

Martial 2781

Chapter 2781, Going Out to Sea

[It might be a little unrealistic to cultivate an Artifact Refiner on our own. Not only does cultivating an Artifact Refiner consume a lot of resources, but it also requires a lot of time to do so.]

[It may take several dozen years or even several hundred years...]

High Heaven Palace has only just been founded, so there was no time to cultivate an Artifact Refining Grandmaster at the moment. If everything went well in the future, the Sect may be able to cultivate its own Artifact Refiners, but for now...

It seemed as though Hua Qing Si had considered this issue as well and questioned, "Palace Master, shall we recruit an Artifact Refiner? In any case, the Sect is not lacking Source Crystals right now. I'm sure someone will come if we offer an appropriate price."

"En," Yang Kai nodded, "I'll leave this matter to you too."

"Palace Master, I actually have a recommendation," Nanmen Da Jun suddenly interjected, "If it were that person, a mere Mountains and Rivers Projection would be nothing at all."

"Oh? Do you know such an Artifact Refiner?" Yang Kai looked at Nanmen Da Jun in surprise, "If that's the case, invite them over. If they agree to join us, High Heaven Palace will not treat them unjustly."

Nanmen Da Jun chuckled dryly and apologetically said, "That person is capable indeed. A Grandmaster in Artifact Refining without any doubt; however, she's a little troublesome. If I meet her alone... I don't think I would be able to recruit her successfully."

"Ho, sounds like this Grandmaster is pretty arrogant," Yang Kai was extremely astonished. "You are also an Array Master yourself. Who would dare to show you such disrespect?"

Nanmen Da Jun scratched his face and said, "To be honest, compared to her, I'm very approachable..."

Hua Qing Si glanced at him contemptuously in response. They had known each other for some time now, so she knew a little about his true nature. It was only because High Heaven Palace had great financial resources and strength, combined with the precedent of Yang Kai nonchalantly destroying Seeking Passion Sect that he, an Emperor Array Master, was subdued. If it were anybody else or any other Sect, Nanmen Da Jun would have been the prime example of arrogance and would unhesitatingly look down on others.

But what Artifact Refiner, Alchemist, or Array Masters of this world who had even a little skill was not haughty? Yang Kai was the only Emperor Alchemist Hua Qing Si knew that liked keeping a low profile, the sole exception to the norm.

"If so, let's have the Head Manager accompany you," Yang Kai said with a wave of his hand.

“Good,” Hua Qing Si nodded.

However, Nanmen Da Jun chimed up, “I think it won’t work unless you go personally, Palace Master.”

Yang Kai laughed, “As the Palace Master, I’m busy managing all the day-to-day affairs and other official duties. Do you think I have the time to run around?”

Hua Qing Si also looked angry, “I am the Head Manager of High Heaven Palace! Who dares to look down on me? Could that person be an Emperor Artifact Refiner?”

Nanmen Da Jun’s expression became solemn as he nodded lightly.

Meanwhile, Yang Kai looked shocked before he exclaimed in amazement, “An Emperor Rank Artifact Refiner?”

“That’s right. So, it would be best if you go meet her in person, Palace Master, that’s the only way to express your sincerity.”

Yang Kai stroked his chin and pondered seriously for a moment before nodding, “In that case, it will be worth the trip. Still... Da Jun, in your opinion, will this Emperor Artifact Refiner be willing to join High Heaven Palace?”

Nanmen Da Jun’s expression became strange, “Does that mean you want to recruit her into the Sect, Palace Master?”

“Yes,” Yang Kai nodded as if it was only natural, “From what you said, this Emperor Artifact Refiner is not affiliated with any force at the moment. Coincidentally, High Heaven Palace is currently short of talents in this particular Dao. Since we came across a Grandmaster by sheer luck, we shouldn’t miss the chance to recruit her.”

“Uhh...” Nanmen Da Jun suddenly became a little embarrassed. He hesitated slightly before saying, “Palace Master... That person is a great choice if we are only working together temporarily. For example, asking to cooperate with me to arrange a Mountain and Rivers Projection then kicking her out after we are done, but, if you plan to recruit someone like that into High Heaven Palace, then... I don’t recommend doing it, Palace Master.”

Yang Kai chuckled and said, “It is said that ‘two of a trade never agree’. You are an Array Master while that person is the Artifact Refiner. Since you are both proficient in different fields, there should be no conflicts, right?”

“That’s not the issue. It’s just... haa, Palace Master, you will understand what I mean once you meet her.”

Nanmen Da Jun seemed quite exasperated with this Emperor Artifact Refiner. Unfortunately, he could not explain the reason clearly, so even though Yang Kai asked many questions, he only said Yang Kai had to see the truth for himself, lest his words give a preconceived bias.

Since this Emperor Artifact Refiner lived like a recluse, Yang Kai had no choice but to travel with Nanmen Da Jun to meet her.

Fortunately, there was nothing he was in a rush to do.

“By the way, is there still no news from Zhu Qing?” Before leaving, he suddenly turned to Hua Qing Si and asked.

Hua Qing Si shook her head and replied, “Are you worried about her, Palace Master? If you are worried, I can ask the Monster Kings to search for her.”

“No,” he waved his hand dismissively and casually tossed a jade slip to her. Without even turning his head, he added, “This is Star Soul Palace’s decision regarding your punishment. Have a look at it.”

Hua Qing Si caught the jade slip and shuddered, quickly pouring her Divine Sense into it. After some investigation though, the nervous expression on her face soon disappeared and was replaced by a bright smile.

The decision written in the jade slip regarding her punishment was very simple. Although Hua Qing Si remained a Star Soul Palace disciple, it would not hinder her freedom. In other words, she was free to stay wherever she wanted to be, and it wouldn’t matter if she never returned to Star Soul Palace for the rest of her life.

It was just a simple jade slip, in no way an official document from Star Soul Palace. Even so, the jade slip contained the Soul Imprint of Princess Lan Xun, so with this jade slip in hand, it was equivalent to Hua Qing Si breaking free of Star Soul Palace even though she continued to hold the status of one of its disciples. She no longer needed to worry about this matter again in the future.

This was also part of the results stemming from the discussions between Yang Kai and Lan Xun a few days ago.

Lan Xun was the daughter of the Bright Moon Great Emperor, a position that, for all intents and purposes, placed her below one and above all others in Star Soul Palace. Compared to the Elders, her status was even nobler. Despite that, Hua Qing Si was now an Emperor Realm Master, so even Lan Xun could not expel her at will. Fortunately, Lan Xun was very willing to give Yang Kai leeway in this matter. Since she couldn’t expel Hua Qing Si from Star Soul Palace, she decided to remove all restrictions on Hua Qing Si’s freedom instead, which was comparatively easier.

Outside the gates of High Heaven Palace, Nanmen Da Jun threw something into the air. That item suddenly became bigger mid-air and quickly transformed into a small boat. Then, he smilingly said, “Palace Master, please come aboard!”

Yang Kai glanced at the flying boat and raised his eyebrow in response, “This thing is pretty good.”

It was obviously a flight-type Emperor Artifact, not something that could be described with mere words like ‘pretty good’.

Not many flight-type artifacts of Emperor Grade could be found across the entire Star Boundary, so the value of one was at least tens of millions of High-Rank Source Crystals. For Nanmen Da Jun to have one showed that he had great wealth.

Nanmen Da Jun laughed dryly, “There’s no way I could have afforded this thing, I simply obtained it by winning a bet.”

“That’s incredibly lucky of you,” Yang Kai clicked his tongue in amazement as he flew up to the flying boat.

The flying boat did not look big, only about ten meters long at a glance, enough for five people to fit inside comfortably. However, Nanmen Da Jun suddenly made a gesture the moment Yang Kai moved towards the flying boat.

A hatch opened immediately on the hull of the flying boat.

Yang Kai stepped through the hatch, and the scene before his eyes changed immediately, leaving him stunned for a moment.

What entered his vision was not a simple interior, but instead a spacious cabin. Right now, Yang Kai was standing facing a large hall that could fit several dozen people without difficulty. Sweeping his Divine Sense around, Yang Kai even discovered several extravagantly decorated private rooms further inside.

There was even a First Stage staircase winding upward in a spiral by the side.

[I can’t believe this flying boat contains an independent space! This is equivalent to a large ship with several decks!]

A moment later, Nanmen Da Jun appeared beside Yang Kai.

Yang Kai turned his head and glanced at Nanmen Da Jun as he asked incredulously, “Did you really win this in a bet?”

Previously, Yang Kai thought that this was just a simple flying boat artifact, so he evaluated it to be worth to be around ten million High-Rank Source Crystals; however, from what he could see right now, this item was probably worth a hundred million High-Rank Source Crystals at the very least.

“It was just luck, just luck,” Nanmen Da Jun laughed wryly, his expression a little unnatural, making it clear he did not want to continue discussing this matter. Stretching out his hands, he gestured, “Palace Master, please find a place to rest at will. The place we are heading towards is neither far nor near. It will take around three days for us to arrive.”

“Good. Many thanks in advance for your hard work,” Yang Kai nodded before walking up the stairs to the second floor and randomly choosing one of the private rooms. Pushing the door open, he swept his glance across the interior and found that it was luxuriously and exquisitely decorated. A monkey head sculpture stood to one side, seemingly shading its eyes with its hand and glancing into the distance. It was a very lifelike sculpture.

Frowning slightly, Yang Kai couldn’t help thinking that the monkey head looked rather familiar.

At that moment, the flying boat hummed slightly and rapidly started flying. The speed went from slow to fast in the blink of an eye, soon reaching a speed no slower than a Third-Order Emperor Realm Master’s maximum pace.

That made Yang Kai sigh in amazement at the grandness of this artifact once more.

After that, Yang Kai walked over to the bed, sat down cross-legged, closed his eyes, and began adjusting his breathing.

The journey was very smooth, to the point where one couldn't even feel the slightest vibration. Moreover, there was nobody stupid enough to dare to block their path or try to rob them.

But then again, the speed of this flying boat was so fast that only a Third-Order Emperors could manage to stop them.

And so, three days passed by in a flash.

The speed of the flying boat decreased significantly all of a sudden. Following that, there was a loud humming sound as the boat came to a stop.

Yang Kai opened his eyes just as a knock on the door sounded from the outside. Standing up, he opened the door and saw Nanmen Da Jun standing outside. Nanmen Da Jun said, "We're almost there, Palace Master. We need to fly the rest of the way."

"Is there a barrier restricting the movement of the flying boat?" Yang Kai asked.

"That's not it," Nanmen Da Jun smirked before explaining, "It's just that I can't let others see this flying boat. Otherwise, things will get a little troublesome."

He only gave a vague explanation, but Yang Kai did not bother to question him further. Then, the two of them got off the boat together.

The sound of waves falling and rising entered Yang Kai's ears immediately, accompanied by a slight fishy smell carried over by the sea breeze. It made one feel relaxed and happy. Lifting his head, Yang Kai saw the blue sky stretching out into the vast distance, with not a cloud in the sky for ten thousand kilometres.

[I can't believe our travels brought us to the sea.]

"Is this Grandmaster living on an island somewhere?" Yang Kai asked in surprise.

"That's right," Nanmen Da Jun nodded, leading the way. "This way, please."

They immediately flew off in a certain direction. Although Nanmen Da Jun had the cultivation of an Emperor Realm Master, he was not good at fighting and his Emperor Qi wasn't very pure, so his speed was not that great.

Meanwhile, Yang Kai leisurely followed behind Nanmen Da Jun. Looking down at the endless sea stretching out below him, he occasionally caught a glimpse of a sea creature revealing itself, making for some interesting scenery.

An hour later, Yang Kai suddenly heard the cry of seabirds in the distance and immediately understood that they were nearing their destination. Somewhere up ahead in this vast sea there had to be an island, for that was the only way for these ordinary birds to appear here.

Chapter 2782, Creditors Come Knocking

Sure enough, an island that was neither small nor large came into view a short while later. Suddenly coming across a beautiful island in the middle of this endless sea could be said to be a kind of visual enjoyment. The island did not cover a large area, only being several dozen kilometres wide, while on the beach, waves came and went while birds rested leisurely.

Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun landed on the shore a moment later.

“Hmm?” Yang Kai frowned suddenly and looked at Nanmen Da Jun strangely, “Isn’t the Grandmaster unaffiliated? Why are there so many people on this island?”

When he swept his Divine Sense across the island, Yang Kai clearly found signs of activity. There were at least twenty people here, including six Emperor Realm Masters. If it weren’t for the presence of so many Emperors, he would have assumed that this place was the residence of a small Sect, but no small Sect would have so many Emperor Realm Masters.

Nanmen Da Jun heard Yang Kai’s question and was just about to open his mouth to explain when a stream of light suddenly rushed towards them from the front. It was clear that somebody had sensed their auras and came to investigate.

“Palace Master, please don’t say anything. I will deal with them!” Nanmen Da Jun said anxiously, as if he was seriously worried about something.

Yang Kai frowned in response as he began to feel that something was amiss about this trip.

Meanwhile, that stream of light dissipated to reveal the figure of a middle-aged man, who exuded the cultivation of a Second-Order Emperor Realm Master. That man glanced at them and casually asked, “Who are you?”

Both of them were First-Order Emperor Realm Masters; therefore, this middle-aged man was not too concerned about them nor was he wary towards them. He even had a hint of arrogance in his expression when he questioned them.

Nanmen Da Jun immediately gritted his teeth and replied, “Debt collectors!”

[Debt collectors?] Yang Kai turned his head and glanced at Nanmen Da Jun only to discover that Nanmen Da Jun was acting serious with a furious expression. Moreover, Nanmen Da Jun now seriously looked like a creditor who had come to collect his due.

[What the hell is going on?] Yang Kai was puzzled. Unfortunately, the situation did not allow him to ask for an explanation.

To his surprise, the middle-aged man nodded lightly after hearing those words, “So, we’re in the same business. How much are you owed?”

