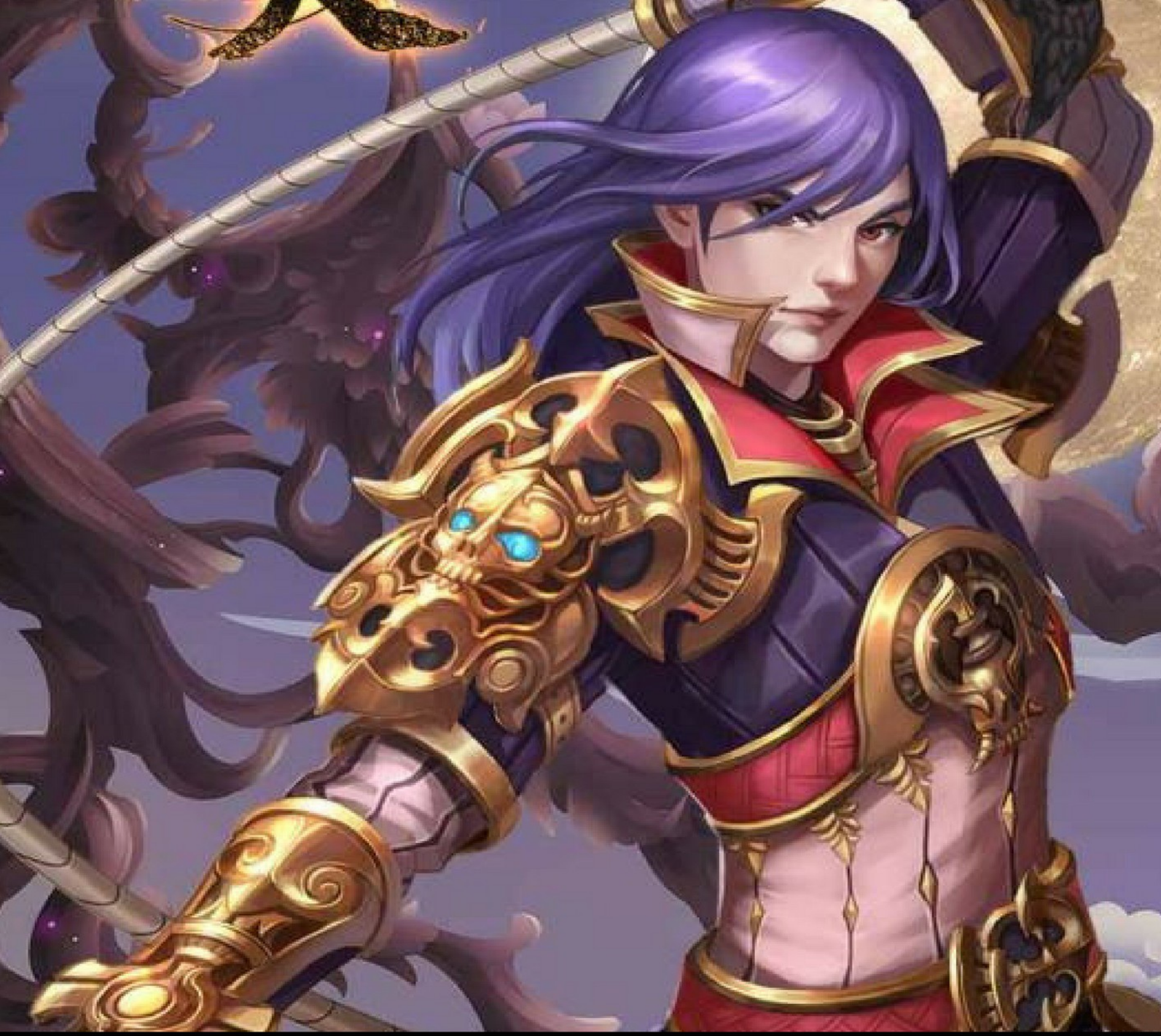

THE AVALON OF 5 ELEMENTS

BOOK 04

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The Avalon of Five Elements

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by

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Synopsis

The tens of thousands of universes have merged. The disintegration of spiritual force led to the momentous collapse of the great Cultivation World, a mighty era that had endured through millions of years of history. In the wake of the large-scale invasion of the Wilderness, the Avalon of Five Elements has become the practitioners' last stand.

After a thousand years, a lowly youth, who hailed from the Old Territory, toiled as a laborer for three years in the depths of the Wilderness. He then became an exception and obtained the opportunity to enter the Avalon Of Five Elements for further studies.

Bearing beast-like fighting capabilities and driven by the desire to take control of his life, the youth strived for greater strength and power. Little did he know that he would set off a majestic upheaval.

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Chapter 301: Caught Off Guard

When Ai Hui landed along with the red muslin that filled the sky, he thrusted his red sword ray into Sha family's compound.

Thump. A dull and somewhat heavy sound rang. The next moment, the eye-grabbing red ray lit up suddenly. The ball of red glow illuminated the night sky radiantly.. Those with their eyes wide opened were unable to avoid it and were temporarily blinded and exclaimed alarmingly.

Their eyesight only recovered seconds later.

Far away, Sha family's compound was extremely quiet. What was happening?

Many were curious but dared not dash forward to look. Wang Han's powerful sword move was simply too terrifying. Plus, he had chosen to charge straight for the family like a death god figure. They couldn't help but revere him.

Who exactly was this guy who concealed such dreadful powers?

"This is it, how am I going to bargain with him in future? How am I going to run my business?" The shop owner held both hands to his head and his face was pale, but quickly, as if he'd thought of something, his face turned red and his eyes lit up. "Aren't Sha family's belongings all going to land in Wang Han's hands? I'll probably earn something by disposing them for him? This Wang fellow is going to strike it rich. Sigh, this is a new tyrant. I shall

prepare a few good items for our new tyrant."

The boss was extremely familiar with Ai Hui and knew what he lacked.

There were always bolder elementalists who had more confidence in their abilities, so they flew slowly towards Sha's compound.

When they were close enough to get a glimpse of the yard, they fell into great shock.

There were no intact corner. It was as if the big yard had been plowed over and over again by steel and lava as there were holes and burnt marks all over the place. The flipped soil were black and there was steam coming out of it.

The arrow towers had been torn apart into countless chunks and none of the guards were still standing. Their bodies were filled with burnt bloody holes. It was a pitiful sight.

The walls surrounding the yard were broken into pieces as well. There were countless gaps, big and small, and there were signs of melting within those gaps.

Wherever he looked there were fragmented remnants so it was imaginable how intense and concentrated of a blow they had been dealt with.

There was no trace of Wang Han in the compound.

Ai Hui was awfully busy in the underground warehouse. It was located underground and hence undamaged, much to Ai Hui's relief.

In the center of the warehouse was a quicksand whirlpool that constantly circulated. The core of the whirlpool was like a fish's mouth, opening and closing.

Ai Hui turned into a diligent porter, throwing things into the whirlpool speedily. Sand compass was indeed a miraculous object. The entrance of the whirlpool was definitely small but no matter what he threw in, the whirlpool swallowed them up.

Ai Hui was very well prepared. He knew clearly where the valuable items were. He was like a gust of wind, sweeping the warehouse empty in the blink of an eye.

The most valuable objects were kept in the sand compass. His biggest reward was two trunks of essence elemental beans, which was Sha family's Peace City branch's initiation funds.

There were also many expensive earth elemental materials around. Sha family was a wealthy and powerful family after all.

Ai Hui couldn't be bothered packing the leftover big objects that were of little worth.

After keeping the compass properly, Ai Hui walked out of the warehouse openly.

Murdering without arson was simply unprofessional.

With a jolt of Dragonspine sword, its sharp end glided across the sky. Boom, a line of flame set off in the sky and landed behind him, into the room full of holes.

His move instantly subdued the restlessness of some people. Creating a fire was easy but only for fire elementalists. Wang Han, a metal elementalist, had relied on his swordsmanship to generate flames in such a relaxed and natural motion. The depth of his swordsmanship and achievements was evident and fear-inducing.

The wisp of flame was exceptionally hot and the house quickly became a raging inferno, coating the sky with the color red.

Under the watch of everybody present, Ai Hui returned to his usual calm and cool self without the least bit of uneasiness.

A man with his sword walked, as if he was strolling casually in the park, to the entrance of the badly crumbled compound as the blaze behind him soared.

He noticed the many observers and something clicked. This was a good opportunity! He scanned the area and saw a broken wooden board not far away. He went over to pick it up and found himself a burnt chunk of a small wooden stick.

The surrounding elementalists were beyond amazed, guessing what Wang Han was about to do.

They only saw Wang Han brushing a few words on it before throwing the small wooden stick away. Carrying the wooden board to the collapsed entrance, he picked a spot to hang the board.

A row of words could be seen on the board.

"Swordsman Training Hall, special tuition rate, a hundred essence elemental beans!"

The onlookers: "..."

Hidden in the crowd, Fu Yonghao almost choked on his own saliva. A hundred essence elemental beans? Why don't you rob somebody? It was four beans previously! How can such an unscrupulous businessman exist in this world! Eh, seemed like I'm focusing on the wrong thing...

In that period of silence, Ai Hui admired his own advertorial board. Come to think of it, this was the first time he'd actually promoted the training hall.

Thereupon, Ai Hui swaggered away amid the silence of the onlookers, leaving only the fiery blaze and an advertorial board on that broken door behind.

The morning sunlight came as scheduled, declaring that it was a cloudless day.

Having checked his inventory of spoils of war through the night, Ai Hui was simply too excited to sleep. The items, piled up like a mountain, brought extreme bliss and made it difficult for one to look away.

Murderers and arsonists were rich indeed!

All of Ai Hui's investments paid off quickly. Those two trunks of essence elemental beans were enough to dazzle him. Moreover, that pile of ingredients was worth a scary amount of money. What surprised Ai Hui was those twenty sand puppets whose models he couldn't recognize.

He knew that these puppets were the newly and successfully manufactured model, Earth Sentinel, that had yet to be released in the market. Sha Wuyuan either brought twenty of these along to strike a deal with other clans or because they had some special uses. After all, many elementalists were not easily swayed by money. Plus, it would be more appealing if there was only one instead of twenty sand puppets.

Because it was a new release, there were only thirty of those in the whole Sha household. Now, twenty had fallen into Ai Hui's hands.

Although Ai Hui did not know what models they were of, being shrewd, he could still distinguish the differences they had from

ordinary sand puppets.

Feeling pleased, Ai Hui came out of the warehouse to welcome the sunlight. It made him feel incomparably contented and he couldn't help but start to stretch. Sha family had better come a few days later. By then, Lou Lan would've completely upgraded his body and he would have more confidence. The set up in this garden would be more formidable under Lou Lan's commands.

Of course, he believed that Sha family wasn't so sluggish. If they were so slow, the family would've perished a long time ago.

This wasn't the era of peace after all. Fighting and killing were the norm in this chaotic world. People who wasn't fully alert would die quickly.

Gazing into the distance, Ai Hui's body suddenly stiffened up.

He stared at a black dot far away. After a while, that dot magnified significantly. A mountain peak. It was moving extremely fast and in a flash, it was already close by.

The huge mountain whizzed over in an alarming speed. The pressure it brought was stifling and even someone as mentally strong as Ai Hui couldn't help but was a little shaken up.

Guardian of Five Elements!

The four red words on it was absolutely domineering.

Peace City was like a startled beast as it turned dead quiet all of a sudden. But when people saw Elders Guild's emblem on the mountain peak, Peace City came alive!

Ai Hui stared blankly at that mountain peak, as if his soul had been drawn out of his body.

It was undoubtedly his first time seeing it but a strong sense of familiarity rose within his heart.

The silver pond at the summit must have layers upon layers of circling veined patterns; images of the cascading waterfall and the hidden meandering river drew themselves out in his mind; he even knew that there must be a thousand and eight hundred trees; the vines were in multiples of six; there were nine faintly discernible lava caverns that supposably shared the same core; palace, pavilion, arrow tower, pagoda; he knew there was a building amid the clouds that were dragged along by the bottom of the mountain……

He knew why he was so familiar with it and he knew why he would know those set ups. It was because he had already memorized that complicated proposal with all his heart and knew every detail inside out.

He was caught off guard. Like a feather, he was being pulled into the warmth and sunshine amid that remote, mini city.

Tears rolled down, blurring his vision.

Master, Mistress.

.....

On the God-subduing Peak, Jiang Wei was bidding goodbye to Shi Xueman and Sang Zhijun.

"Peace City is just ahead. We won’t be stopping so fly there yourself." Shi Xueman said, slightly apologetically.

Jiang Wei was rather surprised. "So rushed? I was even planning to host both of you for a couple of days as a friendly gesture."

"How are you a host when you’re a foreigner?" Shi Xueman laughed and took a look at the thick smoke rising from the east side of the city. "It doesn’t seem peaceful here eh, looks like you’ll have to get busy. I’m busy too, I have to help Bangwan seek justice."

Shi Xueman’s last sentence carried a murderous spirit.

Jiang Wei was alarmed. "Something happened to Huanghun?"

Although Duanmu Huanghun was in Jadeite Forest, both parties were loyal to their masters. Jiang Wei did not think this was Huanghun’s fault.

"Just received the news."

Sang Zhijun passed a report to him.

"Duanmu Huanghun openly challenged She Yu, suffered a bitter defeat!"

A murderous look flashed across his face upon seeing these few words. Of course he remembered that She Yu participated in the war of Central Pine. He recovered himself and returned the report. Laughing, he said, "Do it on my behalf as well."

"Sure!" Shi Xueman agreed readily.

"Then we'll get going."

Jiang Wei waved and rose into the air before flying towards Peace City.

God-subduing Peak whizzed speedily past and above Peace City with a heavy whistle before disappearing far away.

When Jiang Wei left the peak, there was an equally lofty group that descended from Fiery Floating Cloud.

When they arrived at the marked site and saw the thick fog and ruins, the corpses and advertorial board on the badly damaged door, their eyes instantly turn bloodshot and the veins on their

head were like they were popping out.

"I want to know everything that had happened!"

The leader of the group squeezed these words out from the gaps between his tightly clenched teeth.

Chapter 302: The Society of Excellence

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong stared at Duanmu Huanghun, looking as if they had seen a ghost.

At this point of time, Duanmu Huanghun's appearance was extremely comical. His usual handsome face that even women would be envious of was swollen and bruised. Many plasters were stuck to his face in a disorderly manner, making it almost unbearable to look at.

However, Duanmu Huanghun seemed to be in a good mood as he wolfed down his food.

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong cast a glance at each other. Both of them sensed an unusual aura coming from Brother Duanmu.

Something was not right!

The news of Duanmu Huanghun's terrible defeat had been spread throughout the Jadeite Forest. Various rumors were spreading everywhere in the city. Those who rejoiced in Duanmu Huanghun's misfortune said that he had overestimated his capabilities and he was just fishing for compliments. Some also said that he had thoroughly embarrassed the Jadeite Forest.

Even as observers, Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong felt extremely pressured by the incident. They could sense a huge storm was brewing in the Jadeite City.

However, as the person that was directly involved in the incident, Duanmu Huanghun behaved as if nothing had happened.

Coming from a powerful and rich family, Yu Ziyi knew that nothing would go terribly wrong. On the other hand, Wu Qirong was like a faithful little brother to Duanmu Huanghun, and hence, he was deeply worried, "Brother Huanghun, next up... what should we do?"

"What do you mean by what should we do?"

Duanmu Huanghun looked baffled.

Yu Ziyi began to look restless. Wu Qirong braced himself and continued, "This time around, we failed so terribly. Everyone is somewhat worried..."

Duanmu Huanghun put down his chopsticks and replied solemnly, "I have indeed lost."

Upon seeing Duanmu Huanghun’s reaction, a cold shiver went down Wu Qirong’s spine. He quickly said, "Everyone makes mistakes. Defeats are very common in the battlefield..."

He could not continue his sentence as Brother Huanghun was looking at him with an eye-piercing gaze. Wu Qirong felt as if he was going to die soon.

"It’s better for me to lose the battle," Duanmu Huanghun said suddenly.

"Ah!" Wu Qirong and Yu Ziyi let out a gasp of surprise at the same time. They looked at Duanmu Huanghun for a while before looking at each other.

Had Brother Duanmu Huanghun sustained a head injury?

Duanmu Huanghun continued plainly, "Only by losing to her then I can know how far do I lag behind her."

Wu Qirong and Yu Ziyi were stunned.

"I will defeat her in the future."

Duanmu Huanghun looked as if he was talking about something casual. His facial expression was calm as he fiddled with the wine cup in his hand, "For the past three years, I have been troubled by many things, leading an unhappy life. I always felt that I was being played by fate. There are a lot of things that I don’t like but I felt like I should bear them on my shoulders, as though my fate had already been decided. However, I understand now."

"If one works for it and he doesn’t succeed, then it can be said that his fate had already been decided. However, if one never even tries then serves him right."

"One can either choose to let others control his life, or he can

choose to control others’ lives."

Duanmu Huanghun drained the cup of strong liquor in one gulp and a burst of flames burned through his throat to his heart.

His severely bruised face curled into a charming smile. At this point of time, his limpid eyes did not bother to conceal the craziness and fervor within them.

He suddenly asked, "Have both of you forgotten about the Induction Ground?"

Wu Qirong and Yu Ziyi shuddered in fear.

"Honestly, I can’t forget that place," Duanmu Huanghun muttered, "I have often dreamed about the Induction Ground, our battles with the blood elementalists, and the process of my fellow students being eaten alive by the blood fiends. However, right now, we have to sit alongside them, drink with them, and flatter them. Ah, I still have to marry a blood elementalist."

Wu Qirong and Yu Ziyi’s faces became distorted with anger, clenching their teeth. Both of them made it out alive from the Induction Ground and had deep hatred towards the blood elementalists.

"Of course, right now, I’m a trash and trash’s opinions don’t matter." Duanmu Huanghun looked at the both of them and continued, "I’m already in this state but what about the both of

you? Ziyi, if your family wants you to marry a blood elementalist, what will you do? Qirong, if the higher-ups want you to be the subordinate of a blood elementalist, what will you do?"

Wu Qirong heaved a long sigh and replied, "Brother Huanghun, I will follow whatever you say!"

Yu Ziyi nodded his head as well, "Huanghun, just tell us whatever plans you have in mind. I will rather die than to marry a blood elementalist."

"I still don’t have an exact plan yet," Duanmu Huanghun shook his head, and then continued, "There’s one thing we have to make sure and that’s to make our opinions matter to everyone."

Both of them looked blankly at Duanmu Huanghun.

Duanmu Huanghun racked his brain. Suddenly, he thought of Ai Hui. What would that bastard, Ai Hui do if it was him in this situation?

After thinking for awhile, he seemed to have some ideas, "First, we need to have strength. Only powerful individuals’ opinions would matter to everyone. We can’t waste our lives like this, we have to start training."

Upon finishing his sentence, Duanmu Huanghun felt his face burning. Upon realizing he had been wasting his life for the past three years, he felt ashamed of himself.

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong nodded their heads heavily.

"Next, we need to have manpower. Unless we have reached the level of my Master, otherwise, it is still about having strength in numbers." Duanmu Huanghun continued, "We will form a club that only accepts survivors from the Induction Ground, regardless of their backgrounds. Everyone will train together and I will hire a famous teacher to give everyone pointers. Everyone will help each other in the process. Once we become stronger, our opinions will then matter."

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong looked at each other, seeing the excitement in each other's eyes.

Yu Ziyi chuckled, "I like this idea! Huanghun, pick a name for this club!"

"Let's call it Society of Excellence," Duanmu Huanghun blurted out.

Upon finishing his sentence, Duanmu Huanghun was dumbfounded. He did not expect himself to pick this name.

He did not have much memories of the Society of Excellence. The memorable memories that he had of the club were the two instructors, Zhou Xiaoxi and Li Wei. It was a pity that both instructors had died in the Induction Ground.

"Nice name!"

"Nice!"

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong were energized.

The Society of Excellence was a student club that existed in every city in the Induction Ground. It was a club that was exclusive to Induction Ground. Since the Induction Ground had been destroyed, the Society of Excellence was destroyed as well.

The Society of Excellence. There was no better name than this. This name reminded them of the Induction Ground and the blood catastrophe.

The Induction Ground might be extinct after the blood catastrophe but not the Society of Excellence. In the hands of a bunch of youngsters, the Society of Excellence was rising from the ashes.

At this point of time, the Society of Excellence did not catch anyone’s attention.

.....

The God-subduing Peak had given Ai Hui a huge shock.

His understanding towards God-subduing Peak even surpassed

Shi Xueman's. Before Shi Xueman and her counterparts even knew about the mightiness of the God-subduing Peak, he could already imagine how powerful it was.

The God-subduing Peak was a war machine that was specially designed for huge situations.

He could see the numerous marvels surrounding the God-subduing Peak. Even if one gave him enough materials and manpower, he could not have built something like the God-subduing Peak. He had no idea how much elemental energy was involved in the process of building the God-subduing Peak.

Another thing was its structure.

Even if he had many materials, he would not have known how to build God-subduing Peak. He does not have enough experience to understand its structural blueprint.

Alright, for a poor fellow like him, there was no point talking about the God-subduing Peak's structural blueprint. Such a money-losing issue was not something he could think of now.

His train of thought was cleared up all of a sudden.

When he looked back at his own formation, he felt that it was an ugly-looking junk.

He knew of his own shortcomings. His understanding towards

elemental energy was still shallow. He remembered every detail of his master's plan but he was far from really understanding the concept behind it and how it worked.

The idea of "treating the city as a piece of cloth" was inspired by the spell formations in the Cultivation Era. Its' effect was very similar to that of spell formations. His master's plan was complicated yet perfect, like an art piece.

It was so perfect that Ai Hui did not know where to start studying it. It looked and behaved like a living thing, so much so that Ai Hui could not add anything to it or remove anything from it. He simply couldn't make any changes to it.

Luckily, there was an expert who made it possible for him to witness an application of his master's theory in the God-subduing Peak. All the questions he had in the past had been answered.

The most important thing was the God-subduing Peak had displayed to him how his master's theory could be applied.

The creator of the God-subduing Peak would not have thought that someone could have so many insights just by taking a glance at his creation.

Ai Hui began to ponder about it.

The mightiness of the God-subduing Peak lay in its Cycle of Five Elements and vigorous elemental energy. Like a terrifyingly

powerful volcano, it contained boundless amounts of elemental energy. It was built with top-grade materials, superb techniques and powerful elementalists. After going through a perfect building process, the Cycle of Five Elements was formed within it. The five elements were in harmonious balance and a perfect structure was achieved. It had no obvious weaknesses and its offensive capabilities were terrifying.

The God-subduing Peak was so mighty that Ai Hui could not see any weaknesses in it even until now.

He definitely would not have so much money, rare materials, elemental energy or superb techniques.

As such, it was not possible for him to build something like the God-subduing Peak.

When one's strength was not adequate, he would usually face defeat.

Only by launching a surprise attack then he could have a chance of winning.

An extremely strange formation was like a sharp blade, possessing a tremendous amount of destructive power. However, if his enemy was able to see through the formation, then he or she would be able to break it easily. Whether it was the Cultivation Era or the Elemental Era, this was general knowledge that everyone knew about.

How could he prevent the enemy from seeing through it?

There was only one way and that was to use something that the enemy was not familiar with.

With a jolt of his mind, Ai Hui thought of his swordsmanship.

Swordsmanship was merely popularized two years ago. It was still rather new and unfamiliar to the entire Avalon of Five Elements. Furthermore, Ai Hu's swordsmanship was self-learned.

Why not... built a sword formation?

The moment this idea emerged in his head, it stuck there.

He thought of the sword formation because the Assembly of Patriarchs wanted to reward him by sending him to Karakorum to train in their sword formation. He had never seen a legitimate sword formation before. His understanding towards sword formations mainly derived from swordplay manuals.

If he wanted to use his master's theory to build a sword formation, how would he go about doing it?

Ai Hui unknowingly felt somewhat excited.

If setting up a spell formation was a test of his understanding towards his master's theory, then setting up a sword formation

would be a test of his knowledge on swordsmanship.

Since he was building a sword formation, he would need many swords.

Ai Hui only had Dragonspine and Chu Zhaoyang's Silver Broadsword. Furthermore, Silver Broadsword still could not be used. If he revealed anything by accident, Chu Zhaoyang's identity's value might be lost.

However, this was not the first time Ai Hui encountered such situation. After being poor for many years, he naturally had ways to deal with it.

Ai Hui suddenly thought of his weasel bristle arrows.

After thinking about it for a moment, he was sure that the arrows could be used. After solving the most important issue, Ai Hui became even more excited!

Very soon, he realized that he did not need to overhaul and rebuild his formation. All he needed to do was to make certain alterations to it and he could implement his own ideas into it.

Hence, Ai Hui began to build his first ever sword formation.

Chapter 303: The Sha Guards

"Swordsman Training Hall, Special Price: One Hundred Essence Elemental Beans!"

Sha Wuduan stood in front of the dilapidated wooden board and listened to his subordinate's report of the investigation results. His eyes had never left the wooden board for a single second.

As the leader of the Sha Family's elite unit, Sha Wuduan would be extremely eye-striking wherever he went. He was more than two meters tall and his body was muscular and sturdy. His bulging bronze muscles were bursting through his tight-fitted clothes. His eyes were very small and squinty. Instead of containing the urge to seek revenge, his eyes contained an abnormal calmness and steadiness.

He did not spend too much effort on investigating the destruction of the Sha Family's branch compound as there were too many observers.

Every detail regarding the incident were clearly presented before Sha Wuduan. The culprit was Wang Han, an elementalist that had attained elemental externalization. His swordsmanship was superb and he used a high-altitude diving technique to cause the destruction. He was also able to use fire-type sword moves.

The ruins of the Sha Family's branch compound and the corpses lying everywhere had proven this point. Every slash inflicted upon the victims left behind a high-temperature charred mark.

From this, Sha Wuduan conjectured that Wang Han was a fire elementalist, not a metal elementalist. He felt that a metal elementalist would not be able to unleash such scorching fire attacks.

Wang Han's capabilities did not surprise Sha Wuduan. If he could kill Sha Wuyuan and attack the Sha Family's guarded branch compound, there was nothing odd with his capabilities. For someone that dared to mount a sneak attack on Sha Wuyuan, what was attacking the Sha Family's branch compound to him then?

Instead, there was another news that caught Sha Wuduan's attention.

The Sky Edge Division's elite unit, which had been ordered to oversee Peace City, had arrived. A lot of people had seen them descended from the God-subduing Peak and entered the mayor residence in Peace City. Roughly within these two days, they would have taken over the mayor office and took over the control of Peace City.

Sha Wuduan knew that he had to be fast if he wanted to seek revenge.

The captain of the Sky Edge Division's elite unit was Jiang Wei. Sha Wuduan had heard of this name. This fellow was rather reputable in the Sky Edge Division and was viewed by many as a young man with bright future. The fact that Jiang Wei was chosen to oversee Peace City showed Sha Wuduan that he was highly

valued by Sky Edge Division. Once the lesser Avalon of Five Elements was successfully established, his mission of overseeing Peace City would greatly decorate his resume.

Peace City used to be a small border city at the lowest part of Silver Mist River's lower reach. The mayor office was very weak and could not resist against the invading powerful prestigious families.

In the current Avalon of Five Elements, the Elder Guilds could no longer solely depend on their stature to suppress these brazen prestigious families.

Sha Family needed to take action before Jiang Wei officially taken control of the public security of Peace City.

If the Sha Family was to take actions after Jiang Wei officially took over the city, they would openly challenge Jiang Wei. Sha Wuduan was not worried about Jiang Wei, but rather, he was afraid of offending the Sky Edge Division and Elder Guilds. If he took action before Jiang Wei's official takeover of Peace City, even if he blew up the incident, he could say that he was unaware of the new law. Worst came to worst, he could make use of his personal connections to think of a way out.

A ruthless glint flashed across Sha Wuduan's calm-looking eyes.

He looked around at his subordinates. After taking a break, everyone looked much energized. As they were rushing for time, they could not travel using the slow-moving Fiery Moving Cloud.

Instead, they had to fly using azure wings and travel day and night.

Long-distance raid was a huge challenge to an elementalist's willpower and elemental energy. Even though Sha Wuduan's subordinates showed some signs of fatigue on their faces, they still maintained their neat and orderly formation.

"I know everyone had worked very hard and are very tired, but we don't have time to rest. If Wang Han knows we had arrived, there's a possibility that he might escape. Listen to my command, advance to the Swordsman Training Hall and kill Wang Han to avenge the Sha Family!"

All the elite troops of the Sha Family stood up in unison. Their faces were filled with sinister kill intent.

When Sha Wuduan led the Sha Family's elite unit to the alleyway of Swordsman Training Hall, various families' informants received the news in an instant. After witnessing the epic performance from Wang Han yesterday night, everyone was extremely interested in the upcoming battle.

In a blink of an eye, Sha Wuduan discovered that they were surrounded by many observers.

These observers looked from a distance and did not attempt to get any closer. Occasionally, Sha Wuduan could hear discussions that made him clenched his fists in anger involuntarily.

"The Sha Family is really in a slump!"

"That’s right. Nothing can be done anyway, the Yellow Sand Corner had already fallen to the Blood of God. What else can the Sha Family do?"

...

Before he came here, Sha Wuduan’s master had already reminded him that victory was a must. Victory was the only way to ensure the survival of the Sha Family. Sha Wuduan promised his master but it was only until now that he realized his master’s worries were not unwarranted.

Not only must he win this battle, he must do it in a beautiful and epic fashion!

Only by doing this then he could intimidate those who were after the Sha Family.

The signboard of the Swordsman Training Hall could already be seen at the end of the alleyway.

Sha Wuduan maintained his composure and gave a stopping hand gesture. The elite unit behind him immediately stopped.

If one counted the number of members in the unit, he or she would realize that there were twelve people, including Sha Wuduan.

"Muster the troops from the sandpit."

Sha Wuduan ordered. The elite unit immediately channeled their elemental energy and the ground beneath their feet turned into a yellow-colored sand sea. Sand puppets began to climb out of the sand sea continuously.

These sand puppets were fully-armored. Their armors were fully filled with fine decorative designs. A huge "Sha" was written on the back of each of their armors.

Every sand puppet looked exactly the same. After they climbed out of the sand sea, they stood quietly and motionless, resembling a battalion of well-trained soldiers.

Initially, the observers were still exuberant. However, very soon, they began to cry out in alarm.

The sand puppets emerged from the sand sea in a seemingly endless stream.

Densely-packed armored sand puppets occupied more than half of the alleyway. All of them were in a neat and orderly formation.

There was a battalion of one hundred and twenty armored sand puppets. They were motionless and expressionless. The demonic yellow in their eyes were flickering in unison.

The sea of yellow sand beneath their feet looked as if it was alive, slowly wiggling and climbing up the bodies of Sha Wuduan and the eleven members of the Sha Family's elite unit.

The yellow sand engulfed their bodies completely, only exposing their eyes. The yellow sand continued to wiggle and transformed into exquisite armors that were similar to the ones on the sand puppets. A huge "Sha" was written on back of each of their armors.

The twelve elementalists' eyes were flickering with the same yellow glow as the sand puppets'.

No one could clearly differentiate the earth elementalists from the sand puppets.

Such a creepy sight sent a cold shiver down the observers' spines.

"The Sha Guards!" someone yelled in astonishment.

Many of them came to realize that the Sha Family was serious this time around!

The Sha Family was famous for their sand puppets. There was not a single type of sand in the world that they could not make into sand puppet. Among so many types of sand puppets in their arsenal, there was one unique type of sand puppets, the Sand Guards. The outside world knew little about this type of sand puppets. However, every time the Sha Family encountered crises, the Sha Guards would always appear.

So these were Sha Guards!

Everyone widened their eyes as they were afraid to miss out on any fine details regarding the Sha Guards.

Boom!

As the Sha Guards took a step forward in unison, the earth shook and the mountains trembled.

At this point of time, those doubtful observers had their faces turned white and their bodies were trembling in fear.

Boom boom boom!

Every movement the Sha Guards made were sharp, precise and uniform.

Every step they took gave off a thunderous boom. If it wasn't witnessed with their own eyes, they would have thought there was a gigantic ancient beast walking towards Peace City.

A 132-men battalion of armored sand puppets was advancing in a neat and orderly formations. Their movements were sharp and uniform, giving off a surging aura of killer intent. Their eyes were flickering with a devilish yellow glow in unison. Their faces were emotionless, as if they were a battalion of lifeless killing machines,

sending a cold shiver down everyone's spine.

Only their thunderous footsteps could be heard in the midst of dead silence in the alleyway.

Su Huaijun's face turned pale-white. She clenched her fists so hard that they turned pale. She kept telling herself not to be intimidated by the Sha Guards' terrorizing aura.

An intense feeling of helplessness engulfed her.

They were unstoppable!

Anything that was standing in the way of this lifeless robotic army would be crushed to death.

After taking a few deep breaths, Su Huaijun regained her composure and some rosiness returned to her pale-white face.

However, what she saw next stunned her. The twelve earth elementalists that she locked onto previously had vanished into thin air. The formation of the entire army did not seem to have any changes. However, she knew that the twelve elementalists had left their original positions. She did not know how they did it. Usually, for a high-leveled elementalist like her, it was very difficult for someone she locked onto to escape from her sight. Furthermore, she did not once blinked her eyes!

The Sha Guards were indeed formidable!

With an imposing stance, the Sha Guards advanced towards the Swordsman Training Hall slowly and steadily.

Even as the Sha Guards got closer and closer to the entrance of the training hall, the Guards did not slow down their advancing speed. They continued to walk uniformly with their eyes blinking at the same frequency. It was as if they did not see the training hall in front of them.

It was as if there was nothing but just a mere praying mantis that was in their way.

At this very moment, everyone realized the Sha Guards were going to raze Swordsman Training Hall to the ground just like this! They wanted an awe-inspiring victory to show off Sha Family's might.

Yes, everyone understood what they were doing. Even so, they were still shocked by Sha Family's formidable display of strength.

Without even executing any moves, the Sha Guards had already made everyone believed that Wang Han would face an imminent death!

All the observers had their eyes wide open. Even though they knew the Sha Family was showing off their might, they did not want to miss out on a single detail.

The Sha Guards had reached the entrance of the Swordsman Training Hall.

The Sha Guards did not stop and continued to advance.

Boom. The main door of the Swordsman Training Hall was blasted to smithereens. Like crispy biscuits, the walls surrounding the training hall were easily crushed to fine powder.

Like an unstoppable flood of steel, the Sha Guards charged into the courtyard of Swordsman Training Hall.

The various training equipments in the Swordsman Training Hall were being stomped and crushed to smithereens.

Boom boom!

Wang Han was standing at the entrance to the main hall of the training hall, motionless and alone. He looked especially helpless and did not make any retaliation. Perhaps he was shocked by the might of the Sha Guards that he had lost the ability to think. Or perhaps he knew that all his tricks would be useless against this unstoppable army of Sha Guards.

Every step that the 132-men Sha Guards took was filled with power and viciousness, causing the ground to tremble.

Wang Han stood alone with a sword in his hand. His eyes were closed, looking fragile and helpless.

The contrast between the two parties was extremely distinct, so much so everyone felt this battle was one-sided and Wang Han was extremely foolish.

The battle had ended.

At this very moment, just as the last Sha Guard entered the training hall, Ai Hui opened his eyes in an instance.

He plunged his Dragonspine into the ground and countless dazzling light spots appeared in every nook and cranny of the training hall. Following which, fine beams of light shot out from the light spots, making the training hall looked as if it was covered with glowing spider webs.

An interweaving light web appeared and revolved beneath Ai Hui's feet unexpectedly. Subsequently, the countless fine light beams began to rise towards the sky.

The battle had just begun!

Chapter 304: Sword Chime And Swirling Sandstorm

The hovering fine light beams energized everyone.

Wang Han was starting to retaliate!

This was what everyone wanted to see. The Sha Guards were so powerful that everyone felt that Wang Han had slim chances of winning. It would be dull and boring if Wang Han just placed down his weapon and surrendered.

Wang Han was not a fool, but rather a vicious and merciless expert. As such, why would he had stood there and waited for his death? The skydiving fire sword move that he executed yesterday night lit up the entire night sky and stunned everyone, giving rise to an unrealistic expectation in everyone's heart.

What would Wang Han's retaliation be?

Fine light beams shot out from the ground towards the sky and stood tall and upright, looking like glowing light webs. The light webs were stacked layer upon layer, completely enveloping the air space above the training hall. The top of the stack of light webs was narrow while the bottom was wide. It looked like a gigantic bronze bell.

Everyone's gaze was captivated by it. Wang Han's offensive methods had always managed to lit up everyone's

eyes, however, they were still slightly doubtful. The Sha Guards were indeed terrifyingly powerful, but at least everyone still managed to understand what their offensive was . As for Wang Han’s offensive method..... no one understood it at all!

Even the experienced and knowledgeable Su Huaijun and the Fu family were completely lost.

Suddenly, the light webs started to tremble in unison.

An unexpected clear and melodious sword chime resounded through the training hall.

A biting-cold chill struck everyone’s heart. It was as if a sharp reflective sword had pierced through the back of their necks, sending agony down their skins and bones. Those who were brave and firm had their hair stood on end. Whereas, those who were timid and soft could not help it but tremble in fear.

"Sword chime!"

Su Huaijun widened her eyes abruptly.

Sha Wuduan’s feelings were different from the outsiders. The Sha Guards felt that their visions were blurred and their world was spinning. The unstoppable Sha Guards stumbled.This was the first time chaos and disturbance broke out in their neat and orderly formation.

The sharp and ethereal sword chime was like a soft yet powerful energy wave, surging to and fro in the sword formation.

This skill was called [Sword Chime], an inheritance that originated from Nine Tones Sword Sect. After studying it extensively, Ai Hui was able to bring back this melodious ancient music.

For the past three years, Ai Hui had never stopped studying and learning from the swordplay manuals that he had read before. These ancient swordplay manuals were like fertile soil to him, providing him with an endless stream of nutrients. He had restored numerous lost and broken sword moves. Some sword moves were derived and developed from it, whereas, some were imitated and transformed into his own moves. At the end of the day, no matter what he did, he gained a lot.

[Sword Chime] was one of the many moves he learnt.

The [Sword Chime] was the only move in the entire Nine Tones Sword Sect's swordplay manual that Ai Hui restored. Ai Hui did not know whether or not it was similar to the original [Sword Chime]. However, its unique chime of sword did contain the similar wondrous power as the original's.

In order to perform the [Sword Chime], the use of the unique flying swords from the Nine Tones Sword Sect was needed.

"The Nine Tones Sword Chime rings and the nine swords shall be unsheathed."

Back in those days, the Nine Tones Sword Chime that hung in the swordsman school in the Old Territory was said to be the sect treasure of the Nine Tones Sword Sect.

The Nine Tones Sword Sect was an illustrious powerful sect in the past.

"When the nine swords are unsheathed, the heavenly music will break through the void."

One could see how mighty and powerful they were in the past.

[Sword Chime] needed at least nine swords to be unsheathed at the same time to work. Hence, after Ai Hui restored it, he had yet to find a way to use it in actual combat. It was only when he built this sword formation that he realized [Sword Chime] could be used here.

The clear and melodious sword chime resembled the soft tinkling of the wind chimes hung below the roof, extremely pleasant to one’s ears. However, deep down, the sword chime actually possessed an intense killer intent.

Sha Wuduan abruptly discovered there was a delay in the channeling of elemental energy in his body.

The sand on some of the Sha Guards’ bodies began to tremble, showing signs of instability.

What kind of swordsmanship was this?

Sha Wuduan felt that his opponent's swordsmanship was freakish and unprecedented. This mellifluous sword chime was able to unsettle one's mind.

However, Sha Wuduan was a powerful veteran that had survived countless bloody battles, and as such, he was able to think of a solution in an instant. In Avalon of Five Elements, there were inheritances that involved unsettling one's mind. Those elementalists who mastered their sky palace were specialized in carrying out mental attacks.

Mental attacks...

Sha Wuduan furrowed his eyebrows. Normal attacks would be completely useless against the Sha Guards. On the contrary, mental attacks posed to be a troublesome problem for Sha Wuduan.

He did not seem to understand Wang Han at all. He was a fire elementalist that was proficient in swordsmanship and specialized in developing the sky palace. This combination seemed weird to him.

Sha Wuduan did not have the luxury of time to think. Elementalists that were specialized in developing their sky palace were tricky and sly. They had various bizarre tricks up their sleeves. He had to react fast because if he gave his opponent too

much time, the Sha Guards would fall and would be subdued.

Elementalists that specialized in mental attacks had weaknesses as well, for example, they had frail bodies.

It was highly possible that the scene before them might be an illusion. This was the most commonly-used technique among the various types of mental attacks. Powerful illusions could shut down an elementalist’s six senses, which would caused him or her to lose the ability of judgement and made grave tactical errors.

However, no matter how real an illusion was, it was still an illusion.

Something that was fake would never become real.

Sha Wuduan ignored the spinning world in front of him. As long as his feet was on the ground, he would not lose his confidence. Whether or not the scene before his eyes was real, the fact that they were in the training hall was real.

"Swirling Sandstorm!"

The 132-men battalion of Sha Guards roared angrily in unison.

The yellow light beneath their feet began to float and drift. The surging quicksand started to cover the web-like light beams on the ground, which resembled the tidal waves in the sea. The Sha

Guards stood imposingly and motionlessly. Following which, the rolling quicksand gathered in the mid-air and pieces of stones appeared amidst the quicksand. The stones kept on growing in size, which became larger. Eventually, the stones became millstone-sized and rolled in the raging torrent of quicksand.

At this point of time, the few sand pits in the training hall, which were prepared for Su Qingye's training purpose, had been completely devoured by the Sha Guards. After devouring the sand pits, the torrent of quicksand increased significantly in its size and might.

Strong and violent winds swept up and swirled around the Sha Guards.

The millstone-sized stones and the quicksand were swept up from the ground by a violent gust of wind. The deep and low whizzing sound produced by the torrent of quicksand intimidated everyone. Eventually, the torrent of yellow quicksand materialized into a terrifying yellow-colored sand veil. Along with the millstone-sized stones, thick sand veil covered the Sha Guards and expanded outward all of a sudden, resembling a gigantic sand tornado.

Boom!

A huge tree in the corner of the training hall was smashed by the flying stones in the air. Before it collapsed to the ground, the whizzing torrent of quicksand and stones had already left numerous densely-packed holes in the sturdy truck of the tree.

Crack!

The huge tree could not withstand the spinning sand veil and shredded completely to smithereens in the air.

Deep down, Ai Hui was glad that he kept the message tree, otherwise, it would definitely be destroyed.

The brown-colored swirling sand veil destroyed everything in the training hall like a crazy beast. The [Sword Chime] did not have any effect on a gigantic beast like this.

Not only did the high-speed swirling sand veil had high destructive power, it also blocked off the chime of the sword.

The sand veil was like a high-speed spinning millstone, if anyone was to be sucked into it, he or she would have zero chance of surviving.

Ai Hui did not expect his [Sword Chime] to be countered by a simple move like the [Swirling Sandstorm]!

However, how could the sword formation that he meticulously built contained only one type of attack?

Were the sand and stones the key to the might of [Swirling Sandstorm]? No, it was the wind!

Being a metal elementalist who was trained with the metal winds in the Suspending Golden Pagoda, Ai Hui was extremely familiar with the nature of wind.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up.

He pulled out his Dragonspine from the ground and shook the sword hilt softly. The daggers that swirled around Dragonspine flew towards every nook and cranny of the training hall, resembling agile swimming fishes.

Pop pop pop!

Essence elemental beans ruptured and surging elemental energy gushed into the sword formation. All the artifact remnants lit up and the layers of light webs above Ai Hui's head dispersed, which caused the gigantic glowing bell to collapse. If Ai Hui was to raise his head at this very moment, he would see every light web had transformed into a light spot. Even though it was daytime, they still looked like stars in the sky.

Every light web shot a silvery light beam that converged at the Dragonspine in Ai Hui's hand.

The Dragonspine was engulfed by an intense silvery light, resembling a silver-colored burning torch, dazzling and glaring.

A burst of metal elemental energy surged into the sky, as if a

sharp sword was thrusting toward the blue dome of heaven.

Instead of feeling surprised, Sha Wuduan felt overjoyed. The enemy had abandoned his uncanny sword moves and was relying on the elemental energy that he was familiar with. That was equivalent to seeking his own death!

Ai Hui held the Dragonspine in his hand and dashed towards the swirling sand veil. Just as he was about to collide with the swirling sand veil, he thrusted his sword into the sand veil all of a sudden and swirled along with it.

The thrust did not seem to contain any force and looked extremely ordinary.

Ai Hui's body flew into the air and swirled along with the spinning sand veil. Before he landed on the ground, he twisted his body, flew towards the sand veil and thrusted it with his sword in the similar fashion as before.

Everyone, including Sha Wuduan, were baffled and was unsure of what Ai Hui was doing.

Every thrust he executed was ordinary and did not contain the slightest bit of destructive power.

Ai Hui's movements were abnormally fast. In a blink of an eye, he had swirled around the sand veil and thrusted it with his sword several times.

His Dragonspine had lost almost half of its metal elemental energy.

Su Huaijun’s eyes lit up, "Nice!"

Sha Wuduan sensed something was up. As the metal energy poured into the spinning sand veil, the violent wind that swirled the sand veil gradually became metal wind. Even though the insertion of metal elemental energy had caused the wind speed to increase, Sha Wuduan realized he was losing control of the spinning sand veil.

Something was not right. Just as he was about to disperse the sand tornado, Ai Hui took action.

All six artifact remnants emitted a glow at the same time!

Suddenly, an astonishing chilliness erupted beneath the feet of the Sha Guards.Unexpectedly, the Sha Guards were caught off guard and became a battalion of ice statues. Even Sha Wuduan was frozen.

Not good!

Chilling frost engulfed his body, freezing his elemental energy.

The high-speed swirling sand tornado lost control and exploded

abruptly.

The frozen Sha Guards became the perfect target. The high-speed spinning sand veil was mixed with razor-sharp metal elemental energy, becoming terrifyingly powerful. Pop, pop, pop. In an instant, the neat and orderly Sha Guards had their bodies filled with holes.

The millstone-sized stones were like cannonballs, heavily smashing a few unfortunate Sha Guards into powder. When a sand puppet was smashed, he would be reduced to a pile of yellow sand. However, when the pile of yellow sand was mixed with fresh blood and decapitated limbs, that was not a sand puppet, but a fallen earth elementalist.

Sha Wuduan was most powerful among the Sha Guards. Within a short period of time, he had recovered the control over his elemental energy. The scene before him exasperated him intensely. Only half of the Sha Guards were left standing. Those who collapsed were mainly earth elementalists. Three earth elementalists had already died and the rest were severely injured.

"Kill him!"

Sha Wuduan pounced towards Ai Hui as his angry roar resounded through the air. The rest of the Sha Guards followed his suit and yelled angrily, "Kill him!"

All the Sha Guards flew into the air, resembling a huge net that covered the sky.

Ai Hui, who had nowhere to run to, stayed calm and stood up, shook off the yellow sand on his body. It was a huge taboo for earth elementalists and sand puppets to leave the ground.

Ai Hui raised his Dragonspine and pointed it towards the incoming flood of enemies.

The fine light webs that filled the training hall had disappeared, which revealed Ai Hui’s main formation.

Su Huaijun cried out in alarm, "See You Later!"

Chapter 305: “See You Later” Sword Formation

The sound of an intense battle could be heard from a distance. Even from afar, he still felt a slight tremble on the ground.

Jiang Wei’s face turned ashen as he entered the mayor residence.

Standing in front of him, the old mayor nagged long-windedly, "You see, they just don’t know when to stop. My wife told me that they don’t take me seriously and I couldn’t care less. Now that you have arrived, I can peacefully find a place to enjoy my life in retirement. Sigh, Murphy’s law—what can go wrong will wrong. All I want is to enjoy my life in retirement and that’s why I came to Peace City. However, Peace City became a bustling trading hub and a city of strategic importance, attracting and pulling everyone here. I know myself very well..."

Jiang Wei bade farewell to the old mayor and flew toward the battle site with his soldiers.

He knew that he did not have any background and if these powerful prestigious families and tyrants were not suppressed at this very instant, no one would care about him.

However, he was not here to enjoy his life in retirement.

.....

See You Later!

This was the first time Su Huaijun saw so many See You Laters. She always thought that See You Laters were kept in exquisitely-made wooden boxes and there would not be more than ten of them. Every time she went to buy See You Laters, the boss would always tell her that the arrows were out of stock. It was only after she agreed to pay extra, those unscrupulous businessmen would then put on a heartaching look on their faces and slowly took out a few arrows.

However, right now, the sky was filled with densely-packed See You Laters. Su Huaijun was dumbstruck with this sight.

How could this fellow own so many See You Laters!

Suddenly, something struck Su Huaijun's mind. Upon remembering that See You Laters were made in Peace City, a bold thought emerged on her mind. Could this fellow be the one that produced See You Laters?

See You Laters were in popular demand in Peace City. However, since Su Huaijun's primary weapon was not a bow and arrows, she had not seen the real power of See You Laters.

Given its costly price, the power of See You Laters should be extraordinary. Su Huaijun thought pensively.

Su Huaijun was not the only one that identified the See You

Laters in the sky, many onlookers did too and let out a wave of alarmed cries. Those who did not know what See You Laters were quickly asked the person standing beside them.

What's so special about the arrows in the sky?

Very soon, See You Laters will be justified to these people why its price was so expensive!

A colorful glazed radiance swirled around each and every See You Later, giving off a soft ringing sound that resembled the chime of sword.

Those elementalists who had previously used See You Laters had their eyes light up. Top-grade arrows!

When a See You Later was being used, it would release a unique ringing sound that resembled the chime of sword. This was often used as an authentication method to examine the authenticity of the arrows. Because of its costly price, there was an abundance of imitation of See You Laters on the market. However, not only were these imitations not powerful, the unique sword chime wasn't released when used.

A streak of glazed radiance flashed across the sky and disappeared.

The next moment, an arrow emerged from the chest of a Sha Guard in the air. Following which, a colorful glazed glowing sphere

rose from the chest of the Sha Guard. If one took a closer look, he or she could see that the glowing sphere was spinning rapidly, resembling a round-shaped rainbow cotton candy.

Subsequently, the spinning glowing sphere disappeared, leaving a basin-sized cavity in the Sha Guard's chest.

It only took one shot to completely destroy the sand puppet's sand core. Whoosh. The body of the sand puppet collapsed into a pile of quicksand and fell from the sky.

So this was See You Later!

If the tinkling sound of the sword chime wasn't stopped, the glazed radiance would not have faded.

At this very moment, Sha Wuduan was in a dire straits.

The soul-reaping sword chime caused him to tremble with fear. What kind of offensive tactic was this? He had never seen such arrows and he sensed danger from its mighty power. If it wasn't for the sand puppet next to him that dashed forward and blocked the arrows, during this critical moment, he would have breathed his last.

Every arrow claimed one life or destroyed one sand puppet.

Sha Wuduan knew this could not go on any longer. He clenched his teeth and commanded twenty sand puppets to fly up into the

sky at the same time to form a sand barrier, which protected the heads of Sha Wuduan and the rest of the earth elementalists.

Boom!

One of the sand puppets self-detonated. A burst of dazzling yellow light erupted and a powerful shockwave broke out, severely disrupting the flight path of many See You Laters.

Sha Wuduan felt an extreme heartache. The sand puppets that served as Sha Guards were specially made. Each of their cost prices were extremely expensive. The annoying thing was that most of the materials used to build them could no longer be found. This implied that they were irreplaceable.

Right now, as long as that goddamn bastard was killed, everything would be worth it!

Sha Wuduan's face was completely covered by his sand armor, and hence, he became unnoticeable when he blended into the formation of sand puppets.

Just as both of them got closer and closer to each other, Ai Hui suddenly turned around. His movements were sudden and fluid.

Trying to escape?

Sha Wuduan sneered. He had already expected that his opponent would not stay in the same spot and get surrounded by the sand

puppets. Poof, poof, poof. Several sand puppets transformed into a huge mass of quicksand, forming an inescapable "net" in the sky. No matter which direction their enemy ran to, he would not be able to escape from this "net!"

Ai Hui, who had already turned around, stomped the ground forcefully with his feet.

Crack.

The meticulously-built trap mechanism beneath his feet had been broken and deactivated by him.

After Lou Lan’s inspection and verification, the artifact remnants placed within the trap mechanism was verified to be an ancient seal that was either related to "Wind Resistance" or "Divine Movement". However, its effect was yet to be discovered.

In this day and age, everyone had little understanding towards ancient seals. Furthermore, the seals within the artifact remnants had undergone the erosion of time and dispersal of spiritual force. Most of them were badly damaged, having only an extremely tiny portion left.

Ai Hui prayed in his heart, "Lou Lan bless me!"

The barriers between essence elemental beans, blood crystals and the artifact remnants were broken. The ancient seal appeared once more on this land. A wisp of green light swirled around his legs, he

felt as light and lithe as a feather.

It was magical!

The ancient spiritual force, seals and spells were extremely profound in nature. This was the first time Ai Hui used the ancient seal from the Cultivation Era. It felt entirely different from elemental energy.

However, at this point of time, his encounter wasn't important. He squatted down slightly and jumped towards the air.

Swoosh!

Ai Hui's vision blurred. When he clearly saw his surroundings, he was shocked. He was already fifty metres away from the ground in the air.

When Ai Hui lowered his head and saw the flight path of his See You Laters being disrupted by the self-detonation of the sand puppets, he twisted his body and dived downward.

Meanwhile, when Sha Wuduan lost sight of Wang Han all of a sudden, his facial expression changed drastically and a strong feeling of danger arose in his heart.

Without even thinking, he brought the rest of the Sha Guards along with him and drilled into the ground.

However, there was an unexpected a layer of barrier beneath the ground. This prevented them from drilling and digging into the ground.

At this very moment, a deafening mournful sword chime exploded above his head.

Sha Wuduan's facial expression changed drastically. The terrifying sword chime caused him to feel an unprecedented danger. An intense feeling of danger engulfed him, prompted his hair to stand on end.

Boom!

The sand barrier above his head suddenly exploded. A mournful sword chime descended from the sky.

Like a legendary bird that spreaded it's wings, Ai Hui descended from the sky with his sword raised in his hand. Numerous radiance-glazed See You Laters were attracted to the Dragonspine in his hand. Like a gigantic school of fishes, they flew nimbly through the air while Ai Hui's Dragonspine acted as the leader of the school of fishes.

Ai Hui felt an indescribable contentment.

This was sword formation!

Within the sword formation, every See You Later had a connection with the Dragonspine in his hand. If it was any other individual, he or she would have found it difficult to control. However, this was what Ai Hui needed and specialized in. From the day he started to use the Red Dust Swordbox, Ai Hui had developed an interest in the use of a normal-sized sword to control many small swords.

On its own, a See You Later was already very powerful. Right now, being brought together, their power became even more terrifying!

Ai Hui's body was completely engulfed by a colorful glazed radiance, circled by numerous See You Laters. Amidst the torrent of sword chime, he felt an indescribable excitement.

Like a frail piece of paper, the sand barrier above Sha Wuduan's head was easily pierced through.

Sha Wuduan couldn't care less and hurled five sand puppets at Ai Hui at the same time. At the very instant they made contact with Ai Hui, they self-detonated once more.

Like an inflated balloon, a burst of yellow glow erupted and expanded outward. Following which, Ai Hui used his See You Laters and punctured the burst of yellow glow in one shot.

A few of Ai Hui's See You Laters had been broken down into colorful glazed glowing luminous bubbles, gradually vanished into thin air.

Boom, boom, boom!

The sand puppets looked as if they had gone mad, flying toward Ai Hui and self-detonated in front of him.

The shock wave from the self-detonation of the sand puppets was rather powerful. Every sand puppet was able to destroy a few of the See You Laters that circled Ai Hui. It was as if Ai Hui and Sha Wuduan were fighting a battle of attrition.

Boom!

When the last See You Later was destroyed, Ai Hui's head was hit by the shock wave from a sand puppet's self detonation. He let out a groan and his body flew backward.

A tinge of blood seeped out from the corner of his mouth. His enemy did not seem too well either.

There were only twenty-three Sha Guards left and all of them were severely injured.

Sha Wuduan gave a sinister smile. Without See You Laters, Wang Han had nothing up his sleeves to fight against him. Even though there were only twenty-three Sha Guards left, six of them were earth elementalists. He had enough confidence to slay Wang Han.

From his perspective, See You Laters was Wang Han’s trump card and his greatest reliance.

Suddenly, Ai Hui maneuvered his body in the mid-air and flew towards a corner of the courtyard. Just as his feet barely made contact with the ground, he plunged his sword directly into the ground.

Pop. The soft popping sound made Sha Wuduan’s facial expression changed slightly as a premonition crept up his heart.

Ai Hui was abnormally swift and agile. Like a dragonfly, he skimmed swiftly across the training hall. Every time his feet made contact with the ground, there would be a soft popping sound given off.

Even though Sha Wuduan wasn’t aware of what his enemy was doing, he knew that he must stop him.

As such, the rest of the Sha Guards dashed towards Ai Hui at the same time.

Some transformed into quicksand, while some transformed into mini sandstorms. Some even transformed into sand spears for their comrades to throw at Ai Hui.

There were a wide range of attacking methods, which widen one's horizon.

One by one, essence elemental beans, blood crystals and artifact remnants kept on rupturing. The surging elemental energy transformed the training hall into a raging sea of elemental energy. All the artifact remnants had been activated and glows of various colors lit up in every nook and cranny of the training hall.

After fighting for his life this long, Ai Hui knew that there was no point holding back now.

Sha Wuduan felt that he was going crazy soon!

Different colored glows kept on lighting up and Sha Wuduan knew they belonged to artifact remnants. This fellow actually had so many artifact remnants! There was one thing that he found inconceivable. Was this fellow crazy to squander his resources that recklessly? How could he have squandered so many artifact remnants?

Various weird-looking glows and seals formed an utterly chaotic performance in the training hall. Icy frost, violent winds, lightning bolts, sword glints, spear auras, etc had completely flooded this small training hall.

Those Sha Guards that just dashed toward Ai Hui had encountered a cosmic catastrophe.

Chapter 306: Break Even

Even though Ai Hui had put in so many years of his savings, he did not show the slightest bit of heartache or reluctance. With a cold and indifferent look on his face, he did not retreat and continued attacking. With a swing of the Dragonspine in his hand, a crescent moon-shaped sword glint shot out and hit the chest of a swaying Sha Guard.

That Sha Guard was spliced in half and he collapsed onto the ground. After he twitched for a few seconds, the Sha Guard became a pile of sand.

Ai Hui understood the physiology of sand puppets very well. The main weakness of a sand puppet lay in its sand core. Once the sand core was broken, the sand puppet would die. If one could not destroy a sand puppet's sand core, the sand puppet would have an abnormally tenacious survivability.

The next instant, Ai Hui appeared on the other end of the training hall like a ghost. Following which, he executed the [Heavenly Thrust] and shot out a star-like energy beam at another Sha Guard's chest.

Plop!

A spurt of blood shot out from that Sha Guard's chest.

This time around, the Sha Guard who was attacked was an earth elementalist. The glow in his eyes disappeared and every last bit of

vitality in his body was gone. Then, he collapsed onto the ground, facing upward.

Why would Ai Hui waste the opportunities created by using so many artifact remnants? He knew the arrangement of the courtyard by heart. In the midst of the chaotic streaks of radiance, he nimbly darted to and fro across the courtyard, striking down the Sha Guards one by one.

One moment he was in front of the battalion of the Sha Guards, the next moment he was at the back of the battalion, appearing everywhere at almost the same time.

His swordsmanship was extremely ruthless. Every strike he executed would definitely slay one Sha Guard. In a blink of an eye, Ai Hui had killed six Sha Guards and two of them were earth elementalists.

The intensity of the battle had caused all the observers to raise their eyebrows in shock.

Wang Han's successive attacks were unwavering and ruthless, which sent a cold shiver down everyone's spine. No one had expected the battle that they previously thought was one-sided to reach such extremity.

Without much effort, the initial 132-man battalion of Sha Guards had been reduced to eighteen Sha Guards. More than half of these eighteen Sha Guards were severely injured.

Luckily, I never made an enemy of Wang Han. This was what a lot of people were thinking at this moment.

If they were the ones who attacked the Swordsman Training Hall, they would not do any better than the Sha Guards. Even if the Sha Family could take down the Swordsman Training Hall at the end of the day, they would have suffered a huge loss by then. Right now, the Sha Family had already lost. This was a battle whereboth sides had suffered greatly.

Wang Han should be proud of himself for pushing the Sha Family to the brink.

However, everyone could tell that the artifact remnants was Wang Han's last trump card. Wang Han had used more than ten artifact remnants in one go. Such lavishness had stupefied everyone, including the Fu family.

When everyone thought of Wang Han's nickname, King of Anglers, they then realized that the gains he made for the past few years had far exceeded their expectations. Furthermore, with the addition of the numerous See You Laters, Wang Han's expenditure in this battle was indeed outrageous.

Upon seeing amount of resources he had invested in this battle, even the members of those prestigious families were trembling in fear, feeling heartache for Wang Han.

However, Wang Han's performance had ended.

When Sha Wuduan saw the remaining sparse Sha Guards, he felt devastated. From this battle, he knew that the Sha Family had fallen. Even if he could kill Wang Han, he still could not save the Sha Family from its imminent fate.

He felt grieved and despair. Before he came here, he was brimming with confidence that he could save the Sha Family from its imminent crisis, help it to establish a foothold in Peace City and pave the path for its restoration.

However, right now, the last hope for Sha Family had withered in his hands.

Despair, self-blame, and guilt had completely destroyed his rationality. In his heart, there were only anger, hatred, insanity, and mindlessness. His bloodshot eyes were staring firmly at the deft figure.

He must kill this bastard!

Sha Wuduan gave a secret command and the remaining eighteen Sha Guards suddenly spread their arms and held each other’s hands.

Dazzling yellow light lit up beneath their feet. The ground began to fissure and countless cobweb-like cracks started to spread outward.

"Sir!"

"No...."

The few earth elementalists' faces turned deathly pale and they cried out in alarm. However, no matter how much they cursed or begged, they could not move as the yellow sand from the ground slowly crept up their bodies.

The scattered sand in the training hall started to flow towards the Sha Guards like water. The sand within the sand pits, which were prepared for Su Qingye to train in, flowed out and flew towards the Sha Guards in an endless stream.

Not a speckle of sand was left in the huge sand pits.

In a bizarre fashion, the yellow sand wiggled up the Sha Guards' bodies and began to pile up.

Within seconds, the eighteen Sha Guards had been drowned by the yellow sand, forming a twenty meters tall sand mountain in courtyard. The weird thing was the sand mountain was wiggling non-stop, looking as if there was something rolling within it, making one's blood ran cold.

"Devouring the soldiers to build a Sand Sentinel, Sha Wuduan is insane!" the Fu family's eldest daughter's face turned pale.

Not only her, but everyone that was witnessing this scene had their faces turned deathly pale.

"Devouring the soldiers to build a Sand Sentinel" was a technique that was commonly used on sand puppets. It involved making the sand puppets devour each other to form a more powerful Sand Sentinel. A Sand Sentinel was more than ten times stronger than a Sha Guard. It was extremely huge in size and was considered a large-scale combat sand puppet. And because of its terrifying destructive power, the Elders Guild banned the use of Sand Sentinels. Without permission from the Elder Guilds, no one was allowed to build a Sand Sentinel under any circumstances.

As such, wasn't Sha Wuduan insane for building a Sand Sentinel in the glare of the public?

Even though the Elders Guild was not as powerful as it was in the past, the Sha Family was still finished for violating the Elders Guild's ban.

Furthermore, there were a few Sha Guards who were not sand puppets but earth elementalists being devoured as well. A monster like this had never existed before. A lot of people widened their eyes to take a clearer look as they were afraid of missing out on any details. Especially for those earth elementalists, this unprecedented scene had provided them a lot of information on Sand Sentinels.

Every time the sand mountain wiggled, a terrifying aura would be released and it spread throughout the area.

The onlookers' facial expression changed drastically as if they

themselves were in a perilous situation. The energy undulations from the sand mountain were becoming increasingly stronger and its imposingness was rising continuously. An endless stream of elemental energy was drained from the ground by the sand mountain.

Every time the sand mountain wiggled, its outline would become a bit more distinct.

The quicksand on the surface of the sand mountain was swiveling at ease. It was as if there was a pair of invisible hands sculpting the sand mountain's body.

Ai Hui's face turned white. He was trying very hard to suppress his urge to escape.

If not for the fact that Lou Lan was upgrading his body now, AI Hui would have already escaped with Lou Lan without a trace.

Since he was the nearest to the sand mountain, the energy waves emitted from the sand mountain were pounding his mind continuously like torrential tidal waves. He felt that his body was becoming heavier and heavier and he knew this was caused by the waves of elemental energy pounding against his mind. All he could do now was to clench his teeth and endure it.

He grasped his sword with both his hands and guarded his mind tightly. The elemental energy in his body was carrying out a series of Circulatory Cycle Revolutions.

Suddenly, his sky palace was erupted with a brilliant burst of light. A wisp of flame stood imposingly and motionlessly in his sky palace.

[Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp]. This was an absolute art that he exchanged for a huge amount of Heaven Merit Points from the Elders Guild.

[Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] was an extremely rare sky palace-based absolute art. Since it only developed the sky palace, its uses were rather one-dimensional. Some of these uses included breaking illusion, protecting one's mind, refining inner demons and etc.

The purpose of Ai Hui obtaining the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] was to deal with One Thousand Yuan. One Thousand Yuan specialized in mental attacks. If he was slightly careless, he would fall into her traps, making it impossible for him to defend against her.

Ai Hui was extremely worried about this.

After spending such a huge price on this precious absolute art, Ai Hui naturally practised it diligently and relentlessly. Very soon, he experienced the benefits of practising [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp]. His mind became clearer and calmer, completely free of disturbances.

The most surprising thing was [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] actually improved his body constitution. All along, his body

constitution did not match well with elemental energy. As such, there was a time where he was being told that he could not become an elementalist.

Eventually, even though his strength had increased sharply due to various opportunities and lucky encounters, his body constitution did not improve and remained the same. With a bad body constitution, he would absorb a smaller amount of elemental energy at a slower rate than the others from drinking the same bowl of elemental soup.

However, body constitution was innate and there was nothing much he could do about it. When he knew that [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] could improve body constitution, he naturally put in more effort into practicing it. The process of improving body constitution was very slow but he was still very content with it.

He had read from ancient records that [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] was inspired by [Skyheart Flaming Lotus], a spell that originated from the famous sacred shrine in the world of Dhyana, the Suspending Temple.

Cultivation Era’s Dhyana disregarded natural endowments and took pity on all living things. It also emphasized on sharpening and training one’s mind and nature.

However, this absolute art was not very popular in the Avalon of Five Elements. Since the day it was created, only elementalists practiced it. There was no elemental master that had practised it previously. The fact that it only developed the sky palace made many elementalists refrained from practicing it.

Furthermore, this absolute art did not possess any offensive capabilities, making it unpopular in the practicality-focused Elemental Era.

Out of the three elementalists that had practiced this absolute art, two of them had left behind their memoirs of the absolute art. When Ai Hui was exchanging his Heavenly Merit Points for the absolute art, he exchanged for the memoirs as well. These memoirs were extremely helpful to him.

As the elemental energy waves from the Sand Sentinel continued to collide against Ai Hui, his body began to emit a faint red glow, solemn and serene.

Elementalists were extremely sensitive towards the stability of the elemental energy in the surroundings. When the elemental energy in the surroundings was too unstable, the elemental energy in one’s body would be affected too. He or she might even lose control of the elemental energy in his or her body. As such, even those powerful elementalists did not dare to step into areas that elemental energy field was unstable.

A gigantic humanoid sand puppet was formed.

"Die! Die! Die!"

Accompanied by a burst of surging elemental energy, an unclear hysterical roar resounded through the air, resembling thunderclaps. Immediately, it felt as if the elemental energy field of Peace City had been stirred by a huge invisible hand. Black

clouds started to form in the sky and the earth began to shake. The magma deep within the ground was becoming restless and unstable. Sand and stones were flying up into the air, while metal wind was blowing violently. It was as if the Judgement Day had arrived.

Jiang Wei felt startled and angry when he saw the gigantic monstrous sand puppet as he was flying through the air at a high speed.

How dare you devour soldiers to build a Sand Sentinel!

You must be tired of living!

This Sand Sentinel was extremely enormous. On its gigantic head, its eyes that were bigger than a door frame were flickering with a demonic yellow glow. Intense earth elemental energy was flowing frantically through its body. An armor was forming on its body with a visible speed.

Jiang Wei's facial expression changed drastically. This monster's aura and strength had caused him to tremble involuntarily.

However, he did not stop and continued to fly towards the Sand Sentinel.

He had the responsibility to take care of this city and he could not possibly ignore what was going on now.

His soldiers clenched their teeth and followed tightly behind him. No one was deserting him.

As they flew nearer to it, they could see the terror of this enormous monster. The elemental energy waves it was releasing were like violent gales, smashing trees and stones.

Jiang Wei flew towards it with great difficulty.

So unlucky of him to encounter such incident the moment he arrived at Peace City...

Suddenly, at this moment, Jiang Wei heard someone talking. Jiang Wei was shocked. How could there be someone so near to the Sand Sentinel! He resisted against the terrifying energy waves and pushed a few meters forward. The voice became much clearer. However, this voice seemed... somewhat familiar.

"...they should be starting to sprout now. Don’t tell me that bastard sold me fake seeds? I spent two hundred thousand elemental energy points on them. If he really did scam me, I will destroy his store!"

"Hahaha, they are sprouting, they are finally sprouting! Have a taste of my drought fire lotuses!"

"I have not nourished you and dug a sand pit for four hours in vain."

"I have to remind Lou Lan not to eat strangers' sand when he goes out."

Numerous fresh and verdant lotus leaves grew throughout the enormous body of the Sand Sentinel, making it looked extremely comical. The lotus leaves were frantically sapping the earth elemental energy in the Earth Sentinel and began to grow at a terrifying speed. In the blink of an eye, the lotus leaves had grown as big as a bath tub. The color of the lotus leaves turned red and lotus flowers started to bloom, resembling a sea of flames on the Earth Sentinel's body.

The glow on the Sand Sentinel's body began to dim. Its body of sand started to dry up and was filled with cracks and crevices. The flaming lotus flowers started to withdraw and transform into bright red lotus seed heads. The bright red color of the lotus seed heads deepened and became dark-red.

"Phew, I finally break even!"

Jiang Wei stared blankly at the familiar figure, who was standing in front of the elemental energy-deprived Sand Sentinel, as he wiped off the beads of sweat from his forehead and heaved a sigh of relief.

Chapter 307: Troubles Lie Ahead

Wang Han became famous overnight.

Sha Wuduan led an army of Sha Guards to destroy the Swordsman Training Hall and got his army completely demolished, making everyone's jaws drop. Even those who were confident in Wang Han's abilities did not expect this to happen. Furthermore, this time around, Sha Family had utilized all of their elite troops and even brought out the Sand Sentinel. In the end, they still lost terribly, shocking everyone.

The sword chime, the See You Laters and the artifact remnants had amazed everyone, especially in the last moment where he used the drought fire lotuses to defeat the Sand Sentinel. It was a flash in the pan.

No one knew the Sand Sentinel could be defeated using such method!

Being on the ban list of the Elders Guild said a lot about how dangerous and powerful a Sand Sentinel was. The usual offensive methods were useless against a Sand Sentinel as it had many sand cores. It could be defeated only when all of its sand cores were destroyed at the same time. A Sand Sentinel's absorption rate of earth elemental energy was terrifyingly fast. It could repair its body by absorbing an endless stream of earth elemental energy.

And if it decided to self-detonate, half of Peace City would be destroyed.

The fearsome powers and formidable survivability of the Sand Sentinel made it a nightmare for one to face in the battlefield. No one had ever found an effective way to deal with it before this.

"Why did you think of using drought fire lotus? How did you know they will devour sand?" Jiang Wei asked curiously.

Jiang Wei was filled with admiration for Ai Hui, who mixed the seeds of drought fire lotus in the sand pits and reaped his harvest after the Sand Sentinel absorbed them along with the sand.

The drought fire lotus was an unorthodox and infamous species of plant. The ground within ten miles from where it was grown would be dry and barren.

And because of this fact, it was very difficult to cultivate drought fire lotus. One drought fire lotus would consume up to ten miles of earth elemental energy. Once a plot of land was barren, no plants could be grown on it anymore.

Every plot of land in the Avalon of Five Elements was earned through diligence and blood from the Wilderness. Hence, why would the higher-ups tolerate the growth of drought fire lotus? The Sand Sentinel was like a small mountain that was made up of earth elemental energy, which made it the best soil for drought fire lotuses to grow in. Earth elemental energy was highly addictive to drought fire lotuses, so they could deal a fatal blow to the Sand Sentinel.

The logic behind it was not difficult to understand. After everything ended, everyone gradually realized what was going on.

Brilliant creativity did not necessarily have to be complex, but rather, it was about being filled with the dazzle of wisdom and knowledge. Otherwise, why would the methods used to defeat a Sand Sentinel have been so limited before this battle?

Instead of feeling surprised at Ai Hui's closely interlinked arrangements in the battle, like the others, Jiang Wei was unconcerned.

This fellow was already so powerful when he was in Central Pine City.

"I'm being forced to do these things," Ai Hui was very happy to see Jiang Wei. However, when the topic of money was mentioned, he was filled with heartache, "When a poor man like me is being pushed to dire straits, how could I not think of some ways to break even? Otherwise, after this battle is over, I might even have to pawn my clothes. Isn't the Sha Family famous for their sand puppets? How come their sand puppets aren't as smart as my Lou Lan? Stupid sand puppets are easy to deal with. However, I really didn't expect them to bring out the Sand Sentinel. I really have to thank them for that, otherwise, how can I break even? Do you know how much earth elemental energy one drought fire lotus needs? Eh? This might be a good way to earn money. I can ask Lou Lan to make a few Sand Sentinels and I can grow some drought fire lotuses..."

Ai Hui's eyes were sparkling as he continued to talk.

Jiang Wei laughed softly. The moment he saw Ai Hui’s facial expression, he immediately knew what evil tricks this fellow was up to. However, Ai Hui did seem slightly happier than when he was in the Central Pine City.

When Jiang Wei thought of the pressure Ai Hui had to face in Central Pine City, he could not help but sigh silently.

For the last three years, he had asked himself this question countless times. If he was in Ai Hui’s shoes that day, would he have had the courage to take on all that responsibility? Or would he even be capable of taking on all that responsibility?

No, he would not.

"Where’s Lou Lan?" Jiang Wei looked around.

Ai Hui returned to his senses and replied, "He is currently upgrading his body. It will take him a few more days to complete the process."

"Sigh, it seems like there’s no chance for me to drink Lou Lan’s soup," Jiang Wei gulped down his saliva, looking slightly disappointed.

Ai Hui chuckled and Jiang Wei laughed as well.

Jiang Wei started to talk about what he had been doing and what battles he had taken part in during the last three years. For some unknown reason, Jiang Wei did not like to talk to Shi Xueman about such things. However, when it came to Ai Hui, Jiang Wei would take the initiative to spill the beans to him.

He also talked about what Shi Xueman, Sang Zhijun and the rest of A-1 unit's members had been doing for the past three years.

Ai Hui did not speak and listened attentively. He could sense the excitement in Jiang Wei's tone.

Both of them were filled with the joy of their reunion.

When Ai Hui heard that the iron lady and Sang Zhijun were on the God-subduing Peak, he could not help but feel regretful. If he knew they were on the God-subduing Peak, he would go and say hi to them. Then, when he heard that Duanmu Huanghun were defeated by She Yu, his eyes flickered and his fists clenched involuntarily.

This was the first time in the past three years that Jiang Wei had talked so much.

While talking to his heart's content, Jiang Wei ordered his subordinates to buy them some alcohol.

The soldiers looked surprised at their captain. Usually, their captain was extremely self-disciplined and would never touch a

single drop of alcohol. What happened to him today?

With alcohol to liven things up, both of them were chatting non-stop, dancing and gesticulating with joy. When Ai Hui heard that everyone was doing quite well, he was overjoyed.

This type of friendship could only be developed through life-and-death battles, those who had never experienced it would not understand how it felt.

Within a short period of time, both of them were dead drunk.

They were not intoxicated from the alcohol, but rather from the happiness derived from a reunion of comrades-in-arms.

Both of them had no idea how dead drunk they were. Countless citizens of Peace City had trouble falling asleep.

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Sea Pacific Enterprise.

"Found it!" reported Fu Renxuan. "Jiang Wei, a survivor from the Central Pine City. After leaving Central Pine City, he joined the Sky Edge Division. Because of his outstanding military service, he was promoted to a small captain. Jiang Wei’s fighting style is firm and steady, possessing exceptional abilities. He is highly recognized by his higher-ups. This can be seen from the fact that they transferred him from the front line to Peace City.

Furthermore, he has a rather close relationship with Shi Xueman as both of them were comrades-in-arms during the Battle of Central Pine City. This time around, he arrived at Peace City by taking the God-subduing Mountain." Fu Renxuan reported solemnly.

Jiang Wei held great power by leading a team to take over the mayor's residence. From the task given to him, one could tell that he had boundless prospects. As for Shi Xueman, she was known to everybody.

"Wang Han and Jiang Wei have an extraordinary relationship. I have just received news that both of them were drinking and chatting merrily for the entire night. According to our investigation, Wang Han arrived at Peace City three years ago. That happens to be the time when the Battle of Central Pine City ended. We suspected that Wang Han might be a survivor from Central Pine City. This possibly explains his relationship with Jiang Wei. However, when we searched through the database of the Battle of Central City, we did not find anyone with the name Wang Han. Soon after, we suspected that Wang Han might be a false name. Eventually, we managed to determine his real identity. His real name is Ai Hui."

"Ai Hui?" Fu Yongwu had a pensive look on his face, "I have heard of this name somewhere before."

"It's him!" Fu family's oldest daughter muttered as her face turned pale.

Fu Renxuan's face became pale as well. With a slight tremble in

his voice, he continued, "Ai Hui, a citizen from the Old Territory. He worked as a laborer in Wilderness for three years. He is one of the two survivors from that batch of laborers. He is an average individual with mediocre natural capabilities. After he finished his stint at Wilderness, he applied to study in Induction Ground. Eventually, the Induction Ground made an exception and accepted him as a student. Subsequently, he received Teacher Wang Shouchuan's recognition who later accepted him as a disciple. After the blood catastrophe broke out, Ai Hui led a team and fought desperately to save Central Pine City. He had achieved outstanding military merit and obtained the nickname, the Lightning Blade..."

Fu Yongwu finally responded and cried in alarm, "That renegade-cum-murderer!"

"Shut up!" Fu family's oldest daughter sternly berated Fu Yongwu, a rarely-seen sight.

"Am I wrong to say that? Isn't he the one who killed his master with his own hands?" Fu Yongwu retorted.

The Battle of Central Pine City was a distant and fuzzy memory to many people. In the past three years, there had been numerous major battles. However, the incident where Ai Hui killed his own master still remained fresh in countless people's memory.

Ai Hui, a highly controversial fighting genius, had single-handedly saved Central Pine City. However, when he killed his master with his own hands at the critical junction, it stirred up a huge controversy and provoked countless debates over the

incident.

Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division had tried to enlist the fighting genius but there were a lot of strong objections from the people within the two divisions. There were even some people who said that they would beat up Ai Hui if he was to enter the Thirteen Divisions.

However, in the end, Ai Hui did not join the Thirteen Divisions and vanished without a trace, seemingly as if he had disappeared from the world.

No one had expected Ai Hui to be in Peace City.

The Fu family's oldest sister stared coldly at Fu Yongwu and reminded him, "If you don't want to create trouble for our family, you'd better keep your mouth shut."

"I don't think it's as bad as you think, Big Sister. What makes you think he can create troubles for us single-handedly?" Fu Yongwu defended himself.

"That's what the Sha Family thought too," Fu family's oldest daughter replied coldly.

Fu Yongwu was speechless.

After the last battle, the Sha Family was destroyed, completely destroyed.

They witnessed how the unstoppable Sha Guards were decimated by Ai Hui with their own eyes.

Fu Yongwu was rash but he was not stupid, "This Ai Hui is indeed a strange individual. How can he be so powerful when he has just attained elemental externalization! It doesn't make any sense! I don't understand how he won the battle. Didn't you say he is an average individual with mediocre natural abilities? If that's case, why is he so powerful?"

"He is an individual who saves the entire city by himself, it's normal that you can't understand him," the Fu family's oldest daughter answered coldly.

Fu Yongwu knew that he had offended his big sister and quickly begged for forgiveness, "Big sister...."

"You better not offend him, he is a dangerous man," The Fu family's oldest daughter was concerned about Fu Yongwu and reminded him once more with a serious tone.

"Big sister, don't worry, I won't spout any nonsense outside," Fu Yongwu quickly replied.

"This time around, Peace City is going to be lively," Fu Renxuan felt a slight headache as well, "This time around, Ai Hui has more than five drought fire lotuses. Since when does the market have so many drought fire lotuses? There's going to be a lot of people drooling over them. Drought fire lotus has always been unsellable

due to the lack of market for it."

At this point of time, a subordinate hurriedly brought a piece of intelligence to the Fu family's oldest sister.

After she read the report, she laughed bitterly, "This time around, more fuel is going to be added to the fire, things are going to get serious."

Upon reading the report, Fu Renxuan could not help but laugh bitterly as well.

"The Elders Guild has agreed to confer the title of Master on the late Wang Shouchuan of Central Pine City. Master Wang Shouchuan assumed the position of teacher in the Central Pine Academy for several decades, working diligently and sweating blood and tears everyday. Not only did he play an important role in the Battle of Central Pine City, his theory is extraordinary and contains the wisdom of our ancestors. It is deeply meaningful..."

If the Fu family could determine Ai Hui's background, that implied other people would be able to do so as well.

This decision of the Elders Guild had awakened many old slumbering memories that could push Ai Hui to the heart of the struggles in the Avalon of Five Elements...

Chapter 308: The Pagoda of Hidden Edge

Silver City was a city located at the upper most reach of the Silver Mist River. It was also the largest city in the Silver Mist Sea.

There was a grand dike standing between two tall and imposing mountains, completely level with the peaks of the two mountains. The dike was more than three thousand metres tall, making the lofty mountain range surrounding it look comparatively small and unintimidating.

The Silver Mist Dike was one of the most magnificent constructions in the Avalon of Five Elements. After generations of reinforcements, its height kept increasing. Its construction lasted for eight hundred years. The construction was officially completed when the highest point of the dike leveled with the two peaks of the mountains beside it.

The most striking part of the Silver Mist Dike was its gigantic sluice gate.

Like an enormous prehistoric monster, it was lying dormant and only woke up from its slumber on the first of every month. The roaring Silver Mist River would pour down in torrents, becoming a massive waterfall. When sunlight was reflected upon it, it resembled a powerful surging waterfall that was made up of countless silver swords.

Beneath the Silver Mist Dike was a mountain range. On the two sides of the Silver Mist River, there were densely-packed pagoda

forests. Pagodas were some of the most commonly seen structures on the banks of the Silver Mist River. They also possessed the unique characteristics of the Silver Mist Sea. Most of these pagodas were shining with a metallic lustre, resembling swords that were pointing towards the sky when seen from afar.

The lands on both sides of the Silver Mist River were extremely expensive. This was the best area of the Silver City and every plot of land was being fully utilized. Hence, the pagodas, which was a type of structure that was seldom found in other places, became the emblem of the Silver City and Silver Mist Sea.

Silver Mist Sea was heavily-guarded to prevent anyone from trespassing. In many people's eyes, it was an extremely mysterious place. A one-time entry would cost a considerable amount of Heaven Merit Points.

The airspace of Silver Mist Sea was restricted to flying and was guarded by patrolling elementalists as well.

The world that was shrouded by boundless silver mist behind the majestic Silver Mist Dike was not as cold as what everyone thought, though very few people knew it. In contrast, it was abnormally bustling with activity.

There were also very few people who knew that there were three islands in the Silver Mist Sea.

