

Chapter 3661: Two Requests

Perhaps, the old man did not think too much about it when he first saw Duan Qiao Yu acting affectionately with Duan Ling Tian or calling him brother. However, after Yu Qiu Xuan, the beautiful woman, made her move, it was clear that he assumed Duan Qiao Yu and him were from a powerful force. This was a logical assumption. After all, would ordinary people be protected by Lords of Gods? How could Duan Ling Tian be ordinary when the person the Lord of God protected had called him brother?

‘Since this old man recognized me, he must have told Zhong Er and Zhong Si about it earlier...’ Duan Ling Tian thought to himself, ‘However, Zhong Er and Zhong Si were still determined to kill me earlier. They likely set up a Formation to prevent me from sending messages so that they won’t be implicated after killing me. No wonder I felt a slight change in the air earlier. It must be from when they were setting up and removing the Formation.’

Duan Ling Tian was skilled in the law of space. Moreover, he had also comprehended the Space Mastery Dao, which was one of the Four Daos of Heaven and Earth. Hence, his senses were very keen in regard to changes in the void.

‘After finding out about my so-called background, they must have been even more determined to kill me. After all, if I survive, in their opinion, they’ll have to suffer the wrath of the so-called powerful force that they think I belong to. Unfortunately for them, they did not expect Elder Tang Chun to be an advanced King of Gods.’

In fact, not long after arriving at the restaurant, Duan Ling Tian had discreetly probed Tang Chun with his Divine Consciousness. At that time, he had sensed Tang Chun’s cultivation base that was of an advanced god. Although he was an intermediate god, he could still vaguely sense an advanced god’s cultivation base. Any higher, he would not have been able to sense the cultivation base. Subsequently, he had asked Tang Chun about his cultivation base. Tang Chun had told him that to avoid being bothered by other Kings of Gods, he had used a technique to conceal his cultivation base.

Unless one was stronger, one would not be able to detect Tang Chun’s real cultivation base at all. Those who were stronger would definitely not be bothered with Tang Chun.

‘Those three from the Zhong clan must have failed to detect Elder Tang Chun’s cultivation base like me...’

Duan Ling Tian also knew Zhong Er would not behave so humbly because of Tang Chun. After all, even after offending Tang Chun, Tang Chun did not kill them. Clearly, Tang Chun had to consider the person supporting the Zhong clan as well. It was likely someone from the Zhong clan who held a high position in the Hidden Fog Sect had messaged Tang Chun, telling him to spare the trio’s lives. Perhaps, they even compensated Tang Chun for sparing their lives. Perhaps, that was why Tang Chun only asked the trio to apologize to him.

While Tang Chun was still puzzled, Duan Ling Tian asked Zhong Er, "Are you sure you're willing to pay any price as long as it's within your ability?"

"Yes," Zhong Er said without any hesitation as he nodded twice.

"Very good," Duan Ling Tian said as he smiled faintly, "Then please show me your sincerity."

Duan Ling Tian shifted his eyes to Zhong Ke Qi, who was behind Zhong Er, and continued to say, "Second Master Zhong, your son, Zhong Ke Qi, is the cause of this conflict between me and your clan. I only have two requests. One, Zhong Ke Qi must die."

Zhong Er, Zhong Ke Qi, and Zhong Si's expressions changed drastically.

Zhong Si said anxiously, "Young Master Duan, can't you spare him?"

Duan Ling Tian glanced at Zhong Si as he said tonelessly, "Would you have spared me earlier?" Without waiting for Zhong Si's reply, he said mockingly to Zhong Er, "Second Master Zhong, if the Zhong clan can't fulfill my first request, then there's no need for me to tell you my second request."

Duan Ling Tian turned to Tang Chun, who was seated next to him, and said, "Elder Tang Chun, I've lost my appetite. I'll wait for you at the Hidden Fog Academy. Please send me a message when you're done, and I'll come to you."

Before leaving the Hidden Fog Academy, Duan Ling Tian and Tang Chun had exchanged Soul Pearls so they could easily communicate with each other now.

"No, I'm done as well," Tang Chun said as he shook his head, "Let's head to the sect."

Although Tang Chun did not know why the Zhong clan was behaving so humbly and respectfully toward Duan Ling Tian, he knew this was not the time to ask Duan Ling Tian about it. Apart from that, he did not think the Zhong clan would agree to Duan Ling Tian's first request.

Although Zhong Ke Qi was not an important figure in the Zhong clan, he was not called the little prince of the Zhong clan for nothing. He was the son of the Second Master of the Zhong clan, and he was slated to be the next Clan Leader of the Zhong clan. His uncles all doted on him a lot as well.

Tang Chun thought it was already good enough that Zhong Er did not lose his temper after listening to Duan Ling Tian's request. How could Zhong Er agree to kill his son? Even if Murong Sui Feng, the dean of the Hidden Fog Academy and the Vice Sect Leader of the Hidden Fog Sect, were here and made this request, the Zhong clan still would not agree to it.

Just as Duan Ling Tian and Tang Chun were about to leave, something shocking happened.

"Since my unfilial son has offended Young Master Duan, he deserves to die!" Zhong Er cried out.

In the next moment, a loud sound rang out as blood splattered in the room.

The person who was alive just a moment ago fell lifelessly to the ground with a loud thump.

Under everyone's watchful eyes, Zhong Er had decisively struck his son's head, killing his son.

Perhaps, only Duan Ling Tian was unsurprised by this outcome. He had long guessed it would turn out like this.

On the contrary, Tang Chun was truly shocked. He did not think Zhong Er would kill his son for Duan Ling Tian's sake. Although he had lived a long time and experienced many things, he was still shocked by this sudden turn of events. When he looked at Duan Ling Tian again, it dawned on him that he did not know the young man in front of him at all.

"Young Master Duan," Zhong Er called out. His body was trembling, and his eyes were red as he looked at Duan Ling Tian. He tried to hide the fear in his heart as he said hoarsely, "Please tell us your second request."

Duan Ling Tian looked at Zhong Er and said, "My second request is simple. I just want to see the sincerity of the Zhong clan."

Then, Duan Ling Tian raised his hand, openly toying with his spatial ring. Clearly, he was implying something with this gesture.

Upon seeing this, Zhong Er, Zhong Si, and the old man sighed in relief inwardly. They were afraid Duan Ling Tian would ask for their lives. After all, if Duan Ling Tian made such a request, they would have no choice but to obey. Their lives were nothing when faced with the well-being of the entire Zhong clan.

"Elder Tang Chun, let's go." Duan Ling Tian did not even wait for Zhong Er to agree. He knew Zhong Er would not refuse him. After all, Zhong Er had already killed his son. How could Zhong Er still care about treasures?

Tang Chun, who was still in shock, was pulled back to his senses. He nodded and made to leave with Duan Ling Tian.

When Duan Ling Tian had just stepped out of the room, Zhong Er asked, "Young Master Duan, how should we hand the things over to you after we've prepared them?"

"Send someone to bring them to the Hidden Fog Sect," Duan Ling Tian replied.

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When Duan Ling Tian finally left, Zhong Er collapsed to the ground. His hands trembled as he held Zhong Ke Qi's body and said, "Qi'er, please don't blame me. I had to do it for the sake of the clan. Please forgive me. You died for the clan today; the clan will never forget your sacrifice. I'll make sure the future generations of the clan remember your name!"

At this time, Zhong Si also came to Zhong Er's side and patted his shoulder. "Second brother, my condolences... Actually, I could've done it in your stead."

When the two brothers exchanged glances, they both saw the resentment and powerlessness in each other's eyes.

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At the same time, Duan Ling Tian, who left the restaurant and Skywind City with Tang Chun, finally heard Tang Chun saying apologetically, "Duan Ling Tian, I apologize for what happened earlier."

"Elder Tang Chun, there's no need to apologize. You didn't do anything wrong," Duan Ling Tian said as he shook his head.

Tang Chun smiled bitterly. "They wanted to kill you, but I only asked them to apologize to you. Aren't you angry?"

Duan Ling Tian shook his head again, but he no longer replied.

Tang Chun's smile grew even more bitter. He tried to explain his helplessness to Duan Ling Tian, "Earlier, when I was about to kill Zhong Si, I received a message from the sect from Zhong Tian Qing, the Grand Elder of the Zhong clan asking me to spare the trio's lives.. Although Zhong Tian Qing is also an inner elder like me and our strength is the same, he has a very good relationship with one of the core elders."

Chapter 3662: Tang Chun's Small Gesture

In the Hidden Fog Sect, inner elders had the same status while the core elders were ranked. Not all core elders had the same status.

Tu Feng, the disciple who had come to the Hidden Fog Academy to extend an invitation to Duan Ling Tian join his master, was the disciple of the Hidden Fog Sect's second core elder. The second core elder's status in the sect was rather high even though he was not the strongest. There were many old core elders in the sect who were known as supreme elders as well, but they were not ranked.

"I understand," Duan Ling Tian nodded and said with a smile, "Elder Tang Chun, in fact, there's no need for you to explain this matter to me. I understand your situation. After all, from the sect's point of view, I can't compare to the Zhong clan."

