

Martial 2041

Chapter 2041, Wood Spirit Seed

Yang Kai had been waiting for this very moment, so how could he let the Wood Spirit escape now?

With the help of his Space Secret Technique, he appeared right in front of the Wood Spirit and stared at it with a cold look in his eyes. Then, he spread his hands and brought them together, creating an enormous Moon Blade.

Just when Yang Kai was about to release the Moon Blade to give the Wood Spirit the final blow, the Wood Spirit let out a scream, and right then, Yang Kai felt a sudden burst of sharp pain from his arm, causing his wrist to momentarily shake and disrupt the Moon Blade's launch.

Immediately after, loud slicing noise rang. Even though the huge Moon Blade was formed using Space Force and wasn't exactly a counter to the Wood Spirit, its might could not be taken lightly. Yang Kai's aim might have been disrupted at the last moment, causing him to miss the Wood Spirit's vitals, but the Moon Blade still left a huge gaping cut on its body.

The cut was clean and some green blood gushed out from the wound like a fountain.

It was then that Liu Yan swooped in, transformed into a giant ball of flame, and engulfed the entire Wood Spirit.

The nearby Moon Inspect Queen brought its dual swords together and made a slashing motion that created a giant Sword Wave that cut straight into Liu Yan and the Wood Spirit.

The Wood Spirit immediately let out a sharp and piercing scream.

Yang Kai, on the other hand, backed off several dozen metres as he hurriedly tore off his clothes and stared at his right arm, calling out in shock in the next moment, "Wood Spirit Seed!"

At this moment, there was a light green rice grain-sized thing embedded in the skin of his right arm and Yang Kai could feel his vitality uncontrollably flowing towards it.

As more and more of Yang Kai's vitality flowed into it, this little seed actually showing signs of breaking out of its shell.

Yang Kai immediately understood what it was. Obviously, this Wood Spirit Seed had penetrated his flesh along with that faint green beam of light from before.

No wonder even the six Emperors were unable to completely eradicate the Wood Spirit, it was actually able to conceal one of its seeds this well. Yang Kai couldn't even find it after carefully inspecting his body twice. If it wasn't for the Wood Spirit trying to interfere with his attack just now to save itself and escape, perhaps this Wood Spirit Seed would not have activated.

And it was exactly because of the activation of this Wood Spirit Seed that Yang Kai's Moon Blade lost its accuracy.

As for what happened to the cultivators parasitized by the Wood Spirit Seeds in Maplewood City, Yang Kai couldn't be any clearer. All this thing needed was a short time to devour a cultivator's vitality and essence before it took over that cultivator's body and turned them into a Wood Spirit Clone without any will of its own.

Naturally, Yang Kai didn't want to follow in those people's footsteps.

Seeing the Wood Spirit Seed devouring more and more of his vitality, Yang Kai grit his teeth and formed a minute Space Blade on his fingers before slicing into the flesh around where the Wood Spirit Seed was embedded and tearing it out, trying to stifle his pained groan in the process.

Blood streamed down his arm.

Having been separated from his body, the small piece of flesh that Yang Kai had just torn out was devoured by the Wood Spirit Seed in a very short time. The next moment, the Wood Spirit Seed also turned into a small seedling that shot out some thin vines that tried to invade Yang Kai again.

Yang Kai let out a cold snort and immediately summoned his Sealed World Bead before slipping inside it.

Inside the Small Sealed World, Yang Kai held the Wood Spirit's Seedling as he released flames from his palm, completely wrapping it up.

Accompanied by a sharp and piercing screech, the incomplete Wood Spirit Clone was burnt to ashes.

After doing all this, Yang Kai took out a healing pill from his Space Ring and swallowed it before sitting down cross-legged and beginning another careful examination of his body, using the Small Sealed World's Principles to dramatically boost his senses.

He was truly wary of these Wood Spirit Seeds.

He was unable to find any hidden Wood Spirit Seeds with his Divine Sense earlier, but things were completely different inside the Sealed World Bead. Here, he could use the World Principles to perform a much more intensive examination than his Diving Sense could perform alone.

After checking a few times, Yang Kai was finally sure that there weren't any more and he finally relaxed.

After this brief period, the wound on Yang Kai's arm had almost recovered. His Golden Blood had extraordinary restorative properties and coupled with his powerful physique, this kind of minor injury was nothing to him.

After heaving a sigh of relief, Yang Kai stood up and left the Sealed World Bead.

After returning back to the plains again, Yang Kai looked around and found the surroundings at peace, lacking any sounds of fighting.

Not too far away, Liu Yan, who had already taken her human form, gently jumped to Yang Kai's side as a smile finally appeared beautiful face that was usually as cold as ice. Standing next to him, she happily shouted, "Master!"

Yang Kai nodded and asked, glancing at the ashes on the ground, "Is it dead?"

Liu Yan nodded, "Yes!"

While speaking, she turned her eyes towards the Monster Insect Queen and calmly said, "Master, your new helper is pretty good, she's even fiercer than me."

Yang Kai glanced at her and seemed to notice something in her gaze, causing a smile to appear on his lips as he said, "Although it's quite good, its room for growth is very limited. In the future, it will reach the Third-Order Dao Source Realm at best, but you are different. You have gained sentience and you can actively strengthen yourself, so you will definitely be stronger in the future."

"Yes, Master," Liu Yan responded, lowering her head, but she couldn't hide the corners of her lips rising into a small arc.

Yang Kai beckoned to the Monster Insect Queen, which swiftly flew over to him. Yang Kai then had it return to his Sealed World Bead.

Glancing around, Yang Kai saw that this stretch of wilderness had become a wasteland. In just half a day, two Second-Order Dao Source Realm masters and dozens of Origin Kings had lost their lives here, causing Yang Kai to sigh slightly.

"Check if there are any Space Rings remaining," after giving the order, Yang Kai started searching with Liu Yan.

Not long after, eight Space Rings lay in Yang Kai's hands. These Space Rings belonged to Flying Saint Palace's disciples, and Yang Kai didn't pay much attention to them as he knew there wouldn't be much of value in them.

Yang Kai had already collected Ning Yuan Cheng and Han Leng's Space Rings, but as for Liu Yi Zhi's, it was likely destroyed in the previous fight so there was no point searching for it, causing Yang Kai some slight disappointment.

After all, the Space Ring of a Second-Order Dao Source Realm master should have a lot of treasures in it.

"Master, what do you think we should do with this?" Liu Yan asked, looking at the ship on the ground with a curious look in her beautiful eyes.

After being separated from Yang Kai in the Starlight Channel, she didn't have the time to appreciate various wonders of the Star Boundary. She knew very little about this ship, only that it was a kind of flight-type artifact.

"Of course, we're going to keep it," Yang Kai grinned, walking up to the ship and circling it a few times as a satisfied look appeared on his face.

Yang Kai had personally learned how fast this thing could fly as he had been unable to catch up to it despite his best efforts just a day ago. In the subsequent battle, the defensive shield of the ship had even withstood the attacks of the Heavenly Lunar Cycle Grand Array for a time, obviously indicating that its defensive strength was also quite good.

This was absolutely a Dao Source Grade flight-type artifact!

Yang Kai currently lacked a flight-type artifact for travelling, so how could he let go of such a treasure after encountering it? It might belong to Flying Saint Palace, and if anyone saw Yang Kai using it, they

might link him to Ning Yuan Cheng's death, but as long as Yang Kai was careful and didn't use it in front of outsiders, everything would be alright.

The ship was too big, however, and Yang Kai couldn't refine it immediately to make it shrink, so he could only expend a large amount of his Spiritual Energy to put it into the Sealed World Bead, for now, and deal with in the future.

"Let's go!" Yang Kai summoned Liu Yan and began returning to Maplewood City. Now that the matter of Liu Yan had been settled, he could accompany Kang Si Ran to explore the hidden cave mansion without any worries.

But right then, a gust of wind blew over and Yang Kai, who was about to turn around and leave, couldn't help but pause, looking suspiciously in a certain direction.

"What's wrong?" Liu Yan asked, surprised.

Yang Kai didn't answer and instead just stared intently for a time before suddenly soaring over to where the Wood Spirit Clone was killed.

Originally, only the ashes of the Wood Spirit Clone were left here; however, under the last gust of wind, something glimmering in the ashes had caught Yang Kai's attention.

Kneeling down, he swept away the rest of the ashes and discovered something.

Yang Kai instantly retreated as a vigilant look appeared on his face. In that moment, he almost instinctually released a Moon Blade.

Liu Yan slowly came over and stood beside him, sweeping her gaze towards the ashes before a gasp leaked from her lips, "A seed?"

She glanced at Yang Kai and, getting his nod, she stepped forward and reached out her fingers to pick this seed up.

Upon closer examination, the pair confirmed it was indeed a seed, one the size of a grain of rice, obviously something left behind after the Wood Spirit was burnt to ashes.

Since it could survive Liu Yan's intense flames though, this seed was clearly not ordinary.

Obviously, it was a Wood Spirit Seed!

And the reason why Yang Kai showed such vigilance was all because of this. He had suffered a small loss just now and had even been forced to cut out a piece of his flesh to resolve a similar Wood Spirit Seed crisis.

Once bitten by a snake, one would be afraid of ropes for ten years.

But the strange thing was that this Wood Spirit Seed seemed completely different from the Wood Spirit Seed which had implanted itself in Yang Kai's arm. It wasn't green, but instead, the left side glimmered gold while the right released a dazzling silver, looking extremely unusual.

"Is there anything amiss with it?" Yang Kai asked vigilantly.

Liu Yan nodded and said, "There is indeed a problem, it still has a faint Soul fluctuation. It seems to still be alive."

"I see," Yang Kai ground his teeth.

If he hadn't instantly backed away just now and had picked up the Wood Spirit Seed instead, he might have been parasitized again. Just from the looks of it, this Wood Spirit Seed was extraordinary, and if it had taken root in his body, he probably wouldn't have been able to deal with it by just cutting out a piece of flesh.

Fortunately, he had Liu Yan, who was the nemesis of this Wood Spirit and didn't fear its peculiar abilities.

"Good good! This little thing actually dares try to trick me!" Yang Kai coldly smiled and beckoned Liu Yan, "Come with me!"

Saying so, he quickly brought Liu Yan into the Sealed World Bead.

Chapter 2042, All Sorts of Chances and Coincidences

In the Sealed World Bead, Yang Kai sat in a cross-legged position, looking as tranquil as an ancient well.

In front of him was his Purple Origin Furnace, with its lid closed and an intense heat coming from it.

From time to time, knocking sounds could be heard coming from inside the Purple Origin Furnace, as if something was struggling inside it, trying to escape. At this moment, Yang Kai was pouring his Qi into the Purple Origin Furnace, trying to suppress whatever was struggling inside.

As time went by, the Purple Origin Furnace turned extremely red, so hot that it began distorting the surrounding space.

Meanwhile, the struggle inside the furnace was also growing weaker and weaker.

After an entire day, the furnace finally calmed down. Yang Kai called for Liu Yan before opening the Purple Origin Furnace with the wave of his hand. Immediately, Liu Yan turned into a fiery beam and shot out from the furnace before assuming her human form before him.

"Master," Liu Yan greeted Yang Kai and handed him the gold and silver coloured Wood Spirit Seed before adding, "Master, you may rest assured, this thing could not be any deader."

"Good job." Yang Kai nodded with satisfaction, taking the peculiar Wood Spirit Seed and pouring his Divine Sense into it, confirming that Liu Yan was indeed right. The faint Soul wisp hidden inside the Wood Spirit Seed had completely disappeared.

Obviously, the Soul wisp belonged to the Wood Spirit, and unless it was completely destroyed, the Wood Spirit would continue to live on.

But after being thrown by Yang Kai into the Purple Origin Furnace and refined by Liu Yan for a full day and night, how could the residual Soul of the Wood Spirit survive? It had long been wiped out by the scorching heat.

At this moment, the seed in Yang Kai's hand could no longer be regarded as the Wood Spirit's seed, but the original seed before the Wood Spirit grew from.

Yang Kai had no idea what the Wood Spirit's actual body was before it gained sentience; after all, he had never seen a seed like this before.

But since it could stand being burned by the joint effort of Liu Yan's and his flames for an entire day and night without getting damaged, it was far from ordinary.

If this seed was planted, it might gain sentience again after tens of thousands of years, becoming another Wood Spirit, but that one would have nothing to do with the previous one.

