

ODYSSEY 1451

Chapter 1451: Unease

Qing Chen glanced at Cai Shu, who was standing next to him. Only then did Lu Yin notice the elegant, middle-aged man standing slightly behind Qing Chen.

Cai Shu smiled and introduced himself. "I am Cai Shu, the supervisor's eldest disciple."

Lu Yin bowed again. "Junior Long Qi greets Senior Cai Shu."

Cai Shu nodded. "I summoned you here at this time because an interrogator's report mentioned the Guan brothers. Specifically..."

Lu Yin naturally knew the reason why he had been called, as he had been the one to leak the information.

After Cai Shu finished his explanation, Lu Yin frowned as he put on an appearance of carefully recalling the past.

Qing Chen was in no hurry, so he simply waited. This was a very important matter as they could not afford to abandon any potential clues related to uncovering more Redbacks, not to mention when it concerned the recruiter who had persuaded the three Guan brothers to turn traitor. Their recruiter had to be someone with a very impressive status, and all of humanity would benefit from exposing such a person.

Lu Yin carefully went through his memories, and as he did so, his expression kept changing. After the time it took to burn a stick of incense, he said, "This junior remembers that there was a slate with something recorded on it, but it crumbled to powder after I merely glanced at it. So, I can't really remember what was on it."

Cai Shu's expression grew incredibly serious as he stared at Lu Yin. "Long Qi, you must remember what was on that slate. This is very important, and you can't be careless."

Qing Chen also spoke up, "As long as you can provide useful information, you will receive a great deal of merit."

Lu Yin replied with a determined voice, "This junior will try his best."

Qing Chen and Cai Shu both felt satisfied with Lu Yin's attitude.

However, even after two days passed, Lu Yin still was not able to remember anything.

Lu Yin looked at Cai Shu and hesitantly said, "Senior, it's not that this junior does not want to focus on this matter, but rather, I am struggling with restlessness and find myself unable to concentrate."

Cai Shu's eyes flickered. "What is distracting you?"

Lu Yin shared his bitter circumstances, "After Princess Long Xi disappeared, the clan's attitude towards this junior has changed drastically. Once I arrive at Dragon Mountain, I won't have a good ending. This is worrying me quite a lot, and I am finding it very difficult to concentrate on my current task."

Cai Shu understood; the kid was presenting his conditions. The older man smiled. "Since that's the situation, then I will inform Master of your matter and see if Master can help calm things down."

Lu Yin apologized, "I've troubled both seniors."

Cai Shu was not upset, as everyone needed to look out for their own well being. Rather, Cai Shu would have been far more surprised if Lu Yin was a truly selfless person. It was more normal for a person to try to gain something for their efforts.

People who did not bring up conditions for their efforts were either truly altruistic or had bigger plans they were carrying out. Of the two, Cai Shu preferred to believe that people were of the latter type, and given his work with Humility's Gate, he was only able to trust those who sought benefits, as they were generally more reliable.

"He doesn't want to go to Dragon Mountain?" Qing Chen frowned. "That is difficult to help with. While he is indeed a member of the Fourteenth Gate, he is also a part of the White Dragon Clan. From the clan's viewpoint, they want their clan members to return to their ancestral home, and they can use nearly any excuse to bring back their clan members. I can't really interfere with that, even with my position within Humility's Gate."

"That is, not unless Long Qi is continuously given missions. The White Dragon Clan cannot force him away before he has completed a mission, and if that's the situation, then Humility's Gate can negotiate with the White Dragon Clan," Cai Shu offered.

Qing Chen sighed. "It looks like I'm going to need to reach out to Xiao."

Qing Chen revealed a bitter smile. "Long Tian reached out to me three times in the past because of this child, and now I'm being forced to reach out to others for him as well. I'll also need to speak with the White Dragon Clan. Negotiations really are the most troublesome kind of matters."

Far above, in the Higher Realm, at the top of the massive Dragon Mountain, the White Dragon Clan's patriarch, Long Ke, had a miserable expression on his face. During the excursion to the Dominion Realm, Long Tian had been trapped while Long Xi had disappeared. This was a terrible blow to the clan.

This was a matter of the clan's main family weakening, and it had prompted many clans members to scour through their ancient records. If the main family had no heir, then the current main family could be switched out for another family within the clan, which was something that Long Ke would never allow to pass.

Still, things had not reached the worst possibility yet. Long Tian had only been trapped, so there was still hope of rescuing him. As long as the Progenitors made a move, there was no need to mention if the four trapped Junior Progenitors would be saved or not, as there was nothing that could not be accomplished if the four ruling powers joined forces.

This matter was actually the reason why Long Ke had been silent for a while. After all, if Long Tian disappeared in the same manner as Long Xi, Long Ke's position as patriarch would be placed in jeopardy.

At this moment, someone arrived to deliver a report. "Elder Quan has requested to meet with you."

Long Ke's expression twisted even more. Long Quan was the patriarch of the largest branch family within the White Dragon Clan, and he was also Long Ke's most powerful competitor, which was why Long Ke had always done his best to suppress Long Quan's branch family. After the main family had suffered this devastating setback, Long Quan had been seeking an audience with Long Ke for three days straight, and Long Ke was very clear on Long Quan's intentions. If it were possible, Long Ke would have dealt with this rival long ago, but unfortunately, the Long Quan branch family was not weak.

"Long Quan greets the clan patriarch." An old man with a somber face slowly bent to bow to Long Ke.

Long Ke was a middle-aged man, and he looked quite similar to Long Tian. At a glance, Long Ke looked like a middle-aged version of Long Tian. The man was always serious and did not hide his arrogance.

"Elder Quan, what matter has brought you here today?" Long Ke asked lightly.

Long Quan looked up. "I'm here because I wanted to ask the clan patriarch about the trapped Junior Progenitor. How is the investigation going?"

Long Ke glared at the old man with cold eyes. "Is the clan patriarch required to report everything to you, Elder Quan?"

Long Quan did not grow angry. He had been suppressed for many years, and he had long since grown accustomed to Long Ke's attitude. "I know that the clan patriarch is handling the matter, but there are many people who are questioning the event, and they have asked me about a particular matter. On the eve of the excursion to the Dominion Realm, Long Jue, Nong Lie, and Wen Diyi were all poisoned at the same time. That forced our Junior Progenitor to take Long Qi to the Dominion Realm. If Nong Lie or Long Jue had gone instead, the outcome might have been different.

"On top of that, Princess Long Xi may have been separated from the group and vanished because she was forced to protect Long Qi. The clansmen are demanding an explanation."

Long Ke's eyes narrowed. "We are investigating the poisoning, and everything that you've mentioned regarding Long Qi is nothing more than speculation."

"Also, several days ago, Qing Chen Mountain's Cai Shu contacted the clan patriarch and requested for Long Qi to visit Qing Chen Mountain in order to assist in an investigation. Is there any news as to when Long Qi will return to the clan? Many of the clan members wish to see the main family's son-in-law," Long Quan pressed.

Long Ke stared at Long Quan. The branch families wanted to start with Long Qi in their moves to suppress the entire main family. They were not willing to wait!

"Long Qi has already arrived at Qing Chen Mountain, and he will come to Dragon Mountain shortly," Long Ke replied.

Long Quan smiled. "That's good. I merely had to ask due to the numerous curious people, so please don't get upset."

At this moment, Long Ke's communication crystal vibrated. He glanced at Long Quan, and the branch family patriarch retreated in a knowing manner and even turned around. Once his face was out of sight, a smile broke out on Long Quan's face. The main family? What a joke! They had ascended to their

current position from being a mere branch family. Since they were able to climb up, then why could another branch family not do the same?

Long Qi was the opening to the main family's weakness. The branch families had already crafted a series of events aimed towards using Long Qi to weaken the main family. The youth himself did not actually matter; rather, it was his position and identity.

Long Tian was trapped, and Long Xi had disappeared. The gods themselves were helping the branch families! Long Quan nearly laughed aloud at this thought.

"Elder Quan, wait a moment," Long Ke suddenly said.

Long Quan was caught off guard, and he turned around. "Might I ask what else the clan patriarch might need from me?"

Long Ke stared at Long Quan for a moment before suddenly smiling. "Long Qi won't be returning anytime soon."

Long Quan's expression changed. "What does the clan patriarch mean? Even if the princess has disappeared, Long Qi is the main family's son-in-law, and he should return to Dragon Mountain so that he can be protected by the clan."

Long Ke replied, "It's not that I don't wish for the child to return, but rather that Long Qi was given a mission by the Fourteenth Gate, and this mission is to assist Qing Chen Mountain to thoroughly investigate the matter regarding the Guan brothers who were revealed to be Redbacks."

Long Quan's eyes went wide. "Weren't those brothers already proven to be Redbacks? All three of them are already dead, so what else is there to investigate?"

Long Ke was helpless to give an answer. "You will have to ask Senior Qing Chen, but the fact stands that Long Qi is also a member of the Fourteenth Gate. Since he has been given a mission, he naturally must focus on said mission, as it is related to humanity's security and betterment. Elder Quan has to agree."

Long Quan's expression twisted terribly; he had to agree? Of course he disagreed! Several branch families had already come up with countless means of using Long Qi as an excuse to suppress the main family. But if that child did not return, then nothing could be done! Long Quan wanted to immediately contact Qing Chen Mountain about this joke, but instead, he suddenly looked up at Long Ke before abandoning the thought.

Humility's Gate was not a part of the White Dragon Clan, and Long Quan had no right to speak to them. His position within the White Dragon Clan was not high enough for him to attempt such a thing.

"It doesn't matter. His mission can't continue indefinitely, and he will definitely come back eventually. Patriarch, please ensure Long Qi's protection. After all, he is the main family's son-in-law, so we can't allow any accidents to befall him during his mission," Long Quan said in a depressed tone. This was not a threat, but a genuine request. Long Qi could not be allowed to have any accidents, as the branch families needed him to live in order to move against the White Dragon Clan's main family. Everything would be futile if Long Qi died.

Long Ke smiled gently. "Don't worry about that matter, elder. Please return."

Long Quan did not even offer any goodbyes as he simply turned around and left. His expression was somber and terrifying.

This had to have been Long Ke's idea. He had actually managed to mobilize the gate and arrange for Long Qi to stay at Qing Chen Mountain. If Long Tian did not return, then it was practically guaranteed that Long Ke would work hard to keep Long Qi on Qing Chen Mountain. It would actually be a challenge to get Long Qi away from Qing Chen Mountain.

Long Ke stared at Long Quan's back as the old man left, and the clan patriarch's eyes flickered. He had considered leaving Long Qi at the Junior Progenitor Planet, but he had never thought about sending Long Qi to Qing Chen Mountain. That was an even better option.

It would be much better if Long Qi just stayed at Qing Chen Mountain until Long Tian returned.

As soon as he thought of Long Tian and Long Xi, Long Ke's mood fell once more.

In the Middle Realm, on Qing Chen Mountain, Lu Yin looked at the task that he had just been sent via his communication crystal. Secretly, Lu Yin was thrilled. 'Stay on Qing Chen Mountain to assist with the investigation - Xiao.'

Just these few words were enough to decide Lu Yin's fate. He would stay.

Outside Qing Chen Mountain, Long Kui left. He was completely stunned. What just happened? Wasn't it just supposed to be a few days? Why was it extended indefinitely?

Gui was even more depressed. It quite liked Lu Yin, but it would not see the youth again anytime soon.

Cai Shu then appeared in front of Lu Yin. There was a smile on the older man's face. "Long Qi, the White Dragon Clan has agreed to allow you to stay on my Qing Chen Mountain to assist with this investigation. There's no need for you to leave until after the investigation is over. I just wanted to let you know this."

He continued looking at Lu Yin. "How long do you wish to stay?"

Lu Yin thought for a moment before replying, "I would like to wait for the Junior Progenitors to return from the Dominion Realm."

"Understood," Cai Shu replied. "In that case, try to remember as much information as possible. I hope that you can remember something soon."

Cai Shu had promised that, even if Lu Yin immediately revealed everything that he knew, Lu Yin would still be allowed to stay on the mountain until Long Tian returned from the Dominion Realm. There was no need for him to hide any information in order to stall for more time.

Chapter 1452: Acting Gate Master

Lu Yin knew that he could not stall for long. Gaining refuge on Qing Chen Mountain was only his first step, but what should be his second? The Perennial World had Progenitors, and it was impossible to know when Long Tian and the other Junior Progenitors would be rescued. Ideally, Lu Yin wanted to find out what had happened to the Lu family before Long Tian and the others were rescued and then head to

the rendezvous point that Unseen Light had shared with him so that he could return to the Fifth Mainland.

Neither of Lu Yin's two goals would be easily accomplished, and both of them were predicated on his ability to openly leave Qing Chen Mountain.

Over the next few days, Lu Yin gradually revealed certain secrets about who Guan Yun had groomed into traitors. Lu Yin had only ever arrested a few of the traitors, so most of them were still roaming around.

While Cai Shu was not fully satisfied by the gradual release of information, there were still some effects.

After ten days, Qing Chen himself visited Lu Yin. There was an indifferent expression on the old man's face. "Long Qi, while the information you have provided us has all been valuable, you know what I hope to obtain. What did you see regarding the Guan brothers' recruitment?"

Lu Yin felt embarrassed. "Senior, it's not that this junior doesn't want to tell you, but rather that what I saw was too vague, and it was completely useless."

Cai Shu stepped out from behind Qing Chen to say, "That doesn't matter. Just tell us. We'll listen."

"Actually, this junior has been thinking about the matter for many days, and I eventually remembered some things, but Guan Yun's records did not list names, not even code names, of the people who recruited and trained him and his brothers."

Qing Chen's expression fell at this news. He had reached out to Xiao on Lu Yin's behalf and had also negotiated with the White Dragon Clan. Although those matters had gone smoothly, Qing Chen himself was a Semi-Progenitor. He had also promised to allow the youth to stay on Qing Chen Mountain. No matter how Qing Chen viewed the matter, it made him upset. While he appreciated Long Qi, the old man did not like being used by a child, and at this moment, Qing Chen felt that he had been taken advantage of.

"However, their recruiter has a specific characteristic." Lu Yin carefully observed Qing Chen before looking over at Cai Shu. Lu Yin swallowed. He could not worry too much about this anymore, so he just had to give them something. Besides, no one would be able to prove or disprove his information. With this thought, Lu Yin coughed and solemnly continued. "That is, they were not recruited by a person, but rather by a doll."

Lu Yin's face twitched as he spoke. He was describing Shaman God's appearance. Shaman God was one of the Seven Skygods in the Fifth Mainland, and he was also on the side of those monsters. People would only ever be able to confirm the existence of such a person, as it was impossible to prove that no such person existed among the monsters.

