sky and shouted, "Palace Master Du, I am Liu Yang, the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion. I don't have any ties with the Hall of Gods or the Ethereal Hall. I know that you are somewhere below, and I implore you to show yourself so that I can treat you. Otherwise, you won't even last an incense's time[1] under the corrosion of the air of degeneration. If I'm not wrong, your innards and meridians are already starting to collapse under the corrosion, such that even breathing isn't easy for you!"

With the severity of the copper-masked lady's injuries, she would find it hard to survive even outside, let alone in the City of Collapsed Space. Once the air of degeneration seeped into her wounds, it would slowly corrode her innards as well, destroying her vitals.

If her condition persisted, she would not last too long even if she was a Semi-Divinity realm expert.

Hong long!

The vines suddenly exploded, and the copper-masked lady flew out from within. Her body was trembling nonstop due to the excruciating pain. However, her body still remained upright despite her current condition, and she was staring at Zhang Xuan warily, seemingly still unwilling to trust him.

She was afraid that this young man was yet another card prepared by the Hall of Gods in order to lure her out. Most likely, this young man should have already noticed that the altar she had left behind was a fake!

The warriors from the Hall of Gods were beings devoid of feelings. To them, there was nothing more important than accomplishing the missions that they were tasked with.

She knew just how valuable the altar was, and it would not surprise her if the Hall of Gods was willing to sacrifice a few Semi-Divinity realm experts in order to acquire it. Besides, even though it appeared that the young man had killed those

two, who could say for sure that it was not just another illusion to trick her?

As such, she was unwilling to trust the young man before her. She could not allow Starchaser Palace to fall to ruin due to her misjudgment!

“I have already hidden the altar in the depths of the City of Collapsed Space. None of you will be able to find it, so there’s no need to keep up with the pretense. If you wish to kill me, I suggest you get it over and done with. You won’t be getting anything out of me!” the copper-masked lady scoffed.

You are really misunderstanding my intentions,” Zhang Xuan said with a sigh. He flicked a jade bottle over and halted it right before her. “Drink the recovery medicine inside here. Otherwise, even if I don’t make a move, there’s no way you’ll get out of here alive.”

The copper-masked lady scanned her surroundings and confirmed that there was no way she would be able to escape quickly. Seeing that there was no way around this, she reluctantly took the jade bottle and drank it.

The young man was right. Her innards had been corroded by the air of degeneration, and her energy had nearly dried up. The severity of her injuries was much worse than those of Elder Bai Ye back then. If not for the fact that she had reached the Semi-Divinity realm, she would have already died.

Any escape routes had been sealed by the formation set up in the area. Regardless of whether what was in the jade bottle was poison or an antidote, it made no difference to her. At the very most, she would just explode her cultivation and bring the young man down with her!

After drinking the jade bottle, her face suddenly began twitching.

A moment later, she spurted a mouthful of blood. However, the blood was not red in color but pitch-black. As it landed on the ground, black smoke swiftly evaporated from it and dissipated into the surroundings.

“This...”

The copper-masked lady widened her eyes in incredulity.

She knew about the situation in the City of Collapsed Space very well, and it was for that reason that she had set up the formation involving the Inner Demons Flowers in advance to whittle down the forces of the Hall of Gods.

For many years, everyone had believed that one's fate was sealed once the air of degeneration seeped into one's body. Yet, she was cured just by drinking a bottle of water.

“Who are you?” the copper-masked lady asked with narrowed eyes.

It was impossible for those from the Hall of Gods to be so kind as to treat her of her affliction. Besides, she had never heard of the Hall of Gods possessing the means to expel the air of degeneration from one's body. The very fact that several warriors of the Hall of Gods had died here in the past proved that.

Given so, it was highly likely that the young man really was not in cahoots with Fu Chenzi and the others.

“I told you earlier. I am Liu Yang, the new head of the Sevenstar Pavilion. I have come here in search of you not to find the altar but to inquire about some personal matters.” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

“You wish to inquire about some personal matters?”

“Indeed. I heard that Palace Master Du conducted a ritual above the Vacant Sea to summon a god. May I know if that god was Luo Ruoxin?” Zhang Xuan asked nervously.

However, the copper-masked lady simply looked at him quietly with a frown.

Sensing some wariness from the other party, Zhang Xuan pulled out the crimson pendant and said, “You should recognize this artifact, right?”

Considering how Shark One and the others were able to recognize this pendant despite having only seen it once, as the one who had summoned Luo Ruoxin down to the Azure, Du Qingyuan should be very familiar with it.

“This is... a possession of the Spirit God?” The copper-masked lady’s eyes widened as she staggered backward a little. With an incredulous look on her face, she asked, “Could it be that... you are Sect Leader Zhang Xuan?”

“Indeed.” Zhang Xuan nodded as he quickly canceled the effects of the disguise amulet to revert to his original appearance.

The copper-masked lady quickly kneeled down and greeted, “Elder Jiang Yao of Starchaser Palace pays respects to Sect Leader Zhang!”

“Jiang Yao?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

The copper-masked lady took off her copper mask and revealed the appearance of a middle-aged lady. With her gaze lowered deferentially, she explained, “We received intelligence that the Hall of Gods intended to snatch the altar, so our palace master instructed me to disguise myself as her. I would come to the City of Collapsed Space and find a way to kill them while she hid the altar at a discreet location.”

“This...” Zhang Xuan blinked.

It seemed that Du Qingyuan was an extremely meticulous person. Considering that she was up against the Hall of Gods, it was only right for her to go this far.

And her efforts had paid off. It was clear that she was the victor in the war of wits after all that had happened.

Most likely, she might have guessed that First Elder Zhao Yue and the others would not be able to keep silent about the matter for too long, so she had intentionally leaked fake news to them so as to lure those from the Hall of Gods over to the City of Collapsed Space.

This would buy Du Qingyuan more than enough time to complete her ritual.

“But your cultivation realm...” Zhang Xuan remarked questioningly with a frown.

Based on what he knew, Starchaser Palace should not have any Semi-Divinity realm experts other than Du Qingyuan. After

all, the only way they could advance their cultivation to the realm was through the centennial Azure Bridge!

So, how could the other party possibly have reached the Semi-Divinity realm as well?

“It’s the god blood,” Jiang Yao explained.

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in realization.

Even a few droplets of blood from the god was enough for the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks to make the final step forward. As the person who had summoned the god, Du Qingyuan should have been able to acquire quite a few droplets of god blood.

With that, it would not be too much of a surprise for some Semi-Divinity realm experts to appear in the ranks of Starchaser Palace.

However, as such an occurrence would shake the balance of power among the Six Sects, Starchaser Palace had chosen to hide this matter. Most likely, the reason Jiang Yao had been chosen to consume the god blood was because she was a close confidant of Du Qingyuan, similar to what Elder Feng was to Kui Xiao.

After confirming that Jiang Yao knew nothing about Luo Ruoxin at all, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown, “May I know where Palace Master Du is at the moment?”

“Our palace master instructed me that to treat you with the utmost respect and fulfill all of your requests unconditionally, Sect Leader Zhang. However, I’m afraid that I don’t really know,” Jiang Yao said with a bitter smile.

“Sect Leader Zhang?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

He was slightly perplexed by the address. It was true that he was the hall master of the Myriad Beasts Hall and the pavilion master of the Sevenstar Pavilion... but sect leader?

Where did that title come from?

“Yes.” Jiang Yao was slightly surprised to see that Zhang Xuan was confused by her manner of address. “You are the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.”

The entire continent was aware of this matter, so it was not possible that the person in question was unaware of the matter, right?

Zhang Xuan's lower jaw slackened, and his mouth remained agape for a long while. Then, he sighed deeply and said, "Let's put that aside for the moment and leave the City of Collapsed Space. I'll need you to help me contact Palace Master Du and inform her that I am looking for her. I believe that I should be able to help her deal with the threat coming from the Hall of Gods."

Knowing that the young man before her wielded great authority in his hands, Jiang Yao hurriedly nodded. "Alright!" Thus, Jiang Yao quickly led Zhang Xuan toward the exit.

The City of Collapsed Space was a sinister region filled with all sorts of menace, but Jiang Yao was familiar with the terrain, and Zhang Xuan was able to spot threats from a distance with his Eye of Insight. This allowed them to circumvent most danger along the way.

Even if they were unlucky enough to encounter some danger along the way, they were strong enough to get past them without sustaining any injuries.

Just like that, they were able to successfully return to the desert after an hour of travel.

Tension finally escaped from Jiang Yao's body as she finally stepped out of the City of Collapsed Space. She turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "I'll try to get in touch with our palace master."

She had been prepared to lose her life in that dark, eerie place, so when she felt the warmth of the sun embracing her body once more, she felt like she had just been born anew.

Taking out her Communication Jade Token, she quickly set up a formation in order to extend the device's range. A moment later, she said, "I have already sent a message to our palace master. Let's return to Starchaser Palace for now. Our palace master will head there as well once she receives my message."

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

Riding on Shark One, the two of them quickly headed back to the Sea of Exiled Stars.

In a distant spacetime, the head of Starchaser Palace, Du Qingyuan, was standing in front of an altar, muttering softly beneath her breath.

In response to her mutterings, the altar was emanating a divine aura, causing the flames on top to blaze furiously.

Hu!

Some time later, an illusory figure gradually materialized atop the altar.

“Priestess, state your affair...”

The voice of the figure was distinct yet distant, almost as if it had traveled across dimensions in order to reach here.

“I wish to meet the Spirit God.” Du Qingyuan kneeled to the floor.

“The Spirit God has already departed,” the figure replied.

Du Qingyuan was silent for a moment before she spoke once more. “There is something that I would like to report. The Hall of Gods has made a move against the Six Sects, and the timing for the descent of the Azure Bridge has been arbitrarily changed. I suspect that something might have happened with the Hall of Gods.”

The figure frowned. “Do you know of the reasons behind those changes?”

“I do have a conjecture in mind, but I’m not too sure about its veracity,” Du Qingyuan replied. “To be able to incite the Hall of Gods to interfere with secular affairs and attempt to snatch the altar, I suspect that it has something to do with...”

Boom!

Before she could finish her words, the spacetime behind her suddenly distorted, and yet another person appeared within this dimensional plane.

Pah!

With a light flick of his hand, the figure atop the altar dissipated into fleeting mist.

The person walked straight toward the altar to grab it, and in retaliation, the altar released a powerful burst of energy. However, the person dispelled the burst of energy with a flick of his finger.

Just like that, the altar fell into his hands.

Seeing how neither the god nor the altar was able to stop the person, Du Qingyuan's eyes narrowed in utter astonishment. She was just about to make a move when the other party suddenly turned to look at her with a faint smile on his lips.

“Palace Master Du, we meet once again.”

“As I thought, it's really you?”

Du Qingyuan felt as if her heart had been plunged into the depths of an icy river. [1] An incense's time is roughly fifteen minutes.

2055 Catalysts for a Breakthrough

It took half a day for Zhang Xuan and Jiang Yao to return to Starchaser Palace.

First Elder Zhao Yue widened her eyes in disbelief upon seeing Jiang Yao. She had thought that their previous parting would be eternal, but the latter had managed to return alive!

“It’s all thanks to Sect Leader Zhang Xuan’s help,” Jiang Yao explained.

“Sect Leader Zhang Xuan? Are you referring to the new head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?” First Elder Zhao Yue was stunned.

Jiang Yao nodded before asking, “Is our palace master back yet?”

First Elder Zhao Yue shook her head.

“That’s weird. I sent a message to our palace master after I was safe, so she should have returned right after receiving my message. Why isn’t she here yet?”

She did not know exactly where Du Qingyuan had headed to, but it should not be as far off as the City of Collapsed Space, so she should have been able to return ahead of them.

“Let’s just wait a bit more. Our palace master might have been held up by something else. Given her strength, it’s unlikely that anything bad will have happened to her,” First Elder Zhao Yue replied.

“Un.” Jiang Yao nodded.

She settled Zhang Xuan down in one of the accommodations before pacing around the main hall, waiting for Du Qingyuan to return. However, even after half a day, Du Qingyuan was nowhere to be seen. This caused the two elders to start to panic.

“Let’s head to the Ritual Palace and try to get in contact with our palace master through a ritual,” Jiang Yao said with a frown.

They had been with Du Qingyuan for over a thousand years, and they knew the latter’s temperament very well. The latter should have rushed over as soon as she received the news. She was not the type to allow anything else to hold her up when it came to urgent business.

Yet, she was not even responding to their messages. Could she have met with some kind of danger?

Worried sick, Jiang Yao and First Elder Zhao Yue headed to Zhang Xuan’s accommodation to urge him to come along with them before rushing to the Ritual Palace.

In the massive room, an altar similar to the one that Zhang Xuan had seen back in the City of Collapsed Space stood at the very center.

The two elders of Starchaser Palace quickly placed several offerings on the altar, and a moment later, a sky-blue flame seedling suddenly appeared on it.

It was a known fact that the altars of Starchaser Palace could even cross dimensions to establish a connection link with the gods, so reaching a person within the same dimension should not pose a problem at all.

The sky-blue flame seedling flickered slightly, seemingly trying to summon someone. Jiang Yao dripped three droplets of blood onto the altar, and a powerful blaze rose up from the flame seedling as it morphed into the form of a person.

The silhouette of the person became more and more distinct, but all of a sudden, with a resounding pop, the flame abruptly burst apart.

Watching the entire process from the side, Zhang Xuan frowned.

Having lived in the capital of the Master Teacher Continent’s Otherworldly Demonic Tribe for some time, he had browsed through their massive collection of books. As such, he had some understanding regarding the rituals they conducted.

This occurrence did not mean that the ritual had failed. On the contrary, the ritual had succeeded—it was just that the person they were trying to reach could not be summoned.

In other words...

“Something has happened to our palace master,” Jiang Yao and First Elder Zhao Yue muttered with utterly pale faces.

Jiang Yao turned to Zhang Xuan and anxiously explained, “Usually, the ritual would forge a connection link with our palace master’s consciousness, allowing us to communicate directly with her. The abrupt dissipation of the flames means that either our palace master is rejecting the connection link... or she’s in no state to accept the connection link...”

Zhang Xuan’s eyes narrowed into slits.

Even after all the countermeasures that Du Qingyuan had prepared to distract the Hall of Gods, she was still caught by them in the end?

If that was really the case, the Hall of Gods was far more terrifying than he had thought!

“What should we do now?” Jiang Yao asked First Elder Zhao Yue anxiously.

In view of her safety, Du Qingyuan did not inform anyone of their whereabouts prior to her departure, so no one knew where she had gone.

Given everything that she had done, it went without saying that she would have made sure to conceal her trail properly. So, it would be nigh impossible for them to find her.

First Elder Zhao Yue suddenly thought of something, and she hurriedly took out a jade token from her storage ring. “Before our palace master left, she told me to crush this jade token if she didn’t return...”

Right after saying those words, she immediately crushed the jade token.

Weng!

There was a flash of light, and a line of words appeared in the air.

“Should I fail to return to Starchaser Palace, the one who will take my place as the palace master will be Zhang Xuan from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Regard him with the utmost respect and obey his commands unconditionally.”

“This...”

Reading the words in the air, First Elder Zhao Yue and Jiang Yao exchanged gazes before hurriedly turning to look at Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan was also flabbergasted by the matter.

Du Qingyuan had left a will behind to appoint him as the next head of Starchaser Palace... What was going on?

Taking a closer look, he realized that there was an illusory figure right next to the message. His eyebrows shot up as he hurriedly pointed at the figure and asked, “Is that lady over there your palace master?”

That illusory figure was the deity who had appeared on the Master Teacher Continent back when Sovereign Chen Yong conducted the ritual to summon Luo Ruoxin!

First Elder Zhao Yue nodded. “That’s indeed our palace master.”

“As I expected...” Zhang Xuan nodded slightly before a bitter smile crept onto his lips.

He had guessed as much when he realized that the indigenous population living on Starchaser Island were from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

He was just a single step away to learning the truth, but who could have thought that a mishap would occur at this moment?

That person was likely the only one on the Forsaken Continent who knew of Luo Ruoxin’s true identity, as well as where she had gone afterward. If something really happened to her, his only source of information would be severed.

He had initially been a little surprised that Du Qingyuan would nominate him to be the next palace master, but after some thought, he could understand the rationale behind her decision.

The only power who wielded the ability to force her, one of the strongest Semi-Divinity realm experts on the Forsaken Continent, into a corner was the Hall of Gods.

And the only one who really wielded the strength to go against the Hall of Gods was him, the new sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent!

On top of that, while the names 'Liu Yang' and 'Zheng Yang' might have sounded foreign to others, as the one who had saved Wu Chen, it was likely that Du Qingyuan might have heard a thing or two from him and guessed that they were actually all him.

It was probably in view of his current power and influence on the Forsaken Continent that she wanted to entrust Starchaser Palace to him so as to help it tide through this difficult period.

"Sect Leader Zhang." Jiang Yao turned to Zhang Xuan and clasped her fist. "We believe that our palace master has her reasons for issuing such an order, and we are willing to heed her commands. May I know what your view on the matter is?"

The two of them had personally witnessed Zhang Xuan's four Semi-Divinity realm beasts, so they had no doubts regarding his abilities.

Furthermore, Du Qingyuan was a wise and discerning person. They trusted her judgement.

"Since Palace Master Du trusts me so, I'm willing to take on the position as the new head of Starchaser Palace." Zhang Xuan nodded.

He had thought that it was just a great deal of trouble to lead a sect initially, but the Hall of Gods had turned out to be a much more difficult opponent than he had expected. In order to counteract them, the Six Sects would have to unite together, but they would need someone to rally under.

If he could become the head of Starchaser Palace, that would definitely give him much more credence.

More importantly, Starchaser Palace held the means to contact Luo Ruoxin, even if Du Qingyuan was missing at the moment.

“Thank you, Sect Leader Zhang.” First Elder Zhao Yue bowed deeply. “We’ll make preparations for the inauguration ceremony right now. For the time being, please do have a good rest at the accommodation we prepared for you. You must be exhausted after the trip to the City of Collapsed Space. Those from the other five sects should only be arriving tomorrow.”

Those from the other five sects had gathered together in order to discuss the details of how they would deal with the Azure Bridge. It would be good to hold the inauguration ceremony with the other five sects as witnesses to build prestige.

They had no idea why Du Qingyuan would nominate the incumbent sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as her successor, and to be honest, they had some qualms regarding the issue. However, they were also aware of the benefits it would bring.

Having a common leader would create a firm foundation for an alliance between the two sects, thus granting them more power to deal with the Hall of Gods.

“I understand.” Zhang Xuan nodded. “For the time being, I wish to take a look at the library of Starchaser Palace.”

Even though he had already reached the High Immortal realm, he was unable to advance his cultivation any further until he gathered sufficient cultivation techniques to compile the High Immortal realm Heaven’s Path Divine Art.

“Of course, allow me to lead you there,” First Elder Zhao Yue said.

She quickly led Zhang Xuan over to the library before leaving to arrange the upcoming inauguration ceremony.

So, Zhang Xuan quickly collected all the books within the library.

Half a day later, he left the library and headed to an isolated chamber.

As expected of a power that could communicate with the gods, Starchaser Palace had a massive collection of cultivation technique manuals that surpassed even that of the Sevenstar Pavilion.

This was especially so when it came to books relating to souls. The soul-related books in the other sects had could only be considered elementary compared to what they had.

Compile!

With a jolt of the Library of Heaven's Path, all the soul-related books were compiled into a High Immortal realm Heaven's Path Soul Art.

Shortly afterward, he moved on to compile all the High Immortal realm cultivation techniques that he had gathered so far.

With trembling fingers, Zhang Xuan nervously flipped open the compiled book, and after taking a look, he heaved a sigh of relief.

“There are still three more flaws, but they can be resolved by using items as catalysts...”

Even though Starchaser Palace's collection of High Immortal realm cultivation techniques was limited, it was fortunate that they had collected quite a lot of insights and cultivation experiences of High Immortals over the years.

“Water of Heavy Silver, Metal of Luminescent Star, and Grass of Biting Leaf...”

Each of these three items would resolve one of the flaws, but they were incredibly invaluable, such that they were worth even more than the diamond that the Sevenstar Pavilion had used earlier in the Ocean of Exiled Stars.

“I managed to obtain some Grass of Biting Leaf back in the City of Collapsed Space, and its potency is even greater than that of normal ones, so that's fine...” Zhang Xuan quickly ran through the various items that he had at the moment.

The City of Collapsed Space was fraught with dangers, but the natural treasures that thrived in that environment still managed to convince many cultivators of each generation to brave the dangers.

Back then, before he encountered the Degeneration Beasts, he had grabbed all the medicinal herbs that he could find, and fortunately, the Grass of Biting Leaf was among them.

“As for Metal of Luminescent Star... What luck! There happens to be one in Bai Xuansheng’s storage ring!”

Zhang Xuan had secretly taken Citadel Lord Bai Xuansheng’s storage ring before, and he had quickly checked on the contents earlier. There were all sorts of valuable things in there—two Heavenly High Immortal-tier weapons, all sorts of precious medicinal herbs, ores, and cultivation resources. The Metal of Luminescent Star was among them, too.

Thus, all he was lacking was the Water of Heavy Silver.

He had read about this item in the books before. Similar to the Northern Sea Dragon Orb, it existed in the depths of the ocean, making it extremely difficult to find. Even the Sevenstar Pavilion, which had a massive information network and all sorts of connections, did not have a clue as to where to source one at the moment.

“Maybe I should take a look in the Ethereal Hall. It would be best if I could buy one straight away, but otherwise, I could try putting up a bounty.”

Since it was recorded in the books, it meant that there was someone in the world who had used it before. The only power that boasted a greater information network and more connections than the Sevenstar Pavilion was the Ethereal Hall.

The Ethereal Hall had branches all over the Forsaken Continent, and most cultivators accessed the Ethereal Hall frequently. While he harbored some doubts regarding the Ethereal Hall after the encounter with Fu Chenzi, he felt that this was a risk that he had to take.

Otherwise, there was no saying when he would be able to find the Water of Heavy Silver.

If he could advance his cultivation to the Heavenly High Immortal realm, he would be in a much better position to deal with the warriors of the Hall of Gods.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan left his room and quickly looked for First Elder Zhao Yue.

“Here is a High Immortal realm Ethereal Token. Starchaser Palace is located on the remote Starchaser Island, so we didn’t isolate Starchaser Palace from external Ethereal Halls. As such, you can enter the Ethereal Hall here,” First Elder Zhao Yue said as she passed an Ethereal Token over.

Thank you,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

On the other hand, Jiang Yao gazed at Zhang Xuan with a conflicted frown before eventually saying, “Be careful. I don’t have any concrete evidence, but I’m not sure if the Ethereal Hall is trustworthy anymore.”

“I know. I will be careful.” Zhang Xuan nodded grimly before taking his leave.

He headed back to the isolated chamber and sat down. Holding the Ethereal Token tightly in his hand, he stared at the wall before him contemplatively.

Thinking back, I was connected to the Ethereal Hall those two times before I was assassinated by the warriors of the Hall of Gods. Will it be the same this time?”

2056 The Truth

It was right after he had visited Wuhai City's Ethereal Hall to purchase some Superior Immortal Pills that he had been assaulted by them. It was the same for the second time around at Biyuan City.

He had thought that it was weird that the Hall of Gods could accurately identify him back then, and he had even tried to loiter around the area to confirm once more if the Hall of Gods was really able to see through his disguise.

Could something have happened to the Ethereal Hall?

Even an elder of the Ethereal Hall, Fu Chenzi, had ended up colluding with the Hall of Gods! This was a huge cause for concern.

Kong shi's deeds on the Master Teacher Continent showed that he was a benevolent man who constantly had the welfare of the masses in mind. There was no way someone like that would collude with the Hall of Gods and incite chaos on the Forsaken Continent.

However, the same could not be said about those who were continuing his legacy. After all, several thousand years had already passed since the founding of the Ethereal Hall.

There was no doubt that the primary intentions for the founding of the Ethereal Hall were good, but as the organization expanded and developed through the years, for better or for worse, it was inevitable that it would begin to change.

But all of this is speculation. I'll have to give it a try to know for sure if I'm right or not, Zhang Xuan thought as he activated the Ethereal Token and immersed his consciousness into it.

The High Immortal realm Ethereal Hall looked rather deserted compared to the other Ethereal Halls. Considering the low

number of High Immortals in the world, this was only to be expected.

Zhang Xuan walked right up to the front receptionist and said, “Is it possible to purchase Water of Heavy Silver here?”

“Water of Heavy Silver?” the attendant asked with a slight frown, confused by the unfamiliar name. “Give me a moment, I’ll check.”

He quickly flipped open a book, and a moment later, a smile broke out on his face. “Customer, even though the Water of Heavy Silver is very rare, our Ethereal Hall happens to have some of it in stock. However, it might be a little pricy.”

“How much does it cost?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Around 5,000,000 Ethereal Coins,” the attendant replied.

That was way beyond pricy!

“I don’t have that many Ethereal Tokens with me at the moment, but is it possible for me to exchange this for a portion of Water of Heavy Silver?” Zhang Xuan took out a three jade bottles and placed them on the table.

The attendant doubtfully uncorked one of the bottles, and concentrated spiritual energy immediately gushed out from the bottle. With a look of disbelief in his eyes, the attendant uttered, “Isn’t this... the blood essence of a Semi-Divinity realm expert?”

“Is it enough?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Yes, of course. Definitely!” the attendant replied anxiously.

“I’ll make the price estimation right now!”

There were only so many Semi-Divinity realm experts on the Forsaken Continent, which made their blood essence priceless treasures. Every single droplet of it harnessed tremendous energy.

Furthermore, it would be difficult for a Semi-Divinity realm expert to produce three bottles of blood essence even over several decades without hurting their foundation!

Some time later, the attendant returned and passed five jade bottles over.

“Customer, here are five bottles of Water of Heavy Silver.”

“Un.” Zhang Xuan nodded in relief.

With all the three catalysts prepared, he should have no trouble pushing for a breakthrough to Heavenly High Immortal realm anymore. The only thing to do now was to see if he would be assassinated by the warriors of the Hall of Gods.

So, he backed out of the Ethereal Hall. He quickly set up multiple layers of defensive formations that would warn him of any approaching intruders and keep them at bay. Only after that did he take out the three catalysts and a bottle of Semi-Divinity realm blood essence.

With a tap of his finger, the Semi-Divinity realm blood essence swiftly diffused into a powerful surge of spiritual energy that gathered around him like a tornado.

While Semi-Divinity realm blood essence would be an invaluable treasure to any cultivator, he had no lack of it at the moment. To be exact, he had over twenty bottles of it in his storage ring. That was more than enough for him to splurge.

He had managed to acquire that much through squeezing the bodies of Fu Chenzi and the middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods dry. Of course, he did not forget to cleanse it of the air of degeneration using Little Chick’s chicken soup.

In any case, Zhang Xuan began driving his Heaven’s Path Divine Art, and his cultivation began surging once more.

Greater High Immortal realm, Earthly High Immortal realm...

In just an hour, he had already raised his cultivation to the Heavenly High Immortal realm!

Due to the lack of Semi-Divinity realm cultivation techniques, this was the highest level he could reach at the moment.

There’s no way I will be able to compile a Semi-Divinity realm Heaven’s Path Divine Art here, so the only way I can advance is to forge my own path ahead and create my own

cultivation technique! Zhang Xuan thought with a troubled look on his face.

He knew of his own problems very well.

The Heaven's Path Divine Art was indeed flawless, but ironically, this very trait of it was also its greatest flaw.

It dawned upon him when his cultivation went berserk the previous time.

There was no true perfection in this world. Even the heavens were flawed, so how could anything possibly be perfect? It was all just a matter of perspective.

Nevertheless, it was true that cultivating the Heaven's Path Divine Art would guarantee him superior strength. It might not be as perfect as he thought, but it was the best that he had.

But this very train of thought was poison to him. It made him dependent on the Heaven's Path Divine Art. The idea of cultivating something flawed disgusted him so much that he would retch for days on end. Even if he created something of his own, that lingering doubt that it was riddled with flaws would eventually become his greatest inner demon.

So, this Semi-Divinity realm would surely be a huge hurdle for him to overcome. It was likely that he would have to create a Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique with his own wisdom.

It would be tough, but it was not impossible. Since others were able to do it, there was no reason for him not to be able to do it too!

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan entered the cultivation chamber inside the Library of Heaven's Path. It was the manifestation of the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn that Luo Ruoxin had installed within his Library of Heaven's Path before she left.

Inside this unique cultivation chamber, the flow of time was ten times faster than that of the Master Teacher Continent.

Zhang Xuan had thought that the flow of time inside the cultivation chamber would change according to the flow of

time to the Forsaken Continent, but to his surprise, it remained the same as before. In other words, it was still ten times faster relative to the Master Teacher Continent, which equated to a hundred times faster than the time on the Forsaken Continent!

Even if he spent a hundred days inside of the cultivation chamber, a single day would have only passed on the Forsaken Continent.

Even a mere hour in there would equate to four days on the Forsaken Continent!

Zhang Xuan first went through the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula, which was the only Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique that he knew of, before using it as a reference to further develop his Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Just like that, he remained stationary for a very long while before he began to drive his zhenqi. But not too long later, he began coughing out blood.

First try, failed!

Unwilling to give up just like that, Zhang Xuan tried once more... but it was still a failure.

He continued a hundred more times, but he was still unable to make any progress.

"It's indeed not easy to make a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

It was fortunate that he had Little Chick's chicken soup, allowing him to recover swiftly from his injuries. Otherwise, it would only be a matter of time before he sustained severe internal injuries under all his reckless experimentation.

Feeling drained from all the thinking and experimentation, he finally retracted his consciousness from the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn.

All in all, less than an incense's time had passed in the real world.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan severed a slight will of his consciousness and placed it inside his Library of Heaven's

Path to continue researching the development of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique.

After that, he walked out of the isolated chamber.

With his cultivation reaching the Heavenly High Immortal realm, his strength was already comparable to that of an average Semi-Divinity realm cultivator. Feeling confident, he retracted the formations around him before heading out to take a look.

To be honest, he was slightly surprised to see that the Hall of Gods did not make a move while he was cultivating. Was his guess wrong?

Could it be that they were hesitant to make a move because he was currently in Starchaser Palace? The last two times he had been assaulted, he had only been attacked after he left the Ethereal Hall and stepped into a public area.

This conjecture did not seem too likely given that the Hall of Gods had attacked Chu Yin and First Elder Zhao Yue while they were at Starchaser Palace, but it was probably worth testing that out.

So, Zhang Xuan silently left Starchaser Palace without informing anyone and headed to a remote location above the Ocean of Exiled Stars.

With a flick of his finger, he dropped several water droplets into the ocean.

Even though he had many means at his disposal, he would not dare let down his guard against the Hall of Gods.

Zhang Xuan sat on the surface of the ocean for over two hours, but everything remained quiet. Nothing happened at all.

Could it really be that? Zhang Xuan thought with a deeply worried look on his face.

His initial deduction was that there was a faction of traitors in the Ethereal Hall that was giving away his location to the Hall of Gods when he entered. However, from the current looks of it, that did not seem to be the case.

This left him no choice but to turn to the other deduction he had in mind. If this deduction turned out to be true, that could really be the worst-case scenario for them at the moment.

I can only give it a try then...

He quickly changed his disguise, soul aura, and bloodline once more with the disguise amulet before entering the Ethereal Hall.

He walked up to the receptionist, passed the token that he had received from Kong shi over, and said, "I want Premier Immortal Pills. Bring me as many of them as possible."

"T-this token! Esteemed customer, please give me a moment. I'll prepare your Premier Immortal Pills this instant!" the receptionist said before hurriedly leaving the counter.

An hour later, she returned with two jade bottles and said, "My apologies, but we are only able to gather twenty Premier Immortal Pills at the moment."

"It's fine," Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

Just twenty Premier Immortal Pills was enough to make even the richest man on the Forsaken Continent gasp. Superior Immortal Pills were worth 20,000 Ethereal Coins, and Premier Immortal Pills were a hundred times more valuable than that.

In other words, what he had just received was worth an unbelievable 40,000,000 Ethereal Coins...

Even the elusive Water of Heavy Silver was only worth 5,000,000 Ethereal Coins!

Zhang Xuan retracted his consciousness from the Ethereal Hall and withdrew his Premier Immortal Pills. He uncorked one of the jade bottles and sighed in awe at the hulking amount of spiritual energy that each pill contained.

Even with his current cultivation realm, the Premier Immortal Pills were still of great use to him.

As long as I can figure out a Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique, I will definitely be able to make a breakthrough with these pills...

His current strength was already on par with Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, so their blood essence was no longer of much use to him. As such, he had been a little troubled over how he should push for a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.

However, with these pills in his hand, there was no need for him to worry anymore!

Zhang Xuan stretched his back lazily before slowly rising to his feet. He took another look around him once more, but there was still nothing at all.

“Of course, there’s no way that could have been the case...” he murmured with a hint of relief beneath his breath. Nodding in reassurance, he turned around to head back to Starchaser Palace.

But right at that instant, the space around him suddenly began distorting. The brilliant sun seemed to have been plucked from the sky, plunging him into a dark world filled with stars.

Huhuhu!

An old man appeared before his eyes.

This old man appeared to be in his fifties to sixties, and he was dressed in a simple gray robe. Just by standing quietly on the spot, he seemed like a phantom that wandered beneath the darkness of the night, drawing out the deepest fears in one’s heart.

“Are you from the Hall of Gods?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

This was not good at all. The powerful old man before him was one thing, but what was more important was the fact that the old man had only appeared after he used Kong shi’s token in the Ethereal Hall.

In other words, the token that Kong shi had given him actually served as a GPS locator for the Hall of Gods!

Based on what he had heard from Han Jianqiu, it appeared that Kong shi had handed this token to him personally, so the chances of anyone tampering with it were very low. Could it

be that the World's Teacher had really colluded with the Hall of Gods?

Or could it be a misunderstanding?

Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and shook his head.

Regardless of the truth, it was good that he had sorted this matter out. At the very least, he knew who he had to be guarded against in the future.

Then, he turned to look at the old man as he drove his zhenqi furiously.

2057 Counterattack

Astonishingly, even with his current cultivation realm, he was unable to see through the depths of the old man's cultivation.

Up to this point, the strongest Semi-Divinity realm cultivators that he had met were Han Jianqiu, Fu Chenzi, and the middle-aged man. However, the old man before him was at a whole different level from them.

The aura that he emanated seemed to swallow the very essence of the world. The darkness engulfing them was a result of his aura devouring the light in the area. It felt like there was no way to escape from him at all.

“Taming four Semi-Divinity realm beasts and slaying Fu Chenzi and Ying Chen. It's no wonder the master values you so highly, choosing to mobilize even me to deal with you,” the old man remarked. “It's really beyond my imagination how you are able to come this far within ten short days. Even the current me would have some trouble trying to capture you.”

“You know that I was the one who killed Fu Chenzi and the middle-aged man?” Zhang Xuan felt his body tensing up a little.

It was likely that Ying Chen was the name of the middle-aged man from the Hall of Gods who had made a move against Jiang Yao in the City of Collapsed Space.

But they had been in the City of Collapsed Space when he killed the two of them, and he had even made sure to seal the surroundings in order to ensure that those two would not be able to send any messages out to the Hall of Gods. So, how could the old man before him know of this matter?

Furthermore, no one should have known that he had tamed four Semi-Divinity realm beasts other than Jiang Yao.

Given that he had tamed the Blackback Tortoise in his capacity as Liu Yang, did that not mean that the Hall of Gods

was aware of the fact that he was the head of the Sevenstar Pavilion?

This was impossible!

He did not think that he would be able to hide this matter forever, but he did not expect someone to figure it out so quickly either!

“There’s nothing the Hall of Gods doesn’t know about,” the old man replied nonchalantly, as if it was nothing to make a fuss about. “Come with me. You might have four Semi-Divinity realm beasts and a Semi-Divinity artifact, but you won’t stand a chance against me.”

“How will I know if I don’t give it a try?” Zhang Xuan scoffed.

With a flick of his wrist, he brought out the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks, and the four of them charged furiously toward the old man. He then took out the Semi-Divinity artifact and the ten Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords and directed them to assault the old man as well.

It felt like even the stars in the sky would be knocked down by such an overwhelming force, but for some reason, no matter how they charged forward, they simply could not reach the old man. It was just a short distance of several steps between them and the old man, but this small gap formed the greatest difference in the world.

Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes. Dimensional Sand?

He had encountered such a situation back when he was on the Master Teacher Continent as well. Back then, the space had been reduced to sand, such that no matter how quickly he was moving, he was unable to move forward at all.

Could it be that the old man had comprehended such an ability as well?

Through shattering the space before him into dust, those who stepped into the area would feel as though they were stepping into quicksand, preventing them from moving an inch no matter how powerful they were.

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes. No, that's not right. It isn't Dimensional sand... It feels like that starry night in the surroundings is somewhat like his Dominion. Those who step into this space have to obey his laws. All those who are weaker than him aren't able to approach him unless he allows them to!

Not even Dimensional Sand would be that powerful as to completely halt even the movement of a Semi-Divinity realm expert. As long as a Semi-Divinity realm expert released their energy, they should be able to dispel the quicksand.

However, the fact that the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks were unable to do it hinted that there was an even greater power at play.

In a sense, the old man was using an ability similar to Kong shi's Word of Law.

In other words, all those who were pulled into this space would have to obey his rules. How could Zhang Xuan win a battle like this?

It was at this moment that Zhang Xuan realized that he had once again underestimated just what Semi-Divinity realm cultivators were capable of.

So, he knocked on his tamed beast sack and asked, "Little Chick, are you still dead at the moment?"

The little yellow chick in his tamed beast sack was likely his greatest hope at turning the tables around. While the other party was scarily unreliable in battle, there was no doubt that it possessed miraculous powers.

Huhu!

The little yellow chick remained completely motionless in his tamed beast sack, not responding to his calls at all.

Ever since it devoured the droplet of god blood back in the Vacant Sea, it had gone completely silent, not moving at all.

Knowing that there was nothing he could do about it, Zhang Xuan could only gnash his teeth in frustration.

I guess I can only rely on myself since that fellow is out, Zhang Xuan thought as he raised his gaze to assess the old man before him.

The latter was standing quietly on the spot with a slight smile on his face, not moving at all. Zhang Xuan felt as if he was looking at a picture.

Yet, despite the lack of movements on the latter's part, the four Semi-Divinity realm beasts and the others simply could not reach him at all.

"It's futile. In this space, even if you wield the strength of a Semi-Divinity, you still won't be able to hurt me," the old man commented as he raised his hand and waved it.

Padah!

The Blackback Tortoise and the others were immediately knocked down onto the surface of the ocean. They tried to regain their balance and get up, but for some reason, it felt as if the entire world was crashing down on them, preventing them from moving at all.

After suppressing the four beasts, the old man raised his hand, and the Semi-Divinity metal chain immediately flew into his grasp. "I'll be taking this back then."

As soon as the old man's hand fell onto the metal chain, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up. "Now!"

Two Semi-Divinity realm corpses immediately materialized right in front and behind the old man.

Boom! Boom!

Two resounding explosions occurred simultaneously, causing the surroundings to collapse inward from the sheer shockwave. As if a black cloth shrouding the sky was being forcefully pulled away, folds and cracks immediately appeared on the starry night sky above.

Pu!

The old man did not expect Zhang Xuan to be so vicious as to refine two Semi-Divinity corpses and explode them on him without the slightest shred of hesitation. Moreover, he even

used a Semi-Divinity artifact as bait for him to lower his guard...

Based on the sheer intensity of the explosion, it was likely that the artifact would have sustained damage severe enough to cripple it for good.

In fact, if not for his Dominion protecting him, he could have lost his life as a result of the explosion.

His eyes crimson with rage, the old man bellowed with a savage glint in his eyes, "You obnoxious brat. I could have spared you, but you are really testing my patience, aren't you?"

"Despite being a sack of old bones, I must say that you are as resilient as a cockroach," Zhang Xuan scoffed coldly.

He had forged the corpses of Fu Chenzi and the middle-aged man into Soulless Metal Humanoids, thinking that they would be a useful trump card against the Hall of Gods. It was indeed fortunate that he had done so.

He had been wondering how he could allow those two fellows to get close to the old man, and after some thought, he had eventually decided to use the metal chain as bait.

The metal chain was an extremely rare Semi-Divinity artifact that could alter its form, granting it great flexibility in battle. Zhang Xuan was confident that the old man would try to claim it for himself, and that would create a perfect opportunity for him to launch an attack.

So, he had created a mini folded space at the front and back of the metal chain and placed the two Soulless Metal Humanoids inside.

As expected, it had worked out well.

It was just that he did not expect the old man to be so powerful as to survive the explosions from two Semi-Divinity realm experts at such proximity without sustaining any damage whatsoever.

It was no wonder the Hall of Gods had only sent a single person this time to deal with him. It was apparent that they

knew that it did not matter how many ordinary Semi-Divinity cultivators they sent at him, so they decided to send their strongest one instead.

It was really lucky that he did not get arrogant and diligently made preparations beforehand, or else he might have been cornered.

“You b*stard! I’ll kill you!”

With a furious roar, the severely wounded old man charged toward Zhang Xuan.

But as soon as he made a move, the space around him began warping once more, and a black mist swiftly crept out of nowhere.

Rather than mist, it resembled billowing smoke that rose from an inferno more. The earlier explosion had created cracks in the old man’s Dominion that allowed the black mist to creep in.

“Do you think that a Confinement Formation of such a tier will really be able to stop me?” the old man sneered frostily. “You underestimate me too much, brat. This is nothing at all to me. I’ll kill those four beasts of yours and drag you before my master!”

Boom!

The surrounding spiritual energy surged toward the old man, and his injuries began to heal at a visible rate. The old man seemed to have used some sort of secret art that allowed him to swiftly recover from his injuries.

Your recovery ability is spectacular. I am very impressed. Your master must be much stronger than this... but don’t you think that it’s too naive of you to assume that this is just an ordinary Confinement Formation?” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he watched the old man’s actions with composure.

“Is it not?” The old man was taken aback. The next instant, his eyes widened, and his body began trembling in disbelief. “It can’t be... You brought the air of degeneration out of the City of Collapsed Space and infused it into the formation? You lunatic!”

“I knew that I would require special means to deal with you persistent cockroaches. If you weren’t injured, the air of degeneration would never have been able to harm you. In fact, I believe that you possess the means to suppress the air of degeneration and prevent it from seeping into your body with sheer strength...

“But what a pity. You were so anxious to capture me that you neglected your surroundings. You furiously absorbed the spiritual energy from the surroundings in order to quickly heal from your injuries, but that caused you to unwittingly take a massive amount of air of degeneration into your body. I wonder how much longer you have after getting so severely poisoned,” Zhang Xuan scoffed.

Given how potent the air of degeneration was, how could he not gather some of it to use as a weapon?

Most cultivators of the High Immortal realm and above already possessed the ability to ward off the air of degeneration, so its effects would have been severely lacking if he had used it directly. Thus, Zhang Xuan had known that he would have to find some way to severely injure the old man first before deploying it.

Or better still, if he could force the old man into a position where the latter would take in the air of degeneration of his own accord, that would surely seal the latter’s fate.

Pu!

The old man spat out three mouthfuls of black blood consecutively as his body trembled nonstop. He felt as if his head was going to explode.

He had gone there completely confident that he would be able to accomplish his mission without fail. He had known that the young man was a witty person, but he did not think that the young man’s wits would mean anything before his strength. He had never thought that he would meet such an end!

Tzzzz!

As the air of degeneration flowed through the old man’s body, his innards became more and more corroded. Slowly, his

vision began to blur, and his body began to sway weakly. It looked as if he would faint at any moment.

“I have underestimated you, but even though I might be unable to apprehend you, you don’t possess the means to kill me. Just you wait!”

Knowing that his mission had already failed, the old man clenched his teeth and flew into the distance. Given his current condition, his only hope was to quickly return to the Hall of Gods and seek the master’s help in dispelling the air of degeneration in him.

Otherwise, in less than an hour, he would become a pitch-black corpse.

“Do you think that I would have prepared so much just to allow you to escape at the last moment?” Zhang Xuan laughed to himself. “It’s far too late for you to think about escaping!”

Boom!

A halberd shot down from the sky, aimed right toward the old man’s head. Alarmed, the old man tried to dodge, but it was too late.

The halberd stabbed his shoulder, causing him to halt.

2058 Suicidal

The halberd was the offensive-oriented Semi-Divinity artifact that he had obtained from the middle-aged man. Naturally, he did not neglect to tame it on his way there, and the only reason he had not brought it out thus far was because he had planted it in advance to snipe down the enemy should the latter attempt to escape.

If the old man had been at full power, there was no way such an attack would have worked. However, his severe injuries and the corrosion of the air of degeneration had reduced the old man's fighting prowess to less than a hundredth of what it was, not to mention that the old man had devoted the dredges of his strength to escape.

Even though the old man had managed to avoid being skewered in the head, the halberd would still ensure that the other party would not be able to escape.

Putong!

Unable to withstand the impact of the halberd, the old man plummeted into the water, causing a tall pillar of water to rise into the air.

Wuuuuuuu!

Witnessing this sight, the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks immediately went into action. The ocean was their battlefield, and their pride would not allow any land-dwellers to best them on their home turf.

The severe water swiftly turned choppy, and furious waves could be seen rising one after another.

A few breaths later, a dying old man was dragged out from the surface of the sea by Shark One.

If Zhang Xuan's means had shaved away ninety percent of the old man's health points, the encirclement of the four beasts had destroyed another ninety percent out of the remaining ten percent!

If not for the old man's resilient mind, he likely would have fallen into a coma due to the multiple traumas that he had sustained.

Facing the old man, who was held firmly in place by the four beasts, Zhang Xuan stared at the old man firmly in the eye and asked, "Who is your master? Why are you trying to kill me?"

He was utilizing the means of a soul oracle in order to interrogate the old man. Through befuddling one's consciousness, it was possible to make one reveal one's deepest secrets.

It was just that he was usually reluctant to use these means.

"I finally understand why the master is so bent on capturing you. Your capabilities are truly formidable," the old man replied calmly, completely unaffected by Zhang Xuan's means. "The winner takes it all. Since I have lost, the only fate that awaits me is death. You need not dream of trying to pry any information out of my mouth..."

"Sh*t! Retreat!"

Before the old man could even finish his words, Zhang Xuan's eyes suddenly narrowed in horror. He hurriedly pulled his four beasts together with him and dived into the depths of the ocean.

Kaboom!

A few instants later, an explosion of unbelievable proportions occurred. With a deafening rumble, overwhelming pressure and devastating heatwaves swept across the Ocean of Exiled Stars, threatening to vaporize everything.

A humongous mushroom cloud could be seen rising in the air. The water that was within the area of the explosion scattered over a radius of several hundred li, causing a massive flash rain.

Pu pu pu pu pu!

Blood spurted from the mouths of Zhang Xuan and the four beasts, and it took them a long while before they came to.

It was only three breaths between the moment Zhang Xuan realized what the old man was going to do and the moment of the explosion. With the incredible speed of the Semi-Divinity realm aquatic beasts, they were able to dive tens of thousands meters deep within this short period of time.

Nevertheless, they were still nearly blown to smithereens by the explosion!

If they had been standing right next to the old man when he exploded his cultivation, their bodies and souls would have been obliterated on the spot!

“And he dared to call me a lunatic...” Zhang Xuan murmured as he looked at the massive crater that had appeared on the surface of the ocean as a result of the explosion.

Even the Blackback Tortoise, who boasted near-invincible defense, could not help but shudder when it recalled how close it had just come to death.

It had long heard that the Hall of Gods was filled with deranged individuals, but who would have thought that they would really off their rockers?

To engage in suicide bombing without the slightest hesitation... Just the shock was enough to shave decades off its lifespan!

That was really too terrifying.

“It’s a pity...” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

“It’s indeed a pity how someone as powerful as him came to such a tragic end...” Shark One nodded in agreement.

“That’s not it. I find it a huge pity how I paid such a huge price to defeat him, only to receive nothing in return. Is there a greater tragedy than this in the world?” Zhang Xuan cried out.

The four Semi-Divinity realm beasts.

Zhang Xuan had really gone all out to defeat the old man. He had used two Semi-Divinity corpses and used up his air of degeneration. Even his Semi-Divinity artifact had ended up sustaining severe damage as a result of the plan.

He had thought that it would at least be worth it if he could trade all that for a more powerful Soulless Metal Humanoid, but in the end, he had received nothing at all!

To put it in simpler terms, he had invested heavily in the battle, only to reap no returns. It was inevitable that he would feel so stifled.

But thinking about it again, given the opponent that he was up against, he was already lucky to still be alive.

With a grasp of his hand, the tattered Semi-Divinity metal chain swiftly flew to Zhang Xuan. He took out several bottles of chicken soup and soaked the metal chain with it.

Tzzzzzz!

It did not take long for the metal chain to recover to its original condition.

Naturally, Zhang Xuan had known that this was possible prior to the execution of the plan. Otherwise, he would have found it hard to part with such a useful Semi-Divinity artifact.

“Let’s return!”

Knowing that it was likely that the Hall of Gods would not dispatch anyone for him in the short-term after losing such a powerful expert, Zhang Xuan quickly moved the other four beasts back into the tamed beast sack, preparing to leave the area.

At this moment, though, a voice suddenly echoed in his mind. “Master, were you looking for me earlier? Is something up?”

A little yellow chick leisurely waddled in front of him. Its small, feeble body was swaying from side to side, reminiscent of a drunkard who had just awoken from a long sleep.

Just looking at this sight filled Zhang Xuan with the urge to rush forward and give that little yellow chick a beating it would never forget.

When he wanted its help earlier, that little yellow chick was sleeping like a dead log, but as soon as the enemy was defeated and the coast was clear, it popped up and asked if he needed help. It was almost as if it was mocking him!

If not for his good temper and the possibility that he might not have been able to defeat it, he would have charged forward that very instant to pummel it!

Your cultivation... doesn't seem to have grown at all?" Shark One asked with a doubtful voice.

Zhang Xuan was slightly surprised to hear that for a moment. He quickly turned his gaze over, and indeed, there was something amiss.

He had thought that the little yellow chick, after devouring a droplet of the god blood, would experience a huge growth spurt and reach the same level as the Blackback Tortoise and the others. Yet, contrary to his expectations, it felt the exact same as before. There was no change to its cultivation, and even its physical appearance looked the same as before.

It was as if... the god blood was totally ineffective on it!

But how could that be?

Even if it was less than a droplet, that was still the blood of a real god. There was no way it could have just disappeared into the little yellow chick without making any difference at all.

"I don't really know why. I suddenly felt intoxicated after drinking that blood, so I slept for a while. That thing didn't seem to do anything except make me fall asleep." Little Chick shook its little bottom as it spoke.

It was also surprised to see things turning out this way.

It had thought that consuming the god blood would allow it to become a powerful expert in an instant, but things did not happen as it expected.

If even god blood did not work on it, how was it supposed to advance its cultivation to higher realms?

"Alright then..."

Zhang Xuan carried on asking a few more questions, and he even made sure to examine Little Chick closely, but there were really no visible changes. In the end, he had no choice but to shrug in exasperation.

In the end, he stowed Little Chick back into the tamed beast sack together with the other four beasts before heading back to Starchaser Island.

Nearly a day had passed since heading over, and it was about time for his inauguration as the new head of Starchaser Palace.

As he had used an alias back at the Myriad Beasts Hall and the Sevenstar Pavilion, everyone thought that they were different individuals, so the response had not been too intense.

But this time, the very same Zhang Xuan who was known to be the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was going to become the palace master of Starchaser Palace as well...

Just thinking about how high profile it would be made him gasp a little.

Most likely, the news should have already reached all the other sects, stirring a commotion of unprecedented proportions!

Just as Zhang Xuan thought, an uproar had indeed been stirred on Starchaser Island.

“I can’t believe this! Why is our Starchaser Palace nominating an outsider as the next head? Where is our palace master? Why isn’t she announcing the news?”

“It seems to be a unanimous decision made by the First Elder and the rest. Our palace master seems to be out at the moment.”

“Are they making this decision without consulting our palace master? Isn’t that equivalent to a revolt?”

“Are you insane? How can you say those words aloud? Based on what I heard, our palace master left a will behind nominating Sect Leader Zhang Xuan to take over her position...”

Such discussions could be heard throughout Starchaser Palace.

As the indigenous population of the Forsaken Continent, they had never been on good terms with the other sects. Under normal circumstances, even if their palace master wanted to step down, she should have nominated one of her own people

to take over her position. Yet, she actually chose to pass down her seat to the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

Just the very thought of it was ridiculous!

This was as good as trampling on the dignity and prestige of Starchaser Palace!

An elder harrumphed in displeasure. “Shut your mouths! Our palace master has made an offering to a god, and it’s under the will of the god that she made such a decision. Could it be that you think that your words weigh more than those of a god?”

“Under the will of the god?”

Those who had voiced their doubts earlier swiftly shut their mouths fearfully upon hearing that.

As the ones closest to the gods of the Firmament, those from Starchaser Palace had always carried great deference toward the gods in their hearts. They did not think that the elder would dare make a false claim under the name of a god, so naturally, they dared not question her words anymore.

On the other hand, however, it was proving a difficult feat to convince those of the other sects to accept this matter.

In the main hall of Starchaser Palace sat a very confused Han Jianqiu.

“Just what in the world did our sect leader do to make Du Qingyuan willingly nominate him as her successor?”

He knew that Zhang Xuan had been determined to make his way to the Ocean of Exiled Stars, but what he did not expect was for the latter to squeeze Du Qingyuan out and take over her position within a few short days.

Could this have been something that was planned beforehand?

If that was the case, why did Zhang Xuan claim that he was an unaffiliated cultivator?

“Regardless of the truth, this isn’t necessarily a bad thing for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. It’ll be good if we can

forge a friendly relationship with Starchaser Palace,” Han Jianqiu murmured with a frown.

When he passed his position down to Zhang Xuan, he had already resolved himself to follow the latter’s directives. No matter what it was, as long as it did not compromise the welfare of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he would follow the young man’s orders.

It would be unbecoming if he, as an elder of the sect, attempted to overturn the sect leader’s decision without a compelling reason.

Hu!

“Han Jianqiu, what happened?”

A shadow flashed through the air as a figure rushed right into the main hall. It was none other than Elder Qin Yuan from the Myriad Beasts Hall!

“I can’t accept this. There’s no way the Sevenstar Pavilion can accept this. Unless you can give me a proper explanation for this matter, you can expect our Sevenstar Paviliom to take necessary actions in retaliation!” Elder Kui Xiao walked into the main hall right behind Elder Qin Yuan.

They were all staring at Han Jianqiu intently, expecting him to explain what had just happened.

How in the world did the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion end up becoming the head of Starchaser Palace as well?

The Six Sects had always been independent existences, each of them reigning over a region of the Forsaken Continent. There had never been any official alliance within the Six Sects.

It was this balance of power that had allowed for peace and harmony among them.

As such, it was inevitable that the other sects would feel a little nervous upon hearing this news.

“I’m not sure what’s going on either,” Han Jianqiu replied with a troubled frown.

“You aren’t sure?” Elder Qin Yuan had always been extremely hot-tempered. Upon hearing how Han Jianqiu was intending to feign ignorance, he immediately flung his sleeves and bellowed, “Do you think that we’ll let this matter pass just because you don’t know a thing? You are shaking the power balance of the Six Sects with this move!”

“Did you think that your Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is the only one capable of making alliances? Very well! Just you wait! Our Myriad Beasts Hall shall make an alliance with the Sevenstar Pavilion as well!”

“Sect Leader Zhang might have comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, but he isn’t the only genius on the Forsaken Continent,” Elder Kui Xiao sneered. “Our Sevenstar Pavilion has Pavilion Master Liu Yang whereas the Myriad Beasts Hall has Hall Master Zheng Yang. Shall we see if he can stand his ground even against the two of them?”

2059 What Is Hall Master Kong Up To?

Han Jianqiu was unable to speak at all.

He had heard of Hall Master Zheng Yang and Pavilion Master Liu Yang as well, and they were reputed to be extraordinary geniuses who only appeared once every several thousand years.

People of their caliber would surely be able to stand against even Zhang Xuan and his Gods' Sword Intent once they matured. It would not be a wise decision to make enemies out of them.

An alliance between the Sevenstar Pavilion and the Myriad Beasts Hall would certainly be to the disadvantage of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

Not to mention, he had not understood just how many benefits Zhang Xuan had promised Starchaser Palace in order to convince Du Qingyuan to pass down her position to him.

“What a commotion!”

At this instant, hearty laughter suddenly echoed outside the main hall.

Following that, two silhouettes walked into the room.

The head of the Blackmirror Citadel, Bai Xuansheng.

The head of the Evanescent Immortal Sect, Gu Zhuiyun.

The appearance of these two caused the atmosphere in the room to become even tenser.

With this, almost all the heads and ex-heads of the Six Sects were present in the room!

Bai Xuansheng had been recuperating all this while, and while he still appeared a little pale on the surface, his current condition would not affect his exertion of strength anymore.

As for Gu Zhuiyun, he was a tall, lanky old man with a haughty look on his face.

“The two of you are concerned about our sect leader becoming the head of Starchaser Palace as well?” Han Jianqiu asked with a deep sigh. “Would you believe me if I said that I am unaware of this matter?”

Bai Xuansheng shot a cold glance at Elder Kui Xiao before clasping his fist toward Han Jianqiu. “Elder Han, I think you are misunderstanding our intention. We are here to meet Sect Leader Zhang Xuan in order to discuss something with him!”

He did not manage to catch a clear glimpse of the faces of the culprits who had done him in at the Sea of Little Mirror back then. That being said, there was no such thing as a perfect secret in the world, especially when it came to a major operation like that.

There were not too many diamond crystals of that brilliance in the world. All he had to do was track down the sect that had acquired such a diamond crystal recently.

You wish to meet our sect leader?” Han Jianqiu frowned.

That matter concerns the future of the Six Sects. I want to hear Hall Master Zheng Yang and Pavilion Master Liu Yang’s opinions on the matter,” Gu Zhuiyun said as he glanced at Elder Qin Yuan and Elder Kui Xiao.

“May I know what the matter you are referring to is?” Han Jianqiu asked with a perplexed frown.

It was apparent that Bai Xuansheng and Gu Zhuiyun were standing on the same line on this matter, whatever it might be. In fact, there was a good chance that they might have already forged an alliance with one another.

“We can all agree that Semi-Divinities are the strongest experts on the Forsaken Continent. A sect must have a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator in order to enjoy peace and prosperity in the long-term,” Gu Zhuiyun began explaining.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

The presence of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator dictated whether a sect was able to prosper or not. Without the presence of a cultivator in the highest tier, it mattered not how many High Immortals a sect had.

It was also for this very reason that the Six Sects had been able to suppress the aquatic creatures all these years.

Gu Zhuiyun continued. “The Azure Bridge is going to descend very soon. Are those sect leaders of yours confident of defeating the warriors of the Hall of Gods to earn the qualifications to reach the Semi-Divinity realm?”

No one was able to say a word, not even Han Jianqiu.

After all, who could possibly make such a declaration?

There was no denying that Sect Leader Zhang Xuan was powerful, but his cultivation was only at the Heavenly True Immortal realm at the moment. At that level, he would have difficulties trying to deal with ordinary Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivators, let alone the warriors of the Hall of Gods!

The same went for the Myriad Beasts Hall and the Sevenstar Pavilion.

While the unparalleled talents of their new heads sparked great hope within them, deep in their hearts, they were still uncertain if they would be able to overcome the Azure Bridge.

They had challenged the Azure Bridge themselves many years back, and they knew just how difficult it was.

Seeing the expressions on everyone’s faces, the edges of Gu Zhuiyun’s lips inched upward as he spoke up. “However, our Evanescent Immortal Sect and Blackmirror Citadel are confident of it!”

“Confident?”

Han Jianqiu and the others looked at Gu Zhuiyun in disbelief.

Just what in the world gave him the confidence to make a bold claim like this?

Take a look at this,” Gu Zhuiyun said as he flicked his wrist and took out a jade token.

Han Jianqiu took the jade token and looked at its contents. A moment later, he raised his head to look at Gu Zhuiyun once more, this time with an even more confused look on his face, and asked, “What is this?”

Recorded within the jade token were the battle techniques, moves, and flaws of a certain cultivator.

“It is the information of a warrior of the Hall of Gods who fought with the geniuses of our Evanescent Immortal Sect!” Gu Zhuiyun replied.

“The information of a warrior of the Hall of Gods?”

The other three immediately rose to their feet as they looked at Gu Zhuiyun in disbelief.

If they could acquire detailed information regarding the warriors of the Hall of Gods in advance, they would be able to make preparations and design a battle strategy that would pretty much guarantee their victory!

Hall Master Qin Yuan quickly took the jade token in order to browse through its contents. Then, with an agitated look on his face, he asked, “How did you manage to acquire something like that?”

The information appeared to be legitimate, but he still found it hard to believe that the Evanescent Immortal Sect was actually able to acquire something as precious as this.

The Hall of Gods had always been a lofty existence. They rarely made a move, but when they did, there were never any eyewitnesses. As such, it was nigh impossible to gather any information regarding them.

“Of course, there’s no way we would have the means to acquire something like this by ourselves. The one who compiled and gave us the jade token is the Ethereal Hall,” Gu Zhuiyun replied.

“Hall Master Kong is indeed an extraordinary figure. He’s the closest existence to a god among us all. He gave us all of this

information and said that as long as the candidates cultivate according to his advice, they should be able to easily clear the Azure Bridge and reach the Semi-Divinity realm!”

“Hall Master Kong?” Han Jianqiu frowned in skepticism. “There’s no such thing as a free lunch in the world. Why would Hall Master Kong risk offending the Hall of Gods to give this to us?”

Putting aside where Hall Master Kong had acquired the information from, assuming that the information was true, it would only be a matter of time before the Hall of Gods traced the leak of information to him.

Once that happened, even with Hall Master Kong’s superior strength, it was unlikely that he would be able to fare too well against the Hall of Gods.

“Of course, there’s no way we wouldn’t understand something as basic as that. In exchange for this information, Hall Master Kong requested to borrow our Evanescent Boots and Paragon Blackmirror for a month,” Gu Zhuiyun replied with a chuckle.

Han Jianqiu’s complexion immediately turned grim. “Even though the Guardian Artifacts of our Six Sects aren’t Semi-Divinity artifacts, they contain the blood essence and energies of our predecessors. In a battle, they can exert might that surpasses even that of Semi-Divinity artifacts. Is it really fine for you to loan it out so easily?”

Just like how Starchaser Palace had an altar that could communicate with the gods, each of the Six Sects had their Guardian Artifacts as well.

The Guardian Artifact of the Evanescent Immortal Sect was the Evanescent Boots. It was said that the founder of the sect had forged them with celestial meteorite. After putting them on, one would be able to tread across space and cover millions of li within a single breath!

On the other hand, the Guardian Artifact of the Blackmirror Citadel was the Paragon Blackmirror. It was able to seal a person’s soul through its reflection, thus incapacitating that individual.

These artifacts had not reached the Semi-Divinity realm yet, but they exerted a force that even Semi-Divinity realm experts would shudder to face. Putting everything aside, even Elder Qin Yuan would have to flee in the face of those artifacts.

As for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, its Guardian Artifact was a sword left behind by its founder. Having been tempered by the Gods' Sword Intent, it wielded overwhelming might that could slay even Semi-Divinity realm experts with ease.

The Myriad Beasts Hall had an Earth Wyvern ancestor. It was just that the latter had fallen into a deep sleep a long time ago, and it was unknown whether it was still alive.

The Sevenstar Pavilion had a unique artifact known as the Sevenstar Chess. It was rumored to be a chess set once used by the gods. No one knew of its exact tier, but it was said to be an extremely profound artifact.

Of course, due to the sheer power of these Guardian Artifacts, they could only be activated and used by Semi-Divinity realm cultivators. Otherwise, the Six Sects would be able to ensure their longevity just with these Guardian Artifacts.

These Guardian Artifacts were the greatest trump cards of the Six Sects, but the Blackmirror Citadel and the Evanescent Immortal Sect had actually loaned them out so easily over a mere possibility.

Even though the Ethereal Hall's tracks had remained clean throughout the years, it was still unwise to place a tool that could dictate the fate of a sect in the hands of an outsider.

"It might not be my place to say this, but without these Guardian Artifacts, you will be powerless to protect yourselves if the Hall of Gods make a move on you," Hall Master Qin Yuan said with a deep frown.

This was a particularly unwise move especially since the Hall of Gods had become unnaturally active in recent days. To give away their greatest trump card in such uncertain times did not seem like a good idea at all.

“Powerless to protect ourselves? Do you think that we would fail to consider something this obvious?” Gu Zhuiyun burst into laughter.

With a flick of his wrist, a set of armor materialized around his body. This armor emanated a pressure reminiscent of a conqueror.

“That is... a Semi-Divinity defensive artifact?”

Han Jianqiu and the others were stunned.

Not a single one of the Six Sects had a Semi-Divinity artifact, so where in the world did Gu Zhuiyun manage to acquire one?

“That’s right. It’s a bestowment from Hall Master Kong! This artifact and the information regarding the warrior of the Hall of Gods is what Hall Master Kong paid in exchange for borrowing our Guardian Artifact,” Gu Zhuiyun replied.

Han Jianqiu and the others were flabbergasted.

This was unbelievable!

To give out Semi-Divinity artifacts and the information regarding a warrior of the Hall of Gods just to borrow their Guardian Artifacts for a month...

Even with the vast wealth that the Ethereal Hall commanded, surely they could not afford to squander their fortune like that?

“If that’s the case, it means that Citadel Lord Bai has a Semi-Divinity artifact too, right?”

“I believe that Elder Kui Xiao should know very well if I have a Semi-Divinity artifact or not!” Bai Xuansheng spat as he glared at Elder Kui Xiao savagely.

“Me? How would I know something like that?” Elder Kui Xiao scoffed incredulously, as if he knew nothing about the matter.

Of course, he knew the truth better than anyone else.

He had been wondering where Bai Xuansheng had acquired the Semi-Divinity artifact, but in the end, it turned out to be from an exchange with the Ethereal Hall.

It was just that their pavilion master had robbed Bai Xuansheng back in the Sea of Little Mirror, taking away the latter's weapons and storage ring.

He knew that there was no way he could admit to this matter, or else there could be severe complications in the future.

“Don't bother putting on an act before me. The both of us know very well what happened in the Sea of Little Mirror!” Bai Xuansheng bellowed.

He had realized that all his items had disappeared when he came to. It did not take him much thinking to figure out that the culprit was the one who had been hiding not too far away while he was fighting with the Blackback Tortoise.

And it stood to reason that the one who was hiding in the area was the one who had prepared the diamond crystal to lure the Blackback Tortoise over in the first place.