Nanmen Da Jun replied without even thinking about it, “Five million High-Rank Source Crystals. You?”

The middle-aged man coldly snorted, “Twenty million! If I find that bitch, I’ll definitely skin her alive!”

“That’s outrageous!” Nanmen Da Jun nodded in agreement, “Skinning someone like that alive is going too easy on that kind of trash. If I get my hands on her, I’ll make sure she tastes the worst torture the world has to offer!”

“Hahaha,” the middle-aged man smiled slightly and nodded. “Very good.”

Then, Nanmen Da Jun asked, “Are all the people here debt collectors as well?”

“That’s right,” the middle-aged man nodded and explained, “We have reached an agreement among us. If anybody finds her, we will capture first, then immediately signal the others. Everybody else will rush over right away so that that slut won’t be able to escape! Since the two of you are debt collectors as well, we will let you have your share. However, I will warn you first; there seems to be an extremely strong Spirit Array protecting this island, so don’t take anything suspicious lightly.”

“Many thanks,” Nanmen Da Jun said, cupping his fists.

“It’s nothing. We are all victims here, so it’s only natural to help each other out,” the middle-aged man responded politely. He said a few more words to Nanmen Da Jun then before turning around and flying away.

Watching that person leave, Nanmen Da Jun signalled Yang Kai with his eyes and quietly sneaked toward the other side of the island.

“What happened to that Artifact Refining Grandmaster?” Yang Kai asked through Divine Sense transmission, “Why are there so many creditors here? How much money does she owe them?”

“Who knows?” Nanmen Da Jun had an exasperated expression.

Yang Kai clicked his tongue and said, “Seeing as you are so adept at dealing with this, it seems that you expected this from the beginning?”

Nanmen Da Jun wore a bitter smile and nodded, “This is what makes that woman so hateful. It’s not the first time something like this happened.”

Yang Kai wondered, “Isn’t she an Artifact Refining Grandmaster? Just refining a few Emperor Artifacts should be enough to pay off any debt she has, right?”

Nanmen Da Jun sighed, “It doesn’t matter how many Emperor Artifacts she refines, as she can’t stop herself from gambling.”

“That Grandmaster is an avid gambler?” Yang Kai asked in shock.

“It’s worse than that, she’s simply addicted to gambling. As if that wasn’t bad enough, she always loses when gambling,” Nanmen Da Jun had a scornful look. “That’s why I said she is troublesome.”

Yang Kai suddenly realized something and said, “Did you win that flying boat Emperor Artifact through a bet with her?”

Nanmen Da Jun blushed, “I was forced to do it! It wasn’t my intention to gamble with her.”

In just a few words, Yang Kai garnered a deep understanding of this unknown Emperor Artifact Refiner. [Tsk, tsk. This person is quite the character. I can’t believe she gambled away a flight-type Emperor

Artifact worth hundreds of millions. Moreover, she lost the bet too. No wonder so many creditors are hanging around. Isn't this life a little too miserable despite being an Emperor Artifact Refiner?]

While they were talking, they came to a steep mountain wall. There, Nanmen Da Jun sneakily released his Divine Sense to investigate and make sure that no one was paying attention nearby. After that, he suddenly took out a token and waved it in front of him. A series of ripples immediately appeared on a rock on the mountain wall, revealing a passage big enough for one person to enter and exit. Nanmen Da Jun hurriedly went inside while simultaneously beckoning to Yang Kai. Once Yang Kai was inside, Nanmen Da Jun quickly closed the entrance behind them.

As if noticing the suspicion on Yang Kai's face, Nanmen Da Jun took the initiative to explain, "I helped arrange the Spirit Array here. If not for this Illusion Array, she wouldn't have any place to hide by now."

"You two seem to share a good relationship..." Yang Kai chuckled.

"Palace Master, please don't mention me in the same sentence as her," Nanmen Da Jun had an expression of disdain on his face. "If people find out that I am acquainted with her, it will only bring disaster."

"It can't be that bad, right?" Yang Kai seemed confused.

Nanmen Da Jun said bitterly, "Palace Master, you haven't experienced how shameless she is. I helped pay off a bit of debt for her in the past, then those creditors suddenly began knocking on my door, one after the other. Even now, the memory is still vivid in my mind," he shuddered while speaking.

Yang Kai didn't know what to say. It seemed as if this Emperor Artifact Refiner had inflicted quite a lot of psychological traumas on Nanmen Da Jun.

The pair headed deeper inside, walking for a half an hour or so before the front brightened up abruptly and a large cave entered their field of vision. However, the cave was empty, with many tunnels leading in all directions.

"Please wait for a moment, Palace Master," after Nanmen Da Jun said that, he turned around and studied the tunnels. A short while later, his gaze locked onto one of the tunnels before he coughed lightly and shouted, "Xiao Hou, come out."

Nobody replied to that, only his voice echoed in that cave.

"Why aren't you coming out? Do you think I can't see you?" Nanmen Da Jun shouted, his expression darkening.

"Don't come over! If you dare to take a single step forward, I'll kill myself!" Without warning, a female voice rang out. The voice sounded extremely weak, like its owner had suffered a grave injury. Moreover, those words were full of despair.

When Nanmen Da Jun first mentioned that this Artifact Refining Grandmaster was a woman, Yang Kai had been a bit surprised, but after thinking about it for a bit, he relaxed. It wasn't like he had never met female Artifact Refiners before, and among them, Yang Yan was the greatest Artifact Refiner and Array Master he knew.

Nanmen Da Jun's expression became livid as he furiously shouted, "You idiot! Can't you even recognize my voice anymore?!"

The woman hidden in the tunnel fell silent for a moment; however, Yang Kai could sense a pair of eyes studying them. A moment later, a figure rushed out like the wind and stood right in front of them.

"Oh, it's you, Da Jun!" The woman exclaimed in pleasant surprise.

Yang Kai glanced at the woman and discovered that even though her appearance was not country-destroying, she was still quite a beauty. She was wearing a floral dress that made her look playful and cute, but her figure was curvy and mature. Not to mention, her complexion seemed a little pale for some reason.

On the other hand, she seemed very happy to be reunited with an old friend. She paused for a moment before throwing herself at Nanmen Da Jun.

"What are you doing?!" Nanmen Da Jun was clearly prepared for such antics and swiftly reached out his hand to press his palm against her head, using his Emperor Qi to firmly hold her back.

In response, she smiled flatteringly and coyly called out, "Da Jun—"

"What extraordinary impudence you have!" Nanmen Da Jun shouted furiously. Pouring his Emperor Qi into his palm, he pushed her away.

Unexpectedly, the woman pushed back against the pressure, stepping forward, slipped past him, and rushed into his chest for a brief moment before she spun around and fluttered over to a smooth rock nearby while giggling happily.

"My ring!" Nanmen Da Jun's expression went pitch-black as he suddenly felt something missing from his hand, lifting his gaze to see his Space Ring now in the hands of this woman. She held it up between two fingers and waved it at him as if showing off.

Meanwhile, Yang Kai's eyes flashed, revealing a look of surprise. What happened just now had occurred too quickly, and although he couldn't see her movements clearly, he still vaguely detected some traces of her movements. This Emperor Artifact Refiner was quite quick on her feet! Even though Nanmen Da Jun was guarded against her, his Space Ring was taken away in an instant! Was she really an Artifact Refiner, not a thief?

"Give it back to me!" Nanmen Da Jun stretched out his hand to her with an icy expression.

In response, the woman pursed her rosy lips and casually erased his Soul Imprint from the ring. Searching through it, she laughed brightly before taking out several bottles of wine as she happily said, "You always do treat me the best!"

While speaking, she lay down on the rock, unsealed the bottle, and gulped down the wine. At the same time, she silently flicked the Space Ring back to Nanmen Da Jun, who caught it with a dark expression and said nothing. Afterwards, the only sound in the cave was the sound of her glugging the wine.

Yang Kai rubbed his forehead and suddenly felt a headache coming on. He didn't think much of it when he heard that this Emperor Artifact Refiner was addicted to gambling; however, he felt like leaving after

seeing her seasoned drunkard posture right at that moment. Right now, the only thought that came to Yang Kai's mind was, [Damn it! Another female drunkard!]

A few days ago, what Gao Xue Ting did after drinking had cast an indelible psychological shadow in Yang Kai's heart. For that reason, he couldn't help recalling the traumatic events of that day whenever he saw a woman drinking. Just thinking about it made his heart pound wildly and his breathing grow short.

Chapter 2783, Elder Sister Will Make You Understand How Great She Is

After finishing several bottles of wine, the woman belched loudly with a contented expression on her face. She wiped away the remains of the wine from the corner of her lips before exhaling a long breath and standing up, raising her hands and cheering, "I feel alive again!"

Her anaemic complexion from before had vanished without a trace, and her face became flushed instead. There were two more bottles of wine, but she didn't drink them, instead lovingly storing them into her own Space Ring before lifting her head and asking, "Da Jun, are you here to save me?"

Nanmen Da Jun sneered coldly, "What do you think?"

"So, when are we getting married?" She asked.

"Scram!"

The woman curled her lips, muttering something under her breath. From the way her lips moved, it seemed like she was cursing somebody. In the next moment, she glanced at Yang Kai and smilingly asked Nanmen Da Jun, "Who is this Little Brother? He has a good figure. Is he rich? Did he bring me some good wine?"

"Cease your impudence!" Nanmen Da Jun coldly snorted, "This is the Palace Master of High Heaven Palace! You foolish woman; quickly come and give your greetings!"

"High Heaven Palace?" She tilted her head to the side and pondered for a moment before smiling carefreely, "Never heard of it before. Where did it pop out from?"

Nanmen Da Jun quickly snapped, "It doesn't matter even if you've never heard of it before! The important point is that I am now the Chief Array Master of High Heaven Palace!"

The cheeky smile on the woman's face stiffened instantly as she turned to look at him in astonishment, then glanced at Yang Kai. After that, she stepped forward and placed her hand on Nanmen Da Jun's forehead.

"What are you doing?!" He took a step back warily.

"Have you finally gone crazy?" She asked curiously.

"You're the one who's gone crazy!" He shouted furiously, "Your entire family is crazy!"

A peel of laughter left the woman's lips before she twirled around and landed on the smooth rock from before as she condescendingly said, "Why would you join a Sect if you hadn't gone crazy? I recall that you have always sneered at those Sects, be they large or small."

"Naturally, I have my own reasons for joining High Heaven Palace." Nanmen Da Jun groaned.

The woman's expression changed abruptly as she had known Nanmen Da Jun for many years now. They had met each other when they were still young and weak; then, over the years, they had worked together on many occasions and slowly grown stronger together. It could be said that she understood him completely; therefore, she knew what his attitude was like toward those Sects that were trying to recruit him. If he had any intention to join a Sect, he would be free to choose from almost all the Sects in the Star Boundary, be they the smallest and weakest, or the most powerful. Even Great Emperor Sects would welcome him if he showed interest in joining them. The last time she met him, he had still been working alone; yet now, she suddenly discovered that he had joined a Sect called High Heaven Palace. That was enough to shock her to the extreme.

[The Palace Master of High Heaven Palace? He only has a First-Order Emperor Realm cultivation, so how powerful could the Sect he founded be? What does it have that can attract somebody like Da Jun to join it?] The woman tilted her head to the side and studied Yang Kai carefully, as if she was trying to stare a hole into him.

Meanwhile, Yang Kai stared back at her with a smile; however, his heart was full of sorrow and remorse as he thought to himself, [Should I just go back and forget about this? Even if I recruit such an Emperor Artifact Refiner into High Heaven Palace, it might not necessarily be a good thing.]

A long while later, the woman made a fist with one hand and hammered it into her other palm with a look of epiphany. Then, she glanced at Nanmen Da Jun in surprise and said, "Da Jun, we have known each other for so many years, but it's only now that I discovered that you don't love women! No wonder you refused to marry me all these years!"

"Y-Y-You—" Nanmen Da Jun was so furious that steam was practically rising from his head. He pointed at her and stuttered, "You foolish woman!" Turning his head to look at Yang Kai, who had a sullen expression as well, he anxiously said, "Palace Master, this woman is a lunatic! Please ignore what she says!"

"Just who are you calling a 'lunatic'?" She glared.

On the other hand, Yang Kai stepped forward and lightly said, "Da Jun said there was an outstanding Emperor Artifact Refiner here, so I came with great sincerity and expectations, but now, it seems... Tsk."

"What do you mean by 'Tsk'?" The woman suddenly became disgruntled, flying over to him in a flash, widening her almond eyes as she reached out, grabbed him by the collar, and angrily snarled, "You better explain yourself well, otherwise you will suffer the consequences!"

"Let go!" Nanmen Da Jun was startled and hurriedly shouted. Of course, he was not worried about Yang Kai, but was instead concerned Yang Kai might get angry. His 'friend' would definitely suffer at Yang Kai's hands if a fight broke out. They might both be First-Order Emperors, but she definitely wasn't his opponent.

However, Yang Kai simply raised his hand to stop Nanmen Da Jun before he glanced back at the woman with contempt and sneered, "Since you are a Grandmaster, you should carry the dignity of a Grandmaster. Unfortunately, I can't find a single shred of the poise that a Grandmaster would possess. You give off the impression of a countryside bumpkin instead. To be honest, I am very disappointed."

She released her hold on his collar and laughed mockingly, "What a joke! Are you saying that all the so-called Grandmasters should be polite and sanctimonious? Sorry, I was born like this."

Yang Kai smiled back lightly and quipped, "So, you consider yourself a Grandmaster?"

She coldly snorted, "I don't dare to say that about anything else, but nobody is better than me in this world when it comes to Artifact Refining."

"What arrogance. Be careful not to bite your tongue."

She smiled deviously in response, confidence overflowing from her words.

"Anybody can talk big, but I wonder if you can actually prove it."

"You want me to prove myself?" She glared at Yang Kai, seeing his look of provocation, before instantly becoming incensed, "Good, good, good. Elder Sister here will make you understand how great she is!"