Lu Yin had thought that Qing Chen might not believe him, or that the old man would express some doubts. The worst result would be if Qing Chen thought that Lu Yin was lying, but the Semi-Progenitor's actual reaction completely shocked Lu Yin. Qing Chen's expression completely changed.

"What did you say? A doll? What kind of doll?!" Qing Chen eagerly pressed as he stared straight into Lu Yin's eyes.

Lu Yin was startled. What was with this reaction?

"Come on, what kind of doll was it? Where did you see it?" Qing Chen shouted.

Lu Yin blinked as he looked back at Qing Chen. "There were no specifics described. Guan Yun's records only had four words as a description: 'confuses the five senses.'"

Qing Chen's expression changed once again as he looked away from Lu Yin and stared off into the distance.

Cai Shu had a solemn expression and he pressed Lu Yin further, "What else was there?"

Lu Yin had already prepared a bit of nonsense as he hoped to take a more prominent role with this matter. It would actually be best if he was sent out to investigate. However, Qing Chen's reaction stopped Lu Yin dead in his tracks as the old man shook his head. "Anything further doesn't matter."

Cai Shu was somber as he looked at Qing Chen. "Master, that's Shaman God."

Lu Yin's heart skipped a beat, though he did not dare to reveal anything. Still, his heart began to pound loudly.

Shaman God? The Perennial World also had a Shaman God? Was this just a coincidence, or could they possibly be the same person?

Lu Yin had only shared a very simple lie, and yet it had already dragged in Shaman God? How did these people know about Shaman God?

Qing Chen and Cai Shu left after that, so Lu Yin was not able to listen in on any of their subsequent conversation. He had really wanted to learn more.

After the two men left Lu Yin, Qing Chen recalled, "The Seven Skygods are humanity's greatest enemy, and they have always been one of our greatest threats. They have been my Humility's Gate's eternal enemy from ancient times to now, though we have never been able to do anything against them."

"The Seven Skygods are hiding among us, but no one knows who could be one of the Seven Skygods. As for their names, very few people know them. There's no way Long Qi could possibly know of Shaman God, but since he mentioned 'confuses the five senses,' he clearly saw Guan Yun's records," Cai Shu said.

Qing Chen nodded. "Given the status that the Guan brothers held, it's not unreasonable for them to have been recruited by one of the Seven Skygods. Huaiyuan has a unique location, and Guan Tong was one of the nine Gate Masters of the Middle Realm. Only one of the Seven Skygods would have the ability to turn such a person. But now, I'm worried about whether or not there are still Redbacks within the Thirteen Gates."

Cai Shu replied, "It's hard to uncover a Redback. If not for Long Qi, we would have been hard pressed to even consider the possibility of the Guan brothers being Redbacks. Master, just who is Long Qi's source of intelligence that they were even able to uncover the Guan brothers?"

Qing Chen said, "I've secretly looked into it, but found nothing."

"Could it be?" Cai Shu hesitated, but then he shook his head once more. "No, that's not possible. There would have been no meaning in sacrificing the Guan brothers in order to groom Long Qi. Still, Long Xian left behind that map that led the Junior Progenitors to a trap, and if they were stuck there because of Long Qi, then losing the four Junior Progenitors would be well worth the price of sacrificing the Guan brothers. If all of this plays out, it's not impossible for Long Qi to be a Redback."

Qing Chen glanced over at Cai Shu. "You suspect Long Qi?"

Cai Shu replied, "Not even Master is able to find out who provided Long Qi with his information. Something that abnormal is suspicious."

Qing Chen laughed. "He can't be a Redback."

Cai Shu grew curious. "Why?"

Qing Chen's eyes flashed angrily. "Because Huaiyuan is just too important. That place is the site of the Cloud Shuttle, and it keeps a great deal of ugliness that the four ruling powers would prefer kept out of sight hidden. Shaman God clearly groomed and recruited the Guan brothers because of their position, and through them, it would be much easier to turn more traitors. Another reason is because of that ugliness."

Cai Shu felt lost. "Ugliness?"

Qing Chen did not offer much of an explanation. "The Guan brothers were more important than what you know. Even if sacrificing them allowed all four Junior Progenitors to be dealt with, it still would not be worth it. This is something that I know for certain."

Cai Shu did not respond. While he was privy to a great deal of information because of his position, and even though he knew about the Seven Skygods, his master had never said much regarding the four ruling powers other than to warn Cai Shu to stay away from them.

"What do you plan to do now, Master?" Cai Shu asked.

Qing Chen looked towards Huaiyuan. "Long Qi interacted with Guan Yun's scarlet eye insignia."

Cai Shu's body went stiff. "Do you mean to...?"

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One day later, Lu Yin was staring off into the distance. It was impossible to discern his thoughts.

Cai Shu approached with a smile.

Lu Yin was put on edge the moment he saw Cai Shu's smile. He had a premonition that something bad was about to happen.

"Long Qi, is your stay at Qing Chen Mountain still comfortable after spending some time with us?" Cai Shu asked. He was still smiling and had a very kindly expression.

Lu Yin's mind raced. What was this man implying? What was the right answer? This man's smile was so creepy!

"Long Qi?" Cai Shu pressed.

Lu Yin coughed. "Well, it's not bad."

Cai Shu smiled. "That's good—not bad. By the way, I remember that you don't want to return to Dragon Mountain."

Lu Yin's eyes flashed. All of a sudden, he actually did want to go to Dragon Mountain, and it was because Cai Shu's behavior was making him very uncomfortable. Still, in the end, Lu Yin replied, "I don't want to go there for the moment, but didn't Senior promise that I could stay here until the Junior Progenitor returns? Do I need to go to Dragon Mountain?"

Cai Shu nodded. "I did say that, but even if the Junior Progenitor returns, there's no need for you to return to Dragon Mountain. Princess Long Xi is missing, so your life there will be very difficult. That's why Master found another way out for you. This is a reward for your meritorious service. You probably already know that the information you gave us was very important. Not only did you complete the mission that you were given by the Fourteenth Gate, but you also provided us with a very valuable clue."

Lu Yin blinked. The first thought that entered his head was his previous reward of an opportunity to observe the Sword Monument. That had been both a mission and a reward, so Lu Yin quickly refused Cai Shu's offer. "Thank you, senior, but this junior has no desire to receive any rewards. Humility's Gate has already helped me enough, and this junior merely wishes to serve mankind. The task in and of itself is enough."

Cai Shu smiled and said, "It's not good to not reward efforts. If you aren't given proper rewards for your efforts, then it will demoralize many other people."

"No, that definitely won't happen since this junior is the one refusing the reward," Lu Yin quickly protested.

Cai Shu patted a hand onto Lu Yin's shoulder before emotionally stating, "If everyone had a mindset like yours, how would there still be any traitors or Redbacks? It's a pity, but Master once swore that he would never become a Progenitor as long as any traitors or Redbacks still exist. Long Qi, you must have the same ambition as Master."

Lu Yin pursed his lips and wanted to puke. Swore not to become a Progenitor? More like he couldn't.

Who would not want to achieve such power? Besides, by becoming a Progenitor, it would be even easier to fight against those monsters. Lu Yin had never expected Qing Chen to have made such a bold statement. It was no wonder why he had become Humility's Gate's Middle Realm Supervisor.

"Alright, there's no need to refuse. Master's reward is for you to take over the position of acting Gate Master of Humility's Gate's Huaiyuan Gate. Long Qi, you're like a carp leaping over the dragon's gate! You're going to leap from being a nobody in the Fourteenth Gate to being the acting Gate Master of the Huaiyuan Gate! This is the first time that anyone below the realm of an Envoy has been given the position of a Gate Master!"

Lu Yin felt like his brain was about to explode! Acting Gate Master of one of the nine gates in the Middle Realm? This- this was too high of a leap!

Lu Yin had been a member of Humility's Gate for a while, and he had gained a clear understanding of the organization. One of the most basic requirements to become a Gate Master was to be an Envoy. However, Lu Yin was only a Hunter. This was too inadequate! He was too far below the level needed to become a Gate Master.

Even though Lu Yin was only being given the position of an acting Gate Master, the effective authority was the same. The only key difference was that Lu Yin could be removed from the position at any moment.

Cai Shu was still offering his congratulations, but Lu Yin could not hear a thing. Huaiyuan Gate, acting Gate Master. Lu Yin had been stunned by this sudden news, and he felt certain that he was being used as bait for a trap.

Just why would Qing Chen give Lu Yin such a position?

Despite spending some time thinking about the matter, Lu Yin could not understand Qing Chen's purpose. Still, Lu Yin did know one thing: Huaiyuan Gate would be incredibly upset with him. After all, Lu Yin was the reason why the rest of Humility's Gate looked down upon Huaiyuan Gate. They had been led by a Redback and had become a joke.

Lu Yin's scalp went numb just by thinking about what would happen if he traveled to Huaiyuan Gate.

"Senior Cai Shu, this junior is too young! How could I possibly be given the position of Huaiyuan's acting Gate Master? Not to mention leading the gate, but how could I even qualify to be a captain at the gate?" Lu Yin immediately refused.

Chapter 1453: Nine Gates

Cai Shu laughed at Lu Yin's protest. "Young man, you already have quite a bit of experience. Are you sure that you only joined Humility's Gate a few months ago? You've already amassed several achievements in your name, not to mention all the information that you've provided over the last few days. You've stunned the Middle Realm's nine gates, and you seem to truly not know how famous you've become. Why, you were even the one to expose the Guan brothers. Your greatest strength is your ability to read into people's behavior.

"What is Humility's Gate's goal? It is not to fight or conduct war, but rather to capture traitors and Redbacks. Those who excel at such activities will climb the ranks. Look at Zhuo Si. He has not captured a single Redback from the moment he joined, so how did he become a Gate Master? It was entirely due to his strength. However, you're being promoted because of your ability to uncover people's secrets."

Lu Yin silently swore. This person was spouting such bullshit and flattering him. Only an idiot would be deceived by such words. It was insulting.

"Senior, this junior might as well be direct. Since I was the one to expose the Guan brothers as Redbacks, I will definitely encounter a great deal of resentment from everyone based out of Huaiyuan Gate. I'm afraid that no one will listen to me and that there will be problems because of this."

Cai Shu dismissively waved a hand. "Don't worry about that. Since Master has appointed you as acting Gate Master, he naturally won't allow you to go there empty-handed. If there's anyone you're already familiar with, just say their name, and Master will find a way to reassign them to you. There will be powerhouses to protect you, so act with boldness."

Lu Yin opened his mouth, wanting to protest further.

Cai Shu patted Lu Yin's shoulder with a hand, and he used enough force to nearly break Lu Yin. After all, Cai Shu was an Envoy. "Long Qi, don't forget about the oath you made just before joining the Fourteenth Gate. Master told me all about it—'I don't need any credit. I simply wish to do what I can for Humility's Gate and resist the foreign enemies.' Those were your words, right?"

Lu Yin was left truly speechless.

"You stated that you would never give up, correct?" Cai Shu continued to press further.

Lu Yin remained silent.

"Because of this, Master has given you this opportunity in order to see how far you can go after gaining the position of acting Gate Master. Try to relax and take on the job without any fear or hesitation," Cai Shuhao said. He had a refined appearance, so his arrogant act looked rather odd given his appearance.

Lu Yin wanted to cry, but there were no tears to spill. Why did it feel like he had tricked himself? Had he gone too far?

"By the way, Master has already convened the council of the nine Gate Master. Use these next few days to prepare a list of people that will be going to Huaiyuan Gate. It's always more easy on the mind knowing that you're using your own people." After delivering the news, Cai Shu left.

Lu Yin facepalmed. This was a problem. If he ended up becoming the acting Gate Master, he would also be constantly monitored by the supervisor. There had to be a reason behind this, and as Lu Yin's mind raced, he felt that it had to be connected to him mentioning Shaman God.

This thought became a flash of inspiration; Qing Chen—no, Xiao, wanted Lu Yin to act as bait to catch Shaman God!

Why did he believe that Lu Yin could draw out Shaman God?

Even after carefully reviewing everything that had happened and everything that he had said, Lu Yin was still puzzled.

It would be terrible if Lu Yin really had been hung up as bait to lure out Shaman God. Also, the guardian that Qing Chen was assigning to Lu Yin was not likely to be anyone terribly impressive. So should Lu Yin just leave as soon as possible?

Even though this was a different path than what he had planned, the end result would still be the same. Once he was in Huaiyuan, he would not be far from the rendezvous point that Unseen Light had shared with him. As for investigating the Lu family's exile, that would have to wait. Lu Yin could return here through Jupiter, and it would much be easier to investigate later.

This thought allowed Lu Yin to finally relax. He would just slip away, and then he would no longer need to worry about anything.

After thinking for a while, Lu Yin compiled a list of names of whom he wished to join him at Huaiyuan Gate for Cai Shu. The first person that he listed was Dashuai Wang. After all, the two of them had worked together before. Also, this could be considered as a way for Lu Yin to offer him some help, as the fatty must have been having a pretty bad time of things lately.

The second name was Liu Tianmu. The third was Xia Taili, and the fourth was Shang Qing.

Lu Yin wanted to help Shang Qing and Liu Tianmu return to the Fifth Mainland while Xia Taili and the fatty were just covers.

If everything went well, Lu Yin would soon return to the Fifth Mainland.

Lu Yin felt rather exhausted. There were incredible powerhouses in the Perennial World, and he had much more freedom in the Fifth Mainland. The Outerverse did not have that many Enlighters, and there were very few Envoys even in the Innerverse. Only in the Neoverse did experts abound, but even then, the power vessels that Lu Yin had recently gathered should be more than enough to keep him safe.

In the Perennial World, it was easy to stumble upon Envoys even in the Middle Realm. There was no need to even mention the Higher Realm, as even powerhouses on Long Kui's level were nothing more than errand boys there.

As for the Lower Realm, Lu Yin still remembered the giant anteater that he had seen, as well as the Ancestor Python, both of which left him feeling chilled.

Finally, there was the Dominion Realm, and several Progenitors were living there.

Lu Yin had to go back. He had made up his mind, and he had put his return as his top priority.

Some time later, Lu Yin turned in the list of names, which indicated that he had accepted the assignment. With his acceptance, Qing Chen appeared.

"This junior greets senior." Lu Yin bowed the moment he saw Qing Chen. Although Lu Yin was quite upset at the prospect of being used as bait, he still maintained a properly respectful attitude.

Qing Chen spoke gently. "Long Qi, Humility's Gate's Gate Masters hold very important positions. Do you know how many people dream of being given this job, even in the Higher Realm or within the four ruling powers? This old man is taking a risk in giving you this position, so even if you don't want it, you can't let this old man down."

