

Refining the Mountains and Rivers

Chapter 15 – Exalted One

Zeng Mo'er's expression was filled with a complexity of emotions, but soon she turned ice-cold. The Zeng Family had been suddenly destroyed, and no one knew just what sort of earth-shaking changes had occurred within her heart in such a short period of time.

Ning Ling shouted out, "Mo'er, to repay kindness with ingratitude, you have gone too far!"

Zeng Mo'er bit her lips. "This is what he deserves! If he doesn't save us then he can give up any thoughts of drawing back safely!"

Ning Ling's eyes turned frigid. "Fellow daoist Qin and the Zeng Family have no connection to each other. If he helps, it would be because of affection, not because of duty. Moreover, this isn't something that he can decide himself anyways! You have now brought a disaster down upon him, so how wouldn't you know? Mo'er, you ignored my heeding and have given in to your inner demons...I hope that you don't come to regret this in the future."

A bead of blood emerged from the corner of Zeng Mo'er's lips. Sorrow appeared in the depths of her eyes and her complexion grew even paler.

Squeak –

With a light sound, the courtyard doors opened and a black-robed figure stepped out. "The Seven Slaughter Demon Sect actually dares to covet this old man. It seems you have grown much bolder in these past years." A low and deep voice sounded out. Even though it didn't possess any fluctuations of strength, it contained more than enough confidence and daring!

Liang Taizu's breathing quickened. As the black-robed figure's gaze fell upon him, it seemed as if his high and lofty position had become nothing at all. This was the aura of a superior individual.

He had only felt such a feeling from his teacher before. His eyes flashed and he cupped his hands across his chest. "This junior was impolite before. I ask that Grandmaster be broad-minded and forgiving."

He quietly drew backwards. Hei Nu turned around and protectively placed him behind, his eyes cold as he faced this powerful aura.

Hu –

The black robes fluttered even without wind.

The Grandmaster's voice was calm. "For you to provoke me, no matter how noble your background, you still must be punished. Since I have a bit of affection for the demonic path from my past, I shall give you a chance. No matter if it is you or the man in front of you, as long as you can receive the force of a single finger of mine, then I shall no longer investigate this incident, and I will even give you a top grade Spirit Protecting Pill."

Liang Taizu's eyes brightened. "Grandmaster, are you serious?"

"My words are my life. Not even mountains and rivers can move them."

Liang Taizu laughed. "Good, then I ask Grandmaster to give pointers to this servant of mine."

Bang –

Demon energy began boiling over from within Hei Nu's body as black demon seals started to appear all over his body. He was revolving his demon arts to their limits. He roared out loud, "You and I are both Golden Cores. I would also like to experience just what the strength of Grandmaster's single finger can do to me."

Li Yunmo was confident. Hei Nu's Heavenly Demon Arts had reached large success, and if he revolved the entirety of his strength, even a Nascent Soul cultivator would find it difficult to kill him in one strike.

The Grandmaster lightly said, "Come forwards."

Hei Nu felt his heart chill. It was not wise to provoke an alchemist; this was a truth that everyone accepted. But, he had already passed the point of no return. He took a deep breath and revolved his demon arts past their limits. Each step he took seemed to shake the heavens and earth, causing deep cracks to spread outwards.

The Grandmaster lifted his hand. Five fingers thrust out from his black robes, clear and pale, completely unlike the skin of an old man. But, an alchemist was synonymous with mystery in this world, and no one was surprised. All eyes gathered upon his hand, waiting to see what this world-shaking blow would be like.

The Grandmaster curled four fingers.

The Grandmaster pointed one finger.

The Grandmaster's index finger fell.

And then the Grandmaster drew back his hand.

Without any pervasive pressure, without any overwhelming momentum, he simply lifted his hand, pointed a finger, and then drew back.

As simple and understated as a joke!

Countless people were left with widened eyes. What was this new development? Grandmaster, this is completely dissimilar to your previously aggressive words! Is this because you knew you didn't have any method to refuse them, so you simply used this method to claw back some face?

Ah! But wasn't this too great a loss of face!?

The brilliant and blinding image of the Grandmaster suddenly fell to the pit in the hearts of innumerable people; it even loudly collapsed.

Liang Taizu joyously laughed. "Junior must thank Grandmaster for the help!"

"There is no need to thank me." The Grandmaster lightly said, "I originally wanted to give a little punishment, but I really disliked this servant of yours so I simply sent him along the road."

Liang Taizu's complexion stiffened. He shouted out, "Hei Nu, come back!"

However, his words had no effect.

The Grandmaster flicked his sleeves. "Bury him."

Hei Nu flew backwards, falling right in front of Liang Taizu. It was only now that one could see the horror and panic that twisted Hei Nu's face. Before his aura had even dispersed, he had already completely died.