Each of the three islands had a pagoda. These pagodas were called the Elders Pagodas, especially designed for the metal-attributed

Elders from the Elder Guilds. Metal-attributed Elders would live and train in these pagodas, freely making use of the metal elemental energy there. From this, one could see how imposing and prestigious the Elders Guild was.

The training efficiency in Elders Pagodas was countless times better than the outside world's. Only an Elder could enjoy such superior privileges.

And because of this, every term's contest for the placings in Elders Guild was extremely intense.

There was a rule that every term of Elders Guild could have at most three Elders with the same elemental attribute. This was for the sake of bringing the five elements into balance in the Elders Guild.

In reality, this current term's Elders Guild only had two metal-attributed Elders.

The three pagodas were called Pagoda of Purity, Pagoda of Refinement and Pagoda of Hidden Edge. Currently, only Pagoda of Refinement and Pagoda of HIdden Edge were occupied by the Elders. The Pagoda of Purity had been empty for many years.

Each of the other two Elders Pagodas did not just house one Elder. On the contrary, the two Elders Pagodas were overpopulated.

The thirteen Elders were highly revered and powerful. Everyday, there were plenty of important matters and trivial issues for them to decide on and settle. The elders alone could not even finish dealing with so many things.

Other than the Elders themselves, there were other people living in the Elders Pagodas too. It was the greatest honor for those who could be there to listen to the Elders' teachings or wait on the Elders. As such, these people were extremely proud of themselves. They were specifically known as pagoda attendants.

If the Sky Edge Division and the Infantry Division were the backbones of Silver Mist Sea, then the three Elders Pagodas were the brain of the Silver Mist Sea.

At this point in time, the Hidden Edge Pagoda was silent and solemn, except for one lively voice.

"Wow, he's really extraordinary. After vanishing without a trace for the last three years, the moment he appeared he slayed a Sand Sentinel. Drought Fire Lotus? Why didn't I think of that?"

All the pagoda attendants stood silently with their heads lowered.

The voice came from a ten metre tall silver glowing cocoon. The silver glowing cocoon was made up of concentrated metal elemental energy. Wisps of metal elemental energy were obtained from the silver mist through the weapons hung under the roof eaves at each level of the pagoda, and then gathered at the pagoda's

apex. Subsequently, the wisps of metal elemental energy materialized into a silvery elemental energy pillar that descended from the apex of the pagoda and formed this silvery glowing cocoon.

The glowing cocoon might seem stationary but in actual fact, it was spinning at a terrifying speed.

Within the glowing cocoon, there was a skinny figure seated in a cross-legged position. He was one of the members of the current term's Elders Guild, Yuchi Ba.

The metal elemental energy that the Elders could not finish absorbing would be dispersed in the pagoda. Hence, the concentration of metal elemental energy within the pagoda would be very strong, providing huge assistance for training the pagoda attendants.

However, at this moment, no one was absorbing the metal elemental energy. Everyone was listening attentively to the Elder and trying to understand the implications behind his words. The pagoda attendants had followed Elder Yuchi for many years. They knew that Elder Yuchi had always admired Ai Hui.

Three years ago, Elder Yuchi had already thought about enlisting Ai Hui into the Sky Edge Division. Even though he had retired from the position of division leader of Sky Edge Division so many years ago, he still had an enormous influence over the Sky Ege Division.

In the end, Ai Hui did not join the Sky Edge Division and the issue ended up with nothing definite. However, they did not expect Elder Yuchi to still bring it up again.

"A genius will always be a genius. He's always surprising me," Yuchi Ba muttered. After pondering for awhile, he suddenly opened his mouth and said, "If I remember correctly, once the Elders Guild decides to confer the title of Master on someone, his or her descendants will be rewarded accordingly as well, right?"

"Yes," a forty year old woman answered expressionlessly, "His descendants must be within three generations of him. Besides this, his descendants can only be rewarded once by the Elders Guild."

"A merit will always be a merit, a mistake will always be a mistake. We have to be fair in handing out rewards or punishments. Pass down my orders and settle this issue."

"Yes, what order shall the rewards be of?"

"Master Shouchuan has made an extremely huge contribution. Of course we will prepare rewards of the highest order for his descendants. Make sure this is well-publicised. Anyone who has played a role in Master Shouchuan's meritorious service will be rewarded too. The Elders Guild will not treat his disciples and descendants unfairly."

"Yes!"

"Promote Jiang Wei by one rank as well. He will continue to oversee Peace City."

"Yes."

Yuchi Ba did not say anything else.

The Pagoda of Hidden Edge returned to a state of absolute silence once more.

.....

Peace City.

Ai Hui woke up with a hangover. His head felt heavy and his body was aching dully.

The last time he drank was when he was still in the Wilderness. At that time, they would always bring some alcohol along with them to expel chilliness from their bodies. After leaving the Wilderness, he had never touched a single drop of alcohol again.

The reunion with Jiang Wei yesterday night was fabulous.

When the soldiers that were guarding the training hall saw that Ai Hui had woken up, they bowed and greeted him, "The captain is worried that someone might come here and cause trouble for you, so he specially asked us to stand guard here and wait until you are

awake. Since you're already awake, we shall take our leave. Goodbye."

These few soldiers were very respectful to Ai Hui. Firstly, it was because the abilities Ai Hui displayed were really powerful. Secondly, they could tell that Ai Hui's relationship with Jiang Wei was extraordinary.

After they'd bidden farewell to Ai Hui, they left immediately. Having just arrived at Peace City, they had a multitude of issues to tackle.

Ai Hui felt a tinge of warmth in his heart. He knew Jiang Wei cared about his safety and ordered his soldiers to stand guard at the training hall. When he saw his completely devastated training hall, he could not help but chuckle bitterly.

The entire training hall was almost destroyed. Even half of his warehouse had collapsed. All of the captives from the Sha Family had died in the process. Sha Wuduan did not hold back his offensive attacks on Ai Hui.

Ai Hui's plan to use the captives to make money had completely gone down the drain.

If not for the fact that Lou Lan's seclusion area was well-hidden and heavily-defended, Ai Hui might really be worried that the Sand Sentinel would affect Lou Lan's upgrading process.

Upon thinking back to the battle, he felt that the whole process was hair-raising and extremely dangerous. A slight mistake would cost him his life. Furthermore, when he thought about the materials and money he had expended, he felt heartbroken.

Luckily, he had the drought fire lotus seeds. They were a pleasant surprise to him.

He never thought that the drought fire lotuses could bear fire lotus seeds. All along, he only planned to use the drought fire lotuses' ability of devouring earth elemental energy to deal with his enemy and achieve victory.

The conditions needed in order to make drought fire lotuses bear lotus seed heads were extremely demanding. Even those naturally grown drought fire lotuses might not ever bear the lotus seed heads. That was because the surrounding earth elemental energy was not sufficient, causing them to die of malnourishment.

Ai Hui did not expect the Sha Family to bring out the Sand Sentinel. He also certainly did not expect the Sha Guards to devour each other and form the Sand Sentinel. This concentrated the earth elemental energy within their Sand Sentinel to a point which exceed the usual Sand Sentinels' energy.

The drought fire lotus seed heads came as a surprise to him. There wasn't just one of them, but five.

Ai Hui carefully took out the drought fire lotus seed heads.

He had never touched such high-grade material before. He could not help but look at them with curiosity.

Naturally, the seeds that were borne from such extreme plants were extraordinary. The drought fire lotus seed heads were the size of a baby's palm. They were smooth and soft, and they were dark-red in color. The seeds within them could be seen clearly as well. Every seed was covered with a thick and solid outer shell. Indistinctly, one could see a wisp of fire flickering within each seed. That wisp of fire was called lotus heart.

Drought fire lotus was a wood-attributed plant and it fed on earth elemental energy. However, the fruits that it bore were purely fire elemental in nature. One could not help but praise the Creator for creating such a wondrous plant.

The wisp of fire was a dry fire.

Anything in this world that possessed two completely opposite elemental attributes was usually considered an extremely valuable material.

The most valuable part of the drought fire lotus was those dry-fire-made lotus hearts.

Ai Hui did not know much about fire-attributed materials as he was metal-attributed. As for Lou Lan, he needed earth-attributed materials. The reason why Ai Hui knew about fire lotus seeds, was because the lotus hearts of the fire lotus seeds were top-grade

materials for training the sky palace.

Among the five residences and eight palaces, the sky palace was the most special and mystical one. The sky palace was usually involved with psychic attacks.

However, one's mind was formless and was extremely difficult and dangerous to develop. This was also the main reason why there were very few people that specialized in developing their sky palace.

Everyone knew the benefits of having a powerful sky palace. Even if ordinary individuals did not dare to develop their sky palace, they would still think of ways to improve it. As such, a top-grade material. like the fire lotus seeds, naturally became the material that was highly sought after by people.

The fire lotus seeds were extremely useful for an elementalist like Ai Hui who specialized in developing his sky palace.

Ai Hui carefully plucked out a fire lotus seed from one of the drought fire lotus heads. As the fire lotus seed made contact with his hand, he did not feel any burning feeling, but rather, an ice-cold one. The color of its outer shell was dark-red, so dark that it almost looked black. As Ai Hui lifted it closer to his eyes to examine it, he discovered that there were fine veins growing all over it that could not be easily seen by the naked eye.

When Ai Hui tried to determine what these veins were, the elemental energy in his body suddenly began to surge, giving him a

shock. He immediately closed his eyes and did not look at the veins on the outer shell anymore.

At this moment, the skin of the fire lotus seeds in his hand suddenly emitted a faint glow.

Chapter 309: Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp

The faint light lit Ai Hui's face up and he felt the thread of warmth flow between his brows.

In the sky palace, a lotus flower lamp suddenly glowed brightly as the flame in the centre of the petals became bright and concentrated. A roll of golden scripture surrounded and circled around the lamp fire. The words on the scripture were unclear no matter how closely Ai Hui tried to look. Following the circling of the golden scripture, an indistinct and faintly discernible sutra-chanting voice echoed through his sky palace.

Wisps of black smoke grew and were released from all parts of his body, moving quietly like a beast upon smelling something fishy.

Ai Hui's face was quickly enveloped by a layer of thick black smoke. It was as if he was wearing a mask made of fog. The black smog wriggled like little weird and dangerous poisonous worms. Cold and malevolent, it rushed unceasingly towards the space between Ai Hui's brows.

The black fog curled up within his sky palace as the lotus flower lamp pulsed unhurriedly. The circling golden scripture surrounding the flames spun just like before, making a full circle. The black smoke burned cleanly and completely at mere contact with the scripture and flames.

But, as if feeling nothing, the black smog continued pouncing on the lotus flower lamp within Ai Hui's sky palace.

The smog enveloping Ai Hui's face gradually faded.

The malevolence reduced greatly as an indescribable peace and calm started to appear on his face.

He would be surprised and unable to recognize himself if he could see his face now. The grave lines on his previously stone-like face started to soften and loosen up. The sharpness from before was gone and the space between his brows carried a sense of compassion.

It was said that the inspiration for the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] originated from the Suspending Temple's meditation formula.

Ancient meditation meant inner peace, calmness and freedom from suffering.

It was hard to tell how much time had passed.

Ai Hui woke up slowly from this tranquility and was surprised to feel an inexpressible sense of comfort in his whole body. It was as if he had been cleansed thoroughly, both inside and out.

Completely thoroughly. Right, this was the feeling.

Even his bones felt lighter. Ai Hui supposed he could start to float

if there was a gust of incoming wind.

This was the first time he'd felt this relaxed and at peace so even he himself was rather shocked.

After observing his condition thoroughly, he fell into even greater shock. The qi and blood flow in his body was exceptionally smooth and full of vigor. Unlike the sluggishness from before, it was completely unobstructed now. Even the little internal and hidden injuries within his body were gone at this point.

[Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] had its own unique qualities which enabled it to cultivate the sky palace independently and become an absolute art.

It could bring inner peace and calm to people. While there was not much use for this on the battlefield, it was a fundamental inherited nourishment. It could purify one's body continuously to purge any contamination within the body, so as to improve the body's constitution. It was said that upon mastering it, one could start practicing the legendary "Skyheart Pure Body", which was intimately connected with elemental energy.

Of course, this was only a legend. Until now, there hadn't been anyone who'd practiced "Skyheart Pure Body".

But the older generations that practiced absolute arts lived long.

Compared to the unique aspects of [Skyheart Flaming Lotus

Lamp], this absolute art faced much more apparent abuses. While it could improve one's body constitution, it was a very slow process where a day felt like ten years. The practicing elementalists would have been above forty years old by the time they were almost done mastering it and had greatly improved their affinity with elemental energy.

If a practitioner had already missed the golden age for training, even if doing it could improve his aptitude, it wouldn't be of much use.

Ai Hui chose [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] mainly because it was cheap. All along, very few people practiced this technique, so the number of Heaven Merit Points needed for this was the lowest as compared to many other absolute arts. Once he reached the realm of nine lotus petals, he could effectively restrain psychic attacks, preventing evilness from invading.

Blood of God's psychic attacks were strange, ever-changing and difficult to guard against. It was very important for Ai Hui to possess this ability to curb the attacks.

Improving his body constitution was just a convenient bonus.

But things were all different with the fire lotus seeds.

Ai Hui stared with his bright eyes at the drought fire lotus seed heads on his hand and counted them meticulously. There were five, some big and some small, and there was a total of ninety-two lotus seeds.

His thoughts fell on the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] in his sky palace. It had a total of five petals and one of them was slightly smaller than the rest. And before this, Ai Hui clearly remembered that there were only four petals on that lotus flower lamp.

The efficacy of the fire lotus seeds far exceeded Ai Hui's expectations.

If he were to absorb all ninety-two fire lotus seeds, what base level could his [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] reach?

Without hesitation, Ai Hui took a fire lotus seed and started practicing.

He focused and felt the growth of the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp]'s fifth petal more clearly this time. On his fourth fire lotus seed, the fifth petal was as big as the rest. The lamp's flame was much stronger and brighter than before.

That roll of golden scripture revolving around the flames changed the most. It became more condensed and carried a more solemn breath.

According to what he had learnt from practicing for years, Ai Hui knew that it was time to stop. He needed time to adapt to his completely new body. Good preparation was the key to success when it came to all breakthroughs. Blindly relying on external objects would bring rapid progress but only in the beginning. As one reached a higher base level, the hidden dangers developed

from having a weak foundation would break out.

In this aspect, Ai Hui was exceptionally calm, neither arrogant nor impatient.

The Circulatory Cycle Revolution felt super smooth as the elemental energy evidently flowed much faster than before. Ai Hui was pleasantly surprised to find out that the elemental energy sword pills within his body became gentler with each cycle.

From before, there was a thread of sharp sword consciousness that remained in the pill. It felt as if there was a round rock with thorns moving within his body, which unknowingly gave him slight injuries. These fine bruises accumulated and turned into internal injuries over time.

Such internal injuries were difficult to treat and they destabilized elementalists' fundamentals as well.

One cycle after another caused Ai Hui to lose track of time.

The sharpness throughout his body faded with each cycle. He had the same face and body but his whole body and temperament had changed thoroughly. The old Ai Hui was like an unsheathed treasure sword, shivering and conspicuous within a crowd.

Ai Hui now became more and more introspective, as if the treasure sword had a concealed sharpness and protection, making it less garish than before.

Ai Hui’s greatest experience was the fact that his control over his elemental energy had improved once again.

When an elementalist achieved elemental externalization, his elemental energy would improve greatly, but at the same time such progress demanded more when it came to his control techniques.

This was also a meticulous and delicate skill so Ai Hui wasn’t the least bit anxious.

From early morning to evening, Ai Hui had been deep in mystical thoughts and had forgotten about the time.

A cheery voice sounded.

"Ai Hui, Lou Lan is here!"

Chapter 310: Lou Lan’s Upgrade

Lou Lan didn’t change much.

Ai Hui noticed Lou Lan’s eyes first. His eyes were now clear and bright, and heartwarmingly pure. Upon closer inspection, one could see a very mild, yellow halo reflected within his clear pupils. It was difficult for the naked eye to notice. The halo was extremely sensitive as it shrunk and expanded slightly.

Ai Hui circled around Lou Lan once and commented, "Lou Lan’s eyes became brighter."

"Yes, I learned [Earth Elemental Deciphering Technique]. And there’s this, Ai Hui."

Lou Lan raised his arms cheerfully. Ai Hui could see the ordinary yellow sand turning ink black. It carried an intense gold luster.

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up. "Meteoric Sand?"

"Yes," Lou Lan explained, "I used all of the meteoric sand to refine my hands so they won’t burn in flames and are resistant to sword injuries. Be it in making elemental food or in battling, I will be better able to assist you."

"That’s amazing!" Ai Hui cried out.

"There is silk floss sand and many other ingredients in my body now, so my morphing and fighting abilities are much stronger. My body can now unleash seventy percent of the Midnight's abilities.

Ai Hui wasn't sure of the connection between morphing and fighting strength. His concentration was on the later part of Lou Lan's sentence. He was rather shocked. "Seventy percent? Is Midnight sand core that powerful?"

"I've not found any core better than mine," Lou Lan declared proudly but his tone dropped shortly. "I wonder how Master Shao is doing? I have not heard from him in a long time."

Seeing child-like Lou Lan being sad, Ai Hui patted his head and consoled him. "There are things that people have no choice but to do. This shows how brave Master Shao is."

Lou Lan raised his head, his eyes opened wide. "Will sand puppets experience such things?"

"Of course." Ai Hui couldn't help but laugh. "Won't you come to my rescue if I am in trouble?"

Lou Lan said loudly, "Don't worry, Ai Hui. I will definitely save you!"

"Hahaha, you're still the best, Lou Lan... Bah, how inauspicious! Why would I be in trouble?" Ai Hui said with a wretched face. He then thought about the fire lotus seeds and took a lotus seed head

out abruptly. "Lou Lan, look at this."

Lou Lan’s eyes lit up at the sight of the lotus seed head. "Drought fire lotus seed head, fire lotus seeds!"

"So? Any suitable elemental soup in mind?" Ai Hui asked and started drooling.

"Yes, Ai Hui," said Lou Lan. Thinking for a short while he continued, "But more ingredients are needed. We don’t need so much. Thirty fire lotus seeds and the shell of the lotus seed head will be sufficient. Ai Hui, can we use the rest of the fire lotus seeds to exchange for other things?"

"No problem!" Ai Hui readily approved.

Just then, Ai Hui saw Jiang Wei standing by the door with a rather unpleasant expression on his face.

Walking in and seeing Lou Lan, Jiang Wei’s face brightened up significantly. "Long time no see, Lou Lan!"

Lou Lan replied cheerily, "Long time no see, Jiang Wei."

"What happened?" Ai Hui enquired.

With a bitter laugh, Jiang Wei responded, "Ai Hui, your identity has been found out."

"Oh." Ai Hui replied simply.

Hearing Ai Hui’s flat response, Jiang Wei couldn’t help but ask, "Aren’t you worried?"

"Worried about what?" Ai Hui asked instead, "It’s going to be revealed someday. We know each other, a little effort is all it takes to trace my identity. It’s no big deal. Plus, so what if my identity is exposed? Will someone find me bringing trouble?"

Jiang Wei answered anxiously, "I’m worried about Blood of God."

"Blood of God?" Thinking about the blood plum blossom in his body, he replied, "Other than She Yu, no one from there will find me."

As long as She Yu wasn’t a fool, she would never, on her own accord, reveal information about the [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Technique Art] in her body. Not only would she conceal it, she would protect her own life. Otherwise, it wouldn’t just be wasted effort but even her own safety would be an issue.

If a strong player from Blood of God knew about this, he would simply kidnap She Yu and him alive and wait for his blood plum blossom to fall out in order to retrieve it.

That would then be a dreadful period where neither living or dying was bearable.

Such a smart person like One Thousand Yuan would not miss this fact.

Although he wasn’t aware of how confident Ai Hui was, Jiang Wei laid his worried heart to rest. He had almost given himself a slap upon hearing the news. He knew that Ai Hui would be the first victim since his identity had been exposed. While he didn’t know why Ai Hui concealed his identity in Peace City, he also knew that he must’ve had his own reasons.

Jiang Wei was beyond vexed. Why didn’t he think of waiting for a quiet time to connect with Ai Hui?

Ai Hui saw through Jiang Wei’s anxiety and laughed, "Don’t worry about it. I got rid of Sha Wuyuan, so there will definitely be people checking on my identity and it was only going to be a matter of time before they found something out. But since I’ve been exposed, please help me with something."

"Go ahead and tell me." Jiang Wei calmed down as the same steadiness from before returned to his face.

In Central Pine City, Ai Hui always had all sorts of ideas. Seeing Ai Hui’s expression, Jiang Wei knew Ai Hui had an idea already.

"Since I’ve been exposed, we might as well announce it publicly. You can release my true identity and it’s best that the whole city hears it. At the same time let them know our another piece of news, that I’m planning to dispose of my fire lotus seeds."

"You’re going to use fire lotus seeds?" Jiang Wei turned pale before dissuading, "You must keep it cool. Things like fire lotus seeds cannot be bought at all right now. You should keep them for yourselves."

"I don’t need that many." Ai Hui explained, "I plan to exchange the surplus for essence elemental beans and other ingredients that I need. You know, this war with Sha family hollowed me out and I’m broke to death."

Jiang Wei muttered, "How many are you planning to take out?"

"There were ninety-three and I used five so there’s eighty-eight now. I’m going to keep thirty for myself so there’s fifty-eight to be sold. I will write down a list of items that I need. My priority is to exchange for things that I require, then I’ll sell the rest to the highest bidder."

"Okay! The whole city will know of these two matters today." Jiang Wei gave Ai Hui a glance. "You must beware of your safety. Do not act tough. This is a signal for help, so use it when you’re in danger."

Jiang Wei handed a signal arrow to Ai Hui but was still a little worried inside. He had been through the controversy surrounding Ai Hui years ago.

This time, Ai Hui was going to reveal himself on his own accord. Conflicts might arise if people were reminded of past events.

Jiang Wei was determined that he would not just sit and watch if anyone, no matter who, came to seek trouble.

They were still weak and young at that time, but now they were not without strength.

No one knew what that war was about better than they did.

Ai Hui could see the determination in Jiang Wei's eyes and felt his heart warming up. He took the arrow, saying, "New product eh, I've not seen it before. Don't worry, I just killed Sha Wuyuan so most will not dare to trouble me. If they do come, I will not let them off easily."

Jiang Wei smiled upon seeing Ai Hui's confident face.

Yeah, since when had Ai Hui been an easy target?

"Then I'll go get busy! Bye, Lou Lan!" Without any superfluous words, Jiang Wei waved goodbye.

"Bye, Jiang Wei!"

Seeing Jiang Wei's disappearing figure, Lou Lan said suddenly, "Ai Hui, everyone's pretty good."

"Yeah." Ai Hui nodded. "Lou Lan, you gotta start working. Our

training hall needs to be reorganized and tidied up."

"No problem." Lou Lan responded lightheartedly, but when he saw Ai Hui picking up a broken wooden block and walking towards the main entrance, he couldn’t help but ask, "You are..."

"Choose a new price!"

Ai Hui replied without even turning his head.

Soon, there was a newly hung wooden board on the main entrance of the swordsman training hall that said: " Fees, two hundred essence elemental beans per person."

Publicity, good or bad, was still publicity. If he did not use this chance to jack the price up, he would simply be letting down his empty purse and conscience.

Ai Hui shook his head and swaggered his way back in.

God-subduing Peak flew speedily as the shadow casted by its summit swept past violently like a beast stuck to the ground. Alarmed cries could be heard wherever God-subduing Peak passed.

Whenever she had the time, Shi Xueman would be practicing since, counting just training venues alone, there were about seven. There were also quiet rooms designed for meditation and there were wide ones for actual practicing of skills.

A stern looking middle-aged man in grey garments and cloth shoes stood perfectly straight, his short hair stiff like steel wires. His short mustache was well-managed and he looked clean overall. His gaze was like lightning as he observed Shi Xueman, who was practicing in the training hall.

There were no wisps of elemental energy waves around Shi Xueman. Her moves looked very ordinary.

The middle-aged man looked on in admiration nevertheless. Indeed, within the Shi family, she was the one who was most likely going to continue Shi Beihai's legacy. Not even a strand of Shi Xueman's elemental energy overflowed as she contained it well inside. What seemed like ordinary spear moves were actually difficult to execute and control.

Upon attaining elemental externalization, the barrier between elementalists and Nature's elemental energies was broken, and utilizing the energy became second nature to the elementalists.

Yet, Shi Xueman did the very opposite. She controlled her elemental externalization without releasing it. Such training allowed her spear mastery to go to an even higher base level.

Shi Xueman held her spear vertically beside her as the fog lingered on around her whole body, surging ceaselessly without scattering.

She opened her eyes, exhaled deeply and the surrounding fog

started to dissipate. She then walked toward the exit.

The middle-aged man praised her, saying, "Soon enough, among the younger generation, no one will have better spear mastery than you do."

"You flatter me, Uncle Cui. Please guide me along." Shi Xueman replied respectfully, satisfaction absent from her face.

Uncle Cui was the real deal in God-subduing Peak. He was Master Cui Tianzheng. Without a master overseeing it, no one would dare to underestimate such a heavy weapon like God-subduing Peak.

Cui Tianzheng was very close to Shi Beihai and was asked by him to guide Shi Xueman since he had the qualifications.

Cui Zhengtian said in a low voice, "You may be lacking in certain areas but even jades have their flaws so don’t worry about it. You have a strong foundation that no one can compete with. You are on the right track, so as long as you remain patient and continue this way, you can rise up to be one of the strongest."

Shi Xueman bowed. "I’ll remember your wise words well."

Cui Tianzheng gave a slight smile. "I’ll practice with you from tomorrow onwards."

Shi Xueman was overjoyed. "Thanks, Uncle Cui."

Uncle Cui caught sight of Sang Zhijun, who was standing not far away. With a "Go get busy", he turned around and left.

Only when Cui Tianzheng was no longer in sight did Sang Zhijun rush over to give her report. "Xueman, look!"

She took the report over and gave it a few glances. Her eyes lit up and blurted out, "So he’s here!"

Seeing Ai Hui’s open declaration of his identity, she felt somewhat suspicious. "What is this fellow trying to do?"

She knew clearly that Ai Hui was someone who would not get up early if there were no benefits, so he definitely wasn’t the kind to act without thinking.

Chapter 311: Fervor

"It turns out that Wang Han is The Lightning Blade! No wonder he is so brilliant! The Sha Family has met their opponent and now they're done for."

"The monster that killed his teacher with his bare hands? It is a pity I am not strong enough. Otherwise how can I let such a person exist in this world?"

"The magnificent Lightning Blade is going incognito in our Peace City. What are his intentions? Could it be that our Peace City has some sort of hidden treasure?"

"Even if there are any hidden treasures, they are not for you to take."

"He could actually bear to use a good object like the fire lotus seed! I can't get over it!"

"If not that, then what could he have done? Wait till the completion of the lesser Avalon of Five Elements, and the reemergence of the fire elementalists materials? They might not be able to produce such a good material like the fire lotus seed!"

"Stop dreaming. Even if the lesser Avalon of Five Elements were to be completed, you would have to wait an eternity for them to produce such high grade materials like the fire lotus seed."

"I heard that there is some fool that brought along two hundred essence elemental beans to seek an apprenticeship with him!"

"You are the fool, he is a nouveau riche after all!"

"To be an apprentice for such an infamous person? If he is not a fool, what is he? If I was rich, I'd..."

"Wait till you are rich!"

"See You Later was actually created by him, he is so awesome!"

"I wonder if we can buy more?"

At the moment, there was only a name buzzing around Peace City - Ai Hui. He was like a whirlpool, attracting everyone's attention and being the topic of their conversations.

Those who adored him praised his impressive battle success and performance in Central Pine City unbridledly. It was due to Ai Hui that Central Pine City was saved from a disaster. Ai Hui was the most prominent figure in the earlier stage of the blood disaster. He single-handedly killed the blood elementalist Tian Kuan, who was one of the core members on the kill list of the Avalon of Five Elements for a long time. Even those who were under Tian Kuan had exceptional capabilities.

Those who had an intense hatred for Ai Hui described him as an ingrate who resorted to unscrupulous means, turning on his

teacher to gain credit. Furthermore, his teacher treated him like his own son. How could he be so cruel? What a cold and heartless personality!

Previously, Peace City also had even more famous personalities. However, this was the first time that they had someone that was so controversial. With the topics of See You Later Arrows, King of Anglers, Fire Lotus Seeds and more, Ai Hui became the headline of every conversation starter.

Regardless of whether they understood, or whether they liked it, people wanted to join in the conversation.

Evergold Enterprise.

"Obliterated soul wood, this is a good object! It comes from the century old immortal soul tree. It is then chopped into wooden strips with dimensions three inches long, about two inches wide and one inch in thickness. If you deposit them in the water of the Yellow Springs, those that transform upon contact with water are ash firewood, and those that float atop are overcast firewood. Those that are half-submerged are withered soul wood. Only the ones that are completely submerged and sink right to the bottom are obliterated soul wood. A century old immortal tree can only produce no more than three obliterated soul wood pieces. As such, it is extremely precious."

The person who said that was a middle-aged man with a goatee. He looked skinny and shriveled but his gaze was bright and lively. His family name was Hu and he was known as Mr Hu. He specialized in many times of precious natural resources and his

knowledge was extensive. He had just arrived at Peace City the night before.

"The amethyst sword reeds are unusual as well. Sword reeds can be seen everywhere and are extremely ordinary. If the sword reed is not of a certain age, it will be delicate and weak. There are few sword reeds that can grow for more than a hundred years. However, when a sword reed manages to grow over a hundred years, it has many impressive uses. It would be able to absorb the essence of the other vegetation around its surroundings and use the essence for itself. If there are amethyst mica nearby, after thirty odd years it will transform into amethyst sword reeds. The sword reeds will be fully purple in color and can be used as a material in many weapons."

Mr Hu spoke assuredly and he was radiant with delight. He liked talking about such unusual objects and when he started on the topic, he could go on and on.

He went to sleep after he arrived the night before. He was being summoned by Fu family's oldest daughter early in the morning and he rushed over hurriedly. The young mistress gave him a list filled with many different materials. She wanted him to introduce a few materials that were rarely seen. While he was still not clear about the situation, he managed to explain it to her in detail as per his expertise.

Fu family's oldest daughter was intelligent and imposing. She was trusted by the owner of the house and her authority was almost on equal standing with the family head. She brought up a few of her younger brothers as well and she was well-loved and

respected. The family head was often rueful that she wasn’t born as a boy. Otherwise, he would have an heir.

Mr Hu was even more motivated when he saw that the Fu family’s oldest daughter nodded from time to time and did not show any signs of impatience.

After Mr Hu stopped, the Fu Family’s oldest daughter praised him, "Mr Hu is indeed knowledgeable. After hearing what you have said, I have learnt a lot."

Mr Hu was elated while he hurriedly denied the praises.

Fu family’s oldest daughter continued, "I still have a question to ask. Would it be worth it If I used these to exchange for the fire lotus seeds?"

"Fire lotus seeds?" Mr Hu paused for a moment before saying, "Drought fire lotus?"

"Yes!"

"Exchange it!’ Mr Hu said without hesitation and with an agitated expression, "You do not know but within the perimeter of where the drought fire lotus grows, the soil is dried up and there are no signs of life. It originated from the Wilderness and after meticulous breeding from the wood elementalists, they managed to get a few seeds. Some of the wood elementalists started to grow it but it led to the extermination of living things within a

perimeter of five hundred metres, which resulted in a disaster. The elders were furious and forcefully exterminated and prevented the breeding. The drought fire lotus is easy to grow but it requires much ground elemental energy to produce any fire lotus seeds. It is extremely difficult. Now, the seeds of the drought fire lotus are mostly used by the wood elementalists as some sort of weapon. However I have not heard of anyone that is willing to sell off fire lotus seeds yet."

Mr Hu said all these things rapidly. He paused momentarily, "As such, the fire lotus seed is extremely out of the ordinary. It is usually used to train your sky palace as well. One effect of the fire lotus seed is to strengthen your state of mind. Those who have weak willpower usually are those who have a weaker state of mind. As such, it is easy for them to be taken advantage of by external forces. If their mindset is strong, then their willpower will be strong as well.

The Fu family's oldest daughter had maintained a composed face all this time but finally showed a surprised reaction and said, "There's such an effect?"

Mr Hu had also toned down at that moment and replied, "Yes, this is not a secret and there are many who know about it. However, this knowledge is useless to most as the fire lotus seed is elusive.

Fu family's oldest daughter forced a smile and said, "This is going to be interesting."

Mr Hu stared blankly at her while saying doubtfully, "Could it be

that someone is disposing of the fire lotus seed?"

Young Mistress nodded her head, "Yes, there is a total of fifty eight. It is up to us to see how many we can get our hands on."

"Fifty……Fifty eight?" Mr Hu felt light-headed and his face was flushed like he was drunk.

"Since Mister thinks that we should exchange for it, our family will try our best to get it." The young mistress said solemnly.

At that moment, the smile on her face was gone. Her gaze was resolute and her back was straight. Her petite figure radiated power and influence. Everyone was scared into submission and bowed in response.

"I need to consult you for one more thing." The Fu family's young mistress muttered, "From this list of things, what do you think are the intentions and objectives of the person who wrote it? For example, is it for refinement and what sort of refinement is it for?"

Mr Hu shook his head and said, "Your humble subordinate is unable to tell. I might need to gather some experienced artisan and we can discuss it together?"

Fu family's oldest daughter bowed slightly, "Thank you for your help."

"No need to thank me," Mr Hu hurriedly bowed back in return

and was awed. The young mistress was always respectful and never had any haughtiness about her.

Looking at Mr Hu’s retreating figure, Fu family’s oldest daughter suddenly turned around and told Fu Yonghao, "Previously you failed in becoming Ai Hui’s student. Do not fail this time."

Fu Yonghao was at a loss and said, "Ah...Older sister..."

"Work hard at the training hall."

"Older sister... I..."

.....

Swordsman Training Hall.

Ai Hui stared in surprise at the shop owner. That old face was more than familiar.

While he had already released the list of things for a long time, he had never imagined that the first person to trade would be the boss of the store.

"Definitely Boss, I can’t believe it. You are like the sage that disguises himself as an ordinary person."

The shop owner gave a simple and honest smile, "It is nothing as compared to you. I am just trying to make ends meet, trying to make ends meet."

Ai Hui did not bother with the formalities. He took the box and threw it towards Lou Lan.

He did not ask further. Everyone had their own secrets.

He knew of the store owner’s background. In the past, he used to purchase different types of materials from this store owner. At that time, he already felt that the store owner had a vast range of resources. Now, he knew that he had underestimated the store owner. The store owner’s background was even more extensive than what he had guessed. While everyone else was yet to react, the store owner had already come over to do a trade. Ai Hui was impressed by this.

Lou Lan took a glance and told Ai Hui, "Ai Hui, this is obliterated soul wood. There is no problem with the quality and there is a total of three."

The store owner said cheerily, "Lou Lan has good foresight."

"Three?" Ai Hui nodded his head and took out three fire lotus seeds. He wrapped them up in a piece of scrap paper that he randomly found and thrusted it at the store owner.

The store owner’s cheeks twitched, "Can’t you put it in a proper

box?"

This was a precious natural resource!

How could he just use a random piece of paper to wrap up the priceless fire lotus seeds? Even an unscrupulous businessman like the store owner was unable to stand his way of handling them.

"Are you going to pay for the box?" Ai Hui countered.

The store owner also felt that he had wasted his breath. He was clear about Ai Hui's character. His expression suddenly cleared and a smile lifted up his cheeks "Hey little king, when should we meet up to create See You Later? You have to leave enough for me! We have so many years of friendship..."

Nobody knew that the shop owner took away with him three fire lotus seeds. Just like nobody knew that he came.

When the shop owner left, Ai Hui's mood lifted. At least it was a good start.

After a moment, he heard Lou Lan shouting from the outside, "Owner, someone is seeking knowledge."

Ai Hui was happy! There is business! A successful business is equivalent to two hundred essence elemental beans!

However, when Ai Hui saw the face of the person, his face became doubtful, "It is you!"

"So what if it is me?" Fu Yonghao said rudely and threw a money pouch towards Ai Hui, "Two hundred essence elemental beans."

Ai Hui took over the money pouch and counted it. He raised his head and said, "You! Two hundred essence elemental beans is not enough!"

Fu Yonghao said indignantly, "What do you mean? Didn’t you write down the price on the door?"

Ai Hui said righteously, "You are over-age, so naturally you should pay a higher fee. Give over another one hundred essence elemental beans."

"You!" Fong Yongwu was almost spitting fire now. But when he thought of his older sister being angry at him, he trembled and forced the words out of his mouth, "If you want that additional hundred, I will give it to you."

With a disdainful expression, Ai Hui said reluctantly, "Alright, since you are so sincere, I will make an exception and accept you as a student. Come on, call me Teacher!"

Fong Yongwu was so angry that his neck turned red.

Chapter 312: A Group of People

"I can’t believe it is actually him."

Su Huaijun gave a soft sigh. While her emotions were in a mess, she felt a sense of relief as well. How could an unknown being defeat the Sha family? After knowing Wang Han’s true identity, she was more at ease. To her, information on Wang Han was the most important, regardless of what his background was.

"What should we do next? Should Qingye still go to the training hall?" Father Su was feeling conflicted as well.

No matter how controversial Ai Hui might be, his prestige and capability were proven. Before, the Three Smalls had been able to combine forces and block one of Sha Wuyuan’s moves. This was sufficient to prove that Ai Hui was good at teaching his students.

He was not highly regarded in his family, otherwise he would not have been sent to Peace City many years back. He was extremely happy that Qingye was able to practice under a famous master. At the same time, he was also worried that this might clash with his family’s interest. He had been doing business for a long time and knew how complicated Ai Hui’s background was.

Su Huaijun did not have the least bit of hesitation and said, "Let’s go and see our master."

Looking at father Su’s happy, yet worried expression, she knew he had some doubts. She quickly said, "You need not worry about

it. Even though there are many disputes over Ai Hui, you should not underestimate the people supporting him. Those that make him an enemy are extremely foolish."

Su Qingye's father was surprised. "He has such capability?"

"The place which bore the brunt of the blood disaster was the Induction Ground. None of the students managed to survive and the Avalon of Five Elements' backup strength was heavily cut off. These people from Central Pine City went through such a hard battle and performed tremendously. How are they not valuable? Those lucky survivors from the battle, especially those in the A1-unit that was led by Ai Hui, have gained a lot in these three years. A few of them have ascended rapidly and Jiang Wei is one of them. The Thirteen Divisions which was severely impacted will definitely be rebuilt in the future. The many vacancies that will open up will probably be filled by those from the A1-unit."

Su Huaijun seemed to have thought of something and sat in silence. Following which, she sighed "Ai Hui's prestige in the eyes of the survivors from Central Pine City is something we will never be able to understand."

"Old Xu, guess who is near Peace City?"

"You have heard the news? Ge Laohei is here! I have already requested something from him."

"You are so efficient! I only received the news today. Thank goodness we finally have news of him."

"Yes, it has been three years. Time flies. If not for the fact that I am really busy, I would have gone to Peace City myself. Mingfeng has already left for Peace City. You can look for him too."

"Alright, I will go look for them."

"Peace City! He is in Peace City!"

"I did not manage to thank him personally previously. I have always been thinking about it."

The dazzle of the message tree periodically lit up within the crowd of people. Those who had partners in the same city gathered and formed an even larger group. They sat together drinking wine while reminiscing about the past. The blood and fire from three years ago contributed to their fear and despair. They talked about witnessing their own relatives and those students lying in a pool of blood. Soon, tears started rolling.

The more they drank, the more drunk they got. They cried and laughed together.

The memories that were buried deep inside their hearts surfaced. The longing for their family members had never ceased and was ignited by the alcohol.

They sobbed silently.

They had their arms around each other's shoulders while singing at the top of their voices.

They were like a herd of wild wolves that shouted towards the sky, "Lightning Blade! Lightning Blade! Lightning Blade!"

None of them had forgotten the Central Pine City of three years ago, just like none of them will ever, ever forget the lonely silhouette of the youth who faced the blood fiends during the Battle of Long Street. They would never forget the person who fought in the battle in the Heaven Pit. Similarly, they were unable to forget the scene where that youth stabbed the enemy in the back while soaring in the sky. They could not forget the back view of that youth who kneeled in front of the tombstone under the torrential rain.

It was a figure they would never, ever forget, and a feeling that only they could understand.

That was enough for them.

.....

She Yu leaned on the railings and unknowingly caught a glimpse of a silhouette walking hurriedly. She gave a light gasp in surprise.

Quan Minglong who was next to her looked over as well and said smilingly, "Ah, Master Duanmu. After Young Master Duanmu lost to my lady, he set up a society called the Society of Excellence.

Compared to the past, he is keeping a low-profile now.

The relationship between Quan Minglong and She Yu became tense after he was mocked in public by She Yu. For an unknown reason, however, She Yu personally visited him and apologised. She also attempted to butter him up whenever possible at the various public areas. Pretty soon, his initial hard feelings towards her dissipated.

Hearing the words "Society of Excellence", her body turned rigid and she gave a sigh. Duanmu Huanghun had yet to forget about the Induction Ground.

She suddenly thought of Ai Hui. That chap should still remember too, right?

The hatred between Ai Hui and the Blood of God was deeper than the ocean.

However, who would care about the deep hatred of a flower slave?

She pretended to be surprised and said, "God Nation and Jadeite forest was just about to form a sincere collaboration. The Society of Excellence is ill-timed."

Quan Minglong said harshly, "Isn’t that the case! There are many higher-ups who are displeased with him. However, he usually acts like that. He is usually arrogant and despotic, he does not take the

big picture into account. Let’s see how he salvages the situation in the future!"

She Yu covered her mouth and laughed daintily. "I can smell the jealousy over here."

Quan Minglong let out a huge guffaw and was not the least bit angry. Instead, he liked being teased by She Yu. All the other women who talked to him always spoke respectfully to him.

He continued, "I have no other choice. He is the Jadeite Young Master as well as a genius, so he can afford to neglect his responsibilities. People like me, however, still need to work hard."

While saying the above, Quan Minglong’s face was proud. In fact, he had the ability to be proud. Prior to knowing She Yu, he’d lived life like a monk who was obsessed with training. In the Quan family famous for living it up, he was like a weirdo.

After witnessing first-hand the battle between Duanmu Huanghun and She Yu, he realized the disparity between him and Duanmu Huanghun in strength was not too far apart. This spurred him further. Also, Duanmu Huanghun breaking hearts everywhere he went enforced his notion that Duanmu Huanghun was the perfect example of someone who was not serious.

Every time he saw She Yu’s beautiful and alluring face, a ball of fire rose in his heart. He wanted to become stronger, he wanted to defeat Duanmu Huanghun, and he wanted to get the beauty in front of him.

Facing Quan Minglong’s greedy and passionate gaze, She Yu lightly ruffled her fringe. Hearing Quan Minglong’s heavy breathing, she said carelessly, "Life is so boring. Does Minglong know about anything interesting recently? Share so we can pass the time."

Quan Minglong let out a smile. He was already prepared for this. "There are actually two items, and they are both related to our Jadeite Young Master."

Astounded, She Yu said, "Minglong, say it quickly!"

She Yu’s look of anticipation allowed Quan Minglong to feel that his hard work had not gone to waste and he replied, "The diplomatic mission from the Avalon of Five Elements is about to arrive and the one leading the team is Shi Xueman, who once fought alongside our Jadeite Young Master. She Yu, you are going to have a new opponent now. I heard that they have also brought with them a powerful weapon called God-subduing Peak."

"God-subduing Peak?" She Yu was slightly surprised, but gave a cold laugh. "Let’s see how they are going to subdue us."

"Many of them are displeased that the Elders are using such a method to showcase their power," Quan Minglong replied.

She Yu blinked while saying, "Shi Xueman is a one in a million beauty. Doesn’t Minglong want to take a look?"

Quan Minglong replied firmly, "I only have She Yu in my eyes. Nothing can waver my heart!"

She Yu’s glance wandered and she asked, "What about the second item?"

A flicker of disappointment flashed across Quan Minglong’s eyes. He had expressed his admiration toward She Yu many times, but has never received a response. He knew that he should not rush into this and regained his composure. "Our Jadeite Young Master had another comrade who has also recently come into the picture. It is the person who killed his own teacher and who is currently very famous. Birds of a feather indeed flock together. Looking at the Jadeite Young Master’s choice of friends, we can see his character..."

"Are you referring to Ai Hui?"

Quan Minglong was somewhat surprised that his words were stopped so abruptly. Then he realized that She Yu’s expression was rather strange. He continued, "So She Yu has heard about this incident before. It is indeed Ai Hui. Many of the people from the Avalon of Five Elements do not want to meet him. Apparently, many of the Elders were extremely disdainful of him. The Sha Family is also in decline. They actually lost to a scum like Ai Hui. Ai Hui had been living undercover for three years. If not for the Sha Family, everyone would have forgotten about him."

He suddenly thought of something. She Yu had been at the battle

in Central Pine City. "Could it be that She Yu has met him before?"

She Yu’s expression was flickering. She was not listening to what Quan Minglong was saying.

The first thing she thought of was the [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art]. Subsequently she thought of how she had almost achieved success, but ultimately failed. Previously, she was anxious that she could not manage to find any trace of Ai Hui despite using all her resources. Now that Ai Hui was gaining everyone’s attention, however, she became even more worried and anxious.

Damn it!

Is that chap crazy? Doesn’t he know that his reputation was poor?

She thought of how her investment might go to waste and became frantic because their lives were tied. If Ai Hui was to meet with any mishaps, her life would also be lost.

She had never been passive; instead she had been looking for Ai Hui on the sly, not daring to be the least bit flamboyant.

Even when she’d been unable to find him, she hadn’t been worried.

As long as the Flower of Life did not ignite, even though she might meet with some injuries, it would not be life-threatening.

The Flower of Life would only ignite when the Flower of Destruction ripened. Currently, almost nothing could prevent the ripening of the Flower of Destruction.

Despite this, the Flower of Life had been about to ignite, but was not yet ripened.

It was the problem she worried about the most.

Even for a person who was usually calm and composed, when she thought about the fact that she might lose her life at any moment due to that damn chap, her thoughts went into a whirl and she felt the chills.

What should she do?

Ask for help? Nobody would be able to help her. If any blood elementalist was to learn that her [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] was successful, she would become a lamb waiting to be slaughtered.

No! She will not let any mishap befall Ai Hui!

Ruthlessness flashed past her eyes. She calmed down and her mind rotated at high speeds.

Chapter 313: Dragonrise Training Hall

"This is a little gift from us. It is Qingye's good fortune to be able to receive your guidance!"

The father of Su Qingye respectfully offered Ai Hui two hundred essence elemental beans while Su Huaijun silently sized him up. Su Qingye opened his eyes wide in admiration as excitement filled his face. The Sha family was so powerful, yet they'd crumbled in front of Teacher.

In the past, his aunt had always been wary of Teacher, but now that she remained silent, Su Qingye felt rather pleased.

Plus, he could now focus on training in Swordsman Training Hall since his father no longer required his assistance at the shop.

Ai Hui looked at the money pouch in Mister Su's hands but did not accept it. He shook his head, saying, "No need, Qingye's tuition fees have already been paid. Qingye, go train. The rest, please go back."

Su Qingye was moved. He knew Teacher would treat them differently from the rest! He nodded and rushed into the training hall excitedly.

Under Lou Lan's maintenance, the training hall regained its original layout. No signs of damage could be seen.

Father Su and Su Huaijun made eye contact. They were both rather surprised. Ai Hui's money grubbing nature was a topic of ridicule in Peace City, but he had actually rejected their money. No matter how hard they tried to wrap their heads around this, they simply couldn't understand.

Mister Su did not know what to do. He used to feel unconstrained in front of Ai Hui, but today, in front of the same person, he felt an unprecedented pressure oppressing him.

Delighted, Su Qingye greeted Lou Lan loudly. "Morning, Lou Lan!"

Lou Lan replied happily, "Good morning, Qingye. Work hard today!"

"I will!" Su Qingye hoisted his fist and ran towards the sandbox.

Hearing the voices behind him, Ai Hui felt happy inside but kept a straight face. He nodded at the two visitors before turning around to leave.

"Why don't they have to pay the fees?"

Fu Yonghao's unhappy voice sounded.

"It's none of your business!" Ai Hui replied casually before walking past him.

"You..." Fu Yonghao seethed with anger.

Shortly, Ai Hui returned and told him, "Almost forgot. I’m your teacher now so please mind your manners."

Fu Yonghao opened his eyes wide and glared at Ai Hui, but saw not even the least bit of guilt on his face.

Ai Hui waved at Su Qingye. "Come over here."

Su Qingye rushed over immediately. "Teacher!"

"This is your junior. Go teach him some basics."

Fu Yonghao couldn’t believe his own ears. His face stiffened up. Jun... junior?"

Ai Hui said with a stern face, "He’s too old. His life will be hopeless if he continues this way. Double the training intensity temporarily. Lou Lan has many matters to attend to so you’ll be in charge of supervising him."

Su Qingye’s young and tender face glowed, as if he was a soldier who’d just received an important mission. He patted his chest and said reassuringly, "Don’t you worry, Teacher, I will look after him properly!"

Ai Hui left in satisfaction without even looking at Fu Yonghao, who was dumbstruck at this point.

Coincidentally, Zhou Wen and Hua Xiaoyun arrived. Upon seeing them, Su Qingye shouted happily, "Quick, come over! We have a junior!"

With regard to the fight against Sha Wuyuan, the three smalls were feeling much better now.

"Shut up! Who's your junior?"

Fu Yonghao suddenly lost his temper. He flew into a rage, turning around to leave.

"Hey, Junior, you've not finished your training..." Su Qingye called out hurriedly.

Fu Yonghao cursed. "Training my ass, you really think you're great, don't you!"

The Three Smalls made eye contact before simultaneously pouncing on him.

"You guys better not force me! Hey, you're really hitting me! You guys are dead! Ahhhh..."

Fu Yonghao's bitter cries echoed throughout the training hall.

In the warehouse.

Lou Lan was analyzing the clips from Ai Hui's latest battle. Every fine detail was recorded from start to finish. If not for the fact that there were sufficient mirage bean pods inside the hall, it would have been challenging to obtain such clear images.

Lou Lan had been analyzing them for a long time. There was a faint light ray in his eyes. The gentle glow resembled the light of dawn.

His core, Midnight, had gotten stronger after he was upgraded.

Lou Lan was the one who'd sorted out the veined patterns Ai Hui had previously collected. It was thanks to his help that Ai Hui could fix up the sword formation.

Ai Hui stood beside Lou Lan, quietly observing the whole battle process.

Ai Hui couldn't help but get stirred up by the lighting up of the sword formation. When it came to sword formations, Ai Hui's understanding wasn't great since there were too many areas which were badly damaged. His knowledge of them was sloppy at best.

When he saw God-Subduing Peak, a few hazy thoughts occurred to him and shortly became clear.

Ultimately, [Treating the city as a piece of cloth] had merely been a spell formation. They'd had to sort out all the city's nodes, drill the gold needles into them, and then let the city's elemental energy flow in a regulated pattern. Afterwards, Mistress was the key to activating the spell formation.

Central Pine City was the first place in Avalon of Five Elements that had a spell formation being casted and it was elemental spell formation.

The nucleus Teacher had referred to was the exquisite and complicated vein patterns on the nine gold needles. Ai Hui called them the elemental traces.

Even now, AI Hui still found it difficult to imagine. A city's elemental energy flow was beyond complicated, so how had Teacher figured them out? He'd even managed to cleverly connect them to form a perfect spell formation.

Teacher was simply too great!

Yet, he himself had yet to thoroughly understand these elemental traces.

Deep admiration and a little distress enveloped his heart and mind.

Ai Hui snapped out of it when the images closed up. Lou Lan was done with his analysis. He handed a movie bean, which contained

his analysis, to Ai Hui. Rather than analysis, it was more like a breakdown of events. Lou Lan could present many fine details to Ai Hui and help him with trivial calculations and so on.

He just was unable to help when it came to the comprehension of details. Ai Hui had to do that on his own.

When it came to this part, every time, Ai Hui would feel that he wasn't smart enough.

The highest building in Dragonrise Training Hall was Skydragon Pavilion. One could overlook the entire training hall when standing on it.

On the pavilion, the teachers were drinking their tea in silence. Their expressions did not look good.

Seeing that half a day had passed without any visitors, Ren Haitong, who was standing in front of the railings, couldn't help but say, "What happened exactly? Why is business so bad all of a sudden?"

There was a fang-bearing silver dragon embroidered on Ren Haitong's garment, which indicated his position in the training hall. Teachers in Dragonrise Training Hall had a strict ranking system where the most ordinary teachers wore a black dragon on their shirt and those one level up wore a green one. The next few levels would wear red, silver, gold, and jewelled respectively.

Only the owner of the Dragonrise Training Hall, Yang Zhen, wore a jewelled dragon. He was a legitimate metal elemental master. As the overseer of the compound, no one dared to provoke or seek trouble with him.

Gold dragon teachers were usually the hosts of different halls, whereas silver dragon teachers were strong, reputable players, and also the core strength of Dragonrise Training Hall.

Other teachers kept quiet. No one dared to provoke Ren Haitong when he was in a temper.

Business had been extremely poor these few days. While the place wasn't completely deserted, the number of students enrolling had drastically declined.

Before then, business had been prosperous. Dragonrise Training Hall was a big hall with branches in cities that were slightly larger than the Silver Mist Sea. The general headquarters located in Silver City was also extraordinarily grand. There were as many disciples as there were clouds, with no lack of noble people.

A truly influential family would naturally have plenty of guidance from famous masters. If they were to suffer a reversal of fortune, however, or if they weren't as superb, it would be difficult to receive beneficial nurturing from their own elders.

An outstandingly reputable training hall like Dragonrise Training Hall was naturally extremely popular due to the number of good teachers. It had inherited practical moves and students

improved significantly within a short period of time, attracting a lot of public praise. Sons from noble families would even frequent it regularly, seeking to improve their battle experience with friendly matches.

To the citizens of Peace City, the opening of a new branch of such a well-recognized and well-liked training hall was beyond appealing. From its opening day, people had been arriving in an endless stream to register for lessons.

Following the confirmation of the news regarding the mini Avalon of Five Elements, a huge volume of visitors flocked to Peace City, bringing even more business every day to Dragonrise Training Hall.

Nevertheless, everything changed when the Swordsman Training Hall's owner revealed his identity.

Dragonrise Training Hall initially hadn't been bothered by this. The ridiculous price of two hundred essence elemental beans was simply a joke! Who would've expected that people would still go! Upon investigating, they realized that it was a noble visitor from the Evergold Enterprise. Unable to get a good grasp of that person's identity, Dragonrise Training Hall did not dare to act recklessly.

Luckily, no one else had been foolish enough to spend so much money. Yet, their own business had strangely been declining.

Ren Haitong became angrier the more he thought about it. "Blast

it, it’s all because of that stupid Swordsman Training Hall! Tsk, people might be afraid of that Ai fellow, but I’m not!"

The branch master of Peace City’s branch, Miao Hai, sat calmly on his seat of honor with his eyes shut, pretending not to hear anything.

Nevertheless, he was in a poor mood as well. Being sent over to Peace city was a heavy responsibility for him.

The training hall had spent a large sum of money to obtain inside information before opening the branch in Peace City. He knew this was a once in a lifetime opportunity for him. Without the support of this training hall, it was going to be challenging for him to upgrade himself in this era where resources were becoming scarce.

Despite this, he did not act blindly without thinking. Ai Hui’s identity was sensitive, and the flaming lotus seeds he’d thrown out had stirred up the whole city.

He wasn’t afraid of Ai Hui’s abilities, but at the same time, he knew very well how complicated the situation was in Peace City.

A subordinate rushed over to Miao Hai’s side and said in a low voice, "Master, there’s news from headquarters."

Miao Hai suddenly opened his eyes and sat up straight. He took the wooden case over, opened it, and took the tree leaf from within. There were no words on it. His heart trembled a little. This

was news to be kept confidential. Headquarters would only use such a method when they had important instructions to relay.

He channeled a wisp of elemental energy into the tree leaf and words started appearing on its surface.

Shortly, the handwriting gradually faded and vanished.

Miao Hai carefully placed the empty leaf back into the case.

Upon raising his head, he noticed that all eyes were on him.

With his usual expression, he said indifferently, "Go. On the next written war challenge, state that I admire The Lightning Blade's excellent swordsmanship and will make a visit three days later to request a match."

His words caused an uproar among the teachers.

Some couldn't help but ask, "Could it be that headquarters..."

Miao Hai waved them off. "Don't ask too much. Follow my orders. Remember, spread the news."

The teachers dared not ask too much. They moved hurriedly to make the necessary arrangements.

Chapter 314: A Jinai

The news quickly spread all over Peace City thanks to the efforts of those involved.

Jiang Wei got hold of the news early on and felt somewhat anxious. He knew of Dragonrise's good reputation of course. It was the first time in the Avalon of Five Elements that a battle master had established a training hall. Among his colleagues, there was no lack of sons from Silver City's influential officials. He'd heard that Dragonrise Training Hall's background was far from simple.

Citizens coined this match the battle between the training halls. Dragonrise Training Hall wasn't willing to let Swordsman Training Hall snatch their limelight and was determined to re-establish their reputation through this method.

Jiang Wei wasn't sure why, but he smelled danger coming from the seemingly honorable war between the training halls.

In three years, not only had he been on the front line and participated in countless battles against the blood elementalists, he also witnessed many scheming fights. Places which seemed unremarkable were usually unexpectedly dangerous.

Jiang Wei straightened out his thoughts once more but found nothing amiss.

He heaved a sigh of relief. Perhaps he was just being overly suspicious.

The soldiers under him reported that someone was here to visit.

He stopped himself from overthinking, got up and walked to the main hall, where a tall and sturdy man stood in the center. Upon getting a clear look, Jiang Wei couldn’t help but smile. He walked forward with big steps and gave a solid hug to the visitor. "A Jinai! Long time no see! I’m so happy to see you!"

A Jinai grew a thick, forest green beard. He had deep set, brown eyes and a high nose bridge. These features were the evidence of his Grass Clan’s blood from the Old Territory.

Grass Clan was one of the better clans in Old Territory, because each year there would be at least some youngsters who would qualify to enter the Avalon of Five Elements. Most of them moved on to become wood elementalists upon entering the avalon.

A Jina used to be Jiang Wei’s team leader, but was promoted to the back as he’d sustained an injury from accomplishing a meritorious deed for the team. A Jinai took great care of Jiang Wei in the past, so naturally Jiang Wei was extremely glad to see his ex team leader.

"Looks like I’ll have to call you master soon," A Jinai’s resounding laughter filled the hall. "Elders Guild must really have faith in you to hand such a huge responsibility over to you!"

Jiang Wei smiled. "Don’t tease me, A Jinai. I’m not living as comfortably as you. You’re living the life of an immortal."

"How so? I’m so busy I could die." A Jinai saw the doubt in Jiang Wei’s gaze and smacked his head. "I forgot to mention that I’m no longer a civil servant but am moving about and around the Ling’s residence."

Jiang Wei was slightly taken aback but congratulated him instantly. "How amazing for you to be socially connected to them. No wonder you look so well-nourished."

Influential families were further divided into different ranks. There were two top-notch metal elementalist families in Silver Mist Sea, being the Ling residence and Gong residence. Their statuses were similar to that of Shi family and Lian family of Palette Cloud Village. These four families were currently the most well-guarded residences in the whole of the Avalon of Five Elements. Earth, metal and wood elementalists were all declining in strength and struggling badly.

It wasn’t easy to be accepted by the Ling residence. These influential families held up unimaginably high barriers against outsiders. But similarly, their capabilities were beyond imagination.

Although A Jinai tried hard to restrain himself, he couldn’t help but feel a little pleased. "I’m still far from your level. Plus, you’re still a single man. I wonder how many people have their eyes on you. Haha, you’re shy now, have a sweetheart?"

Jiang Wei gave a bitter laugh. "I’m on the front line everyday so

how is that possible?"

A Jinai clapped his palms together, laughing, "That’s good!"

Jiang Wei said, displeased, "Such gloating. Looks like we will have to talk with our fists."

This was A Jinai’s catchphrase from years back. Jiang Wei’s voice imitation cause A Jinai to burst into hearty laughter.

Laughter faded as A Jinai said with a chuckle, "You’re a rare commodity now. The second daughter of Ling Third Master is about your age and there’s nothing to say about her looks other than that she’s as beautiful as a fairy. She really admires you after hearing about you. How about that? Such an opportunity comes only once in a blue moon!"

Jiang Wei said in all seriousness, "Stop joking with me, A Jinai. What have I accomplished? I’m unworthy of her."

Instead of getting angry, A Jinai smiled. "In the past, definitely not. But your prospects are boundless now that you are likely to win success and recognition in future. It’s not at all strange that the Ling family thinks highly of you."

Jiang Wei shook his head. "I’ve no intention of talking about love matters now."

"This is not about love." A Jinai wiped the smile off his face and

said solemnly, "You must know that there will not be such a chance again if you miss it. You need to get recognition from the Elders Guild, but your current background is not good enough. You can only enter a noble position if you marry Ling Third Master's second daughter and borrow her power."

Jiang Wei remained silent.

A Jinai couldn't help but try to persuade him earnestly once more, "You've been through many things so why are you still so naive? How can you be safe in this chaotic, tough world when you are all alone with no backing from anyone? You're far from the center and are unaware of lots of insider news. You do know of God-subduing Peak right?"

Jiang Wei nodded. "I've seen it."

A Jinai added, "What do you think of it?"

Jiang Wei replied with a low voice, "Treasure of the nation!"

"That's right," A Jinai gave a nod. "A few of those on the front line will provide a solid defense. The next few years will be for the avalon to recuperate and accumulate strength. Rebuilding the lesser Avalon of Five Elements and Thirteen Divisions are two of the agendas. The top priority is Master's Glory.

"Five hundred high-aptitude youngsters with sufficient moral characters will be selected in the so called Master's Glory to receive

special training from Elders Guild and eventually become Masters."

"How is this possible! How can a Master be cultivated so easily?" Jiang Wei shook his head.

A Jinai questioned, "The power of Elders Guild is unfathomable. It’s not something we can figure out. Take God-subduing Peak for example, have you ever imagined that something like this could actually be made?"

Jiang Wei was quiet.

God-subduing Peak was indeed very impressive . As a seasoned soldier with rich experience, he knew very clearly that if this big fellow were to be on the frontline, it could be of tremendous use and help.

"I might as well share some insider news with you. You’re one of the five hundred seeds. But have you thought about it? What happens when these people appear? How many empty seats will there be after reconstruction of the Thirteen Divisions? It will be difficult to get a good position if you don’t have any backing. You might get eliminated even with good qualifications. I’m not trying to scare you," A Jinai watched Jiang Wei attentively before continuing, "Perhaps other families will find you, but who offers better terms than the Ling residence? Who’s stronger than them? Ling residence is an influential family with a seat in Elders Guild."

Jiang Wei asked all of a sudden, "Is Ai Hui one of the seeds?"

With Jiang Wei looking straight at him, A Jinai hesitated a little before shaking his head. "No."

"But why?"

"I’m not in the position to ask for details," A Jinai shook his head before adding, meaningfully, "I know you’re a sentimental person and you’re not going to like what I’m about to say, but I still have to remind you. Stay away from him if you wanna climb up."

"I understand." Jiang Wei looked calm, without any hint of joy or anger. "A Jinai, this issue is too important. I’ll need some time to consider."

A Jinai nodded and warned, "You’re a smart man. I believe you’ll make the right decision. Do not reject an influential families’ symbol of peace. Not now, not ever. This world belongs to them."

"Thank you, A Jinai."

Jiang Wei walked A Jinai to the door. Seeing A Jinai’s disappearing figure, Jiang Wei turned around and went back into his room.

He felt that he’d understood certain things.

He took out a carefully preserved pile of leaves and started

writing.

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"Dragonrise Training Hall?"

Ai Hui read the written challenge over and over again but could not wrap his head around it. "Lou Lan, have we ever met them?"

Lou Lan answered in all certainty, "No."

"So they're just bored?" Ai Hui tossed the written challenge aside, mumbling to himself, "Challenging as he pleases? Is there such a thing? Lou Lan, go hang a sign: Five hundred essence elemental beans per challenge."

Fu Yonghao, who was initially just listening in to their conservation couldn't help but jump in, "Five hundred essence elemental beans? Why not just rob somebody?"

Ai Hui looked at him as though he was looking at a fool. "It is tiring to rob. How good is it to have people bringing money to our doorstep!"

Fu Yonghao became flustered. "You..."

Ai Hui turned around and asked the Three Smalls, "Is he done with his training?"

"No," they shook their heads in harmony.

Harboring ill intentions, Ai Hui instructed, "I'll double your trainings if he doesn't finish his today."

Fu Yonghao blew up. "Despicable..."

Before he could finish his words, he was manhandled by three pale-faced kids. They were aware that Teacher meant every word he said and definitely wasn't joking.

Ai Hui shook his head, muttering, "There's a problem."

He was in the limelight for recently defeating the Sha family so what kind of concussed brains would want to find trouble with him at this point in time?

Unless there was a deep feud, ordinary conflicts would not push them to knock on his door now. Ai Hui simply could not believe that they were initiating a battle when there was no strong animosity between both parties. Something must be going on.

But whether or not that was the case, friendly matches weren't a problem as long as they came with the money.

If they weren't going to pay up but still came over to challenge, he would have to take the money from them himself!

Ai Hui quickly forgot about this matter.

The signboard on the hall's entrance obviously became another hot topic of the city. It was the first time people heard that accepting challenges could actually be chargeable.

Everybody was moved by Ai Hui's money-making talent. He was a natural profiteer and was compulsively money-minded.

Branch Master Miao had apparently been feeling extremely terrible the last two days and many teachers had been unlucky enough to step on his toes and receive a dressing-down.

Everyone was very curious as to what would happen to Miao Hai.

Was he going to pay up? Or not?

They realized that whether or not he took the money out, it was going to be extremely embarrassing.

Even gambling dens started to take bets. Will he pay up? Will he challenge successfully? Betters were all eager to find out.

In regards to these rumors, Ai Hui only smiled and paid no heed to them. He was baffled by another matter.

Chapter 315: Aristocratic Families and New Citizens

Ai Hui was wondering about the fire lotus seeds. Several days had passed, but no one else came to buy them.

Fire lotus seeds were supposed to be hot sellers, as many people came to ask about them and were interested in them. Judging from the situation then, it shouldn’t be this unmarketable.

He would look into this when he had time.

Having finished today’s training, the three students and Fu Yonghao teetered home.

Before leaving the training hall, Su Qingye suddenly went up to Ai Hui and whispered, "Teacher, my dad said you must be cautious with the challenge."

Ai Hui paused for a second and then patted Su Qingye’s head, "Got it. Go home now boy."

Seeing Su Qingye leaving, Ai Hui was absorbed in thought.

Suddenly, the message tree began to flicker.

Ai Hui came back to his senses and walked to the message tree. He was surprised to see the message. It was from Jiang Wei.

When Jiang Wei left last time, he asked Ai Hui if he could take a leaf of the message tree with him. At that time Ai Hui was marveling that Jiang Wei was being as cautious as before. They were now in the same city. If anything happened, he could just fly here to convey the message. Why bother to use the message tree?

"The challenge is dangerous!"

Ai Hui’s face looked extremely grave. The message was a scrawl. It seemed that Jiang Wei wrote it down in a hurry.

Together with what Qingye had said just now, Ai Hui knew that there would be something fishy.

A dangerous light flickered in Ai Hui’s eyes.

"Don’t go to the training hall for the next couple of days."

Hearing what Fu family’s oldest daughter said, Fu Yonghao paused for seconds before he realized what it meant, and asked "Why?"

Fu family’s oldest daughter said, "Isn’t Miao Hai going to challenge Ai Hui?"

Fu Yonghao laughed out loud, "Are you kidding me, Big Sister? How stupid is Miao Hai to challenge Ai Hui with five hundred

essence elemental beans? I have to say that Ai Hui's demand is really shameless. I've seen so many people, but he is the most shameless one."

Fu family's oldest daughter put down the teacup in her hand and gave him a glance, "Who told you Miao Hai isn't going?"

Fu Yonghao was surprised.

The gates of Dragonrise Training Hall were wide open. Twenty teachers stood in two rows to see Miao Hai off.

The person walking in front of Miao Hai was Ren Haitong, who was holding a plate in his hand, on which there was a pile of glittering essence elemental beans like a hill.

Miao Hai was calm and unruffled. He was wearing a crimson armor and carried on his back an iron box that was around his height, exuding an imposing manner.

The teachers shouted in concert, "Branch Master is bound to win!"

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The mayor's residence of Peace City was heavily guarded with sturdy soldiers.

But inside the mayor’s residence the atmosphere seemed extremely harmonious. Three people were drinking and chatting cheerfully at a table.

A Jinai was good at maintaining a pleasant atmosphere. As long as he was present, there would be no awkward silences. The one sitting beside him was Huo Yaliu, Jiang Wei’s direct leader. Captain Huo, who used to be serious and taciturn, was now beaming with smiles and toasted with them again and again. Captain Huo was born in a small family. Now that he had an opportunity to build a relationship with those in the Ling residence, he would definitely try his utmost best.

Captain Huo arrived all of a sudden with his subordinates to take over the mayor’s residence.

Jiang Wei looked just as usual without any anger or joy. As long as A Jinai proposed a toast, he would drink up the wine in one gulp.

A Jinai was drunk. With hazy eyes, he said, "Wei, I know you are feeling uncomfortable in your heart, but I’m doing this for your own good. You are too emotional and impulsive. I know this step that I take is not noble, but I have to. So I apologize to you here. Wei, we have been friends for years. You can rest assured that I wouldn’t do this if I had no confidence. When the battle comes to an end, you will be promoted for sure."

Hearing what A Jinai said, Captain Huo also raised his glass and said with jealousy, "Wei, your future is boundless. Don’t forget me by then."

Jiang Wei raised his glass and drank a toast to them, saying, "Thank you for your blessings. But I actually know Ai Hui very well. I don’t think Miao Hai can defeat him."

A Jinai was elated to see that Jiang Wei was not getting angry. He laughed out and said, "Wei, you should know that to those big shots, we are just like ants. Even though Ai Hui is of higher capability, he is just a bigger ant than most. The reason why he could defeat Sha Wuduan was largely due to his wealth. But now, he has run out of money, and there’s nothing he can depend on."

A Jinai said jauntily, "He has fire lotus seeds, and thought that everyone would scramble to buy them. But he didn’t know that as long as the higher-ups gave the order, no one would dare to buy from him. This is what aristocratic families can do. As I told you, Jiang Wei, the world is theirs."

Captain Huo nodded repeatedly as he totally agreed with A Jinai. His family was sort of influential locally, but they were of the lowest class in the pyramid of aristocratic families.

Jiang Wei drank up again and praised, "That’s really a comprehensive plan."

A Jinai, having drunk up the last drop in the glass too, was tipsier. "Not only this. The roads of Peace City and the sky above have all been blocked, and anyone passing through will be strictly checked. As soon as Ai Hui’s identity was exposed, the higher-ups had started to take precautions against him, in case those whom Ai

Hui has helped before hear the news and come to help."

Jiang Wei spoke loudly, "This is wise. Come on, cheers!"

They both drank up again.

Jiang Wei put down his wineglass and asked in a slurred voice, "A Jinai, I have a question that I haven’t been able to figure out for a while. You must answer it for me today."

A Jinai laughed out loud and squinted at him, "You want to know why they have to crack down on Ai Hui like this?"

Jiang Wei nodded and blurted, "Yes. I don’t know why. Why can’t they recruit him?"

A Jinai raised his glass to Captain Huo, "This is not weird at all. Even Captain Huo can see through it."

Captain Huo drank the wine in his glass, wiped his mouth and said, "It’s simple. Ai Hui is a new citizen, and his reputation among the new citizens is too high. Therefore, he must die. Back then, the whole Induction Ground was almost completely destroyed, which has definitely led to a gap in the talent reserve. The largest number of survivors are in Central Pine City, and the higher-ups will depend on you the most in the future. Many of the key talents like you are survivors from Central Pine City, right? They now call all of you the Central Pine Faction. Ai Hui has just exposed his identity, and so many people are coming to him. You can see how

highly admired he is among you guys."

"What will the higher-ups think about this? If he was born in an aristocratic family, then it’d be good for him because he could be the leader of the next generation. But he is a new citizen, which means he is a snake in the grass to the higher-ups. If he stands out among his fellows in the future, and you all follow him, will you still work for the higher-ups? It’s fine to have new citizens in the team, but they cannot be leaders. Otherwise, no one will obey the command of the aristocratic families."

Hearing what he said, Jiang Wei was at a loss.

Captain Huo continued, "Wei, you are different. Once you marry the Ling Third Master’s second daughter, you will be a member of theirs and your future will be boundless. Besides, if you want, maybe you can even start your own aristocratic family."

Jiang Wei came back to his senses, and laughed. He proposed a toast to Captain Huo, "Captain Huo, you are absolutely right. Cheers!"

Captain Huo burst into laughter while drinking the wine in his glass.

Jiang Wei was so drunk that he could not even sit steadily. He laughed and asked, "Then why do they still need new citizens? The aristocratic families can simply abandon them."

"Haha, of course not," A Jinai was already resting his head on the desk. Hearing what Jiang Wei said, he struggled to sit up and answered, "Aristocratic families don’t have enough men. Without new citizens, who will do the dirty work?"

Jiang Wei shook his head and sighed, "This is...the reality!"

A Jinai said, "Reality? Haha...Good point! The aristocratic families are never built in a day. Nobody knows how much hardship they have been through. But as long as they are in power now, they are the rulers. For our future, we new citizens must follow their leadership."

Captain Huo also laughed loudly. He held up his glass and said in a rough voice, "For our future!"

"For our future!"

The two raved in a high voice.

A Jinai flushed in excitement.

Jiang Wei beamed with smiles.

No one noticed that under the table, his fist was clenched tightly.

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"As per your requirement, here are five hundred essence elemental beans. Although the challenge today is only an exchange of fight skills, I will spare no effort, as this is the way in which I show my respect to you. You don’t need to show mercy either. If I can witness the essence of your swordsmanship, I have no regrets even if I die."

Miao Hai’s voice was loud and vigorous like thunder that could be heard throughout Peace City.

In the sky above Peace City, two figures stood still face to face.

Ai Hui spread his Starry Gem Swordwings in full. The black wings were glittering under the sun like the wings of the devil.

Miao Hai didn’t use his azure wings. Instead, he was standing on a cloud, which was his cloud deck. The crimson armor sparkled like morning glow, shrouding him and his cloud deck. The iron box was put to his side.

"Sure!"

Before he finished saying the word, Ai Hui had disappeared in the sky.

Miao Hai looked solemn, eyes downcast. Suddenly he grabbed the iron box and smashed it on the cloud, and with a thundering sound, an intangible shock wave swept down in all directions with a loud crash.

Ai Hui appeared again out of nowhere and bumped into the shock wave. Like an agile bird, he stepped slightly on the shock wave and then disappeared again.

On the cloud deck, the big iron box was open wide, inside there were seven javelins altogether.

The crimson tips of the javelins were thin and sharp as if they had been saturated in blood. The shafts of the javelins were covered with blue and silvery streaks. This kind of javelin was made of more than twenty materials that were integrated by supreme elemental energy.

Someone shouted out loudly in surprise. "It's Baneslayer!"

"Baneslayer javelins!"

This greatly excited the bystanders and caused a stir. Among all javelins, the Baneslayer were rare treasures. Its maker had originally intended to make a set of Heaven-grade javelins, but failed due to a lack of materials. Still, the Baneslayer was top grade compared to other kinds of javelins, and was therefore called the "Best Javelin" among Heaven-Grade javelins.

It was a common way of fighting, to throw javelins when diving.

But this meant that javelins were consumables. Therefore, not many people were willing to waste too much good material on

them. That was why javelins of high grade were not often seen.

This time Miao Hai chose to use cloud deck instead of azure wings, which was an even rarer tactic. This meant that he hadn't considered dodging at all, which revealed his confidence in his javelin attacks.

Ai Hui also understood this. The red light of Miao Hai's armor indicated his strong defensive power.

Miao Hai reached out his hand and grabbed the first javelin. His palms were like cattail leaf fans, which were far larger and wider than ordinary people's palms. The instant he had the javelin in his hand, his eyes opened widely, and terrifying power burst out from his body.

His muscles tensed up, making his figure larger than before like a giant.

Dazzling golden light suddenly burst out from the javelins. Before anyone could clearly see his movement, the golden light rippled like water and the javelin disappeared.

In that instant, Ai Hui, who was standing hundreds of meters away, sensed great danger.

Without any hesitation, Ai Hui shook his waist and the Dragonspine in his hand splashed starry lights into the space in front of him.

Just at this moment, he unleashed ten [Heavenly Thrust]s!

Chapter 316: Gale Bat Slash

Compared to three years ago, Ai Hui's [Heavenly Thrust]s were much more massive and powerful now. Bright stars flew out of nowhere, absorbing light around them and emitting splendid brilliance.

Ai Hui casted ten [Heavenly Thrust]s within the blink of an eye, which fully demonstrated the progress he had made within the past three years.

A streak of glaring golden light appeared among the stars and penetrated Ai Hui's eyes.

An undefeatable power came from the tip, bending his sword like a bow. Ai Hui gave a stifled groan.

It was so powerful!

Seven small swords circled around the tip of the Dragonspine like a cyclone, weaving a dense net of sword rays that could catch its target.

Immense elemental energy exploded at the tip of the sword.

Then, like hitting a spring, Ai Hui bounced away and suddenly disappeared in the sky.

The next moment he appeared again, he was already over a hundred meters away from where he had been standing. He looked as calm as usual, but in his heart he was greatly shocked.

His hand that was holding the sword was numb.

The javelin looked ordinary, but in fact was extremely heavy. Ai Hui believed it must be more than one hundred kilograms.

At that time, Ai Hui didn't know the javelin was the Baneslayer, but his estimation was very precise. The weight of each of the Baneslayer javelins was one hundred and fifteen kilograms.

Miao Hai's elemental energy was already strong and ferocious. Coupled with the heavy weight of Baneslayer, the power of just one attack was unimaginable.

This was the first time that Ai Hui had met with such a violent opponent who was good at long-range offense moves. Miao Hai had completely abandoned any flexibility in his tactics, and focused on vigorous long-distance attacks combined with a strong defense. Ai Hui didn't have to think hard to know that the red glow shrouding Miao Hai was undoubtedly hard to break through.

Playing to one's utmost advantage and making up for one's weakness by using better equipment was nothing complicated, but it was effective. You could see that Miao Hai was an experience fighter.

Experienced fighters tended not to use complicated tactics. Instead, they always preferred simple but effective methods.

It was impolite not to make a return for what one received. Also, you would not know how hard the weapon was if you didn’t try.

After a slash of the Dragonspine in the air, a bright light appeared on the sword. It transformed into a moon-shaped sword ray and flew out abruptly.

[Crescent Moon]!"

A crescent moon dashed through the air soundlessly.

All those years ago, he had to exert himself for this sword move, but now it was totally a piece of cake for Ai Hui.

"Good move!" Miao Hai shouted loudly. Armor clattering, he put his hands together and looked down. The red light that was shrouding the cloud deck was gilded with golden beams. Behind Miao Hai, a towering figure could be vaguely seen.

This was nothing profound, but was a very common inheritance for metal elementalists, called [Vajra Barrier]. Many people practiced [Vajra Barrier], but only those who were extremely persevering and had reached the highest level could summon a [Vajra Body]. Therefore, those who were known to have succeeded in summoning a [Vajra Body] were very rare.

Once the [Vajra Body] was summoned, although it was only a phantom figure, it looked so powerful and solemn that nothing could do the slightest damage to it. The elemental energy in the air was almost stifling.

In front of the mountain-like [Vajra Body], the cold and clear crescent moon was like a moth darting into the fire.

The crescent moon looked slow but was actually moving very fast. It transformed into a flowing light and dashed against the red light surrounding the cloud deck.

The red light was rolling like mist and swallowed the crescent moon. A complacent smile had just appeared on Miao Hai's face before it froze.

The crescent moon suddenly transformed into dozens of stars, and drilled into the red light like slippery and sharp eels.

[Shattered Moon, Dotted Stars]!

Caught off guard, Miao Hai was awkward and almost failed to maintain the [Vajra Body] behind him. The red light started to flow, and the [Vajra Body] stretched its arms and grabbed at the sword rays, which suddenly darkened in the red light and then died down.

The start of the confrontation between these two dazzled every bystander's eyes.

Miao Hai's javelin was used in a violent and fierce way while Ai Hui's Crescent Moon was silent and cool, but dangerous. If Miao Hai was the burning sun at midday, then Ai Hui was the silent moon at night.

The polar contrast between the two completely different ways of fighting left a deep impression in everyone's heart.

It was a rare sight to see the confrontation of two experts.

Miao Hai, who was standing on the cloud deck, no longer thought lightly of Ai Hui. He realized that it would be an arduous fight today.

Holding the second Baneslayer in hand, he didn't throw it immediately.

Ai Hui took the initiative. Stretching his Starry Gem Swordwings, he bounced out like a flying arrow. With the huge strength provided by the Starry Gem Swordwings, Ai Hui's flight speed was as fast as a flash.

With the same momentum, Ai Hui waved his Dragonspine. A moon-shaped sword ray appeared and dashed toward the cloud deck.

Ai Hui's figure kept flickering in the air. He was not flying straight, but was zigzagging forward. Every time he popped up, a

[Crescent Moon] was used.

Different from the silent [Crescent Moon] from just before, now the moon-shaped sword rays flying in the air were whistling shrilly like dozens of lunar bats, flying from all directions toward the cloud deck.

On the cloud deck, Miao Hai looked solemn. He turned his wrists and put his hands together, holding the javelin horizontally in front of his chest.

The [Vajra Body] behind him bowed its head and closed its eyes. It was also putting its hands together like Miao Hai.

Golden light burst out from the cloud deck, and a layer of golden light, like a colored glaze, suddenly contracted. Under the light, Miao Hai's crimson armor was being gilded and became statelier.

Clank, clank, clank!

Moon-shaped sword rays hit the red light of the cloud deck, sounding out a roar like a sword smashing a huge copper bell.

Miao Hai staggered. He was surprised at the pureness of Ai Hui's elemental energy, as he didn't expect that Ai Hui's sharp sword rays could penetrate his protection and cut his defense like a knife. Was it [Big Dipper]?

This guy's swordsmanship was frightening indeed!

Miao Hai marveled. He knew the swordsmanship of Karakorum, which was nothing like Ai Hui's. It was hard to say whose was superior, but each sword move Ai Hui used was aimed at killing with nothing gaudy about it.

Fortunately, as a Heaven-grade weapon, the Unbreakable Hellfire Armor he was wearing lived up to its reputation. It could well restrain the attack of metal elementalists. The red light that was shrouding the cloud deck was the hellfire emitted by this armor. It was not natural fire, but a recently-developed flame that could only be made with ten kinds of fire flowers from Fire Prairie, together with Thousand-face Ghost Tree Burl cultivated by Blood of God.

Both of the materials were produced in Blood of God, but they were sold to the Jadeite Forest, where wood elementalists made them into hellfire and sold it to the Avalon of Five Elements at a high price.

Hellfire could greatly restrain metal elemental energy, and therefore was known as the bane of metal elemental energy.

If it weren't for the protection of the armor, Miao Hai would be uncertain about the result of the confrontation. Those who survived the blood disaster and made a name for themselves could not be easily dealt with.

But still, however tough he was, as long as he was an enemy of the big shots, he was a dead meat!

Ferociousness flickered in Miao Hai's eyes, and the Baneslayer javelin suddenly scattered and transformed into dots of golden light, which didn't disappear, but stayed still in front of his chest.

His unclenched fist grabbed the javelin, the golden light of which was reflected in his eyes and gilded his pupils. Between the golden light, however, he could see a silvery spot was becoming larger fast.

It was not moving straight!

The silvery light left a weird arc traced in the air. The arc was about to fall down when it turned upwards abruptly. Shrouded by the flat sword ray, Ai Hui flew fast across an invisible surface of water.