Lu Yin grinned. "Yes! This junior will do his best to live up to senior's expectations."

Qing Chen felt satisfied. "Your cultivation is not impressive, and most of the missions given to Humility's Gate are more dangerous than what you can handle with your strength. Thus, this old man has decided to have Cai Shu follow you in order to keep you safe."

Lu Yin looked up, anxious. This old man clearly wanted to monitor Lu Yin. "Senior, this junior is confident in my abilities to protect myself. I have many rare power vessels that Long Xi gave me, and each one of them is enough to withstand an Envoy's attacks."

Qing Chen laughed. "So what? If you can do nothing but block attacks, then there's no reason for me to send you to take up the mantle of acting Gate Master. This old man wants to capture Redbacks and arrest traitors, not startle away some scavengers. Are you confident in defeating an Envoy? For example, you've already run into Guan Tong and Guan Hai. If this old man had not traveled to Huaiyuan, then Guan Tong would have killed you."

Lu Yin was rendered speechless. While he was currently capable of beating Guan Tong senseless, he could not say this out loud. Still, he had to try his best. "Senior, this junior is not used to being followed."

Qing Chen smiled. "I know that you are gifted when it comes to observing people and uncovering their secrets. You naturally have many secrets that you cannot allow others to discover. Don't worry. Cai Shu will not be directly observing you, and he will keep his distance. As long as there is no danger, he won't even appear, and he will also never interfere with whatever actions you take as the acting Gate Master. While he is also a part of Humility's Gate, his position is actually much lower than what yours will be. Thus, he will not qualify to interfere with your decisions. You can relax."

After hearing this, Lu Yin had no means to resist. "So Senior has already taken care of everything."

Qing Chen sighed. "Do you know why you were chosen to take over Huaiyuan Gate?"

Don't bullshit me. It's just because there was an opening! But Lu Yin verbally replied, "After considering it, I believe it's because Huaiyuan Gate currently lacks a Gate Master."

Qing Chen laughed. "It's because Huaiyuan Gate is far too important for the Gate Master to be casually appointed."

Lu Yin was lost.

Qing Chen earnestly explained, saying, "After Guan Tong was arrested, the very next day, a Gate Master requested to be transferred to Huaiyuan. Even though Huaiyuan Gate lost three powerhouses in one sweep, this person still wanted the Gate Master position more than you can even imagine. This is because the Cloud Shuttle is in Huaiyuan."

Lu Yin immediately searched through his memory for anything that he could recall about some Cloud Shuttle, but nothing came up. While he had Possessed several people in the Perennial World and had gleaned a bit of information about the Cloud Shuttle, he had not paid any attention to what he had learned.

"The Cloud Shuttle connects the Middle Realm to the Higher Realm. While the Bifrost does the same thing, there are important differences between the two. If there are any Redbacks or traitors within Humility's Gate, then they will most likely be among the ranks of the elders who have great accomplishments. This old man trusts you twice as much as them," Qing Chen solemnly explained.

Lu Yin gave a respectful answer. "This junior understands."

"Over the last few days, you have provided a great deal of information, and several traitors have been arrested. Taking into account your previous rewards, you have been awarded a total of six merit points. Don't feel that it's not enough. After all, your other rewards were not nothing either," Qing Chen said,

"As long as you are Huaiyuan Gate's acting Gate Master, your merit points will increase more and more."

Lu Yin was not overly concerned with gaining merit points. In the beginning, he had solely gained merit points in order to exchange them for a Medal of Righteousness, and eventually, a Medal of the Tree. If he had one of those, then he would receive Humility's Gate's protection even after retiring. However, it had become difficult for him to actually retire, as he had been assigned to be the acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate. As a bonus, if a Gate Master retired, they would not even need an Order of the Tree's protection, as no one would dare to move against such a person without legitimate cause.

One day later, Qing Chen convened the council of the Nine Gates, and Lu Yin officially met the Gate Masters. With the exception of the empty seat belonging to Huaiyuan Gate and Zhuo Si from the Yinshan District, Lu Yin was unfamiliar with the other seven Gate Masters, though he did know that all of them were powerhouses who exceeded normal Envoys.

"This is the new acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate, Long Qi," Qing Chen introduced.

There were eight communication crystals before Lu Yin, and he could see the images of the eight Gate Masters.

"Junior Long Qi greets his seniors," Lu Yin politely greeted the eight. He demonstrated a very humble attitude, and his face was somber, though it also had a trace of anxiety and expectations. Just a glance was enough to see an expectant youth who was full of ambition, though also very honest.

"Hehe, kid, do you know that there has never been a Gate Master whose realm was only that of a Hunter in the entire history of Humility's Gate?" Lu Yin's mouth went dry. The woman who had just addressed him was too seductive.

If Madam Nalan was the type of woman who could naturally and effortlessly seduce any human, then this woman was the type who put on a flirtatious act. Still, she was incredibly appealing.

And that was doubly so for the outfit that she was wearing. Lu Yin quickly glanced at it, as it was completely indecent.

"This junior knows that he is unqualified, so I hope to be able to learn a great deal from you seniors. I also hope that you seniors will offer me your advice. This junior would be grateful to all of you," Lu Yin spoke in a very respectful tone.

The woman chuckled again, and her red lips opened. "If you have the time, come to the Bifrost to play with this sister. I'll wait to give you advice when you visit me, though I'm afraid that you won't be able to handle it."

Lu Yin's face froze for a brief moment then he laughed hoarsely.

The woman was delighted.

Zhuo Si had been staring blankly at Lu Yin the entire time. This kid was the new Gate Master? This was too much to be a joke. How had the kid pulled this off? No matter how Zhuo Si wracked his brain, he could not come up with an answer.

Lu Yin turned towards Zhuo Si and smiled. "Uncle Si, we meet again."

Zhuo Si nodded and carefully observed Lu Yin. "Work hard."

Lu Yin nodded back. "Understood."

Chapter 1454: Gate Master?

The rest of the Gate Masters had nothing to say to Lu Yin as Qing Chen must have already quelled all of their anger over Lu Yin's appointment before Lu Yin joined the meeting. Otherwise, how could they accept a youth who was only a Hunter as an acting Gate Master?

"Alright, Long Qi, we're running out of time. Cai Shu is waiting for you outside, and he'll take you to Huaiyuan Gate. From now on, you are the acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate. These seniors will teach you about your job and responsibilities in the future. I hope that you will work quickly towards getting the 'acting' title off as soon as possible... Understand?" Qing Chen said solemnly.

Lu Yin put on a solemn expression as he slowly bowed. "This junior will live up to Senior's expectations."

He paused for a moment before continuing, saying, "This subordinate will definitely live up to the Supervisor's expectations."

With that, Lu Yin was dismissed by Qing Chen.

After Lu Yin left, an old man spoke up. "Master, is there any use to this? Humility's Gate was established to seek out the Seven Skygods, but even after so many years, they are still alive and well. Can that kid really draw out Shaman God?"

Qing Chen sighed. "If he has touched Guan Yun's scarlet eye, then yes. Shaman God will be able to sense the child's energy, and Huaiyuan's location is unique. Shaman God definitely will not give up."

"Given Shaman God's abilities, even Cai Shu cannot offer any form of protection for the child," another person pointed out.

"I know."

Everything had already been discussed with Qing Chen, but Qing Chen's attitude had remained firm.

Zhuo Si's eyes flashed. Using Long Qi as bait to lure out Shaman God was too simple. That individual was one of the Seven Skygods, and no one had managed to understand the full power of any of the Skygods so far. They treated Humility's Gate as nothing more than a joke.

Zhuo Si looked in the direction that Lu Yin had gone off in. That child was in grave danger. He was being set up as a road sign, and there was no way that Shaman God would miss it.

Outside Qing Chen Mountain, Lu Yin met with Cai Shu.

Cai Shu smiled. "Starting now, I'll be acting as your bodyguard."

Lu Yin smiled bitterly. "Senior, please don't mock this junior."

Cai Shu smiled. "It's not a joke. You've been given the position of a Gate Master, which means that you now publicly represent Humility's Gate. Given your new status, we cannot afford to let any accidents befall you. Let's go to Huaiyuan."

After speaking, the older man took a piece of white paper out of his cosmic ring and began to fold it.

Lu Yin's eyebrows rose upon seeing the paper, as he had collected more than 200 sheets of that paper from the cosmic rings of Long Tian and the others in the Dominion Realm. However, Lu Yin had never figured out what the paper was used for.

He watched as Cai Shu slowly folded the white paper, eventually forming a boat that was several meters long. The Envoy then stepped onto the paper boat and turned to look at Lu Yin. "Come on, let's go."

Lu Yin felt that this was amazing. Logically, a palm-sized piece of paper should fold into something even smaller, so how had the finished product become bigger? This was amazing.

Given the number of sheets of paper that he had taken from Long Tian and the others, Lu Yin felt that these papers were not that valuable. Instead, they seemed to be a commonly available item. Thus, Lu Yin did not ask any questions.

The white boat folded from paper flew up into the sky and started flying towards Huaiyuan. The speed of the boat was quite impressive, as it was not much slower than traveling on Gui's back.

Lu Yin touched his cosmic ring. The papers that he had taken seemed to be the Perennial World's spacecraft equivalent, though the papers were much more convenient.

"Senior, how did it go with the people on the list that I prepared?" Lu Yin asked.

Cai Shu replied, "Except for Xia Taili, there are no problems with anyone else."

"Xia Taili won't be able to come?" Lu Yin was actually secretly delighted, as he had only included the girl's name as a cover for inviting the others.

Cai Shu explained, "She is the Xia family's princess, and their Junior Progenitor is currently trapped in the Dominion Realm. Naturally, under these circumstances, the Xia family won't allow anything to happen to Xia Taili. So, their arrangements will entirely determine whether or not she is able to join you at Huaiyuan Gate."

Lu Yin made a show of being disappointed. "We worked quite well together in the Dominion Realm, so it would be unfortunate if she isn't able to come."

Cai Shu glanced at Lu Yin with a glint in his eye. "Is that the only reason?"

"Of course."

Cai Shu shook his head. "There's no reason to hide your motivations from me. I know that you want her to go with you because of her status as Shenwu's Sky's princess. That's not a bad idea. If she's working with you, then that would make many things easier for you. However, I feel that I need to remind you that you should not even consider trying to take advantage of her. Xia Taili is not stupid, and Shenwu's Sky won't allow you to use her since you are the son-in-law of the White Dragon Clan's main family. You need to be careful."

Lu Yin blinked. This actually made sense, though he had never thought about it before. Inviting Xia Taili had only been a cover for him to invite other people. As for why Lu Yin had invited Xia Taili over Wu Taibai from Shenwu's Sky, it was because Lu Yin felt a true friendship with Wu Taibai. Clearly, he

originated from Shenwu's Sky, but Wu Taibai had betrayed his own people. He had taken the Sixth Mainland's Progenitor of Combat as his master, showing that Wu Taibai had even managed to impress a Progenitor. Also, Wu Taibai had made a point of not using his imprint even when fighting in the Forgotten Ruins. He had concealed many things about himself.

The more secrets such a person held, the less trustworthy they became. Wu Taibai was not as good a choice as Xia Taili.

However, would Xia Taili be willing to work with Lu Yin? He licked his lips. It was possible, but certainly not likely.

While Lu Yin and Cai Shu were traveling towards Huaiyuan, Wang Dashuai had been imprisoned upon the Wang family's Junior Progenitor Planet. He was left tied up beneath the bridge between the Junior Progenitor Planet and the Island of Hope. The fatty was stuck there, though he occasionally let out yells.

"I didn't do it on purpose! Help me, Junior Progenitor! Please, come back soon..." Wang Dashuai's screams were unbearable for many people, but naturally, even more people gloated over his miserable fate.

Some nobody from the Wang family had suddenly managed to find two powerhouses to accompany the family's Junior Progenitor to the Dominion Realm. Wang Dashuai had believed that he had ascended to the sky with a single leap since he had provided his Junior Progenitor with experts. When he had stood side to side with Yu Chen, Xia Taili, and Long Xi, that moment had been the highlight of Wang Dashuai's life. As he stood at the end of the bridge and acted arrogantly towards the various young masters, he had felt famous.

However, fate liked to play jokes. While eagerly awaiting his Junior Progenitor's return, the fatty had discovered that Unseen Light and Yu Hua were both trespassers. Wang Dashuai had felt like his brain had exploded, and by the time he had come to his senses, he had been tied to the bottom of the bridge.

"I really didn't know—! Help—!" the fatty screamed.

Some distance away, Nong Sanniang rolled her eyes and sighed. It was useless to call for help. It was quite interesting that this guy had managed to recruit two trespassers. If the fatty's background was not readily known, no one would have believed that he was not a trespasser himself.

Life really did have its ups and downs.

There were many experts in Hope Restaurant who had been turned away by Wang Dashuai, and they all cheered, excited that they had not gone to the Dominion Realm.

After the fatty screamed for a bit, a powerhouse appeared from the Junior Progenitor planet and dragged Wang Dashuai up. The expert coldly delivered a new batch of orders. "The clan has sent out a new order for you. You are to go to Huaiyuan Gate and report in. From now on, you are a member of Huaiyuan Gate."

Wang Dashuai was still in a state of shock, so he was completely confused when he heard these orders. "Huaiyuan Gate?"

He first thought of the Guan brothers and assumed they had been acquitted. He knew it! Long Qi was definitely unreliable. After all, Guan Tong had been a Gate Master of Humility's Gate, so how could he possibly be a Redback? The fatty was just suffering one tragedy after another. He was being sent to Huaiyuan Gate after fighting against their Gate Master.

Also, that Unseen Light was supposed to be Long Qi's old friend, and although Yu Hua had been from Huaiyuan Gate, she supposedly had some connection to Long Qi. That Long Qi was a complete bastard! Wang Dashuai had treated that person like a brother, but he had been thrown into a pit in return. The universe was full of such bottomless holes. There was no loyalty left in the universe.

"I don't want to go! I don't want to go!" Wang Dashuai immediately shouted. He was actually ready to tie himself back up and jump off of the bridge. He would rather be left hanging here than go to Huaiyuan Gate. Any mission he took there could easily be his last.

"You don't have a choice. Get lost!" The man who had delivered Wang Dashuai's orders picked him up and tossed him away. Someone from Humility's Gate had already arrived to pick up Wang Dashuai.

On Shenwu's Sky's Junior Progenitor Planet, Xia Taili was caught completely off guard by the news. "What? I'm being assigned to Huaiyuan Gate? Says who? Am I sick? Why should I go?"