“I don't know why you would make such a claim, but we can clarify the misunderstanding between the both of us later on... What I'm more concerned with is why Hall Master Kong would go to such lengths make a deal like this.”

Elder Kui Xiao knew that it would only make things more awkward if they continued dwelling on the matter, so he decided to focus on the matter at hand. “Aren't you concerned about what Hall Master Kong is going to use your Guardian Artifacts for?”

It had prospered for the past several thousand years after snatching a (God)' character from the Hall of Gods, such that it boasted the greatest number of treasures in the world. Why would it pay such a heavy price just to acquire theirs?

It was truly an enigma what Hall Master Kong was up to.

2060 Meeting Han Jianqiu

“Hall Master Kong has always been a mysterious person. He made his name several thousand years ago, reaching heights that are comparable to our founders. Our founders have already turned to dust, but he remains active in the world. It’s truly hard to imagine just how far he has advanced in his cultivation!” Gu Zhuiyun remarked.

“Given his standing, it’s hard to imagine that he would renege on his words and steal our Guardian Artifacts. I don’t see any harm lending it to him for a month.”

The sharp Han Jianqiu immediately realized what Gu Zhuiyun was getting at, and a deep frown appeared between his eyebrows. “So, you are here to advise us to lend our Guardian Artifacts to Hall Master Kong too?”

Gu Zhuiyun nodded. “Indeed. We are doing this for the collective welfare of the Six Sects. Our Evanescent Immortal Sect and Blackmirror Citadel have already agreed to forge an alliance with one another. If we clear the Azure Bridge together, the number of Semi-Divinities that we have will far surpass that of the rest of you. Once that happens, there’s no way you will be able to catch up to us anymore...”

“Are you threatening us?” Elder Kui Xiao asked with a glint in his eyes.

“I’m just presenting facts,” Gu Zhuiyun replied calmly.

Han Jianqiu and the others fell silent.

There was some truth in what Gu Zhuiyun was saying. The balance among the Six Sects was maintained by the fact that they only had a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator each, and none of them had any Semi-Divinity artifacts.

Once the balance was broken, the future would become uncertain.

Those in the weaker position could very well find their sects slowly being devoured by the others, thus becoming nothing

more than words in the annals of history.

“If it’s such a good deal, why did Hall Master Kong send you to persuade us instead of coming here himself?” Elder Kui Xiao asked.

He had five words to describe the deal that Hall Master Kong was offering them—too good to be true. Given that the Guardian Artifacts were part of the foundation of their sects, there was no way they could loan them out too easily.

That being said, to receive a Semi-Divinity artifact and precious information concerning the Hall of Gods in return for lending their Guardian Artifacts for a month... this was a deal that was really moving, so much that it reeked of a scheme.

Years of experience as the heads of their respective sects had taught them to look at things objectively. If something was too good to be true, that was likely the case.

If he was really offering that good a deal, why did Hall Master Kong not approach them himself?

“Hall Master Kong has something more important to deal with at the moment, so he’s unable to personally negotiate. That being said, he has promised that he will rush to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder prior to the descent of the Azure Bridge. However, it will be pointless to only acquire the information regarding the warriors of the Hall of Gods then. You will have lost precious time to make preparations in advance and exploit their weaknesses,” Gu Zhuiyun replied.

Even if the candidates knew the weaknesses of their enemies beforehand, there was still a huge gap between them and the warriors of the Hall of Gods. They would need to make preparations beforehand in order to bridge that gap and achieve victory.

For that, they would need some time.

“You should hurry up and make up your minds. We’ll have to make our way over to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder after Sect Leader Zhang Xuan concludes the inauguration ceremony. I’ll just take it as you aren’t interested in the deal if

you aren't able to come to a decision by then," Gu Zhuiyun said, standing up from his seat. "That's all I have to say.

Farewell."

Having said his piece, he turned around and flew away.

Bai Xuansheng quickly followed behind him.

After the two of them had departed, the atmosphere in the room grew heavy once more.

Elder Kui Xiao was the first one to stand up. "Elder Han, I'll be taking my leave."

Elder Qin Yuan swiftly rose to his feet and said, "I'll be leaving, too."

Just like that, the two of them left the main hall.

Seeing that everyone had left, Han Jianqiu pondered deeply for a moment before getting up. "I should also quickly get in contact with our sect leader to discuss this matter with him..."

This matter could very well determine the survival of their sect in the long run. This was not something that he could decide by himself anymore.

While Han Jianqiu was attempting to contact Zhang Xuan, Elder Qin Yuan quickly caught up with Elder Kui Xiao and stopped him for a conversation.

"It's likely that Starchaser Palace and the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion have received some sort of information that prompted them to nominate the same person as their sect leaders, thus sealing their alliance. The Blackmirror Citadel and the Evanescent Immortal Sect have also accepted the Ethereal Hall's deal, forming an alliance of their own through this. That leaves only us. We aren't in a good position at all," Elder Qin Yuan said with a bitter smile on his lips.

this. That leaves only us. We aren't in a good position at all," Elder Qin Yuan said with a bitter smile on his lips.

"My thoughts exactly. Shall we form an alliance of our own?" Elder Kui Xiao nodded in agreement.

As the heads of their respective powers, they had to be extremely sensitive to the power balance among the Six Sects, or else they might just end up getting devoured before they knew it.

In the earlier meeting, they had found that they had been placed in a weaker position than the rest, and that had forced them to have to go along with the whims of the others. This was not a good position to be in.

“Since things have reached this point, I’ll send a message to our hall master and urge him to come back quickly. It would be good if he could meet Pavilion Master Liu Yang face-to-face to discuss the details regarding our alliance,” Elder Kui Xiao said.

“Un. I’ll inform our pavilion master about the matter right away.” Elder Kui Xiao nodded.

So, the two of them took out their Communication Jade Tokens and began liaising with their newly inaugurated heads.

Zhang Xuan had been recuperating on his way back to Starchaser Island, and by the time he arrived at his destination, he had already recovered to his full strength.

As he made his way over to Starchaser Palace, he flicked his wrist and took out a Communication Jade Token.

“Sect Leader Zhang, please head to the accommodation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as quickly as possible.” There was a map below the words that indicated the position of the accommodation.

It would be good to meet Han Jianqiu and ask him how in the world I ended up becoming the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Zhang Xuan thought with a shake of his head.

So, he quickly flitted over to the location marked on the map.

He had still been an ordinary elder when he left the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so when in the world did he get promoted? To make matters worse, it seemed like the entire world, with the exception of him, knew of the matter!

Barely after flying a few li, he suddenly flicked his wrist and took out another Communication Jade Token.

“Hall Master Zheng, please head to the Changyuan Gazebo. There are important matters that we need to discuss with you.”

The person who had sent the message was Elder Qin Yuan.

“Changyuan Gazebo?” Zhang Xuan murmured beneath his breath.

He did not think that two sects would look for him simultaneously. He took a look at the map indicated below and found that the Changyuan Gazebo was not located too far from the accommodation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

He pondered for a moment before bringing his clone out and saying, “I need you to head to the Changyuan Gazebo to check out what’s going...”

But before he could finish his words, a bizarre expression appeared on his face. He flicked his wrist once more, and yet another Communication Jade Token materialized in his grasp. There was a line of words on it. “Pavilion Master Liu, come to the Greenfate Quarters as soon as you receive this message. There are urgent matters that we need to talk about ...”

The person who had sent this message was Elder Kui Xiao.

“Hmm?”

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had thought that he could head over to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s accommodation to meet Han Jianqiu while his clone made his way over to the Changyuan Gazebo to meet Elder Qin Yuan, but it turned out that all three sects wanted to meet him at once...

How was he supposed to deal with this situation?

“Never mind, let’s deal with whatever we can at the moment. I’ll head to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s accommodations, and you can head to the Changyuan Gazebo... No, that won’t do. Forget it, I think it’ll be better if you come with me!”

Zhang Xuan eventually dropped the idea of sending his clone over by himself.

Even though his clone had originated from his soul, for some reason, it felt as if his clone was suffering from a dissociative personality disorder, taking on a completely different character from him. His clone was a compulsive braggart, making use of every chance it had to show off.

It completely lacked humility and a low-profile disposition. How could someone like that be trusted to do great things?

What if his clone caused trouble while meeting Elder Qin Yuan? That would only add to his burdens! Since that was the case, he might as well keep the other party with him.

Thus, he returned his clone to his storage ring before rushing ahead. Half a minute later, he arrived at the accommodation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“Sect Leader Zhang!” Han Jianqiu quickly stood up and bowed.

He went through the earlier happenings in detail before asking, “What should we do now? Should we accept the Ethereal Hall’s deal?”

“The Ethereal Hall is trading a Semi-Divinity artifact and information regarding the Azure Bridge for the right to borrow the Guardian Artifacts of the Six Sects for a month?” Zhang Xuan was slightly bewildered by the news.

Had it been in the past, he certainly would have accepted such a deal. Considering that it was the World’s Teacher of the Master Teacher Continent that he was dealing with, he could trust that the latter would not use the Guardian Artifacts improperly.

But now, he dared not make such assumptions.

It might still have been possible that Fu Chenzi had colluded with the Hall of Gods behind Kong shi’s back, but he had proved that the token that Kong shi had given him was actually the key that lured the experts of the Hall of Gods to him. It was apparent that something was amiss!

“This matter could have severe implications. I think it would be for the best to meet Hall Master Kong in person so that we can better understand what he’s trying to do,” Zhang Xuan said.

If Kong shi was indeed making this deal in order to help the Six Sects, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would be at a severe disadvantage if it turned down the offer. However, at the same time, given the bizarre movements from the Ethereal Hall recently, it was more important than ever to tread carefully.

“I understand,” Han Jianqiu replied with a nod. Then, with a hint of doubt in his eyes, he continued asking, “Sect Leader Zhang, did you receive some sort of important news that prompted you to become the new head of Starchaser Palace?”

“That’s a long story...”

Zhang Xuan went through the details about how the Hall of Gods had forced Starchaser Palace to submit to them, how the Ethereal Hall had gotten involved in the matter, and how Du Qingjoian had abruptly disappeared without a trace.

He did not mention his identity as the new head of Sevenstar Pavilion.

After hearing the matter, a grim look appeared on Han Jianqiu’s face.

“I am very familiar with Du Qingyuan. Her cultivation is very powerful, such that even I would have difficulties trying to defeat her. There aren’t too many powers in the world that have the ability to make her vanish without a trace.”

Zhang Xuan frowned. “Who on the Forsaken Continent has the ability to do that?”

If there was not too big a gap in prowess, Du Qingyuan should have at least been able to send out a signal for help.

Taking the old man he had encountered above the Ocean of Exiled Stars not too long ago as an example, even though the other party possessed means far exceeding his expectations, if he wanted to, he would have been able to send out a signal.

The fact that Du Qingyuan was unable to do so showed something.

“The Hall of Gods is an existence that towers over the entire Forsaken Continents. It’s an extremely powerful organization that could potentially be under the control of real gods. If there are real gods on the Forsaken Continent, there’s no doubt that they would be the strongest existences here. Putting aside Du Qingyuan, even if all Six Sects joined hands with one another, we still wouldn’t be able to beat the other party!” Han Jianqiu said.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

He had never met a god in person, but without a doubt, a real god would surely wield powers far surpassing that of Semi-Divinity realm cultivators. It would not be too surprising if Du Qingyuan was unable to do anything in the face of a real god.

“Other than the Hall of Gods, the next most likely person would be none other than the head of the Ethereal Hall. The fact that Hall Master Kong was able to snatch the (God)’ character from the Hall of Gods shows that he wields prowess far beyond our imagination. Even if he isn’t a god, it’s likely that he isn’t too far away from them anymore.”

“Un.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Kong shi’s accomplishments on the Forsaken Continent served as evidence to his incredible means.

“As for the rest, I’m afraid I don’t know that much either. Since the Forsaken Continent is the land abandoned by the gods, it’s possible that there could still be some surprisingly powerful existences roaming these lands that we don’t know about,” Han Jianqiu added.

Those words brought a frown to Zhang Xuan’s forehead.

He had never considered such a possibility before.

Thinking about it, the Forsaken Continent had been a part of the Firmament in the past. Since that was the case, it was not impossible for there to be even more powerful life forms roaming these lands.

They continued chatting for a bit longer, and through the conversation, Zhang Xuan found out that the Forsaken Continent was far more complicated than he had thought. Shaking his head, he decided not to dwell too much on it and instead asked, “By the way, I heard rumors that I am the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. May I know what that is about?”

With a smile on his lips, Han Jianqiu explained about the declaration he had made shortly after Zhang Xuan’s departure.

“I see...” Zhang Xuan nodded with a bitter smile on his lips.

So, the other party had done it in order to protect him.

It was just that it was not working at all. Even after learning that he was the heads of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, the Sevenstar Pavilion, and the Myriad Beasts Hall, the Hall of Gods had still made a move on him without any hesitation!

2061 Head of Four Sects

“Alright, I’ll be taking my leave first. There are still some matters that I need to attend to.”

After asking everything he wanted to know, Zhang Xuan quickly left the accommodation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and began making his way over to where Elder Qin Yuan was.

“Hall Master Zheng!”

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, Elder Qin Yuan heaved a sigh of relief. He quickly filled the other party in regarding the details.

Having learned of the matter from Han Jianqiu, Zhang Xuan was not too surprised by the news. With a contemplative frown on his forehead, he asked, “Elder Qin, what’s your view on the matter?”

“Since the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is already allied with Starchaser Palace, I was thinking that we could try allying ourselves with the Sevenstar Pavilion. At the very least, we’ll be able to have each other’s backs and have more say on issues,” Elder Qin Yuan replied.

“If you don’t mind, I can bring you over to meet the newly inaugurated Pavilion Master Liu Yang of the Sevenstar Pavilion. I heard that he’s a young genius, so the two of you might be able to get along well with one another”

“Get along well...” Veins popped out on Zhang Xuan’s temples.

He would have to suffer from dissociative personality disorder to be able to get along well with himself!

Elder Qin Yuan noticed the grim look on Zhang Xuan’s face and proposed, “If you aren’t too comfortable with the matter, I can postpone the meeting with Pavilion Master Liu.”

Zhang Xuan was silent for a moment before slowly nodding. “There’s no need for that. Let’s head over and meet Elder Kui

Xiao. It happens that there's something I would like to inform the two of you about."

If he wanted to, he was confident that he could continue his disguise for much longer. However, given the forceful measures that the Hall of Gods had used against Starchaser Palace, it was becoming apparent that the Six Sects would have to gather together and coordinate with one another in order to survive this ordeal.

So...

It was about time for him to reveal his identity as the head of four sects. With the stakes he had in four sects, he was in a good position to push for an alliance among the Six Sects.

The only issue with that was that he was not too certain that these people would be able to take the blow!

"Sure, let's head over right now!"

Elder Qin Yuan was not sure what Zhang Xuan was going to talk about, but the grim look on the latter's face suggested that it was something of the utmost importance. Thus, he quickly led the way forward.

The place where the Sevenstar Pavilion resided, the Greenfate Quarters, was not too far from the Changyuan Gazebo. Five minutes later, they were already standing right before Elder Kui Xiao and the others.

Elder Qin Yuan took one step forward and introduced Zhang Xuan proudly. "This is our new hall master, Zheng Yang!" "He does look like an outstanding individual." Elder Kui Xiao nodded in agreement.

He had been wondering if the new head of the Myriad Beasts Hall might actually be Liu Yang, the new head of their Sevenstar Pavilion, in disguise, but from the looks of it now, there was indeed no relations between the two of them.

Their pavilion master was currently only at Lesser High Immortal realm whereas this Zheng Yang had already reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm. Furthermore, the latter's foundation seemed to be extremely firm, and he seemed ready to achieve a breakthrough at any moment.

“May I know where Pavilion Master Liu is at the moment?” Elder Qin Yuan asked with a frown. We have already brought our hall master here, so don’t you think it’s a little rude for your pavilion master not to come out and greet us?

“We have already sent the message out, so our pavilion master should be returning very soon. I’ll have to ask you to wait patiently for a moment,” Elder Kui Xiao said.

Following that, he took out his Communication Jade Token and began writing on it.

Seeing that Elder Kui Xiao had begun sending messages over to ‘Pavilion Master Liu Yang’, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out a Communication Jade Token. The Communication Jade Token soon lit up, indicating that there was a message. However, he simply held onto it quietly in his hand, not bothering to check it at all.

Elder Kui Xiao swiftly noticed the light flickering on the Communication Jade Token in Zhang Xuan’s hands. Knowing that it would be rude to peek at the other party’s private message, he politely said, “Hall Master Zheng, it seems like someone is trying to contact you.”

“That does seem to be the case.” Zhang Xuan nodded. “Elder Kui, you need not pay me any heed. Feel free to continue sending messages to your pavilion master.”

“I see. Alright then.”

Elder Kui Xiao had no idea what this Hall Master Zheng Yang was trying to pull off. Nevertheless, he continued sending messages to Liu Yang, and surprisingly, the Communication Jade Token in Hall Master Zheng Yang’s hand continued glowing brilliantly.

This left him feeling deeply perplexed.

Thus, he sent two more messages... and the Communication Jade Token in the other party’s hands glowed even more brilliantly. It was almost as if it was resonating with his movements.

“This...”

An ominous feeling arose in Elder Kui Xiao's heart. He gently took the Communication Jade Token that was placed atop Hall Master Zheng Yang's hands and looked at it.

His body immediately stiffened. With a doubtful tone in his voice, he called out, "Pavilion master?"

"Un." Zhang Xuan nodded.

"This..."

Putong!

Elder Kui Xiao nearly fainted on the spot!

His deduction actually turned out to be accurate. Liu Yang was indeed Zheng Yang!

You even tried to deny it back then...

Elder Qin Yuan was bewildered by the abrupt development. He turned his gaze over and asked, "What's going on?"

"Take a look at this, and you should be able to understand what's going on..." Elder Kui Xiao passed his Communication Jade Token together with the one that he had taken from Zhang Xuan over.

Elder Qin Yuan looked at the two, and his body suddenly stiffened on the spot. "Hall Master Zheng... You are actually Liu Yang?"

Zhang Xuan nodded in response, confirming Elder Qin Yuan's doubts.

The two elders stared at one another for a very long time before bitter smiles emerged on their faces. Eventually, a sigh of resignation escaped their lips.

"I guess this isn't too bad. After all, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and Starchaser Palace have a common leader as well. Such a relationship allows for greater intimacy between two sects. Even if chaos befalls the Forsaken Continent, with such a connection between both of our sects, we'll be able to support one another through times of difficulty without any worries," Elder Qin Yuan said.

The situation had come to a point where it was impossible for a sect to survive alone. What had happened to Starchaser Palace was a warning to the rest, but even if two sects allied with one another, if they could not trust each other, this partnership would be for naught.

However, if they centered themselves around a leader who had equal stakes in both sects, they could be assured that there would be no backstabbing or the like. With a tight collaboration between the two sects, they would be able to stand their ground against the others.

Furthermore, their leader was skilled in both beast taming and battle techniques. With such capabilities, would they have to fear the Heavenly True Immortal realm Zhang Xuan?

With this, what did they have to fear?

Even the Hall of Gods would have to think twice before crossing them!

“Since that’s the case, let’s make a declaration to inform the world about our alliance. With this, the others won’t dare act so smugly anymore!” Elder Kui Xiao remarked with a relieved smile.

By making a declaration about their alliance, they would be confirming the stand of both of their sects. This would grant them a greater say when it came to matters concerning the Six Sects.

“There’s no need to send out a declaration. Isn’t the inauguration ceremony of Sect Leader Zhang Xuan about to begin? Most likely, the other sects will dispatch their top echelons over to witness the ceremony. It’ll be much more effective and impactful to announce the news there,” Elder Qin Yuan said.

The way in which the news was disseminated made a difference as well. If the two of them made the announcement right before the top echelons of the Six Sects, the effects would be much more pronounced.

“That sounds like a good idea...” Elder Kui Xiao nodded in agreement.

At this moment, the heavy chiming of a bell echoed across Starchaser Island.

“It’s starting. Let’s head over now,” Elder Kui Xiao said as he stood up.

“Un...”

Zhang Xuan had intended to fully explain the matter, but he knew that he was unable to explain the full situation in a moment’s time. So, he could only follow the rest into Starchaser Palace quickly.

The inauguration of a new palace master for Starchaser Palace was a major affair, so the place was filled with huge crowds of people. Every single one of them was excited to meet the first person on the Forsaken Continent to take over a leadership role in two of the Six Sects!

In the largest square of Starchaser Palace, there was a high seat that was located right in the middle of the crowd. Han Jianqiu, Kui Xiao, and everyone else were standing in the area with their bodies upright, making the atmosphere look particularly dignified and solemn.

“I heard that Sect Leader Zhang Xuan has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. Even though his cultivation is only at the Heavenly True Immortal realm, his fighting prowess is nowhere beneath that of Heavenly High Immortals!”

“Indeed. Someone who is able to catch the eye of both Han Jianqiu and Du Qingyuan is bound to possess extraordinary capabilities!”

“I’m interested to see what kind of person he is. There have been many rumors going around regarding him, but Zhang Xuan remains an elusive figure on the Forsaken Continent. This is probably the first time he’s coming into public eye...”

Hushed discussions could be heard beneath.

When the news that a single person was going to be the heads of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and Starchaser Palace, a huge uproar was stirred across the entire Forsaken Continent. Overnight, Zhang Xuan had become a figure admired by countless citizens.

“I would like to see if this Zhang Xuan is more capable than our Hall Master Zheng!” Elder Qin Yuan chuckled softly beneath his breath.

“Later on, after the inauguration ceremony concludes, we’ll usher our Pavilion Master Liu up to announce the fact that he’s the head of both of our sects and that both of our sects are going to forge a formal alliance with one another. That news will surely make the jaws of the others fall off!” Elder Kui Xiao said.

Just thinking about the bewildered expressions that would appear before him made him want to dance in joy.

After all, there was nothing more enjoyable than passing down one’s shock to another person!

“Alternatively, we can have our Hall Master Zheng challenge Zhang Xuan to a fight. Surely a True Immortal realm cultivator won’t be a match for him...” Elder Qin Yuan smiled.

But halfway through his words, he suddenly froze on the spot. “Hall Master Zheng, what are you doing?”

Elder Kui Xiao turned his head over as well, only to see their pavilion master flying straight for the centermost seat in the square.

“I was joking when I said that you should challenge him to a duel! This is the inauguration ceremony of Starchaser Palace; we can’t afford to cause trouble here! Otherwise, we’ll be turning the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and Starchaser Palace against us!” Elder Qin Yuan exclaimed.

He was nearly scared out of his wits.

He had said those words as a passing remark, but who would have thought that their hall master would take them seriously and actually head right for the centermost seat?

That would really incur the wrath of those two sects upon them! It was true that they were confident in their alliance, but still, there was no reason to make the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and Starchaser Palace their enemies for nothing!

“What should we do?” Elder Qin Yuan turned to look at Elder Kui Xiao anxiously.

What better chance was there to speak of collective responsibility than right now?

“Calm down. Something doesn’t seem to be right over here. Take a look over there...” Elder Kui Xiao was surprised by the happenings as well, but he knew that Zhang Xuan was not a reckless individual, so he was not as anxious as Elder Qin Yuan.

Hearing those words, Elder Qin Yuan quickly looked ahead of him.

On the way of heading to the centermost seat, the leader of those two sects swiftly changed into a twenty-year-old young man.

Hu!

Sitting down upon the highest seat, the young man emanated an imposing aura that commanded the deference of the crowd before speaking loudly.

“I am Zhang Xuan!”

Looking across the crowd around him imposingly, the young man continued. “You can also address me as Zheng Yang or Liu Yang!”

“Zheng Yang?”

“Liu Yang?”

“Aren’t those the names of the heads of the Myriad Beasts Hall and Sevenstar Pavilion?”

“Wait a moment, does that mean that he’s the head of four sects then?”

In an instant, the surroundings quietened down completely.

2062 Meeting Wu Chen Once More

It was already unbelievable news to them that the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was going to become the leader of the Starchaser Palace as well, but to think that he would announce that he was Zheng Yang and Liu Yang as well...

Just what in the world was going on here?

The bewildered Han Jianqiu quickly turned his gaze toward the First Elder of the Starchaser Palace, only to see that the latter was utterly taken aback as well. She had no idea what was going on either.

He moved his gaze toward Elder Kui Xiao and Elder Qin Yuan, and the two of them were flabbergasted too.

Over the past half a month, the Six Sects had been announcing one after another that they had found suitable successors to take over themselves, and there was a great deal of bragging and fawning that followed suit... But in the end, all of them turned out to be the same person!

It felt almost like an extremely bad joke!

“This...”

Contrary to the shocked faces all around, Bai Xuansheng and Gu Zhuiyun’s faces turned utterly livid upon hearing the news.

If those four sects had a common leader, wouldn’t that mean that they were going to form a tightly-knitted alliance with one another? If so, it wouldn’t be that easy to borrow their Guardian Artifacts anymore.

“Let’s inform Hall Master Kong of the matter!”

The two of them glanced at one another and nodded slightly.

Hall Master Kong had entrusted them with the task to convince the other four sects to accept his deal. They thought

that given how attractive the deal was, the others wouldn't hesitate to accept it. After all, there was no sect that would risk lagging behind the others and becoming irrelevant.

However, it would be a different matter if the four sects were united by a common head.

If that was the case, the bargaining power they had against the other four sects would be greatly reduced.

“Zhao Yue, Han Jianqiu, Qin Yuan, and Kui Xiao, I need the four of you to follow me.”

As the inauguration ceremony came to an end, Zhang Xuan listed the names of these four figures before gesturing them toward a guest room not too far away.

“Sect leader, you are really... Zheng Yang and Liu Yang?” Han Jianqiu asked agitatedly.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

Han Jianqiu and Zhao Yue stared at one another. They could hardly believe what they had just heard.

The same went for Kui Xiao and Qin Yuan as well.

It took a long while for everyone digested this shocking fact.

Elder Kui Xiao was the first one to speak up after the prolonged silence, “This isn't necessarily something bad. At the very least, I think we can all agree that there's a greater threat ahead of us, and there's a need for us to stand together in order to overcome this crisis. If Zhang Xuan can become the binding factor that pulls us together, we'll be in a much stronger position than before.”

Zhang Xuan nodded slowly before adding on, “The Hall of Gods has already attempted to assassinate me thrice, and they have openly made a move on the Starchaser Palace and Palace Master Du as well. I don't know what the Hall of Gods is up to, but one thing is clear—they aren't going to remain as spectators anymore. Things could go horribly if we were to continue standing divided at a time like this. Thus, I hope that our four sects could combine our forces and advance and retreat alongside one another.”

He didn't have much interest in accruing power, but even an outsider like him could sense that a storm was brewing in the background. If the Six Sects were to continue acting independently of one another, it would only be a matter of time before they were destroyed one after another!

“You have been assassinated thrice?”

The crowd turned to look at Zhang Xuan with shocked looks on their faces.

So, Zhang Xuan quickly explained the happenings that had caused him to be assassinated those three times.

In an instant, the eyes of the crowd widened in disbelief.

They would have never imagined that the lofty Hall of Gods would be so persistent in attempting to claim a person's life. It actually went to the extent of dispatching a Semi-Divinity realm expert in order to deal with him...

What was even more unbelievable was that the young man was actually able to survive their assassination attempts and even subdue the enemies that had come for him... One must know that even they would have trouble dealing with the warriors of the Hall of Gods!

It seemed like the young man was far stronger than they had thought!

“Hall Master Zheng, you mentioned earlier that you have tamed four Semi-Divinity realm beasts?” Elder Qin Yuan asked.

Zhang Xuan had briefly talked about the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks earlier in his explanation.

For many years, the Myriad Beasts Hall had never been able to tame a Semi-Divinity realm beast, but within such a short span of time, Zhang Xuan actually managed to tame four of them by himself... Was this for real?

Yes, they are all from the Ocean of Exiled Stars,” Zhang Xuan replied.

With a thought, he summoned the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks out, and a powerful aura immediately suffused the

entire room.

“This is...”

Everyone narrowed their eyes in astonishment.

With glowing eyes, Han Jianqiu muttered excitedly, “If that’s the case, wouldn’t that mean that our alliance consists of the forces of the Ocean of Exiled Stars as well?”

“You’re right!”

The crowd widened their eyes in realization.

The Hall of Gods was an existence that had towered over the Forsaken Continent for many years. Even with the combined prowess of their four sects, they still weren’t confident of victory. However, it would be a different matter if they had the aquatic creatures of the ocean with them as well.

The ocean was vast and expansive, and the lifeforms that existed within it were countless. Put together, they would be able to form a power that was greater than that of any of the sects on land.

If they could tap into this power effectively, it would be equivalent to having the entire Six Sects or even more behind them!

“The three sharks have already managed to unite most of the ocean together. They have several hundred Heavenly High Immortal realm aquatic creatures directly under their command, and once the order is issued, they would swiftly rally the entire ocean to launch a decisive strike!” Zhang Xuan replied.

Shark One was intending to build an underwater empire, and it had pretty much managed to pull most of the major powers in the ocean over to its side during the meeting at the cavern back then. Once it gave its order, the entire ocean would move together.

Realizing that they were far more powerful than they had thought, they couldn’t help but look at the young man before them in deference.

While they did require a leader figure to unite the sects together in this period of turmoil, they were still worried that someone as young as Zhang Xuan would be unable to do the job well. After all, there were still some differences among ,and they would need someone decisive and powerful to keep each of the sects in check.

However, it turned out that Zhang Xuan possessed the strength of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator himself, and he had four Semi-Divinity realm beasts and two Semi-Divinity artifacts with him. On top of that, he had the entire ocean backing him as well.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that his influence was comparable to even that of Hall Master Kong.

With such might under his command, only a fool would attempt to turn against the alliance and risk getting on the bad side of Zhang Xuan!

“Pavilion Master Liu, the Azure Bridge is about to descend soon. It's about time for us to head to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder. As the head of four sects, how do you think we should allocate the slots?” Elder Kui Xiao asked.

Their initial thought was to have their respective heads challenge the Azure Bridge, but as it turned out, their four heads were actually a single person. In other words, they suddenly had three additional slots.

“I'll be using the Starchaser Palace's slot. As for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Sevenstar Pavilion, and the Myriad Beasts Hall, you will each nominate a qualified candidate to accompany me onto the Azure Bridge,” Zhang Xuan said.

The reason why he made such a decision was because the Starchaser Palace had acquired the god blood, which meant that they possessed the means to produce Semi-Divinity realm cultivators. In fact, aside from Du Qingyuan, there was already another one in the sect at the moment.

As such, the Starchaser Palace wasn't as desperate as the other sects.

“That shouldn’t be too difficult, but the only issue is that the warriors of the Hall of Gods are too powerful... Currently, we don’t have any candidates that stand a good chance of surviving against them,” Han Jianqiu said with a deep frown.

After all, if the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall, and Sevenstar Pavilion had a reliable candidate to count on, they wouldn’t have gone to the extent of nominating an outsider whom they had just met as their new head!

It was true that they could simply push new candidates forward to fill up the additional slots, but if the candidates stood no chance at success at all, that would be no different from pushing them to their deaths.

Zhang Xuan pondered deeply for a moment before saying, “Choose your candidates and send them to me. I’ll teach them personally. There isn’t much time before the Azure Bridge descends, but as long as they put in their all into learning, I believe that they will still be able to stand a chance.”

It might be last-minute preparations, but that didn’t mean that it was meaningless.

Especially since he was the one doing the teaching over here.

Putting aside his deep understanding of battle techniques and cultivation techniques, having fought the warriors of the Hall of Gods on multiple occasions, he was probably the person of the Six Sects who boasted the greatest understanding of their fighting style.

After that, Zhang Xuan continued laying out some of the future directions regarding the four sects.

While he wasn’t interested in dealing with such matters, that didn’t mean that he didn’t have the ability to do so if he wanted to.

He was, after all, the man who had stood at the very zenith of the Master Teacher Continent, and the innumerable books he had browsed through had built on his knowledge. He could offer deeper insights and newer perspectives in certain matters, thus allowing better decisions to be made.

The four elders had initially wondered if he was too young to take on such a role, but the maturity and alacrity in his thoughts left them feeling deeply impressed.

The ideas that he proposed were considered from multiple perspectives, and every single one of them was very intentional in their outcome.

If they were to follow Zhang Xuan's directives, the four sects would become more deeply integrated with one another, allowing them to support one another in their growth. With time, they would truly gain the strength to stand independently and oppose the Hall of Gods.

After drafting up the future plans for the four sects, Zhang Xuan took out dozens of jade tokens and passed them over, "Here is a set of cultivation techniques from Ancient Sage to High Immortal that I have modified from your existing cultivation techniques. Feel free to impart it to qualified disciples; it should allow them to advance their cultivation swiftly."

He had studied the cultivation techniques of the four sects and modified them accordingly.

While these cultivation techniques weren't simplified Heaven's Path Divine Art, they were indeed much stronger than what the disciples of the sects were cultivating at the moment. It should prove to be invaluable in enhancing the fighting prowess of the individual sects.

The four elders took the jade tokens over, and after taking a look at the contents, they fell utterly silent.

A moment later, their shoulders began to tremble.

The cultivation techniques which Zhang Xuan had come up with was truly a work of ingenuity. If they were to pass it down to their disciples, it could be foreseen that the overall strength of their sects would surge like bamboo shoots after a spring rain. The Blackmirror Citadel and Evanescent Immortal Sect would be the ones who were left behind instead!

"That's all for now. Let's hurry up and get on with what has to be done for now!" Zhang Xuan dismissed the group with a

wave of his hand.

The elders quickly left the room.

After their departure, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief.

The elders were aware of the dangers lurking in the Forsaken Continent at the moment, so they knew the importance of uniting together. As such, they were still willing to acknowledge him as their sect leader.

However, it would be difficult to convince the disciples of the matter. After all, they were not privy to the confidential secrets of the continent, and to them, the honor and pride of their sect came before everything else. Thus, he would have to resort to other means in order to win them over to his side.

And through passing these cultivation techniques down, not only would he be proving his strength to the disciples, he was also painting a bright future of where the new heights that their sect would reach under his leadership.

That would help stabilize his current shaky position.

Jiya!

The door suddenly opened at this moment, and an adolescent youth walked into the room.

“Young Master!” the adolescent youth bowed down and cried out.

“Wu Chen! You are fine?” Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in agitation.

The person who had just entered the room was no other than the ex-Sovereign Chen Yong of the Master Teacher Continent! Who could have thought that Du Qingyuan would really manage to save him and even forge a new body for him!

“Yes, Young Master. I managed to survive!” Wu Chen replied with reddened eyes.

Despite the conflicts between the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and the human race on the Master Teacher Continent, there

was no doubt that this young man had saved him on many occasions.

“How are you feeling at the moment? Have you managed to recover your cultivation yet?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Taking a look at Wu Chen, he surprisingly found that he was unable to see through the latter’s cultivation at all.

“Yes, I’m fine right now. After Palace Master Du brought me here, she used an invaluable artifact to forge my body, and she even bestowed me with a droplet of god blood. As such, not only have I managed to recover from my injuries, I was even able to advance my cultivation all the way to Semi-Divinity realm!” Wu Chen swiftly went through the happenings after he arrived at the Forsaken Continent.

After that, he released his aura, fully showcasing his might as a Semi-Divinity.

Back when he was still on the Master Teacher Continent, Luo Ruoxin had imparted him with a disguise technique. As such, even though his cultivation had already reached Semi-Divinity realm, unless he were to willingly reveal his own aura, no one would be able to discern the extent of his strength!

2063 The Key to Achieving a Breakthrough to Semi-Divinity

Zhang Xuan was shocked.

When Wu Chen was brought away by Palace Master Du, his cultivation was only at Ancient Sage 3-dan consummation. He was still some way off from reaching Dimension Shatterer realm. Who could have thought that within such a short period of time, he would actually rise straight to the top?

It seemed like Palace Master Du wasn't making empty promises. She really fulfilled his request and did it to the best of her abilities.

“You have been following Palace Master Du all this while?” Zhang Xuan asked.

As there was a time difference between the two worlds, the date which Wu Chen had arrived on the Forsaken Continent wasn't too much ahead of him.

“That's right,” Wu Chen replied as he suppressed his cultivation once more. “A few days ago, we received news that you have managed to become the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so Palace Master Du and I went over to look for you.”

“The two of you tried looking for me?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Wu Chen quickly filled Zhang Xuan in on the details.

After hearing the entire story, Zhang Xuan could only shake his head bitterly.

He didn't think that he would miss Du Qingyuan just like that. But again, he didn't know that Du Qingyuan was the 'deity'

whom Wu Chen had summoned back then, so there was no way he would have known that she would have come for him.

With a deep sigh, Zhang Xuan continued asking, “Since you were by Palace Master Du’s side all along, do you... have any news regarding Luo Ruoxin?”

If there was anyone other than Du Qingyuan who knew anything about Luo Ruoxin in the Forsaken Continent, it would definitely be Wu Chen.

Wu Chen was the one who summoned Luo Ruoxin to the Master Teacher Continent back then, and he was the one who had accompanied her on her journey all along too.

“Milady has already returned to the Firmament!” Wu Chen replied.

“She’s the Spirit God of the Firmament, and she returned to the world she belongs to after acquiring what she needed from the Master Teacher Continent.

“Based on what I know, Milady sustained significant injuries when she was descending to the Azure. The dimension barrier between the Firmament and the Forsaken Continent is simply too resilient, such that she isn’t able to freely move across the dimensions despite being the revered Spirit God. She needed someone to summon her from the Forsaken Continent in order to overcome the barrier.

“Back then, Palace Master Du and I summoned her simultaneously from the Forsaken Continent and the Master Teacher Continent in order to allow her to descend from the Firmament... Unfortunately, the dimension barrier was far stronger than we thought, and she ended up sustaining severe injuries on the way down. It was also then that Palace Master Du acquired the god blood which she used in order to allow me to achieve a breakthrough to Semi- Divinity realm,” Wu Chen explained.

It was roughly the same as what he had deduced when he heard the story from Shark One as well.

“Do you know what’s her motive for heading to the Master Teacher Continent?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Even with his current strength, he was still unable to break through the current dimension barrier to descend to the Master Teacher Continent, let alone the fact that Luo Ruoxin was breaking through two dimension barriers at once!

The difficulty in doing so was truly unimaginable.

Just what in the world would have prompted her to go to such lengths, even sustaining such severe injuries in the process?

“I don’t really know for sure, but it seems to be related to the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn,” Wu Chen replied.

Zhang Xuan wasn’t too convinced by that, “The Great Codex of Spring and Autumn is indeed powerful, but it shouldn’t warrant her to go to such lengths for it.”

The Great Codex of Spring and Autumn was indubitably one of the most valuable treasures of the Master Teacher Continent. However, there were already treasures that were on par with it on the Forsaken Continent, let alone the Firmament!

The fact that Luo Ruoxin was able to pass through two dimension barriers simultaneously hinted at her unfathomable cultivation. For someone of her caliber to go that far for a treasure that couldn’t even be considered to be powerful by her standards...

That really didn’t make sense at all.

“I don’t know the details either. I asked about it back then as well, and Milady said that there was someone whom she wanted to deal with. That person wields incredible means that she has trouble coping with, so she had to acquire the treasure at all costs in order to decipher his skills!” Wu Chen pondered for a moment before replying.

Zhang Xuan frowned.

The Great Codex of Spring and Autumn was an artifact that controlled space and time. Could it be that the person whom Luo Ruoxin wanted to deal with specialized in the laws of spacetime?

“I dared not to probe any deeper than that. A mortal like me is unqualified to learn the secrets of the gods,” Wu Chen added with a hint of respect in his voice.

“Then... do you know of any way I could contact her?”

“Palace Master Du is able to establish a connection link with the Firmament through the altar of the Starchaser Palace. However, it will take a lot of offerings in order to do so, and it’s not guaranteed whether we’ll be able to reach Milady or not,” Wu Chen replied.

“Altar...” A glint flashed across Zhang Xuan’s eyes.

Thinking back, the reason why the Hall of Gods made a move on the Starchaser Palace first was probably to prevent Du Qingyuan from using the altar to inform the Spirit God about their movements.

Perhaps, the Hall of Gods didn’t want the gods of the Firmament to learn of their movements?

In any case, he would have to quickly find the missing Du Qingyuan and the altar!

“Wait a moment, is it possible for the Hall of Gods to get into contact with the Firmament then?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Given that the Hall of Gods was to existence closest to the Firmament on the Forsaken Continent, they might just be able to establish a connection link with the Firmament. In fact, there were some rumors that it guarded the gateway leading to the Firmament!

However, Wu Chen simply shook his head to express that he wasn’t too sure about the matter.

Other than the centennial descent of the Azure Bridge, the Hall of Gods rarely appeared in the Forsaken Continent. As such, there was very little that was known about it.

Zhang Xuan continued asking a few more questions, but because it hadn’t been too long since Wu Chen had come here, he didn’t know too much either.

Forget it. The Azure Bridge is about to descend, and most likely, I should be able to find the answers I seek there...

Zhang Xuan thought.

Until now, he still had no idea why the Hall of Gods was so determined to capture him, but he had a feeling that everything would be unraveled at the Azure Bridge. That would be their last chance to strike, after all.

Otherwise, once he successfully achieved a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm, putting aside the Hall of Gods, even this world wouldn't be able to confine him any longer!

By then, the tables would be turned, and he would become the one hunting down the Hall of Gods instead!

Knowing how important it was for him to acquire greater strength, Zhang Xuan's immersed his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path, where the chamber made out of the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn was at, and continued to decipher a plausible Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique for himself.

Half a day later, the three candidates from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall, and Sevenstar Pavilion were brought before him.

They were all beneath a hundred years old, but their cultivation had already reached Heavenly High Immortal realm. Elder Hong Wu of the Sevenstar Pavilion was amongst the three candidates too.

"You called us?"

Other than Elder Hong Wu, the other two were assessing Zhang Xuan with a sharp gaze in their eyes.

They had heard that this young man had become the head of the four sects, but they couldn't help but wonder if he truly had the capabilities and credentials to take on such a role.

Ten breaths. Use all means at your disposal to make me take half a step backward. If you are able to do so, you will still have a chance at defeating the warriors of the Hall of Gods," Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and said.

You want us to push you half a step back?"

The trio was a little perplexed.

Given that they were of the same cultivation realm, even if Zhang Xuan's comprehension of swordsmanship and battle techniques were above theirs, as long as they worked together, they should be more than capable of pushing him half a step back.

"Indeed," Zhang Xuan replied. "However, if you can't even make me take half a step back, I want the three of you to cultivate however I tell you to prior to the descent of the Azure Bridge. I will not tolerate any complaints or whining at all."

The fact that the three of them were chosen by the three elders to challenge the Azure Bridge meant that they were decently skilled. However, if they were to be complacent with their current abilities and refused to heed his instructions, it was unlikely that they would be a match for the warriors of the Hall of Gods.

There was only one way to swiftly win them over and make them heed his instructions—beating them into submission!

"If we still aren't any match for you even with our prowess combined, you can be assured that we'll heed your commands without any complaints!"

As candidates to the Azure Bridge, they were potential successors to the leadership position in their respective sects, but the sudden appearance of this young man had dashed their hopes. It would be a lie if they were to say that they didn't harbor a grudge toward the young man.

Boom!

Right after those words were spoken, the trio made their move simultaneously.

Elder Hong Wu channeled his strength into a palm and executed his strongest battle technique.

The genius from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion brandished his sword furiously, executing an incredibly powerful sword art.

As for the genius from the Myriad Beasts Hall, he decisively brought out his tamed beasts—Heavenly High Immortal realm Blacktiger Beast twins!

Watching the moves of the three youths before him, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

In terms of fighting prowess, they could indeed be considered to be above average. However, compared to the warriors of the Hall of Gods, they were still severely lacking.

Even he was nearly done in by the warriors of the Hall of Gods. It would take more than 'above average' to deal with that lot of fellows!

Without drawing his sword, Zhang Xuan simply waved his hand lightly, and the three of them immediately felt as if they had been plunged into an endless desert. No matter where they tried to head to, they weren't able to escape from this desert.

Then, Zhang Xuan brought his palm down lightly.

Padah!

A sword collapsed to the ground, a battle technique was dissipated, and two immortal beasts groaned in pain... Just like that, the three geniuses collapsed to the ground, completely helpless before the absolute might before them.

"How could a Heavenly High Immortal be so powerful?"

The lips of the trio quivered in disbelief.

As fellow Heavenly High Immortals, they thought that even if Zhang Xuan was stronger than them, it wouldn't be too much. But after crossing blows, they realized that the difference in their strength was in the order of magnitudes!

Even their Semi-Divinity realm ex-leaders might not necessarily be a match for the young man before them!

"Do you admit defeat?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

"We admit defeat!"

With this single blow, Zhang Xuan crushed their complacency and won their respect.

These are the cultivation techniques I have created based on your cultivation. As long as you practice it diligently, you should be able to raise your fighting prowess significantly

within three days. If you have any questions, feel free to ask me.”

Zhang Xuan took out three jade tokens and infused his thoughts into them before passing them over to the trio.

The trio took the jade tokens, and after browsing through the contents, they found themselves shocked beyond words. “Don’t waste this opportunity I have given you,” Zhang Xuan said before dismissing them.

Once they had left, he immersed his consciousness back into the Library of Heaven’s Path and continued studying the way he could advance to Semi-Divinity realm.

In the history of the Forsaken Continent, there were many experts who had attempted to push for a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm, and a huge number of them had penned down their precious experiences and insights regarding it. It was just a pity that it was impossible for anyone to reach the realm without challenging the Azure Bridge.

“Most likely, there must be some quality lacking in the atmosphere of the Forsaken Continent that prevents one from reaching Semi-Divinity realm...” Zhang Xuan arrived at an answer.

It was not that the cultivators on the Forsaken Continent were lacking in talent. The situation was actually very similar to why cultivators on the Master Teacher Continent were no longer able to reach Ancient Sage.

He suddenly remembered Elder Kui Xiao mentioning the ‘Aura of Divinity’ a while back to him.

If Zhang Xuan’s guess was right, the (God)’ character contained the Aura of Divinity which a cultivator required to overcome the final hurdle and reach Semi-Divinity realm.

It was likely for this reason that the Ethereal Hall was able to nurture Semi-Divinity realm cultivators without challenging the Azure Bridge while it was the vice-versa for the other sects.

2064 Heaven Anchoring Boulder

Coming up with one's own cultivation technique was no easy feat. There were simply too many aspects to consider, and even the most minor of details could make the greatest difference.

As such, it was not something that could be accomplished in the short-term.

Knowing this as well, Zhang Xuan had no intention of rushing the process.

Several days passed by quickly, and soon, it was time for the descent of the Azure Bridge. Early in the morning, Zhang Xuan led a large group of people toward where the Heaven Anchoring Boulder was at.

The Heaven Anchoring Boulder was located not too far away from Starchaser Island. Riding on the Blackback Tortoise, it took them roughly four hours before a massive boulder-like island came into sight.

This boulder-like island rose from the depths of the water like a massive pillar surging into the sky. It was impossible to see the ends of it at a single glance.

“Legend has it that the heavens have once collapsed countless years ago, resulting in a huge catastrophe for the lifeforms on the Forsaken Continent. In the face of this crisis, a powerful expert severed the four limbs of a humongous tortoise and used them as pillars to prop up the heavens. As time went by, the four limbs slowly hardened to become rocks, turning into what we currently see before us,” Han Jianqiu remarked as he looked at the towering pillar ahead of him.

“That is nothing more than a legend. This island is least tens of thousands of meters high! How could there be such a massive tortoise in the world?” Elder Kui Xiao shook his head.

“Besides, if the heavens were to really collapse, there is no way the mere limbs of a tortoise would be able to prevent them from falling.”

“Indeed...”

The crowd chuckled slightly.

Every world had its own legends and folklores. Those stories were crafted to make sense out of the seeming aberrance in nature, and the Forsaken Continent was no exception either.

Zhang Xuan took a closer look at the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

He knew that it was nigh impossible for the pillar to actually be the four limbs of a tortoise, but nevertheless, it was indeed bizarre for a structure this tall to remain standing over so many years.

Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight to examine it closely, and soon, he noticed that something was amiss about it. At first glance, it would appear that the Heaven Anchoring Boulder was nothing more than an ordinary rock structure, but its surface was densely filled with formation inscriptions.

It was these inscriptions that allowed it to survive the batter of the wind and erosion of the ocean, thus surviving across the ages.

“What profound formation inscriptions...”

To his astonishment, Zhang Xuan actually found that he was unable to decipher these formation inscriptions even with his current mastery of formations.

“This is the place that bridges the Forsaken Continent to the Hall of Gods?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“That’s right,” Han Jianqiu nodded in response.

As the group chatted with one another, they began ascending up the towering pillar through circling it like a spiral.

As their altitude increased, Zhang Xuan found the pressure weighing down on his body growing heavier and heavier. It was as if there was a massive hand above trying to push him

back to the ground, preventing him from exploring the secrets of the heavens.

Seeing the faces of the Heavenly High Immortals turning pale, Han Jianqiu shouted, “Everyone, make sure to hold on. Ascending the Heaven Anchoring Boulder is part of the trial as well!”

Such pressure meant nothing to a Semi-Divinity realm expert, but to Heavenly High Immortals, it was still a relatively difficult obstacle for them to overcome.

The purpose of it was to sieve out the eligible candidates.

That being said, the candidates who were chosen by the Six Sects to represent them were usually able to overcome this obstacle albeit with a little bit of difficulty.

It’s rather similar to the Temple of Confucius, Zhang Xuan thought with a reminiscent smile.

The pressure above was indeed a little stifling, but it was nowhere enough to make him halt his movements.

He had encountered something similar at the Temple of Confucius back then. There was a crushing pressure from the sky that prevented cultivators from flying up high.

High Immortals were more than capable of flying tens of thousands of meters, but the Heaven Anchoring Boulder was filled with unique inscriptions that formed a formation of its own, hindering cultivators that attempted to scale it.

Pu!

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thoughts, the sound of someone spurting blood suddenly echoed in the air. Turning his head around, he saw an elder of the Sevenstar Pavilion succumbing to the pressure and falling down.

“We aren’t even at half of the distance yet. Elder Kui Xiao, it seems like the elders of your sects are getting weaker over time,” Elder Qin Yuan chuckled softly.

On the other hand, instead of responding to Elder Qin Yuan’s remark, Elder Kui Xiao simply glanced downward with a deep frown on his forehead.

After falling some distance, the elder managed to regain his balance. He anxiously gasped for air as he looked upward with a fearful look in his eyes, not daring to climb any higher.

As a High Immortal capable of flight, it was extremely unlikely the elder would have fallen to his death. It was just that no one expected him to be unable to even reach the halfway mark.

Those who were qualified to become elders were usually the experts of the sect, and by past experience, even the weakest elder should have been able to fly up to 70% of the distance before succumbing.

Pu!

While everyone was still harboring some doubts in their mind, yet another elder spurted a mouthful of blood and fell from the sky.

It was an elder from the Myriad Beasts Hall this time around.

You...” Elder Qin Yuan’s face turned livid.

Barely after he mocked the Sevenstar Pavilion’s elder for being weak, an elder from his Myriad Beasts Hall ended up falling as well. It was almost as if karma had come back around to bite him.

“The pressure from the Heaven Anchoring Boulder is greater than usual,” Han Jianqiu remarked solemnly.

Elder Kui Xiao and Elder Qin Yuan quickly perceived their surroundings, and their eyebrows shot up right after, “You’re right!”

As Semi-Divinity realm experts, they weren’t too affected by the pressure coming from the Heaven Anchoring Boulder, so they didn’t pay it much heed. However, now that they were taking a closer look, they realized to their astonishment that the pressure was actually twofold of what it should have been.

Under normal circumstances, the pressure would only reach such a level at the 70% mark of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

“The trial of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder has never changed for the past several thousand years. Why would an anomaly only start happening now?” Elder Qin Yuan murmured in disbelief.

“It must have something to do with why the Azure Bridge is descending in advance as well,” Han Jianqiu said contemplatively.

“No matter what it is, it’s a fact that the Heaven Anchoring Boulder is far more dangerous than what it used to be. You must make sure to gather your focus and don’t let your guard down. Only by scaling up the Heaven Anchoring Boulder will you be qualified to challenge the Azure Bridge and reach Semi-Divinity realm. Such a chance will not come twice for you,” Elder Kui Xiao turned to the candidates and instructed grimly.

Due to the rules of the Azure Bridge, all cultivators would only be able to take on the trial once in their life. If they were to fail here, they would be doomed to never reach Semi-Divinity realm.

“We understand!”

Knowing the severity of the matter, the group dared not to take things lightly anymore. With focused looks on their faces, they continued scaling up the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

However, the number of victims only continued to rise as they flew higher and higher. Members of their groups fell one after another.

By the time they reached the 70% mark, there were less than twenty of them left.

The three candidates who were going to challenge the Azure Bridge alongside Zhang Xuan had undergone special training over the past few days, causing their fighting prowess to rise significantly. If not for that, it was likely that they would have already caved in by now too.

Zhang Xuan turned to the three candidates behind him and saw that their clothes were drenched with sweat. With a solemn voice, he asked, “Are you still able to hold on?”

“Yes, we’ll hold on no matter what happens!” Elder Hong Wu said with gritted teeth.

So, the group continued to advance forward.

By the time they reached the 80% mark, only Elder Kui Xiao, Elder Qin Yuan, Han Jianqiu, Zhang Xuan, and the three candidates were left.

While Elder Qin Yuan and the others were still able to move leisurely due to their superior strength, Elder Hong Wu and the others were already reaching their limits.

Their bodies were trembling nonstop, and their limbs seemed to have turned limp due to the immense pressure. They felt like they would fall from the sky at any moment.

Will they really be unable to even scale up the Heaven Anchoring Boulder? Zhang Xuan thought with a frown.

There was still a distance of several thousand meters ahead of them, but they weren’t able to hold on anymore. At this rate, there was no way they could persevere till the Azure Bridge.

It seemed like he had underestimated the Hall of Gods once more.

“The three of you, wait here. I’ll be heading up in advance to see what has happened for the pressure to have grown so strong,” Zhang Xuan turned to the three candidates and instructed.

Even if he were to train them on the spot, it was still unlikely that they would be able to grow strong enough to reach the top. Since that was the case, the only thing he could do to help them was to try to alleviate the source of the pressure.

Thus, he sped up and rushed up the Heaven Anchoring Pillar, and the pressure around him swiftly grew more and more intense. It was to the extent that the air around him was starting to become frighteningly viscous.

So, he began to channel his Gods’ Sword Intent around his body, morphing into a sharp sword.

Huala!

He tore right through the viscous air around him, and with a swift upward dive, he landed on the very top of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

The top consisted of a flat platform that was roughly a hundred meters in diameter. There was nothing on it at all. The sky above was completely pitch-black, and the so-called Hall of Gods was nowhere to be seen.

Keeping up the platform, Zhang Xuan tried to venture into higher grounds, but he swiftly found himself hitting onto a ceiling. Rather than calling it a ceiling, it might be more accurate to describe it as ‘the boundary of the world’. No matter how he drove his zhenqi, he was unable to bypass it.

In other words, he was unable to reach the Hall of Gods by himself given his current cultivation.

So, he returned back to the top of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder and took a look around the area. He found that the ground was also filled with the same inscriptions along the sides of the boulder too.

“As long as I resolve the inscriptions, the pressure should disappear right?”

Even though Zhang Xuan couldn’t completely understand the meaning behind the inscriptions, it was most likely the reason why the Heaven Anchoring Boulder was still standing even after many millennia.

The chances were that the pressure that was weighing down on everyone originated from the inscriptions as well. “Go!”

With a flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out the Tongshang Sword and directed it right toward the inscriptions.

A furious outpour of sword qi gushed out like a ferocious dragon, swirling around the peak before eventually diving right into the inscriptions.

Weng!

A brilliant light flickered from the top of the platform, as if something had been something had been brought to life. “As expected!”

The pressure in the surroundings changed along with the flickering of the light, proving Zhang Xuan's deduction. So, he decisively brought out nine more Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords and formed a unique Sword Formation around him.

“Break!”

Zhang Xuan infused the Gods' Sword Intent into the ten swords before ordering them to wreak havoc all around the platform.

While he didn't know the exact meaning behind those inscriptions, through his Eye of Insight, he was still able to decipher the flaws in the formation. Naturally, those were also the exact spots that were devastated by his swords too.

Boom!

With a bright outburst of light, the massive pressure in the air abruptly vanished with a pop.

Huhuhu!

A huge gust of wind echoed from beneath as Han Jianqiu and the others made use of this opportunity to rush upward and get onto the peak of the boulder.

Weng!

Barely after everyone arrived, the destroyed inscriptions swiftly reformed, and the overwhelming pressure began crushing down on the surroundings once more.

It had only been two breaths since the moment the pressure disappeared to the moment it reappeared. If not for the crowd moving swiftly, they wouldn't have been able to make it up here in time.

“These inscriptions actually have the ability to self-repair?”
Zhang Xuan was shocked.

He thought that the formation would be completely ruined after his devastation, but who could have thought that it would be able to revert back so quickly?

As expected of the doorstep leading to the Hall of Gods, it was indeed not ordinary at all.

2065 Bai Xuansheng Wants Vengeance

The pressure in the surroundings had been overwhelming while they were climbing the Heaven Anchoring Boulder, but once they reached the top, the pressure was reduced significantly.

Elder Hong Wu and the other two candidates immediately slumped onto the floor weakly. They had to push themselves to their limits in order to reach the top.

So, they quickly swallowed some pills in order to recover their strength.

On the other hand, Han Jianqiu and the rest took a look around them with complicated emotions in their gazes.

Many years ago, they had been here too. They had to put their lives on the line and undergo a life-and-death battle before they managed to climb to their current heights.

“Where’s the Azure Bridge and the Hall of Gods?” Zhang Xuan asked.

The entire area was barren, and there were no signs of the so-called Azure Bridge or Hall of Gods to be seen.

“The Azure Bridge is right above us. When the time arrives, it’ll descend and become the connection point between the Hall of Gods and the Heaven Anchoring Boulder. All those who are of a hundred years old and below would be able to step onto the Azure Bridge and challenge the warriors of the Hall of Gods guarding the pathway,” Han Jianqiu pointed upward as he spoke.

Zhang Xuan lifted his gaze and looked into the sky of deep darkness, but there was nothing to be seen at all.

“Unless the Azure Bridge descends, it’s impossible for a person to set foot onto the Hall of Gods. That’s because it’s impossible for any cultivator to breach the Azure Barrier. The

Azure Barrier is something left behind by the gods, so not even Semi-Divinity realm cultivators like us are able to faze it at all,” Han Jianqiu said.

As if to prove his point, he gathered his sword qi at the tip of his finger and stabbed upward.

This simple move harnessed his full strength and his deep understanding of swordsmanship. It gushed forward with the deep rumbling of thunder, almost as if a roaring current was charging forth. But barely after it traveled ten meters upward, it abruptly dissipated with a light pop.

It disappeared so quickly and easily that it almost seemed as if it had never existed before.

Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

If even an attack of full might from Han Jianqiu was unable to breach the Azure Barrier, he would stand even less of a chance to do so.

Despite the powerful pressure coming from the Heaven Anchoring Boulder, there are still many cultivators on the Forsaken Continent who are able to make their way up here. Most Heavenly High Immortals, when they were going to reach the end of their lifespan, would visit this area in hopes that they would be able to change their fate. However, not once had anyone succeeded before. As time went by, no one bothered coming over here anymore,” Elder Kui Xiao added on.

Since it was nothing more than a futile attempt, most cultivators thought that it would be more worth it to spend their remaining time accompanying their family members instead. After all, every second they had left of their remaining life was incredibly precious.

Zhang Xuan raised his head once more.

Even though he was unable to see the ends of the Azure Barrier set up by the gods, he could still feel an overpowering pressure coming from above. This pressure was one that he wasn’t confident that he could overcome even if he were to reach Semi-Divinity realm like the rest.

The Azure Barrier induced a feeling of helplessness within him, reminiscent of a mortal standing before a god. Even if he were to use every means at his disposal, he still wouldn't be able to move the barrier at all.

An ant would simply never be able to shake a tree.

This is the strength of the gods? Zhang Xuan thought in alarm.

It was no wonder why the Hall of Gods was able to remain a supreme existence which none could shake. Just this barrier was more than enough to destroy anyone's confidence.

It was truly a wonder how the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and Kong shi managed to overcome its trials.

"I must say that I'm really surprised that you are able to come up here..."

While Zhang Xuan's mind was wandering about, a cold sneer suddenly echoed in the air. Turning around, they saw the Blackmirror Citadel's Bai Xuansheng and the Evanescent Immortal Sect's Gu Zhuiyun flew up from below.

Two middle-aged men quickly followed behind them.

They were probably the geniuses participating in the Azure Bridge's trial.

"The lot of you are able to withstand the pressure?" Elder Qin Yuan frowned.

All of the Heavenly High immortals in their groups were unable to proceed on any further from the 80% marks onward. It was only due to Zhang Xuan heading forward and halting the pressure for two breaths that they were finally able to make their way up.

Given so, how did the two geniuses from the Blackmirror Citadel and Evanescent Immortal Sect manage to get up so easily?

When did the disciples from those two sects become so powerful?

"Of course. Such level of pressure means nothing to our geniuses..." Bai Xuansheng harrumphed smugly.

Barely after those words were spoken, Zhang Xuan's voice sounded in the air, "It's their armor."

The crowd quickly turned to the two middle-aged men to take a closer look, and they realized that the pitch-black armor on them was exceptionally eye-catching.

There were some bizarre patterns inscribed on their armor that somewhat resembled the inscriptions on the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

It was due to the armor that allowed them to remain impervious to the pressure coming from the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, Bai Xuansheng took a deep look at him before remarking sarcastically, "As expected of the great Sect Leader Zhang."

Paying no heed to Bai Xuansheng's provocation, Zhang Xuan turned to take a closer look at the two geniuses.

Even though the two middle-aged men were at the same cultivation realm as Elder Hong Wu and the others, their auras felt much sharper and imposing, almost reminiscent to that of...

"The warriors of the Hall of Gods?" Zhang Xuan thought with a frown.

There were some differences, of course, but the feeling that they gave him was still strikingly similar to that of the warriors from the Hall of Gods.

"Since Sect Leader Zhang has such discerning eyes, may I trouble you to point out the culprit who stole my treasures back at the Sea of Little Mirror?" Bai Xuansheng continued on with a wintry voice.

Zhang Xuan turned to look at Bai Xuansheng and said calmly, "You were about to be killed by the Blackback Tortoise when Elder Kui Xiao and I saved your life. However, we aren't saints either. Given that we have saved your life, isn't it right for you to compensate us for our service?"

Bai Xuansheng's eyes immediately narrowed menacingly.

He had a feeling that Zhang Xuan was involved in the matter as well, and to be honest, he didn't think that they would admit to it. After all, it wasn't a very honorable action.

Yet, who could have thought that the young man would actually admit to it so openly...

After stealing my possessions, you still dare to talk about it so openly as if you are bragging about it... Do you have no sense of shame?

"Sect Leader Zhang, you should also know that there's a symbiotic relationship amongst the Six Sects. You stole Citadel Lord Bai's artifacts and his storage ring, and that can be viewed as an act of aggression. You are sullyng the harmony amongst the Six Sects and possibly inciting a war even," Gu Zhuiyun said deeply.

"What do you think we should do then?" Zhang Xuan asked calmly.

"First and foremost, you should return everything you have taken from Citadel Lord Bai. Afterward, you should apologize to him," Gu Zhuiyun said.

"Apologize?" Zhang Xuan repeated before nodding slowly.
"Sounds fine by me too."

After that, he waved his hand grandly.

Hu!

The Blackback Tortoise immediately materialized before Zhang Xuan and charged right toward Bai Xuansheng.

He was still wondering how he should broach the subject about the Evanescent Immortal Sect and Blackmirror Citadel colluding with the Hall of Gods, but since the latter was the first one to pick a fight, there was no reason why he should shy away.

"What are you planning to do?" Bai Xuansheng was stunned.

It was just a moment ago that the other party said he was going to apologize, so why did the other party suddenly bring out the Blackback Tortoise?

“Well, I’m just reversing what has happened. I’ll make sure to apologize to you properly if you survive this,” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

“If I hadn’t fallen for the Blackback Tortoise’s trap, do you think that it would have been able to injure me given its prowess?” Bai Xuansheng sneered.

Raising his palm, he charged right toward the Blackback Tortoise once more.

If not for the mayflies in the Sea of Little Mirror, there was no way he would have ended up getting cornered.

Furthermore, the Blackback Tortoise was disadvantaged fighting on land. It would be a huge embarrassment if he couldn’t win against it under such conditions!

With a furious roar, wind currents raged around his palm strike.

The Blackback Tortoise hadn’t reverted back to its original body, so its current size was only roughly two meters long. The strength of its ram was significantly reduced due to its smaller size, but in exchange, it was able to move with greater agility.

“Take three steps in front and attack from your right,” Zhang Xuan said.

It had been many years since Bai Xuansheng had reached Semi-Divinity realm. Under normal circumstances, it would have been difficult for the Blackback Tortoise to triumph against him. However, it would be a different story when it had Zhang Xuan’s guidance.

In less than a minute, Bai Xuansheng’s face was already swollen. His body was crushed under the massive tortoiseshell, and he had multiple ribcage fractures.

“Sect Leader Zhang, are you trying to start a fight over here?” Gu Zhuiyun couldn’t bear watching by the side anymore.

“Isn’t there already a fight over here? Do I even need to start one?” Zhang Xuan replied coldly. “Since I’m returning the artifact to him, I think it’s only fair for me to be able to retract

my act of saving him too. Back then, Citadel Lord Bai was knocked out by the Blackback Tortoise when I stepped in to save him, and it doesn't seem like he's near there yet. Don't worry, I'll make sure how to interfere this time, or else you might just demand me to apologize to him again. Even if he passes away from this ordeal, you can be assured that I'll return the Semi-Divinity artifact back to the Blackmirror Citadel and apologize to him before his tombstone."

Those words caused Bai Xuansheng to spurt a mouthful of fresh blood.

What was the use of getting his Semi-Divinity artifact back after he was dead?

"You..." Gu Zhuiyun's face darkened. "Do you think the consequences of killing the head of the Blackmirror Citadel? You are turning the entire Blackmirror Citadel against you!"

"Turning them against me? Why would I do something like that? After Bai Xuansheng is dead, I'll head over to the Blackmirror Citadel and take over Bai Xuansheng's position, It happens that his sect leader token is in my hand too. In order to avoid any unnecessary conflicts, I'll send out the word that he has passed his seat down to me as well..." Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

"As someone who cares so deeply about the peace of the world, I trust that Sect Leader Gu wouldn't expose me and risk plunging the world into chaos, right?"