"What are you going to do with this thing?" Asked Liu Yan, glancing at Yang Kai.

"I don't know. What do you suggest?" Yang Kai looked up at her.

Liu Yan also shook her head, "Master, that is up to you; however, I feel that the two energies flowing in this seed would bring you a great advantage."

"Oh? Why do you say that?" Yang Kai asked in surprise.

"I just have a feeling, that's all. If you really want me to explain it, I can't describe it exactly," Liu Yan smiled.

Yang Kai gently nodded before returning his gaze to the peculiar Wood Spirit Seed and pondering. Suddenly, his eyes lit up as if he had come up with a good idea.

The next moment, his figure flickered as he directly arrived at the medicine garden of the Small Sealed World. Then, he looked for a good spot, dug up a little bit of earth, and planted the Wood Spirit Seed in his hand.

He had no idea what this Wood Spirit Seed was or what its uses were, but since that was the case, he could just grow it himself to investigate.

And in this world, what place would be more suitable for planting the Wood Spirit Seed than the medicine garden inside the Sealed World Bead?

This was a medicine garden with a vast amount of Heavy Earth buried beneath it and five Earth Vein Crystals supplying rich amounts of World Energy. In this place, the growth period of the Wood Spirit Seed would be greatly shortened and in just a few years, Yang Kai would be able to figure out what it was.

After carefully re-checking, Yang Kai clapped and smiled in satisfaction. The next moment, his figure distorted again as he reappeared before Liu Yan.

"It's done! Let's return to Maplewood City. Accompany me, I need to ask you some questions," Yang Kai said, looking at Liu Yan.

“Yes.” Liu Yan nodded before she turned into a fiery beam and shot straight into Yang Kai’s body, disappearing right after.

Yang Kai then left the Sealed World Bead, determined his bearings, and swiftly headed towards Maplewood City.

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Somewhere about ten thousand kilometres away from Maplewood City, Flying Saint Palace.

Surrounded by mountains and rising clouds, Flying Saint Palace was a majestic sight to behold.

And on a certain peak, an old man with a naked chest and white hair was sitting cross-legged, facing east. This old man’s eyes were closed as he inhaled and exhaled slowly. Every time he breathed out, his breath seemed to transform into birds and beasts that would walk or run away, disappearing into the depths of the forest in the blink of an eye. He was clearly cultivating some strange, profound Secret Art.

Suddenly, the old man opened his eyes and a gleam appeared in their depths, causing anyone who saw it to shudder.

“Hmph, this old master said not to disturb him unless it was something of critical importance. Tell me, what is the matter this time? If it turns out to be something trivial, it will be your head!” The old man suddenly stated in a cold tone without even turning his head.

Several dozen metres behind him, a middle-aged man in black robes immediately froze as drops of cold sweat trickled down his forehead. Promptly cupping his fists, he reported in a trembling voice, “Reporting to the Palace Master, Young Palace Master’s life crystal has shattered!”

Judging by the middle-aged man’s words, this old man happened to be Flying Saint Palace’s Palace Master, Ning Bo Yang.

“Yuan Chen’s life crystal shattered?” Ning Bo Yang’s expression turned colder upon hearing this, the temperature on the mountain top dropping sharply.

“Yes,” the middle-aged man replied in a heavy voice, not daring to lift his head.

“Hmph, that rascal’s life was destined to be short from the start. Since his crystal has shattered, that’s all there is to it,” Ning Bo Yan indifferently said.

“Ah?” The middle-aged man was stunned, not having expected someone to show such an indifferent attitude even after knowing that his son had died.

[Could it be... that the Young Palace Master wasn’t really his son?] The middle-aged man couldn’t help wondering.

“Since Yuan Cheng is dead, let Yuan Shu be the Young Palace Master, see to it yourselves and stop disturbing this old master,” ordered Ning Bo Yang.

The middle-aged man didn’t dare to be neglectful and hurriedly nodded, “Yes, I will obey Palace Master’s orders.”

“However... Yuan Cheng might have been a fool, but he was still my son, the Young Palace Master of the Flying Saint Palace! Someone daring to defecate on my Flying Saint Palace’s head is utterly unacceptable. Find out who is responsible and bring me his head!”

“Yes!” The middle-aged bowed respectfully.

“You may go,” Ning Bo Yang waved.

The middle-aged man immediately backed away without saying another word.

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In Star Soul Palace, the true overlord of the Star Boundary’s Southern Territory, a similar scene was taking place.

In a secret room, a short old man was listening to the report from a beautiful woman in front of him, and after listening to it, he furrowed his brow and asked, “Did that little bastard’s life crystal really shatter?”

“Reporting to Honoured Master, Junior Brother Han’s life crystal has indeed broken,” the beautiful woman respectfully replied.

“That evil boy was as slippery as a loach, even evading this old master’s personal pursuit, so how did he die?” The old man let out a cold snort, “Waste!”

“Honoured Master, please restrain your anger, Junior Brother Han is already dead, and no matter who killed him, it can be regarded as cleaning house on behalf of Honored Master,” the beautiful woman comforted.

“Cleaning house?” The old man let out a cold snort and snapped, “This old master does not need anyone to intervene in his affairs!”

“Disciple has made a mistake, please forgive me, Honoured Master!” The beautiful woman’s face turned pale as she heard this shout.

“Go and investigate who did it, and... while this old master cares nothing for his other possessions, your Junior Brother Han had a token on him, make sure you retrieve it and bring it back to me!” The old man commanded.

“A token?” The beautiful woman was stunned, asking curiously, “May I ask Honoured Master what kind of token it is?”

The old man calmly glanced at her and said, “If you really see it, you will know what it is, explaining anymore is useless!”

“Yes, Disciple will deal with this as quickly as possible. Honoured Master need only wait for good news.” The beautiful woman hurriedly left the secret room, not daring to ask anymore.

After the beautiful woman left, an uncertain and pondering look appeared on the short old man’s face before he suddenly cursed, “Little bastard, you’re lucky that you didn’t die at this old master’s hand!”

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“So, after you exited the starlight passage, you fell into the Black Blood Swamp?” Yang Kai asked while making a beeline toward Maplewood City.

The Black Blood Swamp was not too far from Maplewood City, just a hundred thousand kilometres or so away, so Yang Kai had naturally heard of it before.

“En,” Liu Yan’s voice sounded in his head, “I also know that my existence can easily arouse others’ greed, so I’ve been hiding there and didn’t dare to show myself easily.”

“What happened next?” Yang Kai asked.

“Later, I fought with many Monster Beasts in the swamp. Some wanted to devour me, but I managed to escape each time, though at one point, when I was fighting with a certain Monster Beast, I was discovered by a passing master. That man had a Second-Order Dao Source Realm cultivation and not only easily killed the Monster Beast I was fighting, but also captured me. He then sealed me in that bowl.” Liu Yan still seemed to be a little shaken as she recalled her recent encounters, “Fortunately, that man’s Secret Art was Water Attributed, the opposite of my essence, so he brought me to an auction being held in Maplewood City instead of keeping me for himself.”

“It sounds like all sorts of chances and coincidences lead you here,” Yang Kai smiled.

Indeed many chances and coincidences played a part in helping him meet with Liu Yan again. If he didn’t come to Maplewood City after escaping from the Blue Feather Sect, he would have definitely missed Liu Yan.

And once someone like Liu Yan was captured, she would not necessarily survive for long. She would definitely be integrated into an artifact or swallowed and absorbed by a cultivator to enhance their own strength.

“In any case, it’s a blessing to be reunited with Master now. By the way, Master, what about Xiao Xiao?” Liu Yan suddenly asked. She and Xiao Xiao were both Yang Kai’s helpers, his left and right arms so to speak. She had spent many years together with Xiao Xiao, so she was quite attached to him and cared about his situation.

Yang Kai wore a sad look as he shook his head, “There’s still no news.”

“I hope he is safe and sound,” Liu Yan’s tone also fell.

In their native Star Field, they were nearly invincible existences, but after coming to the Star Realm, Liu Yan discovered that there were many powerful people here who she could not currently hope to match, and since even she had been captured by others, it was obvious Xiao Xiao may also be in danger.

Chapter 2043, Token

When Yang Kai returned to Maplewood City, the sky was already dark.

He walked into the city with ease and went straight to his secluded home.

He opened the secluded home barrier and walked right in.

Before he could take two steps though, he heard a cheerful voice call out, "Sir, you're back!"

Yang Kai couldn't help but freeze in shock for a moment, but after turning to see who it was, he finally remembered that another person was living here now: The little girl from the Zhang Family, Zhang Ruo Xi!

Yang Kai had spent most of his life travelling alone, so now that someone was suddenly accompanying him, he was having a hard time adapting. Furthermore, he had been busy with Liu Yan these few days, so he had almost forgotten about Zhang Ruo Xi.

After regaining his wits, Yang Kai gently nodded to her.

"Sir has been working hard these days," Zhang Ruo Xi lowered her head and said in a low voice.

Her voice was so small that, had the secluded home not been extremely quiet, Yang Kai might not have heard her.

Yang Kai took a careful look at her and discovered that she looked a little nervous, her two hands pinching her clothes as she fidgeted slightly.

"Master, who is this little girl? She seems to be afraid of you," Liu Yan's voice rang in Yang Kai's head as she continued in a teasing tone, "Her strength doesn't seem too high... Master wouldn't happen to have kidnapped her, would you? But... en, this little girl is pretty good, she has quite a nice figure for her age, tsk tsk..."

Before Liu Yan could continue any further, Yang Kai directly threw her into the Sealed World Bead and cut off contact with her.

Inside the Small Sealed World, Liu Yan stood stunned for a moment before snorting, "A guilty conscience makes a man become a coward!"

After having said this, she searched for the location of the Sun's True Essence before transforming into her Firebird form and flying over to it, preparing to absorb more of its Sun's True Fire to strengthen herself.

Inside the secluded home, Yang Kai looked at Zhang Ruo Xi nervously fidgeting and asked, "Have you been waiting here?"

Had she not been waiting here, it would have been impossible for her to appear the moment he entered the secluded home.

"No! Ruo Xi just happened to be walking nearby," Zhang Ruo Xi replied, lowering her head.

Obviously, Yang Kai didn't believe her, but looking around and seeing that the secluded home had been cleaned up spotlessly, he couldn't help smiling and saying, "Sit down, I have something to tell you."

Zhang Ruo Xi hurriedly waved her hands and respectfully rejected, "No need Sir, Ruo Xi will continue standing."

Yang Kai heaved a sigh, reached out, and pulled her stiff body over to a chair before pushing her into it, making her sit, and only then walking around the table to sit on the opposite side.

After sorting out his thoughts, Yang Kai spoke, "Ruo Xi... I can call you Ruo Xi, right?"

Zhang Ruo Xi slowly nodded her head without speaking a word.

Yang Kai smiled and tried to speak in as gentle a tone as possible, "If you don't want to speak, that's fine. It's like this, I brought you out of the Zhang Family not to make you repay me, nor because I want you to serve me. The connection between the Zhang Family and myself was all because of the agreement I made with your great grandfather, Zhang Gao Xuan. So, now that that agreement has been fulfilled, neither the Zhang Family nor I owe each other anything."

"Ruo Xi will always remember the great benevolence Sir has shown to the Zhang Family and will surely repay Sir in this life!" Zhang Ruo Xi stated in a soft voice, but firm, unyielding tone.

Yang Kai nodded and said, "If that is what you wish. En, now I want to tell you the reason I brought you out from the Zhang Family is that I might need your help with something in the future."

Zhang Ruo Xi still had her head lowered as she stated, "Ruo Xi will surely work hard to fulfil Sir's orders and expectations. Since Sir has brought me out of the Zhang Family, I am no longer a member of the Zhang Family, so whatever Sir needs of me, I will do it, as long as it makes Sir happy."

Yang Kai rubbed his forehead, feeling like he was talking to a brick wall, making him extremely helpless. In the end, he could only say, "I don't know how else to explain this to you. In any case, you don't need to address me as Sir, nor do you need to think of yourself as a servant or maid. I'm not much older than you, so just call me Big Brother Yang from now on."

"How could that be acceptable!" Zhan Ruo Xi raised her head and waved her hands frantically. When she found that Yang Kai was looking at her though, she quickly lowered her head and said, "That is absolutely impossible, Ruo Xi cannot be so rude to Sir!"

"You blockhead..." Yang Kai was exasperated.

Zhang Ruo Xi appeared to be in a state of nervous panic, thinking that Yang Kai was angry with her, so she quickly got up in order to kneel down.