Stretching her hand out, she said to Nanmen Da Jun, "Give me some materials!"

Nanmen Da Jun glanced at Yang Kai questioningly. He understood what Yang Kai was aiming for by now, a test of her Artifact Refining abilities.

It wasn't as if this woman had not seen through Yang Kai's intentions either, but that didn't decrease the frustration she felt for having her qualifications questioned. Therefore, she went along with this farce despite knowing that Yang Kai was simply using his words to provoke her.

Seeing Yang Kai nodding in agreement, to which Nanmen Da Jun asked, "What materials do you want?"

"Anything would do!"

Only then did Nanmen Da Jun start rummaging in his Space Ring. During his time as the Chief Array Master of High Heaven Palace, he had been busy with arranging Spirit Arrays which required large amounts of materials, so he had quite a lot of them in his ring. He soon found a piece of ore about the size of a melon and threw it to the woman.

Yang Kai took a look and recognized the Scarlet Feather Stone at a glance. It was an ore known for its toughness and if it could be smelted with other materials while refining an artifact, the durability of that artifact would be improved. However, it was precisely because of that attribute that the Scarlet Feather Stone could only be used as an auxiliary material, not a primary one. Despite that, Nanmen Da Jun chose that piece of ore without any other materials. It was obvious that he intended to let the woman show off her abilities.

"Open your eyes wide and watch carefully, Little Brother. Don't even blink or you might miss Elder Sister's amazing display!" She accepted the Scarlet Feather Stone and smiled at Yang Kai frostily. Her fingers then began to dance agilely as the melon-sized piece of Scarlet Feather Stone started to spin and whirl in her hands. She was in no hurry to finish the refining process and instead lifted the bottle of wine

in her hands and took a large gulp. Putting the bottle away, she opened her mouth wide and sprayed out a fine mist of wine.

Hu...

Following that sound, a ball of fire burst forth and the temperature in the cave rose exponentially. The fireball did not burn with a normal colour and seemed to be giving off a faint white light instead, probably a type of Heavenly Flame.

Yang Kai's eyes brightened at the sight. Be it an Artifact Refiner or an Alchemist, their requirements for the fire they used was very high. Having an excellent flame could improve the efficiency and quality of Alchemy and Artifact Refining.

The moment this woman started working, Yang Kai could tell that she was truly very capable. She didn't even take out her Artifact Refining Furnace, clearly intending to refine this ore on the spot. This refining method required great skill from the Artifact Refiner, and amateurs couldn't pull it off. What surprised Yang Kai even more though was her mastery of her flames. It was so perfect that it was to the extent of being divine. That mouthful of spirit wine flames that she sprayed out enveloped the Scarlet Feather Stone perfectly, not having the slightest bit of waste.

Under the high temperature, the Scarlet Feather Stone melted quickly. She then held out her beautiful jade-white hand as her fingers moved dexterously to remove the impurities from the ore, drop by drop. At the same time, the Scarlet Feather Stone became smaller and smaller.

Just as condensing medicinal liquid was the first step in Alchemy, removing impurities from ore was the first in Artifact Refining. That was the most basic step, as well as the step that most directly displayed an Alchemist or Artifact Refiner's skills as everything that followed in the refinement process would depend on how well this first step was executed.

Yang Kai released his Divine Sense and carefully inspected the state of the Scarlet Feather Stone and the result was quite amazing. After a quarter of an hour, this woman managed to remove all the impurities in the Scarlet Feather Stone without leaving the slightest trace behind. She had achieved perfection in this step! That alone was enough to warrant her status as a Grandmaster.

Yang Kai was thoroughly impressed and the prejudice he felt against her because of her previous slovenly behaviour lessened slightly. As long as she was capable, some lifestyle issues were not completely unacceptable.

Another quarter of an hour later, the Scarlet Feather Stone had transformed into a ball of pure liquid metal about the size of a fist. The woman lifted her head and glanced at him triumphantly, "Little Brother, it's not too late for you to beg for mercy right now. As long as you can give me several million Source Crystals, I will forgive you for your previous rudeness."

"Ha!" Yang Kai sneered openly.

"I guess you won't regret it until you see your coffin! I hate stubborn men like you the most!" She gritted her teeth. Even though she turned her attention away to speak with him, her hand movements did not pause in the slightest. She held the liquid mineral in her small hands as her hands formed various

intricate seals one after the other. This led to the liquid metal to burn even hotter while her white flames flickered and fluctuated, obviously varying the temperature at specific positions and points.

The liquid metal was slowly stretched out and gradually took on the shape of a sword. The entire process was visible to the naked eye, and with the passing of time, the appearance of the sword became more and more distinct. The edges of the sword gleamed with a sharp and cold light while intricate designs appeared on its hilt.

Although the refining process looked boring and lacked any particularly thrilling scenes, both Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun couldn't take their eyes off it as they watched intently.

About an hour later, the woman suddenly grabbed a bottle of wine again, and while spraying out a mouthful, the flames were extinguished. This was followed by the sound of something sizzling as a light burst from the sword.

"Done!" The woman casually tossed the sword into the air, allowing it to fall straight down and stab into the ground. The sword proceeded to bury itself into the ground up to its hilt.

Chapter 2784, A Scourge Lasts a Thousand Years

The ground of this cave was extremely hard; however, the sword made from the Scarlet Feather Stone penetrated all the way to its hilt just from its falling momentum. This was enough to showcase just how sharp its blade was. What was even more commendable was that the sword had been made with a Scarlet Feather Stone as the primary material with no other materials being added to it. Although Scarlet Feather Stone was known for its toughness, it was not known for its malleability. That alone gave Yang Kai a general assessment of this woman's Artifact Refining ability.

He reached out and grabbed the sword, and as the Scarlet Feather Stone sword sat heavily in the palm of his hand, Yang Kai poured his Emperor Qi into it, causing it to hum softly.

"Dao-Source Grade Low-Rank!" He said with slightly raised eyebrows.

"Hahahaha!" The woman stood on the rock and spread open her arms, laughing maniacally, "Surrender to the mystical and powerful Artifact Refining techniques of mine!"

Nanmen Da Jun's expression darkened, "Palace Master, why don't we go back and just forget about this?"

If Nanmen Da Jun had made this suggestion before the woman started refining, Yang Kai might have gone back home without any hesitation. Unfortunately, he had other plans after seeing this woman's skills. The woman in front of them still looked extremely unreliable, but she definitely had ability far beyond the average Grandmaster.

"Little Brother, are you convinced now?" She glanced at Yang Kai proudly with an expression that seemed to say 'hurry up and worship me'.

“It’s not bad.” Yang Kai nodded slightly.

“Not bad?!” Her expression became sullen as she stressed each word, “Not... Bad?!” Her divine skills only received a trivial evaluation like ‘not bad’!? She looked angry, waving her hands as if she were driving away flies, “Scram, scram! Leave this place at once. You’re not welcome here. Stay as far away from me as possible.”

Seeing as that brat was a guest brought by Nanmen Da Jun, she had treated him with some courtesy; otherwise, she would not have deliberately revealed her Artifact Refining skills in front of him. However, his neutral evaluation of her skills left her burning with rage and she immediately kicked him out as a result. She no longer had any interest in talking to him as she hated his kind the most! Not only did they not know how to appreciate how amazing her skills were, but they also pretentiously acted as if they understood!

Yang Kai smiled slightly, “It’s certainly not bad.”

Her expression turned icy as she calmly scolded, “Little Brother, watch what you say. Careless talk can bring misfortune. I might not look like much, but a single word from me could destroy you completely!”

Nanmen Da Jun chuckled, “Xiao Hou, you sure are talking big. Be careful or you might have to choke down your words.”

She scoffed in response, “I am an Emperor Artifact Refiner. Do you think nobody would help me if I really wanted to kill somebody? Those guys outside might be going crazy searching for me to pay back my debts; however, they will all become my lackeys if I step up to negotiate with them!”

He lightly replied, “Palace Master is an Emperor Alchemist!”

“Uh...” She looked at Yang Kai in surprise before turning to look at Nanmen Da Jun as if trying to detect a sign that he was lying from his expression. In the end, she was disappointed by the results. His expression was solemn, and he looked dead serious. Besides, based on what she knew about him, he would never lie about such matters.

[An Emperor Rank Alchemist?! At such a young age?!] She seemed rather shocked by the news. Even so, she stubbornly insisted, “So what? There’s not much difference between an Emperor Artifact Refiner and an Emperor Alchemist anyway.”

It was funny if you thought about it. An Emperor Artifact Refiner, an Emperor Alchemist, and an Emperor Array Master were gathered on this nameless island at this moment. That was a terrifying lineup. Any Sect would go crazy at such a sight, trying to recruit them all at any cost.

Yang Kai said, “You are called Grandmaster Hou, right? It seems that you don’t have a good impression of me, Grandmaster Hou.”

She snorted, “Whatever. I’m not close to you anyhow, so it doesn’t matter what you think of me.”

“The reason I said that your skills are not bad is that I have met a more skilful Artifact Refiner than you.”

As soon as the words left Yang Kai’s mouth, she jumped to her feet and screeched, “Bullshit! How could there be an Artifact Refiner better than me in this world?! In the Dao of Artifact Refining, I am the

greatest!" She turned to glare at Nanmen Da Jun and spoke through gritted teeth, "Can I beat this little brat up?"

Nanmen Da Jun shook his head, "There's no such thing as the best in the world."

Nobody would dare to call themselves the best in the world in any field. Perhaps the Wondrous Pill Great Emperor could call himself that in the Alchemic Dao; however, this woman was certainly not of that calibre yet.

"You don't believe me, Grandmaster Hou?" The corners of Yang Kai's mouth curved, revealing a subtle smile.

The woman scoffed, "If that's the case, then you have to bring me to this 'more skilful Artifact Refiner' that you mentioned. I want to see just who is stronger or weaker between us."

Yang Kai shook his head and said, "I don't know where she is right now."

This drew a disdainful snort as Grandmaster Hou's expression turned contemptuous. It was clear that she thought he was slandering her without reason.

"But..." Yang Kai continued, "What if I can prove that there is someone in this world that is better than you in the Dao of Artifact Refining? What happens then?"

"I'll marry you then!" She sneered. Tugging at her floral dress as she puffed out her chest and uttered some shocking words, "I'm beautiful and have an ample bosom and stylish figure! Moreover, I still have my innocence. You better not say that I'm not good enough for you!"

Yang Kai glanced at Nanmen Da Jun who was currently facepalming before bringing a hand up to cover his own face in exasperation. The two wore annoyed expressions as if they just discovered how shameless this woman really was.

"Fine, fine," Yang Kai nodded in exasperation before taking something out of his Space Ring and tossing it to her, "Please have a look at this, Grandmaster Hou."

She caught it and glanced at it before sneering disdainfully, "An Origin King Grade artifact? Where did this toy come from? Ugh. Moreover, it's a warship..."

Origin King Grade artifacts were artifacts that were only used by Origin King Realm cultivators, it was certainly a toy to her at her current level; furthermore, a useless one at that.

Yang Kai only smiled faintly and replied, "The simpler the item, the easier it is to evaluate the ability of the one who refined it, right?"

The woman's brow furrowed together slightly as it was rare that she agreed with his point of view, "Good."

Just like cooking, what challenges a master chef's skills the most are not luxurious delicacies, but the simplest of dishes one would eat every day.

“Hmm?” Her gaze suddenly focused as the contempt in her eyes vanished abruptly and was replaced by prudence and amazement. She flipped the delicate little warship about, playing with it in her palms, her Divine Sense flowing out to investigate its internal structure.

“Palace Master... Do you really intend to recruit this woman into High Heaven Palace?” Nanmen Da Jun asked through a secret transmission, “You’ve seen what she is like... If she really joined High Heaven Palace, she might bring trouble to us. Moreover, she behaves perversely and acts however she pleases. I’ve yet to meet anybody who can subdue her. Do you have the confidence to make her submit to you, Palace Master?”

“Nope!” Yang Kai shook his head, “The only way to make her submit is to defeat her in what she does best. I am not capable of that.”

On this point, Nanmen Da Jun understood through his own experience. The reason he agreed to join High Heaven Palace was not that he was touched by Yang Kai’s sincerity nor how well Yang Kai treated him, it was simply because High Heaven Palace had something in his Dao that he was interested in but was unable to comprehend; that was the main reason he joined the Sect.

“But, even if I don’t have the ability, the people around me do,” Yang Kai smiled mysteriously.

“Are you referring to that Origin King Grade warship?” Nanmen Da Jun frowned, realizing that it was the key to their problem.

Yang Kai grinned meaningfully in response but said nothing more. Even though it was just an Origin King Grade warship, far too low grade for Yang Kai to use now, it was still refined by Yang Yan herself back on Shadowed Star. Yang Kai was very familiar with Yang Yan’s Artifact Refining skills. If this Grandmaster Hou was superior to Yang Yan in Artifact Refining, then he would have nothing to say, but Yang Kai believed that to be very unlikely, and the serious expression the woman in front of him was wearing reinforced that view.

As the saying went, ‘While the connoisseur recognized the artistry involved, the layman simply enjoyed the show’. A trivial Origin King Grade warship was nothing but a low-grade toy to Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun; however, it was an extremely delicate treasure of refinement to this woman.

Time passed slowly as the cave remained utterly silent. Grandmaster Hou’s expression became increasingly serious as a fine layer of sweat oozed out of her forehead. This both shocked and horrified Nanmen Da Jun, as the only reason for her current behaviour was that the Origin King Grade warship had had a huge impact on her.

Although he did not recognize her self-proclaimed title of being ‘the best Artifact Refiner in the world’, he believed that nobody was significantly more skilled in the entire Star Boundary in terms of Artifact Refining. Now, it seemed like the saying that ‘there is always a mountain beyond the mountains’ was true. But just who in the world created this Origin King Grade warship? And, where did Yang Kai obtain it?

“Activate it,” the woman suddenly raised her head and issued a command to Yang Kai. Her voice held no trace of politeness in it.