When Zhang Xuan took away Bai Xuansheng's storage ring back at the Sea of Little Mirror, the token of the Blackmirror Citadel was inside as well.

He was intending to return it initially, but if Bai Xuansheng was really in collusion with the Hall of Gods, it would be a whole different story. As long as he had the Sect Leader Token in his hand, it shouldn't be too difficult to convince others that Bai Xuansheng had passed down his position to him.

He was already the head of the four sects anyway. He didn't mind bringing the Blackmirror Citadel under him as well.

"You..."

Gu Zhuiyun didn't expect this young man to be so vicious. With narrowed eyes, he stepped forward to save Bai Xuansheng from the Blackback Tortoise, only to feel a chill running down his back in the next moment.

Turning his head to the sides, he saw Han Jianqiu, Kui Xiao, and Qin Yuan looking at him with a sharp look in their eyes.

“Sect Leader Gu, this is a personal affair between the two of them. I don't think that it's appropriate for an outsider like you to get involved.”

Knowing that the three of them really make a move on him if he were to interfere, Gu Zhuiyun had no choice but to halt his footsteps.

They were all Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, so there was no doubt that he would end up in the same state as Bai Xuansheng if he had to face the three of them simultaneously.

“Sect Leader Zhang, save me... I was wrong! I won't ask you to apologize to me anymore. I don't want those treasures anymore! They are all yours!”

Seeing that he would really get killed by the Blackback Tortoise at this rate, the severely injured Bai Xuansheng cried out.

He could tell that Zhang Xuan really had no qualms about killing him and taking over his position as the citadel lord. If the latter were to succeed, he wouldn't suffer any backlash for his actions at all!

“You want me to save you?” Zhang Xuan looked at Bai Xuansheng with a conflicted look in his eyes.

“Well, I am only a Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivator. It would be really tough for me to fight against the Semi-Divinity realm Blackback Tortoise. Furthermore, I don't have anything to gain from this either... If you have anything of value to offer to me, perhaps I might still be able to consider doing so...”

“You are still trying to rip me off?” Bai Xuansheng was stunned for an instant before nearly bursting into tears.

Is it really okay for a person to be so shameless?

The Blackback Tortoise is already your tamed beast! All you have to do is to get it to stop, and you are still trying to ask me for rewards?

Not to mention, you were the one who told it to attack me in the first place!

If only I knew that you were such a shameless human, I would have never tried to get back my stuff in the first place...

2066 Descent of the Azure Bridge

Two minutes later, Zhang Xuan looked at the severely wounded Bai Xuansheng in satisfaction and said, “Citadel Lord Bai, if you still want your things back, feel free to tell me. There’s no need to stand on ceremony.”

Bai Xuansheng didn’t even want to talk to Zhang Xuan anymore.

The other party extorted three whole Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifacts from him before finally signaling for the Blackback Tortoise to stop.

If he were to dare continue asking for his artifacts back, wouldn’t the cycle just repeat again?

He had started this argument with the intention of using the ‘harmony amongst the Six Sects’ to pressure the other party to return the Semi-Divinity artifact that the other party had taken from him, but things ended up more awry than he could have imagined!

Losing three Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifacts was just the least of his worries. What was more important was that he nearly lost his life!

“Citadel Lord Bai...”

After Zhang Xuan kept the Blackback Tortoise, Gu Zhuiyun rushed forward to help Bai Xuansheng up.

“I’m fine...” Bai Xuansheng replied as he swallowed a pill and recuperated from his injuries. With gritted teeth, he sent a telepathic message over to Gu Zhuiyun, “Let them relish in their glee for the time being. Once the Azure Bridge opens, we’ll move according to plan. They’ll eventually pay dearly for their actions!”

Gu Zhuiyun nodded with a vicious glint in his eyes.

Despite their subtle movements, the sharp-eyed Zhang Xuan still caught sight of their interaction and chuckled softly beneath his breath.

Up till this point, he hadn't fully understood why the Ethereal Hall was intent on claiming the Guardian Artifacts of the Six Sects. However, one thing was for sure—Bai Xuansheng and Gu Zhuiyun were definitely not on their side.

If anything, it was likely that they would become enemies with one another.

Of course, despite the threats he had made, he knew that there would be a lot of implications if he were to kill one of the heads of the Six Sects without a valid reason. If things were to go wrong, it might even incite a war, and that was not what Zhang Xuan hoped to see.

Thus, his intention was simply to teach Bai Xuansheng a lesson and make use of this opportunity to force Bai Xuansheng to reveal any trump cards he had.

Fortunately, it didn't seem like the latter didn't have any Semi-Divinity artifact other than the metal chain. Boom!

All of a sudden, a deafening rumble echoed in the sky, heralding the arrival of a storm.

The crowd raised their heads, only to see a massive bridge slowly descending from the pitch-black veil in the sky.

“The Azure Bridge is descending...” Han Jianqiu muttered beneath his breath.

The bridge was slowly extending down from the seemingly endless void above. It was made out of a marble-like material, emanating an icy-cold glint. Even as it was still in the midst of its descent, one could already feel its powerful presence.

The crowd was forced to retreat to the edge of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

The Azure Bridge descended onto the Heaven Anchoring Boulder and lodged itself onto it. As if a process that had been done many times before, the inscriptions on the Heaven

Anchoring Boulder simply flickered for a while before eventually returning to calm.

“The Azure Bridge will only remain connected for a single day. Sect Leader Zhang, you should quickly head up!” Han Jianqiu urged.

“Head up?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Even though it was termed as a ‘bridge’, it would be more accurate to describe it as a vertical pillar descending right from the sky. It was hard to imagine how one was supposed to walk on it.

“You’ll know once you try stepping on it,” Han Jianqiu replied as he ushered Zhang Xuan forward.

Nodding slightly, Zhang Xuan beckoned Elder Hong Wu and the others over before moving over to the Azure Bridge. The two geniuses from the Evanescent Immortal Sect and the Blackmirror Citadel quickly followed suit too.

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan raised his foot and placed it on the bridge.

His body couldn’t help but stagger a little as the world around him disoriented a little. Before he knew it, the bridge was already right beneath his foot. He was standing right on top of it.

When he turned his head around to take a look, he saw the Heaven Anchoring Boulder extending from the sides, perpendicular to where he was standing. It felt like Han Jianqiu and the others were simply ‘hanging’ off the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

It was a mysterious sight.

My center of gravity changed? Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback.

It was similar to how no matter where one was standing on the Earth of his previous world, one would still feel as if one was standing upright due to the gravity pulling people inward into Earth’s core.

The fact that he was able to get a stable footing on the Azure Bridge despite it being perpendicular to the ground of the Forsaken Continent showed that the center of gravity had likely changed. Not only so, there was also a good chance that they had already stepped into another dimension, making them impervious to the Forsaken Continent's gravity.

The others who stepped onto the Azure Bridge were also mystified by this different experience, and they couldn't help but assess their surroundings in wonderment.

Nevertheless, knowing that their time was limited, they quickly proceeded forward.

Before long, they were already completely swallowed by the darkness of the sky. It felt like there was no end in sight, and the only thing they could do was to continue making their way forward.

A void where nothing existed, the area would have been deathly silent if not for the careful breathing coming from the group of six.

They knew that the warriors from the Hall of Gods could appear at any moment, so their bodies remained utterly tensed up. They didn't dare to let themselves get careless even for the briefest of moments.

Hu!

All of a sudden, amidst the darkness, five fully-armored silhouettes could be seen walking over from the opposite end of the Azure Bridge.

They were all at Heavenly High Immortal realm.

"Only by defeating these warriors will we be able to proceed forward and claim the opportunity to reach Semi-Divinity realm!" Elder Hong Wu muttered to himself as he clenched his fists in determination.

At the same time, the others around him also narrowed their eyes as they examined the five warriors carefully.

They had known the rules of the Azure Bridge in advance. Six challengers against five warriors.

Usually, five of the challengers would charge forward to hinder the five warriors, creating an opportunity for the final one to rush through.

“Sect Leader Zhang, we’ll hold them back and create an opportunity for you to get through,” Elder Hong Wu said as he gathered his zhenqi.

“Sect Leader Zhang, we’ll be counting on you.”

The other two nodded in agreement.

Over the last few days, they had become filled with admiration for this young man. They were convinced that the young man would be the person who would bring the four sects to greater heights.

“Do whatever you want. We’ll be going ahead first!”

While they were chatting with one another, the two geniuses from the Blackmirror Citadel and Evanescent Immortal Sect charged ahead, arriving before the five warriors of the Hall of Gods in an instant.

Two of them walked forward to confront the two geniuses whereas the other three remained firmly on the spot, awaiting Zhang Xuan and the others to come over.

Peng peng peng!

There was a clear disparity of strength between the two geniuses and the two warriors of the Hall of Gods, but the two geniuses managed to stand their ground by making preemptive strikes. It was as if they knew what the two warriors were going to do in advance, allowing them to suppress the latter.

Within three blows, they managed to push the two warriors back, forcing them to stagger several steps backward.

Sou!

Making use of this momentary opening, the two geniuses quickly rushed through their blockade and escaped ahead.

The two warriors fighting with them were about to chase them when one of the two geniuses said, “There are still four of

them back there. If you were to chase us, you'll be giving them an opportunity to slip through the cracks.”

Upon hearing those words, the two warriors hesitated for a moment before returning back to their positions, waiting for Zhang Xuan and the others to make a move.

“Those two fellows...”

Not expecting to encounter such a situation, the faces of Elder Hong Wu and the others darkened.

The situation had just turned for the worst. From a six against five, it had become a four against five.

Had he known that this would happen, he would have dashed forward with the two of them.

“We would have been in an even more vulnerable position if we had advanced together with them. They are aware of the flaws of the five warriors, so they could have found some ways to turn the warriors against us while we were fighting,” Zhang Xuan remarked.

It would be one thing if the two of them were trustworthy allies, but that was clearly not so. It would be dangerous to entrust your back to someone who could possibly turn against you at any moment.

“Sect Leader Zhang, what should we do now?” the genius from the Myriad Beasts Hall turned to Zhang Xuan and asked worriedly.

“Since they are able to charge their way through, there's no reason why we can't do so as well. Rest assured, just fight to the best of your ability. The warriors of the Hall of Gods aren't as scary as you think they are,” Zhang Xuan said with a light chuckle.

Of course, he could have defeated the five warriors of the Hall of Gods easily himself, but he wasn't going to do that.

He knew very well that the Azure was just a temporary stop for him. Once he had a chance to enter the world of the gods, the Firmament, he would definitely clinch that opportunity without any hesitation.

That meant that he would have to pass down his current positions to others in the near future, and he had no intention of doing it sloppily. It would be the last thing he could do for these sects as their ‘temporary head’.

In order to become the heads of their respective sects, these candidates would need to have absolute confidence in themselves. If they would cower in the face of the warriors of the Hall of Gods, how could they possibly take control of their own sect and bring it to greater heights in the future?

This was not just a trial of their strength. If they could overcome this challenge, they would gain the confidence and credentials for them to lead others.

“We understand!”

Elder Hong Wu nodded before rushing toward one of the warriors.

Ferocious wind currents blared deafeningly in the surroundings. Executing all of his battle techniques desperately, Elder Hong Wu surprisingly managed to gain the upper hand against the warriors of the Hall of Gods

“This...”

The other two were slightly stunned by the sight.

The techniques which Elder Hong Wu was executing were the ones that Zhang Xuan had imparted to them previously. If Elder Hong Wu could stand his ground against them, the two of them surely stood a chance as well!

With such thoughts in mind, they quickly rushed forward as well.

As the start, their movements still felt a little awkward as they didn’t have time to test out their newly-acquired skills in a practical battle yet. However, as the battle continued on, their movements swiftly became more and more fluid.

Even though Sect Leader Zhang has never told us the flaws of the warriors of the Hall of Gods before, the battle techniques which he has imparted to us somehow seem to suppress the maneuvers of the latter precisely...

The trio was taken aback.

Over the past few days, Zhang Xuan had only imparted to them a couple of combat techniques. He told them to focus on building up their zhenqi instead of worrying about how they could deal with the warriors of the Hall of Gods.

They couldn't really relate to it then, but at this very moment, they could finally see the rationale behind his actions.

All of a sudden, the undefeatable warriors of the Hall of Gods didn't seem as frightening as they thought them out to be anymore.

Ahh... So I actually improved so much over the past few days...

The three of them came to a realization.

Had it been in the past, the warriors of the Hall of Gods would have likely been able to defeat them within three blows. The fact that they could stand on equal grounds with the warriors and even suppress them was unthinkable to them.

They had been so focused on their cultivation that they hadn't realized how much they had grown. However, seeing the refined control over their zhenqi, the sharpness of their judgement in battle, and the swiftness of their reflexes, how could they possibly still remain oblivious to it?

They were already no longer the same people as before!

It's all thanks to Sect Leader Zhang... the trio thought.

Such a change couldn't have come naturally. Without a doubt, Zhang Xuan must have put a lot of thought into helping them grow.

Furthermore, the fact that they were able to stand on par with these warriors of the Hall of Gods at the moment made it apparent to them that it wouldn't take much effort for Zhang Xuan to subdue them too.

They realized that Zhang Xuan could have easily cleared the trial by himself, but he still spent time and effort trying to train them. It was clear that he was doing all of this for their growth!

Only with the experience of overcoming the warriors of the Hall of Gods would they be able to go further as a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator.

“Let’s defeat them together!”

Feeling a huge boost of confidence, the three of them executed their strongest moves simultaneously.

Peng peng peng!

With three dull thuds, the three warriors of the Hall of Gods were pushed back.

Putong! Putong! Putong!

Several minutes later, the three warriors of the Hall of Gods slumped onto the floor, having breathed their last.

Hu!

The trio heaved a sigh of relief at having accomplished what was expected of them. At this moment, they suddenly recalled that there were supposed to be two more warriors remaining, so they quickly turned their heads over in astonishment.

However, what they saw was that the two warriors were also lying incapacitated on the floor, and Zhang Xuan was looking at them not too far away from a faint smile.

Even though Zhang Xuan had made a move later than them, he had managed to defeat the other two faster than them. What was even scarier was that they didn’t even see how he made a move!

Well, the ones who felt that way weren’t just them. Prior to their deaths, the two warriors of the Hall of Gods were also horrified.

They didn’t even manage to see what was coming at them when they had already been pushed down to the ground, awaiting the embrace of death...

2067 Slaying a Semi-Divinity

“Let’s go!”

Having dealt with the five warriors of the Hall of Gods who stood in their path, the group of four proceeded forward.

The duo who had rushed ahead of them was nowhere to be seen at all. The Azure Bridge seemed to pierce through the endless darkness, extending beyond the horizon.

They walked along the bridge for a while before there was finally a change in the sight ahead of them.

A circular platform reminiscent of a gazebo had appeared by the side of the Azure Bridge.

The genius from the Blackmirror Citadel was seated at the center of the circular platform.

A unique aura was rippling from the platform. The pores of the genius widened as he voraciously absorbed the unique aura, inducing a swift rise in his cultivation. It felt like he was already on the verge of a breakthrough.

“He’s pushing for a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm!” Elder Hong Wu exclaimed.

Based on the records of the predecessors, after overcoming the five warriors of the Hall of Gods, there would be various places atop the Azure Bridge where the challengers could attempt to achieve a breakthrough. As long as one was already at Heavenly High Immortal realm, the chances of reaching Semi-Divinity realm were extremely high.

This circular platform was likely to be one of these places.

“Since this place has been taken up, let’s move ahead to see if there are other circular platforms,” Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

He didn’t have a good impression of these two, but he didn’t think that there was a compelling reason for him to hinder them either.

Since the predecessors of the Six Sects had been able to achieve a breakthrough on the Azure Bridge, there should be more of such circular platforms around as well.

Otherwise, the genius from the Evanescent Immortal Sect would have been here as well.

Nodding in agreement, the group of four was just about to proceed ahead when a deep cry echoed behind them. A pillar of zhenqi burst forth from the genius on the circular platform, rising right into the voids above.

Boom!

“He has managed to achieve a breakthrough?”

Stunned, the crowd quickly turned around to take a look, only to see that the disposition of the middle-aged man had changed greatly. Divine energy was revolving around the surface of his body like a dragon coiling around him. He floated quietly atop the circular platform, as if he had been freed from the restraints of gravity.

Hu!

Absorbing all of the energy into his body, the middle-aged man finally opened his eyes.

A brilliant light shot out from his eyes.

Feeling the explosive energy surging through his body, the lips of the middle-aged man curved up. His sight fell upon Zhang Xuan and the others, and a hint of surprise surfaced in his eyes.

However, he quickly stood up and spoke, “The fact that you are able to come this far means that you have been able to defeat the warriors of the Hall of Gods. However, this is where your good luck comes to an end. You won’t be able to proceed any further than this...”

Sou!

In the next instant, he appeared right in front of the group.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan couldn’t help but frown in displeasure.

“It would have been better if you have died in the hands of the warriors. It’s meaningless if all of us were to successfully reach Semi-Divinity realm together. We would just be returning back to square one,” the middle-aged man sneered coldly.

The reason why they had unhesitatingly worked together with the Ethereal Hall was to ensure that their two sects would have a greater number of Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, thus putting them in a higher position than the rest of the Six Sects.

However, if all of them were to succeed, wouldn’t that render their efforts meaningless?

“So, you intend to kill us here?” Zhang Xuan asked nonchalantly.

He had known that these two sects were up to no good, but he hadn’t really expected them to go this far.

The middle-aged man replied coldly, “Casualties are almost guaranteed on the Azure Bridge. The world would only know of what happened here from the words of the survivors.”

Given the high death toll of the Azure Bridge, no one would be able to blame him if Zhang Xuan and the others died here. Even if Han Jianqiu and the others were to harbor some suspicions, they wouldn’t be able to do anything without concrete evidence unless they desired to incite a war.

Seeing the confident look on the other party’s face, Zhang Xuan couldn’t help but burst into laughter, “What makes you so certain that you are able to defeat us?”

“I know that you have tamed the Blackback Tortoise, but the Azure Bridge is an existence created by a being that far surpasses our imagination. Do you think that you are able to bend the rules of the Azure Bridge so easily?” the middle-aged man replied with a cold smile.

“If there were truly any loopholes in the Azure Bridge, our predecessors would have long uncovered it by now!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan tried to extend his consciousness into his tamed beast sack, only to find that it had been sealed with some kind of mysterious power. He was

unable to bring out the Blackback Tortoise and the others at all.

However, he was still able to bring out the other Heavenly High Immortal-tier beasts inside.

It was just that the Azure Bridge was narrow, and the beasts he had were rather massive in sizes. If he were to summon them here, it would just hinder their movements.

It seemed like the gods had thought things through before they constructed the Myriad Beasts Hall. They wouldn't allow anyone to sully the sanctity of this trial.

“Haven't you thought about why I was able to tame the Blackback Tortoise in the first place? I have no idea how a Semi-Divinity realm fledgling like you could possibly imagine that you would be able to kill me...” Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed deeply.

He might have been unable to tap on the strength of the four Semi-Divinity realm beasts, but given his current cultivation realm, he was more than a match for a fellow who had just barely tiptoed his way into Semi-Divinity realm.

“What if I were to join the fight as well?”

At this very moment, another voice echoed from ahead.

The genius from the Evanescent Immortal Sect appeared at the other end, encircling the group.

Similar to the genius from the Blackmirror Citadel, he had reached Semi-Divinity realm as well.

With the two of them exerting their auras simultaneously, they cast a heavy pressure upon Elder Hong Wu and the others, causing their faces to warp hideously.

Zhang Xuan might still have been able to defeat a single Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, but if he had to face two of them at once...

The chances of victory were extremely slim!

Furthermore, the two of them were top-notch geniuses on the Forsaken Continent. Even if they had just achieved a

breakthrough, their strength was not to be underestimated!

“Aren’t you worried about stirring a storm on the Forsaken Continent by making a move on us?” Zhang Xuan asked calmly.

“Don’t worry. After you are dead, our Blackmirror Citadel and Evanescent Immortal Sect will slowly annex your sects. Those so-called Starchaser Palace, Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall, and Sevenstar Pavilion, they would just become nothing more than relics of the past!”

With a cold harrumph, the middle-aged man from the Blackmirror Citadel abruptly charged forward.

He appeared right before Zhang Xuan in an instant and thrust his palm forward.

The middle-aged man’s strength was as heavy as a crushing mountain. His might as a new Semi-Divinity realm cultivator poured forth like a relentless current. Elder Hong Wu and the others wanted to help, but they felt as if their bodies had been bound by the pressure in the air, preventing them from taking a step at all.

“So, this is a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator?” Elder Hong Wu felt his heart sinking.

He had met Elder Kui Xiao many times before, but he had never seen the latter exerting his true prowess before, so he had no idea just how powerful Semi-Divinity realm cultivators were. It was only at this moment that it dawned upon him that it was impossible for a Heavenly High Immortal, no matter how powerful, to possibly reach up to a Semi-Divinity.

That was also the reason why the presence of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator in a sect was so important.

In a direct confrontation, even if the three of them were to collaborate with one another, they wouldn’t be able to last too long against the other party.

“Sect Leader Zhang...”

Elder Hong Wu anxiously turned to look at Zhang Xuan, frightened that the hope of the four sects would really lose his

life here. However, what he ended up seeing was a sight that he would never forget.

The young man before him whipped out a sword, and without any hesitation, he pierced the sword right through the other party's palm.

Puhe! Puhe!

With two consecutive moves, the genius of the Blackmirror Citadel had been decapitated. At the point of his death, his eyes were completely dilated, as if he couldn't believe such a thing was truly happening.

"Isn't being alive a wonderful thing in itself? I really don't understand why you are so intent to seek death..." Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed.

His cultivation was only at Heavenly High Immortal realm, but his fighting prowess was on par with that of most Semi-Divinity realm cultivators.

It might still take him a bit more trouble for him to deal with the Semi-Divinity realm experts of the Hall of Gods, but against this Semi-Divinity realm fledgling, it was really a walk in the park!

"You..."

The genius from the Evanescent Immortal Sect would have never fathomed that he would see such a sight in his life either. Utterly horrified, he turned around and fled.

He knew that he wouldn't be too much stronger than his comrade, and the fact that Zhang Xuan was able to kill his comrade meant so easily meant that the young man could do the same to him too!

He had received orders in advance that if Zhang Xuan was able to defeat the warriors of the Hall of Gods, they would have to make a move to kill the young man. He thought that it would have been an easy mission, but who could have thought that the person he was up against was an unbelievable monster!

For a Heavenly High Immortal to actually be able to kill a Semi-Divinity with such ease...

It would be no joke to say that the young man was as powerful as their own sect leader!

Faced with such an opponent, what else could he possibly do other than to run?

“The reason why I took my time to ask you so many questions is to ascertain if you are really intending to kill me. Don’t you think that it’s too late for you to only think of running away now?”

Zhang Xuan uttered those words softly under his breath, but due to the overwhelming silence in the area, his voice echoed clearly in the area.

Weng!

A sword pierced right forth swiftly and pierced right through the heart of the genius from the Evanescent Immortal Sect.

Puhe!

Just like that, the middle-aged man came to the end of his life as well. His body tumbled and crashed heavily onto the floor of the Azure Bridge.

From the moment from their breakthroughs to their deaths, they didn’t even last for three minutes...

They were likely the most short-lived Semi-Divinities on the Forsaken Continent.

2068 Entering the Hall of Gods

Zhang Xuan threw the bodies of the two Semi-Divinities into his storage ring before gesturing for the stunned trio to proceed ahead with him.

Not far away, another warrior of the Hall of Gods, also at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, appeared before them. After defeating him, another circular platform appeared before their eyes.

Zhang Xuan turned to Elder Hong Wu and said, “This is an opportunity to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. You can take this one.”

“Thank you, Sect Leader Zhang!” Elder Hong Wu nodded in gratitude as he stepped onto the circular platform.

Taking a seat, he swiftly began his cultivating. He could feel a unique aura inducing the energy in his body to billow, pushing him closer and closer to a breakthrough.

Meanwhile, the remaining members of the group pressed on, and they soon found two more circular platforms.

Those two circular platforms were each guarded by a warrior of the Hall of Gods, too. If it had been anyone else, they would have been unable to proceed, but that was not the case for Zhang Xuan’s group.

After slaying the warriors, Zhang Xuan beckoned for the two geniuses from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and the Myriad Beasts Hall to cultivate on the circular platform before advancing alone.

He soon encountered another circular platform, and he headed up and sat down in the middle of the platform.

Closing his eyes and focusing on his cultivation, he could feel a unique aura rippling in his surroundings. It was vastly different from the spiritual energy that he absorbed on the

Forsaken Continent. His Heavenly High Immortal cultivation pulsated in response to this aura, seemingly expressing its desire to surge to new heights.

“It’s a pity that I haven’t finished deducing a feasible Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique yet...” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply with a shake of his head.

He had spent days immersing his consciousness inside the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, trying to come up with a Semi-Divinity realm cultivation technique. However, he could not find something that was suited for him.

He could choose to force his way through, and there was a good chance that he would succeed. However, if he did so for this major hurdle, it could lead to some complications that would hinder him from advancing any further in the future.

Hu!

Thus, he raised his hand and stuffed the aura suffusing the circular platform into a jade bottle before stashing it away in his storage ring.

After entering the circular platform, he had become certain that this unique aura was the key to achieving a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm. It was similar what the Aeon of Ancient Sage was to those attempting to make a breakthrough to Ancient Sage.

With it, he would be able to push for a breakthrough as soon as he finished coming up with his cultivation technique! So, Zhang Xuan got off the circular platform and continued ahead.

It seemed like there were quite a number of circular platforms along the Azure Bridge. It did not take long for him to stumble upon another. After dealing with the warrior guarding it, Zhang Xuan hesitated for a moment before bringing out his clone.

A few moments later, his clone successfully made a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.

As he continued, the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and the others also successfully made breakthroughs.

For the remaining circular platforms, he placed the Heavenly High Immortal-tier swords that he had in there in order to nourish them. By doing so, there was a chance that they could become Semi-Divinity artifacts.

“But where in the world is the Hall of Gods? At this rate, I won’t be able to reach it within a single day...”

No matter how far he walked, the path ahead was still shrouded in darkness. He could not see the end of it.

The Azure Bridge would only remain open for a single day. At this rate, he would not be able to snatch the _神 (God)_ character.

Those circular platforms could only be accessed via the Azure Bridge, which appeared once every century, but the (God)’ character was something that he could take back to the Forsaken Continent. If he could acquire it, the cultivators of the Forsaken Continent would be able to freely reach the Semi-Divinity realm and even forge Semi-Divinity artifacts, just like the Ethereal Hall!

They would no longer be restrained.

It was just that he had some concerns...

The Hall of Gods had expressed their desire to capture him, and they had even assaulted him numerous times before. Would he be walking into their trap by making his way over himself?

“The Azure Bridge only appears once every hundred years, and the Hall of Gods is likely to be the key to entering the Firmament. No matter how dangerous it is, I have to take the risk!”

The next moment, he vanished from the spot.

He had warped into a green streak, flitting forward at an unbelievable speed.

Even if he could reach the Semi-Divinity realm, he was not confident that he could reach the Hall of Gods without the Azure Bridge. Thus, he could not afford to miss this opportunity.

Before long, he reached a point where there were no longer any circular platforms in sight. It seemed like the number of circular platforms was limited.

Only the front two circular platforms were unprotected, which basically meant that the Hall of Gods implicitly only allowed two candidates of the Six Sects to reach the Semi-Divinity realm. Beyond there, unless one was an expert on the same caliber as the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion or Kong shi, it would be impossible to get this far.

For the past several thousand years, more often than not, only a single person of the Six Sects would manage to achieve a breakthrough. Yet, within this period of time, only a few dozen circular platforms had been formed.

Of course, the thrifty Zhang Xuan made sure to take away all the unique aura contained in these circular platforms before forging ahead.

All in all, while helping his tamed beasts achieve breakthroughs and gathering the unique aura within the other circular platforms, six hours had passed. If he did not hasten his footsteps, it would be impossible for him to enter the Hall of Gods.

Driving his Gods' Sword Intent to the limits, Zhang Xuan was able to travel at a speed that far surpassed that of ordinary Semi-Divinity realm experts.

But despite that, the Azure Bridge was simply too long.

He flew for six hours straight after that, but the scenery remained unchanged.

This is impossible. If the Hall of Gods is truly that far away, how can anyone enter and return from the Hall of Gods within a day?" Zhang Xuan shook his head in disbelief.

All in all, he had been traveling for twelve hours, but the end was nowhere in sight. Was it impossible for him to reach the Hall of Gods with his current strength?

Based on the records, if one did not return to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder before the Azure Bridge disappeared, one

would fall into the dimension rifts, where even Semi-Divinity realm cultivators would be unable to survive.

“I’ll just fly for another two hours...” Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth.

He did not rush at full speed for the first six hours, so if he immediately turned back, it would take roughly eight hours for him to return to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder, which meant that he only had two more hours to play with. If he still could not find the Hall of Gods within the next two hours, he would have to return.

Thus, driving his zhenqi to the limits, Zhang Xuan sped up further and rushed ahead.

An hour later, there were finally some changes at the very end of the Azure Bridge. Amid the dark void, he could vaguely see a massive castle.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan could not help but murmur, “It sure is far away... The fact that the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and Kong shi were able to reach the Hall of Gods means that they were no weaker than me when they challenged the Azure Bridge...”

For someone who possessed superior cultivation and had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent to have to fly for more than twelve hours in order to reach the Hall of Gods... the length of the Azure Bridge was truly fearful!

Since Kong shi and the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had been able to successfully snatch a ■神 (God)_ character from the Hall of Gods, they must have gone through the same path. Given so, they must have been extremely powerful individuals.

The massive castle floated quietly in the air, serving as a backdrop to the dark void. It took Zhang Xuan roughly fifteen minutes to arrive at its entrance.

Jiya!

Sensing the arrival of a living being, the doors of the castle slowly creaked open.

Knowing that there was no time to lose, Zhang Xuan quickly made his way in.

Shortly after he entered, the doors behind him closed, plunging him into darkness. Following which, innumerable torches lit up, illuminating the surroundings.

Hu hu hu!

Ten silhouettes appeared in the area simultaneously. Their auras felt steady yet unfathomable, making it impossible to gauge the depths of their cultivation.

They were all Semi-Divinity realm experts!

The Hall of Gods was indeed a formidable entity. It was rare to meet even a single Semi-Divinity out on the Forsaken Continent, yet ten of them had appeared simultaneously.

You sure are bold, Zhang Xuan. You knew that the Hall of Gods intends to capture you, but you still had the guts to walk here of your own accord!”

There was a towering figure seated on the throne at the very center. The position he sat at was even higher than where the torches could illuminate, resulting in his face being cloaked in shadows. His voice was ice-cold, seemingly devoid of feelings.

Zhang Xuan had expected to encounter such a situation right from the start, so he was not taken aback at all.

Instead, he looked at the silhouette seated on the throne and said with a frown, “The Forsaken Continent is full of talented individuals. I’m curious as to why you are biting onto me like determined dogs. Is it really because of the Gods’ Sword Intent?”

He had made sure to maintain a low profile ever since he arrived at the Forsaken Continent, but he had still been assaulted thrice. He really could not understand the intentions of the Hall of Gods.

“Gods’ Sword Intent?” the silhouette on the throne scoffed coldly. “Just that thing isn’t worthy of prompting the Hall of Gods into action!”

“What are you up to?” Zhang Xuan asked with a deep frown.

Despite the crackling of flames from the torch, the surroundings felt incredibly cold and lifeless.

You are from the Master Teacher Continent, aren't you?” the silhouette asked.

“You know of the Master Teacher Continent?” Zhang Xuan was shocked.

Without bothering to respond to Zhang Xuan's question, the silhouette waved his hand and said, “I want him alive.” Huala!

The ten Semi-Divinity realm warriors immediately charged forward and encircled Zhang Xuan.

“It won't be that easy for you to capture me!” Zhang Xuan replied coldly.

Since he dared step into the Hall of Gods, he was prepared to face the dangers in there.

Hu! Hu!

He brought out the corpses of the two Semi-Divinity realm cultivators from the Azure Bridge.

Boom!

In an instant, the two bodies exploded simultaneously.

On his way there, he had forged the two into Soulless Metal Humanoids.

“Humph!”

But before the shockwaves of the explosion could ripple outward, a cold harrumph echoed. Right after, a burst of light flickered through the interior of the Hall of Gods, binding the power of the explosion.

With a light pop, the explosion dissipated on the spot.

Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

He had thought that the explosions of the two Semi-Divinities would at least buy him some time, but it seemed like there was a formidable Defensive Formation around the Hall of Gods. It

was actually able to completely neutralize the force of the explosion!

“This won’t do. I need to escape!”

Zhang Xuan took out the Tongshang Sword and channeled his Gods’ Sword Intent toward the tightly-sealed door of the Hall of Gods, intent on knocking it down.

The Tongshang Sword was an existence that was only a step away from reaching the Semi-Divinity realm. On his way there, he had already made use of the unique aura from the circular platform to help it achieve a breakthrough, making it far stronger than before.

When used together with his Gods’ Sword Intent, the might that he commanded would be able to slay ordinary Semi-Divinity realm cultivators within a single strike.

Ding ding ding!

But as the sword qi fell on the door, a metallic clang echoed in the air. Astoundingly, not even a scratch was left on the door!

“Is the door a Semi-Divinity artifact as well?” Zhang Xuan could hardly believe his eyes.

The might that he had exerted was enough to overpower even Han Jianqiu in an instant. Yet, despite facing such an attack, the door remained completely unharmed. Its tier was far beyond his imagination.

“Futile!”

Having expected such an outcome, the ten Semi-Divinities chuckled as they rushed forward simultaneously.

A massive net made of zhenqi fell from the sky, sealing all possible routes of escape for Zhang Xuan.

“Shatter!”

Zhang Xuan brandished his sword, releasing a barrage of sword qi toward the massive net.

Hu!

However, the sword qi did nothing to stop the massive net. It was as if they were existences of two different planes; the massive net simply passed right through the sword qi and bound Zhang Xuan's body tightly. At the same time, Zhang Xuan sensed that his zhenqi had been sealed, preventing him from exerting his strength.

2069 Revelation

“Seal his cultivation!”

Seeing that they had managed to catch Zhang Xuan with the massive net, the Semi-Divinities unwittingly heaved a sigh of relief. They didn't expect things to go so smoothly.

One of the Semi-Divinity realm warriors stepped forward and tapped his finger on Zhang Xuan, intending to seal off Zhang Xuan's cultivation.

“I've been waiting for you!” Zhang Xuan murmured with a faint smile.

Three swords suddenly appeared out of nowhere, and with a set of profound movements, they pierced right through the warrior's back. Then, with a vertical motion, the warrior was sliced into two.

As soon as the warrior was killed, Zhang Xuan could feel the massive net loosened a little. It was as if a formation had lost one of its core sources of energy, resulting in some degree of instability.

Alarmed, the remaining nine Semi-Divinity realm cultivators swiftly infused their energy into the massive net, hoping to stabilize it.

But as fast as their reaction was, none of them could have been able to move faster than Zhang Xuan, who was waiting to seize this opportunity. He immediately dashed out of the massive net, leaped into the air, and brandished his sword furiously, raining a powerful current of sword qi down on one of the Semi-Divinity realm warriors.

Even though all ten of those warriors were at Semi-Divinity realm, they weren't of equal strength to one another, Zhang Xuan was able to tell that this person was the weakest one of the remaining nine.

By using his own body as bait, he was able to swiftly get rid of one of his enemies. After that, he made use of the lapse from

the crowd's shock to assault the weakest one.

Despite his swift movements, his head was constantly calculating what was the best move he could take in order to maximize his chances of eliminating his enemies.

If he wasn't confident of his abilities, why would he take the risk to come here?

Puhe!

The might of four swords augmented with the Gods' Sword Intent formed a force far beyond what the weakest Semi-Divinity realm warrior could deal with. In an instant, he was sliced into multiple pieces.

None of the warriors could have expected two of their comrades to be killed so quickly. Everything happened so quickly that a hint of fear was arising from the depths of their hearts.

This fear wasn't just directed toward Zhang Xuan but toward their leader too. It was a huge failure of their part to display such unbecoming results before their leader.

Boom boom boom!

Eight hands fell onto the floor simultaneously, and a powerful outburst of energy froze the space in the Hall of Gods. Every single movement came with humongous resistance.

With a roar, Zhang Xuan tried to bring out the Blackback Tortoise and the three sharks to assist him, but just like the Azure Bridge, he was unable to open his tamed beast sack in here as well.

With veins popping from his temples, he forcefully brandished the Tongshang Sword. At the same time, he brought out the metal chain and the halberd as well to disrupt the formation created by the remaining eight Semi-Divinities.

With the three Semi-Divinity artifacts moving together, as if a boulder had been thrown into a pond, a black rift swiftly rippled through the surroundings, blasting open the frozen space.

"It's the end!"

Zhang Xuan had put all of his efforts into blasting the frozen space open, only to realize that one of the enemies had managed to sneak up on him. The other party raised his palm to strike down on him.

Peng!

There was no time for Zhang Xuan to dodge at all. So, he could only channel his energy to the front of his body in hopes of diverting the attack.

However, the palm strike was simply too powerful. That single strike fractured three of his ribcage bones, and he fell from the sky.

If it was three, four, or even five Semi-Divinities, he would still have been able to handle the situation. However, to face ten of them simultaneously, not to mention that all of them were experts from the Hall of Gods at that, it was inevitable that it would still be difficult for him to stand his ground despite his superior skills.

Crashing heavily onto the floor, blood seeped out from the corners of Zhang Xuan's lips. He tried to quickly return to his feet, but a metal chain swiftly wrapped around him, binding him tightly.

“A Semi-Divinity artifact?”

Zhang Xuan could feel the metal chain digging tightly into his skin. Even with his current strength, he was actually unable to free himself at all!

“An encirclement of ten Semi-Divinities, but you were still able to kill two of them. That explains why you were able to survive even though I have sent so many people for you in the past. I would have expected nothing less from a person chosen by the heavens,” the silhouette above the flames glanced down at Zhang Xuan coldly as he spoke.

He didn't seem to be frustrated or angered because Zhang Xuan had killed two of his subordinates.

“A person chosen by the heavens?”

Knowing that it was impossible for him to get away, Zhang Xuan gave up on struggling altogether. Instead, he focused on driving his zhenqi to heal his injuries as he asked with a tight knit on his forehead.

“Indeed. You are someone who harnesses the heavens within you, isn’t that so?” the silhouette remarked impassively. Those words caused Zhang Xuan’s body to stiffen.

He had never expected anyone to ask such a question. The fact that he had the Library of Heaven’s Path in him should have been something that only Luo Ruoxin knew of. No one else should have been aware of it.

Yet, the words of the silhouette seemed to be hinting at the same thing as well. Did the chief of the Hall of Gods know something about the Library of Heaven’s Path?

Or could it be that the gods had the ability to see through the Library of Heaven’s Path?

As the Hall of Gods had attacked him after he comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, he had thought that it was simply afraid that he would attempt to steal a 甲 (God)1 character from it after he had grown up. However, it was apparent that he couldn’t be more wrong than that!

So what if he had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent?

A person who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent still wouldn’t stand a chance against ten Semi-Divinities!

Not to mention, the Hall of Gods should have plenty of the unique aura required for one to achieve a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm. Even if he were to snatch the (God)’ character from them, it shouldn’t warrant them to make a move.

Everything would make sense if its goal had been Library of Heaven’s Path right from the start!

That would also explain why the warriors who had been sent to apprehend him had been strictly ordered to capture him alive!

Zhang Xuan tried to conceal his expression, but the silhouette still caught a hint of astonishment in the depths of his eyes.

With a light chuckle, the silhouette said, “You seem to be a little bewildered. Are you wondering how I knew that you harness the heavens inside of you?”

Instead of responding, Zhang Xuan simply glared at the silhouette coldly.

Paying no heed to Zhang Xuan’s silence, the silhouette continued speaking, “Only a person chosen by the heavens would have the ability to rise to the Forsaken Continent and advance from Ancient Sage to Heavenly High Immortal realm within less than a month. Not to mention, you are able to stand on equal grounds with ordinary Semi-Divinity realm cultivators as well.

“It’s through your superior talent that you were able to convince four of the Six Sects to toss aside their prejudice and unite together under your leadership. Isn’t that so?”

With narrowed eyes, Zhang Xuan asked, “What are you planning?”

You are holding onto something you are unqualified for. If you continue keeping it on you, it’ll eventually lead to a disaster. It would be better if you pass it on to someone else before tragedy strikes!” the silhouette said with a wave of his hand.

Hula!

The Semi-Divinities in the surroundings raised his hands simultaneously, channeling their energy toward Zhang Xuan and wrapping him amidst it. Zhang Xuan’s body began rising to the air uncontrollably before flying to the side.

His body eventually landed not too far away on a stone step. Looking upward, he saw an average-sized circular platform.

Upon seeing the circular platform, Zhang Xuan’s face darkened, “The altar of the Starchaser Palace? So, you really are the one who captured Palace Chief Du?”

He had seen a replica of the altar in Jiang Yao’s hands before, allowing him to recognize the altar in an instant.

“Begin the ritual!”

The silhouette couldn't be bothered to respond to Zhang Xuan's question, so he raised his hand and hollered. Innumerable treasures swiftly descended atop the altar. Following that, a lady walked into the room and began chanting in a mysterious language.

Zhang Xuan turned his gaze over and saw that the lady was no other than the 'deity' whom Sovereign Chen Yong had summoned back then, the ex-head of the Starchaser Palace, Du Qingyuan!

It would appear that Du Qingyuan had lost her will. Even though she was moving and speaking, her eyes were tightly shut and her voice was completely devoid of emotions. It felt like there was someone controlling her body instead.

Xiong xiong!

Along with her chanting, the blue flame on the altar continued to burn furiously. Above the Hall of Gods, a massive black hole began to form, as if a connection link was being formed with a higher dimension.

“Rise!” Du Qingyuan exclaimed

Zhang Xuan's body immediately rose up before landing lightly on top of the altar.

The flames of the altar converged and dived right into Zhang Xuan's body. He thought that he would be burned, but to his surprise, the flames didn't feel hot at all. On the contrary, it felt warm and soothing.

What are they trying to do? Zhang Xuan frowned.

Having read all of the books in the Starchaser Palace, he had gained a deep understanding of the various rituals conducted by the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. However, he had never come into contact with such a ritual before.

Normal rituals would require one to offer treasures to a god in order to obtain greater power or information. However, this ritual clearly deviated from the norm.

If anything, it felt like he was being used as the tribute in order to achieve an insidious goal.

Tzzzzzzz!

As the flame continued burning, the illusory silhouette seated on the throne, the chief of the Hall of Gods, slowly became more and more corporeal.

“Are they trying to absorb my power?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes narrowed in astonishment.

He finally understood the intention behind the ritual.

This was not a ritual to summon a god to gather more power. Instead, the other party was trying to take his power and implant it into himself, thus replacing him!

Is he trying to take the Library of Heaven’s Path away from me? Zhang Xuan thought in alarm.

It was no wonder why the other party needed the altar of the Starchaser Palace, not hesitating to snatch it over. It seemed like he was intending to use the mysterious altar to conduct a ritual so as to replace him as the owner of the Library of Heaven’s Path!

Even though he didn’t know how the altar really worked, he could feel energy slowly seeping away from his body. It felt like there was a chance that the other party would really be able to take the Library of Heaven’s Path away from him!

Weng!

Slowly, Zhang Xuan’s body grew fainter and fainter as a result of the flame burning inside of him. At this rate, the ritual might really claim his life!

At this crucial moment, the pendant around his neck suddenly released a brilliant light.

Pu!

The silhouette on the throne suddenly staggered a little.

At the same time, the flame on the altar began to flicker weakly, almost as if it would disappear in the next instant.

“What’s going on here?”

The silhouette quickly looked at Zhang Xuan intently before flitting over with light footsteps. He forcefully grabbed the pendant around Zhang Xuan’s neck and held it up.

Tzzzzz!

“Argh!”

However, as soon as the silhouette came into contact with the pendant, black smoke immediately began rising from his body.

nSh*t!”

The silhouette cursed beneath his breath as he hurriedly released his grip on the pendant.

He tried to grab the pendant again several times, but the searing heat emanating from it made him dare not approach at all.

“I’m not going to be foiled by a darned pendant at this crucial moment. Let’s see how it can protect you after I take your life!” the silhouette roared.

The flames on the altar were already on the verge of being extinguished. At this rate, the ritual would really be foiled. The silhouette knew he had to do something in order to salvage the situation!

Huhu!

The eight Semi-Divinities immediately received the order and made a move simultaneously.

Channeling their might together, they executed a powerful surge of sword qi aimed right at Zhang Xuan’s throat.

If the strike were to really land, Zhang Xuan would be a goner without any doubt!

Boom!

At this crucial moment, the door of the Hall of Gods was blasted open by an overwhelming force. A figure rushed right into the Hall of Gods and tapped his finger ahead of him.

Peng!

The sword qi created by the eight Semi-Divinities dissipated in an instant. The faces of all eight of them paled as fresh blood spurted from their mouths.

“You!!”

Upon seeing the newly arrived figure, the silhouette widened his eyes in anger and struck downward to fend against the figure’s assault.

Peng!

As the two forces collided with one another, the two of them were forced to retreat a step each.

The newly arrived figure turned his sight to Zhang Xuan, and with a grasp of his hand, he wrapped the young man around with his energy and pulled the young man over to him.

“Let’s go!”

The figure quickly sent Zhang Xuan out of the Hall of Gods, and before leaving himself, he turned around and exerted a powerful palm thrust which devastated the interiors of the Hall of Gods. Then, with a light footstep, he swiftly flitted away together with Zhang Xuan.

In just a few instants, the two of them had already vanished on the Azure Bridge.

“Chase them!”

An aggrieved voice echoed from the Hall of Gods in their wake.

2070 The Meeting of Kongshi and Zhang Xuan

A gale echoed in Zhang Xuan's ears as he watched his surroundings swiftly disappearing behind him.

What incredible speed...

Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in astonishment.

The person who had saved him was actually able to travel at several times his speed despite bringing him along.

Even the strongest Semi-Divinity realm cultivator shouldn't have been able to move this quickly... Is he a god?

The Semi-Divinity realm warrior of the Hall of Gods whom he had forced to explode back in the Ocean of Exiled Stars could probably be considered the strongest of all, but even he was nothing compared to the person who had just saved him!

While Zhang Xuan's mind was still wandering around the place, the other party said, "I haven't reached the level of a god yet. The reason I'm able to move so quickly is due to the Evanescent Boots."

"Evanescent Boots?"

Zhang Xuan lowered his head to take a look, and he noticed that the other party was equipped with a pair of striking golden boots. These boots were emanating a unique power that allowed him to cover dozens of li with every step, making it seem almost as if he was teleporting from one spot to another.

"That should be the Guardian Artifact of the Evanescent Immortal Sect... Could you possibly be..." Zhang Xuan's body stiffened up as a person surfaced in his mind.

"We'll talk about it later. The Azure Bridge has already begun retracting. If we don't hurry up, we could lose our lives here," the other party said with a light chuckle as he continued flitting forward with a slightly grim look in his eyes.

“The Azure Bridge has already begun retracting?” Zhang Xuan was appalled.

He lowered his head and noticed that the Azure Bridge was indeed slowly retracting to the Hall of Gods. With a confused look, he asked, “I thought that the Azure Bridge lasts for an entire day, so why would it suddenly retract before the time is up?”

All in all, Zhang Xuan had only spent fourteen hours getting to the Hall of Gods, and he had spent less than an hour inside. Why would the Azure Bridge suddenly begin retracting at that moment?

Could it be that the descent and retraction of the Azure Bridge could be arbitrarily decided by the chief of the Hall of Gods?

“A day has already passed,” the other party replied bitterly. “There’s a difference in the flow of time between the Hall of Gods and the Forsaken Continent by 1:10. You didn’t notice it?”

“Difference in the flow of time?” Zhang Xuan was shocked.

He had come under the attack of ten Semi-Divinities as soon as he entered the Hall of Gods, such that there was no time for him to think too deeply into the matter. After that, he had been taken to the altar, and a ritual had been conducted on him.

As he thought back, there was indeed some difference in the flow of time in the Hall of Gods and the Forsaken Continent.

A ratio of 1:10 ...

“It’s said that the flow of time of the Firmament is a tenth of that of the Forsaken Continent. The same goes for the Hall of Gods,” the other party replied.

“I see...” Zhang Xuan nodded slowly.

By a 1:10 ratio, the one hour he had spent in there would equate to roughly ten hours. Going by this calculation, it had indeed been a day since the Azure Bridge descended, so it was only expected for it to retract.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan understood, the other party smiled lightly before stepped on the ground forcefully. “Alright,

enough talking for the time being. Use your zhenqi to protect your body. I'll be conducting Spatial Traverse.”

In an instant, his speed reached a new peak, causing the space around him to become warped.

Sila!

Even space was torn down as a result of the movement. Naturally, Zhang Xuan was under a huge amount of pressure as well. It felt like everything was collapsing in on him, squeezing him tight and leaving him breathless.

Kacha!

If not for the zhenqi barrier that Zhang Xuan had reinforced around him, his body might have been squashed to a pile of minced meat.

Hu!

All of a sudden, the pressure vanished. Panting deeply, Zhang Xuan took a closer look around him and found that he was no longer on the Azure Bridge. Instead, what appeared before him was a massive palace floating amid the clouds.

Zhang Xuan straightened his body as he asked, “Where are we?”

He could tell that even though he was still in the Azure, he was not on the Forsaken Continent anymore. It felt like he had leaped from the Forsaken Continent into a folded space.

“This is the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall!” the other party replied with a smile as he turned around to face Zhang Xuan.

Only then did Zhang Xuan get a good glimpse of the other party's appearance. The other party looked the exact same as the person who was worshipped in all of the Master Teacher Pavilions. He had a tall physique with a flowing beard. Between his brows, one could see a hint of benevolence and compassion for the world.

“Junior Zhang Xuan pays respects to Kong shi.” Zhang Xuan bowed deeply.

He had already guessed who the other party was, but only after seeing the other party's appearance and disposition in person was he finally able to confirm the matter.

The person standing before him was none other than the World's Teacher who had created the Master Teacher Pavilion and united mankind against the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, Kong shi!

He had encountered the other party's soul fragments several times, but this was his first time meeting the man in person.

The other party was more amiable than he had expected. His presence felt like a warm breeze during the onset of spring.

"Rise," Kong shi said with a smile as he reached out to help Zhang Xuan up. "Is the Master Teacher Pavilion still doing fine?"

"Yes, the Master Teacher Pavilion is still following your teachings. They have worked hard to protect mankind over the years," Zhang Xuan said before recounting the happenings of the Master Teacher Pavilion after Kong shi's departure.

"I see." Kong shi stroked his beard slowly. "Mankind will have to remain united in order to survive against the other races and leave its mark on the world. The reason I created the Master Teacher Pavilion was for all men to become powerful, and it seems like my efforts weren't in vain."

It was difficult for all men to be powerful, but through the selfless impartation of knowledge of the Master Teacher Pavilion, mankind would continue to build on the knowledge of their predecessors and advance to greater heights.

"Indeed. The enmity between the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and mankind is also slowly being repaired. Even though it's impossible to sever the chains of hatred right away, I believe that, with time, all scars will eventually fade," Zhang Xuan said as he explained the current situation with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe as well.

Kong shi smiled a little as he looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, "You have been to Starchaser Island, right? Did you notice

that the indigenous population living there are very similar to the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?”

Yes, I did notice it.” Zhang Xuan nodded in response. “Do you know the story behind it?”

Kong shi nodded. “In truth, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe and the indigenous population of Starchaser Island come from the same origin. They are gods who have been exiled!”

“Gods who have been exiled?” Zhang Xuan frowned. “Hold on a moment. I heard from Elder Han Jianqiu that those living on Starchaser Island are the indigenous population of the Forsaken Continent. Is that not true?”

Aside from Starchaser Palace, the cultivators of the Six Sects proclaimed themselves as gods who had been exiled whereas those living on Starchaser Island were the indigenous population. Why was Kong shi saying the opposite?

Hearing Zhang Xuan’s response, Kong shi smiled a little and said, “The other five sects are just trying to give themselves a better name. If they are truly the exiled gods, isn’t it odd that only Starchaser Palace has an altar to hold rituals to connect with the Firmament?”

“This...”

That question stumped Zhang Xuan.

He had never thought about it like that. Kong shi’s argument was perfectly logical.

Kong shi shook his head before continuing. “A better background and reputation go a long way to developing a power. As time passes, what is false eventually becomes viewed as the truth and vice-versa. Who can differentiate between statements that can hardly be verified anymore?”

Zhang Xuan fell silent.

It was similar to how kings would proclaim themselves as beings chosen by the gods and embed all kinds of legends to their rule, making it seem as if they were the true son of Heaven. Legitimacy could be a powerful tool indeed if people believed in it.

It seemed like the same had happened to the Forsaken Continent as well.

Those of the other five sects proclaimed themselves as the exiled gods, and as time passed, people began to believe these falsehoods.

In the end, they even labeled the true exiled gods as the indigenous population.

“But if they are gods, why would they carry such overwhelming killing intent within them?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

In truth, it did not matter to him who the true exiled gods were. After all, he was not taking any sides, and he viewed himself as a mere passerby in the Azure.

“It probably has something to do with the Firmament... That’s beyond the scope of my knowledge.” Kong shi shook his head.

“I see.” Zhang Xuan nodded slowly before raising his head to look at Kong shi once more. “I still have some questions that I hope you can clarify for me.”

“Speak your mind.”

“Kong shi, you have been in the Azure for several thousand years now. Are you unable to break free of the dimension barrier and ascend to the Firmament?”

This was what had confounded Zhang Xuan deeply.

There was no doubt about Kong shi’s talents and capabilities.

Even he, in less than a month since his arrival, was able to reach a level where he was just a single step away from reaching the Semi-Divinity realm. Given so, how could the World’s Teacher possibly remain bound there for several thousand years?

“Reaching the Firmament isn’t as easy as you think. Furthermore, when I entered the Hall of Gods alone and clashed with the gods back then, while I did manage to acquire a ‘神 (God)’ character, I ended up sustaining significant injuries as well. I had to go into a coma in order to recover,

and it was only recently that I managed to regain my consciousness.”

Kong shi halted his words there with a conflicted look on his face. It seemed like he was unwilling to speak about the past anymore.

“If it’s not convenient for you to speak, I won’t inquire any more about that,” Zhang Xuan said. “However, there is one matter that I would like to seek clarification from you about. You gave me a token that allowed me to purchase any cultivation resources from the Ethereal Hall for free a while ago. However, why is it that I encountered an attack from the Hall of Gods each time I used it?”

This was the matter that made Zhang Xuan deeply doubtful about Kong shi.

If he could not clarify this issue, he would never be able to fully trust Kong shi.

“Regarding that, I’ll have to apologize to you. It’s an unforgivable oversight on my part,” Kong shi said apologetically. “In the years that I was in a coma, the influence of the Hall of Gods managed to seep into the Ethereal Hall, and many of my subordinates have secretly pledged loyalty to the Hall of Gods. The one whom I entrusted to forge the token was a deeply trusted confidant of mine, but it turns out that he was in collusion with the Hall of Gods all this time! I sentenced that confidant to death after learning of this matter.

“Over the past few days, I was busy trying to track down and apprehend the spies of the Hall of Gods, which was also why I was unable to meet you at the Heaven Anchoring Boulder prior to the descent of the Azure Bridge. Otherwise, you wouldn’t have fallen into the trap of the Hall of Gods!”

Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before nodding slightly.

He could not find any logical loopholes in Kong shi’s story, and the latter appeared deeply earnest.

“Since you are currently the head of four sects, you should have heard about how I have borrowed the Guardian Artifacts

of the Evanescent Immortal Sect and Blackmirror Citadel, right?” Kong shi asked.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

“I have my own plans for borrowing those artifacts. I’m hoping to use them to free the Forsaken Continent from the rule of the Hall of Gods. I heard that you have clashed with the Hall of Gods on several occasions, so I believe you are aware of their strength. I knew that I would need more trump cards up my sleeves. While the Guardian Artifacts of the Six Sects haven’t reached the Semi-Divinity realm yet, they harness the thoughts and wills of countless experts from the past several thousand years, granting them astounding prowess,” Kong shi explained.

If that was really true, it would have been a huge misunderstanding from his part.

“Now that I have clarified all of the questions you have, there are some important things that I have to tell you.” Kong shi looked at Zhang Xuan grimly as he spoke.

With a wave of his hand, he swiftly activated an Isolation Formation to sever the space around them from the real world before he spoke further. “Do you know that you are already nearing the end of your life?”

2071 The First Order

“Nearing the end of my life?” Zhang Xuan was completely mystified by Kong shi’s abrupt words.

The only threat he was facing at the moment was the Hall of Gods. Why was he nearing the end of his life then?

“Indeed,” Kong shi said. He placed his hands behind his back as a glint flashed in his eyes, “If I’m not mistaken, you have a fragment of the heavens in you, right?”

“You...” Zhang Xuan was shocked by what he had just heard.

The Library of Heaven’s Path had been his greatest secret all this while, but it felt like it was getting exposed far too easily in recent days. First the chief of the Hall of Gods, and now, it was shown that Kong shi knew about it as well.

He felt as if his secrets were being laid bare to the world, and this left him feeling deeply uncomfortable. A slight frown made its way onto his forehead.

“You are wondering how I knew of the matter, right?”

A little amused by Zhang Xuan’s bewildered face, Kong shi chuckled a little before he spoke, “There’s no need to be too nervous. The truth is that I’m just like you. I have a fragment of the heavens within me as well.”

You also have the library as well?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes nearly bulged from his eyes.

When he heard about Kong shi’s experiences on the Master Teacher Continent, he had wondered if Kong shi had the Library of Heaven’s Path as well. That would have explained why the latter was able to come up with perfect cultivation techniques and advance his cultivation so swiftly.

However, thinking that the chances were incredibly slim, he eventually dropped the idea.

“Library?” Kong shi was slightly taken aback by Zhang Xuan’s question. “No, that’s not it. What I have acquired is the

spacetime jurisdiction of the heavens, otherwise known as the Heavens' Order.”

“Heavens' Order?”

“Just like how the noon sun falls and the full moon wanes, all beings in the world have to obey a certain order. When it comes to order, the very foundation of it lies in that of space and time,” Kong shi said.

Space and time were the very fundamental elements required to create order in this intrinsically chaotic world. They served as the very basis of the development of natural cycles, and they were required for life to blossom. Without them, the world would have been nothing but chaos.

As such, space and time were viewed as the most primordial law of the entire world, otherwise known as the First Order.

That would explain why Kong shi was able to come up with the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, which harnessed both the powers of time and space. Even when placed in the Library of Heaven's Path, it was still able to form its own individual chamber.

It was likely that the Heavens' Order was an ability that wouldn't pale in comparison to the Library of Heaven's Path.

Previously, when he saw Kong Shiyao's 'Word of Law' bloodline ability in person, he was filled with curiosity as to just what the ability Kong shi had comprehended was. After hearing this, everyone immediately clicked together perfectly like puzzle pieces.

It was out of Kong shi's desire to bring order to the world that he created the Master Teacher Pavilion and organized the unique occupations and their heritage. Due to that, mankind enjoyed persistent growth over the past tens of thousands of years, granting them the power to stand against even the innately powerful Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

“Without order, it's impossible to build anything significant,” Kong shi nodded in response. Following that, he looked at Zhang Xuan with confusion in his eyes as he asked, “Could it be that... the fragment of the heavens you have acquired has

nothing to do with order? You mentioned a library earlier, right?”

Despite knowing that Zhang Xuan had a fragment of the heavens, he had no way of knowing what was the ability that the young man wielded. The heavens were vast and all-encompassing, such that it was nigh impossible to comprehend their entirety.

“Yes, that’s indeed what I mentioned earlier. While I said that it was a library, if I’m not mistaken, I think it should be ‘Heavens’ Imperfections’!” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before replying.

Those were the words that surfaced in his mind when he first awakened the Library of Heaven’s Path.

It was due to this ability that the Library of Heaven’s Path was able to see through the flaws of all beings and uncover the most correct path forward. He had come a long way together with it.

“Heavens’ Order and Heaven’s Imperfections...” Kong shi muttered contemplatively before his eyes lit up. “I see!”

“Kong shi, you mentioned earlier that I’m coming to the end of my life... Does that have something to do with my Heavens’ Imperfections?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Indeed,” Kong shi nodded. “Receiving a fragment of the heavens is a huge fortuitous encounter. It’s something that all cultivators would dream of. However, this power comes at a huge cost. As you use it more and more often, you will slowly be assimilated by the heavens, thus eventually losing your own will.”

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had never heard of such a thing before.

However, one thing he did notice was that the Library of Heaven’s Path was getting stronger and stronger with time.

On top of that, he had also become extremely reliant on it, such that it was difficult for him to proceed on if he didn’t have any Heaven’s Path Divine Art with him.

Could this be an effect of the ‘assimilation of the heavens’?

“The power of heavens always exists as a double-edged blade. When there’s gain, there’s bound to be loss as well. You are able to cultivate swiftly with the fragment of the heavens, but that doesn’t come without a cost. If I’m not mistaken, the technique you cultivate should be a cultivation technique of the heavens, right?” Kong shi asked with a stern look in his eyes.

You have come a long way with it, but have you realized that there’s a pitch-black gaseous substance that is lurking in the depths of your body? No matter how you try to purge it, be it through heavenly flames or lightning, it simply wouldn’t budge at all.”

Those words made Zhang Xuan stunned for a moment before he nodded, “I did notice something like that... Are you referring to the thing hidden in the Innate Fetal Poison? One of your soul fragments mentioned it to me back at the Master Teacher Continent.”

Zhang Xuan was initially a little worried about the matter, but as nothing happened all this while, he decided to pay no heed to it, and eventually, he forgot about it even.

It was only when Kong shi mentioned it once more did it finally strike him once more.

Thinking back, Kong shi’s soul fragment did warn him about the matter, just that there was no time to go into details back then.

With a grim look on his face, Kong shi said, “Indeed. Take a closer look at it right now. Do you notice anything different about it from the last time you paid notice to it?”

“Different?” Zhang Xuan immediately channeled his consciousness into his body to take a closer look.

A moment later, his body stiffened.

“It seems like... it has gotten much bigger than before! Furthermore, it’s no longer pitch-black anymore. Rather, it appears to be a little grayish instead!”

Previously, the gaseous remains were only about a finger's length. As it was simply too small, Zhang Xuan wasn't able to catch a clear glimpse at it, so it looked black to him then.

However, with it growing twofold the size of before, it somewhat resembled a tiny snake coiling within his body.

"That's exactly it," Kong shi nodded. "Did you notice any anomalies regarding it previously?"

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before shaking his head.

That thing had been in his body for a very long time now, but he had never been able to make sense as to what it really was. Naturally, he didn't notice anything anomalous regarding it.

It didn't hinder his cultivation nor his flow of zhenqi at all, so he didn't think that it was harmful to his body.

Try to use the ability of your Heavens' Imperfections. Make sure to focus your attention on the grayish gaseous substance," Kong shi said.

"I'll give it a try," Zhang Xuan thought as he turned to the formation which Kong shi had just set up and willed 'Flaws!'.
Hu!

The Library of Heaven's Path jolted, and a book filled with the details of the formation was materialized.

Zhang Xuan casually scanned through the details, and he had to admit that he was really deeply impressed.

Kong shi's comprehension of formations had reached an incredible level, such that he was able to set up an impeccable formation so casually. This was something that even the current him was unable to pull off.

"How is it? Do you notice any difference?" Kong shi asked.

Zhang Xuan had been paying attention to the gaseous substance all along, and he couldn't help but frown, "There doesn't seem to be any changes at all... No, that's not right. It seems to have grown by a little. It's stronger than before..."

The increment was extremely slight, such that it was imperceptible through one's eyes. Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan

was still able to notice a very small difference after he used the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Indeed, it should have grown by a little," Kong shi nodded in response. "Every single time you use the Heavens' Imperfections, the gaseous substance would bulk up by a bit."

Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback by this bizarre situation, "But why didn't I sense anything before then?"

Those at his cultivation realm were extremely sensitive to the changes in their bodies. Under normal circumstances, no matter how slight the increment was, he should have still been able to notice it.

Kong shi answered the question, "The battle techniques and artifacts on the Master Teacher Continent are relatively weaker, such that even if you use the Heavens' Imperfections on them, the growth of the gaseous substance would be insignificant. However, it's different now that you are on the Azure. As your ability grows, the side effects will become more and more severe. The side effects have been insignificant so far, but they will start showing as you proceed on to Semi-Divinity realm and beyond."

To use an analogy, it would be similar to the difference of pulling an empty cart and pulling a cart filled with all sorts of objects. It went without saying that one would wear out faster pulling a heavier cart.

The items on the Azure were of a much higher tier than that of the Master Teacher Continent, so it was more demanding on his Library of Heaven's Path too. As a result, the grayish gaseous substance was produced in greater amounts as well.

"Is the grayish gaseous substance fatal?" Zhang Xuan shuddered a little as he asked.

"It would be a blessing if it's only fatal," Kong shi said with a bitter smile. "What's even more frightening is that the grayish gaseous substance will only continue building up within you, and there's nothing that can be done to erase it. As time goes by, it will assimilate you into a part of the heavens, making you lose your sense of self!"

Zhang Xuan's body stiffened up.

His gut feeling told him that what Kong shi had told him was very likely to be real.

He had tried many means to remove the gaseous substance in the past but to no avail. Given so, it would only continue to build on in his body, causing him to fuse together as one with the Library of Heaven's Path. Eventually, he might become a being devoid of feelings and consciousness.

If so, how would he be different from being dead?

"Could it be that you are also..."

A thought flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind, and he quickly turned his gaze back to Kong shi once more.

The person standing before him also possessed a fragment of the heavens as well, wielding the ability of Heavens' Order. Furthermore, based on what he had heard from the other party back on the Master Teacher Continent, it would appear that the other party was bothered by grayish gaseous substance as well.

"Indeed, I was in the same plight as you as well. I didn't have the ability to get rid of the grayish gaseous substance, and I nearly lost my sense of self as a result... It's fortunate that I noticed it before it was too late and successfully resolved the problem," Kong shi replied.

"You managed to resolve the issue?" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment. He quickly clasped his fist and said, "I beseech you to impart to me the method of overcoming this problem. I'll be deeply grateful to you for it."

He deeply appreciated the ability of the Library of Heaven's Path. It had saved him on many occasions, and it had allowed him to grow at an exponential rate as well. However, it would be all meaningless if he were to lose his life as a result of that. No matter what, he had to cure himself of the gaseous substance!