Upon hearing Duan Ling Tian's humble words, Tang Chun shook his head and said knowingly, "Duan Ling Tian, you must be joking. I know the Zhong clan's sudden change in attitude earlier is definitely because of me. If I'm not mistaken, you must have a powerful supporter, right?"

In order to pacify Duan Ling Tian's anger, Zhong Er, the Second Master of the Zhong clan, was even willing to kill his son. Even a tiger would not devour its cub. For Zhong Er to do something like that, he must be convinced that the consequences of angering Duan Ling Tian were not something the entire Zhong clan could bear. Otherwise, why would he resort to such a drastic measure?

Based on Duan Ling Tian's cultivation base, it was clearly not enough to intimidate the Zhong clan. Hence, Tang Chun was certain that Duan Ling Tian had the support of someone strong enough to make the Zhong clan fear him.

Upon hearing these words, Duan Ling Tian only smiled but did not say anything else.

Tang Chun felt he must have guessed correctly after seeing Duan Ling Tian's ambiguous reaction.

Previously, Tang Chun had a good impression of Duan Ling Tian, but he did not give Duan Ling Tian any special treatment. However, with this new discovery, he naturally did not dare to neglect Duan Ling Tian. How strong must Duan Ling Tian's supporter be to be able to make Zhong Er kill his own son? He felt uneasy when he recalled his earlier actions that must have disappointed Duan Ling Tian.

Although Duan Ling Tian was polite to him, Tang Chun could keenly feel the sense of alienation from Duan Ling Tian. Hence, he tried his best to make up for his earlier mistakes. After all, there were only benefits to forging a good relationship with Duan Ling Tian.

Tang Chun said, "However, it seems like they were still determined to kill you even when they knew about your identity. They must have cast a Formation that blocks communication. When they confirmed I was an advanced god, they must have planned to kill two of us. With the Formation, our deaths wouldn't be traced back to them. However, when I revealed my true strength, they must have deactivated the Formation to call for help. That was when the Grand Elder of the Zhong clan, Zhong Tian Qing, sent me a message to ask me to show mercy by promising me benefits. Half of them should belong to you since I wouldn't have gotten them without you."

In other words, Tang Chun was trying to remind Duan Ling Tian that he was mostly alive because of him even if Duan Ling Tian had a powerful supporter. Then, he tried to make amends by offering to share the benefits he would obtain from Zhong Tian Qing with Duan Ling Tian.

Duan Ling Tian naturally understood Tang Chun's meaning. He said with a smile, "I won't forget Elder Tang Chun for saving my life. I'll definitely return the favor in the future. However, there's no need to give me half of what Zhong Tian Qing promised you. I believe the Zhong clan will prepare something valuable for me."

Tang Chun no longer persisted once Duan Ling Tian refused him. After all, he was rather reluctant to part with Zhong Tian Qing's promised reward as well. Although Duan Ling Tian was not as warm as before, at least Duan Ling Tian did not hold a grudge against him.

'I'll slowly mend our relationship after we return to the sect. It's best not to push things too hard now...'

Tang Chun thought to himself. With that, he no longer said anything to Duan Ling Tian.

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In the Zhong clan's estate.

The Zhong clan was in chaos after Duan Ling Tian left Skywind City for the Hidden Fog Sect.

In the Zhong clan's ancestral hall, Zhong Ke Qi's corpse was placed on a small white bed. He was surrounded by Zhong Da, Zhong Er, Zhong San, and Zhong Si, the masters of the Zhong clan.

"Qi'er, the clan will never forget your sacrifice. Your selfless act will be recorded in the books. Our clan wouldn't have been able to survive that disaster if it weren't for you," Zhong Da said in a low voice as he looked at Zhong Ke Qi. His voice echoed in the hall.

"Second brother, I'm sorry for your loss," Zhong San said grimly as he patted Zhong Er's shoulder in an attempt to comfort Zhong Er.

"Rest assured. I'm fine. Qi'er's sacrifice isn't in vain. He saved our clan," Zhong Er said. His body trembled as he tried to suppress his emotions.

"Second brother," Zhong Da said, "I've activated the Formations in the ancestral hall. No one will be able to hear anything in here no matter how big the commotion is. There's no need for you to hold back. You can vent your emotions here."

As soon as Zhong Da's voice fell, the hem of Zhong Er's robes fluttered as Divine Energy surged violently from his body.

The furniture in the hall shook violently as the Divine Energy raged in the hall.

Then, Zhong Er fell next to Zhong Ke Qi's body. His eyes flashed with killing intent as he cried out, "Qi'er, I'm sorry I can't avenge you! I'm useless!"

Zhong Er continued to cry until his voice turned hoarse. When he finally calmed down, he said with a smile, "Eldest brother, don't worry. I'm fine now."

"That's good." Zhong Da patted Zhong Er's shoulder and nodded. "We believe Qi'er understands you. If Qi'er had a choice, I believe he would sacrifice himself to save our clan as well."

Zhong Er suppressed the bitterness that rose in his heart when he heard these words. No one knew his son better than him. Zhong Ke Qi would never sacrifice himself for the clan's sake. Given a chance, Zhong Ke Qi would definitely choose to save himself. This was the reason he had decisively killed his son. He was afraid he would be soft-hearted and unwilling to act if his son had a chance to plead for his life.

"Eldest brother, I'm fine. The loss of a son can be replaced with another. However, it'll be the end if the clan is wiped out," Zhong Er said as he forced a smile on his face, "Anyway, Duan Ling Tian is clearly extorting our clan. What kind of gift should we prepare for him?"

Zhong Er's expression darkened briefly before it returned to normal.

Zhong Da sighed. "It'd be easier if he had told us what he wanted. I've spoken to the Grand Elder before coming to the ancestral hall. He said to give Duan Ling Tian half of the divine stones, divine artifacts, divine pills, divine fruits, and divine grass we have. He's aware of what happened in the Zhou clan's auction house and suspects Duan Ling Tian is from an emperor-rank force."

The brothers were reluctant to give Duan Ling Tian half of everything the clan owned but changed their minds immediately when they heard Duan Ling Tian was likely from an emperor-rank force. Losing material possessions was nothing compared to losing their lives.

"Eldest brother, I have no objection to that," Zhong San was the first to say.

"Me too." Zhong Si nodded.

"I trust the Grand Elder's judgment," Zhong Er said.

"Second brother, the Grand Elder told me to inform you that he'll be investigating Duan Ling Tian's background after Duan Ling Tian joins the Hidden Fog Sect. There's nothing we can do if he's really from an emperor-rank force. However, if that's not the case, the Grand Elder will get back what's rightfully ours!" Zhong Da said.

Zhong Er's eyes glinted as he said icily, "If he's not from a powerful force, I'll personally crush his bones and tear him into pieces!"

Chapter 3663: Sect Guardian Pavilion

During the journey to the Hidden Fog Sect, Duan Ling Tian found that the test for the core disciples was only half a year away.

Tang Chun said, "You're now an inner disciple of the sect so you'll enjoy the resources of inner disciples. Under normal circumstances, you wouldn't have been able to join the Hidden Fog Sect so quickly even if you're recommended by the Vice Sect Leader. However, an exception is made this time since Vice Sect Leader Murong recommended you twice. The first time, he recommended that you be made a core disciple of the sect. When he found out it would take a while for you to become a core disciple, he recommended that you be made an inner disciple first. Since this is his first time recommending a student to join the sect in advance, the sect was quick to agree to his request. Otherwise, you wouldn't be able to join the sect so quickly."

Duan Ling Tian did not expect Murong Sui Feng to secretly help him out. He did not doubt Tang Chun's words since there was no reason for Tang Chun to lie about this matter. Moreover, he could easily discover the truth once he arrived at the Hidden Fog Sect.

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After some time had passed.

"We're about to arrive at the Hidden Fog Sect."

Tang Chun led Duan Ling Tian into a mountainous forest. As they traveled deeper into the forest, the fog grew thicker as well. It was getting harder to see ahead of them.

In the past, Duan Ling Tian had been to many places that were protected by Formations. However, he had never encountered a fog that seemed so boundless like this one. Naturally, he knew this fog was from a Formation. At one point, the fog was so thick that they could not see past 100 meters. Moreover, their Divine Consciousness was also blocked.

After passing through 99 clouds of fog, Tang Chun finally said, "We're here."

The fog cleared up as soon as they arrived at the Hidden Fog Sect's estate.

Duan Ling Tian saw a vast plain where a huge island floated in the sky. The island was so big that it seemed capable of housing 1,000 cities the size of Skywind City. It looked like a paradise where immortals lived. The island was surrounded by beautiful mountains and shrouded by fog that kept away prying eyes.

"The 99 layers of fog we passed through are from the Sect Guarding Formation that protects the periphery of the estate. Outsiders will have a hard time crossing the layers of fog," Yang Chun explained, "I'm able to bring outsiders here because of my inner elder's identity token. Outer elders and inner disciples can only bring one person here. Naturally, outer disciples can't bring anyone here. Just like inner elders, core disciples are allowed to bring three people here. Those who forcibly enter this place will be attacked by the Sect Guarding Formation. Those weaker than Lords of Gods will definitely die. Even ordinary Lords of Gods will be injured if they barge in."