Yang Kai saw her intent and swiftly reached out to make her sit back down.

"Forget it, I won't pester you about these things; however, now that you will be staying by my side and I will be in need of your help in the future, I will not treat you badly. First, take this." Saying so, Yang Kai took out a jade bottle from his Space Ring, opened it, and took out a single pill with Pill Veins.

"What's this?" Zhang Ruo Xi curiously gazed at the pill.

"Poison! Do you dare to take it?" Yang Kai said in a serious manner. Once he spoke those words though, he realized he had suddenly reverted to some bad habits he'd picked up over the years and felt somewhat disgusted with himself.

Zhang Ruo Xi, on the other hand, just stated with a smile on her face, "Sir is lying to me."

Yang Kai looked a little embarrassed but didn't try to justify himself, instead just saying, "Take this thing and go find yourself a room to cultivate in. I'm going out for a few days, so just stay here obediently and don't go running around."

"Is Sir going out again?" Zhang Ruo raised her head, looking at Yang Kai as she pursed her lips and asked, "Should Rou Xi accompany you?"

"No need, just take care of yourself," Yang Kai got up and smiled before heading straight to the room he usually cultivated in.

After Yang Kai left, Zhang Ruo Xi checked the pill again, but even after examining it for a while, she was still unable to find anything special about it. Bringing it close, she sniffed it lightly, only to have her nose filled with a rich fragrance that caused her beautiful eyes to brighten. Heaven knows what crossed her mind at that moment, but after her face turned slightly red, she popped the pill into her mouth and swallowed.

Just as the pill entered her stomach, it immediately melted into a stream of heat that rushed out towards every nook and corner of her body.

Zhang Ruo Xi's expression changed when she felt this and, not daring to act careless, she hurriedly rushed toward the smallest bedroom in the secluded home, sat down cross-legged, and started circulating her Secret Art.

Naturally, the pill she had taken was the Marrow Washing Pill that Yang Kai had spent several hundred thousand Source Crystals to buy. With the help of this pill, Zhang Ruo Xi's aptitude would fully blossom and the time she required to cultivate to the Origin King Realm would be greatly reduced.

She was quite young, but she still had some worldly knowledge, so she understood that a pill with Pill Veins was unimaginably valuable. Perhaps the Zhang Family couldn't even buy such a pill if they sold out all of its assets.

Naturally, she was very grateful for Yang Kai's generosity.

Inside Yang Kai's room, after he confirmed that Zhang Ruo Xi had taken the Marrow Washing Pill and entered a meditative state, he activated all the barriers in his room to seal it off.

Next, he took out nearly ten Space Rings and began to sort out his harvest.

After half an hour, Yang Kai happily looked at the haul lying in front of him.

From these ten Space Rings, he had acquired over 8 million Source Crystals alone, almost 6 million of which had belonged to Han Leng.

After giving it a thought, Yang Kai didn't find this surprising. At the auction, Han Leng had bid about 6 million when he was competing with Ning Yuan Cheng for Liu Yan, so him not having this many Source Crystals would have been more surprising.

Yang Kai was simply ecstatic after obtaining so many Source Crystals.

He had toiled so hard yet he could only gather a million Source Crystals over the past few months, and during the auction, he had spent a couple hundred thousand to buy that Washing Marrow Pill. Now though, he actually had over 8 million.

By the looks of it, Yang Kai wouldn't need to worry about Source Crystals for a long time.

Naturally, there were many pills as well, but these pills were of no use to Yang Kai. As an Alchemist, he didn't even put these low-grade pills in his eyes. At best, they could be sold for some Source Crystals.

There were many artifacts as well. Besides the flying ship that was lying in his Sealed World Bead, Yang Kai had harvested three other Dao Source Grade artifacts.

One of them was the long sword that Han Leng had used before, and even though it was just Dao Source Grade Low-Rank, it still satisfied Yang Kai greatly.

The other one was an Artifact Armour that Ning Yuan Cheng possessed, refined from some material Yang Kai couldn't identify. This was similarly a Dao Source Grade Low-Rank artifact, but because it was a defensive artifact, its value was naturally much higher than the long sword.

The third and final artifact was, naturally, the Black Jade Furnace which had just been bought by Han Leng at the auction, a genuine Dao Source Grade Mid-Rank Alchemy Furnace. It had many interesting functions and Han Leng had spent a huge sum to win it, but it had now landed in Yang Kai's hands basically for free.

Besides these three Dao Source Grade artifacts, there was also an assortment of Origin King Grade artifacts.

Finally, there were some materials such as herbs for Alchemy and ores for Artifact Refining that Yang Kai neatly sorted.

What caught Yang Kai's attention the most out of everything though was a small token.

[If I remember it correctly, this should have come from Han Leng's Space Ring.]

The token wasn't very big, only about the size of a palm, and seemed to be made of some kind of golden metal. Engraved on the front side of this token was a distinct and lifelike True Dragon while on its back was the ancient character for 'Dragon', engraved in majestic and imposing calligraphy.

Yang Kai released his Divine Sense and also used his Qi power to carefully inspect this token, but soon realized he couldn't distinguish what material it was refined from. Searching through the information he possessed, he also couldn't recall anything about such a token.

However, since it was kept inside the Space Ring of a master like Han Leng, the origin of this token was probably quite extraordinary.

Yang Kai decisively threw it into the Sealed World Bead and decided to study it slowly in the future.

After storing away the pills and artifacts, Yang Kai released his Divine Sense to check up on Zhang Ruo Xi who was using the Marrow Washing Pill to improve her physique. After confirming that everything was proceeding smoothly, he slowly stood up.

After half a day, in the black market of Maplewood City, Yang Kai managed to clean out his inventory.

The black market of Maplewood City was never short of items of less than reputable origin, and buyers here never asked any questions, so although he needed to sell them cheaper than he would in official stores, Yang Kai also didn't need to worry about security or secrecy.

Yang Kai also didn't sell everything in just one store, but went around to several different locations to launder his goods.

During the entire process, he had disguised himself and used his Divine Sense to shield his appearance, so presumably, with the level of cultivators in Maplewood City, no one was able to see his true appearance.

After Yang Kai returned from the black market, the number of Source Crystals in his hand had already crossed the ten million mark, making him suddenly feel like a rich man.

Chapter 2044, Yuan Furnace Mountain

Two days later, when Yang Kai was refining the Dao Source Grade artifacts that he just got his hands on in the secluded home, his expression suddenly changed. Taking out a communication artifact from his Space Ring, he poured his Divine Sense into it and immediately after, a smile appeared on his face and he hurriedly stood up.

Soon after, he left the secluded home and headed straight towards the city gates.

After half an hour, Yang Kai descended into a small forest about 30,000 kilometres away from Maplewood City.

Before he could look around, a familiar figure appeared in front of him and said with a grin while cupping his fist, "Brother Yang, you've come quite fast!"

"Sorry to keep you waiting, Brother Kang," Yang Kai smiled back at the opposite party and cupped his fist in courtesy.

The person in front of him was naturally Kang Si Ran. After Yang Kai had received his message, he immediately understood that everything was prepared; however, the two didn't set off from Maplewood City together and instead moved separately and converged here.

Kang Si Ran was also a cautious person, which suited Yang Kai's taste.

"It's alright, I also just arrived here. Brother Yang, you came before I could even catch my breath," Kang Si Ran said with a smile. "Since Brother Yang is here, let's set off immediately."

Saying so, he opened his mouth and spat out a long shuttle-like artifact, one that rapidly grew to more than ten metres long.

Kang Si Ran formed a few seals before sending a stream of Source Qi into the shuttle, opening a hatch in its side.

When Yang Kai saw this, he immediately understood that this was a flight-type artifact. Stepping inside together with Kang Si Ran, the pair soon shot off into the distance.

“Sorry Brother Yang, my flight-type artifact is only of Origin King Grade Mid-Rank and not very fast; however, travelling this way can still save us some effort,” Kang Si Ran said while piloting his shuttle.

Yang Kai nodded and said, “It’s more than enough, but I wonder how long it will take to reach our destination?”

“About three days or so,” Kang Si Ran answered. “Which is just right for me to discuss the situation there with Brother Yang.”

Yang Kai nodded, “I was just about to ask about this.”

Over the next three days, the two remained inside the artifact, chatting, and after Kang Si Ran gave Yang Kai the run down of the situation, Yang Kai finally came to know the location of the Wondrous Pill Great Emperor’s Third Disciple, Gong Sun Mu’s hidden cave mansion: A place called Yuan Furnace Mountain.

From a distance, this mountain looked like a giant furnace, hence its name.

Yuan Furnace Mountain was situated inside Raging Fire Temple’s range of influence. In his early days, Kang Si Ran had quietly gone to explore this mountain by himself, but unfortunately, he wasn’t strong enough at the time to penetrate very far and could only break through the cave mansion’s outer barriers. In the end, he had to leave in low spirits, completely opposite to how happily he had arrived.

By his calculations, even if Gong Sun Mu’s cave mansion barriers had degraded over the years, it could not be broken by an ordinary Origin King. It would take at least a Dao Source Realm master to crack it.

Therefore, he had no choice but to invite Yang Kai with him, otherwise he would be powerless to do anything due to his current limited strength.

The reason why he invited Yang Kai was that Gong Sun Mu was proficient in the Alchemic Dao, and his hidden cave mansion would naturally be quite attractive to Yang Kai. He wasn’t worried that Yang Kai would reject this offer, and after having been in contact with Yang Kai for a few months, Kang Si Ran felt he was trustworthy.

Otherwise, how could Kang Si Ran rashly invite others to collaborate for such a big matter?

Even friends and relatives would stab each other in the back before such huge benefits.

“Brother Kang, since Yuan Furnace Mountain is inside Raging Fire Temple’s sphere of influence, we must be careful when we arrive there, lest we be discovered by Raging Fire Temple’s disciples,” Yang Kai couldn’t help but furrow his brow after listening to this point.

Although his stay in Maplewood City wasn’t long, he still knew a bit about Raging Fire Temple.

Originally, among the great forces in the vicinity of Maplewood City, only Raging Fire Temple could compete with the City Lord’s Mansion because the strongest master in Maplewood City, City Lord Duan Yuan Shan, and Temple Master Luo of Raging Fire Temple, both had Second-Order Dao Source Realm cultivations.

However, Temple Master Luo was burned to death by the Ancient Divine Spirit Luan Feng's World Extinguishing Black Flame at Clear Jade Mountain.

As such, today's Raging Fire Temple was greatly weakened.

"Brother Yang, you don't need to worry about that," Kang Si Ran smiled. "I asked a friend to inquire about it before coming here and Raging Fire Temple is currently mired in internal conflicts, so how could they care about us?"

"Why do you say that?" Yang Kai was stunned.

Kang Si Ran explained, "Brother Yang, you should have heard that the original Temple Master Luo of Raging Fire Temple fell at Clear Jade Mountain, right?"

Yang Kai nodded, thinking that he hadn't just heard about it, but seen it with his own eyes. If at that time he had not hidden in the Sealed World Bead, he would have been buried along with Temple Master Luo as well.

"After Temple Master Luo's fall, Raging Fire Temple became like a handful of loose sand. The two Vice Temple Masters are now busy fighting with each other for power."

"Is this news reliable?" Yang Kai furrowed his brow.

"Of course it's reliable," Kang Si Ran slightly smiled. "Not to mention that they are fighting to seize power, Yuan Furnace Mountain is located at the outer edge of Raging Fire Temple's territory. When I explored it in my early years, I didn't even see a shadow of a Raging Fire Temple's disciple, so Brother Yang does not need to worry too much about this. As long as we don't act too overtly, we should not need to worry about being detected."

"That's good to hear." Yang Kai nodded with satisfaction.

Afterwards, the two didn't talk much about this and just casually chatted.

Both of them were Third-Order Origin Kings and were preparing to attack the bottleneck of the Dao Source Realm, so they had many common topics to discuss. Along the way, they exchanged their cultivation experiences and comprehensions of the Dao Source Realm and Principle Strength, causing time to pass by quickly.

During this period, the two of them alternately piloted the shuttle so that both could restore their strength while not losing time.

After three days, a furnace-shaped mountain caught the eyes of the duo.

"That's Yuan Furnace Mountain?" Yang Kai asked, raising his head.

"En," Kang Si Ran looked at it with a burning-hot gaze, as if he was deeply yearning for the mountain ahead.