It seemed like it would be best for him to avoid using the Library of Heaven's Path in the short run.

“The solution is surprisingly simple,” Kong shi looked at Zhang Xuan with a deep gaze as he spoke. “It’s just a question of whether you are willing to make a sacrifice or not.”

“What kind of sacrifice would I have to make?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“The reason behind the accumulation of the gaseous substance in your body is because it’s against the laws of nature for a human to wield the might of the heavens,” Kong shi explained.

“As long as you are willing to sever your connection with the Library of Heaven’s Path, you’ll no longer face the threat of being assimilated by the heavens.”

2072 The Other Kong shi

“Sever my connection with the Library of Heaven’s Path?”

“Indeed. The heavens are not an existence that humans are able to control with their strength. If you continue keeping it within your body, it’s only a matter of time before you become a puppet of the heavens,” Kong shi said. “You said that the ability you have acquired is ‘Heavens’ Imperfections’, but why are the cultivation techniques you practice flawless then? Isn’t that a loophole in itself?”

Those words struck a deep chord with Zhang Xuan.

This paradox had indeed been weighing on his mind for quite a while now.

If even the heavens were flawed, how could the Heaven’s Path Divine Art be truly flawless?

No, that’s not it. It appears flawless to me now, but it doesn’t mean that it would remain so in the other worlds... Zhang Xuan thought.

His cultivation had gone berserk once due to this matter, and it was Luo Ruoxin’s pendant who had saved his life then.

Perfection’ was a concept that could only be applied in a limited context. Across different worlds, there would be different laws of nature. Naturally, flaws that didn’t exist before might have started appearing.

As such, the Heaven’s Path Divine Art couldn’t be said to be a completely perfect cultivation technique. At the very most, it could only be said to be the cultivation technique that was most aligned with the heavens in the world he currently was in.

Zhang Xuan didn’t say those words aloud, choosing to ask another question instead, “Kong shi, does this mean that you have severed the Heavens’ Order from you?”

“Indeed. I have torn the Heavens’ Order out of my body, similar to how I rejected my title as the Celestial Master Teacher back then. One has to give up something in order to gain something. Only by paving your own way will you be able to ascend to greater heights!” Kong shi said as he looked into the distance with a deep look in his eyes.

Then, he turned to look at Zhang Xuan and smiled, “I believe that you already have an idea of what you should do.”

Zhang Xuan fell deep in thought.

Back then, if he hadn’t rejected his identity as a Celestial Master Teacher, he wouldn’t have successfully advanced to become an Ancient Sage, and naturally, he wouldn’t have managed to come to where he was either.

Zhang Xuan was skeptical about the notion of abandoning the Library of Heaven’s Path, but there were some grains of truth in what Kong shi was saying.

Was this the path he had to take in order to not be limited by the heavens and advance to greater heights?

With many doubts bubbling in his mind, Zhang Xuan turned to Kong shi and asked, “The Heavens’ Imperfections is intricately connected to me as a being. How can I sever my connection with it?”

The Library of Heaven’s Path was connected to his soul, which was why he was able to use it even in his soul form.

Even when he severed his soul to create his clone back then, the entirety of the Library of Heaven’s Path still remained with him.

Given so, he couldn’t imagine any way how he could possibly sever the Library of Heaven’s Path from him.

“Aren’t I a living example of its feasibility?” Kong shi chuckled. “I have been through the process, so I am familiar with the procedures. It might sound unbelievable to you at the moment, but the procedures are actually extremely simple. In fact, you have just encountered something similar to it earlier.”

“You are referring to the ritual which the chief of the Hall of Gods used?” Zhang Xuan asked as his eyes widened slightly.

“Indeed,” Kong shi nodded. “I used that method to sever the Heavens’ Order away from me back then, and I suppose that’s how the Hall of Gods figured out that it’s possible for them to do the same to you in order to take away your Heavens’ Imperfections.”

“If there is such a huge loophole in the power of the heavens, why would the chief of the Hall of Gods desire to acquire my Heavens’ Imperfections?” Zhang Xuan was slightly stumped.

Just as what Kong shi had said, a person who harnessed the heavens would eventually be assimilated, losing his sense of self. Most people would try to stay away from something as dangerous as that, so it didn’t seem to make sense for the chief of the Hall of Gods to go to such lengths in order to acquire it.

“It’s always those that we don’t have that appears to be the best for us. Besides, everyone has their own pursuits. You and I, what we are aiming for is to ascend to the Firmament and view the world from a higher angle. On the other hand, the chief of the Hall of Gods hopes to consolidate power on the Forsaken Continent. Given the differences in our goals, it’s inevitable that what we hope to acquire would be different as well,” Kong shi explained.

“I understand,” Zhang Xuan nodded.

The scope of one’s ambitions would eventually dictate one’s altitude.

Those with greater ambitions would continuously strive for higher grounds whereas those with humble dreams would limit themselves to what they could see and what was currently within reach.

“But the altar is currently with the Hall of Gods at the moment, right? It won’t be easy to take it away from them,” Zhang Xuan said with a deep frown.

If the method of removing the Library of Heaven’s Path was the same as what the chief of the Hall of Gods used, it was likely that they would need to make use of the Starchaser

Palace's altar, and they would also need Du Qingyuan around to conduct the ritual.

Given that those two were currently in the hands of the Hall of Gods at the moment, they wouldn't be able to do it at least in the short-term.

"That's a needless worry. Look at what I have over here."

With a light chuckle, Kong shi flicked his wrist.

Hu!

An altar immediately materialized in the room.

You took the altar from the Hall of Gods?" Zhang Xuan could hardly believe his eyes.

While fending against the assault of the eight Semi-Divinities to save him, the other party was actually still able to take away the altar as well... The other party's capabilities were truly terrifying!

"But just having the altar isn't sufficient. Based on what I know, the rituals are extremely intricate, and something of that level would surely require Palace Master Du."

"I have learned the ritual myself back then, and I'm confident that I would be able to carry it out even more smoothly than her," Kong shi replied confidently.

"Is that so... I guess there's nothing for me to nitpick anymore then. Shall we begin?" Zhang Xuan burst into laughter before nodding in agreement.

"Un!" Kong shi nodded.

With a light wave of his hand, a pile of treasures fell on top of the altar. Muttering a huge chunk of obscure chants, a blue flame came to life on the altar.

You may head over now," Kong shi commanded.

Zhang Xuan nodded as he began walking toward the altar. However, in the next moment, Kong shi suddenly spoke up, "Wait a moment. I need you to pass the pendant you are wearing over to me first."

“My pendant?” Zhang Xuan halted his footsteps to look at Kong shi.

“I saw it during the ritual earlier. There is something off about the pendant you are wearing. It’s binding the Library of Heaven’s Path to you, preventing anything from severing its connection to you. I’m worried that it might hinder the ritual. Don’t worry, I’ll just hold it for you for the time being, and I’ll return it to you at the end of the ritual,” Kong shi explained.

Zhang Xuan was a little hesitant, but eventually, he took out his pendant and passed it over.

Taking the pendant away from Zhang Xuan, Kong shi’s lips crept up into a smile as he kept it into his storage ring.

Then, he urged Zhang Xuan to quickly make his way over to the altar.

Zhang Xuan took a step forward, but in the next moment, he turned around with a hint of worry and asked, “Will I be fine after the Library of Heaven’s Path is removed from my body?”

He was well aware that the Library of Heaven’s Path had become a part of himself. Even though Kong shi had reassured him that he was fine, he still couldn’t help but worry about the matter.

“The fact that I’m standing here before you should answer your question. I understand your worries, but you’ll be fine,” Kong shi replied.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan finally leaped up and landed above the flames.

“To prevent any accidents from happening, I’ll have to seal you in place for the time being. It’s to prevent the backlash of the heavens,” Kong shi said as he raised his hand.

Boom!

Right after those words were spoken, a powerful might descended from the heavens. Chains similar to that of the Hall of Gods wrapped themselves rightly around Zhang Xuan before he could even react, binding him tightly against the altar.

Caught off guard by that move, Zhang Xuan frowned.

“I’ll be starting the ritual.”

With a smile on his lips, Kong shi flicked his hand once more, and another identical altar appeared beneath his feet. Blue flames rose from the altar too, swallowing Kong shi whole.

“No, that’s not right... You are intending to take my Library of Heaven’s Path and implant it over to your body!” Zhang Xuan exclaimed.

After seeing what Kong shi was doing, how could he possibly still remain oblivious to what the other party was up to?

You realized it? However, it seems to be a little too late,” Kong shi laughed coldly before he started chanting once more.

The flames on the two altars swiftly intensified, growing brighter and brighter.

“Why? Didn’t you say that the heavens would assimilate and turn one into a puppet?”

Zhang Xuan struggled, but he found that he was tightly bound to the altar. It was impossible for him to escape at all.

“I wasn’t lying when I said that. However, without a stepping stone like that, how can one rise to greater heights? Do you think that it’s really possible for an individual to become a god based on just his talents alone? How naive must you be to believe that one can tear open the doorway to the Firmament that easily?” Kong shi scoffed coldly.

“You are deluding yourself!

“I have been foiled once, and I am not going to make the same mistake again. Back then, I left a sliver of my will back at the Qiu Wu Palace in order to capture you. You were weak then, and I should have been able to succeed easily, but that darned woman beside you interfered with my plans...”

“The Qiu Wu Palace?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Memories were slowly floating back to him.

Back then, in the crystal ball that controlled the Qiu Wu Palace, he encountered the will left behind by Kong shi. The

latter was in the midst of giving him a warning when he suddenly raised his palm... But before anything could happen, Luo Ruoxin suddenly called for him, bringing him back to the real world.

Back then, he had a lingering suspicion that Luo Ruoxin had done it intentionally in order to prevent him from hearing what Kong shi had to say. However, he eventually chose to trust Luo Ruoxin on that matter, so he chose not to think too much into it.

But based on what he was hearing right now, it turned out that Luo Ruoxin was trying to save him!

If not for Luo Ruoxin snapping him out of it, he might have had his Library of Heaven's Path taken away from him back then...

It might have been the end of him if that were to happen. His cultivation was still very weak back then, such that the ritual could have very well caused the dissipation of his soul.

Several other thoughts swiftly arose in Zhang Xuan's mind, and he quickly asked, "Does that mean that the descent of the Ancient Sage 4-dan 'deity' on the Kunxu Domain back then was your doing too?"

Back then, when the Ancient Sage 4-dan 'deity' crawled down from the Azure, he had mentioned something about a 'sect leader'.

After learning of the existence of the Six Sects, he had been wondering if the culprit had been one of them. After all, breaching the dimension barrier was no easy feat. Even if it had been weakened, an Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivator shouldn't have been able to do it so easily, especially when there was no ritual on the other side to summon him!

However, as he went from one sect to the other, none of them seemed to have been behind this matter, and that had left him a little puzzled. However, if the Ethereal Hall was the one behind it, everything would make sense!

After all, as someone who had come from the Master Teacher Continent, Kong shi definitely knew about the pathway

leading to the Kunxu Domain!

That could also be why the ‘deity’ was so interested in acquiring Kong Shiyao’s bloodline, which was said to be the purest bloodline from Kong shi over the past tens of thousands of years.

If that ‘deity’ had succeeded, his talents would surely have been brought to greater heights, and he would have been even more highly regarded by Kong shi himself.

“You are quite sharp. I was indeed the one who dispatched him to guard that entrance,” Kong shi admitted to the matter.

“But on the other side of the passageway are your students and descendants... Do their life and death mean nothing to you at all?” Zhang Xuan was unable to believe what he was hearing.

The man before him was known to have used even the body of his students in order to prevent the mercury-like spiritual energy from falling onto the Master Teacher Continent and causing great devastation. Not only so, he also tasked the Hundred Schools of Philosophers to guard the Kunxu Domain as well...

The reason why he did so was to ensure the better development of mankind...

So, why would he go the extent of dispatching someone down to kill even Kong Shiyao?

Zhang Xuan could understand why Kong shi wanted to deal with him. After all, the Library of Heaven’s Path was an invaluable treasure. If the other party could acquire it together with the Heavens’ Order, he would have nothing to fear anymore.

It would provide him with the impetus he required for push a higher level. Perhaps, he might even be able to break open the dimension barrier and ascend up to the Firmament...

It would be expecting too much of Kong shi to presume that he was completely selfless.

However, it didn’t make sense that he would leave his offspring and disciples to the lurch.

As the World's Teacher who was known for his benevolence on the Master Teacher Continent, it was unthinkable for him to change so much just because he had headed to the Azure. It was almost as if he was a different person!

As this thought surfaced in his mind, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

“You... You aren't Kong shi!”

2073 Facing Kong shi

“Atrocious! How dare you say that I’m not Kong shi!”

Casting aside the refined disposition he had been putting on till now, Kong shi looked at Zhang Xuan with an expression warped with savagery, “Why am I not him? Why don’t you tell me just what is it that makes me so different from him?”

“Kong shi is someone who embraces the entire world with his benevolence. He would never do those things you have done,” Zhang Xuan shook his head as he replied.

He had never met Kong shi in person before, but his deeds and beliefs clearly created great ripples across the world, allowing one to fathom who he was as a person. It was indeed possible for a person to put on a persona, but it was impossible for someone to maintain a persona for so many years, especially when one had reached the peak of the world.

“Embraces the whole world with his benevolence? Hahaha, what a joke! Even if I kill you right here and right now, the whole world would still think of me as a benevolent man!” Kong shi sneered coldly.

Kong shi hastened his chants, inducing the flames on the altar to crackled furiously. It felt like Zhang Xuan was going to be swallowed whole.

However, instead of panicking, Zhang Xuan calmed down instead. With a look of pity in his eyes, he sighed, “All along, I thought that you were someone worthy of respect. I guess I was wrong...”

“Whatever library you have in you will be mine very soon. Once you lose your control over the heavens, you will suffer the backlash of the heavens and be crushed by it. Your flesh and bones will be ground to dust... Say all you want, but nothing will change the outcome anymore,” Kong shi replied with a smirk, paying no heed to what Zhang Xuan was saying at all.

Zhang Xuan was someone who cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art. It was with the protection of the Library of Heaven's Path that the heavens had been unable to do anything about this aberrance of nature. However, the moment Zhang Xuan lost his Library of Heaven's Path, he would immediately be crushed by the rules.

There was no way he would be able to survive this.

"Is that so?" a nonchalant voice echoed in the air.

Kong shi was taken aback. He could see that the voice wasn't coming from Zhang Xuan at all, so who could be the one speaking then?

Alarmed, he quickly turned around, only to see another Zhang Xuan standing not too far away with a disappointed look on his face.

All along, while he did not share the same reverence for Kong shi as the rest on the Master Teacher Continent, the other party was indeed someone that he had respected deeply. To think that the other party turned out to be such a person instead!

"You..."

On the other hand, Kong shi would have never expected that another Zhang Xuan would appear all of a sudden. He couldn't help but widen his eyes in disbelief.

"The Hall of Gods has been trying to capture me all along. How could I possibly not prepare a hand before stepping in its trap? The one which you have been trying to extract the Library of Heaven's Path has been my clone all along!" Zhang Xuan replied with a shake of his head.

Prior to entering the Hall of Gods, he swapped places with his clone, choosing to house himself temporarily inside the storage ring.

It was for this reason that he was able to remain unharmed even while Kong shi was jumping through dimensions with him.

The reason why he had his clone to go along with whatever Kong shi was doing was to uncover the true answer from him.

It was just that he didn't think that the answer he received would be so disappointing.

Very well. Very well. I would have expected nothing less than a person chosen by the heavens. Of course, it should have never been so easy. It couldn't possibly have been so easy..." Kong shi murmured with a frenzied expression on his face. "But it doesn't make a difference at all. Did you think that I would allow you to leave this area safely, especially now that you have appeared before me on your own accord?"

Boom!

With a light step, Kong shi walked out from the flames, and a powerful aura rippled across the entire hall. It felt like the surrounding space would cave in at any moment and collapse on them.

Kong shi had singlehandedly defeated eight Semi-Divinities back at the Hall of Gods, which meant that he was at least several times stronger than Zhang Xuan.

"Don't you think that it goes both ways? Why would I appear before you just to run away?" Zhang Xuan scoffed. "Since everything is pretty much out now, why don't you satisfy the final curiosity of mine? Has the Hall of Gods already fallen under your control as well?"

From Fu Chenzi to the illusory chief of the Hall of Gods, the silhouette of Kong shi could be seen all around the Hall of Gods.

"I have massacred the chief and the warriors of the Hall of Gods. They are pawns which the Firmament has dispatched here in order to suppress the Azure, so all of them deserve to die. I will create a new world in the Azure! I will lead this world to unprecedented greatness! The Hall of Gods and the Ethereal Hall are both under my control, so no matter where you run to, you will never be able to escape from me!" Kong shi laughed.

The 'current chief of the Hall of Gods was him, and the one who kidnapped Du Qingyuan was also him.

The main reason behind that was because he wanted to steal Zhang Xuan's Library of Heaven's Path and make it his own.

"I don't have any more questions," Zhang Xuan said.

Then, he turned to his clone on the altar and shouted, "What are you fooling around for? Hurry up and get down here!"

"Yes, yes..."

The body of the clone immediately became as flimsy as noodle strands, allowing him to slip through the metal chains that bound him and move over to Zhang Xuan's side.

At the same time, the clone drove his zhenqi as well, causing a powerful aura to burst forth from him. Just like Kong shi, he had reached Semi-Divinity realm as well!

Hula!

After that, Zhang Xuan brought out the Blackback Tortoise, the three Shark Brothers, the Serpentine Dragon and the others, as well as all of the weapons he had in his possession.

Clap! Clap!

"Wonderful. You sure have prepared many trump cards in advance," Kong shi nodded as he clapped his hands resoundingly. "However, it's still far from sufficient. I am the man who was known as the World's Teacher!"

As he spoke, he took a step forward and pressed his palm downward. The Blackback Tortoise, the three Shark Brothers, and the other beasts were immediately forced to the ground, unable to take a step at all.

There were all at Semi-Divinity realm, but these beasts were simply far too weak compared to Kong shi, such that they weren't even worth a fight

"They aren't enough in your eyes, but in my view, you aren't anything either!" the clone burst into laughter.

Sou!

It dashed forward and sent a punch right toward Kong shi.

Peng peng!

As the clone traded blows with Kong shi, the surrounding space immediately began shattering under the immense strain.

Even when they were at the same cultivation realm, Zhang Xuan was no match for his clone, not to mention that his clone had already reached Semi-Divinity realm. In terms of strength, his clone was nowhere weaker than that of Kong shi.

Furthermore, the clone's indestructible body made it a huge headache to deal with. Despite Kong shi's overwhelming strength, he actually found himself unable to do anything about the clone in the short-term.

"How can a clone like you possibly be so powerful?" Kong shi could hardly believe his eyes.

He had been paying close attention to Zhang Xuan ever since the latter ascended to the Azure. Even though the various attempts he had made to capture Zhang Xuan eventually ended in failure, he still had a rough gauge as to just how powerful Zhang Xuan was,

But he was never aware that Zhang Xuan actually had a clone, and he would have never imagined that his clone would be so powerful at that...

Having lived for several thousand years, he could be considered as a man who stood at the very peak of the Azure, making him an existence unrivaled by the others. Otherwise, there was no way he could have managed to massacre the experts of the Hall of Gods and replace all of them...

But despite so, he actually found himself unable to do anything about this clone...

Just what in the world was happening over here?

"Get him together!"

Paying no heed to Kong shi's shock, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and undone the formation that weighed down on the beasts in the area, allowing them to return to their feet.

Hong long!

The eight Semi-Divinity realm beasts and the dozen Semi-Divinity artifacts formed a massive formation that constantly

attacked Kong shi's blind spots.

Kong shi was already fighting a close battle with the clone, so how could he cope with a bunch of disruptors eyeing him closely from the sidelines to constantly disrupt him whenever he revealed an opening?

In just a few moments, he was already struck squarely in the chest, causing him to be pushed back before crashing heavily onto the ground.

“Kill him!”

With a strike finally connecting, the clone immediately rushed forward to follow up with another punch.

The might of his strike felt strong enough to rip the space into two.

“You bastards! If not for the fact that I have been suppressed by him for several thousand years and haven't fully recovered yet, did you think that the likes of you would have been able to injure me? Hmph! There's no way I'll be killed by the lot of you on my own home ground!”

Hu!

With a quick leap, Kong shi instantaneously traversed through space and disappeared from the spot.

“Quick, we need to leave!”

Along with Kong shi's disappearance, Zhang Xuan immediately sensed that something was amiss, so he swiftly kept all of the artifacts and beasts back into his storage ring and tamed beast sack respectively before entering his own storage ring himself.

Hu!

Carrying the storage ring, his clone swiftly dashed in a certain direction.

That was where the weakest point of the Guardian Formation of the Ethereal Hall. Zhang Xuan had told his clone about it earlier through their telepathic connection.

Boom!

But before his clone could tear through the formation and leave, the entire Ethereal Hall suddenly burst apart, causing devastating infernos and powerful shockwaves to sweep into the surroundings, threatening to tear the world apart.

The clone that had yet to leave was immediately sliced into two by one of the spatial rifts rippling into the surroundings.

Hu!

The two halves of the clone quickly linked back together before continuing to rush his way out.

It was fortunate that the one who was struck was the clone. If it had been Zhang Xuan instead, that single strike would have really killed him through and through.

After escaping to safe grounds, Zhang Xuan came out of his storage ring. Looking back at the tattered space where the Ethereal Hall used to exist, Zhang Xuan felt goosebumps rising all over his body.

“That bastard actually set up so many destructive formations in his own base of operations. He’s far more vicious than I have thought!”

If not for his swift reaction, all of them could have been obliterated along with the Ethereal Hall.

“Quick, take a look around the area to see where he has gone to. We mustn’t allow him to escape!” Zhang Xuan instructed.

Nodding his head, his clone quickly searched the area.

Along with the explosion, the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall was pretty much wiped off the face of the world. It was hard to tell whether it was empty from the start, or that everyone inside had died along with the explosion.

“He has probably escaped...”

The clone had searched the area, but he was unable to find Kong shi.

As powerful as Kong shi was, he was only able to equal Zhang Xuan’s clone in prowess. If he had to face so many Semi-Divinity realm beasts and artifacts on top of that, there was a

good chance that he would be the one to be defeated at the very end.

Thus, after exploding the Hall of Gods, he immediately fled the area.

This left Zhang Xuan feeling deeply helpless.

He tried scanning the area with the Eye of Insight as well, but he was unable to find any traces of Kong shi around. It was indeed very likely that the latter had managed to escape!

He had thought of many possibilities beforehand, but he didn't think that Kong shi would actually run away from him.

That was the World's Teacher, the strongest existence of the Master Teacher Continent. He was someone whom no one dared to disrespect for the past tens of thousands of years... He couldn't imagine just what had happened for the other party to become like this!

In fact, if he were to send the news back to the Master Teacher Continent, it was likely that the Master Teacher Pavilion and Hundred Schools of Philosophers would view him as their greatest enemy for besmirching Kong shi!

"Your pendant..." the clone turned to look at Zhang Xuan.

Kong shi had escaped, but the pendant was still in the other party's hands.

"That's a fake. After finding out that Fu Chenzi was colluding with the Hall of Gods, I have been suspecting that there's something wrong with the Ethereal Hall... Otherwise, I wouldn't have had you substitute me before entering the Hall of Gods," Zhang Xuan replied.

He had never spoken his thoughts aloud, but that didn't hinder speculations from arising in his mind. Since he doubted Kong shi's intentions, why in the world would he entrust Luo Ruoxin's pendant to the other party's hand?

Luo Ruoxin had instructed him sternly to not take off the pendant no matter what happened. He wasn't so foolish as to hand it over just to bait Kong shi.

“You managed to fool Kong shi with a fake?” the clone was slightly surprised.

Even he was unaware of this matter. Zhang Xuan had kept this a secret from him as well.

In fact, Zhang Xuan had never shared any information regarding Luo Ruoxin with him before.

“I was also perplexed about that as well. My guess is that he doesn’t know where the pendant comes from and what kind of strength it wields either,” Zhang Xuan shook his head and said.

To be honest, all he did was to place his blood essence inside the fake pendant. He had fully expected Kong shi to see through it, but the latter simply took his word for it.

Most likely, unlike the Library of Heaven’s Path, the Heavens’ Order that Kong shi possessed was unable to discern the authenticity and flaws of objects.

At this moment, a voice suddenly echoed in Zhang Xuan’s mind.

“Have you not noticed it?”

The person who spoke was Vicious, who had just reached Semi-Divinity realm through cultivating on the circular platform too.

“Noticed it?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

“That fellow, he isn’t the real Kong shi!” Vicious replied.

2074 The Use of the Altar

Those words made Zhang Xuan frown.

“Their soul auras are identical, and his comprehension of battle techniques has reached the same level as Heaven’s Path battle techniques too.”

Zhang Xuan didn’t want to believe the other party was the World’s Teacher from the depths of his heart as well, but no matter how he looked at it, they were indeed the same person!

It might be possible for someone to copy Kong shi’s soul aura, but surely there should be no way for one to copy the latter’s comprehension of battle techniques as well?

If not for his clone’s breakthrough and the aid of so many Semi-Divinity realm beasts and artifacts, victory might not have been theirs to claim.

To put it in other words, the other party was no weaker than him, who had cultivated the Heaven’s Path Divine Art.

If the other party wasn’t the real Kong shi... honestly, Zhang Xuan could think of no one else who could be so powerful.

Furthermore, he was unable to peer through the other party’s real identity through the Library of Heaven’s Path as well. Other than someone who possessed the Heavens’ Order, who else could possibly conceal themselves before the Library of Heaven’s Path?

“I have crossed hands with Kong shi many times in my lifetime, so I know very well just what kind of person he is. Even though the person whom you have encountered earlier appears to be identical to Kong shi, I am certain that that fellow isn’t him! If he was really Kong shi, there’s no way your clones and tamed beasts would have been able to defeat him so easily!” Vicious said.

Those words immediately sent Zhang Xuan deep in thought.

“Back then, I captured a disciple of his quietly in order to lure him into a trap. He could have simply feigned ignorance so as to not put himself in danger, but he still charged right into my trap without any hesitation... Despite knowing that there was a real threat of death, he was still willing to charge forward bravely. He has been my nemesis for my entire lifetime, but at the same time, I respect him deeply for his character. There’s no way he would have did earlier!” Vicious said.

“Furthermore, if what that fellow said is true, there’s no way he would try to take your Heavens’ Imperfections when he already has the Heavens’ Order. He would be digging his own grave if he tries to acquire two fragments of the heavens at once!”

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Even the threat from a single fragment of the heavens was enough to put one in great danger. If Kong shi were to acquire the Heavens’ Imperfections on top of that, there was a good chance that he would end up being assimilated by the heavens.

But if the other party wasn’t Kong shi, who else could he possibly be?

“There’s no point thinking so deeply into it. For the time being, I should focus on saving Du Qingyuan. She should know a little more about the matter...”

The altar had been taken away by Kong shi, so there was no reason for him to linger in the area anymore. Zhang Xuan quickly found the exit to the folded space and left this so-called headquarters of the Ethereal Hall, returning back to the Forsaken Continent.

When he finally stepped through the passageway, he found that his surroundings were surprisingly familiar. He was floating in the midst of the ocean, and roughly two hundred li away, there was a towering pillar—the Heaven Anchoring Boulder!

Who could have thought that the headquarters of the elusive Ethereal Hall would actually be located so close to Heaven Anchoring Boulder? It was probably because none of the Six

Sects had thought that such a thing would be possible that they had never tried checking the vicinity.

Zhang Xuan quickly made his way over to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder and scaled to its peak. Just as he had expected, the Azure Bridge had already vanished, and the faraway Hall of Gods had disappeared into the depths of the dark sky,

“Sect Leader Zhang, you are fine?”

Seeing that Zhang Xuan had returned alive, Han Jianqiu, Kui Xiao, and the others were slightly stunned for a moment before heaving a deep sigh of relief.

By the time the Azure Bridge retracted, Elder Hong Wu and the others, who had successfully advanced to Semi-Divinity realm, had already returned back to the Heaven Anchoring Boulder. However, no matter how they waited, Zhang Xuan simply didn't appear. They thought that the young man had encountered some kind of danger and was gone for good, but who could have thought that he would appear from the bottom of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder instead of from the Azure Bridge?

“It's a long story. Where is Bai Xuansheng and Gu Zhuiyun?” Zhang Xuan scanned the area and asked.

Those two heads, who had defected to the Ethereal Hall, were nowhere to be seen on the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

“They left hurriedly not too long after you have gotten onto the Azure Bridge. They didn't specify the details of where they are heading to, so we aren't too sure either...” Han Jianqiu replied.

“They left shortly after we got onto the Azure Bridge?”

From the looks of it, it seemed like those two, one way or another, found out that he had managed to kill the geniuses of their sects, so they made sure to escape in advance.

Given that more than twenty hours had passed since then, it would be impossible to find them again now.

“Do you know what other ways there are to enter the Hall of Gods other than through the Azure Bridge?” Zhang Xuan asked.

The others shook their heads in response.

If they knew, they wouldn't have to resort to waiting a hundred years for each opportunity.

There must be other paths to the Hall of Gods other than the Azure Bridge, Zhang Xuan thought deeply.

The fact that Kong shi was able to enter the Hall of Gods and massacre the Hall of Gods showed that he had a way of entering the Hall of Gods without going through the Azure Bridge.

Just the fact that he appeared earlier to save him was an anomaly in itself. The Azure Bridge shouldn't allow anyone whose cultivation had reached Semi-Divinity realm and was over a hundred years of age to step onto it!

But in any case, since the Azure Bridge had disappeared, there was no longer any point in remaining in the area. So, Zhang Xuan and the others quickly flew down the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

Before they could return back to the sea level, Wu Chen suddenly approached them.

In order not to reveal his strength, he didn't scale to the top of the Heaven Anchoring Boulder together with the others. Instead, he had been standing guard here.

Seeing Wu Chen, a thought suddenly surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind, and he asked, “Wu Chen, has Palace Master Du ever mentioned any other ways into the Hall of Gods other than the Azure Bridge?”

Han Jianqiu and the others might be unaware of the other possible routes, but Du Qingyuan might just have a clue. “She has never mentioned anything like that before,” Wu Chen shook his head.

Zhang Xuan could only sigh helplessly.

It seemed like he was pinning his hopes too much on Du Qingyuan.

If the latter really knew that much, the Starchaser Palace should have long risen to an existence above the Six Sects. At the same time, it wouldn't have been so helpless when the Hall of Gods attacked it as well.

Then... other than the Evanescent Boots, do you know any ways one could traverse through space?" Zhang Xuan turned to Han Jianqiu and the others and asked.

Now that he thought about it, Kong shi was wearing the Evanescent Boots when he traveled from the Hall of Gods back to the Ethereal Hall's headquarters. Perhaps, the key to getting through the barrier left behind the gods and entering the Hall of Gods lay in it.

Traversing through space?"

"It's said to be a feat which only gods are able to pull off."

Han Jianqiu and the others replied.

"A feat that only gods are able to pull off?" Zhang Xuan sighed deeply once more.

If it was possible to reach the level of gods on the Azure, that Kong shi would have surely long achieved it. He wouldn't have to bother resorting to stealing his Library of Heaven's Path.

After been through the Azure Bridge, he realized that reaching the level of the gods didn't just bank on one's talents. Most likely, this world was lacking in a certain quality that was required for one to make the final breakthrough.

Without that quality, Semi-Divinity realm would be the invisible ceiling. No matter how much one cultivated, it would be impossible to overcome this limitation.

Just as Zhang Xuan was still helpless as to how he could return back to the Hall of Gods and save Du Qingyuan, a voice suddenly sounded in the air, "Actually, I think I know of a plausible solution to do it..."

The one who had spoken was no other than Wu Chen.

Zhang Xuan immediately turned his gaze over and said, “Tell me about it.”

Wu Chen began speaking, “Under normal circumstances, it’s indeed impossible to traverse through space. However, if you were to tap into the mysterious powers of a ritual, it might be possible to pull it off. That was also how Milady managed to overcome two dimension barriers simultaneously back then!”

That answer made Zhang Xuan slap his own face.

How could he possibly have overlooked it when the answer had been right in front of him all along?

In terms of overcoming dimension barriers, what could possibly be more efficient than the rituals of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe?

Even Luo Ruoxin, as the Spirit God, resorted to using such a method in order to traverse through the dimension barriers of the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent. Considering how he was using it to traverse through space in the same world, the difficulty should be much lower.

Wu Chen pondered for a moment before adding on, “However, such a method would require an altar on both sides.

The trick is basically to establish a connection link between the two altars so as to send a person from the location of one altar to the other.”

Back when Zhang Xuan was on the Master Teacher Continent, while he was dealing with the copper-masked Qingtian Emperor, he used this trick in order to send people from one altar to the other.

“If that’s the case, it might really be possible to pull it off... It could be possible for us to enter the Hall of Gods even without the Azure Bridge!” Zhang Xuan said excitedly.

He had no idea where Kong shi would escape to, but out of safety considerations, there was a good chance that he would return back to the safe Hall of Gods.

If so, Zhang Xuan would be able to create a direct route to teleport him right over there. No matter what, it would be too

dangerous to keep that Kong shi alive. Who could predict when the latter would make his next move against him?

“Let’s head to the Starchaser Palace!” Zhang Xuan instructed without any hesitation.

Before long, Zhang Xuan was already in the Starchaser Palace, and Elder Jiang Yao was standing right before him.

“This is the altar I used in order to impersonate our palace master,” Elder Jiang Yao said as she took out the altar, as well as the various offerings required to hold a ritual.

As a close aide of Du Qingyuan, she knew a lot about the rituals of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. It didn’t take long for the offerings to burn up, and a unique aura drifted forth from the altar.

Zhang Xuan quickly made his way to the top of the altar, waiting for the moment that he would be teleported to the Hall of Gods.

However, even as all of the offerings were burned to cinders, he still remained standing on the same spot.

The ritual didn’t work.

Elder Jiang Yao quickly tested it another time, but it didn’t work out either.

In the end, she shook her head and said, “It seems like only our Guardian Artifact is capable of pulling off teleportation. The other altars can still be used for conducting minor rituals, but the more major rituals are beyond its capability...”

The altar that Kong shi had taken away was the Guardian Artifact of the Starchaser Palace. It went without saying that it wielded unique abilities.

Considering how their goal was to transport a Heavenly High Immortal across a barrier created by the gods, they would definitely require something more than an ordinary altar.

“That won’t work. It’s very likely that the altar is in the Hall of Gods right now,” Zhang Xuan’s posture slumped a little from disappointment.

If that was the case, it would mean that their plan of getting to the Hall of Gods through a ritual wouldn't work out.

“Young Master, I know where we can find an altar that could be used to hold the ritual. If we return to the Master Teacher Continent and bring the altar used by the Spirit Tribe over, I believe that we should be able to conduct the ritual fine,” Wu Chen suddenly interjected.

“You are referring to the altar that you used to summon Palace Master Du back then?” Zhang Xuan was stunned. Indeed.

Given that the altar was able to bring Luo Ruoxin from the Azure to the Master Teacher Continent, even if it was not up to par to the Guardian Artifact of the Starchaser Palace, its effects should still be spectacular.

If they could bring it over to the Azure to hold the ritual, it might just be possible to teleport him into the Hall of Gods!

It was just that...

The altar was still in the Master Teacher Continent, so how was he supposed to get it?

Back then, Luo Ruoxin only managed to descend to the Master Teacher Continent through a ritual summoning her. Furthermore, despite being a god, her cultivation still plunged all the way to Saint realm as she fell to the Master Teacher Continent... Considering how he was only at Heavenly High Immortal realm at the moment, even if he knew that it was possible to use that altar, there was no way he could head down to the Master Teacher Continent.

“That's right. And in fact... it might not be that difficult to return back to the Master Teacher Continent anymore too,” Wu Chen said.

Zhang Xuan immediately looked toward Wu Chen.

“When Milady first descended to the Master Teacher Continent, the pathway between the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent was sealed. There was no route for her to get to the Master Teacher Continent, so she had no choice to barge her way through the dimension barrier.

“However, after the emergence of the Temple of Confucius, the spatial seal that blocked the passageway between the two worlds began eroding. In fact, when you were making your way over to the Azure, the passageway has already been re-established. As long as you return via the pathway you used to come here, it shouldn’t be too difficult for you to head back down to the Master Teacher Continent...”

2075 We Are Here

Zhang Xuan nodded.

Thinking about it for a while, there was indeed some truth to what Wu Chen was saying.

The spatial passageway that linked the Master Teacher Continent to the Azure had been sealed by two things, namely the Temple of Confucius and the great formation in the Kunxu Domain that made use of the corpses of Kong shi's direct disciples.

Under normal circumstances, the passageway was so tightly sealed that it would not be an exaggeration to say that it was non-existent.

However, when the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn emerged, the seal of the Temple of Confucius unraveled. That inadvertently weakened the seal in the Kunxu Domain, thus resulting in the 'deity' being able to force his way into the Kunxu Domain. That was also how Zhang Xuan had managed to bypass the dimension barrier and enter the Azure.

As long as he found the passageway once more, it would indeed be possible for him to return to the Master Teacher Continent.

With the resilience of his current body, the spatial turbulence of the passageway was no longer able to affect him. "However, it probably won't be too easy to find the entrance," Zhang Xuan said.

Even if he knew the general location, it was likely that Kong shi had hidden it in some kind of folded space, making it incredibly difficult to find it unless he knew the exact location. After all, Kong shi's very ability of Heavens' Order granted him incomparable skills in manipulating space.

"It would indeed be difficult to find the entrance in the Azure, but Young Master, you should know where the entrance is

from the Master Teacher Continent's side, right?" Wu Chen asked with a smile.

"Of course." Zhang Xuan nodded.

It was in the Kunxu Domain, where the Hundred Schools of Philosophers resided.

"Since that's the case, we can always find a way to communicate with the current Sovereign Chen Yong and have him hold a ritual. Through the power of the summoning ritual, we'll be able to find the entrance and return to the Master Teacher Continent," Wu Chen said.

"Yes, you're right!" Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

That was indeed the most feasible plan that they had at the moment.

"As for how we can communicate with the incumbent Sovereign Chen Yong, that isn't an issue at all. Starchaser Palace should have a unique communication channel," Wu Chen added.

So, Zhang Xuan quickly called Elder Jiang Yao and First Elder Zhao Yue over and filled them in on the details.

After understanding what Zhang Xuan wanted to achieve, First Elder Zhao Yue replied, "We do have a way to communicate with the Master Teacher Continent. However, without an altar, we'll only be able to send messages over."

"That's enough. This is the message that I want to send over to the current Sovereign Chen Yong. Tell him to hold the ritual a month from now," Zhang Xuan said as he sent a sliver of thought over.

First Elder Zhao Yue clasped her fist and said, "I'll have it done right now!"

Starchaser Palace would often communicate with the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe of the Master Teacher Continent. It was their tight coordination that had allowed Luo Ruoxin to successfully overcome the two dimension barriers one after another.

After settling this issue, Zhang Xuan beckoned Wu Chen over and said, "Let's go!"

"Where are we going?" Wu Chen asked in confusion.

"I was in the territories of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion when I first regained consciousness after reaching the Azure, so I believe that the location of the dimension passageway is in that area. This way, we'll be able to quickly make our way over once Sovereign Chen Yong conducts the ritual."

Zhang Xuan was not too sure of the exact location of the dimension passageway, but the first place he was at when he regained consciousness was in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's Xuanjiang City. If his guess was not wrong, the dimension passageway should be somewhere around there.

With the exception of the Serpentine Dragon and the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, Zhang Xuan left all of his tamed beast at Starchaser Palace. This way, if Kong shi attempted to attack while he was gone, they would at least have some forces to protect themselves.

After this was done, Zhang Xuan and Wu Chen rode on the Serpentine Dragon and the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix and quickly headed toward the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

The Serpentine Dragon and Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix had reached the Semi-Divinity realm, and they were beasts that specialized in speed. Thus, riding on them was much faster than traveling on their own.

Within just three days, they had already entered the territory of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

Zhang Xuan had originally taken almost twenty days to make his way over to Starchaser Palace, but riding on the Serpentine Dragon, he took only three days. The speed that Semi-Divinity realm beasts were able to move at was frightening.

"We have finally arrived at Xuanjiang City," Zhang Xuan muttered.

Putting the two tamed beasts back into his tamed beast sack, Zhang Xuan and Wu Chen made sure to conceal their

cultivation before strolling along the wide streets of Xuanjiang City leisurely.

A month had only passed since Zhang Xuan was last there, so there had not been many changes on the surface. After Xue Gan's death, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had nominated a new person to serve as the lord of Xuanjiang City.

“Have you heard? The friend which joined the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion together with Dan Xiaotian seems to be called Zhang Xuan as well!”

“Wait a moment... Are you saying that Dan Xiaotian's friend has become the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Starchaser Palace, the Myriad Beasts Hall, and the Sevenstar Pavilion?”

“That's exactly what I'm saying! My little uncle's second aunt's third cousin's uncle is a menial disciple at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. I met him at the Ethereal Hall just yesterday, and he told me all about it personally! He said that the current sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is none other than Dan Xiaotian's friend!”

“If I recall correctly, he's only in his early twenties, right? Yet, he's already the head of four sects? My gosh, why is Dan Xiaotian's luck so good?”

“That's exactly what I was thinking! I heard that Dan Xiaotian has already acknowledged Zhang Xuan as his teacher! He simply saved a random man off the streets, and that man eventually turned out to be the head of four sects... Wow, I really want to go out there and start saving some people!”

“Hahaha! You know, my neighbor, Zhang Yuanwai, really did just that! Inspired by the story, he recently picked up a few severely injured people off the streets and treated them, hoping dearly that the same thing would happen to them. So far, he has saved four girls and five boys, and all of them happen to be in their late teens. I saw them when I visited their house, and hell, those girls are really gorgeous. Even the guys look valiant and dashing... I was almost convinced that they would achieve great things in the future too!”

“Oh? How’s their cultivation?”

“I don’t really know about that... I heard that they are currently very feeble due to the severity of their injuries. It has been a few days since I visited my neighbor, so I don’t know what the latest news is.”

“It’s probably impossible for them to be as talented and capable as Sect Leader Zhang Xuan, but I guess it’s still worth a try. There’s always that little chance that you might just luck out... Well, I really should start walking around the area and help out those in need!”

“Duh. If you keep yourself cooped up at home for heavens know what, you’ll never get around to achieving anything great!”

Such discussions could be heard in the vicinity.

Hearing these vibrant conversations around him, Zhang Xuan could not help but smile a little.

It was a wondrous feeling, returning to the leisurely pace of life after dealing with the Hall of Gods and all those troublesome issues.

That being said, news seemed to spread really fast on the Forsaken Continent. It had been less than ten days since his inauguration, but even a remote place like Xuanjiang City had already caught wind of the matter.

“Young Master, where are we heading to next?” Wu Chen asked, completely unaffected by the chatters around them.

He was already used to it. It felt like the Young Master would naturally become the center of attention no matter where he went.

It was that way on the Master Teacher Continent, and it seemed like it would be no different in the Azure.

“We’ll just wait around for the time being. I told First Elder Zhao Yue to instruct the Spirit Tribe to hold the ritual in a month, which is roughly equivalent to three days here. We should be receiving the summons soon. For the time being, let’s find a quiet place to rest,” Zhang Xuan said.

There was a 1:10 difference in the flow of time between the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent. A month on the Master Teacher Continent would roughly equate to three days here.

Wu Chen took a look around the area before pointing in a certain direction. “Why don’t we head over to the mountain over there?”

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Xuanjiang City was very close to nature. There was a river and a mountain range not too far away.

So, the two of them left the city and scaled the mountain.

With a wave of his hand, Zhang Xuan took out a large handful of formation flags and planted them all around.

The formation that he had set up was a Sensory Formation that he had specially designed on his way there. It was somewhat similar to the signal towers in his previous life. It served to locate and amplify the summoning energy coming from the altar on the other side so that he would be able to find his way around more easily.

After setting up the formation, Zhang Xuan took out a halberd and planted it at the direct center of the formation. Then, he tied a ribbon around it.

With a stomp of his foot, the formation whirred into action.

The red string simply drooped downward quietly, not moving in the least.

“Let’s just wait around. I reckon that the ritual hasn’t started yet,” Zhang Xuan said.

It was impossible to sustain the ritual for too long due to the staggering amount of tributes one required. Furthermore, even if they were able to sustain the ritual for three days on the Master Teacher Continent, that would only equate to roughly seven hours in the Azure.

As such, it was important for him to make preparations accordingly so that he could locate the spatial passageway as quickly as possible.

Sitting quietly on the spot, Zhang Xan continued to work on the cultivation technique that he was developing for his breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.

Meanwhile, in a spacious residence in Xuanjiang City, a young lady with delicate features slowly opened her eyes. •Young Miss, you are finally awake,” a maid exclaimed in relief.

“Where is this place? Where am I?” The young lady frowned slightly.

She struggled to get up as she scanned her surroundings warily.

The residence looked extremely foreign. It was unlike what she had seen before.

“You are in Xuanjiang City. Our Old Master, Zhang Yuanwai, saved you and brought you all here,” the maid replied.

“You all?” The young lady was stunned for a moment before her eyes lit up in excitement. “You found the others that were with me? Where are they?”

There are eight people with you. They are still unconscious at the moment, so we laid them down to rest in the other rooms,” the maid replied.

“All eight of them are here?” The young lady heaved a sigh of relief. She immediately struggled out of the bed and said, “Quick, bring me to see them!”

“This...”

The maid felt that the young lady was still a little too weak to be moving around, but the young lady seemed to be very insistent on the matter. Thus, she carefully supported the young lady out of the room.

Barely after they walked out of the room, they saw that the severely injured, unconscious group of eight had all awakened, and they were currently standing in the courtyard.

“Senior...”

Upon seeing the young lady, all of them quickly clasped their fists and greeted her.

“Un, let’s take a seat over there, shall we?” the young lady said as she gestured for everyone to take a seat in the cooling gazebo.

“It’s great that we managed to survive the ordeal, but our injuries are more severe than we thought. I took a look at my internal condition earlier, and there are signs of spatial tears in my body. It’ll be hard for me to recover to full health without several years’ recuperation,” the young lady said grimly.

“It’s the same for me.”

“I guess we are all in the same plight...”

The eight of them quickly checked their conditions, and they replied with solemn voices.

“Our teacher must have sustained the same injuries when he entered the Azure a year ago. I wonder if he has recovered from his injuries yet How should we go about looking for him?” Knowing the conditions of her body, the young lady could not help but mutter worriedly.

“Our teacher is a person of great capabilities. I believe that he’ll be fine,” another young lady in the group replied to her concerns.

“Indeed, our teacher is a person of great capabilities.” The young lady nodded in agreement.

“Wait a moment, I sense that something is amiss. There seems to be some difference between the flow of time in the Azure compared to that of the Master Teacher Continent,” one of the young men in the group suddenly said with a deep frown.

“There’s a difference in the flow of time?” The crowd was stunned by that remark.

That young man’s bloodline ability was related to time, so he had exceptional innate sensitivity toward the temporal laws of the world.

“Un. Give me a moment. I’ll do a quick calculation,” the young man said as he closed his eyes.

Roughly three minutes later, he opened his eyes once more and said, “There’s a difference of roughly ten times in the flow

of time between the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent. In other words, a day in the Azure equates to ten days on the Master Teacher Continent!”

If Zhang Xuan was there, he would have surely recognized those nine people. They were the direct disciples whom he had taken in back when he was still on the Master Teacher Continent.

Zhao Ya, Liu Yang, Wang Ying, Zheng Yang, Yuan Tao, Lu Chong, Wei Ruyan, Zhang Jiuxiao, and Kong Shiyao!

It had been slightly more than a month since Zhang Xuan entered the Azure, and in the meantime, a year had already passed in the Master Teacher Continent.

Within such a long period of time, everyone had managed to cultivate up to Ancient Sage 4-dan consummation, and they had found that they were not able to advance any further. On top of that, there was absolutely no news from their teacher, which stoked their worries. Eventually, they could not sit still.

Thus, they gathered together in the Kunxu Domain to look for Kong Shiyao, and they decided that they would enter the spatial passageway and head to the Azure.

The person whom everyone greeted as ‘Senior’ earlier was naturally Zhao Ya, and the one who had noticed the time difference between the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent was Zhang Jiuxiao.

“A difference of ten times? In other words, it has only been roughly a month since our teacher arrived in the Azure?” Zhao Ya remarked contemplatively.

“If that’s the case, it’s likely that our teacher hasn’t recovered from his injuries yet. Perhaps he might even be in Xuanjiang City at this very moment!”

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They were well aware of their teacher's talents. If he had a year or so, he would have surely been able to recover from his injuries and perhaps, he might have even made a name for himself too. However, considering the severity of the injuries caused by passing through the spatial passageway, it really seemed improbable for him to be able to walk out of Xuanjiang City within just the passing of a single month.

Furthermore, they were in a brand new world. Back at the Master Teacher Continent, Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivators were existences who could make the world tremble with a single word. But here, they were mere fishes in a massive ocean.

“Un, let me find someone to ask about that matter!”

With this thought in mind, Zhao Ya turned to the maid not too far away and asked, “May I trouble you to relay our wish to meet the Old Master? My juniors and I would like to express our gratitude to him!”

Yes, Young Miss,” the maid replied as she left the area.

Not too long later, a middle-aged man walked in with widened strides, and upon seeing the group of nine, he remarked in astonishment, “You all have regained consciousness so quickly despite being so heavily injured?”

He didn't know much about medicine, but he had the physicians in the residence to specially take a look at them.

Under normal circumstances, those who had sustained injuries to that extent would take at least several months before they could wake up. Yet, barely a few days had passed and they had all regained consciousness. It looked like there were more to them than he thought!

Could it be that, just like Dan Xiaotian, his luck had arrived?

“We are extremely grateful to you for saving our lives!”

The nine of them stood up and clasped their fists together.

You're too polite, I'm just doing what any other person would have done," Zhang Yuanwai replied with a smile.

After trading a few pleasantries, Zhao Ya got straight to the point, "Our memories are currently a little befuddled due to the injuries we have sustained, so may I ask which power does Xuanjiang City fall under, and is there a Master Teacher Pavilion or anything similar here?"

"Master Teacher Pavilion?" Zhang Yuanwai blinked his eyes. "I'm afraid that I have never heard of something like that before."

Then, he paused for a moment before replying to the first question, "Xuanjiang City is under the jurisdiction of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, one of the Six Sects."

"One of the Six Sects?"

"Indeed. The Forsaken Continent is ruled by the Six Sects, and they are namely the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall..." Zhang Yuanwai began going into the details.

The group of nine widened their eyes in realization.

It seemed like they had really arrived on the Azure. This was clearly a world completely different from that of the Master Teacher Continent.

"Speaking of the Six Sects, something shocking happened just a few days ago!"

As Zhang Yuanwai began on that topic, he couldn't help but recall the various exciting news he had heard recently, such that he was slowly getting more and more into the conversation.

"Have you heard of the new hall master of the Myriad Beasts Hall, Zheng Yang?"

"Zheng Yang?"

The group was stunned for a moment. Eight of the nine youths turned their gazes to the young man sitting amongst them.

“He shares the same name as me?” Zheng Yang scratched his head awkwardly.

“Your name is Zheng Yang as well?” Zhang Yuanwai was slightly surprised by the coincidence as well. A moment later, he burst into laughter and said, “There are plenty of people who share the same name in the world! This is not a cause for concern at all!”

Given the scale of the Forsaken Continent, there must be at least thousands of people who were known as Zheng Yang here!

“I understand. It’s just that I’m slightly surprised to hear that such a powerful expert would share my common name...”
Zheng Yang replied.

“Common? If you are talking about the most typical, run-of-the-mill name, there’s probably no one who can compete with the new pavilion master of the Sevenstar Pavilion,” Zhang Yuanwai remarked with a smile.

“Oh? A name that’s even more common than Zheng Yang? Just how horrible must it be for you to describe it as run-of-the-mill?” Liu Yang chirped in as he glanced at Zheng Yang playfully.

“Indeed. The pavilion master goes by the name of Liu Yang!”
Zhang Yuanwai said.

“...“Liu Yang.

Seeing how the gazes of the youths had centered around the young man who had just spoken, Zhang Yuanwai realized that something was amiss with their expressions, so he asked, “What’s wrong? Could it be that you don’t find this name common and run-of-the-mill enough? If you were to ask me, I think Liu Yang sounds a lot more awful than Zheng Yang. Do you all not agree? Ah, please don’t misunderstand me. It’s not that I’m trying to insult your name, Brother Zheng. It was just a passing thought...”

Liu Yang’s face darkened as he said, “Well... I share the same name as the pavilion master. I am Liu Yang too.”

Zhang Yuanwai was stunned.

Did he just pick up a den of sect leader impersonators?

He looked at the nine youths before him and hesitated for a moment before asking carefully, “Then... by any chance, are any one of you called Zhang Xuan?”

You know Zhang Xuan?” Zhao Ya was stunned.

“Indeed. There’s no one on the Forsaken Continent who wouldn’t have heard of this name,” Zhang Yuanwai replied as a matter-of-factly. “He’s the sect leader of our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

The sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?

Zhao Ya and the others fell into deep thoughts.

“Could it be just another person going by the same name?”

“Our teacher has only arrived here a month ago. How could he manage to become the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion? Even for our teacher, such a feat doesn’t seem too likely...”

“Zhang Yuanwai also mentioned earlier that the minimum requirement to becoming the head fo the Six Sects is for one’s cultivation to reach Heavenly High Immortal realm...”

Earlier, while they were chatting, Zhang Yuanwai also mentioned the various cultivation realms. He was unaware of the existence of the Semi-Divinity realm, but he still had some knowledge about the Pseudo Immortal realm, True Immortal realm, and High Immortal realm...

In order to become the head of a sect, one’s cultivation would have to be at Heavenly High Immortal realm at the very minimum. It was already a huge question whether their teacher would be able to recover from his injuries when he had only arrived a month ago, let alone advance his cultivation so far...

Zhao Ya pondered for a moment before asking, “Do you know how Sect Leader Zhang looks like?”

“He’s a dashing young man, probably still in his early twenties. I had the honor of meeting him once. Speaking of that, he shares a deep fate with our Xuanjiang City. Around a month ago, our city’s Dan Xiaotian found Sect Leader Zhang

severely injured in the vicinity, so he brought the latter back to his house and treated him. Then, before anyone of us knew it, the news that he has become the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion began spreading all over the Forsaken Continent...”

As Zhang Yuanwai spoke of Zhang Xuan’s happenings, his eyes glittered in reverence, similar to how a hardcore fan would react when his number one idol was mentioned.

“Not only so, do you remember the Hall Master Liu Yang and Pavilion Master Zheng Yang I have mentioned earlier? I actually haven’t finished the story yet. The truth is that... they are all aliases of Sect Leader Zhang! To put it in other words, he is currently the head of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Sevenstar Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall, and Starchaser Palace right now! That is four out of the Six Sects! Do you know what that means? It wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that he’s currently the most powerful man in the world!”

“He’s the head of four sects?”

“The most powerful man in the world?”

In this instant, all nine of the youths were stunned. Wang Ying’s face was twitching. Zhao Ya was clutching her hair frenziedly. Yuan Tao had bitten his tongue but he didn’t even realize it.

At this point in time, no matter how slow-witted they could be, it was obvious that this Zhang Xuan was really their teacher!

It was one thing for the various heads of the Six Sects to share their names, but surely it would be too much of a coincidence if a single man known as Zhang Xuan were to use their names as aliases...

They were still thinking a moment ago that it was impossible for their teacher to fully recover from his injuries given that he had just arrived a month ago...

They couldn’t help but clutch their hearts tightly.

Wasn’t their teacher’s rate of cultivation impossible?

To advance from Ancient Sage 4-dan to Heavenly High Immortal realm over the span of a single month, and that was not all... He even somehow managed to find the time to take on leadership positions in four of the sects, thus becoming the most powerful man on the Forsaken Continent!

It seemed like their teacher was still the same as ever. No matter how diligently they trained, he still remained a person whom they could only look up to.

“You are acquainted with Sect Leader Zhang?”

Seeing the dazed looks on the faces of the nine youths, Zhang Yuanwai sensed that something was amiss with the atmosphere, so he asked with a slight frown.

“If my guess is not off, I think that he might very well be our teacher...” Zhao Ya said with an awkward smile.

“Your teacher...” Zhang Yuanwai was taken aback by what he had just heard.

“Pardon me, but may I trouble you to bring us over to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?” Zhao Ya asked.

The group of nine asked a few more questions after that, and it didn't take long before they were confident that the so-called Sect Leader Zhang was indeed their teacher.

“That's easy. I'll have it done right away!” Zhang Yuanwai replied before rushing out of the room.

He did harbor some doubts about the story of the nine youths, but if, by any chance, what they said turned out to be true, and that they were really Sect Leader Zhang's direct disciples, as their savior, he would surely be handsomely rewarded for his deeds!

At the top of a mountain in the vicinity of Xuanjiang City, Zhang Xuan and Wu Chen waited for an hour before the red string on the halberd began floating up. It was pointing toward a certain direction.

Zhang Xuan immediately rose to his feet.

The direction which the red string was pointing toward was where, surprisingly, Xuanjiang River located.

“It’s no wonder I was unable to find the entrance...”

Zhang Xuan had asked Dan Xiaotian where the latter had found him, and he had made sure to examine the place earlier after he arrived at Xuanjiang City. However, he was unable to find anything there at all.

In the end, it turned out that the entrance of that spatial passageway was actually in Xuanjiang River.

The flow of water would mask the pulsations of spiritual energy that usually came from a formation. Considering the vastness of the river, if a formation was set up within it, it would indeed be difficult for even the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to notice it.

Zhang Xuan quickly kept his formation flags and the halberd back to his storage ring before heading to the area where the red string was pointing toward.

Without any hesitation, he leaped into the river and swam downward.

Xuanjiang River was rather deep; its seabed was roughly a hundred meters below water level. Nevertheless, it didn’t take long for Zhang Xuan to reach the bottom.

However, a frown soon formed on his forehead.

Based on his observation, everything within a diameter of several hundred li of him appeared to be perfectly normal.

He couldn’t sense any anomalies at all.

“Young Master...”

Wu Chen was unable to find anything as well, so he turned his head over to look at Zhang Xuan questioningly.

Did something go wrong with the formation earlier, leading them to the wrong place?

“Hold on for a moment,” Zhang Xuan said.

He pricked his finger with a tiny surge of sword qi and flicked out a droplet of his blood.

Weng!

With a resounding buzz, the silt that was deposited at the bottom of the seabed immediately rose up, revealing a stone door beneath.

Zhang Xuan walked over and pushed on it gently.

The stone door opened with a bit of resistance, revealing a dark passageway.

Zhang Xuan was about to walk in when he saw Wu Chen looking at the stone door with a look of incomprehension on his face. With a light chuckle, he explained, “This passageway was sealed by Kong shi back then in order to prevent the mercury-like spiritual energy from the Azure from leaking over. My bloodline is different from that of Kong shi, but as fellow Celestial Master Teachers, our powers still resonate to a degree with one another. Through my bloodline, I was able to activate the hidden formation. Otherwise, there’s no way we would have been able to find it!”

In fact, the resonance wasn’t just because they were Celestial Master Teachers. More importantly, both of them carried fragments of the heavens within them.

It was just that Zhang Xuan didn’t feel like sharing it with others.

On the other hand, Wu Chen widened his eyes in realization.

Heading down the passageway, it didn’t take long for Zhang Xuan to arrive at a spacious hall. There were eight Ancient Sage 4-dan guards in the hall, and they were currently drinking with one another.

“What’s the difference between imprisonment and guarding this area?”

“It’s too boring! Boooooorrrriiiiiinnnngggg!”

“I heard that those living in the world on the other side are extremely weak...”

They are weak, but the entrance is completely sealed. There’s no way we can head down there...”

The eight guards muttered as they gulped down their wine.

They must be the guards Kong shi has dispatched to guard the passageway, Zhang Xuan thought as he listened to their conversation.

He waved his hands lightly, and before the guards could even react, they had already turned into dust.

They were only guarding this area under Kong shi's commands, but them lingering in this area would pose a huge threat to the Hundred Schools of Philosophers and the Master Teacher Continent. Out of safety concerns, he had no choice but to get rid of them.

With his current strength, he could easily completely vanquish a person's existence from the face of the world.

At the very center of the hall was a massive spiral. Surges of mercury-like spiritual energy were drawn into the spiral, disappearing into an unknown land.

The two doors by the sides of the spiral were inscribed with some sort of bizarre patterns. Taking a closer look, the patterns were rather similar to that of the Starchaser Palace's altar.

It seems like Kong shi was worried that someone would blockade the entrance, so he designed the formation to be so that anyone traveling to the Azure from the Master Teacher Continent would be teleported straight to a random place near Xuanjiang City-

Zhang Xuan stroked his lower jaw contemplatively.

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t

Due to these inscriptions, even though these gates looked like a door, if someone were to really pass through the spatial passageway, he would be silently transported to a random place around Xuanjiang City.

Otherwise, given how he had been unconscious when he passed through the spatial passageway back then, there was no way he would have survived after being caught by this group of people.

This place can only be activated with Kong shi's and my bloodline, such that even Semi-Divinity realm cultivators wouldn't be able to find it either way. Yet, he still dispatched his subordinates here... Just who is he trying to guard against?" Zhang Xuan was getting a little confused.

The secrecy of the spatial passageway was definitely top-notch, even by the Azure's standard. It was likely that Kong shi had designed it specifically in order to make sure that no one from the Azure would be able to find it. Even if someone were to find it, they would be unable to harm those coming over from the Master Teacher Continent.

Thus, it was contradictory for Kong shi to instruct his subordinates to guard the spatial passageway. It was as if he was trying to eliminate anyone coming over from the Master Teacher Continent.

If that was really true, wouldn't that also mean that he was unable to read the inscriptions and didn't know that those who entered the spatial passageway would be randomly teleported away?

"It is very likely for what Vicious said to be true... That man is likely to be a fake Kong shi!"

Previously, he still harbored some reservations when he heard those words from Vicious, but at this moment, he was starting to see some sense to it.

If the Kong shi he had faced was real, there was no way the other party wouldn't know about the various mechanisms he had installed in place... unless the other party lost his memory one way or another, just like a certain little yellow chick.

Thinking about the little yellow chick, a sigh escaped from Zhang Xuan's lips.

He had fed the unique aura of the Azure Bridge to the little yellow chick, but for some reason, the latter was unable to achieve a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm!

He had tried all kinds of means to further its cultivation, but nothing worked at all. He was really unable to comprehend just what were the criteria required for it to make a breakthrough.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan moved forward to check the condition of the spatial passageway. Seeing that it was still working fine, he took out the disguise amulet and used it to suppress his cultivation.

At the same time, he turned to Wu Chen and said, "Let's suppress our cultivation down to Ancient Sage 4-dan before entering the spatial passageway."

Ancient Sage 4-dan was the limit of what the Master Teacher Continent could withstand. If it had been any other Semi-Divinity or High Immortal, even if they were to suppress their cultivation, they would still be rejected by the world if they attempted to descend to Master Teacher Continent.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan had the disguise amulet whereas Wu Chen had the disguise method imparted to him from Luo Ruoxin. Using these to conceal their cultivation, they would be able to fool even the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent.

After all, Luo Ruoxin also used the same method to enter the Master Teacher Continent back then. It was only because she revealed her true strength during the fight for the Great Codex

of Spring and Autumn that she was eventually rejected by the heavens and was forced to leave the Master Teacher Continent.

Entering the spatial passageway, Zhang Xuan saw the chaotic spatial currents raging in the surroundings. All kinds of spatial turbulence flew in his direction, threatening to slice him apart.

Any other Ancient Sage 4-dan in his place would have likely lost consciousness before long. However, both Wu Chen and Zhang Xuan were top-notch experts of the Azure. Even if they were to compress their cultivation, they still had their powerful soul energy and physical body to protect them.

As a result, the spatial turbulence striking on them dealt no damage at all.

At the same time, their speed was also much faster than before. Previously, Zhang Xuan took half a month before he finally reached the other end of the spatial passageway, but this time around, he could also see the exit when he had only been traveling for less than two hours.

A massive coffin was floating peacefully in the air, sealing the space around the exit. It had fused as one entity with the exit, sealing it off entirely.

Zhang Xuan placed his finger lightly on it, and the formation immediately unraveled. He leisurely passed through the exit together with Wu Chen.

The glaring rays of the sun shone on his face. The familiar scent of the Master Teacher Continent tingled his nose.

He had returned.

“Zhang shi!”

Barely after Zhang Xuan landed on the ground, he heard a shout coming from not too far away. Shortly after, Ancient Sage Yan Qing appeared before him.

Over a year of absence, the latter had managed to advance his cultivation significantly. At the same time, he didn't look as feeble as before anymore.

“Un,” Zhang Xuan nodded in acknowledgement.

He turned his gaze to the side and saw someone standing before an altar, chanting endlessly. A furious flame was blazing atop the altar, emanating a sinister glow. This was the ritual that had guided their way back to the Master Teacher Continent.

However, the person conducting the ritual was an unfamiliar face.

“Who is he? Where’s Liu Yang?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

Wasn’t the current Sovereign Chen Yong his direct disciple, Liu Yang? Why would the one conducting the ritual be an Otherworldly Demon whom he didn’t recognize instead?

“This person over here is the new sovereign of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, Chen Xiao. He’s Liu Yang’s direct disciple,” Ancient Sage Yan Qing replied.

“Liu Yang’s direct disciple? So, he’s my grandstudent?” Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback.

It felt weird for him to have a grandstudent when he was only in his early twenties.

“That’s right,” Ancient Sage Yan Qing nodded.

“If he has become the sovereign of the Otherworldly Demon, then where is Liu Yang? Where are Kong Shiyao, Zhao Ya, and the others?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

He had told First Elder Zhao Yue to send a message down to the incumbent Sovereign Chen Yong to hold the ritual. Even though he didn’t explicitly state that he was planning to descend to Master Teacher Continent, it was still very likely that Liu Yang and the others would be interested to watch the proceedings of the ritual to the Azure.

“Zhang shi, your nine direct disciples have entered the Azure through the passageway you took three months ago...” Ancient Sage Yan Qing replied.

“They went to the Azure too?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

If they entered the Azure three months ago, that would equate to roughly nine days in the Azure... Back then, he was at the

Ocean of Exiled Stars teaching Elder Hong Wu and the others...

“I’ll have to look for them after I return to the Azure...”
Zhang Xuan remarked with a deep sigh.