He was unpredictable!

Miao Hai's hair stood on its end. He grabbed one more Baneslayer and held it vertically in front of his chest. Then the javelin scattered and transformed into countless light spots.

Ai Hui had already mastered the sword move [Gale Bat Blade]. Now, combined with his slash attack, it had evolved into the move he was now using, which was called [Gale Bat Slash]!

From the moment when this bit of inspiration had occurred to him, it took Ai Hui a whole month to successfully design the new

sword move, and six months in total to perfect his ability to use it.

A Jinai who was watching the fight in the courtyard had become completely sober and cried out, "What is this sword move?"

"I don’t know either." Jiang Wei tried to sound as calm as usual, but inside his heart, he was extremely excited.

Captain Huo’s drunkenness was gone too. His face was pale. Seeing the weird sword move that was disregarding of any conventional wisdom, he had a premonition about the result of the fight.

Not only they, but all the others in Peace City were also shocked by the [Gale Bat Slash].

A bystander could better feel both the wonderful and weird sides of the arc. Ai Hui in the flat sword ray was dangerous, even lethal like a ghost assassin.

Su Qingye was totally dumbfounded. His eyes lit up and were full of admiration.

Su Huaijun who was standing beside him also kept her gaze fixed upon Ai Hui in fear of missing any details.

Fu Yonghao’s eyes widened as if he was looking at a demon.

Fu family’s oldest daughter couldn’t believe what she saw and murmured, "Bad times make monsters of men..."

Miao Hai, who was faced with this move, knew how powerful it would be, and therefore didn’t dare to take it lightly. As the light cross had already appeared in front of his chest, he quickly pushed his hands forward.

The light cross collapsed with a loud crash and transformed into two enormous circling, roaring, golden-light dragons that consisted of countless small light shuttles. The dragons hovered and suddenly dashed towards the oncoming Ai Hui.

Covered with sword rays all over his body, Ai Hui suddenly gained height and left an arc in the air, avoiding a face-to-face collision with the dragons. Then he descended rapidly and punctured the abdomen of the golden dragons like a sword.

Boom!

Numerous light shuttles fell on the sword ray like heavy rain, making the sword ray dim and unstable.

Ai Hui knew that at this moment, if the sword ray surrounding him collapsed, he would definitely be immediately riddled by the light shuttles.

The Dragonspine slashed again and again like crazy at an incredibly high speed. More sword rays appeared after each slash

and merged into the larger sword ray. The sword ray from [Gale Bat Slash] had just been lit up by the new sword rays when more light shuttles crashed against it and dimmed it down. In this way, it lit up and dimmed again and again.

Ai Hui didn't know how many times he had slashed. His mind was extremely focused.

Suddenly, his view became open and clear. All he could see was red light.

He had pierced through!

Ai Hui had no time to cheer for this. He was less than ten meters away from Miao Hai, and could even clearly see the stunned expression on Miao Hai's face, as if he couldn't believe that Ai Hui had already gotten so close to him.

Miao Hai seemed to wake up all of a sudden. He knew that now came the critical moment. Having made up his mind, he tore up the priceless Unbreakable Hellfire Armor he was wearing.

A bright red hellfire leapt up silently like red demons from hell, devouring Ai Hui who was shrouded by [Gale Bat Slash]'s sword rays.

Chapter 317: Defeating the Hellfire

The billowing hellfire immediately devoured Ai Hui like a red fiendish monster.

Miao Hai sighed in relief.

War was always the best catalyst for self-improvement. Within three years, the normal training method had undergone enormous and profound changes. God elementalists' preference for elemental materials and the elementalists' study and utilization of blood crystals had greatly improved both sides' learning speeds and destroyed the conservative scruples between them.

Many achievements had been made within these three years, one of which was the hellfire.

Adopting the essence of both elementalists and god elementalists, the formidable hellfire was known as Fire of Demon. The name 'hellfire' was a word used by elementalists who practised meditation in the old days. The elementalist who created hellfire so named it to indicate its profoundness.

Almost all elemental energy could be the fuel of hellfire, which meant that hellfire was invincible to all elemental energy.

The Thousand-face Ghost Tree Burl would form when a tree took in a large amount of the souls of blood fiends.

The high-quality Ghost Tree Burls were produced in the Induction Ground, where trees took in many elementalists' souls. But instead of encroaching on this bloodstained place, they sent a lot of god priests and soothed the souls at every corner of the Induction Ground. They claimed that they had no option but to start the life-or-death war by then. But now that people had passed away, they should no longer suffer in misery.

Many people knew that this was just a gimmick, but the reputation of Blood of God did improve because of this act.

The souls of the dead blood fiends contained within the Ghost Tree Burls was the reason why the hellfire was so formidable.

Unable to avoid the sudden explosion of the hellfire, Ai Hui was immediately trapped in flames. His facial expression changed dramatically when he realized that the flames were burning along the [Gale Bat Slash] sword ray.

The [Gale Bat Slash] sword ray was like dry firewood soaked in the oil and was burning rapidly.

Just at that moment, the sky palace between his eyebrows was suddenly activated, and a tiny point of light appeared. It turned out to be the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp. The lotus was spinning slowly and lit up Ai Hui's body with faint red light.

Compared with the bright color of the hellfire, the red light of Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp was too faint to be noticed.

But it was this faint light that kept the hellfire out of Ai Hui. Without hesitation, Ai Hui stretched his Starry Gem Swordwings in full and flew straight up into the sky like a sharp arrow.

Whoosh!

A figure rose up from the sea of fire, leaving a trace of flames behind him.

Miao Hai was dumbstruck and his facial expression changed sharply. How was it possible? This was hellfire! No one had figured out how to defeat it yet. How could Ai Hui survive the hellfire?

Meanwhile, Ai Hui’s survival also gave rise to chaos on the ground below.

"Oh my god! How did he make it?"

"How can he resist the hellfire?"

The bystanders went ballistic like boiling water.

But those who had been observing the fight secretly now also stirred in the exciting and tense atmosphere.

"What is the red light on him? We have never seen this before!"

"Quickly go and check what other inheritances Ai Hui had practiced!"

"Sir, Ai Hui once exchanged Heaven Merit Points for [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp], an absolute art."

"So the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] can defeat hellfire. This is a great discovery. Our previous study towards hellfire was in the wrong direction. Now pay attention to absolute arts concerning state of mind. Try to purchase them as early as possible before their price goes up. The price of hellfire will decline soon. Get them sold quickly."

...

Those with business acumen had started making arrangements accordingly at once. The reason why the price of hellfire had been held high for a long time was because it was regarded as invincible so far.

Once its weakness was found, the threat of hellfire would be largely weakened.

Ai Hui flew up and looked at the tiny black spot down there in the upper air, his heart still fluttering with fear. The battle just now was a narrow miss. If it weren't for the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp, he would have already lost his life.

The red hellfire was still writhing restlessly in the sky. It didn't

die out, but was burning up the elemental energy in the surrounding air.

After about half a minute when all the surrounding elemental energy was burnt up, it began to become dim and finally died down.

The hellfire was indeed formidable!

The spread of hellfire broke out all of a sudden without any signal beforehand, and Miao Hai was good at making moves at the right time. Ai Hui had no time to react at all just now.

The fear from barely escaping his death made Ai Hui breath the fresh air greedily like it was a luxury.

After a few deep breaths, Ai Hui recovered from the shock and returned to normal. His escape meant that the situation between the two sides had totally changed.

Without the armor, Miao Hai was barely under protection. Plus, the cloud deck itself could not move flexibly. As a result, Miao Hai was the fish on the chopping board, and Ai Hui only needed to take one last strike.

Up in the sky, Ai Hui stretched his Starry Gem Swordwings in full and began to dive.

As his speed increased, bright flames began to appear at the tip of

his sword. Then the tip shivered slightly, and the flames were attracted by the sword. Soon the sword with flames became as red as hot irons.

Exclamations were heard at different corners of Peace City at the same time.

Su Qingye cheered loudly, "It’s that move!"

Su Huaijun who was standing beside him knew what he was talking about without explanation.

And at the same time, Fu Yonghao also blurted out, "It's that move!"

Miao Hai’s face became pale. He could clearly see what Ai Hui was thinking.

His situation was very tough.

When he heard the thrilling whirr, when he saw the heaven fire appear at the tip, he thought of the fiery sword ray that fell down from the sky a few nights before.

The power of the sword move frightened everyone in Peace City. After it had struck, the courtyard of the Sha Clan was almost completely destroyed.

Escape?

Miao Hai never thought of escape. Compared with azure wings, the cloud deck was as slow as a turtle. Where could he escape to? He knew he was being used as a pawn, and there was no way back. Those higher-ups who were watching him behind his back were the real players.

Fortunately, he still had four Baneslayer javelins.

Miao Hai took the javelins out from the box, and stuck them on the cloud deck.

No happiness or sadness could be seen on Miao Hai's face. It seemed that he was not concerned about the foreseeable danger at all. His big palms swept across and grabbed one javelin in each palm. Then he leaned backward, bending his strong body like a bow. Every muscle was glowing with golden gloss.

The elemental energy was surging, the javelins quivering like they could fly out if they had not been firmly gripped by those hawkbill-like hands.

There seemed to be an invisible wall in front of Miao Hai, who stepped on the wall and ran in big strides while throwing out the javelins, one by one, forcefully towards Ai Hui.

Boom, boom!

Two tremendous rumbles resounded, like the loudest thunder in the sky, and golden light exploded in front of the tip of Ai Hui's sword, hindering his speed to some extent.

The golden waves of elemental energy ejected needle-shaped golden rays that spread out at a fast speed.

Miao Hai did a backward somersault, and staggered when he landed. The two [Vajra Thunder]s he'd just utilized were killing moves of absolute art and were energy-guzzling. However, even the [Vajra Thunder] that usually never failed to prove its power only slowed down Ai Hui's speed for a while.

He smiled hopelessly. He had been too arrogant and shouldn't have underestimated Ai Hui.

But thinking of the higher-ups behind him, who also belittled Ai Hui, he felt less depressed.

At that moment, he knew that there was no hope for himself to win. That meant he must die. Only death could give the higher-ups a satisfying answer. A pawn who was ready to die should die heroically, so that those who had families could earn them a considerable amount of compensation, and those without families could earn themselves a glorious ending.

He grabbed the last two javelins. Different from before, this time he was holding the tips in his hands.

The crimson tips were extremely thin and sharp, and Miao Hai's hands were dripping with blood. The javelins seemed to enjoy drinking the blood and became more delicate and charming.

He crossed the two javelins in front of his chest, red blood trickling down along the shafts in spirals.

He didn't take action immediately, but was looking up at the sky and waiting for the last opportunity.

However, he didn't notice there were seven small swords in the distance cruising silently like swordfishes in deep sea.

They were so inconspicuous that no one ever noticed them.

Everyone's attention was on the reckless figure diving from the sky, accompanied by a curtain of red light and fiery, dazzling sword rays.

But at this moment, as if summoned, the seven small swords flew towards the cloud deck silently from each direction.

Still, no one ever noticed their presence.

Miao Hai, standing on the cloud deck, stared at Ai Hui focusedly. He knew he had only one chance.

Whether it would result in his death or survival, he only had this

last chance.

But he wasn't discouraged at all. Instead, he somehow became excited. He couldn't say that his life was without regret, but he hadn't wasted it either. Maybe he had been idle for too long, and now at this life-or-death moment, his heart that had been long at rest was stirring.

His eyes were as sharp as a sword. He could clearly see Ai Hui's stone-cold face behind the sword rays.

This lad had a bright future!

Come on!

He was more excited than ever, like a drunk man – his face was red, and body was quivering.

Suddenly, something appeared in sight abruptly. They were seven glowing small swords in a circle.

Miao Hai paused, and a thought occurred to him – he must have seen a similar scene somewhere before.

The quivering of the small swords produced a clear chime, making Miao Hai's vision blur and his mind go absent.

He remembered! The light webs he used to defeat Sha Guards...

[Sword Chime]!

The chime of the swords lingered in the air. The blazing Dragonspine approached closer and closer with a thrilling whistle as expected.

In the last minute before he was devoured by the blazing sword rays, Miao Hai suddenly became sober.

Even though Ai Hui was absolutely on the more advantageous side, he still chose not to use his insidious moves just in case something happened. What a smart yet callous lad!

He wanted to laugh out loud when he thought about how the higher-ups would feel about dealing with such an annoying guy.

His figure withered away in the blazing sword rays.

Chapter 318: Coming!

"This guy is cunning."

On an unnoticed roof, a man with long hair murmured while looking up at the red, muslin-like sword ray gradually falling from the sky outside the city. He was tall and wore a long black robe. His face was covered with a bronze mask and only his eyes could be seen. The pupils were silvery rhombuses like the tip of an arrow, which was very rare.

"Insidious," a lady who was standing beside the man said coldly. In her eyes there was still a trace of shock.

The way the lady dressed was unique. She wore her hair in an exaggerated bun. It was a high, tower-shaped bun that leaned back, with throwing knives inserted into it. It resembled a crown and also the horn of a unicorn. Together with her thin waist, attractive breasts, long and slender legs and delicate but cold face, her image was very impressive with massive visual impact.

A group of men were standing behind the two. They were silent and still, and looked indifferent as if they were statues.

"Let’s go!" ordered the man with silvery rhombus pupils coldly, and flew away before everyone else.

.....

At the mayor’s residence.

A Jinai looked pale, cold sweat trickling down his back. He never thought that Ai Hui could kill Miao Hai in a direct confrontation!

For this fight, Miao Hai was equipped with [Unbreakable Hellfire Armor] and Baneslayers. To deprive Ai Hui’s of making money, the superiors forbade anyone to purchase fire lotus seeds from Ai Hui, so that he would have no money to prepare for the confrontation. And to make him more helpless, they blocked all the roads of Peace City and put Jiang Wei under house arrest. They even chose a battlefield out of the city just in case Ai Hui would set traps.

A Jinai had made every arrangement he could think of. He didn’t belittle Ai Hui at all.

With such detailed preparation, how could he fail?

Captain Huo, who was standing beside him, was also dumbstruck, as if he had lost his soul.

Now, Jiang Wei was the only one who was happy and at ease. He glanced at the other two and couldn’t help serving himself a glass of wine and drinking it off cheerfully. He knew that it was the worst idea to try to get Ai Hui killed in a fight.

That guy was best at fighting!

A Jinai suddenly said loudly with a tough attitude, "Captain Huo,

this guy killed Miao Hai in public. He should be arrested and brought to justice!"

Captain Huo's facial expression changed, but soon he made up his mind. They had gone so far, and now except for riding on Ling Residence's coattails, he had no other options. Therefore, he said determinedly, "I'll do it right now!"

Jiang Wei suddenly slammed his wine glass on the table heavily, stood up and said coldly, "Peace City is under my administration. Captain Huo, I'm afraid you are acting beyond your authority."

A Jinai looked at Jiang Wei gloomily, "Jiang Wei, I'd like to remind you that one wrong move will lead to a grave mistake."

Jiang Wei didn't flinch, "A Jinai, you are no longer the steed of Grass Clan. But I am still Ai Hui's brother. if you want to do so, then you'll have to kill me first. My fellow comrades of Sky Edge Division, Captain Huo is interfering in the affairs of Peace City without Elders Guild's permission. He has already made a mistake. Don't you want to stop him before he does it again?"

Captain Huo's soldiers looked at each other in confusion. They all looked hesitant.

A Jinai knew things were not going well, but he had made up his mind and said, "Jiang Wei, why are you so stubborn. If so, then don't beg for my mercy. Take him down!"

No one moved.

Captain Huo was also in a panic. If the plan failed this time, he would lose everything. As Jiang Wei's words had apparently affected his subordinates, he also reproached them loudly, "Why don't you move? A Jinai has Elders Guild's secret order!"

His words created a disturbance. Someone shouted, "Then show us!"

With a hideous grin on his face, Captain Huo said, "How dare you disobey my order! Are you are so eager to die?"

A Jinai smartly said, "Elders Guild? Elders Guild belongs to the aristocratic families. So what are you afraid of? If you render them outstanding service this time..."

Just at that moment, he heard a cold laugh.

"Elders Guild doesn't just belong to aristocratic families."

Two figures were standing on the wall of the mayor's residence quietly. Before the one who was speaking had finished his words, many figures appeared and besieged the Mayor's residence.

"Vic... vice division leaders!"

Someone cried out.

A Jinai’s face turned pale. How could both vice division leaders have arrived?

The one with silvery rhombic pupils was the vice division leader of Sky Edge Division, Tong Gui. And the lady with the knife bun was the other vice division leader, Yu Jin.

Why would they come?

Captain Huo was shivering all over. He looked frightened and his teeth were chattering.

"I never expected we’d have traitors in Sky Edge Division. This is disappointing." Tong Gui stared at Captain Huo as if looking at dead meat, "You know what to do. I don’t want to get my hands dirty."

Captain Huo knew he could not escape today, so he smiled bitterly and said, "I beg for mercy for my family members. Please consider the contributions I have made in these years and let them go."

Having finished his words, he transformed his elemental energy into a sword and stabbed himself in the heart. His body froze and his eyes gradually became empty. Then he fell on the ground, blood dripping from the corner of his mouth.

A Jinai, on the other hand, became more sober than ever, "So you

had made preparations long ago, and were waiting for us to swallow the bait."

Tong Gui looked at A Jinai, and said in a bass voice, "You've been with Sky Edge Division for a long time. Why do you work for the Ling residence now?"

A Jinai laughed out furiously, "Winner takes all. Cut the crap. Now I die here, but someone will avenge me. Jiang Wei, this world belongs to the aristocratic families..."

A throwing knife penetrated his heart.

Tong Gui smiled ironically at A Jinai, who could not say anything anymore. "This world belongs to the aristocratic families? Did you even ask us?"

Jiang Wei looked at what had happened in front of him blankly. He had been in Sky Edge Division for almost three years, but this was the first time he had seen the vice division leaders. And since the features of the two vice division leaders were very conspicuous, no one could impersonate them.

He could not be counted as smart, but he kind of understood something from the conversation between A Jinai and Tong Gui.

On the other hand, he was still grieved to see A Jinai's death. Now they were on different sides, but in those days A Jinai had helped him a lot. If it were not for A Jinai, he would have already

died in many previous battles.

Tong Gui’s eyes fell on Jiang Wei with recognition, "You’re not bad."

Jiang Wei didn’t feel happy. He simply bowed and said, "I beg you, Sir, to allow me to bury A Jinai."

Yu Jin, who hadn’t said anything so far, replied, "Approved. He’s dead anyway."

"You can leave now. We have many things to deal with."

Hearing Tong Gui’s voice from behind him. Jiang Wei paused, and wondered what else they had to deal with.

.....

Standing in the air, Ai Hui looked at the mess on the ground and sighed, thinking that Miao Hai was strongest opponent he had met in the last few years.

The challenge was different from previous battles. It was like a big exam.

In the fight with Shi Youguang, he was in the dark, while his enemy was in the open, and he won by ambush and sneak attacks. But the fight today was a one-on-one confrontation, during which

he could not take advantage like that any more.

The battle didn't last long, but it was extremely dangerous, especially the hellfire. If it were not for the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp], he'd have already lost.

In this fight, he had also done his utmost. The [Gale Bat Slash] and [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] that he had practiced long and hard, and [Sword Chime] and [Soaring Flames, Cascading Muslin] that he only comprehended recently had all been utilized in this fight.

The fight lasted only a short period of time, but it was a battle of wit and courage. The mental and physical pressure was tremendous.

Now as the battle came to an end, Ai Hui felt that he had used up everything he owned, which seldom happened to him.

He felt that anyone could defeat him now.

Miao Hai was completely destroyed by Ai Hui's last move, [Soaring Flames, Cascading Muslin], and both his spirit and body had vanished. Even his cloud deck was destroyed and turned into fog that dissipated into the air. The only things that were left were the Baneslayers.

Ai Hui picked up the two Baneslayers and sighed. Miao Hai was not a vile guy, but he was an excellent opponent. It was a pity that

he almost didn’t leave anything behind. So Ai Hui reluctantly had to take the two javelins Miao Hai left in memory of this opponent.

Therefore, under the gaze of everyone of the city, he carried the javelins and flew back to his training hall groggily.

Ai Hui looked exhausted and his azure wings were flapping heavily.

It seemed that crossing the city had taken all his effort.

A puzzled look appeared on Ai Hui’s face.

This was not what he had expected. He thought that by now, someone should have jumped out and accused him of being heartless and cruel, and then a group of people would come to take him down.

But why was there no one?

No follow-up? That was it?

Even if there was no brotherhood between the conspirators, didn’t they have brains? That was all they could think up?

If so, the rest of the tricks he had arranged would be wasted!

Ai Hui felt remorseful about the money he had used and the time he had spent with Lou Lan on this follow-up arrangement.

And now it was wasted?

Ai Hui still could hardly believe this result. He knew that it was less likely he'd get anything useful from Miao Hai, but he thought they would definitely come to retaliate. So he had made delicate arrangements in hope of getting some benefits this way.

But he now knew that this hope seemed no longer achievable, which meant that in this fight, he only got two Baneslayers in reward. Of course the whole set of Baneslayers was of great value, but now as he only had two of them, it wasn't worth much.

Thinking about the essence elemental beans he had spent, Ai Hui almost cried. What a money-losing deal!

Because of this, everyone in Peace City saw something very weird. Although Ai Hui was the one who won the fight, he looked melancholy and not the slightest hint of happiness could be seen on his face.

Those observing businessmen were also confused.

But they were calm enough. They were also all waiting, including Sea Pacific Enterprise and Evergold Enterprise. The purchase prohibition on Ai Hui's fire lotus seeds was given from the superiors. The shrewd businessmen knew that the Ling residence

must have been involved in this.

As the Ling residence had taken action, it would not stop so easily.

So everybody was waiting.

Just at that moment, a group of people appeared in the sky far away and were flying towards Ai Hui at a fast speed.

This excited everyone, especially Ai Hui, who began to think about how to act his part well enough to lure them into his trap.

The group of people soon came in front of Ai Hui. Their clothes were all embroidered with the badge of Elders Guild.

Finally!

The bystanders said to themselves in their hearts, and widened their eyes.

Finally!

Ai Hui said to himself, and began to prepare to feign defeat.

A middle-aged man, who looked cold and gloomy, stepped forward and asked, "Are you Ai Hui?"

Ai Hui pretended to be suffering from severe injuries, and asked with fright and vigilance, "Who are you?"

The middle-aged man stared at Ai Hui. The flicker in his eyes looked fierce. Then he took out a round insignia.

The insignia was about the size of a palm, with a red word, "Order", on the front and the badge of Elders Guild on back. This was called the Elders Guild Order, and it would be used only when the order to be conveyed was officially issued by the Elders Guild.

The bystanders were surprised. The Ling residence had connections everywhere!

Ai Hui was desperate. If the manipulator was Elders Guild, then he'd better pack up his things and prepare to run.

The middle-aged man unclenched his fist and the insignia was suspended in the air. The moment he pointed to it with one finger, the insignia began to shine with glorious radiance, and an old, but dignified voice could be heard all over the city.

"As agreed by the Elders Guild, I hereby announce that Wang Shouchuan, the deceased teacher of Central Pine Academy, is honored with the title of Master. As a teacher of Central Pine Academy, Master Shouchuan had been working conscientiously with perseverance and consistency for decades. He had played a key role during the battle in Central Pine City. Besides this, the school of thought that he created was unique, unprecedented and

meaningful..."

Ai Hui was shocked.

The others' facial expressions changed too.

Although they had already known this information, the Fu family's Big Sister and her brothers were also surprised. They didn't expect that it would be announced at this time in this situation. They were further shocked by what they heard next.

"His great deeds blessed every one of us. And his disciple, Ai Hui, followed in his footsteps and devoted himself to studying his teacher's theories. He had killed the Sand Sentinel to prevent people in the Peace City from suffering. This is a brilliant contribution. Therefore, Ai Hui is awarded as follows..."

Ai Hui was dumbstruck.

Everyone else in Peace City was also dumbstruck.

Chapter 319: A Belated Reunion

Ai Hui was in a daze at Swordsman Training Hall.

He had been awarded with an absolute art for metal elementalists, a Heaven-grade weapon, a thousand essence elemental beans and a thousand Heaven Merit Points.

The Elders Guild's rewards petrified Ai Hui, not because it was too little, but because it was too much. Ai Hui instinctively felt something was wrong with the rich rewards.

One who was unaccountably solicitous was hiding evil intentions.

There was no free lunch. What lied behind such abundant awards must certainly be a big pitfall. A lot of things were beyond his expectations. For example, Miao Hai's avengers didn't come after him, and the awards of the Elders Guild were even more of an anomaly.

He hardly had any contacts with the Elders Guild.

Ai Hui was quite bewildered. Suddenly, he was disturbed and came to his sense.

There was a burst of commotion at the gate while a bunch of people rushed toward him.

Ai Hui was refreshed. Finally!

He whispered, "Lou Lan, get ready!"

Lou Lan nodded vigorously, "Ai Hui, Lou Lan is ready."

As long as Miao Hai hadn’t made any further moves, Ai Hui couldn’t feel relieved. He didn't believe at all that the manipulator behind Miao Hai would accept being defeated so easily.

Ai Hui was not worried about the retaliation attacks. What was worrying was the lack of them.

Now at his own training hall, he didn’t even have to feign defeat.

Ai Hui picked up his Dragonspine and was ready to encounter the enemy.

However, when he saw clearly the first person breaking in, he came to a halt. Because the one in front of him looked familiar, but for a while he couldn’t recall where he had seen him before. After Ai Hui saw the second person coming in, he paused again, as he found that this guy was familiar to him as well.

"Ai Hui!"

"A Hui!"

...

...

The excited calls came one after another, which suddenly made Au Hui recall his memory. He finally realized why they looked so familiar.

For a moment, his memory was drawn back to the city soaked in blood, where he could still smell the smoke of gunpowder and hear the screaming of the people fighting in battle. He felt unspeakably cold and sad, as if being caught in heavy rain for a long time.

After a shiver, those cold feelings and memories faded like tidewater. He came back to reality.

"It’s all over." He told himself.

Those standing in front of him were so excited. Their eyes were filled with tears, reflecting the warmth of sunlight.

Ai Hui smiled.

"You are...Black Ge!"

"You are Ming Feng!"

...

...

"Lou Lan, it’s been a long time!"

"Ming Feng, Lou Lan is so happy to see you!"

"So shall we have elemental energy soup today?"

"Of course! Leave it to Lou Lan!"

...

...

They hugged and gave high fives to each other. Sweet smiles bloomed on every face.

The noise of dense traffic went on and people constantly joined the reunion.

.....

A high building, not far from Swordsman Training Hall.

"What a warm situation! Compared to those cold, pitiless aristocratic families, this is so much more tender." Tong Gui said with emotion, "Have you recorded it all?"

A subordinate beside him said promptly, "Yes, we arranged enough workhands. Don’t worry, they are all very skilled."

A deep sound emerged from behind the copper mask, "We are responsible for letting everybody know the truth."

"No problem!" a subordinate said reverently, "We have arranged for extra people to get in touch with those survivors and asked them how they felt when Ai Hui was called the murderer of his teacher. They all expressed their rage."

Tong Gui turned his face, "Did you encounter any resistance on taking over the checkpoint?"

Yu Jin said indifferently, "Yes, three people were dead and two wounded."

"So, they should already get the information." Tong Gui nodded and turned his face back, "These mirage bean pods must be sent out today."

"The first batch was already sent out." The subordinate said reverently, "Tomorrow morning they will be on the shelves of all bean pod shops. We have reserved all the best places."

Jiang Wei listened to their talking silently.

"You are promoted."

He heard Tong Gui’s voice.

Jiang Wei came to his senses but didn’t seem happy. He asked in a low voice, "Have you been preparing for this from a long time ago?"

"It’s

, to be more accurate," Tong Gui corrected him and his voice sounded as deep as the echo in the valley, "Although I don’t want to admit it, to be frank, we are on the disadvantageous side. So we’d better get prepared."

"Why are you doing this?"

"Because we don’t want to give up our future without putting up a fight."

.....

Morning sunshine always brought a stream of coolness. But to those diligent ones who enjoyed the soberness and freshness brought by the cool air, it was the start of an exhilarating day.

Wang Xiaoshan got up early as usual.

This was a habit he'd developed when he was in Central Pine City. Ever since he'd met Ai Hui, he kept being assiduous, even if he was now in charge of military supplies. He worked at a large military warehouse. He could get this popular position thanks to his contribution in the Central Pine City war as well as Shi Xueman's connection.

Wang Xiaoshan was different from other warehouse managers. He was diligent and kept a low profile, and hardly participated in social engagements. He was so indulged in his earth elemental construction method that many of his men called him "mud manager". He wasn't mad about the nickname, but was proud of it instead.

His father was a craftsman of mud and it was well-reasoned for him to carry on his father's career. He knew clearly that he could get this position not because he was competent or outstanding, but because of Shi Xueman's help.

He had no outstanding merits, just as he couldn't be a good helper to Ai Hui and other friends in those years. It might be the reason why he indulged in earth elemental construction method. Deep in his heart, he had an unreachable dream to help Ai Hui and other friends by being a master in earth elemental construction method.

Every morning, while breathing the cool air, he would always remind himself that the idea was ridiculous.

Well, it was ridiculous indeed.

He was no longer the teenager who loved playing with mud at that time. Having been a mud manager for three years, he understood many things.

This was a mud pond where mudfish could live, but not dragons.

He might be too pessimistic. Shi Xueman was a good person, he thought. He knew that if Shi Xueman asked for his help, he would never refuse. However, he would not help Shi Xueman of his own initiative, maybe because Iron Lady lacked nothing. He was not sure about that. But the picture of Ai Hui kneeling in the heavy rain was rooted deeply in his head.

He couldn't figure out why. It was neither sympathy nor admiration. Instead, he thought many things fell on Ai Hui's shoulders alone, when they should have been dealt with by everybody. Was it a sense of guilt or feeling lost? No, not like that. In fact, he wondered, if he could do more, would the result be any different?

Wang Xiaoshan admitted he was irresolute. Even if three years had passed, he couldn't feel relieved.

However, irresolute as he was, it shouldn't impact his daily life.

Like every other day, he came to a bean pod shop that he was

familiar with. The boss was placing the new bean pods on shelves. Wang Xiaoshan asked casually, "Any new news bean pods?"

Mirage bean pods were not the only mirage products on the market for long. In the high-end market, film-spitting tortoises, with a higher level of safety and sharpness, had replaced mirage bean pods. Sensing the crisis, the wood elementalists didn’t give up. They had been improving the mirage bean pods, resulting in the exploding bean pod tree, a brand-new breed.

They grafted the traditional bean pod trees onto breeding trees, a kind of tree with strong vitality, and got a newly transformed breed - exploding bean pod trees that could duplicate plentiful mirage bean pods within a short period of time.

An exploding bean pod tree could produce tens of thousands of mirage bean pods, which largely brought down the cost of mirage bean pods. Due to the sharp decline in cost, a new thing was brought out: news bean pod.

At the beginning, people recorded interesting things in life using news bean pods and then sold it in markets. Soon, some people found business opportunities in it, such as the Dragonrise Training Hall. A teaching course from Yang Zhen, the owner of Dragonrise Training Hall, in news bean pods had been sold over four million times, and was still on sale now.

Before long, many professional elementalists emerged, who made a living by recording frontline battle progress, new trends of the Elders Guild and disasters in mirage bean pods. The news bean pods became more and more popular, because common people

could afford to buy them due to their low price, and the specialty stores of bean pods were everywhere.

Recently, the popularity of news bean pods gave rise to a professional news-collecting group, called news village. Each news village produced its own news bean pods including several news beans with different contents.

Seeing Wang Xiaoshan, the boss of the bean pods shop smiled warmly and said, "Good morning, Manager! We have new arriving news bean pods. You must check them out. They are definitely going to be popular, for the content was about The Lightning Blade!"

Wang Xiaoshan didn’t expect that, "The Lightning Blade? Ai Hui?"

"No wonder you can be a manager. You can even remember a figure from ages ago!" the boss of the bean pods shop said flatteringly, "He is a controversial figure. In those years, people argued about him drastically. Now they have things to argue about again."

Ai Hui...

A figure from ages ago... Yes, it’s ages ago.

Wang Xiaoshan said without hesitation, "I will have one of each kind!"

Then he went back to his room hurriedly and shut the door.

In the dark room, he stared at the mirage blankly.

"As agreed by the Elders Guild, I hereby announce that Wang Shouchuan, the deceased teacher of Central Pine Academy, is honored with the title of Master. As a teacher of Central Pine Academy, Master Shouchuan had been working conscientiously with perseverance and consistency for decades. He had played a key role during the battle in Central Pine City. Besides this, the school of thought that he created was unique, unprecedented and meaningful..."

"His great deeds blessed every one of us. And his disciple, Ai Hui, followed in his footsteps and devoted himself to studying his teacher's theories. He had killed the Sand Sentinel to prevent people in the Peace City from suffering. This is a brilliant contribution. Therefore, Ai Hui is rewarded as follows..."

"An absolute art for metal elementalists, a Heaven-grade weapon, a thousand essence elemental beans and a thousand Heaven Merit Points."

A beautiful woman appeared on the mirage.

A beautiful woman might not be convincing, but she was at least attractive enough to keep people listening. Moreover, the topic itself was hot.

The gorgeous woman talked vividly and movingly.

"The significant award by the Elders Guild is unexpected, but does make sense. Needless to say, Master Wang and his wife earned great achievements. Everyone living in the Avalon of Five Elements should remember the miracle that they created in Central Pine City at the expense of their lives. In those years, Ai Hui earned great achievements on the battlefield as well. After fading out for three years, he reappeared with a lofty stance. As the successor of Master Wang, Ai Hui bears pressure far beyond the amount that his age should take. The rumor of Ai Hui being the murderer of his teacher hurts our hero the most. Just as people in those years shouldn't forget that Master Wang and his wife fought for the city at the cost of their lives, now we shouldn't forget as well that when we were isolated, a young hero stood out and led us to fight to the end. At the most crucial moment, he was fearless and bore all the responsibility and criticism. He saved us."

"He is accused of being ruthless for sacrificing his teacher in exchange of this feat. At the same time, he is admired as a tragic hero, who assumes the unbearable heaviness of his fate and lives in seclusion for three years. So, what is the truth? Only the survivors in Central Pine City know. They witnessed the whole process of the miracle in Central Pine City, from the beginning of the crisis to the ending. When the information that Ai Hui was living in seclusion in the Peace City spread, how did those survivors in Central Pine City react to it?"

"We noticed that many survivors in Central Pine City came to visit Ai Hui. We were lucky to record the event of their meeting. There were tears in their eyes. They hugged and sent regards to

each other excitingly."

"This is a belated reunion!"

The gorgeous woman in the mirage choked with sobs.

"We also interviewed several survivors in Central Pine City for their opinions on Ai Hui being called the murderer of his teacher. They all believe it’s slander and feel angry about it. For those who are interested, please watch the C bean and D bean in this bean pod, ‘Under the Name of Survivors’..."

Thinking that Ai Hui could get rid of the accusation of murdering his teacher, Wang Xiaoshan felt extremely excited.

Exactly at the same time, when he saw Ai Hui whom he had been thinking about all the time, he smiled with tears in his eyes.

Long time no see, Ai Hui!

Chapter 320: Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge

Clash!

A clear, shattering sound could be heard. Perhaps it came from the pot on the master's table, which cost 2,000 elemental energy beans, or from the crooked-neck porcelain vase outlined in gold on the wall shelf. While the servants quietly waited outside to clean the mess, there were still a few precious decorative items that remained intact inside the master's room.

The heavy breaths sounded like the roars of a trapped beast.

The red sandalwood carved door was made by a famous craftsman. Its complicated and exquisite grass pattern swept the sword. The emblem protecting the Ling residence was a soaring golden eagle with its wings spread open.

The Golden Eagle Study Room is an important place in the Ling residence. Many influential strategies that deeply affected the Avalon of Five Elements were born here. Currently, the tightly closed door was like a steel cage that trapped an angry and violent wild beast.

And a beast tamer.

Madam Ling sat on a chair beside the tea table, turning a blind eye to the mess on the ground and the wild beast's roars. Her

gorgeous, waterfall-like silk dress really accentuated her slim waist and body. Above her half-revealed, delicate collarbone was her long, snow-white neck. As if there was no one around, she sipped on her tea slowly and indifferently.

The rough breaths gradually stopped as the bulging veins on the angry man’s forehead disappeared. His bloodshot eyes became clear once again. He walked in big steps before he stopped in front of the lady, grabbed the teapot, raised his head, and gulped a large amount of tea noisily.

The man put down the teapot, wiped his mouth, and said in a low voice, "It must be that old fellow, Yuchi Ba. He has yet to give up. How is the situation outside now?"

Madam Ling put her teacup down gracefully and replied with her pleasant voice, "There aren’t many talking about Ai Hui being a murderer that killed his master anymore. He is once again seen as a hero. In fact, many are suggesting that he should be compensated. Another piece of bad news is that after word spread that Ai Hui could be coming out of his seclusion, members of Central Pine Faction, which had already been swayed, go back on their words now. Even those who’d agreed to join the aristocratic families are now backing out."

The man opened his eyes wide. "Are they fools? Withdrawing as they please? Is this a game? Do they think we can’t deal with them?"

Madam Ling sipped on her tea, before saying, "It is true that we can’t do anything to them. Just today, a few have already tendered

their resignations and are preparing to head to Peace City. They were all previously A-1 unit members."

The man blanked out for a moment and found it hard to believe. "Are their brains damaged? What can a positionless fellow offer them? Power? Prospects? Wealth? Absolute arts? Nothing!"

Madam Ling drank her tea unhurriedly. "Underestimating your enemy... are you insulting yourself?"

The man sneered. "My enemy? Hah, do you really think Ai Hui is qualified to be my enemy? Only Yuchi Ba has the right."

"But the one raging is you." Madam Ling laughed softly, not the least bit bothered by the man's ashen face. She asked, "Perhap you can kill everyone in Central Pine Faction to ease your anger?"

The man calmed down. He had to admit that it was useless to be angry at this point. He was unable to take Central Pine Faction down since the Elders Guild would not allow it.

"Ai Hui's sudden rise is unstoppable now." Madam Ling hit the nail on the head. "Yuchi Ba and his gang chose him to be the future leader of the new citizens. I have to say this move of Elder Yuchi is very beautiful. He's using this method to help Ai Hui clear his bad name as a murderer."

The man clenched his teeth and said, "I should've killed that kid long ago!"

"Many people are after his life, but he’s still living well." Madam Ling put her tea cup down and looked at the man. "Those who want his life aren’t able to find the chance. Ai Hui is more vigilant than we think. He left suddenly three years ago, changed, and concealed his identity. A wise choice, judging from the current situation."

The man was filled with bloodlust. "It’s not too late."

"You better stop this dangerous way of thinking," Madam Ling warned sternly. "I do not want to wake up one day to the news of my children getting killed. In the past, Ai Hui wasn’t a member of the New Citizens Faction, so killing him will not bring about any dispute. Now, as a selected successor of the faction, my children will sink into the vicious cycle of revenge if he gets assassinated. Yuchi Bai is not an unarmed and defenseless old man."

The man knew Madam Ling was right, but felt somewhat indignant. "Then what should we do now?"

Madam Ling had been waiting for this question. A charming smile appeared at the corner of her mouth. She said gently, "We have a lot of time. Ai Hui is popular, but positionless. They are trying to push up him, but they also have to choose a suitable seat for him. For example, he can enter the Sky Edge Division and eventually get promoted to become the division leader. Even if things proceed smoothly, it will take a few years’ time."

The man nodded his head repeatedly.

"The more important question is if Ai Hui is willing?"

The man was stumped by this funny question. He shook his head. "Hahaha, don't be ridiculous. Would anyone be unwilling? Who wouldn't be willing to achieve instant success?"

Madam Ling blinked. "You have to ask Ai Hui."

The man was stunned.

Just then, the doorbell rang.

Dong, dong, dong.

A servant's voice was heard from outside the door two seconds later. "Master, there's a new report."

.....

Swordsman Training Hall was already a lively gathering place by now. Without needing Ai Hui's instructions, the guests had already prepared the bonfire, started to grill the meat, and brought wine over. Everybody was taking in big pieces of meat and big bowls of wine while chatting endlessly, crying, and laughing at times.

"Really, Ai Hui?" Lou Lan looked at Ai Hui with his eyes wide open and filled with surprise.

"That’s right." Ai Hui laughed. "Since everyone’s so cordial, we have to do our part by returning the favor. Take out all the fire lotus seeds. Prepare a bowl of elemental soup for everyone, Lou Lan. Everyone misses it. I can’t sell those anyway."

"Leave it to me!" Lou Lan reassured happily. "I’m so happy to see everybody today! I will work hard to prepare a bowl of Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge!"

"Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge?" Ai Hui burst into laughter and asked curiously, "Sounds like a pretty potent porridge. What effect does it have?"

Lou Lan explained, "All five types of elementalists can consume it. It raises people’s spirits and noticeably fixes internal injuries, increases one’s connectivity with elemental energy, and strengthens their elemental foundation. It helps both the physical body and elemental energy greatly."

"Good stuff!" Ai Hui’s eyes lit up while drooling.

Lou Lan was a little hesitant. "But we’re missing quite a few ingredients. Although we can find substitutes, the porridge will be less effective..."

Jiang Wei, who’d been listening in on their conversation was unable to hold back anymore. "What ingredients do you need? Make a list Lou Lan. Everyone will think of a solution!"

Jiang Wei’s usual steadiness was completely absent as anticipation filled his face.

"That’s right, that’s right, we will all think of a solution!" Ming Feng spoke up while swallowing his saliva, a sound that was ear-piercing.

Ai Hui stared blankly at the bunch of eager fellows. They ran off like a gust of wind upon receiving the ingredient list, leaving him alone at that spot and ignoring him.

"Hey, hey, hey, fire lotus seeds are expensive. Aren’t you guys touched by my generosity..?"

Before he could finish his sentence, everyone had already left and not even their shadows could be seen.

Minutes later, the news of Lou Lan preparing Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge, which used fire lotus seed as the main ingredient, spread among all Central Pine survivors present at the party and caused a commotion.

"Fire lotus seeds! Oh my god! How much money is that?"

"What’s important is that Lou Lan is preparing it himself! Hahaha, we did right by coming. What a gain! Oh my! I can’t control my drool, what should I do?"

"Judging by its name, it must be very powerful! Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge! Damn it, who grilled this meat? Why does it taste so bad?"

"Didn’t you just praise my grilling skills earlier?"

"Missing ingredients? Hah, quick gather them everyone!"

"Gather, gather, gather!"

"For Eight Treasures Porridge!"

...

News about Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge spread around in the blink of an eye!

Upon hearing it, survivors from Central Pine City quickly gathered ingredients and flocked over from other cities.

"Manager, your ingredients are ready!"

"Are you going to participate in the Eight Treasures Porridge feast? Is The Lightning Blade really that great?"

"Ai Hui is really amazing!"

Wang Xiaoshan carried with his many bags, big and small, and boarded the Fiery Floating Cloud with an excited heart. He was going to get to Peace City as quick as he could. He heard that practically all of Central Pine's survivors had already departed on their journeys, rushing over from all directions to join in the reunion party.

Ai Hui did not expect his random idea to blow up so much. Within a short period of time, the Swordsman Training Hall's Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge feast had already spread widely across the Avalon of Five Elements. Even the list of ingredients was disseminated widely.

As one of the most in vogue figures currently, Ai Hui was a target of interest to many news villages.

Many cooking masters, who were proficient in cooking elemental food, deduced the porridge's recipe after analyzing the ingredient list.

Perfect!

This was the word that came out of people's mouths the most. The porridge's effectiveness was similar to that of a legendary divine medicine that could cure all illness and extend life.

While there were people who tried replicating the porridge, they were shocked to find out that the main ingredient, fire lotus seeds, was not purchasable at all.

Advocation from many news villages triggered the interest of some resolute people.

.....

Clash!

Yet another sound of something being shattered and an angry snarl traveled from within the Golden Eagle Study Room.

"Bribery! Undisguised, plain bribery!"

The mayor’s residence.

Seeing the racket outside Swordsman Training Hall, Tong Gui said ruefully, "Using so many fire lotus seeds to buy people’s hearts. What a big move! That little fellow is treacherous, but in a different way. It’s all because of those people who are so loyal to him. Even Jiang Wei did not attract any attention when he walked into the training hall."

Detecting the unhappiness in Tong Gui’s voice, Yu Jin responded coldly, "All the divisions have already received a total of 12 resignations and they’re all from Central Pine Faction."

Tong Gui was stunned and only opened his mouth after a little while. "Okay, so that means Jiang Wei isn’t that bad. At least he did not resign. Looks like we underestimated the influence he has over this crowd."

Yu Jin replied, "We've yet to ask for his opinion."

Tong Gui fell into a daze once more before saying bitterly, "Okay, looks like we are going to go get a bowl of porridge and whatever else we can."

Chapter 321: Same Boat

"Think you guys can just do as you like?"

A messy haired old man guarding the door shot a side glance at Tong Gui and Yu Jin. He leaned against a big, glossy black wine jar and strange bubbling noises could be heard coming from inside.

Without retorting the two vice division leaders, Tong Gui and Yu Jin, bent over slightly and listened respectfully.

"Do you know how much blood and sweat I've poured for this bowl of porridge? That's right, blood and sweat. I found the people and contacted them, but they refused to agree no matter what. Said something about the portion being big, but barely enough! Was I gonna give up just like that? Of course not! I found out that they were lacking in ingredients. Let me tell you that someone with willpower will not give up so easily!"

Tong Gui's copper mask did not give off its usual cold luster. Instead, it looked as if it was going to melt soon. Meanwhile, Yu Jin's high bun looked like a frosted carrot.

The old man became increasingly excited and radiant as he spoke. His saliva flew everywhere.

"I saw that they had yet to gather the best quality canna flowers, hahaha. Coincidentally, I knew that the leader of a bandit crew was in possession of them. I set off that very night so you can tell how important this was. The canna flowers might fall into the

hands of others if I were to delay my journey any longer. After a night of work I wiped the whole crew out. For the next two hours I searched the whole mountain and finally found this precious canna stump. What do you say, does it sound easy?"

It could've been because of the blazing sun that beads of sweat dripped onto the floor from the edge of Tong Gui's mask and that Yu Jin's back was soaked.

The old man sighed. "Not easy! In exchange for this stump, they finally agreed to give me a bowl of porridge, but what do you know? They sent me out here to guard the door. I was furious. Asking a person of my status to guard the gate? But on second thought, wouldn't all my previous effort be superfluous if any brat simply stumbles over and tries to get a bowl of the porridge that I've worked so hard for? That little fellow, Ai Hui, made sense. If more people come over, wouldn't my share be reduced?"

Tong Gui and Yu Jin sweat poured profusely.

Satisfied, the old man asked them, "What do you guys say? Does it make sense?"

"Yes, yes, yes, Senior. You've worked so hard. No one should freeload!" Tong Gui agreed repeatedly.

"You're a sensible lad." The old man heaved a long sigh as a nostalgic look appeared on his face. "Old fellows like us have been slogging our whole life for the Elders Guild, but after sustaining a full body of internal injuries the Elders Guild tosses us aside. How

mournful! Since I’m finally getting my hands on a bowl of porridge, I’m going to be direct. If the old fogeys from the Elders Guild come over for a free ride, they’re going to have to fight me first!"

Tongue-tied, Tong Gui shuddered slightly. "Senior, you... you..."

Under the attentive gaze of the old fellow, Tong Gui clenched his teeth and continued, "... are completely right!"

The old fellow was mollified. "Hahaha, well done! You ain’t too bad, lad. Decent abilities. What vice division leader... you can totally be a division leader!"

Amid the old man’s candid laughter the duo fled in fear.

Breaking news: The Green Dragon Bandits that took over Green Dragon Mountain for years have all been wiped out. Their corpses and valuables are lying everywhere. "Venerable Volcano" is the current suspect.

Tian Huzun, 64 years old, nicknamed "Venerable Volcano," fire elemental master.

He was one of the former candidates for the division leader position of the Ardent Flower Division. Because of his irritable nature, he lost control in a duel, killed somebody, and withdrew from the competition. He then went solo and accepted all kinds of missions, accumulating a net worth of 330,000 Heaven Merit

Points. He was seventh on the recent list of wealthiest men.

At 46, Tian Huzun tried and failed to become a Grandmaster. Instead, his old injury reappeared and infrequently relapsed.

The friendship between Tian Huzun and Le Buleng ran deep. They had fought numerous times.

This report was sent to the study table of every residence and those who had seen it either gnashed their teeth or kneaded their head in worry. No one wanted to face Tian Huzun as an enemy. He had outstanding achievements, was very reputable, and was strong. Furthermore, he had a fiery temper and was easily triggered.

It was normal for a disagreement to lead to a fight. These people were all too familiar with this and were not shocked when a bloodbath occurred due to conflict.

The key was that they might not win.

These people banked on real abilities instead of hope. They were all old foxes, sly and tough.

Yet, everyone knew that his internal injury was the main reason why Tian Huzun had failed to break through. In order to heal these injuries, Tian Huzun would make an enemy out of anyone.

Madam Ling exclaimed in admiration, "This young fellow is

simply too crafty!"

After a short while, feeling somewhat stifled, Family Head Ling said begrudgingly with a pale face, "Withdraw! Get all of them back here!"

Upon returning to the mayor’s residence, Tong Gui immediately flipped out and started cursing, "Treacherous! Too treacherous! How dare he ask Tian Huzun to guard the door! Base, cheap, and cunning!"

Yu Jin added, "Ought to be killed!"

Tong Gui jolted. "Indeed! How do we kill him?"

After a short silence Yu Jin spat, "Suicide."

"..."

"Too treacherous, too cunning!"

Ai Hui shook his head sorrowfully. "I did not expect something like this from you."

No one on the outside would have imagined that having Tian Huzun guard the door was not Ai Hui’s idea. It was the brainchild of the seemingly honest, innocent, calm, and reliable Jiang Wei.

Jiang Wei simply smiled.

When compared to Ai Hui, he was more aware and knowledgeable about the complexity of the current situation. More and more people gathered at Swordsman Training Hall. It was like a magnet, attracting Central Pine City's survivors who had assembled from all directions.

The crowd grew and, while everyone was cheering wildly, the more clear-headed ones were already pondering over some profound issues.

To outsiders, they were a community. In their hearts, they were also a community.

When Ai Hui stood up, people who were scattered everywhere got in touch, as if brought together by invisible threads. In normal times they would disregard such connections, but when Ai Hui made an appearance, they were shocked to realize that the connection they shared was actually this strong.

They were a community indeed. A community more tight-knit than they, themselves, or anyone else had imagined.

For three years, they had been working hard at their own posts. They were far from being shrewd and ruthless, but were no longer naive and ignorant. The surging undercurrents and lurking dangers served as a constant reminder that the outside world was very real and daunting.

They needed to face up to their own strength, and they needed to face up to their own ideas.

Aristocratic families or new citizens?

What would they gain and what would they lose?

Ai Hui had not expected things to turn out this way. His initial idea was beyond simple. Seeing that everyone was happy, he thought it was fine to share the leftover fire lotus seed with everybody.

The fact that the Eight Treasures Porridge had caused such an uproar left even the originator dumbstruck.

A smile followed.

Eating the porridge happily and training without mishap.

What did the battle between new citizens and aristocratic families have to do with him? What did the future of the Avalon of Five Elements have to do with him? He was just a minor character without the will to carry the burdens of the world. He was also incapable of saving those trapped in the abyss or the fire pit.

He had but one mission. Revenge.

This was the only thing he had to accomplish in this life,

regardless of success, failure, or death. The moment his Dragonspine pierced through his teacher’s chest, his tiny life had been bestowed with the color of fresh blood.

Yet, he did not wish for the others to accompany him. He knew that this was a brutal journey with no return route. He did not want them to step into the abyss with him. All he wanted was for them to live on properly.

With a slight smile, he listened to the ongoing discussion quietly without expressing his opinions.

Perhaps the waves would return to their usual serenity when their enthusiasm blew over.

Jiang Wei was the first to sense Ai Hui’s calmness.

They sat on the roof and looked over the training hall that was illuminated by the bonfire. People were still arriving every day, resulting in the hall being soaked in a perpetual merriment.

Jiang Wei gazed at the distant mayor’s residence and spoke suddenly, "Ai Hui, are you afraid of dragging us down?"

Ai Hui did not know what to say.

Jiang Wei added, "Ai Hui, are you of the opinion that hatred toward the Blood of God involves only you?"

Ai Hui remained quiet.

"It is not, Ai Hui." Jiang Wei continued in a low voice, "Other than the fact that we weren't forced to kill our own teacher, we're all no different."

Ai Hui shuddered.

"Our teachers, classmates, friends, and relatives have died in Central Pine City." Jiang Wei's voice was a little hoarse at this point as he continued with a slightly trembling voice, "How many have died? We don't even know. You're not the only one seeking revenge. All of us are after it and have never forgotten. These people shall not die for nothing and bleed for nothing. How can revenge simply be forgotten?"

"Ai Hui, do you really think we will be able to put aside the hatred and live on peacefully? The Elders Guild can do that. They have control over the Avalon of Five Elements and countless citizens. A small city is negligible as far as the state of the Avalon of Five Elements is concerned. They can tell themselves that they are doing it for the greater good of the Avalon of Five Elements, but we can't. We're unable to forget. Not now. Not in future. Not ever."

"Central Pine City could have recovered its appearance with the "Cloth City" plan, but would it have revived the corpses? Could the lost lives be recovered? Would our relatives and friends come back? Even now, we can't forget that land full of corpses and blood. People were falling to the ground nonstop. We still

remember the fear and dread. We can’t tell ourselves that this was a war and that we deserved it. We’re unable to tell ourselves that this was war so just forget about it and live peacefully ever after."

"F*ing war!"

A sinister look flashed across Jiang Wei’s face.

"Why would you think that revenge belongs only to you? Why did so many people resign? Because we did not forget about revenge? It’s because we know that the Elders Guild is only after stability. New citizens or aristocratic families, we are going to pay blood with blood!"

"Ai Hui, we’re in the same boat," Jiang Wei concluded with these words, regained his composure, and jumped off the roof.

Ai Hui sat motionlessly on the rooftop.

Chapter 322: Call Me Sister

Outside Jadeite City, the floating mountain peak pressed down on everybody’s hearts like a big rock, suffocating them.

Every passerby couldn’t help but raise their head for a look at the lofty mountain peak. Under the sunlight, the words "Guardian of Five Elements" gave off an impression of boundless prestige and austerity. A ray of light would flash past occasionally, reminding people of its danger.

The God-subduing Peak entered Jadeite Forest and wherever it passed it evoked intense panic.

The high officials and aristocratic families who had initially called for an alliance with Blood of God all vanished without a trace. And the elders, whom Shi Xueman invited on board to tour around and view the demonstration of its attacking power, were all ashen-faced with worry and unease.

People with foresight understood that the appearance of God-subduing Peak would thoroughly change the battle form.

Shi Xueman did not care too much since she was distracted by the latest news. Everything from the exposure of Ai Hui’s identity, the destruction of Sha Guards and the public peddling of fire lotus seeds, to Miao Hai’s challenge, Elders Guild’s commendation, the mirage bean pod that swept across the whole Avalon of Five Elements, and the attention-grabbing Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge.

And she was still in high spirits, buying all the message bean pods with news about Ai Hui.

The rest of the time she strolled in Jadeite Forest City, looking around and buying things.

The sky was a dark blue color and the beautiful sunlight penetrated the lush forest, illuminating this jadeite green city. The season of blooming flowers had come again, with pink petals appearing like pieces of dreamy feathers drifting in the wind and making crisp bell sounds. It was the most beautiful season in Jadeite Forest. At night the feather flowers would emit a faint pinkish fluorescence. They were like night fairies.

Walking under the bright sunlight and falling petals, amid the busy streets and crowd, Shi Xueman felt cheerful. She carried big paper bags that contained pastries she'd purchased along the way. There were long forest baguettes and soft, sweet viridescent balls and seasonal fresh flower biscuits. There was also a fluffy, fragmented pale-blue wild flower that was given to her as a gift from the bakery boss.

She walked into an alley and arrived at the entrance of a house. She knocked on the door.

Creak. The main door opened and the person behind it looked at her, smiling. "You're quite early today."

Shi Xueman smiled slightly. "I have nothing else to attend to

anyway."

She held onto the bags and stepped inside, closing the door behind her.

Beside the main door was an old, broken wooden board that had the words "Society of Excellence" on it.

Duanmu Huanghun, who was training, saw Shi Xueman walking in. He couldn’t help but mockingly comment, "People might think you’re here for a holiday trip. Isn’t it inappropriate for you to be idling like this? You’re an honorable person in charge of a diplomatic mission after all."

Shi Xueman tossed the snacks around to everyone while answering, "I’ve accomplished my mission. To intimidate you all with God-subduing Peak. What else do you want me to do? Find a wife for you?"

Duanmu Huanghun stopped his training and responded in a resentful tone shortly, "Solve your own problems first. Don’t forget that you’re Iron Lady."

Shi Xueman handed out the last pastry and rolled up the bags, throwing them into the bin. After that, she warmed up her fists and sneered, "Do you know why I’m so early today? I’m here to put you in order. If you can’t even beat that She woman, why are you acting all mighty in front of me?"

Being wise, the others held their pastry in their mouths and paved a space for them.

Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong were the quickest.

Duanmu Huanghun’s face paled. He feigned coldness, shouting, "I’m a gentleman. I will not fight against a woman! The relationship between Jadeite Forest and the Avalon is very subtle. Do not jeopardize your mission. As Duanmu family’s..."

Shi Xueman remained unmoved. She raised her chin and kneaded her fists. "Call me sister!"

Duanmu Huanghun flew into a rage. "Do not be a bully, Shi Xueman. This is Jadeite Forest. You don’t want to provoke me..."

Shi Xueman approached him while cracking her knuckles and stretching her shoulders. An unfathomable gush of latent elemental energy surfaced like a sea with a dangerous aura.

In everyone’s eyes, Shi Xueman seemed to have grown taller. Tall enough to obstruct the sky and cast a devilish black and dangerous shadow. Through the gaps between her teeth she smiled eerily, "Call me sister!"

Duanmu Huanghun was like a frightened kitten, the hairs on his body standing on end. The recent, torturous training had sharpened his mental state and pushed his essence-breath-spirit to its peak. He narrowed his eyes, dangerous light rays flickering

within. His voice was as cold and heart-piercing as a knife as he released his concealed and fatal blow in a straightforward manner, "Fine!"

The cold winter turned to warm spring as Duanmu Huanghun broke into a big smile. "Sister Xueman!"

Dead silence.

Thud. The pastries in Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong's mouths fell onto the floor as they stood motionlessly with their jaws wide open. Those around them were dumbstruck as well.

Brother Huanghun...

The dangerous aura Shi Xueman had been emitting just a moment ago vanished in a puff of smoke.The raging sea returned to its usual calmness in an instant as the sunlight pierced through the black clouds above the sea.

A bright, sunshine-like smile appeared on Shi Xueman's face. "Did you call me Iron Lady earlier?"

Duanmu Huanghun replied righteously, "Back in the day when Ai Hui came up with that nickname for you, I was strongly against it. However, my position was lowly and my words didn't carry much weight. He was domineering and out of control, absolutely unrestrained and evil. You must teach him a lesson, Sister Xueman!"

Gentleness returned to her face as she said, "You don’t have to tell me that."

Expressionless, Duanmu Huanghun turned to Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong. "It seems like the training schedule is too empty since you two are so free. Double the training today."

That scoundrel’s method is really handy!

Quivering, Yu Ziyi and Wu Qirong turned pale. They looked pleadingly at Shi Xueman.

Shi Xueman sighed. "Should we discuss the training load? Would tripling it be more reasonable?"

Shi Xueman was well aware of how Ai Hui had done it in the past.

Everybody’s face turned whiter as they hurriedly sneaked away, leaving only the four of them in the courtyard.

Shi Xueman turned around suddenly, "Aren’t you guys going for the porridge feast?"

Duanmu Huanghun answered after a short silence, "I’m afraid we might make thing more troublesome if we go."

Shi Xueman knew that he was speaking the truth.

Under the circumstances, the Avalon had been forced to rope Jadeite Forest in. Jadeite Forest, which had just revolted against the Avalon, was regarded as traitorous in the eyes of Elders Guild. Because of its relationship with Jadeite Forest, the Elders Guild would do anything to ensure Duanmu Huanghun's safety if he appeared in the Avalon. However, this did not mean that the Elders Guild would tolerate his other behaviors.

Because of his special background, it was easy for his actions to be misinterpreted, and yet he had no power to defend himself. Even if the Elders Guild worried about their association, they could send people to escort him back to Jadeite Forest.

Shi Xueman spoke up. "I never expected him to stir up something so huge."

"I'm curious as to what path he'll take." A strange smile emerged on Duanmu Huanghun's face. "Ai Hui and his gang do not understand the filthy affairs that are going on between the aristocratic families and the new citizens, but we do. In Elders Guild's eyes, Ai Hui and his gang are together with Central Pine Faction. Such a big group operating as the backbone of the Avalon of Five Elements... how fun."

Shi Xueman shot him a sideways glance. "Are you gloating?"

Duanmu Haunghun laughed. "I'm looking forward to seeing what that fellow will do. Don't you think that whatever matter he bumps into, he's always making the unpopular choice?"

Shi Xueman smiled. "True."

Duanmu Huanghun kept his smile and added coolly, "There's no space for Ai Hui in the aristocratic families. Joining New Citizen Faction would be meaningless too. Otherwise, why would Ye Baiyi rely on Blood of God for support?"

Shi Xueman remained silent.

"Ye Baiyi figured out that there's no future for New Citizen Faction. It's been over a thousand years. The connection between Avalon and Old Territory has long been severed. Resources are required for the training of elemental energy. When there were ample resources, talented practitioners were picked out from Old Territory to add new blood to the Avalon of Five Elements, which is a good thing. Now resources are so scarce that even its own people are facing shortages. How was it going to gather anything for Old Territory? Old Territory is now a burden to the Avalon of Five Elements. It has been a burden ever since before the construction of the new Avalon of Five Elements was completed. But abandoning Old Territory is equivalent to thoroughly abandoning its roots, so how did the new citizens do it?"

Duanmu Huanghun spoke calmly but his words hit the nail on the head.

An intense helplessness rose in Shi Xueman's heart. She knew that he was right.

"The aristocratic families will win since they are purer. They are the only ones who will have the Avalon of Five Elements's interests at heart. New citizens will lose because they have to tend to everything. They are unable to think from both perspectives of the Avalon of Five Elements and Old Territory."

Gloom took over Duanmu Huanghun's handsome face. "Old Territory belongs to Blood of God. I don't know who created blood elementalists. Damn it. Blood elementalists do not consume much resources, which means that people from Old Territory can train. Those who are unable to train can choose to train as blood elementalists. Who do you think these people would choose?"

A mocking look appeared on his face as he pointed to the horizon where God-subduing Peak was. "Can't you already tell from that big fellow the Elders Guild has come up with? They're trying to stop the war, right? Using this big fellow to seal off the front line before reconstructing the Avalon of Five Elements. Heh heh, they never would've thought that Blood of God also can't wait for the battle to end so that they can take possession of Old Territory. How many people are there in Old Territory? How many times that of the Avalon of Five Elements's population? Ten percent of the population is going to become blood elementalists. Hahaha, Elders Guild's waiting to be slaughtered! A bunch of short-sighted morons!"

These words fell on Shi Xueman's ear like a sudden clap of thunder. Her limbs were cold. She asked, "Any solutions?"

Feeling jittery inside, Duanmu Huanghun responded, "What solutions can I possibly have? Go and ask Ai Hui."

At that he became distracted. On second thought he felt he was a little mental. Ai Hui was rather powerful but far from being able to solve such issues.

Noticing Shi Xueman’s pale face he sighed, "Don’t think too much. Let the big guys fret. She Yu is preparing to slip away tonight, probably because she’s figured out the Elders Guild’s intention."

Shi Xueman asked abruptly, "How do you know?"

"Inside news." Duanmu Huanghun waved his hand.

Shi Xueman walked toward the door without turning her head back. With murderous eyes she yelled, "I’m gonna kill that bitch!"

Duanmu Huanghun was stunned, but his face quickly changed. He shouted for her while making chase.

"Hey hey hey! Don’t be rash, don’t be rash... Count me in!"

Chapter 323: Watch the Door

Cui Tianzheng observed Shi Xueman. He could vaguely see Shi Beihai's spirit in her perseverance and stubbornness. They even had the same disregard for law and nature.

"Have you considered the consequences?"

His tone was peaceful.

"I did." Shi Xueman said calmly as she met Uncle Cui's gaze.

"Bringing Duanmu Huanghun on board and revealing God-subduing Peak's secret. Using God-subduing Peak without permission, killing Blood of God's diplomatic mission in Jadeite Forest... Have you thought about Elders Guild's reaction?"

Shi Xueman answered in a low voice, "I did. These were my selfish decisions. No one else is to be blamed so I'm willing to take all responsibility for my actions."

Cui Tianzheng looked at her meaningfully. "Why are you so anxious? With your current speed, you can take over your father in another ten years. Twenty years after, and the future of the Avalon of Five Elements will belong to you all. You just have to follow the order. Everything is yours. Be it taking revenge or returning favors, you can act according to your wishes."

"I know," Shi Xueman nodded. "but I also know that once I accept

these things, I will have to obey them. I will have to accept whatever task they give me, whether I like it or not. It’s not mine if I don’t accept it. They need people who are willing to conform."

Duanmu Huanghun, who was standing beside her, laughed silently. He was born into an influential family and knew exactly how Shi Xueman felt.

The one wearing the crown must bear its weight. Good things were either too difficult to get a hold of, or obtained at the expense of everything else.

Cui Tianzheng pleaded earnestly, "Youngsters need patience. What can’t be done once you have the power? You have a long life ahead of you."

Shi Xueman shook her head. "I will be old by then. I should do what the twenty year old me wants to when I’m twenty, do what the thirty year old me wants to when I’m thirty, and do what the forty year old me wants to when I’m forty. I should do whatever, whenever I feel like. There’s no point waiting. I won’t be able to do anything when I’m old."

Duanmu Huanghun was startled by her words.

Cui Tianzheng asked helplessly, "Aren’t you afraid of dragging your father down?"

Shi Xueman blinked. "Those were my father’s words."

Cui Tianzheng sat mute, only shaking his head after a long time. "Both father and daughter are really worrisome. Okay then, since my duty is to ensure that God-subduing Peak does not fall into enemy hands. You're in charge of everything else, so I'll leave it up to you."

As a Master, Cui Tianzheng held a high position. As for God-subduing Peak being snatched away? He wasn't the least bit worried. Even if Dai Gang were to attempt it personally, he would have to pay a huge price in order to seize it.

"Let's go then."

Shi Xueman commanded straightforwardly.

Citizens of Jadeite Forest were shocked to see God-subduing Peak light up suddenly in the night outside the city.

Whoosh whoosh. The thick and solid old vine was like a chained anchor, freshly pulled up from the sea. On its faint, transparent glowing shield, streaks of dazzling light scars were flickering non-stop.

The giant peak sailed unhurriedly in the sky with its intense elemental energy waves dispersing in the air. The gale swept that across Jadeite City and God-subduing Peak was a gradually migrating elemental energy windstorm.

Could it be that God-subduing Peak was really going to attack Jadeite Forest City?

An intense fear shrouded the city.

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Outside Peace City.

A typical yet eye-catching Old Territory-style caravan could be seen.

It was different from the Avalon of Five Elements's. Old Territory was home to a vast jumble of people. The pace of living was slower and many customs and habits from the cultivation era remained here. Of course, in the eyes of people in the Avalon of Five Elements, those traditions were in patches and useless.

There was a shortage of resources and elemental energies was scarce. Additionally, it used to be the core of the Cultivation Era, so there were many artifacts and grotto-heavens left behind by the sects that were now seen as garbage.

Old Territory's patchy style had always been this way – the upper body was covered in sturdy armor that was refined by body-tempering sect from thirty thousand years ago, and the lower body was covered in skirt armor fashioned by some sect from seventy thousand years ago. People carried a cult-ish chopper from an unknown period and they either had a priest hat or conical

bamboo hat on their head. Shoes were the most cumbersome; only overflowing luck would allow someone to find a matching pair.

Most wore different shoes on both feet and businessmen racked their brains over this issue. For example, if one had Tigerhead Wind-resistant Shoe on the left foot and Greendragon-On-Cloud Shoe on the right, the combination is called Walking Dragon, Sprinting Tiger. Other shoes like Idlecloud Wild Crane, Double Sword and Flaming Wind Assistance could fetch a good price.

But in these past few years, due to wars, prices rose ridiculously. It was absolutely impossible for things to be like in the past, where items were sold by weight.

Even Silver Mist Sea, which was unlocked twice every month, changed to just once a month. In order to prevent the volume of water from dropping too low, Silver Mist Sea tried to empty out the golden ores to increase the metal elemental energy in the sea.

Old Territory's patchy style had been a topic of ridicule in the Avalon of Five Elements. To them, it represented retrogress, poverty and decay.

Nevertheless, when the Old Territory caravan appeared outside Peace City, many pairs of eyes turned bloodshot. That seemingly patched up bit of treasure was actually worth quite a lot today.

All thanks to that damned Blood of God!

Blood of God practiced blood spiritual force so some artifacts could still function in their hands. This led directly to a price hike in those artifact remnants.

People’s eyes were red but no one dared to do anything. For any caravan to move about so boldly in the Avalon of Five Elements, it must not be an easy target. A few guards from the caravan were legitimate elementalists with decent abilities. They were swift and fierce, and their gears were impressive.

"Screw it, why am I feeling a little nervous? Let me have a sweet to calm my nerves."

The leader of the caravan was a solidly armored fatty. He took a malt candy out and popped it into his mouth with a cackling sound.

I have to show Ai Hui the result of three years of hard work!

I haven’t just been doing nothing these three years!

A Hui, get ready to be shocked!

He chomped the candy down, gnashing his teeth. He’d been suffering for three bitter years for this moment. He took a deep breath and stopped a passerby.

"Excuse me, may I know how to get to Swordsman Training Hall?"

.....

Swordsman Training Hall entrance.

There were two more figures beside Venerable Volcano this time. Devilish Tong Gui and icily arrogant Yu Jin were in discomfort. The duo had urgently gathered a batch of precious ingredients, finally getting the chance to get a bowl of congee.

But they were called out by Tian Huzun to watch the door with him even before they could step into the training hall.

When Venerable Volcano spoke, none dared to disobey.

The pitiful Sky Edge Division's vice division leaders had never guarded the door for anyone. With eyes on them, both felt uncomfortable all over.

Yet, Tian Huzun directed them non-stop and they had no choice but to lower their heads and obey.

"...Don't let anyone in easily. This is our principle. Look, you guys went to so much effort but have yet to drink the porridge. Others got it so easily, can you bear this? If I were you guys, I wouldn't be able to. Hmm, since Old Yuchi is here, let's just fight first. It's not like we haven't fought anyway."

Cold sweat poured out of their bodies as they tried to breathe as quietly as they could.

Tian Huzun became excited, waving his hand in big motions. "The trick to guarding is to control your eyes! Like a staring contest, you need a fierce gaze so those who are trying to take advantage will cower upon meeting your gaze. As the saying goes, a gentleman is magnanimous whereas a vile person conceals his intention. Hey! Who let you in?"

Already in front of the entrance, the middle-aged man jumped up in fright. His face changed upon getting a clear view of who the three men by the door were.

The middle-aged man instantly gave a charming look and dashed toward Tong Gui and Yu Jin, saying respectfully, "But Tong Gui and Yu Jin? I'm He Cheng, a teacher of Dragonrise Training Hall. The hall owner heard that Miao Hai'd challenged Ai Hui to a battle without reporting to the headquarters and was furious about it. In order to apologize, he specially sent your humble one to prepare a gift that expresses our sincere apologies toward Sir Ai Hui. Who would've thought that I'd be lucky enough to bump into you masters here. How honored..."

He Cheng's tone was passionate and he spoke really fast.

"Dragonrise Training Hall..." A ray of light flashed across Tong Gui's eyes as he made eye contact with Yu Jin.

Dragonrise had a profound background. The owner, Yang Zhen,

wasn’t somebody they were willing to provoke.

Tong Gui was about to open his mouth when he heard Tian Huzun’s impatient voice, "Put the things down and leave."

He Cheng flew into a rage. "You old fellow, I’ll have you know that this is the owner’s good intention..."

Bang!

A foot smashed into He Cheng’s face. As if he’d been knocked right over by a sprinting, violent, wild beast, he flew more than thirty meters away, losing consciousness.

Tong Gui’s pupils instantly shrunk. That leg...

He’d seen it clearly. There was a golden dragon symbol on He Cheng’s garment. He was a golden dragon teacher. If that teacher wasn’t able to block that kick, would he himself have been able to dodge it?"

Tong Gui broke out in a cold sweat. He wasn’t the least bit confident.

Tian Huzun casually picked up the items off the ground. They were the gifts He Cheng had carried with him. The old man was extremely displeased. "That fellow is great and all, except that he’s a stingy miser and will not stand losing out at all."

Fatty, who’d arrived at the entrance and witnessed the scene, was dumbstruck.

The caravan guards had the same pale look on their faces.

A thought struck the guard leader, causing his expression to worsen. He whispered in Fatty’s ear in a low voice, "That old man is Venerable Volcano, Tian Huzun. He’s a Master! The masked man is Sky Edge Division’s vice division leader, Tong Gui, and Yu Jin is the woman beside him, a vice division leader as well."

"Watching the door is a small matter. How are you gonna accomplish anything great if you can’t even handle something so trivial..."

The old man lectured endlessly.

Sweat meandered down Fatty’s chubby face as his clothing became soaked with it. Fear filled his beady eyes.

Watching the door...

Ai Hui’s doormen actually consist of a Master and two vice division leaders of a division!

Why were his calves shaking?

Was he in the wrong place?

"Excuse me three gentlemen, is... is this Ai Hui's Swordsman Training Hall?"

Fatty's voice was trembling uncontrollably but no one behind was mocking him. They were in a worser mental state. Before a Master and two vice division leaders, it was already very brave of those who dared talk to them without kneeling down.

The old man gave him a look. "That fellow said he has a fat friend named Qian Dai. Is that you?"

"Yes yes yes!" Fatty answered agitatedly. In this split second, he felt a sense of pride and had completely forgotten that he was here to brag.

The team members beside him stood up straight, puffing their chests out with a proud expression on their faces.

"You can go in, but not the rest."

The old man gave a wave.

Really watching the door...

Fatty swallowed his saliva with some difficulty, quickly bending at his waist in agreeance. Damn it, he had never seen such a VIP!

But another thought quickly filled his mind. Ai Hui was rich now!

Oh my, I’m going to be rich too!

Walking into the hall muddle-headed, Fatty heard a joyful voice suddenly.

"Long time no see! Fatty, I’m so happy to see you!"

Fatty jerked a little before raising his head.

He saw that familiar figure standing before him, smiling and Lou Lan cheering at him with his arms raised.

Countless figures gathered before him. There were people from the Wilderness and Central Pine City. Tears blurred his vision and when he could see clearly again, Fatty’s mouth trembled as he started to cry.

"Ai Hui!"

Chapter 324: Impossible To Understand

"Nonsense!"

An angry boom echoed through the meeting room. Great Elder seldom got angry on the monthly Bigtree Meeting.

The Bigtree Meeting was the most highly regarded meeting in all of the Avalon of Five Elements. Every Elder had to participate in this monthly gathering. Because the Elders were powerful and busy figures, it was difficult for all of them to assemble. As such, the Avalon forked out a tremendous sum to grow 13 elder trees.

Each elder tree had only 13 leaves and each leaf was about the size of a tabletop. It could project an Elder's silhouette onto the leaf surface such that he appeared to be standing on it.

As such, this monthly Elders Guild meeting was coined the Bigtree Meeting.

"Look, using God-subduing Peak without permission, attacking the Blood of God's diplomatic mission, and causing heavy losses. Over 20 dead! Triggering panic throughout the Jadeite Forest! And kidnapping Duanmu Huanghun! Look at our diplomatic mission team commander! This is the future leader whom we'd selected! What are we doing?"

"Is there such a thing? Is that girl crazy?"

"This must stop! How are we going to function if people come in and do as they please? I suggest severe punishment!"

"It must be severe! Youngsters like her need to be taught a good lesson, but we'd have to inform Shi Beihai first!"

The Elders were talking fervently over one another.

Just then, an Elder's expression turned strange as he spoke, "Wait, everybody."

The other Elders turned around successively.

"A report from Shi Beihai came earlier. Everyone should see it."

"North Sea Division member, Shi Xueman, has seriously broken the rules. She was willful, irresponsible, and has severely affected the interests of the Avalon of Five Elements. After a discussion, the North Sea Division has agreed to expel Shi Xueman as a disciplinary action."

The Elders looked at each other in confusion and did not know what to say. Everyone quieted down.

Shortly, an Elder slowly started to speak up, "Why is Shi Beihai being so rash? Don't youngsters all make mistakes? It's normal for them to be impulsive. A little polishing should do the trick."

"Yeah, it’s over, already over. Why the need to go this far!"

"I’ve seen Xueman grow up and she’s always been sensible and clever. She’s been through the blood battle of Central Pine, and her animosity toward the Blood of God did get the better of her, but it shouldn’t be surprising. She’s young after all."

"The panic in the Jadeite Forest isn’t a bad thing from what I see. Weren’t we trying to intimidate them by sending the God-subduing Peak there? We did well!"

"Shi Beihai is really too rigid and harsh!"

…

The Elders had a headache.

As the division leader of North Sea Division, Shi Beihai had the power to make such a decision. Even as elders, they weren’t able to stop him. However, they really did think highly of Shi Xueman and saw her as the leader of the next generation. Shi Beihai’s direct declaration of her discharge would damage her future prospects heavily, especially in the next election.

Some Elders held flickering gazes since they were secretly pleased.

In the competition among the new generation, Shi Xueman was leading significantly and everyone saw it as foregone conclusion.

Who would've imagined that she would actually do something as silly as this to withdraw from the race and ruin her own future.

Elders with outstanding sons within their families started to get restless.

Seeing the change in the Elders' expressions, a bitter smile appeared on the corner of Yuchi Ba's mouth. His plans had been completely messed up.

Flying at full speed, the God-subduing Peak was like a wave-splitting whale, smashing the sharp, bitingly cold wind into pieces that flew in all directions. Even as it was moving at such a high speed, however, the God-subduing Peak remained as motionless and stable as a boulder.

The sea of clouds in front was thick and the mountain range could only be seen from the bottom.

"Cloud Ridge is just ahead." Sang Zhijun smiled gleefully. "It's great that we'll be able to make it in time for Lou Lan's porridge feast."

Including Shi Xueman, there were many other Central Pine survivors who'd tendered their resignation together and had received approval.

"Is it worth it?" Duanmu Huanghun asked suddenly. He simply could not understand what these people were thinking.

"Of course!" Shi Xueman answered bluntly. "Just thinking about being able to reunite with everyone makes me super happy. I don’t know why but I’m just so happy. No messy and complicated matters. No distracting thoughts and qualms."

"Yeah." Sang Zhijun smiled as well. "In the past, I thought that battling blood elementalists and beasts was tiring and terrifying, but after coming out, I realized that there were many things that were more tedious and horrifying than those."

Duanmu Huanghun felt rather envious.

"Don’t forget that you’re a hostage!" Shi Xueman glared at Duanmu Huanghun, but was unable to stifle a smile. "You have a good brain and many evil tricks up your sleeves, so think hard about what everybody should do. Ai Hui will whack you if you can’t come up with any good solutions."

"Hostage?" Duanmu Huanghun reacted. "Yeah, I got kidnapped. The Jadeite Forest is asking you guys what the Elders Guild wants?"

"Oh well." Shi Xueman blinked before saying, " I forgot to tell you that I’ve been expelled from the North Sea Division."

"Ex... expelled by the North Sea Division?" Duanmu Huanghun almost lost his voice. "Is that even possible?"

"No choice. That’s what you get when you have a great father. Don’t worry, I’ve already written a letter to inform him that you’re doing fine."

Duanmu Huanghun’s eyes lit up. Yeah, he was a hostage. Did that not mean that he was free? He felt cheery instantly, as if the bright sunlight had driven away the dark clouds and night sky. He was inexplicably agitated.

He was finally experiencing the happiness that Shi Xueman and Sang Zhijun had just been talking about earlier.

That’s right, simply happy!

All of a sudden, he was looking forward to his future and became overwhelmed by it all.

The God-subduing Peak flew past Cloud Ridge and descended rapidly, charging into the boundless pitch-black sea of clouds. Amid the whistling wind, they held their breaths as if waiting for something.

Crashing through the sea of clouds and the last wisp of fog, a bustling city entered their field of view. Everybody cheered in harmony.

"Uncle Cui, I’ll leave the God-subduing Peak to you. We’ll get going now!"

Shi Xueman bid Cui Tianzheng goodbye confidently before grabbing Duanmu Huanghun and leaping out.

"Let go! I can fly by myself!"

"Shut it! Such a pesky hostage!"

Duanmu Huanghun’s resentful voice and Shi Xueman’s chiding tone filled the air.

"Bye, Master Cui!"

Sang Zhijun and the others bowed, smiled at everyone else, and cheered before running toward the edge of the summit and leaping down.

Cui Tianzheng smiled slightly. How good it was to be young!"

Cui Tianzheng suddenly felt a fondness toward these youngsters. He felt the thriving vitality they possessed. A completely different kind of vigor when compared to that of the Avalon of Five Elements.

When he looked at the vast land and the distant blue sky, he was filled with hope all of a sudden.

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Swordsman Training Hall entrance.

"Shi Xueman was being expelled from North Sea Divsion?"

A member of the Sky Edge Division quickly landed before Tong Gui and gave his report in a low voice. Tong Gui opened his eyes wide and even Yu Jin's never-changing face revealed a hint of shock.

Tong Gui and Yu Jin were genuinely shocked. Shi Xueman's popularity had been rising daily for three years. She had long since been referred to and acknowledged as the number one member of the new generation.

Of noble origin, Shi family was one of the longest standing aristocratic family in the whole history of Avalon of Five Elements. Furthermore, Shi Beihai was the division leader of North Sea Division and had overflowing power.

Be it her family background, abilities, or character, she was number one without contention.

Almost everyone opined that she would exceed her father's accomplishments and become the future leader of the Avalon of Five Elements. New citizens thought so as well.

New citizens had never thought of fighting against the aristocratic families for that position because they were simply too weak. They occupied only three out of 13 seats in the Elders Guild.

Neutral Faction held three as well and the remaining seven seats were taken by the respective aristocratic families. Basically, when it came to decision making, the families could easily put plans into effect without any hindrance.

New citizens absolutely did not think about fighting for the first position. They merely hoped to expand their freedom of speech.

Their previous target was Jiang Wei, but they realized later on that Ai Hui was the better candidate.

The aristocratic families were worried that Ai Hui would steal Shi Xueman's limelight, whereas new citizens focused on the unique relationship between those two. Ai Hui had better abilities than Jiang Wei, and his reputation and influence were not things Jiang Wei could compete with. Plus, Shi Xueman had even once assumed the role of Ai Hui's assistant.

Shi Xueman had more respect for Ai Hui than for Jiang Wei.

When Shi Xueman took charge of the Avalon of Five Elements in future, they could push Ai Hui into the Elders Guild. That way, Ai Hui would undoubtedly have decent speaking power, something the new citizens intended.

Yet, in just one night, circumstances had changed drastically.

Tong Gui and Yu Jin were caught unprepared. They had a clearer picture of Old Ba's idea.

In this way, previous plans fell through just like that. If Shi Xueman did not become the Avalon's leader, Ai Hui's value would drop greatly as well.

Even worse, it was difficult for Ai Hui to become a threat to Shi Xueman. Toward other candidates, however, it was a different story.

Tong Gui and Yu Jin had splitting headaches.

This could lead the aristocratic families to erroneously think that the new citizens were after the first position. If unresolved, new citizens would be completely suppressed by the aristocratic families. This was precisely what the new citizens wanted to avoid.