He had failed to obtain the Dao Source Fruit in the Five Colored Treasure Pagoda and failed to win it at the auction due to insufficient wealth, so now, all his hopes of advancing to the Dao Source Realm laid

on Gong Sun Mu's cave mansion. Naturally, he very much hoped that a Dao Source Pill was stored somewhere in this secluded home.

Suddenly, Kang Si Ran frowned as he focused his gaze ahead.

At the same time, Yang Kai doubtfully asked, "Something's not right, Shopkeeper Kang. Things here seem quite lively compared to what you had expected."

With Yang Kai's eyesight, he could easily spot the figures of many people moving around even if he was a few hundred kilometres away. From time to time, one or two streaks of light would fly off or land, making for a rather active scene.

Kang Si Ran's face couldn't help but turn ashen as he stood suddenly.

At that moment, a streak of light flew straight towards them from up ahead.

Kang Si Ran's face changed as he hurriedly controlled his flight artifact to stop.

Soon after, the streak of light arrived in front of the shuttle and dissipated, revealing a man who seemed to be in his thirties and had a cultivation at the Second-Order Origin King Realm. On this man's robes was a flame-shaped emblem over his chest which was quite eye-catching.

"A Raging Fire Temple disciple!" Kang Si Ran was shocked as he turned to Yang Kai.

Yang Kai slowly shook his head, indicating for him to remain calm and not make any rash moves.

At this moment, the Raging Fire Temple disciple in front shouted, "This place is the domain of my Raging Fire Temple. Friends inside this shuttle, please show yourselves."

Kang Si Ran frowned, pondered for a moment, then signalled to Yang Kai before exiting the shuttle.

The opposite Raging Fire Temple's disciple scanned the pair with his Divine Sense and found that both Kang Si Ran and Yang Kai's cultivations were higher than his own by a Minor Realm, but despite this, he didn't panic and simply cupped fists and said, "May I ask these two friends if you've come here to explore Yuan Furnace Mountain?"

Kang Si Ran's heart clenched at that moment as he almost believed that his secret operation had been exposed, for a moment he didn't know how to answer.

Fortunately, Yang Kai immediately took over the conversation and said, "Indeed."

"Since you have come for the matter regarding Yuan Furnace Mountain, please follow me." The Raging Fire Temple disciple didn't look surprised after hearing this and, contrary to expectations, didn't try to expel them and instead for them to follow him back to Yuan Furnace Mountain.

Kang Si Ran and Yang Kai looked at each other with clear confusion.

However, now that things had come to this, they could only take one step at a time.

Afterwards, Kang Si Ran put away his shuttle artifact and closely followed the Raging Fire Temple disciple with Yang Kai, flying towards Yuan Furnace Mountain.

A short distance of three hundred kilometres was covered in a short time.

Before the trio landed on the ground, a reverberating rumble was heard coming from Yuan Furnace Mountain as if a muffled clap of thunder was echoing inside the mountain.

Kang Si Ran and Yang Kai's expressions both changed as they subconsciously protected themselves with the Qi.

The Raging Fire Temple disciple who was leading the way, however, didn't seem the least bit disturbed, not stopping his pace as he simply looked up with interest.

Yang Kai followed this man's gaze.

The muffled claps of thunder continued echoing from bottom to top, as if something was about to rush out of Yuan Furnace Mountain.

After a moment, a deafening explosion was accompanied by the thunderclap.

Immediately after, a five coloured glow erupted from the peak of the mountain! This glow spread outward into the surroundings in ripples before it slowly dissipated.

At the same time, Yang Kai couldn't help but take a deep breath, as a look of surprise soon appeared on his face.

"Such a pleasant fragrance! What is it?" Kang Si Ran looked confused as he too took a deep breath. At this moment, the air was filled with a strange fragrance that made one feel calm and refreshed.

His words were naturally heard by the Raging Fire Temple disciple who was leading the way, causing him to look back at Kang Si Ran and ask, "Didn't you two come here because you were attracted by this phenomena?"

Yang Kai shifted his eyes slightly but quickly replied, "That's right, but we didn't know what this was so we simply decided to come and take a closer look."

"Heh heh, I also have no idea what exactly is causing this phenomena, I only heard from Temple Master Zong and Temple Master Lian that some kind of wondrous treasure is about to be born."

Chapter 2045, Discussion

"Temple Master Zong and Temple Master Lian?" Yang Kai couldn't help feeling confused after hearing this.

"They used to be the two Vice Palace Masters of Raging Fire Temple, Zong Qing and Lian Yu Ming," the nearby Kang Si Ran explained in a low voice.

Yang Kai nodded in understanding as he gazed over quickly towards two Dao Source Realm masters standing not too far away, thinking that these two should be Zong Qing and Lian Yu Ming.

The two Vice Temple Masters of Raging Fire Temple were First-Order Dao Source Realm cultivators and had similar strength. Both of them wore the same Raging Fire Temple robes as well, so Yang Kai was fairly certain of his guess.

Yang Kai suddenly recalled Zong Zi Jin, a youth he met at the Soaring Dragon Altar when he was exploring the Five Colored Treasure Pagoda. Zong Zi Jin had a Third-Order Origin King cultivator and was from Raging Fire Temple, so by the looks of it, Zhong Zi Jin was very likely related to Zong Qing, possibly even the latter's son.

After a while, the strange phenomenon faded and along with it, the wonderful fragrance as well.

The Raging Fire Temple disciple leading Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran beckoned to the two to land nearby. Once on the ground, this disciple cupped his fist to the two Dao Source Realm masters and stated, "Reporting to the two Temple Masters, these two were also attracted by the Yuan Furnace Mountain's phenomenon."

Having heard his report, the taller one of the two Dao Source Realm masters nodded lightly before sweeping Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran with his Divine Sense and said in an indifferent tone, "Since they've come here, arrange a place for them to wait with the others."

"Yes," the Raging Fire Temple disciple acknowledged before guiding Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran to a certain spot to the side and saying, "You two, wait over there, when we need you, we'll notify you."

"Wait a moment," Yang Kai hurriedly stopped him.

"What?" The Raging Fire Temple disciple seemed rather impatient.

Yang Kai smiled and leaned forward and quietly started stuffing a few Source Crystals into his sleeve while whispering, "Friend, I want to ask you about the current situation. If it's convenient, can you explain a bit to me?"

The Raging Fire Temple disciple felt the number of Source Crystals being stuffed into his sleeve and smiled with satisfaction, "What else could this be? To be honest, even I have no idea what's going inside Yuan Furnace Mountain, all I know is that the cave mansion of some fallen master has appeared. If it weren't for this phenomenon, I'm afraid no one would have noticed it. After these strange eruptions began, our two Temple Masters rushed over along with many elite disciples from the temple to explore this cave mansion."

"A fallen master's cave mansion?" Yang Kai pretended to be extremely surprised, his eyes widening as he asked, "Since you've discovered such a cave mansion, why hasn't your Raging Fire Temple tried to explore it alone? Why are they not only allowing outside cultivators to come, but are even welcoming us to stay?"

Upon hearing this, the Raging Fire Temple disciple looked left and right before whispering quietly, "If we could explore it alone, why would we allow others to interfere? The two Temple Masters have already tried, but they couldn't break open the cave mansion's protective barriers with just their own strength. The barrier of the cave mansion seems to have been arranged by an Emperor Realm Master and still remains very strong despite years of neglect. Even with all of our Raging Fire Temple's elites working together, we cannot break that barrier, so we can only depend on external forces."

After hearing this, Yang Kai showed a look of understanding and nodded, "So that's how it is."

To the side, Kang Si Ran furrowed his brow. Obviously, he was also surprised by this development; after all, he had come to quietly explore this cave mansion many years prior and, although he felt that the barrier was strong, it should have still been manageable for a Dao Source Realm master, but he also knew that now was not the time to ask questions.

"From what you say, it seems that your noble Temple intends to break open the barrier with the help of outsiders like us?" A pondering Yang Kai asked.

"Indeed. There is strength in numbers."

Yang Kai grinned meaningfully, "Obtaining help from outsiders is one thing, but how will the treasures inside be distributed if we manage to break the barrier?"

The Raging Fire Temple disciple shook his head and said, "I have no idea about that, that's something for the Temple Masters to worry about. That's all I know. Friends, please remain here."

Having said this, the disciple left without giving Yang Kai a chance to ask anything more.

After he left, Yang Kai finally glanced at Kang Si Ran and the two tacitly made their way to a more remote spot before both their expressions grew ugly.

"Who would have thought that things would turn out like this?" Kang Si Ran tightly frowned, "If I knew this would have happened, I would have proposed coming sooner to investigate. Haa... now that this phenomenon is so visible, I'm afraid that everyone in the vicinity will come rushing over."

"It wouldn't matter if we came earlier or later. Since even two Dao Source Realm masters couldn't break in, I'm afraid that just the two of us would have been helpless. This situation might be disadvantageous, but that doesn't mean we don't have an edge."

"Brother Yang, why do you say this?" Kang Si Ran looked at him curiously.

Yang Kai grinned and said, "Shopkeeper Kang has something that no one else has, this is our advantage."

After hearing this, Kang Si Ran pondered for a moment before nodding and agreeing, "Good! What I have is still quite valuable."

What they were referring to was naturally the map of the cave mansion. In the past, what the descendant of Gong Sun Mu's servant gave Kang Si Ran was not just the specific location of the cave mansion but also a map of its interior.

With this thing in hand, no matter how many people went in, Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran weren't afraid of losing the initiative.

Furthermore, according to the information Yang Kai got after inquiring, Raging Fire Temple only knew that there was a cave mansion inside Yuan Furnace Mountain, as for whose cave mansion it was or what was inside it, they had no idea.

In light of this, Kang Si Ran finally calmed down, exchanging a knowing glance with Yang Kai before both of them closed their eyes and sat down cross-legged, entering a calm, meditative state.

Over time, more and more cultivators were attracted to Yuan Furnace Mountain by the strange phenomenon; however, the strengths of these cultivators were mixed, with many of them being just Origin Returning Realm and a dozen or so Origin Kings mixed in.

With the addition of the cultivators that had gathered before, the number of people at the base of Yuan Furnace Mountain had already crossed seventy.

After two days, the two Dao Source Realm masters of Raging Fire Temple looked at each other before Zong Qing gently nodded and said, "I think that we have the right amount of people. Let's start!"

Lian Yu Ming also nodded in agreement and said, "An undue delay might bring about trouble."

Just as he said this, the two stood up at the same time.

As soon as the two of them made a move, the cultivators gathered here opened their eyes and looked towards them one after another.

Zong Qing looked at everyone before speaking, "Friends who have been attracted here by this strange incident, I thank you for remaining patient for so long. This one is Raging Fire Temple's Vice Palace Master, Zong Qing. Many of you might recognize me."

"We have indeed heard of Vice Temple Master Zong; however, Vice Temple Master Zong, may I ask why have you gathered us here and what exactly is inside Yuan Furnace Mountain that is causing all this commotion?" an impatient cultivator immediately inquired.

Hearing this, Zong Qing slightly smiled and said, "Friend has asked an excellent question. This Zong was just about to explain to everyone. As for what exactly is inside Yuan Furnace Mountain, truthfully, this Zong does not know. All that is known is that there is an abandoned cave mansion here. Furthermore, it seems to be a cave mansion of an Emperor Realm master!"

"An Emperor's cave mansion?"

"There was actually something like that inside Yuan Furnace Mountain!?"

"This place is completely desolate, I've even passed by it many times in the past! Why didn't I think of exploring it before? Haa... what a loss!"

In an instant, everyone broke into a clamour, with some showing extreme frustration while others were filled with excitement.

Zong Qing continued with a smile, "My Raging Fire Temple attempted to explore this cave mansion already and broke through the first two barriers protecting it, but we were unable to break the last barrier and were thus unable to enter. Because of this, we can only depend on all the friends gathered here now. As long as all of you are willing to cooperate with my Raging Fire Temple, the last barrier will surely be broken and everyone will be able to explore the cave mansion before us!"

"So, the first barrier has already been broken," Kang Si Ran muttered under his breath. He had been sceptical as to why Raging Fire Temple hadn't broken the barrier even with two Dao Source Realm masters at its disposal, but now it seemed that there was more than one barrier to be broken, and the last one was particularly strong.

Finally, everything made sense to him. Kang Si Ran's previous information wasn't wrong, but because his strength was lacking, he simply didn't know about the additional barriers protecting the cave mansion.