Considering how they had left some time ago and that he didn’t encounter them in the spatial passageway, it was very likely that they were already at Xuanjiang City. So, he decided not to think too much into the matter.

Just as he was about to continue speaking, he suddenly spotted two silhouettes flying over hurriedly from the horizon.

They were his parents, the Xingmeng Sword Saints!

“Xuan-er...” Sword Saint Meng called out in agitation. Seeing that her son was fine, her eyes reddened slightly as she breathed out deeply, “I’m glad that you are fine...”

The Azure was fraught with dangers. Ever since her son left for that place, there had never been a single day that she didn’t worry for him. There was completely no news from him at all, and this had been weighing on her mind over the past year. It was only after seeing that Zhang Xuan was fine was she able to heave a sigh of relief.

Seeing the Xingmeng Sword Saints, Zhang Xuan smiled gently and said, “Mother and father, I’m fine.”

His parents had managed to make significant breakthrough in their cultivation during his absence. They, too, had managed to reach Ancient Sage 4-dan.

Zhang Xuan enquired about the current situation on the Master Teacher Continent. The Master Teacher Continent had been developing well, and the reforms Yang shi pushed for were being implemented well. As for the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, there hadn’t been any problem ever since Liu Yang took over as the next Sovereign Chen Yong. There was still some tension, but the situation was peaceful.

The Hundred Schools of Philosophers had managed to lower the concentration of the mercury-like spiritual energy to a level where even human cultivators could absorb them without

too much problem. At this rate, the chances of a war happening would keep lowering.

Heading to the main hall where the Hundred Schools of Philosophers host its guests, Zhang Xuan saw a bunch of familiar faces—the head of the Luo Clan, the head of the Jiang Clan, Master Teacher Pavilion’s Yang Xuan...

Just like the Xingmeng Sword Saints, their cultivation had reached Ancient Sage 4-dan. If those warriors blocking the spatial passageway were to attempt to invade the Master Teacher Pavilion once more, it was likely that they would simply get killed on the spot.

They began chatting with one another to catch up with one another.

Halfway through the conversation, Luo Xuanqing suddenly looked at him worriedly and asked, “Zhang Xuan, did you see my younger sister while you were in the Azure?”

Your young sister?” Zhang Xuan was taken aback. “Isn’t Qiqi on the Master Teacher Continent?”

He had left alone back then, and it was certain that he hadn’t seen Luo Qiqi anywhere on the Azure either!

“A year ago, shortly after you left for the Azure, she said that she’ll head there as well to look for you...” Luo Xuanqing shook his head and sighed.

“Look for me? Did she enter the Azure through the spatial passageway as well?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

“That’s not it. She used the Dimension Silencer to break open the dimension barrier of the Master Teacher Continent,” Luo Xuanqing replied.

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

With his current cultivation, he would be able to break open the dimension barrier as well. He was no longer that reliant on the spatial passageway to return back to the Azure anymore.

However, the Luo Qiqi from a year ago, no matter how powerful she could have been, at the very most, she could only have been at Ancient Sage 4-dan. How did she manage to

break open the dimension barrier of the Master Teacher Continent?”

“Do you know why she called herself Qiqi?” Luo Xuanqing suddenly asked this question.

He knew that there was already a massive gap between the two of them, so his desire to compete with the young man standing before him had already died down. All he hoped was for the young man to find his younger sister and take care of her.

“Isn't the reason why she called herself Qiqi because she has six older brothers in front of her?” Zhang Xuan seemed to have recalled something like that before.

“Indeed. She has six elder brothers in front of her. I am in the sixth place in terms of seniority, and my five elder brothers have all passed away! Given that the Luo Clan's standing and power on the Master Teacher Continent, don't you think that it's weird that all five of my elder brothers have passed away prematurely?” Luo Xuanqing asked.

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had indeed been a little curious about it back then, but he chose not to probe too deeply into the matter.

Given the Luo Clan's standing on the Master Teacher Continent, even if the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe were to launch an assault, there was no way they would have been able to kill all five sons of the esteemed clan head so easily!

“It's because of the Dimension Silencer,” Luo Xuanqing suddenly said. “It's an artifact that our predecessor acquired, and it harnesses an unbelievable amount of power within it. You should have heard about how my younger sister was able to assimilate it shortly after her birth because of the sheer purity of her bloodline... That isn't entirely true. More than that, it's because of my five elder brothers that she was able to do so!

“Back then, something triggered the Dimension Silencer, and it was on the verge of tearing open the dimension barrier and escaping. If that were to happen, the Luo Clan would slip from the position of the Three Premier Sage Clans. In order to

prevent the decline of the family, my five elder brothers sacrificed themselves and fed the Dimension Silencer with their blood essence before the latter finally calmed down. As a result of that, the spirit within the Dimension Silencer also slowly began awakening... and she eventually became the Qiqi you know of!”

“Wait a moment, you are saying that Qiqi is actually the weapon spirit of the Dimension Silencer?” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes in shock.

The spirit slipped into my mother’s womb, and my mother eventually gave birth to Qiqi. She is the spirit of the Dimension Silencer, but at the same time, there’s no doubt that she’s my younger sister as well. After all, her flesh and blood originate from our Luo Clan,” Luo Xuanqing said.

Zhang Xuan nodded slowly.

He had seen many different kinds of weapon spirits, and he had tamed many of them before. However, none of the spirits were able to leave the confines of their main body, and that applied to even Semi-Divinity artifacts too.

Thus, it was inconceivable that the spirit of the Dimension Silencer was able to leave its body and reincarnate as a human.

“How did she tear apart the dimension barrier? How did you know that she was heading to the Azure?” Zhang Xuan continued asking.

“Shortly after you left, her will to follow you to the Azure grew stronger and stronger. In resonance with her emotions, the Dimension Silencer emanated overwhelming energy that allowed her to overcome the limitations of Ancient Sage 4-dan. She reached an unfathomable level, which resulted in her being rejected by the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent. Eventually, she was squeezed out of the world together with the Dimension Silencer,” Luo Xuanqing said.

“The experts of our Luo Clan did everything that we could, but we weren’t able to stop her from leaving...”

Zhang Xuan fell silent.

That was also rather similar to how Luo Ruoxin left back then. They were squeezed out by the space of the Master Teacher Continent, a bit similar to a wooden log in the face of water.

No matter how hard one pressed the wooden log down into the water, the moment the force was released, it would simply float back to the surface of the water.

Given the situation, it was very likely that Luo Qiqi had been forced into the Azure.

“Alright, I’ll take a look around when I return to the Azure later on. If I were to find her, I’ll relay the news to the sovereign of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe,” Zhang Xuan said.

2078 Fraudsters

Zhang Xuan made sure to jot the matter concerning Luo Qiqi in his mind.

The Forsaken Continent was massive, but as the head of four sects, it still shouldn't be too difficult for him to uncover the whereabouts of an individual.

After parting from Luo Xuanqing, Zhang Xuan chatted a while with Yang Shi and the others to catch up with time before imparting to them the cultivation techniques and battle techniques he had newly compiled so that the Master Teacher Pavilion could share the knowledge with the world.

Just like that, a day passed in a flash.

“The main reason why I returned this time around is to borrow the altar. There are still a lot of things I have to deal with back at the Azure, so I won't be staying here...”

Zhang Xuan knew that he was tight on time. So, after he received the altar, he called Wu Chen over. He was intending to break open the dimension barrier directly and return back to the Azure right away.

At this moment, though, a voice suddenly cried out.

“Young Master, bring me with you!”

Sun Qiang rushed forward as he looked at Zhang Xuan with pleading eyes.

Shortly after Zhang Xuan left, he swiftly realized that his indolence was going to cost him the opportunity to rise to higher grounds. He was made aware of the painful fact that he was no longer able to keep up with Zhang Xuan anymore.

Thus, over the past year, he trained desperately. In view that he used to be Zhang Xuan's butler, the Master Teacher Pavilion and the Zhang Clan also provided him with ample resources for his cultivation.

Just like that, he actually managed to reach Ancient Sage 4-dan primary stage as well, just like the rest.

“You wish to head to the Azure as well?” Zhang Xuan asked with a questioning frown.

“Yes, I wish to follow you!” Sun Qiang replied in determination.

He was aware of the fact that he was materialistic, and he enjoyed exploiting his influence and reputation as Zhang Xuan’s butler and an Ancient Sage. The respect and admiration that others showered him with swelled him up with pride. But for some reason... he felt as if something was missing, leaving him with an odd feeling of emptiness inside.

Those should have been the things that he desired all his life.

But now that he had acquired it all, he found himself reminiscing about the old days. Remembering those exciting days where he confidently berated experts far beyond his league made his heart thump with excitement.

He realized that those were actually the golden days of his life, and he missed them dearly so.

He didn’t want to limit himself to a boring life in this small world. He wanted to follow the Young Master. He knew that only then would he be able to experience the vibrant life he had before!

“We are intending to break open the dimension barrier directly to enter the Azure. It’s too dangerous for you at the moment, and I don’t have the confidence that I’ll be able to protect you like this. However, if you really wish to follow me, you can enter the Azure through the spatial passageway.

“Here are some medicine. Swallow them before you enter the spatial passageway; they should heal your injuries and prevent you from losing consciousness!”

With a flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a bottle of chicken soup and a protective artifact before passing them over to Sun Qiang. Then, he looked at Sun Qiang and said, “After you arrive at the Azure, head to the Ascendant Cloud

Sword Pavilion and report my name. Someone will bring you to me.”

The pressure of passing through the dimension barrier directly was extremely great, such that it was unlikely for even an Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivator to survive the journey.

Sun Qiang nodded his head in agitation.

After dealing with everything that he had to, Zhang Xuan unhesitatingly released the seal on his cultivation, causing a resounding echo in the air.

Following that, he felt the entire world rejecting his existence. An unknown force was trying to push him out of the world.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan allowed the force to push him out without resisting. In a few moments, he was already out of the Master Teacher Continent's dimension barrier. However, the danger wasn't over yet.

Amidst the space in between the two worlds, Zhang Xuan could see spatial turbulence raging in his direction, threatening to rip him apart.

He quickly drove his zhenqi to form a protective barrier around him so as to ward off the spatial turbulence. At the same time, he allowed the force of rejection from the Master Teacher Continent to continue propel him forward.

Soon enough, light returned to his sight. With a slight shake, he was squeezed out of the void and landed in the air right after Xuanjiang City.

“We were indeed able to return easily,” Zhang Xuan remarked with a light chuckle.

He turned to look at Wu Chen, and the latter seemed to be a little surprised by the matter as well.

From the looks of it, it seemed that even though moving from a stronger world to a weaker world was extremely difficult, returning back to a stronger world from a weaker world was much easier in comparison.

They had to rely on Luo Ruoxin's disguise amulet and disguise art in order for them to conceal themselves from the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent. Otherwise, if they were to just suppress their cultivation, there was no way they could have fooled the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent.

They would have likely been pushed out before they could even enter the world.

"Let me first take a look around to see if Zhao Ya and the others are still around..." Zhang Xuan said as he extended his consciousness all around Xuanjiang City.

At his level of cultivation, as long as he willed so, he could even sense the slightest flutter of one's eyelashes all over Xuanjiang City.

"They are there!"

A moment later, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up.

He was worried that his direct disciples would have already left Xuanjiang City given that it had been nine days since they arrived. He was glad to see that they were still around.

However, he also realized that the residence they were in was preparing aerial beasts. It looked like they were preparing to set off.

So, Zhang Xuan quickly headed over without any hesitation.

"Zhang Yuanwai, why are you in such a hurry to borrow my aerial beasts? Is there something that you need to do?"

A pot-bellied middle-aged man walked over and looked at Zhang Yuanwai doubtfully.

There weren't too many clans in Xuanjiang City who had the power and wealth to rear aerial beasts, but the middle-aged man, Wu Jiangcheng, happened to be one of them. After the downfall of the Xue Clan, the aerial beasts of his clan became the strongest and fastest ones of the entire city.

It was for this reason that Zhang Yuanwai paid a visit to him in hopes of borrowing his aerial beast.

“Do you remember the group of youths whom I have saved?” Zhang Yuanwai asked with a smile.

“I remember that. Are you going to try your luck just like Dan Xiaotian?” Wu Jiangcheng asked with a chortle.

Dan Xiaotian’s encounter was one-of-a-kind. No one could hope to emulate what he had done. After all, there could only be a single Sect Leader Zhang Xuan in the world.

Surely someone like Zhang Yuanwai wouldn’t be so naive as to think that he would strike gold just by saving a couple of people off the streets?

How could something that good happen so easily?

If that was the case, he wouldn’t bother doing anything anymore. He would simply devote his time to saving people out there!

“To be honest with you, I think that lady luck really shone on me this time around...” Zhang Yuanwai replied with a mysterious smile on his lips.

He was on good terms with Wu Jiangcheng, so he had no intentions of hiding the matter from the other party.

“Is it?” Wu Jiangcheng was slightly surprised to hear those words from Zhang Yuanwai. “Don’t tell me that you have saved a sect leader or an elder... Even if you want to joke with me, there should be a limit to it! There can’t be that many sect leaders or elders who are in a dire situation in the world!”

“Haha, of course not! You are thinking too much into it!” Zhang Yuanwai looked around him warily before leaning closer toward Wu Jiangcheng. “I’ll only be telling you this. The nine people whom I have saved are actually... the direct disciples of Sect Leader Zhang Xuan!”

“The direct disciples of Sect Leader Zhang Xuan? Hahaha! You really are good at kidding around!” Wu Jiangcheng burst out laughing.

“Sect Leader Zhang Xuan is the head of four sects, the strongest man in the world. There are countless people in the world who desire to come under this tutelage... Just walk

around the streets and you will easily find a handful of people who want to become his student, and some might even go to the extent of proclaiming that they had learned something from him before... Are you sure you want to take those words for real? Just a few days ago, I caught a horse from the wilderness, and that fellow actually used his hooves to write out that he's a student of Sect Leader Zhang Xuan!"

"Even a horse is doing that too?" Zhang Yuanwai was stunned.

"Indeed! It's not that I want to shatter your dreams, but you really shouldn't pin your hopes on this. It's almost guaranteed that those youths you have captured are trying to scam your money, and only a fool like you will fall for their tricks..." Wu Jiangcheng harrumphed.

"Just think about it. As the head of four sects, who would dare to offend Zhang Xuan's direct disciples and injure them? And how could it be so coincidental that all of them would be saved by you as well? It's obviously a planned scheme!"

Zhang Yuanwai was rendered speechless.

There was so much sense to what Wu Jiangcheng was saying that he had no idea how to refute the other party's words.

Thinking back, the only evidence he had regarding their claim that they were Zhang Xuan's disciples came from their words... and it was too easy to spout falsehoods from one's mouth.

Could he have really been scammed?

"Aiyo, let's head over to meet them together. I'll expose the true faces of those liars for you!" Seeing the conflicted look on his good friend's face, Wu Jiangcheng tucked in his tummy—though it didn't make much of a difference—and spoke vehemently.

"I'll be troubling Brother Wu then..." Zhang Yuanwai heaved a sigh of relief.

He quickly led the way to the courtyard where Zhao Ya and the others were residing in.

“You are the ones who claim to be Sect Leader Zhang Xuan’s direct disciples?”

Upon arriving in the courtyard and seeing a bunch of feeble-bodied young men, Wu Jiangcheng was even more convinced of his thoughts, and he sneered coldly.

On the other hand, Zhao Ya and the others swiftly sensed Wu Jiangcheng’s hostility, and a slight frown appeared on their faces.

Every single one of them were existences who could make the Master Teacher Continent tremble with a stomp of their foot. As such, they were displeased to see someone acting so disrespectful to them when it was only their first meeting.

“Why aren’t you saying anything?” Wu Jiangcheng looked at the frowns on their faces and scoffed. “Do you know what’s the crime for impersonating Sect Leader Zhang Xuan’s direct disciples? Putting aside heading to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, if I were to just report you to the city lord right away, the nine of you will be immediately thrown to the jail!”

Those words caused the hot-tempered Yuan Tao to take a step furiously. The others were also glaring at Wu Jiangcheng coldly, as if they were going to pummel his head into the ground.

Afraid that they would really come to blows, Kong Shiyao stood forward and clasped her fist, “We aren’t impersonators. Zhang Xuan is indeed our teacher.”

“Who doesn’t know how to spout a couple of words from their mouths. Do you have any evidence to prove the matter?” Wu Jiangcheng sneered.

Kong Shiyao fell silent.

It was impossible to bring their storage rings or anything else with them through the spatial passageway, so they had nothing that could prove their identity with them at the moment... Furthermore, even if they could bring it out, there was no way the other party would be able to recognize it either way!

“Did cat get your tongue? Why aren’t any of you talking anymore?”

With a grand wave of his hand, Wu Jiangcheng’s voice suddenly became much louder and sharper, “How dare you try to impersonate Sect Leader Zhang Xuan’s direct disciples? Just what gave you the audacity to do something as ridiculous as this?”

“We really are Zhang Xuan’s direct disciples,” Kong Shiyao frowned in displeasure.

“Enough! I’m not like Zhang Yuanwai, who would easily fall for your lies. If you are really Sect Leader Zhang Xuan’s direct disciples, I would be his teacher then. Men!” Wu Jiangcheng harrumphed coldly.

With a raise of his hand, he beckoned for his subordinates to capture these fraudsters and bring them over to the City Lord Manor.

But at this moment, a faint voice echoed in the air, “You said that you are my teacher? Why don’t I know about it?” “Who is it?”

Taken aback, Wu Jiangcheng quickly raised his head, only to see two figures floating quietly in the air. One of them was gazing downward with a faint smile on his lips.

“Sect Leader Zhang Xuan...”

Wu Jiangcheng’s body stiffened up on the spot. His knees knocked together from fear, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

He watched Dan Xiaotian’s court proceedings at the City Lord Manor back then, and there, he had the honor to meet Sect Leader Zhang Xuan in person. The person above him shared the same appearance as Sect Leader Zhang Xuan, and the very fact that he was flying in the sky meant that he was at least a High Immortal...

If so, there wasn’t much to be said about the other party’s identity...

“Teacher!”

Contrary to Wu Jiangcheng's shock, upon seeing the figure in the sky, the eyes of Zhao Ya and the others reddened, and they quickly kneeled onto the ground.

“Un, it has been hard on you all...”

Seeing how far his direct disciples had grown in his absence, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. With a wave of his hand, he passed nine jade bottles to them.

“Drink it.”

“Yes, teacher!”

The nine of them gulped down the chicken soup inside the bottles, and in the next moment, they felt incredible energy washing through their meridians. In just a few moments, their injuries had already vanished.

“This... They are all Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivators?”

Wu Jiangcheng and Zhang Yuanwai nearly passed out from shock.

This was especially so for Wu Jiangcheng. He really wanted to burst into tears at this very moment.

Even the city lord, the most powerful man in Xuanjiang City, was an Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivator. Yet, these young men and women had actually reached that level as well...

It was fortunate the Sect Leader Zhang came in time. Otherwise, given what he had just said, these nine youths would have surely wrangled his neck out of rage!

2079 Zhang Xuan Creates a Cultivation Technique

Zhang Xuan looked at his direct disciples intently.

It was only a month for him, but it had been more than a year for them. He could see hints of maturity and determination on their youthful faces. At the same time, they had also advanced their cultivation significantly too.

They hadn't let him down on his teachings.

“Let's go!”

With a wave of his hand, all nine of them flew into the air simultaneously. Zhang Xuan touched his tamed beast sack with his finger lightly, and the Serpentine Dragon materialized in the air. It grew along with a powerful gale, and in the blink of an eye, it was already more than a hundred meters long.

Zhang Xuan and his disciples quickly got on top of it.

“A Pseudo Dragon?”

“Such a lifeform actually exists in the world?”

Innumerable people of Xuanjiang City saw the appearance of the dragon. From the initial shock, they quickly knelt onto the ground one after another, not daring to raise their heads.

Pseudo Dragons had only appeared once in the history of the Forsaken Continent. It was expected that it would cause such a huge impact when it appeared once more.

“Pseudo Dragon...” Wu Jiangcheng felt even more like crying.

The appearance of this being reinforced the fact that it was indeed the most powerful man of the Forsaken Continent right in front of him.

He actually had the guts to question the other party's direct disciples, not to mention, he even audaciously claimed that he

was the other party's teacher!

At this rate, he really should just find a brick and knock himself out with it!

Wu Jiangcheng trembled in fright, fearing that Sect Leader Zhang Xuan would harbor a grudge against him for his insolent behavior earlier.

At this moment, the voice in the air continued sounded once more, "Zhang Yuanwai, you have my gratitude for saving my nine direct disciples. As long as your descendants arrive at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion with this token in hand, you can be assured that they would be entitled to the top resources of our sect."

A token fell from the air and landed quietly atop Zhang Yuanwai's palm.

"Thank you, Sect Leader Zhang!" Zhang Yuanwai bowed deeply in gratitude.

This token was pretty much a token of invulnerability in Xuanjiang City. No power or clan would dare to provoke him. At the same time, once he sent the descendant he had chosen to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion with the token, it was guaranteed that his clan would rise to greatness.

Understanding the deep significance behind the token, Zhang Yuanwai clutched onto it tightly with his fingers as he raised his head. However, he found that there was nothing in the sky anymore. The Pseudo Dragon had disappeared along with the others.

Kindness goes around in a circle. I must do more good deeds and generate more positivity in the world, Zhang Yuanwai thought as he knelt onto the floor and kowtowed deeply.

It was true that he had saved those nine with ulterior motives in mind, but to be honest, he didn't expect to be repaid like this. After all, even he knew that the chances of what that had happened to Dan Xiaotian happening to him were extremely slim.

Yet, it still happened in the end. He didn't think that he would be rewarded in such a manner.

“Brother Zhang, you have really changed your fate. Everything will be different from today onward,” Wu Jiangcheng remarked in envy as he looked at his food friend.

Just the favor of having saved Sect Leader Zhang’s direct disciples was enough to pave his way to greatness.

“My luck was really good. However, I think what’s more important is for us to view the world is kindness and do more good deeds,” Zhang Yuanwai smiled.

To celebrate his fortuitous encounter, Zhang Yuanwai hosted a banquet that night, and of course, Wu Jiangcheng joined in the festivities as well. But as he returned home from the night banquet, he couldn’t help but sigh deeply.

“It feels like I have gotten too caught up with vying for power and wealth in this world that I started viewing the world with skepticism. I forgot about the core that makes me human...” Wu Jiangcheng remarked with a bitter smile.

He couldn’t help but recall how his first response after hearing Zhang Yuanwai’s words was utter skepticism. He didn’t think that his skepticism was unjustified, but it felt like he had lost the trust for the world that he did in the past.

Perhaps, it was time for him to make a change?

Putong!

While he was deep in thoughts, a dull thud echoed in the bushes not too far away.

Alarmed, Wu Jiangcheng turned his head over and saw a fatty lying on the ground. The fatty’s head was filled with dry grass.

“That friend over there, are you fine?” Wu Jiangcheng quickly rushed over to help the fatty.

On the other hand, the fatty rubbed the back of his head and he leaped to his feet. With a hint of wonderment on his face, he asked, “Is this the Azure?”

“Azure?” Wu Jiangcheng blinked his eyes blankly.

“Since you are from the Azure, have you ever heard of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?” the fatty asked.

“I have heard of it,” Wu Jiangcheng nodded in a daze, unsure of what the fatty was getting at.

“Wonderful! Our Young Master is currently serving as the sect leader there. I need you to bring me over to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. As long as I can find our Young Master, you can be assured that you’ll be handsomely rewarded for your service,” the fatty patted off the dust from his robe as he looked at Wu Jiangcheng with his head tilted upward.

“Your Young Master is serving as the sect leader? Could it be that...” Wu Jiangcheng’s pupils dilated to round circles. “Are you related to Sect Leader Zhang Xuan?”

“That’s right! I am Sect Leader Zhang’s butler!” the fatty replied proudly.

This fatty was Sun Qiang, who had entered the Azure through the spatial passageway. He had taken some time to pass through the spatial passageway, but due to the time difference, it had only been several hours on the Azure. As he had consumed the chicken soup Zhang Xuan had given to him, he managed to overcome the spatial turbulence without any trouble.

With his Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivation perfectly intact, he would definitely be considered as a powerhouse in Xuanjiang City.

“You are Sect Leader Zhang’s butler?” Wu Jiangcheng was still unable to come to terms with the current situation.

“That doesn’t seem right. I have heard of Sect Leader Zhang’s butler, and he is an ex-bandit named Cao Chengli. I don’t recall Cao Chengli being such a plump individual...”

“Cao Chengli?”

It looked as if Sun Qiang’s world had suddenly collapsed. With a pained expression on his face, he clutched his chest and exclaimed to the sky, “Young Master, it has only been a single month and you have already replaced me with someone new! I, Sun Qiang, will not accept this! Hmph, where the heck is that Cao Chengli? I’ll go castrate him this instant!”

“Wu Jiangcheng.

While Sun Qiang was raging at the fact that someone had replaced his role, Zhang Xuan and his direct disciples had just arrived at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“Teacher!” Dan Xiaotian rushed forward to greet Zhang Xuan.

“Un. These are your seniors over here,” Zhang Xuan looked at Dan Xiaotian and gestured. After that, he turned to Zhao Ya and the others and said, “This young lad over here is a disciple whom I have taken in here, Dan Xiaotian.”

“Junior, you have our deepest gratitude for having saved our teacher!”

Along the way, Zhao Ya and the others had heard about their teacher’s happenings after he had arrived at the Azure. If not for Dan Xiaotian saving their teacher at the very start, it was hard to tell how their teacher would have been right now.

So, the nine of them bowed deeply to Dan Xiaotian in order to express their gratitude.

“Seniors, there’s no need for this! Please, you are too polite!”

Astonished, Dan Xiaotian quickly bowed again and again in a fluster to the seniors as well.

“Here are some Superior Immortal Pills and cultivation technique manuals. I have designed the cultivation techniques specifically to suit each of your constitutions. Cultivate them and aim to reach High Immortal as soon as possible so that you can lend me a hand too!” Zhang Xuan said as he took out a couple of pills and jade tokens.

Given his current identity, he had no lack of cultivation resources at the moment anymore. If he willed so, he could easily gather hundreds of Superior Immortal Pills.

After receiving their teacher’s bestowment, the crowd quickly left for their own accommodations so that they could start cultivating.

Zhao Ya and the others possessed great potential, and that allowed them to advance their cultivation swiftly as well.

Soon after, Bai Ruanqing returned back to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as well. She had been out on a mission together with her grandfather earlier. At this very moment, her cultivation had already reached Heavenly True Immortal realm.

She was only a step away from reaching High Immortal realm.

Zhang Xuan imparted his modified High Immortal realm cultivation technique to her and instructed her to raise her cultivation swiftly.

After dealing with the affairs concerning his students, Zhang Xuan was in no hurry to leave with Wu Chen. Instead, he looked for a silent chamber and began cultivating.

He had managed to acquire the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe's altar, which meant that he could conduct a ritual and teleport over to where the Starchaser Palace's altar was. However, he didn't think that the timing was right yet.

Putting aside Kong shi, the Hall of Gods had plenty of experts in their ranks. Furthermore, they were bound to have some trump cards at their home ground too. If he wanted to save Du Qingyuan and solve all trouble, he would definitely have to raise his cultivation to Semi-Divinity realm at the very least.

Only then would he be able to fight on equal grounds with Kong shi and save Du Qingyuan.

However, he didn't have a proper cultivation technique for that yet. He would have to forge his own path if he wanted to reach greater heights in the future.

It was just that creating one's own path was no easy feat.

Zhang Xuan had already immersed his consciousness in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn for many days so far, but he still had no directions as to where he should focus on at all.

Hu!

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan brought his consciousness into the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn as well, and he began contemplating over all of the insights he had received over the last few days. Slowly, he got into a state of deep concentration.

As someone who has cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art, my body won't be able to practice cultivation techniques that are too inferior.

Putting aside whether an inferior cultivation technique would be able to spur the growth of his exceptionally powerful cultivation and body, even if it was able to, it wouldn't raise his fighting prowess by too much.

Thus, I can't compromise too much. Even if the cultivation technique I have created won't be able to reach the level of Heaven's Path Divine Art, it must at least be close to that level!

This was also Zhang Xuan's bottom line as well. If he was going to do it, he was determined to do it to the best of his abilities so that he wouldn't have any regrets in the future.

Kong shi said that he has comprehended the Heavens' Order whereas I have comprehended the Heavens' Imperfections. The more often I use my Library of Heaven's Path, the more reliant I would be on it. Eventually, I would be assimilated by the heavens... Zhang Xuan pondered.

Granted that those words were spoken by the enemy, even after he pondered over the matter, he still thought that there was a high possibility that it was the truth.

Similar to the Celestial Master Teacher, the power of the heavens definitely granted him incredible growth. However, if he wanted to surpass the heavens, he would have to eventually sever his connection with it.

Otherwise, his reliance on the heavens would eventually cap his growth, causing him to eventually stagnate.

Heavens' Order and Heavens' Imperfections, I wonder what else there are...

As thoughts filled Zhang Xuan's mind, he gradually lost track of time.

Regardless of whether he was reliant on the Heaven's Path Divine Art or not, it was a fact that it would become more and more difficult for him to gather cultivation technique manuals as his cultivation advanced. Besides, he couldn't allow the

grayish gaseous substance to continue growing either, or else he would eventually become a puppet of the heavens!

Thus, he knew that he had no other choice but to embark on this route.

For three days straight, he sat motionlessly on the same spot, not eating or drinking at all.

Three days in the Azure equated to roughly three hundred days in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn. Unknowingly, almost a single year had already passed for Zhang Xuan.

Within this single year, Zhang Xuan didn't rest a single wink. His exhaustion had caused his eyes to turn scarlet. If not for the fact that his cultivation had reached Heavenly High Immortal realm, he would have already suffered a breakdown by now!

“This doesn't work...”

“This isn't working either...”

“Just a bit more... Why am I always off by just a bit!”

Just like that, another seven days passed in the Azure.

In this period of time, Zhang Xuan had come up with at least ten thousand possible ingenious cultivation technique manuals, but they were either infeasible for his current body or that there was still something lacking with it that he was dissatisfied with. Eventually, he had no choice but to give up and return his consciousness to his physical body.

It had only been ten days in the real world, but he had already spent nearly three years in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn.

Working intensely throughout this period of time had left his mind deeply withered.

He felt desperate. If he couldn't create a cultivation technique, he wouldn't be able to achieve a breakthrough. And if he were to head to the Hall of Gods in his current state, he would only be courting his own death.

Sighing deeply, he walked out of the silent chamber to first deal with the matters he had at hand.

He quickly found one of the elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and asked, “How is the search going on? Have you found her yet?”

After returning from the Master Teacher Continent, he had the elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to inform the Sevenstar Pavilion, Myriad Beasts Hall, and Starchaser Palace to look into Luo Qiqi’s whereabouts.

Considering that ten days had passed, they should have some results by now.

2080 The Heavens Would Have Withered If They Had Feelings

“Sect Leader Zhang, the four sects have dispatched several hundred thousand disciples to comb through all of the cities in the Azure, but no one has seen or heard of Miss Luo Qiqi!” the elder clasped his fist and replied.

“There’s no news at all?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Since Luo Xuanqing said that Luo Qiqi had overcome the dimension barrier of the Master Teacher Continent to ascend to a higher world, there should be a good chance that she had come here... So how could there be no news on her at all?

Zhang Xuan trusted the competency of the information network of the four sects. If they weren’t able to find her within ten days, there was indeed a good chance that she wasn’t on the Azure then...

If she didn’t come to the Azure after ascending from the Master Teacher Continent, where else could she be?

I’ll have to think about this matter carefully later on... Zhang Xuan thought.

There was nothing he could do about this matter at the moment, so he shook his head and headed to where his disciples were cultivating.

Over the past ten days, his disciples had made great advancements. Zhao Ya, Zheng Yang, and the others had managed to reach True Immortal realm within this period of time.

Even Yuan Tao, who tended to lag behind the others, managed to reach Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm.

As for Bai Ruanqing, she had successfully achieved a breakthrough to High Immortal realm, making her one of the strongest experts in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion of her generation!

Seeing that they were cultivating diligently, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Then, with a heavy heart, he began trudging his way back to the silent chamber to go into seclusion once more when he suddenly heard a commotion not too far away.

“Young Master, you must redress my grievances! I, your beloved Sun Qiang, has been accompanied you for so many years. We have been together since our time in Tianxuan Kingdom! You can’t possibly be thinking of replacing me with this darned bandit, right?”

A particularly exaggerated exclamation sounded in the distance as a fatty ran into the courtyard.

It went without saying that this fatty was Sun Qiang.

Over the past ten days, he had managed to make his way from Xuanjiang City to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. With Zhang Xuan’s weapon serving as a symbol of his identity, it wasn’t too difficult for him to gain entry. And alas, he eventually had his fated meeting with the bandit Cao Chengli.

The two of them proclaimed themselves as Zhang Xuan’s one and only butler, and the argument got so heated that they even came to blows with one another.

While Cao Chengli was an expert of the Azure, his cultivation had also only reached Ancient Sage 4-dan too, which was roughly the same level as Sun Qiang. As a result, the battle was inconclusive.

However, none of them was contented with leaving things just like that. So, when they heard that Zhang Xuan had come out of seclusion, they immediately ran over godspeed.

“Young Master, this fellow popped out of nowhere and claimed that he is your butler. Not only so, he even dared to make a move on me!” Cao Chengli was a feisty man who wouldn’t back down in the face of an argument.

The already exhausted Zhang Xuan felt like his head was ringing from all of the shouting going on. He waved his hands in irritation and said, “It’s just a mere butler position, is there a need for the two of you to fight like that? Don’t you find it embarrassing?”

“Things aren’t as simple as that! As a butler, we must be sharp on our feet in order to tend to our Young Master’s every need. Too many soups would only spoil the broth! If we were to come to a disagreement as to what to do, who should we listen to then?” Sun Qiang exclaimed indignantly.

Young Master! I have followed you for so long, and I dare say that there’s no one in this world who knows you better than I do. There’s no way this half-baked rascal who popped out of nowhere will be able to service you better than I do!”

You...” Cao Chengli gritted his teeth in fury. “Young Master, this fellow is obviously unreliable with just a single glance! As a butler, we have to make sure to keep the big picture in mind so that we can share your burden. I don’t believe that this fellow is up to the task at all!”

Seeing how these two were bickering with one another yet again, Zhang Xuan could only rub his glabella to ease his pulsing headache.

To be honest, he really didn’t want to choose between either of them at all!

Sun Qiang was a darned braggart down to his bones. No matter what he was faced with, regardless of what kinds of troubles that would ensue as a result of his actions, his topmost priority was always to satisfy his desire to brag first... With that fearless character of his, there was no doubt that he would bring him a lot of trouble in the future.

On the other hand, the bandit Cao Chengli was a person driven by his lower body. Satisfying his lust seemed to be his top priority, making him an even more unreliable person than Sun Qiang.

Sigh! He would have never thought that someone as reliable like him would end up taking these two troublemakers as his

butler...

And to make things worse, these two fellows were even bickering over this position at this moment!

Unable to take the noise any longer, Zhang Xuan eventually cried out, "Enough! Sun Qiang shall be my butler, understood?"

If he really had to choose between these two, Sun Qiang was definitely the more reliable one.

At the very least, that fatty had never disappointed him when it came to information gathering and uncovering monetary opportunities.

"B-but I..." Cao Chengli immediately panicked upon hearing that verdict.

"I'll task you with the responsibility of taking care of Dan Xiaotian and my other direct disciples instead," Zhang Xuan said. A moment later, he quickly added, "Know that I'll hold you responsible if any of them were to go astray!"

Considering how hot-blooded Zheng Yang, Yuan Tao, and the others were, it would really be tough if Cao Chengli were to lead them astray!

"Yes, I understand!" Cao Chengli quickly nodded his head.

At the current moment, he was only glad that the Young Master wasn't trying to drive him away.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment longer before he turned to Sun Qiang and instructed, "Since you are here, I need you to look into Qiqi's whereabouts. Based on what I have heard, she should have already arrived in the Azure."

"Miss Qiqi is in the Azure too?" Sun Qiang was slightly surprised to hear the news. He quickly patted his chest confidently and said, "Young Master, leave it to me! As soon as she appears, I'll bring her over to you!"

"Good!" Zhang Xuan nodded.

He felt a lot more assured entrusting this task to Sun Qiang. As an ex-businessman, Sun Qiang was exceptionally capable at

networking in order to get things done.

After being entrusted with the job, Sun Qiang didn't leave right away. Instead, after hesitating for a brief moment, he finally asked, "Young Master, I hope you don't blame me for probing too much into your affairs, but Miss Qiqi has really done a lot for you... Do you really feel nothing for her at all?"

As someone who was probably the closest to Zhang Xuan in his days at the Master Teacher Continent, Sun Qiang was well aware of Luo Qiqi's feelings toward Zhang Xuan.

For Zhang Xuan, she was willing to turn against her own clan members and even sacrifice herself... Yet, Zhang Xuan showed no signs of reciprocating her feelings at all.

Zhang Xuan was silent for a moment before he shook his head solemnly, "I don't."

Ever since his days at Tianxuan Kingdom, there were many ladies who were interested in him. Shen Bi Ru, Mo Yu, Zhao Feiwu, Hu Yaoyao, Yu Fei-er... All of them were stunning, outstanding ladies, but he felt nothing for them at all.

The same went for Luo Qiqi too.

It was probably cliché to say this, but his heart seemed to only beat for Luo Ruoxin. There was just something about her that drew him in, and despite the short time they had spent together, he was unable to forget about her at all.

His heart was simply too filled at the moment to house another person.

"She's such a nice lady, but you have no feelings at all... What a cold-blooded man..." Sun Qiang murmured quietly beneath his lips.

Even though he was Zhang Xuan's butler, he couldn't help but feel bad for Luo Qiqi.

"Cold-blooded man?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows rose up in fury when his eyes suddenly widened in astonishment.

A thought struck his mind.

Was he really a cold-blooded man without feelings?

Definitely not!

His sentiments toward his parents were still a little awkward, but they were definitely existent. His care of his students and those around him were definitely genuine as well. He wasn't a very expressive person, but he didn't consider himself as someone who didn't have feelings either.

But thinking back on it now, ever since he transcended over and obtained the Library of Heaven's Path, his desire for romance seemed to have died out.

He was only an ordinary librarian in his previous life, and he had died as a single too. Under normal circumstances, he should have been excited by the notion that there were beautiful ladies who were interested in him, but he felt nothing at all.

Furthermore, other than affairs relating to Luo Ruoxin and his direct disciples, he found that he was able to remain perfectly rational under most circumstances. It was not that he didn't feel emotions, but his emotions rarely triumphed over his rationality.

More often than not, even in the direst of situations, he was always able to analyze everything rationally with a calm mind.

He thought that it was the effect of comprehending Heart of Tranquil Water previously, but from the looks of it now, things weren't as simple as he thought.

Could this actually be a side effect of the Library of Heaven's Path?

There was a saying in his previous world that "the heavens would have withered if they had feelings". Be it the Heavens' Order or the Heavens' Imperfections, they were abilities built on logic. Emotions and feelings had no place with the heavens at all.

This dispassionate nature of the heavens was what allowed all beings to be equals in their eyes.

No matter how just or unjust happened in the world, it was none of the business of the heavens at all. The natural cycles of the world wouldn't stop for anyone, not even in the slightest.

All along, Zhang Xuan hadn't thought much of the matter. It was only after hearing Sun Qiang's words that he came to a realization.

It made him question if the Library of Heaven's Path had gradually chipped away at his emotions. After all, there was no denying that Luo Qiqi had done a lot for him. If it had been anyone else in his place, his heart would have probably softened by now. Yet, he remained completely unfazed, almost as if he was devoid of emotions.

In fact, now that he thought back, it always felt like he was looking at this issue from an outsider's point of view, allowing him to analyze it with solely reason and logic.

He couldn't help but wonder if the other emotions he felt would slowly die out as well as the grayish gaseous substance grew within his body. Would his feelings for Luo Ruoxin die out as well once he became assimilated by the heavens?

With such a thought in mind, a realization came to Zhang Xuan.

Heavens' Order commanded all beings to follow a certain law of nature whereas Heavens' Imperfections dictated that all beings are flawed and incomplete... Only feelings didn't obey any logic and reason at all. It compels people to do all kinds of things that are beyond reason...

There were many things in this world that had certain laws that one had to obey... but were emotions something that necessarily obeyed laws too?

Of course not!

If feelings were logical, back then, when the world needed him to marry Luo Qiqi in order to save the world, he should have fallen in love with her. Yet, he ended up becoming fond of Luo Ruoxin instead.

There were all sorts of illogical things in the world that occurred as a result of uncontrollable emotions. If a person was really able to control his emotions, who wouldn't want to keep this unstable factor in rein?

It was just a pity that the one thing that was hardest to control in the world was emotions. It was a unique state of mind that entranced people yet leaving them helpless so.

Were emotions flawed? Did love have imperfections?

That was probably the case...

But at the same time, it was also what that gave life colors as well. Innumerable people devoted themselves to the pursuit of love, and they were willing to condemn themselves in hopes of achieving romantic fulfillment...

If so, perhaps emotions shouldn't be considered as a liability but as a wonderment of life instead.

I see...

A sharp glint flashed across Zhang Xuan's eyes.

The heavens would have withered if they had feelings. If feelings are something which even is beyond the jurisdiction of the heavens, what do I have to be conflicted over? So, the cultivation technique which I have been searching for has been here all along...

In the three years that Zhang Xuan had spent in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, he ended up cornering himself.

He had been trying to find a way to surpass the heavens, but how could he possibly outdo the already flawless Heaven's Path Divine Art?

No matter how great and refined his creation was, the best that he could have done was to create a cultivation technique equaling it. There was no way he could have surpassed it.

That was also the reason why he hadn't been able to succeed despite three years of effort.

It was only at this moment did he realize that he had been walking down the wrong route right from the start!

All along, he already had something that surpassed the heavens right inside of him!

There were those whose love transcended all logic and reason, lasting for thousands of years.

There were those who were willing to give their lives away for the sake of protecting those whom they cared about.

Kinship, friendship, romance...

Luo Qiqi was willing to give in so much to him without any regrets.

Zhang Hongtian was willing to give even his final breath to protect humanity without asking for anything in return.

Ancient Sage Yan Hui was willing to leave his corpse behind so as to seal off the spatial passageway to the Azure for tens of thousands of years.

Be it the Master Teacher Continent or the Azure, there were simply too many decisions in life that were made out of sheer emotions instead of reasons.

Tens of thousands of years had passed in the Master Teacher Continent, but it wasn't enough to erase Kong shi's greatness. The heavens had killed generation after generation of people, but the deep respect that the people felt toward Kong shi remained firm and unwavering.

Not even the rationality of the heavens can subdue the irrationality of emotions...

Boom!

Zhang Xuan's body jolted as a surge of energy began surging up his dantian. He could feel the bottleneck to Semi-Divinity realm was swiftly unraveling itself.

"Sun Qiang, thank you!" Zhang Xuan looked at Sun Qiang and burst into laughter.

After that, he turned around and returned back to the silent chamber.

"This..."

Seeing how the Young Master thanked himself instead of flying to a temper despite his deeply disrespectful words, Sun Qiang blinked his eyes in bewilderment.

Did the Young Master... go mad?

On the other hand, Cao Chengli's mouth was twitching after seeing the sight before him...

Back then, just because he had unintentionally offended the Young Master, the latter made it so that he had no choice but to leap back into their accommodations. Yet, when this fatty insulted him, not only did the Young Master not berate him, he even thanked him...

Thinking back, the Young Master never seemed to show any interest toward the ladies before. Could it be that... he only had feelings for Sun Qiang?

Cao Chengli immediately turned to look at Sun Qiang, only to heave a deep sigh in the next moment.

Just how heavy must the Young Master's taste be to actually like this fellow?

2081 Zhang Xuan Achieves a Breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity Realm

Swallowing Premier Immortal Pills one after another, Zhang Xuan released the unique aura that he had collected from the circular platforms alongside the Azure Bridge and allowed it to swirl around him like a tornado.

Sitting quietly in the midst of the tremendous air currents, his Heavenly High Immortal realm cultivation slowly rose bit by bit. After overcoming his previous bottleneck, Zhang Xuan saw another towering mountain peak appearing right before his eyes. It was a majestic mountain that pierced right into the heavens.

As he assimilated the medicinal energy from the Premier Immortal Pills, he was able to gather the power required for him to scale the mountain a step at a time.

When he finally reached the very peak of the mountain, he saw a familiar silhouette standing before him—Sun Qiang!

Sun Qiang was currently pacing around the top of the mountain in a panic. He was trapped and could not leave this mountain peak at all.

The memories of the time Zhang Xuan had spent with Sun Qiang gradually floated in his mind.

“Old master, are you here to buy a house?” These were the very first words that Sun Qiang had said when they first met one another.

“Your humble servant’s name is Sun Qiang! You can call me Xiao Qiang!” Those were the words that Sun Qiang said when their relationship as master and butler had been sealed.

Time seemed to pass relentlessly like a flowing river. Sun Qiang had not been the most reliable of subordinates, and his

desire to brag was at odds with Zhang Xuan's humble and low-profile character. However, the two years that they had spent together had allowed them to get used to each other's existence, and they had come to familiarize themselves with each other's temperament and habits.

Zhang Xuan spent most of his time cultivating, leaving any important miscellaneous affairs for Sun Qiang to deal with. Before he had even realized it, this master-butler relationship had become something extremely important to him. Nothing could substitute Sun Qiang's existence to him anymore.

Zhang Xuan harrumphed nonchalantly. "I'll save you."

He raised his hand up and chopped it down with great might.

Boom!

The mountain peak split in two before everything abruptly disappeared. There was no more mountain peak and Sun Qiang. At the same time, the bottleneck limiting his cultivation vanished as well.

The doors leading to the Semi-Divinity realm broke open!

So, these are the feelings between a master and a subordinate! Zhang Xuan thought with a smile as he drove his zhenqi according to the feeling that he felt within him.

Back when he was cultivating the Heaven's Path Divine Art, he had limited his zhenqi to flow strictly in accordance with the circulation pathway defined in the cultivation technique. That was the only way he could cultivate unparalleled zhenqi and maximize his fighting prowess.

However, he decided to limit himself no longer. Letting completely loose, he allowed his zhenqi to flow along with his feelings.

He could feel it.

Everything could be a cultivation technique. Everything could be a battle technique.

Even emotions could be used as a cultivation technique. Even emotions could be utilized as a sword.

Hong long long!

The resounding chimes of a bell echoed in his ears as spiritual energy surged endlessly into his body, causing his strength to grow exponentially.

Semi-Divinity realm!

That realm that had stunted the growth of countless geniuses of the Azure... he had finally reached it!

Zhang Xuan continued putting more and more Premier Immortal Pills into his mouth, and the unique aura shrouding him swiftly depleted.

A long time later, he finally opened his eyes once more.

At this moment, he had already finished using all the Premier Immortal Pills that he had acquired from the Ethereal Hall, and he had used a total of twenty sets of the unique aura gathered from the circular platforms.

While others only needed a single set to achieve a breakthrough, he had actually needed twenty people's worth.

It's a pity that I only managed to raise his cultivation to Greater Semi-Divinity realm. I am still a long way off from reaching Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm... Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

Ultimately, the amount of Premier Immortal Pills he had was still insufficient. Furthermore, due to his breakthrough, the quality of spiritual energy that he required to make a breakthrough rose once again. Thus, he was only able to make a breakthrough to Greater Semi-Divinity realm with the twenty Premier Immortal Pills he had in hand before losing his momentum.

Zhang Xuan contemplated for a moment before coming up with the name for his new cultivation technique.

This is a cultivation technique that I managed to create through comprehending my own emotions. Since that's the case, I shall call it Pathos of Heaven!

Perhaps because it was Sun Qiang's reminder that had enabled him to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, the

first sentimentality he comprehended was the sentiments between a master and a subordinate.

The quintessence behind such a relation lay in mutual trust.

Sun Qiang had never been a strong individual, but he was willing to stand against stronger opponents and even the entire Master Teacher Pavilion for his sake. Standing steadfast in the face of danger for the one he had decided to stand with, this represented the values of loyalty and brotherhood.

Infused with emotions, the Heaven's Path Divine Art was clearly vastly different from before. It seemed to have gained its own spirituality, harnessing its own powers.

Let me test its might! Zhang Xuan thought.

He gathered his strength within his palm and lightly thrust it forth.

Peng!

The stable space before him immediately tore open, revealing a pitch-black dimension rift.

Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had seen plenty of Semi-Divinity realm experts. In fact, eight of his tamed beasts had already reached the Semi-Divinity realm. As such, he knew what the usual strength of a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator was.

In terms of fighting prowess, he was already on par with the overwhelmingly powerful Semi-Divinity realm cultivator whom he had faced on the Ocean of Exiled Stars.

He had never thought that he would gain so much strength right after his breakthrough. Even if that Semi-Divinity realm cultivator were to explode his cultivation before him once more, he would not sustain the slightest harm at all!

“Come out!”

With a wave of his hand, Zhang Xuan brought out the Serpentine Dragon, Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix, and the Tongshang Sword.

“Use your strongest attacks against me!” Zhang Xuan instructed.

Huhuhu!

The two Semi-Divinity realm beasts and a Semi-Divinity artifact formed a collaborative formation and launched a furious barrage of attacks against Zhang Xuan. In response, Zhang Xuan sat on the ground without moving a single step. All he did was use his finger as a sword to deflect their attacks.

A few moments later, the attacking trio collapsed weakly on the ground, unable to move at all.

Despite their collaborative offense, they had not been able to force him to his feet!

“Master, your strength...”

The Serpentine Dragon and the Nine-headed Fiery Phoenix could hardly believe what was happening.

They had thought that they had reached the top of the Forsaken Continent by having achieved a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, but to their disbelief, they found that they were no different from novices before their master. They could not even withstand a single strike from the other party!

“I had an epiphany earlier and successfully made a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he finally rose his feet.

He stowed the trio back into his tamed beast sack and storage ring before summoning the one he had been wanting to deal with all this while—his clone.

You. Let’s trade blows!”

Peng!

The swollen-faced Zhang Xuan struggled back to his feet as he snarled with twitching lips, “Darn it. Just you wait! I’ll challenge you again once I reach Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm!”

Shrugging nonchalantly, the clone returned to the storage ring.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan shook his head.

His clone was truly a pervert. Not only did he manage to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, over the past few days, he had actually figured out a way to advance his cultivation to Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm.

Thus, it was only a given that he would be no match for his clone!

Nevertheless, it was certain that he had gotten much stronger after comprehending the Pathos of Heaven. While his Greater Semi-Divinity realm strength did lose out to his clone's Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm cultivation, the gap was not that big anymore. As long as he could make a few more breakthroughs, there was a good chance that he could stand on par with his clone even when they were in the same cultivation realm!

“But where in the world can I find more Premier Immortal Pills?”

With his current cultivation realm, ordinary pills and even the blood essence of Semi-Divinity realm experts were no longer effective on him. He needed something more potent than those.

The only thing he could think of that was still effective to him was the Premier Immortal Pills. However, those pills were known to be incredibly expensive and rare, such that even a major sect like the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was unlikely to have too many of them.

Leaving the silent chamber, Zhang Xuan headed to the sect treasury, a place where only the sect leader of each generation was authorized to enter.

He did manage to find some Premier Immortal Pills there, but there were only ten of them in total.

“Let's head to Starchaser Palace together.”

Having achieved a breakthrough in his cultivation, Zhang Xuan did not think that there was any need for him to stay there any longer. Thus, he called Zhao Ya, Sun Qiang, and the others over before bringing out the Serpentine Dragon.

Together, they got onto the back of the Serpentine Dragon, and soon, they were well on their way to Starchaser Palace.

Three days later...

Entering the main hall of Starchaser Palace once more, Zhang Xuan met Jiang Yao, Zhao Yue, Kui Xiao, Qin Yuan, Han Jianqiu, and the core elders of the four sects.

He had sent a request previously for the other three sects to bring all of their Premier Immortal Pills to Starchaser Palace. Nevertheless, they only managed to scrape together twenty-seven of them.

In other words, Zhang Xuan only had thirty-seven Premier Immortal Pills with him at the moment.

Zhang Xuan quickly headed to a silent chamber in Starchaser Palace before swallowing all the Premier Immortal Pills at once. After several minutes, he successfully advanced his cultivation to Earthly Semi-Divinity realm.

As my cultivation increases, the effectiveness of the pills is clearly lowering. Previously, twenty pills were enough for me to reach Greater Semi-Divinity realm, but now, even after I consumed thirty-seven pills, I was only able to advance my cultivation by a single stage. At this rate, I'll need at least one hundred pills to reach Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm!

His requirement for spiritual energy increased exponentially alongside his cultivation, and that had always been a severe headache for him.

Where in the world was he supposed to find one hundred Premier Immortal Pills?

Seeing right through Zhang Xuan's thoughts, Han Jianqiu explained, "Sect Leader Zhang, Premier Immortal Pills are known to be a cultivation resource that only Semi-Divinity realm cultivators are able to use. The Six Sects usually only have one expert of such caliber, so it's inevitable that we haven't stockpiled too many of them in our inventory. However, it is a different case for the Ethereal Hall. Possessing a complete (God)' character, it's likely that they have many Semi-Divinity realm cultivators in their ranks. Given so, it's

highly likely that they have quite a number of Premier Immortal Pills with them!”

“In other words, the Ethereal Hall has plenty of Premier Immortal Pills?” Zhang Xuan clarified.

Indeed!

Thinking back, the twenty Premier Immortal Pills that he had were from the Ethereal Hall. Given that the Ethereal Hall had remained the dominant power for thousands of years, it went without saying that its treasury was much fuller than those of the Six Sects.

The only problem was that he was at loggerheads with the head of their organization, not to mention that he had inadvertently induced the destruction of its headquarters.

Even if he demanded Premier Immortal Pills from them, it was likely that they would not give any to him!

But I guess that it’s still worth a try. I do still have the token that Kong shi gave me, so there’s a chance that the disciples of the Ethereal Hall will be forced to provide me with whatever I need, Zhang Xuan thought with a glint in his eyes.

He had been hesitant to use it after realizing that it was the thing that had been giving away his location to the Hall of Gods, resulting in the assassination attempts time and time again. However, now that his cultivation had reached Earthly Semi-Divinity realm, there was no one in this world who could threaten him other than Kong shi.

What else did he have to fear?

In fact, he would be extremely glad if Kong shi came personally for him. That would save him the hassle of having to hunt him down.

Zhang Xuan looked at Han Jianqiu and asked, “Is it still possible to enter the Ethereal Hall?”

Realizing the devious thoughts that were in Zhang Xuan’s mind, Han Jianqiu could not help but chuckle to himself as he replied, “Of course!”

Even though the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall had been destroyed, the other branches remained perfectly intact. Cultivators could still enter and leave it as they pleased, and the teleportation service of purchased objects was still working as usual.

“I’ll be heading in for a moment,” Zhang Xuan informed them.

He took out the Ethereal Token that he had been using and quickly immersed his consciousness into it. Soon, he found himself standing before a familiar tower.

Without any hesitation, he made his way over to the receptionist and passed the token that he had received from Kong shi over.

“I want one hundred Premier Immortal Pills,” Zhang Xuan demanded coolly.

“One hundred Premier Immortal Pills?”

The elder of the Ethereal Hall shuddered in horror upon hearing the ridiculous demand. He glanced at the token in the young man’s hand before anxiously flipping through the records. A moment later, he said, “We don’t have that many Premier Immortal Pills here at the moment. However, we can transfer the stock from other branches over. I think we should be able to gather the required amount within a day’s time...”

“Good. Give me everything that you have at the moment, and I’ll collect everything else a day from now!” Zhang Xuan replied.

“Y-yes, esteemed guest!” The elder quickly rushed into a room, and roughly an hour later, he passed several jade bottles over. “There are thirty Premier Immortal Pills here in total!”

“Un!” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction before retracting his consciousness out of the Ethereal Hall.

He had worried that Kong shi would have revoked his privileges after revealing his true color, but to his surprise, it was still working!

Most likely, Kong shi is so busy recuperating from the injuries that he sustained from the clone a while back that he forgot about this matter... However, this will be last time that I can tap into this privilege.

Even though the elder had said that he would gather the remaining seventy Premier Immortal Pills by tomorrow, the problem was that it was even more likely that news would reach the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall before then. Once that happened, the privileges that he enjoyed through the token would be annulled, and the seventy Premier Immortal Pills would never reach his hands.

After all, there was no way Kong shi would be so foolish as to provide his enemy with the cultivation resources that he needed to power up.

As such, he could only take away as much as he could in the earlier transaction.

2082 The Two Altars

After demanding the Premier Immortal Pills from the Ethereal Hall, Zhang Xuan headed over to an empty area above the Ocean of Exiled Stars and waited patiently in case someone came for him.

But just as he expected, no one from the Hall of Gods arrived even after he waited for some time.

He could not help but feel a little downcast.

In the past, Kong shi would sponsor him with pills to eat and bodies to forge, but there was nothing at all anymore...

“If only I’d known this would happen. I would have made sure to squeeze the Ethereal Hall dry before challenging the Hall of Gods...”

Zhang Xuan waited for another two more hours, but there was no trace of anyone at all. In the end, he had no choice but to return to Starchaser Palace.

“I recall Kong shi saying that he has been suppressed for several thousand years and hasn’t fully recovered yet. Furthermore, he used a huge portion of his energy to massacre and seal off the Hall of Gods. So, it’s safe to assume that his true strength is much greater than what he displayed back then. However, just who in the world has the ability to suppress him?”

The fact that Kong shi was able to massacre the Hall of Gods was enough to show just how powerful he was. Even a transcendental organization like the Hall of Gods did not have the capability to deal with him. Given so, it was hard to believe that there was person in the Azure who was powerful enough to suppress him for several thousand years, such that he had only been able to regain consciousness recently.

Zhang Xuan thought about the matter for a while, but he was still unable to make sense of the matter. Eventually, he could only drop all thoughts.

Heading to a silent chamber, he swallowed the thirty Premier Immortal Pills that he had just acquired and managed to advance his cultivation a fair bit. However, he was still some distance away from reaching Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm by the end of it.

Nevertheless, feeling the incredible strength pulsating in his body, Zhang Xuan felt compelled to test his fighting prowess once again.

So, with a vicious glint in his eyes, he summoned his clone once more.

This time, the two of them actually managed to fight on equal ground with one another. His strength was on par with his clone's.

Furthermore, he had not used his swordsmanship yet.

“It seems like I’m finally stronger than my clone.” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Ever since he created his clone two years ago, he had been dominated by the latter time and time again. It was only after he created his own cultivation technique that he finally managed to slightly surpass his clone.

“It’s about time for me to head to the Hall of Gods,” Zhang Xuan murmured as he walked out of his room confidently.

He should head to the Hall of Gods to save Du Qingyuan and settle the grudges with Kong shi once and for all.

So, he quickly gathered Zhao Yue, Jiang Yao, and the others before getting Wu Chen to bring out the altar from the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe.

“Sect Leader Zhang, I’m a little worried about this matter. Since you have been able to think of this, it’s likely that the other party has been able to figure it out as well. There’s a good chance that he has laid a trap for you over there, waiting for you to walk right in,” Han Jianqiu said worriedly.

The fact that Kong shi knew of the chants of the ritual meant that he had a deep understanding of what the altar was capable

of. At the very least, it was safe to assume that his knowledge surpassed that of every single one of them present.

It was even possible that Kong shi had planned for everything to develop like this! He had intentionally sealed off all routes so that Zhang Xuan would have no choice but to rely on the altar to reach him.

“I won’t be able to save Du Qingyuan if I don’t do this. I can’t afford to continue wasting time here...” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had thought of this possibility as well, but he knew that he could not afford to continue waiting.

He had fought with Kong shi before, and the latter already possessed strength on par with his clone when he had not fully recovered. Once the latter regained his full might, the chances of victory would be extremely slim.

By then, it would be one thing if he was killed, but even those around him might fall prey to Kong shi as well.

As such, he knew that he could not back down.

Zhao Ya and the others walked forward and said, “Teacher, we wish to go with you as well.”

“You are still too weak at the moment. I have stored the unique aura you will require to reach the Semi-Divinity realm in here. Cultivate diligently. You’ll be able to help me once you reach the Semi-Divinity realm,” Zhang Xuan said.

With a wave of his hand, he passed the jade bottles over that he had prepared for his direct disciples beforehand.

Zhao Ya and the others had the necessary cultivation techniques and cultivation resources for them to make a breakthrough, but unfortunately, their time in the Azure had simply been too limited. As such, they were still a long way off from reaching the Semi-Divinity realm.

If they followed him to the Hall of Gods, there was a high chance that they would end up being captured and used as hostages to keep him in check.

Since that was the case, it would be better for them to focus on their cultivation so that they could reach the Semi- Divinity realm as quickly as possible.

Knowing that they were not in a position to help their teacher, Zhao Ya and the others clenched their fists tightly in agitation.

They hated the fact that they were weak. It had always been like this. Their teacher would stand at the forefront and brave all kinds of danger whereas they could only stand helplessly behind him. They detested this feeling of helplessness.

After dealing with his direct disciples, Zhang Xuan turned his gaze to Han Jianqiu. “Han Jianqiu, I have developed a deeper understanding of the Gods’ Sword Intent in recent days. I’ll impart it to you now...”

“Thank you, Sect Leader Zhang,” Han Jianqiu replied as his eyes reddened slightly.

He had been studying the method to comprehend the Gods’ Sword Intent that Zhang Xuan had given him a few days ago. He could feel himself coming very close to that level, but he was simply unable to take the final step forward. He had a feeling that the new insights from Zhang Xuan would be the key that he required for a breakthrough.

Once he had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, with his strength as a Semi-Divinity realm expert, even if he was unable to emulate the greatness of the founder, at the very least, he would have the strength to protect the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion from the Ethereal Hall and the Hall of Gods.

It was just that he could not help but feel as if Zhang Xuan was delegating his will, and this made him feel a little heavy inside.

“However, this insight comes from my own comprehension, so it’ll deviate significantly from the Gods’ Sword Intent of the sect. If you wish to study it, you’ll have to come under my lineage and become my student. May I know if you’re willing to do that?” Zhang Xuan asked after a moment of hesitation.

It was not that he was trying to humiliate Han Jianqiu. Rather, he was using this as one final attempt to induce the creation of another golden page before facing Kong shi!

He was going to head to the lair of the enemies very soon. Even though he had raised his cultivation significantly, honestly speaking, he was not confident of victory.

If he could just obtain a single golden page, he would be in a much more favorable position than before.

He was not too certain what the conditions for producing the golden page were, but he knew that one of the key elements was genuine gratitude to him as a teacher.

“It would be my honor to become your student.” Han Jianqiu nodded without any hesitation.

There were many renowned experts in the world who were only willing to pass down their secret arts to those in their lineage. Considering the profoundness and ingenuity of the Gods’ Sword Intent, it was understandable why Zhang Xuan might be reluctant to pass it down to someone who was not in his lineage even if he was the sect leader.

Han Jianqiu had already seen past the transiency of what humans defined as pride and dignity. He did not think that it was a big deal for him to become the student of someone much younger than him.

Seeing that Han Jianqiu had agreed to it, Zhang Xuan tapped his finger lightly and infused a sliver of his will into the other party’s mind.

Upon receiving Zhang Xuan’s swordsmanship insights, he immediately took out his sword and began practicing his swordplay.

He had already reached an extremely high level in swordsmanship, such that it was extremely hard for him to progress any higher. Yet, his swordplay still seemed to be getting much sharper and more unpredictable with each move he made.

Eventually, it came to a point where something seemed to shatter within him. Following that, his energy suddenly

surged, and his entire being seemed to have morphed into a cold, sharp sword.

“Finally, I have managed to reach this level...” Han Jianqiu’s hands were trembling.

In order to comprehend the Gods’ Sword Intent, he had devoted more than a hundred years to practicing his swordsmanship, but alas, success had always eluded him. He had eventually come to think that this day would not come in his lifetime.

“Teacher, thank you for fulfilling my greatest wish!” Han Jianqiu knelt onto the floor and bowed deeply out of respect.

Upon seeing this, Zhang Xuan quickly brought his consciousness to the Library of Heaven’s Path, but even after waiting for a while, there was nothing at all. A golden page had not been created.

He frowned.

The golden page would usually appear after this, especially in times when he really needed it. Why did it have to fail at this crucial moment?

Sighing internally, Zhang Xuan quickly walked forward and helped Han Jianqiu up. “There’s no need to stand on ceremony.”

Following that, he turned his gaze to Jiang Yao, Qin Yuan, and Kui Xiao.

He tried the same method on them as well. He imparted his comprehension of cultivation, beast taming, and battle techniques to them, and the trio benefited greatly from his teaching. They managed to rise to greater heights, and they expressed their deep gratitude to him for guiding them.

Fortunately, a golden page was generated this time around. It came from Jiang Yao.

Just as I thought—gratitude isn’t the only thing that is required. Most likely, it has something to do with the intensity

of one's desire as well, Zhang Xuan thought as he heaved a sigh of relief.

Han Jianqiu, Kui Xiao, and Qin Yuan were grateful toward him as well, but as heads of their respective sects, as well as Semi-Divinity realm experts, their desire for strength had already waned significantly. Even if they were thankful to Zhang Xuan, the feelings they felt were not that strong.

It was similar to how you could treat a cook to a Manchu Han Imperial Feast, and the latter still would not feel too grateful to you. On the other hand, if you gave a lollipop to a little child, they would think that you are the best person in the entire world.

A person who had undergone more turmoil would gradually let go of their desires.

Jiang Yao was not the head of Starchaser Palace, and in the City of Collapsed Space, she had nearly lost her life. Thus, she recognized how desperately she was in need of strength, so the gratitude she felt toward Zhang Xuan, who lent her a helping hand when she was at a loss as to what she could do, was understandable.

There were probably more conditions required for the generation of the golden page, but this was all he could deduce for the time being.

Thinking about it, gratitude is also one of the invaluable emotions that a human has, Zhang Xuan thought deeply.

Perhaps, if he had paid more attention to this trivial detail, he might have been able to come up with the Pathos of Heavens much earlier. He would not have spent so many years wracking his brain to come up with something.

With everything in place, Zhang Xuan turned to Wu Chen and said, "Let's begin."

Hu!

With a wave of his hands, Wu Chen filled the altar with tributes. Then, with a snap of his fingers, all the tributes began burning up. At the same time, the altar began rising into the air, emanating an aura that seemed to stop one's breathing.

Wu Chen began to chant out loud.

The flames on the altar blazed, and the space around it began to distort, gradually forming something reminiscent of a door.

“Teacher, why don’t I head over first to see if there is any danger? If there is a threat on the other side, we can strategize and come up with an appropriate countermeasure!” Han Jianqiu anxiously proposed.