If both parties broke out in a full-fledged fight, the new citizens were sure to lose.

What now?

Both of them were at a loss. Things changed too quickly, catching them off guard.

Suddenly, a group of people appeared in the alleyway.

"I have not seen Lou Lan in a long time. I miss him!"

"Lou Lan healthcare!"

"I want porridge!"

...

Wait. Tong Gui and Yu Jin's pupils shrank immediately as they fixed their gaze on the foremost, beautiful figure.

Shi... Shi Xueman!

They made eye contact and saw the shock in each other's eyes.

Shi Xueman, who had just be expelled by the North Sea Division, was actually in Peace City to visit Ai Hui's Swordsman Training Hall. Beside her was her assistant, Sang Zhijun. And could that person she was carrying... be Duanmu Huanghun?

No way...

They both felt as if they'd been struck by lightning as their minds turned blank.

What was going on?

Why was it getting harder and harder for them to understand?

Chapter 325: Porridge Almost Done

The news that Shi Xueman was expelled and was heading for Ai Hui's Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge feast spread across Avalon of Five Elements like a wildfire.

The whole Avalon was in an uproar.

As the number one of the new generation, Shi Xueman was the most perfect goddess in the eyes of ordinary people. She was born into a noble family, trained hard since young, homeschooled, well-mannered, tenacious, and responsible. She had never ever had any negative publicity.

As if the news of her abrupt expulsion was not already earth-shattering, her appearance at the Swordsman Training Hall in Peace City triggered endless wild thoughts.

Many people felt that it was a pity since it was now impossible for her to become the next leader. None of the successive Great Elders of the Avalon of Five Elements had ever made such a grave mistake.

Other than regret, people also felt curious as to what Ai Hui was like as a person.

When Central Pine survivors from all over gathered in Peace City, everyone saw how much influence Ai Hui had over these people. Even Shi Xueman came, pushing Ai Hui's popularity up a few notches.

Because of this matter, no one talked about the master murderer incident anymore. Would Shi Xueman still have came if Ai Hui was really such a vile character?

The most troubling issue was still regarding the New Citizen Faction.

Without the support of the new citizens, Ai Hui was merely a rootless duckweed. No matter how popular he was, he would be no different from Tian Huzun and unable to contend for the position of the next Great Elder. The aristocratic families viewed this as insignificant.

Yet, with the support of the new citizens, Ai Hui was highly likely to become the next Great Elder, thus becoming a threat.

In other words, if the new citizens supported Ai Hui, it was equivalent to them declaring their intention of taking the position of the next Great Elder. Undoubtedly, that would lead to a full-on protest from the aristocratic families' side.

On the other hand, if they gave up on Ai Hui, it meant that they would be offending the whole Central Pine faction. To the aristocratic families, they would still have sufficient power even without the Central Pine faction. To the new citizens, however, losing the Central Pine Faction, where 90% of the members were new citizens, would cause a long-term loss.

To the new citizens, it was a tough decision to make.

To Ai Hui and gang, they had no time to worry about these fights and schemes.

Shi Xueman and her group’s arrival pushed the party atmosphere to a new high.

The core group of Central Pine survivors were all here.

Ai Hui, Shi Xueman, Duanmu Huanghun, Jiang Wei, Sang Zhijun, Wang Xiaoshan, and the A-1 unit. One could easily imagine the excitement and joy this reunion brought.

The busiest was Bangwan.

"Bangwan, I heard you got defeated by One Thousand Yuan?"

"Bangwan, I heard you’re here as a hostage?"

"Bangwan, I heard you got intoxicated in brothels every night?"

"Bangwan, I heard you’re looking for a wife? Want us to help you arrange a blind date?"

"Bangwan..."

"Big Sister is still the best! Or else Bangwan would still be getting

drunk in brothels!"

Lou Lan was busily boiling the Eight Treasures Porridge.

There was a big iron cooking pot, and complicated patterns were drawn on the ground. It was a spell formation. Up until now, the earth fire had already been burning for a whole 10 days. More than 1,000 elemental essence beans and 200 blood crystals had been consumed, while the number of precious ingredients thrown in was uncountable.

In all of Lou Lan's elemental cooking career, this was his first time taking on such a large-scale project.

On one hand, seeing expensive ingredients carelessly being thrown into the pot everyday made Fatty's heart ache, but on the other hand, the fragrance drifting out of the pot made him drool freely.

Fatty could not endure it any longer. "Lou Lan, how much longer do you need?"

"It's almost done." Lou Lan cheered on, "Go, go, Fatty, hang in there."

Fatty was a fire elementalist, and over the past three years, he had never stopped training. He had long since attained elemental externalization and could help Lou Lan brew the Eight Treasures Porridge.

But, Lou Lan's preparation method was quite different from the others.

The drawings on the ground were spell formations were called elemental energy formations, and they were products Ai Hui had researched according to his master's theories. Fatty did not quite understand elemental energy formations, but as a fire elementalist, he had a deeper understanding of flames than most.

The flames used to cook the Eight Treasures Porridge were from the subterranean earth fire, but Fatty could guarantee that he had never seen such fierce flames. Plus, the flames were exceptionally condensed. He could no longer feel any heatwaves upon walking mere steps away from the fire.

As a fire elementalist, he knew just how difficult this was.

These three years, other than his artifact remnant business, he had not been the least bit lazy when it came to training. He was no longer that insensible and ignorant newbie. He was no longer that lazy fatty who wanted to lie down all day to bask in the sun.

Lou Lan was a sand puppet made for controlling earth, not fire elemental energy.

The concentrated, blazing flame before his eyes came from this so called elemental energy formation. Having done business for three years, Fatty saw things very differently now. One look and he could tell that this elemental energy formation possessed an

immense value.

"Ai Hui, this elemental energy formation is good stuff. Are there any other types?"

Ai Hui looked at Fatty, somewhat flabbergasted. He never thought that Fatty would the first person to notice its value. He asked curiously, "What do you think this is good for?"

"Many things!" Fatty's spirit rose. "I've never seen such a powerful earth fire. It can be used to forge metal and brew elemental soup. If it's too expensive, can't we find cheaper ingredients to make a fire pool? Even if we use it to breed Inferno Dragonsnakes, we will strike it rich. Fire type ingredients are very valuable since the Fire Prairie is gone and other earth fire aren't powerful enough. Plus, isn't the lesser Avalon going to be reconstructed? There will be fire elemental cities, so fire elemental ingredients will be in great demand. We will make huge profits by obtaining batches of those ingredients."

"Sure, Fatty. I see that the past three years have not been wasted." Ai Hui sized Fatty up and commented in shock, "You did not reduce in size, but your knowledge and experience have increased decently, eh."

"Just a little less than you." Fatty acted humble, but the satisfaction on his face simply could not be concealed.

Still, after seeing the luxurious lineup of door guards, Fatty felt it was better for him to be less showy.

Just then, Lou Lan reminded them, "The porridge is almost ready!"

Ai Hui and Fatty's attention was immediately drawn to the aroma that filled the air. The porridge in the big pot was like gluey lava, bubbling nonstop. As each bubble burst, the fragrance in the air thickened.

The training hall turned quieter as everybody's gaze fell to where Lou Lan was standing. How sweet smelling!

Gulp.

The sound of someone swallowing his saliva rang loud and clear through the hall, but no one laughed at him since they could all feel their saliva starting to overflow.

The light in Tian Huzun's eyes brightened. He felt touched. He had the strongest abilities and could tell better than anyone else that this exotic, delicate fragrance was not an ordinary scent, but a type that was made up of extremely complex elemental energy.

Elemental energy's delicate fragrance!

No one else would recognize this, but being experienced and knowledgeable, Tian Huzun had seen it before from the strongest dire beast he had ever encountered in his life!

A deep space sperm whale!

By chance, he had met a deep space sperm whale, thousands of miles up in the sky. The sight of the whale swimming about leisurely was unforgettable. Wherever it passed, a delicate fragrance curled up like fallen petals.

That exotic, delicate fragrance was elemental energy!

Elemental energy fragrance was different from other forms. One would still be unable to block it off even if he or she shut off your sense of smell. This fragrance was essentially made up of complicated, ever-changing elemental energy.

Tian Huzun clearly remembered that he was looking at that whale with eyes wide open As it swam past him, his mind went blank momentarily.

He was pleasantly surprised. Before, he was still somewhat in doubt, but at this point, he was 100% sure that this porridge was really extraordinary!

No one could resist this delicate fragrance.

Other organisms, not just humans, had no power to resist such a scent as well.

"Ai Hui, I’m going to throw the fire lotus seeds in now!"

Lou Lan’s voice roused Ai Hui. Putting in the fire lotus seeds was the last step. Ai Hui did not forget Lou Lan’s reminder that this step might cause an accident.

Ai Hui asked Lou Lan what might happen, but Lou Lan was also uncertain since he had never cooked such an expensive elemental cuisine before.

"Be alert, everybody."

Ai Hui shouted at the top of his voice, asking everybody to stand guard.

He was unsure what situation would arise, but it was always better to be prepared.

Shi Xueman and the others quickly regained their alertness, and their faces changed slightly. They stood guard in their respective positions. They had always had complete confidence in Ai Hui’s judgments. While they did not know why he asked everyone to be on guard at this time, everyone knew that something was definitely going to happen.

Tong Gui and Yu Jin’s eyes met, and they both saw the bafflement in each other’s eyes. Could it be that someone was here to steal the porridge?

Nevertheless, Tian Huzun picked up that greasy fire vat without

a word and hovered into the air gracefully. At this moment, there was a solemn look on his disheveled face.

Perhaps there really was such a turn of events?

Right now, all of Lou Lan's attention was on the big pot. The light in his eyes flickered as he concentrated.

His fingers moved quickly as fire lotus seeds appeared and disappeared out of sight. Moving very naturally, the shadow of his fingers was like a blossoming flower. The sight of elemental energy surging between his fingers was dazzling.

The outer shells of the fire lotus seeds were like a mixture of ice and snow, revealing the red ceramic-like lotus seed kernels. In the center was a wisp of weak flame, the lotus seed core.

The sparkling and translucent fire lotus seed kernels drew a beautiful parabola before falling into a bubble that had just burst.

Whoosh. A wisp of flame flared up from the porridge. An astonishing elemental energy wave spread with a loud rumble.

Lou Lan's eyes flickered incessantly, his fingers moving rapidly as he peeled the shells off the fire lotus seeds and threw them into the big pot one after another.

Wisps of flames rose as the elemental energy waves grew increasingly intense.

Each elemental energy wave triggered additional waves from the surrounding elemental energy. Quickly, these waves extended throughout Peace City and the elemental energy of the whole city stirred.

Everybody in Peace City put down what they were doing and looked toward the Swordsman Training Hall in shock.

Thump, thump, thump!

Beating powerfully, it was just like a giant heart.

Chapter 326: Lesser Tribulation

Boom, boom, boom!

As if a monster was underground, the ground shook along with the elemental energy waves.

The audience in the hall couldn't stand properly on their feet. They glanced around and saw the shock in each other's eyes.

Ai Hui asked aloud, "Lou Lan, what's going on?"

"It might be a Lesser Tribulation! Ai Hui!" Lou Lan replied loudly.

What was that? Everybody was stunned. They'd never heard of such a thing.

Lesser Tribulation? Ai Hui was also stunned. He'd come across this term a lot in ancient books from the Cultivation Era. Lesser Tribulations had been common in that era. For example, when cultivators broke into higher realms, all sorts of Tribulations might befall them. The birth of some powerful weapons and elixirs could also face Tribulations.

In the cultivators' understanding, Tribulations were God's test.

There were Great Tribulations and Lesser Tribulations, and some powerful Tribulations which intimidated even the strongest

cultivators. During that Cultivation Era, countless cultivators were destroyed, physically and mentally, by these Tribulations.

Later on, the cultivators started regarding Tribulations as a form of reaction when the resonance of elemental energies occurred. The birth of powerful weapons often triggered a response from Nature's spiritual force; that was the so-called Tribulation.

Now, however, it was the Elemental Era and there wasn't any spiritual force, so why would there be a Tribulation?

Was it possible that elemental energy could create Tribulations?

Was this Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge so amazing that it could trigger a Tribulation?

As Ai Hui was feeling skeptical over this, the ground shook.

Boom!

A heavy sound rang from underground as the training hall's ground suddenly sank. Countless cracks suddenly appeared on the surface, just like a spider web.

Everyone was frightened by this sudden change of events.

"This is an Earth Elemental Tribulation!" Lou Lan shouted.

Boom. With another sound, the hall sank further down. It was as if a pair of invisible hands was underground, forcefully dragging them downward.

The strange thing was that, despite the intense shaking of the ground, that big pot of porridge remained motionless, without even a single drop overflowing.

Ai Hui asked urgently, "Lou Lan, any solution?"

Lou Lan stared at the ground, his eyes flickering quickly. Shortly, he replied, "The earth elemental energy underground is isolated from the surrounding elemental energy, so we have to break this barrier in order to connect them!"

While Ai Hui did not really comprehend, Wang Xiaoshan got it instantly. "Let me try!"

He crouched down and placed both palms on the ground. The underground earth elemental energy surfaced and he immediately felt the barrier Lou Lan was talking about. Where the training hall was located and its surrounding land used to be a whole entity, but now they were like pieces cut out from a cake, isolated from the elemental energy in the surrounding ground.

The earth elemental energy deep underground had become exceptionally active, increasing its attractive force and causing the unconnected training hall to sink unceasingly.

The ground surface around Wang Xiaoshan’s palms suddenly turned soft like mud and a section rose up and instantly hardened into rock. Countless lumps of mud flew up from a quagmire in front of him like wyverns and a bridge made of rocks was quickly created.

The other end of the rock bridge reached the ground outside the training hall.

The moment the bridge was completed, the ground jerked and stopped sinking.

Wang Xiaoshan remained expressionless as he started building the second rock bridge. Upon construction, the ground started to rise slowly. Upon the construction of the third bridge, the invisible layer of barrier between the training hall and the surrounding soil started to melt like ice.

Two minutes later, the cracks on the ground vanished and the swordsman training hall returned to its usual condition, as if nothing had happened.

Everybody heaved a sigh of relief at the same time.

Lou Lan reminded everybody, "Eight Treasures Porridge contained all five elements, so there might be five types of Tribulation."

"That was Earth Elemental Tribulation, so what’s the next one?"

"How magical, this Eight Treasures Porridge is so powerful that it could bring about a Tribulation!"

"Eye-opening!"

"Hey, do you feel a little hot?"

Everyone fell into a short daze as they immediately noticed that the surrounding temperature had gone up by quite a bit.

"Fire Elemental Tribulation?"

But where was the fire going to come from?

The sunlight seemed to be getting more glaring. Wait, the Sun?

Everyone started getting a sense of things and quickly raised their heads. Unknowingly, the clouds, which were once above their heads, were no longer there. Instead, the blazing sunlight cascaded down.

It grew increasingly intense and, all of a sudden, a spark flashed across the sunlight.

Fire Elemental Tribulation indeed!

Fatty was just about to speak when an excited voice boomed. "Let me!"

Tian Huzun carried the greasy fire vat and appeared above the audience’s heads the next moment.

The citizens of Peace City looked on in shock as a piercing light beam descended from the sky, enveloping Swordsman Training Hall. The beam became increasingly bright and sparks started to flashed past. A minute later, the sparks turned into bright orange flames that descended like rain.

Alarmed cries sounded simultaneously.

What was that?

Peace City’s citizens were overwhelmed with shock.

Tian Huzun, who had positioned himself above the training hall, felt inexpressibly excited as the light in his eyes grew. He had a premonition that this Eight Treasures Porridge would be extraordinary. Such exceptional phenomenon occurred even before the porridge was fully cooked.

Plus... these flames were good stuff!

Tian Huzun inhaled deeply, his elemental energy surging. His once crooked and stubby body appeared a little taller and mightier now, and there was no anger on his face. He wrapped the vat with

both arms, his body slightly crouching. His overall posture was akin to that of a golden toad carrying a jar that swallowed light.

Then came a long laughter, bold and at ease.

"Come, come, come, everybody come over to my bowl!"

The fire raining down from within the light beam flew towards and into Tian Huzun’s fire vat. The red glow from the greasy vat brightened dramatically like a heated iron vat.

The fire rain lasted for a whole five minutes. Tian Huzun’s fire vat did not seem all that large, but it was like a bottomless pit, taking everything in without any sign of overflowing.

When the last bits of fire rain flew into the vat, the splendid light beam collapsed without a sound as countless fragments flew about like snow, disappearing into the vat in the blink of an eye.

Tian Huzun laughed out loud, landing on the ground with the fire vat in his hands.

The big fire vat was like a raging volcano. The flames rolled around inside and those nearby could feel the heatwaves coming from it.

"Stay further away. It’s not completely refined yet so don’t blame me if you guys get hurt."

Tian Huzun was beyond satisfied.

Ai Hui’s voice sounded abruptly. "Half each!"

Tian Huzun’s body stiffened but he responded nonchalantly, "What do you mean, half each?"

Ai Hui gave a bitter smile. "If you don’t offer my share, don’t blame me if I do the same."

Tian Huzun knew he couldn’t keep it from Ai Hui and could only say, "You’re not even a fire elementalist so what do you need this for?"

Ai Hui couldn’t be bothered. "Are you giving it or not?"

Tian Huzun was bleeding inside but he clenched his teeth and replied, "Yes! Half each!"

Tong Gui and Yu Jin were utterly shocked by what they’d just seen. It was even more mind-blowing than whatever Tribulations had just occurred. Ai Hui had actually talked to Tian Huzun so boldly? Ai Hui had actually threatened Venerable Volcano!

Ai Hui stopped caring about Tian Huzun as he turned his attention to Shi Xueman. "Iron Lady, it will be your turn soon."

Earth Elemental Tribulation, Fire Elemental Tribulation... if nothing went wrong, the next should be Water Elemental Tribulation.

The reappearance of this nickname caused Shi Xueman to feel somewhat familiar, yet embarrassed. She shot Ai Hui a death glare, snorted, and grabbed hold of her Cirrus as she made her preparations.

Ai Hui muttered to himself, "Iron Lady’s temper is rising, eh!"

Fatty played along, saying, "Everyone’s just been expelled and aren’t feeling good, so don’t pour salt on their wounds, Ai Hui!"

"Oh, is that the case!"

Shi Xueman was this close to dashing over and giving them a good beating.

Just then, dark clouds gathered from all directions and quickly turned pitch black. The intense pressure made everyone feel as if a great enemy was approaching.

But time passed without any movements. No lightning, rolling thunder, or rainstorms.

It was beyond silent.

Quickly, Ai Hui and the gang sensed something amiss; it was simply too quiet!

Fatty felt somewhat sleepy. Something within his body was draining away slowly as his eyelids got heavier.

"Stay awake people!"

Ai Hui’s shout woke Fatty up with a quiver, but soon after, his whole body felt weaker and weaker as his eyelids became heavier and heavier.

"Do not sleep, this is a land of fantasy!"

Ai Hui shouted once again, anxiety rising within his chest. He too, had almost fallen asleep. Just then, his Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp had activated itself, thus jolting him awake.

The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp’s spontaneous activation made Ai Hui realize that this was the land of fantasy.

While the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp could shield him from the effects of the fantasyland, it wasn’t able to do the same for the rest.

What to do?

Ai Hui caught a glimpse of Iron lady from the corner of his eye

and was stunned. She held onto her spear, her eyes clear and bright. She seemed to be completely unaffected by the illusion.

"Let me!"

The Cirrus in Shi Xueman’s hand transformed into a ball of mist. It started spinning and becoming a whirlpool.

Hissss!

Threads of bright light rays appeared amidst the darkness. They gathered from all over and entered the mist-formed whirlpool in Shi Xueman’s hand.

It was as if the mist-formed whirlpool was infected with the clouds, causing it to become bright and multicolored. Shi Xueman maintained an extremely stern expression.

When the last wisp of light entered the whirlpool, Shi Xueman opened her palms and caught it.

Clap!

The mist-formed whirlpool reappeared and turned into a cloud spear, one that was completely different from Cirrus. A pitch-black, veined pattern was now on the spear’s snow-white body. There was an additional multicolored cloud within the azure spearhead.

Ai Hui could see the grave expression on Shi Xueman’s face.

As if noticing Ai Hui’s troubled gaze, Shi Xueman blurted, "I’m fine."

Ai Hui gave her a nod. "Don’t be careless," Ai Hui reminded.

Feeling the concern in Ai Hui’s voice, Shi Xueman felt indescribably delighted. She nodded in understanding.

The surrounding darkness retreated like waves and the dark clouds overhead vanished.

Many woke up, as if from a dream, not knowing what had happened. People like Tian Huzun and Tong Gui, however, had serious faces as they were aware of the danger that had just passed.

Yu Jin suddenly spoke up. "It was an illusion."

"Yeah, a very powerful illusion." Tong Gui spoke from behind his mask. His tone was grave as he’d experienced its power for himself.

Just that... the Central Pine FAction was indeed extraordinary!

In a complex frame of mind, he diverted his gaze toward Ai Hui.

Everyone was feeling tense. Two more Tribulations!

Chapter 327: Distributing the Porridge

Duanmu Huanghun was feeling unreasonably nervous, but he was also somewhat excited.

What would the Wood Elemental Tribulation be?

He had no idea since he'd never heard of Tribulations. The three that had happened earlier really widened his horizons. Tension, anticipation, and the feeling of the unknown were foreign, yet stimulating.

He thought of Jadeite Forest all of a sudden. Over there, he had power, a high status, countless servants, and inexhaustible wealth, but living with that rigid lifestyle full of fake smiles and etiquette meant that corner fights were inevitable. Comradery was dirt cheap and virtues were dazzling gold leaves attached to decayed, dried up bones.

That beautiful cage was the battleground for ravenous wolves and hyenas.

In Jadeite City, everything could be made into a deal. Emotions like hatred could be balanced against benefits and interests, but Duanmu Huanghun did not know how to convert such emotions.

He preferred it here, where the air was filled with joy and gratitude.

The intense wood elemental energy waves pulled him back to reality.

Blades of grass broke through the ground and grew at crazy speeds. They struggled free from the soil and flew toward the big pot like green darts.

Everyone responded very quickly as they reached out their hands to stop the incoming grass.

The grass blades released blood-curdling shrieks and transformed into balls of mist upon being struck. Everyone's hair stood on end; it was their first time hearing such miserable shrieks coming from grass blades.

When the last blade was struck down, the cries stopped.

The green mist rose in spirals within the training hall. It did not dissipate, but surrounded and circled the big pot instead. They spun faster and faster, causing an ear-piercing, mournful whistling sound that resembled the bawling of a certain wild beast.

What in the world?

Everyone was bewildered.

It was even more strange that no matter how hard they tried, they were unable to break up the green fog. The gale only heaved it upward without dispersing it. Tian Huzun had initially thought

that his flames could restrain the green fog, but who knew that they would be ineffective!

The faint fog thickened and squirmed about like a monster, revolving non-stop around the Eight Treasures Porridge.

Duanmu Huanghun's eyes, which had been shut a moment ago, opened wide as shock filled his face.

He automatically shifted his gaze to Lou Lan. What kind of porridge was he cooking exactly?

Not only him, but other wood elementalists in the hall were also startled.

When he saw Ai Hui and Shi Xueman's distrusting gaze, he spoke up. "These wood elemental energies have changed. To be precise, a certain vitality contained within them has been activated so general methods used against wood elemental energy will be useless."

Shi Xueman looked on pensively. She was homeschooled and had solid and practical knowledge.

Ai Hui, on the other hand, was baffled. Other than metal elemental energy, he was only familiar with earth elemental energy, and this was only because of Lou Lan.

Duanmu Huanghun understood that to other elementalists, the

wood elementalists' field of "vitality" was very difficult to understand. The "vitality" that wood elemental energy contained was something that differentiated it from the other elemental energies and it was also the most profound aspect of wood elemental energy..

After some thought, Duanmu Huanghun explained, "That certain vitality has been aroused by the elemental energy odor from the Eight Treasures Porridge. It can undergo metamorphosis if it swallows this porridge. The wood elemental energy will then regroup and form a new life. To put it in layman's terms, it could become an entity like that of the ancient flower demon."

The green fog surged and released a head-numbing howl. As if knowing that the porridge wasn't ready, it only continued circling around the big pot.

Ai Hui recalled the written accounts from the ancient books. "It's developing spiritual consciousness?"

"It's similar, but not completely identical." Duanmu Huanghun added, "These wood elemental energies can only exist for a short period of time. If they do not seize the porridge successfully, they will dissipate. I'm not too sure what will then become of the entity, but the wood elemental energy will reorganize its body constitution."

The audience was horrified upon hearing Duanmu Huanghun's explanation.

Together with the fear, however, was also anticipation, since the Five Elemental Eght Treasures Porridge had far exceeded their expectations.

Tong Gui and Yu Jin made eye contact and detected the same shock in each other’s eyes. They’d been in the battleground for a long time and had seen and experienced all sorts of strange things, but it was their first time seeing the scene that was unfolding before them.

Ai Hui asked, "Any solutions?"

Duanmu Huanghun nodded. "Yes, but we have to wait a little while. It can only cause chaos now since its spiritual consciousness has not yet been activated. When the Eight Treasures Porridge is about to finish cooking, its energy waves will intensify and that will be our chance."

He stopped talking and started preparing by sprinkling something in certain positions.

The surging green fog did not seem to see or care about what Duanmu Huanghun was sprinkling.

Tong Gui squatted down, moved closer out of curiosity, and realized that they were bamboo stems. He was quickly stunned to see that these shoots were all dried up and did not have the least bit of life in them.

What's so useful about dried up bamboo stems?

Everyone looked on curiously.

Duanmu Huanghun then proceeded to drop a drip of rootless water on each dried-up shoot, a process that puzzled everyone.

The gluey and thick Eight Treasures Porridge bubbled as the red color gradually disappeared. The elemental energy that each burst bubble released was exponentially stronger than the ones before.

The storm-like green fog started to intensify, its cries ear-piercingly high and loud.

Just then, Duanmu Huanghun's every movement caused a ball of green glow to light up under his feet. Immediately following this, viridescent flower vine traces made their way out of the green glow like swimming green dragons.

A bamboo stem was wrapped within each viridescent flower vine.

Eh?

Tong Gui's pupils shrank. Each bamboo stem's position had been calculated carefully. If one were to look down from the sky, it became apparent that each vine was like the flower petal of a viridescent fresh flower that was blooming, and Duanmu Huanghun was standing right in the middle.

Duanmu Huanghun's pupils became two mini viridescent flowers that rotated unhurriedly. An indescribable coldness oozed out from his body.

[Viridescent Flower Eyes]!

He raised his palms suddenly and the vines wrapping around the shoots flew up from the ground and floated in midair.

Whoosh. The blossoming flower beneath his feet started spinning.

Hisssss!

The dried-up bamboo shoots absorbed the green fog ferociously, and as if sensing danger, the fog's screech became even more mournful. In spite of that, it continued to be sucked into the shoots.

The shoots turned plump at a speed observable to the naked eye.

The green fog slowed down and its howls gradually vanished.

[Viridescent Flower Command]!

Thick vitality seemed to overflow from within the bamboo shoots. Suddenly, green buds sprouted out of them. Verdant,

glistening bamboo shoots rose up little by little, shedding off their skin and growing leaves.

In the blink of an eye, the training hall became a verdant bamboo sea.

The leaves and branches swayed along with the rustling of the wind. It was a beautiful scene.

Everybody's jaws dropped. They wondered, was this whole scene still part of the illusion from earlier? There had been all kinds of inconceivable changes that did not make sense to them!

Amid the rustling of the wind, the bamboo sea, like raised curtains, faded away unhurriedly.

Was this really an illusion?

Eh? No!

All eyes were on a small section of bamboo branch that was fluttering in midair. A few fresh green leaves were hanging from the branch. The vast bamboo sea disappeared, leaving only this little branch that fell onto Duanmu Huanghun's open palm.

Joy flashed across Duanmu Huanghun's eyes. With a turn of his palm, the branch vanished as well.

The Duanmu family's [Viridescent Flower] was indeed unfathomably strange.

Tong Gui exclaimed in admiration but was on guard at the same time. Duanmu Huanghun did not look like a hostage at all. His abilities were even more immeasurable than rumored. Rethinking She Yu's victory over Duanmu Huanghun, could it be that She Yu was really that powerful? Or perhaps Duanmu Huanghun chose to conceal his skills?

At this point, he laughed bitterly to himself. Everybody had underestimated the Central Pine Faction.

One more Tribulation was left and practically everyone breathed a sigh of relief. As this thought surfaced within their minds, the Metal Elemental Tribulation arrived spontaneously.

There wasn't any sign at all.

Cracks started appearing on the ground surrounding the big pot. These cracks were like wounds created by sharp blades, crisscrossing and densely packed. They formed a circle, keeping the big pot in the center.

Boom!

Metal wind violently surged up through the cracks.

Lou Lan reacted quickly by withdrawing from the metal wind's

range just in time.

The concentrated metal elemental energy dyed the wind silver-white. A solid, bitingly cold metal wind screen covered the Eight Treasures Porridge.

It was Ai Hui's first time seeing such a terrifying metal wind. Where did this wind come from? It was practically a wind screen made up of countless blade rays!

Yet, he did not panic. Metal wind was something he was rather familiar with after all, since he'd borrowed it for training in the past. Only it hadn't been as intense as the wind currently before his eyes.

He held onto the Dragonspine and walked around the circular wind screen.

His gaze fell upon the crisscrossed cracks on the ground. His eyes lit up.

What people saw as intertwined, random cracks were not so in Ai Hui's eyes. The cracks seemed alive to him. Were they not like scars left by a sword?

He subconsciously moved his sword along the crisscrossed marks.

Eh?

There was clearly nothing on the sword tip, but it moved sluggishly as if it were underwater, making his heart churn.

Having read countless swordplay manuals, Ai Hui was astonishingly efficient since he knew those disordered cracks thoroughly. He knew, however, that this wasn't the time to polish his moves. Breaking the wind screen was top priority.

Eh?

Noting down every point of the cracks, Ai Hui realized that this chaotic sphere looked very much like... the sword formation he himself had fixed up.

Could it be...

Ai Hui shook. It seemed increasingly possible.

If it was a sword formation, then this...

Ai Hui continued drawing and dancing with his sword and people knew that he must have found something. They held their breaths in fear of disrupting his train of thought.

"Ai Hui, we're running out of time!"

Lou Lan's urgent voice interrupted Ai Hui's thoughts.

No time!

Ai Hui clenched his teeth. Silhouette like smoke, sword extending out like electricity, he charged toward the wind screen with a sword ray as bright as ten stars.

Clash!

Like glass, the wind screen shattered loudly.

Ai Hui blanked out. Success?

A figure rushed to his side. It was Lou Lan.

Elemental energy bubbled out from the big pot of crystal clear, gluey porridge. The wisps were like colorful fog slowly flowing.

The brightly colored fog blossomed into colorful flowers upon reaching about a meter away from the pot. Each flower was about the size of a thumb and dissipated in the air in a flash. Some appeared as others faded, creating a beautiful image.

As each flower shattered, a wisp of indescribable fragrance was emitted. As compared to the delicate smell from before, this one was much weaker.

But this faint fragrance entered right into people’s hearts and

spleens, as if cleansing their bodies and purifying their spirits.

Everybody couldn’t help but swallow their saliva. Their noses twitched and their necks stretched.

Tian Huzun’s eyes were practically shining like a torch in the dark night.

"Get ready everybody! Time to distribute the porridge!"

Lou Lan called out joyously, attracting a round of cheers.

"Bangwan, ice bowl!"

"Coming!" Duanmu Huanghun’s spirits rose.

[Viridescent Flower, Icy Fissures]!

Innumerable ice blocks burst open and before they reached the ground, the mini knife-like vines cut them speedily, causing bits and pieces of ice to splatter everywhere, forming ice bowls one after another. When the ice bowl carvings were formed, the vines suddenly turned into soft springs that flung the bowls toward Lou Lan.

The ladle in Lou Lan’s hand moved fast like lightning yet light like a dragonfly brushing over water, pouring the perfect amount of porridge into each bowl.

Ice bowls filled with porridge flew toward and stopped in front of the crowd.

Without a word, they cupped the ice bowl carefully and started eating the porridge in small bites.

Upon entering their mouths, the Eight Treasures Porridge instantly transformed into a warm stream that permeated their bodies. The five residences and eight palaces within started to operate. The elemental energy in their bodies raged incessantly like boiling water.

Those with even just a little experience knew that it was time to execute the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

They hurriedly downed the whole bowl. Slurp, slurp.. With no time to savor the taste, they quickly sat cross-legged on the floor. They did not expect the energy of the Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge to be this mighty.

Ai Hui was also caught off guard.

As he swallowed the porridge, his whole body started to burn and turn red like a cooked prawn. He did not sit down, but took out his Dragonspine instead and started to execute his unique Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

Although the sword embryo was long gone, he preserved this

peculiar way of executing the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

The brightness of the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp within Ai Hui’s sky palace increased sharply.

Chapter 328: Discussion

The porridge feast in Peace City became a trending topic as news travelled around with a marvelous speed.

The different phenomenons that occurred during the cooking process really broadened everybody’s horizons. Elementalists specializing in elemental food were all focusing on research. In order to witness the legendary Tribulations, many made special trips to purchase a message bean pod, causing a rise in sales of message beans in every store.

Silver Mist Sea, Pagoda of Hidden Edge.

"Was it really that magical?" Yuchi Ba’s curious voice sounded from the light cocoon.

Tong Gui stood in front of the cocoon and answered respectfully, "Yes, it was very mystical. Old Tian’s old injury healed completely and while my elemental energy did not increase, I could feel my mental state becoming much more stable and concise."

Yuchi Ba commented in praise, "There’s actually such a capable person among Ai Hui’s subordinates."

Tong Gui reported, "Yes, he is a sand puppet named Lou Lan. I don’t know which expert created him came from but he’s smart and extremely talented. In Central Pine City, he kept by Ai Hui’s side and was very familiar with the rest of the gang as well."

"Go investigate." Yuchi Ba said in a low voice, "I've not heard of a sand puppet who is such an expert at cooking elemental food. Making elemental food that triggered Tribulations, isn't he an elemental food master then? Being able to create such a powerful sand puppet, there's no way that earth elementalist is an obscure figure."

"Yes." Tong Gui agreed. Hesitating, he asked, "Old Ba, this Ai Hui... how and what are we going to do with him next?"

Yuchi Ba laughed. "The rain must fall, the ladies must marry. Let him be."

"Ah?" Tong Gui was stunned. So much effort had been spent on creating this situation, was he going to just let it go like this?

"Shi Xueman seeks shelter from Ai Hui and the position for the next Great Elder is vacant now. All aristocratic families are fighting hard for this position so who has the time and energy to care about him?" Yuchi Ba's tone was filled with ridicule. "As long as we don't take Ai Hui in as our own, all will be peaceful. Just wait, they might even try to get us involved."

Tong Gui said urgently, "But, the backbone of each division in Central Pine has been taken away by Ai Hui. Isn't this a messy situation? And there's Master's Glory. Is Ai Hui getting a place? If not, I'm afraid many from Central Pine will not join as well. Old Ba, your humble servant has been staying in Swordsman Training Hall for a few days now, and I feel that these people are very united

and have already developed the ‘all for one, one for all’ attitude."

"What’s the rush?" Yuchi Ba laughed again. "The cooked meat is in the pot so where else can it go? And so what if Ai Hui and his people moved together? Where else can they go? As long as they remain in the Avalon of Five Elements, we will have our options. Since they’re so adamant on seeking revenge on Blood of God, they can’t rely on Jadeite Forest."

Tong Gui’s eyes lit up.

"Youngsters are often impulsive. Aren’t we also seeking revenge on Blood of God? But the time just isn’t right yet. Ai Hui is just a male eagle that has to be tamed, or else how is he going to listen to us? How is leading a whole bunch of people an easy task? Money, resources, inheritance... does he have them? People are practical creatures. When comradeship is obliterated, there will be nothing left after some time."

Tong Gui nodded his head repeatedly. "Old Ba is wise! Ai Hui can only break in and inhabit the Wilderness if he wishes to provide shelter and support for so many people."

"Youngsters have to be polished or how else would they understand the vastness of the world? How are the aristocratic families going to find time to care about him? They hold the same opinion that since the cooked meat is already in the pot, making a move earlier or later will yield the same result. As long as Ai Hui experiences a little setback, Central Pine City will collapse. That is when everyone will make a move. Aristocratic families are different from us. They have no interest in Ai Hui but they have

their eyes on Central Pine Faction. These youngsters need a little fine-tuning."

Yuchi Ba said leisurely, "Don’t be anxious. We have nothing but time. The fight between aristocratic families is not going to conclude any time soon."

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A heated discussion was in progress in Swordsman Training Hall.

"Are we going to choose Aristocratic Faction or the New Citizen Faction? Right now, it seems that the new citizens are friendlier..."

Before finishing, Shi Xueman interrupted by repeating Duanmu Huanghun’s earlier judgments. Everyone nodded their heads in agreement as she spoke.

Duanmu Huanghun’s words were convincing as they hit the nail right on the head.

"There’s no need to mention the Aristocratic Faction. They’re busy fighting for... the position sister Xueman discarded." Duanmu Huanghun sighed softly, his voice taunting. "God-subduing Peak is so mighty that the internal strife can carry on without a problem. The New Citizen Faction deems the situation to be lacklustre. As the fights within Aristocratic Faction become fiercer, their loss will increase along with the opportunities available to the New Citizen Faction. As such, they will not lure us in now to avoid provoking

the Aristocratic Faction."

Everyone’s faces were ashen as the atmosphere was rather stifling.

Only Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village were left in the Avalon of Five Elements so Elders Guild was still battling internally. It was bitterly painful.

"They don’t care at all. To them, people like us, high in number but weak in strength, are good practice targets. Plus, it’s too easy to deal with us. They just have to find someone to get rid of Ai Hui and we will all fall apart. If they take action again, it’ll be like plucking perfectly ripe fruit – effortless."

Duanmu Huanghun continued, "We don’t even have to consider Jadeite Forest. Even I am unwilling to return to that place."

These words silenced everyone further. The future seemed so bleak.

Thinking about the conversation he had with Shi Xueman that day, Jiang Wei spoke up. "We can inhabit the Wilderness and construct a city that belongs to us. Ai Hui is very familiar with the Wilderness so if we can hunt more dire beasts, Lou Lan can prepare more elemental food and our skills will improve quickly."

Everyone’s eyes lit up.

"What if Elders Guild wants to take it back?" Duanmu Huanghun asked. "We can build a city, but with a simple order Elders Guild can revoke it. The Elders Guild may not deal with the aristocratic families since they're their own people, but what about us? When the internal battle is over, our good days are too."

Ai Hui spoke suddenly. "We can sell that city to an aristocratic family and move to Old Territory."

Everyone was in shock. Old Territory?

"Don't forget the purpose of our reunion. We are here to seek revenge." Ai Hui said in a low voice, "The Avalon is urgently undergoing reconstruction now, so there won't be a war with Blood of God for the time being. We can only head to Old Territory if we want to battle with Blood of God. Old Territory is where the key strategy to attacking Blood of God lies."

Fatty looked cheerful. Going to Old Territory was a good thing since his family was still there.

"What about resources?" Duanmu Huanghun questioned. "Why did the Avalon abandon Old Territory? It's because there aren't much resources. How are we going to compensate for that? Where are we going to get our regular training and battling supplies? Plus, it is surrounded by enemies from three corners. Anyone can attack us in that battleground. What are we going to do if Avalon of Five Elements and Jadeite Forest stab us in the back?"

Ai Hui kept quiet. Duanmu Huanghun made a lot of sense and he

was unable to refute this reasoning.

But he wasn’t angry. Such a big matter wasn’t going to be easy naturally. "Let’s make use of these few days to train as much as we can and digest the medication. Fists work better than anything else. We’ll take our time to think of solutions. I’m sure we will come up with something."

Chapter 329: The Fall Of Cloud Ridge

Scarlet Sand Forest was a small city at the border between Jadeite Forest and Blood of God. Beyond this city, there was Fire Prairie, a territory of God Nation now.

She Yu was leisurely sipping her tea. Beside her, Jadeite Forest's decision maker, Gongwen You, had a relaxed look on his face as well.

The recent vicious attack by the God-subduing Peak on Blood of God's diplomatic mission had caused the diplomatic mission to suffer heavy casualties. Jadeite Forest was severely embarrassed by this incident. The higher-ups of Jadeite Forest were extremely infuriated. Not only did they want the Elders Guild to give an explanation for the incident, they also requested that someone be dispatched to escort the Blood of God's diplomatic mission.

As such, Gongwen You was being dispatched to escort the diplomatic mission.

At this moment, a report was being sent to him.

After he read the report, a vexed look appeared on his face. After a long while, he sighed and passed the report to She Yu and said coldly, "Your henchmen have succeeded."

After She Yu read the report, she sighed as well, "What a pity, the brave warriors of God Nation. However, it's still worth celebrating. We shall use tea in place of alcohol and toast to this

victory."

Gongwen You stayed calm and did not move.

She Yu was not angry. She finished the cup of tea herself and said leisurely, "This time around, our partnership is flawless. Mr Gongwen has indeed worked very hard. Without Mr Gongwen, this victory would not be possi..."

"Enough!" Gongwen You interrupted She Yu and flew into a rage.

She Yu merely smiled, "Does Mr Gongwen feel that you have let down the Avalon of Five Elements? After all, you are born of Avalon of Five Elements, it’s hard for you not to think of the good old days. However, the Avalon of Five Elements is outdated and the Elders Guild is obsolete. They are fundamentally old and decadent. Take a closer look, do you see how lazy they are? The God Nation’s warriors did not even meet any resistance. Oh! They have much more important things on their minds now. That future empty crown is much more important than establishing a lesser Avalon of Five Elements."

Gongwen You stared at She Yu, resembling a furious lion that was going to pounce on its prey at any moment.

She Yu smiled sweetly and continued, "Jadeite Forest is no longer part of the Avalon of Five Elements. Mr Gongwen, where does your loyalty lie?"

Like a punctured balloon, Gongwen You immediately calmed down and replied, "Forget it, I’m going to have a bad reputation this time around."

"Why does Mr Gongwen say that? I can see that Mr Gongwen has worked your heart out for Jadeite Forest. You’re a meritorious servant of Jadeite Forest."

Gongwen You regained his composure and replied, "Pardon me for being unreasonable. It will be better for us if the Elders Guild continues to be like this."

"As long as God Nation and Jadeite Forest continue to collaborate with sincerity, it will just be a matter of time before the Avalon of Five Elements collapses. The God Nation is willing to build an everlasting friendship with the Jadeite Forest." She Yu said grimly.

"An alliance with God Nation does not really benefit Jadeite Forest. The Avalon of Five Elements doesn’t need to be too powerful nor too weak. As long as everyone is harmonious, then our business can thrive." Gongwen You shook his head.

She Yu raised her eyebrows and replied, "The Elders Guild might not think like this. If they knew the operation this time around is being supported by Jadeite Forest, I’m afraid..."

Gongwen You burst into a laughter. However, his portly face was filled with disdain, "Are you trying to threaten me? So what if they know? Are they going to attack Jadeite Forest? Right now, they are the ones who are begging us, not the other way around."

"I wouldn’t dare," She Yu smiled, "No matter what, God Nation and Jadeite Forest have a pleasant collaboration this time around. In the future, our relationship might even be closer."

This time around, she had completed her mission flawlessly.

Sending a diplomatic mission to Jadeite Forest was a sham. Their real motive was to capture the attention of the Avalon of Five Elements.

"Pretending to advance along one path while secretly going along another" was a simple stratagem that always worked.

Another thing that made her even more happy was that Ai Hui was safe and sound.

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Peace City, Swordsman Training Hall.

Duanmu Huanghun furrowed his eyebrows and thought pensively. Even though his questions had hit the nail on the head, he did not feel any sense of achievement. Identifying the problems was easy, but solving the problems was difficult.

Which path should they take?

Duanmu Huanghun understood how important this question was to them more than anyone else. Both he and Shi Xueman were from aristocratic families, however, their situations were completely different. He had seen more dark and treacherous plots and experienced more failures than Shi Xueman.

The others were seizing the moment to train, digesting the beneficial effects of the Eight Treasures Porridge.

Everyone knew that an opportunity like this was hard to come by. If not for Ai Hui, they would not have enjoyed such exceptional Eight Treasures Porridge. Amongst them, only Bangwan and Iron Lady were capable of eating such a delicacy without the help of Ai Hui.

Take a look at Venerable Volcano. He had paid such a huge price for just one bowl of porridge. Before he left, he even bade farewell to Ai Hui personally and promised that he would definitely help him if he was to encounter any troubles.

Yu Jin stayed motionlessly in her training state. The aura emitting from her body became increasingly concentrated.

In conclusion, Lou Lan's Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge had two obvious beneficial effects.

The first obvious effect was that it helped in healing old injuries. Veterans like Tian Huzun and Yu Jin, who both had been through hundreds of battles, had accumulated countless internal injuries inside their bodies. These old injuries were usually situated in the

depths of their bodies, or places that elemental energy was hard to reach, making it very difficult for them to heal them. Not only would these internal injuries affect their fighting capabilities negatively, they would also obstruct their training progress.

The second obvious effect was that it improved elemental energy's connectivity within one's body. Apart from Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun, the rest had rather ordinary elemental energy connectivity. If not for the abundance of blood crystals obtained during the Battle of Central Pine City and Lou Lan's elemental soups, everyone's fighting capabilities would not have reached their current level.

Improving one's connectivity with elemental energy would help him or her greatly in terms of future developments. This effect would be on full display during one's everyday training.

In terms of mind and sky palace, Ai Hui and Shi Xueman were the only ones who benefited from the porridge. There were little improvements in this aspect for the rest.

Suddenly, a soldier ran hurriedly into the training hall and came before Lord Yu Jin. He hesitated, thinking whether he should speak or not.

Yu Jin opened his eyes and asked indifferently, "What's the matter?"

"Sir Yu Jin, Cloud Ridge City is in trouble!" the soldier answered hastily.

"Cloud Ridge City?" Yu Jin was slightly surprised, but she maintained his composure and asked again, "What happened?"

"Blood elementalists have been discovered in Cloud Ridge City!"

Yu Jin widened her eyes abruptly. She quickly stood up as an ominous premonition arose in her heart.

Blood elementalists had been discovered in Cloud Ridge City?

Ai Hui, Shi Xueman and the rest stopped what they were doing. They could see the worry in each other's eyes.

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Cloud Ridge City.

Yu Jin stood beside the Cloud Ridge City's mayor and listened to his account of the incident.

"... When our men discovered them, they did not run away. They probably knew they couldn't put up a fight and all of them self-destructed and died. Subsequently, I'm afraid that there might still be blood elementalists lurking around the city and so I ordered a thorough search of the city. To our surprise, we did find some in the city. However, they are rather strong-willed and self-destructed the moment we found them. None of them were alive.

We have yet to discover the reason why they are here..."

Yu Jin’s face turned ugly and interrupted the mayor, "Where are the locations that they self-destructed?"

"There are several places..."

"Lead the way!"

Suddenly, at this moment, they heard someone yelling, "Look at the sky!"

Yu Jin raised her head abruptly and her facial expression changed drastically.

A demonic color of blood was spreading throughout the everlasting sea of clouds above Cloud Ridge City. The color of blood was spreading extremely fast. In the blink of an eye, half of the sea of clouds was blood red in color.

"Blood poison!"

Two words came out of Yu Jin’s clenched teeth.

On the third day of the Avalon of Five Elements’s Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge Feast, nineteen blood elementalists self-destructed in Cloud Ridge City.

The blood poison was spreading throughout the city with a terrifying speed. The sea of clouds above Cloud Ridge City had turned into a sea of blood. Yu Jin immediately ordered the entire city to evacuate quickly, preventing a large-scale disaster from taking place. The healers who arrived at the scene in haste had failed to purify the blood poison. Eventually, they found out that this was a brand new version of blood poison. This version was far more potent and it had a greater destructive power.

To prevent the blood poison from spreading to other places, Tong Gui and Yu Jin joined hands and smashed open the Cloud Ridge Mountain, allowing the lava within it to erupt for three straight days and flood the the blood poison-infected Cloud Ridge City. The Cloud Ridge City had disappeared completely.

Upon witnessing this sight, the citizens of Cloud Ridge City burst into tears.

Eventually, this disaster was known to many as "The Fall of Cloud Ridge".

Ai Hui and the rest looked at the sky and watched the Cloud Ridge Mountain erupt. The Armageddon-like scene silenced everyone.

Just like this, the Cloud Ridge City disappeared from the map.

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During the Elders Guild’s emergency meeting, the atmosphere was extremely sombre.

"According to our investigation, this attack was planned. The blood elementalists came through stolen trading caravans and avoided our detection.Right now, there are two questions. Did the Blood of God come up with a new method of disguise? And did Jadeite Forest play a part in this incident?

"Definitely! We have investigated the places where the blood elementalists self-destructed. All of these places are vital areas. Clearly, the attacks have been meticulously planned. Without help from Jadeite Forest, the Blood of God would not have known so many details. Furthermore, those stolen trading caravans are tightly linked to Jadeite Forest."

"I suggest we do a thorough investigation on the trading caravans. If the Blood of God can infiltrate the Avalon of Five Elements that easily, then we have ourselves to blame. Resources might be important, but I don’t want us to be fearful everyday just because of resources."

"I support that idea!"

"I second that!"

...

"So how are we supposed to negotiate with Jadeite Forest now?

Start a war?"

The other Elders remained silent. They obviously knew that Jadeite Forest had something to do with this incident, however, they did not dare to open their mouths and say they wanted to wage war on Jadeite Forest.

What would happen if they waged war on Jadeite Forest? If Jadeite Forest became a turncoat and joined the side of Blood of God, the Avalon of Five Elements would have zero chance of winning this war.

If they didn’t wage war on them, should they just let the incident go like this?

"We can’t start a war with them."

The Great Elder began to talk. His eyes were filled with the vicissitudes of life. "We don’t have the evidence to prove that they played a part in this incident. Even if we did, we can’t start a war. We will ignore Jadeite Forest first, and we must retaliate against the Blood of God. Send the God-subduing Peak to the front line. We must secure a victory to redeem our reputation."

The other Elders nodded their heads in unison.

The Great Elder continued with a deep voice, "Our real issue is, since Cloud Ridge City has been destroyed, our plan for a lesser Avalon of Five Elements has failed. What should we do now?"

The metal-attributed Peace City and the water-attributed Cloud Ridge City were the cornerstones for the plan of establishing the lesser Avalon of Five Elements. By building another three cities, a lesser Five Elemental Cycle could be established. The conditions for building a lesser Avalon of Five Elements were extremely strict. One missing city would result in the failure of this plan. Every city's elemental attribute and location was supposed to be fixed.

The loss of the water-attributed Cloud Ridge City implied that the Five Elemental Cycle could never be achieved. This also meant that the plan of setting up a lesser Avalon of Five Elements had completely failed.

Cities like Peace City and Cloud Ridge City were chosen based on their ideal strategic locations. Other than these two cities, the remaining three cities' locations were perfect as well.

Such places were hard to come by.

All the Elders became silent once more.

That's right, the main issue they faced now was the failure of the plan to establish a lesser Avalon of Five Elements.

Chapter 330: The Four Seasons of the God Nation

The road leading into the God Nation was lined with blood trees on both sides. They stood tall and imposing, like monsters waiting to attack.

Taking in the familiar sweet scent made She Yu feel great.

The first batch of blood trees that were used to spread the blood poison had been turned into fertilizer after they had produced seeds. The blood trees she now saw were germinated from those seeds. These second generation blood trees had grown rapidly in the past year and were now extremely large.

This insane rate of growth completely defied the laws of nature.

It was flowering season and blood tree blossoms could be seen everywhere. Scarlet was the landscape's dominant color, which made it look completely different from the Avalon of Five Elements. The flowers were not in shades of red though. They were mostly a deep black or a dull white, with the occasional sky blue. Many people enjoyed plucking these flowers as decorations for their homes.

A delicate yet intoxicating fragrance filled the air as She Yu gently plucked one of the black flowers. This scent was enjoyed by god elementalists, but would drive normal elementalists mad.

By this time next year, the trees here would be filled with fruits. Further refinement of these fruits would turn them into a type of natural blood crystal that could be used to enhance a god elementalist's training. Known as jade fruits, they were slightly different from the blood crystals nurtured within blood fiends.

She Yu was looking forward to the appearance of the jade fruits. The successful growth of jade fruits would further strengthen the God Nation's rule.

The domestication of blood fiends as a means to obtain blood crystals was the main reason why the God Nation was able to stabilize so quickly. Being able to farm blood crystals allowed the God Nation to convert elementalists on a massive scale. With the arrival of the jade fruits, the God Nation would have even greater amounts of resources to further strengthen their position.

The higher ups had also attached great importance to this event and had already begun preparations to harvest these fruits on a large scale.

The God Nation's winter, which came once every four years, would arrive one month after the harvest. Blood trees would swiftly wither away after their fruits were harvested. They would turn into ash, transforming the entire landscape. The once vibrant and colorful sight would quickly become a world of gray ash soon after the great harvest. Because of this, the God Nation's winter was known as the "Winter of Ash."

The God Nation's vitality was splendid, but short.

The Winter of Ash was a long season and the citizens would have to bear with the dull, lifeless environment for almost a year.

During this period, however, the people had important things to do. They would have to scour through the ashes to find new life—the blood tree's seeds. The gathered seeds would be sent to a special facility for assessment. Seeds that were determined to have a great degree of transformation would be kept and sowed after Winter of Ash. Those that did not become stronger would be destroyed.

Only the strong survive. This was the God Nation's number one rule.

After the Winter of Ash came the popping spring. Blood trees would sprout and grow to immense heights during this season that lasted for a year. This season was named as such because the trees would grow so fast that popping and crackling noises could be heard from all over.

Next was the resplendent summer, a season of blooming flowers. The flowers were so radiant that they shone brightly even at night.

It was presently the resplendent summer.

The autumn of jade fruits came after.

Each cycle lasted for four years, and up until now, the God

Nation had yet to experience one full cycle. One of the high level advisors in the palace had told her that the first generation of blood trees were out of sync with the cycle. This new generation should begin to settle into the correct rhythm.

The God Nation was indeed a young nation.

All of a sudden, the ground trembled. A group of armored wolf riders appeared with a bang. Their mounts were the famous ardent flower night wolves.

Night wolves were native to the Fire Prairie and had a sleek coat of jet black fur. The Beast Venom Temple had created a new breed of night wolves that had red flowery patterns strewn across their black bodies. Ardent flower night wolves were larger and much faster than steeds. They had incredible endurance as well and were reportedly able to continuously charge forward for 10 days and 10 nights.

The Beast Venom Temple was unsatisfied with the ardent flower night wolves as their true aim was to breed large flying beasts. They felt that nothing on land could ever come close to competing with something that could fly.

The Beast Venom Temple had adopted the name of these wolves from the Avalon of Five Elements' Ardent Flower Division.

Ardent flower night wolves became wildly popular in the God Nation immediately after they were released. These beasts were cheap, easy to maintain, and extremely hardworking.

The ardent flower night wolves used by high ranking officials were of the best grade and had immense fighting prowess in addition to the aforementioned advantages. They were extremely well suited for battle with a rider, never backing down once the fight had started.

"Congratulations, the Young Master is extremely delighted by your performance. He has specially ordered us to ride down and give you a proper welcome! Salute!"

Clanging sounds could be heard as the other riders raised up their weapons to salute She Yu.

She Yu bowed slightly in return and replied, "It’s all thanks to His Highness’s meticulous arrangements. Has he been well?"

The rider said cheerfully, "His mood has improved of late, and he has been going out into the sun quite a bit more than before."

"That’s good to hear. the Young Master’s health is of utmost importance," said She Yu, her voice carrying a tinge of joy.

There was only one person who carried the title of "Young Master" throughout the entire God Nation. He was the "Sick Tiger of the Blood Nation" Bei Shuisheng. The Young Master had been afflicted with a strange sickness since he was a young and had almost died from it several times. Bei Shuisheng later met the Holy Emperor. Being a man who cherished talent, the Holy Emperor painstakingly saved him.

After the God Nation was founded, the Holy Emperor built a palace for the Young Master. He filled it with all sorts of artifacts that were capable of maintaining the Young Master's life force. Although his condition gradually stabilized, the Young Master could never leave his palace.

The Young Master called his new home the "Cold Palace" and often joked that it was even colder here than in the ones built to incarcerate imperial concubines that had flouted the rules.

When his mood was good, the Young Master enjoyed sunbathing by the palace's main entrance. Those who knew him well quickly picked this up and used it as an indicator for his mood.

Everyone loved and respected the Young Master for his huge contributions to the God Nation. The Holy Emperor was too engrossed in his training to handle the nation's affairs. As a result, most of the planning, strategies, and laws were the work of the Young Master. Instigating Ye Baiyi to defect was also his idea, and it was one that he managed to carry out with great success.

After Ye Baiyi converted, the Young Master gave him control of the army and ordered for a palace to be built for him.

Ye Baiyi did not let the Young Master down. He reformed the entire army and began to devise military tactics that were suited to the god elementalists' fighting style. Under his reforms, the God Nation's military was able to stabilize the situations at the front lines.

The Young Master was also behind many other highly important actions, such as the exorcism of the Induction Ground and the widespread domestication of blood fiends.

Every now and then, She Yu would think of how great it would be if the Young Master was completely healthy again.

She Yu arrived at the cold palace three days later.

A lazy youth was lying down behind the main hall’s doorway, basking in the sliver of sunlight that came through the open doors at an angle. Beside him was a teapot with a long handle and half a cup of tea.

She Yu walked up to the doorway and noticed a neatly placed floormat with a table on top of it. On the table sat a complete tea set.

The two of them sat on opposite sides of the doorway.

A grin appeared on Bei Shuisheng’s pale face as he chipped, "I’m sorry but you’ll have to do it yourself."

She Yu smiled sweetly and started to boil some water to brew the tea.

"Come, tell me about the interesting things you saw on this

journey. Being stuck in this lousy place is boring me to death," said the young man, his eyes filled with wonder.

She Yu felt a tinge of heartache as she looked at the young man in front of her. In that moment, the almighty the Young Master appeared to just be an ordinary boy. A smile crept up on her lips, and she gently spoke, "Nothing much happened, really. The Jadeite Forest is also experiencing a flowering season—a season where plume flowers are in full bloom. Plume flowers look like pink feathers and give off a melodious ringing sound when scattered by the wind. I suppose girls are more interested in stuff like that. At night though, the God Nation is much more beautiful..."

The young man listened intently, not uttering a single word as he did so.

After a while, he picked up his teacup and brought it to his lips. "The tea has turned cold," he muttered with a frown on his face.

He opened the teapot and saw that it was empty.

"Bring me some hot tea."

Half of the long-handled teapot crossed the doorway toward She Yu.

She finally understood why the Young Master used a teapot with such a long handle.

She Yu hurriedly grabbed her pot of freshly brewed tea and walked to the doorway.

The Young Master warmly reminded, "Be careful not to cross the threshold. You won’t be able to handle the things inside."

She Yu carefully poured the freshly brewed tea into the long-handled teapot.

The Young Master swiftly downed a cup of tea and said, "Please continue. The world outside of this palace is indeed interesting."

She Yu told him about Duanmu Huanghun getting drunk in a brothel and challenging her to a fight.

The Young Master called him a proper man.

When she mentioned that Duanmu Huanghun had reorganized the Society of Excellence, the Young Master sighed.

She moved on to talk about Shi Xueman’s use of the God-subduing Peak to ambush the diplomatic mission, much to the Young Master’s delight. He frantically clapped his hands and praised Shi Xueman’s boldness.

The Young Master laughed heartily when he heard about the conflict between the new citizens and the aristocratic families,

calling them a bunch of clowns who had long lost their edge.

She spoke of how Shi Xueman was discharged from the North Sea Division after kidnapping Duanmu Huanghun and made her way to Peace City instead. She Yu continued her story, talking about Ai Hui's Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge Feast and how all the members of the Central Pine Faction flocked from all over with the ingredients they needed for the porridge.

The Young Master had a faraway look as he commented that the Central Pine Faction must be made up of truly loyal friends.

She got to the part where the Venerable Volcano dragged two vice division leaders and stood guard at the door for a bowl of porridge. All this talk about the Eight Treasures Porridge made

The Young Master salivate as he imagined just how amazing it must taste. He muttered that if they ever caught Lou Lan he would definitely get him to cook lots of porridge.

The Young Master was glad to hear that their operation in Cloud Ridge City was a success.

"I'm glad we didn't choose Peace City as our target. It would be a waste if such an interesting group of people were killed just like that."

She Yu stared blankly at the Young Master.

The Young Master stretched his back and picked up the long-handled teapot. Standing up, he said, "All right, rest time’s over. Back to work. Everyone’s living such colorful lives, so I guess I have to strive hard too. Thanks for the nice, long chat. I’m sorry I can’t send you off."

The young man beamed. "All the best!"

He waved at She Yu before returning to the darkness.

Chapter 331: City Expansion Order

Peace City was devastated. The bustling construction site had become deathly quiet.

People sat listlessly among the materials that were scattered all over the unfinished construction site. Cloud Ridge City had been destroyed overnight, and the plan to build the Lesser Avalon of Five Elements had gone with it. All hopes had been dashed.

Everyone was stuck in a daze.

The spirits of those in the Swordsman Training Hall had plunged greatly.

Witnessing an entire city collapse with their own eyes would certainly make anyone feel absolutely wretched. Moreover, this destruction was caused by their sworn enemy.

Shi Xueman walked up to Ai Hui and informed, "The results of the investigation are out. The blood sacrificial warriors were specially created by the Beast Venom Temple."

"Beast Venom Temple? What do they do? The name sounds positively ghastly," commented Fatty, who could not help shiver as he thought about it.

Without lifting his head, Ai Hui said, "It is where the Blood of God nurtures and creates blood fiends and other strange things. It

has existed for a long time, and consists of the core members of the Blood of God. The earliest blood poisons were created by them. The Beast Venom Temple prides itself on the creation of ever stranger things, and its members are high up on the hierarchy."

Shi Xueman could not help but look at Ai Hui. She was quite surprised that Ai Hui was this familiar with the Blood of God. She, herself, had not even known that the blood poisons were created by the Beast Venom Temple. Thinking further, she deduced that Ai Hui had probably delved deeply into the Blood of God's working as part of his plans for exacting revenge.

Fatty looked unwell as he spoke, "But isn't it terribly ruthless to sacrifice people like that?"

"Would the blood disaster in the Induction Ground have happened if they weren't ruthless?" asked Sang Zhijun.

Considering that the Blood of God had never respected the sanctity of life, there was nothing to be surprised about.

Fatty was horrified. "What can we do then? All they have to do is send a couple of these blood sacrificial warriors and it's over?"

Ai Hui shook his head, "It isn't that easy to create blood sacrificial warriors since the process requires people who have an extremely high endurance. The subjects are usually less talented blood elementalists. They would be infused with fresh blood that came from all sorts of blood fiends. This seemingly inhumane process is one of the Beast Venom Temple's favorite methods. Ancient

methods of creating the strongest poisons involved pitting venomous insects against one another in a small box. The one that survived the massacre would naturally be the most vicious."

Everyone's faces lost some color. Listening to Ai Hui's brief explanation gave them the creeps.

Ai Hui continued, "The chosen blood elementalists' bodies work the same way as the box while the different types of blood are like the venomous insects. Using this method, the Beast Venom Temple has been able to create various types of blood sacrificial warriors. However, the success rate is very low since most blood elementalists cannot endure the toxicity of the blood fiends' blood."

Fatty felt his mouth go dry. "What will happen to those who cannot endure it?"

"What do you think?" retorted Ai Hui.

Sang Zhijun's face was drained of color. "That's terrible! Have they lost every last shred of their humanity? How can they simply disregard human life like that!"

"No wonder the name 'Beast Venom Temple' gave me goosebumps," uttered Fatty, his voice quivering a little.

"It is pretty ghastly, but not exactly what you guys are thinking," said Ai Hui while he shook his head. "The creation of blood

sacrificial warriors is merely a tiny part of the work they do, and the scope of their research is extremely extensive. They are the reason why the Blood of God was able to establish themselves so rapidly. Domesticating blood fiends as a source of blood crystals was one of their brilliant ideas. The Beast Venom Temple is highly regarded among the Blood of God."

Shi Xueman could not help but ask, "Why?"

"They do not directly intervene in the God Nation's affairs, but constantly provide new types of blood fiends such as the ardent flower night wolf. The god priests of the Beast Venom Temple also make their rounds throughout the God Nation to guide its people on how to harvest jade fruits, a type of blood crystal that is grown on trees."

"Grown on trees?"

Everyone's eyes were wide open with shock.

The Blood of God's workings were extremely mysterious and bizarre to most people.

"Since this harvest only occurs once every four years, nobody can say for sure how big an impact it'll make. As long as it goes well, the Blood of God's power will further consolidate. Meanwhile, look at our Elders Guild, heh."

Ai Hui scoffed with disdain. He did not disguise his scorn for the

Elders Guild.

Everybody felt a slight panic upon being reminded of the Elders Guild. The Blood of God was actually surging forward while the members of the Elders Guild were busy infighting.

"It’s actually not a bad thing." Duanmu Huanghun coughed, waiting for everyone’s attention before continuing, "I’m talking about about the lesser Avalon of Five Elements’ failure. The lesser Avalon of Five Elements plan isn’t something new and is actually just a rehash of an old plan that was stored away for many years. This plan was drawn up shortly after the founding of the Avalon of Five Elements as a fallback if their fight against the Wilderness failed. After the Avalon of Five Elements became more and more stable, the plan was shelved in the Induction Ground and quickly became forgotten. Considering that the entire Induction Ground was destroyed by the blood disaster, the Elders Guild must have spent a lot of effort to dig up this plan from elsewhere. Little did they expect the Blood of God to act so swiftly and ruthlessly."

Duanmu Huanghun continued, "The requirements for building the lesser Avalon of Five Elements are very stringent. The biggest challenge for the Elders Guild now is to find a suitable location as soon as possible. I’m guessing that they’ll encourage more people to go into the Wilderness to search for such a place. This is the only choice they have at the moment. Failing at this will cause the fire, wood, and earth elementalists to rebel."

Just as he finished his last syllable, Jiang Wei hurriedly walked in and announced, "The Elders Guild has just issued the latest Bigtree Decree."

Everyone turned their attention toward him.

Every Elder had the power to send out a decree, but the Bigtree Decree was an order that could only be passed if all the Elders agreed to it at a Bigtree Meeting. In the Avalon of Five Elements, it was a mandate of the highest degree.

"The Elders Guild has issued a city expansion order: any family, group, or individual who registers with the Elders Guild will be permitted to build a city in the Wilderness. Since cities in the Wilderness do not have the typical elemental energy system in Avalon of Five Elements, the Elders Guild has decided to sell the blueprints for building all five types of elemental energy pool. As long as they can build their own elemental energy pool, each city will be able to operate independently. The cities constructed will belong to the settlers, themselves."

"In addition, the mayor of the first city to build and operate elemental energy pools of all five elements will become the next Great Elder of Elders Guild."

Jiang Wei finished the announcement in one breath.

Everyone instantly turned to look at Duanmu Huanghun.

His mouth was wide open in surprise.

"Wow, who would have thought that you'd have such foresight!"

Shi Xueman exclaimed excitedly. "Looks like you've been actively engaging in petty political discourses during these past three years!"

Duanmu Huanghun's eyes almost rolled out of their sockets. Was this how you praise people?

Upon seeing Ai Hui's awestruck face, however, Duanmu Huanghun felt much better. After suffering all that humiliation due to him, Duanmu Huanghun finally managed to amaze Ai Hui.

Ai Hui rubbed his chin pensively and muttered out loud, "Looks like the Elders Guild is risking everything on this!"

Everyone nodded their heads spontaneously. Although the aristocratic families were powerful, they were still under the control of the Elders Guild. Now that the Elders Guild was allowing them to build their own cities, it meant that they would be able to set up their own independent regimes.

Furthermore, even the position of the next Great Elder was up for grabs. The Elders Guild actually had the drive to take such bold actions.

Duanmu Huanghun sneered. "Drinking poison to quench the thirst. They won't be able to take their power back once it's been given away. If everyone has their own city, who is going to give a hoot about the Elders Guild? The Elders Guild has to consider the welfare of all elementalists, but the aristocratic families are more likely to only be concerned with themselves. Take the Shi family

for example. All they need is a water elemental energy pool. By giving up their absolute control over elemental energy, the Elders Guild is giving up their power as well. Nonetheless, the Elders Guild doesn't have any other choice. What they are trying to do is to subtly tell everyone that they no longer have the power to control everything and that everyone needs to find their own way forward."

Wry smiles could be seen throughout the group. Duanmu Huanghun's words were harsh, but they were the truth.

"The elemental energy in the Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village have dwindled significantly. If the lesser Avalon of Five Elements isn't ready in a few more years, these two places will wither away. The Elders Guild is probably trying to divide these issues and take alternative steps to address each one."

As he continued his speech, Duanmu Huanghun's voice changed from one of contempt to one of helplessness. Compared to the prospering Blood of God, the Avalon of Five Elements was like the setting sun, destined to fade away.

Ai Hui shook his head defiantly. "There can be no construction without destruction. We'll just have to make a new path if the current one cannot be trod upon."

Shi Xueman asked, "What about us?"

All of the others, including Duanmu Huanghun, were looking expectantly at Ai Hui for an answer.

Ai Hui thought for a moment before replying, "Everyone needs to find out more information first. The Bigtree Decree has just been announced, so things will take a while to happen. Developing a city in the Wilderness isn’t a simple task, so we’ll need to make preparations."

All of them nodded their heads in response to Ai Hui’s reply and immediately got to work. They tapped into their different networks to get as much information as they could.

Ai Hui fell into deep thought.

Come to think of it, things were really as Huanghun said. The Elders Guild had run out of options. The destruction of the lesser Avalon of Five Elements left the Elders Guild in a bad state.

The Avalon of Five Elements was hanging by a thread.

The five elemental cyclical system was truly ingenious, but a single missing link would affect the entire cycle. In the short term, the wood, fire, and earth elementalists would be the ones giving the Elders Guild the greatest amount of pressure. However, if the cycle continued to be broken, then in the long run, even the strength of the metal and water elementalists would be lost.

The Silver Mist Sea had already begun to dry up.

The present Avalon of Five Elements was like a wounded person,

weakening as the blood continued to pour out of his wounds. Was he going to wait for death or fight for life before his blood ran out?

The Elders Guild chose to fight, but could this plan really save the Avalon of Five Elements?

Nobody knew.

Something this big was not going to be so easily addressed by an individual. It was better to just focus on something more realistic.

Upon hearing about the decree, the aristocratic families and new citizens would both rush to develop the Wilderness. The benefits promised by the Elders Guild were sufficient to motivate everyone. Just the reward for being the first mayor to establish a five elemental city was already enough to spur the aristocratic families into overdrive.

It looked like there were wise men in the Elders Guild!

Wasn’t building a city that had all five elements operating pretty much the same as building the lesser Avalon of Five Elements?

Ai Hui now understood that the Elders Guild had turned the internal conflict into a public competition. Furthermore, the end goal was still the creation of the lesser Avalon of Five Elements.

Location was the key factor in building a five elemental city. The location had to contain extremely pure forms of all five elements

that were in the right amounts and in the right places before they could be incorporated into a cycle.

Ai Hui was struck by a sudden flash of inspiration. Perhaps there was someone who knew about this.

The old prisoner!

Chapter 332: Clues

A dark and empty gallery deep within the Beast Venom Temple.

Two god shamans were engaged in a quiet discussion as they walked.

"Did you know? The iron man was moved to the blood pool this morning under the elder god priest's special order."

"That's good, I hope he regains his consciousness soon. It's a waste for someone as tough as iron man to become a blood sacrificial warrior."

"I agree, but who knows when he's going to wake up. It's extremely strange that he has obvious responses towards external stimuli but simply doesn't wake up. To think he was just going to be used as an expendable, but now nobody wants him to die. One hundred and eight types of fresh blood. The previous record was only sixty-two types!"

"Perhaps he has something in his heart that he just can't let go of. What a terrifying resolution that must be, if his will is still intact despite being infused with one hundred and eight types of blood. Is he from the first batch of blood sacrificial warriors?"

"Yeah, it was before this place even existed."

"If I remember correctly, that batch of blood sacrificial warriors

were made from maimed individuals?"

"Yes, they were all elementalists who failed to transform into god elementalists. Recycling is all the rage, you know."

"That’s probably why he doesn’t want to wake up."

"That’s true, it’s quite the dilemma. Do you think he’ll eventually wake up?"

"Maybe, maybe not. Who knows."

...

The two silhouettes gradually faded out of sight as their voices became fainter.

At the bottom of a deep, crimson pool surrounded by countless troughs filled with blood, a motionless figure was faintly visible.

.....

Swordsman Training Hall.

Ai Hui thought of the old prisoner because a plan like the lesser Avalon of Five Elements was probably hatched by an ambitious organization like the Assembly of Patriarchs. The old prisoner had

an amazing wealth of knowledge and even used to have a high position in the Assembly of Patriarchs. The likelihood of him being exposed to related matters was, as such, relatively high.

"... Someone in the organization has indeed done research on this. The idea of leaving the Avalon of Five Elements has been played around with several times in the past. Because of this, someone has broached the subject before. Later on, however, the relationship between the Assembly of Patriarchs and the Avalon of Five Elements became increasingly tight and this idea was never mentioned again."

"I have seen the description of a place in the Wilderness that was suitable for the establishment of a five elemental city back when I'd looked through one of the seniors' notebooks. There was also a sketch accompanying the information. A pity this was too long ago and my memory has blurred. What's more, I wasn't particularly interested in the Wilderness back then, so I only gave it a cursory glance."

"If you want to find out its exact location, you'll have to make a trip to headquarters. This particular notebook should be kept on the seventh floor of the headquarters' Hall of Ancient Records, its author has the surname Xiao. I've completely forgotten any other details. I hope this is sufficient to help you."

Headquarters?

Ai Hui hesitated for a moment. He knew that as Chu Zhaoyang, he was qualified to join headquarters. Hua Kui had mentioned it to him several times, but he never once agreed.

The relationship between the old prisoner and the Assembly of Patriarchs was a strange one. He was sometimes very proud of them and sometimes very angry with them. Every now and then, he would sigh deeply when he spoke of the organization.

Ai Hui privately guessed that the old prisoner most likely betrayed them or somehow got expelled. He wondered what relationships inside the Assembly were like, but the old prisoner always refused to talk about it.

The old prisoner was nice, but very cautious. He was on alert most of the time and never spouted nonsense. The advice he gave was largely pertinent and worldly, and his guidance had been indispensable to Ai Hui's progress during these three years. Like Master Shao, he was an elementalist not geared towards fighting.

Nothing had been heard from Master Shao yet. It was as if he had suddenly vanished from this world.

Lou Lan missed Master Shao a lot, and worried about him constantly. Master Shao had, after all, been a big part of Lou Lan's life ever since he could remember.

The message tree lit up again.

"Judging from the current situation, building a five elemental city shouldn't be your goal. For those who are weak, having too sumptuous a meal is no different from taking poison. Although the Elders Guild has made such a commitment regarding the selection

of the next Great Elder, only those whose foundations are strong enough will be capable of holding onto the post firmly. You won't be able to build a five elemental city or hold the position of Great Elder if you don't become much stronger first."

Ai Hui laughed. The old man was too conservative, but he had good intentions in mind.

Ai Hui quickly wrote on the leaf. "Rest assured that I do not covet the position of Great Elder, and have never once thought of lording over a five elemental city; however, having control over a five elemental city is incredibly enticing for the aristocratic families. I believe it would be a good investment if I can sell one off at the opportune moment. A pauper dying of poverty pays his respects to the great prisoner."

That's right, Ai Hui never thought of fighting for the position of Great Elder. This simply wasn't something he hankered after.

However, he wasn't sure whether this plan would work out.

As more and more people returned to Swordsman Training Hall, the information collected started to pile up.

The prices of various materials were soaring on the markets. All the enterprises were desperately acquiring materials. The elemental energy pool blueprints were already available for purchase from the Elders Guild, but at a price of one thousand Heaven Merit Points. Hunting groups' commissions were easily up tenfold, but those that were highly reputable commanded even

larger sums of money. Despite these exorbitant prices, almost all of the hunting groups had been signed by various aristocratic families. The first wave of elementalists had already made their way into the Wilderness.

All of a sudden, the Avalon of Five Elements's broken spirit seemed to have been restored.

"The elemental energy pool costs one thousand Heaven Merit Points, what a ludicrous price! The Elders Guild is ruthless."

"Shall we start moving? I see so many others frantically rushing into the Wilderness."

"Nah, I don't think so. Not many people can afford to buy the blueprints anyway."

"Nobody's even bothering about the elemental energy pool. Anyone willing to go into the Wilderness can make a ton of money. The commission for average elementalists has gone up five times already. Who is going to remain here?"

"But it's risky."

"There are so many of us, even the dire beasts will be afraid."

Everyone was engaged in lively discussion about the current situation.

Ai Hui called Shi Xueman, Duanmu Huanghun, and a few others to one side. Lowering his voice, he said, "I need your opinion on something. Do you think we'd be able to sell a five elemental city at a good price?"

"Five elemental city? Sell?"

They were all staring at Ai Hui blankly.

Shi Xueman was the first to respond. "Do you know something? Have you found the right location?"

Ai Hui thought for a moment before saying, "There's a chance, but it's not certain."

Everyone was in high spirits. A five elemental city would command the highest reward the Elders Guild had offered.

Fatty immediately asked, "If you had a five elemental city, why would you want to sell it? Why not just directly take the position of Great Elder and rule over the entire Avalon of Five Elements?"

"Moron!"

Everyone spoke out in universal contempt.

Duanmu Huanghun said, "Selling is a good idea since influential

families would be willing to pay almost any price to buy one. What I’m afraid of is that they may attempt to take it by force. I have looked through the Elders Guild’s instructions and nothing on it disallows snatching."

Other people were also worried. After three hard years of tempering, they were no longer the ignorant teenagers they had once been. They knew very well that if the benefits were large enough, people would become willing to take bigger risks. Whether it was the influential families or the new citizens, they would all be the same.

Ai Hui said, "Then I’ll give the city to Iron lady and let her be the Great Elder."

Everybody’s eyes lit up. With the Shi family’s status and Shi Beihai’s immense influence, anyone wishing to snatch the Shi family’s assets would be out of their minds.

Fatty winked at Ai Hui. "Hey, check out this guy’s generosity. The Lightning Blade is really something else, giving a city to a lady as gift."

The others turned their faces aside.

Shi Xueman cracked her knuckles and clenched her fists. "Do you really miss my beatings that much, Fatty?"

Fatty turned pale at the thought of the iron lady’s fists meeting

his face. With a flattering smile, he quickly praised, "Sister Xueman, how can you be given any ordinary gifts? You should be given an entire city at least. Ouch, ouch..."

Staring at Shi Xueman's iron fists, Fatty fled like a terrified rat. Everyone else laughed heartily

After the humorous exchange, Duanmu Huanghun took a good look at Ai Hui and said, "Actually, Iron... Sister Xueman would make a pretty good Great Elder. With our reputations and the Shi family name as our backing, we will have enough leverage..."

"I disagree," Shi Xueman snapped. "The moment I make use of my family's influence to step up to that position, a lot of things will move beyond my control. I would be stuck in the same position I was before being expelled, what's the point in that?"

Everyone was dumbfounded. It was indeed true that if Shi Xueman hadn't gone out and done some reckless things, she'd definitely be next in line to become the Great Elder. Going back to square one after doing so many things, what's the point in that?

"Alright, publicly break all ties with the Shi family then. I believe the other aristocratic families won't go on the offensive so soon anyway." Duanmu Huanghun continued, "I can't say the same for everyone else though."

Sang Zhijun coldly exclaimed, "It's not like we're made of mud!"

Having this discussion helped Ai Hui to clarify his thoughts. He said, "It’s okay, we can start finding bidders after the construction of the fourth elemental energy pool. We don’t have to wait until the entire city has been built to start selling. This way, we’ll have ample time and it won’t be so eye-catching. As long as we let others know that we plan to eventually construct a five elemental city, I believe we’ll be able to sell it."

Everyone nodded in agreement.

For the influential families, a semi-finished five elemental city was more suited to their needs. They would gladly throw more money into the project to finish building the remaining elemental energy pools.

Ai Hui left quietly after affirming the feasibility of the plan.

Shi Xueman and the others continued to stay in Peace City. Peace City was, after all, located at the border, making it a very convenient location to enter and exit the Wilderness. Besides, they could make use of the time together to build up their camaraderie. They hadn’t fought together in three years and would do well to catch up with one another.

Most of them had served stints in the combat divisions, especially those who were a part of the A-1 unit. In terms of base level or combat experience, all of them had become way stronger than before.

As they became more familiar with one another, everyone

quickly regained the rapport that they once had.

Swordsman Training Hall that had captured everyone's attention soon became completely disregarded.

The city expansion order had caused some kind of frenzy. Countless people were pouring into the Wilderness. All the message trees were constantly filled with messages regarding the Wilderness.

The messages were about things such as: Several families have begun to lay the foundations for their cities, who will be the first to complete theirs? Some lucky kid managed to take down a dire beast that was wounded by others and made a fortune off it.

The Avalon of Five Elements was brimming with action.

Chapter 333: A Test

Droves of elementalists were all over the place. The sky was filled with bamboo carts that looked like swarms of bees.

Everyone had completely dismissed the bleak future, looking short-sightedly at the exciting missions they were about to complete. Everybody talked and dreamt of a better life.

Ai Hui watched coldly from the sidelines.

The Avalon of Five Elements had built their advantage over the Wilderness for hundreds of years. People were still afraid of the deepest parts of the Wilderness, but as long as one didn't venture too far in, the Wilderness was really just an expansive hunting ground.

Where else would all the dire beast materials come from? How else could so many hunting groups continue to thrive?

The fear of the deepest areas in the Wilderness was all in their minds. They were only afraid because no one else had set foot there before. If the elementalists truly wanted to delve deeper, dire beasts wouldn't be able to do anything to stop them. What's more, the Thirteen Divisions had joined the hunting groups in the Wilderness. Combined, their strength would be more than sufficient to take down any dire beasts they encountered. It looked as though the Avalon of Five Elements was primed to take over the Wilderness.

This was the most popular view of the masses.

Ai Hui, who had spent three years in the Wilderness, knew how outrageous this idea was.

The elites of the Thirteen Divisions were definitely much more powerful than the elementalists in the hunting groups, but this wasn't necessarily a good thing.

Why did the hunting groups recruit so many untrained laborers from the Old Territory? Even with the appalling death rate of the laborers, why weren't they stopping?

The dire beasts' sensitivity to elementalists was far beyond the elementalists' sensitivity to dire beasts. In other words, dire beasts were born with much keener sensing abilities. The more powerful the elementalist, the more outstanding they would appear in the Wilderness.

Only those with strength as impressive as the Grandmasters and Masters could make the dire beasts flee without even putting up a fight. All other elementalists below the rank of Master would attract stronger and larger amounts of dire beasts the stronger the elementalists were.

Having had so many encounters with dire beasts, Ai Hui knew that they weren't as stupid as people believed. In fact, the dire beasts were extremely cunning and sharp, banding together to fight against larger groups of elementalists.

This was the main reason why Ai Hui didn't rush to send everyone in.

The first wave of elementalists would definitely suffer the heaviest casualties.

Sensational news was constantly being spread through the grapevines. All these fake news stories were probably being spread intentionally. All these passionate people rushing in probably didn't know that they were just being used as cannon fodder.

Ai Hui guessed that the Elders Guild was probably in on this, but chose to let it slide.

To the Elders Guild, using such an approach to reduce the number of elite elementalists lost was a great idea.

Ai Hui shook his head as he didn't have the power to dissuade these people. They were completely blinded by wealth and merits.

He hurried along at a moderate pace, leaving the main road at times to explore and trudge along the mountain paths. He took his time to advance, slotting in time to train along the way. He had ample time and did not need to hurry.

Well into the night, Ai Hui stood on top of a cliff and faced a sea of clouds. He held onto his sword while he stood motionless. Starlight bathed his entire body, making him shimmer.