If it weren't for the appearance of this strange phenomenon, with just his and Yang Kai's strength, they might have been able to break the first two barriers, but would have been stopped by the third.

In light of these facts, Kang Si Ran finally found a little comfort.

"Everyone must be wondering what is stored inside this Emperor Realm master's cave mansion, and judging by this phenomenon, this Zong can guarantee that there is definitely an extraordinary treasure inside, most likely some kind of extremely precious herb that is about to mature!"

The phenomenon, a five coloured brilliance that was accompanied by an attractive, refreshing fragrance, was quite obviously not something an artifact would produce. Only when a rare and miraculous spirit grass or medicine was about to mature would such a phenomenon occur.

"Temple Master Zong, I would like to know: If the barrier does break, how will the things inside be distributed? This is your Raging Fire Temple's territory, so if you wish to monopolize everything inside this cave mansion, we will not be able to fight back," suddenly, a sharp voice rose from the crowd, drifting from place to place, making it hard to figure out just who had spoken.

Once this topic was brought to light, everyone immediately calmed down as well and turned their gazes towards Zong Qing. Obviously, everyone was very concerned about this.

Zong Qing, on the other hand, wasn't the slightest bit angered by this question and just smiled as he announced, "This Zong can understand your worries, but this Zong can also guarantee that if friends cooperate here to break this barrier, any treasure inside will belong to the one who finds it. This Zong and Brother Lian would absolutely not attack you."

Lian Yu Ming, who was standing beside him and had been silent all the while, nodded at this moment.

"Vice Temple Master Zong, words alone are no proof, how are we supposed to believe you? Even if Vice Temple Master Lian and you really attacked us, could we still resist?" the sharp voice rose again.

Zong Qing lightly smiled as he swept his gaze across the crowd, soon locking onto a thin man trying to look inconspicuous and declared, "If friend is unwilling to believe Brother Lian and this Zong, you can always leave. We are not forcing you to remain."

Chapter 2046, Breaking the Barrier

In the crowd, the face of the thin man, who was being stared at by Zong Qing, turned ugly.

However, despite his whereabouts being exposed, he stood his ground and simply cupped his fists, "Vice Temple Master Zong, please forgive me, it was just a slip of the tongue. Since the two Temple Masters have given their word, naturally I will believe you."

In this situation, there really was no other choice. Zong Qing had already explained everything and given his word, and there was no way for the rest of the crowd to force him to swear an oath, not that they would believe that either, even if he did. More importantly, if they wanted to enter the cave mansion, they only had one choice, so agreeing to Zong Qing's terms was inevitable.

The thin man had promptly judged the situation and hurriedly compromised.

Upon hearing him say so, Zong Qing smiled with satisfaction and nodded, "If any friend here has any doubts about this arrangement, speak now. This Zong will address your concerns one by one."

Everyone remained silent.

Zong Qing nodded with satisfaction, "Good, it seems that everyone is ready to proceed. In that case, we should not delay. Before we move out though, let me forewarn you, if anyone dares to hide their strength while trying to fish in troubled waters, when we break this barrier, don't blame this Zong for being ruthless."

Everyone didn't even dare to breathe loudly.

At this time, Lian Yu Ming, who had been standing next to Zong Qing all the while, spoke, "Now this old master will explain to you the characteristics of the barrier, so we can properly cooperate; be sure to listen carefully. This cave mansion was definitely left behind by an Emperor Realm master. The barriers outside it are divided into three layers. The first and second barriers aren't difficult to break and my Raging Fire Temple is already quite familiar with the process. The real difficulty is the third barrier which requires a great deal of strength to break. If the amount of strength used is insufficient, it will not break, and if it remains unbroken for long enough, it and the other two barriers will quickly repair themselves. My Raging Fire Temple has been stuck at this third barrier for some time now. In the following action, my Raging Fire Temple's disciples will break the repaired first and second barriers, while our external friends, Brother Zong, and I will jointly break the third. Does anyone have any objections?"

"We naturally don't have any objection; however, Vice Temple Master Lian, what method will we be using to break the barrier? Is it enough for everyone to just attack it?" Someone among the crowd asked, raising the issue everyone cared about.

Lian Yu Ming nodded his acknowledgement when he heard this and said, "The barrier has a reflective property, so attacking it will only result in backlash, as such, scattered attacks will not work. Instead, we will be using a special artifact in this old master's possession."

Saying so, he summoned a dagger roughly two fingers long into his palm. The dagger was jet-black and its edge had a strange gleam to it. Just from one glance, it was quite apparent that it was a high-quality artifact.

"A Dao Source Grade artifact?" Someone cried out in shock as looks of admiration appeared on the faces of the crowd.

All the cultivators here were basically in the Origin Returning Realm or Origin King Realm, and most had never even seen a Dao Source Grade artifact before, so when they saw this dagger, they were naturally surprised.

“Good, this old master’s dagger isn’t just an ordinary Dao Source Grade artifact, but a Mid-Rank one that possesses a special ability. The greater the amount of energy infused into it, the more damage it can do. Even when this old master pours his full strength into this dagger, he is unable to bring out its full strength. Later, after Brother Zong and I, and everyone else will pour their Qi into this dagger. Once this dagger is saturated, leave the rest to this old master,” Lian Yu Ming said with a complacent yet smug look on his face as if he was very satisfied with his artifact.

“Vice Temple Master Lian has such a peculiar artifact! With it, it won’t be a problem to break the barrier then,” a cultivator in the crowd cheered.

“If there is a problem, it will be because individuals in the crowd held back their strength,” Lian Yu Ming put away the dagger with a flip of his wrist before shouting loudly, “If there are no other questions, we will take a quarter-hour break before executing the plan!”

After saying this, he closed his eyes to adjust his breathing.

Seeing this, everyone hurriedly sat down cross-legged to restore themselves to their peak state.

Zong Qing, on the other hand, didn’t close his eyes and instead began issuing instructions to the Raging Fire Temple disciples, making no attempt to hide his voice.

Seeing Zong Qing tell the Raging Fire Temple disciples the timing to break the barrier, everyone also felt reassured.

“Brother Yang, you must be careful later, I feel that something is off. Raging Fire Temple is never this hospitable,” Kang Si Ran suddenly sent a voice transmission straight into Yang Kai’s ears.

Yang Kai nodded without showing any visible change in his expression.

None of the cultivators present were fools, so naturally many had concerns and doubts in this regard; however, at present, no one would risk offending Raging Fire Temple by bringing these issues up. All everyone could do was secretly put their guards up and act according to the situation.

After fifteen minutes, Lian Yu Ming and Zong Qing gathered again as the former suddenly shouted, “It’s time, follow this old master.”

Saying so, he flew up.

Others hurriedly followed after him seeing this.

Soon after, everyone arrived halfway up Yuan Furnace Mountain and hovered above a stone platform. This platform was in no way small and could easily accommodate several dozen people and on the cliffside on this plateau, there was a flat stone wall.

After arriving here, Lian Yu Ming and Zong Qing had everyone else stop while they flew over to the stone wall and began inspecting it carefully.

“Is that the entrance?” Yang Kai secretly asked Kang Si Ran.

Kang Si Ran nodded without making it obvious or speaking a word.

After a while, the two Vice Temple Masters of Raging Fire Temple flew over and stood before everyone again where Zong Qing spoke, "Everyone, Brother Lian and this Zong have just checked and confirmed that the barrier has already been repaired. Please act according to how we just discussed. If we can really break this barrier in one fell swoop, we will gain access to this Emperor Realm master's cave mansion where his Emperor Grade Secret Arts, pills, artifacts, and more lie waiting! All our efforts will not be in vain!"

Many people appeared to be tempted by his words, their blood beginning to boil.

Zong Qing's face suddenly turned serious as he shouted, "Raging Fire Temple disciples, move out!"

As he issued the order, the dozens of elite Raging Fire Temple disciples split into two groups and began to assume two formations centred around the strongest cultivators in each while forming a series of hand seals.

Yang Kai caught sight of Zong Zi Jin's figure among these people as he was one of the centre figures.

With the circulation of Raging Fire Temple disciples' Qi, a surprising scene appeared before everyone.

The energy of these people seemed to become linked together and it became increasingly difficult to distinguish one aura from another. As for the auras of the two Raging Fire Temple disciples at the centre of each group, they both shot up from the Third-Order Origin King Realm to the Dao Source Realm.

Obviously, this was a Secret Technique Raging Fire Temple possessed to link together a group of individuals to dramatically boost the strength of a single person temporarily.

After a while, the leader of one of the groups let out a shout before a sharp sword suddenly appeared in his hand and he started pouring his energy into it. Moments later, he directly thrust this sword forward.

The sword struck the first barrier, which started shining brightly, blocking the thrust.

However, as the man continued pressing forward, the barrier was quickly split apart.

Immediately after, the second Raging Fire Temple group with Zong Zi Jin at its centre followed up. After having received everyone's Qi, a bright flash appeared in Zong Zi Jin's hand and he used some unknown artifact to shoot out a brilliant ball of light.

That ball of light passed through the broken first barrier and soon struck the second.

Judging from the intensity of the light on impact, the second barrier was much denser than the first, but it still couldn't stop the Raging Fire Temple's cultivators.

Not long after, the second barrier was also broken.

At this moment, the awaiting Lian Yu Ming shouted, "Begin!"

Just as his voice fell, he summoned his dagger artifact and began weaving a complex series of seals at an astonishing speed.

Zong Qing, who was beside him, instantly started pouring his own energy into the dagger without a moment of hesitation.

The next moment, the several dozen foreign cultivators also used their own techniques to pour their Qi into the dagger.

The dagger started humming as more and more Qi was poured into it and surprisingly, it also began to change shape, going from only two fingers in length to nearly a metre, from pitch black to multi-coloured.

Lian Yu Ming's arms started fiercely shaking as a strained look appeared on his face, like he was struggling to control this immense energy.

He only persisted for less than ten breaths, though, before he shouted with no other alternative, "Go!"

As he pointed his hand, the metre-long dagger whistled through the air, passing through the first and second barriers before striking something solid.

Hong...

The dagger shook slightly and Lian Yu Ming's figure trembled along with all the other cultivators who had poured their energy into it. All of them seemed to have felt a powerful recoil at this moment, causing many people's expressions to slightly change.

In front of the dagger, an even thicker barrier than the first two flickered, holding the dagger back, making it unable to advance at all.

Lian Yu Ming's face couldn't help turning ugly at this sight as he constantly formed more seals, but in the end, he was still unable to break the third barrier.

It was a deadlock.

What made the situation even worse was when Zong Zi Jin suddenly shouted, "Father, the second barrier has begun to repair itself!"

As he spoke, the second barrier that he was responsible for breaking was flashing with white light as it began to fill in its various cracks at an extremely fast rate. Zong Ji Jin and the other Raging Fire Temple disciples were forced to push in even more energy just to maintain the status quo.

Zong Qing's face immediately darkened at this sight and he promptly shouted, "Everyone, our success or failure depends on this moment! If we cannot break the third barrier now, we will never be able to enter this cave mansion! Are you still going to keep holding back even now? Do none of you want to see what wondrous treasures there are hiding here?"

Chapter 2047, Burning the Bridge After Crossing the River

As soon as Zong Qing said this, everyone's face turned grim, but more than that, some people looked embarrassed. Obviously, as Zong Qing had said, not all cultivators were using their full strength when cooperating with the two Dao Source Realms; they were all hoping for others to make the effort while they sat back and enjoyed the fruit of others' labour.

If the third barrier was broken in one fell swoop, it was safe to assume that no one would blame them. But now that the breaking of the third barrier had reached a stalemate, some people were left in an embarrassing situation.

Zong Qing said again, "This Zong has no idea what's going on in your mind, but this Zong wants to see what kind of treasures are inside!"

Just as his voice fell, his body erupted with energy as he poured his energy even more fiercely into the dagger.

Someone in the crowd couldn't help but shout, "Since even Vice Temple Master Zong is being so sincere, how can we hide anymore? If we don't do it now, when will we!?"

While speaking, he no longer hid anymore and poured every bit of his Saint Qi into the dagger.

The rest of the people glanced at each other with a determined look in their eyes. They too started to rouse their energy.

In a short time, the already huge dagger had grown a lot bigger. Obviously, it had received a lot more energy.

After such an increase, Lian Yu Ming faintly felt that he couldn't bear it anymore. His expression couldn't help but change. He exclaimed aloud, "Great, with your help, this Old Master will risk everything to break this barrier!"