“I’ll do it instead. My strength might not be on par with you, but I have plenty of life preservation means,” Elder Kui Xiao said.

Seeing how worried those two were, Zhang Xuan shot them a confident smile and said, “There’s no need for that. I’ll enter first, and you can follow behind me if you like. Even if the enemy is the Hall of Gods, we still have to show them the price of messing with us!”

“Sounds good!”

The others cheered passionately in agreement.

How long had it been since they barged into the Hall of Gods? Their predecessors had succeeded a long time ago, and perhaps it was time for a new legend to be born.

Regardless of whether they succeeded or not, since the Hall of Gods had already bared its fangs against them, the Six Sects would have to make a stand as well to show that they were not to be trifled with! Hu!

Zhang Xuan walked up to the door and entered it.

He saw the space around him distorting entirely. With a smile on his lips, he brought out his clone before entering his storage ring.

Just as the others had said, the Hall of Gods was fraught with dangers. There was a good chance that Kong shi had already laid out an elaborate trap for him. Given that his clone was indestructible, there was no one more suited than it to serve as the vanguard.

Driving his zhenqi, the clone took a step forward and walked out of the portal.

“Hmm? Where is this?”

Before his eyes was neither the Hall of Gods nor the exploded headquarters of the Ethereal Hall. Instead, it was a long, narrow passageway that went on and on amid the void.

The altar that he had teleported to was currently right beneath his feet.

2083 The Mysterious Palace

“There’s nothing here at all?”

An identical figure appeared right beside Zhang Xuan’s clone.

He thought that he would immediately be faced with the offense of innumerable Semi-Divinity realm cultivators once he teleported over, but there was no one in sight at all.

“However, there seems to be something really suspicious about this place.”

The more empty the place looked, the more unnerving it felt.

Leaping off the altar, Zhang Xuan was intending to wait for Kui Xiao and the others to come over when he suddenly felt a chill run down his spine. He immediately reached forward to grab the altar.

But before his hand could reach the altar, a burst of sword qi shot out from below.

Kacha! Kacha! Kacha!

The domineering energy tore the altar into smithereens.

As a result of the destruction of the altar, the dimension portal between the two altars vanished.

Pu!

On the other side of the portal, Wu Chen spurted a mouthful of blood. His face turned pale from weakness, and his body trembled uncontrollably.

“What’s wrong?”

Noticing Wu Chen’s current state, Kui Xiao and the others quickly turned their gazes over.

“Someone destroyed the altar on the other side and severed the connection. Zhang shi won’t be able to return anymore...” Wu Chen muttered with eyes widened in horror.

“What do you mean by that?”

Everyone was stunned to hear those words.

“There is only one altar from the Starchaser Palace. Its destruction means that the only pathway to the Hall of Gods has been severed. We won’t be able to head over to save him anymore even if we wish to do so. Similarly, he won’t be able to return back here through the altar anymore...” Wu Chen replied.

“This...”

Realizing the graveness of the situation, the crowd looked at one another in astonishment.

The eyes of Zhao Ya and the others also reddened in agitation.

Doesn’t this mean that our teacher is in grave danger?

It’s all our fault! If not for our weakness, our teacher wouldn’t have been placed in such a precarious position!

We have to raise your cultivation swiftly so that we can save him!

A determined light could be seen in the depths of their eyes.

On the other side of the portal, Zhang Xuan looked at the destroyed altar before him with clenched fists.

It wasn’t that his reflexes weren’t fast enough. Rather, the enemy had left a formation right beneath the altar to ensure that it would be destroyed as soon as he came over, thus severing all of his paths of escape.

In other words, no matter what the enemy had prepared for him from here onward, he could only advance ahead and deal with whatever that came his way promptly. Retreating was no longer an option for him.

“I thought that you wanted my Library of Heaven’s Path? How are you going to hold the ritual now that you have destroyed the altar?” Zhang Xuan spoke with a deep voice as he examined his surroundings nonchalantly.

The reason why Kong shi sent Fu Chenzi and the others to capture Du Qingyuan was so that he could acquire the altar

required to hold the ritual. After all the planning he had done, he eventually chose to destroy it without any hesitation.

Could it be that Kong shi's goal had changed? Was it that he no longer desired the Library of Heaven's Path anymore?

Zhang Xuan's voice echoed loudly across the path ahead.

After waiting for some time, there was still no response.

It was as if there was no other living being here other than him.

"I guess I can only advance forward."

With completely no idea as to what the other party was up to, Zhang Xuan felt as if he was walking into a lion's den. With a frown on his forehead, he raised his foot and began making his way forward cautiously.

His clone followed closely behind him.

The passageway wasn't too long. It didn't take long before a massive palace appeared before his eyes.

It was even more magnificent and grander than the Hall of Gods he had seen previously. It was erected above a massive cradle of air currents, sealing the cradle entirely such that not the slightest bit could leak out.

Zhang Xuan was a little taken aback.

The sight before him looked like a whirlpool being clogged up by a humongous behemoth. No matter how powerful the whirlpool was, it was unable to faze the behemoth at all.

Such was the grandeur of the palace.

Pitch-black air streams seemed to fly toward the unfathomable darkness, leaving one's heart trembling from the eeriness.

Yet, none was able to taint the palace, reminiscent of a valve in a pipe.

I should try entering the palace.

No matter what Kong shi was up to, he could only dive right into it and try to make his way out alive. The problem wouldn't solve itself just by him waiting outside.

He walked to the entrance of the palace together with his clone and saw two humongous pillars rising deep into the void. It looked as if the centerpiece that was pinning the palace in place, preventing it from flying away along with the air currents.

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan activated the Eye of Insight to take a closer look.

“It’s a Semi-Divinity artifact?” Zhang Xuan remarked in surprise.

He couldn’t help but recall how the doors of the Hall of Gods had been a Semi-Divinity artifact too.

He took out the Tongshang Sword and brandished it lightly. A burst of sword qi slit through the air currents, heading right for the two pillars.

Ding!

A spark could be seen as it struck the pillar, but it didn’t leave the slightest mark at all.

“Even the pillars of this palace are so formidable... Just where is this place?” Zhang Xuan murmured in astonishment.

The palace before him was distinctly different from the Hall of Gods, but the materials that were used to build it seemed to be of even higher quality than the latter.

The gates of the palace weren’t locked nor shut, so Zhang Xuan was able to walk in without any problems.

A few steps later, Zhang Xuan realized that something was amiss.

He turned around to look at his clone, who was still standing by the doorway, and asked, “Aren’t you coming along?”

“I can’t step across the doorway.”

The clone demonstrated by taking a step forward, but in the next moment, a force assaulted him, causing him to retreat several steps consecutively. It was as if there was an invisible force field blocking his way, preventing him from advancing any further.

“You can’t step across the doorway?”

Zhang Xuan walked back to the doorway and tried touching the area which his clone was unable to pass through.

There was nothing at all. Yet, it was a fact that his clone was unable to advance a step at all.

“Never mind. You should enter my storage ring for the time being then,” Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

After keeping his clone into his storage ring, he walked into the doorway again. However, just as he was going to pass through, his clone suddenly materialized out of the storage ring and stumbled backward.

This time, Zhang Xuan was really stunned.

His clone was driven out even when he was hiding in the storage ring?

Wasn’t this invisible barrier a little too domineering?

They tried a few more methods, but his clone was simply unable to walk into the palace.

“Since you aren’t able to enter the area, you should wait here for the time being,” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

“It seems like Kong shi knows how troublesome it is to deal with my clone, so he did something to separate me from my clone...” Zhang Xuan thought warily.

As formidable Kong shi was, he was only able to fight his clone to a draw back then. This probably made Kong shi view his clone as a major threat, so he intentionally prepared this so that he could deal with him individually.

In other words, it was likely that he would meet in danger within this palace.

If so, should he continue advancing?

Holding the Tongshang Sword tightly, Zhang Xuan took in a deep breath.

If I dare not to face Kong shi even after my cultivation has reached Semi-Divinity realm, I’ll never be able to break open

the dimension barrier and ascend to the Firmament, Zhang Xuan closed his eyes and thought.

A cultivator's state of mind was extremely important.

There was only a thin line between recklessness and cowardice. Once a cultivator caved in to his fears, he would lose his courage to charge forward in times when it truly counted.

Most likely, Kong shi had prepared this in order to put him in a dilemma.

It wouldn't be wrong for him to back out right now. He only had one life, and there was no wrong in prioritizing his safety.

However, the faces of Luo Ruoxin and his direct disciples flashed across his head at this moment. There was something that was more important to him at the moment that he couldn't give up on, even if he had to take this gamble.

So, he cast aside his fears and walked right into the palace.

The interiors of the hall were unlighted and nothing could be seen at all.

There was something in the darkness that seemed to be wearing down his senses and mind. Even when he activated the Eye of Insight, he was still unable to peer through it.

"I'm already in here. Make your move if you wish to kill me!" Zhang Xuan slowly advanced forward with his sword in hand.

Echoes of his voice sounded all over the palace, but there was no response at all.

Perplexed, he backed away slightly, wanting to leave the darkness temporarily to reassess the situation. However, in the next moment, he felt his back pressing against a wall.

He had barely taken a few steps away from the gates earlier, and before he knew it, the gates had already vanished!

To put it in other words...

He was already trapped in the formation of the enemy.

Flaws!

Zhang Xuan pressed his hand against the wall behind him and willed.

If he could just use his Library of Heaven's Path here, he would be able to peer through the formation right before him. Weng!

The Library of Heaven's Path jolted in his mind, but no book was compiled.

“Damn it!” Zhang Xuan cursed beneath his breath.

Just as he had thought, this palace was severed from the heavens too. Only Kong shi, who knew about the Heavens' Imperfections, would prepare such a hand to deal with him.

Plunged in the midst of utter darkness, where his senses were confounded and his mind was befuddled, he was in a truly vulnerable position. It seemed like this was Kong shi's trump card against him!

I have no choice. Since I'm unable to use my eyes and my Spiritual Perception, I can only rely on my ears then... Zhang Xuan thought.

He was nervous but he wasn't panicked yet. He closed his eyes and focused his attention on his ears. The silence in the air caused a ringing sensation in his ears that made it hard for him to hear, but through focusing his full attention, he was still able to pick up some of the minute noises carried along with the wind.

Drip! Drip!

It was the sound of water droplets dripping, and it was coming from a distance away.

“Go!”

Zhang Xuan brandished his sword, and a surge of sword qi flew right in the direction where the water droplets were coming from.

But astonishingly, there was no response at all.

It was as if the darkness had swallowed his sword qi at some point in time, unraveling his attack.

Just as Zhang Xuan was utterly perplexed as to what was happening, Kong shi's voice suddenly echoed in the air, "Walk out of this room before the water drips out. Otherwise, you'll be evicted from here."

Evicted from here?

Zhang Xuan's confusion only served to further deepen.

Didn't Kong shi intentionally lure him here in order to deal with him?

Why would he threaten to evict him out of this room then?

The altar has been destroyed, so even if I am evicted from this palace, I won't be able to leave this area either. Instead, I might just be trapped till my death. So, I have no choice but to follow his rules for the time being. Once I find him and save Palace Master Du, I'll make sure to rip him apart... Zhang Xuan thought as he exhaled deeply.

No matter what Kong shi was up to, he would just have to deal with everything the other party had prepared. Eventually, he should be able to find Kong shi at the end of the path!

Having decided on his next course of action, he began examining his surroundings carefully.

Even though I can't see anything at all, there's nothing attacking me either. Most likely, this is a Confinement Formation, Zhang Xuan thought.

The fact that it could hinder his Spiritual Perception and Eye of Insight likely meant that it was a Confinement Formation far beyond his imagination.

Nevertheless, as long as it's a formation, there is bound to be some anomaly in the flow of spiritual energy in the surroundings. As long as I can figure out the flow of spiritual energy, I should be able to deduce the locations of the formation core and formation flags. With that, it shouldn't be too difficult for me to overcome the formation! Zhang Xuan thought.

So, he closed his eyes and began perceiving his surroundings carefully.

The key purpose of formation flags and formation core was to redirect the flow of spiritual energy based on the needs of the formation. Given so, there was bound to be some anomalies in the flow of spiritual energy in the surroundings where a formation existed.

As long as he could create a visual mapping of the flow of spiritual energy in his mind, he would be able to find a way to resolve this issue.

This was also the most fundamental formation deciphering method on the Master Teacher Continent.

As the most proficient formation master on the Master Teacher Continent, it went without saying that he was familiar with these basics.

Something is wrong. It feels like the spiritual energy in here is... homogeneous?

To his surprise, the concentration of spiritual energy within the palace was equal. There was no concentration gradient at all. This threw Zhang Xuan off a little.

He took two steps forward and tried perceiving his surroundings once more. The concentration of spiritual energy was still the same.

He tried taking a few steps left and a few steps right too, and it was still the same.

This didn't make sense. Was his deduction wrong?

Were there no formation flags and formation core here?

Left with no choice, Zhang Xuan finally took out a compass and placed it on his palm.

He couldn't even see the needle on top due to the deep darkness, but as long as it moved, he would still be able to sense the direction it was pointing toward.

2084 Heaven's Path Hammer

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t

However, he could feel the needle in the compass spinning ceaselessly, not stopping at all.

There were only two reasons behind such a phenomenon. It was either the flow of spiritual energy was too chaotic or that the concentration of spiritual energy was completely equal throughout.

Spiritual energy is similar to the flow of water. It's possible for the water within a well to be peaceful and motionless, but as soon as something intrudes its space, ripples would be produced... Zhang Xuan thought.

“Thus, it's a logical impossibility for the spiritual energy to remain unmoved even after I have entered this space. This only goes to show that there's something unnatural about the spiritual energy here... or else, it could also mean to say that the spiritual energy I am sensing is off! In other words, this Confinement Formation confounds one's ability to sense spiritual energy as well!”

Zhang Xuan had never seen this Confinement Formation before, but he had his trove of knowledge with him. He had read many books relating to formations back on the Master Teacher Continent and on the Azure as well, so it wasn't too difficult for him to figure out what was happening before him.

“I should try sealing my six senses!”

Most Confinement Formations work through interfering with a cultivator's senses. So, the only way to prevent such interference from occurring was to seal off one's senses.

In an instant, Zhang Xuan felt as if he had been cast into oblivion. He was unable to see, hear, touch, or smell anything.

Even his consciousness seemed to have been plunged into a state of hibernation.

This tranquil silence lasted for quite a while, then an image of a slight gap with water dripping from it seemed to surface in Zhang Xuan's mind.

This gap wasn't too big, allowing only a droplet of water to fall out at a time. It was what that was causing the dripping sound.

“This is it!”

With a silent exclamation, Zhang Xuan channeled his Gods' Sword Intent into his hands before pulling it down furiously upon the slight gap, as though it was a massive sword with a length that could reach the heavens.

Hula!

It was as if the dark cloth around him had been sliced apart.

Zhang Xuan opened his eyes, and just as he had expected, his sense of sight had returned to him. Innumerable torches lit up the path ahead of him brightly.

The Confinement Formation is indeed a trap for the heart... Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply as he thought in relief.

He knew that he had gambled right this time around.

The Confinement Formation confounded not only one's senses but one's soul too. The only way to overcome it was to cast aside one's reliance on one's senses and use one's raw intuition to identify the source of the dripping water.

In truth, it had very little to do with one's understanding of formations. As long as one had a resilient state of mind, one should be able to find it eventually and overcome the trial easily.

You have overcome the Heart Oblivion Formation within a tenth of the allocated time, proving that your cultivation and state of mind are fairly decent. You are qualified to proceed on to the second floor,” Kong shi's voice echoed in the air.

Following that, a stone staircase abruptly descended from the top.

“Heart Oblivion Formation? Qualified? What the hell are you up to?” Zhang Xuan bellowed in bewilderment.

He thought that Kong shi would have made preparations for countless Semi-Divinity realm cultivators to ambush him as soon as he teleported over via the formation, but all the other party did was to put him through a Confinement Formation, and now, he was telling him he was qualified to move to the second floor?

Just what was that fellow up to?

However, he was only met with silence. The doubts he harbored remained unanswered.

Taking in a deep breath, Zhang Xuan made his way up the stone staircase.

As soon as he stepped onto the first step, he felt an inviolable pressure crushing down on him, as if attempting to push his soul out of his body.

This pressure seems to have originated from the gods... Zhang Xuan thought with a frown as he continued moving up the steps.

The pressure that crushed down on him left him with a feeling of helplessness in the depths of his hearts. It felt as if it was shackling down his bloodline and his life force.

It was an instinctive fear, similar to how the knees of an ordinary human would shake in the face of a tiger.

This was a feeling that came from the depths of his soul, so there was no way he could avoid it.

However, such a trial was nothing to him at all.

Weng!

The pendant that hung in front of his chest emanated a slight warmth that dissipated the pressure around him.

Zhang Xuan walked up the stairs without any trouble, and soon, he arrived on the second floor of the palace.

Similar to before, he was faced with a spacious hall in front of him. There were eight paintings positioned in an Eight Trigram Formation hanging on the walls in front of him. It felt like they were trying to seal something off.

Zhang Xuan took a closer look at the paintings in front of him.

The paintings depicted eight men, each of them wielding a weapon of a different kind. One brandished a sword, one wielded a saber, one gripped onto a steel whip, one carried a metal hammer...

As Zhang Xuan walked toward the painting, he could feel a sharp sensation coming from the paintings.

“These paintings can’t be considered as amazing artistic works, but the person who made the paintings clearly possesses exceptional skills. With a few simple strokes, he was able to infuse the essence of the person he was drawing into the painting...”

Zhang Xuan’s mastery of painting had already reached 9-star back when he was still at the Master Teacher Continent. He dared not to claim that his painting skills were on par with Kong shi, but at the very least, he didn’t think that he was too lacking in comparison to the latter...

The paintings in front of him were drawn simply, such that even a 3-star painter of the Master Teacher Continent would be able to produce artwork of such quality as well. However, what was powerful about these paintings was how they had precisely captured the power and disposition of these eight people accurately.

This was a feat that not even Zhang Xuan would be able to achieve.

“Could this be the drawings of a god?”

Zhang Xuan could only imagine a real god to be capable of infusing such amazing power into an ordinary piece of paper through a brush and preserve its might for so many years.

Of the eight paintings, six of them were colored. One of them had turned grayish, making it reminiscent of a black- and-white photograph whereas the last one had lost half of its

color, making it an incomplete piece. It was hard to tell whether the artist had failed to color it in the first place or it had started fading off at some point in time.

Zhang Xuan studied the paintings for a little longer, but he was unable to identify any useful clues from it. At the same time, he didn't hear Kong Shi's voice sounding either.

So, he walked up to one of the paintings to take a closer look.

There was nothing else in this massive hall other than these eight paintings, so he knew that the key to advancing on from this area lay within the paintings. Most likely, he would have to find a way to uncover their secrets.

The painting he walked up toward was one that depicted a brawny man with eyes as large as bells. The man carried two metal hammers in his grasp, and his bulging biceps hinted at the great strength he wielded. Zhang Xuan hesitantly reached out to touch the painting.

Hu!

Following that, he vanished on the spot. When he reappeared once more, he was already standing in the midst of vast, barren lands.

It was a completely white world that was devoid of greenery or anything else. It felt almost as if he had descended into an illusory dream.

“Make your move.”

Raising his head, Zhang Xuan saw a brawny man looking at him coldly with two metal hammers in his grasp.

“Did I... enter the painting somehow?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

The brawny man standing before him was indeed the same person he had seen in the painting earlier. It seemed like he had been pulled into the painting!

“Why should I fight with you?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown as he looked at the ferocious man in front of him.

He was still trying to figure out what was happening to him when the other party told him to make a move.

“If you don’t make a move, you’ll be trapped here for your entire life,” the brawny man harrumphed coldly.

Paying no heed to whether Zhang Xuan was willing to fight or not, the brawny man swung his hammers right toward him.

Before it even struck, the sheer force behind the hammers made cold sweat from behind Zhang Xuan’s back.

To his astonishment, the strength of the brawny man had already exceeded that of the Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm cultivator he had encountered on the Ocean of Exiled Stars... In fact, his strength might even be greater than Kong shi’s!

“A god...”

In that instant, Zhang Xuan realized that even if the person standing before him wasn’t a god, he was an existence not too far away from that.

Zhang Xuan raised his hand to take out his sword, only to realize that his mental connection with his storage ring had been severed. On top of that, at some point in time, a pair of gigantic metal hammers had appeared in his hands too.

He didn’t think that his choice of weapons would be limited in the painting too, and his complexion turned awful. He would have been fine if it had been any other weapons, but he had never practiced any battle techniques that required the use of hammers!

Before Zhang Xuan could groan about the situation he was in, the brawny man had already swung a metal hammer right toward his ribcage.

The key advantage of fighting with a hammer was the superior torque it provided due to its weight, thus enhancing one’s strength significantly. Even though it was impossible for hammer wielders to be as agile as sword practitioners, they were able to restrict the movements of their opponents due to their sheer strength.

Zhang Xuan took a step back and avoided the attack as he thought anxiously, I guess I have no choice but to learn on the spot then...

While he had never practiced any hammer-related battle techniques or fighting style before, he did gather quite a few battle technique manuals relating to hammers. It was just that he had left them lying on the shelves of the Library of Heaven's Path, never bothering to compile or learn them.

But since he was limited to only using hammers in here, he had no choice but to learn it right now.

Compile!

Zhang Xuan gathered all of the books relating to hammers together and assimilated them together, forming a brand new book.

He tapped his finger on the newly compiled book, and knowledge immediately flowed into his mind.

He was indeed worried about the grayish gaseous substance that grew in his body each time he used the Library of Heaven's Path, but given the desperate situation he was in, he couldn't care that much anymore.

He would just have to find a way to resolve them in the future. Otherwise, it was likely that he would die from the crazy brawny man chasing after him with two gigantic hammers first.

The severing of the heavens only prevented his Library of Heaven's Path from gathering the flaws of other objects, but he was still able to access the Library of Heaven's Path through his consciousness and access the books in them.

While dodging the brawny man's attack, he quickly assimilated the Heaven's Path Hammer Art, turning it into his own.

Once he fully comprehended the Heaven's Path Hammer Art, his aura abruptly changed. In an instant, his aura grew heavy like a mountain, reminiscent of a being that wouldn't waver in the face of anything.

Peng! Peng! Peng! Peng!

He began clashing hammers with the brawny man, but that didn't seem to be a good idea. Astonishingly, his Heaven's Path Hammer Art was actually weaker than the brawny man's battle technique. He was still able to stand his ground for the time being as his strength was at least able to match the brawny man's might, but the feedback from each clash made his arm feel a bit number.

Fortunately, it seemed like it was the other party had taken on some damage too. The brawny man's attack speed had visibly decreased.

“But it would still be difficult for me to defeat him before my zhenqi runs out at this rate. I'll have to think of another method ...”

Even though the brawny man was just a person in a painting, the strength he wielded was almost comparable to that of the gods. Zhang Xuan was indeed able to stand his ground against the other party after he had achieved a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm, but it still wouldn't be an easy feat for him to triumph over this opponent.

If he were to allow things to continue at this pace, even if he were to win the battle, he would still have exhausted himself significantly in the midst of doing so.

That would be dangerous, especially considering he didn't know where Kong shi was and what he was up to.

The brawny man's hammer art is even more profound than my Heaven's Path Hammer Art. If I could just infuse his maneuvers into my battle technique too, I should be able to win the battle... Zhang Xuan thought

Despite having practiced the Heaven's Path Hammer Art, he could tell that his battle techniques were still a little lacking as compared to his opponents. Unless he could learn his opponent's moves, infuse it into his own, and create an even stronger battle technique, or else it would be a difficult battle for him.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan quickly paid closer attention to the brawny man's movements.

Hu hu hu hu!

The other party continued pressing on with his offense furiously whereas Zhang Xuan made use of the opportunity to remember every single one of his moves.

After trading a hundred blows, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up in surprise.

His hammer art only has 12 basic moves, and everything else aside from that are just transformations and extrapolations from those 12 moves?

2085 Facing Off Against Kong shi

Even though the maneuvers of the brawny man looked profound, in truth, all his attacks were made up of twelve basic movements.

This was similar to how his Heaven's Path Sword Art only had a single move, but through its countless possible transformations, he was able to bring out different moves to handle different situations.

The crux of a battle technique lay in the intent, not the form. As long as the intent was precise, the attack would eventually connect.

Zhang Xuan quickly went through the twelve moves in his head, and he could not help but exclaim in astonishment.

This hammer art was rather similar to the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula that he had practiced. The twelve moves had to be executed in a certain order.

Compile!

Zhang Xuan quickly jotted down the movements in his head and compiled them together with the Heaven's Path Hammer Art. The correct sequence appeared before his eyes, and he quickly moved his hammer in accordance to it.

Boom!

Barely after making two moves, he felt a different aura rising from the depths of his body. He had reached at an epiphany.

"This is... the Gods' Hammer Intent?" Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

He did not think that he would comprehend the Gods' Hammer Intent through learning the brawny man's hammer art. Furthermore, just like the Gods' Sword Intent that he had learned previously, it had reached the level of a true god.

Peng peng!

After comprehending the Gods' Hammer Intent, the movements of the brawny man before him suddenly became utterly hideous. He noticed all kinds of flaws in the other party's movements, and by exploiting one of them, he was able to subdue the other party within a few strikes.

His surroundings abruptly blurred, and when he came to once more, he was standing before the eight paintings yet again.

Kacha! Kacha!

Right before his eyes, Zhang Xuan saw the colored painting of the brawny man losing its vibrance, turning into a gray image.

He blinked blankly.

So, the reason the paintings lost their color was because someone had successfully challenged them and comprehended the gods' battle technique harnessed within?

In other words...

“It's said that Kong shi managed to snatch a (God)' character after entering the Hall of Gods, and the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion managed to snatch half a character... Could this be what they mean by it?”

Of the eight paintings, there was one that had turned into a black-and-white portrait, like the painting of the brawny man. At the same time, the painting of the person wielding a sword had lost half of its color.

This was in line with what he had heard so far.

“This also explains why the twelve hammer maneuvers are so similar to the twelve moves of the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Formula.” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in realization.

Most likely, the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had fought the person in the painting to a draw, so he had only managed to acquire half of the ■神 (God), character. Even though he had managed to learn all twelve maneuvers, he had not been able to figure out the correct sequence.

This resulted in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion being able to produce Semi-Divinity realm cultivators without overcoming the Azure Bridge, just that the number of successful cases was extremely low, incomparable to that of the Ethereal Hall.

“Since I have comprehended the twelve maneuvers of the hammer art, doesn’t that mean that I have successfully snatched a 神 (God)’ character, just like Kong shi did back then?”

That also meant that the place he was in at the moment was where Kong shi and the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had barged into back then!

It was no wonder no one in the Azure, except for those two, had succeeded in the past several thousand years. It was indeed no easy feat to defeat those people in the paintings.

After comprehending the Pathos of Heavens and raising his cultivation to Earthly Semi-Divinity realm, he could be considered the strongest individual on the Forsaken Continent aside from Kong shi!

Despite his strength, he had struggled quite a bit against the brawny man before he was able to achieve victory.

From this, it was apparent just how difficult it was a feat to acquire a 神 (God)_ character!

“You have acquired a 神 (God)_ character. You are qualified to proceed.”

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thought, the stone staircase descended from above once again, showing a path that led endlessly upward.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan was just about to step onto the stairs when a thought surfaced in his mind.

“Since I still have time, why don’t I take away the battle techniques harnessed in the other paintings?”

Even though he seemed to have taken some time to comprehend the hammer art and defeat the brawny man, in truth, it had only been ten minutes at most. Going by the rate

in which the water was dripping down, it had only been a fourth of the total time!

Since he had plenty of time to spare, it went without saying that he should acquire a few more (God)' characters!

After all, he was not the head of one sect but four sects! He could not possibly be biased by imparting the battle technique to only one of the sects, right?

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan stretched his hand forward to touch the painting depicting a lady holding a sword.

Similar to before, his surroundings warped as he was pulled into the painting.

The next moment, the lady in the painting immediately charged toward him with the sword she had in hand.

In response, Zhang Xuan released his Gods' Sword Intent and began brandishing his sword, too.

Within just three breaths, the enemy had already collapsed onto the white floor, turning into a splatter of ink.

“With this, I have managed to put together the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's (God)' character,” Zhang Xuan murmured with a chuckle.

Countless generations of disciples in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had worked themselves to the bone in hopes of completing the half ■神 (God)1 character their sect possessed. With this, he would have fulfilled their long-time wish.

After the painting turned gray, Zhang Xuan moved on to the one, which depicted an old man executing a battle technique. Without any hesitation, he reached out and touched the painting.

Five minutes later, he reappeared in the spacious hall, and the painting of the old man had turned gray.

With his prior experience, he knew what he had to do as soon as he entered the painting. As a result, he was much faster than the first time!

His efficiency only continued to rise for the remaining four paintings. It took him less than fifteen minutes in order to clear all of them. Only then did he finally place his foot on the stone staircase and begin heading toward the third floor.

The third floor was extremely spacious as well.

The surroundings were well-lit, and there were no paintings nor formations in sight. If there was one word to describe the area, it would be 'empty'.

Halting his footsteps, Zhang Xuan scanned his surroundings and shouted, "Kong shi, isn't it about time for you to make an appearance?"

Since the other party had set up all of this and baited him in, it should finally be time for the other party to appear.

Just as he had expected, right after he said those words, a tall figure appeared before his eyes.

It was none other than Kong shi!

Glaring at Kong shi with narrowed eyes, Zhang Xuan took out his Tongshang Sword and gripped its handle tightly.

This was the man who had attempted to take his life multiple times in order to acquire his Library of Heaven's Path. Since this man dared appear before him, he would have to return the favor!

However, Zhang Xuan quickly noticed that something was amiss. "What's wrong? Do you not dare face me with your main body?"

He realized that the other party was just a sliver of his will. It was not the main body at all.

Could it be that Kong shi knew that he had already reached the Semi-Divinity realm and feared that he was not a match for him anymore?

Paying no heed to Zhang Xuan's provocation, Kong shi placed his hands behind his back and spoke calmly. "It's formidable that you were able to clear seven paintings on your own. That being said, you'll still have to defeat me in order to obtain the Aura of Divinity and earn the right to become a real god!"

“You want to have a fight?”

Seeing that Kong shi was not escaping, Zhang Xuan raised his Tongshang Sword and slashed it furiously. He knew that his opponent would be powerful, so he used the Gods’ Sword Intent right from the start.

“I won’t take advantage of you either.” Kong shi chuckled softly.

He suppressed his Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm cultivation down to Earthly Semi-Divinity realm, the same level as Zhang Xuan.

With a flick of his finger, he took out a sword. It was hard to tell what tier it was, but it emanated an imposing chill. With a swift movement, he charged right up to Zhang Xuan.

Tzzz!

His Sword Intent burst forth as though a vigorous dragon.

“Formidable!”

Just these few moves were enough to tell Zhang Xuan that Kong shi was a true expert. Even though what he was facing was just a sliver of Kong shi’s will, the latter’s comprehension of swordsmanship was actually beneath his at all. On the contrary, it might even have surpassed his!

Despite being in the same cultivation realm, he was not able to claim an advantageous position!

“How did you become so powerful?” Zhang Xuan muttered in disbelief.

Back then, Kong shi had barely been able to fight on par with his clone.

However, he was already stronger than his clone at the moment, and he had comprehended so many gods’ battle techniques too. Under normal circumstances, he should have been able to defeat the other party’s will easily. He did not expect that he would face such a tough battle.

“He’s also using a type of Heaven’s Path Sword Art as well.”

Kong shi's swordplay was also aligned with the world around him. Despite its simplicity, the might that it harnessed was not one to look down upon.

Even though the two of them were using Heaven's Path Sword Arts, the natures of their swordsmanship were vastly different from one another. Zhang Xuan's swordsmanship was focused on exploiting the flaws of others, but Kong shi's swordsmanship was able to influence his opponent's swordplay, forcing it to obey his order.

It felt as if his sword was dancing to Kong shi's tune instead.

How was he supposed to win in such a battle?

"Is this the ability of Heavens' Order?" Zhang Xuan felt his heart turning cold.

He had heard Kong shi speaking about his ability before, but the latter did not use it while he was fighting with his clone, so he had not paid it any heed. It was only at this moment that he realized just how frightening that ability was.

It was strikingly similar to Kong Shiyao's bloodline ability, Word of Law.

Even if he managed to find a flaw to exploit, it would be meaningless when his sword was bending to Kong shi's will!

This had already gone past the level of swordsmanship to the laws of the world. Through changing the order of the world, Kong shi was able to maintain an absolute dominion around him, and nothing was able to faze him.

This was a battle that could not be won!

"There's no way I could lose to an opponent who is at the same level as me!" Zhang Xuan bellowed lividly.

Other than his clone, he had never lost to anyone in the same cultivation realm as him.

The person before him was just a sliver of will from Kong shi, so how could he possibly lose?

There was no way he would allow it!

Thus, Zhang Xuan began changing his attacking pattern. While executing his swordsmanship with his right hand, he began launching battle techniques one after another with his left.

It was as if he had split into two people in an instant, one specializing in swordsmanship and the other specializing in battle techniques. Furthermore, both attacks were infused with the Gods' Intent. With such might, he was more than qualified to start his own sect and rule over the entire Forsaken Continent!

Just like that, his fighting prowess doubled.

“Not bad.” Kong shi's will nodded with an approving smile.

Following Zhang Xuan's example, he began to execute swordsmanship with his right hand and battle techniques with his left as well. With this, he managed to defend against Zhang Xuan's offense without any trouble.

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan felt goosebumps rising all over him.

Was this Kong shi's true strength?

Was the only reason his clone had been able to defeat Kong shi back then because the latter had not fully recovered his strength yet?

Peng peng peng!

After trading over a dozen blows, Zhang Xuan felt that he would eventually fall in defeat. He was still managing to stand his ground, but slowly, he could feel the tides of the battle moving toward Kong shi's side, and this left him feeling deeply anxious.

So, with a narrowed gaze, a vicious glint flashed across his eyes.

It seems like I can only try out my new technique on him...

2086 A Heart of Intertwined Threads, Filed with Thousands and Thousands of Knots

Pathos of Heavens.

As much as it was a cultivation technique, it was a battle technique as well.

It was a conceptualization that he had come up with through his epiphany, so it was not too difficult for him to materialize it into a battle technique.

Sentimental humans were born from the indifferent heavens. The heavens would have long withered if they had feelings.

As a conceptualization arose in Zhang Xuan's head, Kong shi's flawless swordsmanship began to take on another form right before his eyes.

Where Kong shi's sword passed, a gray streak would be left in its wake. These gray streaks gradually interweaved with one another to form something reminiscent of a net.

This was the power that had limited his movements, placing him at a disadvantageous position throughout the battle.

Heavens' Order. Even though these gray streaks are scattered chaotically, they still observe a certain kind of pattern and law. It's almost like weaving together a heavens' net. It isn't tight, but once it bites, it will never let go, Zhang Xuan analyzed with a nonchalant expression on his face.

He did not have too deep an understanding of Heavens' Order previously, and it was through his conceptualization that he was able to see through the laws behind Kong shi's swordsmanship.

Resonance, that was the crux of Kong shi's swordsmanship. It was also a property that all beings in the world possessed, an intrinsic law of nature.

As long as two objects were moving in at the resonant frequency to one another, even the toughest object in the world could easily be destroyed.

To be honest, Zhang Xuan had no idea whether the Heavens' Order Swordsmanship was flawless. However, through forcing his opponent to obey his law, he was able to slowly bring his opponent to the same frequency as him and finally defeat him.

To use a crass metaphor from his previous life, it was similar to how 'an idiot would drag you down to their level and beat you with experience'!

Zhang Xuan came to a realization. The Heavens' Order Swordsmanship is able to weave together an illusory net that compels the opponent to obey its rules. If I use swordsmanship that can unravel his rules, I'll be able to overcome him...

With a light chuckle, he channeled his Gods' Sword Intent into the Tongshang Sword and swiftly formed a massive net that was similar yet dissimilar to Kong shi's net.

A heart of intertwined threads, filled with thousands and thousands of knots!

A poem suddenly surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind.

Just like that, the very first sword art of Pathos of Heavens had been created.

With a flick of Zhang Xuan's Tongshang Sword, Kong shi's swordsmanship suddenly seemed to freeze in place. The intricate net that he had been weaving earlier overlapped with the one that Zhang Xuan had created, causing it to intersect messily with one another. As a result, he was unable to quickly struggle free.

With the messing up of the order that he had created, Kong shi lost control over his surroundings. He was no longer able to influence Zhang Xuan with his rules.

With this, Zhang Xuan had finally been freed.

He immediately stepped forward to launch a follow-up attack so as to crush Kong shi's will, but the next moment, the latter took a step back and retreated from the sphere of battle.

"The fact that you were able to find the flaws in my swordsmanship and destroy my order within such a short period of time shows that you are a deeply talented and intelligent individual. You are qualified to become a god." Kong shi chuckled as he stroked his beard.

"We haven't finished our battle yet." Zhang Xuan looked at Kong shi with eyes narrowed with doubt.

Despite having comprehended such a powerful sword art, Kong shi was still able to retreat so easily without sustaining the slightest injury. This showed that he had not used his full strength. If the battle went on, there was no guarantee that he would have emerged victorious.

Since that was the case, why did Kong shi back out of the battle?

Victory and defeat are inconsequential here. My only goal here is to test the eligible challengers on behalf of the gods. You were able to overcome the Heart Oblivion Formation within a tenth of the time and comprehend seven Gods' Intents alone. On top of that, you were able to see through the opening in my swordsmanship and create a new sword art to deal with it on the spot. Your talents are truly unrivaled," Kong shi remarked calmly.

"Test? Challengers?" Zhang Xuan was confused by what was going on.

Was Kong shi not trying to kill him so that he could obtain his Library of Heaven's Path?

Why was he acting in such a manner?

It was as if the will before him was completely different from the person whom he had met previously!

Perplexed, Zhang Xuan was just about to voice the doubts in his heart when Kong shi suddenly said, "If I'm not mistaken, you have inherited the Heavens' Imperfections, right?"

Those words immediately placed Zhang Xuan on guard.

He had been wondering if the will before him was really a different person from before when the latter suddenly spoke of the Heavens' Imperfections. It seemed like he was finally revealing his true self.

“Just as I thought... The Hall of Gods has always held the strong in high esteem, so successful challengers are allowed to leave their will behind to test the next challenger. You should leave your will here so that you can test the challengers of the next generation,” Kong shi said with a smile.

As he said those words, his silhouette began to flicker.

Zhang Xuan had seen this situation many times before. Ultimately, a will was just a transient existence in this world. After accomplishing its mission, it would dissipate.

While he was on the Master Teacher Continent, every time he tried to ask Kong shi about the Innate Fetal Poison, the latter would simply dissipate all of a sudden.

“As for the Aura of Divinity, the palace will naturally bestow it upon you once you leave the premises...”

Then, with a silent pop, Kong shi's will dissipated into the surroundings.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully. Could it be that there's really a real Kong shi and fake Kong shi?

The Kong shi whom he had just met earlier was similar to all those he had met back on the Master Teacher Continent. There was a hint of benevolence in the depths of his eyes, and it felt like he was someone who would shelter the world from all storms. This was vastly different from that one who had saved him from the Hall of Gods!

Could it be that the will that had just dissipated came from the real Kong shi?

Forget it! Whether that Kong shi is a good person or a bad person, if I can really obtain the Aura of Divinity and successfully become a god, nothing will be a problem anymore!

He left his will on the third floor before heading down the stone staircase.

The fact that the palace allowed him to leave his will there meant that he had already gained its approval. When he returned to the entrance that he had entered from, the gates had already appeared once more. He saw his clone standing beyond the doorsill, waiting patiently for his return.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan walked over to his clone's side before turning around to take another look at the gigantic palace right before his eyes.

The palace was still standing above the cradle of wind currents. All of a sudden, a golden flow shot out from the cradle and rose in between the two pillars of the palace.

This golden flow emanated a brilliant glow. It exerted a heavy pressure right upon one's soul.

Is this the Aura of Divinity?

It seemed like Kong shi had not lied to him.

This golden flow felt as heavy as the mercury-like spiritual energy when he first encountered it back on the Master Teacher Continent. He had a feeling that his meridians would rupture if he absorbed it recklessly.

Most likely, this was the power that only real gods were worthy of harnessing.

In other words, if he absorbed the Aura of Divinity before him, there was a good chance that he could reach the realm of the gods. That would put him on a level that no one on the Forsaken Continent could match!

With eyes glowing with excitement, he leaped into the air as he quickly headed toward the golden flow.

But before he could reach his destination, a burst of sword qi abruptly sliced through his pathway. It severed the space, creating a dimension rift between Zhang Xuan and the golden flow.

Astonished, Zhang Xuan hurriedly halted his movements.

“You have my deepest thanks. I knew that you would be able to do it, and you sure didn’t disappoint...”

Following that, a mirror suddenly appeared in midair. A hand crept out from the surface of the mirror and grabbed the golden flow between its fingers.

Hu!

Then, the entire golden flow was absorbed into a jade bottle and vanished.

Following which, the figure turned around—it was none other than Kong shi!

Zhang Xuan tightened his fists in anger.

“You aren’t Kong shi. Who in the world are you?” Zhang Xuan asked with narrowed eyes.

He had thought it was weird how the other party had never appeared even though there were so many ideal opportunities for him to strike. It turned out that he had been hiding in the void all along, waiting for the moment that he obtained the Aura of Divinity to snatch it from him!

However... when Zhang Xuan first arrived in the area, he had made sure to examine his surroundings carefully, and he did not notice any folded space or the like. Just where in the world did the other party appear from, and how did he manage to traverse space to get there?

More importantly, if the will that he had encountered in the palace was real, it was likely that the person standing before him was a fake!

That would explain why the other party was unaware of the details regarding Xuanjiang City’s Teleportation Portal, as well as why the will that he had encountered in the palace seemed to be unsure about the existence of the Heavens’ Imperfections.

“Who else can I be if not Kong shi?” The face of the person in the air warped in anger. “I am him. I have always been him!”

Hula!

Amid his furious rage, he thrust his palm downward.

The air currents had always been chaotic in the area. That palm strike caused more and more dimension rifts to appear all around, leaving Zhang Xuan not daring to advance any further.

He has indeed gotten much stronger! Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

The fact that the other party was able to shatter space so easily showed that he was much stronger compared to the time he was facing his clone.

Nevertheless, there was no hint of Heavens' Order in his palm strike, and the battle technique that he used did not harness the essence of the world. That meant that he was not using a Heaven's Path battle technique.

Furthermore, as powerful as his attack was, it was not to the extent where it was able to influence the laws around him.

There's no doubt about it—he's indeed a fake...

Since Kong shi possessed a fragment of the heavens as well, he was naturally able to use Heaven's Path battle techniques.

He had wondered about that previously, too, but he had not been too certain as he had never seen anyone aside from him using Heaven's Path battle techniques. As such, he had mistaken the other party's attacks to have reached the level of Heaven's Path battle techniques previously.

However, after witnessing what Kong shi's will was capable of, it was apparent that the attacks of the person before him were lacking.

This only pointed to a single possibility...

Even though he refused to admit to it, the person standing before him was indeed a fake!

“Return the Aura of Divinity to me!”

Zhang Xuan knew that this was not a good time for his mind to be wandering. As he brandished the Tongshang Sword, he beckoned his clone to move alongside him. With a barrage of

swift slashes, he formed a net of sword qi around the fake Kong shi.

A Heart of Intertwined Threads!

He executed the sword art that he had just comprehended without any hesitation.

He knew that he was facing a difficult opponent, such that the Gods' Sword Intent that he had comprehended would not be much use in the battle. Thus, he used the strongest move he knew of from the very start of the battle.

“Amazing swordsmanship... However, I won't be fighting with you today. Once I become a god myself, your library will become mine. No one in this world will be able to stop me!” Kong shi burst into laughter as he leaped back into the mirror and vanished from view.

“Sh*t!” Zhang Xuan's face turned livid.

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It was no wonder this fellow had not made a move since disappearing back then. Zhang Xuan had thought that the other party was finding a way to recover his full strength, but who could have known that the other party's goal was to bide his time so that he could acquire the Aura of Divinity!

In fact, the other party might even have known that he would not be able to obtain the Library of Heaven's Path back then, so he intentionally set this scheme up to bait him.

But why did that fellow not challenge the palace on his own? Was it because he was unable to challenge it or because he was unable to clear it?

Considering how the will on the third floor had been left behind by the real Kong shi, perhaps the latter might have used some means to prevent the fake Kong shi from entering, similar to how his clone was unable to enter the palace.

Wait a moment, could it be that...

A thought surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind as his gaze darted toward his clone, who was standing with a smug smile on his face.

His clone did not seem to be embarrassed because the palace had rejected his entry. If anything, he only seemed disappointed that he had not been able to show off.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before retracting his gaze. It isn't the time for me to be thinking about this right now. I can't let that fellow escape. Once he absorbs the Aura of Divinity and reaches the level of the gods, I won't stand a chance against him...

He could not help but be worried about the current situation.

In the first place, the fake Kong shi was no weaker than him. If the other party really made a breakthrough, he would be

doomed no matter how many Semi-Divinity realm cultivators he could rally to his side.

The only reason the fake Kong shi needed to lie low was because he was unable to find the catalyst that he needed to make a breakthrough. However, the situation was different now that he had acquired the Aura of Divinity.

No matter what, he had to stop the other party!

It was just that... the other party had already run away.

Even if there was something he could do, he had to find a way to get out of there first!

With the altar destroyed, he no longer had a way to return to the Forsaken Continent. If he had obtained the Aura of Divinity earlier, he would have been able to reach the level of the gods. If so, he could have just returned by breaking apart space.

But now... his route had been completely destroyed.

The only reason Kong shi was able to traverse through space was because of the Paragon Blackmirror and the Evanescent Boots, Zhang Xuan thought as he recalled what had happened earlier.

Even though the Evanescent Boots were not a Semi-Divinity artifact, they granted their wearer the special ability to traverse through space. When used together with the Paragon Blackmirror, Kong shi was able to move at speeds that even Zhang Xuan was unable to do anything about!

This was not a good situation. It meant that if Kong shi attempted to harm his direct disciples, there was not much that he could do.

Even though Zhang Xuan felt a little anxious inside, he was still able to keep a rational head. He quickly ran through everything that had happened over the last few days to figure out the current situation.

“Kong shi snatched the ‘神 (God), character from here, and the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion took half a character away with him. The fact that there are traces of that

here means that the palace is likely the real Hall of Gods. In turn, that also means that the place I entered back then was a fake!”

Previously, he had thought that the place where he had been assaulted by the ten Semi-Divinity realm cultivators was the real Hall of Gods, but from the current looks of it, he had been misled.

Most likely, it was a place that the fake Kong shi had specially prepared in order to corner him. That might even have been the real headquarters of the Ethereal Hall!

Thinking back, it was weird how there had been no one to be seen in the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall when he arrived back then. Furthermore, the entire area was even planted with explosive formations...

Who in their right mind would plant explosives in their headquarters, as if expecting that it would be breached by an enemy? That did not make sense at all!

It was likely that the Azure Bridge was linked to the palace that he had been to earlier, the real Hall of Gods, several thousand years ago. Otherwise, how did the real Kong shi and the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion get there and snatch the •神 (God)' character?

How did they return to the Azure and establish their own sects as powerhouses of the Forsaken Continent?

If this is the real Hall of Gods, it should be connected to the Azure Bridge too, right?

Zhang Xuan began examining his surroundings carefully with his Eye of Insight.

The area where the altar had been destroyed was completely empty, as if it had been floating in the midst of a void.

The surroundings were also dark, and there was not the slightest sign of life to be seen.

There was no sign of the Azure Bridge at all.

Was he wrong?

Zhang Xuan circled the palace, but there was still no passageway to be seen. It was as if this palace existed in the midst of a void. Just as he was feeling incredibly helpless, his eyes suddenly fell upon the two pillars that seemed to pin the palace in place.

He had seen them when he first arrived.

They seemed to pierce endlessly through the void, and he had also been unable to analyze what material they were made of. All he was able to conclude was that they were at least Semi-Divinity artifacts, such that he would be unable to destroy them with his current strength.

Could that be the real Azure Bridge?

He had already checked the surroundings multiple times, but there was nothing that came close to resembling the Azure Bridge. Perhaps those two pillars were the key!

Let me take a look!

Zhang Xuan quickly threw the clone into his storage ring before leaping onto the palace. Grabbing tightly onto one of the pillars, he began climbing upward.

He had no idea how tall the pillar was, but he kept climbing on and on, till the palace behind became as small as a dot.

He climbed for four whole hours before he finally broke through an atmosphere. A ray of light suddenly appeared at the end of the dark void.

Right after, Zhang Xuan felt his surroundings disorientating. He had been climbing up a moment ago, but all of a sudden, he was hugging onto the pillar to prevent himself from falling downward.

He had encountered this situation back when he was getting on top of the Azure Bridge from the Heaven Anchoring Boulder. He had stepped from one spatial dimension into another, resulting in the abrupt change in his center of gravity.

He felt like he had been climbing upward all along, which suggested that the Hall of Gods had been at the bottom.

However, from his current point of view, it would seem like the Hall of Gods was actually above him.

He quickly climbed back up the Azure Bridge before looking around him.

He noticed that there was a majestic hall right beneath him.

Isn't that the fake Hall of Gods?

Zhang Xuan recognized it with a single glance.

It was where he had been assaulted by ten Semi-Divinity realm experts simultaneously, only to be saved by the fake Kong shi.

“So, these two places are actually linked to one another...”
Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

The two pillars of the palace were linked to the very top of the fake Hall of Gods. He thought that it was only for aesthetic purpose back then, but it turned out that the fake Hall of Gods was actually not the endpoint.

If he had traveled a little further back then, he would have been able to enter the real Hall of Gods.

Kong shi should have returned here...

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up, and he quickly concealed his aura before heading into the fake Hall of Gods.

If his guess was not wrong, those Semi-Divinity realm experts that he had encountered back then were all the fake Kong shi's subordinates. In other words, the fake Hall of Gods was actually the other party's core base!

It was likely that the fake Kong shi would head there to attempt a breakthrough after obtaining the Aura of Divinity.

Zhang Xuan knew that he had to find a way to steal the Aura of Divinity. As long as he could achieve a breakthrough, the enemy would pose no threat to him at all!

He silently crept alongside the walls of the fake Hall of Gods and entered it.

Perhaps they thought that no one could reach there or that no one would dare barge in, but there were no sentries standing on guard. Zhang Xuan stealthily explored the area.

The place was truly massive. Zhang Xuan swiftly maneuvered around the areas to find where Kong shi was hiding when he suddenly heard two sets of footsteps.

They chatted with one another as they walked over.

“Our hall master has passed down orders for us to put that person to death!”

As there were no outsiders in the area, there was no need for them to worry about their secrets leaking out.

“Put that person to death?”

“That’s right. We needed her previously for her chants to activate the altar and conduct the ritual, but now, as long as our hall master successfully becomes a god, he will be able to do anything even without the altar! It doesn’t matter whether she’s alive or not...”

“Indeed. We’ll surely be handsomely rewarded once our hall master becomes a god. As long as we listen to him obediently, we might even have a chance to reach that level, too.”

“Isn’t that so? Well, let’s hurry up and do it!”

The discussion seemed to be slowly drifting further and further away.

Activate the altar and conduct the ritual? Are they referring to Palace Master Du? Zhang Xuan frowned.

Thinking back, the last time he had seen Du Qingyuan was also in this hall. It seemed like she was still there. However, it was apparent that she was in a precarious position.

I should first save her before doing anything else, Zhang Xuan thought with narrowed eyes.

With a set of swift maneuvers, he appeared before the duo in an instant and swung his Tongshang Sword.

A cold glint flashed across the room.

Puhe! Puhe!

The two Semi-Divinity realm experts collapsed to the floor before they could even react. Zhang Xuan immediately stowed their corpses into his storage ring.

Back when he was still at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, he had been able to slay ordinary Semi-Divinity realm cultivators with a single slash. Since he had achieved a breakthrough and comprehended the complete Gods' Sword Intent, assassinating opponents of such tiers no longer posed a challenge to him. He was able to do it without even causing the slightest disturbance in the surrounding spiritual energy.

After getting rid of those two, he morphed his appearance into one of them and donned his clothes. With this, his disguise was perfect.

So, he began making his way forward.

Even though the place was extremely spacious, there were not many rooms around. He was able to determine where Du Qingyuan was kept just by where those two Semi-Divinity realm cultivators had been heading.

Soon, he arrived before a locked chamber. With a flick of his wrist, he took out a key that he had looted from those two and opened the door without any trouble.

In there, he saw a middle-aged lady seated at the center of the room. Her hands and legs were tightly cuffed, limiting her movements. Her hair was unkempt, and there was a withered look on her face. The aura she emanated was extremely weak as well.

It seemed like she was severely injured.

Upon his entry, Du Qingyuan looked over with clear eyes. It seemed like she had shaken out of Kong shi's control.

"Has he ordered you to kill me?" Du Qingyuan asked with an expressionless look on her face.

She had managed to guess what was awaiting her.

Instead of answering the question, Zhang Xuan shut the doors tightly before slowly walking over.

“Since he was willing to destroy the altar, it means that my existence is of no value to him anymore.” Du Qingyuan harrumphed coldly.

The altar was an artifact that she had assimilated, so naturally, she was able to sense its destruction.

He knew that the reason Kong shi had captured her was to make use of her altar, so the only reason she could think of for Kong shi allowing the altar to be destroyed was that he had found a way to achieve his goals even without the altar.

A pawn who had lost its value was bound to be disposed of.

“I never thought that I would meet my end like this...” Du Qingyuan glanced upward with a slight hint of despair in her eyes.

She could not imagine what would become of Starchaser Palace without her. Her direct disciple was not ready to succeed her as the new palace master, and even though Jiang Yao had reached the Semi-Divinity realm, her strength was lacking to the other veterans.

They were in difficult times. The Hall of Gods was colluding with the Ethereal Hall, and it was likely that they would soon root out the Six Sects so that they could establish their dominance on the Forsaken Continent.

Any hint of weakness at this moment would be fatal.

It was for this reason that she had entrusted her hopes to an unknown factor—Zhang Xuan. She hoped that the young man who had created so many miracles would protect Starchaser Palace even in her absence.

But ultimately, she did not know if she had made the correct decision. Would Zhang Xuan even be willing to protect Starchaser Palace?

She hated how she was helpless, and it pained her to think of the possible tragedies that could happen to Starchaser Palace in her absence.

She closed her eyes tightly for a brief moment before opening them once more. Rising to her feet, she tidied up her clothes

and smoothed out the creases. After that, she began to comb her hair with her fingers before pinning it in place with a hairpin.

Then, she looked at the person who had just entered the room and said, “Even if I have to die, I will die a dignified death.”

As she waited for the other party to make his move, a calm voice suddenly echoed in the air. “It’s the second time we’ve met, isn’t it, Palace Master Du?”

Right before her eyes, the appearance of the person before her began to morph into that of a young man in his early twenties.

“Zhang Xuan?”

Du Qingyuan’s body stiffened up. Slowly, it started to tremble in agitation.

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It was through the mouth of the Spirit God that she first heard about this young man.

Back then, she had found it extremely bizarre. How could a young lad from a lower world possibly be qualified to gain the Spirit God's fancy and even become her lover?

Soon after, she received an audience from Sovereign Chen Yong, so she descended an avatar of herself to the lower world. It was then that she met the young man for the first time.

She did not see anything impressive about the young man, but the decision he made pleased her. So, she brought Wu Chen up to the Azure and treated him.

Not too long later, she received news that Zhang Xuan had arrived on the Forsaken Continent, and within just a few days, he had already become the sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Words could not explain how astounded she was by that news.

She began to realize why the young man was able to catch the Spirit God's sight.

So, she specially made a trip over to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to meet him, but he had already left the sect. She left Wu Chen with the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion before returning to the sect alone.

Shortly after, the warriors of the Hall of Gods barged into Starchaser Palace and demanded that she hand over the altar. Knowing that she would not be able to deal with them alone, she wrote her will before running away with the altar. Yet, who would have thought that Hall Master Kong would still end up being able to find her?

Eventually, she was captured and imprisoned.

She thought that she would meet her end. Not even in her wildest dreams did she expect to see Zhang Xuan there, disguised as one of the Semi-Divinity realm cultivators.

With a smile on his lips, the young man took out a sword and said, "Palace Master Du, I'll have to trouble you to take a step back."

Du Qingyuan knew that it was no time for them to be reminiscing about the past and catching up with one another, so she took a step back and raised her arms.

Taking a deep breath, the young man swung his sword.

Ding ding ding ding!

With four metallic clangs, the cuffs binding her wrists and ankles fell to the ground.

Even though the cuffs were not Semi-Divinity artifacts, the fact that they were able to bind a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator meant that they possessed resilience comparable to one. Yet, Zhang Xuan was able to sever them easily with his current strength.

After severing the chains, the young man passed a jade bottle over to her. "Drink this!"

Du Qingyuan quickly uncorked the jade bottle and gulped down whatever was inside. A moment later, her eyes widened in astonishment.

She knew how severe her injuries were. Given that she was already reaching the limits of her lifespan, she thought that her cultivation was already crippled for good. She did not think that she had enough vitality in her to make a full recovery. Yet, a mere bottle of water had cured all of her injuries, nursing her back to full health.

She looked at Zhang Xuan in astonishment, but the latter shook his head and said, "There's no time to explain. Come with me!"

"Alright." Du Qingyuan nodded.

She quickly drove her zhenqi and cleansed her body of grime and dirt, thus reverting to her usual appearance as a graceful

palace master. Heaving a sigh of relief, she quickly followed behind Zhang Xuan.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan could not help but shake his head helplessly when he saw how Du Qingyuan was concerned about her appearance despite the dire situation they were in. Clicking his tongue, he pushed the door open and walked out.

There was no one outside.

Having saved Du Qingyuan, he could not be bothered to keep up his disguise. It was not as if anyone there, except for Kong shi, could defeat him anyway. So, he continued inward.

“The exit is over there,” the perplexed Du Qingyuan remarked with a frown.

The deeper they headed in, the greater the danger they would face. Zhang Xuan might be unaware of Hall Master Kong’s true strength, but she knew just how insanely powerful that man was. In terms of fighting prowess, he might even be on par with the gods!

Not only so, he also had plenty of Semi-Divinity realm experts under his command. They would be doomed once they were made aware of his intrusion!

“I’m not planning on leaving yet. I’m here for Kong shi,” Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

This time, he had his clone to fight alongside him. On top of that, he had also comprehended the Pathos of Heavens and A Heart of Intertwined Threads. As long as Kong shi had not reached the level of a god, the chances of them winning were extremely high.

The only reason he had chosen to disguise himself was out of fear that it might incite panic, leading to the enemies to quickly get rid of Du Qingyuan or use her as hostage.

Since Du Qingyuan had been saved, there was nothing to hold him back anymore.

“Kong shi? You are referring to Hall Master Kong, right?” Du Qingyuan was stunned. “We won’t be able to take him on with

just the two of us. We'll need to gather Han Jianqiu and the others..."

Before she could finish her piece, footsteps suddenly sounded ahead of them. A doubtful voice demanded, "Who are you? Wait, aren't you Du Qingyuan? How did you get out? Men!"

That voice echoed loudly throughout the entire hall.

Sou sou sou!

In an instant, numerous figures appeared all around the corridor, sealing off all paths of escape.

"Thirteen Semi-Divinities..." Du Qingyuan trembled in horror.

They would have been perfectly fine if they had snuck away earlier, but this fellow simply wanted to look for Hall Master Kong.

Now that they were surrounded by thirteen Semi-Divinities who were no weaker than her, there was no way they would be able to get away unscathed anymore.

She felt as if the hope that had appeared before her just a moment ago had been shattered, plunging her deeper into the abyss of despair.

Spirit God, you didn't tell me that the person you like is actually so unreliable!

"Oh, aren't you Sect Leader Zhang? Since you have paid a visit to our Ethereal Hall, it would be rude for us not to offer you our warmest welcome, right?"

A Semi-Divinity realm cultivator amid the crowd recognized Zhang Xuan, and his words sparked flames of greed in the eyes of the others.

All of them knew how highly their hall master valued Zhang Xuan. If they could capture him, they would surely be handsomely rewarded for their service!

Huala!

With overwhelming killing intent lingering in the air, the Semi-Divinities drew their weapons.

Du Qingyuan felt goosebumps rising all over her body. She silently inched toward Zhang Xuan and said, "I'll only be able to deal with two of them at most with my current strength... I have been observing them carefully, and I think I can try opening a path for you to escape by attacking those three right ahead of me. So, pay careful attention and make your escape as soon as you see an opening, alright?"

Only her physical wounds had healed so far. Her soul had not fully recovered yet, and her greatest trump card, the altar, had been destroyed.

It was already formidable that she could keep two Semi-Divinity realm cultivators of the Hall of Gods in check given her current strength.

"Escape?"

"I am very grateful that you are willing to brave through the danger to rescue me," Du Qingyuan said with a determined glint in her eyes, "but my lifespan is already coming to an end. If only one of us can make it out of here alive, it should be you. I'll be entrusting the future of Starchaser Palace and the Forsaken Continent to you..."

"There's no need for that!" Zhang Xuan chuckled a little upon seeing Du Qingyuan's response.

Seeing how the two of them were relaxed enough to chat with one another, the leader of the group bellowed, "Everyone, let's take them down together. Our hall master will surely be delighted if he sees that we have managed to capture Zhang Xuan when he returns..."

Hula!

Unable to hold back their anxiety any longer, the crowd made their move.

Sou sou sou sou!

Surges of energy gushed in from the surroundings, forming a sturdy cage around Zhang Xuan and Du Qingyuan.

"Zhang Xuan, run away!" Du Qingyuan exclaimed.

She did not think that they would actually be so well-trained in collaborative formations. Knowing that they would be trapped if she waited any longer, she immediately dashed forward to make her move.

However, the sight before her suddenly blurred, and the energy cage around them abruptly dissipated. Before she knew it, Zhang Xuan was already standing right before the leader of the pack, his hand clutching onto the latter's neck tightly.

Looking at the leader with a frighteningly nonchalant expression on his face, he asked, "Where is Hall Master Kong?" "H-he has gone out..." the leader replied with a quivering voice.

He was caught completely off guard by how fast Zhang Xuan was, such that his entire body was still trembling from shock.

"He isn't here?" Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had thought that Kong shi would try to assimilate the Aura of Divinity there... If the other party was not there, where else could he be?

This was not good at all. If Kong shi successfully became a god, the consequences would be dire. They would really have no means to deal with him then.

"I don't believe you," Zhang Xuan remarked coldly.

He squeezed his fingers lightly, crushing the leader's windpipe. There was a short moment of silence before he sighed with a frown. "Ha, Kong shi really isn't here..."

There was no way he could take the enemy's words at face value, so he had conducted a Soul Search as well.

But just as the other party had said, Hall Master Kong did not return after heading out.

While Zhang Xuan was shaking his head in displeasure, Du Qingyuan was looking upon the sight before her with an incredulous expression.

It was just a moment ago that she thought they were goners, but in the blink of an eye, her comrade had already taken down the leader of the pack!

What was even eerier to her was how no one in the crowd rushed over to help their own ally. It was as if they were frozen in place!

Du Qingyuan pointed to the other twelve Semi-Divinities around her and murmured, “They...”

They were all standing on the spot, not moving an inch. However, she could see fear deeply reflected in their eyes, as if they were looking at something that terrified them to their souls.

“What’s wrong?” Zhang Xuan tossed aside the leader’s body before taking out a handkerchief to wipe his hands.

“Why aren’t they moving?” Du Qingyuan asked warily.

“They’re dead. Dead men aren’t able to move,” Zhang Xuan replied impassively, as if he was just pointing out a fact.

He had been wondering what Du Qingyuan was so shocked about, but it turned out to just be that.

Since those men had decided to assault them, there was no need for him to show mercy to them. Thus, he had used A Heart of Intertwining Threads to slit their throats, killing all twelve of them in an instant.

He had only chosen to spare the leader temporarily in order to question him.

“They’re dead?” Du Qingyuan was stunned.

She carefully walked up to one of the Semi-Divinities and pushed his body carefully.

Putong!

The Semi-Divinity realm cultivator’s body fell flat on the floor, causing the ground to tremble a little. That, in turn, caused the bodies of the remaining eleven Semi-Divinities to fall to the ground as well.

Du Qingyuan rubbed her eyes vigorously, wondering if she had seen incorrectly.

When did he make a move?

How did he make a move?

For thirteen Semi-Divinities to be killed in an instant... how was this even possible?

Was it really true that this fellow had only arrived on the Forsaken Continent a month ago?

Was it possible for someone to become so powerful within such a short period of time?

Du Qingyuan felt a little stifled inside.

To think that there was a period of time where she had thought that this young man was not worthy of the Spirit God. This was probably the first time in the history of the Forsaken Continent that a person had managed to cultivate from Ancient Sage 4-dan to become an unrivaled existence among Semi-Divinities within just a single month.

If he were given another month, would he be able to become as powerful as the Spirit God?

She suddenly had a feeling that everyone else had only been crawling along in their cultivation whereas the young man was sprinting ahead.

“Hold on for a moment,” the young man suddenly said.

With a smile on his face, he walked up to each and every one of the corpses and took their storage rings. After that, with a wave of his hand, he chucked all their corpses into his storage ring.

“Not too bad. They seem to have plenty of pills with them. I guess those from the Ethereal Hall are pretty wealthy after all,” Zhang Xuan commented with a satisfied nod.

He had wondered where he could find the remaining seventy Premier Immortal Pills required for him to achieve a breakthrough, but to his delight, he managed to gather all of them with several dozen extra after slaying fifteen Semi-Divinities.

As expected of the Ethereal Hall!

“Since Hall Master Kong isn’t around, it’s unlikely we’ll face any danger here. Wait here for a moment, I’ll swiftly take a look around,” Zhang Xuan said before vanishing from sight.

“Take a look around? What does he want to look at?” Du Qingyuan was left standing on the spot, confused.

Paying no heed to the Du Qingyuan, Zhang Xuan headed to the innermost room along the corridors.

Through his earlier Soul Search, he had been able to confirm that he was in the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall.

Since this was the headquarters, there was no doubt that there were plenty of treasures lying around. Considering how Kong shi had stolen his Aura of Divinity, no matter what, he should at least return the favor a little. Or else, would he not be making a huge loss?

Thus, while he was conducting his Soul Search earlier, he had made sure to keep a close eye on where the treasure vault was.

Naturally, that was where he was heading!

2089 Returning to Starchaser Palace

He followed the path that he had seen in his Soul Search and flitted ahead.