If one looked closely enough, he or she would realize that Ai Hui was utterly motionless. In actual fact, his body was quivering almost imperceptibly with every breath he took.

The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp in Ai Hui's sky palace was rotating slowly. The scriptures surrounding the lamp's flame flowed around like light. Ai Hui's bodily rhythm, his breathing rhythm, as well as the flame's rhythm, were all synchronized.

Soft light shined through the circular scripture, magnifying the words. The magnified words cycled throughout his body unobstructed. These words from the scripture had a strange pull on the starlight, making it congeal and create a layer of light on Ai Hui's body.

The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp in his sky palace had gained an additional two petals, bringing the number from four to six. Looks like Lou Lan's Eight Treasures Porridge was indeed effective.

Attaining all nine petals would allow one to achieve the [Skyheart Pure Body], which protects it's user from all evils and grants the ability to break all illusions.

Ai Hui could feel the changes in his body. The soft, bright light and the circulating scripture text were constantly coursing through his flesh. He would occasionally see tiny puffs of black smoke rising and disappearing in the blink of an eye.

His mind and body had a translucent quality to them and felt extremely pure.

Ai Hui was inexplicably surprised. This phenomena was mentioned in the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp's scripture and was called [Glazed Body]. While [Glazed Body] couldn't match up to the [Skyheart Pure Body], it already granted him some interesting benefits.

He intuitively begun a Circulatory Cycle Revolution and felt the elemental energy sword pills within his body become even more refined. They had lost all traces of their sharp edge and now flowed smoothly throughout the revolution. A faint attractive force was now present between the elemental energy sword pills, turning them into somewhat of a necklace made of magnetic pearls.

In addition, Ai Hui's body seemed to contain a whirlpool within it that generated a suction force on the elemental energy in the environment. This was indicative of his now increased rates of improvement and recovery.

As the black mist dispersed, Ai Hui's flesh and blood felt much purer. Although it didn't increase his strength, his muscles and tendons were evidently more resilient than before. His physical strength also appeared to recover at a much greater rate than before.

His [Copper Skin]had transformed as well. It was now the colour of jade and had a shiny new lustre.

Ai Hui felt extremely refreshed; it felt as though he was back in the sword embryo's state. His sixth sense felt unnaturally keen,

allowing him to capture even the slightest changes in his surroundings.

The metal winds atop the cliff were very strong. While they contained only weak traces of metal elemental energy, the winds were unyielding and ceaseless.

Metal elemental energy from the surroundings was accumulating around Ai Hui's body. His body was soon surrounded by countless silver needles, giving one the impression of a large school of whitebaits swimming relentlessly around him. As the silver glow grew brighter, the starlight became dimmer.

Unknowingly, Ai Hui's mind wandered off with the wind.

Floating and sinking, rising and falling, gathering and scattering; Ai Hui no longer knew where he was.

He was abruptly awoken by an intense beam of light that shone right into his eyes.

Ai Hui saw the rising sun leap out from beneath the sea of clouds. The orange sunlight illuminated his face from the horizon as he smiled at the majestic sight before him.

He sheathed his sword and stood up. The entire night's worth of practice did not leave him the least bit sore. Instead, he felt unspeakably refreshed and at peace.

It had been a while since he achieved elemental externalization, but last night's experience was completely different from anything he had experienced before. He was thoroughly intrigued by it.

Achieving elemental internalization required constant practice over long periods of time. Elemental externalization required a profound understanding of the heavens and the earth; the blind accumulation of elemental energy was no longer of any use.

Many elementalists were unable to become accustomed to this external connection with the environment.

Relaxing his control on the surrounding metal elemental energy, Ai Hui watched it slowly disperse into the wind. He jumped off the cliff and spread his Starry Gem Swordwings, soaring through the air before plunging into the sea of clouds.

After flying for hundreds of kilometers, he finally landed at noon.

He was lucky to catch a bharal for lunch. He lit a bonfire and started to roast it according to Lou Lan's teachings. Under chef Lou Lan's tutelage, Ai Hui's cooking skill had become pretty good.

The aroma of the various spices mixed with the bharal's grease was simply irresistible.

Travellers passed by every once in awhile. They all appeared to be heading towards the Wilderness.

"Are you the Silverwheel Swordsman, Mr. Chu Zhaoyang?" asked a middle-aged man who happened to be passing by. He looked like a housekeeper.

Ai Hui felt a bit helpless. He had met several groups of people who greeted him along the way. The whole incident with the Great Wei Caravan had made him famous and widely recognized.

Ai Hui stared at the roast, carefully rotating the grill without lifting his head. He replied, "I am indeed Chu Zhaoyang, do you need something?"

"My master would like to ask whether Mr. Chu is heading into the Wilderness. If Mr. Chu is going in, my master is willing to pay..."

Ai Hui interrupted the housekeeper. "I'm not going into the Wilderness."

This again...

Along the way, he had met a couple of guys who wanted to hire him.

After a satisfying lunch, Ai Hui decided not to waste anymore time on the ground and flew directly to Silver City, his destination.

Hua Kui’s meeting locations were always different. Ai Hui was surprised that they were going to meet at Silver City this time around.

Due to their past discussions about having him join the headquarters, Ai Hui couldn’t help but wonder if the Assembly of Patriarchs had their headquarters here in Silver City.

Ai Hui had been to Silver City twice. Both times, however, he had had matters to attend to and so entered and left the city hastily.

Heading towards the exact address given to him by Hua Kui, Ai Hui managed to find him swiftly. Once again, they were meeting in a courtyard filled with vast varieties of plants and flowers.

Hua Kui was very pleased to see Ai Hui. Among his acquaintances, Chu Zhaoyang was the most eye-catching individual. Hua Kui saw him as someone truly worthy of further grooming. From the information he received from the organization, Chu Zhaoyang seemed like someone who had a deep feud with the Blood of God.

Hua Kui curiously asked, "Why do you suddenly want to join the headquarters when you weren’t willing to do so previously?"

Ai Hui knew that while Hua Kui appeared to be asking this casually, his response would determine whether or not he could join the headquarters. He was, however, well prepared to answer something like that. "The incident with the Great Wei Caravan helped me to realize something - it is difficult to survive without a

strong backer."

Hua Kui burst out in laughter. "I believe you were just terribly unlucky that time, but what you say is true. If you had joined the headquarters then, the issue with the Great Wei Caravan would have been settled with a single order. Joining the headquarters isn’t going to be simple, I’m afraid. You’ll have to pass a test first."

"What kind of test?"

Ai Hui had already guessed that there would be a test.

"You have to find a way to join the Karakorum Sword League." Hua Kui continued, "It’s just nice that you haven’t used your opportunity to practice the Karakorum Sword League’s sword formations."

Cold fear gripped Ai Hui’s heart. How did he know about this? Clearly they had someone within the Karakorum Sword League. Ai Hui nonchalantly asked, "Isn’t it easy to join the Karakorum Sword League?"

Hua Kui explained, "It’s only easy to become an ordinary external disciple. You need to find a way to get into the main institution. Once you’re a part of them, you pass the test. If you fail, you’ll have to wait until next year."

Ai Hui promptly nodded. "I understand."

Chapter 334: Karakorum Sword League

Silver City was also known as Pagoda City. As the most elite city in the entire Silver Mist Sea, every inch of land was filled with wealth. The tall pagodas blended well with the other buildings and had gradually become a large part of Silver City's unique style.

Looking down from a bird's eye view, one could see large numbers of pagodas everywhere, each and every one them standing tall like swords that were pointing towards the sky. Bamboo carts, Fiery Floating Clouds and elementalists with their azure wings spread opened shuttled amongst these majestic pagodas. In the distance, the sparkling Silver Mist River loomed. The towering dams in the upper reaches and the mountains appeared to cover half of the horizon. This view was simply breathtaking.

Being the largest city in Silver Mist Sea, Silver City consisted of 13 towns of varying sizes. The furthest town was 220 kilometers away from Silver City and the nearest was 26 kilometers away. Every town was relatively busy and buzzed with enough activity to rival that of a small city.

The headquarters of Karakorum Sword League were located in a small, obscure town.

Ai Hui initially thought that Karakorum Sword League would be well-known throughout Silver City. However, upon reaching Silver City, he realised that the locals had limited knowledge of Karakorum Sword League.

Rather, the Dragonrise Training Hall was the most influential place in Silver City.

The location of headquarters of Dragonrise Training Hall was proof of this. Situated within Silver City itself, the training hall covered quite a bit of land area. Its buildings were lofty and grand, giving the area an extraordinary presence.

Money alone wasn't sufficient to create such a spectacular training hall in Silver City. Solid backing was definitely needed as well.

In comparison, Karakorum Sword League was much more low-profile. Ai Hui's curiosity towards Karakorum Sword League didn't change because of this.

Karakorum Sword League was directly responsible for the recent rise of swordsmanship's popularity.

It was rumoured that the chief of Karakorum Sword League was a highly skilled young lady with a mysterious background. She had also created numerous swordsmanship inheritances and therefore had the power to nurture a new generation. But as with all rumours, it was difficult to determine their reliability.

The further away one got from Silver City, the less pagodas could be seen. In their place stood low courtyards and shorter buildings.

The headquarters of Karakorum Sword League were relatively

old and must have been around for many years. Collapsed and shabby structures were everywhere, but the owners did not seem to be interested in repairing them.

Countless broken swords were strewn about the place, many of which were stabbed firmly into the surrounding walls and green ceramic tiles. Some were coated with layers of rust, while others shone brightly.

Racks made from bamboo poles lined both sides of the stone road that led up to the main gate. The racks were filled with grass swords placed out to dry.

A gust of wind blew past, causing the grass swords to ring out in harmony. The crisp, ringing sound was rather pleasing to Ai Hui's ear.

After walking two steps, Ai Hui saw the craftsmen who were handling the grass swords dip them into vats of black starch before swiftly taking them out. These shining black grass swords were then hung onto the bamboo pole.

Rows of bamboo racks were stretched across a few hundred feet in a spectacular display.

Although Karakorum Sword League's location was a little remote, it was not deserted at all. Groups of young ladies with long swords hanging from their waists would brush past Ai Hui from time to time. They would talk about their gains and losses and discuss the day's competitions.

Ai Hui was already enjoying the atmosphere - it reminded him of Central Pine Academy.

There was no trace of the hustle and bustle found in the rest of the Avalon of Five Elements.

The word "Karakorum" was written on the top portion of the main gates. Ai Hui found the handwriting rather familiar but couldn’t figure out where he had seen it before.

Stepping through the gates, he found his field of vision widened. Every single training ground was filled with people practicing their swordplay.

There was a teacher allocated to each one, lending their expertise and guidance to the students practicing within.

Upon seeing Ai Hui scanning the area, one of the youths in charge of attending to guests walked up to him. "Honored Guest, is there anything I can help you with?"

The youth looked no older than sixteen. A sword hung limply at his waist, and he looked pretty nimble.

Ai Hui took a small sword about three inches long and said, "I’m here to experience the sword formations."

The youth took a quick glance at the small sword and repeatedly nodded, "Those who hold the small sword token are Karakorum's distinguished guests. Please, come this way. We have six types of sword formations, which type would our honored guest wish to experience?"

"Six types?" asked Ai Hui, slightly taken aback. He never imagined that there would be several types of sword formations.

Upon hearing the surprise in Ai Hui's words, the youth suddenly displayed a strong sense of pride. "The swordsmanship of our leader is unrivalled. All six types of sword formations were invented by her and we'll probably have even more in the future."

"Truly impressive," replied Ai Hui sincerely. Come to think about it, he couldn't even create a complete sword formation, yet here they had already invented six types. He couldn't help but feel impressed.

No wonder they dared to use Karakorum's name, their leader must be pretty powerful.

The youth had a favourable impression of Ai Hui. He continued, "The sword formations are good for the training of swordsmanship. However, it is extremely pricey and ordinary people probably cannot afford it. Since you have the small sword token, you'll be able to experience three types of sword formations."

Ai Hui asked curiously, "Don't you usually use the sword

formations?"

"How can I possibly afford it?" the youth uttered as he shook his head. "Activating a sword formation requires blood crystals and essence elemental beans. Hang on, not just any essence elemental beans, they must be of the highest grade."

High-grade essence elemental beans contained much more elemental energy than ordinary ones. Furthermore, the elemental energy within was also much purer, which was why they were priced so highly.

A high-grade essence elemental bean was worth twenty ordinary ones, although the market for them was extremely volatile.

High-grade essence elemental beans were expensive and had a low production rate. As such, people in general didn't use them.

The beneficial effects of high-grade essence elemental beans were significantly better than that of the ordinary essence elemental beans, but the discrepancy wasn't exactly twenty times, as the difference in value might imply. More often, they were used to refine weapons or manufacture elemental food to enhance the product's quality.

"Doesn't that make it super expensive?" Ai Hui asked as he raised the small sword token in his hand. "How much is this worth?"

The youth shook his head again and replied, "I don't know the

specific price, but it’s definitely worth quite a hefty sum. The thing is, you may not be able to buy it even if you have lots of essence elemental beans."

Ai Hui followed the youth and walked along the training grounds. He inquisitively asked, "How’s the standard of the teachers here? Are their rates high?"

"The teachers are without a doubt the best you can find," answered the youth haughtily. "Other places like Dragonrise Training Hall might be stronger in other aspects, but in terms of swordsmanship, they aren’t even worth mentioning. The price is reasonable, only five essence elemental beans per year, something that most people can afford. Of course, this is only for the daily lessons given by the teachers. If you’d like to learn swordsmanship inheritances, you’d naturally have to pay more."

"Reasonable indeed," nodded Ai Hui. "Looks like there are quite a lot of students."

A fee of five essence elemental beans per annum wasn’t expensive, especially since Karakorum was located around Silver City.

The youth held his head so high that his chin almost pointed towards the sky. "Of course! Karakorum Sword League in Silver City is the best place to learn swordsmanship inheritances. Everyone knows this!"

Just then, a man and a lady walked out from the backyard.

The man was charismatic, dashing and gracefully wielded a longsword in his hand. The lady by his side had a demure and refined presence.

The lady’s face was filled with indignation as she exclaimed, "This woman does not know her place. Ah Xian, you saved her from those people yet she treated you with such disrespect! This is too much!"

The man was however not angry at all. He replied, "Don’t be angry, Junyu. Her behaviour isn’t exactly out of sorts either. We saved her with the intention of taking a reward, which wasn’t particularly well-intentioned of us anyway. If I hadn’t heard that the ancient treasure she possesses is a swordplay manual, I wouldn’t have concerned myself with this. Besides, she’s probably still grieving over the unexpected massacre that befell the Great Wei Enterprise."

"That’s true. The attackers were absolutely vicious," sighed the lady. "Although, such things have been happening since ancient times. Talented people will always draw others’ jealousy, sometimes resulting in their family’s misfortune. I guess she’s quite pitiful too. Ah Xian, do you think someone will find their way here?"

"Junyu, you shouldn’t be worried since Karakorum is not an easy place to break into. Nothing will happen as long as they don’t come. But if they do, we’ll just have to take revenge for her and get rid of them all," said the man confidently.

After hearing this, the lady calmed down and diverted her gaze. Softly, she said, "Isn’t that Chu Zhaoyang?"

The man stopped in his tracks while his eyes followed the lady’s gaze. His eyes immediately lit up, "He really is Chu Zhaoyang!"

The two of them used to track Shi Youguang and stumbled upon his body soon after Chu Zhaoyang had killed him. Upon further inspection of the body, they were deeply shocked by what they had seen.

The lady felt a little surprised. "He’s very powerful."

The man made a sound in agreement, "Check out his pace and breathing rhythm, they’re both very relaxed, but completely in sync. Also, there is hardly any trace of his elemental energy around him. Doesn’t it feel like a sword hidden in its sheath?"

"Yes indeed," agreed the lady, astonished. "His entire body is shrouded by a faint metal elemental energy that appears to be well-concealed. This elemental energy around him seems to extend a good distance away from his body as well... He’s discovered us!"

Sure enough, Chu Zhaoyang turned to face them.

The man felt a shiver down his spine. It seemed like Chu Zhaoyang was much more powerful than he’d thought. He had heard that Chu Zhaoyang had only recently achieved elemental externalization, but upon seeing him for himself, he knew that this

wasn’t true.

With a gentle smile on his face, the man took the initiative to greet Ai Hui. "Are you the Silverwheel Swordsman Chu Zhaoyang, Brother Chu? I’m Qin Xian, and this is my fiancee Lian Junyu. I wasn’t expecting to see Brother Chu here in Karakorum, it’s such an honour."

"A good day to both of you," replied Ai Hui with a smile. The other party’s friendly manner made Ai Hui less wary. "A friend gave me this small sword token, which allows me to face Karakorum Sword League’s sword formations as a learning experience."

Qinxian laughed, "Brother Chu, you’re too humble. The Silverwheel Swordsman is well-known by everyone."

Ai Hui self-deprecatingly said, "Being known by everyone isn’t exactly something worth boasting about."

Qin Xian and Lian Junyu both smiled.

The youth who had been bringing Ai Hui around was momentarily stunned. He had most certainly heard of the Silverwheel Swordsman Chu Zhaoyang who had risen to fame amidst the incident with the Great Wei Enterprise and his various other exploits.

Qin Xian addressed the youth, "Go attend to your other tasks, I

will take care of Mr. Chu."

The youth made an indiscernible sound and immediately ran off. He was so excited that he couldn’t wait to tell his friends about what had just happened. Although they couldn’t enter the sword formation training area, they were still able to watch from the outside.

Being able to see such a famous swordsman in action was an extremely rare opportunity, maybe even once in a lifetime.

In the blink of an eye, news about Chu Zhaoyang’s visit to Karakorum Sword League’s sword formations spread like wildfire.

Be it the teachers or the pupils, everyone immediately stopped what they were doing and rushed towards the sword formation training area.

Chapter 335: Sword Formations

"All six sword formations were created by Chief. Some were developed when she was younger while playing games, and others were new discoveries made in recent years. The newest one is less than three months old. It is Chief's sudden conception that was built only after a long discussion with everybody. Karakorum is different from most training halls. We rarely get involved in concrete battles. You can see us as a training hall that researches on and promotes sword mastery."

Qin Xian stood in front, introducing and guiding the way. He spoke slowly but not imposingly. His voice was refreshing and his elegant demeanor was admirable.

Lian Junyu, who followed behind him, looked at him affectionately.

Ai Hui was absorbed in Qin Xian's explanation. It was rather different from what was rumored.

"There is a main and an external institution in Karakorum. The main institution is where the teachers do their research on inherited swordplays. We don't have many of those, and those that we do have are not of a high level, so there's no need to mention absolute arts. We usually train and ponder over ideas on our own, but we gather once a week to share knowledge and skills. Everyone says whatever they want, so arguments are common. However, no one gets angry since they are all used to it. If anyone has a new idea, he will also gather everybody immediately to discuss it. Karakorum's sword-related discussions are unique to us and hard

to find elsewhere."

Ai Hui raised his eyebrows. "What do you do if there's any absolute art that you do not wish to divulge?"

Qin Xian smiled. "We will not force it of course, since absolute arts are used to save one's life. Honestly speaking, our swordsmanship inheritance are still of a lower grade, except for Chief's, which is slightly higher. As compared to the absolute arts from aristocratic families, we are lagging far behind. We don't really regard absolute moves or what not as important, but our first swordplay absolute art is taking shape."

Ai Hui was stirred. "How impressive."

Very impressive.

Till now, swordsmanship inheritance offered nothing great, and it was needless to talk about absolute arts. If an absolute art can emerge from an swordsmanship inheritance, it will definitely cause a commotion.

Even though swordsmanship had declined, they still had some influence over people. These were the brilliant results accumulated over millions of years and left by the Cultivation Era.

If Karakorum birthed the first ever absolute swordplay, it would indeed live up to its name.

"I’m ashamed to say this, but this was accomplished by Chief’s own efforts. We couldn’t help much at all." Qin Xian felt rather embarrassed. He continued, "The external institution is where swordplays are passed down. Whether a person has a foundation or not, we are willing to impart knowledge to them. If we meet a talented and impoverished person, fees are waived. Most practitioners are taken care of by teachers in the external institution. Teachers in the main institution will go over and give a weekly, four-hour lecture about swordsmanship. They will share information as they please, as a means of contributing to the promotion of swordsmanship.

Ai Hui was in genuine admiration. "Karakorum Sword League is indeed a noble one!"

To judge a person, one must observe what he does and not what he says.

No matter what rumors were said about Karakorum, the fact that Karakorum Sword league could come this far was indeed worthy of respect.

Ai Hui practiced with swords but had never thought about promoting swordsmanship. Even if he did open a training hall that taught swordsmanship, it was merely to conceal his identity. He truly respected Karakorum’s efforts, regardless of their motives, in promoting swordsmanship.

Qin Xian smiled slightly. He’d said so much as he had his own ideas. Chu Zhaoyang was an excellent swordsman. If recruited into the main institution, he could assist them greatly in completing

their first swordplay absolute art.

"The sword formations are just ahead."

Six sword formations entered Ai Hui’s field of vision and he couldn’t help but stop in his tracks and open his eyes wide. "Grass swords?"

Karakorum Sword League’s sword formations were completely different from the one he’d arranged.

Each formation was formed by grass swords. Some were inserted into the ground while others were placed in midair. Some of the grass swords cruised like fishes whereas other were faintly discernable. But there was one sword formation, which contained a pure, concentrated sword consciousness that Ai Hui could feel. Some were massive like mountains, some were sharp and harsh, some moved swiftly like wind while others were extremely unpredictable.

Qin Xian said softly, "Deriving the sword formations consume too much materials. Since we can’t afford materials that are too expensive, we might as well use grass swords. The cost is lower and we make them ourselves so that reduces the overall cost even further."

Ai Hui finally realized that the grass swords he’d seen being dried outside the entrance were meant for the sword formations.

Using grass swords to derive a sword formation was indeed a decent idea so Ai Hui was impressed. The sword formation he'd fixed up in the training hall consumed way too much to the point where he's practically used up all his fortune, evidence that deriving sword formations this way was unsuitable.

Using grass swords could really minimize the production costs. Of course, there were disadvantages of using grass swords, since they wouldn't be able to withstand too much elemental energy. In that sense, the power of the sword formation was reduced greatly as well.

This was also probably the reason why Karakorum Sword League used these sword formations for training and practicing.

"How do I start?" Ai Hui turned around and asked Qin Xian.

"Stand in the middle of the sword formation. You'll need to use another grass sword." Qin Xian explained while handing Ai Hui a different sword. "Which sword formation would you like to start with?"

Receiving the sword, Ai Hui felt a sense of familiarity. He'd been using a grass sword for so many years so it was easy for him. "Let's start from the first one."

Qin Xian nodded. "Okay, you can just step inside anytime and when you're stationed, the sword formation will be mobilized."

Hearing that, Ai Hui started walking towards the first sword formation.

Many youngsters, upon receiving the news, had gathered around the sword formation. They'd heard that Silverwheel Swordsman, Chu Zhaoyang, was coming to experience the sword formation so all of them rushed over. Swordsmanship hadd been in decline for many years. While it did become a slight trend in recent years, there hadn't been many famous swordsmen coming out of it. Silverwheel Swordsman was one of the more outstanding practitioners so these young and budding swordsmen had all came to observe.

Qin Xian and Lian Junyu kept their eyes wide open as well since they were both very curious about Chu Zhaoyang's abilities.

Ai Hui held onto the grass sword and walked into the first formation.

There were thirty-six grass swords inserted into the ground randomly and only half of the sword bodies were above ground. Ai Hui was extremely familiar with sword manuals from the Cultivation Era so he knew immediately, upon seeing the positions of these swords, that the formation had been completed in accordance to the Plum Blossom Numerology.

The Plum Blossom Numerology had been used extensively in swordplays during the Cultivation Era. Many swordplays involved this law, making it one of the staples.

But was the Plum Blossom Numerology functional in the Elemental Ea?

Ai Hui was in doubt but concealed it with his usual expression. He held the sword straight and remained calm.

To the bystanders, holding a sword turned Chu Zhaoyang into a different person. If they were to say that Chu Zhaoyang was the sheath of a treasure sword, now that the treasure sword was unsheathed, his abilities were out there for all to see and there was a cold aura surrounding him, making him seem sharp and dangerous.

Knowing when they saw something good, Qin Xian and Lian Junyu's eyes lit up.

The students did not say anything but they automatically held their breaths.

Clang!

A sword chime sounded as one of the grass swords inserted into the ground trembled before flying out.

A sword shadow flashed across the sky.

Without panicking, Ai Hui took a slight step forward and thrust the grass sword in his hands forward cleanly.

Ding!

Ai Hui’s grass sword hit the sword shadow accurately.

Just then, another sword chime rang from behind him. Without turning around, AI Hui pulled his sword behind his back, and as if there were eyes on his back, he managed to aim and strike the sword shadow precisely.

Clang clang clang. The sword chimes fell incessantly on the ears as the densely packed sword shadows enveloped Ai Hui like a swarm in midair.

Ai Hui appeared unhurried. His sword moves were neither fast nor gaudy and complicated. Each move was simple, practical and accurate.

Lian Junyu couldn’t help but exclaim in surprise, "Such solid swordsmanship."

Qin Xian kept quiet but his eyes said it all. It was obvious when an expert made a move. Ai Hui’s sword moves weren’t at all garish but the more this was the case, the more apparent it became that Ai Hui had a profound understanding of swordsmanship.

Standing in the middle, Ai Hui was trying to grasp the sword formation.

Ai Hui had no idea that the Plum Blossom Numerology could be used this way.

After some handling, the ground beneath his feet was in reality a sword scabbard. Thirty six grass swords were inserted into the same sheath. On normal days, these thirty six swords were placed into the ground for nourishment.

If he guessed correctly, there must be a hidden spring underground which supplied water elemental energy and wood elemental energy.

The Plum Blossom Numerology could be operated together with water elemental energy, producing something marvelous. This was something Ai Hui'd never explored before so he made sure to take note of it. He could impart this to Hua Xiaoyun and get her to mull over it herself.

Cloud Ridge City, where Hua Xiaoyun's house was located, had already been transformed into scorched earth. Her family was killed in that catastrophe so Ai Hui naturally would not just sit back and watch.

The well-nourished grass swords blended into one another, as if they shared a core.

If Ai Hui had seen such a sword formation in Central Pine City, he definitely would've been flustered.

Over the past three years, his elemental energy had been growing slowly because of the blood plum blossom. However, his swordsmanship improved so fast it could be said that he'd become a whole different person.

Ai Hui understood that if the sword formation operated this way, the thirty six grass swords would increase in speed and become increasingly difficult for the center person to handle. In other words, if a swordsman were to get caught up in the sword formation, he would find himself in a troublesome situation if he did not find the key to breaking the sword formation within five minutes.

This excited Ai Hui. He wanted to see how far he could persevere.

Clink clink clink!

The sword shadows became increasingly blurred as the sword chimes in midair started to become loud and clear.

Within the sword formation, the grass sword in Ai Hui's hands started to blur as well. It struck continuously and forcefully, causing sparks to fly in all directions. Nevertheless, Ai Hui's body remained steady and motionless like a rock.

"Seven minutes."

Qin Xian checked the time repeatedly. He was well familiar with the sword formation. This sword formation wasn't difficult to

break. It only tested swordsmen's understanding of the Plum Blossom Numerology. If one understood it, it was relatively easy to break the formation. This formation gave the subject three minutes and once time was up, the swords' power would rise to an unresistable level. The longer it dragged on, the mightier the grass swords became.

But it'd already been seven minutes and the sword shadows were moving at a speed so fast it was difficult for the naked eye to catch. The sharp, echoing sword whistles were soul-shattering.

Clink clink clink!

The sounds of grass swords crossing paths became louder and higher in pitch.

Boom. A heavy explosion sounded suddenly.

The ground shook and dust filled the air. It was as if the whole sword formation had been torn apart by an invisible hand. Thirty-six grass swords flew all over the place like dried seedlings in a crazy storm.

A figure holding onto a sword walked slowly out from amid the smoke and dust.

Chapter 336: Madam Ling's Guess

Only half a section of the grass sword was left in Ai Hui's hand but Ai Hui stood steady and dust-free.

Amid the sea of silence, he threw away the sword in his hand and said with ease, "Please get me a new sword."

As if awakening from a dream, the teachers standing at the side hurriedly handed over their swords to Ai Hui and felt embarrassed upon realizing that many others had also offered their swords.

Ai Hui took a sword from the nearest teacher and thanked him.

He then gave the others a slight bow. "Thank you everyone."

People were only now coming back to their senses and a clamor broke out.

The students were excited and in disbelief. Many had both hands on their heads as they mumbled about things that they, themselves, could not hear. They had seen many who managed to break the sword formations, especially the first one since it was the easiest. The fastest record was a minute and ten seconds.

So far, Chu Zhaoyang was the slowest contender.

Yet, it was this fact that shook them completely. They had never

seen a sword formation being destroyed and falling into ruins. The same voice echoed in all their minds, "How's that possible?"

How was that possible?

Qin Xian opened his eyes wide as the same question filled his mind. He already had an idea when he saw that seven minutes had passed, but to have that scene unfold right before his eyes was still a shocking experience.

Lian Junyu had both hands over her mouth, and her face was overwhelmed with shock.

The grass swords had scattered all over the place due to the surging force from the formation. It was as if a violent beast had just trampled across this area.

Ai Hui felt rather embarrassed. "I am so sorry to have destroyed the sword formation. I'm willing to compensate."

He had no choice and had been pondering how to carry out his mission of sneaking into the main institution. His conclusion was that he needed to impress and shock them.

It appeared that he had accomplished his goal.

However, to come over to someone else's territory, make use of their sword formation, and still act so arrogantly, was this not considered bullying?

Okay, maybe a little, but to complete his mission, he really could not care that much! Plus, why did he feel... slightly pleased? That final blow had really given him an adrenaline rush.

Hey, hey, hey, calm down. Unlike Fatty, he was not an immoral fellow!

Qin Xian reacted by laughing joyously. "Don’t say that, Brother Chu. We are more than happy that it’s broken since it means that we, the swordsmen, are powerful. Do not feel apologetic. You’ve really opened up our eyes. This experience is far more valuable than the sword formation and also proves something."

He deliberately pause before continuing in a deadpan manner, "It was the right choice to use grass swords when deriving a sword formation."

Those around roared with laughter, and even Ai Hui could not resist revealing a slight smile.

It had to be said that Qin Xian was an extremely charming fellow. He was likeable and approachable.

"The next formation then?"

"To the next!" Qin Xian added as a reminder, "Please do not go easy, Brother Chu. It’s fine if you destroy it. It will teach the younger ones a little something—that there’s always a higher

mountain to climb. Plus, grass swords aren't expensive and they're easily replaceable."

The last sentence caused the crowd to erupt into laughter once more.

Ai Hui laughed out loud. Carrying the grass sword, he walked upright and unafraid toward the second sword formation.

With unhurried steps, Ai Hui felt carefree and relaxed Looking from the back, however, there was a mighty aura that surrounded him. Those who witnessed this sight could not help but feel admiration.

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The Ling residence, Golden Eagle Study Room.

The servants all knew that the family head would only call for his wife if he had met with a challenging situation.

According to the rules set by the older generation, the women in Ling residence were not allowed to enter the study. However, when it came to this particular madam, there was no restriction at all. The servants felt it was reasonable. Even the housekeeper who had served the residence for over 50 years and across two generations felt it was reasonable. No one had an objections.

Madam Ling had proven too many times that she was

knowledgeable, experienced, and a good judge. When the old family head was still healthy, even he was full of praise when it came to this daughter-in-law of his.

When Madam Ling was young, she was not considered the most notable young aristocrat.

Back in the day, the most famous figure, also referred to as "Flower of Aristocratic Families", was Ye Lin. Ye Lin was born into the most respectable family in all of the Avalon of Five Elements and later married the only son of the Elders Guild’s Great Elder.

However, Madam Ling was different. She relied on her own wisdom and personality to win the hearts of everybody. She had the perfect family, and her children grew up well. Her virtuous character was well-known to the aristocratic families. Her husband treated her with utmost respect, and everyone in the household adored her deeply.

There were people in the Ling residence who talked behind the family head’s back and were let off with a few warnings. However, those who talked bad about the madam were undoubtedly going to get a beating.

"Have you found out what it is exactly?" Madam Ling sipped her tea and asked unhurriedly, "How can it be an ordinary object if Dai Gang set his eyes upon it?"

"Opinions differ." Family Head Ling Sheng anxiously continued, "Some mentioned that it is a secret swordplay called

[Transcendence] from the Void Sword Clan. Some said it's a blood-refining spell, while others said it's an important treasure belonging to Karakorum, or even a demonic artifact. There are also people who believe that it is an immortality pill. We planned to enter from the Great Wei Enterprise, but they reacted very aggressively and those people did not hold back so..."

Madam Ling placed her tea cup down and sighed. "Why must we take action? Didn't we agree that no action should be taken unless absolutely necessary? Don't keep using those people. They're too murderous."

Ling Sheng replied in embarrassment, "I've already given them a scolding, but you know what kind of people they are too. It's difficult for them to control themselves when they see blood."

He elaborated, "There's still some benefits. I heard that that the Great Wei Enterprise has obtained this ancient treasure for quite a long time now. The enterprise has a good relationship with the Duanmu family and they had even presented a gift to the family before. You do remember what happened next right? Back in the day, Dai Gang accepted Duanmu Huanghun as his disciple all of a sudden, and the Duanmu family specially selected a bunch of gifts for Dai Gang. The thing that Great Wei Enterprise gifted Duanmu family is likely to be in Dai Gang's hands."

"From what you've said, that's actually possible. Otherwise, why would the Great Wei Enterprise get noticed by Dai Gang?" Madam Ling said thoughtfully as she mumbled to herself. "The Great Wei Enterprise planned to send the ancient treasure to the Jadeite Forest, but the news was leaked, attracting many who lusted over

the treasure. Why didn’t Dai Gang send reinforcements at that time? Could it be that he hadn’t figured out what was going on? Yeah, probably. This means that the Great Wei Enterprise might not know what the treasure is for. Dai Gang did not hesitate to request the help of an enterprise of Avalon of Five Elements to search for this treasure. Evidently, it is extremely important to him. Tell me, with his current status, is there anything he would sacrifice everything to obtain?"

Having thought for a long time, Ling Sheng shook his head. "Can’t think of anything. Dai Gang is now a Grandmaster. He’s the god of the Jadeite Forest, so what could he possibly not have?"

A lightbulb went off in Madam Ling’s head. She shouted excitedly, "Great Grandmaster! What if the treasure he’s looking for could make him a Great Grandmaster?"

Ling Sheng sat dumbstruck. After some time, he stammered, "Is there something so magical in this world?"

Madam Ling questioned him instead of answering. "Then tell me, other than this kind of object, what else could be attractive enough for Dai Gang?"

Ling Sheng stared absent-mindedly for a long time, muttering to himself, "How can there be such a treasure?"

Deep down, he had already internalized his wife’s judgment, but it was simply too shocking for him. He soon came up with another question. "If it’s so important to Dai Gang, why doesn’t he

personally make a move?"

The moment these words left his mouth, he knew he had just asked a foolish question.

Indeed, his question put Madam Ling in a bad mood. "An Muda isn’t dead yet."

Ling Sheng felt embarrassed once again.

There could never be two tigers on one mountain. This was especially the case for Grandmasters. Between Grandmasters, they were natural enemies and both parties could feel each other’s presence from thousands of miles away. Dai Gang’s infiltration into the Avalon could be concealed from everyone except An Muda.

Grandmasters were the real treasures of a powerful nation. Once they were deployed, that would be the decisive battle.

Unless Dai Gang was insane, he would absolutely never enter the Avalon of Five Elements.

"An Muda doesn’t have many years left ahead of him," Ling Sheng commented.

This was also the reason why he would contact Dai Gang in secret. It was to leave an escape route for the Ling residence. The death of An Muda would break the equilibrium between both sides

and no one inside of the Avalon would be able to stop Dai Gang.

An Muda was too old. No one knew how much longer he would live.

Everyone understood that the moment of An Muda's death would be the moment when everything changed.

Anyway, the Ling residence was not the only family leaving a way out for themselves.

"If this item is so important to Dai Gang, and he's determined to win it over, then the Ling residence wouldn't be the only family he's utilizing. We must grab this opportunity to gain merit so as to rise above the rest." Madam Ling's voice was ice cold. "Is she in Karakorum?"

Whenever Madam Ling used this murderous tone with him, Ling Sheng would feel an indescribable excitement and would want more than anything to pounce on and ravage her.

He licked his lips. "Yes! She's in the Karakorum Sword League and is said to be a big beauty. Presumably, Karakorum Sword League heard about the [Transcendence] secret swordplay and wondered what it was for, but it's a pity they have yet to find its whereabouts and can only keep her confined at home."

Madam Ling asked, "What is Karakorum Sword League all about?"

She had heard of this name, but was not concerned. Other than the aristocratic families located there, Silver City was a place where generations of families were replaced quickly.

Water-like Silver City, iron-made aristocratic families.

"What history? What history could a bunch of idiotic sword lovers have? Swordsmanship has long been thrown into the trash, yet there are always people who are trying to commemorate it. Those who associate themselves with swordsmanship are all fools."

Madam Ling responded with a straight face, "Just like Ye Lin."

Ling Sheng was astounded. "Widow Ye Lin must have bullied you quite a bit in the past for you to hold such a deep grudge."

"Capture that beauty." Madam Ling could not be bothered with him. Her face remained ice cold as she spoke, " The treasure must be where she is. Karakorum Sword League may be unable to locate it, but we’re not as useless."

Ling Sheng was no longer able to hold himself back. With a cry he pounced on her like a wild beast in heat.

Chapter 337: Uninvited Guests

Ai Hui was deeply shaken by Karakorum Sword League's sword formations.

He had broken through the second formation as well. To be exact, it had been destroyed. Nevertheless, Ai Hui was not the least bit complacent. The second sword formation was completely different in style from the first.

The more complicated the sword formation, the mightier it was.

Although they were just grass swords, that feeling of having a blade on his back still caused him to break out a cold sweat. He appeared calm, but inwardly, he felt far from it. The reasoning behind the second formation was entirely different from the first as it used firewind swords.

When it came to the third formation, Ai Hui was already feeling the pressure. He recalled what Qin Xian mentioned earlier, about how some sword formations were created while the chief was playing games when she was young.

When she was young…

Games…

All right then. He got rid of any sense of satisfaction. Yes, this meant that he really was not an immoral character, unlike Fatty.

Ai Hui's competitive spirit had been triggered.

Being the weakling in other aspects was something that Ai Hui was used to, but not when it came to swordsmanship. He had spent a significant amount of time and effort on training and on searching for functional objects amid the vast, boundless garbage heaps. He would find it difficult to accept if he could not even defeat a game that someone created at a young age.

Entering the third sword formation, Ai Hui was already certain that the Chief of Karakorum Sword League had a more holistic understanding and knowledge of the swordsmanship.

The third sword formation was actually a military-type swordsmanship.

Military-type swordsmanship appeared in the early days of the Cultivation Era, but were quickly replaced by more complex swordplays from swordplay sects. Only with the resurgence of large military units had military-type swordsmanship risen once again.

Military-type swordsmanship was unique in that it involved straightforward moves. Each blow was sharp, murderous, and without any excessive shifts.

With a flip of the sword in his hands, Ai Hui obstructed a sword that came for him from above. The strong impact made his wrist tremble. Before he could take a breather, another sharp presence

locked onto him. He spun around abruptly, thrusting the grass sword out at a slight angle.

With a slight tremble, a faint glow appeared on the grass sword.

Clang!

The sound of metal colliding was painful to the ears.

The grass sword rose up and shot backward.

Ai Hui did not cower at all. With a twitch of his sword, he charged toward that recoiling grass sword. His strikes were plain, and after 12 consecutive hits, he struck the tip of that grass sword.

The blade of the recoiling grass sword split like a solid bamboo being forced open.

Crack!

The grass sword broke completely, transforming into chaff that drifted away.

Ai Hui lowered his body and dodged a grass sword that came at him from behind before chasing after it. With a flick of his wrist, a silver glow appeared. A silver sword wheel became entangled with the grass sword in front of it.

Shattering explosions sounded as the grass sword within the silver wheel snapped off inch by inch.

Ai Hui’s desire to win was so strong that he had no idea that those outside the sword formation were already flabbergasted by what they had witnessed.

Stupefied, Qin Xian suddenly turned around to ask his fiance, "Is he really going to destroy every sword formation?"

Lian Junyu did not even close her eyes for an instant. "It seems like he does have that intention."

Suddenly, they both reacted together by turning their heads and making eye contact.

The Karakorum Sword League’s sword formations had been open to public for quite some time now. They had given away many small swords and sold even more. This could be considered as one of the Karakorum Sword League's important sources of income. For the longest time, those who were able to break through three formations were allowed to enter the main institution and become registered teachers.

Break, not destroy.

The best record so far was four formations. Even the chief had mentioned that she might not successfully break through all six if it was her first time trying.

Notice! Break! Not destroy!

Breaking through and destroying were two completely different concepts. To break through meant to find a loophole in the sword formation and escape. To destroy, not only must the challenger find the loophole, he also had to attack the formation in order to shatter it.

Sword formations had many loopholes that could only be broken though.

To destroy... no one had even done that.

Even before the other students and teachers could process this, they were already shaken by Ai Hui’s swordsmanship. All sorts of cries and screams could be heard continuously.

"Oh dear, how did he do that?"

"Did anyone see how many sword moves Ai Hui unleashed? Nine or ten?"

"It’s 12!"

"Too... too crazy. How can anyone in this world do this?"

"I’m starting to see stars!"

Amid all the excitement, a silver sword wheel lit up, bringing the chatter to its highest pitch.

"Silver wheel! Silver wheel!"

"Silverwheel Swordsman!"

Chu Zhaoyang's nickname was Silverwheel Swordsman, so this silver wheel was naturally his signature move. How could the students not feel moved when they actually got to witness a famous swordsman displaying his signature move?

Ai Hui was unaware of the commotion outside. He was totally in the zone and only had eyes on the grass swords within the sword formation.

Crack crack crack!

After the third grass sword was entangled, the whole sword formation was no longer able to keep up and it collapsed. The remaining grass swords burst into flames, and in the blink of an eye, the blaze engulfed the sword bodies, turning them all into ashes.

The third sword formation had been destroyed.

The whole hall quieted down when this scene ended.

The audience looked at Ai Hui with respectful, but not agitated nor shocked, eyes.

To the audience, the image of Chu Zhaoyang wielding a grass sword seemed to become a majestic, towering mountain and an extremely admirable sight.

Ai Hui's fiery fighting spirit surged. The sword formation had already collapsed, but he had no wish to stop yet. He walk toward the fourth formation with the grass sword in hand.

Qin Xian, who was trailing, opened his mouth and prepared to stop Ai Hui.

This was enough validation. Destroying three sword formations was a feat only he and the chief of Karakorum Sword League could accomplish. Although the formations were made up of grass swords, the cost was not low.

Deep down, Qin Xian already saw Chu Zhaoyang as member of his group, so there would be many opportunities in future for him to experience the sword formations. Plus, they could tackle them peacefully. Why was there a need to be so violent... They were all money...

Lian Junyu was quick enough to stop Qin Xian. "Notice his state of mind," she reminded.

Qin Xian snapped out of it, stared at Chu Zhaoyang, and immediately realized that something was amiss. Chu Zhaoyang was becoming increasingly vigorous, and they could feel his intense battlelust even from far away.

Qin Xian had experienced being in such a state.

To put it simply, it was an indescribable excitement and passion that a fighter felt when competing against an evenly-matched opponent.

The stimulation of violence was another easy way of explaining it.

Since Chu Zhaoyang was in such a state, it was unsurprising that he entered the fourth formation without even giving anybody a second glance. He was in a senseless state, indicating the beginning of a breakthrough.

This state was one that could be discovered, but not sought.

Qin Xian instantly shut his mouth as his eyes filled with anticipation. It was clear to him that six sword formations in exchange for an opportunity for Chu Zhaoyang to break through was definitely worth it! Everything else aside, Chu Zhaoyang would then owe them a favor.

The more esteemed people were, the more they placed an importance on favors. They would avoid owing favors, but at the

same time, they would definitely pay them back when necessary.

Chu Zhaoyang's abilities were already greater than what he had imagined, so what kind of standard would he reach if he were to undergo a breakthrough?

He had no idea, but he knew that if Chu Zhaoyang did experience a breakthrough, they were going to strike it rich.

.....

A group of uninvited guests appeared in Small Leaf Town.

"Have you run a check on Karakorum Sword League's background?" The burly-looking leader asked in a low voice. He looked ordinary and had no striking traits. He was the type that could blend in and disappear into a crowd, but when he narrowed his eyes, a thick bloody smell automatically oozed out.

"Nothing great." A petite man shook his head.

Someone beside them laughed softly. "How great would it be? Opening a training hall in such a remote place. If Karakorum Sword League really was something, why would it be established in such a place rather than in the city?

The rest nodded their heads in agreement. These words made too much sense.

Training hall owners with greater abilities would naturally pick livelier places to open their training halls since the livelier the place, the better the business.

"The chief of Karakorum Sword League Isn't around," the petite man said somewhat regretfully. "I heard that the chief is a young girl. She never ever removes her veil, but she has a gorgeous figure with curves in all the right places. There’s no doubt that she’s a great beauty, heh heh."

Someone immediately stirred restlessly, saying, "And that Xiao Shuren, eh. She’s a great beauty too. We should not forget about her."

"Yeah, what a waste to let them go."

Enraged, the boss suddenly yelled, "Shut it, all of you!"

Everyone fell silent out of fear.

The big man narrowed his eyes like a tiger hungry for human flesh as he coldly said, "I’ll say the ugly words first. Keep your pants on. If anyone screws up, I will personally extract his brain and kill his whole family."

No one dared to utter a sound. They all knew that their boss was truly furious.

The burly-looking boss surveyed his people, and no one dared to meet his gaze. "This is Silver City. Is Silver City a place for us to create trouble? Know your place. You think those aristocratic families are good people? They'll be the first to get rid of us if anything happens."

Finishing this sentence, he slowed down, adding, "We need to get this done in the shortest time possible. Let's capture Xiao Shuren and leave immediately. Do not stir up any trouble at all. Since the chief of Karakorum Sword League isn't around, let's cut the bullsh*t and head straight for it."

The petite man hurriedly asked, "Boss, should we wait for nightfall?"

"No." The boss lowered his voice. "There could be competitors, so let's stay alert and make our move."

Upon hearing that there were other people of the same trade, their faces changed and all of them suddenly stood up straight and became vigilant.

The boss looked pleased. "Let's go. To the Karakorum Sword League."

The gang arrived at the Karakorum Sword League's entrance and immediately felt suspicious.

There was no one standing by the big entrance.

"Let’s go in and see," the boss said in a low voice.

The well-prepared gang walked through the entrance, but the place was still empty, and not a single soul was present.

The boss’s gaze fell upon the petite fellow, and the latter quickly said, "Boss, it was full when I came previously."

Just then, an alarmed cry sounded from somewhere.

A murderous look flashed across the boss’s eyes as he said without hesitating, "Go. Let’s go and have a look."

They started walking toward the sword formations.

Chapter 338: Yin Yang Sword Formation

No one noticed these uninvited guests as everybody in the hall, students and teachers, was standing around the sword formation.

Ai Hui, who was in the middle of it, was also unaware of the situation outside.

He was in trouble. It was the fifth sword formation.

That earlier cheer was from when he destroyed the fourth sword formation.

The fourth was Big Dipper sword formation, an obvious modification of Cultivation Era's Big Dipper sword formation.

Ai hui had read more than one swordplay manual involving Big Dipper. Plus, he practiced the inheritance of [Big Dipper] so naturally, he understood it better than most.

Nevertheless, he still came across a minor problem. As compared to his understanding of Big Dipper, the creator had an even deeper comprehension of the whole system. Ai Hui had been suppressed for a good eight minutes before getting a chance to retaliate.

He used up a tremendous amount of strength. Clink, clink, clink! Finally, the fourth formation was shattered.

But the moment he stepped into the fifth formation, he fell into a tough spot.

This was actually a Yin Yang sword formation!

Ai Hui was astonished. Could it be that Karakorum's understanding of swordsmanship had already reached such a level? There was Yin Yang in primal chaos, and it transformed into five elements. It appeared that Yin Yang was simpler, but when it came to practice the simpler things were actually harder.

The same idea applied to battles. The simpler the reasoning, the harder to fancify it. But when done, it would be extremely powerful.

This sword formation was like that as well.

The Yin Yang grass swords were like a shoal of fish cruising around Ai Hui's body. It looked harmless and ordinary, but the more harmless it looked, the more dangerous it really was.

Ai Hui's state of mind and awareness were completely shut off from the outside world, as if there was an invisible wall isolating him from it. What was even more unimaginable was that these Yin Yang grass swords brought such turbulent flows that disrupted and warped his perception.

The perception he'd been relying on all this while was completely failing him. His sense of position and speed were wrong because of

the distortion produced by the turbulent flows.

Ai Hui had never been in such a situation before.

Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp was powerless since this wasn’t an illusion created by a psychic attack.

Outside the formation, Qin Xian subconsciously sighed a breath of relief. "Looks like he’s going to be stuck in this one."

Not knowing why, he felt as though a weight was lifted off his mind. Quickly, he realized that he wasn’t the only one feeling this way. Lian Junyu, too, sighed, "Yeah, it’s simply too shocking but luckily Yin Yang formation is obstructing him."

"Chief's mentioned that Yin Yang sword formation was an accidental discovery. After building it, she spent quite some time to find the solution to it." Qin Xian added in admiration, "To be able to reach this stage, Chu Zhaoyang’s power is undeniable. Destroying four sword formations is an impressive feat that hasn’t been done before."

"What a pity. Such a good opportunity for a breakthrough." Lian Junyu continued regretfully, "If he was in a slightly weaker sword formation, he just might be able to do it."

Breakthroughs usually occurred under pressure, but if the pressure was too great, not only was it difficult to break through, it might cause injuries.

Sufficient accumulation, an opportune moment, the appropriate level of pressure...Only when all conditions were suitable would one be able to complete a breakthrough. Breakthroughs were challenging because of this.

"There's no choice, this is life." Qin Xian agreed in disappointment.

If Chu Zhaoyang did break through and become more capable, it would be even more advantageous for Karakorum. But failure had its own benefits too. It showed Chu Zhaoyang the power of Karakorum's swordsmanship, which would make it easier to keep him as a teacher in the main institution.

Qin Xian was already thinking about how he could persuade Chu Zhaoyang to stay.

Just then, he sensed something, jerked his head up, and looked toward the Yin Yang sword formation.

A big man looked at the impenetrable crowd before giving a petite man a look. The petite man hurriedly shook his head, expressing his confusion.

Deep down, the petite man was crying about his bad luck. All had been normal when he'd snuck over to investigate. Boss hated it most when people deceived him. If Boss developed suspicions about him and killed him in a moment of fury, he wouldn't even get the chance to plead for justice.

The petite man felt Boss's displeasure, but even before he could speak up, Boss reached his arms out to push through the crowd.

Those who were shoved aside were furious and were about to display their annoyance, but seeing that the group wasn't one to be provoked, they swallowed the curse words that almost left their mouths.

Boss continued pushing his way in and his subordinates followed closely behind.

Suddenly, someone from the crowd starting scolding but Boss turned a deaf ear to it. Others dared not to get as angry as they pleased.

Reaching the inner crowd and getting a clear look at the situation, Boss finally sighed a breath of relief.

If he'd made his way in only to see Xiao Shuren's corpse, he definitely would have lost it.

Since what he saw had nothing to do with his mission, he decided not to waste any more time. The news that there might be people with the same motives shocked him greatly. Who else did Xiao Shuren provoke?

He was even more alert at this point and did not wish to be sidetracked any further. Catching Xiao Shuren was top priority.

As he was about to leave, Boss felt something and turned his head around instinctively, looking toward the sword formation.

A splendid silver ray blossomed within it.

This silver ray was so piercing to the eyes that even the vigilant boss was caught off guard and blinded by it.

Could it be a trap? His heart was jumping and as he was about to move, a terrifying aura soared from within the formation.

The big man's heart tightened and the little rationality that was left in him kept him on his feet.

Crack!

A sound like a shattering glacier sounded from underneath his feet that made hearts palpitate. It seemed to explode by his ear, causing his hair to stand on end.

His whole body turned rigid. He was motionless and felt that any movement on his part would provoke his murderousness and turn himself into dregs.

If he could see right then, he would've realized that not only he, but everyone else was experiencing the same thing.

The timid ones fell onto the ground as their knees went soft and gave way.

Inside, Ai Hui's eyes were so bright they could combust and the grass sword was wrapped up in the dazzling silver light. He was like a gust of wind, moving swiftly and forcefully within the formation and amid the glaring silver rays. The sword rays were like long strands that were pulled out from melted silver liquid.

The strange thing was that these silver, strand-like sword rays seemed to have imprinted themselves in the sky and there was no sign of them vanishing.

The grass sword in his hand was like a bottomless pit. The elemental energy within Ai Hui's body was surging wildly toward the sword, and every hair-like strand consumed a shocking amount of elemental energy.

But it was as if Ai Hui was unaware. The blinding silver light shone on his face, turning it into a white sheet. It also accentuated his stone-like features, making them seem even more cold and solid.

Only his pupils shone brightly, in spite of the already dazzling, blinding silver light. They were so clear, distinct and memorable.

His sword moved delicately yet imposingly.

It was as if Ai Hui was holding a brush rather than a sword.

The sword rays drawn in midair were densely packed and intertwined. Even if they were put in front of people, no one would understand them. Even Ai Hui did not.

But he remembered every detail very clearly.

How could he forget about the metal wind sword screen that rose from the ground in the final Metal Elemental Tribulation from the Five Elemental Eight Treasures Porridge feast? Each crisscrossed metal wind sword trace was engraved into his heart. He felt the dense sword consciousness amid the seemingly chaotic sword rays. The metal wind sword screen proved its strength.

It was part luck that he managed to break the screen. He thought back to that scene many times and felt lingering fear.

He'd tried figuring out these disordered sword rays but hadn't been able to find any clues.

Except this time, he thought about the sword rays from the metal wind sword screen.

The change of Yin and Yang was simple and mysterious at the same time. He felt that the only thing he could fight against was the metal wind sword screen.

Since there were no clues, he was going to duplicate it completely!

This sudden thought jolted Ai Hui into action since he couldn't come up with any other method. Without hesitation, he began drawing the metal wind sword screen's messy sword rays.

These messy rays seemed to have a bizarre power. When the first ray was drawn in the sky, the turbulent flows of Yin and Yang that were everywhere instantly weakened significantly.

This gave Ai Hui a huge confidence boost.

Following which, however, Ai Hui bumped into an unexpected situation. The messy looking sword strokes consumed way too much elemental energy.

He felt that the sword in his hands was like a starving leech, desperately sucking away his elemental energy.

Ai Hui knew that he mustn't stop. Once he did, the incomplete sword rays would collapse. Moreover, he had a feeling that once the sword rays collapsed, the causal effect would be extremely terrifying and wasn't something he could endure at that moment.

The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp operated at full force and every elemental energy sword pill within his body was mobilized.

As the turbulent flows were held down, Ai Hui reconnected with the external elemental energy. Threads and wisps of metal elemental energy shot out from the wind into Ai Hui's body, and

into his sword following his Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

The grass sword was like an ever-starving monster, greedily swallowing up every trace of elemental energy.

In the wind, the abundant metal elemental energy was being sucked away violently.

The leaves on the ground rolled up and the wind became stronger.

The well-replenished grass sword shone even brighter. Not only was Ai Hui being enveloped within this splendid silver light, his body was surrounded by a silverish white halo of metal elemental energy.

Everyone regained awareness when the wind became so strong that their clothes started to make sounds. The glaring silver light rapidly faded and everybody channeled their elemental energy into their vision and finally saw the ongoing situation clearly.

The metal elemental energy amid the crazy wind spiraled down like a tornado and circled around Ai Hui's body. His sword moved naturally and each stroke was clean and carried a tinge of indescribable flavor and mystery.

Ai Hui's expression did not change but his vigor rose continuously.

Not good, the big man thought. Where did such a powerful fellow come from? At this point, he was already set on withdrawing from the scene. The person involved had unmeasurable powers and those messy sword rays made him feel fear and trepidation.

An experienced person like him had an acute sense of danger.

Just then, Ai Hui stopped suddenly with a final stroke. It was complete.

Time seemed to stop at this point.

Chapter 339: Elemental Energy Suffocation

The last stroke was like the final brushstroke of a picture scroll. Within the Yin Yang sword formation, the messy sword rays formed a complete ring.

The roving Yin Yang grass swords slowed down and time seemed to stop at this moment.

The ring, made up of disarrayed sword rays, was like a nest built of tree branches picked by a bird. It emitted a delicate light ray that shone on the stationary Yin Yang grass swords, making them appear like a flock of motionless birds.

The fine and drawn-out whistle burst forth from deep underground, as if a monster had been awakened.

The next moment, the Yin Yang sword formation seemed to have sensed danger and started spinning wildly. The Yin Yang grass swords brought wave after wave of turbulent flows. The black and white, crisscrossed flows were like black and white fishes, advancing dauntlessly toward the disordered sword ring.

At the same time, the surging metal wind sprayed out from within the messy sword rays.

The metal wind collided head on with the black and white, crisscrossed Yin Yang turbulent flows.

Ai Hui was almost completely exhausted from the metal wind sword ring, which was emptying out all his elemental energy. It was getting so difficult for him to even move his fingers that he could only watch on helplessly.

He saw an unforgettable sight.

The chaotic rumbling of the turbulent flows came endlessly, wave after wave. The simplest black and white.. no, the simplest Yin and Yang grew and multiplied without end in this simple crisscross pattern.

The metal wind that was swept into these black and white, crisscrossed flows disappeared rapidly. The flows that swallowed the wind constantly tangled with one another and fused into each other, eventually extinguishing completely.

Ai Hui, who had his eyes wide open, witnessed the whole process, from the birth of the turbulent flows, to how they got tangled with each other, and how they finally welded together and were destroyed.

All was so simple, yet so profound that Ai Hui was deeply attracted to what he'd seen unfolding before his eyes. He made sure to keep his eyes open in fear of missing any detail. He stared on with undivided attention.

The metal wind from underground surged violently and unendingly. The Yin Yang turbulent flows thrived under the continuous agitation of the metal wind.

But Ai Hui quickly realized that along with the incessant interweaving motions, the Yin and Yang of the grass swords started to converge unceasingly.

It seemed as if Ai Hui had started to understand something.

Ai Hui was so engrossed in the mysticality of it all he did not feel that anything was amiss.

The onlookers outside the sword formation, however, saw a different scenario. The silver wind pillar, that carried an ear-piercing whistle, soared into the sky, drowning Ai Hui completely. The Yin Yang sword formation released a rumble that shook the sky as it spun so wildly and quickly that it was difficult for the naked eye to process.

The sword formation was like a cup attached to the ground, sucking and locking the metal wind in.

The metal wind hit against the sword formation ferociously.

The whistling of the wind and the rumbling of the sword formation blended together, but one could clearly feel the two thoroughly different elemental energy waves surging within. It was like two huge monsters tearing at each other.

Sparks flew and electricity flowed like a silver snake. The colorful splendor was like an overturned paint bottle.They were

like fireworks, some appearing while others faded away, magnificent and dazzling.

A mysterious sense of fear arose in everyone's mind.

Blended into the crowd, the big man reacted the quickest. His face changed greatly as the fear within his eyes could no longer be concealed.

He felt as if he was stuck in a pile of quagmire and unable to move, or as if he was underwater, suffocating. He knew that this was a sensory illusion that was caused by a reduction in the concentration of the surrounding elemental energy.

Reduction in concentration of elemental energy…

He stared deadly at the main culprit – sword formation!

It was like a vacuum, frantically sucking in the surrounding elemental energy.

Not only him but Qin Xian and the gang were unable to keep a straight face as they too could feel the elemental energy being emptied out.

Many students were unaware of this. Their mouths were wide open as they looked on at the changing colors and the deafening sword formation.

Elementalists that had achieved elemental externalization were no longer obstructed by the invisible wall between their bodies and Nature’s elemental energies. And because of this, they became more sensitive toward external elemental energies. They would more or less absorb some heaven and earth elemental energy even as they breathed. The absorption became more apparent when they were executing their Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

Elementalists that had achieved elemental externalization were like fishes while Nature’s elemental energies were like water.

Once the surrounding elemental energies thinned, elemental-externalized elementalists would feel discomfort, but not to the point where they really suffocated.

There was a specific terminology for this sensory suffocation –"elemental energy suffocation".

Elemental energy suffocation would appear in battles at times.

The nature of battles between elemental-externalized elementalists was to fight for control over Nature’s elemental energies. Such a contest was extremely intense. The mysterious interaction between the five elements would complicate the fight, making it difficult to gain an absolute advantage.

Other than that, an elementalist must be able to extract his or her surrounding elemental energies at an insane speed in order to create elemental energy suffocation.

As such, elemental energy suffocation was often seen as an art executed by Masters.

The elemental-externalized elementalists felt increasingly uncomfortable. Their eardrums were about to burst and the sky was spinning around in their heads. There were even some who started to hallucinate.

While the elemental energy surged within his body, Qin Xuan responded by calling out swiftly, "Retreat! Move back, everybody!"

As if awoken from a dream, people started retreating.

Only after withdrawing about a hundred feet did everybody start to loosen their tensed bodies.

The big man was bewildered. Just then, someone from beside him called in a suppressed voice, "Boss!"

He turned around.

Fear was written all over the petite man’s face and bloodstains could be seen below his nose.

He looked at the other subordinates and they were all in fear, but he felt unwilling to leave just like that. He clenched his teeth, saying, "Let’s look around a little more. We will leave if we’re no

match."

The others simultaneously heaved a sigh of relief.

Seeing this, the big man felt somewhat displeased, but on second thought, he felt relieved too. These people had been following him for many years. They were brave and good at fighting since the weaker ones had already been eliminated. They acted this way simply because the scene before them was really pretty scary.

Elemental energy suffocation was a rare phenomenon that went far beyond their expectations.

Ai Hui wasn't aware of the situation outside. He was standing in the eye of the tornado, where no metal winds were present.

He took in all details before his eyes.

The Yin Yang turbulent flows formed an endless cycle of engendered existence.

The metal wind opened his eyes to a whole new world. He saw even more clearly this time, that the unprecedented power of the wind was due to the metal elemental energy within. It wasn't wispy and strand-like, like in ordinary wind, but rather a whole unique kind of sword ray.

This type of sword ray was special because it was made up of many scattered and fragmentary sword rays.

Each crack on the sword ring released a sword ray that took a different shape. They looked like pieces of broken porcelain.

The amazing thing was that, together, these seemingly irregular shapes formed a complete sword ray.

It looked like a mosaic sword ray, made from joining fragmented porcelain pieces.

The fragmentary porcelain sword ray was astonishingly mighty. It resisted the Yin Yang turbulent flows well, despite the fact that the turbulent flows were extremely mutable. The fragmentary porcelain sword ray hit the hardest on its first strike, and after, the ray would shatter but not fall apart. The pieces became countless small blades that formed a powerful current, endlessly twisting and breaking the Yin Yang turbulent flows.

What a powerful sword ray!

Yin Yang turbulent flows and the fragmentary sword ray were both so exquisite. Ai Hui imitated the Yin Yang grass swords at times and the fragmentary porcelain sword ray at times, as if intoxicated.

He had forgotten about victory. The marvelous changings around him were so captivating that he wanted so bad for time to stop.

But Ai Hui’s hope was shattered quickly. He noticed that the Yin

Yang turbulent flows were starting to wane. Shortly, he realized that the sword formation was vacuuming the nearby elemental energy. The surrounding elemental energies had been emptied out, but the sword formation's consumption of it was still high and rapid. Without the necessary replenishment, the sword formation started to display signs of collapsing.

Ai Hui felt somewhat regretful. Was it going to end like this? He had yet to understand the turbulent flows and fragmentary porcelain sword ray fully...

All of a sudden, a bold idea came to him. Was it possible for him to assist the sword formation to regain a new equilibrium between both sides? That way, wouldn't he gain more time to observe and emulate it?

Immediately he became excited. He started thinking carefully about how he was going to help strengthen the sword formation.

He knew the root cause of the weakened structure. It was because the materials used were of a very low grade. Yin Yang grass sword swallowed the surrounding elemental energies to sustain its Yin and Yang essence, but when the elemental energies couldn't catch up, the essences would gradually disappear during the developmental process of the turbulent flows. Eventually, the Yin Yang grass swords would all turn into ordinary grass swords. Essentially, the core problem was the grass swords' limited ability in absorbing the surrounding elemental energy.

Since it wasn't possible to alter the grass swords' nature, what else could he do?

Ai Hui thought of something suddenly. What if he could supply the sword formation with Yin Yang sword rays? Would that increase its ability to absorb elemental energy?

At this point his body had already recovered, more or less. Without hesitation, he thrusted the grass sword in his hand and two sword rays, one Yin and one Yang, flew simultaneously into the sword formation and toward the dancing grass swords.

Ai Hui could feel the sword formation stabilizing a little. Feeling pleased, he struck unceasingly, imitating the Yin Yang sword rays.

The sword formation started to gain strength. Yes! It started to take in the surrounding elemental energy once again.

The big man could only stare blankly as the terrifying elemental energy suffocation occurred yet again!

The faces around him changed too.

Qin Xian fell into a daze and only regained his senses after some time. He found it hard to believe that they were experiencing the suffocation again, when they were already more than a hundred feet away. Did this not mean that the scope of absorption had increased...?

"Retreat further!" he shouted.

What exactly was going on?

Fifty feet!

Everyone withdrew another fifty feet, freeing themselves from the discomfort. However, they were still feeling bewildered and uncertain.

Coming to a stop, the audience started discussing in low voices and with faces of disbelief.

"What just happened? Is his elemental energy suffocation becoming stronger?"

"What a scary sight."

"Where did Chu Zhaoyang come from? Why is he so formidable?"

"He seems stronger than rumored."

...

"Boss!" The petite man’s voice trembled a little as he called out with a pleading look.

If elemental energy suffocation was a Master-level move, then whose move was that? The move that increased the range of

elemental energy suffocation?

The big man was also considering leaving, but then he thought about the importance of their mission. With an unpredictable expression, he squeezed four words out from the gaps of his tightly clenched teeth. "Wait a while more!"

Just then, the sword formation changed again.

Chapter 340: Where Are They?

Ai Hui realized suddenly that as the sword formation grew stronger, the Yin Yang turbulent flows gradually regained an advantageous position and started to suppress the metal wind.

Ai Hui started to think again. Could he strengthen the metal wind?

Again, without hesitation, he decided to try, but how?

The Yin Yang sword formation covered a wide area, but the change in Yin and Yang was extremely basic because the grass swords could only endure so much. It was precisely because the change was on such a very basic level that Ai Hui was able to quickly understand the sword formation's evolution under the stimulation of the sword ring metal wind.

On the other hand, the sword ring metal wind, or fragmentary porcelain sword rays, were much more difficult to understand. Under the bombardment of the sword formation, however, Ai Hui was able to witness the marvel within.

The success from earlier gave Ai Hui courage. He struck the moment the fragmentary porcelain sword ray was complete. With a shake of his grass sword, a sword ray entered the fragmentary porcelain sword ray, appearing to give it an additional porcelain piece.

The sword ray became slightly more powerful.

Ai Hui thought this was pretty interesting. He tried supplying the "porcelain pieces" from different positions, which all resulted in differing degrees of strength increment.

Ai Hui memorized each move and its result. It was as if he had just opened the door to a whole new world.

Engrossed, Ai Hui noticed that the sword formation was starting to fall into an inferior position.

He then started to strengthen it.

Ai Hui alternated between strengthening the sword formation and the metal wind.

People outside were all dumbstruck. The range of elemental energy suffocation increased continuously at a constant tempo.

15 feets later, the area affected increased 1 feet by 1 feet...

What situation was this?

Those who witnessed this scene looked bewildered and uncertain. They could not wrap their head around the situation within the sword formation.

Hua Kui, who blended into the crowd, was flabbergasted as well.

He knew that Chu Zhaoyang's skill had always been decent, which was why the latter had been selected by him to become an important nurturing target.

Yet, as far as Hua Kui knew, Chu Zhaoyang was merely a decent warrior and definitely not the strongest.

Chu Zhaoyang's current display of talent and power made Hua Kui's jaws drop.

Chu Zhaoyang had soared ever since he attained elemental externalization. He improved astonishingly fast, leaving everyone stupefied.

It was not the first time Hua Kui had seen something like this. Thinking back carefully, Chu Zhaoyang's splendid performance was not strange.

Generally speaking, similar situations often happened to elementalists who had accumulated experience, but were stuck at a certain juncture. Because of their profound and long accumulation of wisdom, they usually progressed rapidly the moment they broke through.

Chu Zhaoyang's experience as a swordsman was extremely profound. While it was surprising that he took a long time to reach elemental externalization, it did not affect Hua Kui's evaluation of him.

Hua Kui could not help but feel somewhat excited.

He suddenly noticed that it was a marvelous decision to invite Chu Zhaoyang into the sword league. Having attained elemental externalization stage, Chu Zhaoyang's swordsmanship progressed rapidly. How could Karakorum not be interested in someone like him?

Things progressed just as he had predicted. No, even better. He had thought that Chu Zhaoyang's ability to break one or two sword formations was already commendable. Who knew that he could actually destroy several sword formations...

Legend had it that the Karakorum's chief was a genius swordsman, but it seemed to Hua Kui that Chu Zhaoyang was on par.

All was well, except for those uninvited guests.

He squinted and scanned the crowd, a murderous glint flashing across his eyes. From one look, he was shrewd enough to tell who the dangerous ones were.

The ordinary looking big man, along with his gang, were the infamous Yellowsand Bandits. This group of bandits was ruthless. The Great Wei Enterprise's massacre was executed by these fellows.

In another corner, a fellow who looked like a simple merchant

was Jiao Dafeng, another ruthless character. The three brothers from the Jiao family were inseparable, so the other two had to be hiding nearby.

The harmless-looking lady standing by the wall reminded him of a dangerous name.

...

After filtering all the suspicious and dangerous targets, his face instantly turned grave. He'd heard some rumors, but had not expected the situation to turn out like this.

He knew that these people were here for Xiao Shuren. Could it be that the ancient treasure Xiao Shuren had obtained was actually an important artifact?

He decided to investigate when the time came.

For now, his priority was to protect Karakorum. Weighing his abilities against the people here, it would not be a problem for him to defeat any one of them. Unfortunately, with so many opponents, he was unable to manage them all at once, which created a thorny situation.

He could not help but tremble at the thought of the punishment that awaited him if he failed the mission.

The organization never had the least bit of patience and mercy

toward failures.

He really had been caught off guard!

Hua Kai's gaze fell upon the sword formation once again and was slightly startled. Perhaps this fellow could give him a nice surprise. His rich experience told him that Chu Zhaoyang was possibly undergoing a period of enlightenment.

For someone who had so much accumulated knowledge and experience like Chu Zhaoyang, a sudden enlightenment would increase his abilities exponentially.

There were diligent people who achieved success through constant perseverance and there were also overnight prodigies who succeeded without effort.

Hua Kui quickly weighed the matter in his mind.

Ai Hui, with his increased strength, was in the open. Karakorum's Qin Xian and Lian Junyu had decent abilities. He was in a hidden spot so even if he could not protect everyone around him, this did not mean that it was a lost cause.

Eh?

Hua Kui raised his head suddenly, looking toward the sword formation.

Countless bright light rays swam vaguely within the formation. The silver metal wind was bright and dazzling. The everchanging sword formation released a horrifying amount of pressure and caused everyone to feel breathless, as if they had been pressed down by a huge rock.

The sky was covered by dark clouds that had unknowingly gathered from all directions. A glimpse of lightning could be seen.

This was...

Hua Kui opened his eyes wide in shock.

Boom!

A glaring wind pillar soared skyward from within the sword formation, straight into the sinister black clouds.

The elemental energy surge had completely surpassed what the grass swords could endure. The dancing swords started exploding successively like firecrackers. They exploded into countless colorfully fragmented rays that hovered around like fog.

What was strange was the fact that the sword formation had not actually collapsed.

The mobile and fragmented rainbow of rays faded bit by bit.

With the colors gradually dimming, the rays transformed into a multitude of black and white whirlpools.

The whirlpools were attracted by a bizarre force and started shooting into the wind pillar. The silver wind pillar started to transform into many black and white eddies that attracted and circled around one another, getting all tangled up.

Clink!

A crisp, shattering sound rang across the field.

The whistling wind pillar was like a fragile piece of porcelain that shattered inch by inch. The broken wind pillar pieces that were now black and white floated up like feathers, as though raising a theater curtain.

A silhouette slowly entered the audience's field of view.

Those present experienced the same illusion. It was as if they had been slashed by an extremely sharp sword, but because of its keen edge, they could not feel any pain. All they felt was a slight chill in the places they were cut.

Qin Xian's face changed, as if a storm raged in his heart.

Sword consciousness! This was sword consciousness!

Legend had it that when an ancient swordsman's aura reached a certain level of concentration, it became like a substance that could cause the skin of others to feel pain, making them felt as if they were being slashed by a sword. This was sword consciousness.

Every muscle in Qin Xian's body was so excited that they were trembling. He didn't expect that he could witness the legendary sword consciousness with his own eyes one day.

The sharp, bitingly cold, and substantial aura enveloped the whole area.

Yet, the fellow emitting this terrifying sword consciousness did not look at them at all.

He stood on tips of his toes with his straightened body arched slightly backward. As he faced the sky, his right hand dangled naturally by his side while wielding the sword.

There were no superfluous sword rays, but this scene was still filled with an inexplicable tension. It felt as if there was an invisible hand that gripped everyone's throat and choked them. It also felt like a kind of magic that attracted everyone's gaze like a magnet.

Suddenly, underneath his raised head, he scanned across the field with apathetic eyes.

Those who made eye contact with him trembled inside and felt a

sting in their eyes.

Chu Zhaoyang's gaze was literally sharp!

There were no emotions in his eyes. Calmly overlooking the crowd, he stood god-like, aloof, and remote.

Faces in the crowd changed. Those with guilty consciences felt as though they were being exposed and unable to cover their tracks.

The Yellowsand Bandits fell into a daze, his back drenched in sweat. All his toughness evaporated. In a trembling voice he cried out, "Withdraw! Withdraw immediately!"

The only thing he could think of was to stay as far away from this monster as possible! Escape his line of sight!

No one reacted to his order. He suppressed his fear with great difficulty. He turned around, only to see his subordinates' pale faces and their shuddering bodies as well as hear the chattering of their teeth.

The big man gave the petite man two tight slaps before the latter finally regained his senses.

"Withdraw! Everyone withdraw!"

Completely exhausted, they squeezed their way out of the crowd.

Jiao Dafeng's face was as white as a sheet. He staggered out and the other two brothers also ran away battered and exhausted.

The harmless-looking lady was no longer at the corner by the wall.

Ai Hui was in a bizarre state of mind. He raised the silver broadsword in his hand. His movement was very slow, as if the sword he wielded was extremely heavy.

With each inch raised, there was a fragmented ray that shot into the silver sword, slightly brightening it.

Raised half way, the silver sword exploded with a loud rumble as it was no longer able to endure the power.

Ai Hui shook a little. The frightful aura that enveloped the field suddenly vanished without a trace.

Ai Hui felt the strength in his body emptying. His legs gave way as he fell onto the ground.

As if smashed by a hammer, his head started buzzing loudly. He had no control over his body and was unable to even move his fingers.

The feather-like fragmented rays that floated all over the sky

disappeared together with the sinister black clouds. The skys were clear, while the sun was shining bright. It was as if the apocalyptic occurrence had just been an illusion.

When Hua Kui finally recovered from his shock, all he felt was regret. He knew that Chu Zhaoyang had failed to break through.

As he glanced through the crowd of people, his eyes almost fell out. Where is he? Where are they?

All the dangerous targets he had previously picked out were gone.

Hua Kui regained his bearings five seconds later. He turned his head and looked at Chu Zhaoyang, his gaze becoming complicated.

Chapter 341: Patriarch Grass, Silverfold Plum

Just like that, Chu Zhaoyang became a hot topic.

Silver City citizens were broadminded and experienced, so he was merely a topic for them to discuss leisurely over dinner and tea. The majority of the residents agreed that swordsmanship counted for almost nothing when it came to the training system of the Avalon of Five Elements. Sword formations were merely paltry toys made by old fogies who were unwilling to give up on the glory of the ancient swordsmen.

What praise was there for a fellow who rose to fame as a wanted criminal who had made an unexpected mistake?

The Ling residence, Golden Eagle Study Room.

Ling Sheng looked so gloomy that water could be squeezed out of his face. He had just been talking about how there was nothing in Karakorum for them to fear, but in the blink of an eye, reality hit him square in the face. He felt as if someone had just given him a tight slap, and his face still heatedly stung from it.

He clenched his teeth and said, "Those morons actually got intimidated by Chu Zhaoyang!"

Madam Ling was not angry. Instead, it appeared that she had noticed something interesting as her eyes flickered. She picked up

the report, which she had already looked over many times, and read it word by word. "Could it be that Chu Zhaoyang knows what Xiao Shuren's ancient treasure is?

Ling Sheng paused slightly before raising his head abruptly. He asked gloomily, "What do you mean?"

"He previously created a bunch of problems when he rode The Great Wei Enterprise's Fiery Floating Cloud." Madam Ling waved the piece of paper in her hands, adding, "And now he's at Karakorum. Xiao Shuren's there too. Don't you think it's too much of a coincidence?"

While Ling Sheng felt moody, he was no fool. On the contrary, in terms of temperament and wisdom, he surpassed most people, especially since he wielded power over the residence.

The fury in his eyes vanished into thin air as he lowered his voice and muttered, "Coincidental indeed. If he knows about the ancient treasure that Xiao Shuren possesses, he is definitely an object that we can exploit."

They had been curious all along. What exactly was this treasure that Dai Gang was so interested in?

If it could offer Grandmasters the chance to become great grandmasters, could it also elevate a Master into a Grandmaster?

There were no Grandmasters in the Ling residence, but there

were quite a few Masters. There was only a single word that differed between the two, but in actual fact, they were worlds apart.

The highest a Master could achieve was to become a division leader or the Great Elder of Elders Guild.

A Grandmaster, on the other hand, could rule the a region.

Without a doubt, the Jadeite Forest belonged to Dai Gang. The Avalon of Five Elements belonged to Grandmaster An Muda if An Muda said so.

This was a Grandmaster.

As long as they lived, no one, except another Grandmaster, could defy their will.

If there was a Grandmaster in Ling residence...

Just the thought of this possibility made Ling Sheng ready to pay any price to realize it.

Madam Ling asked, "What's Chu Zhaoyang's history?"

Ling Sheng regained his senses and shook his head. "No results yet. He had too minor of a reputation and had been without a fixed residence. He behaved mysteriously, so I reckon it would be

difficult to find any useful information. It’s even difficult to judge if this identity of his is real or false. Where do you plan to start?"

"Whatever we can think of, the other families will as well. So you’re right, Chu Zhaoyang is now a target for exploitation." Madam Ling continued, "We can assume that many invitations have been sent to him. No matter what he chooses, the ancient treasure in Xiao Shuren’s hands is the crucial issue in the end. We still have to think of a way to capture him. There’s only one treasure chest, but there might be more than one key."

Ling Sheng wrinkled his brows. "There must be many eyes watching Karakorum right now."

"Don’t be impatient." Madam Ling smiled meaningfully and said, "I have a feeling that Chu Zhaoyang still has a surprise for us."

.....

The Karakorum Sword League.

Chu Zhaoyang was enjoying the supreme treatment. The Silverheel Swordsman had long since become a teacher of the main institution and was given a courtyard of his own. Many teachers visited in an endless stream, hoping to receive guidance and tips, to the point where a queue had formed.

For consecutively destroying five sword formations, Chu Zhaoyang’s popularity within Karakorum skyrocketed.

When a veiled lady appeared by the doorway, the crowd moved aside and bowed.

"Chief!"

"You’re finally back, Chief."

…

The veiled lady slightly nodded her head toward them.

Ai Hui was quite curious. The Karakorum Sword League’s chief was called the "Karakorum Savant". No one knew her name, but judging from her outfit, she appeared angelic and magical.

The ordinary veil on the Karakorum Savant’s face was obviously thin, but it completely concealed her face. She wore a navy and white robe that was loose, yet accentuated her graceful figure.

"Nice to meet you, Mister Chu. I’ve heard of your magnificent feat on my way back. I can only regret that I wasn’t able to witness such a spectacular event."

The Karakorum Savant’s voice was clear, carrying a certain sternness and loftiness.

Ai Hui stood up to bow. "Nice to meet you. You flatter me. I’m

still far behind you in terms of attainments. I heard that you want to create the first absolute art for swordsmanship. I have always been interested in swordsmanship ever since I was young, so this grand undertaking is something I simply can not miss. Please forgive me for turning up without an invitation."

"You're too modest sir." The Karakorum Savant spoke in a clear voice, "Even I am unable to do what you've done."

She took out a wooden case and handed it over to Ai Hui. "Inside is my first draft. There are many areas to consider, so please be generous with your advice and comments."

Ai Hui was moved. She had handed over the compilation to him so openly, without the slightest intention to conceal anything. Such breadth of mind and boldness were not qualities most people could possess.

The Karakorum chief had not reached her current level without reason.

Ai Hui respectfully received the case and gravely said, "Many thanks. I will give it my best."

The Karakorum Savant bowed slightly and said in her clear voice, "Then I will not disturb your rest any longer."

The Karakorum Savant left, and upon seeing this, the teachers also started bidding their goodbyes.

In a flash, Ai Hui’s courtyard was back to its peaceful and quiet state.

A voice chimed behind him before Ai Hui could even open the case. "Your performance really shocked me."

Ai Hui’s body stiffened, and the hair on his body stood on end, but he quickly relaxed. "You scared me."

Turning around, he saw Hua Kui laughing at him.

Ai Hui trembled inwardly. He had not been able to judge Hua Kui’s abilities. Now, it seemed that Hua Kui was stronger than Ai Hui had guessed.

Was this a warning?

He asked with his usual expression, "How is that? My mission is already completed, so how about joining the headquarters?"

"Congratulations, it has been approved." Hua Kui grinned. "Your performance was more or less flawless. This is yours."

Ai Hui caught the wooden case Hua Kui threw to him and opened it. Inside was a small glass bottle half-filled with soil. A blade of grass grew within. A very ordinary blade of glass.

"What is this?"

"Patriarch grass." Hua Kui seemed to have predicted Ai Hui's reaction. Laughing, he said, "It is our token and also a way to stay in touch."

Patriarch grass? Token? Ai Hui was bewildered. He tossed and turned the bottle, but no matter how he looked at it, it was just an ordinary blade of green grass.

Hua Kui was amused by Ai Hui's movements and burst into laughter once again. "Hahaha, of course it's not going to work this way. You'll need to use the Assembly of Patriarchs' unique fusion elemental energy."

"Fusion elemental energy?" Ai Hui felt dizzy from hearing all the foreign terms that Hua Kui threw at him.

"It is different from any existing type of elemental energy. It's a unique creation from our Assembly." Hua Kui explained proudly, "Only those who join us will be able to learn it. The method of training fusion elemental energy is inside. You can use the patriarch grass once you've learned this, and we will be able to contact each other through it. You can also use it to read books and records that have been accumulated by the organization over hundreds of years. Then, you'll know how mighty the organization is. Before us, the so called aristocratic families aren't even worth mentioning."

Finishing his sentence, Hua Kui threw Ai Hui an oddly shaped

sword. "You did really well this time. This Silverfold Plum is your reward."

Ai Hui grabbed it. The moment it reached his hand, he felt a vigorous jolt. A good sword!

The Silverfold Plum was silvery white all over and shaped like a chopped section of a plum tree branch. Its body was crooked and strong, while its surface was bumpy like old tree bark. The sword tip was actually made of three vivid, lifelike silver plum flowers. Their stamens trembled, and on the whole, the sword looked splendid and magnificent.