He opened his mouth and spewed a mouthful of Blood Essence that turned into mist and enveloped the dagger.

Very soon, the mist of blood was completely absorbed by the dagger as a glowing layer of crimson appeared along with its colourful sheen. At first, the dagger seemed uncontrollable, but it actually settled down again.

Lian Yu Ming let out a furious cry as the dagger and the third barrier clashed with each other with an earth-shattering sound, causing even the World Energy to become chaotic.

CRACK...

Finally, a soft sound which everyone was waiting for was heard. Everyone couldn't help but smile happily.

Because an opening had finally appeared on that rock-hard third barrier.

Lian Yu Ming changed the seals again as he urged his Mid-Rank Dao Source Grade artifact to fiercely slash forward.

The third barrier instantly shattered to pieces with a clattering noise. It broke like a mirror. Much to everyone's surprise, it broke just like that.

The instant the third barrier broke, the first and second barrier burst like a bubble and disappeared all of a sudden.

"We did it!" someone cried in joy.

But many more people were already in motion, ready to rush ahead.

But right then, Lian Yu Ming and Zong Qing suddenly withdrew 30 or so metres. At the same time, the Raging Fire Temple disciples followed suit, backing away together.

Upon seeing this, Yang Kai couldn't help but chuckle. Without a warning, he grabbed Kang Si Ran, who was about to rush forward, and flew back several dozen feet.

The next moment, swishing sounds were heard as something suddenly shot out.

Suddenly, dazzling beams of light shot out from the wall of stone in the front, raining down on the crowd.

"What's this!"

"Damn it, quickly hide!"

Screams and shouts quickly resounded on the mountain. When those unsuspecting cultivators noticed that something was wrong, they evaded left and right, again and again.

But the beams shooting out of the wall of stone were simply too fast. Before they could mount any kind of reaction, the beams were already upon them.

The next moment, miserable cries rang, one after another.

The cultivators in the sky fell down like dumplings, bleeding buckets. And the stronger ones even burst into mists of blood; not even their bones were left.

Most of the several dozen cultivators fell in an instant. And none of the Origin Returning Realm masters had survived. Even the surviving Origin King Realm masters were injured. Some of the seriously injured ones were missing their arms and legs. It was a ghastly sight.

Far away, Yang Kai's face turned ashen. Kang Si Ran's face was even paler; fear could be clearly seen on his face.

Had Yang Kai not noticed everything quickly and pulled him back, he might have been seriously injured if not dead already.

"As I thought. After the barrier broke, there were other traps!" Zong Qing's words suddenly echoed from one side.

Lian Yu Ming gently nodded his agreement. "Fortunately, we were ready for it, otherwise..."

While speaking, he turned his head and looked around. All the surviving cultivators were filled with righteous indignation when they noticed his gaze. Their faces distorted with anger.

But no one dared to say anything.

They all knew it would be useless to say anything now. Even though the Raging Fire Temple was unkind to them, why would people not try to outwit the other? Why would they not scheme against each other? How could they blame others when they themselves hadn't taken preventive measures? They could only blame themselves for not able to see it miles away.

What's more, no one among the Raging Fire Temple had been injured. More importantly, they still had the two Dao Source Realm masters, who hadn't taken the initiative to attack them. But if they point fingers at them now, they might really kill them.

No one would do such a stupid thing.

"Huh!?" Zong Qing suddenly let out a soft exclamation as he turned his head and glanced at Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran, who were standing several dozen feet away. He seemed surprised that the two were safe and sound.

However, he didn't care about it too much. Instead, he said to the Raging Fire Temple disciples, "The barrier is broken, let's go in."

While speaking, he took the lead and rushed towards the entrance that had appeared on the stone wall.

The rest of the Raging Fire Temple disciples closely followed after him. After a short while, all the people of the Raging Fire Temple had left.

Only now did everyone let their tongues loose; all kinds of curses and swears rang everywhere. However, these cultivators could only satisfy themselves like this. Having suffered serious injuries, no one had any courage left to explore the cave mansion! Not to mention, no one could say whether there were even more horrifying barriers inside. And then there were also those shameless guys of the Raging Fire Temple, they weren't that easy to provoke. If they entered in their current shape, there was a 90% likelihood that they would die.

As such, many people immediately flew away after cursing for a while, looking for a place to heal their injuries.

Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran looked at each other, their faces growing incomparably ugly.

Even though they already knew that the Raging Fire Temple people weren't that easy to reason with, who would have thought that they would murder with a borrowed knife and directly cull away their potential rivals.

Among the foreign cultivators, only Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran were still in one piece. And if they went in and ran into the Raging Fire Temple team, they both had a pretty clear idea how things would end for them then.

Just when the two were hesitating, the opening on the stone wall started rumbling. The two were shocked when they heard the rumble. They looked up and saw that the opening was closing at a subtle speed.

"This opening won't last for a long time!?" Yang Kai's expression changed. He quickly asked, "Brother Kan, are we going in or not?"

Kang Si Ran's face changed. He was still hesitating. But when he saw that the hole was about to be completely closed, he grit his teeth and said, "Brother Yang, you should go back, I will go in alone!"

Obviously, he didn't want to drag Yang Kai with him.

Having said this, he flew straight towards the stone wall.

A moment later, his figure appeared inside the Yuan Furnace Mountain. When he looked back, the entrance was already closed.

Kang Si Ran turned his head as if he sensed something. The next moment, he saw a smiling Yang Kai looking at him.

He didn't even realize that Yang Kai had come in with him. He couldn't help but say in surprise, "Brother Yang, you..."

"There is plenty of time for whatever you want to say later, let's solve the immediate problem first." Yang Kai chuckled as he turned and stared at the front.

In front of them were two Third-Order Origin King Realm Raging Fire Temple disciples, coldly staring at them. They looked displeased and angry.

The figure on the left was tall and, maybe because he cultivated Fire Attribute Secret Art, his skin and even his hair were red. The figure on the right was short and chubby, with a big belly. He was staring at Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran with a smile on his face. His face was plump and when he narrowed his small eyes, his eyeballs couldn't be seen.

Kang Si Ran couldn't help but furrow his brow at the sight of this. Naturally, they knew that these two Raging Fire Temple disciples were left to guard the opening, preventing anyone from entering this place.

Having thought all this, he cupped his fists and asked, "Friends, what's the meaning of this?"

The tall cultivator on the left didn't answer but the fat cultivator smiled and said, "Aren't you two clear what it means? Everyone is smart here, so I won't speak nonsense anymore. Now that the entrance is closed, it seems that no one else will come in. What do you two think? Should my fellow brother and I compete with you or should we sit down and talk to kill time?"

Kang Si Ran's expression changed. He rebuked in a low voice, "Your Excellency, you mean to say that you won't let us pass?"

The obese cultivator cupped his fists and said, "It's two Vice Temple Masters' order. This one doesn't dare to disobey it. Friends, please don't make it difficult for us. Anyway, we just worked together to break the barrier just now, didn't we?"

"When all hares are killed, the hounds are stewed and eaten. The Raging Fire Temple's means are really praiseworthy," Kang Si Ran's face turned livid in anger as he quickly asked. "And what if this Kang insists on passing through?"

The obese cultivator's face turned ashen. He narrowed his small eyes as they flickered with cold gleam. His tone also grew colder, "If that's the case, then don't blame my fellow brother and me for being merciless."

"Wait a minute!" Right then, Yang Kai suddenly reached out and shouted.

The obese cultivator immediately turned his gaze at Yang Kai. Originally, he believed that Yang Kai wanted to say something but the next moment, he saw a beam shooting toward him like a bow fired from an arrow.

The obese cultivator's expression changed. He took a deep breath as his already fat body suddenly grew fatter. His entire figure had doubled in size.

He then opened his mouth and threw a ball of fire, which in turn transformed into a Fire Dragon and greeted the oncoming beam.

While the two made their moves, Kang Si Ran and the tall man also reacted. Kang Si Ran didn't say anything and suddenly summoned a club-shaped artifact. After he poured his Source Qi into it, the club-shaped artifact immediately shot straight toward the tall and robust man, leaving a purple trail.

The tall man was taken aback by this sight but he didn't panic. A long sabre appeared in his hand with a flick of wrist before he shouted, "The Saber Rules the Jianghu!"

He swung the sabre diagonally. It started to radiate scorching hot energy before a peerless beam shot out from the blade, greeting the oncoming artifact.

BAM BOOM BAM...

The four Third-Order Origin Kings hurriedly acted in the narrow tunnel, the resulting force from their clash gave the impression that it would blow the entire mountain apart.

Chapter 2048, Investigating

The sabre technique displayed by the red-haired Raging Fire Temple disciple clashed with Kang Si Ran's artifact with a deafening clap, bursting forth with a dazzling flash. Immediately after, extremely terrifying fluctuations spread into the surrounding.

At the same time, Yang Kai and the obese cultivators clashed as well. Yang Kai might have launched a sneak attack but the obese cultivator wasn't any run-of-the-mill cultivator. Since he could participate in this operation and was even left behind by Zong Qing and Lian Yu Ming to guard the entrance, he was naturally an elite of the Raging Fire Temple whose combat skills were definitely higher.

After the obese cultivator took a deep breath and his body become fatter, Yang Kai was almost left with no room to escape when he suddenly breathed the Fire Dragon.

After a dazzling fiery red flash, Yang Kai's figure seemed to have been melted away as he slowly disappeared.

The obese cultivator couldn't help furrowing his brow. He instinctively felt that Yang Kai shouldn't have been killed that easily. But as he looked around, he couldn't find Yang Kai at all. This gave him a bad feeling.

Right then, a peculiar power suddenly appeared behind him. As soon as that power appeared, it enveloped him like a cage. In an instant, he felt that the space around him had suddenly become extremely murky. He felt as if he had fallen into a swamp. Furthermore, not only was this power affecting his mobility but was also affecting the circulation of his energy.

“Domain! How is this possible!?” the obese cultivator cried in shock.

He too was a Third-Order Origin King level cultivator. His own Domain had reached the grand accomplishment stage. Naturally, when he was confronting Yang Kai, he had spread his around his entire body, guarding himself against surprises.

But when the enemy’s Domain was cast, he suddenly felt his own Domain completely suppressed!

[How can the enemy’s Domain be so strong when he is in the same Third-Order Origin King Realm? Compared with him, my Domain is just simply a joke.]

[Furthermore... in his domain, there seems to be an extremely weird power, a power that can affect space.]

He was greatly shocked. He promptly bit the tip of his tongue and spewed a mouthful of blood essence. At the same time, he let out a crazed cry as he mobilized all the Source Qi in his body, trying to get free of the shackles and suppression of the Domain.

Suddenly, a cracking sound resounded in the narrow space. It was the sound of the obese cultivators’ bones grinding against each other. These sounds were particularly harsh.

Behind him, Yang Kai’s eyes grew colder seeing this. A long sword suddenly appeared in his hand. As he then poured his Source Qi in it, it let out a clear hum. Yang Kai was surrounded by a sword aura which suddenly turned in a whirlwind as the tip of sword shone, cutting straight toward the obese cultivator’s neck.

Suddenly, before the glow from the sword could even reach him, an inexplicable force enveloped the obese cultivator.

The obese cultivator couldn’t help but tremble. His squinted small eyes suddenly bulged wide and round as if he had seen a ghost in broad daylight. There was a look of incredulity on his face.

With a flash of light, Yang Kai reappeared before the fat cultivator, holding the sword in one hand. As he gently flicked the sword, a drop of blood trickled down the blade.

The obese cultivator was rooted on the spot, staring at Yang Kai in a daze. His throat made a little noise as if he wanted to say something. However, in the end, he could only utter one word, “Principle...”

Just as he said this, the obese cultivator’s body quickly deflated like a punctured balloon. At the same time, a bloody-red line appeared on his neck as a fountain of blood spurted out like a fountain before his head flew into the air.

The headless corpse of the obese cultivator fell back with a thump.

“You... you dare to kill my Senior Brother!?” the red-haired cultivator couldn’t help but cry in shock at the sight of this.

Compared to the death of his Senior Brother, he couldn’t believe the fact that Yang Kai killed him in such a short time. He was pretty clear about how strong his Senior Brother was. He was the elite of the elites of Raging Fire Temple. How could he be beheaded by a guy who was similarly a Third-Order Origin King in one or three moves?

As he shouted, he couldn't help but gasp in shock as a chill ran down his spine.