Fortunately, Yang Kai wasn't bothered by her rudeness and simply formed a hand seal. Then, the warship that was the size of his palm immediately swelled until it became thirty metres long. A hatch opened and the woman entered the warship in a flash. From the looks of it, she planned to study it carefully from the inside out.

Since Yang Kai was in no hurry, he decided to wait outside with Nanmen Da Jun. At present, he was eighty percent certain that he could successfully recruit her into his Sect. The rest all depended on whether she was willing to accept her loss.

One hour later, she walked out of the warship with a dazed expression, looking like a walking corpse. It was as if she had been brutally ravaged by dozens of burly men to the point where she even walked stiffly and awkwardly. Only a strange light shone in her beautiful eyes. Moreover, her mouth was moving slightly, muttering something under her breath.

Glancing at each other, Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun tactfully did not disturb her from her trance.

Time passed. An hour... Four hours... Half a day... One night... A whole two days later, her demeanour finally changed. Her eyes shone brightly as she jumped up and clapped her hands, "Hahaha! I understand! So, that's how it is!"

[She actually gained some kind of enlightenment from this!] Seeing this, Nanmen Da Jun let out a long sigh of relief. He had been quite worried over the last two days. Although they had known each other for so long and she constantly got on his nerves, they were still old friends, so he had been worried that she might suffer from dissonance in her cultivation when he looked at her possessed appearance. Still, it seemed like he had been worried over nothing. It made him feel relieved but a little angry at the same time. [Good people don't live long, but a scourge lasts a thousand years. Based on what she has done in the past, she might just live forever. Why was I foolishly worried about her?]

Chapter 2785, Are You the Monkey Grandmaster?

"How was it?" Yang Kai looked at the woman with a smile.

"Ah, well..." The woman scratched her head and shifted her gaze away, laughing dryly, "This warship is... well... certainly not bad... hahaha..."

Nanmen Da Jun smiled in response, "Xiao Hou, do you remember what you said before?"

She glared at him fiercely, striking a defiant but resigned posture before she glanced over at Yang Kai and declared, "Fine! Even though I have some minor shortcomings in my character..."

"Minor shortcomings?" The veins in Yang Kai's forehead throbbed visibly.

"I also have my strong points! My greatest strength is my willingness to accept my losses!" She looked at Yang Kai and unreservedly said, "Since that's the case, when do we tie the knot?"

“Marriage won’t be necessary,” Yang Kai lifted his hand in refusal, “Grandmaster Hou, you are an Artifact Refining Grandmaster, and I am here to recruit you into my High Heaven Palace. I hope you will take on the position of Chief Artifact Refiner. I apologize if I offended you with my words earlier, Grandmaster Hou.”

“Hehehe...” She covered her mouth and giggled, “Little Brother, you sure know how to talk.” Her expression suddenly became stern, “Let’s make this clear; you’re the one that doesn’t want me to fulfil our agreement. I did not go back on my word. I cannot allow my reputation to be tarnished.”

“Da Jun can testify for your reputation.” Yang Kai smiled slightly and added, “The prerequisite being that you willingly return to High Heaven Palace with me, Grandmaster Hou.”

When she heard those words, her expression became solemn as she turned to look at Nanmen Da Jun before carefully considering Yang Kai’s offer, eventually saying, “If it wasn’t for Da Jun, I wouldn’t even consider it regardless of how many benefits High Heaven Palace offered, but since Da Jun has already joined... I’ll join in on the fun too.”

“I will not disappoint you, Grandmaster Hou!” Yang Kai smiled and nodded.

“Hold on!” She lifted a hand and said, “Before that, I have a condition.”

Frowning, Yang Kai nodded, “What is it?”

She turned around and moved back to the rock she was sitting on before, lifting her leg and pulling up her floral skirt before she placed one foot on the rock. Her actions exposed half of her leg, but she didn’t care. Furthermore, a dice cup had appeared in her hand at some point. She shook it vigorously, and a rattling noise came from inside the cup. After that, she placed it face down on the rock and shouted, “Make a bet with me! The wager will be that warship!”

“That’s your condition?” Yang Kai asked in astonishment.

“Good!” She nodded.

Yang Kai was rendered speechless. He had heard from Nanmen Da Jun that she was addicted to gambling, but he had yet to experience it for himself. [I can’t believe I’d see it for myself before we leave. The Origin King Grade warship refined by Yang Yan must be very attractive to her, which is why she wants me to wager it in our bet.]

“Fine!” Yang Kai had no problem with her suggestion. It was just a small bet after all, “What do I get if I win? What is your wager?”

“Of course, I have something to pay you with!” She snorted and shouted, “What do you choose, big? Or, small?”

Yang Kai glanced at Nanmen Da Jun. The latter said, “Just pick whichever you want, Palace Master. You don’t need to worry about her cheating in this regard. She is always serious when it comes to gambling. She won’t cheat.”

“I’ll choose big then,” Yang Kai casually said. It didn’t matter whether he won or lost anyway. Besides, he would only lose an Origin King Grade warship if he lost the bet.

Following that, Nanmen Da Jun silently took out a Space Ring and tossed it onto the rock, "I'll choose big too."

The woman shot a sneer at him, "Careful, you might lose everything you have."

"Don't worry! I can beat you with my eyes closed."

"Alright! The bets have been placed!"

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A moment later, the woman grabbed her right wrist with her left hand with all her strength. She looked as if she was staring at her nemesis as she wailed in agony, "No way! How can it be 'big'?!"

Nanmen Da Jun calmly retrieved his Space Ring and replied, "Adding it all up, you now owe me a total of fifty million Source Crystals, Xiao Hou."

"Put it on my tab!" She glared at Nanmen Da Jun angrily. Then, she looked at Yang Kai and sighed, "Since I lost, I'll give you something." While speaking, she reached into her clothes, grabbed an object, then tossed it to Yang Kai.

Yang Kai caught the item unsuspectingly, but when he fixed his gaze on it, he nearly had a nosebleed on the spot.

She chuckled, "It's my undergarment. And, it's still warm..."

Yang Kai's expression darkened as he shouted, "What am I supposed to do with this?!"

She meaningfully replied, "Who knows?"

He sighed. Just as he was about to return the delicate undergarment to her, he frowned suddenly. Unfurling the undergarment, Yang Kai lifted it up and began to study it carefully.

The woman initially wanted to tease him; however, she felt her heart skip a beat when she saw his reaction and secretly sent a Divine Sense transmission to Nanmen Da Jun, "Da Jun, is the Palace Master a virgin? Will he devour me if I play tricks like this on him?"

"Devour you? You of all people?" Nanmen Da Jun sneered contemptuously.

"What's wrong with me?" She immediately became insulted.

On the other hand, Yang Kai seemed to have spotted a clue and lifted his head in surprise to stare at the woman, exclaiming in astonishment, "Are you the Monkey Grandmaster?"

The woman was taken aback for a moment before blinking and replying, "En, my last name is Hou, and my given name is Yu!"

"So, you are Monkey Grandmaster!" Yang Kai laughed heartily, pointing at the monkey head symbol on her undergarment with his finger.

Only then did Hou Yu understand what he was talking about and smiled faintly, "I see; that's what you're talking about. That's right. I am the mysterious and elusive Monkey Grandmaster!"

"I can't believe it's you!" Yang Kai widened his eyes in shock but immediately nodded to himself lightly, "I should have realized earlier."

He had seen a monkey head sculpture on Nanmen Da Jun's flying boat previously, and at the time, he had the vague feeling that it looked familiar. Unfortunately, Yang Kai's thoughts had been interrupted before he had the time to mull over it. Seeing the monkey head symbol on her undergarment again, Yang Kai immediately understood the situation.

When he brought Qin Yu to the auction in Maplewood City a short time ago and spent a lot of High-Rank Source Crystals to buy her the Flowing Clouds Butterfly Hairpin which had a similar monkey head symbol engraved on it.

According to what Qin Yu said at the time, Monkey Grandmaster was an extremely mysterious Artifact Refining Grandmaster whose very gender wasn't even known. Nevertheless, any artifact refined by Monkey Grandmaster was a magnificent item, and each item could be sold at an exorbitant price.

The name 'Monkey Grandmaster' enjoyed a stellar reputation in the Southern Territory, but unexpectedly, the true identity of the Monkey Grandmaster turned out to be a woman. Moreover, it was a strange woman who loved drinking and gambling. In addition, she lost every single bet she made!

[This is such an unexpected surprise. Regardless, Hou Yu's Artifact Refining skills are already extremely impressive. Combining that with the grand reputation of Monkey Grandmaster, High Heaven Palace has certainly received a stroke of luck!]

At the moment, High Heaven Palace had gathered an Emperor Alchemist, an Emperor Array Master, an Emperor Artifact Refiner, and even had a number of practitioners of the Dao of Puppetry. Furthermore, three Monster Kings oversaw the Sect and there was even a Cross-Territory Space Array that linked both the Eastern and Southern Territories. At this rate, nobody could stop the rise of High Heaven Palace anymore.

Yang Kai's mood brightened immensely as he waved his hand and said, "I'll give this Origin King Grade warship to you. It only holds some nostalgic value to me anyway."

"Seriously?!" Hou Yu was overjoyed. Smiling widely, she bowed to Yang Kai elegantly and gently replied, "I thank Palace Master for his gracious gift."

Her sudden change in attitude left Yang Kai feeling a little unaccustomed, but she relapsed back to her original behaviour in the blink of an eye, rushing over to the Origin King Grade warship as she opened her arms wide and hugged it as if holding a priceless treasure.

After that, Yang Kai dispelled his Soul Imprint on the warship and she immediately started to refine it. Soon, Hou Yu solemnly placed it away before walking over to him and saying with a stern expression, "Palace Master, I hope you can introduce me to the person who refined this warship if the opportunity arises."

"I'm sure the opportunity will come." Yang Kai nodded slightly, "Do you have anything you need to pack? If not, let's be on our way."

She threw her head back and laughed, "I don't have much."

Years of gambling had made her lose almost all of her assets, so even though she was an Emperor Artifact Refiner, she was actually very poor.

“Let’s go then,” Yang Kai said, “Please don’t resist.”

Having given them notice, Yang Kai wrapped the other two in his Emperor Qi then pushed his Space Principles. With a flash, they disappeared from the cave in an instant. Their field of vision instantly changed as the three of them reappeared in the sky above the island.

Nanmen Da Jun had been mentally prepared, so he didn’t feel anything about it; however, Hou Yu was shocked and exclaimed in amazement, “Teleportation?!”

They had moved from the cave to this spot in an instant, effectively breaking through various obstacles such as barriers and Spirit Arrays around her cave mansion. Even so, she could not detect any traces of Yang Kai using an artifact; therefore, there was only one explanation for that, “Palace Master, are you proficient in the Dao of Space?”

“Palace Master’s abilities are vast and unfathomable. You will be very surprised in the future,” Nanmen Da Jun grinned meaningfully.

Hou Yu was already quite surprised. At the same time, she quietly rejoiced that she had not fallen out and fought Yang Kai head-on previously. [I don’t think my strength is enough to take him on. Even though we are both First-Order Emperor Realm Masters, an opponent proficient in the Dao of Space is terrifying!]

“Oh no, this is bad!” Her pretty face paled suddenly as she hurriedly urged Yang Kai, “Let’s leave quickly. It will be too late if we don’t leave now.”

Needless to say, Yang Kai knew what she was worried about and motioned lightly to her, “High Heaven Palace will become famous across the Star Boundary one day and it will be impossible to conceal the fact that you are our Chief Artifact Refiner forever. Rather than having these people chase you all the way to High Heaven Palace to collect on your debts, ruining High Heaven Palace’s reputation, I might as well settle everything now.”

“Palace Master, you...” Hou Yu looked touched, but unfortunately, Yang Kai’s next sentence shattered her good feelings completely.

“All the payments made today will be deducted from your salary from now onward.”

“You damn woman! You finally appeared! You won’t be able to escape today!” A furious roar sounded while at the same time, a stream of light flew towards the trio at high speed from the distance. At the same time, a kind of flare exploded in the sky, alerting everyone else nearby.

A short while later, the streak of light appeared before the trio and dispersed to reveal the middle-aged man that Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun had met when they first arrived on the island two days ago. This man was a Second-Order Emperor and had good strength. The moment he arrived, he locked his Divine Sense onto Hou Yu in order to ensure she did not escape.

When he came closer, he grabbed her with a large hand. Following that, an incredibly powerful pressure pressed down on Hou Yu like a large mountain and she couldn’t help turning pale with fright. Even

Nanmen Da Jun shuddered in response. Both of them were only First-Order Emperors; therefore, it was only natural that they had a hard time standing up to this enraged Second-Order Emperor. Even breathing was difficult for them.

Silavin, Okay. So, Hou is the Chinese character for Monkey.

Chapter 2786, A Hundred Years of Servitude

Facing the middle-aged man's terrifying pressure, Yang Kai lightly stepped forward and pushed out his palm, instantly causing the intense aura pressing down on Hou Yu and Nanmen Da Jun to melt away like snowflakes under the scorching sun. Although Yang Kai's actions seemed simple and unremarkable, they also seemed to harmonize with the surrounding World Principles and with the Martial Dao itself.

The expression on the face of the middle-aged man that had approached them changed abruptly. He hastily curled his hand into a fist, gathered his Emperor Qi, and threw a punch out to meet Yang Kai's palm. When the two attacks met one another, the middle-aged man's aura deflated like a punctured sack and with a muffled snort he was forced back several steps before finally managing to steady himself.

On the other hand, Yang Kai remained motionless while his aura did not even fluctuate as a sea breeze blew against him, making his clothes sway and his hair dance in the wind.

Hou Yu was stunned and stared at Yang Kai's back in a daze. For a moment, she thought that he was amazing. [I didn't see wrongly, right? How can a First-Order Emperor Realm Master be so powerful? Da Jun and I are both First-Order Emperors too, but we could barely breathe under the pressure of that attack. On the other hand, Palace Master managed to repel the enemy with just a casual palm!]