Seeing Ai Hui fondling it with admiration, Hua Kui was pleased as well. "This Silverfold Plum was forged by a master within the organization. It was made directly from artifact remnants fished out from deep within the Silver Mist Sea. Upon completion, it was immediately kept in a Heaven-grade weapons storehouse and has never appeared outside, so you don’t have to worry about its origin."

"This is a Heaven-grade weapon?" Ai Hui was beyond surprised.

"That’s right." Hua Kui nodded. "You will have a lot of time to experience its marvels. The organization will treat you well as long as you’re diligent. Your next mission is to stay in Karakorum, gain the chief’s trust, and keep her safe."

Hua Kui said with a stern face, "I heard that Dai Gang is interested in something that Xiao Shuren has, so evil characters

from all over have started to come out one by one. You have to be vigilant as Karakorum is likely to be attacked within these two days, but don’t worry, because organization is prepared. Tsk, else these aristocratic families will think they can hide the truth from the masses."

"Xiao Shuren? The Great Wei Enterprise? Ancient treasure?" Ai Hui’s expression turned strange.

He thought back to the unpleasant experience when he was a wanted criminal.

Hua Kui could not help but laugh. "You should know that in the eyes of these aristocrats, you’re an object for exploitation."

Ai Hui was befuddled. "Why?"

Hua Kui was overjoyed. "You tangled with the Great Wei Enterprise and now you’re here in Karakorum where Xiao Shuren is. Is this a coincidence or not? It would be weird if you did not know any inside information about the ancient treasure, hahaha!"

Hua Kui was totally gloating over Ai Hui’s misfortune.

Chu Zhaoyang fell into that sticky situation with the Great Wei Enterprise precisely because he was on his way to meet Hua Kui. Currently, he entered Karakorum under the direct orders of Hua Kui’s mission. What inside information?

Seeing Chu Zhaoyang's dumbstruck face, Hua Kui rejoiced even more.

Chapter 342: Fusion Elemental Energy

Beyond the noble doors were places as deep as the sea. With a thousand years of inherited history, the aristocratic families were full of mystery in the eyes of people.

In Silver Mist Sea, no clans could surpass the reputations of the Ling and Gong residences. They were the strongest giants, standing right at the top of the food chain. Then there were the Zeng, Fu, Jin and Zhong families. While they had shorter and less illustrious histories as compared to the Ling and Gong families, these four had a considerable amount of influence in Silver Mist Sea.

The Zhong residence had been declining over the past ten years and was left with only an vice division leader from the Infantry Division to keep up appearances. Many felt that if ten years was all it took for the Zhong residence to reach this state, another ten would eliminate them from the big four list.

But life was unpredictable. The sudden movement of Blood of God inflicted heavy damages on the Sky Edge and Infantry Divisions. The Infantry Division, specifically, first lost its division leader in battle, and later on lost its vice division leader due to severe injuries. Zhong Houjun then became the only remaining higher-up in the Infantry Division. He'd suffered pretty heavy injuries himself, but had been lucky to survive and recover fully.

During the reconstruction of the Infantry Division, Zhong Houjun instantly became a hot candidate for the new vice leader position. Be it in qualifications or abilities, no one else was on par

with him.

The Zhong residence's prospects immediately turned up and people were sighing over the family's good fortune.

But this was just anticipation. No matter how popular a candidate was, it was a separate matter from being a legitimate division leader. Plus, due to the Elders Guild's city expansion order, it seemed to the people that the Elders Guild's priority would be to open up the Wilderness and not to rebuild the thirteen divisions.

Did the Avalon of Five Elements have the ability to rebuild the Thirteen Divisions? No one really knew.

The Zhong residence had tight security. In a deep corner of the courtyard was a darkroom.

"What's the current situation?" an ordinary looking lady asked in a low voice.

Ai Hui and Duanmu Huanghun would be thoroughly shocked if they were here, because this voice was extremely familiar to them. It was the voice of She Yu.

She Yu had just arrived in Silver City.

No one knew that long before the blood catastrophe happened, the Zhong residence had already been infiltrated and seized by

Blood of God. The reason why Infantry Division suffered such huge losses was precisely because Zhong Houjun coordinated with both internal and external forces. And with his injuries at that time, he had managed to fool people and remove suspicions.

And when one party became independent, the Zhong residence received an order from Blood of God to draw close to Jadeite Forest.

The news of Dai Gang and the ancient treasure immediately caught the attention of higher-ups in Blood of God. Because of She Yu's outstanding performance in Jadeite Forest, she was once again given a mission. She wore a special mask that concealed her identity. Without elemental energy waves, no one would notice her.

Zhong Houjun was about forty years old. He had a squarish face, stately bearing and a natural mighty appearance. He said in a low voice, "We're not too sure what the ancient treasure exactly is. We're not the only clan getting involved. Quite a few fellows appeared at Karakorum previously. If not for Chu Zhaoyang's moment of enlightenment, they might have gotten hold of it already."

"Chu Zhaoyang?" She Yu had been reading relevant reports and found this name rather familiar. "The Chu Zhaoyang who appeared at Great Wei's Caravan?"

"Yes." Zhong Houjun nodded. "He has a mysterious background and is a sword expert. I wonder if his sudden appearance in Karakorum is coincidental or planned."

"We will find that out very soon." She Yu was interested in another matter. "Who is Chu Zhaoyang battling against?"

Zhong Houjun shook his head. "There's no battle. Chu Zhaoyang has destroyed five of Karakorum's sword formations consecutively. The abilities he's displayed frightened every passerby away. Our people were there at that time and they witnessed the whole thing."

This piqued She Yu's interest even more. "Oh, he mustn't be ordinary, to be able to scare people off with his skills. Any images?"

"No, they were all stunned and no one thought about recording anything."

She Yu nodded her head. "Must have been a spectacular sight. What's the situation now?"

"According to inside news, quite a few people will take action in the next two days." Zhong Houjun asked, "Do we need to make a move?"

She Yu smiled slightly. "Do not be impatient. Let's go watch how things play out first."

The lady before him was clearly average looking, but somehow her laugh charmed him greatly.

He did not know who she was but he knew that people from Blood of God were always mysterious and cold.

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Karakorum Sword League. In a courtyard that stood on its own.

Regaining his senses after the pleasant Silverfold Plum surprise, Ai Hui thought back to what Hua Kui said about the reading of ancient books through the patriarch grass. He felt a sudden premonition.

This was completely different from what that old man had said.

"This set of notes should be kept in the seventh floor of the Hall of Ancient Records. The author’s surname is Xiao."

Where was the Hall of Ancient Records? Where was the seventh floor?

Both parties said completely different things, but thinking about how the old man had been imprisoned for so many years, it wouldn’t be surprising if the general headquarters had changed location in the past several decades.

Ai Hui only hoped that he would be blessed enough to find Senior Xiao’s notes.

But before that, he needed to analyze [Fusion Elemental Energy] first, since it was required to active the patriarch grass.

Because of the old man, probably, Ai Hui'd always felt that the Assembly of Patriarchs wasn't very strong. It had a loose structure and nothing to offer, except that they were more familiar with Blood of God.

But now, Silverfold Plum made him realize that the assembly was wealthier and more imposing that he'd imagined. And the fusion elemental energy that he'd never heard of shocked him even more.

Fusion elemental energy wasn't any type of elemental energy but a blend of the five elemental energy types.

This subverted everything Ai Hui knew.

How was this possible?

Who could simultaneously train five kinds of elemental energies? Even training two was unheard of. The current five residences and eight palaces system was extremely mature and there would be different Circulatory Cycle Revolutions, but there wasn't any inheritances that required practicing two or more types of elemental energies.

Ai Hui was scared witless. It was as if he was reading dark books from dissenting sects.

Fusion elemental energy believed that everyone had five elements in them and no one was purely of one elemental energy type, so it was only natural that they practiced all five elements.

The way to practice it was even stranger. It had something in common with the system of five residences and eight palaces. No. To be precise, their only similarity was that they both had five residences.

Other than that, they had nothing else in common.

Fusion elemental energy required the practitioner to train five residences of the heart, liver, spleen, lung and kidney simultaneously. What was more odd, was the fact that fusion elemental energy trained only the residences but not the palaces, as if the eight palaces did not exist.

Such peculiar way of training elemental energy actually existed. It was simply unheard of and Ai Hui felt that it really widened his horizons.

The five residences formed the ring of five elements, where elemental energies engendered one another in a marvelous cycle.

A continuous deepening of fusion elemental energy would form ring patterns, like that of a big tree's age rings. The five elemental ring patterns could rinse incessantly and temper the practitioner's body, gradually channeling every organ and flesh into the five elemental ring patterns, allowing it to grow and multiply infinitely.

When the whole body was fully consisted of the five elemental ring patterns, the process was complete and known as [Fusion Body].

Inside a [Fusion Body] was an endless circulation of the five elemental ring patterns, and any elemental energy that entered the body would blend into the ring patterns, restraining all elementalists.

Ai Hui was lost for words, his face clearly in shock.

This was a completely different train of thought, but Ai Hui did not find any loopholes within it.

The Assembly of Patriarchs's five elemental ring patterns had thoroughly subverted the system of five residences and eight palaces.

The more amazing thing was that practicing fusion elemental energy did not clash with the practicing of five residences and eight palaces at all. Seeing this made Ai Hui realize why such a powerful training method was unheard of. No one would notice as long as the practitioner did not use it.

The old man wasn't loyal. He knew of such an amazing training method but chose to keep it quiet.

Ai Hui decided to blackmail the old man when he got back. He

must extort something from him at least.

The book Hua Kui gave him covered only the basics and nothing too radical. He figured that he would have to continue contributing to the Assembly before he could get better information.

The Assembly of Patriarch's abilities far exceeded Ai Hui's expectations.

Aristocratic families were powerful because they had control over absolute arts. They constantly modified and deepened the absolute arts, making them more formidable but easier for practitioners to grasp.

In this world, those with bigger fists would live better. Aristocratic families possessing absolute arts could nurture elementalists with big fists more easily.

Creating a training system would increase the Assembly's might. The exceptional disguise of fusion elemental energy smelled like a conspiracy to Ai Hui.

The book Hua Kui gave him had only a few thin pages, covering the most basic of the basics.

The training of fusion elemental energy was simpler and smoother than Ai Hui'd predicted.

Four hours later, Ai Hui opened his eyes and could feel his long suppressed heart, liver, spleen and kidneys becoming stronger, as a faint wisp of elemental energy flowed between the five residences.

Fusion elemental energy had a very unique aura that brimmed with an intense life force!

That was the aura of life, which was completely different from the elemental energy he had been training in the past. He had never felt such a solid breath of life. Even his body became livelier and more agile.

The fusion elemental energy that he had just trained was extremely weak, but sufficient to activate the patriarch grass.

The only wisp of fusion elemental energy was channeled into the patriarch grass.

The patriarch grass glowed faintly. Each leaf had another layer like a velvety halo of light and Ai Hui was captivated. A fog that came from nowhere engulfed the surrounding walls and furniture and a spacious and solemn lobby took shape rapidly amid the fog.

It was hazy in the lobby due to the surrounding fog. It moved very slowly and fuzzily.

There was someone standing in the middle of the lobby. Upon seeing Ai Hui, he said with a slight smile, "Hi, Swordsman."

Ai Hui could tell from one look that it wasn’t a human but a sand puppet standing before him.

Swordsman was Ai Hui’s name within the Assembly of Patriarchs. Other than Hua Kui, who knew his real identity, the other members only knew him as "Swordsman".

The sight before him was so illusory yet real.

Ai Hui was dumbfounded.

Chapter 343: Grass Hall

Immediately, the Assembly of Patriarchs seemed more powerful and mysterious in Ai Hui's eyes. This was not something that an ordinary organization could achieve.

Furthermore, the Assembly of Patriarchs' ability to develop a completely new energy system, fusion elemental energy, had displayed its amazing strength and accumulated wisdom over the years.

Wealth could be earned in one night, but things like fusion elemental energy and patriarch grass needed a long period of time and the effort of numerous geniuses' to be developed. The amount of manpower and resources expended to develop these two things was astronomical.

What Ai Hui saw from the Assembly of Patriarchs was only the tip of the iceberg, and he was already shocked.

He guessed that the technology of patriarch grass might have been developed from message trees, but it definitely needed more improvements. Ai Hui had already regained his composure, "Hi, how may I address you?"

Because of Lou Lan, Ai Hui clearly knew how to communicate with a sand puppet. The method of communicating with a sand puppet was actually very simple. One could just speak his or her mind and ask any questions. There was no need for one to adorn his or her language nor be tactful with his or her words. It was

better for one to be as direct as possible when it came to communicating with a sand puppet.

"You can call me Manager."

"Okay, Manager," Ai Hui addressed the sand puppet accordingly, "Can you introduce this place to me? This is my first time here."

"Alright, Swordsman," Manager nodded and waved his right hand. The great, serene hall and the countless hall pillars behind him disappeared and materialized into a black mist. Following which, the black mist transformed in a wall. Pieces of wooden slabs were hanging on the wall. Small, densely-packed words were written on the wooden slabs, giving off an extraordinary glow.

Manager began to introduce the place, "This place is known as the Grass Hall. From today onwards, missions will be issued from this place. Upon joining the headquarters, you will be supervised by the headquarters even if you're not online. The difficulty of the missions will directly correspond to your base level. Right now, due to special circumstances, you already have one mission and that is to protect Karakorum Sword League The reward for completing the mission can be obtained from here as well."

Upon hearing these words, Ai Hui was extremely shocked, "This place is real?"

"If you think that this place is real, then it is real," Manager's words were rather abstruse. He then continued, "We will give you a key. This key is a specially processed earth elemental hoop. You

can activate it from any place, at anytime to obtain your rewards."

"A sand compass?" Ai Hui asked.

Manager nodded his head and replied, "It is a device that's much more complicated than a sand compass. To be exact, it is also known as sea urchin sand compass. It is a brand new type of enchanted sand compass. Every sea urchin spine corresponds to an earth elemental space. Currently, the Assembly of Patriarchs and Elders Guild are the only ones that possess this device."

"The Elders Guild has it too?" Ai Hui widened his eyes. He felt a lot of his perspectives regarding the Assembly of Patriarchs had been completely overturned after joining the headquarters. He used to think that Elders Guild was decaying and decadent. He did not expect them to possess such a powerful device.

"Yes," Manager did not explain much about the Elders Guild and continued, "In the future, you can sell your spoils of war and purchase weapons and inheritances in Grass Hall as well."

Manager waved his hand and the wall behind transformed into black mist.Dazzling artifacts appeared and hovered within the black mist, looking extremely magnificent. Ai Hi almost drooled upon this magnificent sight.

"There are absolute arts too," Manager waved his hand again and countless light orbs hovered behind him. Each light orb had a faint shadow flickering within it. Manager continued, "In Grass Hall an absolute art will be twenty-five percent cheaper than a similar one

sold by the Elders Guild, and it’s one level higher in terms of quality in Grass Hall. We accept Heaven Merit Points as payment as well. Our prices are much more fair than the market prices too.

Ai Hui was flabbergasted. To his surprise, this place sold Elders Guild’s absolute arts at a cheaper price and accepted Heaven Merit Points as payment. He was speechless.

"Of course, you can also buy training techniques for fusion elemental energy here. In addition, you are allowed to purchase our Heaven-grade weapons too. We also have the Hall of Ancient Records, where the seniors’ knowledge, reading notes and travel notes are contained. Most of the ancient records are free to read, only a small amount of them charge a fee."

Upon hearing the words "Hall of Ancient Records", Ai Hui quickly asked, "Can I take a look?"

"Of course," Manager waved his hand and the black mist behind him transformed into a tall, unadorned bamboo tower. Four bold and forceful words were written on it, "Hall of Ancient Records".

Ai Hui heaved a sigh of relief upon seeing that the tower had multiple levels. His gaze fell upon the seventh level.

"Can I enter?" Ai Hui pointed to the Hall of Ancient Records.

"No problem," Manager nodded his head, "However, I have to remind you that your current amount of fusion elemental energy

only allows you to stay in Grass Hall for up to one hour. If you want to stay longer, please continue to work hard to develop your fusion elemental energy."

"Thank you for your reminder," Ai Hui bade Manager farewell and entered the Hall of Ancient Records.

As Ai Hui reached the entrance of the bamboo tower, he suddenly stopped in his tracks. His gaze fell upon the words "Hall of Ancient Records", which were inscribed on a wooden signboard.

The handwriting of these words... seemed somewhat familiar...

Wait, didn't he feel the handwriting of some other word was also familiar previously? He quickly remembered that it was the word "Karakorum" written on the wooden signboard hung above the entrance of Karakorum Sword League.

He carefully compared the handwriting between the four words "Hall of Ancient Records" and the word "Karakorum". Indeed, their handwritings looked remarkably similar.

The simple and forceful brushstrokes contained an unrestrained sword glint, conveying a sharp and intense killing intent.

"Hall of Ancient Records" and "Karakorum" should have be written by the same person. However, why would he feel a sense of familiarity from these words? He must have seen this handwriting somewhere in the past. Ai Hui was very confident about his

intuition. After racking his brain, he finally knew why he found the handwriting of these words familiar.

Vanguard Training Hall.

There was a signboard hung at the entrance of Central Pine City's Vanguard Training Hall as well. When he first moved to the training hall, the signboard was covered in dust and cobwebs. He had to clean it before hanging it on the wall of the lobby. The handwriting of the words "Vanguard Training Hall", "Hall of Ancient Records" and "Karakorum" looked remarkably similar to him, and as such, he felt that he had seen the handwriting somewhere in the past.

Could the inscriptions on these three signboards be written by the same person?

If that was the case, things were getting more interesting.

The owner of Vanguard Training Hall was called Heng Bingfeng and he had disappeared for many years. Given the fact that the ancient message tree at the training hall was able to connect with the old man, there was a high possibility that Heng Bingfeng might be from the Assembly of Patriarchs.

If the inscription on the wooden signboard of Karakorum was written by Heng Bingfeng, it only showed two things.

First, Heng Bingfeng was still alive.

Second, Heng Bingfeng was still in the Assembly of Patriarchs, or his relationship with the Assembly had yet to break. There was a very deep relationship between Karakorum and the Assembly of Patriarchs. This was also why Hua Kui wanted Ai Hui to protect Karakorum.

Ai Hui had decided to ask the old fellow about Heng Bingfeng after he returned to the Swordsman Training Hall.

Several bizarre thoughts emerged in Ai Hui's mind.

After leaving Central Pine City many years ago, Heng Bingfeng had vanished without a trace and never returned. He left such an important message tree in the training hall and he did not even come back to retrieve it. This somewhat puzzled Ai Hui.

Ai Hui also thought of Master Shao. In his mind, Master Shao had always been a very mysterious individual. The more he knew about Master Shao, the more powerful he felt Master Shao was. Every sand puppet Ai Hui had encountered, including Grass Hall's Manager, was not as powerful as Lou Lan. Then, there was also the sand core, Midnight, of which Lou Lan could not fully utilize its powers.

Was it a coincidence that Master Shao lived beside Vanguard Training Hall? What was the relationship between Master Shao and Heng Bingfeng?

Ai Hui could not help but shake his head. It seemed that the more

he knew, the more doubts he had.

"I’m very sorry, your fusion elemental energy has run out, you will have to leave the Grass Hall. Goodbye, Swordsman."

Manager’s voice rang across Ai Hui’s ears and he returned to his senses. Before Ai Hui could react, his vision blurred and his surroundings disappeared.

The glow of the patriarch grass vanished and he was back in his room.

It appeared that fusion elemental energy was the key to establishing a foothold in the Assembly of Patriarchs.

The information he obtained today was somewhat too much. The unfathomable depths of the Assembly of Patriarchs and the conjecture regarding Heng Bingfeng had overwhelmed Ai Hui greatly.

After around ten minutes, he finally calmed down. For someone who had powerful self-control like Ai Hui, this kind of situation seldom happened to him.

He threw all these distracting thoughts to the back of his mind. Actually, both Karakorum and the Assembly of Patriarchs had nothing much to do with him. The Assembly of Patriarchs was only a channel for him to gather information. With the addition of Grass Hall now, this process became much more efficient.

Right now, the most important thing for him to do was to find that notebook as soon as possible.

He guessed that the old fellow would be more interested in the topic of Heng Bingfeng.

After Ai Hui regained his composure, he flipped open the prototype inheritance that Karakorum Savant had passed him. Very soon, he became engrossed in it.

Karakorum Savant had great achievements in the field of swordsmanship. Unlike Ai Hui, who learnt swordsmanship by putting together various pieces of knowledge from everywhere, Karakorum Savant seemed to have learnt swordsmanship systematically. Ai Hui could see some of his own techniques in the inheritance. For example, [Oblique Slash] and [Heavenly Thrust]. There was also a move that was somewhat similar to his [Crescent Moon] but much weaker in power.

The inheritance also contained a lot of Karakorum Savant's insights into swordsmanship. For example, it specifically talked about the transformation of Yin and Yang, enlightening Ai Hui on this topic.

Ai Hui was completely engrossed in it. This was the first time he saw such a systematic and detailed swordplay manual.

Even though there were several areas that needed further improvements, the contents of the swordplay manual were enough

for it to be considered a prototype. In an era where swordsmanship was irrelevant, this inheritance was extremely valuable.

Like a drug addict, Ai Hui was completely obsessed with the swordplay manual.

There were some ideas mentioned in the manual that Ai Hui had already verified, but there were also some that he had never thought of. These novel ideas threw him into a deep thinking process. Whenever he understood something or came across a marvellous insight, he could not help but exclaim in admiration. Those areas that he could not understand distressed him, causing him to furrow his eyebrows and mumble to himself. In order to focus on comprehending the inheritance, he shut his door and declined to meet any visitor.

All the teachers in Karakorum Sword League knew Chu Zhaoyang was reading a prototype inheritance. Everyone was filled with the expectation that Chu Zhaoyang could add on more insights and knowledge to this incomplete inheritance.

Numerous pairs of eyes were staring at the tightly shut door.

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Silver Mist Sea, Pagoda of Hidden Edge.

A domineering old voice emitted from the light orb, "What do you think about this proposal?"

Tong Gui bowed and answered, "It’s an opportunity for us. We can secretly send some people over."

"Then we will send unknown individuals."

"Yes. But I’m afraid that we can’t stop them and will blow up the issue."

"If they can’t be stopped, then they can’t be stopped. It’s their business and it got nothing to do with all of you. Your mission is to make sure Silver City is safe."

"What about the Great Elder..."

"Don’t worry, the Great Elder is still the Avalon of Five Elements’ Great Elder."

"Subordinate understands."

Chapter 344: Night Attack On Karakorum

The darkness of night engulfed the earth. On this dark night, the moonlight was barely visible.

Hua Kui glanced at the tightly-shut door of the courtyard. This action was rather eye-catching.

A lofty-looking guy that wore a golden mask on his face sneered at Hua Kui. "It appears that our little friend has no intention of coming out. Hua Kui, I heard that you're his guide? Your foresight doesn't seem too good."

Before Hua Kui could reply, a guy who was seated beside him and drinking alcohol alone chuckled. "Prince has rather good foresight. I heard that the young fellow you brought in had attracted some enemies, causing you to flee for 4,000 miles? Both of you are evenly matched, so the two of you can have a good talk with each other."

Hua Kui fiddled with a piece of a leaf from the potted plant beside his feet and replied, "Cabinet, we are still better than you. Until now, you haven't even brought in a single person. If you don't bring in fresh blood within the next five years, you will be expelled from the Grass Hall."

The guy who was drinking was called Jiu Gui [1]. Those who were familiar with him called him Cabinet.

Prince felt a sense of schadenfreude and chirped in, "I didn't

expect the cabinet to still be empty. No wonder you're jealous of us. You can't even have a good conversation with us about this topic."

Jiu Gui downed his drink in one gulp and changed the topic. "What do you think the relationship is between Karakorum and the Grass Hall?"

A solemn look immediately appeared on Hua Kui's face. "Cabinet, just keep on drinking your alcohol and don't ask any questions that we are not supposed to ask."

"Hua Kui, you're being too prudent. There's no harm in talking about it. Even though the Grass Hall provides a lot of rewards, we are still doing a job. This time around, the situation is rather dire, and the enemies we are expecting will not be ordinary individuals."

The leaf that Hua Kui was fiddling with trembled. Annoyed, he replied, "Prince, you and your inauspicious mouth."

Jiu Gui chirped in as well, "Sigh, if you have told me earlier that Prince was coming, I definitely would not have come. You're truly deserving of the name 'Inauspicious Prince.' Anyway, how're the preparations going on Xiao Shuren's side?"

"The preparations have been made." Hua Kui nodded his head.

Upon hearing these words, the other two immediately felt relieved. Hua Kui might look imposing, powerful, and reliable, but

in reality, he could be rather careless at times.

"I can’t wait for our little friend to take action." Jiu Gui shook his head and shot a seemingly drunken look at a distant part of the sky.

Hua Kui and Prince stood up at the same time.

A few shadows flew across the sky above Little Night Town, overlooking the brightly-lit town beneath them.

"How is it possible that a mere Chu Zhaoyang can frighten them to such a state? A bunch of bums."

The person who had just spoken was standing atop a Fiery Floating Cloud. His face was of two completely contrasting complexion. The charred and dry left side of his face appeared to have previously been burned by fire. His blazing, flickering eyes looked exceptionally bright in the dark night. Beside him, there was a half-a-meter tall, three-legged cauldron with a crow design engraved on it. Dark-red lava slowly churned within the cauldron.

This person was called Fire Crow. No one knew what his real name was. He was infamous and guilty of monstrous crimes. His hands were covered in the blood of numerous lives. Even though he had countless enemies, he still led a carefree life.

Beside him, there was a person that was fully covered by a cloak. He remained silent and flew through the sky like a ghost.

Ye Shuang did not try to conceal his disdain and hatred toward Fire Crow at all. If they were in another place, he would have slaughtered this troublesome fellow. The moment he returned this favor, he would be a free man and owed nothing to nobody.

His weapons were very unique. In each of his hands, he held a golden wheel. In the center of each golden wheel, there was nothing but a handle. The edge of each golden wheel was filled with sharp densely-packed teeth. The dark-red color of the teeth made the golden wheels look as if they feasted on fresh blood.

Fire Crow knew Ye Shuang disliked him, but he did not care at all. He grinned at Ye Shuang. However, when a grin appeared upon that face of his, he looked exceptionally terrifying.

A delicate newbie like Ye Shuang would not survive very long on the battlefield.

There were three people in total, and they were not familiar with each other. They did not have the intention of coordinating with each other either. Fire Crow directly made his stance clear. "Each person takes on one opponent. We will fight them individually."

After finishing his sentence, Fire Crow flew directly downward without even waiting for the other two to reply.

The other two also had no intention of coordinating their offense. They flew toward the Karakorum Sword League separately.

A blazing streak shot down from the sky and flew toward the Karakorum Sword League like a burning meteor.

At that moment, the half-drunk Jiu Gui let out a hiccup and heaved a mouthful of white mist. Like an inflated balloon, the white mist expanded as the wind blew and transformed into a house-sized white cloud in the blink of an eye.

The fast flying blaze shot into the white cloud in a flash. Afterward, the white cloud burst into flames with a loud bang, disintegrating into ashes along with the blaze.

In the sky, Fire Crow's eyes froze. From the attack of his opponent, Fire Crow could immediately tell whether he was an expert or not. The other party was no pushover.

Fire Crow licked his lips as a tinge of excitement appeared upon his face. He was never scared of his opponents being too powerful. He only feared that they were too weak and posed no challenge to him.

Smacking the cauldron beside him, raging flames surged out of it and shot skyward. The raging flames were dazzling and splendid, illuminating all of Little Night Town and making it look as if it was daytime. The flames also caused Fire Crow's sinister-looking half-charred face to appear even more terrifying. A grin appeared upon his face.

Three fiery birds flew out of the raging flames in the cauldron.

Apparently, they were three crows conjured from fire. Their bodies intertwined as they dived toward the ground.

Mournful screeches engulfed the sky above the Karakorum Sword League in an instant.

Jiu Gui broke into a hearty laugh. "A grape wine so fine that a cup gleams at night. To drink on I'd love, but for the summons to fight!"

Intoxicated, he picked up the wine cup from the table and spilled its contents into the air.

The sparkling and translucent beads of wine rolled in the air. Suddenly, concentrated water elemental energy erupted from Jiu Gui and vaporized the beads of wine into a cloud of mist. Crackling chords of a lute played from the mist. Subsequently, a neigh from a steed rang out, and a mist-formed rider abruptly surged out of the fog.

The horseman raised his sword and charged forward with lightning speed. Eventually, it transformed into a shadowy streak.

Meanwhile, the three screeching flaming crows in the sky suddenly exploded into countless flaming sparks.

A cold glint flashed across Fire Crow's eyes. He spread open his right palm, and a flaming protective screen appeared before him.

A shadowy streak blurred through the air. The charging horseman hacked his longsword heavily against the blazing fire screen. The anticipated boom from the clash was not produced. The fire screen collapsed swiftly like a piece of soft paper and engulfed the misty horseman.

The horseman only managed to struggle briefly before vanishing into thin air with a pop.

Grave expressions appeared on the faces of Jiu Gui and Fire Crow.

On the other side.

The ghost-like cloaked man had encountered trouble as well.

He stopped in his tracks and looked at the potted plant not far away from him. It was a hibiscus. Even in the dark night, its beauty and brilliance could still involuntarily captivate his attention.

He shifted his gaze and looked around elsewhere.

Potted plants were well spaced out around the courtyard. All of them were placed in noticeable positions. Some were also placed at the corners of the perimeter walls. At a glance, this place looked like a normal courtyard with nothing out of ordinary. This was also why the cloaked man did not care too much about the potted plants.

He was slightly surprised that his opponent would deploy such ordinary-looking potted plants.

However, they were merely potted plants after all. Even if they contained powerful plants, he would not be afraid of them.

He walked directly to the pot of hibiscus and stomped it to smithereens.

He did not encounter any resistance, and the pot of hibiscus had no reaction either.

An ordinary potted plant? The cloaked man became vigilant all of a sudden. On a battlefield, the more harmless and ordinary a deployment looked, the more dangerous it was.

Eh?

Suddenly, his pupils contracted. He did not know when, but the crushed hibiscus had taken root on the ground. Right now, the hibiscus was glistening and alluring. There was not the slightest bit of dirt or mud on it. Its previously crushed stems and leaves had completely recovered.

Something strange was going on!

He felt that his control over the surrounding elemental energy

was gradually declining.

Had he been isolated from the elemental energy in the environment?

Then, he saw a tall and sturdy man standing 30 meters away from him. Like an experienced gardener, the man was pruning the potted plants around him.

The cloaked man strode toward the burly man.

As long as he could kill this man, these potted plants would be ineffective against him.

The potted plants around Hua Kui were arranged in an irregular arrangement that had a charming effect. If Ai Hui was to witness this sight, he would be dumbstruck. He would not have expected Hua Kui to hide his killing intent within these pruned potted plants.

The battle between Ye Shuang and Prince was much more intense.

Both of them were metal elementalists.

Ye Shuang's golden wheels were like two dazzling golden dragons, surging and whizzing through the air to display their impressive might. The dragon roar that the golden wheels produced contained a secret art. This roar was able to numb the

blood in one's body, causing his or her elemental energy lose control.

Prince wore a golden mask on his face. His hands wielded a great sword forged from pure gold, which had a length that was about equal to his height. He had no swordsmanship to speak of, as he was just purely hacking and slashing at his enemy.

With an incredibly fast speed, each hack was heavier than the previous one.

Every hack released a streak of brilliant golden light. Since his hacking speed was too fast, before the previous streak of golden light could disappear, the next streak of golden light had already formed. This caused streaks of golden light to accumulate. Eventually, his entire body was shrouded in surging golden light, resembling a gigantic golden-glowing hurricane.

This golden-glowing hurricane unreasonably blasted at Ye Shuang.

Ye Shuang's golden dragons collided with the golden-glowing hurricane and let out waves of dragon roars, but the dragons could not stop the hurricane which was becoming increasingly thick.

Not a single tinge of panic could be found on Ye Shuang's face. He did not look like a rookie at all.

At this point in time, all of the Karakorum Sword League

teachers were startled by the ongoing battles. When everyone saw the intensity of the battles and how the battles were surging with violent elemental energy, their facial expressions changed drastically. The fighting capabilities of the teachers were not worth mentioning in such battles.

"Quickly run!"

It was not known who shouted these words. Everyone looked as if they had woken up from a dream and started to hastily run away from the ongoing battles.

In an exquisite courtyard.

A beautiful woman gazed at a streak of blazing flames that soared through the sky. The sound of intense battles fell incessantly on her ears. Surging elemental energy waves in the air sent a cold shiver down her spine.

"These people are here to abduct me?" Xiao Shuren asked softly.

The Karakorum Savant did not look at her. She sat cross-legged on the ground with her sword placed before her. She replied coldly, "That’s right. Dai Gang wants your ancient treasure, and a lot of people are willing to risk their lives for him."

"Treasuring a jade ring becomes a crime for even an innocent man. This saying is spot-on." Xiao Shuren laughed bitterly.

"What you want, what you get," Karakorum remained unmoved.

Xiao Shuren regained her composure and replied, "Pardon me, but haven’t you always wanted the ancient treasure?"

To Xiao Shuren’s surprise, the Karakorum Savant shook her head and replied, "I don’t want it anymore."

"Are you afraid of Dai Gang?" Xiao Shuren stared at the Karakorum Savant.

"Yes, I’m afraid," the Karakorum Savant replied.

Her face was still covered by a veil. Even though her features were masked, one could see the unwavering calmness within her eyes.

Xiao Shuren lowered her head and looked slightly downcast. After a while, she raised her head as she returned to her senses.

The Karakorum Savant nodded her head in silence. Xiao Shuren might appear weak and delicate, but her will and determination far surpassed those of many men. She was truly a woman that had managed an enterprise for many years.

Xiao Shuren suddenly asked, "Where’s Chu Zhaoyang? I heard he’s here. I am very happy that I can meet an old friend here. I’m the one who was in the wrong during our previous encounter, and I feel really guilty. If I get to meet Mr. Chu, I have to apologize and

compensate him.

"You better know your place. Since I don’t want the ancient treasure, my sword will not hesitate to slay you," the Karakorum Savant said coldly.

Xiao Shuren was not afraid of this threat, smiling gracefully. "If I die, the ancient treasure will definitely be in the hands of the Savant. Clearly, the Savant can’t bear to kill me. Eh? Given such a huge ruckus, why hasn’t Mr. Chu appeared yet?"

The Karakorum Savant did not bother with Xiao Shuren. Instead, her gaze shifted to the courtyard where Chu Zhaoyang resided, feeling slightly puzzled.

Note:

[1] Jiu Gui is liquor cabinet in Chinese.

Chapter 345: Sword Glint And Tranquil Night Breeze

To become a true Master, one must fulfill two conditions. The first condition was to reach the Third Elemental Realm. The second condition was to create an absolute art. These two conditions were mandatory.

After one attained elemental externalization, he or she would have to focus on controlling and channelling elemental energy from the natural environment. Elementalists that had attained elemental externalization must first learn how to control the elemental energy of their base type. For example, Ai Hui, who was a metal elementalist, could control the metal elemental energy in the wind or the scattered metal elemental energy in the ground.

As an elementalist's control over elemental energy improved, not only could he control the elemental energy of his base type, he could also draw and convert other types of elemental energy that engendered his base type.

For example, after Ai Hui had increased his base level, he could draw and convert earth elemental energy into metal elemental energy, thereby strengthening himself.

Duanmu Huanghun's [Perennial Lock] made use of this logic as well. He drew water elemental energy from the ground to nourish his own wood elemental energy.

This was also known as the Second Elemental Realm.

After attaining Second Elemental Realm, an elementalist could eventually draw one more elemental energy type to strengthen himself. This was the Third Elemental Realm. For example, if Ai Hui reached the Third Elemental Realm, he could draw and convert fire elemental energy and earth elemental energy into metal elemental energy.

The ability to draw and utilize all five types of elemental energy was the mark of a Grandmaster. Dai Gang, a Grandmaster, was surrounded by only wood elemental energy.

The unique characteristic of Third Elemental Realm was the reason why it became one of the two necessary conditions for becoming a Master. When an elementalist reached the Third Elemental Realm, he was no longer restrained by the cycle of the five elements.

If Ai Hui was to attain the Third Elemental Realm, he would be able to control fire, earth, and metal elemental energies. In the past, fire elemental energy happened to be the bane of his metal elemental energy. As such, if he attained the Third Elemental Realm, he would no longer be restrained by fire elemental energy. This also implied that his control over natural elemental energies had reached a new level.

Reaching Third Elemental Realm allowed one to be filled with vigorous elemental energy. The inheritances that everyone practiced were focused on where this vigorous elemental energy could be used and applied. Inheritances could display an elementalist’s level of understanding toward elemental energy as

well.

The ability to create an absolute art indicated a deep and unique understanding that an elementalist had toward elemental energy.

An absolute art was a way for one to exhibit the "path" he chose to embark on.

It was hard to determine the strength of an individual who was below the level of a Master. Some people had a low elemental energy level, but a strong comprehension of elemental energy. On the contrary, there were other people whose strength could easily be determined just by engaging them in battle.

Right now, there was an unknown number of eyes looking from the shadows at the ongoing war in Karakorum.

Fire Crow was an infamous villain As such, his fighting capabilities were obviously powerful. Having achieved the Third Elemental Realm allowed him to launch his attacks continuously. Nonetheless, even though Jiu Gui was only at Second Elemental Realm, he did not show any sign of being in a disadvantageous position against Fire Crow. He had an abnormally deep understanding ofs elemental energy. His moves were extraordinary and transcended worldliness.

Meanwhile, the mysterious-looking cloaked man was actually a transfigured earth elementalist!

Very soon, Hua Kui could feel the pressure from the cloaked man. His opponent could transform his body at will. Furthermore, his body was made up of an unknown material that gave it immense strength as well as the ability to turn invisible and vanish into thin air.

If not for the traps that Hua Kui had put in the potted plants, he would be in deep trouble. Even so, his current attacks were not really effective against the cloaked man. He had yet to discover the weakness of his opponent.

Both of them were in a deadlocked position.

Meanwhile, the battle between Prince and Ye Shuang was extremely dangerous and sent sparks and flames in all directions.

Both of them were fighting force with force.

Ye Shuang had been suppressed by Prince from the beginning of the battle. Now, he was slowly pulling back the battle. His sleeves were completely torn, revealing two muscular arms in the air. It was at this point in time that the onlookers noticed a dragon tattoo on each of his arms. Suddenly, the dragon tattoos looked as if they came to life. Their eyes gave off a faint glow that pulsated rhythmically.

The might of Ye Shuang's golden wheels became increasingly terrifying.

Prince behaved as if he had not even noticed what was going on with Ye Shuang. The golden-glowing hurricane around his body became thicker and thicker.

The six individuals locked in combat were extremely powerful. Those who covertly watched the ongoing battles were shocked.

Out of the six combatants, they only recognized Fire Crow. They knew nothing about the remaining five.

The cloaked man was a transfigured earth elementalist. Transfigured elementalists were shunned individuals who lived in the dark. As such, there was nothing unusual about the cloaked man being unknown. As for Ye Shuang, one could tell that he was a rookie with a glance. Hence, it was also normal that not many people knew about him.

On the other hand, the three defenders of Karakorum were terrifyingly powerful. Their moves were weird and constantly changing. Most importantly, they had rich combat experience. After having been through countless battles, how was it possible that they were just some ordinary individuals?

However, none of the onlookers knew who these three people were. Those who were well-informed could only link these three with some fragmented information.

However, all the onlookers knew one thing for sure: Karakorum was not as weak as they thought.

A lot of people became solemn as they thought of this, but no one had given up the hope of obtaining the ancient treasure.

Everyone knew that no matter how powerful Karakorum was, it still could not contend against the superpowers.

How many families had taken part in this struggle? Nobody knew the exact number, but they definitely knew that it was huge.

No matter how powerful Karakorum was, under such a situation, their members would be constantly exhausted and weakened. Eventually, they would reveal their vulnerability.

As long as they were patient and waited long enough, they would be able to strike out and reap the fruit of another's hard work after Karakorum's experts were eliminated. Everyone felt that they were the strongest hunter, that they would obtain the ultimate victory.

A shadow silently approached Xiao Shuren's courtyard.

Suddenly, a streak of sword glint swiftly appeared. Its dazzling radiance illuminated the dark night in an instant.

A dazzling flash flew across the air as a human head flew up into the sky. After a moment, blood spurted into the air as a headless corpse fell heavily to the ground, twitching nonstop.

Everyone was stunned by the streak of sword glint.

They had never seen such a dazzling, sharp, and crisp sword glint before.

A long time ago, swordsmanship had collapsed and was made irrelevant by the elemental energy system.

It was only now that the sword glint reminded everyone of the incomparable glory of swordsmen.

Was this true swordsmanship?

No one could clearly identify that sword move. Even Xiao Shuren, who was standing beside the Karakorum Savant, was dumbstruck and overwhelmed with shock. She was completely unable to see how the Karakorum Savant had unleashed her sword move.

The Karakorum Savant sheathed her sword. The veil on her face prevented anyone from seeing her expression, but it was obvious that her eyes were still as tranquil and calm as before.

It was at this point in time that everyone remembered where they were right now.

"Karakorum..."

This name was a new face for the swordsmanship that used to

command reverence and respect in the distant past.

Could it be that swordsmanship was on the rise again?

"Karakorum."

Those hidden onlookers muttered this word repeatedly, revealing fear and excitement on their faces.

Karakorum!

Fire Crow was the first one to turn around and retreat. He had no confidence in withstanding that previous sword move.

The cloaked man did not hesitate to escape either. He transformed into a cloudy sandstorm and flew across the air. After flying several hundred meters away from Karakorum, he turned back into his original form and vanished into thin air in the blink of an eye.

After hesitating for a while, Ye Shuang clenched his teeth and turned around to escape as well.

The concealed onlookers scurried back to where they came from like a bunch of rats.

The Hua Kui trio looked at each other. They could see the astonishment in each other’s eyes. The Karakorum Savant’s

amazing sword move had left an unforgettable memory in their heads. They had not expected such an intense battle to end in this fashion.

The battle arrived abruptly and ended abruptly as well. Peace and tranquility returned to the Karakorum Sword League once again.

At this moment, the creaking sound of a door opening could be clearly heard in the quiet Karakorum Sword League.

Everyone turned around at the same time.

The door to the courtyard was pushed open, and Ai Hui stood at the doorstep looking absent-minded. His body wobbled, looking as if he could be blown away by a gust of wind at anytime. With a blank look on his face, he surveyed his surroundings. Clearly, he had not returned to his senses after delving into the world of swordsmanship.

After a while, his eyes slowly regained their focus.

"Eh? What happened? How did things become like this? Why did you demolish the floor and walls for nothing?"

Ai Hui looked surprised by the Karakorum Sword League that had changed beyond recognition. Everything was messed up with debris everywhere. A few lone figures stood nearby.

"Eh? Hua Kui, why are you here? Oh? Are you waiting for me?

Has the mission started? Are these two your assistants?"

Ai Hui suddenly realized what was going on.

Hua Kui remained silent as his face turned extremely grave.

Jiu Gui coughed softly, walked to Hua Kui, and patted his shoulder. "Hua Kui, your little fellow is rather interesting. He will have a bright future."

"Hua Kui, it’s okay. Your rating is very high."

The relationship between a mentor and a rookie was extremely tight. Usually, a rookie’s performance would have a direct impact on his or her mentor’s rating.

If a rookie performed really badly, his or her guide’s rating would be reduced.

After being teased by Prince and Jiu Gui, Hua Kui’s face turned even uglier.

However, he was a shrewd individual after all. He regained his composure after a while and asked calmly, "Did you fall asleep just now?"

"Ha, how could I fall asleep?" Ai Hui quickly shook his head. "I was too engrossed in reading a swordsmanship inheritance. Is the

mission going to start soon?"

Hua Kui could not be bothered with him and replied expressionlessly, "Not yet."

"It seems that I came out too early." Ai Hui let out a yawn. Since his body was on the verge of collapsing, he simply just sat his a** down on the ground.

"What progress have you made?" Hua Kui asked casually.

"Great progress. It's truly amazing. I didn't expect that swordsmanship could be used in such ways..." Ai Hui yawned incessantly. He had made huge progress and obtained a lot of revelations. Countless marvellous ideas were spinning in his head. Like a piece of knotted rope, he had a lot questions that he could not untangle. He vaguely remembered that he had a very daring and powerful idea, an idea that would shock everyone...

His brain processed slower and slower as sleepiness continuously seeped into him.

How could he be so tired after reading a swordsmanship inheritance for a while...

Before the fatigued Ai Hui could understand why, he fell into a deep sleep.

Apparently, he had not realized how many days and nights he

had spent reading the swordsmanship inheritance. The continuous excitement and deep thinking had greatly exhausted his physical energy. In reality, his body was extremely weary.

Facing the sky, he sprawled on the floor and slept.

After a moment, his snores pervaded the tranquil night breeze, resembling the loud and rhythmic croaks of a frog in pond.

Chapter 346: A Shameless Person

It was two days later when Ai Hui finally learned about the epic battle that night.

It was not that Ai Hui was slow on the uptake, but rather, it was because he had slept for two days and two nights straight.

On the first night, his snores were like the croaks of a frog in a pond in the summer, refreshing and pleasant. Two straight days and nights of his snores, however, were considered irritating, so much so that one wanted to sprinkle poison all over the pond to kill the frog.

The human race has always been heartless.

The frog, however, had not forgotten its mission.

Ai Hui's schedule was fully packed. His most important task was to find Senior Xiao's notes in the Grass Hall's Hall of Ancient Records. The only way to increase the duration of time he could spend in the Grass Hall was to develop his fusion elemental energy diligently. In between developing his fusion elemental energy and searching for Senior Xiao's notes in the Grass Hall, he would practise his swordsmanship.

His life was busy and fulfilling. He simply had no time to care about other things, and he was not interested in them either.

Meanwhile, Karakorum had become extremely lively.

Currently, Karakorum Sword League was thrust into the limelight. Its reputation surpassed even that of Dragonrise Training Hall.

The battle in Karakorum that night had caused a sensation in all of Silver City.

Karakorum Savant's sword move was being described by everyone as divine and supernatural. The three mysterious experts had also displayed the unfathomable depths of the Karakorum Sword League.

The climax of the incident happened when the identity of the headless body was exposed.

He was the leader of the Yellowsand Bandits, Chi Zun.

The Yellowsand Bandits had been going on a rampage for many years, committing all kinds of heinous crimes. Even though they had taken countless lives, they were still outside the reach of the law. They were very powerful. Their leader, Chi Zun, was a genius in his youth. He had been viewed by many as a genius that could become a Master in the future. Unfortunately, he eventually suffered a devastating injury and his strength decreased greatly, causing him to lose the opportunity to become a Master. Because of this setback, his nature changed drastically and he sank further into depravity day by day.

Even though he could not become a Master, due to his immense talents, his strength still far surpassed that of ordinary elementalists. Within a few years, he became an infamous bandit leader.

In the past, the Yellowsand Bandits had been a bunch of petty thieves. Under Chi Zun's leadership, they gradually became a group of notorious bandits that struck fear into people's hearts.

Great Wei Enterprise's strength was rather good, but they were still exterminated by the Yellowsand Bandits. This showed how vicious and powerful the Yellowsand Bandits were.

Nevertheless, the notorious Chi Zun was ultimately beheaded with a single sword move. How could a sensation not stir up in Silver City?

Just defeating or killing Chi Zun might not prove much, but beheading him with a single sword move could only mean one thing. A Master!

Only a Master could achieve such a feat.

An ordinary Master would not have sent everyone into a frenzy. What the mysterious Karakorum Savant practised was swordsmanship.

A master swordsman!

The first master swordsman in the history of the Avalon of Five Elements!

The decline of swordsmanship began when the Avalon of Five Elements was established. As the Elemental Era began, swordsmanship became useless and irrelevant. There were only some youths that continued to adore it for its grace and past glory. Elementalists viewed those self-proclaimed "master swordsmen" as just a bunch of clowns.

Its decline went so far that there was a hypothesis stating that those who liked swordsmanship were a bunch of ignorant people that liked to daydream.

No one could verify the worth of swordsmanship.

Occasionally, when one or two stunning sword moves were placed together with exquisite and fully-developed inheritances, the former would look insignificant and frail.

The mainstream idea was that swordsmanship had died out.

The fact that there had never been a legitimate master swordsman verified this idea. A Master needed to seek his or her own "path"; however, no Master had ever sought the "path" of swordsmanship. This showed everyone that swordsmanship could no longer exist in the world.

Now, however, a master swordsman had appeared.

Everyone’s common understanding towards swordsmanship completely changed in an instant.

It was not that swordsmanship did not contain a "path", but rather, no one had found it yet!

Silver City went into a frenzy. The Silver Mist Sea went into a frenzy. The Avalon of Five Elements went into a frenzy.

Even the Elders Guild immediately sent someone to commend Karakorum. The Elders Guild was willing to provide Karakorum Sword League with various resources, help them increase their influence, and offered its collection of swordplay manuals among other things.

Those bad elements that had hidden in Karakorum Sword League’s surroundings suddenly vanished into thin air.

The Karakorum Sword League immediately became the holy land of those elementalists who loved swordsmanship, which in turn resulted in Little Night Town becoming extremely lively. Swordsmanship had everyone’s new favorite field to train in. In the extravagant and lavish Silver City, numerous rich and powerful families employed a swordplay teacher. They behaved as if not having a swordplay teacher was something to be ashamed of.

Incidentally, even Karakorum Sword League’s swordplay teachers had become hot in demand.

Under such circumstances, people began to remember Chu Zhaoyang, who had previously destroyed five sword formations in a row

"Teach swordsmanship at someone’s residence?"

Ai Hui, who was being disturbed, did not try to conceal his annoyance at all.

The old prisoner had told him that the notes were on the seventh floor of the Hall of Ancient Records. Ai Hui had thought that he could easily find it with such precise information, but when he arrived at the seventh floor of the Hall of Ancient Records, he soon realised how naive he’d been.

Looking into the distance, there was no end to the rows of bookshelves. Every bookshelf was filled with tattered books and ash-colored papers. Many areas on the seventh floor were disordered and in a mess. It was unimaginably hard to find Senior Xiao’s notes in this place. The worst thing was that he did not have enough fusion elemental energy to stay long in the Hall of Ancient Records. As such, he had to train hard to develop his fusion elemental energy.

He wished that the amount of time he had could multiply, then someone had to ask him to teach swordsmanship at someone else’s residence.

He would not agree even if Karakorum Savant was the one to ask

him!

Even though Karakorum Savant was wearing a face veil, Ai Hui could still see her helplessness.

Karakorum Savant continued to explain, "In the past, this family took good care of me and treated me as one of their own. If not for the fact that I'm busy right now, I would have gone personally to show my sincerity."

Ai Hui remained unmoved, maintaining a look of innocence in his eyes.

Hua Kui, who was standing behind Karakorum Savant, kept sending Ai Hui signals with his eyes. Ai Hui turned a blind eye to them. After all, he was not the one who had been cared for by that family.

"I'm very clear of the Karakorum Sword League's teachers' standards. The more I think about it, the more I feel that Brother Chu is most suitable for this job. I hope that Brother Chu can help me out..."

"No! I'm very busy; there are a lot of things I have to do!" Ai Hui rejected her without any hesitation.

Hua Kui's face turned extremely ugly as he stared at Ai Hui fiercely. Ai Hui continued to pay him no attention.

"Brother Chu..." Karakorum Savant wanted to continue persuading Ai Hui, but she had never been one to fawn on others and did not know what to do.

Hua Kui quickly interjected. "Savant, give me a moment and let me have a talk with Brother Chu."

"Alright, I shall wait outside then," Karakorum Savant replied, feeling relief.

After Karakorum Savant left the courtyard, Hua Kui sputtered in Ai Hui's face. "Didn't you see my eye signals? Why can't you agree? She merely asked you for a bit of help and you act like this. What's the meaning of this?"

"I'm very busy, how would I have enough time to help her?" Ai Hui replied.

"You? Busy? Every day you hang out in the Hall of Ancient Records, how's that considered busy? And you're not in the training section. What are you looking for in the seventh floor's miscellaneous section?"

A cold shiver went down Ai Hui's spine. It appeared that someone was already observing him; however, he had already expected this to happen. A newbie like him who visited the Hall of Ancient Records every day would indeed easily arouse suspicion.

"I am, of course, looking for treasures," Ai Hui replied

expressionlessly.

"What treasures?" Hua Kui's face was filled with suspicion.

"There are so many seniors' notebooks and records; If I search carefully, I'll definitely find something good," Ai Hui replied in a deadpan manner.

"There are so many absolute arts you can learn, why are you still searching for treasures?" Hua Kui was still filled with doubt.

"Do I have enough Association Merit Points? Do I have enough money?" Ai Hui gave Hua Kui a look of disdain.

Compared to the Elders Guild, the Grass Hall's artifacts and absolute arts were not only cheaper, but the way to buy them was also more flexible. One could use Association Merit Points, money, or Heaven Merit Points to purchase them.

The exchange rate between Heaven Merit Points and Association Merit Points was one to one. From this, Ai Hui felt that the Assembly of Patriarchs was really generous for aligning with the Elders Guild regarding such matters.

Hua Kui was speechless, especially when he heard the line, "Do I have enough money?" He began to sympathize with Ai Hui. "I never expected you to not only be a rookie, but also a poor man. This is all the more reason to agree to this job. You don't have money, right? You also don't have Association Merit Points, right?

I can give them to you!"

Ai Hui looked at Hua Kui suspiciously. "Do you have money? I've known you for so long, yet you've never even treated me to a bowl of noodles."

"Fifty fusion elemental energy beans and two hundred Association Merit Points." Hua Kui was very straightforward.

Ai Hui was momentarily stunned.

Fusion elemental energy beans were an unique product of Grass Hall. These beans contained fusion elemental energy and could speed up the development of fusion elemental energy. Ai Hui still remembered the price of these beans. Each fusion elemental energy bean cost two high-grade essence elemental beans.

Two hundred Association Merit Points were equivalent to two hundred Heaven Merit Points. Ai Hui knew their worth very clearly. Grass Hall's products were priced a lot cheaper than the Elders Guild's. As such, two hundred Association Merit Points were worth a lot more.

"Pay first!" Ai Hui reached out his hand.

"Do I look like someone who will owe you anything?" Hua Kui looked at Ai Hui with disdain.

Upon seeing Ai Hui remain unmoved, Hua Kui passed him the

fusion elemental energy beans while sulking. "In any case, I’m still your guide, can you give me some face and not be so mercenary?"

Ai Hui carefully kept the fusion elemental energy beans and replied, "I’m a rookie and a poor man."

Hua Kui restrained himself from giving this fellow a tight slap. After taking a deep breath, he started speaking again, "Be careful. This time around, there are other people too. Remember, once you reach that place, don’t ask questions you’re not supposed to ask and don’t look at things you’re not supposed to see."

"Don’t worry, I won’t be a busybody. I still need to search for treasures in the Hall of Ancient Records." Ai Hui nodded.

"Didn’t I just give you Association Merit Points?" Hua Kui furrowed his eyebrows.

"I’m a rookie and a poor man." Ai Hui gave him an innocent look.

Hua Kui could no longer stand this fellow and turned around to leave.

After a while, Karakorum Savant entered the courtyard looking extremely happy. "Thank you so much, Brother Chu. Don’t worry, Brother Chu, that senior of mine is a very nice person. Brother Chu, if you have any difficulties, feel free to tell me."

"As a member of Karakorum, it’s my bound duty to make some

contributions to Karakorum. Since I will be there to teach swordsmanship, I can’t embarrass the name of Karakorum, but my sword is not really up to standard for this job..."

Hua Kui widened his eyes. Did you eat the Silverfold Plum or something?

Without any hesitation, Karakorum Savant passed her sword to Ai Hui. "This is a newly-forged sword. I shall gift it to Brother Chu."

Ai Hui quickly accepted the sword and replied, "Chief, you’re too generous. You can just give me a grass sword, really..."

Hua Kui was dumbstruck. He had never seen such a shameless person before.

Chapter 347: [Six Moons]

Elegantly, his sword drew sparks.

Excellent sword, excellent sword! Ai Hui praised the sword in his heart.

Even though it was not as good as the Silverfold Plum, it was still a premium sword. The colors of snow and cherry blossoms fused together, giving the body of the sword a rarely-seen faint pinkish glisten. The sword was so light and graceful that it felt weightless, extremely suitable for a girl to use. The sheath of the sword was exquisite and gorgeous, clearly the work of a famous swordsmith. On the sheath, there were two words written in seal script, "Snow Cherry."

Ai Hui estimated that this sword could be sold for three hundred Heaven Merit Points without much difficulty. There were very few swordsmen, but even fewer good swords. Karakorum Savant was truly the chief of Karakorum, anything she gave was of high quality.

Should I sell it while I give swordsmanship lessons? Ai Hui pondered to himself.

A good sword like this belonged to whoever was destined for it!

If one did not have at least four hundred Heaven Merit Points, how could he or she be destined for it?

Ai Hui stretched his shoulders. In order to sell the Snow Cherry for a good price, he decided to put on a good performance and promote Karakorum's swordsmanship. He did not want to let down Karakorum Savant.

After stretching his shoulders, Ai Hui sat down and asked Hua Kui, "It sounds like it will be far away. Which residence are we going to?"

"You will know when the time comes." Hua Kui had an irritated look on his face.

"Actually, all of you don't need to send me. Can't you just give me the address? I can go there myself." Ai Hui wasn't annoyed by Hua Kui's tone.

The Fiery Floating Cloud beneath his feet wasn't any ordinary product. It looked very normal and ordinary from the outside, but as for the inside, one could tell that its master paid great attention to design and quality when making it.

"Who says we are sending you off?" Hua Kui rolled his eyes. He was beginning to regret his decision to become this scumbag's guide.

"Xiao Shuren is being kept in the trunk?" Ai Hui asked.

"You are quite sharp." Hua Kui was slightly surprised.

Even though Hua Kui had not said anything, Chu Zhaoyang still knew that it was Xiao Shuren. He felt rather impressed.

"This Fiery Floating Cloud is more luxurious than the Auspicious I destroyed last time. Furthermore, you are here as well. Why would Karakorum spend so many resources? Xiao Shuren can be the only reason."

Hua Kui nodded his head. Just as he was about to praise Chu Zhaoyang for being smart, Chu Zhaoyang changed the topic. "So now we have to talk about the escort fee. You see, I have gone to great lengths to accompany you in escorting Xiao Shuren. What a big risk I'm taking! I'm a rookie and a poor man..."

"Get lost!" Hua Kui could not stand Ai Hui and flew into a rage.

"Hey, hey, hey, don't think you can scold me just because you're my guide." Ai Hui widened his eyes.

Hua Kui decided to close his eyes and ignore this scumbag.

Very soon, the Fiery Floating Cloud landed in an unadorned and serene courtyard.

This place was not located in the centre of Silver City. Instead, it was located in a remote corner of Silver City. A simple and unadorned manor like this was rarely seen in the extravagant and lavish Silver City.

Even though Ai Hui did not know which family this residence belonged to, he could sense the aura of a rich and powerful aristocratic family coming from within.

Ai Hui descended from the Fiery Floating Cloud. The green ceramic tiles beneath his feet looked extremely old. The surrounding walls were overflowing with aged vines and green moss. Everywhere was filled with traces of extreme aging.

A long-established family.

This was the first thought that came to Ai Hui’s mind.

A butler that had been waiting for their arrival bowed slightly and greeted Ai Hui respectfully. "Are you Mister Chu? You must have had an arduous journey. Your living quarters have already been prepared. Do you want to take a rest first? Madam is currently out on business; she will be back by tonight. Madam hopes to have dinner together with Mister Chu, will you be able to make it?"

"No problem." Ai Hui nodded. "Bring me to my living quarters first."

"Okay." The butler nodded at a servant on one side. That servant quickly came forward and the butler instructed him, "Bring Mister Chu to bamboo garden."

"Yes," the servant replied respectfully.

The butler turned back and spoke to Ai Hui once again, "If Mister Chu needs anything, feel free to tell me."

Ai Hui smacked his lips in silence. This was his first encounter with such a meticulous and strict butler. Ai Hui did not really like such aristocratic families, but fortunately, he just needed to put on a good act as a teacher. The most important thing for him to do was to sell the Snow Cherry for a good price. Oh, wrong, he had to find the one destined for Snow Cherry.

For Xiao Shuren to be sent to this place, this family must have a deep relationship with Chief...

As Ai Hui followed the servant to bamboo garden, he asked the servant curiously, "May I know the surname of this family? I have come in haste and Chief did not have enough time to brief me."

As the servant continued to lead the way, he replied respectfully, "Our family's surname is Ye."

Ye? Ai Hui racked his brain. He did not know of any aristocratic families in the Silver Mist Sea that had the surname Ye. From the looks of it, however, this family was definitely a first class aristocratic family.

After replying to Ai Hui, the servant did not speak anymore and focused on leading the way. Ai Hui also did not ask anymore

questions. He began to focus on training with fusion elemental energy. With the fifty fusion elemental energy beans, his training efficiency would improve significantly. Besides this, he also hoped he could find Senior Xiao's notes sooner so that he could leave Silver City. For some reason, he had a premonition that a maelstrom was approaching Silver City.

The ancient manor was extremely huge; Ai Hui followed the servant for more than ten minutes before arriving at the bamboo garden.

Ai Hui silently trembled with fear. Every plot of land in Silver City was extremely expensive. He did not expect this residence to be so gigantic.

Bamboo garden was a lone court. The surrounding bamboos were swaying slightly, looking especially elegant. The necessities provided were comprehensive. The things that satisfied Ai Hui the most were the customized meditation room and the training arena. Even though they were not really huge in size, they were more than enough for Ai Hui alone.

Since Ai Hui was alone and had not brought a lot of luggage, he began to start training.

As for where Xiao Shuren was placed or how powerful the Ye Residence was, Ai Hui did not care at all. The Ye Residence was far more quiet than he'd expected it to be. This was a good place for training. It just so happened that he had a premonition that a maelstrom was going to hit Silver City. As such, he was exceptionally happy to have a quiet and serene place to train.

After developing his fusion elemental energy, entering the Grass Hall, and completely depleting his fusion elemental energy in the Hall of Ancient Records, Ai Hui headed to the training arena in the courtyard to practise his swordsmanship.

He was not at all surprised that Karakorum Savant was a master swordsman.

He had finished reading the inheritance compiled by Karakorum Savant, and even though there were several areas which were vague and unclear, he could sense that Karakorum Savant had found the essence of swordsmanship.

He was slightly envious of her.

Despite this, he did not immediately practise his swordsmanship according to the inheritance. It was not that Ai Hui was prideful and wanted to create his own absolute art, but rather, this inheritance was far from completion.

Ai Hui estimated that Karakorum Savant would need at least twenty years to perfect eighty percent of this absolute art. The remaining portion would have to be constantly polished and improved by the future generations.

This was where the strength of the absolute arts of aristocratic families lay. Their absolute arts had been polished by many generations and continued to develop, becoming nearly perfect.

Even though Karakorum Savant's inheritance was still crude and incomplete, it could serve as a verification for Ai Hui's theories and stimulate him. Ai Hui's level of swordsmanship was not low. Furthermore, after a long period of trial and error, he gradually formed his own style of swordsmanship.

For example, Ai Hui's elemental energy sword pills were extremely unique. He was the only one who had come up with the idea; it hadn't been done before.

Karakorum Savant's inheritance provided Ai Hui with great revelations. Her outlook towards swordsmanship was very systematic. There were a few times where Ai Hui exclaimed in admiration. Her ideas were well-explained and were justified by various teachers. Ai Hui could tell that Karakorum Savant had compiled everyone's knowledge in this inheritance, no, this swordplay encyclopedia.

She was trying to revive swordsmanship...

This thought flashed across Ai Hui's mind, but soon, he thought of the word "Karakorum" and felt at ease. If Karakorum Savant did not want to revive swordsmanship, why would she name her school "Karakorum"?

The crudely compiled swordplay encyclopedia gave Ai Hui endless inspirations. He felt he'd had a revelation.

Indistinctly, he could sense a new sword move forming in his

mind. He had sensed this faintly discernible feeling on more than one occasion when he'd been flipping through the swordplay encyclopedia.

This made him excited.

He was familiar with this kind of feeling. Holding Snow Cherry in his hand, he jumped into the training arena.

Without much deliberation, he brandished his sword according to that feeling.

Time passed bit by bit and he became completely lost in his own world. Sometimes, he would stop what he was doing, furrow his brows, and ponder without moving his body for a long time. Sometimes, he might engage in a disarrayed swordplay, staggering everywhere.

Gradually, the sun began to set. The bamboo garden was dyed orange by the afterglow of sunset.

Suddenly, a sharp glint flashed across Ai Hui's eyes. He took an explosive step forward and unsheathed his sword!

A blurry energy ripple swept up to the tip of the pinkish Snow Cherry. The air surrounding the tip of the sword became distorted. Six palm-sized crescent moons shot out from the energy ripple.

A piece of bamboo leaf that had been swept up by the wind was

slashed by the six fleeting, weird sword glints. This was only the beginning. The biting cold sword glints suddenly gathered and burned fiercely, engulfing the piece of bamboo leaf.

The bamboo leaf-turned fine green powder vaporised into a green smog in the air. It gradually became faint and disappeared completely.

The six fine crescent moons swirled around Ai Hui's body. His eyes lit up like the stars in the sky.

[Crescent Moon] was a very practical move, but it was too straightforward and was easily seen through by his opponents. Furthermore, as Ai Hui became stronger, [Crescent Moon]'s destructive power became increasingly insignificant.

Ai Hui brandished Snow Cherry lightly and the six crescent moons flew along with it. He flicked his wrist and pointed the sword downward.

The six crescent moons combined into one and Ai Hui felt his elemental energy freeze, following which, a brilliant and powerful sword glint suddenly appeared.

A paper-thin sword gash appeared on the ceramic ground beneath Ai Hui's feet. If one did not look closely, he or she would not see it; however, no one knew that this gash was actually more than thirty meters deep.

Holding the sword in his hand, Ai Hui flicked his wrist upward. A powerful sword glint shot out from the gash on the ground and separated into six crescent moons once more, then danced around Ai Hui.

Not bad, not bad. Ai Hui was very satisfied. Regardless of strength or flexibility, this move was much better than [Crescent Moon].

Furthermore, Ai Hui discovered that he had used a very small amount of elemental energy to execute this move.

This move shall be called [Six Moons]. Ai Hui was already thinking about how to utilize [Six Moons]. For example, he could use it as a diversion tactic. Or maybe he could combine the six crescent moons into one and split them up before making contact with his opponent's weapon.

Suddenly, Ai Hui felt some movement from the ground beneath his feet.

Eh?

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Surging water gushed out from the gash in the floor, completely soaking Ai Hui.

Ai Hui immediately responded to it. His sword move must have

hit an underground spring.

It was his first day here and he'd already spoilt something... Things were not going well...

Ai Hui was flustered. The water flow was very strong and it was very difficult for him to clog up the gash. If only Lou Lan was here, he could have solved this problem within a second.

Suddenly, Ai Hui heard footsteps approaching. Not caring about anything else, he clenched his teeth and stomped his foot. Boom. A two-meter wide crevice appeared.

It was finally clogged up.

Having arrived at the doorstep a moment ago, the servant was startled by the loud boom. After a while, he began to speak, "Mister Chu, it's time for dinner. Madam and the guests are already waiting for you."

When the servant saw Ai Hui's drenched appearance, he was flabbergasted.

"It's dinner time? Let's go, let's go, it just so happens that I'm hungry now." Ai Hui gave him an innocent smile.

With a blank look on his face, the servant followed Ai Hui as he walked out of the courtyard.

Karakorum is Kunlun(昆仑) in Chinese. Kunlun Sect is a martial arts sect that is found in many Wuxia stories. This sect is famous for their swordsmanship.

Chapter 348: To Hell With It!

Ai Hui, who was busy fixing the damaged floor, forgot to use elemental energy to dry his clothes. As such, when he appeared at the dining hall in drenched clothes, the lively dining atmosphere quieted down in an instant.

There was a dignified and beautiful woman sitting at the seat of honor. A surprised look flashed across her alluring eyes but she soon regained her composure. Ai Hui’s gaze landed upon an old woman who was standing by in attendance behind the beautiful woman.

A cold shiver went down Ai Hui’s spine. The old woman might appear inconspicuous, but Ai Hui could sense that her strength was of an unfathomable depth.

After a momentary silence, the guests then broke into an uproar.

"Such a boorish fellow, how dare he come for dinner in this manner?"

"That’s right, he really has no manners!"

"How can a guy who doesn’t even have basic manners teach us swordsmanship?"

"It seems like Aunt Ye has made the wrong judgement this time around."

…

Murmurs rang inside Ai Hui’s ears. He noticed the guests were mainly kids that were around ten or more years old. He had to teach these brats swordsmanship?

Eh? Ai Hui soon noticed some familiar faces among the guests.

The gorgeous Xiao Shuren was extremely eye-catching amongst the crowd. When she saw Chu Zhaoyang, her eyes involuntarily lit up.

Ai Hui was puzzled. Didn’t Chief send her here to put her under house arrest? Why would they treat her like a guest now?

Ai Hui also knew the girl sitting beside Xiao Shuren. She was Qin Xian’s fiancee, Lian Junyu.

When Lian Junyu saw Ai Hui, she smiled and winked at him. She did not make a fuss over Ai Hui’s appearance. After all, she had personally witnessed how Ai Hui destroyed five sword formations in a row and she was very confident in Ai Hui’s capabilities. It was normal for talented people to have some eccentricities.

When Ai Hui saw Lian Junyu wink at him, he did not know what she meant. However, it did seem like a sign of goodwill to him. Hence, he winked back at her.

Then, when Ai Hui saw another two familiar faces, he groaned silently. Isn't that Fu family's oldest daughter? And isn't that cold-looking fellow Qingye's aunt? Is she called Huaijun or something?

Ai Hui felt numb. If it was anyone else, he would not have cared much. However, Fu family's oldest daughter and Huaijun stayed in Peace City and they had met his true self before. If they recognized him, he would be in deep trouble.

The old man had reminded him many times that he should not let the Assembly of Patriarchs know his true identity. Otherwise, things would become very problematic for him.

To hell with it!

Why would he encounter acquaintances here?

If he had known earlier this would happen, he would not have come to this place to teach swordsmanship!

At this moment, a teenager beside Madam Ye mumbled, "Mum, Xiaobao is hungry."

Madam Ye's son?

The teenager was around fifteen years old. He looked rather handsome but his facial expression seemed somewhat half-witted.

"Since Xiaobao is hungry, we will have our dinner now," Madam Ye told Xiaobao gently. Then, she spoke to Ai Hui, "Mr Chu, please take your seat. I'm not sure what Mr Chu likes to eat, please forgive me if the dishes are not to your standard. Whatever Mr Chu likes to eat, feel free to order the servants to make it. Don't be shy."

Madam Ye seemed to be highly revered by these people. Whenever she spoke, these proud and arrogant young masters and mistresses would become well-behaved.

Without even giving a bow, Ai Hui burst into loud laughter, "Madam, you're too courteous. I'm fine as long as there's meat."

After finishing his sentence, he sat his ass down and started gobbling the food as though there was nobody else present.

The surrounding young masters and mistresses felt uncomfortable in an instant. Since they were young, they had been taught proper dining etiquette. This applied to their surrounding friends as well. Since when had they ever met such a boorish individual?

One by one, those who sat near Ai Hui walked away from him with a look of disdain on their faces.

Ai Hui, whose face was gleaming with oil from the food, heaved a quiet sigh of relief. He was especially happy when he saw a disgusted look flash across the face of Fu family's oldest daughter from the corner of his eyes. Following which, he began to eat with

more aggressiveness.

He was most worried about Fu family's oldest daughter. Even though they had not had many interactions before, her shrewdness and capabilities had left a deep impression on him.

He did not have much of an impression of Qingye's aunt, Su Huaijun.

Who exactly was Madam Ye?

"I'm going crazy, who wants to change seats with me? The sound of this fellow eating resembles thunderclaps!"

"I can't take it anymore, can't he be more civilized?"

"Oh my god, he did not spit out the bone! He ate the entire chicken drumstick without spitting out the bone!"

...

On the other side of the table, Xiaobao was looking at Ai Hui with his eyes wide open.

Ai Hui noticed Xiaobao's gaze. Being in a relaxed state, he had sensed that Xiaobao was slightly mentally challenged.

Suddenly, Xiaobao opened his mouth and said, "You look as if you're having a great meal! Let us compete to see who can eat faster!"

Upon seeing Xiaobao filled with expectation, Ai Hui's gaze slightly softened and he replied cheerfully, "Come, come, come, let's compete!"

Xiaobao was overjoyed. Immediately, he lowered his head and began to stuff food into his mouth.

Ai Hui could not stand to be outdone. He had been scared of taking part in an eating competition.

Everyone looked blankly at these two persons, especially Chu Zhaoyang. Everyone looked puzzledly at him. Xiaobao suffered from an illness when he was born. This caused a problem in his mental development as he grew up. Currently, his intelligence level was only equivalent to a three years old kid's.

Chu Zhaoyang's intelligence level doesn't seem that high as well....

Amidst the loud rumbles of both of them gobbling up food, Madam Ye's gentle voice could be heard constantly, "Xiaobao, eat slower, don't eat too fast..."

The rest of the guests were like wax statues, staring blankly at the two of them gobbling up food.

Phew. Both of them stopped eating at the same time. They could not eat anymore.

The two of them looked at each other several times. Heroes appreciated one another.

Everyone heaved a deep sigh of relief. For civilized and refined people like them, who ate their meals without making any noises, this scene was no doubt hugely torturous to them.

Initially, they still could ridicule Chu Zhaoyang. However, after Xiaobao joined in, all of them shut their mouths and stared on blankly.

No one was interested in eating dinner anymore.

Ai Hui collapsed against his chair. He was so full that he could not move, "Can I have some tea? I’m a bit thirsty."

Lian Junyu could not help but turn her face away. This was far too embarrassing. Even she could not tolerate such behaviour from Chu Zhaoyang. The rest of the guests were annoyed. They had never seen such a crude individual!

On the contrary, Madam Ye was smiling. She then ordered one of her servants, "Go and bring some tea here."

"Yes, Madam," the servant quickly went to pour some tea.

Xiao Shuren looked interestingly at Chu Zhaoyang. She clearly remembered Chu Zhaoyang wasn’t so boorish the last time he was boarding Auspicious. Why did he seem to have completely changed today?

When Chu Zhaoyang saw her, he was slightly surprised. Clearly, this was the real Chu Zhaoyang.

She was a shrewd individual. Even though she was doubtful, she did not show it on her face at all. Furthermore, she clearly knew of the situation she was in now. Staying here seemed to be better than staying in Karakorum Sword League. Madam Ye was very friendly to her, but in reality, she was still a prisoner.

Xiao Shuren remained calm and collected. Her gaze casually swept across the crowd, but she failed to observe anything important.

The dinner’s leftovers were cleared and the tea was served.

Other than Ai Hui and Xiaobao gulping down the tea, the rest of the guests were motionless. They were looking at Chu Zhaoyang with contempt. Since when was the dining table a place to drink tea?

Today was definitely not a happy day for them.

Madam Ye casually picked up the teacup in front of her. After taking a sip, she put it back down and her gaze swept across everyone. Then, she began to speak with a gentle voice, "Recently, swordsmanship has been very popular. Since all of you are very interested in swordsmanship, I have invited Karakorum Savant to my residence to teach everyone. Maybe some of you might have a flair for swordsmanship."

Madam Ye changed her tone slightly and continued, "However, Karakorum Savant is busy and she doesn't have the time to teach all of you. Therefore, she recommended Mr Chu Zhaoyang to come in her place."

With a smug look on his face, Ai Hui raised his right hand and waved to everyone.

Clap, clap, clap. Xiaobao was clapping enthusiastically.

Ai Hui gave Xiaobao a thumbs-up. The friendship built out of an eating competition was indeed extraordinary.

Upon seeing Ai Hui's reaction, Xiaobao clapped with even more enthusiasm.

Everyone's face turned ugly as if they had swallowed a fly. Lian Junyu was filled with embarrassment. Chu Zhaoyang was not really young. When he was in Karakorum Sword League, he was still alright. Why did he behave like this today...

Madam Ye had a panoramic view of everyone's facial expressions. With a stern voice, she continued, "I know why all of you are here today. Actually, if you don't come, it won't affect your chance of being selected. After all, everyone here is an outstanding genius of the younger generation in the Avalon of Five Elements. All of you will definitely be selected. I am just a woman, and have no power to interfere with such an important matter."

Everyone was bolt upright and remained silent. Whoever believed these words was stupid.

Madam Ye smiled and continued, "Therefore, I hope everyone can treat this as a break and relax. Swordsmanship is on the rise these days and none of you have made contact with it before. Therefore, I invited Mr Chu to teach all of you swordsmanship. Maybe some of you might have a flair for swordsmanship. It would be a pity if you neglect it. Of course, all of your respective family absolute arts are very powerful. However, you still can further improve yourself by exposing yourself to new things and accepting criticism from others. Give the popular swordsmanship a try and it might bring you some revelations."

"Madam, you're right."

To Ai Hui's surprise, after Fu family's oldest daughter showed her support for Madam Ye, the rest of the guests followed suit.

Ai Hui was slightly puzzled. Selection? What kind of selection would make these pampered young masters and mistresses come all the way here? Even the shrewd Fu family's oldest daughter was not excluded.

Furthermore, why did Madam Ye want these people to learn swordsmanship?

The more Ai Hui thought about it, the more puzzled he felt.

Alright, why does he need to think so much? He should quickly think of a way to get out of here. Otherwise, if his identity was revealed, he would be in deep trouble. Ai Hui had already decided that he would intentionally put up an inferior performance later. These fellows had been tolerating him for so long. They must be feeling very angry deep down. As such, when he screwed up later, they would definitely heckle him. When that moment came, he could act dejected and leave this place earlier.

He did not really care about being embarrassed.

Who would be the first one to humiliate him later?

Ai Hui’s gaze swept to and fro across the crowd, trying to find his target.

This guy seems shrewd, he might not want to defeat me. Oh? How about this one? His eyes look sly and squinty, he is a good choice...

"Actions speak louder than words. Why not everyone try for themselves? I will give all of you a chance to challenge Mr Chu and see his capabilities for yourself."

Upon hearing Madam Ye’s words, everyone turned restless. A lot of people stared at Ai Hui with vicious looks on their faces.

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up. The chance is here.

It was time to test his acting skills!

"Of course, this challenge can’t proceed without a reward. I have a pair of gloves here. This pair of gloves is one of the representative works by the late embroidery master, Han Yuqin. It’s called Star Reaper. You must have heard of its name before. Anyway, I shall not be so long-winded, we will just treat this pair of gloves as the reward."

An uproar broke out among the crowd. Everyone’s eyes lit up, feeling extremely eager to give it a try.

Ai Hui’s mind jolted and his entire body froze.

Mistress…

Chapter 349: I Will Give The Sky To You

"It’s just a trial and I don’t want all of you to destroy this old manor of mine. Therefore, everyone will have to wear a Suppression Bracelet. There’s no need for you to execute those ultimate moves that exhaust a lot of elemental energy. Who is up first?"

Madam Ye’s tone was relaxed as her gaze swept across everyone.

Expressionless, Ai Hui stood in the arena while holding the Snow Cherry, looking like a statue that gave off an austere aura.

Xiao Shuren’s eyes lit up.

She had a deep impression of Chu Zhaoyang. Emotionless, decisive, calm and collected, always planning his next killing move. Auspicious was destroyed by him. If not for him, she definitely would not have led such an arduous life like this.

The current Chu Zhaoyang was exactly the same as the one from her memory.

The change in Chu Zhaoyang’s demeanour began from the moment Madam Ye announced the reward.

Xiao Shuren thought pensively. It seemed that only practical benefits could move Chu Zhaoyang.

Honestly speaking, she also did not expect Madam Ye to be so generous. She actually used a rare artifact like Star Reaper as a reward for such an ordinary competition.

Was this the might of a legitimate aristocratic family?

Xiao Shuren felt a cold shiver go down her spine.

A tall and sturdy teenager stepped out, "I will be the first one."

A delightful look appeared on Madam Ye's face as she encouraged that teenager, "Gui Hu, good job!"

Everyone began to cheer for that teenager.

"Ah Hu, come on!"

"Defeat him!

"Let him have a taste of your strength!"

...

The teenager grinned as a glint of battle fervor flashed across his eyes.

Among this group of young masters and mistresses, Gui Hu's

family background wasn't really impressive. However, he was brave, aggressive, determined and resolute. He clearly understood how important this opportunity was and he had to make an all-out effort.

As Gui Hu spread his arms, all his muscles bulged out of his clothes. His fingers were like iron pincers, giving off a bright metallic lustre. Vigorous elemental energy flowed through his blood vessels. Blub blub blub. His blood vessels sounded like a monster swallowing its saliva. A violent and powerful aura was emitted from his body.

All the teenagers had their faces turned solemn as they silently trembled in fear.

Gui Hu's body tempering had actually reached such a high level. His body had attained Silver Marrow Completion and was beginning to step into Golden Blood Completion.

Copper Skin, Iron Muscles, Steel Bones, Silver Marrow, Golden Blood.

When one attained Golden Blood Completion, it implied that his or her level of body tempering had been maxed out.

A look of approval appeared on Madam Ye's face as well. The painstaking work that was needed to achieve such a high level of body tempering would make one flinch.

Such determination was hard to come by.

"Big Chu, come on!" Xiaobao suddenly yelled.

An awkward silence swept across the arena. No one expected Xiaobao to cheer for Chu Zhaoyang.

From the arena, Ai Hui waved to Xiaobao. He casually brandished the Snow Cherry in his right hand, looking as if he was stretching his joints.

Ai Hui remained expressionless. No one could tell what he was thinking.

"This fellow is indeed motivated by only wealth," the old woman whispered to Madam Ye with a smile on her face, "If Madam never took out the Star Reaper as a reward, this fellow would be thinking of ways to leave this place."

"Being avaricious is not a weakness. As long as one is wise and just, it’s okay even if he or she is avaricious," Madam Ye laughed involuntarily.

"Madam is right," the old woman nodded her head, "Now we don’t need to be worried that he won’t reveal his true skills. It’s a pity Karakorum Savant is not free, otherwise it would be much better to let her teach these kids instead."

"Chu Zhaoyang is no different from her," Madam Ye continued,

"Let him put up a good show for everyone."

"Yes," the old woman replied.

At this moment, Gui Hu bent his knees slightly and jumped straight for the arena. He flew twenty metres through the air and landed steadily in the arena. Just this move alone sent the crowd into an uproar. Everyone could clearly see that Gui Hu's leap did not use any elemental energy at all. The leap depended solely on his physical strength. This showed how powerful his physical body was.

Viciousness was written all over Gui Hu's face as his copper bell-like eyes stared at Ai Hui. Just as he revealed a sinister smile and was about to speak, Ai Hui suddenly asked, "Are you ready?"

Gui Hu's rhythm was disrupted and he froze. At this moment, Ai Hui struck out.

A streak of crimson sword light gleamed suddenly before Gui Hu.

Apparently, Gui Hu had underestimated Ai Hui's degree of slyness. He could only cross his forearms and protect his face.

Unexpectedly, the sword gleam suddenly curved and pierced towards Gui Hu's chest.

Gui Hu's reaction was extremely fast. With one hand protecting his throat, he spread open the palm of his other hand and aimed

for the sword gleam with lightning speed.

His palm was brimming with elemental energy, making it impenetrable.

He caught it!

Gui Hu was overjoyed. The strength of his palm was terrifyingly powerful. There was once he broke an enemy's weapon with his bare hands. The moment he caught his enemy's weapon, he would gain control over the tempo of the battle.

However, right now, he felt as if he had caught a mud fish that was slipping out of his hand.

A sharp and intense gush of chilliness suddenly blasted his body. Gui Hu's heart tightened as if it was being frozen by the blast of chilliness.

The sword gleam was heading straight for his heart.

Gui Hu was shocked and enraged. He opened up his palm and tried to smack the body of the sword.