With these words, Duan Ling Tian learned about how powerful the Formation was.

Tang Chun continued to say, "Apart from the Formation that protects the boundary of the estate, we have another Sect Guarding Formation protecting the sect. The fog shrouding the island is from that Formation. Without an identity token, you won't be able to enter the estate. I won't be able to bring you through that Formation. In order to do that, we'll need to obtain clearance from the Sect Guardian Pavilion." He paused for a moment before he said again, "The Sect Guardian Pavilion is responsible for protecting the sect. The members of the pavilion are incredibly loyal to the sect. They're all death warriors."

Tang Chun looked around his surroundings vigilantly before he continued to say through Voice Transmission, "The death warriors have taken the Devil Heart's Blood Oath to be loyal to the sect. If they were to betray the sect, only death awaits them. Only those with positions higher than core elders can bring outsiders into the estate. Everyone else will have to obtain clearance from the Sect Guardian Pavilion before they can bring outsiders into the estate."

"The Hidden Fog Sect is very strict with security. It's quite extreme," Duan Ling Tian said before he asked, "Did something happen in the past that caused the Hidden Fog Sect to be so highly vigilant?"

"According to rumors, that seems to be the case, but I'm not sure what happened," Tang Chun said with a nod, "There's no doubt our sect's security is much stricter compared to other lord-rank forces. In fact, even emperor-rank forces might not be so strict with their security measures."

Duan Ling Tian was certain something bad must have happened in the past for the Hidden Fog Sect's security to be so tight. However, since even Tang Chun did not know what happened, it was clear that the high-ranking officials of the Hidden Fog Sect intended to keep the matter a secret.

"Duan Ling Tian, I've spoken to the people from the Sect Guardian Pavilion. We'll have to wait for them to send someone over," Tang Chun said, "After entering the sect and registering you as a disciple, you'll be able to enter and leave the estate freely with your identity token."

Duan Ling Tian nodded.

A few dozen breaths later, a figure emerged from the fog shrouding the floating island. The figure flashed a few times before arriving in front of Duan Ling Tian and Tang Chun. The figure belonged to an aloof middle-aged man who was dressed in a long black robe. He looked at Duan Ling Tian indifferently before he asked Tang Chun, "Elder Tang Chun, is he Duan Ling Tian, the Ten Stars student from the Hidden Fog Academy?"

"Yes." Tang Chun nodded. Then he introduced the middle-aged man to Duan Ling Tian. "Duan Ling Tian, this is the Third Pavilion Master of the Sect Guardian Pavilion."

At the same time, Tang Chun explained to Duan Ling Tian through Voice Transmission that there were 10 Pavilion Masters in the Sect Guardian Pavilion. Each Pavilion Master had 100 death warriors as their subordinates. Among the 10 Pavilion Masters, there were two Lords of Gods, and the others were outstanding advanced Kings of Gods. Apart from that, he also learned that the weakest death warrior was a rudimentary King of Gods.

'The Sect Guardian Pavilion has 1,000 death warriors who are Kings of Gods?' Duan Ling Tian was rather shocked by this discovery. Considering death warriors were not disciples, their number was truly high. Outwardly, he said, "Greetings, Third Pavilion Master."

The middle-aged man did not respond to Duan Ling Tian's greeting. Instead, he only said, "Show me your Ten Stars student's identity token."

Duan Ling Tian silently handed his identity token to the middle-aged man. He nodded after confirming Duan Ling Tian's identity. Following that, an invisible force surged and swept toward Duan Ling Tian.

At the same time, the middle-aged man said, "Don't resist. Otherwise, you'll suffer the consequences..."

Duan Ling Tian relaxed his body after hearing those words. In the next moment, he discovered he had passed through the fog and had entered the Hidden Fog Sect's estate.

After entering the estate, Tang Chun said, "Thank you, Third Pavilion Master."

The middle-aged man did not spare Tang Chun a glance before he vanished from their sight.

"The members of the Sect Guardian Pavilion are indifferent by nature. You'll get used to it eventually," Tang Chun explained with a smile.

Duan Ling Tian nodded in response.

"Let's go and get you registered," Tang Chun said to Duan Ling Tian.

With Tang Chun by his side, it only took Duan Ling Tian half an hour to be done with the registration.

"Duan Ling Tian, I have to attend to some matters now. I've already sent for someone to show you to the inner disciples' cultivation ground," Tang Chun said.

As soon as Tang Chun's voice fell, a beautiful woman suddenly appeared in front of the duo. The woman was dressed in a long red robe. Although she was not a peerless beauty like Duan Ling Tian's two wives and Huan'er, she was still a beauty in her own right.

"Greetings, granduncle," the woman greeted Tang Chun respectfully. A hint of curiosity could be seen in her eyes when she looked at Duan Ling Tian through the corners of her eyes.

"Wu Yan, there's something I need to deal with so I'll leave Duan Ling Tian to you. Why don't you show him around?" Tang Chun said with a smile.

Tang Wu Yan was the Tang clan's most outstanding member among the younger generation. She was the only one in the clan who managed to become an inner disciple of the Hidden Fog Sect. Her peers were only outer disciples and outer elders.

Tang Chun turned to look at Duan Ling Tian and said with a smile, "Duan Ling Tian, this is my grandniece, Tang Wu Yan. She's an inner disciple as well. If you have any questions, feel free to ask her.. She'll bring you to the inner disciples' cultivation ground as well."

Chapter 3664: Tang Wu Yan

“Wu Yan, look after Duan Ling Tian. I won’t be happy if you neglect him,” Tang Chin said before he left. As soon as he turned away, a meaningful smile could be seen on his face. He had deliberately created a chance for his grandniece to get close to Duan Ling Tian.

When he was dining in the restaurant that was owned by the Zhong clan, he had already thought about introducing Tang Wu Yan to Duan Ling Tian. Based on how outstanding Duan Ling Tian was, if Tang Wu Yan was successful in forging a relationship with Duan Ling Tian, their clan would definitely rise to great heights. However, at that time, Duan Ling Tian had said that he was already married with children so he dismissed that idea.

However, when Tang Chun saw how the Zhong clan humbled themselves in front of Duan Ling Tian, to the point where Zhong Er, the Second Master of the Zhong clan even killed his son to appease Duan Ling Tian, he was determined to play matchmaker.

As one of the top three female disciples in the Hidden Fog Sect, Tang Chun was very confident about Tang Wu Yan’s ability. The number of female disciples was rather low so one could imagine how few outstanding female disciples there were in the Hidden Fog Sect. Apart from that, Tang Wu Yan was widely acknowledged as the Hidden Fog Sect’s most beautiful disciple. Many male disciples would fight over her. There were even core disciples who had asked for her hand in marriage.

Tang Chun would have been happy to marry Tang Wu Yan off to any of the core disciples. After all, core disciples had a bright future ahead of them. Their prospect was even better than his. Unfortunately, Tang Wu Yan was not interested in any of the core disciples.

Tang Wu Yan was very strong-headed so it would be impossible to force her into a marriage with a man she disliked. In fact, it was likely she would choose death rather than being forced to marry someone she did not like. Hence, Tang Chun, who was eager to marry Tang Wu Yan off to someone who could help their clan in the future, decided to try and match her and Duan Ling Tian.

Nevertheless, before Tang Chun left, he sent a Voice Transmission to Tang Wu Yan. “Wu Yan, Duan Ling Tian is already married with kids. If you can’t accept that, then at least try to be friends with him.”

Tang Wu Yan did not reply to Tang Chun’s Voice Transmission.

Although Duan Ling Tian was handsome and had an extraordinary bearing, these things were not important in a world where the strong were revered. To Tang Wu Yan, the man she liked had to be strong. As long as he was strong enough, she would not even care if the man had wives or children. In her opinion, it was normal for powerful men to have multiple wives. Moreover, she was confident about her beauty and was certain she would be able to win the man’s heart no matter how many wives he had.

At this time, Tang Wu Yan glanced at Duan Ling Tian before she said casually, “Follow me.”

Duan Ling Tian silently followed Tang Wu Yan. He naturally knew Tang Chun had deliberately created an opportunity for him to interact with Tang Wu Yan. After all, Tang Chun had mentioned setting him up with Tang Wu Yan when they were still in the restaurant. He would have found it troublesome if Tang Wu Yan had acted enthusiastically. Hence, he was relieved when he saw Tang Wu Yan’s indifference.

"If you have any questions, feel free to ask me," Tang Wu Yan said as she showed Duan Ling Tian around the estate, pointing out various buildings that house core elders and inner elders to him. The high-ranking officials of the Hidden Fog Sect stayed in a different area. The Heaven and Earth Spirit Energy in the Hidden Fog Sect was the same everywhere so it did not matter where one stayed.

"That's where the second elder lives," Tang Wu Yan said as she pointed at a building that looked like a small palace, "His cultivation ground is located in there as well, and his disciples would also cultivate there."