"You..." The middle-aged man was shocked too. What he saw at that moment was not a palm, but rather a mountain slamming towards him. The aura of death had enveloped his entire body in that instant, and moreover, the attack had been unavoidable and unstoppable. Just as he was thinking that he would suffer grievous injuries even if he survived the attack, the other party simply broke through his defences easily and pushed him back. Surprisingly, that attack did not kill him nor even harm him whatsoever; all that person did was disrupt his momentum.

"Are you all one group?" The middle-aged man immediately recognized Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun; after all, he had greeted these two when they first arrived on the island just two days ago. [The other guy claimed that they were debt collectors back then, and I naively believed them. From the looks of it, they are not creditors but accomplices of that wicked woman!]

If it were any other ordinary First-Order Emperor, he would have thought nothing of them; however, this middle-aged man immediately understood Yang Kai's abilities after being beaten back with a single palm and was now feeling quite anxious.

[I might not be his opponent if it really comes down to a fight.] Changing his mind, he regained his composure and shouted, “No matter what, you need to pay up or pay with your life, woman!”

As soon as those words rang out, numerous figures appeared in all directions and gathered around the middle-aged man. These people were none other than the debt collectors that were loitering around on the island and searching for Hou Yu to claim payment. There were more than twenty people here, of which five were Emperor Realm Masters. Aside from the middle-aged man who was a Second-Order Emperor, the remaining four were just First-Order.

With so many people standing next to him, the fear the middle-aged man felt in his heart reduced slightly. He might not be a match for that young man on his own, but with so many people on his side, how could they be defeated? A lone tiger cannot defeat a pack of wolves, just as two fists cannot defend against four strikes. No matter how powerful the other party was, he was still just one man.

The moment these people appeared, they all glared at Hou Yu with hatred and anger, acting as if they had absolutely irreconcilable enmity with her. Even so, none of them spoke carelessly, making it clear that the middle-aged man was the ringleader.

“Friend, this woman owes me a lot of Source Crystals. If you insist on protecting her, please don’t blame me for being rough.” The middle-aged man fixed his gaze on Yang Kai, obviously extremely wary of the latter.

“Is everybody here now?” Yang Kai smiled slightly as he swept his gaze across the crowd before looking back to the middle-aged man. He then said unhurriedly, “Repaying one’s debts is a matter of course. I will pay off all her debts on her behalf.”

“You will pay on her behalf?” The middle-aged man was taken aback after hearing those words. He glanced at Yang Kai and asked with a furrowed brow, “Do you even know how much she owes?”

“I will pay it off no matter how much she owes!” Yang Kai said lightly.

Hou Yu swallowed nervously and nudged Nanmen Da Jun quietly, asking under her breath, “Is Palace Master rich?”

Nanmen Da Jun glanced at her and smiled deviously, “What does it matter to you? Palace Master is going to help you pay off all your debts this time and will then deduct it from your monthly salary in the future. In that case, you will probably be stuck in High Heaven Palace for the rest of your life.”

When she heard those words, the expression on her pretty face changed abruptly. She clutched at Da Jun’s arm and begged, “Da Jun, please don’t abandon me! I joined High Heaven Palace because of you! If you ever think of leaving in the future, you can’t go alone! You must take me with you!”

Nanmen Da Jun continued to smile coldly as he pulled his arm out of her grasp.

On the other side, Yang Kai’s words were met with mixed reactions. Some looked happy while some looked suspicious. The amount of debt owed by Hou Yu was not small, yet this young man was saying that he would pay off however much she owed. However, did he have the financial resources to do so? This wasn’t a matter of Low-Rank Source Crystals or Mid-Rank Source Crystals but High-Rank Source Crystals calculated in the tens of millions! Even Full Sky Sect and Fire Dragon Palace would have some difficulty taking out so much money all at once!

“May I ask who Your Excellency is?” The middle-aged man frowned as he stared at Yang Kai, “You have such impressive strength and even dare to boast so grandly; you cannot be an unknown character!”

“I’m just paying off some debts. Why are you asking so many questions?” Yang Kai smiled slightly.

However, Nanmen Da Jun cut in and introduced to the crowd, “This is the Palace Master of High Heaven Palace, Yang Kai. I’m sure you’re familiar with the name, right?”

“What?!”

“High Heaven Palace’s Palace Master?!”

“The High Heaven Palace that destroyed Seeking Passion Sect and occupied their stronghold?!”

“I heard that the Palace Master of High Heaven Palace is a young man; moreover, his cultivation is just First-Order Emperor Realm. From the looks of it...”

Murmur...

Upon hearing Nanmen Da Jun’s introduction, this group of debt collectors was quite shocked. They drew in deep breaths of cold air while simultaneously re-evaluating Yang Kai. Meanwhile, the middle-aged man’s expression turned dark and cold sweat began beading on his forehead. It turned out that this young man was none other than the famous Palace Master of High Heaven Palace, whose name had spread across the entire Northern Territory recently!

The annihilation of Seeking Passion Sect had caused a great stir, and consequently, the name ‘High Heaven Palace’ became famous even though it had only just been founded. Any person among the billions of cultivators in the Northern Territory that had access to even the slightest bit of information would be familiar with this grand name.

High Heaven Palace was capable of annihilating a deep-rooted behemoth such as the Seeking Passion Sect. From that alone, one could imagine how astonishing the strength of High Heaven Palace was. It was even rumoured that three Monster Kings were guarding the Sect. Furthermore, the Sect Master of Seeking Passion Sect, Feng Xuan, had also been killed without even the chance to resist.

Now, it would seem as if High Heaven Palace was not just relying on the power of the three Monster Kings to establish itself. Despite how young the Palace Master was, he was a formidable person too. He only had a First-Order Emperor Realm cultivation, yet he easily managed to suppress a Master one Minor Realm higher. This was not something many people across the entire Star Boundary can do. Fortunately, the conflict between them wasn’t great; otherwise, he might have to escape the Northern Territory after this incident concluded.

The moment that thought crossed the middle-aged man’s mind, his expression turned solemn and he quickly cupped his fists, “So, you are Palace Master Yang. I apologize for my discourtesy.”

Upon seeing his actions, the others quickly mirrored him. They cupped their fists and greeted Yang Kai, not daring to show any disrespect.

In response, Yang Kai waved his hand lightly, “Xiao Hou is now part of my High Heaven Palace. I apologize for all the trouble she caused during this period. So... how many Source Crystals does she owe you? Please name your price. I will pay back everything on her behalf.”

(TI note: Xiao Hou is a more intimate way of calling Hou Yu. It's literally Little Hou)

Everybody exchanged glances with each other for a moment. It was reasonable of them to suspect his ability to repay those debts when they were unaware of his true identity; however, they were troubled by something else now that they knew he was the Palace Master of High Heaven Palace; they didn't know whether they should collect their debts from him.

Those debts were essentially gambling debts and not debts from righteous transactions. Hence, they would lose more than they gained if they offended High Heaven Palace over something like that. Even so, they could not bring themselves to refuse the repayment. It was not a small sum after all. For that reason, nobody dared to speak up even though Yang Kai sincerely offered to pay back the debts on Hou Yu's behalf.

Yang Kai observed the situation and immediately understood what these people were afraid of. Raising a brow, he turned to the middle-aged man and asked, "I recall Xiao Hou owes you twenty million High-Rank Source Crystals, right?"

"Uh... Yes, indeed!" The middle-aged man nodded in agreement. That was what he had told Yang Kai and Nanmen Da Jun two days ago.

"Please check if this amount is correct." Yang Kai casually tossed a Space Ring to him.

The middle-aged man caught the Space Ring and immediately knew that the number was correct upon sweeping its contents with his Divine Sense. Now that things had come to this, he could only nod, "It is twenty million, indeed."

With that, the remaining people no longer hesitated and enthusiastically reported the number of Source Crystals that Hou Yu owed them, one after the other. The number ranged from anything between one million to tens of millions of High-Rank Source Crystals. There were more than twenty people present, and it took Yang Kai seventy million High-Rank Source Crystals to pay off all the debts owed to them.

Everybody was happy that they managed to collect their debts. Among these people, the ones that arrived the earliest had spent more than a year on the island. They couldn't even locate Hou Yu before, let alone try to collect their debts from her; hence, they couldn't help being overjoyed by the unexpected blessing they received. Getting back their money meant that they no longer needed to suffer in this place.

"The money has been returned to you," Yang Kai clasped his hands behind his back and glanced at the crowd calmly. "So, now I have a small favour to ask of you, one I hope you all can assist me with."

The expression of the middle-aged man acting as the leader became serious as he cupped his fists and said, "Palace Master Yang, we admire your generosity. Please speak up if you have anything to ask of us."

The rest echoed his words in unison.

Yang Kai smiled and said, "I would like you to spread a message for me when you return home. If any Sect or person gambles with Xiao Hou in the future, High Heaven Palace will not forgive them!"

Everybody was shocked by this request while Hou Yu exaggeratedly shouted, "Palace Master, please just kill me now!"

[Who will dare to gamble with me in the future if word of this spreads to the public?!] She suddenly regretted joining the dump known as High Heaven Palace, which caused her to be deprived of the greatest pleasure in her life. A wave of despair washed over her as she felt she no longer had anything left to live for!

The middle-aged man let out an obvious sigh of relief and smilingly replied, "That's not a problem. Please rest assured, Palace Master Yang. We were not aware that this... lady was affiliated with your High Heaven Palace. If we had known..."

"There is no need to mention the past," Yang Kai waved his hand lightly. He had no intention of exchanging greetings with this group any longer. Thus, he turned to Hou Yu and Nanmen Da Jun and said, "Let's go."

Nanmen Da Jun immediately summoned his Emperor Artifact flying boat and the three of them entered. After that, the flying boat turned into a stream of light heading in the direction of High Heaven Palace.

Inside the boat, Yang Kai glanced at Hou Yu, who looked like she had just had a sword driven through her heart, and asked, "Do you still want to gamble?"

Hou Yu looked up, nodding repeatedly like a chicken pecking at rice.

"Pay off the seventy million High-Rank Source Crystals you owe me first." Yang Kai grinned, "It won't take long. I think a hundred years of servitude should be enough."

Hearing this, Hou Yu's eyes rolled back and she instantly fainted...

Chapter 2787, An Abnormality in the Dantian

Three days later, the trio returned to High Heaven Palace. During this period, Hou Yu had tried to escape many times, only to be recaptured by Yang Kai. She was so furious that she couldn't get any angrier.

[I don't believe you can monitor me for a hundred years! I will have plenty of opportunities to escape the moment you look away!] She sneered in her heart. Unfortunately, this wishful thinking of hers was ruthlessly crushed no more than a quarter of an hour after they returned to High Heaven Palace.

"M-Monster Kings?! And there are three of them?!" She stared at the three terrifying existences standing in front of her with a look of shock. They were completely enveloped in dense Monster Qi and exuded an incredible strength from their very beings.

She had no idea that High Heaven Palace had such a sturdy foundation. Yang Kai was nothing more than a First-Order Emperor Realm Master after all, so how many Masters could the High Heaven Palace he

established have? Besides, she had not had a chance to inquire more about High Heaven Palace during their return journey. For that reason, she was utterly caught off guard when she arrived.

With three Monster Kings protecting it, High Heaven Palace was powerful beyond imagination! It was unrivalled by any of the top Sects in the Northern Territory!

“This is the new Chief Artifact Refiner of our High Heaven Palace,” Yang Kai introduced Hou Yu to the three Monster Kings, “Just call her Xiao Hou. En, Xiao Hou is a rather lively and active person; however, I hope she can be more anchored and dutiful in High Heaven Palace, so...”

Ying Fei immediately replied, “Please rest assured, Young Master Yang. The three of us will take turns watching her. We will not allow her to cause any trouble whatsoever.”

Similarly, Xi Lei and Xie Wu Wei fervently expressed their agreement on the matter.

Meanwhile, Hou Yu’s complexion instantly became deathly pale. She involuntarily staggered backwards and wailed, “How can this be?!” [I’m going to be watched by the three Monster Kings in turn?! How will I live out the rest of my days?! If that’s the case, forget about escaping; I won’t even have a single moment of privacy!]

“Very good!” Yang Kai gently nodded before turning to Ying Fei, “Bring her to Head Manager Hua and register her name into the Sect. After that, arrange a place for her to live in.”

“Yes, sir!” Ying Fei replied, reaching out his hand to Hou Yu, “Sister Hou, please come this way.”

“I don’t want to!” Hou Yu gritted her teeth, spun around, and fled.

Ying Fei glanced at Yang Kai, to which Yang Kai nodded lightly in response. Chuckling slightly, Ying Fei transformed into a stream of light and chased after Hou Yu, capturing her in the blink of an eye. Holding her in his hand as if he were holding a tiny chick, Ying Fei leisurely flew away into the distance.

In the meantime, Xi Lei and Xie Wu Wei looked at each other for a moment before slowly following them. The sounds of Hou Yu cursing and yelling in the distance gradually became softer and softer until the sounds couldn’t be heard anymore.

Taking out a communication artifact, Yang Kai left a message for Hua Qing Si before turning to Nanmen Da Jun and saying, “Complete the Mountains and Rivers Projection as soon as possible.”

“Rest assured, Palace Master, the Mountains and Rivers Projection will be a simple matter with Xiao Hou’s assistance.”

“One more thing, please inform Head Manager that I want Xiao Hou to refine a flight-type artifact for me once she finishes with the Mountains and Rivers Projection. Cost is no issue, so I only want the best.”

“Yes!”

Now that the matter regarding the Chief Artifact Refiner was done, Yang Kai was in a good mood. He returned to Azure Sun Temple via the Space Array a short while later. The moment he planted both feet on Spirit Sword Peak, Yang Kai’s expression suddenly changed. Looking to the side, he saw a jet-black little beast in the mountain valley. It was looking in his direction curiously. Moreover, its beady eyes were shifting about, seemingly as if it were searching for something.