An old woman stood before Xia Taili and smiled at the girl before respectfully explaining, "Long Qi was appointed as the acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate. He said that he wanted to take a few of his old acquaintances with him as helpers. He mentioned your name, princess. Of course, you don't have to go if you don't wish to."

Xia Taili's mouth fell open, and she was completely flabbergasted. "Long Qi? Huaiyuan Gate's acting Gate Master? Long Qi?"

"Yes, it's Long Qi," the old woman affirmed.

Xia Taili was left speechless. "Long Qi? The son-in-law of the White Dragon Clan's main family? That Long Qi?"

The old woman nodded.

"Isn't he just a Hunter? What kind of Gate Master is he supposed to be? Who even gave him such a position? Are you sure that you heard right? Shouldn't he be the gatekeeper, not the Gate Master?" Xia Taili asked in a strange voice.

The old woman coughed awkwardly. "There's nothing wrong with my hearing. Long Qi has been appointed as the acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate."

Xia Taili felt as though she was trapped in a dream. She had believed that, now that Long Xi had gone missing, Long Qi would be rendered helpless and forced to fight against other members of the White Dragon Clan while also suffering retaliation from the members of the Celestial Frost Sect. She had never expected to hear that he had somehow become the acting Gate Master of Humility's Gate in Huaiyuan! Damn, was it really that easy to gain such a position?

At best, even the four Junior Progenitors could only gain the position of a commander within Humility's Gate, which was a far cry from the position of Gate Master. To put it bluntly, Long Qi had been given command over an entire region of the Middle Realm and was in charge of the lives and deaths of countless people. He could even frame almost anyone he wished!

Xia Taili's eyes lit up. Framed, retaliation. Framed...

Various ideas flitted through her mind, and she grew more excited the more she thought about the matter. She had not yet participated in such exciting matters. "Let's go! We'll go to Huaiyuan Gate."

The old woman was surprised. "You're actually going? You have no obligation to do so. No one can force you to go."

Xia Taili rolled her eyes. "Long Qi is an old friend of this princess, so how can I not help after being asked by a friend? That's just immoral! Hurry up and take me to Huaiyuan."

The old woman quickly acquiesced.

On the Celestial Frost Sect's Junior Progenitor Planet, Shang Qing was facing a sect elder and answering the elder's questions one by one.

Shang Qing had been subjected to this manner of questioning every two days since he had returned to the Junior Progenitor Planet. This was entirely because he came from Nest, and anyone who came from that prison was looked down upon by others. Everyone had acted politely before the excursion to the Dominion Realm because Bai Shaohong needed Shang Qing's assistance, but now that the Junior Progenitor had been trapped, everyone's attitudes had taken a complete turn.

"When the Junior Progenitor was fighting people in the Forgotten Ruins, why didn't you help?" The elder of the Celestial Frost Sect looked serious, and he even radiated a bit of killing intent.

"I had an opponent of my own, a man called Yao Xuan. He was trying to kill me, and his attacks were powerful," Shang Qing replied in a tone that was neither servile nor arrogant.

"You didn't know that your attacker was a trespasser at the time?"

"I didn't know."

"You didn't question it?"

"No."

"What did the young master tell you?"

"He did not give out any commands, as each of us had our own opponent."

"How did Dong He die?"

"I didn't see."

...

Questions were continuously asked, and Shang Qing steadily answered them all.

He has already been interviewed by several powerhouses from the Celestial Frost Sect. After all, it was impossible to completely verify Shang Qing's background since he had come from Nest.

Chapter 1455: Return to Huaiyuan

The elders grew more suspicious the more they were unable to learn anything at all. Still, there was an undeniable detail; if Shang Qing was on the same side as Yao Xuan, then Shang Qing should have left with Unseen Light. If he was a trespasser, he would have no reason to stay behind since the excursion to the Dominion Realm had already ended.

It was for this reason that no one actually believed Shang Qing to be a trespasser. Their repeated questions were only to satisfy the desires of some important people within the Celestial Frost Sect.

After a while, the elder stopped his interrogation. He stared at Shang Qing, and the old man's face relaxed. "Have you heard of Humility's Gate?"

Shang Qing was caught off guard. This was the first time anyone had asked him this question. "I've heard of it."

"You are to travel to Huaiyuan Gate to assist the Gate's acting Gate Master, Long Qi. Of course, you also have the option of staying on the Junior Progenitor Planet and awaiting the Junior Progenitor's return," the elder stated.

Shang Qing's expression remained unchanged, but his heart was in turmoil. Acting Gate Master Long Qi? Isn't that just Lu Yin? What happened? Hasn't it only been a few days? He's already keeping Princess Long Xi captive on Zenith Mountain, which means that she's effectively disappeared. Yet nothing happened to him, instead he became an acting Gate Master? Really?

Shang Qing was not naive. He had been raised and trained by the Hall of Honor since his childhood, so he was very well informed. But even he had no idea how Lu Yin had pulled off such a thing. Shang Qing was confident that Lu Yin had no true connection to the White Dragon Clan, but Shang Qing had grown a bit suspicious of the authenticity of Lu Yin's identity.

Seeing Shang Qing go unresponsive, the elder believed that the youth was unwilling to go, so the elder solemnly said, "The sect's decision has been made."

Shang Qing was momentarily stunned by this information, and he could not help but ask, "Why? I wish to wait for the Junior Progenitor to return. He promised to give me a high position within the Celestial Frost Sect."

Shang Qing's response cleared away any residual doubt that the elder might have held towards the youth. The elder's expression grew much gentler, and he felt like he was looking at one of his sect's youths as he looked at Shang Qing. "We already know how you feel about our Junior Progenitor, but even if he returns, he would still ask you to go to Huaiyuan. You should know how the Junior Progenitor feels about Long Qi. Didn't Miss Yu Chen tell you?"

Shang Qing shook his head.

The elder patiently explained, saying, "The Junior Progenitor has long admired Long Xi, the White Dragon Clan's princess. However, she ended up marrying Long Qi, which made Long Qi a thorn in the eyes of our Junior Progenitor. If you can eliminate Long Qi for our Junior Progenitor, he will be very happy upon his return."

Shang Qing's eyes lit up, and he was clearly very excited.

Just as the elder was about to continue sharing additional information, Yu Chen arrived. She respectfully asked, "Elder Xi Zi, could you give me a moment with Brother Shang Qing?"

It was only at that moment that Shang Qing learned that the elder was named Xi Zi. Shang Qing was not very clear about the Celestial Frost Sect's internal situation, but based on Yu Chen's behavior, it seemed that Elder Xi Zi had to be someone very important within the sect. Most elders were very respectful towards Yu Chen, but Elder Xi Zi was completely indifferent.

Elder Xi Zi nodded, but he did not move.

Yu Chen was not bothered. She moved behind Elder Xi Zi and then focused on Shang Qing. "Brother Shang Qing, do you and Long Qi know each other?"

"We saw each other in the Dominion Realm."

"Did you become friends?" Yu Chen pressed.

Shang Qing thought for a while. "I saved him during our return."

Yu Chen frowned. "Why did you never mention this before?"

Shang Qing frowned. "Why would I? We had to fight against the withered creatures together, and none of us would have returned without us all working together."

Yu Chen's eyes flashed. "Did Long Qi say anything to you?"

Shang Qing shook his head.

Yu Chen fell deep into thought for a bit, but then she smiled at Shang Qing. "What do you think of our Junior Progenitor?"

Shang Qing's eyes instantly snapped wide open. "I want to join the Celestial Frost Sect!"

Across from the youth, Elder Xi Zi showed a gentle smile, and his eyes grew increasingly softer. This child clearly held the Celestial Frost Sect as his goal, and his eyes clearly indicated his admiration and longing. The only issue was that he had been born into a lowly situation, but such a past could always be erased.

Yu Chen asked several more questions, but Shang Qing did not immediately have any answers, so he had to think through his responses.

However, this reaction helped to eliminate any doubts that Yu Chen had held, and finally, she only had one last question left: "Brother Shang Qing, Elder Xi Zi just told you that our Junior Progenitor would be delighted upon returning if you had already eliminated Long Qi for him. Would you be willing to do so?"

Shang Qing felt confused. "Since Long Qi is set against our Junior Progenitor, then why do you want me to go to Huaiyuan Gate? If you can come up with this plan, then he should have as well."

Yu Chen smiled gently. "No matter what reason he might have for his request, you can still go there and report his actions to me. Then, I can tell you how to proceed."

Shang Qing nodded. "I understand."

Before long, Shang Qing was taken away from the Celestial Frost Sect's Junior Progenitor Planet.

Yu Chen stared towards the Middle Ocean. It seemed like she was still able to see Shang Qing's back.

"You don't believe him?" Elder Xi Zi asked.

Yu Chen respectfully replied, "In a normal situation, there should be no reason for Long Qi to seek out anyone from my Celestial Frost Sect, or anyone with even a close relationship to us."

"Then why are you sending him?" Elder Xi Zi was surprised at this decision.

Yu Chen frowned. "I don't know about this situation. The only explanation that I can come up with is that Long Qi is not worried about us using Shang Qing against him. Either the two of them already knew each other from before, or the events in the Dominion Realm forced their interests to coincide."

"If that's true, then sending Shang Qing there is useless," Elder Xi Zi pointed out.

Yu Chen smiled. "Even an enemy holds value."

Elder Xi Zi glanced at Yu Chen in surprise. "Do you believe that Shang Qing is our enemy?"

Yu Chen did not deny it. She was used to assuming the worst possible outcome. However, as she had said, it did not matter even if Shang Qing did help Long Qi. She was fully confident that she would still be able to gather useful information from whatever Shang Qing decided to share, and then she would also be the one to ultimately deal with Long Qi. A tool did not need to be aware of its role in order to be useful. Even the ignorant could be properly used.

Liu Tianmu also received notice from where she was staying on the White Dragon Clan's Junior Progenitor Planet. She immediately set out towards Huaiyuan Gate in order to assist acting Gate Master Long Qi.

Liu Tianmu had been stunned when she first received the request for assistance. She was also unable to understand how Lu Yin had accomplished such a feat. Personally, she had been trying to come up with a plan to leave the Junior Progenitor Planet when Lu Yin had offered her an easy path out. He really could go anywhere.

Huaiyuan Gate was one of the Middle Realm's Nine Gates. It was also the Gate that was the most antagonistic towards Lu Yin.

After all, Lu Yin had lived in the Yinshan District for a period of time, and he had treated Huaiyuan as a field where he harvested merit points. In the end, he had revealed everything that he had learned from Guan Yun's memories, but that also meant that, in the short term, Lu Yin had no more leads on how to gather merit points at Huaiyuan Gate.

However, he also had not spent any time contemplating such a thing. Was there any reason to earn more merit points? Rather, Lu Yin wanted to slip away. He wanted to gather everyone together so that they could escape to the rendezvous point at the right moment.

Lu Yin looked up at Cai Shu who was up in front. At the moment, Cai Shu was Lu Yin's greatest obstacle.

"We're getting close to Huaiyuan Gate," Cai Shu reported.

Lu Yin looked past the older man and saw a strange sight off in the distance.

Huaiyuan Gate was surrounded by rings of rivers that flowed in space above the Middle Realm, and they were all flowing vertically. The rivers were held in the sky by some mysterious force, and each one contained islands and various creatures. Naturally, Huaiyuan Gate could also be found within the rivers.

Huaiyuan Gate was the strongest of the Middle Realm's Nine Gates. This was because there were two Envoys stationed at the Gate while the other eight Gates only had a single Envoy each.

This was also why Guan Tong had been able to become the Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate to begin with.

But with the recent events, Huaiyuan Gate had fallen from being the strongest of the Nine Gates to being the weakest. Lu Yin did not even need to guess to know that the people currently stationed at Huaiyuan Gate had to all be furious at him at the moment. They had been waiting for a new Gate Master, but it was impossible for any of them to expect a Hunter realm child to arrive.

That was the truth of the matter for most people in Humility's Gate. A Hunter was essentially a rookie, and were unqualified to be captains, let alone Gate Masters.

The moment he saw Huaiyuan Gate, Lu Yin felt his communication crystal vibrate, startling him. He was actually receiving a mission from the Fourteenth Gate. Specifically, it was a mission from Gate Master Xiao with command over some of the Fourteenth Gate's personnel, and it was for Lu Yin to act with discretion.

Was Lu Yin still a part of the Fourteenth Gate? He felt confused.

Given that Lu Yin had received a mission and support from Xiao, Lu Yin decided that he should continue to consider himself as a member of the Fourteenth Gate!

Huaiyuan Gate's headquarters was situated above the intersection of the rings of rivers, and the base actually occupied half of one river. It was on an island that floated within the middle of the river, and it was isolated from the water by a massive bubble. There were nearly a thousand cultivators living in the Gate, and other than people who wanted to speak with a recruiter or turn in a recommendation, everyone else needed to climb up to the Gate from the bottom.

The river was home to many creatures, and there were many very powerful ones. This represented the status of the Gate.

All of the cultivators based out of Huaiyuan Gate were present to greet Lu Yin when he arrived. No matter how much disdain they might feel for a child at the Hunter realm, they did not dare to show any form of disrespect given Humility's Gate's strict rules.

Lu Yin looked up and watched the water flowing above the giant air bubble. He could hear the calming sound of gurgling water, and occasionally, a massive creature would drift by. It was quite a relaxing vista, though it was a truly odd sight. At this thought, Lu Yin looked around to see thousands of pairs of eyes staring at him. He smiled at them. "I am Long Qi, the acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate, appointed to this role by the Middle Realm's Supervisor."

"We greet the Gate Master!" Thousands of cultivators bowed as one. Out of everyone present, there were nearly ten Enlighters, and the rest were Hunters, Cruisers, and Explorers.

Any one of the people before Lu Yin could act arrogantly in the outside world, as they all represented Humility's Gate, which no one dared to cross. But at this moment, they all bowed to Lu Yin.

Even an ordinary person would feel rather smug in such a situation, even if they tried their best to resist it. After all, Lu Yin was only a Hunter. However, this demonstration meant nothing to Lu Yin. He was the master of the Outerverse who oversaw seventy two weaves. There were not many sights that he had not already seen. After all, he had already seen the Daynight Flowzone be trashed before him, so there was no need to mention the army arranged in front of Lu Yin at this moment.

With the Guan brothers absent, Huaiyuan Gate's most powerful member was an Enlighter with a power level slightly above 400,000. However, the man was a weakling in Lu Yin's eyes. After all, any of his peers that had gone to the Dominion Realm could defeat every single person in Huaiyuan Gate.