Duan Ling Tian nodded. At the same time, he recalled the time in the Hidden Fog Academy when he refused the invitation of a young man who claimed to be a disciple of the second elder of the Hidden Fog Sect. At that time, that man was so angered by Duan Ling Tian's refusal that he almost attacked Duan Ling Tian. In the end, that man was stopped by his companion.

"How many second elders are there in the sect?" Duan Ling Tian asked.

"Only one. There are only 19 ranked core elders in the sect, and the second elder is one of them. The unranked core elders are supreme elders. The supreme elders naturally have higher status than the 19 ranked core elders, and they're on par with the Vice Sect Leaders at least. Some of the supreme elders are stronger than the Sect Leader; they're our Sect Leader's elders. Apart from that, the sect also has 19 guardians, their status is comparable to the Vice Sect Leaders and higher than the 19 ranked core elders."

When Duan Ling Tian looked at the second elder's residence, he wondered if Tu Feng was there now.

"Based on our speed, we'll be arriving at the inner disciples' cultivation ground within 15 minutes," Tang Wu Yan said.

It would have taken them only a dozen breaths to get to the inner disciples' cultivation ground if she did not have to show Duan Ling Tian around.

"Sorry to trouble you," Duan Ling Tian said with a nod and a smile on his face. As they flew, he saw a familiar figure leaving the second elder's residence. He could sense the figure's gaze on him.

'That's not Tu Feng...' Although Duan Ling Tian only caught a glimpse of the figure, he was certain it was not Tu Feng. However, he was not bothered and continued to follow Tang Wu Yan's lead.

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Indeed, the figure did not belong to Tu Feng. It was the gray-clad young man who had stood behind Tu Feng when Tu Feng went to see Duan Ling Tian in the Hidden Fog Academy. He was Tu Feng's fourth junior brother, the second elder's fourth disciple.

"Isn't that Duan Ling Tian?" The young man was surprised when he saw Duan Ling Tian. When he regained his senses, he hurriedly sent a message through Voice Transmission. "Huan Li, can you ask Tang Wu Yan who's the purple-clad young man with her? Don't tell her that I'm the one who asked. Pretend like it was someone else who saw them."

Huan Li was an inner disciple of the Hidden Fog Sect who had a good relationship with Tu Feng and his junior brother.

It did not take long for Huan Li's reply to arrive.

"Meng Xing Hen, do you like Wu Yan as well? Why do you suddenly care about who she's with?" Huan Li asked teasingly.

"You're overthinking things. The purple-clad young man looks familiar so I want to know who he is. Anyway, hurry up and ask her. I'll treat you to a good meal later," Meng Xing Hen replied.

Meng Xing Hen did not have to wait long for Huan Li's reply.

"Meng Xing Hen, the purple-clad young man is a Ten Stars student from the Hidden Fog Academy. He just arrived today and joined the sect as an inner disciple. I didn't expect Vice Sect Leader Murong would recommend a student to join the sect in advance. It's said he even recommended that student to become a core disciple. That student will be taking the core disciples' test in half a year. You mentioned he seemed familiar; do you know him?"

"Thank you." Meng Xing Hen thanked Huan Li but did not answer his question.

He quickly flew away before coming to a stop in front of a building.

"Eldest Senior Brother, are you free?"

Chapter 3665: Unresolved Grudge

"Fourth Junior Brother, did something happen?"

A figure flew out of the building and appeared in front of Meng Xing Hen in just the blink of an eye. It was none other than Tu Feng who had gone to Hidden Fog Academy to express his master's intention of accepting Duan Ling Tian as a disciple to Duan Ling Tian. After being rejected by Duan Ling Tian, he held a grudge against Duan Ling Tian. He hated Duan Ling Tian to the point where he wished Duan Ling Tian would die before joining the Hidden Fog Sect.

"Eldest Senior Brother, do you still remember Duan Ling Tian, the strongest Ten Stars student from the Hidden Fog Academy who broke the record by accumulating 120,000 points during the Ten Star students' trial?" Meng Xing Hen asked.

Tu Feng and Meng Xing Hen, who had met Duan Ling Tian once, were shocked when they heard about Duan Ling Tian's outstanding performance during the Ten Stars students' trial. Moreover, Duan Ling Tian even survived multiple assassination attempts from the various king-rank forces in Skywind City during the trial.

"How can I not remember him?" Tu Feng said as his eyes glinted coldly, "I heard from our master that Vice Sect Leader Murong recommended that he be allowed to join our sect ahead of time as an inner disciple. In fact, Vice Sect Leader Murong had suggested that he be made a core disciple. I didn't expect him to arrive so soon."

“Eldest Senior Brother,” Meng Xing Hen said grimly, “Duan Ling Tian is now an inner disciple. I know you don’t like him, but it’s best that you don’t act against him for now. You should know about the sect’s rules...”

Meng Xing Hen was worried his hot-headed senior brother would get into trouble.

“I know,” Tu Feng said impatiently, “Did you come only to tell me about this?”

“Yes.” Meng Xing Ku smiled wryly. Not only did he come to inform Tu Feng about Duan Ling Tian’s arrival, but he had come to remind Tu Feng not to act recklessly. Otherwise, their master might not even be able to save Tu Feng from the consequences of breaking the sect’s rules.

“In any case, I’m not stupid,” Tu Feng said contemptuously, “Since he has joined the sect, I naturally have ways to deal with him without having to make a move myself. In fact, he’s not worthy of me personally making a move.”

Although Tu Feng was not a core disciple, he was rather popular. This was due to his status as a disciple of the second elder of the Hidden Fog Sect and his cultivation base that was of a King of Gods. After all, a rudimentary King of Gods younger than 10,000 years old was rare among the inner disciples.

“That’s great.” Meng Xing Hen heaved a sigh of relief upon hearing Tu Feng’s words.

“If there’s nothing else, you should cultivate harder so you can break through. Otherwise, it won’t be long before Duan Ling Tian surpasses you,” Tu Feng said dismissively before he left.

Meng Xing Hen watched helplessly as Tu Feng flew into the distance instead of returning to his residence. He knew Tu Feng was already plotting against Duan Ling Tian. After all, he was very familiar with Tu Feng. After being humiliated by Duan Ling Tian, Tu Feng had been holding a grudge against Duan Ling Tian. At that time, there was nothing Tu Feng could do since Duan Ling Tian was in the Hidden Fog Academy. Now that Duan Ling Tian was in the Hidden Fog Sect, he knew Tu Feng would definitely not let go of this chance to seek revenge.

“I hope that Eldest Senior Brother won’t go overboard. It’s rare that Vice Sect Leader Murong placed such great importance on a disciple. He even made two recommendations. It’s clear he thinks highly of Duan Ling Tian,” Meng Xing Hen muttered to himself before he returned to his residence.

Since Tu Feng and Meng Xing Hen were disciples of the second elder, their residences were near their master’s.

...

As they made their way to the inner disciples’ cultivation ground, Tang Wu Yan continued pointing out buildings to Duan Ling Tian.

“That’s where the fourth elders and his disciples live. High-ranking officials in the sect usually live very close to their disciples and relatives since it’s more convenient. Most of the inner disciples living in the cultivation ground don’t have masters in the sect. Some of them won’t accept a master unless it’s a high-ranking official of the sect. There are also the arrogant ones who think even the high-ranking officials aren’t qualified to be their masters. The majority of the inner disciples there are without masters because their performances were deemed ordinary. Moreover, the high-ranking officials also

think the inner disciples are beneath them,” Tang Wu Yan said. Then, she glanced at Duan Ling Tian before she sighed and asked, “Although the Vice Sect Leader recommended you twice, he didn’t express his wish to accept you as a disciple, right?”

Duan Ling Tian nodded.

“Do you know why?” Tang Wu Yan asked. Without waiting for Duan Ling Tian’s reply, she continued to say, “Based on your innate talent and comprehension skills, many supreme elders and guardians with the same status as Vice Sect Leader Murong would be more than happy to accept you as their disciple. Have you wondered why that’s not the case for Vice Sect Leader Murong?”

“Why?” Duan Ling Tian asked. In fact, he had wondered about this matter as well. Before he had met Murong Sui Feng for the first time, he was already prepared to refuse Murong Sui Feng when Murong Sui Feng expressed his wish to accept him as a disciple. However, to his surprise, Murong Sui Feng did not bring up this matter at all. He wondered if Murong Sui Feng knew he had rejected Tu Feng’s master, hence, Murong Sui Feng did not bother asking him to become his disciple. However, based on Tang Wu Yan’s words, that was clearly not the case.

“Vice Sect Leader had a disciple he cared about a lot. However, when his disciple passed away, he vowed that he would never accept another disciple in his life,” Tang Wu Yan said with a hint of reverence in her voice, “Although he didn’t swear on the Devil Heart’s Blood Oath, my granduncle said that it’s unlikely he’d accept another disciple again.”

She paused for a moment before she said, “Duan Ling Tian, once news of you arriving at the sect spreads, the supreme elders and guardians will surely try to get you to become their disciples. You should consider the matter of who you’re going to accept as a master carefully. After all, there are many factions in the sect. If you ask me, I think you should join the Skywind City’s Progeny since that’s where you came from. They’ll definitely take great care of you.”