Li Yunmo's eyes turned blood red as he saw this. He roared out in anger, "Poison! You actually used poison! I'll kill you!"

Bang – !

The Grandmaster's robes fluttered in the stillness. Then, his aura erupted like a volcano, as if it would flush away the heavens. Golden light erupted from his body, as if a giant sun had descended upon the world. A horrifying aura spread out like a limitless ocean, submerging all within.

And at this moment, what left Li Yunmo shaken the most was that there was a figure faintly visible within the golden light. This figure was bathed in the vicissitudes of time, as if it were a god overlooking the world.

"Hollow Nascent Soul realm!"

Li Yunmo shrieked. From the aura of this Golden Core he could feel endless disdain and overbearing tyranny. Moreover, there was a violence that shocked the heart. It was cruel and wild, as if it wanted to crush him, even if he were to flee to the ends of the world!

The Grandmaster's voice echoed between the heavens and earth, rumbling like thunder. "You want to kill this old man?"

Li Yunmo turned deathly pale. He was only at the fifth level of the Golden Core, so how could he be the opponent of a hollow Nascent Soul? Moreover, this person's Golden Core aura was vast and boundless; the disparity of strength was at least five times over...kill him? It was the same as committing suicide!

The entire East Stream Town was left wreathed in a deathly silence.

Countless gazes revealed looks of shame. Grandmaster was truly Grandmaster. Not only was his alchemy amazing, but his cultivation was earthshaking. A hollow Nascent Soul realm; that meant there was only a single step before he could step into the great dao of the Nascent Soul and become a true overlord of the Southern Empire.

How could such a grand figure be humiliated so easily? These demonic cultivators had truly suffered a spell of bad luck!

Ning Ling looked at the Grandmaster, her eyes filled with respect, but also a hint of hesitation. The figure beneath those voluminous black robes seemed somewhat familiar.

Zeng Mo'er's face paled. She lowered her head, her hands shivering.

"Grandmaster is magnanimous and merciful. This junior admits defeat!" Liang Taizu squeezed out a smile. Then, he used some strength and twisted his fingers beneath his robes, causing a bloodhawk to fly into the skies. Its wings were like lightning as it flew towards the distant mountains.

"Junior will pass on news of today's matter of encountering Grandmaster to my sect. Before long, I am sure that a lord from my sect will come to thank Grandmaster for the graciousness."

The Grandmaster looked up. "Are you threatening me?"

Liang Taizu bowed. "Junior does not dare." He glanced at the bloodhawk flying away. As it turned into a black spot against the sun, his heart began to relax.

Those with wealth loved to protect themselves, and he had far more than just wealth; he naturally wouldn't allow his life or death to be decided by others. By sending a message to his sect, Liang Taizu was confident that since this person knew of his identity, no one would dare to try and kill him!

The Grandmaster sneered. A dark light flashed out, crossing miles in the blink of an eye. A miserable hawk's screech echoed out from the distance. Liang Taizu stuffily coughed and blood flowed out from the corners of his mouth.

Shua –

The dark light returned, hovering above the Grandmaster's finger. It was actually a black nail as large as a knuckle, one that emitted an awe-inspiring amount of killing intent.

"Corpse Sealing Nail!" Liang Taizu cried out. He quickly fell to his knees. "Seven Slaughter Demon Sect's Liang Taizu greets Exalted One!"

Li Yunmo seemed to let out a breath of relief and quickly bowed.

The Grandmaster paused for a moment, his tone dark. "Killing your bloodhawk is a lesson. If I wanted to kill you, no one could save you."

Liang Taizu's expression was respectful and cautious. "Junior has affronted Exalted One. To kill or to maim, your will shall be done."

"Humph!" The Grandmaster coldly coughed. "Although I haven't agreed to become any sort of Exalted One, I do have some fateful origins with the demonic path. Since I revealed the Corpse Sealing Nail today, I have already decided not to kill you. Leave behind the Kong Family's Golden Core and a storage bag, and you may leave."

Liang Taizu used both hands to take out the Golden Core and ceremoniously laid it upon the ground.

Li Yunmo felt as if a knife were twisting apart his heart, but he didn't dare to hesitate. He loosened the storage bag at his waist.

"Then junior bids his farewells!"

Liang Taizu shot into the sky. Li Yunmo carried Hei Nu's corpse and followed close behind. The 12 columns of demon energy that sealed up East Stream Town began to rapidly dissipate.

In the blink of an eye, the group of demonic cultivations vanished into the mountains.

The Grandmaster sneered. He could feel the Corpse Sealing Nail faintly quivering. "And you're still trying to play little tricks. Since you've stayed down, you should already have made preparations to die."