Other than the Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, there was no one else in the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall. Zhang Xuan had killed all of them earlier, so there should be no more danger lurking in the area. As for the formations that were set up around the area, all of them posed no threat to a formation master of Zhang Xuan's caliber.

"Here it is," Zhang Xuan said with a smile after confirming the location.

He swung the Tongshang Sword lightly.

Kacha!

The door was knocked open, revealing a folded space.

Treasures of all kinds filled the entire folded space. They were at a quantity that was beyond even Zhang Xuan's means to count.

Huala!

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked into the folded space, he was assaulted by innumerable surges of sword qi, saber qi, and all kinds of different forces.

Knowing that those attacks came from the weapon spirits of the artifacts stored in the room, Zhang Xuan nimbly dodged all of the attacks coming his way.

Ding ding ding ding!

Ten minutes later, Zhang Xuan looked at the huge array of weapons before him with glowing eyes.

As expected of the treasure vault of the Ethereal Hall headquarters, there were more than thirty Semi-Divinity

artifacts and over two hundred Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifacts!

Even if one gathered every last weapon on the Forsaken Continent, it was unlikely that their value would surpass what he had right before him.

It was hard to tell whether this was the inventory that the Ethereal Hall had managed to accumulate over the years or what they had stolen from the Hall of Gods. Well, regardless of where they came from, the only thing that mattered was that they had all become his.

With a grand wave of his hands, he stowed all of them into his storage ring.

Then, he turned his attention to the jade bottles by the side. All kinds of pills were flying around the room like a bunch of chirpy canaries.

They were all Heavenly High Immortal-tier pills, and they were effective even on Semi-Divinity realm cultivators. What caught Zhang Xuan's attention more though were the thousand or so Premier Immortal Pills placed atop the shelves.

Stowing away everything around him, Zhang Xuan needed three whole storage rings before he was able to collect everything in the treasure vault.

First and foremost, I should raise my cultivation to Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm!

Instead of hurrying out of the treasure vault, he took a seat in the middle of the room. He got out the Premier Immortal Pills and stuffed them into his mouth as he immersed his consciousness into his Great Codex of Spring and Autumn.

The feeling of not having to worry about having insufficient cultivation resources was truly an exhilarating experience for Zhang Xuan. He felt like he had never been so extravagant before. Was this how it felt to be loaded?

A few breaths later, he stood back up.

As of that moment, he had managed to raise his cultivation to Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm and reinforced it. With this, he

could be considered to have reached the very peak of the Forsaken Continent.

As long as Kong shi had not reached the level of the gods yet, he was confident that he could fight on equal footing with the other party.

After he was done, he left the treasure vault and returned to where Du Qingyuan was.

Du Qingyuan had not recovered from the earlier shock yet. There was a dazed look on her face that made it look as if she was daydreaming.

“Palace Master Du, do you know how we can return to Starchaser Palace from here?” Zhang Xuan snapped Du Qingyuan out of her daze.

He had previously gone there through the Azure Bridge, and he had only managed to leave through the ability of Kong shi’s Evanescent Boots.

In other words, he had no idea how he could return to the Forsaken Continent from there without the Azure Bridge.

However, there was a good chance that Du Qingyuan might have an idea in mind. After all, she had been taken there before the Azure Bridge descended.

“My cultivation was sealed when Hall Master Kong brought me here, so I wasn’t able to move around freely. However, I was still able to deduce his technique.” Palace Master Du quickly gathered her thoughts before continuing. “If I’m not mistaken, he traveled here through the Ethereal Token.”

“Ethereal Token?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

He knew that it was possible for the Ethereal Token to transport one’s consciousness to enter the Ethereal Hall, but did it really wield the ability to teleport a person’s entire body?

“That’s right. Don’t underestimate the prowess of the Ethereal Token. It might be small, but its functions are rather remarkable. Just its ability to teleport items you have bought in the Ethereal Hall already makes it an amazing artifact,” Du Qingyuan said.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

It was easy to take the Ethereal Token for granted, but if one thought about it, it was actually a pretty incredible artifact. The act of teleporting items around was already one usage of Spatial Teleportation.

“My guess is that he used it together with the Blackmirror Citadel’s Paragon Blackmirror. The Paragon Blackmirror has the ability to pull one’s soul into a mirror, and it’s also capable of materializing what that is stored within the mirror. Usually, we can only access the Ethereal Hall with our consciousness, but through the Paragon Blackmirror, it might be possible to enter the illusory Ethereal Hall with one’s real body,” Du Qingyuan deduced.

While the Ethereal Hall that cultivators immersed their consciousness into was often described as ‘illusory’, it was very much existent in the world. The fact that it was possible for individuals to interact with the environment and one another was enough to prove its existence.

It was just that it existed on another dimensional plane, making it impossible for living cultivators to enter it with their physical bodies. The differences in the spatial structures of the two dimensional planes made it impossible for a living person to even survive the journey into the Ethereal Hall. As such, even though it was possible to take items in and out of the Ethereal Hall, no cultivator had managed to step into the Ethereal Hall with their physical body before.

However, through reflecting the ‘illusory’ Ethereal Hall on the Paragon Blackmirror, one would be able to bind it to the mirror’s dimensional plane. Then, using the Paragon Blackmirror as a gateway, it might be possible to physically enter the ‘illusory’ Ethereal Hall safely.

“If he used the Paragon Blackmirror to reflect the illusory Ethereal Hall before using the mirror to reflect himself, it’s likely that he’s able to freely move around the branches of the Ethereal Hall...”

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

That explained why Kong shi had wanted to obtain the Evanescent Boots, the Paragon Blackmirror, and the altar... Those three wielded exceptional abilities!

If one could enter the illusory Ethereal Hall with one's real body, through the connections between the illusory Ethereal Hall and all the Ethereal Tokens, it would technically be possible to teleport one to wherever an Ethereal Token existed.

Basically, it worked in a similar manner to how one retrieved purchased items from the Ethereal Hall.

Who could have thought that the Ethereal Token and Paragon Blackmirror could actually be used in such a manner? Unbelievable!

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before pointing out the main problem. "But we don't have the Paragon Blackmirror with us..."

Even if they had figured out how Kong shi managed to move around, it would make no difference if they did not have the Paragon Blackmirror with them.

"No, wait... Even though we don't have the Paragon Blackmirror with us, we can still create a folded space that we can enter and teleport through the Ethereal Token!" Zhang Xuan smacked his forehead.

Why did he not think about it earlier?

"That does sound feasible, but I don't think it's that easy to create a folded space stable enough to carry life while traveling into the illusory Ethereal Hall," Du Qingyuan replied with a frown.

It was the kind of thing that sounded theoretically feasible but might not work in practice.

For one, creating a folded space was no easy feat on the Forsaken Continent.

If so, the Six Sects would have long uncovered such a transportation technique, and they would not have to spend days on end sitting atop aerial immortal beasts to move around.

More importantly, it could be extremely dangerous. This medium of transportation was under the control of the Ethereal Hall, and if anything went wrong, they might fall into the cracks of space and be unable to return.

“It might be difficult to do it anywhere else, but in here... Well, just wait here for a moment,” Zhang Xuan said before disappearing.

He could easily create stable folded spaces back on the Master Teacher Continent, but it was not as easy to do so there.

However, while he was still unable to do it, it did not mean that others would be unable to do so. In fact, there was one nearby waiting for his picking.

The treasure vault earlier was one perfect example of a stable folded space that could carry life.

With a grasp of his hand, Zhang Xuan compressed the folded space in the treasure vault until it fitted nicely in his palm.

Boom!

With his cultivation reaching Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm, his current strength was definitely on par with Kong shi’s previously. While he did not possess the Heavens’ Order, which granted one superior powers over spacetime, he was at least still able to manipulate a folded space like that.

Hu!

He took out a storage ring and placed the sealed folded space into it.

“Palace Master Du, please enter the folded space.”

Du Qingyuan nodded as she lowered her guard.

In the next moment, she vanished from the spot.

After pulling Du Qingyuan into the folded space, Zhang Xuan took out an Ethereal Token and infused his consciousness into it.

Even though he was in a place impossible to access from the Forsaken Continent, considering how he was in the Ethereal

Hall headquarters, he should still be able to access the illusory Ethereal Hall without any trouble and contact the others.

Soon enough, Han Jianqiu appeared before him, and upon seeing Zhang Xuan in the Ethereal Hall, he heaved a sigh of relief.

“Sect Leader Zhang, how are you faring over there? Are you still doing fine?”

Shortly after Zhang Xuan entered the portal, the altar on the other side had been destroyed, causing the portal to dissipate. That had left all of them at Starchaser Palace panicking. They had feared that something had happened to Zhang Xuan.

Only when he saw the young man before him once more was he finally able to calm his heart.

“I’m fine. I’ll place a storage ring on the auction later. Buy it and take it out in Starchaser Palace’s Ethereal Hall right after, understood?” Zhang Xuan instructed.

“Yes.” Han Jianqiu nodded even though he did not know what Zhang Xuan was up to.

After instructing Han Jianqiu, he quickly backed out of the Ethereal Hall and placed the storage ring on the Ethereal Hall’s auction. Following that, he brought the Serpentine Dragon out.

“Here is a blank Ethereal Token. I need you to remain here and guard it. Make sure to appear immediately as soon as I call for you, understood?” Zhang Xuan said.

With the recent breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm, the Serpentine Dragon’s soul had grown strong enough for it to enter the Ethereal Hall with its consciousness.

Zhang Xuan wanted to return to the Forsaken Continent to look for Kong shi, but there was a chance that he might have to visit the Hall of Gods once more in the future. Thus, he had to prepare in advance.

If he could really return to the Forsaken Continent through this method, he should be able to go back there by liaising with the Serpentine Dragon.

Knowing what its master was trying to do, the Serpentine Dragon nodded. "I understand."

"Also, make sure to hide well. Don't let anyone find you. There's a chance that Hall Master Kong might come back here," Zhang Xuan instructed sternly.

The Serpentine Dragon nodded before shrinking itself to roughly the size of a thumb.

Its real body, which was several hundred meters long, was simply too conspicuous. It was too easy for someone to spot him even from a distance away. However, if he shrunk himself to the size of a thumb, it would be hard for someone to find him amid the vast hall.

After handling the Serpentine Dragon, Zhang Xuan entered the folded space in the storage ring as well. Following that, the Serpentine Dragon tapped the Ethereal Token lightly, and the storage ring disappeared from view.

On the Forsaken Continent, an Ethereal Token lit up brilliantly as a storage ring materialized from a Teleportation Formation.

Hu!

Zhang Xuan came out from the folded space in the storage ring. When he saw Han Jianqiu and the others, he heaved a deep sigh of relief. "It really worked!"

Even though the plan had sounded feasible in theory, there were many complications that could have happened when putting it into practice. In fact, his heart had been beating worriedly throughout the entire process.

If someone on either side of the Ethereal Token had betrayed him or the Ethereal Hall had noticed what they were up to, they might have ended up banished into the cracks of space.

In any case, it was a huge relief that everything had worked out well. It also appeared that the Ethereal Hall had not noticed what they had done yet.

After all, such trades were held often enough for the Ethereal Hall not to pay close attention to every transaction.

"Teacher..."

Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, the eyes of Zhao Ya and the others lit up in agitation.

Zhang Xuan was just about to call them when he noticed something that sent his eyebrows shooting upward. “All of you... have managed to reach the Heavenly High Immortal realm?”

Prior to his departure, Zhao Ya and the others had still been at the True Immortal realm. Yet, at that very moment, all of them had reached the Heavenly High Immortal realm, and it looked as if they were ready to achieve a breakthrough at any moment!

But he had barely been gone for a few hours...

Had his students always been so talented?

2090 Zhang Xuan Imparts

All along, Zhang Xuan thought that he was able to cultivate quite quickly. Nevertheless, he still spent half a month to raise his cultivation from Ancient Sage 4-dan to High Immortal realm. The sweat and blood he had put into it were enough to make any man break down in tears.

It could be said that every step he took was immensely difficult.

It was true that these 11 direct disciples of his had the simplified Heaven's Path Divine Art, and they had sufficient Immortal Pills to fuel their cultivation too... But how did they manage to raise their cultivation from True Immortal realm to Heavenly High Immortal realm within just a few hours?

This was ridiculous!

“It isn't fast at all. We took an entire month after your departure to reach our current level...” Zhao Ya replied sheepishly.

“An entire month?” Zhang Xuan frowned. “Was I away for that long?”

He knew that the flow of time in the Ethereal Hall was 1:10 of the Forsaken Continent. Going by what Zhao Ya said, a month in the Forsaken Continent should equate to roughly three days or 72 hours in the Ethereal Hall.

But all in all, he had only spent at most 2 hours in the Hall of Gods and 4 hours in the Ethereal Hall. Even factoring in 4 hours he spent climbing up the pillars, it would only total up to 10 hours at the very most...

That was different far off from the estimated 72 hours!

“Unless...”

A thought suddenly surfaced in Zhang Xuan's mind.

Could it be that the flow of time in the Hall of Gods is also 1:10 of the Ethereal Hall? In other words, it is 1:100 of the

Forsaken Continent?

If the flow of time in the Hall of Gods was even slower, that would make sense.

Using a 1:100 ratio, he had spent two hours in the Hall of Gods and four hours climbing up the Azure Bridge, which equated to 600 hours on the Forsaken Continent. Factoring in the four hours he had spent in the Ethereal Hall headquarters, that would be around 640 hours...

If so, it would indeed have been around a month on the Forsaken Continent.

The flow of time in the Hall of Gods is actually 1:100 of the Forsaken Continent... Is the flow of time in the Firmament that slow as well?

It would really be frightening if that was the case.

The slower the flow of time, the stabler the temporal laws of the world were.

Space and time were often collectively termed as spacetime because the two of them had an inseverable relationship with one another.

If the flow of time was indeed a hundredth of the Azure, that would likely mean that the stability of the space in the Firmament was a hundredfold as well.

And beings who existed in dimensions with stabler spacetime were likely to be much more powerful as well, especially since they would have to endure the greater pressure from the spatial laws.

In a sense, this provided Zhang Xuan with a peek into just how powerful the gods of the Firmament were. If so, Kong shi would likely be a terribly difficult opponent to deal with if he were to successfully make a breakthrough.

Shaking his head, Zhang Xuan put away these thoughts in his mind and turned to look at his disciples.

If they really had a month to work with, given their stable foundation and ample resources, it was indeed not too difficult

for them to make a breakthrough from True Immortal realm to Heavenly High Immortal realm.

“Sit here and listen well. I’ll be imparting to you my comprehension of Semi-Divinity realm, as well as the crux of Gods’ Intent!” Zhang Xuan said.

Given the current situation, they still wouldn’t be of much help at Heavenly High Immortal realm. They would have to be at Semi-Divinity realm at the very minimum to be able to even stand a chance against Kong shi.

Since they were ready for it, he should lend them a hand for the final breakthrough!

All in all, he had comprehended seven Gods’ Intent so far. As long as his disciples were to comprehend the essence of one of them, they should be able to make a breakthrough to Semi-Divinity realm easily.

“Yes!”

Seeing that their teacher was going to conduct a lecture, Zhao Ya and the others quickly sat down and waited excitedly for the lecture to begin.

Han Jianqiu and the others were initially intending to leave the room as well, but after hearing Zhang Xuan’s words, they chose to linger around the sides of the room instead.

“In order to reach Semi-Divinity, you must first comprehend what divinity is. An unequaled existence, a being that has transcended nature, that is what divinity is. In order to reach that level, one must first affirm his own will and temper his determination...” Zhang Xuan spoke in a slow voice.

As Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, Han Jianqiu and the others initially didn’t think that Zhang Xuan’s lecture would be able to value-add to them. However, after hearing for a while, they soon found themselves completely engrossed over his words.

Despite having made the breakthrough themselves, the truth was that they still didn’t have a complete understanding of what the realm comprised either. They were able to drive the power in their body freely, but they had no idea where the power originated from and how it worked.

This was similar to how a human might not necessarily know how each and every part of his body functioned.

The reason why they were able to succeed was due to absorbing the unique aura in the circular platform by the Azure Bridge. Furthermore, the number of Semi-Divinity realm cultivators on the Forsaken Continent had always been severely limited, so it was inevitable that there was very little knowledge regarding the realm being passed down.

As a result, their comprehension of the realm was half-baked. Even if they wanted to, they wouldn't be able to properly impart the quintessence of Semi-Divinity realm to their disciples either.

However, things would be different from this day onward.

Zhang Xuan's lecture was simple and direct, allowing the listeners to grasp the crux swiftly. Along with this understanding, the zhenqi in their dantian immediately began moving on its own accord.

Boom!

Barely two hours after the lecture started, a powerful aura surged into the air. Zhao Ya and the others, who were still trapped at Heavenly High Immortal realm a moment ago, actually managed to make a breakthrough simultaneously.

Zhang Xuan had already passed them a portion of the unique aura from the circular platforms not too long ago. With their newfound enlightenment, they were swiftly rushing toward a higher realm.

Han Jianqiu and the others also managed to advance their cultivation to Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm too. Their zhenqi became much purer and more condensed, granting them greater fighting prowess.

Soon, the lecture came to an end.

Han Jianqiu and the others also quickly halted their cultivation, and looking at Zhang Xuan, he asked, "Teacher, what's the current situation with the Hall of Gods?"

They had been too engrossed in cultivation that they forgot to ask about the details after Zhang Xuan teleported over via the altar.

“It’s like this...”

Zhang Xuan swiftly told the others what he had encountered after moving to the other side of the portal.

“So, you are saying that Hall Master Kong has stolen the Aura of Divinity, and it’s likely that he’ll be able to reach the level of the gods?” Han Jianqiu narrowed his eyes in shock.

Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement, “If he were to succeed, it’s likely that it’ll be the end of all of us.”

Given Kong shi’s abnormal obsession with the fragments of heavens, it was likely that he would try to snatch the Library of Heaven’s Path away from him after he became a god. With his strength then, even with over twenty Semi- Divinities on their side, they would still be in a disadvantageous position.

Putting everything aside, Han Jianqiu and the others wouldn’t even be a match for him teamed up together, so it was unlikely that they would be able to put up a fight against a god-level Kong shi.

Whether that Kong shi was fake or not, his fighting prowess was the real deal.

“What should we do then?” Elder Kui Xiao asked worriedly.

“There are only two things that we can do at the moment. First, we look for Kong shi and snatch the Aura of Divinity away from him. As long as we are able to stop him from achieving a breakthrough, we’ll be victorious,” Zhang Xuan said.

The crowd nodded in agreement.

As long as Kong shi didn’t reach the level of the gods, they would still be able to stand against him with their current strength. If so, the other party wouldn’t dare to move recklessly.

It was just that there was a major flaw with that course of action.

After obtaining the Aura of Divinity, the next logical step that Kong shi would make was to find a place where no one would be able to find him and cultivate. There was no way he would leave behind any clues that would lead them to him.

It was likely that even his most trusted subordinate didn't know where he was hiding at this moment!

Zhang Xuan paused for a moment before continuing on, "Second, we have to accrue sufficient strength that would allow us to deal with a god. That's the only way we can cope with the danger ahead of us..."

If they couldn't find Kong shi and snatch back the Aura of Divinity, the only thing they could do was to reinforce their defense.

If they could set up a formation which even gods were unable to escape from, or if he could just kill Kong shi with the golden page that he had at the moment, they would be able to resolve the danger that Kong shi posed.

But would the golden page really wield sufficient strength to kill a god?

Zhang Xuan wasn't confident of that at all.

There was no doubt that the golden page was a powerful weapon, and it had saved him on many occasions as well. However, its prowess seemed to be dependent on the might of the heavens in the world he was in.

This was similar to how it was impossible for the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent to kill him anymore. The most that it could do was to expel him from their world.

The current Library of Heaven's Path was augmented by the heavens of the Azure, which meant that the golden page was likely able to obliterate any Semi-Divinity realm cultivator easily. However, if the opponent was a god, an existence that surpassed the Azure itself... the chances of success were extremely slim indeed.

The reason why he was able to kill the deity descending from the Azure back then was because the latter was still at Ancient Sage 4-dan. That was the highest level that the Master Teacher

Continent permitted one to reach. Any higher than that would be impossible.

Of course, this was just his conjecture at the moment too. It would be for the best if the golden page really worked, but he had no intention of gambling his all on that single hope.

He didn't like the idea of leaving his fate to luck.

More importantly, Kong shi knew about the existence of his Heavens' Imperfection, so there was a chance that the other party was aware of his trump card as well. If the other party were to go all out to guard against it, he wasn't certain if he would really be able to land a clean blow with the golden page.

If not for this, he would have already used the golden page back when he encountered Kong shi outside the real Hall of Gods. He only held himself back because Kong shi was too far away then, which significantly lowered the chances of success were extremely low.

"Accrue sufficient strength? It won't be easy, but I think it's feasible. If our teacher is able to reach the level of the gods too, he should be able to deal with Hall Master Kong!" Han Jianqiu said.

Those words left a bitter smile on Zhang Xuan's lips.

He didn't have any Aura of Divinity with him, and he hadn't come up with a feasible cultivation technique for him to achieve a breakthrough with yet too.

It had only been a day since he had reached Semi-Divinity after comprehending the sentiments between a master and a subordinate. It would take some time for him to make a breakthrough again.

"Teacher, didn't you say that you have already saved Palace Master Du? Why don't I see anywhere? She knows quite a bit about the gods, so she might have an idea in mind!" Elder Qin Yuan suddenly spoke up.

"Ah, I forgot!" Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

In the next moment, Du Qingyuan appeared before everyone.

He was too caught up with the series of events that happened afterward that he forgot to let Du Qingyuan out from the folded space.

“Paying respects to Palace Master Du!”

Han Jianqiu quickly filled Du Qingyuan in on the quandary they were facing before asking the question, “Palace Master Du, do you know of any alternative ways that would allow a cultivator to become a god other than through the Aura of Divinity?”

“If our Starchaser Palace is in possession of such knowledge, a god would have long appeared amongst us,” Du Qingyuan replied sharply.

Hearing her definite reply, awkward looks appeared on everyone’s faces.

Indeed. If there was an alternative way to reach the levels of the gods, the geniuses of the Starchaser Palace would have long done so. They wouldn’t have been so helpless in the face of the Hall Master Kong too.

“Is there really no hope at all?” Han Jianqiu remarked with anxious reddened eyes.

2091 Entering the City of Collapsed Space Once More

New Semi-Divinity realm cultivators had appeared amongst the four sects, and the number would only continue to increase with Zhang Xuan imparting the crux of Gods' Intent to them. They thought that this would bring about an era of prosperity as cultivators reached greater heights, but if they failed to deal with Hall Master Kong properly... everything would just become history.

“There's no feasible way to do so, unless...”

At this point, Du Qingyuan's voice suddenly paused for a moment as a thought suddenly emerged in her head.

“Unless what?”

Du Qingyuan had a conflicted expression on her face for a moment before she finally spoke up hesitantly, “If we are able to find the source of the air of degeneration in the City of Collapsed Space, there might be a chance that we are able to acquire some Aura of Divinity...”

“The source of the air of degeneration? What does that have to do with anything?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

He had been to the City of Collapsed Space once, and he knew just how frightening the air of degeneration there was. Even his Heaven's Path zhenqi was unable to ward it off completely. The only thing that could curb it was Little Chick's chicken soup.

It was a force which even Semi-Divinity realm cultivators were unable to expel from their body. If he wasn't around back then, Jiang Yao would have been a lifeless corpse by now...

Why would Du Qingyuan ask him to trace down the source of the air of degeneration?

“Legend has it that the City of Collapsed Space isn't a city native to the Forsaken Continent... Instead, it's a city that has

fallen from the Firmament, and the corpses of the gods are buried beneath it!” Du Qingyuan replied.

“A city that has fallen from the Firmament?” Zhang Xuan was slightly stunned.

Han Jianqiu and the others were taken aback as well. This was the first time they were hearing about this.

All along, the City of Collapsed Space had been a restricted zone for the cultivators. There was no one who could have imagined that it was actually a city from the Firmament!

“It’s said that the city suddenly fell from the heavens several thousand years ago. Back then, the phenomenon drew countless people to venture its depths, hoping to find the treasures of the gods, but as most of you would be able to guess, all of them died,” Du Qingyuan said.

“There is probably no one in the Forsaken Continent who knows about the true origin of the City of Collapsed Space anymore. I only happened to overhear the Spirit God speaking about the matter too...”

“The Spirit God?” Zhang Xuan’s body tensed up a little.

“Un. The Spirit God fell into a long moment of silence when she first heard about the City of Collapsed Space on the Forsaken Continent. After that, she unwittingly mentioned that it’s a city that has fallen from the Firmament due to the wars going on up there, and many gods have lost their lives in that city. She also explained that the air of degeneration is a product of the Aura of Divinity released by the decomposition of the gods’ corpses reacting with the environment of the Forsaken Continent, resulting in an aberration. If we are able to trace the origin of the air of degeneration, it might be possible for us to find some untainted Aura of Divinity to make a breakthrough...” Du Qingyuan said.

“So, you are saying that this is actually the Aura of Divinity too?”

Taking out a sliver of the air of degeneration he had stored in a jade bottle previously, Zhang Xuan remarked in astonishment.

He had taken quite a few of this when he went to the City of Collapsed Space a while ago. He also made use of it to kill a Semi-Divinity realm expert from the Hall of Gods too.

All along, while he did find it weird how there was actually something on the Azure which even Semi-Divinity realm cultivators weren't able to deal with, he didn't think too much into it. After all, nature could be extremely bewildering at times. However, if what Du Qingyuan said was true, everything would make sense.

It was a known fact that a cultivator would be doomed once the air of degeneration seeped into his body. No medicine could cure that at all. Even Zhang Xuan's seemingly omnipotent Heaven's Path zhenqi was unable to cleanse the air of degeneration either.

From this, it was clear that the air of degeneration was something that had surpassed the level of the Azure.

Thus, it was indeed plausible for the air of degeneration to have originated from the Aura of Divinity.

Only gods possessed the ability to render even Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm cultivators utterly helpless.

"This is a matter I heard the Spirit God speak about in passing, so I can't affirm its authenticity. Even if it's true, there's a chance that the origin of the air of degeneration has been corrupted too. Furthermore, I believe all of you are aware of just how frightening the air of degeneration can be. Just being afflicted with the slightest hint of it is enough to seal one's fate... This is also the reason why I wasn't able to verify it even when I have received this piece of intelligence,"

Du Qingyuan said.

"I trust Ruoxin. If those words came from her mouth, there's a high likelihood that it'll be true," Zhang Xuan spoke up.

Just the fact that there was something peculiar about the air of degeneration wasn't enough to verify that it had originated from the Aura of Divinity.

However, he knew Luo Ruoxin's character well. She wasn't the type of person to speak of something she wasn't certain of.

There was likely a basis behind her claim.

Since that was the case, it would indeed be worth investigating the source of the air of degeneration.

“Since that’s the case, I’ll head to the City of Collapsed Space with Palace Master Du. As for the rest of you, I’ll entrust you with the important job of making preparations for the final battle in case we fail,” Zhang Xuan instructed.

Despite the risks, this was a trip they would have to make.

He wasn’t doing this just so he could deal with Kong shi. More importantly, he had to reach the level of the gods in order to ascend to the Firmament.

Only then would he be able to find Luo Ruoxin...

“Rest assured, teacher. We’ll make sure that everything is in place by the time you return!” Han Jianqiu declared resolutely.

“Teacher?” Palace Master Du was surprised by how Han Jianqiu was addressing Zhang Xuan. “Han Jianqiu, what did you address Zhang Xuan as earlier? Did you... acknowledge Zhang Xuan as your teacher?”

As they had gotten right into the serious matters as soon as she appeared, Du Qingyuan was still unaware that the heads of the other sects had already acknowledged Zhang Xuan as their teacher.

“Indeed. Kui Xiao, Qin Yuan, and I have acknowledged Sect Leader Zhang as our teacher,” Han Jianqiu replied with a smile.

It was unheard of for powerhouses like them to actually acknowledge a young man in his twenties as their teacher. However, they didn’t regret their decision. If not for the young man’s teaching, they wouldn’t have been able to make a breakthrough to Heavenly Semi-Divinity realm so easily.

The rest of you did so too?” Du Qingyuan was flabbergasted.

One must know that all three of them were the strongest existences on the Forsaken Continent, but they were actually able to lower their pride and acknowledge Zhang Xuan as their teacher...

She did know that there was something extraordinary about Zhang Xuan, but even this was a little too much for her to accept.

Noticing Du Qingyuan's shock, Zhang Xuan chirped in with a smile, "I don't mind if you wish to acknowledge me as your teacher too."

It would be for the best if Du Qingyuan could bring him a golden page too. In any case, he would only accept her as an ordinary student and not a direct disciple, so there was no need for him to hesitate too much over this.

Eh? I don't want to." Taken aback by the abrupt offer, Du Qingyuan quickly shook her head and turned him down unhesitatingly. Then, realizing that she might have been a little too rude, she quickly added, Thanks for the offer."

There was no denying that she was a little moved by the request. She knew that Zhang Xuan was the lover of the Spirit God, and she had no doubt that he would eventually achieve great things in the future.

However, she simply couldn't accept the act of acknowledging someone so much younger than her as her teacher.

"I see. It's fine then. Let's set off to the City of Collapsed Space now."

Zhang Xuan knew that it was unlikely for the golden page to be formed if Du Qingyuan wasn't willing, so he didn't insist on the matter. He took the lead and began heading toward the City of Collapsed Space, and Du Qingyuan followed him closely.

After comprehending the Pathos of Heavens, his speed had become much faster than before. The previous time around, it took him half a day in order to get to the desert above the City of Collapsed Space. This time around, it only took him four hours.

He swiftly found the entrance once more and descended beneath the sand.

Tracing his footsteps, he quickly arrived at where he saved Jiang Yao back then.

Du Qingyuan took a look at the surroundings before remarking, “This isn’t it. We have to find the very center of the City of Collapsed Space.”

In truth, she hadn’t been to the City of Collapsed Space before. However, the predecessors of the Starchaser Palace had been here before, and they had left records of their expedition behind. It was through these records that Jiang Yao was able to lure Fu Chenzi and the others into a trap, nearly killing them.

The two of them continued proceeding ahead.

Through his superior strength, Zhang Xuan was able to easily deal with the Degeneration Beasts that stood in their way. There wasn’t anything that could pose a threat to him along the way.

Following behind the young man, Du Qingyuan felt a little conflicted within as she watched the young man dealing with those bizarre creatures, which she would have never dared to approach, with ease.

This wasn’t the first time she was witnessing Zhang Xuan’s strength anymore, but she still found herself astounded by how powerful he was. She couldn’t help but wonder just how he cultivated to become so powerful within such a short period of time.

They continued to search the area for another two hours, but they didn’t manage to find what they were looking for.

Realizing that it was futile to search this massive city aimlessly, Zhang Xuan finally came to a halt and said, “We won’t be able to find the origin of the air of degeneration like that.”

“What do you propose then?” Du Qingyuan asked with a frown.

Her understanding of this place stopped at the records of the predecessors, so naturally, she was at a complete loss of how they should look for the source of the air of degeneration too.

Otherwise, she wouldn’t have allowed herself to be dragged aimlessly around the place by the Zhang Xuan either. Zhang

Xuan pondered for a moment before speaking up, “I think we can try this instead...”

Hu!

His clone appeared before him.

Given his current strength, there was pretty much no one who could hurt him on the Azure anymore. As such, it was no longer a big deal for him to reveal the existence of his clone anymore.

“Is that your clone?” Du Qingyuan was slightly confused.

She didn’t understand what Zhang Xuan was trying to do. Did his clone possess some kind of mysterious ability that would help them in this situation?

“Stand properly!” Zhang Xuan instructed as he took out the Tongshang Sword.

Then, without any hesitation, he slashed the sword at his clone’s arm.

Tzzzzzz!

As soon as the clone was injured, the surrounding air of degeneration immediately surged in furiously. The sheer concentration of it caused it to materialize as a grayish fog in the surroundings.

“It should be safe to assume that the origin would have a higher concentration of the air of degeneration,” Zhang Xuan explained the motive of his actions.

Understanding Zhang Xuan’s intent, Palace Master Du’s eyes lit up and she exclaimed in excitement, “You’re right!”

But of course, that was easier said than done. The City of Collapsed Space was a confined space, and over the past several thousand years, the air of degeneration had diffused to near homogeneity in the area. While it was likely that there was a concentration gradient, it was so slight that it would be nearly imperceptible.

Thus, they had to rile up the air of degeneration in the surroundings a little before they would be able to detect any

difference.

“That way!” Du Qingyuan quickly pointed a way out.

Nodding his head in agreement, Zhang Xuan and his clone quickly headed in that direction.

Every now and then, when they weren't sure where to go anymore, Zhang Xuan would unhesitatingly bestow a slash upon his clone in order to trigger his compass function. By the eighth time, the clone was already on the verge of exploding from rage. Fortunately, a decrepit temple appeared before them at this moment.

Despite having been reduced to ruins, this temple still spanned over a distance of more than 10 li, making it hard to imagine just how grand it was before it collapsed. Due to the corrosion of the air of degeneration, the shattered bricks were covered with a thin layer of darkness.

The land was completely barren, devoid of any greenery. From time to time, a sinister gale would blow over, causing one to shiver from the eeriness.

“Is this it?” Du Qingyuan frowned doubtfully.

Despite the bizarre nature of the air of degeneration, there were still some unique plants that managed to blossom in such a climate. Thus, it was hard to imagine that the origin was located in a place as barren as this.

“It should be...” Zhang Xuan replied.

Till now, the wound on his clone's body was still bleeding. Judging from the concentration of air of degeneration in the air, they should be at the origin. There was no other place in the City of Collapsed Space that felt as discomfoting as here.

“We should hurry up and search the area then.”

Not wanting to linger around this area for too long, Du Qingyuan quickly examined the ruins carefully, fearing that she would miss out the slightest detail.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan didn't seem to be in much of a rush. He traded glances with his clone as they continued perceiving their surroundings carefully.

A moment later, they slowly walked over to an area filled with rubble.

Zhang Xuan lifted his hand, and with a powerful wave of his palm, the rubble on the floor was swept to the side, revealing an uneven ground filled with depressions.

Dark streaks scarred the ground, hinting at the existence of a sinister force.

Zhang Xuan took out his Tongshang Sword and flicked out a piece of boulder from the ground. Taking a closer look at the boulder, he found that even its insides had been dyed in darkness. A bizarre glint could be seen reflecting off its surface. It felt like a glaring beast that would devour one's soul whole if one were to stare at it for too long.

Zhang Xuan carefully touched the boulder with his finger.

Weng!

A book was compiled in the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Godblood Rock, formed through assimilating the blood of the gods..."

This was a part of the description written in the book.

"We're at the right spot..." Zhang Xuan nodded before a slight frown crept onto his forehead.

When he first caught sight of the boulder, he found it extremely familiar. It was just that there were some anomalies regarding its color. So, he dug out a piece to take a closer look with the Library of Heaven's Path, and it affirmed his thoughts.

If this was the Godblood Rock, the black streaks on the ground would indeed have been caused by the flow of god blood.

The only doubt he harbored was that... why did this Godblood Rock feel so crass? Unlike the Godblood Rock formed through Luo Ruoxin's blood, it felt unrefined and rough.

Could it be that there were different tiers of god blood too?

2092 Tombstone

With a flick of his wrist, Zhang Xuan took out a piece of the Godblood Rock he had taken from the Ocean of Exiled Stars and compared the two together. The difference was really similar to that between an inkstone and a jewel.

They were made out of the same material, but their appearances were vastly different!

Without taking a close look, it was impossible to discern that they were actually the same thing.

“The Godblood Rock is formed when the blood of a god seeps into a stone... Since that’s the case, it’s extremely likely that the gods’ corpses are lying around here!”

Rising to his feet, Zhang Xuan swung his Tongshang Sword, and all of the rubble around the area were swept to the side. On the exposed ground, he found more boulders with the same appearance as the black Godblood Rock.

In other words, the blood of the gods had permeated the entire area.

“Palace Master Du!” Zhang Xuan immediately beckoned.

Du Qingyuan hurriedly flew over.

She didn’t manage to find anything much in the area.

“You found it?”

“Not yet. However, I think that these black streaks are a hint to where the corpses of the gods are...” Zhang Xuan said as he gestured to the ground.

Du Qingyuan turned her gaze over.

There was indeed something weird about the black streaks on the ground. They seemed to form some sort of mysterious message when looking at them on the whole. Taking a closer look, it was actually rather similar to the inscriptions on the Heaven Anchoring Boulder.

After looking around with a deep frown for a moment, Du Qingyuan suddenly exclaimed with widened eyes, “It looks like... a ritual!”

“Ritual?”

“I believe that these inscriptions on the floor were formed using fresh blood. Most likely, they were in the midst of a large-scale ritual when the entire city suddenly fell from the Firmament,” Du Qingyuan revealed her analysis with a grim look on her face.

“This... Zhang Xuan’s heart skipped a beat.

Normal rituals could be conducted by tributing treasures and artifacts, but some of the more malicious ones might require sacrifices and fresh blood in order to activate.

Back then, Sovereign Chen Ling killed over a hundred thousand of his subordinates in order to summon a deity from the Azure so that he could swiftly recover from his injuries.

Could it be that... someone was attempting to do something similar to that?

It would be too naive to think that the fall of the city coincidentally happened in the midst of the ritual. Most likely, the city was banished from the Firmament by some sort of force after being caught conducting such a ritual.

However, rituals that made use of sacrifices tended to be extremely powerful. It was hard to imagine how powerful that force had to be in order to kick the city out of the Firmament in the midst of the ritual.

“As long as we find the center point of the ritual, we should be able to find the origin of the air of degeneration!” Du Qingyuan said.

Using her zhenqi, she swiftly cleaned away the rubble within a hundred meters radius, revealing a huge black door beneath.

“This door is located at the center of the inscriptions. Let’s head in to take a look,” Du Qingyuan said as she walked forward and pushed open the door.

She was just about to enter when Zhang Xuan suddenly stopped her. Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan took the lead in.

It seemed like the temple extended to the underground as well. Everything above had collapsed, but the space beneath had managed to remain intact over the years, presumably because it was tightly sealed.

Tzzzzzz!

Barely after entering, Zhang Xuan immediately felt innumerable sword qi flying in his direction. He adeptly waved the Tongshang Sword, extending his Sword Intent into the surroundings.

A Heart of Intertwined Threads!

Knowing the dangers that lurked within the City of Collapsed Space, Zhang Xuan didn't hold back at all.

Peng peng peng!

With a few dull groans, several black silhouettes dissipated into the shadows.

They are Degeneration Beasts too! However, they appear to be far stronger than those we have faced above..." Du Qingyuan remarked with a hushed voice from behind.

Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

These Degeneration Beasts seemed no different from specters lingering in the shadows of the night, preying upon living beings who dared step in their direction.

Zhang Xuan had killed many Degeneration Beasts along the way, but they were all only at High Immortal realm. Yet, the ones which he had just dealt with had astonishingly reached Semi-Divinity realm.

Had it been anyone else in his place, it was likely that he wouldn't have even survived the first wave of attack, eventually fulfilling the fate of being corroded down to bones.

"The air of degeneration seems to be coming from there..." Du Qingyuan pointed out anxiously.

Looking in the direction where Du Qingyuan had pointed out, Zhang Xuan saw the black streaks congregating at the very center of the underground hall.

So, he carefully made his way over.

There was a small altar placed on top of the area where all of the black streaks had originated from.

“This...” Zhang Xuan was a little taken aback.

Even though it was small, the altar looked extremely similar to the altar of the Starchaser Palace. The only difference would be that the altar right before him was of an even higher tier.

If the altar Wu Chen used was from the Forsaken Continent and the one Du Qingyuan used was from the Azure, the one before him must have definitely come from the Firmament!

Zhang Xuan could not discern what it was made of, but despite being buried for several thousand years, it didn't seem to be worn out at the very least. In fact, it was emanating a slight glow.

“Could it be that...” Du Qingyuan clenched her fists tightly in agitation.

There could only be one reason why there was an altar in the City of Collapsed Space which closely resembled the Guardian Artifact of the Starchaser Palace. It was hard to believe it, but the evidence seemed to be pointing toward that direction.

Just as what she had heard from the preceding palace master, it was likely that the population on Starchaser Island had indeed originated from the Firmament!

“It looks like what he said is true...” Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Back then, after ‘saving’ him, the fake Kong shi explained the origins of the Six Sects, and he mentioned that those living on the Starchaser Island were actually exiled gods.

Noting the slight look on confusion on Du Qingyuan's face, Zhang Xuan told her about the story he had heard from the fake Kong shi back then.

Du Qingyuan shook her head and said, “Such information has been passed down verbally through each generation of palace master, but I thought that such a thing couldn’t have been true. But this...”

The other five major sects of the Forsaken Continent had proclaimed themselves as the exiled gods, and as time passed by, those lies ended up being taken for real.

There was no way of knowing when and why those lies had started spreading. Too much time had passed since then to investigate the matter.

However, those lies had indeed become the conventional truth on the Forsaken Continent. There was no longer anyone who would try to question those claims anymore.

Even if Zhang Xuan were to reveal the truth to everyone in the Azure, there would be very few people who would believe him.

But again, the truth no longer mattered at this point anymore. The fact was that no one on the Forsaken Continent was able to reach the level of the gods anymore, so these lies were nothing more than words that made one feel good about oneself.

Zhang Xuan walked around the perimeter of the altar but he didn’t notice anything worthy of note. With a helpless sigh, he said, “It doesn’t seem like there’s anything here aside from the altar. While it’s placed at the very center of the ritual, it doesn’t seem to be the source of the air of degeneration.”

It was a little bizarre how the air of degeneration suddenly thinned out around the altar. If he hadn’t known for certain that he was in the City of Collapsed Space, he might have thought that he had been teleported back to the Azure somehow.

However, Du Qingyuan had a very different view from Zhang Xuan, “There must be a reason why this altar is placed here. I think that it’s highly likely that the Aura of Divinity lies right here.”

“Oh?”

“Since this altar is similar to that in our Starchaser Palace, I’ll try and see if I can assimilate it with my bloodline.”

Du Qingyuan slit her wrist with a surge of sword qi before dripping her blood on the black streaks around the ritual.

Fresh blood flowed along with the black streaks, and it didn’t take long before they were all dyed crimson. Right after, as if a formation had come to life, a brilliant burst of light surged outward.

Hong long long!

The altar began to rattle.

Du Qingyuan’s face had already turned pale at this point, but she continued to allow her blood to flow freely from her wrist. With the tribute of her blood, the light grew brighter and brighter.

Whenever her wound started clotting, she would carve a new one with her fingernails. Just like that, she left three strokes on her wrist.

It was fortunate that there was no air of degeneration in the area, or else she would have been corroded down to bones before her blood could even flow out.

Boom!

Just as Du Qingyuan was reaching her limits, the altar suddenly glowed brilliantly.

There was a feeling of great disorientation before the two of them realize that they had been teleported into an area even darker than before.

The entire area was shrouded with a layer of thick mist, hindering one’s line of sight.

“Be careful!”

Zhang Xuan quickly fed Du Qingyuan with a bottle of chicken soup and Premier Immortal Pill before she finally recovered from her exertion.

It felt as if they had tumbled into the depths of a cave. There was a vague scent of charred earth lingering in the air. “Are we

still in the City of Collapsed Space?” Du Qingyuan asked with a frown.

Zhang Xuan replied solemnly, “I don’t know, but I think it’s likely that we might have arrived at the source of the air of degeneration.”

He could feel a powerful and terrifying power amidst the dark area they were in.

Putting aside his current strength, he felt that even if he were to reach the level of the gods, he would still be no match for this existence.

The fact that he was feeling such a heavy pressure likely meant that there was a real god hidden amidst the darkness, similar to what they had heard previously.

“I’m hungry. I want to eat...” a chirpy voice suddenly echoed in Zhang Xuan’s mind.

It was Little Chick.

“Shut up,” Zhang Xuan replied snappishly.

It was likely that they were standing before a frightening existence, but all Little Chick could think of was food... Could it be more of a wastrel than this?

He had never met a real god before, but even someone of Vicious’ level was able to recover after being killed. Regardless of whether the being lying within this dark space was dead or alive, the other party was an existence which a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator like him should definitely not offend.

“But I’m hungry...” Little Chick cried out.

“Eat these Premier Immortal Pills to fill your stomach,” Zhang Xuan replied impatiently as he moved a bottle of Premier Immortal Pills into his tamed beast sack.

Little Chick immediately waddled its way gracefully over and pecked on one of it.

Seeing that it wasn’t causing any trouble for the time being, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief before proceeding deeper

in with Du Qingyuan.

A massive tombstone soon appeared before their eyes.

Five words were inscribed on it. It was emanating an imposing pressure that prevented others from proceeding any further ahead.

Zhang Xuan began to examine the tombstone.

The inscriptions on the tombstone were similar to that on the Azure Bridge as well, making it hard for him to discern its meaning.

T-this ...”

By his side, Du Qingyuan’s body suddenly began trembling.

You recognize these words?” Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

Du Qingyuan nodded with a pale face. Her voice trembled as she spoke, “It reads... Tomb of the Deathless Monarch!”

“Deathless Monarch?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

“It’s said that he’s an extremely powerful expert of the Firmament, a being who exists alongside the heavens and the earth. He’s known to be an existence who can’t be killed, but... he’s actually dead?” Du Qingyuan could hardly believe

“A being who existed alongside the heavens and the earth?”

Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

He had no way of telling whether Du Qingyuan was true or not, but just the other party’s title as the ‘Deathless Monarch’ spoke a lot about the other party’s strength and abilities!

For a being who was bestowed with the title of ‘Deathless’ to lose his life here...

Just what in the world happened in the City of Collapsed Space?

“Who dares to barge in here?”

Zhang Xuan was still trying to make sense of the situation before him when a hostile voice echoed in the air. Amidst the mysterious dark mist lingering in the area, a figure slowly made its way over.

He clutched the Tongshang Sword as he looked at the approaching figure warily.

In the next moment, a black skeleton suddenly appeared before his eyes.

The black skeleton was tall, and a dark menacing glint reflected off its surface. It carried an imposing pressure which made its tremendous strength clearly known.

This was the first time Zhang Xuan felt so deeply threatened. Even when he first encountered Vicious' heart back in the underground cavern, he hadn't felt such goosebumps over his body before.

2093 Corrupted Aura of Divinity

“We didn’t mean to disturb you...” Du Qingyuan hurriedly raised her hands to clarify the situation.

This isn’t a place where you should have come to. But since you are already here, why don’t you stay here to accompany me?”

The black skeleton crackled coldly as it raised its hand and pointed its finger toward the duo.

Huala!

In the next moment, Zhang Xuan and Du Qingyuan felt as if the world was collapsing on them. An overwhelming pressure crushed down on them, leaving them feeling as though their bodies would be reduced to dust.

“This is the strength of the gods...” Zhang Xuan was alarmed.

Knowing that there was no time to waste on words, he took out the Tongshang Sword and executed his strongest swordsmanship.

Huala!

Through exerting his Sword Intent, he swiftly formed a fishnet barrier around him and Du Qingyuan to shoulder the pressure.

As the fishnet tangled together with the finger of the black skeleton, the pressure crushing down on them alleviated significantly.

“Your swordsmanship is decent. Are you from the Sky of Heavenly Sword?” the black skeleton halted its attack and asked.

But a moment later, it shook its head and answered its own question, “That doesn’t seem right. It should be impossible to find someone from the Sword God Heaven here. Furthermore, their swordsmanship is known to be sharp and ferocious,

carrying great determination and tenacity. As a result of that, their attacks tend to be tough and unbending...

“On the other hand, your sword seems to extremely sentimental, a very different nature from that of the Sky of Heavenly Sword. To be able to comprehend such a powerful move in a place that is so direly lacking in spiritual energy, you are indeed extremely talented, just like the previous person who last ascended to the Firmament from here.

“But that’s all there is to it. The tomb of my master is not a place where outsiders can enter and leave freely. However, in view that it wasn’t easy for you to cultivate to your current level, I’ll make an exception and spare you if you leave right now,” the black skeleton waved its hand dismissively.

“Elder, we came here to search for the Aura of Divinity in order to reach the level of the deities. I implore you to accede to our request!” Seeing that the black skeleton had finally halted its attack, Zhang Xuan hurriedly lowered his posture and made his request.

This was likely to be the only place on the Forsaken Continent where he could find the Aura of Divinity. So, despite the dangers, he couldn’t back down here so easily.

“Do you wish to die? If not, scram!” the black skeleton harrumphed coldly.

“Elder...”

Zhang Xuan was just about to speak up again when the black skeleton waved its hands impatiently, inducing a burst of energy to surge outward like a massive tsunami.

Zhang Xuan’s face immediately turned livid. It felt as if everything was caving in on him.

He quickly took out all of the Semi-Divinity artifacts he had acquired from the treasure vault of the Ethereal Hall previously to fend against the impact.

Ding ding ding ding ding!

The collision still knocked Zhang Xuan back as blood spurted from his mouth. He crashed heavily onto the floor. At the same

time, the Semi-Divinity artifacts he had in hand also fell powerlessly to the ground as well.

He quickly drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi in order to recover a little as he endured the sharp pain his body was under and rose to his feet.

"I really have no intention of offending you, elder. However, we are in dire need of the Aura of Divinity..." Zhang Xuan said.

"You really are pushing your luck, aren't you?" the black skeleton spat coldly.

In the next moment, Zhang Xuan felt yet another powerful pressure pressing down on him from above, attempting to crush him into a pancake.

Just as he was about to reach his limits, the crimson pendant he hung in front of his chest suddenly grew warm, and the heavy pressure also alleviated simultaneously as well.

Hu!

Sensing that the power of the pendant had dispelled the pressure, Zhang Xuan was about to make use of this opportunity to try convincing the black skeleton once more when he suddenly felt tension around his neck.

Before he could even react, the crimson pendant was already flying toward the hands of the black skeleton.

"Return it to me!"

Shocked, Zhang Xuan immediately dashed forward to retrieve his pendant. However, there seemed to be some kind of force holding him in place, preventing him from moving at all.

Dangling the crimson pendant right in front of its empty eye sockets, the black skeleton examined it closely for a moment before flicking it back toward Zhang Xuan's chest.

Hu!

The binding on his body vanished, and Zhang Xuan immediately panted heavily for breath.

With a cold yet no longer hostile voice, the black skeleton looked at Zhang Xuan and asked, “You mentioned that you require the Aura of Divinity?”

Sensing the change in the attitude of the black skeleton after examining the crimson pendant, Zhang Xuan realized that there was a chance that things might work out. So, he quickly clasped his fist and replied, “Yes, elder. I hope that you can accede to my request!”

“I don’t have any Aura of Divinity. However, this can replace it.”

With a grasp of his hand, the air of degeneration swiftly gathered around the black skeleton. Under the might of some sort of power, the air of degeneration swiftly condensed together to form a black current around the black skeleton.

This sight left Zhang Xuan a little taken aback.

He could sense that the black current was much purer and more refined than the air of degeneration. In fact, it emanated an inviolable pressure that was strikingly similar to the Aura of Divinity he had encountered previously.

The only difference was that the Aura of Divinity was golden in color and it didn’t carry the property of degeneration. If Zhang Xuan were to be afflicted with even a hint of the black current, even with the Little Chick’s chicken soup, there was still a good chance that he would be corroded down to his bones.

“I don’t think that I’ll be able to use the Aura of Divinity that you have produced...” Zhang Xuan pointed it out hesitantly.

If he were to dare assimilate it, the chances were that he would be dead before he could even raise his cultivation.

“I know what you are getting at. The Aura of Divinity is originally golden in color, but it takes on a different form in this world,” the black skeleton said.

“A different form?” Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

“The spiritual energy in this world is too murky and impure. With the passing of time, the Aura of Divinity would become

corrupted, losing its golden glow,” the black skeleton explained with a shake of its head.

Similar to how the spiritual energy on the Azure was far purer and more refined than that of the Master Teacher Continent, it was likely that the situation was similar for the Firmament and the Azure as well. The incredibly pure Aura of Divinity, when placed in an area that was far more impure than it, would eventually become corrupted and turn into the air of degeneration.

Zhang Xuan’s complexion darkened.

He thought that he would be able to find pure Aura of Divinity here, but if it had all turned into air of degeneration, it would be useless even if he acquired it.

There was no way he could assimilate it, let alone use it to make a breakthrough!

“Elder, is there a way to cleanse the corrupted Aura of Divinity?” Zhang Xuan asked.

He had to find a way to make things work out over here.

Otherwise, not only would he be unable to find Luo Ruoxin, the fake Kong shi might even tear the Library of Heaven’s Path out of his body, thus resulting in his death!

And he knew that the next victim after him would likely be his direct disciples and the rest of the Six Sects.

It was not as if he didn’t have other strategies that he could resort to, but those were the final measures. It would really be a desperate battle for survival then.

In order to everything going down in the worst possible situation, he had to become a god at any cost.

“There’s a way to do it, but it won’t be easy,” the black skeleton said.

Hearing that there was a way out, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief on the inside as he hurriedly asked, “Elder, I beseech you to enlighten me.”

“A ritual that utilizes the power of souls can cleanse the Aura of Divinity. However, it’ll require many wills to be united as one, earnestly wishing for it to happen. If there’s even a single will that isn’t aligned with the rest, it will end in failure,” the black skeleton said.

“Elder, please impart to me the procedures of the ritual,” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief and said.

“Un.”

The black skeleton raised its finger and tapped forward lightly.

Hu!

A sliver of its will was infused right into Zhang Xuan and Du Qingyuan’s minds.

“This...”

Upon seeing the content of the will, Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

Just as what the black skeleton said, the ritual would require many people working in unison to complete.

Furthermore, the chances were extremely high that sacrifices would be required.

The act of cleansing Aura of Divinity is a necessary step to becoming a god. This step poses no difficulty if it’s conducted in the Firmament, but over here, it’s no different from trying to overstep the authority of the heavens. So, it’s only normal that someone will have to suffer divine retribution for it... If you think you are able to do it, you can give it a try. Otherwise, I have no alternative solutions for you either,” the black skeleton said.

With a tap of its finger, it sent a sphere of black energy right toward Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan carefully caught the sphere of black energy with his zhenqi before sealing it within a jade bottle.

“That’s all I have for you. Do not disrupt my rest anymore. I don’t care whether you are from the Sky of Heavenly Sword

or Sky of Freedom, but if you dare step into this area once more, don't expect me to show mercy to you..."

The black skeleton sat down on the ground before falling completely still.

Zhang Xuan stashed the jade bottle into his storage ring before bowing deeply to the black skeleton, "Thank you, elder."

Even though the other party didn't have the golden Aura of Divinity he wanted, the other party did provide him with a sliver of hope and a clear direction.

As long as he did what the other party said, there was a chance that things might just work out.

"Can I swallow that black skeleton whole?"

Just as Zhang Xuan and Du Qingyuan were about to leave, Little Chick, who was in the tamed beast sack, suddenly spoke out.

"Don't utter nonsense!" Zhang Xuan nearly fainted upon hearing those words.

Till now, the little yellow chick's cultivation was still stagnated at Heavenly High Immortal realm. Given that it hadn't even reached Semi-Divinity realm, how could it possibly devour a real god whole?

Wasn't that practically daydreaming?

Furthermore, even though the black skeleton was hostile at first, it provided him with a way out of the quandary he was in.

"Tsk, stingy..."

Little Chick murmured in displeasure as it continued to peck at its Premier Immortal Pills.

After dealing with Little Chick, Zhang Xuan began walking in the direction from where he came from when a thought suddenly came to his mind. He took out his pendant and clasped his fist toward the black skeleton, "Pardon me for bothering you, but I would just like to ask one last question. Elder, do you know of the origin of this pendant?"

2094 A Hundred Thousand True Immortals 1

2094 A Hundred Thousand True Immortals (1)

He had noticed that the black skeleton mentioned something about the Sky of Heavenly Sword and Sky of Freedom, and even though he didn't understand what those words meant, he was certain that it had something to do with the Firmament.

Furthermore, the black skeleton had initially intended to harm them, but after seeing the crimson pendant he was wearing, its attitude suddenly changed. This meant that it was able to recognize the crimson pendant, and there was a good chance that it was acquainted with Luo Ruoxin!

However, the black skeleton stood unmovingly on the spot, not responding at all

Knowing that the black skeleton wasn't going to answer any of his questions even if he were to probe further, Zhang Xuan shook his head before retreating from the area.

Together with Du Qingyuan, they headed back in the direction where they came from. With a slight moment of disorientation, they soon reappeared above the altar.

“Let's return.”

Even though the Aura of Divinity he had obtained was impure, there was still a chance he could cleanse it through the ritual the black skeleton had passed down to them.

Within four hours, they were back at the Starchaser Palace once more.

Han Jianqiu and the others were pacing around the room anxiously when Zhang Xuan and Du Qingyuan returned, and they immediately directed anticipatory gazes over.

“Wu Chen, prepare the altar!” Zhang Xuan instructed as he imparted the ritual process to him.

After looking through the ritual process, a tight frown appeared on Wu Chen's forehead, "I'm afraid that it won't be easy for the ritual to succeed..."

"What does the ritual require?" Han Jianqiu asked.

The ritual requires the participation of 100,000 True Immortal realm cultivators. They must bare open their souls and display not the slightest resistance at all!" Wu Chen replied with a shake of his head.

Baring open one's soul required a bold leap of faith as it would mean making one completely vulnerable before others. It was no different from entrusting one's life into the hands of another. If anyone in the formation were to harbor any malicious intention toward them, that could spell the end of them.

Even though Zhang Xuan was the head of four sects, the idol of countless young men in the Forsaken Continent, he didn't possess the influence to convince so many people to go to that extent for him.

No human was truly selfless, let alone a hundred thousand of them!

"I know that it isn't easy, but we still have to give it a try," Zhang Xuan replied solemnly.

He turned his eyes toward where Han Jianqiu, Kui Xiao, and Qin Yuan were and asked, "Are the disciples and elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Sevenstar Pavilion, and Myriad Beasts Hall here yet?"

When the grudge between him and the fake Kong shi was first brought to the surface, Zhang Xuan immediately instructed Han Jianqiu and the others to gather all of the disciples and elders of their respective sects on Starchaser island. He knew that they would require as much power as possible in order to deal with the powerful Ethereal Hall and Kong shi.

A month had passed since then, so they should have arrived by now.

"They have all arrived, and they are ready to move at your command!" Han Jianqiu replied. "However, we are only able

to gather 20,000 cultivators of True Immortal realm and above.”

The greatest problem for them at the moment wasn't whether they could unite the hearts of a hundred thousand cultivators together, but that they couldn't even gather that many True Immortals together!

The four sects had many experts in their ranks, but there were only so many of them who were able to reach True Immortal realm. One must know that those who wielded such strength were already qualified to become a core disciple or elder of their respective sects.

Despite the several thousand years of heritage of the Six Sects, even when factoring all of their subordinate and hidden powers, they were only able to gather 20,000 True Immortals together.

Given so, it was unlikely that they would be able to meet the requirement of the participation of a hundred thousand True Immortal realm cultivators in the ritual.

In fact, it was a question whether there were even that many True Immortals on the Forsaken Continent or not. “20,000 True Immortals?” Zhang Xuan's face darkened.

It hadn't been long since he and Wu Chen arrived on the Forsaken Continent, so their understanding of it was still slightly lacking. They were too caught up with worrying over how they could unite everyone's will together that they neglected the most important problem that stood in their path—where in the world were they going to find 100,000 True Immortals?

One must know that the True Immortals on the Azure were similar to the Great Sages on the Master Teacher Continent. The only reason why Zhang Xuan was able to encounter so many of them was because he was constantly in contact with the Six Sects, where the top experts of the Forsaken Continent congregated.

It was already difficult enough to find and rally 20,000 of them together, let alone 100,000!

“Sect Leader Zhang, bad news!”

While the crowd was frowning deeply for a solution, Elder Zhao Yue suddenly barged into the room with a panicked look on her face.

Zhang Xuan’s eyes glanced over.

“Countless beasts have suddenly appeared around Starchaser Island! I fear that it’ll be hard for us to fend them off even with our current strength!” Elder Zhao Yue exclaimed anxiously

“Beasts?” Zhang Xuan was taken aback by the sudden announcement.

He quickly headed out of the hall with Du Qingyuan and the others, only to see that the water and air around Starchaser Island had been completely filled up by beasts of varying sizes.

Crabs, clams, squids, fishes, lobsters, sea urchins...

“I’m hungry,” Little Chick, who appeared suddenly atop of Zhang Xuan’s shoulders, gulped down a mouthful of saliva and murmured.

“...“Zhang Xuan.

This was really bad timing.

There were far more enemies than he had expected, severely outnumbering even their forces.

It was reassuring that those beasts had no Semi-Divinity realm cultivators amidst them, which placed them in an advantageous position. However, if they were to fight those beasts right now, they would be winning the battle but losing the war. Given the precarious situation they were already in, they couldn’t afford to be weakened any further.

“Master, I have gathered all of the aquatic creatures who are capable of battle here!”

Just as Zhang Xuan was trying to discern the purpose of these beasts, three massive sharks and a humongous tortoise suddenly flew out from the depths of the ocean.

They were Zhang Xuan’s tamed beasts!

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan patted his heart in relief as he suddenly recalled something.

He had also instructed the four of them to rally all of the powerful aquatic creatures together at Starchaser Island in order to deal with the hostility of Kong shi and the Hall of Gods. It was just that he got too caught up with the matters he had on hand that it slipped his mind.

This is perfect timing!” Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up as he nearly burst into laughter out of joy.

He was still troubled over how he could gather 100,000 True Immortals together in one place when these aquatic creatures appeared. Perhaps, they might just be able to meet the requirement of 100,000 True Immortals like that!

With such thoughts in mind, he looked at Shark One and asked, “How many aquatic beasts are of True Immortal realm and above here?”

“Master, we have roughly 40,000 aquatic beasts who are of True Immortal realm and above!” Shark One replied.

“Only 40,000?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

To be fair, this was already plenty amazing. After all, the four sects only had around 20,000 True Immortals in total.

It was no wonder why the aquatic creatures dared to band together to overthrow the dominance of the Six Sects. Just the sheer number of True Immortal realm experts they had was enough to crush any single one of the Six Sects.

However, that only added the number of True Immortal realm cultivators they had to 60,000. They were still far from their goal of 100,000.

“We still don’t have enough people. Where else can we find more True Immortal realm cultivators?” Wu Chen asked.

“This is indeed a huge problem,” Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

He contemplated with a deep frown on his face for a while before passing down a new instruction, “Gather everyone

whose cultivation has reached Pseudo Immortal realm in the four sects and the Ocean of Exiled Stars here!”

“Yes!”

Even though they had no idea what Zhang Xuan was up to, Han Jianqiu and the others still carried out his orders immediately.

Two hours later, many more cultivators and aquatic creatures appeared in the vicinity of Starchaser Island.

“We were able to gather another 200,000 Pseudo Immortal realm cultivators and 400,000 Pseudo Immortal realm beasts. Around 80,000 of them are at Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm!” Han Jianqiu walked up to Zhang Xuan and reported the current numbers.

“80,000 of them?” Zhang Xuan nodded. “It would be have been good if there were more of them, but I can work with this number too.”

Not knowing what Zhang Xuan was up to, Han Jianqiu looked at him with a confused look on his face as he asked, “Teacher, what’s your reason for gathering so many Pseudo Immortal realm cultivators here as well? Is there anything we need to do to help?”

“Yes. I need you to bring 100,000 formation flags to me as soon as possible,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“100,000 formation flags?” Han Jianqiu was astonished. He turned to Elder Kui Xiao and said, “Our sect doesn’t have the ability to gather that many formation flags within a short period of time. Seems like we’ll have to count on your Sevenstar Pavilion for this!”

“Of course, this isn’t a problem at all!” Elder Kui Xiao chuckled confidently. He quickly took out a Communication Jade Token and passed down an order.

Not too long later, he brought a storage ring to Zhang Xuan and said, “Teacher, here are the 100,000 formation flags you require.”

Tapping into the Sevenstar Pavilion's resources and channels, it wasn't too difficult for Kui Xiao to gather 100,000 formation flags swiftly.

"You have my gratitude!"

Given that the entire Forsaken Continent was in danger, it would be pointless to harp too much on formalities at this point in time. Zhang Xuan grabbed the storage ring and leaped into the sky. He ascended for over ten thousand meters before coming to a halt.

He flicked his wrist.

Hula!

100,000 formation flags materialized in the air around him. With a wave of his hand, they swiftly descended to the ground, creating the bizarre sight of raining flags.

"This..."

Han Jianqiu and the others were stunned speechless by what they were seeing. The same went for the aquatic creatures and the disciples of the four sects too.

Usually, most formation masters would plant a formation flag at a time to set up their formation, but even so, there was a huge chance that there would be some kind of deviation in the setup which they would have to slowly identify and correct later on.

A person who could plant 10 formation flags simultaneously was worthy of being called a formation grandmaster. Similarly, a person who could plant 20 formation flags at once was known as a formation grand-grandmaster.

And Zhang Xuan was a person who had just planted 100,000 formation flags at once.

This was one of the few happenings in life that filled one with incredulity, prompting one to wonder if one was dreaming. It was something that none of them dared imagine to be possible.

Even the most talented formation master of the Forsaken Continent would have never been unable to pull off such a feat!

“Let me see what kind of formation it is. If it’s a simple formation, it might still be plausible to pull off something like this...” Amidst the crowd, an elder who was skilled in formations mumbled to himself.

As the elder, the formation flags fell into the ground and the ocean.

Then, the young man in the air stomped his foot lightly.

Weng!

The formation immediately came to life. A shimmering light of seven colors began to ripple in the surroundings, causing the surroundings to reflect the iridescence of bubbles.

“It’s the Seven-colored Spirit Locking Formation, one of the top formations of the Forsaken Continent!”

“Not only so, it appears that there are Spirit Gathering Formation, Heart Calming Formation, and many other formations compounded over it. There must at least be dozens of formations stacked over one another!”

“He actually managed to set up such a massive compound formation in an instant?”

The word that should be used to describe everyone’s emotions was not ‘shock’ but ‘horror’.

The difficulty in setting up a compound formation was much greater than that of setting up an ordinary formation. Attempting to compound two formations together would already increase the difficulty of the process by manyfold, but Zhang Xuan actually set up a compound formation of dozens of layers, spanning over a distance of hundreds of li in an instant.

It was an ability that had surpassed their imagination!

“It seems to be an ability which only gods are capable of pulling of...” Du Qingyuan muttered to herself with widened eyes.

She thought she was already deeply in awe with the young man’s capabilities, but the sight before him still rendered her incapable of words.

It was no wonder why the young man was able to win the fancy of the Spirit God.

He was indeed an extraordinary individual!