Fortunately, Yang Kai had concealed the location where the Space Array was with the power of Spirit Sword Peak's Earth Vein and arrays. Thus, there was nothing special about this place from what the little beast could see.

Yang Kai laughed softly as he recognized this small beast was the one he had encountered after the drinking party that day. It had a strange appearance, slightly resembling a puppy, and was probably a Monster Beast native to Spirit Sword Peak. It was just that it was not that strong, so Yang Kai hadn't detected any energy fluctuations from it.

When Yang Kai stepped forward and his figure suddenly appeared, the 'puppy' was visibly startled and warily crawled backwards. Its beady eyes stared unblinkingly at him, gleaming with humanlike vigilance; however, that vigilance vanished the moment it recognized who he was. Instead, it stuck out its tongue and panted continuously as if trying to act cute and friendly.

Yang Kai found this small beast's actions to be very amusing. Reaching out, he picked it up and petted its head with a laugh, "Are you lost? This isn't a place you can come and go as you please."

Although the cultivation realm of the Monster Beasts on Spirit Sword Peak was not that high, many of them were something this puppy could not handle with its strength. In particular, this mountain valley contained numerous powerful Monster Beasts. If it encountered any one of those powerful Monster Beasts, it would be devoured in a single bite. Therefore, Yang Kai was honestly very curious as to how that small black dog-like beast managed to survive here.

Meanwhile, the black puppy revealed an expression of delight while being petted. It closed its eyes in enjoyment as it quietly crawled into his arms before staying there motionlessly.

Yang Kai shook his head lightly at the sight. Shifting his body slightly, he arrived outside Spirit Sword Palace. He bent down to place the black puppy on the ground, but to his surprise, the little guy hugged him tightly and refused to let go. Yang Kai laughed wryly and flexed one of his fingers, flicking the little beast on the forehead.

At that moment, a sudden change occurred. The black puppy that had been calm and well-behaved all this while suddenly opened its mouth and bit his finger without warning. For a moment, the human and the beast stared at each other. Yang Kai was a little taken aback as an incident like this was completely out of his expectations. Immediately after that, he frowned as a twinge of pain came from his finger, and he concurrently felt a violent force causing a tremor in his Dantian.

His expression changed drastically, but before he could reorganize his thoughts, the black puppy ran away with its tail between its legs. It fled without looking back, whimpering endlessly. It was clearly shocked by what happened just now.

Lifting his hand, Yang Kai examined his finger with a look of disbelief. The skin on his finger where the black puppy had bitten him was broken. Moreover, there were distinct teeth marks and deep puncture wounds there, with golden blood quickly flowing out.

[It managed to make me bleed when it bit me? How is that possible?]

Yang Kai's constitution was so intrepid that he could be said to be one of the strongest Emperor Realm Masters in terms of body tempering in the Star Boundary. Aside from a few unusually gifted members of

the Monster Race, Yang Kai was not afraid of being physically injured by anybody, let alone an unremarkable puppy. Even if an Emperor Realm Master were to bite him with all their might, it should be impossible for them to break his skin with their teeth if they did not use their Emperor Qi to reinforce their jaws. However, this black puppy had managed to do just that! Moreover, it looked like it had bitten him without any thought and didn't even put that much strength into it.

[Can those little fangs really be that sharp?] Yang Kai frowned. He had a strange expression on his face, accompanied by a vague feeling that the black puppy was rather unusual.

What shocked him the most though was that the Ancient Demon's Qi sealed in his Dantian had reacted when the black puppy bit his finger. The Ancient Demon's Qi had been sealed by the gold and silver power of the Firmament Tree and the seal was so strong that he had never felt any abnormality from it all this time. And yet, not only had it been triggered today, but it was triggered by a little black puppy at that!

What was going on?

Yang Kai carefully examined the seal in his Dantian and determined that there was no hidden danger. That sudden abnormality seemed to be an isolated event, but with such timing, it couldn't be a mere coincidence.

Spreading out his Divine Sense, he found the black puppy in a cave not far away. It was currently hiding and for some reason, had fallen asleep. It seemed to be frightened by something in its sleep and trembled uncontrollably in fear.

[Why is it showing such a wounded look after biting me?!] Yang Kai was speechless. He initially planned to capture it and investigate it carefully. Unfortunately, it seemed like that was impossible at the moment.

"What's going on?!" A cold shout rang out. Yang Kai looked up and saw Gao Xue Ting appearing atop Spirit Sword Peak, her beautiful eyes scanning the area, seemingly searching for something before she asked, "What happened here just now?"

Yang Kai's heart clenched but he quickly put on a confused look and asked, "What do you mean by 'what happened'?"

Gao Xue Ting replied, "I felt a familiar energy fluctuation, one that I deeply loathe and detest... Did anything strange happen here?"

"What strange thing could happen here?" Yang Kai fervently denied, "I was simply experimenting with my newly-trained Divine Ability just now." He had to admit, Gao Xue Ting's perception was extremely keen. The abnormality involving the Ancient Demon's Qi in his Dantian only happened for a moment, yet she still noticed it.

Back when he had been taken over by the Demon Qi for the first time and his body had undergone a kind of demonification, Yang Kai had fought a huge battle against three Emperor Realm Masters, namely Gao Xue Ting, Chen Wen Hao of Heavenly Martial Holy Land, and Feng Ming of Orthodoxy Temple.

At the time, Yang Kai had only been a Dao Source Realm cultivator; thus, the pressure of facing the three Emperors was unimaginably heavy. He only managed to escape their clutches after using a special trump

card. Hence, he did not dare to come clean with Gao Xue Ting regarding this matter. If she were to learn that he was the Demon back then, who knows whether she would attack him with her sword.

"Is that so?" Gao Xue Ting frowned slightly, obviously still having some doubts about the truth. If Yang Kai had only been experimenting with his Divine Ability, then she would not have found it so hateful. However, that momentary fluctuation had instinctively filled her with utter disgust! Unfortunately, it was so fleeting that it disappeared before she could sense it properly. Therefore, she couldn't recall where she had felt it before.

"Of course," Yang Kai felt cold sweat pouring down his back. Even so, he kept his expression straight and changed the subject, "By the way, Purple Bamboo Peak is quite far from here. How did you arrive here so quickly, Senior Sister Gao?"

She responded, "I happened to be passing by. I was on my way back from visiting the Temple Master." Pausing for a moment, she added, "Now that I think about it, where have you been? Why couldn't I find you anywhere when I came here the day before yesterday?"

[I was in the Northern Territory the day before yesterday. It's only to be expected that you couldn't find me.] Yang Kai retorted in his heart, but what came out of his mouth was, "I went into retreat for a short while."

She looked at him suspiciously. His evasive answer made her a little suspicious, but even so, she had no intention of questioning him further if he did not want to talk about it. She simply nodded in response, "You can continue doing whatever you were doing then. I'm leaving."

"Senior Sister Gao!" Raising his hand, Yang Kai suddenly called out to her.

"What is it?" She paused and asked.

He replied, "You seem to be in a rush and look troubled about something. Did you encounter something difficult? I might be able to be of some help."

To which Gao Xue Ting replied, "This matter is related to the secrets of the Temple. As a High-Rank Guest Elder, you are not qualified to know too much. Well, if you are willing..."

"Senior Sister, please don't say more," Yang Kai hurriedly stopped her. He was half forced, half tricked into becoming a Guest Elder of the Temple, so why would he want to go a step further and get more deeply involved? When it came down to it, he was still a Palace Master of his own Sect.

"By the way, I am planning to go on a trip soon!"

"Go if you want to; nobody is going to stop you." Gao Xue Ting's voice rang out as she flew off.

Chapter 2788, Mouse Dropping

“Brother Yang!” Kang Si Ran walked into one of the best private rooms inside Violet Source Chamber of Commerce’s branch office, a ruddy complexion on his face as he warmly cupped his fists and gave his greetings.

Yang Kai stood up and returned the greeting, “Brother Kang!”

“Please have a seat. It’s not like we are strangers to each other.” Kang Si Ran motioned to Yang Kai before glancing behind him. A maidservant instantly appeared outside the door with a tray of high-quality tea. After closing the door, he asked, “Did you come here today to pick up your order?”

“That’s right. The two month period is almost up. How are your preparations going?”

Kang Si Ran smiled, “Doing business with Brother Yang is very profitable, so it’s only natural that President Lou did everything in his power to complete your request. The Space Spirit Crystals and the Space Spirit Jades have been prepared.” Saying so, he took out a Space Ring, placed it on the table, and pushed it to Yang Kai, “These materials are worth forty million High-Rank Source Crystals. Brother Yang, please feel free to inspect them.”

“No need.” Yang Kai shook his head. If he were doing business with anybody else, he might have inspected the wares to see if everything was in order; however, it was unnecessary since he was currently dealing with Kang Si Ran, who Yang Kai trusted would never deceive him.

In reality, transferring Space Spirit Crystals and Space Spirit Jades worth forty million High-Rank Source Crystals from the major branches of the Southern Territory within two months had required quite a bit of manoeuvring, consuming a large amount of labour and resources in the process. Although Lou Chi was doing his best, it ultimately required Kang Si Ran’s frequent efforts to speed up the process. In the end, they managed to gather everything with some excess, and the extras were given to Yang Kai free of charge under Kang Si Ran’s decision. Compared to this large-scale business, some small benefits weren’t worth mentioning at all.

“How much should I pay?” Yang Kai asked.

“You previously paid a deposit of ten million, and with the two Twelfth-Order Monster Cores being worth thirteen million, you only need to pay an additional seventeen million High-Rank Source Crystals,” Kang Si Ran reported the price, “On another note, President Lou said that it is fine even if you don’t pay us with Source Crystals; we will also accept Twelfth-Order Monster Cores.”

Yang Kai grinned, “President Lou is shrewd indeed. I think it’s best if I pay with Source Crystals.”

Although he had many Monster Cores on hand, he could not take them out carelessly. If too many Twelfth-Order Monster Cores entered the market, it would definitely affect the price. Needless to say, he was not the type to dig his own grave. Besides, he had enough High-Rank Source Crystals to pay off Hou Yu’s seventy million gambling debt, so what was seventeen million in comparison?

Soon, they concluded their business deal. Kang Si Ran then took out the documents, and they left their respective Soul Imprints onto the Soul Contracts to successfully complete the transaction.

Then, Yang Kai requested, “Please continue to purchase Space Spirit Crystals and Space Spirit Jades on my behalf. If I don’t come to you in time, please deliver them to the Azure Sun Temple for me.”

“Not a problem,” Kang Si Ran nodded, “On that note, congratulations on being promoted to the position of Azure Sun Temple Elder, Yang Kai.”

“I’m just a High-Rank Guest Elder,” Yang Kai shook his head.

Kang Si Ran sighed, “The chamber of commerce also received an invitation letter, but I was busy with acquiring the Space Spirit Crystals and Space Spirit Jades, so I couldn’t step away from my position and failed to congratulate you. I am very ashamed!”

“Brother Kang, don’t be such a stranger, it’s just a small matter,” Yang Kai smiled lightly.

Now that the transaction was completed, they chatted casually for a while.

Upon asking about Kang Si Ran’s current situation, Yang Kai learned that the former was doing very well in Maplewood City’s branch office. Kang Si Ran’s cultivation was just First-Order Dao Source Realm, so normally it would be impossible for him to take up the Manager position at this branch office. However, he was promoted to the position as a special case since he was very familiar with Maplewood City. Though, he had almost reached the end of his career as a Manager here prior to obtaining Yang Kai’s business deal. If not for this deal, it would not have been long before he was transferred away from the prosperous Maplewood City and dispatched to some remote place instead.

Fortunately for him, Yang Kai’s huge business was an important turning point for Kang Si Ran.

The deal made Lou Chi highly regard Yang Kai, as who else would be generous enough to put down forty million in a single transaction? Not to mention that Yang Kai also promised to bring two Monster Cores from Twelfth-Order Monster Beasts to Violet Source Chamber of Commerce every six months. That was a long-term business deal, one valuable enough to make Kang Si Ran irreplaceable as the Manager here. After all, Yang Kai only made this agreement with the Violet Source Chamber of Commerce out of respect for Kang Si Ran.

Furthermore, Lou Chi was said to have the greatest expectations of Kang Si Ran among the current Managers and had been appointing him to handle many important customers, especially after the Manager named Gu Hong suddenly left Maplewood City. Kang Si Ran had subsequently taken over all of the clients under Gu Hong’s jurisdiction and was now considered the Head Manager of this Violet Source Chamber of Commerce branch office.

“Gu Hong left Maplewood City?” Yang Kai was surprised. [No wonder I didn’t see him around during my trip here this time.]

“En, after you came here, Brother Yang, he took the initiative and requested to be transferred away from Maplewood City. Since President Lou had no reason to refuse this request, he immediately approved the transfer with a wave of his hand.” Kang Si Ran smiled from ear to ear. He had a fierce rivalry going on with Gu Hong and originally had no hope to win, but to his surprise, he had the last laugh in the end while Gu Hong, who used to have the upper hand, had to leave instead.

“He probably felt that he couldn’t continue working here. This is all thanks to you, Brother Yang,” Kang Si Ran repeatedly thanked Yang Kai, believing all the credit belonged to the latter.

Listening to those words, Yang Kai vaguely felt as if he finally understood something and asked, “How was Gu Hong’s condition when he left?”

Kang Si Ran did not know the reason for this question, but even so, he considered for a moment before replying, "He looked panicked. Hmm... He also looked very uneasy, as if a huge catastrophe was about to befall him."

"That bastard!" Yang Kai slapped his thigh and snorted coldly.

"What happened?" Kang Si Ran was startled.

Yang Kai sneered, "I know why he suddenly asked to transfer out of Maplewood City... He was afraid I might come looking for revenge against him."

Kang Si Ran suspiciously asked, "Did Gu Hong offend you in some way, Brother Yang?"