Although Tang Wu Yan was not from Skywind City, she had joined the Skywind City’s First Progeny because of Tang Chun.

“The other progenies will also take great care of you. However, it’d take some time since they’d be wary of you in the beginning. In any case, this is just my suggestion. The choice is still in your hands. The Skywind City’s First Progeny won’t target you even if you decided not to join us. After all, we’re all from the sect.”

Duan Ling Tian smiled faintly upon hearing Tang Wu Yan’s words. “Thanks for the suggestion.”

When they arrived near a mountain range, Tang Wu Yan looked into the distance and said, “The inner disciples’ cultivation ground is behind the mountain peak. There are a few thousand inner disciples in the sect. About 20% of them are disciples of high-ranking officials. The majority of the inner disciples usually cultivate in the cultivation ground. Apart from that, some might have left the sect to cultivate outside while some older inner disciples are outside helping the sect manage its affairs. Hence, there are usually about 1,000 inner disciples at the cultivation ground.”

After passing through the mountain range, the duo arrived in front of a valley. The ground was uneven, and stone houses and wooden houses of different sizes and shapes were scattered everywhere. It seemed like the houses were built by the disciples themselves.

“These houses were built by the inner disciples... Those covered in cobwebs are unoccupied. You can choose to clean it and stay there or you can build your own place,” Tang Wu Yan said, “You can find out more about your responsibility as an inner disciple through the Memory Jade Token given to you during the registration. If there’s anything you’re unsure of, you can speak to me.”

After saying that, she handed her Soul Pearl over to Duan Ling Tian.

“Thank you.” After putting away her Soul Pearl, Duan Ling Tian handed his Soul Pearl to her as well.

“Thanks for showing me around today. If you need my help, please feel free to speak to me..”

Chapter 366: Inner Disciple Manual

During their entire journey, Tang Wu Yan only showed Duan Ling Tian around and introduced the various buildings to him, she did not talk about anything outside of that.

For this reason, Duan Ling Tian was certain she was not interested in him at all and was only helping him because of Tang Chun.

“It’s nothing so there’s no need for you to feel obligated to say such things,” Tang Wu Yan said with a faint smile. However, she did not reach out to take Duan Ling Tian’s Soul Pearl. It was as though she did not intend to have any contact with him in the future.

“Just take it. Who knows if I’ll be of some help in the future?” Duan Ling Tian said with a smile. He did not like owing others after all. Although this only took a little effort on Tang Wu Yan’s part, he knew she would not usually be tasked to show new disciples around. Naturally, he knew that Tang Chun had only arranged for her to show him around in hopes that he would take a liking to her. Apart from that, during their short time together, he could sense the pride and arrogance that were etched in her bones. In his two lives, he had only met a handful of women with such arrogance and pride.

“Alright.” Tang Wu Yan nodded in the end. A hint of helplessness could be seen on her face when she accepted Duan Ling Tian’s Soul Pearl.

Duan Ling Tian who noticed her expression could not help but smile bitterly. He rarely gave out his Soul Pearls, but one of the few times he took the initiative to give out his Soul Pearl, he was refused.

“I’ll take my leave then,” Tang Wu Yan said before she left, “Remember to have a look at the Inner Disciple Manual that’s contained in the Memory Jade Token. It’ll save you a lot of trouble down the line.”

“Okay.” Duan Ling Tian nodded faintly as he watched Tang Wu Yan leave. Then, he made his way to the cultivation ground of the inner disciples. Instead of building a house, he chose to stay in a vacant stone house.

Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!

With a wave of his hand, a gust of wind swept through the stone house, clearing the cobwebs and dust away. In just a blink of an eye, not even a speck of dust could be seen in the house.

After entering the house, Duan Ling Tian looked at the Formation compass that had been given to him during his registration. The Formation compass was given to the disciples so they could place it at their cultivation place to avoid being disturbed. It also served to protect the disciples since the Formation could keep everyone who was weaker than Kings of Gods out. If the Formation was destroyed, the inner elders responsible for protecting the disciples would also be alerted.

Duan Ling Tian sat cross-legged on the bed before he brought out the Memory Jade Token.

“Inner Disciple Manual.”

As soon as he extended a strand of his Divine Consciousness into it, a huge load of information appeared in his mind immediately.

The introduction of the manual contained some of the basic rules. There were the Hidden Fog Sect’s rules and rules specifically for the inner sect. Along with that were detailed descriptions of the punishments for breaking the rules. The rules were similar to the laws on earth to maintain order.

The manual held a lot of information, hence, it took Duan Ling Tian several hours before he was finished with the manual. With that, his understanding of the Hidden Fog Sect deepened as well.

“The Hidden Fog Sect is only a lord-rank force, but it’s still so wealthy. Every inner disciple is given ten taels of divine rocks every month. Even if I don’t collect my divine rocks, they’ll accumulate, and I can collect them at a later date.”

Although Duan Ling Tian possessed a few hundred thousand taels of divine rocks, he was still impressed when he thought about the Hidden Fog Sect giving 10 taels of divine rocks to so many inner disciples. With just inner disciples, the sect was already giving away tens of thousands of divine rocks a month. Moreover, this did not include the divine rocks allocated for the core elders, inner elders, outer elders, guardians, core disciples, and outer disciples.

“The cultivation environment here is indeed better than that of the academy. There’s also the Heavenly Stairs Battle for the inner disciples who are gods and Kings of Gods respectively. The top ranker will be handsomely rewarded as well. One can choose from different rewards or ask for something equal in value...”

Due to the rewards, Duan Ling Tian was rather excited about the Heavenly Stairs Battle. Since the core disciples’ test was still half a year away, he should have plenty of time to participate in the Heavenly Stairs Battle.

After that, Duan Ling Tian decided to leave his stone house to ask someone about the competition. As soon as he stepped outside, he saw a figure flying out from a wooden house and hurriedly intercepted that figure.

“What’s the matter?” The other person looked at Duan Ling Tian warily.

“Hello,” Duan Ling Tian said, somewhat embarrassed. After all, it was rude to suddenly obstruct someone’s path. He asked, “Excuse me. I just wanted to ask when’s the upcoming Heavenly Stairs Battle?”

“Heavenly Stairs Battle?” The young man that Duan Ling Tian intercepted had an ordinary appearance and a medium build. He furrowed his brows as he looked at the unfamiliar purple-clad young man and asked, “Are you a new inner disciple?”

The young man was certain Duan Ling Tian was a newcomer because he had never seen Duan Ling Tian before and also because of Duan Ling Tian’s question.

“Yes.” Duan Ling Tian nodded slightly.

“The next Heavenly Stairs Battle is in four months,” the young man said somewhat impatiently, “Now that I answered your question, can you step aside?”

“My apologies.” Since Duan Ling Tian knew his action could be considered rude, he apologized and stepped aside. His mind was only filled with thoughts about the Heavenly Stairs Battle at this moment.

‘I have another four months. During this time, I should try breaking through to become an advanced god. If I succeed, ranking at the top won’t be shocking,’ Duan Ling Tian thought to himself.

Although Duan Ling Tian was certain he would be able to rank first despite only being an intermediate god, he thought it would attract too much attention and trouble. Due to envy and jealousy, who knew if there were those who would make an attempt on his life? Although the sect provided ample cultivation resources, there was still a limit to them. There would be those who were unwilling to share these resources with another person.

Although Duan Ling Tian did not fear any of the inner disciples, he could not dismiss their masters who were elders of the Hidden Fog Sect. Even if the elders could not act openly against him, it would be easy for them to act in the dark.

“If possible, I should try to find a backer in the sect. However, accepting a master is out of the question. After all, I already have a master,” Duan Ling Tian muttered to himself. He felt a headache coming on when he thought about this matter. “Let it be. Let’s just take one step at a time for now.”

With that, Duan Ling Tian returned to the stone house to cultivate.

...

At some point, Duan Ling Tian was woken up by a disturbance to his Formation. Although whoever was outside did not force their way in, he or she had still triggered the Formation’s alarm.

When Duan Ling Tian emerged from the stone house, he saw a middle-aged man and a young man.

The middle-aged man was dressed in a long cyan robe. Although he was rather handsome, he looked rather gloomy.

On the other hand, the young man's appearance was ordinary. He looked a little dull, but his eyes were bright.

"Are you looking for me?" Duan Ling Tian asked with a frown as he sized up the two strangers.

"You're new here?" the middle-aged man asked Duan Ling Tian.

"Do you have a problem with that?" Duan Ling Tian bluntly asked.

"This stone house is my eldest brother's cultivation place. He'll be returning soon. Since you're new here, I won't say much, but it's best you vacate the stone house."

"Your eldest brother's cultivation place?" Duan Ling Tian raised an eyebrow.

Perhaps, if he did not read the Inner Disciple Manual, he might have apologized and vacated the stone house. However, the Inner Disciple Manual had clearly stated that the vacant houses could be occupied by any of the inner disciples. Based on the cobwebs that hung on the house when he arrived, it was clear the house had stood empty for a while now.