Still, this was only the power of a single Gate, and there were nine Gates in just the Middle Realm. Normally, that also meant that there were at least nine Envoys in the Middle Realm, as well as Qing Chen, who was a Semi-Progenitor. This was a massive force within the Middle Realm, and not even Daynight Flowzone could come close to comparing to it.

After a few polite words, Lu Yin dismissed everyone back to their normal responsibilities.

The most powerful cultivator present approached Lu Yin and respectfully introduced himself. "Your subordinate, Chen Xiazi,¹ greets the Gate Master. May I show the Gate Master around the base and turn over all authority to you?"

Chapter 1456: Cloud Shuttle

"Chen Xiazi?" Lu Yin asked in an odd tone. "Can you not see?"

Chen Xiazi replied, "These eyes can see, but this heart cannot."

Lu Yin rolled his eyes before putting on a stoic facade. "Be a bit more clear."

"I failed to see that the Guan brothers were Redbacks. All of us here in Huaiyuan Gate are guilty," Chen Xiazi said in a deep voice.

Lu Yin shook his head. "That had nothing to do with you. If Redbacks were so easy to recognize, then we would not need to hunt them down. Alright, let's get to work."

"Yes, this subordinate will hand over the authority of this gate now," Chen Xiazi said.

The people of Huaiyuan Gate were not as difficult to deal with as Lu Yin had expected. Apparently, he had overthought the situation. No matter how upset they might be with the situation, they all kept their frustrations close to heart and were ready to perfectly execute all of Lu Yin's orders.

This was in line with the accepted behavior of Humility's Gate, and it could even be considered as part of the rules.

Water flowed through space, and light fell down from a sun high above. In other words, this place also experienced time normally.

The nights in Huaiyuan Gate were exceptionally beautiful. The dim light refracted through the flowing water before landing on the island within the river, which created a hazy and beautiful scenery.

During this time, Lu Yin observed everything in and around Huaiyuan Gate. He sighed emotionally at the realization that he was currently the acting Gate Master.

Huh? While checking Huaiyuan Gate's intelligence network, Lu Yin discovered that there was a jade butterfly among their members.

Yu Chen had created and trained the jade butterflies to act as her moles and spies within various powers throughout the Perennial World. Coincidentally, Lu Yin had once Possessed the old man that was Yu Chen's guardian, and during that time, Lu Yin had learned the identities and contact information of many jade butterflies. At this moment, he had just stumbled upon one of them.

Yu Chen was a vicious tactician, and she had actually even sent her jade butterflies to infiltrate Humility's Gate. Suddenly, Lu Yin thought of the gate in the Yinshan District. If that place had not been filled with spoiled and lazy silkpants, then Yu Chen would have most likely sent her jade butterflies over there as well. Lu Yin had been lucky that he had been initially sent to that particular gate. Any other option would have most likely resulted in Yu Chen out maneuvering him long ago.

Cai Shu glanced over at Lu Yin from the distance, but then he closed his eyes and relaxed. Just as Qing Chen had told Lu Yin, Cai Shu would not interfere in any of Huaiyuan Gate's affairs or any decision that Lu Yin made. The Envoy was nothing but a bodyguard at this time.

Or rather, he was an observer.

Lu Yin contemplated how he could lose his shadow, and just like that, a new, peaceful life for Lu Yin began.

Over the following days, Lu Yin wandered about the headquarters, becoming familiar with the place and his new subordinates. The truth was that Lu Yin was already very familiar with the headquarters itself. He had not accessed Guan Yun's memories for nothing.

After several days, Lu Yin saw a group of people being taken away by Chen Xiazi. After being asked about it, Chen Xiazi said, "There are traitors within that group, but there's no way to know who it might be. Thus, we have to interrogate them one by one."

Lu Yin glanced at the people. "How are you so certain that there's a traitor among them?"

"A nearby lord had a son with an exceptional innate gift that recently disappeared, and these are all the people who were in contact with the child. Unless rescued, the child will be either killed or taken away and raised as a traitor," Chen Xiazhi explained.

Lu Yin grew curious. "He has an impressive innate gift?"

"He has an innate gift of melting. He can melt anything that he touches."

Lu Yin nodded and waved a hand, allowing the group to be taken away.

Humility's Gate had their own interrogation methods, and Lu Yin saw no need to get personally involved in that process. He was nothing but a passerby, and he did not actually see himself as the Huaiyuan Gate Master. How could such an inexperienced person possibly be a Gate Master? Not to mention, he even had a guardian watching over him.

Lu Yin was nothing more than bait.

When Liu Tianmu arrived, her face was as expressionless as ever. She did not even smile when greeting Lu Yin, though Lu Yin was very happy to see her.

"I wonder, Tianmu, how old are you?" Lu Yin was bored, so he made some small talk with her while lazily leaning against a wall and watching the water flow by overhead.

Liu Tianmu was standing next to him and indifferently replied, "Older than you."

"You shouldn't be a part of the younger generation anymore," Lu Yin continued.

Liu Tianmu denied nothing.

Almost none of the youths who had entered the Perennial World were still considered a part of the younger generation in the Fifth Mainland.

"When are you going to get married? You're not too young for that anymore," Lu Yin asked. His boredom was only growing.

Liu Tianmu frowned. "That has nothing to do with you."

"That's why I asked." Lu Yin rolled his eyes.

Liu Tianmu simply stopped speaking.

Lu Yin pursed his lips. He was not actually asking these questions randomly. Rather, he was trying to lower Cai Shu's vigilance. After all, the more the powerhouse relaxed, the less attention he would pay to the youths. Negligence would give them the opportunity to slip away. Unfortunately, Liu Tianmu would not cooperate. The woman really was too stiff.

"Smile once in a while, or else you'll never get married," Lu Yin said.

Liu Tianmu stayed silent. She was too lazy to even pay any attention to Lu Yin.

Soon, a second person arrived: Shang Qing.

Lu Yin grew much more comfortable once he saw Shang Qing. Just as in the past, every time Lu Yin saw Shang Qing, he had three streams of ancestral qi swirling about him.

"Yu Chen asked me a lot of questions before I left. She clearly doesn't trust me." These were the first words out of Shang Qing's mouth when he saw Lu Yin.

Lu Yin shrugged. "Of course. I asked for someone who has close connections to the Celestial Frost Sect to come. Of course she won't trust you."

"And yet you still asked for me. You're not afraid of them looking into things?" Shang Qing grew increasingly confused.

Lu Yin said, "I have a plan. Yu Chen will definitely contact you, so just make a normal report to her. It won't matter."

Shang Qing nodded. He then proceeded to silently stand in place, just like Liu Tianmu. The situation once again returned to a very boring atmosphere.

This situation did not improve in any way until Wang Dashuai arrived.

"Bro- Bro- My bro-" Wang Dashuai was almost moved to tears the moment he saw Lu Yin. He acted like Lu Yin was his long-lost brother, completely forgetting about how he had cursed Lu Yin during his punishment on the Junior Progenitor Planet.

Lu Yin watched the pale-faced fatty rush towards him and wanted to evade as he was embarrassed by the entire situation. But this moment of hesitation allowed the fatty to embrace Lu Yin. "Bro! You don't know how your brother's suffered recently! The elders were upset, and they even tortured me! They left me hanging under the bridge so that everyone would laugh at me! I've lost all respect, and I don't know how I'll ever be able to show my face in public again. Bro, you're still loyal enough to ask me to come over here. Without you, I'd be done for..."

Wang Dashuai was truly weeping and venting as he clung to Lu Yin. All of the fatty's emotions had erupted after seeing Lu Yin.

Lu Yin was rendered speechless. While he had already known that the fatty would suffer after introducing two trespassers to his Junior Progenitor, Lu Yin had also played a part in Wang Dashuai's previous situation. "Okay, Brother Wang, it's all over now. You can find some peace here at Huaiyuan Gate. Your brother will take care of you," Lu Yin comforted.

The fatty felt overwhelmed when he heard Lu Yin's words, and he squeezed Lu Yin even harder. "Bro, you're the loyalest! I really read you right! Bro, you're the best!"

Lu Yin rolled his eyes, though he actually felt even more guilty. He did not have any intentions of saving Wang Dashuai by requesting him be transferred over to Huaiyuan Gate, as the fatty was merely a red herring for Qing Chen and the others. Lu Yin's goal was actually to slip away from Cai Shu.

Upon thinking of this, Lu Yin let out a cough, and he sympathetically patted the fatty on the back.

"Bro, no matter where you go in the future, your brother will go with you! We'll share the same blessings and tribulations!" Wang Dashuai loudly declared. His words and behavior made some of the people passing by momentarily stunned.

Liu Tianmu was nearby, and she glanced at Wang Dashuai. There was a hint of unspoken empathy in the depths of her eyes. She rarely sympathized with anyone, but Wang Dashuai's situation resonated with her. This fatty had been truly unfortunate to encounter Lu Yin.

Shang Qing had the same reaction, and the longer he observed the fatty, the more Shang Qing empathized with the man.

Wang Dashuai's arrival at Huaiyuan Gate stirred up a lot of excitement for Lu Yin. The fatty applied all of his skills, and within a mere two days, he had already become acquainted with most of the people in Huaiyuan Gate. While many people resented Lu Yin's presence, they had nothing against the fatty. His enthusiasm and excitement to get to know people caused them to let their guard down, and Captain Wang quickly reported to Lu Yin on the current situation within the gate through his interactions with all the members.

"Bro, the Cloud Shuttle is the most important thing here. It connects the Middle Realm to the Higher Realm. Anyone in the Middle Realm who wants to visit the Higher Realm needs to use the Cloud Shuttle, as the Bifrost is really too far away, you know? Every year, the Smokecloud Sect has to contribute a great deal of resources to Huaiyuan Gate," the fatty whispered in a report to Lu Yin.

Lu Yin grew curious. "Contribute resources? Why?"

Wang Dashuai glanced around, but only Liu Tianmu and Shang Qing were nearby. The fatty sneakily answered, "I don't know about all the details, but I've heard that there are some things that can't be revealed in the Middle Realm that have to be taken up to the Higher Realm along the Cloud Shuttle. Since Huaiyuan Gate has the right to inspect everything that passes through, it seems that the Smokecloud Sect is naturally concerned that Huaiyuan Gate will cause trouble for them, which is why they make such impressive contributions each year."

"How much?" Lu Yin had grown interested.

The fatty shook his head. "I don't know, but according to my estimates, it shouldn't be any less than hundreds of millions of star essence."

Lu Yin was surprised. That much? Hundreds of millions of star essence every year? That was insane! And this was only for Huaiyuan Gate, which meant the majority of the Smokecloud Sect's resources went to themselves and the four ruling powers. This indicated that the Smokecloud Sect received an annual income of billions of star essence from the transports that they delivered up the Cloud Shuttle.

"Also, that's just star essence. That stuff's useless for Envoys, and curios were also donated for the Guan brothers to use each year. Because of this, Huaiyuan Gate rarely inspects anything going up the Cloud Shuttle," the fatty eagerly finished his explanation.

Curios? Lu Yin knew that Envoys cultivated differently from those lower realm cultivators. Weaker cultivators needed to absorb star energy and circulate it through their bodies while Envoys used stellar energy, which could only be absorbed from the true universe. However, just like during a stellar

tribulation, anyone trying to cultivate stellar energy in the true universe would be attacked by the true universe, which meant that Envoys had to employ extreme caution while cultivating. This risk meant that they could easily suffer backlashes.

Many Envoys would use various methods to hide their energy, speed up their rate of absorbing stellar energy, or use certain means to resist the true universe's retaliation. Anything that Envoys could use to assist their cultivation was collectively referred to as curios.

Also, there were certain power vessels that Envoys could use to help them resist the backlash from the true universe, which meant that some power vessels could also be referred to as curios. It was not a term for a specific type of item, but rather a broad category of things that Envoys used to assist themselves in increasing their strength.

"Bro, you're the newly appointed acting Gate Master, and it's also about time for the Smokecloud Sect to visit and negotiate their donations for the year." The fatty looked excited.

Lu Yin felt frustrated. The Smokecloud Sect was a powerful force in the Middle Realm. They were not as powerful as the Liu family or Seed Garden's Nong family, but the Smokecloud Sect was certainly not weak either. Yun Tingting, who had helped Bai Shaohong, had come from the Smokecloud Sect.

"Are we supposed to just go talk to them like this? That's not a good idea," Lu Yin murmured.

The fatty suggested, "Why don't we go see the Cloud Shuttle first then?"

That sounded reasonable, and Lu Yin shot an admiring glance towards Wang Dashuai. The fatty had a quick mind. Although he was saying that they should go see the Cloud Shuttle, Wang Dashuai was actually suggesting that they look for some trouble, though he knew better than to say such a thing out loud.

Chapter 1457: Intimidation

The biggest difference between Lu Yin and the Guan brothers was that Lu Yin had no fear of stirring up trouble. The more chaotic the better. If he was being treated as a bait he should have the resolve of being a bait. Even if things went south, he believed that Qing Chen would clean up the mess behind him. If they couldn't be resolved, all the better. He would seek an opportunity to be absolved from this role. The more Lu Yin thought about it, the more resolved he became.

"So? Are we going?" Wang Dashuai looked like he was suppressing an even greater sense of anticipation than Lu Yin.

Lu Yin said, "We just need to wait for one more person."

"Who?"

Lu Yin looked up. "Her."

The fatty looked up to see Xia Taili slowly making her way towards them with a smile on her lips. The fatty was taken aback. "Her? Why's she here?"

Lu Yin was also feeling uncomfortable, as he had not expected Xia Taili to actually accept his request. She was someone who had been left with nothing to do but wait on the Junior Progenitor Planet for Xia Shenfei, so she certainly had the time to go to Huaiyuan Gate.

"Brother-in-law, you still remembered your relatives after climbing higher, and you didn't forget your little sister. Thank you." Xia Taili smiled at Lu Yin.

Lu Yin smiled back. "I didn't expect you to actually come."

Xia Taili smiled happily. "Of course! I was free, and I've always been quite interested in Humility's Gate. Also, brother-in-law just became the Gate Master here, which is fascinating. What's wrong? Do you not have any targets to arrest? You can always just arrest someone first and then interrogate them later."

Lu Yin saw Xia Taili's eyes glowing with excitement, and his own eyes flickered. "That's true. Come with me."

Xia Taili's eyes lit up even brighter. "Really? Alright, let's go! Don't even think about letting the target escape."

The fatty stayed right on Lu Yin's heels.

Liu Tianmu and Shang Qing were also nearby, and they similarly moved to follow after Lu Yin.