It was as if Ai Hui had expected Gui Hu's attack. The crimson sword suddenly sprung up.

Bang!

A crisp explosion resounded through the air.

Together with his sword, Ai Hui plunged into the ground. His Snow Cherry was stuck in the ground, looking extremely pathetic.

"He’s not really that good!"

"That’s right, he dares to be our teacher with that kind of standard?"

A disapproving look appeared on many people’s faces.

Gui Hu’s body was sent flying into the air by the recoil. He heaved a sigh of relief. The chilliness from Chu Zhaoyang’s sword created a misperception in him that he was going to get pierced. Fear still lingered in him.

However, that fellow must not have enjoyed his attack as well.

Gui Hu was feeling slightly pleased with himself. He lowered his head and looked at the ground. When he saw Chu Zhaoyang pull his sword from the ground and stretch his shoulder, he felt even more pleased with himself.

On the ground, Ai Hui was stretching his shoulder while looking at Gui Hu in the sky,

This boy's strength is rather huge!

His shoulder was sore and numb. This fellow's strength was terrifying. Ai Hui felt Fatty might be the only person to beat this guy in terms of strength.

Looking in the direction that Gui Hu was falling, Ai Hui exerted force through the balls of his feet and dashed forward. On the way, he passed the sword to his left hand.

When Gui Hu saw Ai Hui dashing to the spot where he was going to land, he did not panic, and just bent his legs and sucked in his stomach.

A streak of sword gleam shot up from the ground towards him.

Sure enough. Gui Hu sneered. The elemental energy in his entire body began to surge. Suddenly, his bent legs straightened abruptly and he shot down with his feet pointing downward.

The anticipated collision did not occur. He felt as if he had landed on an elastic web. He went deeper and deeper, and then…

The surrounding scenery became a fleeting blur. He was being sprung up into the air once more!

This time around, he flew even higher up than before, at least eighty metres above the ground. From his perspective, Chu Zhaoyang had become a tiny figure.

Gui Hu was at a loss. Around him, there was nothing but air. A mysterious panic began to extend throughout his mind. He had no azure wings!

Without azure wings, he lacked the ability to fly.

Actually, even if he had azure wings, they would not be of much use. Flying had always been his shortcoming as he placed all his attention on body tempering. He felt that his body alone could crush and destroy everything.

However, right now, he could not find anything to hold onto or step on in the empty sky.

Without something to hold onto, he was like a massive weight. No matter how massive or sturdy he was, he was still a weight that could be smashed to pieces if he landed on the ground.

Gui Hu wasn't stupid. He immediately knew what Chu Zhaoyang was trying to do. His facial expression changed drastically but he still could not think of any solution.

On the ground, Chu Zhaoyang was stretching his shoulder once more. Clearly, the odd sword move he executed just now was taxing to his body. This gave Gui Hu a glimpse of hope. The higher he sprung up, the stronger the collision force would be on the way down. How many more times could Chu Zhaoyang catch him?

Ai Hui stretched his left arm and passed the sword to his right hand.

When he raised his head and looked at the sky, he saw Gui Hu had turned from panicky to calm and collected. When Gui Hu got into the same previous position and prepared to dive down, a grin flashed across Ai Hui’s face.

Alright, I will give you the sky.

Without any hesitation, he appeared directly below Gui Hu.

Just like before, a similar sword gleam appeared. Gui Hu channelled all his elemental energy as he bombarded the sword gleam.

And just like before, he felt as if he had landed on a solid but elastic net. Once again, the net sprung him up into the sky. This time around, he flew up even higher.

Gui Hu continued to bombard Ai Hui.

Ai Hui continued to spring Gui Hu up into the sky.

After a few rounds, Gui Hu, who was being sprung up into the sky, still wanted to continue. Suddenly, Chu Zhaoyang yelled from below, "Hey, I am not catching you this time around."

Can’t hold on anymore? You’re dead. Gui Hu sneered in his heart.

His body continued to ascend through the air. When he looked back at the ground, Chu Zhaoyang had become a small black dot.

Ai Hui stepped far away from the spot that Gui Hu was going to land on.

Eh? Why was he so far away from the ground?

More than two hundred metres above the ground...

Gui Hu suddenly realized what was going on and his face turned deathly pale. More than two hundred metres above the ground!

Even if his body tempering had attained the level of Silver Marrow Completion and his body was comparable to that of a dire beast, he would still be smashed to smithereens when falling from two hundred metres above the ground.

The more frightening thing was that the scenery on the ground was expanding rapidly in his vision as he fell towards the ground...

He had never come so close to death before.

"Ahhhhhhh....."

A blood-curdling scream resounded through the air.

A figure flew across the air out of nowhere and caught the falling Gui Hu. To Ai Hui's surprise, it was the figure that had directed him to his living quarters.

Not bad.

Ai Hui cast a glance at the servant. In his eyes, the Ye Residence had become increasingly inscrutable. A random servant already possessed such a large amount of strength. Was this the might of a true aristocratic family?

The onlookers were dumbstruck. A lot of people had yet to know what was going on,

However, when they saw the gaze of Ai Hui, their faces turned solemn. Everyone who faced Gui Hu before knew that it was impossible to defeat him so easily.

When the servant landed on the ground, one could see the deathly pale face of Gui Hu. He had yet to recover from the fear of encountering death.

Clap, clap, clap!

Applause could be heard. It was Madam Ye. With her face brimming with admiration, she stood up and clapped loudly, "Marvellous! Outstanding! Not only does Mr Chu have amazing

swordsmanship, your strategy is exceptionally unique as well! Ingenious!"

Xiaobao was at a loss. However, when he saw his mother start clapping, he clapped with enthusiasm as well.

Xiao Shuren had seen Chu Zhaoyang's fighting methods before. However, when she saw them once more this time around, she was still filled with astonishment.

Following which, Madam Ye turned her head around and encouraged the pale Gui Hu, "Ah Hu, don't be too discouraged. Losing to Mr Chu today is a good thing for you. Isn't losing to him better than losing to your enemies in a real battlefield? You're so young and yet you have developed your body tempering to such a refined level, you will definitely have a limitless future."

"Thank you Madam for the pointers!" Gui Hu returned to his senses and thanked Madam Ye.

"Drink some tea, have a rest and take a look at other people's performances. Who is up next?

"Me!"

A cold and calm voice rang across the air. A pretty and petite figure appeared on the arena. It was Su Huaijun!

Ai Hui had a slight headache.

Chapter 350: What Tier?

Su Huaijun held a jade bamboo stick in her hand. The verdant bamboo stick seemed to be made of jasper. The few pieces of verdant and glistening leaves on it swayed lightly, looking as if they had just fallen off a bamboo tree.

Sanmu Su Family.

Ai Hui did not know much about the Sanmu Su Family. All he knew was that this family was a well-known family in Jadeite Forest in the past. Eventually, they left Jadeite Forest and stayed in the Avalon of Five Elements.

From the restraining fear Sha Wuyuan had for Su Huaijun previously, he could tell that Sanmu Su Family was rather powerful.

There were too many aristocratic families in the Avalon of Five Elements. Unless he personally knew members from a particular aristocratic family, like how he knew Duanmu Huanghun and Shi Xueman, he would definitely not know the social status of that family.

After spending three years with Su Qingye, Ai Hui knew his character very well. To Ai Hui, a person's character mattered the most. As for a person's family background, he did not really care.

Ai Hui had heard from Su Qingye that his aunt was very powerful.

He certainly did not expect he would face her one day.

Standing opposite him, Su Huaijun had a solemn look on her face. After watching Chu Zhaoyang's previous performance, she did not dare to underestimate him.

"Mr Chu, your guidance will be appreciated," Su Huaijun said with a deep voice.

Ai Hui brandished the Snow Cherry in his hand as his brain went to work. Su Huaijun and Fu family's oldest daughter had seen the real Ai Hui in action before. To prevent them from finding out his true identity, he could not use the same sword moves that he'd used in the past.

He was somewhat glad that he had just read Chief's sword encyclopedia and learnt a lot from it.

Ai Hui was slightly excited. He had not officially sorted out the insights he gained and most of them were still scattered and fragmentary. With such an excellent sparring partner now, it was an extremely rare chance for him to do it now!

Which move should he use?

"Give me a moment," Ai Hui said subconsciously.

Su Huaijun was stunned. This was the first time she'd encountered such a situation. Did her opponent just ask her to wait in the middle of a competition?

All the onlookers went in an uproar.

"Ha, he dares to ask for a moment?"

"Don't tell me he wants to use the toilet! Hahahaha, that's a lousy excuse!"

"If you're afraid, just admit defeat! Stop wasting everybody's time!"

"Maybe he has some crafty plots!"

...

In the arena, Su Huaijun felt slightly embarrassed. Wasn't it embarrassing to challenge someone like this? Since young, she had been through a lot of competitions and she had never been so embarrassed like this before.

Ai Hui, who had been in deep thought, suddenly had his eyes light up. He had thought of a good move to use. Then, he raised his head and told Su Huaijun, "I'm ready."

Ready...

Su Huaijun nodded her head with a blank look on her face, "Mr Chu, your guidance will be appreciated."

"Here I come," Ai Hui boasted shamelessly. However, he did not move forward and stood at his original spot. Following which, he flicked the Snow Cherry in his hand.

The air around the pinkish tip of Snow Cherry suddenly became distorted. The sword tip looked as if it was emitting energy ripples. Suddenly, six palm-sized crescent moons shot out from the energy ripples.

[Six Moons]!

Ai Hui's newly developed move.

Su Huaijun's eyes shrunk as all her distracting thoughts disappeared.

The commotion from the onlookers had completely disappeared as well. Everyone widened their eyes and looked at the six dancing sword gleams. Even though the sword gleams were only palm-sized, their razor-sharp aura was able to engulf the entire arena. They were fast and nimble, resembling six flying bats. They flew so fast through the air that one could only see their afterimages.

What kind of swordsmanship was this?

Before the onlookers could resolve their doubts, Su Huaijun had already sensed the danger that was approaching and she began to move.

A glint flashed across Su Huaijun's eyes and she pointed her jade bamboo stick towards Ai Hui.

A burst of green light erupted from the jade bamboo stick and exploded in the air. The burst of green light transformed into a green-colored glowing net that suddenly appeared on top of Ai Hui.

The faint green glow from the net was in perpetual motion, dancing and flowing. The area it covered was extremely huge.

All the onlookers bolted upright. They did not expect Su Huaijun to start off with an ultimate move. [Inescapable Net] was one of Sanmu Su Family's ultimate moves. The threads that made up the green net were as thin and fine as hairs, making the net look as if it would break any moment. In reality, they were impenetrable by swords or spears. No matter how hard one tried to escape from it, he would still be a trapped fly.

Chu Zhaoyang raised his head and looked at the glowing net that was floating down slowly. He looked as if he was dumbfounded at the sight of the glowing net, remaining motionless.

The slow-moving speed of the green glowing net was just an illusion.

Those who had sharp eyes had already noticed that a few strands of green glow from the net were already embedded in the ground.

Chu Zhaoyang was finished.

This thought flashed across everyone's minds. Once [Inescapable Net] embedded its roots in the ground, no one could break from it.

The glowing net started to expand and become thicker. In the blink of an eye, the glowing net looked as if it was made up of thick and solid vines. Surprisingly, pieces of verdant bamboo leaves began to grow on the glowing net.

Chu Zhaoyang stared blankly at the sky above his head.

Disdain and disappointment appeared on the faces of the onlookers one by one. This competition had already ended. Chu Zhaoyang had admitted defeat.

Every bamboo leaf was like a single razor blade. When the bamboo leaves started to fall, a great danger descended upon Chu Zhaoyang. If this was a real fight, the trapped Chu Zhaoyang would be sliced to smithereens.

The countless bamboo leaves gave rise to countless killing intents.

A disappointed look appeared on Su Huaijun's face as well. Previously, after she saw how Chu Zhaoyang defeated Gui Hu, she

still thought that he was rather powerful. That was why she decided to challenge him. However, she did not expect him to stay motionless and fail to put up any resistance. A competition like this was far too boring.

Suddenly, Chu Zhaoyang's murmurs rang across her ears. She was stunned.

"Which tier should I start from?"

"Forget it, I will start from the first tier. Save time and brainpower."

Tier? What tier? Su Huaijun's mind was filled with doubt. She widened her eyes and looked at the trapped Chi Zhaoyang. Could it be that... he had some countermoves?

Such a pity, it's too late for any countermoves!

She felt pity for Chu Zhaoyang in silence. Once the [Inescapable Net] embedded its roots in the ground, anyone who was trapped inside the net had practically zero chance of breaking out of it.

Chu Zhaoyang continued to mumble to himself. He did not look at Su Huaijun and brandished his sword by himself.

"Thirty-six plum blossoms are easier to count but I don't have thirty-six now. I only have six now, maybe I can make a simplified version."

The six sword gleams swirling around Chu Zhaoyang suddenly began to spin faster. Swoosh swoosh swoosh. Deafening sonic booms resounded through the air. The six sword gleams intertwined together in the air. Woosh. The bamboo leaves that were falling towards Chu Zhaoyang were grinded to smithereens by the six sword gleams.

Su Huaijun’s eyes lit up. She could sense an unpredictable killing intent coming from the intertwining sword gleams.

Interesting!

The onlookers broke into discussion as well.

"What kind of swordsmanship is that?"

"I’m not sure."

"It’s too late."

"That’s true!"

…

Indeed, the six sword gleams swirling around Chu Zhaoyang were gradually suppressed by the falling bamboo leaves.

At this moment, Su Huaijun heard Chu Zhaoyang murmuring again.

"It’s not powerful enough. Seems like I got to move it up to the second tier."

Second tier?

The doubt in Su Huaijun became stronger. This time around, she was sure that she hadn’t wrongly heard his words. What exactly is second tier?

The six sword gleams suddenly transformed. Zoom. Intertwining wind and flames were swirling around Chu Zhaoyang now, appearing brilliant and powerful. Every sword gleam was accompanied by intertwining wind and flames. They were moving extremely fast and giving off scorching heat.

Numerous bamboo leaves burst into flames with a loud rumble.

The [Inescapable Net] was being stimulated. This time around, not only bamboo leaves grew out of it, but there were bamboo branches growing out of it as well.

Deafening sonic booms rang across the air. The bamboo branches were like arrows, piercing through the protective screen of wind and flames in an instant.

"Eh? It still can be transformed? The third tier!"

Su Huaijun felt that she was going to go crazy soon. Third tier... what exactly is third tier?

None of the onlookers were talking now. Even though they could hear Chu Zhaoyang's murmurs, they could see the successive changes of his sword moves. They noticed the current situation was far from what they had expected it to be.

Chu Zhaoyang seemed like...he had the power of resistance.

But it might just be his final struggle.

The onlookers quickly came to this conclusion. After all, this was the [Inescapable Net]. Even if Gui Hu was the one that was trapped in it, he would not be able to break out of it.

When Chu Zhaoyang completely depleted his elemental energy, he would become a slave to the [Inescapable Net] like a physically exhausted wild animal.

However, Ai Hui was actually immersing himself in the pleasure of simulating sword formations.

The sword formations that he had destroyed previously were extremely exquisite. The feelings of simulating sword formations and destroying sword formations were completely different. A sword formation could be destroyed just by identifying its

loopholes and weaknesses. However, to simulate a sword formation, one needed to have a deep understanding towards swordsmanship and sword formation.

"Okay, there's something wrong with this area. Alright, I have to increase its power."

"I get it now, there's something else in this area."

...

Ai Hui, who was lost in his own world, continued to mumble to himself. The number of crescent moons he had now could not be compared to the number of grass swords used in the sword formation. As such, it was not an easy task to simulate the sword formation. If not for those few detailed descriptions and explanations on sword formations in Karakorum Savant's swordplay encyclopedia, Ai Hui would not have had such a deep understanding of sword formations.

Because of the quantity issue, there were a lot of limitations in using just six crescent moons to simulate a sword formation. However, the six crescent moons were sword gleams and they were naturally more powerful than grass swords. New insights made Ai Hui's eyes lit up.

The powerful and ever-changing [Inescapable net] forced Ai Hui to speed up his thinking process. He was racking his brain on how to increase the power of his sword formation.

A dead silence swept across the onlookers. Everyone was staring in shock at the arena. They no longer had the thought that Chu Zhaoyang would face an imminent defeat.

During the previous sword formation, Chu Zhaoyang had displayed how swordsmanship could be used in a battlefield.

Everyone felt as if they were in a battlefield. They could see corpses and blood everywhere. Thousands of men and horses were fighting and colliding against each other. A feeling of devastation engulfed them.

Even though they were young masters and mistresses from prestigious families, most of them had seen blood before. However, they had never seen such devastating and desperate swordsmanship before.

Chu Zhaoyang, who was trapped in the [Inescapable Net], was like a valiant general that was fighting with his life, bold and powerful.

Chu Zhaoyang suddenly stopped what he was doing.

"It’s still not working... That means I have to move it up to the fourth tier!"

Su Huaijun had already become numb at this point of time.

Fourth tier... what was he doing?

The fourth tier was the [Big Dipper Sword Formation]. This was also the sword formation that Ai Hui had the most understanding of. However, he only had six crescent moons. [Big Dipper] needed a total of seven entities to work.

Suddenly, Ai hui hit upon an inspiration. He could count himself as one entity and there would be seven entities in total.

The [Big Dipper Sword Formation] was being channelled noiselessly. Ai Hui stood in the centre of the formation with his eyes flickering.

The [Big Dipper Sword Formation] gave him a completely different feeling. For the previous three sword formations, he could clearly sense their tardiness and see their loopholes.

He could infuse some of the marvellous ideas from these three formations into his own swordplay but he could not completely simulate them.

However, Ai Hui could feel that [Big Dipper Sword Formation] was not a sword formation, but rather, a sword move!

That’s right!

The six sword gleams flew rapidly through the air. Ai Hui, who was standing in the middle of the formation, emitted a glow from his eyes.

No matter how the sword gleams danced and flew, the aura of [Big Dipper] continued to exist.

Very soon, Ai Hui could see the marvel of this move.

It was as if the Big Dipper, in the depths of space, had shot out a streak of starlight. A faint lingering aura of death spiralled around the streak of starlight, cold and awe-inspiring.

The trembling Su Huaijun was overwhelmed with horror. She immediately made a hasty retreat!

Her [Inescapable Net] collapsed with a loud bang. An intense sword gleam engulfed the entire arena like a flash flood.

Everything that stood thirty metres within Ai Hui was completely obliterated to a fine powder.

Not a single voice could be heard.

Chapter 351: Sincerity

"I concede defeat," Su Huaijun announced straightforwardly, breaking the silence.

Ai Hui recovered his senses and smacked his lips, as if wanting to continue. He had been engrossed in the battle and many ideas were still running through his mind, so it was simply too dissatisfying to end it now.

Without giving Su Huaijun another look, he scanned across the floor and asked urgently, "Who else? Hurry!"

Those who made eye contact with Chu Zhaoyang only felt their hearts tremble as they instinctively tilted their heads down. Chu Zhaoyang's gaze was like a sharp, electric sword that pierced deep into their hearts, giving them the illusion that a hole had been drilled within them.

A word surfaced in everyone's minds: Unstoppable!

Fully inspired, Ai Hui's eyes were about to explode. He was stuck at a crucial point and becoming anxious.

"What? Is there nobody with any guts at all? Are all of you scared?" Ai Hui rambled impatiently.

What disappointed him greatly was the silence that followed. He did not realize that the more arrogant he sounded, the more the

crowd felt that he had strong confidence and unfathomable powers. Sanmu Su family's [Inescapable Net] was not the strongest skill and also was not flawless. There was a decisive opening if one was able to utilize the interval just before the net deployed..

Shattering the inescapable net into pieces after it had deployed and trapped its target was unheard of.

The spectators believed that they did not have such capabilities.

Chu Zhaoyang's strange sword techniques really opened their eyes and even excited them.

Could this be the real abilities of a swordsman?

Su Huaijun realized that she had been disregarded and felt displeased, but at the same time, she embraced her defeat. She was just about to ask what exactly Chu Zhaoyang meant by the number of tiers when she heard his shady, malicious voice.

"Since you guys are not coming to me, I'll come to you guys."

Su Huaijun's face froze.

Chu Zhaoyang soared with his long sword. Like a tiger pouncing on a flock of sheep, he broke his way into the crowd with an evil grin.

She was dumbstruck and flabbergasted.

"Ow, stop hitting, Teacher! Stop!"

"You’re unmatched. Respect!"

...

Xiao Shuren was in shock too. She had seen countless of matches, but none were as preposterous as the spectacle before her eyes.

Just as the old woman beside Madam Ye was about to make a move, Madam Ye smiled and said, "You need not stop him."

Ai Hui became angrier the more he fought. There had been contenders who retaliated initially, but none resisted now. They either slipped away or merely howled in grief upon getting attacked. The girls looked at him with teary eyes, as if offering themselves to him willingly.

Was there any fellow who was not a troublemaker?

With his body built like an iron tower, Gui Hu wrapped his head with his hands and crouched down on the ground like a squirrel.

Looking at Chu Zhaoyang’s death god-like appearance and sensing his murderous spirit through his piercing gaze, the people were scared witless. If Teacher forgot to hold back and chopped

them into pieces, would they not be the ultimate losers?

Ai Hui firmly held onto the sword hilt, his stomach full of ire.

Just a little more...

He felt the inspiration in his mind disappear by more than half. Inspiration did not emerge that often, and as he calmed down, it meant that his active thoughts regained their calm.

In everyone's eyes, Teacher Chu's expression softened, and the terrifying aura surrounding his body gradually disappeared as well.

They collectively heaved a sigh of relief as the respect and admiration in their gazes grew stronger. Since the beginning of the Avalon of Five Elements, those with abilities were respected and had the greatest clout. They used to doubt Chu Zhaoyang's skills, but now that they had seen for themselves, there was no longer any suspicion.

Calm down... calm down...

Ai Hui exhaled a deep breath as he restrained his urge to spar with the old lady beside Madam Ye. That woman's abilities were simply unfathomable.

His life was more important!

Ai Hui reverted to his usual self, sheathed his long sword, and walked toward Madam Ye.

The old lady beside Madam Ye appeared vigilant. Chu Zhaoyang's earlier performance had already made him a threatening target in her eyes.

Amid the old lady's cautious gaze, Ai Hui took large strides and stopped in front of the tea table that was beside her. He held the teapot to his mouth and gulped the tea straight down without a word.

No one mocked his boorishness and poor etiquette.

The noble sons and daughters sincerely stood on either side.

Clap, clap, clap. Madam Ye applauded once again. "Mister Chu's performance was really amazing and an eye-opener. It is your good fortune to be able to learn from Teacher Chu. I hope you guys will put in the effort and not waste such a good opportunity."

The youths called out in unison, "Yes, Madam!"

Madam Ye nodded her head in satisfaction. "Teacher Chu, I'll leave them to you. Please give the housekeeper the names of those who try to goof off or resort to tricks."

The students trembled in fear.

They clearly knew that Madam’s words were directed at them.

Ai Hui bowed slightly. "All right, Madam."

The students were startled. Teacher’s temper was not too good either. If he did give their names to the housekeeper, they would completely lose their qualifications.

Madam Ye smiled sweet-temperedly. "Thank you for your trouble, Teacher Chu."

She then turned to face Xiao Shuren, stopped smiling, and said, "It’s peaceful, quiet, and also the safest place here. Feel free to move about within the compound, but please avoid leaving to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings."

Xiao Shuren responded respectfully, "I will never forget your kindness for providing me shelter. Please do not worry, Madam. I will not take a step beyond this property."

Madam Ye looked pleased. "That’s good. Do not worry, you will naturally regain your freedom when the storm passes. Just be patient."

Xiao Shuren bowed. "I understand. Thank you Madam."

Madam Ye bade her goodbye and left with Xiaobao.

Ai Hui looked at Xiao Shuren.

Xiao Shuren combed her fringe and remarked tartly, "Long time no see, Mister Chu."

Ai Hui looked at her and could not help but feel sorrowful. "I did not expect to meet you here, Madam."

The ancient treasure became such a hot topic that Ai Hui had even heard about the Great Wei Enterprise's pitiful state. How could one not sigh over the fact that Xiao Shuren, who recently had a retinue following her around, was now reduced to this solitary, prisoner-like state?

Xiao Shuren could tell that Chu Zhaoyang sympathized with her and felt regretful. While she felt as though her heart was being pricked, she kept a straight face and bowed deeply. "Please accept my bow as an apology for causing you trouble and offending you."

Ai Hui did not dodge, accepting her apology instead. "I accept it, so let's forget about past grievances. The road in front is going to be difficult. Please take good care of yourself, Madam."

Xiao Shuren met Ai Hui's gaze and could feel the sincerity within him. Her nose ached as tears almost flowed out.

He did not make things difficult for her or mock her downfall,

but chose to leave the past behind and proved that he had an open heart. She felt extremely regretful for the way she had set him up.

If the Great Wei Enterprise was still around, Ai Hui would definitely exact revenge and would not show the least bit of mercy, be it on the lone Madam Xiao or the Madam Xiao who had a retinue.

To take revenge on Xiao Shuren now was totally meaningless.

As they say, a man of character knew what to do and what not to do!

He diverted his gaze toward the people standing respectfully before him and sternly said, "Madam places high hopes on you guys, so I hope you all will do your best to become outstanding swordsmen and not disappoint her."

Everyone answered together, "Yes!"

The servants standing around nodded their heads in agreement as their gazes toward Ai Hui became much friendlier. Speaking on Madam’s behalf,Ai Hui really seemed to know how to behave.

Xiao Shuren’s gaze flickered as she thought about certain matters.

With a solemn expression on his face, Au Hui continued, "So how can you perfect your swordplay? As the saying goes: to do well, one

has to sharpen his tools first. To become an outstanding swordsman, you will have to choose a suitable and good sword! With the decline in swordsmanship, however, a good sword can be difficult to find. As your teacher, I can’t bear to see you guys empty-handed, so I can only resign myself to part with this treasure and hope for a brighter future for you."

The servants were stupefied.

The noble sons and daughters too.

"This sword, Snow Cherry, is two feet and seven inches long, weighs seven kilograms, and was made by a famous craftsman! It has a crimson sword body, and like cherry blossoms falling onto the snow, it is beyond beautiful. Using it to practice will produce twice the results with half the effort. Plus, it belonged to the first ever master swordsman in the history of the Avalon, the Savant from Karakorum.. The Karakorum Savant and I discussed sword theories and enjoyed our time so much that she gifted me this sword."

"As a teacher, it is my job to educate and clear your doubts! What is this sword when compared to your future? Of course, treasures should not be given out easily. This godly weapon will land in the hands of the most sincere. Its base price is 300 Heaven Merit Points or the equivalent in essence elemental beans. Bartering is allowed. Absolute arts, treasures, and Heaven grade weapons are also accepted!"

Dead silence filled the courtyard.

The noble sons and daughters stood frozen.

Calmly, a bone-chilling voice rang in the audience's ears.

"Sincerity is the most important trait when learning sword skills from me. Only when there's sincerity within the heart can there be sincerity within the sword! What skills are you going to learn without sincerity? What future are you going to have? Go home instead!"

Future... go home...

Everyone quivered. These words jolted them to their senses.

Although they did not understand why Madam Ye wanted them to master the sword, they must learn it since that was what she demanded! They would lose their qualifications if they left this place and their future would be completely bleak.

Those with more agile minds were even guessing if this was Teacher Chu or Madam Ye's idea. Or perhaps this was Madam's test for them?

Yes! It must be Madam's test!

Gui Hu said in a low voice, "Teacher, I'm the most sincere! 300 Heaven Merit Points! Please hand the godly weapon to me!"

Which one of these people had not grown up in an environment full of trickery and corruption?

Who would be that naive?

"Thinking about getting this authentic heirloom weapon for 300 points? What do you treat Teacher as? Teacher, I’m more sincere. 400 Heaven Merit Points!"

"Is this what you guys call sincerity? I can’t look at this any longer. Teacher, I’m willing to take out a Heaven grade armor!"

…

Xiao Shuren stared blankly at the strange sight before her.

Chapter 352: Madam Ye's Background

"What does she mean? What is she trying to say? Despicable!"

A sharp, hysterical voice traveled from the Golden Eagle Study Room as the servants stood outside quietly in fear. From what they remembered, they had never seen Madam lose control.

Inside the study room, Madam Ling's face was beet red, her long hair spread out like angry water plants, and her chest heaved.

She glared at her own husband with a vicious gaze, as if looking at a mortal enemy.

Ling Sheng quivered and tilted his head subconsciously to avoid eye contact.

Madam Ling gradually stopped panting as her anger faded. She regained her usual composed and virtuous self. She held the teacup up gently, placed it by her mouth, and pursed her lips, revealing their plumpness and fresh red color.

"Finally, Ye Lin no longer wants to be alone." Ling Sheng laughed grimly.

Ling Sheng hesitated for a moment before asking, "But why? Is Widow Ye relying on Dai Gang? Or the Blood of God? Impossible. Could it be that she's interested in the ancient treasure? Xiao Shuren entering the Ye residence means that she will be attacked

from all sides. Widow Ye isn’t such a brainless person."

"You’re not wrong." Madam Ling nodded. She knew very well that her long time rival was not an easy target and said coldly, "If she was interested in the ancient treasure, she would’ve launched a sneak attack instead of creating such a huge commotion. Where did she get her confidence from?"

Ling Sheng cried out in alarm, "Could it be the Great Elder?"

Madam Ling’s faced changed, and as they made eye contact, both could see the shock in each other’s eyes.

They were already convinced that this matter was incited and instructed by the Great Elder or there was no way Ye Lin would be so flamboyant about it.

If this was true, what message was the Great Elder trying to convey?

Both were smart people who quickly grasped the significance within, and their expressions worsened.

.....

Grass Hall, seventh floor.

Ai Hui diligently thumbed through note after note. While he was

still unable to find the notebook the old man was talking about, he had gained a lot.

In fear of missing something, he chose to flip through the books one by one.

All kinds of strange notes and bizarre personal letters expanded his horizons, and he often read them with keen interest and pleasure.

For example, he saw many kinds of travel notes written by seniors who had stayed many years in the Wilderness to seek their fortunes. Some spent more than 10 years going to the deepest part of the Wilderness and even found antique relics. These relics were very similar in composition to those from the Avalon of Five Elements, so these seniors made a bold guess that the Avalon had its origins in this place.

There were all sorts of similar speculations, which made Ai Hui feel that the seniors from the Assembly of Patriarchs were not as reliable in the past.

Of course, these were just interesting topics to talk about.

Ai Hui also saw some notes regarding fusion elemental energy. These notes recorded some initial thoughts on it as well as all sorts of conjectures. He could tell that fusion elemental energy definitely was not studied by one person, but by many researchers. Only through a significantly long period of analyzing had fusion elemental energy become what it was known as today.

The more Ai Hui thought about it, the more apprehensive he became toward the Assembly of Patriarchs. They were not as simple as he had thought.

The words on the notes he was holding started becoming blurry. Ai Hui knew that his fusion elemental energy was nearly exhausted. Although he wanted to continue reading, he had no choice but to exit the Grass Hall.

The scene before him vanished in a puff of smoke, while the green and the tender Patriarch grass sprouted up, full of vitality.

Still not enough fusion elemental energy, Ai Hui thought as he shook his head and walked out of the room.

The sun shone brightly outside. Ai Hui squinted his eyes and saw a group of people practicing hard in the training grounds.

A few fellows with sharp eyes immediately adopted a more focused look during training upon seeing Teacher Chu's appearance.

They had never seen a teacher like him.

Teacher was strong, irritable, and wild, especially when he charged toward them during the match. If he was merely this, he would just be a weedy man. Such weedy people were all cannon fodder, fated to die by the hands of others.

Yet, Teacher Chu absolutely was not a weedy person. He was completely despicable and treacherous, seeking and prioritizing nothing but personal profit.

Among the students, even the stingiest fellow had already spent over a hundred heaven merit points on Teacher Chu. Teacher Chu charged fees for all kinds of made up things like "sincerity." Just hearing this word made everyone ache.

Ever since the collapse of the Avalon’s currency, it had quickly been replaced by essence elemental beans. Other than that, the deal allowing Heaven Merit Points to be used instantly turned it into the highest-end currency, causing a rapid circulation.

As the highest-end currency, its value was extremely high.

Most of the students had never spent so many Heaven Merit Points, so the ache they felt was beyond piercing.

What angered them more was the fact that Teacher Chu was incomparably lazy. He often arranged a big bunch of training content and made them self-practice while he, himself, would go back to his room to sleep.

He even encouraged them to snitch on anyone that goofed off. Such a contemptible and crafty trick was as disgusting as the fake smile on his face.

Ai Hui was strolling leisurely along the sides of the training arena. He felt that the life he was leading now was really good.

With only two days of effort, he had already received 1,400 Heaven Merit Points, an amount that would cause many to be envious. Plus, he could be idle and did not need to watch them all day long. Such good days were simply too comfortable.

These rich and hardworking students were the best!

As he scanned across the training ground, his gaze finally landed on Xiaobao.

Xiaobao surprised him the most. He had wisdom like that of a child, but was gifted and matchless in swordsmanship. He was naturally very sensitive to swords, and the level of his swordplay was already rather solid.

Only after asking Xiaobao did Ai Hui find out that he had been taught by a lady. Despite Ai Hui's continuous questioning, Xiaobao was not able to share her name. Ai Hui guessed she was the Karakorum Sword League's chief. It seemed that Chief was related to Madam Ye, so she probably visited frequently. It would not be a surprise, then, that she imparted skills to Xiaobao.

Ai Hui spent the most effort guiding Xiaobao.

Xiaobao had the heart of a young child and was kind and naive, traits that Ai Hui liked the most.

Ai Hui glanced across the field and his gaze landed on the "Fu" family's oldest daughter. No, "Fu" was a false surname. Her real surname was Fu(note: written differently in chinese), Fu Sisi.

Fu Sisi was the complete opposite of Xiaobao when it came to talent. Her talent in swordplay was incomparably lacking. While she was exceptionally diligent, she improved the slowest among all students.

Previously, Ai Hui was worried that Fu Sisi would be able to recognize him, but now, he realized that he had been worrying pointlessly, so he laid his worried heart to rest.

He had heard some rumors about Fu Sisi these past two days.

The Fu family's position was way above the aristocratic families that other students came from. No one could compare. She was always the most eye-catching person around and always attracted the most discussion.

Sanmu Su Family, where Su Huaijun was from, was either declining daily or simply not as good it used to be. To her family, the opportunity to participate in the Master's Glory program was extremely precious.

Madam Ye's capabilities shocked Ai Hui. Of course, he knew about the Master's Glory program. It was Elders Guild's most spirit-raising project.

He had not expected Madam Ye to control an admission slot in Master's Glory. More than one it seemed.

With the Fu family's standing, receiving an entry slot was like hammering a nail into an iron panel, but their entry was for Fu Yonghao, Ai Hui's former student, not Fu Sisi. A marriage had been arranged for Fu Sisi, and it was rumored that she was unwilling, so the Master's Glory became her only chance to escape.

Even those superior to the Fu family would not be able to overlook the existence of a master. In other words, a master's worth far exceeded the value that Fu Sisi's arranged marriage would bring.

Such a pitiful girl.

Ai Hui looked at her sympathetically before turning his head.

Just then, there was a disturbance among the diligently training noble sons and daughters.

"Great Elder!"

"It's the Great Elder!"

...

Suppressed cries could be heard since they were too excited. They had not expected to see the Great Elder in the Ye residence. It gave them full confidence in this training session.

Ai Hui was stunned. He shifted his gaze and saw Madam Ye standing beside an old man with snow-white hair and a stern face. He was surrounded and well-protected by guards.

This was the Great Elder? The Great Elder of the Avalon of Five Elements?

Ai Hui had speculated a lot about Madam Ye's background, but being related to the Great Elder was simply beyond his imagination!

Who had the most authority in the Avalon? The Great Elder!

The Great Elder was no mere Elder. He became a Master at the age of 28 and was regarded as one of the candidates who had the highest chance of becoming a grandmaster. He then joined the Elders Guild and was the only Elder who never assumed a commanding role. When he turned 40, he started wielding power and became the head of the Elders Guild. Ever since then, his position had never been threatened.

Since all of his heart was placed on government affairs, he had yet to enter a higher realm. His senior, on the other hand, fulfilled his long-cherished wish by becoming a Grandmaster during the Great Elder's second year of leading the guild.

This senior was one of the strongest grandmasters around, An Muda.

The Great Elder had the most power in all of the Avalon of Five Elements, period.

"Grandfather!"

Upon seeing the old man from afar, Xiaobao shouted cheerfully before dashing over.

Ai Hui jolted. He finally understood why these youngsters would come over here to join in the training.

It was not the Great Elder's first time in the Ye residence, so he was very familiar with this place.

Feeling the bright and beautiful sunlight, he was in a good mood. He strolled along while saying in a warm voice, "It's been hard on you to ask you to step in personally."

"Don't say that." Madam Ye responded respectfully yet amiably, "It's no trouble. Having everyone over here in harmony is a good thing too."

The old man nodded. "It'd be great if they're as far-sighted as you. Heh heh, I'm not dead yet, but they already can't wait to collude with Dai Gang. If it'd been five years back..."

There was a murderous tone in his voice.

Madam Ye quickly soothed the situation. "Why bother with people like them?"

"Yeah, there’s no way." Great Elder sighed. "I’m old, the Avalon can no longer rise, and this is it. Don’t count on them. They have no minds of their own. We will still have to rely on the young generation so guide them and don’t hold back."

His gaze fell on the youngsters.

"Grandfather!"

When he saw Xiaobao, who was covered in sweat, running over, his stern gaze immediately softened and turned friendly. "Slow down, slow down. What are you running so fast for?"

Chapter 353: The Ye Residence's Origin

There was a nameless valley 90 miles south of Silver City. Since it was far from the main road, human's footprints were rare and vegetation was very lush. The whole valley was rather hidden.

Xiao Laosan's triangular eyes lacked their usual vitality. Not only him, but the people around him, who were swaying unsteadily from side to side, all felt dispirited and listless.

Since Chi Zun's death, the Yellow Sand Bandits had really become became a sheet of loose sand.

They ran away from Little Night Town for several nights ago and sought shelter in this obscure valley, but there was a huge divergence in opinions as to what they were going to do next.

Some hoped to take revenge, some hoped to rally the gang, while others thought it was better to run as far away as possible.

No one could convince anyone else.

The Yellow Sand Bandits rose from being a bunch of nobodies to a group of impressive, dauntless bandits all thanks to Chi Zun.

Everyone wholeheartedly accepted that Boss Chi was the most prestigious person in the Yellow Sand Bandits. His death meant that the pillar of the crew was no longer around. As no one else was up to his standard when it came to leading the team, the whole

situation became chaotic, with some fiery-tempered fellows almost resorting to their fists.

Everyone was at a loss and feared for their future.

"Loose sand indeed."

A charming, languid voice sounded from the mouth of the valley without warning.

"Who?" Xiao Laosan lurched as he asked in a stern voice.

The rest stood up in unison and looked maliciously toward the mouth of the valley.

A graceful, lovely silhouette stood at the valley entrance. This lady had an ordinary appearance, but an extremely sensual figure, and her fluttering red dress attracted a lot of fanciful imagination.

The lady smiled sweetly. "Your new boss."

A few strong men instantly burst into laughter. Harboring evil designs, they closed in on her with lascivious looks.

"Little girl, accompany me well and you can be the boss."

"Boss, better be good in bed eh."

…

Xiao Laosan’s pupils shrank. While inwardly cursing their idiocy, he took steps backward without a word instead of advancing.

Coming over alone and facing a bunch of tigers and wolves, this lady was composed and not the least bit afraid. She was certainly not someone to provoke.

The lady advanced with a sinister smile.

A short moment later, everyone was staggering and howling in grief. Only the woman in red stood steadily among them.

"From now on, I’m your new boss, Fairy Chi."

…..

Ai Hui led his life comfortably in the Ye residence. The Great Elder’s appearance boosted the youngsters’ enthusiasm. They practiced crazily even without Ai Hui’s supervision.

Ai Hui liked it when others sought him for guidance. All teachers liked students who were eager to learn.

Lecturing fees, instructing fees… There was no reason why dispelling doubts should not be charged.

His Heaven Merit Points were rising slowly but steadily, and before he knew it, he already had 1,600. Madam Ye was unaware of these fees. If not for the fact that he had agreed to go to the Wilderness with all of them, he felt that his current life was pretty decent. He had never earned so many Heaven Merit Points before.

Ai Hui shucked a few bamboos to make a big parasol and placed it at the training ground. He then took out a wooden couch from his room and added a short coffee table next to it. When he felt bored, he would lie on the couch, snack on a frozen dessert, and watch the sweaty youngsters train under the hot sun. The vitality of youth and the blazing heat completely moved him.

Xiao Shuren appeared daily, watching everyone practice as she stood under the parasol like a servant waiting for orders. Initially, Ai Hui was not used to it, but soon, seeing that she kept quiet all the time, he started disregarding her presence.

A tall and sturdy figure walked toward him, and he was surprised to see that it was actually Hua Kui.

Xiao Shuren left upon seeing a stranger.

Hua Kui glanced over at Xiao Shuren as she exited before turning around and seeing Ai Hui’s carefree appearance. His expression turned strange as he commented, "You’re enjoying life, aren’t you!"

Ai Hui saw this as jealousy and offered his dessert. "Same old,

same old. What are you here for?"

"I brought herbs." Hua Kui took the dessert and gulped everything down in one mouthful. Shortly, he spoke up, "I see that you've not offended Madam Ye."

Ai Hui could feel his concern and laughed deliberately. "You make it sound as though Madam Ye bites."

Hua Kui let out a cold laugh as he scanned his surroundings. Seeing that the coast was clear, he said in a low voice, "You'll know in future how big of a deal Madam Ye is. She is reclusive and does not like to show herself in public, but once she speaks up, no one dares disobey. The Grass Hall too. Madam Ye is a VIP of the Grass Hall. Her requests are conveyed to us by the Great Elder, himself."

Ai Hui had a look of understanding. "The Great Elder's daughter-in-law."

Hua Kui shook his head. "Not just that. Her background is not to be trifled with. She probably treats you favorably because of your identity as a swordsman."

Ai Hui asked curiously, "Perhaps she's a swordswoman herself?"

"Remember that deep groove along the entrance of the Induction Ground?" A look of respect flashed across his face. "The last swordsman, Ye Huitang, was her ancestor."

Ai Hui stammered, "Ultimate... Ultimate defense line?"

There was a 1 meter wide and 200 meters long groove in front of the Induction Ground's metal gates. It had been the ultimate defense line during the darkest era for humans in the Wilderness.

During the crucial moments before the start of the Avalon of Five Elements, enemies came like the tides, and the situation was precarious.

Under desperate circumstances, the last reputable swordsman dealt a most resplendent blow to the enemy leader. This effectively boosted the morale of the defenders, allowing the team to persevere and ultimately open up the Avalon.

When Ai Hui had been admitted back then, he had especially visited that "ultimate defense line" to admire and pay respects.

"Yes, that." Hua Kui said in a deep voice, "The Ye clan was well-respected. Madam Ye's husband died at the front line during her pregnancy. Madam Ye was in serious sorrow, causing her to prematurely give birth to an inherently weaker baby. Not only did she not remarry, she placed all her efforts into raising Xiaobao, never giving up on treating him. Her requests for the Grass Hall have basically involved all sorts of herbs. It's been over 10 years already. For this, the Grass Hall has always been well taken care of by Madam Ye, or else it would not be what it is today."

Ai Hui could not help but feel deep veneration for her. Be it the legendary swordsman Ye Huitang or Madam Ye, both were worthy

of respect.

He also came to realize the reason why Madam Ye was particularly interested in swordsmanship. She came from a family of swordsmen.

"I'm making a trip to the Wilderness, so be careful in the meanwhile." Hua Kui reminded, "Something seems to be amiss in Silver City. Do not get involved."

"Don't worry, I don't like meddling in others' businesses." Ai Hui reassured before asking, "What's the situation in the Wilderness now?"

"Countless casualties." Hua Kui's expression turned grave and sour. "It was reported that there had already been many waves of dire beast attacks and more than half of the hunting team perished, so the team was more or less destroyed. If not for the fact that a few Masters rushed to the scene in time to stabilize the situation, the team could've been utterly crushed.

Hui Kui did not forget to warn Ai Hui again. "Do not enter the Wilderness now."

Both chatted for a bit before Hua Kui bid goodbye and left.

Ai Hui felt overwhelmed. Just a simple casual chat gave him so much information to digest. The Ye residence's history startled him beyond belief. The devastation in the Wilderness was

expected, but to hear it for himself was still a rather sorrowful feeling.

Many ordinary citizens were so agitated by this upsurge that they ignited balls of blazing flames to burn down the trees, grass, and also themselves.

There was nothing new under the sun.

It was not the first time such a thing had happened in the Avalon’s history, and it would not be the last either.

Although he told himself repeatedly that he had nothing to do with this, he somehow felt suffocated and anxious.

He rose from the couch and walked into the practice ground with large strides, surveying the situation with evil intentions.

"Everyone has been training very hard recently, so in order to encourage you guys, I’ve decided to guide each of you through actual combat with me, free of charge. Such opportunities knock but once. Miss it at your own loss."

Ten minutes later, everyone was lying on the ground.

Ai Hui felt entirely free from worry, his expression jolly as he prepared to leave.

"Teacher."

Fu Sisi’s voice sounded from behind him.

Ai Hui stopped in his tracks and looked toward her suspiciously.

Fu Sisi clenched her teeth and rose from the ground. "I would like to choose a suitably advantageous sword, but do not know how to do this. Could you take some time to select it for me?"

Ai Hui felt it was somewhat unfortunate that there was only one Snow Cherry, or else it would be good if he could sell one to Fu Sisi.

As a well-known family in Silver City, the Fu family had wealth and power.

Ai Hui shook his head and said aloofly, "I’m very busy."

"200 Heaven Merit Points!" Fu Sisi blurted out.

Without a word, Ai Hui supported Fu Sisi and asked with a smile spanning his whole face, "Where to?"

This was the type of person that he adored. People who solved problems simply by throwing money!

Walking out of the Ye residence, Fu Sisi sank into silence.

Ai Hui did not rush either since he had already been paid the Heaven Merit Points, so he only had to follow through. He enjoyed the scenery along the streets with some interest. He had been to Silver City a few times, but had never taken a leisurely stroll around.

There were many shops along the streets, which opened up Ai Hui's eyes. Each shop was decorated to look splendorous and majestic, with the shop assistants dressed neatly and without even a thread loose or hair out of place. The pedestrians he saw on the streets were mostly dressed luxuriously too.

Indeed, this was the biggest city in Silver Mist City.

He followed Fu Sisi into a weapon shop. Due to the bedazzling jewels that covered the weapons on display, AI Hui never would have thought that this exceptionally exquisite shop actually sold weapons.

Every weapon was exhibited in a fine crystal display case. The perfectly adjusted lighting brought out and accentuated the brilliance and vibrant details of each weapon.

Seeing all of this, Ai Hui could not help but drool. He was someone who had seen enough good things, but these weapons turned him feverish nevertheless.

After seeing the price, Ai Hui felt as though someone had stuffed a big lump of ice cubes in his head, cooling him down.

Even the cheapest weapon cost 2,000 Heaven Merit Points.

At that very moment, he finally understood reality. While the fragrance of wine and meat drifted out from homes of the wealthy, the poor froze to death on the streets.

Thinking about how he felt satisfied after earning 1,600 Heaven Merit Points, Ai Hui felt indescribably ashamed. He was going to raise his prices!

"How’s this one?" Fu Sisi asked Ai Hui, pointing at a black longsword right in the center of the hall.

Ai Hui followed her gesture, and as he was about to speak, he felt something unusual.

Chapter 354: Life Is A Performance

Footsteps could be heard as a group of people entered the shop.

Ai Hui was about to turn around when Fu Sisi continued asking, "You haven't told me how this sword is?"

Since he had taken her money, he should do what he was supposed to. Instead of turning around, he inspected the black sword and commented a second later without hesitation, "Decent sword."

Could he be wrong?

2,500 Heaven Merit Points. How could he be wrong!

Ai Hui had initially thought that the Silverfold Plum in his hands was an extremely good sword, but in front of this black sword, it was not even comparable. It would already be pretty good if the Silverfold Plum could be sold for 1,500 Heaven Merit Points, but in front of this valuable sword priced at 2,500 points, it still paled in comparison by quite a bit.

"You have such a good eye!" the manager quickly praised. "This was made by a weapon master, He Tuze, and is a Heaven-grade weapon. Master He was not pleased with it, so he melted in a huge volume of blood crystals and jade fruits before adding 36 expensive herbs to fashion this Blood Ink Sword. After 30 days of forging and a huge expenditure, this Blood Ink Sword was finally completed. This sword is neither metal nor wood. It does not repel against any

element types. It is naturally sharp and indestructible. The main reason for its high cost is that it has an extremely rare property. It is psychic!"

"Psychic?" Ai Hui asked in shock.

He often saw many passages in different sword manuals talking about famous swords being psychic. Swords with spirit were common knowledge in the Cultivation Era, and it was said that long hours of practice would cause a sword to develop a special existence, known as sword spirit. Some manuals written by sects even said that there were ways to nourish this spirit. There were also some sword manuals that could make the sword spirit appear as a corporeal existence. For example, the sword, Transcendence, created by God King Zuo Mo's senior Luo Li, was like this.

When the Elemental Era came around and swordsmanship declined, the sayings about swords being psychic were forgotten.

Thus, when someone suddenly mentioned that this sword was psychic, how could Ai Hui not be shocked?

"Yes. On the day this sword was completed, its aura cried out for three days straight. Ordinary people could not even get close to it, and in order not to hurt customers, the shop had to spend a huge sum to make this crystal case seal to lock in the sword aura. Master He said that the treasure sword would pick its owner and would be owned by the fated one. We took it out in part to test this."

The shopkeeper expertly knew how to promote his goods. After

his explanation, even Ai Hui, who was very low in funds, was stirred.

"Why not you try it? I'll give it to you if the treasure sword chooses you," Fu Sisi said.

Ai Hui looked at her doubtfully. Something was wrong! 2,000 Heaven Merit Points was definitely a significant sum, so why would she spend them on him for no reason?

"Who is he, Sisi?"

An angry voice boomed from behind, and Ai Hui immediately understood what was going on.

The task of helping to pick out a sword was an excuse. In reality, he was being used as a shield.

What a cliche plot. Did aristocratic families all enjoy doing such things?

Ai Hui turned around casually.

An angry, smart-looking man glared at him. Beside him were a few gloomy looking fellows who were also staring at him.

"Who is he, Sisi?"

According to the recent news, Ai Hui could easily guess who the speaker was.

Ling Xiao, the noble son of the Ling residence. It was said that both families hoped for them to get together. If that was it, things would have been simpler, but Fu Sisi expressed intense objection and other families did not wish to see this union either.

Fu Sisi was the most outstanding among the younger generation of the Fu family. The other sons had few accomplishments.

The Ling residence was already powerful to begin with. If the Fu family was to enter the picture, they would pose too big of a threat.

While it had not been Ai Hui's intention to wind up in such a whirlpool, it seemed that there was no way out. As his mind spun quickly, AI Hui instantly saw through the crux of the matter.

Madam Ye represented the Great Elder, Fu Sisi was using such a method to oppose the marriage, and the Fu family was hesitating over what move to make with regard to Fu Sisi's resistance. Otherwise, how could a girl like Fu Sisi disobey her family's will?

The Fu family's hesitation was not unreasonable. It was a good thing to be able to connect with the Ling residence by marriage, but the Great Elder was not one to be provoked.

Ai Hui, himself, was a teacher in the Ye residence. In their eyes, he was naturally a person of the Ye residence. To engage in conflict

with Ling Xiao and incite contradictions was not really a wise strategy, Ai Hui thought. How could the Ling residence sit and watch as such a big gift like the Fu family slipped away? The family was most likely closing in step by step, wanting to actualize the marriage before anything else.

The young lady‘s way of fighting for herself was indeed smarter than her brothers’.

"Who is he, Sisi?" Ai Hui asked, imitating Ling Xiao’s tone with a surprised look on his face.

Behind his back, his right hand pointed toward the Blood Ink Sword at the side.

Since he was already rolled up in this, the real problem was how he could reap the maximum benefit. He was well prepared. If it appeared that the young lady would not get the upper hand, he would retreat immediately. He would not do anything to save face nor would he get all angry over a beautiful lady.

Fu Sisi had not expected that Chu Zhaoyang would be so cooperative and became slightly distracted by this. When, out of the corner of her eye, she caught a glimpse of Chu Zhaoyang’s finger, which pointed at the sword, her eye twitched.

2,500 Heaven Merit Points!

Was this fellow insane?

She could invite a Master to help her for 2,500 Heaven Merit Points!

Did this fellow really think he was worth 2,500 Heaven Merit Points?

"This man here is Young Master Ling Xiao," Fu Sisi explained before turning around to Ling Xiao. "He's Chu Zhaoyang."

She placed one hand behind her back and open up her fingers, making a five sign.

Ai Hui sneered inwardly. 500 Heaven Merit Points for bringing me such big trouble? What do you treat me as!

"I see. Nice to meet you, Young Master Ling!"

Ling Xiao's face was full of gloom. Flames could be seen pulsing in his eyes. He was extremely angry.

Young Master... he...

"Young Master" instantly displayed the distance between Fu Sisi and himself.

This adulterous pair!

Ling Xiao was raging.

His mother demanded that he use whatever means to grab hold of Fu Sisi.

While it was true that Fu Sisi was beautiful, had he not seen all kinds of women? In his eyes, Fu Sisi was his prey, and the chase was merely an interesting hunt. His so called adoration for Fu Sisi was only a tool in this hunt.

Yet now, his prey had landed in someone else's hands.

He kept quiet as his murderous spirit rose in his chest.

Ai Hui placed all his attention on bargaining with Fu Sisi.

Eventually, both agreed to a price of 1,000 Heaven Merit Points.

Ai Hu was pleased. These few days, he had already swindled whatever points he could from the young aristocrats. He got about 200 to 300 Heaven Merit Points from some and 600 to 700 Heaven Merit Points from others.

With the original 200 Heaven Merit Points he had already been paid, he earned a total of 1,200 Heaven Merit Points.

Previously, Ai Hui had racked his brains over the sale of the Snow

Cherry before finally milking 1,400 Heaven Merit Points out of it. With an addition of 300 Heaven Merit Points to these 1,200 Heaven Merit Points, he could already afford another Silverfold Plum.

Suddenly, as if the dark clouds had dispersed and the sun shone brightly, Ling Xiao beamed. "I seem to have heard of your name from somewhere. I wonder where you are currently working at?"

Ai Hui was somewhat surprised. Why had he not made a move? Ling Xiao was more shrewd than Ai Hui had imagined, but this made sense. He could not be a simple person since he was able to force Fu Sisi into such a pitiful state.

Life was a performance. Ever since Ai Hui took on the identity of Chu Zhaoyang, his stature rose greatly day by day.

Full of shame, Ai Hui said, "I have accomplished nothing. Fu Sisi has been the one helping me, so how can I just sit and watch when she's been so loyal to me? I came over to Silver City in order to spend the nights with her. I've been in luck so far and am currently a teacher."

Fu Sisi stared blankly at Chu Zhaoyang as goosebumps started surfacing.

Upon hearing the word "teacher," Ling Xiao instantly let his guard down and sneered. "So he's living off a woman."

"Your words are too..." Chu Zhaoyang's face changed as he glared

at Ling Xiao. Five seconds later, he said in disappointment, "You got me there. I’m so useless, yet Sisi chooses to stay by my side. The heavens, sun, and moon could testify how I feel about her. There’s mutual support through thick and thin. Sisi, can you feel it?"

Finishing his sentence, Chu Zhaoyang looked passionately at Fu Sisi.

He had been blindsided by Fu Sisi. While he had not lost out in terms of heaven merit points, this did not mean that he enjoyed being blindsided. How could he let Fu Sisi off so easily?

Fu Sisi wanted to kill herself. Her hair was standing on end and she felt terrible, as if she’d just swallowed a fly. She was beyond regretful. Why did she seek Chu Zhaoyang? She was so disgusted by it all and felt horrible.

Why had Ling Xiao, who had always been the aggressive sort, not taken action as soon as he could? Why was he spewing so much nonsense?

Her face was red from anger, but she forced herself to suppress it. She lowered her head and asked, "Why are you talking about this now?"

Seeing that Fu Sisi’s face blushed red and that she bowed her head down so bashfully, Ling Xiao’s guards’ expressions changed. They knew their master’s temper too well.

Ling Xiao was about to explode!

The fact that his prey had landed in someone else’s hands was already maddening, yet this adulterous pair dared to display their affection and passion for each other in public. Thinking about how his prey had been played with by someone else countless times, but still adopted such an ice-cold attitude toward him, the fury within his chest burned through whatever self-control he had left.

Ling Xiao’s face looked twisted as he laughed nastily. "Kill this coward!"

Ling Xiao’s guards pounced forward with a cry.

Fu Sisi’s face changed slightly. Just when she was ready to shout "run," Chu Zhaoyang appeared before her and started putting on an act. He shouted passionately, "Run, Sisi!"

The guards surrounded and closed in on them.

"Run? None of you shall run!"

Ling Xiao was pleased with this cat and mouse game.

Fu Sisi’s face paled a little, but she forced herself to remain composed. She asked coldly, "Ling Xiao, do you dare to attack me?"

Ling Xiao responded warmly, "Sisi, don’t worry, I’m not going to

touch you. I’m still waiting to marry you. I won’t kill your little boyfriend either. I will soak him in a salt jug and make sure he witnesses our marriage."

Fu Sisi’s expression worsened, fear evident in her eyes.

"You’re utterly heartless and inhumane! Ling Xiao, let me ask you!"

Chu Zhaoyang’s voice was filled with fear as he shook uncontrollably, before he had a sudden change in tone.

"Why not a sugar jug?"

Everyone was stunned.

Splendid and dazzling sword rays erupted swiftly.

Chapter 355: Off Guard

Ling Xiao's guards had not expected Ai Hui to initiate an attack. They were distracted by his question, and before they could even react, the sword rays suddenly came toward them like balls of splendid fireworks that exploded right beneath their eyelids.

Caught off guard, they were bedazzled.

Alarmed cries mixed in with curses as the guards hurried to display their strongest defensive moves. A light screen appeared in front of some, while others used weapons and stood before Ling Xiao.

No one withdrew. Behind them was their young master.

The Ling residence's rules were strict. Severe punishments awaited those who failed to protect their young master.

Amid the dazzling sword rays, a pair of eyes remained still, and the hands holding the Silverfold Plum were steady and accurate. Following the sword momentum, Ai Hui hunched over like a stealthily-moving black cat under the night sky, not making the slightest sound.

Moves with flourishing and blinding brilliance were mostly illusory and empty, whereas the simple, subtle, and inconspicuous moves were mostly the real deal.

Ai Hui's sword rays belonged to the latter group.

Ai Hui, who rushed forward, was like a tiger invading a flock of sheep. It extended its sharp claws and bared its fangs. Not only could the Star Reaper Gloves increase his agility 10 fold, it also significantly increased his ability to mobilize elemental energy.

His speed of attack was twice as fast as usual, and taking his realm into consideration, such an increase was a qualitative leap.

With a tremble of the Silverfold Plum and like the meandering of lightning, [Six Moons] was unleashed!

Six palm-sized, arched sword rays sprayed out swiftly from the tip of the sword.

With a turn of his wrist, the sword hilt rotated.

The Silverfold Plum rotated like a clock hand as the six arched sword rays seemed to be pulled in circles by an invisible thread.

Ai Hui's new understanding of the [Big Dipper]!

The guards felt a cooling sensation behind their necks as the sharp sword consciousness penetrated their skin, causing their bodies to turn rigid.

There was a palm-sized sword ray sticking behind every guard's

neck.

Their faces were ashen as they stood motionless. The piercing sword consciousness made their hair stand on end. They had no doubt that with any slight movement on their part, the sword rays would slice and separate their necks from their heads.

No one had clearly seen what just happened.

Circumstances were reversed in the blink of an eye.

Ling Xiao was dumbstruck and had not regained his senses.

Fu Sisi, too, was still in a daze. Her mouth was slightly open, and she had on a look of disbelief.

This...

She knew that Chu Zhaoyang's abilities were decent, otherwise he would not have gotten into Madam Ye's good books. It was not surprising for him to defeat Gui Hu and Su Huaijun as well. How could he become a teacher if he could not even beat his students?

Those without outstanding abilities would never have the right to teach in aristocratic families.

Yet, she never would have thought that the conflict would come to an end this quickly. The guards by Ling Xiao's side were not

nobodies. Since young, Ling Xiao had been arrogant and despotic, often causing trouble. Afraid for his safety, Madam Ling assigned guards to protect him. While they were not Masters, they were extremely capable.

Ling Xiao, who finally regained his senses, turned pale. The Chu Zhaoyang in front of him was like a completely different person.

There was even a faint smile hanging by his lips, but there was no warmth in that smile. What gave him palpitations was the fact that Chu Zhaoyang emitted a dangerous aura.

This was an extremely dangerous fellow.

Composing himself, Ling Xiao spoke up, "Who exactly are you?"

"Chu Zhaoyang," Ai Hui answered with his usual expression.

What Ling Xiao saw, however, was sarcasm and mockery. Being rather shrewd, he calmed down, saying, "Such good skills. Unlike a teacher."

Ai Hui removed his sword and the arched rays behind the guards' necks dissipated into the air. He said with all smiles, "I teach swordsmanship in the Ye residence."

Ye residence!

Ling Xiao’s pupils shrank and many things started to add up. He gave Fu Sisi a look before saying, "No wonder she’s always going to the Ye residence. It’s because of you. But even the Ye residence won’t be able to defend you for starting a fight with me."

Ai Hui was not mad. He replied without thinking, "Perhaps I will become a master swordsman someday? Hey, you got to think about it. I must have something in me or why would Sisi follow me around so loyally?"

Ling Xiao’s facial expression turned slightly sour. What Chu Zhaoyang had just said hit him right where it counted.

According to his understanding of Fu Sisi, she definitely would not fall for an incapable person. If Chu Zhaoyang really was gifted, things would be different.

A young, talented, and loyal man marrying into the Fu family would give the weakening family a new lease on hope.

Plus, he was a teacher in the Ye residence and had Madam Ye and the Great Elder’s support. While Ling Xiao had always been proud of his own family, he had nothing to boast about in front of the Great Elder.

Similarly, even a Master would not count for anything in front of the Ling residence.

The most important thing was to figure out if this was the Great

Elder’s intention!

If so, he would have to reevaluate everything. Otherwise, he would just have to get rid of Chu Zhaoyang and the problem would easily be solved. He had to find out who the Ling residence was really facing in order to take decisive action. Dragging this matter any longer might lead to more unpredictable changes.

"If that’s the case, we have to fight fair." Ling Xiao smiled generously. "My love for Fu Sisi is genuine, so how can I give up halfway? I believe she will make the right decision."

Finishing his words with a smile on his face, he gave them a slight bow before leading his guards away.

About 20 meters away from the shop, Ling Xiao’s smile vanished as he ordered his guards coldly, "Go find out everything about Chu Zhaoyang."

"Yes!"

On the way back to the Ye residence, Ai Hui counted his heaven merit points joyfully. "Goods delivered, bill settled!"

He had a huge sum of 2,600 Heaven Merit Points on him in total. Putting things into perspective, the blueprint for an elemental energy pool cost 1,000 Heaven Merit Points, and Ai Hui could now afford that Blood Ink Sword.

But Ai Hui could not bear to do so.

He was going to the Wilderness soon, and there were many other things which required Heaven Merit Points.

Relishing his riches, Ai Hui’s footsteps were significantly lighter. Fu Sisi, who was walking beside him, held her head down silently as she was deep in thought.

As the Ye residence’s gates came into sight, Fu Sisi asked suddenly, "Are you interested in becoming the Fu family’s son-in-law?"

Ai Hui was stunned. He turned around and looked at her as if he was looking at a fool. "Do you think I’m stupid?"

Fu Sisi continued, "10,000 Heaven Merit Points."

Ai Hui looked at her in disdain. "Who are you trying to scare? I can’t even sell you for 10,000 Heaven Merit Points."

Fu Sisi responded calmly, "Although the Fu family is not as capable as the Ling residence, it is still not an ordinary family without any foundation. If not Heaven Merit Points, there will always be treasures suitable for you. If you don’t like me, you can still seek outside pleasures after marriage. All I need is a status."

Chu Zhaoyang’s earlier display had shocked her. She realized that everyone had been underestimating his abilities. The Fu

family lacked a pillar of support right now.

And she saw huge potential in Chu Zhaoyang.

Chu Zhaoyang had innate sword skills that exceeded her imagination. Coupled with the Fu family's financial resources, he could become a Master within a short period of time.

Most importantly, she could use this reason to convince her family.

"This ends now. It's been purely business between us. I have no interest in a flat figure girl like you. Plus, am I so free as to provoke the Ling residence? Are you taking advantage of the fact that I'm new to Silver City? I've already helped you once for the sake of Heaven Merit Points. We will announce our breakup when we get back. I do not want to be assassinated in the middle of the night."

He felt pleased that his words had Fu Sisi speechless. He shot a glance back out of the corner of his eyes. He'd long noticed that there were people following them from afar.

Ai Hui inhaled deeply before putting a grieved look on his face. He pointed at Fu Sisi with a trembling hand and turned his pitch up a notch, saying, "Marry into your family? I've said it before. Do not mention such things to me. I, Chu Zhaoyang, am a capable man. How can I marry into your family? Blame it on my ignorance for misjudging you! From today onward, let us not cross paths. All ties shall be broken. Go on your way, while I go on mine."

Fu Sisi fell into a daze, but reacted shortly after. She looked at him with a bitter smile.

He noticed those following them had become restless, excited, and evidently relieved. He could tell that Ling Xiao was absolutely not going to let the matter rest. The Ling residence was practically a tyrant in this city. Offending them meant the end of peaceful nights.

Money making was important, but he had no plans to get into trouble over it.

He had limited time. Other than practicing, he had been searching for that notebook in the Grass Hall, so where would he find the time to play house with these young aristocrats?

His acting had improved though!

Ai Hui winked at Fu Sisi, glad that he had gained the upper hand once again. This woman was very scheming, and he had almost been made a fool. If he had not put an end to this affair, he would most definitely be expecting a visit from an assassin tonight.

Fu Sisi looked gloomy as she stared coldly at Ai Hui.

Just then, a gentle voiced sounded from close by, "You guys..."

At a cross street not far away, a person could be seen on her way back to the residence. Madam Ye looked at the both of them with

suspicion.

Ai Hui’s heart jumped. Not good.

A grim smile appeared at the corner of Fu Sisi’s lips. Her eyes turned red quickly and tears started spilling out generously. Crying loudly, she dashed toward Madam Ye and threw herself into her arms, bawling nonstop.

"What happened? What happened exactly? Don’t cry, tell me what’s going on. I’ll help you!"

Madam Ye comforted Fu Sisi gently.

"Huuuu..."

"Huuu... I’ve known him for many years and we had something good going on. Huu..."

"He’s not made a name for himself, but not once did I abandon him. I bought sword manuals for him and trained with him. Finally he made progress, so I asked him to come over to Silver City in order to be with him. Huuu..."

"He... he wants to end all ties with me. Wants... wants me to go my own way... Huuu..."

A murderous glint flashed across her face as she threw piercing

glances at Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was speechless this time. His body stiffened up like a statue.

Chapter 356: Gift Him A Blow

The atmosphere was grave and suffocating.

There was a very stern expression on everybody’s faces. The main hall was absolutely quiet and only Fu Sisi’s sobs could be heard.

Ai Hui lowered his head. All eyes were on him, and it felt as though he was being stabbed by knives.

Madam Ye’s usual smile vanished as well. She spoke with a stern face and threatening look on her face, "I did not expect you two to have this kind of relationship. It isn’t something for me to get involved in, but when one of you is calling me aunt and the other is a teacher in my residence, I can’t just sit and watch as if it’s none of my business. So let’s talk. What are you two planning to do?"

What?

Ai Hui felt like dying. If he’d known that this 1,200 Heaven Merit Points was going to be so troublesome, he absolutely wouldn’t have accepted it. But on second thought, it was a huge sum and it would be unrealistic of him to expect a smooth ride.

With this thought, Ai Hui was set.

Fu Sisi’s feeble voice sounded in the hall.

"I... I'm not actually expecting anything. If he doesn't want to marry into the family, so be it. We could've come up with solutions together so why was he so quick to sever all ties?"

Ai Hui instantly felt the looks thrown at him becoming sharper and more murderous.

Ai Hui was crying bitterly inside. What a scheming woman!

Her wretchedness immediately evoked great sympathy! What would you do if this young lady had already resorted to such trickery?

He was in big trouble!

His head throbbed.

It was his first time meeting such a lady.

Money-losing Deal was the most candid and readable lady. She would spare you the trouble of guessing and just show you with her fists. One Thousand Yuan was the most unpredictable lady. She was vicious and sly. There was no need to guess her thoughts since it would be fruitless. Fu Sisi surprised him the most. She was, in reality, completely different from how she appeared. She looked harmless and upright, but was in fact dangerous and secretive.

Thinking about his time in Peace City when he had even thought that this lady was generous and graceful.

How naive and silly he had been.

Madam Ye turned her gaze to Ai Hui and asked, "Zhaoyang, what do you say?"

Ai Hui’s brain was spinning rapidly. This was definitely a big hole and jumping into it would mean broken bones and a horrible death. The Ling residence, the Fu family and the Ye residence were all big shots. If he were to enter this massive maelstrom, his small frame would be torn apart in no time.

But he must not offend the Ye residence either, since he had not obtained the notebook yet.

Ai Hui could infer much from Hua Kui’s attitude toward the Ye residence. He suspected that the Assembly of Patriarchs was highly dependent on Madam Ye’s care. Otherwise, why would the Grass Hall fawn over her?

If he offended Madam Ye, he would definitely cause trouble in the Grass Hall, making it even more difficult for him to find the notebook he had been looking for.

It was wiser to offend her after getting ahold of those notebook.

What should he do now?

Just then, the housekeeper rushed in.

"Teacher, Young Master Ling Xiao has been attacked by an assassin and is seriously injured. His guards are all dead."

Everyone was shocked beyond belief. They looked toward Fu Sisi and Chu Zhaoyang in unison.

Madam Ye's expression changed a few times. The couple had just parted ways with Ling Xiao and now he was severely injured by an assassin. There was something seriously amiss here.

Fu Sisi's face turned as white as a sheet. She did not want to marry Ling Xiao out of fear that the Fu family would be swallowed up by the Ling family. Since the latter was strong while the former was weak, the Ling residence had an excuse to deal with the Fu family now that Ling Xiao was seriously hurt.

Ai Hui's expression worsened. He had just gotten into a brawl with Ling Xiao, and Ling Xiao was attacked soon after. How was he going to clear his name? Plus, the Ling residence would not even care if he was the one behind the assassination. A small shrimp like him was best used as a warning against potential perpetrators.

Another guard spoke up urgently. "Madam, the Ling residence's people are here and wish for you to hand them over. They assert that both of them are involved in Ling Xiao's assassination attempt."

Fu Sisi’s face paled even more. She had not expected things to play out this way. The Ling residence’s agitation was akin to that of a crazy beast, and the Fu family could very possibly become the first sacrifice.

Ai Hui felt thoroughly down on his luck, but he remained calm since he was already prepared to escape. He would have to think of an alternative method of obtaining the notebook from the Hall of Ancient Records.

The pitiful Chu Zhaoyang was going to feel to the other end of the world soon.

Thinking about how the false identity he had fostered over the years was about to die, all he could do was sigh.

As the saying goes, people die for money while chickens die for food. This applied to his alias as well.

Madam Ye replied coldly, "The Ling residence is really demanding. Do they think they’re the Elders Guild? Or do they see me as a widow who can be trampled on? Tell their people to get an order from the Elders Guild before coming over."

Ai Hui gave Madam Ye an astonished look. She was usually soft and gentle, but right now, she sounded extremely domineering. It all made sense now since he was a teacher in the Ye residence. In front of the Ling residence, the Ye residence would definitely not appear weak. Without concrete evidence, Madam Ye would protect the family with all that she had instead of surrendering.

Ai Hui relaxed immediately.

Who would attempt an assassination at such a critical juncture?

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The streets were in a chaotic state, and the ground was still covered in bloodstains and corpses, displaying the evident intensity of the battle. People observed from afar because no one dared to come close to the scene. They discussed in low voices instead. Which family had been brave enough to pull the Ling residence's beard? Some felt rueful over Silver City's plight. How long had it been since such a huge incident happened here?

A few figures whizzed down from the sky and landed.

The two persons turned out to be Tong Gui and Yu Jin. Seeing the Ling residence's emblem on the guards' uniform, their gazes changed. They saw the surprise in each other's eyes.

Dealing such a huge blow to a Ling residence's descendent in Silver City... how far would they have to trace this matter back to?

Fights between aristocratic families were irreconcilable, but there was a certain mutual understanding. For example, not assassinating the sons of the families was an unwritten rule. To the aristocratic families, a momentary benefit could not be placed on par with the continuation of a family's genealogy. Families rose

and fell, but the continuation of the family line never failed to bring hope.

Any family that broke this unwritten rule would be the target of public criticism.

Now, such a vile thing had actually happened in Silver City.

Both could feel a storm brewing.

Yu Jin checked the guards' corpses and said rapidly, "The perpetrator must have blended into the crowd and attacked from the side. There were also archers lying in ambush above the shops on both sides of the street. The attack was very intense, and they had no time to retaliate. The opponent's target was Ling Xiao. Look at the arrowheads."

The densely packed holes on the ground formed a circular, but irregular shape.

Most arrows had been blocked by the guards' bodies, but the attack was concentrated, so Ling Xiao's injuries must be pretty significant." Yu Jin rose and looked at Tong Gui. "They want him dead."

Tong Gui muttered to himself, "Who would want his life?"

Yu Jin gave no answer, but continued, "The perpetrator is very experienced. The arrows he used are ordinary and without any

symbols."

Just then, a subordinate came forward to give his report. "Sir, after checking with those nearby, they mentioned that there were numerous perpetrators. Upon completing their task, they escaped through the underground canal.

Tong Gui immediately ordered, "Form a group to check on each and every exit of the underground canal. Take suspicious characters down. Send another group to search within the canal."

"Yes!"

The subordinate flew off immediately.

Yu Jin gave Tong Gui a look. "Only local families would be familiar with such a canal."

Immediately upon completing his sentence, a bunch of aggressive fellows, led by Ling Sheng, dashed over.

Without even looking at the both of them, Ling Sheng walked toward the corpses with an ashen face and started examining them.

Shortly after, he stood up and looked at them coldly. "If I recall correctly, the Sky Edge division has recently been in charge of Silver City’s defense. The Sky Edge division has evidently been neglecting its duty for such a nasty thing to happen here. The

division must take responsibility. You guys wait."

Tong Gui responded lazily, "As you wish."

Ling Sheng was furious. His eyes spat fire, but he said nothing and led his team away instead.

Seeing Ling Sheng's disappearing figure, both also started to realize the severity of this matter.

"They are heading toward... the Ye residence?"

"It's been rumored that a swordsmanship instructor got involved with Fu Sisi and both had just been in conflict with Ling Xiao before he was attacked. Earlier, the Ling residence sent people to the Ye residence to get ahold of the suspects, but were rejected by Madam Ye."

"Is Ling Sheng planning to barge in?" Tong Gui shook his head. "Things are about to get real messy."

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The Ye residence.

Ai Hui thought hard about who the perpetrator could be, but to no avail. All right, no point in thinking if it's not working out. Silver City's waters ran too deep. For a small shrimp swimming in

the big ocean, there were other things to worry about. Letting his worried heart calm down, Ai Hui loosened his mind.

Objectively, the Fu family and him were all victims. There was no evidence to prove their relations, and Madam Ye absolutely would not back down. If the Ye residence was unable to protect Fu Sisi and himself, the Great Elder's authority and power would be obliterated, something unacceptable in the eyes of the Great Elder.

This gave the Fu family an opportunity to rely on the Great Elder's support.

Seeing Fu Sisi return to her usual state, Ai Hui knew that this scheming woman had realized this too.

Just then, a furious voice roared from the sky, "Ye Lin! Hand over that adulterous pair and I'll disregard this matter!"

The voice was like exploding thunder, its volume reaching far and wide.

Ling Sheng, who was in the sky, brought along a bunch of murderous-looking guards. Looking mighty and powerful, it seemed as though he was ready to crush this old house into pieces.

Unexpectedly, Ye Lin retained her usual disposition and even had a faint smile on her face. Except that this smile was exceptionally cold.

"Our ancestors were right: the kind get bullied," she mumbled to herself with a casual expression on her face. "I’m the only widowed mother in the Ye residence, so people often think they can trample on me as they wish. They forget the Avalon’s origins. They forget that all elementalists owe their lives today to the Ye family!"

Finishing her sentence, her expression turned cold and murderous.

"Gift him a blow."

A loud rumble could be heard in the Ye residence. It was as if a monster had been awakened from a thousand years of deep sleep.

Chapter 357: Are You Willing?

Shiiiiing!

At first, the sound of a sword being unsheathed was fine and soft, causing one to focus and listen to it carefully. Suddenly, the sword chime increased in volume, becoming sharp and reverberating. Upon hearing it, one would feel as if his or her heart was being pierced by a sword.

Ai Hui's hair stood on end, resembling an alarmed cat. An indescribable feeling of danger enshrouded his body. He felt as if a glimmering razor-sharp sword was being pressed against the back of his neck. His hand subconsciously gripped the Silverfold Plum on his waist.

He was overwhelmed with shock.

This was...

A streak of sword gleam shot out from an ancient well in the back garden of the Ye Residence. The streak of sword gleam was not really dazzling, but the sky suddenly darkened at this point in time. The azure sky and the scorching sun looked as if their colors had faded, becoming ashen. The only thing that remained bright was that streak of sword gleam.

Upon sensing that something was not right, Ling Sheng turned around to escape. However, the streak of sword gleam was extremely fast. In the blink of an eye, it had caught up with Ling

Sheng. He let out a blood-curdling screech as his left arm was cut off, causing him to be drenched in blood.

"The blood feud between the Ye Family and the Ling Family will last for generations, and it will only end if one of us is dead!"

Ling Sheng's figure disappeared into the distance, but his vile curses continued to resound through the air.

Ai Hui's face turned pale. After a long while, he finally regained his composure. He simply could not describe the shock he felt. That sword gleam's aura alone was enough to freeze his entire body. As the head of the Ling Family, Ling Sheng was at least a Master. Even a Master had lost an arm to stay alive against that streak of sword gleam. If Ai Hui was in Ling Sheng's position, he would have zero chance of surviving.

Ai Hui thought about the sword gleams he had seen before, but none of them were comparable to the one from the Ye Residence. The sword gleam that the Karakorum Savant used to kill Chi Zun was earth-shattering and could be considered the apex of the present age's swordsmanship.

However, it still paled in comparison to this one.

When this sword gleam shot out, it did not leave any trail of smoke, fire, or aura, yet it could dominate all living things.

Ai Hui returned to his senses and looked at the others. Everyone

else reacted worse than him. Their facial expressions were blank. Apparently, they had not recovered from the shock of that sword gleam.

"Xiaobao, follow me," Ye Lin said solemnly.

Xiaobao acknowledged and quickly followed behind his mother.

Ye Lin brought Xiaobao out of the main hall and walked to an empty space outdoors that faced the back garden. Next, she kneeled down and bowed. Xiaobao did not seem to understand what was going on, but when he saw his mother kneel down, he followed suit.

"Mighty Ancestor, thank you for protecting your descendants today. I'm Ye Clan's Ye Lin. My husband died when his son was still young. Today, a powerful enemy arrived at our doorstep and brought dishonor to our family. I had to summon you to punish him. Sorry for disturbing your peaceful slumber. Mighty Ancestor, please keep me and my son safe and sound. Ye Lin will kowtow to you now."

With a solemn look on her face, Ye Lin kowtowed three times. Upon seeing what his mother did, Xiaobao kowtowed three times as well.

Ai Hui was flabbergasted. Could it be... that streak of sword gleam was left behind by Ye Huitang?

A thunderbolt struck Ai Hui. No wonder the sword gleam was so terrifying and powerful. Even a Master like Ling Sheng was defeated by such a blow and had to lose an arm to stay alive.

Amazing!

Ye Huitang's era was a millennium ago.

What kind of sword gleam could be sealed for a millennium? If Ye Huitang could do this, how powerful was he actually? In the records that Ai Hui read before, most of them mentioned that the "last swordsman" was an aged hero who no longer possessed any strength. Having no options left, he had to use the last bit of his vitality to unleash the ultimate sword move.

However, it was at this moment that Ai Hui realized that what was written in those records might be inaccurate. The depths of Ye Huitang's strength were more unfathomable than he expected! Suddenly, Ai Hui returned to his senses. No, it was he who had misinterpreted those records.

As Ai Hui thought of the line mentioned in the swordplay manual, that "the enemy leader was slain by a single sword move," he involuntarily became lost in thought. Was this sword move just like that streak of sword gleam?

The depths of the Ye Residence's might were indeed terrifying!

Madam Ye stood up and wiped off the dust on Xiaobao's knees.

The old lady beside her returned to her senses and said to Madam Ye with a worried tone, "Madam, I'm afraid the Ling Residence will not take this incident lying down."

"Afraid?" Madam Ye chuckled. "Didn't you hear him say that the blood feud between the Ye Family and Ling Family will last for generations, and it will end only if one of us is dead? Regardless, you don't need to be too concerned about a mere Ling Residence."

The old woman wanted to say something, but she hesitated. She knew her master was a decisive individual and might already have a plan.

Fu Sisi's face was deathly pale. She knew she had gone overboard in provoking the Ling Residence this time around. The Ye Residence was powerful and had the backing of the Great Elder. For Chu Zhaoyang, as long as he stayed in the Ye Residence, the Ling Residence could not do anything against him. Therefore, the enraged Ling Residence would go after the Fu Family first.

At its peak, the Fu Family could not contend with the Ling Residence, let alone a Fu Family that was now on the decline.

Trembling in fear, she kneeled down and begged Madam Ye, "Madam, please save the Fu Family!"

Madam Ye sighed deeply without saying anything.

Ai Hui could see that Fu Sisi was truly scared now. Her entire

body shivered in fear, looking like quail that was crouching on the ground. When Ai Hui saw this scene, he could not help but feel sad for her. Fu Sisi had always been a shrewd and confident individual. Since when had he seen her in such a panicked and fearful state? The fighting and plotting between aristocratic families were indeed dangerous.

Even though Ai Hui felt sad for Fu Sisi, he still had no intention of speaking up for her. Right now, he was having a headache over how to break free from this maelstrom. He really did not want to get involved in the struggles between aristocratic families. He knew everyone here was vicious and despicable. For the sake of their families, they would not even mind getting married to a stranger.

This must be the price of enjoying the benefits of being in an aristocratic family.

Suddenly, Ai Hui thought of Shi Xueman. Shi Xueman did not seem to have these characteristics.

Oh? How did iron lady survive all these years? She had a good father. Ai Hui felt that this was the key reason why she did not possess these qualities.

Fu Sisi begged piteously, "Madam, please save the Fu Family! From today onward, everyone in the Fu Family will be at your disposal and will not hesitate to go through fire or tread on water for you!"

Madam Ye smiled and helped Fu Sisi up from the ground. With a kind and gentle tone, she replied, "Don’t be anxious, Aunt Ye watched you grow up. Why would I not take care of you? Aunt Ye is pondering how to get us all through this crisis?"

Fu Sisi heaved a sigh of relief as a grateful looked appeared upon her face. "Thank you, Aunt Ye!"

From Ai Hui’s perspective, Madam Ye was not pondering at all. Obviously, she was waiting for Fu Sisi to state where her family’s loyalty lay. It appeared that Madam Ye was trying to absorb the Fu Family. Fu Sisi was an intelligent girl and knew what Madam Ye was trying to do. There were no other options for the Fu Family except to hug the Ye Residence’s legs. At this point of time, which family dared to provoke the Ling Residence by protecting the Fu Family?