Above the air, Zhang Xuan was starting to feel a little fatigued after setting up and activating the formation.

Even though he made it seem as if he had pulled it off easily, setting up such a massive and complex formation still took its toll on him. If not for the fact that he had comprehended Pathos of Heavens and had reached Semi-Divinity realm, he would have depleted himself dry before he could fully activate the formation and plummeted from the sky.

He quietly gasped for air as he drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi to swiftly replenish his energy. After he had recovered a fair degree, he stepped into the formation and flicked his wrist.

Over a dozen Semi-Divinity realm corpses appeared around him in an instant.

They were from the headquarters of the Ethereal Hall.

“Disintegrate!” Zhang Xuan said with a snap of his fingers.

Peng peng peng peng!

The dozen corpses immediately burst apart. Different from an explosion though, the diffusion of energy was controlled. The shockwave induced wasn't enough to hurt any of the cultivators present in the area.

Tzzzzz!

In just a few moments, the dozen Semi-Divinity realm cultivators had already fully released the power from their cultivation, filling the massive formation with energy.

2095 A Hundred Thousand True Immortals 2

2095 A Hundred Thousand True Immortals (2)

“Sect Leader Zhang is trying to... enhance the concentration of spiritual energy in the air?”

“But... this is too extravagant, isn't it?”

“Of course it is! How many Semi-Divinity realm cultivators do you there are on the Forsaken Continent? That being said, as the energy released by those Semi-Divinity realm cultivators has been refined before, it is much easier to absorb and assimilate!”

“That's indeed the case. However, the gap between Pseudo Immortal realm to True Immortal realm is a relatively high hurdle to overcome. There's a requirement on one's talents in order to reach True Immortal realm, so not everyone will be able to make a breakthrough...”

“I guess you're right. Without sufficient talent, it wouldn't matter no matter how ample one's cultivation resources are!”

After witnessing what had happened so far, the crowd widened their eyes in realization. They were finally able to grasp what Zhang Xuan was trying to do.

It was clear that he was trying to build a more favorable environment for these Pseudo Immortals to make a breakthrough to True Immortal realm!

To disintegrate the corpses of over a dozen Semi-Divinity realm cultivators and use their cultivation to help everyone to make a breakthrough... This was an extravagance unseen before on the Forsaken Continent.

In fact, extravagance might be an understatement... Profligacy was a far more appropriate word!

In terms of strategic importance, a single Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, even when dead, far surpassed that of all of the Pseudo Immortals gathered beneath.

Furthermore, while it wasn't a bad idea to raise the cultivation of these Pseudo Immortals through such a method, the problem was that it was likely to be an insufficient solution.

The Six Sects only devoted their cultivation resources to their most talented disciples was because it would be a waste to do otherwise. It was believed and proved time and time again that a cultivator could only go as far as the fundamental limitation brought about by one's talents.

Even if a person were to come under the tutelage of a world-class coach, there would still be only a single gold medallist in the world.

Without talents, no matter how diligent or resourceful one was, there would be an invisible glass ceiling limiting how far one could go.

Of the 80,000 Heavenly Pseudo Immortals that were gathered here, it was unlikely that a tenth of them would eventually make a breakthrough in their entire lifetime.

Thus, Zhang Xuan's hopes were unlikely to be realized.

But again, it was probably a desperate measure. It was worth a try rather than to sit around and despair over it.

While the crowd was shaking their heads over the futility of the situation, Zhang Xuan sat down in the midst of the sky, and a golden glow shimmered around his body. In this very moment, he looked like a Buddha!

“Right now, I will be imparting to you the crux of reaching True Immortal realm.”

His voice echoed in the ears of every cultivator in the area, almost as if he was whispering right behind them.

Listening to Zhang Xuan's lecture from below, Wu Chen narrowed his eyes, “This is... Kong shi's Simple Words of Profound Wisdom?”

Given that the Young Master was a master teacher, there was no questioning his ability to impart knowledge to others. However, attempting to lecture 80,000 people at once was no easy feat. Every single cultivator had his own specific set of circumstances. So, when lecturing in large groups, the lecturer would have to make the content more generalized in order to remain relevant to everyone, but in the midst of doing so, it would make it harder for his words to resonate deeply with those listening.

For this reason, cultivators on the Master Teacher Continent preferred having 1-to-1 consultations with master teachers to resolve their problems.

Wu Chen had no idea whether Kong shi had lectured 80,000 people at once during his era, but this was definitely the first time he was witnessing such a grand sight.

Simple yet profound words dissolved amidst the spiritual energy and descended from the sky, surging into the bodies of each and every cultivator.

The crowd grew more and more excited as they savored every single word Zhang Xuan said. Agitation gripped their bodies as they trembled wildly.

Most aquatic creatures thought that the lecture would be meaningless to them as their physical constitution was vastly different from that of the humans. Yet, after listening for a short moment, they felt a shiver running down their spine as their pores and meridians opened wide to accept an influx of spiritual energy.

What Zhang Xuan had lectured wasn't a cultivation technique but a set of principles that deconstructed and deciphered the hurdle that stood between a Pseudo Immortal and a True Immortal.

It was an absolute logic of the world!

Through understanding and overcoming every single aspect of the hurdle, any lifeform would eventually be able to make a breakthrough to True Immortal realm.

Flowerclaws, this was the name of a certain crawfish amidst the crowd.

Its name originated from the colorful pair of claws it was born with.

It had been several decades since Flowerclaws reached Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm, but an accident had caused the foundation of its cultivation to stumble. Ever since then, it hadn't been able to push its cultivation any further.

The person who had hurt it back then was a True Immortal realm disciple of the Six Sects. Back then, that darned fellow and his gang tried to capture it so as to braise it with spicy mala paste, but it managed to slip away. However, it had sustained severe injuries in the midst of doing so.

It lost a claw, and several of its meridians snapped. It was already a miracle that it was able to maintain its current level of cultivation.

Not too long ago, the Three Kings rallied all of them together at Starchaser Island. It was thinking that this was the opportune moment to cut that darned disciple into multiple slices and cook him in curry...

But before it could even find that fellow, the master of Three Kings suddenly began on a lecture.

It didn't pay any heed to the lecture initially as it knew that there was no way it would be able to further its cultivation given its current state. But after listening for a while, its shell suddenly began glowing crimson as spiritual energy surged into its body. Before it knew it, its cultivation was rising like crazy!

Hong long!

True Immortal realm!

"I made a breakthrough..." Flowerclaws broke down in tears. "I won't have to live in fear of getting captured and being made into spicy mala crawfish anymore!"

With its cultivation reaching True Immortal realm, it finally had the ability to protect itself.

“Since he’s the master of the Three Kings, he’s also the master of Flowerclaws as well. From this day onward, I shall pledge my loyalty to him. Even if he tries to kill me and braise me with onion, I’ll accept my fate...”

The little crawfish looked at the figure floating in the sky as it made up its mind.

The same scene was happening amongst the other aquatic creatures too.

Flower clams, scallops, oysters, razor shells... All of them managed to make a breakthrough too.

“I am hungryyyyyy...” Little Chick murmured as it looked at the aquatic creatures with saliva dripping from its lips.

“Amazing...”

In less than an hour, more than half of those who were at Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm previously had already made a breakthrough. Han Jianqiu and the others were shocked beyond words.

This ability to induce improvement in other cultivators was truly terrifying.

A single lecture actually allowed more than 40,000 Heavenly Pseudo Immortals to make a breakthrough to True Immortal realm...

This was a feat that they would dare not imagine to be possible, but it was really happening right before their eyes.

Seeing that he had finally reached the required amount, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Forcefully enduring his current exhaustion, he passed down an order.

“Alright, gather all of those who have managed to make a breakthrough together with the other True Immortals. Wu Chen, prepare the altar. We’ll be holding the ritual soon!”

The zhenqi of Semi-Divinity realm cultivators was extremely pure, such that even absorbing a sliver of it was enough for a Heavenly Pseudo Immortal to make a breakthrough.

Furthermore, he had used over a dozen Semi-Divinity realm

corpses for this and further refined and mediated the energy released through the formation...

Given the extent Zhang Xuan had gone to for this, it would be difficult for the Heavenly Pseudo Immortals to not make a breakthrough!

Of course, Zhang Xuan's impartation also played a vital role as well. Even if those Heavenly Pseudo Immortals had accumulated sufficient energy, it would still take most of them at least several years to make a breakthrough.

The lecture reduced this lengthy duration to just a mere hour. More importantly, he had also won the loyalty of these 40,000 cultivators through this as well.

Zhang Xuan quickly immersed his cultivation into the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn to recover from his previous exertion.

Nevertheless, it still took him a few minutes to recover.

Within this period of time, Han Jianqiu and the others had finished gathering all of the True Immortal realm cultivators, and Wu Chen had also finished preparing the altar for the ritual too.

"Let's begin!"

Even though all preparations were complete, Zhang Xuan was in no rush to carry out the ritual. Instead, still floating in midair, he began carrying out another lecture.

"What I want to talk about now is the way to practice battle techniques..."

If he wished to unite the hearts of everyone together, he would have to first win their respect.

Regarding that, he could think of no other ways than to impart his knowledge to them. If he could win their earnest gratitude, they would likely be more willing to help him cleanse the Aura of Divinity of its corruption.

"The way to practice battle techniques?"

Having witnessed the miracle Zhang Xuan had pulled off earlier, the crowd immediately pricked up their ears upon hearing his words. Anticipation and excitement could be felt in the atmosphere.

“The key to battle techniques lie in...”

Seeing that he had managed to gather everyone’s attention, Zhang Xuan smiled a little before beginning on his lecture.

Every single word he spoke seemed to linger in the surroundings, filling the air with a peculiar yet natural vibe. It was the feeling of resonance with the world, the harmony with nature and one’s surroundings.

“Don’t you think that it’s too late to only start raising your fighting prowess now?”

A dissonant voice suddenly broke the atmosphere.

The sky shivered as a silhouette warped into existence before everyone’s eyes.

It was a person dressed in a flowing robe. He had a tall stature, and there was a hint of benevolence between his eyebrows.

“You...” Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

He halted his lecture and stood up.

The person before him was no other than the man who had vanished after stealing the Aura of Divinity from him, Kong shi!

Kong shi’s aura seemed to have vanished completely, or to be more exact, he had managed to conceal it entirely within him, making it impossible to gauge the depth of his cultivation. However, his eyes still remained sharp as ever, inducing a feeling of helplessness in those facing him.

There could only be a single possibility behind this...

Kong shi had managed to reach the level of the gods!

Crawfishes are extremely popular in China, though they can also be extremely resilient at times...

2096 Precarious Predicament

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“Protect the sect leader!” Han Jianqiu cried out.

The High Immortals from the four sects and the aquatic creatures swiftly rose into the air and stood between Zhang Xuan and Kong shi, forming a resolute wall.

“Futile!” Kong shi harrumphed coldly as he raised his hand.

Huala!

Many experts walked out from the warped space behind him. There were two notable figures among the group, namely Citadel Lord Bai Xunsheng from the Blackmirror Citadel and Sect Leader Gu Zhuiyun from the Evanescent Immortal Sect.

On top of that, there were several hundred High Immortals as well. It was a force that could stand against the allied armies of the four sects and the aquatic creatures.

“They are the High Immortals of the other two sects and the Ethereal Hall...”

Everyone felt their hearts tightening a little.

The Ethereal Hall had remained at the top of the continent for the past several thousand years. Considering how they had over twenty Semi-Divinity realm experts, it did not come as a surprise that they had over five hundred High Immortals.

Adding in the High Immortals from the other two sects, it formed a frightening force that should not be underestimated.

After bringing out his army, Kong shi completely disregarded Han Jianqiu and everyone else, focusing his eyes only on Zhang Xuan. With a slight curl of his lips, he remarked, “You must have been eagerly waiting for me to have even prepared an altar here.”

His next goal after reaching the level of the gods was to steal the Heavens’ Imperfection within Zhang Xuan.

With his current strength, he could resort to other means to extract the fragment of the heavens, but it would take a huge toll on his body. Things would be much simpler if he had the altar with him.

“Han Jianqiu, you’ll be leading all of the experts of the High Immortal realm and above to defend against them. As for the rest of you, we’ll be continuing with the lecture,” Zhang Xuan bellowed.

After that, he turned to the hundred thousand True Immortal realm cultivators beneath and continued. “The crux of battle techniques...”

His voice was steady and unhurried. Despite the clashes occurring behind him, the True Immortals found their state of mind slowly calming down as they listened to his words.

Zhang Xuan knew that this decision he made would surely result in massive casualties. There was no one present who stood a chance at subduing Kong shi other than him, so the only way to buy time was through piling up sacrifices.

But he had no other choice. He could tell that he would not be a match for Kong shi in his current state. If they fought as they were, everything would be over.

Thus, he could only carry the burden of this decision and push on.

“Choosing to disregard me, eh? Those who are chosen by the heavens sure are conceited!” Kong shi’s face darkened as he spat coldly.

Boom!

With a raise of his hand, Bai Xuansheng, Gu Zhuiyun, and the few remaining Semi-Divinities of the Hall of Gods charged forward. The High Immortals also made their move.

“Protect our sect leader!” Han Jianqiu cried out as he stepped forward to face the enemy.

Driving the Gods’ Sword Intent, he filled the sky above him with a barrage of sword qi.

Just like that, Semi-Divinities clashed with Semi-Divinities while High Immortals clashed with High Immortals. It was a full-blown war where both sides were determined to tear each other apart.

In just a few breaths after the battle began, High Immortals began dying one after another, causing corpses to rain from the sky.

The lofty and elusive High Immortals of the Forsaken Continent were swiftly dying one after another like ordinary mortals.

In terms of the number of experts, the four sects and the aquatic creatures paled in comparison to the Blackmirror Citadel, Evanescent Immortal Sect, and Ethereal Hall. However, in terms of individual fighting prowess, the four sects clearly had an advantage.

As a result, both sides turned out to be equally matched for the time being. The scales did not seem to be leaning toward anyone yet.

“For our sect leader! For our great continent!”

The ex-first core disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword pavilion, He Jingxuan, charged toward the enemies.

Ever since Bai Ruanqing surpassed him after acknowledging Zhang Xuan as her teacher, he had been cultivating desperately. Even though his cultivation was still only at the Heavenly True Immortal realm, his fighting prowess was already comparable to most High Immortals.

“Kill one, and the scales are balanced. Kill two, and we would have made a gain!”

Another one of the core disciples, Liu Yulian, flew forth as she roared furiously, forming a stark contrast to her usual gentle demeanor.

“For the master of the Three Kings!”

The crabs, crawfish, and other aquatic creatures charged forth, too.

Their fighting prowess was greatly reduced while they were out of the water, but their numbers made up for that disadvantage. Furthermore, most of them had hard shells that granted them natural protection.

With both sides nearly equally matched, it was bound to be a long and gruesome battle.

“It’s our turn...”

Paying no heed to the slaughter behind, Kong shi took a step forward and covered dozens of li in an instant. Before anyone could react, he was already standing right above Zhang Xuan.

But the next moment, the formation that was made up of a hundred thousand formation flags released a slight buzz as a massive barrier of light formed around Zhang Xuan and the hundred thousand True Immortals.

The formation was built not just to prevent spiritual energy from leaking into the atmosphere but to protect those within it as well. Even Semi-Divinity realm cultivators would not be able to breach it easily.

Hu!

With a slight flick of his finger, Kong shi ripped a hole in the barrier and stepped in. The barrier could not stop him for even a second.

Upon entering the formation, he quietly directed his glance at the altar.

This simple gesture immediately caused Wu Chen to lose control of the altar. It began to shake wildly, as if it would fly toward Kong shi at any moment.

Wu Chen immediately bit his finger and splattered his blood all over the altar.

Tzzzzzzzz!

The trembling altar began to calm down under the tribute of the blood. It was still shaking a fair bit, but it was not as intense as before.

“Palace Master Du, I need your help!” Wu Chen cried out with a pale face.

Du Qingyuan, who was fighting a few High Immortals, swiftly got rid of her opponents and rushed over to the altar to infuse her zhenqi into it.

Only then did the altar finally stop shaking altogether.

Paying no heed to this, Kong shi turned to Zhang Xuan and said, “Do you want to take it out yourself, or do I have to do the work personally? Know that things will not end simply if I have to make a move.”

Huala!

Even though it looked as if Kong shi was not doing anything, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt the space around him hardening, forming a barrier that trapped him, leaving him unable to escape.

Despite so, Zhang Xuan continued with his lecture as if nothing had happened.

Even as Kong shi breached the barrier, attempted to steal the altar, and made a move on him, his voice had never stopped at any point in time.

The hundred thousand True Immortals were still completely immersed in his lecture, to the point that they did not seem to have realized that danger was already unbelievably close to them.

“Impartation of Heaven’s Will, Simple Words of Profound Wisdom... Trickery that beguiles the hearts of others and fools one into subservience. That was always the method he preferred and specialized in, and you seem to be pretty skilled in it as well. However, it’s all too late,” Kong shi sneered as he raised his palm against Zhang Xuan.

“Protect the sect leader!”

Horrified, Wu Chen and Du Qingyuan immediately rose up to protect him, but the next instant, several bursts of light gushed forth to block Kong shi’s path.

“If you wish to hurt our teacher, you’ll have to step over our dead bodies!”

The sheer might behind the attack of the eleven youths caused even the sky to tear apart.

They were Zhao Ya, Zheng Yang, and the others!

Zhang Xuan’s eleven direct disciples had all reached the Semi-Divinity realm, and they were all wielding the Semi-Divinity artifacts that their teacher had given them. Through their sharp coordination, they were able to defend against Kong shi’s palm strike!

“Wu Chen, begin the ritual!” Zhang Xuan bellowed.

With a flick of his finger, the Aura of Divinity that he had acquired from the City of Collapsed Space swiftly fell on top of the altar.

“O’ noble gods, I, Wu Chen, humbly offer the earnest loyalty and faith of a hundred thousand souls to plead for the purification of the Aura of Divinity...”

Two voices echoed in unison—Wu Chen and Du Qingyuan. One standing on the left of the altar and the other standing on the right, they raised their forefingers toward the heavens as they scattered their fresh blood over the altar. A brilliant light flickered into the surroundings as immense spiritual energy swiftly embraced all of the hundred thousand True Immortals.

Xiong xiong!

A light yellow flame ignited above the altar, searing the black Aura of Divinity. However, nothing seemed to be happening to the black Aura of Divinity at all.

“Not all of the hundred thousand True immortals have opened themselves fully yet,” Du Qingyuan said with gritted teeth.

“The flame must turn golden before it’s able to cleanse the Aura of Divinity of its degeneration properties!”

Having been imparted with the ritual procedures, she knew the conditions required for success.

Only when the wills of all one hundred thousand True Immortals were aligned together would the flame on the altar

turn golden. The current light yellow flame indicated that those whose wills were aligned together only numbered half!

“If only I had more time to lecture them,” Zhang Xuan remarked with a shake of his head.

Of the hundred thousand True Immortals, only fifty thousand of them were with him, and that included the forty thousand Heavenly Pseudo Immortals who had achieved a breakthrough earlier. It was not that his lecture did not appeal to them, but the time that he had with them was simply too short!

Trust and credibility needed time to nurture.

Even with a bond as deep as one between a parent and a child, if it was not nourished with care, concern, and accompaniment, their relationship would only remain shallow.

This was even truer for the ties between a teacher and a student.

The bond between a teacher and a student could run extremely deep, but it had to be carefully nurtured over time. That was the one thing that Zhang Xuan lacked the most at the moment!

If he had just an hour more, he would not have been in such a predicament.

“Is that... the Aura of Divinity from the City of Collapsed Space? That darned black skeleton actually gave it to you?”

That b*stard! Why? Why?”

Kong shi, who was fighting against Zhao Ya and the others, noticed the happenings below as well and swiftly figured out Zhang Xuan’s goal. His eyes reddened in fury.

As someone who had lived for several thousand years, he knew the secrets behind the City of Collapsed Space.

In fact, he had entered the area himself and obtained a certain medicinal herb. Following which, several things had happened.

In the two times he ventured into the depths of the City of Collapsed Space, he had encountered a black skeleton. However, that black skeleton had been extremely hostile to

him, never hesitating to attack him. Putting aside acquiring the Aura of Divinity, he had nearly lost his life there!

Due to that, he had been left with no choice but to trick Zhang Xuan into challenging the Hall of Gods and obtaining the Aura of Divinity on his behalf.

Why?

The world had hindered him for so long, but it allowed this young man to do everything that he was unable to!

This was unjust!

With a furious roar, Kong shi pulled his palm down.

This single strike was at least two times stronger than the palm strike before. It caused the formation to waver feebly as the surrounding space collapsed inward under the pressure.

“Block it!” Zhao Ya cried out as she dealt out boundless sword qi to hold back Kong shi’s attack, like a pillar propping up the heavens.

Zheng Yang also dashed forward and pressed his spear against the collapsing space, desperately pushing back the destruction.

The same went for Wei Ruyan, Kong Shiyao, Liu Yang, Wang Ying, Dan Xiaotian, Lu Chong, Bai Ruanqing, Zhang Jiuxiao, and Yuan Tao.

His eleven direct disciples had no fear despite the danger they were in. Driving their strength to the limits, they were able to barely maintain the stability of the space despite destruction caving in relentlessly on them.

“They won’t be able to hold on for too long. Concentrate!”

Seeing that Wu Chen had halted out of shock, Zhang Xuan sent an urgent telepathic message to him as he carried on with his lecture.

As the lecture continued, the color of the yellow flame on the altar grew deeper and deeper, gradually making the transformation toward golden.

Young Master, we’ll still need at least fifteen more minutes in order to achieve perfect unity of wills at this rate. I fear that

they won't be able to hold on for that long!" Wu Chen said nervously.

The yellow flame was already changing at a rapid pace, but it did not seem like they would be able to make it in time.

Given the strength and undying tenacity of Zhao Ya and the others, they were still able to hold on for several breaths against the overwhelmingly powerful Kong shi, but for them to last fifteen minutes...

That was simply too difficult!

No, it would be more accurate to say that it was no different from hoping for a miracle to happen!

"I know that! But we can only try to persevere for as long as we can," Zhang Xuan replied grimly.

The lecturing continued without a pause. The crowd beneath seemed to be completely oblivious to the living hell occurring around them. They continued driving their zhenqi ceaselessly as they deepened their understanding of battle techniques.

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Kacha!

The might behind Kong shi's attack only continued to grow stronger with time. Eventually, it reached a point where it couldn't be stopped anymore.

Dimension rifts began to breach the stable space as Zhao Ya and the others were jolted back violently, causing blood to spurt from their mouths.

The encounter had inflicted considerable injuries on them.

Kong shi was already invincible in his own power class, let alone the fact that he had achieved a breakthrough to the level of the gods. As an existence that stood at the very peak of the Azure, he was no longer someone whom Zhao Ya and the others could take on.

“Someone of your capabilities won't be able to cleanse the Aura of Divinity. It will be put to much better use in my hands.”

After sending Zhao Ya and the others flying, Kong shi reached his hand out toward the altar.

Knowing that there was no other choice for him but to join in the battle as well, Zhang Xuan whipped out the Tongshang Sword and exerted his Sword Intent while his mouth continued moving so as to continue with his lecture.

He had been trying to avoid making a move himself so as to avoid any possible situation where the lecture was interrupted. The ritual could fail if anything were to go wrong.

However, given the current situation, he had no choice but to step up as well.

A massive net appeared all over the sky, forming a massive barrier that blocked out Kong shi's hand.

“If I hadn't made a breakthrough, this move of yours might have made me hesitate for a moment... But do you really think

that your move will be able to stop the current me?” Kong shi chuckled softly as he continued pressing his palm downward.

Kacha!

Cracks immediately appeared on the net.

A Heart of Intertwined Threads.

This was a move that had surpassed the Heaven’s Path Sword Art. It made him invincible amongst Semi-Divinity realm cultivators, and even ordinary gods might find themselves overwhelmed by it as well...

But his opponent was no other than Kong shi!

Having overcome the hurdle to godhood, the other party had acquired strength far beyond imagination. Tzla!

A massive hole was ripped open in the net.

With a pale face, Zhang Xuan skidded back several hundred meters before he was able to regain his footing. At the same time, a spurt of blood escaped from his mouth.

In just a single encounter, he had already sustained severe injuries!

But throughout the entire encounter, he carried on with his lecture as if nothing was happening at all. The 100,000 True Immortals continued listening to his words without realizing that something was amiss.

“Come over,” Kong shi turned his gaze toward the altar and beckoned.

He knew that the Aura of Divinity was the key of the battle. Once he snatched it over, victory would be his to claim.

The young man before him would be completely helpless before him by then.

Hula!

The black Aura of Divinity on the altar swiftly flew into Kong shi’s hand.

“No!” Wu Chen and Du Qingyuan cried out with pale faces as they leaped into the sky to retrieve the black Aura of Divinity.

Peng! Peng!

But with just a glance over from Kong shi, the two of them felt an enormous force crushing down on them, causing crimson blood to spurt from their mouths.

Even though they had reached Semi-Divinity realm, their fighting prowess was far beneath Zhao Ya and the others. There was no way they could have possibly been a match for Kong shi.

“Hahaha! Now that the final hope you have been desperately clutching onto has fallen into my hand, let’s see what else you are going to do!” Kong shi burst into laughter as he looked at Zhang Xuan with eyes filled with ridicule.

As long as Zhang Xuan was unable to reach the level of the gods like him, he would never be a match for him. With this, the battle was sealed.

“Did you think that I would have no way of curbing you just because I’m unable to make a breakthrough?” a voice of utmost composure echoed alongside Zhang Xuan’s lecture.

A book suddenly materialized in midair, and it plunged down toward Kong shi at a frightening speed.

“The golden page? You do have it after all! However, did you think that I wouldn’t be guarded against something that bastard has as well?”

Watching as the book above him grew larger and larger, Kong shi was slightly taken aback for a moment before a cold sneer formed on his lips. He raised his hand up and waved it lightly.

Weng!

A peculiar aura crept out and covered his entire body, and his presence abruptly vanished from the world. It was as if he had suddenly phased out from the world.

Unable to sense Kong shi’s presence, the golden page screeched to a halt. It was unable to find its target to attack.

He possesses the Discamate Constitution of Divination too, and he used a secret art on top of that to ensure that he leaped out of the jurisdiction of the heavens. As powerful as the

golden page, it's futile if it can't land a clean blow... Zhang Xuan thought grimly.

As powerful as the golden page was, there were some conditions required for it to strike. Furthermore, there was still some lag time before the golden page struck, thus allowing the opponent to prepare countermeasures beforehand.

Given that Kong shi was aware of the existence and nature of the golden page, it wasn't too difficult for him to prepare a counter against it!

What Kong shi did was to conceal his presence completely from the heavens, thus rendering the golden page incapable of finding him.

"You're underestimating me as well. I wouldn't prepare just a single trump card to go against the great Kong shi. Do you want to fathom a guess why I use the golden page on you even though I know that there's a high chance you knew of its existence?" Zhang Xuan spoke with a calm smile while carrying on with the lecture.

As those words were being spoken, the flames above the altar abruptly soared into the sky. A figure rose up swiftly with a sword in hand.

It was Zhang Xuan's clone!

He had hidden amidst the flames of the altar, waiting for the moment which Kong shi was distracted by the golden page to launch an assault!

Puhe!

Kong shi was too guarded against Zhang Xuan and the golden page that he was caught off guard by the clone's appearance. In a moment of carelessness, he got stabbed in his palm, causing fresh blood to pour out.

However, the sword pierce stopped right there. The clone found that he was unable to drive his attack any deeper in.

The physical body of a god was simply too resilient. Despite the clone's superior strength, which was further enhanced by a Semi-Divinity artifact and the Gods' Sword Intent, he was

only able to barely scrape Kong shi's skin. Even at the very best, it only dealt as much damage as a failed injection would.

“Hahaha! Remarkable! You were actually able to hurt me! It appears that it's not without reason that you were chosen by the heavens... But do you think that something of this caliber will really affect me, a god?”

Kong shi knocked the clone flying with a wave of his hand before turning to look at Zhang Xuan with an air of inviolability around him.

Part of the reason why Zhang Xuan's scheme worked was because Kong shi allowed it so. He had already realized that something was amiss when Zhang Xuan's clone hadn't appeared on the battlefield all along.

Despite knowing that there was a ploy, he hadn't bothered putting his guard up. That was because he knew all schemes would crumble before absolute strength.

Will you be able to kill me even if I were to stand still on the spot and allow you to attack me freely?

In the face of a real god, Semi-Divinities were not any more than ants!

“I don't deny that. This bit of injury probably means nothing to a god at all, but the Aura of Divinity in your hands might beg to differ...” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly.

Taken aback by those words, Kong shi lowered his head to take a look, only to see the black degeneration aura inside the Aura of Divinity surging swiftly into his wounds. His hand was rotting swiftly, causing it to take on a hideous form.

You...”

Horrified, Kong shi hurriedly let go of the black Aura of Divinity in his hand, causing it to fall onto the altar once more. Even so, the black Aura of Divinity continued to release the black degeneration aura, which was naturally drawn to the wound in Kong shi's hand.

The black Aura of Divinity was created by the black skeleton by compressing the air of degeneration in the City of

Collapsed Space tightly together, so the concentration of the degeneration property within it was terrifyingly high. Putting aside a Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, even a true god would be vulnerable to it!

“Damn it!”

Kong shi cursed furiously as he released all of his energy to curb the black degeneration aura.

With his newfound strength as a god, not even ordinary air of degeneration would have been able to faze him anymore. That led to him thinking that there was nothing that could threaten him in the Azure anymore, but such a line of thought clearly backfired against him.

Peng!

Feeling deeply humiliated, Kong shi charged toward Zhang Xuan.

Even when plagued by the black degeneration aura, the strength he had at his disposal still far surpassed any existence on the Azure. Overwhelmed by rage, he thrust his palm forth with his full strength this time around.

It was an attack so powerful that it ripped through the fabrics of space in the trajectory of its attack, causing a spatial quake.

Huala!

Overwhelming might descended right upon Zhang Xuan, but before it was able to seal his fate, a little yellow chick suddenly appeared before Kong shi. It widened its mouth to an unnatural degree and gobbled Kong shi whole.

Boom boom boom!

A huge lump could be seen in the little yellow chick’s body, and it was moving around violently to break free.

“Hold on as long as you can, but don’t hesitate to spit him out if you find yourself reaching your limits!” Zhang Xuan said worriedly.

This fellow had been able to swallow the massive Blackback Tortoise whole and render it powerless back then, which

proved that its ability to devour was a special talent.

However, the fact still remained that Little Chick was only at Heavenly High Immortal realm whereas Kong shi was a real god. Even when Kong shi was wounded, there was still a huge gap between the two of them.

All Zhang Xuan hoped was for the little yellow chick to hold on for a while longer, till the 100,000 True Immortals finally achieved the complete union of wills.

One thing that was extremely fortunate was that a huge proportion of the black degeneration aura had been absorbed by Kong shi earlier on, causing the black Aura of Divinity to change from pitch-black to a dark yellow color.

It wasn't completely purified yet, but it was a major step forward. Previously, the altar had to turn completely golden in order for the cleansing to be completed, but given the current state of the Aura of Divinity, it would do even if the color were to just turn bright yellow.

This meant that the time he needed had been greatly reduced!

Nevertheless, it was still a question whether they could stall Kong shi for this long.

Zhang Xuan channeled all of his focus into the lecture, greatly increasing the effects of the Impartation of Heaven's Will. A nourishing atmosphere could be felt lingering in the area.

Meanwhile, the little yellow chick's body was still moving around violently. It was apparent that Kong shi was trying to force his way out.

Back then, the Semi-Divinity realm Blackback Tortoise nearly lost its life after being gobbled whole, but Kong shi was still able to move around vigorously after that... The strength of the gods was truly fearsome!

“Hurry up, hurry up...”

Knowing that the little yellow chick wouldn't be able to last for too long, Zhang Xuan stared at the Aura of Divinity above the altar with an anxious look on his face.

Along with his lecture, the flame had slowly turned to a bright yellow color. At the same time, changes began to occur to the Aura of Divinity as well. A black aura was slowly being expelled from the Aura of Divinity, causing it to slowly turn from dark yellow to yellow, light yellow...

“It’s almost there!”

Seeing the changes in color, Zhang Xuan knew that the ritual was finally working. His heart thumped wildly in excitement.

All of a sudden, the space above him wavered.

Hula!

A sword sliced through the air, and right after, the stomach of the little yellow chick was split into two. An unkempt Kong shi wielding a sword stepped out from within, appearing before everyone’s view once more.

His face was completely distorted with rage.

He turned his body around and slashed down on the little yellow chick frenziedly.

Shua! Shua! Shua!

As cold flashes of light struck down on it, the head of the little yellow chick was lopped off, and its body was sliced in many pieces.

Xiong xiong!

As if that wasn’t enough, he released a burst of flame that seared the little yellow chick’s severed body into ashes. “No!”

Everything happened so quickly that Zhang Xuan didn’t even have any time to react. His body stiffened, and his mind nearly blanked out entirely in that instant.

This couldn’t be true...

The little yellow chick was dead?

This little yellow chick had been with him ever since his time at the Master Teacher Continent. Back then, it was still stuck in the form of a gourd.

It was an unreliable glutton which had sabotaged him on many occasions. It was also incredibly lazy, often choosing to lie around in his dantian, refusing to come out no matter what happened. As a result, they had many conflicts with one another, and they often bickered as well.

But even as he raged or rolled his eyes at that little yellow chick, before he knew it, it had already become an important figure in his life...

He had never imagined that such a situation would ever happen.

Even his clone might have been unable to piece itself back together after it was reduced to such a state!

“You bastard, I’m going to slaughter you...”

Zhang Xuan’s eyes turned red.

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Little Chick was his tamed beast, but it was also a friend and a brother.

The two of them had been together with one another after having entered the Azure together. Unknowingly, the occasions which they teased one another and the interactions between them, all of these had become a natural part of his life.

Even though they did not share a bond of blood, they had become as close as kin to one another.

This was especially so after they formed a contract with one another. He could sense its thoughts and emotions, creating a feeling of unprecedented intimacy.

The realization that those days would never return left him with a deep feeling of emptiness inside.

He was initially opposed to letting Little Chick devour Kong shi as he thought that it was too dangerous. However, he eventually caved in because he knew there was no other choice. Be it his direct disciples or his clone, there was no one else who had the ability to stop Kong shi anymore.

Even his greatest trump card, the golden page, had failed as well!

So, he allowed Little Chick to go ahead with it, but he also instructed Little Chick to stop as soon as it felt it was in danger. He thought that the latter would be fine with its extraordinarily powerful recovery ability. Yet, who could have thought that Kong shi would go so far as to sever it into many pieces before burning it to ashes!

With eyes filled with killing intent, Zhang Xuan was just about to rush forward to pit his life against Kong shi when he felt someone holding him back. Right after, Wu Chen's anxious

voice sounded, “Young Master! Purifying the Aura of Divinity is more important, or else Little Chick’s sacrifice would have been in vain!”

It was as if a pail of ice water had been poured over Zhang Xuan. His killing intent remained unabated, but rationality had returned back to his thoughts. He immediately halted his actions.

Indeed.

With his current strength, even if he were to pit his life against Kong shi, it was impossible for him to achieve victory. There was a world of difference between the fighting prowess of a god and a Semi-Divinity. This wasn’t something that could be bridged by mere skills or tenacity.

There was only one route Zhang Xuan could take if he wanted to exact vengeance for Little Chick, and that was to purify the Aura of Divinity, assimilate it, and push his cultivation to the level of the gods too!

As long as he succeeded, it shouldn’t be too difficult for him to kill the other party!

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan resumed his lecture after a momentary pause, “Battle technique is a means to channel and exerting one’s strength at a point...”

Xiong xiong!

The color of the flames on the altar grew brighter and brighter.

As of this moment, there were at least 80,000 True Immortals who had opened their hearts, but they were still a stretch off from success!

“How dare your tamed beast devour me whole? I’ll return this humiliation a hundredfold to you!”

Kong shi’s expression remained warped in anger even after slaying Little Chick. With a roar, he swung his sword toward Zhang Xuan.

The weapon he had in hand was only a Semi-Divinity artifact, but in the hands of a god, it exerted strength far beyond that of ordinary Semi-Divinities. The sword qi that was produced

through it stretched over a distance of ten li, and its frightening sharpness made it seem as if the fabrics of space were as flimsy as a piece of paper.

“Protect our teacher!”

Zhao Ya and the others charged over agitatedly. Zhang Xuan’s clone also quickly charged forward to protect the main body as well.

Even though they had sustained significant injuries earlier, they had managed to make a full recovery through drinking bottles of chicken soup while Little Chick was holding down Kong shi.

Zhang Xuan’s eleven direct disciples and his clone all had a Semi-Divinity artifact in hand, which added up to a total of 24 Semi-Divinities in total. Through their tight coordination, they formed a powerful collaboration formation.

Even though the sword slash filled with Kong shi’s rage was powerful, they still managed to fend it off, albeit with some difficulty.

“Smash him to death!” Zhang Xuan willed.

Hu!

The golden page, which had lost its target earlier, locked its target onto Kong shi and plummeted from the sky once again.

The strength of the Library of Heaven’s Path had grown proportionately stronger to the might of the heavens of the Azure. This also meant that the duration that the golden page could remain materialized had increased, allowing it to linger in the area even after a failed attack.

With the golden page exerting its full might from above, the space around Kong shi was forcefully sealed through the sheer pressure it emanated.

“Damn it!”

Kong shi immediately tried the same move once more, activating his secret art to conceal his presence from the heavens to dodge the attack from the golden page. However,

the clone suddenly rushed from behind to stab Kong shi's back at this moment.

Zhao Ya and the others quickly emulated the clone's actions, executing their strongest moves to harass Kong shi.

"You fools! Are you trying to die?" Kong shi felt his goosebumps rising up.

The golden page didn't discriminate between allies and enemies. It was a force that could crush even the gods, but Zhang Xuan's clone and direct disciples still charged right into the area of effect of the golden page without any hesitation. That was tantamount to suicide!

Or even worse, they might even be planning on using themselves as a guiding beacon for the golden page to strike... In other words, they were planning on sacrificing themselves to bring him down!

Kong shi released a burst of sword qi which circled him like a ferocious dragon. He was intending to drive these fellows away so that he could hide securely away from the all-seeing eye of the heavens, but these fellows persistently stuck themselves to him. No matter how he tried to push them away, they would return and converge back in on him in the next instant.

He couldn't escape at all.

Hong long long!

His surroundings swiftly grew darker and darker as the golden page approached him at a terrifying speed. It felt as if the entire weight of the heavens was falling down on him, sparking a hint of fear in the depths of his heart.

"Even if the golden page strikes me squarely, I still won't die that easily!" Kong shi harrumphed coldly.

Knowing that he wouldn't be able to shake off Zhang Xuan's direct disciples and his clone in time, he wrapped himself with a layer of sword qi to protect himself from the attacks from Zhao Ya and the others before dashing right toward the golden page.

Boom!

He collided face-on with the golden page, and the sword in his hand immediately shattered. The tremendous pressure crushing down on him caused fresh blood to spurt from his mouth and nose.

But at the same time, he managed to stop the golden page in place.

“How frightening...” Zhang Xuan’s heart skipped a beat.

The golden page had always been a trusty trump card that he could rely on to defeat his opponent regardless of the situation. As long as he brought it out, even the strongest individuals would be immediately flattened into a pancake.

So, he thought that as long as he could stop Kong shi from dodging, there should be a fair chance that he would be able to crush the latter to death. Yet, the latter actually wielded the strength to withstand it.

It seemed like even the heavens of the Azure was powerless against the gods.

“Young Master, the Aura of Divinity has turned golden!” Wu Chen suddenly exclaimed excitedly.

Zhang Xuan turned his head over and saw the Aura of Divinity on the altar was emanating a brilliant golden glow. It looked the exact same as the one he had received back at the Hall of Gods.

While his direct disciples, his clone, and the golden page were attacking Kong shi, he managed to align the wills of the 100,000 True Immortals together, thus completing the ritual.

“Little Chick, I shall exact vengeance for you...”

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan swiftly flitted over to the altar and grabbed the Aura of Divinity.

Tzzzzzz!

The Aura of Divinity slipped into his body through his pores, and it swiftly coursed through his meridians.

If he had haphazardly absorbed the Aura of Divinity without a corresponding cultivation technique back then, there was a good chance that his body would blow up from the accumulation of energy.

But right now...

Just recalling the sight of how Little Chick was sliced into bits and razed to ashes, he felt as if his heart was going to be ripped out.

Flashbacks of the time he had spent with Little Chick crossed his mind.

Back at the Sanctum of Sages, when he tagged along with Luo Xuanqing's group to find the Dongxu Gourd, the latter abruptly dashed into his dantian and hid in there. That was the start of their bizarre relationship.

There wasn't anything much that happened while they were at the Master Teacher Continent. He was unable to deal with the Dongxu Gourd, and the latter spent all of its time lazing around and leeching off his dantian. It was only after coming did the Azure did they start to spend more time together.

Smacking his opponents to death from behind, stealing his pills, devouring the sword of his ally... All sorts of things happened between the two of them, and they did all sorts of things together too.

Before he knew it, Little Chick had already taken on an irreplaceable position in his heart.

Habit was truly a scary thing. Somehow, he felt like the days would simply carry on like that. They would continue being by each other's side, bickering with one another every now and then.

"I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands..."

Little Chick's voice echoed in his mind. In fact, he could almost see the other party shaking its bottom gleefully as it guzzled Immortal Pills as if they cost nothing at all.

"We still haven't uncovered what kind of legendary beast you are yet..." Zhang Xuan murmured quietly beneath his breath.

All along, that fellow had been trying its best to achieve breakthroughs so that it could finally uncover its true identity... But till the very end, it never knew what it truly was.

The tight bond of brothers go beyond life and death,” Zhang Xuan muttered with reddened eyes.

To look after each other’s back and protect one another in the face of true danger, this was brotherhood!

Boom!

It was as if the Aura of Divinity in Zhang Xuan’s body suddenly found an outlet. It flowed at the whims of Zhang Xuan’s emotions, circulating on and on.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan quickly immersed his consciousness into the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn to accelerate the process by a hundredfold.

Even so, the process of reaching godhood was simply too complicated. It represented the qualitative evolution of a lifeform.

However, Zhang Xuan knew that this matter couldn’t be hurried. So, he allowed the Aura of Divinity to flow along with his feelings and temper his physical body.

“I’ll require at least a single day in order to reach godhood...” Zhang Xuan estimated.

Even though he had comprehended a higher cultivation technique and identified a feasible way of achieving a breakthrough, it would still take at least a single day for him to reach the level of the gods.

It might seem a long period of time, but for a major breakthrough like this, it could already be considered to be extremely fast.

One must know that Kong shi had cultivated for nearly an entire month after he acquired the Aura of Divinity before he managed to make a breakthrough.

In comparison, Zhang Xuan’s ability to make a breakthrough within a single day was unthinkable!

“There are 24 hours in a day, which translates to 1440 minutes. Even with the hundredfold multiplier from cultivating in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, I’ll still need 14 minutes before I can make a complete breakthrough...” Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly.

“I can only hope that I can buy that much time with the golden page...”

Even if the duration had been lowered down to fourteen minutes, it was still far too long! He wouldn’t be able to exert much strength within this fourteen minutes. If Kong shi were to attempt something during this period of time, he would be completely helpless.

Zhang Xuan turned to look at Kong shi, who was still suppressed under the weight golden page at the moment, and prayed that the golden page would somehow be able to buy him sufficient time for a breakthrough.

Hu!

But barely after this thought surfaced in his mind, the golden page suddenly wavered a little before dissipating into thin air, as if it had never appeared before.

The duration of materialization of the golden page had been increased after he came to the Azure, but it still wasn’t able to remain materialized for too long.

“You scoundrels!”

With the vanishing of the golden page, Kong shi finally turned his gaze toward Zhang Xuan.

His entire arm was already rotting, and his other palm had been severely injured as well. Blood was dripping from his body.

Even though he had managed to fend against the golden page and all of the trump cards which Zhang Xuan had prepared, he still ended up sustaining severe injuries in the midst of doing so.

“You might have succeeded in buying enough time to cleanse the Aura of Divinity and absorb it, but you have also depleted

all of your cards too. You don't have any means of buying time anymore. On the other hand, all I require is a single breath to kill you. There's no way I'll be giving you any chances anymore..." Kong shi spat menacingly as he glared at Zhang Xuan with cold eyes.

The only reason why he hadn't killed Zhang Xuan so far was so as he could capture the latter alive and extract the Heavens' Imperfections from his body. Yet, this hesitation nearly cost him his life.

That fellow was indeed an existence of the same level as that bastard... Even as a mere Semi-Divinity realm cultivator, that fellow was someone who couldn't be underestimated!

He realized that he would have to kill that young man right here right now. If the battle were to drag out any longer, he would really lose control over the situation.

2099 Godhood!

You're right. Time is indeed not on my side..."

Even as he realized that Kong shi was prepared to kill him, Zhang Xuan did not display the slightest hint of fear.

"If I were to foolishly wait here for you to make a move against me, there's no way I would have enough time. However, I could always choose to hide, just like you. It won't be too late for me to exact vengeance when I make my breakthrough eventually."

"Hide?" A cold glint flashed across Kong shi's eyes. "Do you think that I will allow you to escape in my presence?"

With a wave of his hand, Kong shi began to seal the space around Zhang Xuan.

Hu!

But at that very instant, Zhang Xuan suddenly vanished from the spot. At the same time, Wu Chen took out an Ethereal Token and placed a storage ring on it. With a resounding buzz, the storage ring disappeared from sight.

"A storage ring and an Ethereal Token? I see..." Kong shi was initially stunned for a moment before bursting into laughter. "It would indeed be possible to achieve spatial teleportation using such a method. However, you have neglected one important fact. I am the head of the Ethereal Hall, and I hold the authority to track down the movement of any item in the Ethereal Hall!"

He had been wondering what kind of ingenious plan Zhang Xuan had in mind to flee from him. Yet, it turned out to be such a meaningless and futile maneuver!

The only reason cultivators were able to remain anonymous in the Ethereal Hall was because the Ethereal Hall allowed them to! Was the young man really so naive as to think that he, the head of the Ethereal Hall, would not be able to track down someone moving through it?

He had thought that it would be a great deal of trouble to obtain the Library of Heaven's Path after Zhang Xuan reached the level of the gods, but it seemed like he had overestimated the latter's intelligence.

It was just a change of battlefield.

“Humph! Did you think that I would allow you to escape?”

Paying no heed to the war happening all around him, Kong shi flicked his wrist and took out an Ethereal Token.

His Ethereal Token was very different from what was distributed to the others. It was golden in color. Most likely, it was the token reserved specially for the hall master's use.

Holding tightly onto the token, a glint flashed across Kong shi's eyes. “Of all places, you have chosen to head to the Ethereal Hall headquarters? Very well... It seems like you are courting death!”

After uncovering the location where Zhang Xuan had teleported, Kong shi was dazed for a moment before a cold sneer formed on his lips.

Hu!

He took out a mirror and reflected the Ethereal Token against the mirror. A moment later, a majestic palace appeared in the reflection of the mirror.

The palace was the Ethereal Hall headquarters located on the Azure Bridge.

With his Evanescent Boots, he stepped into the mirror.

A moment later, he was already standing right in front of the Ethereal Hall headquarters.

“As the adage goes, the most dangerous place is often the safest place. It wasn't a bad decision for you to choose to escape here, but it's unfortunate that you neglected one important detail. It's possible to track the location of others through the Ethereal Hall. This works in my favor as well. The interference of the heavens is limited here, so it'll be much more convenient for me to extract the Heavens' Imperfections

from your body here...” Kong shi chuckled softly as he released his Spiritual Perception into the surroundings.

Through his earlier checks, he had found that Zhang Xuan had hidden in a folded space and placed the folded space in a storage ring. After that, the adolescent youth conducting the ritual had swiftly sold the storage ring through the Ethereal Hall, and it had been bought right after.

The buyer had then made use of the Teleportation Formation embedded within the Ethereal Token to bring the storage ring over here.

The chances were that Zhang Xuan was hidden in the Ethereal Hall headquarters.

It was not a bad move at all. He never would have thought that Zhang Xuan would be so bold as to choose to hide in his home ground if not for the records of his movement.

“He isn’t here?”

Kong shi swiftly scanned the entire palace with his Spiritual Perception, but other than a Semi-Divinity realm Serpentine Dragon trembling fearfully in one corner, he could not find any trace of Zhang Xuan.

The Serpentine Dragon was likely the buyer that had purchased the storage ring that Zhang Xuan was hiding in. He would deal with that Serpentine Dragon in due course, but his priority was to capture Zhang Xuan before he was able to do anything.

So, he scanned the palace once more with his Spiritual Perception, but the results were still the same. Frustrated, he raised his head, only to see a figure climbing up the pillars of the Ethereal Hall headquarters using just his physical strength.

There you are!” Kong shi’s eyes lit up.

At that moment, that figure was very close to the boundary between the Ethereal Hall and the Hall of Gods.

“Where do you think you are escaping to?” Kong shi sneered as he soared up alongside the pillar.

Semi-Divinity realm cultivators had to scale the pillar by climbing it with their hands and feet, but those who had reached the level of the gods were spared this hassle. They were able to fly right up the pillar.

“Stop right there!” Kong shi bellowed as he launched a palm strike to knock Zhang Xuan down.

Zhang Xuan dared not stop. He swiftly climbed up the pillar with the dexterity of a monkey. Just as the palm strike was about to strike him, his body suddenly flickered before vanishing.

He had finally passed through the boundary between the Ethereal Hall headquarters and the Hall of Gods.

“I see... You are thinking of biding your time in the Hall of Gods because you think that I’m unable to get in there. Hahaha! You really do impress me time and time again with your sharp wits, but it won’t work!”

With a cold harrumph, Kong shi passed through the boundary as well.

The next instant, his entire surroundings suddenly flipped upside down. He should have been heading upward, but all of a sudden, he found himself heading downward instead.

His center of gravity had been flipped.

He had been there many times before, so he was not thrown off guard. He quickly drove his zhenqi and steadied himself before swiftly assessing his surroundings.

Glancing downward, perhaps because the other party knew that he could not get away anymore and had resigned himself to his fate, he saw Zhang Xuan holding tightly onto the pillar, not escaping anymore.

“I didn’t expect you to come chasing after me so quickly,” Zhang Xuan remarked nonchalantly.

“There are many more things that are beyond your expectations. Since you have realized that it’s impossible for you to escape anymore, why don’t you just obediently hand

the Heavens' Imperfections over?" Kong shi smirked as he charged forward to strike Zhang Xuan.

Before his palm strike even landed, the surrounding space froze, sealing off all possible routes of escape.

Just as he was about to be killed, Zhang Xuan suddenly raised his palm and said, "There's something that I would like to

However, Kong shi's palm continued surging forward, only stopping when it was less than half a meter away from Zhang Xuan. He looked at the young man with eyes filled with ridicule.

"Speak. I'll listen to your final words."

"That would be much appreciated." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Then, he started counting down.

Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four..."

"Huh?" Kong shi was taken aback.

Did this fellow lose his mind from fear?

He had been wondering what kind of last words Zhang Xuan was going to utter when he started to do a countdown instead... Was he mentally ill or something?

"What are you doing?" Kong shi bellowed furiously.

"I'm not doing anything much. I'm just counting down. There's no need to get so agitated," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile before continuing on with his countdown. "Three, two, one!"

When he finally counted down to the very last number, a smile as brilliant as the sun blossomed on his face. He stretched his back with a refreshed look on his face.

"Is that it? Since you are done with your last words, I hope that you are prepared to move on!"

Boom!

Right after those words were spoken, a resounding explosion filled the air.

As if there was a massive dragon circling his body, rumbling thunder roared from Zhang Xuan's body. A powerful aura surged into the void.

At this point, the young man suddenly released his grip on the stone pillar. Yet, instead of falling endlessly into space, he was floating quietly in midair.

Flight!

"Y-you... You have managed to achieve a breakthrough?"
Kong shi could hardly believe his eyes.

He had started cultivating right after he acquired the Aura of Divinity, but even so, it had taken him nearly an entire month before he was able to overcome the final hurdle.

Even though the young man before him possessed a fragment of the heavens and was able to cultivate at an unprecedented rate, just like that b*stard, it should not have been possible to achieve a breakthrough without at least an entire day of cultivation!

It was precisely for this reason that he had not been too worried about the situation.

As long as he could capture Zhang Xuan within a single day, the latter would not be able to pose a threat to him.

Yet... how did the other party suddenly reach the level of the gods?

All in all, it had only been five minutes since the other party consumed the Aura of Divinity and ran all the way there! Was it really possible for a person to make a breakthrough within just five minutes?

Not even that b*stard would be able to pull off something as ridiculous as this off!

"I don't believe it! There's no way this is true!" Kong shi roared furiously as he charged forth and launched a palm strike.

"It's already too late..." Zhang Xuan looked at Kong shi with killing intent flaring in his eyes.

He was calm and rational, but the rage from witnessing the death of Little Chick had not been quelled yet.

He flicked his finger lightly.

Peng!

Kong shi had channeled his full strength into the palm strike, but as if a bolt of lightning, Zhang Xuan's finger flick still sent him flying back.

Kong shi staggered for over several hundred meters before he was finally to regain his balance. Taking in large mouthfuls of air, he looked at the young man before him with a look of disbelief on his pale face.

That single finger flick had not just dispelled his attack; it had nearly crushed his cultivation!

Granted, he had already sustained significant injuries in the earlier battle, but the might of Zhang Xuan's attack had still surpassed his imagination. If the other party was able to sustain his might, he was not sure if he would really be able to achieve victory.

“Did he really manage to achieve a breakthrough?” Kong shi clenched his fists tightly.

Even up to this point, he was still unable to believe that he had been foiled by such a ridiculous turn of events.

Gritting his teeth, he coldly spat, “So what if you have reached the level of the gods, too? I don't believe that you'll be able to master your powers so quickly!”

The powers of a god were vastly different from that of a Semi-Divinity. Familiarizing oneself with it would take a significant period of time.

It was impossible to exert the full strength of a god right after achieving a breakthrough!

Even though he had gone into seclusion for a month, the truth was that he had already reached the level of gods within twenty days. He had spent the last ten days reinforcing his cultivation and familiarizing himself with the powers of the gods before reappearing.

Even if Zhang Xuan had used some kind of secret art to accelerate the rate of his breakthrough, there was no way he would be able to familiarize himself with the powers of the gods so quickly!

With such a thought in mind, Kong shi released a punch toward Zhang Xuan with a ferocious roar.

In that instant, everything seemed to dim before Kong shi. It was as if the world was displaying its subservience to a superior being.

A god exerting his full strength was not something to be made light of.

In response, Zhang Xuan raised a single finger up.

Hu!

The incredible momentum of Kong shi's punch was halted by a single finger. It was almost as if there was a metal barrier that stood in its place, preventing it from advancing any further.

“Crumble.” Zhang Xuan flicked his finger once more.

Pu! Pu!

Kong shi was sent tumbling back dozens of li. The bones in his arm were fractured, and fresh blood spurted from his mouth. The sheer impact of this single move had nearly claimed his life.

“How is this possible?” Kong shi murmured fearfully as he struggled to regain his balance.

In this clash, he realized that the other party had not just reached the level of the gods in terms of cultivation. The other party had also managed to familiarize himself with its powers, such that he was able to use it even more smoothly than him!

And all of this was done within a few short minutes!

This was impossible! Utterly impossible!

With confusion reflected in his eyes, Kong shi fell into a daze.

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Godhood and Semi-Divinity, these were two very different existences from one another.

Even if one obtained the Aura of Divinity and successfully made a breakthrough, it would still take a considerable period of time to fully master the power of the gods.

As such, he had thought that he stood a chance against Zhang Xuan even after he had successfully made a breakthrough.

But this hopeful thought of his was swiftly ripped apart by the other party.

“There’s nothing impossible about this.” Zhang Xuan looked at Kong shi coldly.

After achieving a breakthrough himself, he realized just how powerful the gods were.

It was no wonder Kong shi was able to tear through space and freely traverse through it. In comparison, Semi- Divinities were truly weak!

As long as he willed it, even if Zhao Ya and the others put their strength together, they would not be able to stop him for a single breath!

“I don’t believe it! I don’t believe it!” Kong shi cried out as he desperately channeled all his energy together and flung his fist at Zhang Xuan.

He had been thinking of capturing Zhang Xuan alive and extracting the Heavens’ Imperfections from him, but now that the latter had obtained the same strength as him, that was clearly no longer possible.

At this point, it had all descended to a fight for survival. He knew that he had to find a way to kill Zhang Xuan, or else there was no way he would be walking out of there alive.

So, he channeled all his strength in this single move.

The space around the Hall of Gods was much stabler than that of the Azure, but it still collapsed under the full strength of a god.

Zhang Xuan showed no signs of backing down at all. With a smile on his lips, he calmly tore down whatever attack Kong shi directed toward him.

A few minutes later, Kong shi's body was frozen in place. A powerful force had sealed his movements completely. He had also been stripped of his Paragon Blackmirror and Evanescent Boots, thus sealing off his escape route as well.

After comprehending the Pathos of Heavens, not even Zhang Xuan's clone was a match for him. Even though Kong shi was not weak, he was only on par with his clone at the very most.

Not to mention the fact that Kong shi had been worn down by Little Chick, the golden page, and the collaborative offense from Zhao Ya and the others, thus causing him to be severely weakened.

After trapping Kong shi in place, Zhang Xuan looked at him calmly.

The results of the battle were already out. With this, Kong shi's fate was sealed.

"To be able to make a breakthrough to godhood and master its powers... Even that b*stard would have been unable to do it..." Kong shi was still in a state of denial.

The doubt in his mind scratched and clawed at his sanity, preventing him from coming to terms with reality.

"That b*stard?" Zhang Xuan sensed that there was a deeper meaning behind Kong shi's words. "Who are you referring to?"

"That b*stard also has a fragment of the heavens, but even he was unable to cultivate as quickly as you..." Kong shi murmured under his breath.

"It seems like you have admitted to the fact that you aren't Kong shi," Zhang Xuan said with a smile. "Should I address

you as Kong shi's clone, or is there another name that you prefer?"

The very fact that Kong shi had made a move on him at the Azure Bridge had left him feeling deeply bewildered, leading him to believe that the other party could be a fake.

However, everything had become clear to him after he entered the Hall of Gods. The fact that clones were not unable to enter the Hall of Gods and the fight with Kong shi, who was able to use Heaven's Path battle techniques and the ability of Heavens' Order...

He would have to be a fool to have not figured out the truth after seeing all of that.

Most likely, the person before him was Kong shi's clone.

There was only a single fragment of the heavens. Even though Zhang Xuan's clone shared the same soul as him, he could not practice the complete Heaven's Path Divine Art and Heaven's Path battle techniques.

Probably due to that, the nature of their souls had begun to diverge. Their thoughts were no longer completely in sync, and they could even chat with one another as if they were two different entities.

Since that was the case for Zhang Xuan, it was likely the same for Kong shi.

The clone before him appeared to be a manifestation of the ill will within Kong shi's soul. It was driven by negative emotions, and perhaps it was out of jealousy of the real Kong shi that it was so desperate to obtain a fragment of the heavens.

As they shared the same origin, the clone viewed itself as Kong shi, and it seemed to take pride in its identity.

"Humph! We are the same person, so why is it that he is the only one who possesses the Heavens' Order and can cultivate faster than anyone else? Why is he the only one who enjoys such honor and prestige, such that the whole world looks up to him as the World's Teacher? Why is it that I am forced to hide

in a place where the sun doesn't shine, sealed off for several thousand years?" Kong shi's clone spat with gritted teeth.

"Don't you already have an answer to that in the depths of your heart?" Zhang Xuan pointed it out coldly.

From the looks of it, it appeared that the other party was indeed the ill will that Kong shi had severed from his soul.

The reason Kong shi was respected as the World's Teacher was not because of his overwhelming strength or capabilities but the benevolence and magnanimity he had displayed.

In contrast, Kong shi's clone was someone who would resort to any means in order to acquire what he wanted. How could someone like that earn the respect of others?

"If only I had killed you and everyone else who has betrayed me, I would have been able to maintain my impeccable image and remain as the figure whom everyone respects..." Kong shi's clone bared his teeth indignantly.

"You still don't understand, do you?" Zhang Xuan shook his head. "You can conquer the world and force everyone to submit to you through sheer force, but as time goes by, the negative emotions of the people you have suppressed will grow more and more powerful. It'll eventually blow up on you and reduce you to smithereens!"

Authority and dominance could grant one power, but it could also turn people against one .

It was impossible to seal off the mouth of the people, let alone attempt to conquer their spirit.

A thought suddenly popped up in Zhang Xuan's head. "Even a person as powerful as Kong shi ended up with such an evil clone... but what about my clone?"

He had spent quite some time with his clone. While the latter was a braggart and a show-off, it had never displayed any envy or ill-will. Given so, why would Kong shi's clone end up like that?

"Perhaps it's the work of inner demons. Due to the Library of Heaven's Path, the cultivation techniques that I practice are

flawless, so I am unaffected by inner demons. The cultivation techniques that Kong shi practices are likely to be perfect as well due to the Heavens' Order, which defines the very laws of the world... But in truth, that's also its greatest flaw!"

Heavens' Order allowed one to dictate the laws of the world, forcing all existences to conform to one's will.

As powerful as that ability seemed, the act of altering long-established laws of the world would shake the stability of the world, thus causing the order of the world to waver. This contradiction in Kong shi's beliefs would make him highly vulnerable to inner demons.

As a result, Kong shi's clone was born out of his negative emotions.

His clone dared not to move recklessly in Kong shi's presence. However, once the latter left the Azure for the Firmament, his clone swiftly realized that it was the strongest existence, possessing the greatest authority in the Azure.

The sudden possession of power unleashed all the negative emotions within his clone's soul.

"If Kong shi has severed the negative emotions in his soul to his clone, what did I sever from my soul to my clone then?" Zhang Xuan could not help wondering.

Compassion and malevolence were dictated by just the difference of a single thought.

The act of severing one's soul and creating a clone was no different from giving away a part of one's personality. From such a perspective, it stood to reason that a clone would have a contrasting personality from the main body.

Kong shi had given away his malicious intentions all to his clone, leaving him with the benevolence and magnanimity that the world knew him for.

If so, what did he give away to his clone?

From the looks of it... other than its compulsive desire to brag and show off, it did not seem to have too many bad habits!

“Hah... I guess I severed my bragging personality to my clone. That’s why I became much humbler and more low profile after my clone came to be...”

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

That would explain the huge contrast between him and his clone.

He had never really thought too deeply into the implications of severing his soul to create a clone, so this matter really got him thinking.

Well, it was undeniable that he had the urge to brag every now and then, but the virtue of humility was imprinted in his very bones!

That was the trait that he could strike his chest proudly for.

“Hahaha, the world only listens the words of the winner. Now that you have won, whatever you say becomes the truth.”

Knowing that it was meaningless to debate about such matters with Zhang Xuan, Kong shi’s clone looked at the young man intently and said, “I still don’t get it. How were you able to achieve a breakthrough so quickly? Wait a moment...”

A thought suddenly surfaced in the mind of Kong shi’s clone, and his eyes widened. “You have the Great Codex of Autumn?”

Using the Heavens’ Order’s jurisdiction over spacetime, the real Kong shi had created a unique artifact known as the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn.

If one attempted to strictly categorize it in terms of tier, it would not even be considered a High Immortal-tier artifact. However, just like the Paragon Blackmirror and the Evanescent Boots, it possessed unique abilities.

However, through the eyes that he had left on the Master Teacher Continent, he was aware that the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn had been taken away by a god who went by the name of Luo Ruoxin.

How could it be in Zhang Xuan’s hands?

If he had known that the other party was in possession of the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, he never would have let his guard down. Perhaps, at the very instant that Zhang Xuan took in the Aura of Divinity, he would have already used his greatest strength to kill him!

You're right. It's indeed the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn," Zhang Xuan replied. "The flow of time in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn is fixed at ten times that of the Master Teacher Continent, which equates to a hundredth in the Azure."

"I see..."

The face of Kong shi's clone paled as he finally understood the reason behind his loss.

Assuming that Zhang Xuan shared the same talent as the real Kong shi, he would take 24 hours, 1440 minutes, or 86,400 seconds.

If he cultivated in the Azure, with the hundredfold multiplier of the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, he only needed fourteen minutes in order to make a breakthrough.

That was indubitably amazing, but it still was not enough given the situation back then.

For that reason, Zhang Xuan had chosen to teleport over to the Ethereal Hall headquarters.

At the Ethereal Hall headquarters, the flow of time was ten times that of the Azure. Given that the flow of time in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn was fixed, it meant that time flowed thousand times faster. In other words, he would only need a single minute to make a breakthrough there.

However, Zhang Xuan still did not think that it was fast enough yet.

So, he had climbed all the way up the pillar to head to the Hall of Gods.

The flow of time was even slower there, being at only a hundredth of the Azure.

As long as he passed that boundary, the flow of time in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn would be ten thousand times that of his external environment!

Therefore, of the 86,400 seconds he needed for a breakthrough, he would only need eight seconds in the real world!

It was for that reason that he had counted down from ten.

Ten seconds might not have seemed like anything much, but it was sufficient for him to reach the level of the gods in the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn and even familiarize himself with his new power!

Kong shi's clone felt his guts turning green from regret. There were so many 'if only's in his mind that it was driving him insane.

He attempted to struggle a little, but he was still unable to break free of Zhang Xuan's restraints. Eventually, he took a deep breath and exhaled deeply before saying, "Do whatever you want. I have already lost!"

He had thought that he could have surpassed his main body if he snatched the Heavens' Imperfection ... but it had ultimately ended in failure.

It was indeed impossible to overcome those who had been chosen by the heavens.

"I really hate you, but I won't kill you. You are Kong shi's clone, so I'll leave it to him to determine your fate. However, I can assure you that you won't be able to live a single day in peace from this moment onward," Zhang Xuan remarked coldly as he swiftly directed his power toward Kong shi's clone.

Hu!

The power sealed the cultivation of Kong shi's clone, preventing him from making a move at all. Following which, he threw the latter into the folded space within his storage ring.

He stood silently in the void for a long moment before a deep sigh escaped from his lips. There were simply too many things that had happened over this period of time that left his heart feeling extremely heavy.

He knew that the war happening at Starchaser Island should have settled down given that his clone and direct disciples were there to help out, so he was not needed there for the time being.

“Since I have reached the level of the gods, I should go and check out what the black vortex sealed under the Hall of Gods is,” Zhang Xuan murmured as he glanced downward.

It was almost as if his eyes were peering right through the void to gaze upon the stately Hall of Gods.