Cai Shu watched as the group of youths all left the headquarters. They were headed towards the Cloud Shuttle, so the Envoy quickly followed after them. As he looked up at the Mother Tree, he remembered his master's comment about a terrible darkness that hid in Huaiyuan; just what was this darkness?

Huaiyuan's unique location meant that it completely surrounded the Cloud Shuttle, sitting directly beneath the entrance to the Mother Tree's Higher Realm.

No matter who they were, if they wished to use the Cloud Shuttle to enter the Higher Realm, they had to travel to Huaiyuan. This also meant that Huaiyuan Gate had the authority to arrest and interrogate anyone passing through, which was the number one reason why the Smokecloud Sect always donated to Humility's Gate every year.

The Cloud Continent was a landmass formed from a strange smoke. Occasionally, a bit of the smoke would break free and drift up to the Higher Realm. There were thousands of these rising clouds at any given moment, and each one could carry anywhere from dozens of people to hundreds.

Countless people were lined up beneath this Cloud Shuttle, each of them waiting to board a drifting cloud and ascend to the Higher Realm. In addition, there were far, far more doing their best to submit an application so that they could also ascend.

Although the four ruling powers were based in the Higher Realm, that did not mean that they were the only forces in that place. There were numerous cities that needed servants to carry out tasks along with mysterious mountains and unfathomable oceans. People had an instinctive desire to explore, and the four ruling powers occupied less than half of the Higher Realm, and other people lived in the rest of the realm.

Also, there were many people who wanted to join one of the four ruling powers or learn from them.

As far as the people of the Middle Realm were concerned, reaching the Higher Realm was a glorious achievement in and of itself. They were willing to pay a steep price, and that was an important source of the Smokecloud Sect's income.

Lu Yin and his party moved closer and closer to the Cloud Shuttle. Half of it floated in the air while the other half was connected to the Mother Tree's trunk. This meant that as they moved closer to the Cloud Shuttle, they were also moving closer to the Mother Tree.

Lu Yin felt an involuntary shudder. Every time he saw the Mother Tree's trunk, it looked like it connected the sky to the ground. Just how could a tree be so large? It was absurd! Even if he looked to the side, it was impossible to see the trunk's edge. It had formed a wall that was the border of the Middle Realm.

On the other side of the Mother Tree's trunk was a massive battlefield.

The trunk protected the Middle Realm from that battlefield.

"Are we targeting someone near the Cloud Shuttle?" Xia Taili was getting more and more excited. She certainly knew of the Cloud Shuttle.

As Lu Yin observed the busy Cloud Shuttle and the numerous disciples from the Smokecloud Sect who were standing guard there, he nodded.

"So we are going after someone from the Smokecloud Sect!" Xia Taili's eyes had lit up brightly. She looked quite eager to proceed.

Lu Yin grew curious. "Were you hoping to go after someone from the Smokecloud Sect?"

Xia Taili rolled her eyes. "No. I'm just asking."

Lu Yin felt that Xia Taili's attitude was a bit strange. He looked over at Wang Dashuai, who was similarly confused.

A short while later, Lu Yin and his group slowly walked towards one of the clouds in front of the line. Everyone in the queue looked at them curiously.

When it was this close to the Cloud Shuttle, the line was very quiet and somber. It cost a substantial price to enter the Higher Realm, and everyone had to pay. No one wanted to be disqualified due to any sort of mistake, and Lu Yin and his group had appeared rather abruptly.

They quickly drew the attention of the members of the Smokecloud Sect.

The Smokecloud Sect's disciples were typically arrogant and acted above everyone as they shouted at the people lined up, but the attitude of Lu Yin and those with him had caught the disciples flat footed. They did not quite know how to react.

This confusion allowed Lu Yin and those with him to peacefully step foot onto the cloud.

Lu Yin looked at the Smokecloud Sect disciples who were still some distance away. He asked, "So, no one's concerned about us?"

Xia Taili lifted her head arrogantly. "They must have recognized me."

Shang Qing said lightly, "They're calling our bluff."

"Is that the case?" Lu Yin muttered to himself. He lifted his hand and pointed towards a disciple with a mustache. "You, come here."

There was a rule that most cultivators knew before arriving at the Cloud Shuttle, which was that the price to pay was not to ascend to the Higher Realm, but rather to receive the qualification to enter the Cloud Continent, so the question was, who was going to take you to the Cloud Continent?

It was easy to find the Cloud Continent, but one was not able to ascend however they pleased. A person would first need to wait in line, then wait to be told which specific cloud they could use to ascend, and then finally be appointed a guide who would control the cloud. These guides charged a fee, and payment was to be made to the custodian of the Cloud Shuttle, and those payments were made to the Smokecloud Sect.

There were thousands of rising clouds in the Cloud Shuttle's area, and they could be merged together or dispersed depending on what was needed. Everything was arranged according to a schedule, and anyone hoping to go to the Higher Realm needed to follow the schedule and cloud that they were assigned to.

Scheduling was very complicated, or at least it seemed to be, and there was also the fee paid to Cloud Continent's guides. Even after qualifying to enter the Higher Realm, if the guide's fee was not paid, a person could only wait, as they would never be scheduled.

Not everyone was willing to pay the guides' fees. There were some people who were absolutely confident that they could enter the Higher Realm without paying the guides' fee, and they were content to wait several months. However, after being forced to wait for more than a year with no end in sight, everyone eventually caved and paid the fee to enter the Higher Realm.

Given these examples, most people were aware that the guides' fee was absolutely necessary.

"Second Master, what are those people doing? They don't seem to be getting in line." A younger disciple standing behind the disciple with the mustache whispered to the older disciple with a malicious gleam in his eyes.

The mustached disciple slowly sipped his drink. "The only reason why someone would come in here and act so brazenly is if they have an impressive background. Don't worry about them."

"What if it's just an act?"

"Then they'll be out of luck," the older disciple angrily retorted.

Right after that, the younger disciple stepped forward, approached the group of people who were led by the youth pointing his finger, and allowed the group through.

The mustached disciple blinked; was this person insane? He was the Cloud Shuttle's chief dispatcher. While this was not a high position, it was still one with great influence. In particular, he had a powerful backer within the Smokecloud Sect. Despite all of that, this person who had barged into the Cloud Shuttle seemed to be completely unconcerned by such things.

The mustached disciple was not stupid, and he was actually quite sharp, which was how he had managed to become the chief dispatcher. After quickly analyzing the situation, he realized that regardless of who this youth was, he was not someone who the mustached disciple could afford to offend. Thus, he straightened out his clothes and walked over.

"Young Master, what are your orders?" The mustached disciple approached Lu Yin with a warm smile. He looked like the ideal customer service worker.

Lu Yin was stunned. Such behavior made it difficult to try to stir up trouble. Weren't there rumors that the Smokecloud Sect's disciples were crazy? The Cloud Shuttle was the Perennial World's version of the Astral River Ark, and those who controlled such a ferry system would invariably enjoy a higher status and grow arrogant. What was going on? This guy should be full of himself.

"Get the person in charge of this piece over here for me," Lu Yin casually demanded. He was assuming that the mustached man's position was just too low. As soon as someone with an appropriate position appeared, they would definitely show a different attitude.

The mustached disciple showed an even more modest smile. "This little one is the chief dispatcher of the Cloud Shuttle. I wonder, what might Young Master need?"

"You? Isn't the chief dispatcher that kid, Yun Yang's, lover?" Wang Dashuai stuck his head forward and asked a strange question.

The mustached disciple's expression changed the moment he saw Wang Dashuai. "You? You're here again?"

Lu Yin looked back at Wang Dashuai. The fatty's reaction at this moment was a bit strange. He seemed worried and as if he was dreading something. Suddenly, Lu Yin remembered how the fatty had talked about the Cloud Shuttle, and it seemed as if the fatty was trying to use Lu Yin to exact some vengeance.

At this moment, a cloud descended at the side, and an angry voice called out, "Is that Fatty Wang? How dare you come to my Cloud Shuttle!"

Lu Yin and the others looked over to see a young man yelling at them. He was quite handsome, but his face was very pale. It was readily apparent that his body had been ravaged of all color, and it almost seemed like his eyes were simply floating in the sky and looking down at them.

The mustached disciple quickly stepped forward when he saw the young man and respectfully greeted him. "Young Master."

Wang Dashuai shouted, "Grandson Yun! Your fat master's here, so what's the problem?"

The young man sneered as he looked at Wang Dashuai. "There's no problem. I'm just telling you that this place is a dead end for you."

"Are you a toilet bowl? If you said the route is stuck, it's stuck?"

"Fatty Wang, you better watch your words! This is the Cloud Shuttle, which is my Smokecloud Sect's domain. Just watch me throw you out!"

"You wouldn't dare! I'm from the Wang family!"

"Hmph, you think that I don't know that? You brought trespassers to your very own Junior Progenitor's team, and the Wang family is about to disown you! I'll just give them a head start."

"Try it!"

"I won't just try!"

...

Xia Taili was excited, and her fists were clenched tight. She looked like she wanted to run over and join the fight.

Lu Yin nudged her. "Who is 'that kid'?"

Xia Taili excitedly replied, "He's the Smokecloud Sect's young master, Yun Yang. He's also Yun Tingting's cousin. His status in the sect is very high, and he's known as the little overlord of the the Cloud Shuttle. The fatty fought with him before, and their fight got both the Wang family and the Smokecloud Sect involved, which was why the fatty was dispatched to the Yinshan District."

Lu Yin had guessed right. It was no wonder why the fatty had wanted to come here to make trouble at the Cloud Shuttle; he wanted to settle an old grudge. The little overlord of the Cloud Shuttle? That was an arrogant enough title.

Chapter 1458: Polarization

"Get over here! Get rid of this fat corpse and his posse for me!" Yun Yang shouted. He had not glanced at Lu Yin and the others even once, as he had only been staring at Wang Dashuai this entire time.

Wang Dashuai sneered. "Grandson Yun, do you really have the guts to throw out Huaiyuan Gate's new Gate Master?"

The fatty then stepped aside.

Yun Yang's gaze slipped past Wang Dashuai, and he finally looked at Lu Yin and the several other people. "What are you talking about? The Gate Master? Guan Tong? He's dead. He was a Redback, and he's dead. You're trying to trick me, you fat corpse."

Wang Dashuai stayed silent, though he did have a sneer on his face as he stared at Yun Yang.

While Lu Yin was not happy that the fatty had used him in such a manner, he indeed wanted to cause some trouble. Wang Dashuai had assumed that Lu Yin wanted to put his foot down in a way that would force the Smokecloud Sect to offer Humility's Gate more donations, but all Lu Yin wanted was the chance to slip away.

The best way for Lu Yin to make his escape was to find someone who could keep Cai Shu occupied. The bigger the mess, the higher Lu Yin's chances of escape. The Smokecloud Sect seemed like the perfect target, especially when little overlord Yun Yang showed himself.

However, before Lu Yin could speak, Yun Yang's expression changed the moment he saw Xia Taili.

"Princess Taili? Why are you with Fatty Wang?"

Lu Yin abruptly choked on the words that he had just been about to speak.

Xia Taili waved a hand. "I'm just passing by, so don't worry about me. Just do whatever you want, as it has nothing to do with me."

Despite her words, Yun Yang grew nervous.

Xia Taili was not the same as Wang Dashuai. She was the princess of Shenwu's Sky as well as Junior Progenitor Xia Shenfei's little sister. Let alone Yun Yang, even if the Smokecloud Sect's master were present, he still would not behave too casually towards Xia Taili.

Yun Yang glared at Wang Dashuai, but then he quickly smiled at Xia Taili. "Since Princess Taili is here, I won't disturb the princess with a bad atmosphere. I'll let the fat man go for now."

Wang Dashuai grew increasingly more relaxed, and he sneered in an antagonistic manner that looked extremely rude.

Xia Taili frowned. "He's got nothing to do with me, so just do whatever you want."

She was eager to watch a fight, as she was hoping to see some fun. Unfortunately, regardless of her protests, there was no possibility of Yun Yang causing any more trouble. He was not stupid.

Xia Taili grew disappointed.

Lu Yin stepped forward and looked at Yun Yang. "Are you the person in charge of the Cloud Continent?"

Yun Yang frowned. He shot a glance towards the fatty, but then he noticed that the fatty was actually following this person, as was Xia Taili, which scared Yun Yang. "Might I ask who you are, your Excellency?"

"Huaiyuan Gate Master Long Qi," Lu Yin casually replied.

Yun Yang was caught off guard. "You're Long Qi? The Long Qi who's the son-in-law of the White Dragon Clan's main family?"

"That's me." Lu Yin stared at Yun Yang.

Yun Yang stared back at Lu Yin, still not quite believing the situation. "When did you become the Huaiyuan Gate Master?"

A smile spread across Lu Yin's face. "It looks like your status isn't sufficient, if you haven't even been informed of this."

Yun Yang frowned. "Historically, every single one of Humility's Gate's Gate Masters has been an Envoy. How could you possibly be a Gate Master, let alone the Huaiyuan Gate Master? You actually dare to pretend to be a Gate Master?"

"Idiot! Not even someone trying to die would pretend to be a Gate Master! With your stupidity, how were you ever put in charge of the Cloud Shuttle?" Wang Dashuai jumped forward and mocked Yun Yang.

Yun Yang felt that this was a valid point after a moment's thought. He whispered something to his followers, looked at Lu Yin, and then casually asked, "Even if you are the new Huaiyuan Gate Master, I

still don't know why a Gate Master would visit my Cloud Shuttle. Do you want to visit the Higher Realm?"

Lu Yin clasped his hands behind his back and looked as if he was inspecting something.

Yun Yang's expression froze. "Is Huaiyuan Gate Master saying that my Smokecloud Sect has a traitor?"

Lu Yin laughed. "The Smokecloud Sect has more than a mere traitor."

"That's nonsense! You dare to slander my Smokecloud Sect?" Yun Yang shouted angrily.

Lu Yin calmly looked back at the youth. "If there are any, I'll know after an investigation. As the Huaiyuan Gate Master, I have the authority to investigate the Cloud Shuttle, as well as the Smokecloud Sect."

Yun Yang clenched his fists and glared at Lu Yin. He then looked at Wang Dashuai's gloating face. Yun Yang took a deep breath and then sneered. "It looks like we have an unwelcome visitor today. Long Qi, I would like to remind you to not allow yourself to be used by others. While it's not that you are not authorized to inspect, there are certain places that you should be careful of inspecting, as there are some consequences that you cannot bear. It would be best for you to first check with your seniors to see if you can even investigate my Smokecloud Sect."

"Are you threatening me?" Lu Yin's eyes grew cold.