"That's right." The middle-aged man nodded. A hint of impatience flashed in his eyes as he said, "My eldest brother built this house. Since you're a newcomer, you should leave as soon as possible."

"Why?" Duan Ling Tian asked. Since the people in front of him were also inner disciples, he did not believe they were unaware of the rules. He had just arrived not too long ago, but these two people had already come knocking on his door. He felt this matter was not simple.

"What? You don't want to leave?" The middle-aged man's expression hardened immediately. "You're just an intermediate god. You're not a match for me, an advanced god!"

The dull-looking young man sneered at this moment as he suddenly exuded an oppressive aura.

Duan Ling Tian looked at the middle-aged man expressionlessly as he asked, "Not a match for you? Are you sure?"

Chapter 3667: Duan Ling Tian Finally Comes Out of Closed-door Cultivation

The middle-aged man was taken aback by Duan Ling Tian's confidence. Despite being an advanced god, he was ranked bottom among the inner disciples who were advanced gods. In fact, some of the more outstanding intermediate gods had strength on par with his.

A hint of fear flashed in the middle-aged man's eyes as he mulled over the reason why an intermediate god was so confident facing an advanced god.

Similarly, fear could be seen in the dull-looking young man's eyes as he asked, "Who are you?"

Duan Ling Tian said mockingly, "You don't even know who I am, but you dare disturb me when I'm cultivating? Did the person who sent you here not tell you about me?"

At this time, Duan Ling Tian was rather certain the person who sent these two people here to look for trouble with him was Tu Feng, the disciple of the second elder of the Hidden Fog Sect. Hence, he added, "Perhaps, I should be more direct. Did Tu Feng not tell you about me before he sent you here?"

The duo's expressions changed drastically.

Although Tu Feng did not explicitly tell them to look for Duan Ling Tian, they had indeed come because of Tu Feng. Earlier, they were chatting with Tu Feng when Tu Feng mentioned there was a newcomer whom he wanted to teach a lesson to. The duo decided to take matters into their own hands since it did not seem difficult to look for trouble with a newcomer. They could claim credit in front of Tu Feng at that time, and Tu Feng might even reward them. However, it was beyond their expectations that Duan Ling Tian was calm even after they threatened him.

Seeing the duo's silence, Duan Ling Tian smiled and said, "I'm Duan Ling Tian."

The duo's expression changed again upon hearing Duan Ling Tian's words.

"Y-you're Duan Ling Tian?"

"You're that Ten Stars student from Skywind City's Hidden Fog Academy?!"

The duo began to panic. They had naturally heard about the monstrous genius from the Hidden Fog Academy. News about Duan Ling Tian's outstanding performance during the Ten Stars students' trial had long spread in the Hidden Fog Sect. They knew he was only 3,000 years old but had already become an intermediate god and comprehended triple Fused Profundities from the law of space, which was one of the Four Supreme Laws.

Although the duo was much older than Duan Ling Tian, they had only comprehended two or three double Fused Profundities. Although they were advanced gods, they knew they were no match for Duan Ling Tian. Even if they joined forces, they would only fight to a draw at most.

All of that aside, a monstrous genius like Duan Ling Tian definitely had a bright future ahead of him. The duo knew it would be disastrous if they offended Duan Ling Tian. As long as no accidents happened, Duan Ling Tian would definitely surpass them.

The duo exchanged a look and saw the regret in each other's eyes as they communicated through Voice Transmission. They would not have acted so boldly if they knew their target was Duan Ling Tian.

"We're too naive! We should've known Senior Brother Tu Feng wouldn't have asked for Senior Brother Qi's help if he wanted to deal with an ordinary inner disciple."

"We can only blame ourselves for acting rashly..."

At the same time, Duan Ling Tian said with a nod, "Indeed, I'm from Skywind City's Hidden Fog Academy. Based on your earlier words, it seems like you want to challenge me to a duel. I accept your challenge."

The middle-aged man forced a smile on his face as he hurriedly said, "Junior Brother Duan, I-I was just j-joking. Anyone can occupy the vacant houses. Since it was vacant when you moved in, you can naturally stay here."

“Is that so?” Duan Ling Tian stared at the middle-aged man intently.

“Yes, yes,” the middle-aged man hastily said before turning to the young man next to him and said, “Hurry up and help me say something as well!”

With this, the young man regained his senses and chimed in, “That’s right. It’s just a joke, Junior Brother Duan!”

“It didn’t seem like a joke to me. Tell me the truth, and I’ll let this matter go,” Duan Ling Tian said as he narrowed his eyes.

The duo exchanged a look before they turned to look at Duan Ling Tian and told him everything they knew through Voice Transmission.

“Junior Brother Duan, please forgive me for disturbing you.”

“Junior Brother Duan, you best keep an eye out on Senior Brother Qi Yu. He’s one of the top ten strongest gods among inner disciples. His comprehension should be on par with yours. He’s comprehended a triple Fused Profundity from the law of wind.”

‘Qi Yu? He comprehended a triple Fused Profundity from the law of wind?’ Duan Ling Tian’s narrowed eyes glinted frostily.

Initially, he had wondered why Tu Feng sent two weak gods to teach him a lesson. As it turned out, the duo took the initiative to look for trouble with him in order to curry favor with Tu Feng.

“Junior Brother Duan, if there’s nothing else, we’ll take our leave now. Sorry for bothering you.”

With that, the duo hurriedly left before Duan Ling Tian could even respond.

‘Am I that scary?’ Duan Ling Tian was stunned when he saw the speed at which the duo vanished. He shook his head and returned to his stone house.

He continued cultivating, hoping to break through and become an advanced god so his performance during the Stairway to Heaven Competition would not be too shocking. After all, he did not want to attract unnecessary attention.

“I have a few months left before the Heavenly Stairs Battle. I should be able to become an advanced god by then. Moreover, I still have the leftover efficacy from the Dragon Pattern Divine Grass.”

Subsequently, Duan Ling Tian began to immerse himself in cultivating. He activated the Formation compass he had been given so as to avoid being disturbed. Unless the Formation was destroyed, he would not be alerted to all the small commotions outside. He had even cast a Formation that functioned like an alarm clock, which he had learned during his last month in the Hidden Fog Academy, to remind him of the time.

Hence, for the next few months, Duan Ling Tian cultivated undisturbed.

...

Duan Ling Tian lost track of time as he tried to break through and become an advanced god using the Dragon Pattern Divine Grass' leftover efficacy.

Alas, before he could do so, he was woken up by the alarm-like Formation that he had cast to wake him up on the morning of the Heavenly Stairs Battle.

"Time's up? I was so close..." Duan Ling Tian sighed, feeling helpless. He was on the brink of achieving a breakthrough, after all. He needed only a few more days to break through the bottleneck but was interrupted at the critical point.

While he was lost in his thoughts, a voice rang from outside his stone house.

"Duan Ling Tian, you're finally out of your closed-door cultivation."

It was none other than Tang Wu Yan, Tang Chun's grandniece.

Since he was in closed-door cultivation over the past few months, he had been unreachable until now.

Chapter 3668: The Auspicious Pill

"What's the matter?" Duan Ling Tian was not surprised Tang Wu Yan knew he had woken up from his closed-door cultivation. After all, many of the inner disciples had seen him; some of them must have informed her about it.

"Over the last three months, Qi Yu, who's ranked in the top ten among inner disciples with the cultivation base of a god, has been challenging you to duel, but there was no response from you. A lot of people thought you're too afraid to accept the challenge. Naturally, there are some who realize you're in closed-door cultivation. However, it seems like someone's deliberately spreading the rumor that you're a coward. Duan Ling Tian, you should just ignore these people. Don't let their words affect you," Tang Wu Yan said.

"Don't worry. I won't," Duan Ling Tian replied. He could tell Tang Wu Yan was sincerely concerned. However, with his experience in the mundane realm to the Devata Realms and the Realms of Gods, how could he be affected by such trivial matters?

Although Duan Ling Tian only responded with a few words, Tang Wu Yan could tell that based on his calmness, he was truly unruffled by the rumors. After a brief moment, she asked, "Are you planning to compete in the Heavenly Stairs Battle?"

"Yes," Duan Ling Tian said with a nod.

Tang Wu Yan smiled and said, "Alright. Good luck. I hope you do well!"

Tang Wu Yan no longer said anything after that. She did not even mention if she was going to be present during the battle.

Duan Ling Tian followed the inner disciples who were leaving the cultivation ground. He knew they were all going to the Heavenly Stairs Battle's venue.

The Heavenly Stairs Battle was an important event for the inner disciples to show their talents and skills.

As he made his way to the venue, Duan Ling Tian recalled the thing he had learned about the Heavenly Stairs Battle from the Inner Disciple Manual. If he took it literally, it seemed like the battle was to see who could climb the highest. Naturally, he knew it was not going to be that simple.

The Heavenly Stairs Battle was created by the founders of the Hidden Fog Sect. Initially, its purpose was to train the disciples. As time passed, it evolved and became an event where inner disciples competed with one another. The sect seemed happy with this development and tried to motivate the disciples by putting up extraordinary rewards for the person who ranked first in the battle.