Yang Kai raised his head and coldly said, "So what if I killed him? It's your turn next!"

"Ah!?" The red-haired cultivator was startled and retreat in horror, again and again.

Yang Kai fiercely shouted, "Brother Kang, don't show any mercy."

Just as he said this, Yang Kai's figure was already shrouded in a sword aura as he cut toward the red-haired cultivator. At the sight of this, Kang Si Ran also grit his teeth and attacked the red-haired cultivator with that artifact at full strength.

The red-haired cultivator might not be any weaker than the obese Senior Brother, but Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran weren't that easy to deal with. And under their joint attacks, the red-haired cultivator was at their mercy. He was powerless to fight back. And because of the terrain, the red-haired cultivator couldn't even escape.

After half the time it takes to drink a cup of tea, the red-haired cultivator too fell back on the ground, bleeding.

At this moment, Kang Si Ran saw Yang Kai in a new light. He sized him up and down with a gaze full of surprise.

Shopkeeper Kang might have been acquainted with Yang Kai for quite some time but it was the first he teamed up with Yang Kai in a real sense to fight against an enemy. Before today, Kang Si Ran had no idea that Yang Kai was so strong.

"Brother Yang, is the sword in your hand a Dao Source Grade artifact?" Kang Si Ran thoughtfully gazed at the weapon in Yang Kai's hand.

Yang Kai pursed his lips into a smile and said, nodding, "That's right."

This long sword was exactly the one used by Han Leng before. After Han Leng's death, it became Yang Kai's trophy. Although Yang Kai himself hadn't reached the Dao Source Realm, he had absorbed and refined many shattered Principle Fragments in the Fiver Colored Treasure Pagoda. So, he could make slight use of the power of some Principles. And coupled with this long sword and the Space Secret Technique, it was naturally a piece of cake to kill cultivators of the same realm.

"Brother Yang can actually use the Principles. It seems you are not far away from advancing to the next level. This Kang is envious," Kang Si Ran sighed, again and again.

He was much older than Yang Kai. He had reached the Third-Order Origin King Realm far earlier than Yang Kai yet he had not touched the threshold of Principles. He had been stuck before the Dao Source Realm. So, when he compared himself with Yang Kai, he was in admiration, as well as frustration.

"Brother Kang, don't be anxious. As long as you find the Dao Source Pill here, you won't need to worry about it." Yang Kai casually comforted.

Kang Si Ran's eyes immediately lit up. He nodded and agreed, "You are right."

Afterwards, the two picked up the Space Rings of the dead Raging Fire Temple cultivators, each of them taking one, before they continued venturing deeper.

What was Gong Sun Mu's cave mansion like? Yang Kai and Kang Si Ran didn't have time to investigate. After all, the obese cultivator and the red-haired cultivator had stopped them as soon as they came in.

At this moment, they finally got to check it out. There was a narrow corridor in front of them. The walls of the corridor were dotted with some strange rocks that were emitting light. So, the corridor wasn't dim at all.

As the two were investigating carefully, they moved forward slowly. They didn't encounter any danger nor did they run into anyone from the Raging Fire Temple.

They found tracks of Raging Fire Temple cultivators along the way, but they were nowhere to be found. Heaven knows where they had gone.

After about the time it takes an incense to burn, the two suddenly walked into a spacious stone room.

They immediately looked left and right just after stepping inside. But the next moment, Yang Kai couldn't help but look shocked. Because they had run into a dead end. The situation inside the stone room was also quite clear at a glance. Apart from many stone furnaces carved from rocks, there was nothing else here.

There were a lot of stone furnaces, roughly about 30 at least.

What Yang Kai found weirder was that the Raging Fire Temple disciples weren't here either.

"Brother Yang, what's going on?" Kang Si Ran looked astonished.

Yang Kai shook his head as he carefully probed the stone room with his Divine Sense but didn't find any signs of danger. He then said, "We didn't find a fork in the road. The Raging Fire Temple disciples should be here. But they aren't... is there a Transmission Array here!?"

Kang Si Ran found it reasonable as well. He then suggested, "Why don't we look around?"

Yang Kai nodded in agreement and said, "Brother Kang, I will check this stone room, while you check the map to see if you can find a way out."

"Okay," Kang Si Ran replied. He then took out an old beast skin and started studying it, furrowing his brow.

Yang Kai then started carefully investigating every nook and cranny of the stone room.

The stone room wasn't that big. After a while, he returned to the point where he started. He then scanned the stone furnaces, back and forth.

If there was anything suspicious in this stone room, that was these stone furnaces.

However, he had also used his Divine Sense to carefully check them out just now. There was nothing strange about these stone furnaces, and they weren't made from some Artifact Refining material. It was just ordinary stone.

He then turned his head and glanced at Kang Si Ran. Seeing that he was still checking the beast skin parchment and still hadn't found any clues, Yang Kai didn't bother him. He just walked to a stone furnace and touched it.

The moment Yang Kai's hand came in contact with the stone furnace, he heard a strange clicking sound before a hole suddenly appeared where Yang Kai was standing.

His body immediately started sinking. He was on the verge of falling down.

Yang Kai was slightly taken aback, but he didn't panic. He immediately circulated his Source Qi, wanting to rise into the air.

But the next thing that happened gave Yang Kai a shock. Just when he was circulating his energy, a powerful suction came from underneath his feet. Before he could rise up, he was sucked into a black hole on the ground.

The next moment, Yang Kai's expression changed for the worse. He only had the time to let out a cry before his entire figure fell straight down.

And the black hole that had just opened up closed itself right after, plunging him into the darkness.

"Brother Yang!" the nearby Kang Si Ran was greatly shocked upon hearing the commotion. He hurriedly stood up and rushed toward Yang Kai. But he was too late. When he arrived at Yang Kai's previous position, Yang Kai had long disappeared.

Staring at the place where Yang Kai disappeared, Kang Si Ran's expression changed several times. Finally, he grit his teeth and reached out to touch the stone furnace Yang Kai had just touched.

But nothing happened! The ground didn't crack open as he had expected. Kang Si Ran tried several times before he decided that continuing anymore would be fruitless.

As a last resort, he could only turn to one of the other stone furnaces. He started testing them one by one. Only when he touched the seventh furnace did the ground underneath his feet crack open, causing him to plummet like Yang Kai.

Chapter 2049, A Strange Test

It was dark all around. Yang Kai felt his body free-falling constantly as if there was no end to this. When he looked up, he couldn't find even a ray of light.

Yang Kai furrowed his brow slightly. He might have been a little taken aback by the situation he was in, but he wasn't that alarmed.

What happened before in the stone room allowed him to understand one thing...

All those stone furnaces should be the triggers that activate on touch. That was why he couldn't find any clues when he used his Divine Sense. Only when he touched the stone furnace was the trap in the stone room finally triggered.

In light of this, the Raging Fire Temple disciples should have fallen into this trap. That was the reason why the stone room above was empty.

[I wonder if Kang Si Ran would also follow me down. And would there be Raging Fire Temple cultivators below?]

He didn't dare to be careless. He was silently circulating his Source Qi, ready to attack at a moment's notice if he found something wrong.

Not long after, he saw a ray of light coming from below. Yang Kai hurriedly spread his Divine Sense to scan, and a strange look appeared on his face in the next moment.

Because there was another stone room below. However, it was a little different from his imagination. There weren't any Raging Fire Temple cultivators in the stone room. It too was empty.

After a while, Yang Kai fell into this stone room and he promptly looked around. The stone room was completely empty; there was even a stone furnace this time.

Before Yang Kai could take a closer look, an unusual energy fluctuation suddenly appeared. Soon, a stone platform-like thing appeared out of nowhere in the centre of the room.

The stone platform slowly rose, causing lots of rumbles. While watching, Yang Kai kept his guard up all the while. The stone platform finally stabilized, but up till now, Yang Kai still didn't notice any danger.

He furrowed his brow, slowly making his way toward the stone platform.

He came before the stone platform and went up the stairs, soon reaching the top of the stone platform.

"An Array!?" Yang Kai raised his brow. He looked at the mysterious pattern that had appeared on the flat surface of the stone platform, surprised. He could faintly sense a sliver of Space Force fluctuations originating from this pattern.

"A Transmission Array!?" Yang Kai was greatly taken by surprise. But in light of this, he was now sure that if this Array on the stone platform activated, it should teleport him to another place.

However, this Transmission Array was very different from what he had learned. So, Yang Kai didn't dare to rush. He paid even closer attention to it, trying to see some clues from it.

As he looked carefully, Yang Kai found a line of small text under the Array, covered by the dust.

He cautiously reached out and brushed away the dust as the line of small text immediately emerged before his eyes.

"The Array can be activated by pouring Fire Attribute energy into the Array!" Yang Kai read, muttering to himself. He couldn't help but frown.

[Clearly, this is a Transmission Array but why does it need Fire Attribute energy?] Yang Kai was a little confused. [And what's the point of having such a special Array in this stone room!?!]

Yang Kai couldn't figure it out after thinking over it for a while. So, he stopped thinking about it.

He had a Fire Attribute type of energy. Whether it was the Conflagration Knowledge Sea or Fire Sword Qi, they were both categorised as Fire Attribute energy. However, he didn't rush to activate the array and rather just stood there, waiting patiently.

He was waiting for Kang Si Ran, waiting for him to come down before moving together.

But to Yang Kai's disappointment, even after waiting for half an hour, Kang Si Ran was nowhere to be seen.

[When I triggered the stone furnace's trap, Kang Si Ran must have seen me fall. And judging by his personality, he would not ignore me for sure.] Yang Kai was sure that Kang Si Ran would certainly trigger the stone furnace mechanism.

However, Kang Si Ran was nowhere to be found. There was only one explanation to this: Kang Si Ran must have fallen into another stone room.

[There should be more than one stone room here. Otherwise, when I fell down, I should have seen at least one of the Raging Fire Temple disciples.]

[Maybe everyone who fell was separated so that they couldn't work together.]

Of course, this was only Yang Kai's conjecture based on the situation he was in. He couldn't verify if it was true.

Since he couldn't wait for Kang Si Ran, Yang Kai was left with no choice but to act alone. Considering all this, he no longer hesitated. He stretched his hand out toward the Array and mobilized the Fire Attribute energy in his body, infusing it into the Array.

A scorching hot aura immediately appeared in the stone room, causing the entire room to momentarily tremble. Suddenly, the Array lines on the stone platform lit up.

Seeing this, Yang Kai knew that there was no mistake. This Array indeed required Fire Attribute energy to start up. Then, he started pushing the Fire Attribute energy in his body even more madly.

BAM BOOM BAM... A series of rumbles resounded as the Array on the stone platform flickered with dazzling flashes, enveloping Yang Kai. And when the light dissipated, Yang Kai had disappeared.

"This..." Yang Kai turned his head and looked around. He found that where he was now was no different from the stone room he was before. Had he not felt that he had just teleported, Yang Kai would have thought that he had never moved.

"What the hell is this place!?" Yang Kai started frowning. He felt so confused.

In a normal cave mansion of a predecessor, there were many defensive and restriction-type Spirit Arrays. This was the norm, and there was no cultivator who didn't arrange things like this in his or her cave mansion. However, the cave mansion before him was a little strange. Many stone rooms were exactly the same. The first stone room he just came through only required the infusion of the Array with Fire Attribute energy to safely pass. There wasn't any difficulty or danger, whatsoever. [I wonder what's special about this stone room.]

Just as he was puzzling over, familiar rumbles rang again. The next moment, Yang Kai noticed that another stone platform just like the previous one had appeared in the centre of the stone room.

He furrowed his brow. But all he could do was slowly ascend the stone platform with the mentality of taking things as they come.

Looking around, Yang Kai couldn't help but let out a soft cry in surprise.

Because there wasn't any Array on the stone platform this time around. Instead, many grooves had appeared.

There were different kinds of herbs in these grooves.

These herbs had been stored with a special technique, preserving them for thousands of years without decaying. More importantly, their medicinal properties were still intact; they appeared as if they had just been picked up.

Yang Kai took a look and found that most of these herbs were foreign. He could only recognize three out of ten; he couldn't recognize the rest.

Afterwards, he shifted his attention to the bottom part of the stone platform. And as expected, there he saw another line of small text. After dusting off the dust, Yang Kai read aloud, staring at the line of small text, "Select fifteen poisonous herbs and the Spirit Array can be activated!"

"Select fifteen!?" Yang Kai was greatly shocked. He carefully counted all the herbs on the stone platform. He found that all the herbs added to be only twenty-five, that's all. In other words, more than half of these herbs were poisonous.