Yang Kai replied, "In your chamber of commerce, what kind of offence does the selling of customer information constitute?"

Shocked by those words, Kang Si Ran solemnly replied, "It's considered one of the highest offences. If the claim is verified, the criminal will be executed immediately! Why do you ask, Brother Yang?"

Yang Kai explained, "After attending the auction in Maplewood City, I was stopped by the Sect Master of Broken Mountain Sect, Le Dong Zheng, when I went out of the city. At the time, I was wondering how that guy tracked me down. Moreover, he managed to intercept my path so quickly and precisely. Now, I understand; somebody was manipulating things from behind the scenes!"

"What?! Le Dong Zheng died at your hands, Brother Yang?" Kang Si Ran was shocked. He had heard the news about Le Dong Zheng's death; after all, Le Dong Zheng had been a Sect Master and a major customer of Violet Source Chamber of Commerce, so it was only natural for Kang Si Ran to pay attention to such news, especially after he took over all of Gu Hong's clients.

Le Dong Zheng was originally one of Gu Hong's best clients, so when Kang Si Ran took over Gu Hong's portfolio, he had specially visited Broken Mountain Sect to give his greetings. To his surprise though, Kang Si Ran learned that Le Dong Zheng had passed away when he arrived. Following Le Dong Zheng's death, Broken Mountain Sect fell apart and its thousands of disciples scattered.

After asking around, Kang Si Ran learned that Le Dong Zheng had died soon after the auction. Not many knew about this though, and no one knew just who murdered Le Dong Zheng either. It wasn't until this moment that Kang Si Ran realized it was Yang Kai's doing. Although his cultivation was not high, he was a Manager of Violet Source Chamber of Commerce, so Kang Si Ran was naturally very quick-witted. Thus, he managed to guess the truth of the matter just by making some inferences from Yang Kai's words.

It was obvious that Gu Hong had leaked the information about Yang Kai to Le Dong Zheng after the auction. Then, Le Dong Zheng tried to ambush Yang Kai. Unfortunately, his skills were inferior to Yang Kai's and the hunter ended up becoming the hunted instead.

The grudge between Yang Kai and Le Dong Zheng was no secret to Kang Si Ran, while on the other hand, the reason Gu Hong turned against Yang Kai was even simpler. As he and Kang Si Ran were competing for the Manager position, Gu Hong became jealous and angry upon seeing Kang Si Ran's position stabilizing because of Yang Kai.

Pondering over it, Kang Si Ran's expression became grim, "This matter is of great importance. Brother Yang, please wait for a moment. I will report this to President Lou immediately."

Unexpectedly, Yang Kai said, "Forget it. Since Le Dong Zheng is dead and Gu Hong has also taken the initiative to transfer, let's drop this matter. There is no need to trouble President Lou."

Gu Hong was nothing but an ant to him, so there was no need to blow this matter out of proportion.

Kang Si Ran, however, shook his head and responded solemnly, "Brother Yang, you might not know this, but the chamber of commerce places great importance on its reputation; after all, reputation is vital in the business world. Gu Hong's actions, leaking a customer's private information for his personal gain, will absolutely not be tolerated by the chamber of commerce. If we let him go this time, he might cause greater trouble in the future."

When Kang Si Ran brought up the Chamber of Commerce's reputation, Yang Kai could hardly refuse anymore, "However, I don't have any real evidence..."

Kang Si Ran shook his head again, "No proof is needed. This matter couldn't be more obvious; I believe President Lou will be able to tell as well." After saying that, he walked out of the room.

It was clear that he was not trying to take the opportunity to exact his personal vendetta against Gu Hong. Although he and Gu Hong had been stuck in a rather unpleasant rivalry, Kang Si Ran was not such a petty and small-minded person. What he was doing was simply for the sake of the Violet Source Chamber of Commerce. As the saying went, 'a single mouse dropping could ruin the entire pot of porridge'.

A short while later, Kang Si Ran returned. He said nothing regarding Gu Hong's fate or how Lou Chi planned to punish Gu Hong, he simply apologized to Yang Kai on Lou Chi's behalf. Similarly, Yang Kai did not ask about it either. Moreover, Kang Si Ran informed Yang Kai that he would receive a ten percent discount whenever he purchased anything from the chamber of commerce in the future. That was, without a doubt, hush money from Lou Chi.

As Gu Hong's actions tarnished Violet Source Chamber of Commerce's face, word about it could not be spread outside. Besides, the ten percent discount was a very generous offer as hush money, in particular since the business between Yang Kai and Violet Source Chamber of Commerce was on an extremely large scale.

After chatting idly for a while longer, Yang Kai said his goodbyes and left. He went directly to Spirit Lake City. Along the way, he took out the Jade Elder Token and sent a message to Xia Sheng. Thus, Xia Sheng was already standing there with a smile by the time Yang Kai arrived, waving his hand enthusiastically upon spotting him.

When Yang Kai walked over, Xia Sheng threw his arm around Yang Kai's shoulder with a smile, "Junior Brother Yang, congratulations on becoming an Elder of the temple!"

Yang Kai replied, "Please don't tease me, Senior Brother."

"I'm not teasing you! It's a happy event for both you and the temple," Xia Sheng patted Yang Kai on the shoulder and whispered, "More importantly, I heard that you have already experienced two of the temple's Three Great Taboos."

All was fine before this topic was mentioned, but the moment Xia Sheng brought it up, Yang Kai couldn't help recalling Gao Xue Ting's heroic posture from when they were drinking that day and in response, his face visibly twitched.

Xia Sheng laughed loudly, "Don't mind it, don't mind it."

Chapter 2789, Hua Yu Lu's Invitation

Xia Sheng enthusiastically welcomed Yang Kai into his room, and after they took their seats, Yang Kai asked about Bian Yu Qing's condition.

"That woman successfully broke through to the Emperor Realm half a month ago. The commotion she caused on that day was huge." Xia Sheng's expression was solemn.

"She broke through to the Emperor Realm?" Yang Kai raised his eyebrows in surprise. That news was both within his expectations and extremely unexpected at the same time.

Based on Bian Yu Qing's aptitude, the possibility of a breakthrough was very slim even if she could enter the Spirit Lake Palace's Heaven Grade cultivation room for two months of secluded retreat; after all, her inherent talent in the Martial Dao was not that great, and she had been stuck in the Dao Source Realm for so many years. All her passion had been withered away, and she lost her drive to move forward. How could a person like that achieve a breakthrough? Third-Order Dao Source Realm should have been the pinnacle she could reach in her life if nothing unexpected happened.

Fortunately, or unfortunately, Kou Wu's death had greatly stimulated her. In addition, she also received all sorts of help from Yang Kai, such as a large number of Source Crystals and Emperor Pills to supplement her cultivation. It was only a matter of time for her to achieve a breakthrough and make progress in her cultivation with such motivation and resources.

In any case, it was a happy occasion as it meant that High Heaven Palace had another Emperor Realm Master added to its ranks.

Spirit Lake Palace had been established for many years, so numerous cultivators came here to break through their own shackles and spy on the mysteries of the higher realms. However, not many managed to advance into the Emperor Realm here. For that reason, the commotion created by Bian Yu Qing's breakthrough that day shocked all of Spirit Lake City. In particular, those cultivators waiting in line to enter Spirit Lake Palace to cultivate seemed to have gotten fresh hope. They were filled with renewed motivation as they waited their turn.

"She has been consolidating her cultivation for the past half a month and should be able to leave in a few days," Xia Sheng smiled lightly. As one of the three Deacons of Spirit Lake Palace, he was very familiar with Bian Yu Qing's situation. Even if she was not somebody Yang Kai had brought over, he would have extended a helping hand to her somehow given her situation.

"That's great." Yang Kai nodded cheerfully.

“Junior Brother, do you have anything going on in the near future?” Xia Sheng suddenly changed the subject and asked.

Yang Kai replied, “I need to go to Star Soul Palace for a certain matter, but other than that, no. Why? Do you have anything to ask of me, Senior Brother?”

“Star Soul Palace...” Although Xia Sheng was stunned by those words, he did not question Yang Kai about the reason he was heading to Star Soul Palace and instead just pondered for a moment before asking, “How long will it take?”

“A month, maybe two.”

“In that case, there will be just enough time,” he grinned and continued, “I would like you to do me a favour, Junior Brother. Do you have the time?”

“What is it, Senior Brother?” Yang Kai looked solemn.

However, instead of explaining, Xia Sheng turned his head to look in the direction of the private room behind them and said, “Xiao Hua, come on out. You are also acquainted with Junior Brother Yang, so stop hiding away.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, a young woman in a fabulous dress strolled out of the room. Her tight-fitting attire emphasized her excellent figure, and the smile on her face made all who saw it swoon, but it was her beautiful, watery eyes that were the most captivating.

“Palace Master Hua!” Yang Kai was surprised to see the beautiful woman who appeared suddenly.

This lady was none other than the Palace Master of Hundred Flowers Palace, Hua Yu Lu. Just a few days ago, they had greeted each other at Azure Sun Temple, so Yang Kai had not expected to meet her here again. Hua Yu Lu had inquired about Xia Sheng that day, and from the looks of it, she had headed to Spirit Lake Palace directly after she left Azure Sun Temple.

Although he had noticed that there was another person’s aura in the room, Yang Kai had not investigated it further since that person had no intention of showing themselves.

[A man and a woman together... interesting!] Yang Kai’s expression suddenly became meaningful.

Meanwhile, Hua Yu Lu seemed a little apologetic, and her cheeks were slightly flushed. When she came closer, she bowed elegantly and gently said, “Greetings, Elder Yang!”

“Palace Master Hua is being too polite.” Yang Kai quickly replied to her with due courtesy. Putting aside the fact that her cultivation realm was similar to his, they were both Palace Masters of their respective Sects. However, her unclear relationship with Xia Sheng was enough to make Yang Kai a bit uncomfortable with her overly polite behaviour. As such, he quickly turned to look at Xia Sheng, “Senior Brother, could it be that the favour you wanted to ask of me is related to Palace Master Hua?”

Xia Sheng smiled slightly, “Yes, it is indeed related to Xiao Hua.” He glanced at Hua Yu Lu and said, “Xiao Hua, why don’t you explain it yourself?”

Hua Yu Lu nodded lightly, parting her luscious lips slightly as she slowly explained, "It's like this... When I went to the Southern Swamp to look for spirit medicines three months ago, I stumbled upon an Ancient Cave Mansion..."

"An Ancient Cave Mansion?" Yang Kai was shocked when he heard those words.

"Yes," she nodded, "It was undoubtedly an Ancient Cave Mansion; moreover, it gave off an extremely desolate aura. I don't know who it originally belonged to, but three people, including myself, ventured inside to explore it at the time. Although we tried all means to break the barrier that had been in disrepair for so many years and managed to gain some benefits from our endeavours, we were eventually blocked by a stronger single barrier deeper inside. As a result, we couldn't enter the inner sanctum."

"Why were there two other people with you?" Yang Kai frowned.

To which Hua Yu Lu replied, "The Southern Swamp might be perilous, but it also has many opportunities. It is said that the Southern Swamp was once a thriving place where ancient cultivators gathered. That's why so many treasures are hidden there. Moreover, it is a special environment that can give birth to various rare spirit medicines. Therefore, many Masters like to explore the Southern Swamp. When the Ancient Cave Mansion appeared, it caused some minor disturbances. Otherwise, I would not have discovered it, and the other two would not have been attracted to it either."

Yang Kai nodded after listening to her explanation as he could vaguely understand the situation at the time.

She then continued, "Of the other two people, one of them had some knowledge about barriers and Spirit Arrays. According to that person's hypothesis, we wouldn't have been able to break the barrier blocking our way even if we combined our strengths. Thus, we could only ask others for help. We agreed to each bring a helper and meet up at the Southern Swamp again half a year later."

"So, you asked Senior Brother Xia for help!" Yang Kai understood.

Smiling bitterly, she admitted, "Although I know many Emperor Realm Masters, not many can truly be trusted."

Selling out comrades, murder, robbery... These were common occurrences along the road of cultivation. Therefore, one had to find somebody trusted when asking for cooperation in exploration. Otherwise, one might find themselves dead at the hands of their 'partner' if they carelessly invited just anybody to help them.

Xia Sheng spoke up, "Junior Brother Yang, I'm afraid I really can't step away from this place. The temple sent me here, and I need to remain here for three more years. I can't step a single foot out of this place before the time is up. If that wasn't the case, I wouldn't need to trouble you for this, Junior Brother."

"It's not a big deal. It's just exploring an Ancient Cave Mansion." Yang Kai waved his hand confidently before glancing at Hua Yu Lu, "But... are you familiar with the other two? Are they trustworthy?"

Hua Yu Lu replied, "I can't say I'm familiar with them as that was the first time we met each other, but both of them were in the First-Order Emperor Realm. As for whether they are trustworthy or not... since it's the first time we met; how can I possibly trust them? Still, it goes both ways. If I don't trust them,

they won't trust me either, that's why we each made a Heart Demon Oath, vowing not to disclose any information about the Ancient Cave Mansion to the public. We are only allowed to bring one person along to help us. Moreover, that person must be a Second-Order Emperor Realm Master at best."

"I see..." Yang Kai rubbed his chin and pondered over it.

A Heart Demon Oath might be nothing more than lip service, but it was not an oath one would carelessly make once their cultivation reached the Emperor Realm. If they broke their word, a Heart Demon might appear and negatively impact their future cultivation, and since all three of them were restrained by such an oath, it should be alright to temporarily trust that the other two will not disclose this information to others at will. It was a well-considered strategy.

"If my guess is right, those two will surely find Second-Order Emperors to help them." Hua Yu Lu looked at Yang Kai with light in her eyes and added, "If you have any qualms about this, Elder Yang, you can forget about it. I will think of another way."