Duan Ling Tian overheard the conversations between the inner disciples around him as he continued to walk.

“It’s said that the person who ranks first this time in the King of God and god divisions of the Heavenly Stairs Battle will be rewarded with the Auspicious Pill and the Tribulation Defense Fruit respectively.”

‘The Auspicious Pill?’ Duan Ling Tian was stunned. He did not expect the Hidden Fog Sect to be so generous as to offer the Auspicious Pill as a reward.

The Auspicious Pill was created specifically for gods. Even an advanced god who was not particularly talented was guaranteed to become a King of Gods after consuming the Auspicious Pill. This pill was tremendously useful in helping gods become Kings of Gods.

There was a rumor that an extraordinary god had broken through and became an advanced god. After that, he directly took nine Auspicious Pills and became a rudimentary King of gods. Having two breakthroughs in a day was normal in the Realms of Gods. Many emperor-rank and supreme-rank forces would provide their prodigies with various resources to facilitate two breakthroughs in a day. Hence, one can imagine how highly coveted the Auspicious Pill was.

‘The god who ranks first and the King of Gods who ranks first will be rewarded with the Auspicious Pill and the Tribulation Defense Fruit respectively.’

Duan Ling Tian had heard of the Tribulation Defense Fruit as well. Unlike the Auspicious Pill that was refined using various rare medicinal herbs, the Tribulation Defense Fruit was a product of heaven and earth. It did not boost one’s cultivation, but it would help Kings of Gods withstand the Heavenly Tribulations.

Kings of Gods had to face the Heavenly Tribulation once every 1,000 years. The tribulations would get increasingly difficult, and those who could not raise their cultivation bases in time would be killed by the Heavenly Tribulation. For this reason, apart from anticipation, there were also many advanced gods who feared becoming Kings of Gods. Advanced gods’ cultivation bases could stagnate, and it would not be a problem. On the contrary, the consequences would be deadly if a King of Gods’ cultivation base stagnated since they would be unable to withstand the Heavenly Tribulation.

The Tribulation Defense Fruit could help a King of God avoid the Heavenly Tribulation once. After consuming the fruit, a defensive barrier would appear to help the King of God partially block the damage from the Heavenly Tribulation. If a King of God only had a 50% chance of surviving the Heavenly Tribulation, with the Tribulation Defense Fruit, his or her chances of survival would increase to 80%.

'The Hidden Fog Sect is truly generous!' Duan Ling Tian exclaimed inwardly. He was amazed by the wealth of the lord-rank force.

"Young Master Duan!"

A voice rang in the air, pulling Duan Ling Tian back to his senses. Since the voice was unfamiliar, he did not look back. However, the owner of the voice flew over and stood in his way. He asked, "Who are you?"

The person who stood in front of Duan Ling Tian was a tall and burly middle-aged man. His eyebrows slanted up at the sides, and he wore a determined expression on his face. A hint of fear could be seen on his face as he said, "Young Master Duan, my name is Zhong Tian Nu. I'm a disciple of the Zhong clan."

Zhong Tian Nu was not only a disciple of the Zhong clan, but he was also the adopted son of Zhong Da, the Clan Leader of the Zhong clan. Although he had no blood relations to the Zhong clan, he was raised to be loyal to the clan since he was young. Moreover, when he was young, Zhong Da had tricked him into taking the Devil Heart's Blood Oath, swearing to be loyal and to only serve the Zhong clan. For this reason, the Zhong clan entrusted him with many important tasks. Today, he had been entrusted by Zhong Da to deliver the things to compensate Duan Ling Tian.

Since Duan Ling Tian was in closed-door cultivation over the past few months, Zhong Tian Nu was unable to deliver the compensation to Duan Ling Tian. With the commencement of the Heavenly Stairs Battle, he was certain he would be able to meet Duan Ling Tian today.

"Young Master Duan, I'm here to pass you these things on behalf of my godfather," Zhong Tian Nu said.

"Your godfather?" Duan Ling Tian was puzzled.

Zhong Tian Nu explained, "My godfather is Zhong Da, the Clan Leader of the Zhong clan. Young Master Duan, everything is kept in this spatial ring."

Duan Ling Tian accepted the spatial ring. After claiming ownership of the spatial ring, he took a look at the content. He was surprised when he saw the piles of divine rocks, rare medicinal herbs, divine fruits, and pill bottles that were already labeled.

'Auspicious Pills?' Duan Ling Tian was further stunned. The Hidden Fog Sect was only rewarding the winner with one Auspicious Pill after all.

'How many Auspicious Pills are in this bottle?' Duan Ling Tian wondered inwardly as he used his Divine Consciousness to sense the number of pills in the bottle.

One, two, three...

Chapter 3669: The Heavenly Stairs Battle

Auspicious Pills could help an advanced god become a King of God. Duan Ling Tian was naturally interested in this reward for the person who ranked first in the Heavenly Stairs Battle's division for gods.

He had seriously weighed the pros and cons of participating in the Heavenly Stairs Battle. Although he was just an intermediate god, he was confident about winning the battle. However, it would draw a lot of attention for an intermediate god to rank first. Even among the advanced gods who were inner disciples, there were not many who had comprehended triple Fused Profundities. People would definitely wonder how an intermediate god like him managed to rank first. Nonetheless, in the end, he decided to take the risk for the reward. He thought he had made the right decision when he heard the reward was going to be an Auspicious Pill. Imagine his feelings now that he discovered the Zhong clan had not only given him piles of divine rocks and other valuable things, but they had also given him more than one Auspicious Pill.

‘Five Auspicious Pills!’ Duan Ling Tian could barely contain his excitement when he discovered five Auspicious Pills in the pill bottle. With these pills, he did not have to take the risk and rank first in the Heavenly Stairs Battle.

‘I didn’t expect the Zhong clan would give up five Auspicious Pills,’ Duan Ling Tian thought to himself. It seemed like the Zhong clan was sincere about compensating him. The other things aside, with just a glance, he could tell the Zhong clan had given him at least 1,000,000 taels of divine rocks.

‘A king-rank force like the Zhong clan likely possesses 2,000,000 taels of divine rocks at most. These divine rocks here should be half of their fortune. Apart from that, they could have just given me one or two Auspicious Pills, and I would be none the wiser. Why did they give me five? Are they afraid of incurring my wrath?’ Duan Ling Tian wondered curiously. He had never met Zhong Da before, but he was truly impressed by Zhong Da’s generosity.

“Young Master Duan,” Zhong Tian Nu said respectfully, “My godfather wants me to ask you if you’re satisfied with this compensation?”

“Yes.” Duan Ling Tian nodded. His eyes glinted as he thought to himself, ‘I was planning to annihilate the Zhong clan, but since your leader is so sincere, I’ll only kill those who tried to kill me.’

Although the instigator, Zhong Ke Qi, was dead, Duan Ling Tian did not have any intention of letting the others who were involved go. He would return to seek revenge once he had grown strong enough.

“Thank you, Young Master Duan,” Zhong Tian Nu said as he sighed in relief. Then, he moved to the side to make way for Duan Ling Tian. Following that, he sent a message back to Zhong Da.

Meanwhile, some of the inner disciples discussed among themselves as they watched Duan Ling Tian.

“Who’s that? Is he a newcomer? I’ve never seen him before.”

“Based on how respectful Zhong Tian Nu was to him, he must have an extraordinary background.”

At this time, someone said, “What? You don’t know him? Haven’t you heard about the newcomer who joined us recently? You know, the person whom Senior Brother Qi has been challenging over the past months?”

Qi Yu was one of the top strongest gods among the inner disciples. He was famous as well during his time at the Hidden Fog Academy.

Someone exclaimed, “So he’s Duan Ling Tian from Skywind City’s Hidden Fog Academy?”

“Duan Ling Tian? The person Vice Sect Leader Murong recommended joining the Hidden Fog Sect ahead of time? It’s said that his innate talent and strength are extraordinary. He’s not even 3,000 years old, but he has already an intermediate god and has comprehended triple Fused Profundities.”

“It’s not just that. The law he comprehended is the law of space, one of the Four Supreme Laws. If I’m not mistaken, no one in our sect who’s below the age of 4,000 has comprehended a triple Fused Profundity from any of the Four Supreme Laws.”

“Duan Ling Tian is truly a monstrous prodigy. I heard he’ll be taking the core disciples’ test as well. Initially, Vice Sect Leader Murong recommended that the sect make him a core disciple.”

“Not all inner disciples are qualified to take the core disciples’ test. I didn’t expect Vice Sect Leader Murong to recommend him. After all, there’s a limit to how many times the high-ranking officials can recommend someone to be an inner disciple or core disciple.”

Although Duan Ling Tian was a distance away, he could still clearly hear the conversations in his surroundings. He only just found out that inner disciples could only take the core disciples’ test if they had a recommendation.

Soon after, Duan Ling Tian came to a stop with the others.

A flight of brightly lit stairs hung in the air.

A person hovered in front of the stairs, receiving a token from an expressionless old man. Then, that person disappeared up the stairs.

Not long after, a spot of light lit up on the first step when the disciple entered it. Then, the the spot of light vanished from the first step and appeared on the second step. However, when he reached the spot of light reached the third step, the light dimmed. Soon after, he exited.