Yun Yang sneered. "It's just a reminder. You don't want to be a Gate Master who's replaced after just a few days, as that would be too embarrassing. That wouldn't only humiliate you, but it would also humiliate the White Dragon Clan."

"You don't qualify to give me such reminders," Lu Yin replied indifferently.

Yun Yang's expression grew sharper.

Lu Yin looked elsewhere, where an old man was approaching them.

Yun Yang quickly stepped forward when he saw the old man. "Third Elder-"

The old man raised a hand to stop Yun Yang before he said anything and then addressed Lu Yin with a smile. "The Smokecloud Sect's third elder greets the Huaiyuan Gate Master."

Lu Yin nodded, though his hands remained clasped behind his back. "Those are easy words to say."

Yun Yang was displeased with Lu Yin's attitude, but the old man was unperturbed. "Gate Master Long has come today, and I assume it's to familiarize yourself with the Cloud Shuttle. This old man happened to be free, so should I take Gate Master Long on a tour? If there is anything that you wish to see or any questions you may have, then please just speak. This old man knows everything about this place."

Lu Yin felt helpless; he had run into a peacemaker. Such old people were the most difficult people to deal with, as they made it impossible to kick up any trouble.

While it looked like the day's issues would stop at this point, the elder was still being respectful enough. "Then I'll have to trouble the third elder to show us around."

"It would be this old man's honor," the old man said with a smile as he gestured invitingly.

Wang Dashuai felt disappointed, and Xia Taili was even more frustrated, but neither of them had any idea that Lu Yin was the most upset one over this development. There was no possibility of stirring things up or making a bigger mess out of a minor conflict. At the very least, he would try and leave a poor impression on the other party, so that things would proceed smoothly in the future.

However, the old man showed such a pleasant attitude that Lu Yin would only embarrass himself if he continued trying to make a mess. What's more, he felt that it would be highly unlikely for him to encounter Yun Yang the next time he came to visit the Cloud Shuttle. They were being careful so that the rookie Gate Master did not stir up too much trouble.

The Smokecloud Sect was able to endure despite the existence of the four ruling powers, so it was clearly governed by intelligent people.

Each of the floating clouds could carry at least dozens of people, and there were also larger clouds that were able to ferry hundreds or even thousands of people. The floating clouds spread into the distance, and there were countless people queued up to board them.

Lu Yin felt the urge to visit the Higher Realm as he looked at all of these people lining up.

He truly did want to visit the Higher Realm, but given his current situation, he could not make such a journey casually.

The third elder led the youths along, and they made their way from west to east. Whenever Lu Yin asked anything about the Smokecloud Sect, the third elder would immediately have the person in question answer Lu Yin's question. No matter how small or petty the question was, the elder's attitude remained perfectly respectful to the point where it was impossible to pick out any faults.

Lu Yin felt helpless, and he glanced over at the fatty, hinting for Wang Dashuai to find a means to start a conflict.

The fatty had a headache himself. He glared defiantly at Yun Yang, but Yun Yang restrained himself and completely ignored the fatty, which left Wang Dashuai utterly helpless.

"Third Elder, is everyone who wishes to enter the Higher Realm required to have their possessions inspected?" Lu Yin watched as a cultivator in the distance handed his cosmic ring over to a Smokecloud Sect disciple and then drip a bit of blood onto the ring. The disciple then emptied the ring and asked the cultivator some questions.

Elder Yun San smiled as he replied, "Yes. The four ruling powers are based in the Higher Realm, so no dangerous objects are allowed in."

"What is considered a dangerous item? Cultivators typically carry weapons. Wouldn't a weapon be considered a dangerous item?" Lu Yin asked.

The third elder explained, "No weapons or power vessels are allowed to be taken to the Higher Realm. If you want a weapon, then you must buy one after arrival, unless special permission is granted to a traveler. This is all done to ensure the safety of the Higher Realm's youths. There are specific rules in

place, and all of the weapons in the Higher Realm are manufactured by the four ruling powers. Those weapons are all registered, so every weapon can be tracked back to its origin."

"It's also quite normal for a cultivator to form a weapon from their star energy, so how would that be tracked?" Lu Yin continued his line of questioning.

The third elder explained, "Naturally, it's impossible to trace such a weapon to its source. For the time being, all we can do is restrict the entry of outside weapons. There are many situations that we cannot affect. Still, we are improving our methods as time passes. There are rumors that the four ruling powers are working on developing some means of tracing the origins of star energy attacks, and once they are successful, any cultivator who enters the Higher Realm will leave behind traces when using their star energy."

Lu Yin's expression grew solemn, as this news defied all that he knew to be true!

For cultivators, fighting, absorbing star energy, releasing star energy, and creating a weapon out of star energy in self-defense were all common occurrences. And yet, the four ruling powers were restricting cultivators in order to protect their own youths. From Lu Yin's perspective, this was not merely a means of protecting their youths, but rather a means of creating a greater disparity.

The four ruling powers were the most powerful organizations in the Perennial World, and their youths were naturally far more powerful than the other youths of the Middle Realm. There was no need for the four ruling powers' youths to be protected through this method, so this was more of a means to highlight the status of the four ruling powers. The four ruling powers were the elite, and everyone else was considered lower class.

Lu Yin did not know who had formulated this plan, but if it was carried out, then it would lead to the formation of a strict caste system in the Perennial World. This would make cultivators who were not a part of the four ruling powers be more and more intimidated by the four ruling powers' cultivators. The further things progressed, the less anyone would dare to resist.

"Would you happen to know who's behind this rule that prohibits weapons from entering the Higher Realm?" Lu Yin asked.

Elder Yun San looked up and admiringly said, "Lady Bai Xian'er."

Lu Yin's eyes narrowed, and he looked over at Shang Qing. They both saw contemplation in each other's eyes.

After quietly observing the inspections for a while, Lu Yin still found the matter of people turning over their cosmic rings for inspection to be quite bizarre. Personally, Lu Yin would rather not visit the Higher Realm than turn over his cosmic ring for someone else to inspect it. On top of that, there was also the matter of not being allowed to bring any weapons or power vessels.

Some of the people being inspected appeared indifferent, others looked angry, and even others were placative. The reactions to the inspections ran the gamut. There were also some weapons that were confiscated, and while some cultivators wanted to resist, they were all intimidated by the Smokecloud Sect. Thus, they could only swallow their objections.

None of the confiscated weapons would be returned.

"Hey, that person was taken aside and skipped being searched," the fatty commented in surprise.

Lu Yin had noticed the same thing. There was an arrogant-looking middle-aged man. Not only had he been separated during the inspection, but he had also skipped the queue and been led straight to the front by the Smokecloud Sect's disciples.

"Hehe, he's an old friend of my Smokecloud Sect. Huaiyuan Gate Master should understand that procedures can be made convenient for certain people," the third elder said with a smile.

Chapter 1459: Stellar Liquid

Lu Yin smiled. While the third elder's attitude seemed casual, his pupils had actually fluctuated when watching the arrogant middle-aged man pass through the inspection. It seemed that the man was someone important, but he did not seem to be anyone important enough to warrant such a reaction from the third elder. It was either the person who had caused the reaction, or, more likely, it was the what the man carried in his cosmic ring.

At this thought, Lu Yin moved out and made his way towards the man.

The third elder was shocked at Lu Yin's actions, and he quickly moved to block Lu Yin's path. "Gate Master Long, I'm not sure where you are wanting to go, but perhaps this old man can help you?"

Lu Yin took some quick steps to bypass the third elder. The older man wanted to stop the youth, but was not able to do so. By the time he had reacted, Lu Yin had already moved past the elder, which shocked the old man, though it was not entirely unexpected. After all, Long Qi had qualified to enter the Dominion Realm.

Anyone who qualified to visit the Dominion Realm was one of the most powerful youths in the entire Perennial World.

"Gate Master Long!" The elder shouted loudly, but Lu Yin was already in front of the middle-aged man. Many of the Smokecloud Sect's disciples surrounded Lu Yin and watched him with wary eyes.

Liu Tianmu's sword left its sheath. Sword qi lingered in the void and chilled all of the disciples. Even if ignoring the disciples, even the third elder felt his scalp tingle. Yun Yang swallowed what he had been about to say when Liu Tianmu's sword qi trembled. This qi was so terrifying that he felt as though he could be destroyed at the swordswoman's whim.

The middle-aged man was completely unconcerned with Lu Yin. The man merely indifferently glanced at Lu Yin before preparing to take his things and leave.

Lu Yin set a hand on the man's arm. "Brother, wait."

The man frowned and looked at Lu Yin with an expression of frustration. "What's the problem?"

The third elder finally arrived and he quickly spoke to Lu Yin, "Gate Master Long, what are you doing? Please don't disrupt the work of my Smokecloud Sect."

Surprise filled the middle-aged man's eyes when he heard Lu Yin referred to as Gate Master Long. Gate Master was not a common title, nor one casually used by a Smokecloud Sect elder. Realizing the situation, the man's expression softened a bit.

Lu Yin smiled. "What is Elder so worried about? I'm just curious about how you inspect people's belongings, so I wanted to try for myself."

The third elder replied, "That's easy enough. If Gate Master Long will just wait a moment, this old man will set something up and you can perform inspections on as many people as you wish."

A smile spread across Lu Yin's face. "Wait for what? Isn't this one already ready?"

As Lu Yin spoke, he turned to look at the piles of belongings that had come from the middle-aged man's cosmic ring.

The third elder's expression changed drastically. "Gatmaster Long, this gentleman is one of my Smokecloud Sect's distinguished guests, so please stay your hand. My Smokecloud Sect would be most grateful, and I will prepare a generous gift for you later. Humility's Gate's Gate Masters are able to gain many riches."

The people of the Smokecloud Sect were not stupid. They had already guessed at the motivation behind Lu Yin's visit.

Wang Dashuai felt satisfied, as this had been specifically his purpose in leading Lu Yin into visiting the Cloud Shuttle, and it looked like he had achieved his goal.

However, no one was able to guess at Lu Yin's real motivation. The more that the third elder showed that he did not want Lu Yin to search the middle-aged man's possessions, the more intrigued Lu Yin became. "Don't worry, Elder. No matter what's found, it has nothing to do with me. I just want to take a look."

The third elder's face went pale, and suddenly he lifted his hand and reached for the hand that Lu Yin had placed on the middle-aged man's arm.

However, the moment the elder moved, Liu Tianmu reacted, and the tip of her sword pointed straight at the elder's throat.

The third elder was not weak, and his smoke was actually able to block the sword qi for a moment, which allowed him to touch Lu Yin's wrist.

Liu Tianmu's eyes grew sharp, and she spun her sword: Fourth Sword. The third elder Yun was horrified, and he immediately retreated, as he was not capable of standing up to this attack.

Lu Yin's hand never moved from the middle-aged man's arm.

The man did not panic, and he simply looked at Lu Yin. "Young man, there are certain things that are better to not know about."

Xia Taili's eyes lit up. "Hey, what're you hiding? Are you that afraid of being discovered? This princess must see what you have before you can leave."

The man frowned and glared at Xia Taili. He spoke quietly, "Young lady, don't make a mistake."

He did not know who Xia Taili was.

Xia Taili's eyebrows rose. "Oh, you actually dare threaten this princess! You're finished! Your whole family is finished! Move for this princess!"

The third elder gritted his teeth and he suddenly attacked. His smoke formed chains that bound everyone, and at the same time, the Smokecloud Sect disciples surrounding them attacked Lu Yin and Xia Taili.

The moment the elder made a move against Xia Taili, Lu Yin knew he had caught a big fish. There had to be something extremely important in the pile of items to be inspected.

The middle-aged man also took action. He had a similar level of strength as the third elder, and his arms trembled to allow his body to break free of the smoke. He immediately attacked with powerful battle techniques that targeted the nearby area.

What was he using? Wind God Slash? That was one of the Celestial Frost Sect's techniques.

Lu Yin had not expected this person to be someone from the Celestial Frost Sect. The arm that was holding the man trembled, and a terrifying power of the Overlaying Stacks Path fell upon the man with the weight of a mountain and crushed him to the ground, instantly obliterating his Wind God Slash.

Liu Tianmu attacked with her sword and cut through the third elder's smoke. Still, some of the smoke approached the items that had been inspected and tried to sweep them away.

At that moment, a stream of qi shot forward and forced back the third elder's smoke.

The elder was shocked, and he turned to look at Shang Qing in surprise. The Smokecloud Sect's smoke was not something that could be dealt with so easily, so just who was this youth?

Everything happened in less than a second, and when everything was resolved, Xia Taili was already at the pile of the middle-aged man's belongings.

The man's expression changed completely, and he shouted in fury, "I'm warning you, don't make a mistake! You're only going to cause a great deal of trouble, and no one will be able to save you."

A terrifying aura suddenly fell upon the area and suppressed everyone. Lu Yin was no stranger to this sensation; it was from an Envoy. A true master of the Smokecloud Sect had arrived, but they were too late. The Envoy emerged from the void and approached the group, but before he could approach, Lu Yin released a Vacuum Palm into the pile of possessions and smashed it.

Xia Taili was forced to take a step back from the Vacuum Palm's shockwave, and she turned to glare at Lu Yin.

The middle-aged man turned to look, amazed that his belongings had been smashed. Suddenly, the void twisted and even started to break. The man's pupils instantly shrank; this was not good! It had leaked.

The void suddenly shattered, and an expert who stood about two meters tall stepped out. His terrifying aura left everyone in shock.

Cai Shu instantly appeared and stood in front of Lu Yin.

The man ignored Lu Yin and the others and instead focused on the pile of shattered belongings. His face was pale, and he raised his hand to do something, but Lu Yin instantly attacked with another Vacuum Palm. This attack targeted the man who had just appeared. Lu Yin had ultimately decided to attack an Envoy.

Even though Lu Yin had not used his battle force, just 250 Stacks was still powerful enough for an Envoy to pay attention to the attack. The expert sensed the power of Lu Yin's Vacuum Palm, and he struggled to react in time. His arm was struck, and he was forced back two steps. He glared at Lu Yin.

The Envoy had not expected a youth to take action even after he, an Envoy, had appeared.

At this moment, the void around the pile of destroyed belongings fractured, and a liquid appeared and leaked into the void through the cracks. The cracks did not actually lead to the void like normal, but instead led to the true universe. This liquid was being absorbed by the true universe.

Many people saw this, and Cai Shu was among them. His expression instantly changed as he recalled certain things, and his pupils constricted.

"Stellar liquid?" Xia Taili blurted out, her face white.

The middle-aged man had similarly gone pale; it was over! Everything was over.

The third elder's body trembled, and he nearly fainted.