It wasn't that she couldn't find a Second-Order Emperor Realm Master to help her, but rather that she could not cooperate with them. If that wasn't the case, she would not have come to Xia Sheng for help. Before being a cultivator in the Emperor Realm, Xia Sheng was the chief disciple of Azure Sun Temple, and although it had not been long since he became a First-Order Emperor, it would not be an easy feat for a Second-Order Emperor Realm Master to kill him when it came down to a desperate fight.

As for Yang Kai's strength, Hua Yu Lu had personally witnessed it during the Grand Canonization Ceremony the other day. Yang Kai had even injured an Elder of Star Soul Palace, so despite being injured in the process, his power was certainly not something an average First-Order Emperor Realm could compare to. He should be of equal strength with Xia Sheng at least.

Standing to the side, Xia Sheng reminded, "Junior Brother, just consider the issue yourself, there's no need to worry about me. I'm simply making a suggestion, whether you accept the request or not is completely up to you."

He was clearly worried that Yang Kai might reluctantly accept the request out of respect for him.

In response, Yang Kai simply smiled, "I am also very interested in this Ancient Cave Mansion."

Hua Yu Lu's beautiful eyes lit up at those words, "Does that mean you agree, Elder Yang?"

Yang Kai did not reply to her question immediately and instead asked, "Why are the three of you so fixated on this Ancient Cave Mansion, even going to such lengths just to search for helpers; what benefits did you gain from it?"

"We certainly gained some benefits!" Hua Yu Lu nodded frankly, "Even if you didn't ask about this, I planned to explain it to you too, Elder Yang. The three of us didn't manage to explore the inner depths of that Ancient Cave Mansion, but we did manage to break several powerful barriers and reap valuable benefits. This is one of the items I obtained from that cave mansion."

While speaking, she took out a small flower drum. The small flower drum didn't seem to be anything special on the outside and was only about the size of a person's palm, made from some unknown materials; however, an extremely special aura rippled forth the moment it was taken out.

Yang Kai's eyes narrowed as he gasped in shock, "An Ancient Exotic Artifact!"

This small flower drum exuded a pure yet desolate aura. It was a genuine Ancient Exotic Artifact, just like the Mountains and Rivers Bell he owned.

In ancient times, the World Energy and World Principles were very different from what they were currently; therefore, the ancient cultivators cultivated all sorts of different Secret Techniques and Divine Abilities. Even the artifacts they used back then were vastly different from those created in this era. However, it was undeniable that the Ancient Exotic Artifacts passed down through the times were not to be underestimated.

It was just that Ancient Exotic Artifacts were too scarce in numbers. Over the past few millennia, the Mountains and Rivers Bell was the only Ancient Exotic Artifact that was well known enough to be recorded in history. Other unknown Ancient Exotic Artifacts might have surfaced during that time, but they surely amounted to less than ten across the entire Star Boundary. And yet, there was now one in Hua Yu Lu's possession!

Chapter 2790, Agreement

"This Soul Summoning Drum can shock the mind, and although it isn't very strong, it makes up for that in stealth, allowing one to catch their enemy off guard." Hua Yu Lu suddenly reached out and patted the little flower drum gently. The strange thing was that no sound came out from it; however, an invisible force rippled out from it, cutting into Yang Kai's Knowledge Sea like a sharp blade.

Caught by surprise, the force shook Yang Kai's focus slightly. It was just as Hua Yu Lu had explained, the power of the Soul Summoning Drum was not that great, and for that reason, it failed to break through the defences in Yang Kai's Knowledge Sea. It also went without saying that part of the reason for its weak power was that she had failed to completely refine the artifact and was unable to fully bring out its true strength as a result. Even so, it was already very impressive.

Imagine if two people of equal strength were desperately fighting against each other; the opponent would definitely suffer a fatal blow if Hua Yu Lu were to use the power of the Soul Summoning Drum without any warning. If used well, it could become a concealed weapon that could turn the tides of a losing battle. In this regard, it was actually much more versatile compared to most Emperor Artifacts.

"What an impressive item!" After getting a taste of the Soul Summoning Drum's power himself, Yang Kai couldn't help praising it.

To which Hua Yu Lu replied, "You flatter me, Elder Yang."

Yang Kai then asked, "You acquired the Soul Summoning Drum when the three of you went exploring. So, what did the other two get?"

"One of them obtained a Secret Technique from the cave mansion. I don't know the exact details since he did not reveal anything to us; however, it should be very powerful from the way he reacted. On the

other hand, the other person's cultivation skyrocketed inside the cave mansion. In the beginning, that person's strength was the weakest among the three of us as he had just broken through to the First-Order Emperor Realm. Nevertheless, his aura was the strongest among us when we left that place." Hua Yu Lu explained.

"It can even make a person's cultivation skyrocket!?" Yang Kai was stunned.

Opportunities that could significantly increase an Emperor Realm Master's cultivation were extremely rare. Just from that, it could be seen that the Ancient Cave Mansion definitely held some powerful inheritance. The ancient methods were powerful and extraordinary, and to think such a treasure with so many opportunities was so deeply hidden even after so many years. It made one wonder just how many benefits could be obtained if they managed to explore the entire cave mansion.

If it was said that Yang Kai only agreed to explore the Ancient Cave Mansion with Hua Yu Lu out of respect for Xia Sheng before, it was now because he truly became interested at this moment.

Cultivators could not grow strong by simply cultivating behind closed doors. Rather, gaining actual experience out in the world was the most important aspect of one's cultivation. Coming across a rare opportunity was often far more beneficial than years of hard secluded retreat.

"If you are interested in this endeavour, then let's meet at the Southern Swamp in two months. What do you think, Elder Yang?" Hua Yu Lu looked at Yang Kai.

"Good," Yang Kai nodded. He didn't have much to say about it as it just so happened that he needed to visit Star Soul Palace during this period to cultivate in the Five Colored Treasure Pagoda.

The two of them exchanged the means to contact each other on the spot, leaving their Soul Imprints on each other's communication artifacts, which would allow them to communicate freely as long as they were not too far away from each other.

"Then, this matter is settled. Please take good care of Xiao Hua, Junior Brother." Xia Sheng smiled faintly.

Yang Kai generously replied, "Rest assured, Senior Brother. I will definitely bring Palace Master Hua back in one piece."

Xia Sheng seemed calm and indifferent, while on the other hand, Hua Yu Lu blushed furiously and secretly sneaked a glance at Xia Sheng before revealing a slightly disappointed expression. Yang Kai took in the entire situation in front of him and vaguely understood the relationship between those two afterwards.

"I'll be staying in Spirit Lake City for the next few days. Senior Brother, please let me know if Bian Yu Qing comes out of her retreat."

"Don't worry!" Xia Sheng spoke in a serious tone, "I will periodically check up on her."

After that, Yang Kai took his leave, but just as he was about to turn around, he turned back and asked, "By the way, do you still remember what the barrier that blocked your path looked like, Palace Master Hua?"

Stunned, Hua Yu Lu nodded, "Of course. Do you want to check into it, Elder Yang? I can draw it out for you."

"That would be great."

Nodding, she immediately took out a blank jade slip and poured her Divine Sense into it, engraving what she saw the other day inside. Then, she handed the jade slip to Yang Kai and said, "This is the barrier. It's probably an ancient Spirit Array, but unfortunately, I don't understand much about Spirit Arrays and can't tell much from just observing it. I did carefully memorize it though, so there should be no mistakes."

At her level of cultivation, memorizing something at a glance was the most basic of basics.

"I don't know much about Spirit Arrays either, but I can ask others about it," Yang Kai smiled.

"Do you know somebody proficient in Spirit Arrays, Elder Yang? That's great! I planned to visit the Gong Family of Heavenly River Valley after this, but it seems unnecessary now."

The Heavenly River Valley Gong Family was the most highly regarded Spirit Array force in the Southern Territory, while Hua Yu Lu was not an ignorant Junior either. It was impossible to fully trust the other two Emperor Realm Masters; therefore, it was a given that she would need to learn more about this Spirit Array if she wanted to crack it and enter the deeper parts of the Ancient Cave Mansion. For that reason, the Heavenly River Valley Gong Family was her best choice.

Fortunately, from what Yang Kai had said just now, she no longer needed to go through such trouble. If she went to Heavenly River Valley, Hua Yu Lu would have no choice but to lie about the origins of this Spirit Array on the off chance that the Gong Family questioned her about it.

"Leave this to me, Palace Master Hua. You should rest well for the next two months. I'll see you again at the Southern Swamp at the appointed time."

"Many thanks, Elder Yang." Hua Yu Lu nodded politely.

As soon as Yang Kai left, Xia Sheng stood up and said, "Xiao Hua, please make yourself at home. I'm going out for a bit."

"Where are you going?" Hua Yu Lu looked at him angrily, "Why are you in such a hurry to leave? Are you afraid I might eat you?"

Xia Sheng's brow twitched slightly as he replied, "Why would I be afraid of you? It's just that if I don't work hard to cultivate, I won't be able to maintain my seat as the Eldest Senior Brother for long."

Clasping his hands behind his back, he walked out looking pleased with himself and disappeared in the blink of an eye.

"Smelly man!" Hua Yu Lu puffed up her cheeks in anger, feeling very upset. The host had left, so what was the point of the guest remaining? Thus, she could only follow his example and depart, leaving behind a lingering floral scent of perfume.

Yang Kai stayed at an inn in Spirit Lake City for three days before Bian Yu Qing came looking for him. She was brimming with energy at the moment and her aura was strong and steady. Their eyes met inside the room, and Yang Kai nodded lightly, "Not bad."

Bian Yu Qing brushed her hair back behind her ear with a wry smile and replied, "It's all thanks to your help. If not for you, I wouldn't have come this far."

In truth, she was quite shocked as well. She had assumed that she wouldn't feel as pressured when facing Yang Kai again now that she was also an Emperor Realm Master, but contrary to her expectations, she realized she could not figure out his depths even meeting this time. If she had not known that he was a First-Order Emperor, she might have assumed he was a Third-Order Emperor instead. But why was the gap still so massive between them?

"You can't withdraw your aura yet, which means your cultivation hasn't fully stabilized," Yang Kai commented, "Once you can freely control your aura, that will mean your cultivation has been consolidated."

"I understand. Many thanks for your guidance, Palace Master." Bian Yu Qing replied honestly but still couldn't help feeling a little awkward. A decade or so ago, she had stood far above this young man; however, their roles were now reversed. She was also only able to survive and become an Emperor Realm Master thanks to Yang Kai. Just thinking back on the past, it really was quite embarrassing.

Yang Kai simply smiled, "It looks like you are ready to join High Heaven Palace."

Bian Yu Qing smilingly replied, "Could it be that you don't want me to join High Heaven Palace, Palace Master?"

"No such thing!" Standing up, Yang Kai motioned, "Let's be on our way."

With that, they left Spirit Lake City and flew off in a certain direction without stopping. During their journey, Bian Yu Qing constantly worked hard to stabilize her cultivation, and after two days of travel, the effects of her efforts were apparent as her aura was significantly more restrained than before.

"Palace Master, where are we going now?" Bian Yu Qing couldn't help but ask when she saw Yang Kai's leisurely look.

"I'm sending you back to High Heaven Palace!" Yang Kai replied.

"Back to the palace..." She was stunned for a moment, then she exclaimed in surprise, "Isn't High Heaven Palace in the Northern Territory?!"

The Northern Territory and the Southern Territory were separated by a distance of billions of kilometres! Flying without stopping would take them several years to arrive, and if they were delayed during their journey, a decade-long trip would not be surprising!

At first, Bian Yu Qing wanted to persuade him to speed up a little bit or use local Space Arrays to save some time; however, Yang Kai did not seem to have any intention to do so. Thus, she did not say anything. In any case, she was now part of High Heaven Palace, so she only needed to follow Yang Kai's lead. There was nothing special about her that could attract his attention anyway, even if he had saved her life before.

Three days went by in such a fashion before the pair arrived at a desolate and dilapidated place.

“If I remember correctly, this was once the Thousand Leaves Sect, right?” Bian Yu Qing followed Yang Kai as he landed, turning her head around as she studied her surroundings.

“Indeed!”

Bian Yu Qing couldn't help sighing, “The rise and fall of a Sect is like the ebb and flow of the tides. Nothing stands forever.”

She seemed to be feeling nostalgic about something. Looking at the ruins of the Thousand Leaves Sect, she inevitably recalled the Blue Feather Sect. Both Sects had about the same strength, and their endings were practically no different either.

“Get on!” While she was in a trance, Yang Kai called out to her. He was already standing on the Space Array in the hidden mountain valley, and although Bian Yu Qing found this strange, she obediently followed suit and stood on the Space Array.

In the next moment, they appeared in what seemed to be a Small World. Yang Kai said nothing though and simply led her straight towards a certain spot in Emperor Heaven Valley. When she caught sight of the Cross-Territory Space Array, Bian Yu Qing instantly revealed a shocked expression, stuttering in amazement, “T-T-This... Could this be?”

Yang Kai nodded and explained, “Once you pass through here, you will arrive at High Heaven Palace. I have three jade slips for you to bring back with you.”

Bian Yu Qing forcefully composed herself and accepted the three jade slips from him before asking, “Who should I hand them to?”

Yang Kai replied, “Give one to somebody by the name of Hua Qing Si. She is the Head Manager of High Heaven Palace and is responsible for all affairs in the palace. Just hand this jade slip to her and she will take good care of you. As for the other two jade slips, ask Hua Qing Si to pass them to Nanmen Da Jun. Understood?”

She nodded seriously, “Yes.”

“Good. Go on then!” Yang Kai motioned for her to step onto the array.

Yang Kai then waved his hand and numerous High-Rank Source Crystals were accurately embedded into the grooves at the base of the array. The moment the Space Array was activated, it thrummed with Space Principles and in a flash of light, Bian Yu Qing disappeared.

For a moment, Yang Kai thought he vaguely saw Bian Yu Qing opening her mouth slightly as if to thank him just before she vanished, to which he just smiled brightly and turned around to leave Emperor Heaven Valley.

His next destination, Star Soul Palace!