At this time, a young man standing near Duan Ling Tian shouted, “Hu Jun, you still can’t pass the third step of the stairs?”

After returning the token to the old man, Hu Jun approached the young man. His expression was dark as he tossed a few divine rocks over to the young man. Then, he said, “Don’t get ahead of yourself. You’ll have to return these divine rocks to me if you can’t climb up to the fourth step of the stairs.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll definitely succeed!” the young man said with a smile. Then, he flew over to the old man. After receiving the token, he began to climb up the stairs. Light began to light up in his wake as he climbed the stairs.

‘Is the stairs part of a Formation?’ Duan Ling Tian wondered inwardly. Then, he extended a strand of his Divine Consciousness to probe the stairs only to discover his Divine Energy was blocked by another force.

At this time, while Duan Ling Tian was deep in his thoughts, a figure appeared next to him and called out, “Duan Ling Tian.”

Before Duan Ling Tian could respond, the people in the surroundings began to whisper among themselves.

“It’s Tang Wu Yan!”

Not only was Tang Wu Yan among the top three strongest female inner disciples, but she was also acknowledged as the most beautiful female disciple in the Hidden Fog Sect. She was even more famous than Qi Yu in the Hidden Fog Sect.

Duan Ling Tian nodded with a smile on his face at Tang Wu Yan.

When Tang Wu Yan saw the confused expression on Duan Ling Tian’s face as he watched the Heavenly Stairs Battle, she was reminded of herself when she first watched the battle. She naturally knew what was going on in his mind so she said, “Duan Ling Tian, the Inner Disciple Manual only briefly describes the history of the Heavenly Stairs Battle. I bet you don’t know much about the stairs, right?”

Duan Ling Tian nodded.

Tang Wu Yan continued to say, “The stairs might look like it’s from an Illusory Formation, but that’s only partially true. It only looked like stairs outside; it’s just an illusion. However, when you climb up the stairs, you’re led into many small independent realms in there. These small realms are guarded by inner disciples who committed crimes. Some of them have been imprisoned there for 100,000 years when the sect itself isn’t even 200,000 years old. In order to climb up the stairs, you’ll have to defeat those in that independent realm.”

Duan Ling Tian nodded as he listened to Tang Wu Yan’s explanation. In other words, the Heavenly Stairs were just a prison for those disciples of the Hidden Fog Sect who committed crimes. They were isolated in small realms and could not raise their cultivation bases in there. To him, death was better than being imprisoned in such a place.. The prisoners had nothing to do, and their interactions with the outside world were only with inner disciples who participated in the Heavenly Stairs Battle.

Chapter 3670: The Heavenly Stairs Token

‘Death would be better than being imprisoned in there.’ Duan Ling Tian could not help but shudder when he thought about the inner disciples imprisoned in the Heavenly Stairs. It was likely that most of them had lost their sanity.

At this time, Tang Wu Yan said, “There are many of them who took their own lives since they could not stand being in there.”

“If the participants can’t defeat the prisoners, doesn’t it mean the participants will be killed by the prisoners?” Duan Ling Tian asked.

“This is very unlikely to happen unless the participants are reckless. I’m sure you noticed by now that participants are given tokens before they climb the stairs. Those are called the Heavenly Stairs Tokens. If participants can’t defeat their opponents, they can crush the token and be transported out. The chances are very low for participants to be unable to crush the tokens in time,” Tang Wu Yan explained.

Duan Ling Tian learned a lot after listening to Tang Wu Yan. As it turned out, the tokens not only kept track of time but functioned like a life-saving token as well.

At this time, the young man who had made a bet with Hu Jun had already climbed up to the third part of the stairs while Hu Jun looked at the stairs intently, waiting for the results.

Meanwhile, the male inner disciples looked at Duan Ling Tian enviously. The most beautiful female disciple in the Hidden Fog Sect who was usually aloof and taciturn was conversing with him for so long, after all.

“Among the gods, how high do they usually climb?” Duan Ling Tian asked.

The Heavenly Stairs had 19 steps in total. The steps below the 12th step flashed with spots of light, but the steps above were dim. On the 11th step, there was only one spot of light.

“During the previous Heavenly Stairs Battle, three gods managed to climb to the eighth step. One of them was Qi Yu, the inner disciple who has been challenging you over the past few months,” Tang Wu Yan replied, “Among the three, the person who stayed on the eighth step the longest was considered the winner. Although Qi Yu performed well, he was only ranked third.”

Based on this, Duan Ling Tian could infer that the spots of light from the ninth step onward represented the Kings of Gods since the top god only climbed to the eighth step.

“The rankings will be shown above the stairs. The sect will reward those who rank at the top as you already know,” Tang Wu Yan said.

Duan Ling Tian was rather excited to challenge the Heavenly Stairs after listening to Tang Wu Yan’s explanation.

At this time, the flashing spot of light on the third step suddenly vanished.

Soon after, the young man appeared and returned the divine rocks back to Hu Jun. Then, he said furiously, “D*mn it! I was so close to climbing past the third step, but that fellow suddenly fought as though his life depended on it nearing the end! Whatever! So what if he won? He’ll die soon enough living in such a place.

“Stop talking nonsense. A loss is a loss. Everyone only has one chance to participate in the Heavenly Stairs Battle. You’ll have to wait for the next round to redeem yourself,” Hu Jun said, grinning ear to ear now that he regained the divine rocks he had lost earlier.

At this time, someone exclaimed, “Look! Senior Brother Qi Yu has reached the eighth step!”

Duan Ling Tian instinctively looked up and saw a spot of light flashing on the eighth step.

“Senior Brother Qi Yu has reduced the time he spent on the seventh step!”

‘Qi Yu?’ Duan Ling Tian smirked. Although he had yet to meet Qi Yu, he knew Qi Yu was sent by Tu Feng to trouble him. That was the reason Qi Yu had persistently challenged him over the past few months.

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After a while, it was finally Duan Ling Tian’s turn.

“Elder, I’m Duan Ling Tian, an intermediate god. I’m here to challenge the Heavenly Stairs,” Duan Ling Tian said to the old man in front of the Heavenly Stairs.

This was the standard greeting of the disciples participating in the Heavenly Stairs Battle. Usually, the old man did not pay much attention to the greetings, but this time, he looked in surprise when he heard Duan Ling Tian’s name. He asked, “You’re Duan Ling Tian from Skywind City’s Hidden Fog Academy?”

“Yes.” Duan Ling Tian nodded.

“After hearing so much about you, I finally got to meet you. Good luck,” the old man said with a rare smile on his face as he handed a token to Duan Ling Tian, “This token will be activated once you channel your Divine Energy into it. If you want to leave, send a strand of your Divine Consciousness into it.”

“Thank you, elder,” Duan Ling Tian said before he entered the Heavenly Stairs.

Many of the inner disciples began to focus their attention on Duan Ling Tian again when they saw the elder’s attitude toward Duan Ling Tian.

“That’s that monstrous talent from Skywind City’s Hidden Fog Academy!”

“No wonder Tang Wu Yan treats him differently!”

“What nonsense are you spouting? I don’t think our sect’s goddess treated him any differently!”

“That’s right. Our goddess stood quite a distance from him so I’m sure they’re just ordinary acquaintances.”

Duan Ling Tian was not around to hear the conversations, but Tang Wu Yan heard it all. Nonetheless, she did not pay attention to the whispers. Instead, a hint of curiosity flashed in her eyes as she looked at the flashing spot of light that represented Duan Ling Tian.

In the beginning, she had been indifferent toward Duan Ling Tian, but she felt like her ego had been hit when Duan Ling Tian ignored her. When she was showing him around the sect, he did not pay much attention to her at all. It was as though he did not see her beauty at all. She was someone who took great pride in her beauty. With his indifference, her self-esteem naturally suffered a blow. She was one of those women who ignored men who were interested in them and were interested in men who ignored them.

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Duan Ling Tian was naturally unaware of the messy thoughts in Tang Wu Yan’s mind. He had just entered the first small realm. It was dark and resembled the space in spatial rings.

Swoosh!

A flame suddenly lit up.

Duan Ling Tian saw a sloppy figure in front of him. They were standing in the middle of a barren valley at this moment, across from each other. Beyond the valley was only darkness since the realm was isolated.

“The Heavenly Stairs Battle has started again?” The sloppy young man who was sitting cross-legged rose to his feet slowly. His body burned with flames from the law of fire.

“Yes.” Duan Ling Tian nodded.

“You can attack first,” the young man said.

“You’re no match for me,” Duan Ling Tian bluntly said.

Duan Ling Tian had already used his Divine Consciousness to probe his opponent. He discovered his opponent was just an intermediate god. Moreover, his opponent had yet to comprehend all the profundities from the law of fire to the mastery stage.

“You’re just an intermediate god like me. How can you be so confident when we’ve yet to fight?” the young man said hoarsely.

Duan Ling Tian shook his head. The air seemed to freeze as he cast the profundities from the law of space.

Silence descended immediately.

After a moment, the young man said, “I... I surrender.”