[What does the owner of this cave mansion want? Why did he give such a difficult problem?] Yang Kai was left completely confused.

He shook his head. All he could do was immerse himself deep into his mind and intently look at the twenty-five herbs in front of him.

Although the text on the stone platform didn't explain the consequences of choosing the wrong one, Yang Kai knew better not to test it out. Whether this cave mansion was left by Gong Sun Mu or not, it certainly belonged to an Emperor Realm master.

Yang Kai couldn't speculate the means of an Emperor Realm master. Once he made the wrong choice, he might fall here.

He didn't dare to play with his life. Thus, he became extremely serious.

"Hmm, this Heavenly Heart Orchid is poisonous. And so is this Filthy Shade Grass..." Yang Kai, after looking at them for a while, he first took the herbs he recognized from the groove and set them aside.

He was very cautious throughout the process, but since he didn't trigger any restriction, it seemed that he had chosen the right one.

However, he didn't recognize the rest of the herbs. On the one hand, it was because of his superficial knowledge of the Star Boundary's products, and on the other, it was also related to how foreign these herbs were to him.

Even the native Alchemists of the Star Boundary would not dare to say that they knew all these herbs, if they were here.

However, as an Alchemist, Yang Kai had studied the nature of herbs. The Alchemical properties of every herb had their own rules and characteristics. So, even if he didn't recognize most of the herbs, it didn't prevent him from judging whether these herbs were toxic or not.

He leaned closer to the herbs and carefully sniffed them. Very soon, Yang Kai had selected several more poisonous herbs from them.

The toxicity of these herbs was very subtle. Most people couldn't judge by their smell. Only an Alchemist, someone who dealt with herbs all the time, or people who had studied herbs, could judge them.

After tossing around a bit more, Yang Kai chose eight more. However, there were still more than half of the fifteen herbs left to choose from.

Unfortunately, the toxicity of the rest of the herbs couldn't be judged by their smell.

Yang Kai thought for a while before he came to the conclusion that he could only taste them himself and judge them by the reaction from his tongue and body.

He hesitated no longer after having come to this conclusion. He reached out and tore a very small piece from the petal of a light blue flower. He then put it in his mouth and started chewing.

The next moment, Yang Kai's expression changed as he suddenly turned pale. While chewing the small piece of petal, an extremely cold sensation suddenly numbed his mouth. It almost froze his tongue.

A panicked Yang Kai hurriedly circulated his Source Qi and immediately dispelled it.

"Although it's very strong, this one is not poisonous!" After a while, Yang Kai looked at the light blue flower with a look of fear. He had no idea what kind of herb would contain this kind of terrifying coldness.

Since he had made the confirmation, he could only cast his gaze on another herb.

Following suit, he tore a small piece and stuffed it into his mouth. The next moment, Yang Kai sat cross-legged as his face turned black and blue alternatively. His facial features were extremely distorted as if he was suffering extremely cruel torture.

After the time it takes for an entire incense to burn, he opened his mouth and spurted a stream of black blood. His aura had also fallen a lot.

"What a fearsome poison!" Yang Kai's face was filled with lingering fear. He had just chewed just a very tiny piece of it and yet he was poisoned. If he had taken the entire herb, he would have surely died at once.

Chapter 2050, Limestone Cave

Even though the herbs inside the grooves of the stone platform tasted horrendous and their toxicity was so terrifying that they even made Yang Kai's tongue numb...

If he wanted to leave this forsaken place, he could only complete the requirements as described in the small text on the stone platform. Yang Kai could only grit his teeth and continue to taste test the unfamiliar herbs.

It took him almost half a day to taste test all the herbs he couldn't recognize and be sure whether they were poisonous or not.

He went through all kinds of pain and torture, and had it not been for Yang Kai's sturdy physique and strong recovery, he might have lost his life.

Even so, he failed to pick the fifteen herbs.

"How come there are only thirteen?" Yang Kai tightly frowned standing before the stone platform. He looked rather confused.

Since the owner of this cave mansion left such a test for intruders to solve, he would surely not deliberately play tricks. In other words, fifteen of these twenty-five herbs were indeed poisonous.

But Yang Kai had used all three methods, looked, smelled, and tasted, but he could only ascertain that thirteen herbs were poisonous. He couldn't find the remaining two.

[What's wrong here?] His eyes swept across the grooves of the stone platform, one by one, but he couldn't find the remaining two from them.

Just as Yang Kai was at a loss before the stone platform, all the cultivators who had entered this cave mansion were facing the same dilemma.

From the get-go, all the Raging Fire Temple cultivators cultivated Fire Attribute Secret Art. So, the first stone room wasn't that difficult for them at all. Just like Yang Kai, they infused their Fire Attribute Energy into the stone platform and were transmitted to the second stone room immediately after.

Even Kang Si Ran had easily passed the first stone room's test.

But now, everyone was stumped by the second stone room's test.

In a certain stone room, a Raging Fire Temple disciple looked at the twenty-five herbs and scratched his head.

He wasn't an Alchemist. He didn't even know what these herbs were, let alone how to distinguish between the toxic and non-toxic ones. He waited and watched for a long time before selecting a few certain toxic herbs from among them. However, he couldn't distinguish anymore.

Seeing the time slipping by, the Raging Fire Temple disciple grit his teeth and took out a herb from the groove.

And the moment he took out this herb, the entire stone room suddenly hummed before the stone platform in front of him sank at an extremely fast speed. It disappeared in the blink of an eye.

The cultivator was struck with panic. He hurriedly flew back and circulated his Source Qi, preparing for the unexpected.

Suddenly, *WENG WENG WENG...* noises rang from the stone room. The next moment, specks of light flashed in the room. The specks of light were dense and were just about everywhere. By a rough count, there were hundreds of them. At first glance, they looked like the eyes of fearsome monsters, giving the onlookers the chills.

In the next moment, these flickering lights shook a little as they bombarded the cultivator together, giving off fearsome energy fluctuations all of a sudden.

Seeing this, a look of despair immediately took over the Raging Fire Temple cultivator's face. All he could do was let out a scream before he was drowned by the countless beams of light.

After a moment, when the light finally dissipated, the Raging Fire Temple disciple was nowhere to be found. All that remained was a pool of red blood and some tattered pieces of clothes where he had stood as proof of his existence.

This was not the only Raging Fire Temple disciple to suffer this kind of misfortune. All the cultivators who chose the wrong herbs had triggered the restriction in the room and were killed on the spot within a breath. Not even their bones were left.

In another stone room, Kang Si Ran solemnly took out a herb from the groove in front of the stone platform. After waiting for a while, when he realized that he was still very much safe and sound, he couldn't help but heave a sigh of relief.

He might not be an Alchemist, but as the shopkeeper of the Spirit Pill Plaza and a native cultivator of the Star Boundary, his knowledge and experience of herbs was much better than that of Yang Kai. After all, he too could be considered as someone who dealt with the herbs every day.

Therefore, although the test in the second stone room was a little difficult for him, it was not without hope.

In another stone room, the Raging Fire Temple's Vice Temple Master, Lian Yu Ming looked at the twenty-five herbs on the stone platform before him. He quickly selected about ten herbs and started pondering. He then chose a few more, making the count thirteen. Furthermore, the herbs he had chosen were exactly the same as the herbs Yang Kai had chosen after so much painstaking effort.

Only the final two remained.

Lian Yu Ming's gaze alternated between the remaining herbs with lightning-fast speed as he searched his memories for the knowledge of herbs he had. After the time it takes for an incense to burn, a smile suddenly appeared on his face as he took out two kinds of herbs from the remaining herbs in the grooves.

And when he took out the last two herbs, the place where he stood suddenly lit up as a Transmission Array slowly emerged, teleporting him to another place and the stone platform in the stone room slowly sank at the same time.

...

In the stone room, Yang Kai still had a worried look on his face. Once again, he carefully checked the remaining herbs but he was still unable to determine which two were poisonous.

Just as he was at a loss, he suddenly seemed to have been struck with a realization as his eyes shone with an intelligent gleam.

Immediately, he hurriedly tore a piece of the remaining herbs, one after another, and carefully ground and mixed them in pairs.

After a short while, when he was grinding two herbs with his hands and mixing their paste, a pungent and spicy smell suddenly permeated from his fingertips. This pungent smell immediately made him dizzy as a scorching-hot feeling spread from his fingertips.

Yang Kai immediately circulated the Profound Art and dispelled the discomforting feeling. His face immediately lit up with joy as he burst into laughter and spoke, "That's it!"

In this world, some herbs were non-toxic in nature, but when they were mixed with some special herbs, they might become highly toxic. This common-sense wasn't just applicable in the Alchemy World but also in the lives of ordinary people, who hadn't even cultivated.

Yang Kai hadn't thought of it at first, but now this situation had proved that his notion was correct.

He decisively took out two reactive herbs from the groove and set them aside.

A Transmission Array suddenly appeared underneath his feet and his eyes were blinded by a dazzling flash of light before the feeling of being teleported struck him again.

After he regained his footing, he turned his head and looked around. Suddenly, a weird look appeared on his face as he nodded and said, "As I had expected!"

He was still in a stone room, one that was no different from the stone rooms he had been in before. There was also a stone platform in the middle.

At this point, Yang Kai had faintly guessed the role of this place from the various clues he noticed.

Suppressing the joy in his heart, he stepped forward and came to the stone desk.

He focused his gaze and found that there were a total of three identical herbs placed on the stone desk. Judging by the aura they were emanating, their grade shouldn't be that high. It should be about the level of Origin Grade.

He stretched his hand out and brushed away the dust on the stone desk. Yang Kai read the small text on the stone desk and immediately understood the purpose of this stone room.

It was to actually refine the medicinal liquid.

As long as the purity reached a certain level, the Transmission Array in the stone room could be activated.

Refining medicinal liquid was nothing to Yang Kai. He had refined medicinal liquid hundreds of thousands of times in Alchemy so far. Furthermore, he also had the unique Conflagration Knowledge Sea, which made his job of refining medicinal liquid and removing all kinds of impurities from it easier.

And extracting the medicinal liquid from an Origin Grade herb was a piece of cake for him.

At this point, he no longer hesitated and prompted his Conflagration Knowledge Sea, wrapping the herb inside.

After a while, the herb was reduced into a drop of green liquid as its impurities continued to burn away, making the green liquid clearer and more brilliant.

Because he had already guessed some things from the various tests here, Yang Kai spared no effort to extract the medicinal liquid and did a perfect job.

When he had refined all three herbs into the medicinal liquid, he placed them in the groove of the stone platform again. Immediately after, the familiar Transmission Array appeared again.

...

Over the course of the next few days, Yang Kai spent all his time in stone rooms. Each stone room gave a different test. Some required him to draw the Spirit Array used during refining pills, some required him to refine pills, some required a mastery of heat... the tests were numerous and strange.

But the purpose of all the tests couldn't be separated from Alchemy.

At this point, Yang Kai was completely sure that his previous conjecture was right.

This was definitely Gong Sun Mu's test to check the mastery of later generations' Alchemy techniques. He was an Alchemy Grandmaster, so it wasn't surprising that he would be testing in this aspect.

As an Alchemy Grandmaster of his generation, he naturally hoped that his relics could be obtained by someone who was also an Alchemist, instead of some insignificant people. All those tests could completely determine whether a person was a qualified Alchemist or not.

Perhaps, Gong Sun Mu also wanted to find a successor for himself.

...

In the stone room, Yang Kai put his newly refined pill into the groove of the stone platform. After a while, the familiar feeling of transmission struck him as he disappeared again after a flash of dazzling light.

When Yang Kai finally regained his senses, he couldn't help but smile happily after looking at the surroundings around him.

Because the place where he was now wasn't the unvarying stone room, but a tunnel.

The tunnel was abnormally dry. There was even a faint fiery radiance and a strange bubbling noise. The hot aura in the tunnel gave the feeling of falling into magma.

Yang Kai pushed his energy to defend himself as he walked towards the place where the fiery light was coming from.

After a while, he entered a stone cavern.

Heaven knows how deep under the ground this stone cavern was, but it didn't appear to be man-made. It seemed to have been formed naturally.

There was a bright red fiery glow in the front. Yang Kai narrowed his eyes and found that the source of the fiery glow was actually a stream of magma! The magma had gathered into a pool. From time to time, one or two bubbles would emerge from below and burst, splashing the magma around.