Within the dense forest, a demonic cultivator flew out. He fell down to one knee and bowed before slapping himself in the forehead, instantly dying as blood gushed from his head.

Within the forest, Liang Taizu paused. He coldly said, "Mei Ba died."

Li Yunmo's eyes shined with a dense light. "Young Master, could this person plan on not letting us go?"

“You idiot, since he killed Mei Ba, that proves he will stop here and not chase us down.” Liang Taizu’s complexion darkened. “It’s because I didn’t consider the matter enough. I should not have drawn such a powerful alchemist into the plan, otherwise we wouldn’t have failed so miserably, even losing Hei Nu in the process.”

Li Yunmo shouted out, “There was a flaw in the information!”

Liang Taizu narrowed his eyes. “Yes, it seems that someone wants to kill us with a borrowed knife. It looks like we’ll need to return to the sect for some time and quell internal matters first, shouldn’t we?”

Li Yunmo diabolically grinned, “They will regret this!”

As the demonic cultivators left, the quiet East Stream Town suddenly erupted in wild cheers.

“I thank Grandmaster for saving our lives. We will never forget this!”

“Grandmaster has rescued everything in East Stream Town. I am filled with gratitude!”

“Junior would like to respectfully congratulate Grandmaster on soon stepping into the Nascent Soul realm!”

Flattery surged in from all sides.

The Grandmaster took back the Corpse Sealing Nail and placed it in his storage bag. He lightly said, “The Kong Family’s Golden Core, take it.”

Several figures rushed out. They fell to their knees and bowed again and again before taking away their old ancestor’s Golden Core.

The middle-aged man leading them offered a black iron token with both hands. “With this token, if Grandmaster has any need in the future, the Kong Family will go through fire and water to help!” With another deep bow, he led the others to leave.

The Grandmaster turned. His eyes fell upon Zeng Mo’er, pausing there for a moment. Then, he lightly stepped up like a willow in the wind and fluttered away.

In the blink of an eye, he disappeared from everyone's sight.

"Grandmaster is so principled and generous. Even though he rescued us, he doesn't ask for anything in return."

"That's right. Such virtue should be the model for our generation to aspire to."

"To not see the Grandmaster's true appearance, that is my life's greatest shame!"

As everyone continued to express their emotions, no one scattered. However, their eyes faintly gathered towards somewhere.

Ning Ling looked away. Her eyes were slightly cold as she said, "Senior Zeng injured himself to save us juniors. I will help him back."

Zeng Chingming opened his eyes, light shining in them. He smiled and said, "Then I'll have to trouble Miss Ning."

Zeng Mo'er straightened up as if she awoke from a dream. She quickly went to support him.

A bit of shame appeared in the eyes of those remaining. As they glanced at Ning Ling, they began to scatter.

The Zeng Family's main residence was destroyed, but they still had other properties where they could temporarily stay. After issuing orders for the remnants of his family to go, he sent them away. At this time, the originally calm and steady Zeng Chingming violently coughed, blood flowing from his mouth.

"Grandfather!" Zeng Mo'er cried out in alarm.

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Zeng Chingming waved his hand. "I'm fine." He forced a smile and cupped his hands against his chest. "I must thank Miss Ning for the help. Otherwise, I fear the Zeng Family would have suffered true disaster today."

Ning Ling rose up. "Over the years, Senior Zeng looked after me, so this is what junior should have done. But, it's best not to stay here for too long, and senior should also make a decision as soon as possible. Then, junior bids her farewell."

As her voice fell she turned and left.

Zeng Mo'er's lips shivered, her face pale.

Zeng Chingming sighed. "Mo'er, in order to save me, in order to save our Zeng Family, you have been wronged!"

Tears immediately began to fall. Zeng Mo'er wiped them, but for some reason she couldn't wipe them cleanly away. Within her mind, the image of Qin Yu's cold back continued to appear. It was like a knife that constantly cut at her heart.

No matter what difficulties she had, no matter what her reasons were, betrayal was betrayal. Within his heart, Big Brother Qin should hate her, right? But even so, Big Brother Qin had forgiven her, otherwise how could the Grandmaster not have punished her for her actions? Thinking of this, Zeng Mo'er felt even more pained and distressed in her heart. Her field of vision darkened and she fainted where she was.

Ning Ling left the Zeng Family, sighing awkwardly. She had already guessed what Zeng Mo'er's thoughts were. If she looked at things from Mo'er's perspective, then perhaps what she did was right. But even so, she didn't like it. If so, then there was no choice but for them to drift apart. In any case, she would have to return before long.

Suddenly feeling a bit dispirited, Ning Ling's thoughts stirred. A white cloud picked her up and she flew into the distance.

She should return to the mountain sect first.