The Smokecould Sect's Envoy who had appeared swept his hand out, twisting the void and blocking others' sight of what was happening. At the same time, he seized the remaining liquid. The spatial crack leading to the true universe suddenly opened wider, and a sharp ray shot out towards the Envoy. It hit his hand, and three of his fingers were broken. Instinctively, he retracted his hand and the last of the liquid was sucked into the true universe and the crack disappeared.

The Envoy seethed with rage, and he turned to glare at Lu Yin and the others while radiating killing intent.

Xia Taili's face was still pale. She had watched the entire scene in shock. She looked like someone had struck her.

Lu Yin knew that what he had just witnessed was not a simple matter, but he was not afraid of the Envoy's anger and rage.

"Uncle Kuang, they-" The third elder started speaking, but was cut off when the Envoy raised his bleeding hand. The powerhouse ignored his injury, and then turned and left without saying a single word.

Cai Shu made no attempt to stop the man. He was still staring at the pile of broken items. The depths of his eyes betrayed turbulent thoughts.

Lu Yin had not expected the Envoy to leave so readily. Lu Yin had attacked the powerhouse, and yet the man had said nothing. It seemed as though the Envoy could not wait to escape the place.

The third elder was missing his perpetual smile, and instead looked like he was mourning his dead mother.

Yun Yang was completely confused, and he had not understood anything that had happened.

As for the middle-aged man, his reaction was even worse than the third elder's. The man was on the ground, seemingly paralyzed. For being a powerful Enlighter, he looked pathetic.

Lu Yin expected the man to say something, yet he remained silent. In fact, the man did not even look at anyone as he numbly walked towards where the clouds rose into the sky.

Everything had been truly bizarre.

Lu Yin turned to look back at Xia Taili, who was staring at the pile of broken items in the same manner as Cai Shu.

Lu Yin was feeling incredibly curious; just what was that liquid? Was it some sort of power vessel that was able to twist space and open a path to the true universe? Suddenly, Lu Yin remembered pyrolyte and how its appearance had thrown the Innerverse and Outerverse into chaos. This liquid seemed to be similar to pyrolyte!

"I remembered, stellar liquid-" Wang Dashuai suddenly said, sounding as though he was rather incredulous.

Cai Shu shouted, "Shut up!"

Wang Dashuai's mouth snapped shut. His face became as white as Xia Taili's, and he also stared blankly at the pile of rubble on the ground.

Lu Yin nudged the fatty. "Stellar liquid? What's that?"

The fatty's expression twisted, and he quietly replied, "Go back to get an explanation, but it's a big problem. We might have kicked a hornet's nest."

Lu Yin was puzzled.

Cai Shu looked over at Lu Yin and quietly said, "Hurry back to headquarters and forget about this. Don't say anything about it to anyone."

Lu Yin agreed, "Don't worry, we'll behave."

Cai Shu nodded. "Go."

Their arrival had created a shock, but no one paid any attention to their departure. It seemed as though no one from the Smokecloud Sect, including the third elder, even saw Lu Yin and the other youths leave. No one moved to touch the broken items. The entire situation seemed to be the start of trouble, but it was also all very eerie and peaceful.

Lu Yin suppressed his curiosity and did not ask any questions while they returned to Huaiyuan Gate.

Chapter 1460: Nutrients

Cai Shu stayed a bit behind Lu Yin and the other youths. He raised his hand, and after a moment's hesitation, he decided to call Qing Chen.

"Master, your disciple has discovered stellar liquid." Cai Shu immediately brought up what had happened.

Qing Chen showed no surprise. "The Cloud Shuttle."

Cai Shu frowned. "Is it the four ruling powers?"

Qing Chen sighed. "Times have changed. In the past, everyone was suppressed by the Lu family, and thus no one dared to cause any harm to the Mother Tree. But now..."

As the old man spoke, his expression grew more complicated.

Cai Shu gritted his teeth. "The Mother Tree forms the very foundation of our existence. Humanity is able to thrive and even resist the monsters only by relying on the Mother Tree! Yet despite that, they actually work to harm the Mother Tree like those parasites in the Lower Realm in order to absorb stellar liquid. They are destroying humanity's foundation! Why? Will no one stop them?"

Qing Chen solemnly explained, "The Mother Tree has the power to block those monsters, and some people believe that they can take that power for themselves and become capable of destroying the monsters."

"How could that be possible?" Cai Shu was furious.

Qing Chen shook his head. "No one knows whether or not it's possible, but it is still a possibility. Humans have always been on the back foot, even with the Mother Tree's protection. Who can say if such a situation can be replicated in the future?"

Cai Shu fell silent.

Qing Chen asked, "How did you discover this?"

Cai Shu shared everything that had happened, and then asked, "Was this what you were meaning when you mentioned a darkness here?"

Qing Chen sighed. "From what you just told me, the stellar liquid that was discovered should belong to the Celestial Frost Sect, which is unfortunate. While no one will openly move against Long Qi over this matter, it will certainly cause problems, and some people will likely move against him in secret, and there could even be some fanatics. You will need to protect Long Qi, and I will need to negotiate with the Celestial Frost Sect."

"What of Long Qi?" Cai Shu asked.

Qing Chen had a headache. This matter seemed very strange. "How was he able to pinpoint that person? It's impossible to perceive stellar liquid, as not even the true universe can detect it."

"It was just a coincidence." Cai Shu was actually not confident in his answer.

Qing Chen frowned. "He's deliberately making trouble. Give him a stern warning not to mess with the Cloud Shuttle. Even though he's bait to lure out Shaman God, I don't wish anything to happen to him."

However, with stellar liquid involved, he'll become an enemy of the four ruling powers, and if that happens, no one will be able to protect him."

"Your disciple understands." Cai Shu's mood fell further.

Qing Chen looked back at Cai Shu and comforted his disciple. "Master realizes that you can't unravel this matter, and stellar liquid has been a matter of debate since ancient times. In the past, the Lu family's suppression protected the Mother Tree, but the situation has changed to what we see now."

"Master, don't worry. Your disciple knows what to do," Cai Shu raised his head and spoke with determination.

Qing Chen nodded and his image disappeared.

Cai Shu lowered his hand and looked up towards the Higher Realm that was far overhead. Were they really doing the right thing? If they were wrong, humanity would be doomed. At this moment, Cai Shu also understood the importance of the Guan brothers, as well as why the Supervisor had been so confident that Lu Yin would enter Shaman God's sights after being made acting Gate Master of Huaiyuan Gate. This was not only because the youth had grabbed the scarlet eye that had belonged to Guan Yun, but more importantly, because he had been put in charge of Huaiyuan Gate.

The position was incredibly appealing to the Seven Skygods, and location was the focal point of an operation that had the potential to topple the entire Perennial World.

Back at Huaiyuan Gate's headquarters, Lu Yin was just about to ask Wang Dashuai about stellar liquid, when Cai Shu suddenly appeared. "What is it that you wish to know? I'll tell you."

With that, the others all left.

Naturally, Xia Taili did not stay behind. It was clear that she had been badly effected by the incident.

"What is stellar liquid?" Lu Yin asked.

Cai Shu sat right down on the ground without any pretenses. He patted the ground next to him.

Lu Yin was surprised to see Cai Shu had such a casual side, but still sat beside the Envoy without giving the matter much thought.

"Do you know how difficult it is to continue cultivating after becoming an Envoy?" Cai Shu asked.

Lu Yin shook his head. He was not an Envoy himself, and no one had mentioned anything to him.

Cai Shu smiled bitterly. "An Envoy cultivates with stellar energy, and stellar energy must be absorbed from within the true universe. You should already know about stellar tribulations and how a person will be targeted and attacked by the true universe after absorbing stellar energy. A struggle forms between an Envoy and the true universe, and this struggle is a natural development.

"Any Envoy who cultivates within the true universe can easily be attacked by that universe if they absorb too much stellar energy or try to absorb the energy too quickly. This is why many Envoys search for things that can hide their presence."

"I know, those are curios," Lu Yin said.

Cai Shu nodded. "Curios are difficult to acquire, and not every Envoy has one. In theory, as long as a cultivator receives no backlash from the true universe, they can quickly cultivate, as it is easy to absorb stellar energy. Thus, they could rapidly cultivate through six tribulations, or even seven to become a top powerhouse. However, while this is nothing but a dream for most Envoys, it is achievable for certain people."

"Stellar liquid," Lu Yin blurted.

Cai Shu smiled. "Yes, stellar liquid. If an Envoy absorbs stellar liquid, they no longer need to worry about receiving any sort of retaliation from the true universe. As long as the stellar liquid is not exposed, it can be absorbed no different from star essence, and it provides a shortcut for Envoys' cultivation. However, stellar liquid is not something that can be synthesized or even something that forms naturally. There is only one place in the entire Perennial World where it can be found."

Cai Shu's eyes locked onto Lu Yin. "The Mother Tree."

Lu Yin's eyes flashed. "The Mother Tree?"

Cai Shu let out a long breath. "The Mother Tree roots herself into the universe itself, but not only the visible universe. It is also rooted in the true universe, and the Mother Tree absorbs stellar energy from that universe. Has anyone mentioned to you how the creatures in the Lower Realm came into being?"

Lu Yin instantly understood. Long Xi had told him long ago that the Mother Tree absorbed nutrients from the universe itself, and that the creatures of the Lower Realm tried to devour and destroy the Mother Tree. This was due to the fact that the universe had both positive and negative aspects, and this was also why Root had been established and sent various adventure teams to the Lower Realm: to protect the Mother Tree.

Given this information, it seemed like the nutrients the Mother Tree absorbed was stellar energy, and the nutrients were distributed throughout the Mother Tree in the form of stellar liquid.

"The creatures in the Lower Realm attempt to destroy the Mother Tree and do their best to prevent the Mother Tree from transporting stellar liquid up to nourish the trunk and upper reaches of the Mother Tree. Humanity has worked to destroy those creatures and protect the Mother Tree, but now, humanity itself is working to destroy the Mother Tree in order to absorb the Mother Tree's stellar liquid. Is there any difference between us and those parasites?" Cai Shu growled out more of the explanation while his expression grew ugly.

"Our Perennial World has long had an uncrossable line, which is that no matter how difficult cultivation becomes, we must never touch stellar liquid. This is a basic rule that has been in place for countless years, and it is a bottom line that no cultivator has cared to cross. It's an untouchable taboo, but-" Cai Shu hesitated, as he did not know how to continue.

Lu Yin immediately understood that there were people who had crossed humanity's bottom line, and they were actually the four ruling powers.

He understood why there had been such a strong reaction the moment that the stellar liquid had been exposed. It represented humanity's greatest taboo. Absorbing stellar liquid might benefit some individuals or groups by allowing them to grow stronger, but it also risks destroying humanity's very

foundation in the Mother Tree, which could lead to humanity's extinction. Such selfishness was inexcusable.

One could only imagine how big of an impact such news would cause once it leaked out. This incident had the potential to shake the entire Perennial World.

"Do you now understand how dangerous your actions today were?" Cai Shu solemnly asked .

Lu Yin nodded. "We can't allow those people to destroy the Mother Tree?"

Cai Shu shot a look of surprise at Lu Yin. He had not expected to hear that reaction. After all, Cai Shu saw Lu Yin as a member of the four ruling powers. "No one can stop them, not even my master."

Lu Yin fell silent.

"My master will find a way to suppress the incident from today, but in the future, stellar liquid cannot be touched, as doing so will cause you to become the universal enemy of all of the four ruling powers, and once that happens, no one will be able to save you," After speaking the last bit of warning, Cai Shu left.

The information Lu Yin heard lit a fire in his heart, and his eyes blazed brightly. Become a universal enemy of the four ruling powers? That was a really big deal! Lu Yin grinned after considering the possibility.

The four ruling powers were already his enemies, so exposing this incident would not only stop the destruction of the Mother Tree, it could also achieve Lu Yin's own goal. Wasn't this just perfect?

Cai Shu could never have dreamed that the more serious his warning, the more hyped Lu Yin became.

The very next day, Lu Yin returned once again to the Cloud Shuttle.

While Cai Shu was curious as to why Lu Yin returned to the Cloud Shuttle, the Envoy did not think much of it. He had already been very clear with the youth and made it known that when it came to stellar liquid, even Humility's Gate would feign ignorance and would have nothing to do with stellar liquid. A moment's carelessness could make them the enemy of the four ruling powers, and thus Cai Shu did not believe that Lu Yin would be brazen enough to go anywhere near stellar liquid again. The Envoy believed that Lu Yin was putting up a front of being fearless with this trip to Cloud Shuttle.

While Lu Yin was informed about stellar liquid from Cai Shu, Shang Qing and Liu Tianmu learned about the situation through Wang Dahuai.

Returning to the Cloud Shuttle again left the fatty feeling rather uneasy. "Um... Bro, what are we doing here today?"

Lu Yin stated matter-of-factly, "The Smokecloud Sect did not provide any gifts."

The fatty coughed. "Well, didn't that third elder say yesterday that he would send it and that we should go back and wait?"

The possibility of getting involved with stellar liquid terrified Wang Dashuai.

Only a Perennial World native like the fatty could truly understand the seriousness of having this matter of stellar liquid being exposed. Forget the fatty, not even Xia Taili could walk away unscathed.

Xia Taili also spoke up, though she rolled her eyes. "This ladder is boring."

Lu Yin grew serious. "After walking around the Cloud Shuttle yesterday, I'm pretty sure there's a traitor here."

The fatty and Xia Taili were both surprised. "A traitor?"

Lu Yin nodded. "We need to determine the truth."

The fatty felt a bit skeptical, but he then remembered Long Qi's results in the Yinshan District, which caused the fatty to give some credence to Lu Yin's claim.

Xia Taili was suffering from a headache; how could it be so easy to find a traitor to humanity? The night before, she had received a warning from her clan that she was not to return to the Cloud Shuttle. After all, she had been partly responsible for the stellar liquid being exposed. Even if she was a mischievous child, she felt it was too much to immediately return to the Cloud Shuttle.

As Xia Taili looked at Lu Yin's back, she suddenly felt that he was too bold. If he was anyone else, even if it was completely certain that there was a traitor at the Cloud Shuttle, no one else would return right away in order to show the four ruling powers that there was no intention of provoking them.

How was it that this guy was so different from what the rumors claimed? How was this the attitude that a son-in-law should have? If Long Xi had not disappeared, Long Qi would have been scolded to death.

After arriving at the Cloud Shuttle, Lu Yin was surprised to see Yun Yang. The youth had not been transferred out, though the third elder had disappeared.

When Yun Yang saw Lu Yin and his group, his face grew as ugly as if he had been forced to eat dead flies. He completely ignored the group and turned around to leave.