In the end, whether it was the Ye Residence or the Fu Family, it had nothing to do with me. Ai Hui thought to himself.

Just as Fu Sisi began to feel nervous, Madam Ye continued, "It has been a while since I last visited your residence. Aunt Ye and Xiaobao want to stay at your residence for a few days What do you think?"

"Thank you, Aunt Ye! The entire Fu Family will put up grand preparations for your arrival!" Fu Sisi replied with great respect.

Madam Ye turned around and said to Ai Hui, "Teacher Chu, you will follow us as well."

"Me?" Ai Hui was stunned.

Madam Ye smiled to Fu Sisi. "You see how happy he is. I think he still cares about you. We will discuss your issue when we are at your residence."

Fu Sisi lowered her head, looking extremely shy. "I will let Madam make all the decisions."

Ai Hui was startled. This girl's acting skills were terrifying. However, he currently had no time to care about Fu Sisi's acting skills and was racking his brain to find a method to reject Madam Ye. If he was to go to the Fu Family, would he not become a lamb in a tiger's den? How would he find a wife in the future?

"I think there's no reason for me to go," Ai Hui replied with a solemn tone. "The students' swordplay training has reached a critical junction. If their training stops now, wouldn't all their effort go down the drain..."

"Stop? Are you thinking about slacking off?" Madam Ye laughed. "They will be coming along. The Fu Family is a huge family, and they have many training arenas and rooms. Sisi, it won't too much of a hassle for you, right?"

Fu Sisi smiled and replied, "Madam, your words are too flattering. It will be more lively if everyone goes together. This is what Sisi has been hoping for. Sisi and everyone enjoys a harmonious relationship, and all of us are best friends. Please treat

my home as your own when you arrive."

Best friends my foot!

Ai Hui almost burst out in rage. All of you are fighting and plotting against each other. Do you think I am blind?

Madam Ye's gaze shifted to the youths as an affable smile appeared on her face. "What about all of you? Are all of you willing to come? Don't force yourself if you really don't want to."

Everyone nodded their heads vigorously.

"Of course we are willing to go!"

"We will go wherever Madam wants us to go!"

"Sorry for the troubles, Sister Fu."

...

Ai Hui did not know that what happened today would have a huge impact on these people. After all, Ai Hui was not from an aristocratic family, so he lacked understanding toward the significance of the current situation. These young masters and mistresses were extremely sensitive to changes in the situation.

Madam Ye's display of might implied that she was prepared to step into the spotlight.

The smile on Madam Ye's face might appear affable and kind, but in reality, this was a dangerous and critical moment.

It was time for them to pick a side.

Fortunately for them, from the moment they stepped foot in the Ye Residence, they had already picked their side. Now, it was merely time for them to officially state where their loyalty lay. When the last person finished speaking, everyone looked at each other and smiled. The intense competitive atmosphere had lightened up significantly. They belonged to the same camp now.

Except for Ai Hui.

A lot of gazes fell upon Ai Hui. The quiet Teacher Chu seemed to be out of place.

Ai Hui realized that his situation was becoming precarious once more.

He did not act recklessly and maintained his composure.

At this moment, the butler ran over to them in a haste.

"Madam, there is updated news. Many bodies and tools have been

found in the underground canal. After verifying the bodies' identities, they were found to be the Yellow Sand Bandits. None of them survived. It has been suspected that they were being silenced by someone."

"You reap what you sow. Who can they blame?" Madam Ye replied leisurely.

"Xiao Shuren will be very happy when she hears this news." The old woman smiled.

When she saw the puzzled look on Madam Ye's face, she quickly explained, "The entire Great Wei Enterprise was massacred by the Yellow Sand Bandits."

"I see." Madam Ye nodded her head. After a while, she instructed the old woman, "Tell Xiao Shuren to go with us as well. She is also a pathetic individual."

Madam Ye suddenly looked as if she remembered something. Then, she turned around and looked at Ai Hui and asked, "Teacher Chu, what do you think?"

Ai Hui clenched his teeth and replied, "I will let Madam make all the decisions."

Chapter 358: Pearblossom Pavilion

If one had to choose the most unique structure in the Avalon of Five Elements, it would undoubtedly be Pearblossom Pavilion.

In the cold deep space above the area where humpback cloud whales lived, there was a six-hectare wide platform of clouds floating silently. On the top of the cloud platform, there was a small courtyard with green roof tiles and white walls that stood alone in the upper atmosphere. A small curvy path made up of wooden planks extended from the entrance of the courtyard to an octagonal pavilion situated at the edge of the cloud platform.

Pearblossom Pavilion was where Grandmaster An Muda lived.

An Muda liked serenity. As such, he built Pearblossom Pavilion at a high altitude.

At this point in time, there were two people sitting across from each other in Pearblossom Pavilion. One of them was a white-haired old man who slouched on his chair, the other was a valiant-looking girl who sat upright.

The old man was An Muda, the last Grandmaster in the Avalon of Five Elements. The girl seated opposite him was his disciple, Shi Xueman.

An Muda was very happy to see his disciple. He had been smiling the whole time since he met her.

The wrinkles on his face were very deep, resembling ravines that were formed by the gushing river water of time as it eroded the land of life. His thick eyelids always reminded Shi Xueman of a pair of tortoise shells that were filled with spots and traces. His eyes were turbid and dim. Shi Xueman remembered only a few times that his eyes lit up, causing one's heart to palpitate. His long snow-white hair resembled cascading clouds falling from the sky.

The appearance of Shi Xueman's master had never changed from the first time she met him.

However, when she saw her master today, she felt a tinge of an aura of defeat from him. This tinge of aura might be weak in nature, but it was extremely eye-striking in the pure and sparkling Pearblossom Pavilion.

She suddenly understood why her master would ask her to come visit him. An unsuppressable sorrow filled her heart. Even a Grandmaster like him would be defeated by Father Time?

"Master has heard of your issue. That unior of mine is not very happy with you and your father. Hahaha." An Muda chuckled.

When An Muda thought of the scowling look on his junior's face, he could not help but burst into laughter

Shi Xueman knew that An Muda's junior was the Great Elder. When she saw her master laughing to his heart's content, she smiled and poured some tea for him.

An Muda’s snowy eyebrows shrugged lightly, looking extremely comical. "Master feels that you don’t need to care about them. Do whatever you like to do. You have a good nature and a good father. Master can’t lose out to your father and has to be a good master to you as well. Hahaha."

An Muda was very satisfied with this disciple.

He then continued happily, "I’m not at all worried about your future. You have a different path from everyone else. The path you’re walking is a grand one. If you continue to train like this, sooner or later you will become a Grandmaster. Master’s style doesn’t suit you. Therefore, I have not given you many pointers so far."

If the outside world was to know An Muda’s evaluation of Shi Xueman was so high, everyone would be very shocked. Usually, all An Muda said about his disciple was something along the line of "she was a nice girl."

Shi Xueman was slightly surprised. This was also the first time she had heard her master giving her such an evaluation.

Very soon, she regained her composure and bowed lightly. "Disciple understands."

"I never taught you many things, so I can’t let you call me Master for nothing. After I pass away, this Pearblossom Pavilion shall belong to you. Treat it as a present from Master."

Immediately, Shi Xueman’s eyes became red and her nose started to sniff. "Master..."

An Muda waved his hand and continued, "Don’t react like this. Ever since Master became a Grandmaster, I have set myself apart from my rivals and enjoyed a happy life. My entire life has not been wasted. Furthermore, I am not dying soon. The reason why I asked you to come this time is because I have a few things to remind you."

Shi Xueman choked with emotions. After a while, she quickly raised her head and sat upright. With a solemn tone, she said, "Master, tell me!"

"Master can live for another two to three years, so you don’t need to be so worried. The first thing I want to talk about is your training. I know you have resigned from your position and have lost your opportunity to take part in Master’s Glory. I want to remind you that even if you have the opportunity to participate in Master’s Glory, don’t do it. It will clash with the path that you are on," An Muda said smilingly.

"Disciple will remember it!" Shi Xueman replied solemnly.

An Muda waved his hand and continued, "No need to be so serious. The second thing is that during this period of time, the Elders Guild will do two things. They will build a God-subduing Peak and promote Master’s Glory with all their might. By doing these two things, even if I pass away, the Elders Guild would still

possess the ability to defend itself. Since you have left the North Sea Division, you don’t need to care about the Elders Guild anymore."

"Yes."

"Also, if one day the Avalon of Five Elements really collapses, all of you shall return to the Old Territory.

Shi Xueman was extremely shocked. She stared blankly at her master.

"Don’t look at me like that," An Muda said cheerfully. "I’m just saying if it happens. The situation is not that critical right now."

After remaining silent for a while, Shi Xueman asked, "Why the Old Territory?"

"That’s the origin." An Muda appeared to be in a trance. He stared into the distance as if he was looking forward to something.

While Shi Xueman digested the words of her master, she gazed outside of the pavilion as well. Separated by the vast empty space, the Silver Mist Sea beneath the pavilion appeared blurry to her. Invisible energy waves were defusing in the empty space beneath her. Those were the traces left by a humpback cloud whale swimming in the upper atmosphere.

The Old Territory was an extremely unfamiliar place to her.

Why did Master want her to go to the Old Territory? Could going to the Old Territory keep her safe and alive? What origin?

Shi Xueman was unsure. Just as she was about to open her mouth and ask again, An Muda suddenly turned around and said, "It’s everyone’s origin."

.....

The residence of the Fu Family was brightly lit. The servants ran about like gushing river water, appearing to be extremely busy.

The Fu Family had prepared the highest level of reception for Madam Ye and her counterparts. The grand welcoming banquet that the Fu Family prepared made it seem like they were celebrating the New Year.

The banquet itself was extremely lively. Without a doubt, Madam Ye was seated at the seat of honor. Seated beside her was the head of the Fu Family, Fu Huaien. Ai Hui saw his cheapskate student, Fu Yongwu, and his brother, Fu Renxuan.

There was a drunk fellow named Jiu Gui and a lecherous guy called Prince.

Ai Hui did not expect them to know him and was puzzled by this fact for quite a while. It was only when they mentioned Hua Kui that Ai Hui knew they were from the Grass Hall as well. This

further proved that Madam Ye had a deep relationship with the Grass Hall since two of their experts were members of her entourage.

The Fu Family had never held a banquet for so many people before. The long table extended from the great hall to the main entrance.

The dinner was extremely sumptuous and the dishes were alluring. However, Ai Hui did not have the mood to eat at all. He absent-mindedly grabbed a few mouthfuls of food as he racked his brain to think of a way to escape from here.

The news of the assassination attempt on Lin Xiao had spread throughout Silver City. Every family was on tenterhooks.

The Fu Family's guards were on high alert. Meanwhile, the old lady that served Madam Ye was unfathomable. There were more than a few times Ai Hui caught her surveying him. The faint tinge of scrutiny behind her gaze made him feel as if there was a sword placed behind his neck.

The great hall looked extremely lively, but in reality, everyone's attention was placed upon Madam Ye and Fu Huaien. All of them had their ears perked up.

Madam Ye had an affable smile on her face, giving one the feeling of warmth. After talking to her for a while, Fu Huaien was completely overwhelmed by her. He had heard of her when he was young. However, after she got married, there was no more news of

her. She led a low-profile life and was seldom seen in the public.

With the backing of the Great Elder and her shrewdness, what was there to be worried about?

Fu Huaien held up a full wine cup and gave Madam Ye a toast, "Madam is indeed an extraordinary individual. Huaien is willing to play a second fiddle to Madam. From today onward, the Fu Family will follow Madam wholeheartedly and be at your disposal!"

After finishing his sentence, he downed his cup in one gulp.

"What disposal? You are being too courteous. From today onward, we are all one big family."

Madam Ye did not allow herself to lose to a man. She poured herself a full cup of wine and downed it in one gulp.

Fu Huaien was extremely touched by the Madam Ye's respect toward him. He immediately downed three straight cups of wine.

The fate of the Fu Family was set after joining the Great Elder's camp.

The atmosphere in the hall became harmonious and lively. Everyone was drinking and toasting each other to their hearts' content.

Suddenly, an arrogant voice rang across the room.

"Since today is a good day, how can we just drink alcohol alone. Let’s have a bout to liven things up even more! Madam, may I have your permission please!"

A youth stood up and walked to the center of the hall. To everyone’s surprise, it was Fu Yongwu.

He bowed respectfully to Madam Ye and then to Fu Huaien.

"I have long heard that Fu Yongwu is exceptionally talented. Today, I can see that you’re indeed an outstanding individual," Madam Ye praised him.

Fu Huaien was greatly consoled upon hearing Madam Ye’s praises for his son.

Madam Ye held up her wine cup and continued loudly, "Yongwu is right! First, there was the blood catastrophe. Then, there was the mutiny of the Jadeite Forest. The Avalon of Five Elements has never been in such a perilous situation for the past millenia. We are walking on eggshells, and our nation is on the verge of collapsing. What can we do? Only by being brave, only by taking up arms, and only by having a positive attitude can we save ourselves from this crisis and have a clear conscience! Cheers!"

She raised her head and downed her drink in one gulp.

Everyone was fired up as their emotions went out of control. All of them stood up and yelled together, "Cheers!"

Even Ai Hui felt a sense of respect toward Madam Ye. He silently praised Madam Ye in his heart. She was able to boost everyone's morale with just words alone, bringing a brand new attitude to them. Upon seeing the reverence and zealotry in the surrounding people's eyes, Ai Hui simultaneously developed a sense of admiration and vigilance regarding Madam Ye.

The atmosphere was extremely lively. Everyone's gaze was directed at Madam Ye at the same time.

With a smile on her face, Madam Ye continued with an attractive tone, "Of course, the Avalon of Five Elements cannot just depend on the old fellows like us. It needs the younger generation as well. All of you are the pillars, the future, and the hope of the Avalon of Five Elements. Since you want to liven things up, there has to be rewards. For the previous competition, I took out the Star Reaper. This time around, the reward is an elemental elixir."

The entire hall burst into an uproar.

Ai Hui's face froze. He was shocked by Madam Ye's generosity.

Elemental elixir! It's an elemental elixir!

A so-called elemental elixir was an elixir that was made from the essence of a high-grade dire beast. After refining and processing it,

the elemental energy within the elemental elixir could be directly absorbed by an elementalist.

This was also the only use for elemental elixirs.

The old lady walked into the hall holding a plate in her hand. On the plate, there were five elemental elixirs that were of completely different colors and gave off five different lusters. The noisy hall became quiet in an instant. Everyone’s face was filled with incredulity.

Metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Five types of elemental elixirs!

"The ultimate victor can choose one of these five elemental elixirs."

Madam Ye’s words were like adding fuel to flames, causing the hall to burst into an uproar again. Everyone’s gaze was filled with frenzy.

Should he do it...

Ai Hui was gulping his saliva as an internal struggle took place within his head.

"I challenge Chu Zhaoyang!"

Ai Hui was stunned and raised his head subconsciously.

With an arrogant look on his face, his cheapskate disciple was pointing his sword at him.

Ai Hui was instantly overjoyed.

Chapter 359: A Renowned Master, A Brilliant Disciple

The atmosphere in the Ling Residence was extremely depressing. Everyone felt tense.

Madam Ling stroked Ling Sheng's face lightly as her tears continuously flowed down her cheeks. Earlier today, there was an assassination attempt on her son, causing him to be severely injured and falling into a coma from which he had yet to wake. Subsequently, on the same day, her husband's right arm was chopped off, similarly rendering him in a comatose state.

Her world collapsed just like this.

She heard footsteps behind her. The butler stood at the doorstep with a worried look on his face. He was about to say something, but then hesitated.

"Spit it out, what more bad news do you have for me?" Madam Ling regained her composure.

"The namelist that we submitted for Master's Glory has been declined by the Elders Guild," the butler bowed and reported the news.

"All right, excuse yourself. I need some time to calm myself down," Madam Ling said plainly.

The butler did not dare to say anything else. He bowed and carefully closed the door before he left the room.

There was no one else in the room. In front of the bed, she stood up and walked to the dressing table. Looking at the pale and haggard woman in the mirror, she began to dress and groom herself.

Very soon, the woman in the mirror became gorgeous and charming once more.

Her slim and white hand grasped a colored glass lamp on the dressing table and turned it lightly. An entrance to a tunnel suddenly appeared in the corner of the room. Holding up her magnificent long dress, she stepped into the tunnel and walked down a flight of stairs.

The tunnel smelled terrible. Poisonous insects like centipedes and scorpions could be seen everywhere. Madam Ling's facial expression remained the same, appearing as if she had never seen them at all.

After walking for some time, she heard a clamor coming from the tunnel exit. She came before the exit, unlocked the door, and lightly pushed it open. When the door was opened, the volume of the clamor increased significantly. She found herself in a private room. Concealing the secret door to the tunnel in the private room was a hanging landscape painting that reached the floor.

No one would expect that this thriving and prosperous restaurant

would hide a tunnel that was connected to the Ling Residence. The owner of this restaurant had no relationship with the Ling Residence at all.

In the private room, food and drink had been set up on the table. There was a middle-aged man eating and drinking by himself.

The man had a squarish face with a pair of thick eyebrows. He looked imposing and ferocious. He was a regular customer in this restaurant, and all the employees were very familiar with him. He was the head of the "number one training hall," Dragonrise Training Hall, Master Yang Zhen.

Upon seeing Madam Ling, the man sighed, "It has been hard on you."

Madam Ling walked to the seat opposite Yang Zhen and sat. With an indifferent voice, she replied, "This is life."

Yang Zhen put down his wine cup and asked, "What do you want me to do? Assassinate Ye Lin? I’m afraid that is very difficult to achieve. The old servant by her side is as powerful as me."

A sneer appeared on Madam Ling’s face. The bitter resentment in her eyes was intense and distinct. She replied, "Can you make someone regret by killing him or her? No. The only way to make her regret is to make her lose everything she has now."

Yang Zhen looked slightly doubtful. He picked up his wine cup,

took a sip, and tasted it slowly in his mouth. Then, he replied, "I can’t think of any ways to make Ye Lin lose everything she has."

"Who has never done anything stupid when they were young?"

Madam Ling passed Yang Zhen a piece of paper.

Yang Zhen took over the piece of paper and looked at it. Immediately, he was overwhelmed with shock. "Is... Is this true?"

"What do you think?" Madam Ling retorted.

Yang Zhen became silent and drank his wine. After a long while, he raised his head and asked, "What do you want me to do?"

"Spread this out." Madam Ling fumed with rage between gritted teeth. "I want everyone in the world to know the true colors of this sl*t!"

The hand that Yang Zhen used to hold the piece of paper trembled lightly.

.....

The residence of the Fu Family.

Fu Yongwu’s sudden challenge to Chu Zhaoyang shocked

everyone, while Madam Ye’s encouragement and generosity completely lit up the atmosphere of the hall.

Everyone’s gaze fell on Chu Zhaoyang.

Jiu Gui, who was drinking by himself, and Prince, who was hitting on the girls around him, stopped what they were doing at the same time.

Prince asked curiously, "What do you think of this young fellow’s strength?"

Jiu Gui’s hazy and intoxicated eyes opened up slightly. With a drunken voice, he replied, "Hua Kui is such a picky fellow. Anyone that he chooses is more or less capable."

"It’s a pity that this fellow never fought the previous time." Prince said with regret in his voice.

Jiu Gui heaved a deep sigh of intoxicated air, "We will get to see later. It’s an elemental elixir. If not for the fact that I am too embarrassed to fight for it with these youngsters, I would have gone for it."

"I, myself, want to go for it too." Prince sighed as well. "The depth of the Ye Residence’s might is really unfathomable. I heard that the reward last time was a pair of [Star Reaper Gloves]. This time around, she actually took out elemental elixirs as a reward. When we were young, did we ever encounter such good stuff?"

The two of them were filled with envy.

Under everyone’s gaze, Ai Hui stood up unhurriedly, walked to the center of the hall, and asked, "You want to challenge me?"

Fu Yongwu stared fiercely at Ai Hui. He could tell that this cold and gloomy middle-aged man, who could not even stand up straight, was not a person of good character. How was he compatible with his elder sister?

"So you’re the one who has been bugging my elder sister?" Fu Yongwu asked coldly.

Ai Hui was stunned. He pointed his finger at his own face and asked with incredulity, "Me? Bugging your elder sister?"

He almost spat out a mouthful of blood. He finally understood how it felt to be called a thief by a thief. He wished he could hug his cheapskate disciple’s legs and beg him to let him off. Good disciple, I beg you to ask your elder sister to let Master off!

If your big sister let Master off, Master will leave without even wanting the elemental elixir.

It’s a pity Ai Hui could not...

Ai Hui flicked the Silverfold Plum in his hand and looked at his

cheapskate disciple with a regretful gaze. Life was always filled with so many moments of helplessness.

When Fu Yongwu saw Chu Zhaoyang's gaze, he was stunned. He felt that Chu Zhaoyang's gaze looked somewhat familiar. Suddenly, he realized why this was so. Did Chu Zhaoyang's gaze not look somewhat similar to his teacher, Ai Hui's?

Fu Yongwu became enraged all of a sudden.

If it was Teacher Ai Hui that looked at him like this, he would not mind. Even though he was gradually set apart from Teacher Ai Hui due to family reasons, his respect toward him had not decreased the slightest bit. Teacher Ai Hui had accomplished so many extraordinary feats. The moment he saw that Teacher Ai Hui could rally multitudes with a single call, he knew of his importance in everyone's heart.

Coincidentally, Chu Zhaoyang was also a teacher that taught swordsmanship.

Don't think you can look at me like this just because you're a teacher!

Fu Yongwu stared ferociously at Chu Zhaoyang. Not backing off, he said, "I advise you to give up on my elder sister. Humph, you're a toad that's lusting after a swan's flesh. Look at yourself. Do you think you're compatible with my elder sister?"

Chu Zhaoyang suddenly became furious, "Hey, can you then tell me how am I not not compatible with her?"

With a disdainful look on his face, Fu Yongwu replied, "Do you still need me to tell you? Look at how beautiful my sister is and then look at how ugly you are. Since the ancient times, married couples' families were always well-matched in term of social status. Let me ask you, are you from a prestigious family?"

"No." Ai Hui shook his head.

Fu Yongwu continued, "Since your family background doesn't match her, how can I watch her jump into a living hell with you? I heard that you're a swordplay teacher. I myself have practiced swordsmanship for some time as well. Let's have a bout."

He stepped into his fighting stance and drew his sword and pointed it at Ai Hui. "Come!"

Ai Hui examined his stance and felt slightly surprised. Fu Yongwu's stance was well-guarded and balanced. It seemed that he had been practicing hard every day.

"Not bad," Ai Hui nodded his head.

"My master is the renowned Ai Hui, the Lightning Blade. I heard that your swordsmanship is very powerful, but in my heart, my master is the best."

"His name is Ai Hui?" Chu Zhaoyang's face turned pale with fright.

"That's right!" Fu Yongwu replied proudly.

"I have heard of Lightning Blade Ai Hui's superb and outstanding swordsmanship," Chu Zhaoyang's face was filled with adoration. Following which, the look of adoration on his face became a regretful one, "It's a pity he is not in Silver City. Otherwise, I would want to have a drink with him and discuss swordsmanship. Fine, fine, fine. Since you're the Lightning Blade's disciple, you must be rather outstanding as well. A renowned master, a brilliant disciple. I shall concede defeat then."

A dead silence swept across the hall abruptly.

Prince's facial expression and movements froze. The meat that was wedged between his chopsticks fell on the table, but he was completely oblivious to it. Beside him, Jiu Hui choked on his wine, and his entire face turned red.

Everyone else was caught off guard and became dumbfounded.

Fu Sisi's facial expression turned ugly. However, she regained her composure very soon.

Currently, the Fu Family had already succeeded in hugging Madam Ye's legs and formed a feud with the Ling Residence. Given the current situation, she did not need to use Chu Zhaoyang's

status as the Ye Residence’s swordplay teacher to protect her family.

Chu Zhaoyang had a mysterious background. His methods of doing things were cunning and unpredictable.

Did he not know what Madam would think of him?

Right now, the Fu Family was hugging Madam Ye’s legs tightly. What mattered the most was Madam Ye’s attitude toward them.

Fu Sisi glanced at Madam Ye. Upon seeing that Madam Ye was smiling cheerfully and in good mood, Fu Sisi felt relieved.

Fu Yongwu had not expected Chu Zhaoyang to admit defeat as well. He could not help but feel shocked. However, very soon, he returned to his senses. Could it be that his persuasive power had increased?

He was overjoyed. His gaze toward Chu Zhaoyang immediately became much friendlier. Other than being ugly, poor, and having a lousy family background, Chu Zhaoyang was a rather good guy.

He coughed softly to break the silence. Then, he spoke with a dignified voice, "It’s a good thing for everyone that you can come to your senses. Even though you can’t be my brother-in-law, we still can be brothers. Your problems shall be my problems as well! Whoever finds trouble with you is equivalent to finding trouble with me!"

"You will be a loyal friend! Brother, you are indeed very kind! In the future, if I encounter any problems, I shall find you for help!" Chu Zhaoyang gave him a thumbs-up.

"No problem!" Fu Yongwu smacked his own chest.

Fu Sisi's gaze was fixated on Chu Zhaoyang. She felt puzzled and mindful at the same time. What was Chu Zhaoyang up to this time around? She knew how avaricious Chu Zhaoyang was. There was no reason for him to be enticed by 1,000 Heaven Merit Points, but not by the precious elemental elixir!

Was he worried about the Ling Residence?

The Ye Residence and Ling Residence had completely fallen out with each other. There would be a series of confrontations between these two families. Chu Zhaoyang did not need to be afraid of the Ling Residence at all.

Was there something that she missed out on?

When Chu Zhaoyang casually walked back to his seat, an awkward silence swept across the previously vibrant hall. No one knew how to react to this surprising outcome.

Chu Zhaoyang cupped his hands in salute and began to immerse himself in the food.

Gui Hu and the rest looked at each other in dismay. They were puzzled since they were aware of this teacher's morality and conduct.

It was a fact that he had no shame. However, he did not seem like someone who could ignore the enticement of an elemental elixir.

Instantly, the young members of the Fu Family looked at Chu Zhaoyang with disdain and contempt.

After a short period of awkward silence, the hall bustled with activities once more. No one could ignore the allure of the elemental elixirs. There were a few times when Ai Hui noticed that someone was secretly observing him. However, each time, he acted like he did not know, and he did not try to look for that person.

Could it be that he had become a hot commodity as well?

Ai Hui laughed bitterly in his heart as he continued to immerse himself in the food.

The atmosphere was extremely lively. The entire hall was filled with the smell of alcohol and toasts could be heard incessantly. Those taking part in the bout were fighting fervently, displaying all kinds of spectacular abilities. On the two sides of the long table, servants were continuously shuttling to and fro, bringing out good wine and delicious food in an endless stream.

Ai Hui, who was indulging himself in the food, suddenly froze.

Chapter 360: Reunion

Silver City was really not a good place to be.

This was not the first time Ai Hui had such a feeling. It was as if he was born to loathe this place.

At this point in time, the dining hall was like a boiling cauldron of voices. Faces were intoxicated. Anything that was put into one's mouth was either delicious food or fine wine. Anybody that one saw with his eyes was a beauty.

In this place, other than getting drunk and making a ruckus with everyone, there was nothing else one could do. Everyone's face brimmed with joy, completely lacking in vigilance. Everyone knew what distance to maintain from each other to make sure they, themselves, were safe and that the other party was comfortable.

Just like the fine wine and delicious food, exquisite lies and fake smiles could be found everywhere.

As compared to tonight's banquet, the last party Ai Hui had in the Swordsman Training Hall was simple and crude. A party that was specially for savage people, to be exact.

Everyone had had their arms around each other's shoulders while eating, drinking, babbling nonsense. There had been no elegance to speak of. No one had to worry about bragging and talking about their troubles. If one wanted to cry, then he or she would cry. If one wanted to laugh, then he or she would laugh.

Everyone had acted like an idiot.

Ai Hui had never missed that moment more than now.

In this place, everyone put on a mask and tried their best to outperform each other. An exquisite crystal chandelier hung high above their heads, looking grand and resplendent. Even though there were so many people around Ai Hui, he still felt lonely.

Silver City was like an exceptionally beautiful lake. The surface of the lake was like a mirror, reflecting the image of the sky perfectly. However, beneath the tranquil lake, there were numerous invisible whirlpools. These whirlpools were the prestigious aristocratic families.

The aristocratic families' influence could be found everywhere in Silver City. Their tentacles had extended to every nook and cranny of Silver City.

The moment one stepped into Silver City, he or she would be swept into one of these whirlpools. No one could avoid this fate. It was normal to lack the freedom to act independently in this place. Even the mighty Madam Ye and Fu Huaien were in this situation as well.

Silver City might look like an beautiful and alluring painting, but in reality, it was a pale and hollow painting. Just like how the beautiful and visionary speech that Madam Ye previously gave had already been forgotten by everyone. Everyone looked to the two individuals battling in the arena with their bloodshot, intoxicated

eyes.

Other than immersing himself in the food, what else could Ai Hui do?

He wished he could leave this place now.

He was not someone who would back away from any problem or danger he encountered. However, for some unknown reason, in this brightly-lit, fully-packed, and bustling dining hall, his urge to run away and leave this place became even stronger.

Unfortunately, he had not found the notebook yet.

He continued to gobble up the food. Only by doing this could he get rid of the bad feeling within him.

At this moment, a feeling of extreme danger suddenly arose in Ai Hui's heart, freezing his body momentarily. After one second, his body loosened up. He pretended to drink water and raised his head, slowly scanning his surrounding.

The feeling of danger was extremely strong. The premonition in Ai Hui's heart did not disappear and became stronger instead.

Ai Hui appeared no different from the rest. However, he was extremely focused, and his body was preparing itself for something to happen. If anything bad was to happen, he would be ready to strike.

The feeling of danger became faintly discernable. Ai Hui, an experienced individual, knew that the danger was not targeting him. The weird thing was that he indistinctly sensed a familiar aura.

If the danger was not targeting him, then who was it targeting?

Ai Hui's brain began to operate rapidly as his gaze continued sweeping across his surroundings. Suddenly, a thought flashed across his mind. Who was the one that was most likely to be assassinated?

Ai Hui turned his head around abruptly and looked at Madam Ye, who was seated at the seat of honor.

If a crisis occurred, the one who was most likely to be targeted... must be Madam Ye!

Madam Ye was chatting happily with Fu Huaien. The unfathomable old woman guarded her from behind. Her vigilant gaze scanned through her surroundings every now and then.

Ai Hui's eyes were extremely sharp. He immediately noticed a servant that was getting closer to Madam Ye. The servant was holding a plate of piping hot food, appearing as if nothing was out of the ordinary.

Was he being too paranoid?

At this moment, the servant happened to turn around and face Ai Hui.

Ai Hui’s eye pupils shrunk. The servant’s eyes contained a tinge of blood-red demonic glow.

The Blood of God!

Horrified, Ai Hui stood up abruptly and yelled, "Be careful!"

He finally understood why he sensed danger. He was extremely sensitive to blood spiritual force. His instinctive hatred for the Blood of God was embedded within his body.

The old woman reacted the fastest. Just as Ai Hui stood up, she was already protecting Madam Ye.

When the servant saw that his surprise attack had failed, a look of determination appeared on his face.

His body inflated rapidly like a balloon, and his face became distorted, appearing extremely hideous.

"What is that?"

"Oh my god!"

The old woman’s facial expression changed drastically.

10 meters away from her, the inflated servant exploded with a loud boom

A glaring red light momentarily blinded everyone. A terrifying aura engulfed the entire dining hall. Blood-curdling screams and cries of alarm could be heard incessantly.

Ai Hui reacted extremely fast. Immediately, he flipped up the ironwood table in front of him with his foot and crouched down. The table acted like a big shield in front of him.

Thud, thud, thud!

The sound of densely-packed collisions fell nonstop on his ears. Numerous bumps began to appear on the bottom of the sturdy table. Pieces of torn flesh rapidly flew by him like arrows that were launched from a bow.

The people surrounding Ai Hui collapsed in an instant.

The air in the dining hall was pervaded with the uniquely sweet smell of blood poison. Ai Hui’s eyes suddenly reddened. His inner hatred for the Blood of God caused him to involuntarily tremble. The entire hall seemed to be shrouded in a red blood mist.

At this moment, the blood plum blossom on Ai Hui's chest trembled, freezing his body.

This was...

Ai Hui widened his eyes. He suddenly realized that One Thousand Yuan was nearby!

The old woman received the most damage from the servant's explosion. She had endured more than half of the impact from the blast. Her hair was dishevelled and blood flowed out from the corner of her mouth, making her look extremely pathetic.

"Protect Madam!"

The old woman let of a bellow and a miserable shriek at almost the same time. Amid the blood mist, two figures could be seen separating upon making contact.

Not good!

Ai Hui's facial expression changed drastically. He felt really stupid. Other than Madam Ye, who else could One Thousand Yuan possibly target?

With a pair of glaring eyes, the old woman stood motionlessly in front of Madam Ye.

Suddenly, a streak of blood shot out from her neck. Following which, blood began to flow out of her neck like gushing spring water. She then collapsed onto the ground with a loud bang.

Was... was she dead?

Ai Hui was flabbergasted. The old woman's strength was unfathomable, and he suspected that she was at least at the level of a Master. However, a Master like her had just collapsed right in front of him. Even a Master could be so fragile when hit with a carefully planned assassination attempt.

For the first time, panic was written all over Madam Ye's face. When she saw the old woman collapse to the ground, the panic on her face turned into fear.

Out of the corner of his eye, Ai Hui suddenly saw a weird-looking figure dashing silently toward Madam Ye.

One Thousand Yuan!

She was trying to kill Madam Ye!

"Stop!"

"Be careful!"

Jiu Gui and Prince both cried out in alarm. They were seated at

the entrance and far away from Madam Ye. As such, when they witnessed this horrifying scene, they were unable to do anything, regardless of how much they wanted to. They could only cry out a warning.

Damn it!

Without hesitation, Ai Hui dashed forward. Sticking close to the wall, he pounced forward like a ferocious tiger. As he flew up into air, he unleashed a snow-white sword gleam that streaked across the dining hall.

Fu Yongwu was very lucky. Because of the location where he was seated, his brother, Fu Renxuan, had blocked most of the attack. However, this unforeseen event still left him in shock.

Suddenly, a dazzling cold sword gleam flashed across his eyes.

He quickly returned to his senses and saw Chu Zhaoyang's tiger-like back and the biting-cold sword gleam.

The image of the silvery light expanded rapidly in Madam Ye's vision, A terrifying killing intent overwhelmed her, causing her brain and body to freeze.

Chu Zhaoyang's cold scarred face suddenly increased in size from her perspective. His pair of eyes were filled with a deep-rooted hatred and the viciousness of a predator. The dazzling sword gleam was so cold that it did not contain a single tinge of warmth.

Is he... trying to kill me?

The fear on Madam Ye's face grew at a visible speed, resembling the expanding ripples on a pond after a rock had been thrown into it.

The figure that silently dashed toward Madam Ye flicked her hand.

Clink!

At the instant when Ai Hui made contact with the figure, the Silverfold Plum in his hand appeared as if it had been pierced into a whirlpool of void. A powerful attractive force was sucking him into the whirlpool. The glow in Ai Hui's eyes flickered and that mysterious force disappeared.

At this moment, Ai Hui was certain that the lady disguised as a servant girl was She Yu!

The Demonic Girl of God Nation!

Wearing an elemental mask on her face, She Yu looked like an ordinary servant girl. However, as her eyes lit up, a tinge of liveliness flashed across her plain-looking face

The servant girl's mouth curled into an enigmatic smile. Her

tongue involuntarily licked her luscious bright-colored lips, resembling a predator that had discovered traces of its prey.

So you were here!

The surging energy wave from the collision knocked Madam Ye a few steps back. When she stabilized herself, she noticed a figure was standing in front of her and protecting her. By this point, Madam Ye had realized that Chu Zhaoyang had just saved her. A tinge of gratitude appeared within her eyes.

Jiu Gui spat out a cloud of wine mist. A horseman dashed out of the wine mist and charged at servant in front of Chu Zhaoyang.

Prince flew up into the air and raised his great sword over his head. Locking on to his target, he pumped all his energy into this attack!

The third person to react was actually Su Huaijun. She waved her hand and threw out her jade bamboo stick.

The bamboo stick landed beside Madam Ye’s feet and began to grow. Following which, a green-colored light screen was released and enshrouded Madam Ye.

She Yu winked at Ai Hui. Then, her body trembled in an odd way, looking as if she was breaking away from some kind of restriction. Suddenly, the charging wine mist horseman and Prince’s overhead slash both completely lost their target.

The enemy was initially there, but they could not accurately target her.

The empty space in front of Chu Zhaoyang pissed off Prince so much that he almost vomited blood.

Meanwhile, the wine mist horseman dissipated into the air.

Under everyone’s watchful eyes, the servant girl vanished into thin air.

Those who saw this sight felt a cold shiver run down their spines.

Only Ai Hui saw what She Yu silently mouthed to him before she disappeared. The chilliness within his heart became more intense.

"I will be back for you."

Chapter 361: Painstaking Investigation

The residence of the Fu Family was filled with anguished wails.

The dining hall was messy and chaotic. Casualties could be found everywhere. The impact of the servant's self-destruction was not that large, but the incident had happened too suddenly. Being caught off guard caused devastating losses.

It merely took tens of seconds for merriment to turn into bereavement.

The one who suffered the greatest loss was Madam Ye.

With a sorrowful pale-white face, she kneeled beside the body of the old woman. She used trembling fingers to close the old woman's wide glaring eyes. This was the first time Madam Ye had come so close to death. She was literally a few steps away from death. If not for her loyal old servant using her body to protect her, Madam Ye would also be lying in a pool of blood right now.

She stared at the body of the old woman as her eyes filled with intense grief. The old woman had followed Madam Ye for many years and had gained her trust. Madam Ye treated her as part of her family.

The death of a Master dealt a huge blow to Madam Ye's strength.

"Give her an honorable burial," Madam Ye said to a servant in a

low voice.

Madam Ye stood up from the ground. There were a lot of things that she needed to do. The Fu Family had just pledged their allegiance to her and immediately received such a huge blow. The Fu Family's confidence was definitely wavering.

Madam Ye was sure that the Fu Family did not know anything about the surprise attack on their residence. This was because most of the casualties were members of the Fu Family.

Even Fu Huaien, who had been near Madam Ye, was severely injured by the impact of the explosion.

The Fu Family had suffered a crippling loss and might not be able to recover from this setback.

She could not let the Fu Family collapse just like this.

The quest for talent needed a vast amount of effort and resources. If the first family to pledge allegiance to her collapsed just like this, how would the other families still dare to join her?

Madam Ye shuttled to and fro among the casualties. She arranged medical treatment for them and maintained order in the hall. Very quickly, even though the number of casualties did not decrease, everyone's morale had soon been elevated. Fear and panic had been subdued.

Prince walked over and patted Ai Hui’s shoulder. "Good job!"

Ai Hui returned to his senses and understood that Prince was referring to blocking the recent assassination attempt. "It’s nothing. It’s my duty to do so," Ai Hui replied.

Jiu Gui nodded his head in approval at Ai Hui as well.

If anything was to happen to Madam Ye, both of them would be severely punished. Madam Ye and the Grass Hall had a deep relationship. Since they had been in the Grass Hall for a much longer period than Ai Hui, they naturally knew more things.

Ai Hui scanned his surroundings as his mind filled with suspicion and doubt.

Why was One Thousand Yuan in Silver City? What exactly did One Thousand Yuan want?

To assassinate Madam Ye? Ai Hui did not think so.

The assassination attempt was abnormally brief and precise. No matter how one looked at it, it was meticulously planned. Not only did it cause Madam Ye to lose an expert, it almost ended her life as well.

However, for some reason, Ai Hui felt that there was something wrong.

He calmed himself down and slowly sorted out his thinking process. It was during the daytime that Madam decided to come to the Fu Family's residence. The assassination attempt took place on the night of the same day. This meant that One Thousand Yuan had approximately half a day's time to prepare for this assassination attempt, unless she had already been hiding in the Fu family and the assassination opportunity just happened to present itself.

However, Ai Hui felt that the possibility of this happening was too low.

If this was not the cause, then that meant One Thousand Yuan had the support of a local family who was powerful and influential. Only a powerful and influential local family could obtain the news of Madam Ye's visit and infiltrate the Fu Family in such a short period of time.

Could it be the Ling Residence?

Logically speaking, the Ling Residence was the main suspect. It would not be unusual for this assassination attempt to be part of their revenge against the humiliation and losses they had just suffered. However, Ai Hui still felt that something was amiss about this conjecture.

Suddenly, Ai Hui thought of the assassination attempt on Ling Xiao. His body froze as he seemed to catch on to something.

The assassination attempt on Lin Xiao was the flashpoint for the animosity between the Ye Residence and the Ling Residence.

Assassination attempt on Lin Xiao... Assassination attempt on Lin Xiao...

Ai Hui caught ahold of the main point. Was the assassination attempt on Lin Xiao planned by One Thousand Yuan? When this idea flashed across Ai Hui's mind, his mind jolted abruptly. If this was the case, then many things could now be explained.

The Ling Residence was the representative for aristocratic families, while Madam Ye was the representative of the Great Elder and the Elders Guild. A fight between these two parties would cause the Avalon of Five Elements an immense loss of strength.

Weakening the Avalon of Five Elements was something that the Blood of God had always wanted to do.

However, other than causing Madam Ye to lose an expert, the assassination attempt this time around did not yield very many results. Furthermore, the assassination attempt also exposed the Blood of God's involvement in this incident. Everyone could identify the blood poison used in the attack.

Revealing the existence of the Blood of God's spies in Silver City would caused One Thousand Yuan more harm than good.

Unless...

At this moment, he heard Jiu Gui yell, "Be careful, the enemy has not left yet!"

Everyone, including Ai Hui, became tense!

Despicable!

The enemy pretended to leave the area and hid in one corner, waiting for the right opportunity to strike again.

Jiu Gui spat out a cloud of wine mist. A horseman emerged from the wine mist and charged toward the corner of the room. Suddenly, in the previously empty corner, a few figures appeared out of thin air.

When the infiltrators realized that they were exposed, two of them charged at the wine mist horseman and the rest split into two groups that started attacking everyone.

The situation immediately became dangerous.

Most of the injured were lying on the ground. Everyone's attention was placed on treating the wounded. The sudden outbreak of fighting sent everyone into a panic.

All of the Fu Family's guards ran forward to stop the enemies.

However, what happened next frightened everyone. The guards dropped down one by one, resembling wheat stalks that had been reaped.

At this point in time, Fu Sisi's face had already turned pale-white. The heavy losses that the Fu Family suffered today made her feel horrified. Initially, she wanted to carve a new path for the Fu Family and prevent them from being annexed by the Ling Residence. However, she did not expect that the new path would be so cruel and devastating.

"Stop them! Protect Madam!" Fu Huaien stepped forward and roared with a stern voice.

Among the many generations of family heads, Fu Huaien's aptitude was considered average. When compared to the young and inexperienced Fu Sisi, however, he was still very capable. When he saw his family guards collapsing one by one, his eyes surged with rage. With a roar, he pounced on the enemies.

The absolute art of the Fu Family, [Green Dragon Art], was on full display.

When Fu Sisi saw her bloodied father dash forward, tears flowed down her cheeks.

Fu Huaien's skin ignited with surging elemental energy. Cracks began to appear on his skin. These cracks emitted a green glow and looked like green dragon scales growing out his body. The sclera of Fu Huaien's eyes turned green as his eye pupils disappeared.

A terrifying aura shot into the sky.

When Fu Huaien enter the battle, the collapsing defensive line was immediately strengthened. In a single breath, Fu Huaien killed six enemies. The whole process resembled a fruit cutting process, shocking everyone in the hall.

Could Fu Huaien... be a Master?

Ai Hui looked at Fu Huaien in shock. He had fought against these enemies before and knew how powerful and vicious they were. Just three of these enemies were enough to tie him up and make him feel immense pressure.

Where did One Thousand Yuan find these powerful and vicious experts?

By this point, Fu Huaien had entered a zone. There was a vast difference in his strength before and after his transformation.

Jiu Gui and Prince were amazed. They were now certain that Fu Huaien had reached the level of Master.

"Defend! His transformation won’t last long!" An indifferent voice could be heard from the enemy line.

The enemies’ faces remained gloomy. Apparently, when they

heard that Fu Huaien's transformation would not last long, they heaved a sigh of relief. Within a short period of time, Fu Huaien had slain seven of their comrades.

Fu Huaien detested these people. These people almost caused the Fu Family to be consigned to eternal damnation. As such, he was very ruthless to them.

Both Jiu Gui and Prince were engaged in hard battles as well. Their opponents were specialized in mounting joint attacks in groups of five, causing the two of them to be in deep trouble.

"Fine, fine!"

Standing on the flight of steps, Madam Ye's face was gloomy. Saying "fine" two times in a row clearly showed that she was enraged.

"The Ling Residence is indeed evil. How dare they use Sacrificial Guards against me!"

Madam Ye hit the nail on the head about these people's background.

When everyone heard the term "Sacrificial Guards," their facial expressions changed drastically. Sacrificial Guards were the elite units of the Ling Residence. Every one of them was specially chosen after layers of trials. They were trained together from young, hence, they were well-coordinated.

At this point in time, Jiu Gui and Prince realized what was going on. Their opponents were not powerful, but they could pester the two of them and tangle them up.

A cold-looking man yelled indifferently, "So the Ye Residence has pride and honor, but my Ling Residence doesn’t? Today, I want one of your arms to seek vengeance for my brother!"

Ai Hui did not know of the background of these "Sacrificial Guards," but when he heard the words "Ling Residence," he was startled.

He finally knew what One Thousand Yuan was trying to do.

She framed the Ling Residence and the Ye Residence for her plot!

By framing the Ling Residence with the crime of colluding with the Blood of God, it would deepen the enmity between the Ling Residence and Ye Residence. The death battle between the Ling Residence, which was a powerful representative of the aristocratic families, and the Ye Residence, which was a representative of the Great Elder and the Elders Guild, would cause internal disorder and devastation in the Avalon of Five Elements.

Colluding with the Blood of God to kill Madam Ye would result in zero chance for both sides to reach a compromise.

Vicious!

Ai Hui broke out in cold sweat as he trembled with fear. A mere scheme like this could cause a huge fissure in the seemingly grand and magnificent Avalon of Five Elements.

Demonic girl!

One Thousand Yuan's shrewdness far surpassed his.

When Ai Hui thought of her parting words to him, he felt a cold shiver down his spine.

Should he leave Silver City as soon as possible?

Silver City was a really dangerous place. A moment of carelessness would cause him to meet with a tragic end.

Ai Hui was prepared to make an escape. The Sacrificial Guards were gaining an advantageous position in the battle. If Madam Ye's old servant was still alive... Ai Hui suddenly thought of something. What if One Thousand Yuan's target was never Madam Ye but the old servant with an unfathomable depth of strength?

The more Ai Hui thought about it, the more he felt that it was possible. If Madam Ye died by the hands of the Ling Residence, it would widen the rift between the aristocratic families and the Elders Guild and cause the Great Elder to lose his rationality.

To ensure that the Ling Residence was capable of hurting Madam Ye, the powerful and unfathomable old servant was killed.

The demonic girl was too scary!

"As long as there's one member of the Fu Family still alive, you can forget about hurting Madam Ye!"

Fu Huaien's roar was like a thunderclap.

"Vowing loyalty and devotion to your new master so soon?" The cold-looking man sneered. "The Fu Family is like a dog. Are you even qualified to bark at me? Kill him!"

Suddenly, Fu Huaien said, "From today onward, the head of the Fu Family will be Fu Sisi. Madam Ye, Sisi is still young. Please guide her along."

Afterward, Fu Huaien suddenly slapped the back of his head, and a green light erupted from the back of his head.

The cold-looking man's facial expression changed drastically.

Chapter 362: Finally, Overflowing Inspirations

Surging green light flowed through Fu Huaien's body. He was rapidly losing his vitality, looking as if his soul had left his body. Green dragon scales grew on his body. His eye pupils became ice-cold, completely devoid of emotions.

When the dragon scales completely covered his body, an awe-inspiring aura engulfed the hall. The air seemed to freeze at this moment.

Fu Huaien became like a monster that was fully covered with dragon scales. Two short horns protruded out of his forehead.

The cold-looking man's face changed drastically. He quickly roared, "Be careful!"

What was this? The [Green Dragon Art] had such a move? No one knew about it. The reason why the Ling Residence racked its brain to annex the Fu Family was to obtain this [Green Dragon Art]!

The cold-looking man looked slightly worried.

The [Green Dragon Art] was extremely powerful. Other than elemental energy, it also depleted blood and qi. The Ling Residence had an absolute art called [Swallow Moon]. This absolute art happened to be a top-grade art that nourished blood and qi. It complemented well with the [Green Dragon Art]. If one could fuse

these two absolute arts together, the [Moon-swallowing Green Dragon Art] might be a transcendent absolute art!

An absolute art and an heir were the keys to the perpetuation of a family. If these two keys could be preserved, then the family could be preserved. Even if a family did not have other resources, it could still survive with the birth of a genius.

A transcendent absolute art was a deadly enticement for the Ling Residence.

No one had expected so many unforeseen events.

By going against the Great Elder, the Ling Residence would definitely not come to a good end. However, after what happened today, everyone had lost their sense of logic. Other than fighting each other to death, there did not seem to be any other options.

When the cold-looking man saw Fu Huaien burning his own vitality to unleash the skill, he knew that a blood feud had been formed between the Ling Residence and the Fu Family. The hope of obtaining the [Green Dragon Art] was completely dashed.

With a flick of his body, Fu Huaien materialized into a streak of green light that flashed across the sky. At the same time, blood-curdling screams could be heard.

A fist-sized bloody hole appeared on the bodies of two Sacrificial Guards. Before the two could react, they collapsed face down onto

the ground. Fu Huaien was so fast that he could not be seen by the naked eye. Like an odd-looking snake, he rapidly slithered in and out of the crowd.

Blood-curdling screeches could be heard incessantly. Fu Huaien was on a killing rampage.

Ai Hui was dumbstruck. When these families started to go all-out, it was a terrifying sight to behold. Unlike his abnormally swift movements, Fu Huaien's breathing was calm and stable like a sleeping dragon. The sound of his breaths were not loud, but they sounded like thunderclaps to everyone. With every breath he took, the surrounding elemental energy would be sucked dry.

Many people in Silver City were alarmed by the noises, flew up into sky, and looked in the direction of the Fu Family's residence.

The brightly-lit residence of the Fu Family looked as if it housed a horrifying monster that devoured elemental energy from the environment. Every time it inhaled an immense amount of natural elemental energy poured into the Fu residence like floodwater.

The facial expression of the onlookers changed drastically.

Master!

Only a Master could cause such an astonishing phenomenon.

Was that not... the Fu Family?

When everyone recalled the news of what had happened during the day, they suddenly realized what was going on. There were mixed reactions toward the current events. Some people flew toward the Fu Family's residence in haste, but most families chose to look at the ongoing battle from afar.

The collision between the Ling Residence and the Elders Guild was like a battle between two colossi. A direct confrontation between two powerful forces like this had rarely been seen in the history of the Avalon of Five Elements. If an ordinary individual was sucked into this maelstrom, he or she would be shredded to pieces in an instant.

Many people were deeply worried. Could the Avalon of Five Elements withstand the battle between these two powerful families? After this battle, what would become of the Avalon of Five Elements?

No one knew what would happen. It was as if there was nobody that could stop these two behemoths.

When the surrounding elemental energy was completely depleted, it became a extremely miserable for the elementalists in the vicinity. To the Sacrificial Guards, not only was this torture, it was a nightmare as well.

Every time the rhythmic breathing was heard, a body would collapse.

Possessing a speed so fast that it sent despair into one's heart and completely dominating the surrounding elemental energy, Fu Huaien was definitely winning the battle right now. The Sacrificial Guards had been through extremely harsh training, and they had extreme willpower and fighting spirit. However, when they faced Fu Huaien's continuous attacks, their defensive line faltered and was on the verge of collapse.

Ling Yun's facial expression changed.

Fu Huaien was burning his vitality and could not last long. Initially, Ling Yun hoped to endure until Fu Huaien's dragon body crumbled, but he could not wait any longer now. Once the defensive line formed by Sacrificial Guards collapsed, he would be defeated.

The deployment of the Sacrificial Guards by the Ling Residence would definitely lead to many criticisms. However, if the Ling Residence could not obtain revenge even after they utilized the Sacrificial Guards, then it would spell much deeper trouble for them.

The Ling Residence's prestige would suffer a devastating decline. Their allies and vassal families would feel that the Ling Residence was strong in appearance, but weak in reality if they lacked the ability to even retaliate. No one would pledge allegiance to a weak family, just like how no one would choose a weak family as an ally.

In this predatory world, the weaklings would become food for the predators.

A look of determination appeared on Ling Yun's face. As a member of the Ling Residence, not only did the fate of the Ling Residence depend on him, but the fate of the Ling Family's descendants as well.

A high-profile battle like this would definitely attract a lot of attention. He had to resolve this battle in the shortest time possible. If Ye Lin's reinforcements were to arrive, this mission would be a complete failure.

The Fu Family was not the only one that possessed desperate measure like the [Green Dragon Art].

Ling Yun's hair turned snow-white at a visible rate before beginning to stand upright and point skyward. His skin rapidly turned pale-white as well. A dark red mark, which was bright and glistening, appeared on his glabella.

With a twist of his body, a streak of white light flashed across everyone's eyes and collided ferociously with the fleeting green light on the battlefield.

Boom!

The impact from the collision crushed the surrounding sturdy walls and half of the courtyard into fine powder.

Everyone was shocked by the impact of the collision between the

two combatants. They quickly retreated from the dueling duo.

Both of them fought each other with force, neither prepared to back away.

Everyone's attention was on the battle between Fu Huaien and Ling Yun.

No one had noticed that Chu Zhaoyang, who was in a deep trouble in one corner of the courtyard, was beginning to show signs of turning the tables.

No one other than Xiao Shuren.

Xiao Shuren had been secretly observing Chu Zhaoyang.

Ai Hui had never fought with enemies that specialized in joint attacks. Due to his inexperience, he was caught up in a bitter struggle from the start.

The combined assault from the three people put immense pressure on Ai Hui, forcing him into a passive position. However, such a pressurized situation also stimulated Ai Hui's fighting spirit. He had an unswerving determination and was not afraid of pressure. Pressure forced him to be more focused. He had no choice but to think at a faster speed as well as use extreme and risky moves to win the battle.

The form of his swordplay began to change.

The last time Ai Hui fought with Su Huaijun, he had to restrain a lot of his inspirations. After a few days, he tried to regain the inspirations he had touched upon the fight, but failed to do so. The inspirations and ideas just shuttled to and fro in his brain until today or, to be exact, until just a moment ago.

The joint attacks from the three opponents were well-coordinated. The time interval between each attack was very short, so short that Ai Hui almost could not ward them off. To break out of this predicament, Ai Hui had to execute his sword moves faster than his opponents' attacks!

As fast as a lightning bolt, the Silverfold Plum moved nimbly and gracefully in his hand. His [Six Moons] technique was changing its form endlessly. Streaks of silvery light swirled around him, appearing and disappearing at random.

His swordplay was not complicated, but simple and clean. Usually, one would find it extremely hard to withstand his attacks.

The three person team that attacked Ai Hui was complaining incessantly. The dancing streaks of sword gleam flew at an extreme speed and came from all sorts of weird angles. A moment of carelessness would cause one to be injured by them.

In the past, Ai Hui could control flying daggers. However, these daggers were made up of solid matter while the [Six Moons]'s sword gleams were formed by elemental energy. The sword gleams were as light as a feather and several times faster than the flying

daggers.

As such, the difficulty of controlling the sword gleams was also higher.

As Ai Hui's control over the sword gleams improved, the [Six Moons]'s destructive power increased sharply as well. Ai Hui, who previously was outnumbered, began to turn the tables on his enemy. The three Sacrificial Guards looked as if they were facing seven swordsmen in one go.

This was not the only breakthrough Ai Hui had obtained. Along with Ai Hui himself, the six crescent moon shaped gleams formed by the Silverfold Plum just happened to form the exact number of entities needed to activate the [Big Dipper]. As his ability to control the sword gleams increased, his understanding of sword formations escalated in an instant.

Other than the [Big Dipper Sword Formation], how many more variations could the Silverfold Plum and the six sword gleams derive?

Next, he thought of the [Fragmented Porcelain Sword Formation]. What would the power of a simple [Fragmented Porcelain Sword Formation] be like?

How about the [Yin Yang Sword Formation]? Could the Silverfold Plum be used as a central axis while the six sword gleams formed three Yin Yang rings? Or could he form three huge circular Yin and three huge circular Yang sword gleams?

If he excluded the Silverfold Plum, then would it not be possible for the six sword gleams to attempt the [Plum Blossom Count]?

…

Inspirations popped up in his brain one by one. The long-awaited feeling of contentment overwhelmed Ai Hui. The movement of the Silverfold Plum became increasingly refined, swift, and erratic. There were times where wind and fire would arise, while other times a dancing rain of razor-sharp sword consciousness would form.

His brain was overflowing with inspirations. Ai Hui, who was completely absorbed in his enlightenment, could not stop what he was doing. The Silverfold Plum became alive in his hand and came up with unpredictable forms of swordplay.

The three pitiful Sacrificial Guards were continuously ravaged by Ai Hui's successive unpredictable sword moves. There were a few times when they were about to call for help, but Ai Hui's offense would weaken and give them a chance to gasp for breath. This happened several times. Eventually, they began to suspect that Chu Zhaoyang was doing this on purpose,

They felt as if there was a noose on each of their necks, tightening and loosening at random.

By now, Ai Hui did not know what he was doing. He was completely immersed in the inspirations in his mind.

Slowly, the three Sacrificial Guards realized that Chu Zhaoyang's swordplay was not really stable. Could he be trying out new sword moves on them? The three of them felt somewhat humiliated, but heaved a sigh of relief at the same time. Chu Zhaoyang's swordsmanship was really powerful and really unpredictable. If he was in his peak form, the three of them would have been dead.

As Chu Zhaoyang's swordplay became stable once more, the noose around their necks tightened.

The three Sacrificial Guards clenched their teeth and endured the incoming attacks. From their experience, if they could endure a bit longer, Chu Zhaoyang's swordplay would slacken very soon.

Clink, clink, clink!

The densely-packed sounds of the collisions between the sword gleams and their weapons was suffocating. The thing that struck terror in three of them was that Chu Zhaoyang's swordplay did not slacken. Instead, it became increasingly sharp and precise.

Swish, swish, swish!

Three human heads flew up into the air at the same time. A terrified look still remained on their faces.

A few streaks of white light intertwined in the air. The razor-sharp sword gleams looked as if they were even going to rip a hole

through the dimensions of space.

Ai Hui's vision became clear and bright once more.

At this moment, there was an earth-shaking explosion.

Ling Yun's right arm was severed, dripping fresh blood all over his body. He glared at Fu Huaien, who was standing opposite him.

The body of Fu Huaien, who was covered in dragon scales, began to collapse. His legs were fracturing into numerous green crumbs. The disintegration process began from his legs and traveled upward.

His green glowing eyes had regained the warmth of a human, but it was time for him to bid farewell.

He smiled at his tearful daughter. Just as he opened his mouth and was about to say his last words, the disintegration process reached his face.

Before he could say anything, he disappeared along with the wind.

Chapter 363: Three Huge Yin And Three Huge Yang Sword Rings

When Ai Hui saw a real person disintegrating into the air like a wisp of smoke, he felt an indescribable shock and a faint tinge of sadness. He had seen many deaths. Some were heroic, some were tragic. The withering of a life was like the withering of a flower. However, when the next spring arrived on the earth, the withered flower would blossom once more, but not the withered life.

There were four seasons in life. The spring of adolescence, the summer of youthfulness, the autumn of confidence, and the winter of obsolescence. However, there would only be one cycle of life.

What kind of reason would make one's death justifiable?

Ai Hui's gaze was fixated on the completely empty sky. Suddenly, he laughed at himself. Since when did he become so melancholy?

He did not know whether or not Fu Huaien vanishing into thin air had caused him to feel an indescribable calmness.

As if he had sensed something, Ai Hui turned around and noticed that Xiao Shuren was staring and smiling at him. Ai Hui felt slightly puzzled. Ever since the last time this woman tried to plot against him, he had become wary of her.

He had long since decided not to pay any attention to Xiao Shuren. He did not want to have anything to do with her. He had

zero interest in the so-called ancient treasure. All he wanted to do was to find the godd*mn notebook and leave this scary place as soon as possible.

In this city, a Master would pop out whenever a family fought for its survival. This reality was far too much for a bum like him to handle.

In one day, he had witnessed a Master-level family head's arm being chopped off, the assassination of a Master-level bodyguard, the disintegration of another family head, and the severing of an arm of the leader of the Sacrificial Guards. As for the grunts that had died, their number was uncountable.

It was too scary!

The front line was child’s play when compared to Silver City.

At the front line, a Master was considered an important figure who possessed powerful fighting capabilities. Every Master had an impressive entourage of guards and these guards were in charge of all the mundane tasks. The death of a Master would be a devastating loss to an army.

However, in Silver City, it looked as if there was an abundance of Masters.

If all the Masters from these prestigious and powerful families were sent to the front line, the current situation of the Avalon of

Five Elements might have been different.

Ai Hui felt somewhat dejected. The Blood of God was flourishing and full of vitality. On the contrary, the Avalon of Five Elements was riddled with internal strife. All of its precious fighting capabilities were wasted on these internal disputes.

The disparity between the two parties was clear and distinct.

As such, how could Ai Hui, an individual who had a deep hatred for the Blood of God, not feel dejected?

He forced himself to calm down and let out a deep breath. His vision had regained its clarity. This time around, what he saw and heard in Silver City had made him greatly disappointed in the Elders Guild. The disappointment reinforced the belief of depending on himself rather than depending on others.

Right now, he wished he could leave Silver City and return to that small peaceful border city. He wanted to fight and seek success together with his friends.

No one knew that Ai Hui thought of so many things in such a short period of time. Even if they knew, would they care about him? From their perspective, Ai Hui was being sour grapes for having such thoughts.

Now that Fu Huaien had perished, the opponent’s next move would be...

Without hesitation, Ai Hui dashed toward Madam Ye.

Before the notebook was found, Madam Ye could not die yet!

When Ling Yun saw Fu Huaien dissipating into the air, a tinge of respect arose in his heart. However, he still heaved a sigh of relief. Before he arrived, he never expected for Fu Huaien to put up any resistance against him.

When he scanned the entire area and did not find the old servant of Madam Ye, he felt slightly puzzled. It was no secret among the aristocratic families in Silver City that the old servant was a Master.

Eh?

Suddenly, his gaze landed upon a body on the floor. It belonged to that mysterious old lady. Apparently, she had died.

Ling Yun was overjoyed. He had not expected for his greatest hindrance to have been killed by someone else!

"Who are you, villain!? How dare you commit such violent crimes in Silver City!"

A figure flew toward him with extreme speed. The surging elemental energy within that figure’s thunder-like roar sent a cold

shiver down Ling Yun's spine. If Ling Yun was to engage in a deadlocked battle now, the situation would not be favorable to him. The absolute art he used was going to expire soon. Once the absolute art expired, he would fall into a state of weakness. This state of weakness would last for exactly seven days and was the price he had to pay for using the absolute art.

That figure must be one of Ye Lin's reinforcements.

Ling Yun did not have enough time to determine which expert had killed Ye Lin's old servant. Right now, Ye Lin was at her most vulnerable. A chance like this was extremely rare.

A killing intent flashed across his eyes, and his body suddenly vanished into thin air.

As for the young fellow who dashed toward Ye Lin, Ling Yun did not care about him at all. His main target was Ye Lin!

His pale-white palm acted as a sword and carved a mysterious arc in the air in the direction of Madam Ye.

A dazzling glow emitted from his palm before an awe-inspiring sword glint shot out from his palm and flew toward Madam Ye. The transparent sword glint was like a thin slice of mica. It looked extremely beautiful, but contained a deadly danger within it.

Ai Hui, who had reached Madam Ye, could sense a piercing killing intent descending from the sky. The killing intent was so

strong that his entire body froze.

An unprecedented sense of danger suddenly erupted in Ai Hui's heart. He immediately understood that if he could not ward off this attack, today would be his death date.

He stopped and turned around smoothly with fluid movements. He placed the Silverfold Plum before his body. Three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings that were made from six sword gleams slowly swirled around the vertical silvery sword. Mysterious energy waves emitted from the intertwining Yin and Yang sword rings.

In everyone's eyes, Chu Zhaoyang's eyes suddenly became unusually bright, resembling the stars in the night sky. The cold, scarred face unleashed an elegant aura of purity at this moment.

The descending sword glint collided with three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings.

Clang!

Ai Hui's hand trembled, causing him to lose control of his sword. He was knocked back three steps before he could stabilize himself. The radiance of the three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings dimmed, and they looked as if they would collapse at any moment.

His palms were numb and the qi and blood within his body was

vibrating. His ears were ringing loudly, causing him to become temporarily deaf.

Was this the might of an attack from a Master?

The joy and excitement he derived from his previous revelations regarding his sword moves had extinguished. He immediately became clear-headed. Ai Hui had rich combat experience. He had a clear judgement of the strength disparity between himself and Ling Yun.

There was no way he could stop Ling Yun.

He took in a deep breath of air and stabilized the elemental energy within his body. Then, he stretched his numb palms. The Star Reaper Gloves produced waves of warmth. Eventually, his palms regained their flexibility. The advantage of wearing an elemental mask was that it made his facial expression looked as calm and composed as usual.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw that Jiu Gui and Prince were coming his way and felt slightly relieved.

In the sky, Ling Yun could not believe his eyes. The attack that he was so confident in was warded off by his enemy! The ultimate attack that he had used all his strength to unleash was actually warded off by an unknown youngster!

His base level was so low and his elemental energy was so weak.

He could not even be compared to an ordinary Sacrificial Guard. How was this possible…

He stared blankly at Ai Hui.

This weak-looking guy was the one that warded off his attack? Those black-and-white sword rings were what kind of sword move? He had never seen or heard of them before.

At this point, Ling Yun was engulfed by an intense feeling of frustration. His eyes were lifeless, and his mind was in disarray. He still could not believe that he had just missed such an exceptionally good chance.

This fellow…

Ling Yun's eyes rapidly regained the color of life. As a Sacrificial Guard, he was not someone who would give up easily. He might be very vexed that he had missed such a golden opportunity, but now was not the time for to him to feel regret.

When things did not go well, one should try his best to escape unscathed. When one could not escape unscathed, he should try his best to conserve his strength.

He passed down an order to his subordinates.

Three determined-looking Sacrificial Guards emerged from the crowd. Suddenly, the bodies of these three Sacrificial Guards

turned silvery-white, resembling metal men. They flew up into the sky and launched a two-pronged attack against the incoming expert.

"Get lost!"

A thunder-like roar resounded through the air. The incoming expert was as fast as a lightning bolt. He unleashed a burst of firm and powerful fist gleam with a loud rumble.

The three Sacrificial Guards did not retreat and continued to advance forward. One person directed the silver luster on his body to his fingertip and pointed his finger forward. Another person directed his silver lustre to his right palm and swung his right palm as if it was the blade of a sword. The last person gathered his silver luster in his right fist and punched his fist forward.

With a loud bang, the powerful whizzing fist gleam from the incoming expert exploded.

"[Sacrificial Strike]!" a yell could be heard from air.

The three Sacrificial Guards disintegrated to countless silvery crumbs, which fell through the sky like silver snow.

The [Sacrificial Strike] was most famous killer move of the Sacrificial Guards. The technique was derived from the name of the Sacrificial Guards as well. It was a technique that every Sacrificial Guard had to learn. This technique involved sacrificing

one’s life to unleash a terrifyingly powerful attack.

Many of the Ling Residence’s enemies had died from this move.

The arriving expert was an imposing middle-aged man. Currently, there was a lingering fear on his face. A hole could be seen in one of his sleeves. If he had not unleashed his previous punch with all his strength, he would have failed in his mission today.

The Ling Residence’s Sacrificial Guards were truly suicidal warriors. They would throw away their lives without any hesitation. Almost every family was extremely fearful of the Ling Residence’s Sacrificial Guards.

Soon after, the rest of the Sacrificial Guards disappeared into the darkness like a receding tide.

This scene had shocked many people. Previously, they still thought that by hugging the Great Elder’s legs, they would not need to worry about the Ling Residence. Now, however, they finally knew how dangerous and frightening the Ling Residence was.

If they were given a chance to choose again, they might not have the courage to participate in this conflict. Every time two colossi fought, there would be countless corpses beneath their feet.

However, those who had already boarded the boat had no chance

of disembarking from it.

The arrival of the reinforcements and the retreat of the enemies loosened up everyone's taut mental state. At this moment, Ai Hui smelled a faintly discernable tinge of a sweet smell.

His eye pupils suddenly dilated. One Thousand Yuan had not left yet!

She was hiding in the dark!

A strong feeling of anxiety forced the speed of Ai Hui's thinking process to increase significantly. Who was her target? Madam Ye? No! If her target was Madam Ye, she would have killed her given that there were so many opportunities for her to do so. Who exactly was her target then?

She wanted to create internal strife within the Avalon of Five Elements by aggravating the enmity between the Ye Residence and the Ling Residence...

Ai Hui trembled and dashed forward instantly!

Chapter 364: Sir, Can You Open The Door First?

Just as everyone heaved a sigh of relief and relaxed their stressed minds, Ai Hui suddenly pounced forward like a nimble cheetah.

Ai Hui's movements were very swift and his sword gleam was even swifter

In the mid-air, the Silverfold Plum's sword gleam was like a dazzling silvery lightning bolt, brightly illuminating Xiaobao's blank face.

Chu Zhaoyang was going for Xiaobao!

In an instant, Madam Ye's face turned deathly pale.

The middle-aged man who had just arrived to reinforce Madam Ye drastically changed his facial expression. He had not expected such an unforeseen event to happen right under his nose. The sword gleam was too fast. He was caught off guard and could not react in time.

The illustrious sword gleam outshone the remaining lights in the residence of the Fu Family. It was so bright that it lit up the night sky. Its overpowering sharpness and bone-piercing chilliness momentarily froze everyone.

Xiaobao was terrified and stood motionless.

The sword gleam brushed past Xiaobao's face. A few strands of his hair were shredded to smithereens by the slipstream spiralling around the sword gleam.

Did the attack... miss?

Everyone widened their eyes as they did not know what was going on. Chu Zhaoyang's swordsmanship was legitimately powerful. There was no reason for him to miss such a short-ranged attack.

40 centimeters behind Xiaobao, a brightly-colored mini vortex suddenly appeared out of thin air without any warning.

The sword gleam brushed past Xiaobao's face and collided heavily against the brightly-colored mini vortex.

Boom!

Like a balloon that popped, a crisp and clear sonic boom resounded through the air. The shock wave from the collision erupted in all directions. Xiaobao let out a blood-curdling scream as his body rocketed up into the air.

The middle-aged man in the sky flashed across the air and caught the flying Xiaobao. Following which, he landed beside Madam Ye and quickly examined Xiaobao's body. When he saw that Xiaobao

was merely bruised by the shock wave, he felt relieved.

The middle-aged man was enraged. The person who launched the sneak attack was vile. How dare this person do such a thing under his nose!

She Yu, who was so confident in her attack, had not expected it to fail!

Furthermore, the one who warded off her attack was Ai Hui.

A bitter sigh spiralled in the air like a wisp of smoke.

"Destined nemesis, destined nemesis..."

Before the voice completely disappeared, She Yu had already vanished into thin air. It was as if she had never even been here at all.

Everyone felt a cold shiver down their spines. The other party was able to appear and disappear unpredictably, and her methods were unforeseeable and unguardable. Even now, they did not know who the other party was.

"She’s gone," the middle-aged man standing beside Madam Ye said in a deep voice.

Then, he turned around to face Madam Ye and bowed his head.

"Is Madam injured? Yuchi Qingshan has arrived late!"

The man had a dignified look on his face and the hair at his temples was snow-white. He was the younger brother of Elder Yuchi Ba, Yuchi Qingshan.

Back when Yuchi Qingshan was young, he had assumed the position of vice division leader of the Sky Edge Division.

The current vice division leader of the Sky Edge Division was Yuchi Ba's adopted son, Tong Gui. Meanwhile, Yu Lin was Yuchi Qingshan's adopted daughter.

"Thank you for the assistance, Mr. Qingshan! Otherwise, my son and I would have reunited with my dead husband today," Madam Ye thanked Yuchi Qingshan with a mournful look on her face.

Yuchi Qingshan had a headache. Initially, he had not wanted to take part in the strife between the Ling Residence and the Ye Residence. If not for the fact that the Sky Edge Division was stationed in Silver City and was responsible for Silver City's public order, he would not have come. If anything was to happen to Madam Ye in Silver City, the Sky Edge Division would not be let off. Tong Gui and Yu Lin would have been punished as well.

"I am glad you're safe and sound." Yuchi Qingshan then changed the topic. "The person who just mounted that sneak attack has a weird attacking method and does not emit any elemental energy undulations. He might be a blood elementalist."

"The incident happened so fast that I couldn't even clearly see what was going on!" Madam Ye was choked with sobs. "Granny She has been taking care of me since I was a child. Today, she died by the hands of an evil scheme. If it was done by a blood elementalist, there will definitely be leftover traces of blood poison. Can I implore Mr. Qingshan to check if there are any traces of blood poison on the body of Granny She?"

Yuchi Qingshan was shocked. The old servant who attended Madam Ye had an unfathomable depth of strength. She was just as powerful as him. Even so, she was murdered. With a solemn look on his face, Yuchi Qingshan walked to Granny She's body and squatted down to examine it. Soon, he nodded his head and said, "There are indeed traces of blood poison!"

"At the end of day, the fight between the Ling Residence and the Ye Residence is like a mere family tiff. When a family has many members, it is unavoidable to have occasional disagreements. After all, we are one big family. Our enmity will eventually be resolved as time goes by. However, why are there blood elementalists among the Ling Residence's Sacrificial Guards?"

With tears still flowing down her cheeks, an incredulous look appeared on Madam Ye's face.

Immediately, Yuchi Qingshan knew the Ling Residence was in trouble.

"I am not an ungrateful person. Mr. Qingshan saved my life and I shall never forget it. I will report this incident to the Elders Guild and let them make the decision. When the time comes, the Elders

Guild might inquire Mr. Qingshan about this incident. I'm sorry for troubling Mr. Qingshan."

Madam Ye bowed respectfully to Yuchi Qingshan.

Yuchi Qinghshan quickly returned a bow and replied, "Madam, you're being too courteous. When the Elders Guild inquires me about this incident, I will speak and report truthfully."

The Ling Residence had already lost this battle. Having blood elementalists among their Sacrificial Guards was something that the Elders Guild could not tolerate. The Elders Guild could tolerate the Ling Residence's collusion with Dai Gang, but definitely could not accept their collusion with the Blood of God.

Yuchi Qingshan could anticipate that a gigantic storm was going to break out in Silver City. The seats in the Elders Guild would face great changes as well. He was thinking that he needed to immediately discuss this issue with his elder brother. It might be an opportunity for them.

The Elders might be very divisive on other issues, but all of them were unanimous in their attitudes toward the Blood of God.

They would never ever tolerate or appease the Blood of God!

Yuchi Qingshan shifted his gaze to Ai Hui and asked curiously, "Sir, your swordsmanship is indeed terrifying. May I know your distinguished name?"

Filled with gratitude, Madam Ye introduced Ai Hui. "Mr. Chu Zhaoyang is my family's swordplay teacher. Even though he is not particularly famous, his swordsmanship is superb. If Zhaoyang was not present today, I'm afraid that Xiaobao and I would have..."

"So you're the Silverwheel Swordsman, Mr. Chu Zhaoyang!" Yuchi Qingshan nodded his head respectfully. "Tong Kui and Yu Lin told me how outstanding Lightning Blade Ai Hui's swordsmanship was when they were in Peace City. Today, after witnessing Mr. Chu's swordsmanship, I have to say yours is far better than Lightning Blade Ai Hui's."

Initially, when Ai Hui heard Yuchi Qingshan mentioning his name, his heart thumped with anticipation. However, when he heard Yuchi Qingshan's last few words, he did not know whether to laugh or cry. Still, he regained his composure and cupped his hands in obeisance. "Thank you for your praises. My chief from the Karakorum Sword League is the one with the truly extraordinary and godly swordsmanship."

"The Karakorum Savant's swordsmanship ushers in a new era and is unequalled in her time!" Yuchi Qingshan showed a deep veneration for the Karakorum Savant.

Masters were usually well-respected and revered. However, the first Master in any field always commanded an incalculably greater degree of respect and reverence compared to ordinary Masters. Even though the Karakorum Savant had just stepped into the realm of Master, she had already become a well-known individual. Her reputation far exceeded any ordinary Master's.

The anguish and suffering that a pioneer had to undergo qualified him or her to enjoy these fruits of success.

When the Sky Edge Division’s elites arrived, everyone finally felt at ease. Under the protection of Sky Edge Division’s elites, Madam Ye and her entourage returned to the Ye Residence. Tong Gui and Yu Lin were part of the the protection team as well. The fact that they did not recognize Ai Hui made him felt at ease.

Fu Sisi rejected Madam Ye’s invitation to follow her back to the Ye Residence.

"Before my father passed away, his final words are for Sisi to become the head of the Fu Family. Now that my home has been half destroyed and every member of my Fu Family is feeling anxious and fearful, how can I, the symbol and leader of the family, abandon them and enjoy the luxury of peace and safety alone? Without the Fu Family, there would be no Fu Sisi. Sisi has to take up the responsibility of a family head and repay my family for raising me!"

Ai Hui looked at the red-eyed Fu Sisi, whose face was filled with stubbornness, in surprise. Even though this woman was practical and shrewd, she was a responsible individual.

Madam Ye touched Fu Sisi’s hair and nodded her head. "Having such will and responsibility shows that your father’s effort in grooming you was not in vain. Don’t worry, Aunt Ye has seen with my own eyes what your father did. The Fu Family will not be

destroyed. The Fu Family will only become more prosperous. This is Aunt Ye's promise to the Fu Family."

Fu Sisi could no longer restrain her emotions, threw herself into Madam Ye's arms, and started wailing in anguish.

Madam Fu requested for Yuchi Qingshan to deploy an elite unit from the Sky Edge Division to safeguard the Fu Family for two days. Naturally, Yuchi Qingshan immediately agreed to this costless favor.

Under the protection of the Sky Edge Division's elite unit, Madam Ye and her retinue returned to the Ye Residence that very night. At this point in time, the experts that the Great Elder deployed had reached the Ye Residence as well. Finally, everyone felt relieved.

Everyone had a mournful look on their face. They had been through the most frightening day of their lives.

The battle between two top-notch aristocratic families was brutal and cruel.

More than half of Su Huaijun's peers had died.

The good news was that Madam Ye had announced that all of them had obtained the qualifications to join Master's Glory. Every one of them would be rewarded as well. Su Huaijun, who had performed outstandingly during the battle, had received a wood

elemental elixir and an absolute art. These two rewards caused everyone to turn green with envy.

After the Jadeite Forest declared their independence, the prices of wood elemental materials and ingredients had skyrocketed. A wood elemental treasure like the wood elemental elixir could not even be found on the market. Only the powerful and influential aristocratic families possessed them.

Madam Ye was even more generous toward Ai Hui, who had saved her and Xiaobao.

Three metal elemental elixirs, 10,000 Heaven Merit Points, and one treasure that Ai Hui could freely choose from the Ye Residence's treasury. Ai Hui was also allowed to read any swordplay manuals and encyclopedias that the Ye Residence owned.

An unexpected windfall!

Madam Ye's generosity almost caused Ai Hui to faint.

By now, he knew that he had underestimated these aristocratic families. Initially, when he first saw the plain and old-fashioned Ye Residence, he had thought that maybe they were a slightly poorer aristocratic family.

Poor?

When the butler led Ai Hui to the Ye Residence's treasury, he realized how naive and ignorant he had been.

"Our treasury was built five years after the Avalon of Five Elements was established. It took three years to be built. The first family head was a swordsman, so he kept many flying swords and swordplay encyclopedias. The subsequent family heads had different preferences, so the treasures in the treasury begin to increase in variety. Every family head has to abide by a traditional custom set by the first family head: no more than 10 artifacts can be put in the treasury during his or her lifetime. One must know that a family head of the Ye Residence is well-respected and highly revered. The treasures he or she has come across in his or her lifetime are countless. As such, it is extremely hard for a family head to choose 10 treasures to put into the treasury!"

The butler grieved and lamented as he shook his head. He looked as if the treasury had missed out on so many treasures because of this custom.

Ai Hui could hear one underlying message in the butler's words. Flaunting your wealth! Blatantly flaunting your wealth!

"However, a custom will always be a custom. What can one do about it? This means a family head can only choose the best, the most expensive, and the most precious treasures to be stored in the treasury! Every family head regards the limit of 10 treasures as their ultimate goal. Each of them does not want to lose out to his or her predecessor. Anything that goes inside the Ye Residence's treasury is definitely a treasure and is the best treasure."

You are so good! Continue to show off!

"The custom has been continued for a millenia. Throughout the history of the Ye Residence, other than the seven family heads who encountered unexpected calamities, the rest have succeeded in the goal of selecting ten treasures for the treasury. Their treasures are on full display in the treasury. Throughout the history of the Ye Residence, you're the thirteenth guest to enter the treasury."

A fancy-style of flaunting your wealth!

Continue to show off if you are capable of doing so! I want to see how far you can go!

"Out of the previous twelve guests, five have assumed the position of the Great Elder before, four were Grandmasters, and the remaining three were illustrious individuals. Some of them were revered by the world and had countless disciple, some were so fearsome that they could contend against the Elders Guild for years, some were so shrewd that they could dominate the Avalon of Five Elements with words alone, and others were so smart and evil that they could manipulate the Elders Guild from behind the scenes."

Lou Lan once asked me why my eyes were glittering. I told him there was someone flaunting his wealth to me.

"You're the thirteenth guest to enter the treasury, so you're destined to become an extraordinary individual in the future."

Standing at the doorstep of the treasury, the butler’s face brimmed with sincerity and solemness.

Suddenly, a thought flashed across Ai Hui’s mind. He had taken on the responsibility of caring for everyone in the world. He was a being that descended from the sky to save the world!

Even Ai Hui, who was a shameless individual, had been defeated by such a high level of flaunting.

"Sir, can you open the door first?"

Chapter 365: Treasury

The Ye Residence's treasury had neither golden floor tiles nor exquisite crystals. There was no magnificent and ornate velvet. The treasury's design was simple and generous and its green-tiled wooden shelves were uneven. The soft light allowed observers to admire the exceptional pieces from all angles.

Standing inside the treasury, Ai Hui was in awe.

Ai Hui finally understood the meaning behind "millennium family." The treasury wasn't big. It was more like a small storehouse with roughly five to six hundred wooden racks. If it was a storehouse, it would be the world's most valuable storehouse.

Each treasure emitted a pure and gentle radiance. Multi-colored rays intertwined and reflected off the walls, brightening up the whole treasury.

The ordinary looking shelves were, in fact, used to seal up prohibited treasures. If not for these shelves, the elemental energy waves released by the treasures would mix together, causing the whole house to shatter into pieces.

Ai Hui's gaze regained its brightness as he inhaled deeply, calming his inner agitation.

The butler did not expect Ai Hui to regain his senses so quickly and was rather surprised. The Ye Residence's butler position

wasn’t like its counterpart in other residences. It was strictly an inherited status. The butler’s son would start learning the ropes from his father at the age of ten. When the butler turned old, the son would be in his prime and take over his father’s role as the new butler. After nurturing and educating them from a young age, these sons were most definitely loyal to the Ye Residence.

The butler was one of the dearest and most reliable members of the family and was trusted with a lot of confidential information.

In the butlers' historical records, each guest tour had been observed and noted down, wherein valuable guests were all depicted as being dumbstruck and bedazzled upon entering the treasury. Some were even in a daze for more than five minutes. It must be said that these guests had all been outstanding fighters and held great power and influence. The Ye treasury was evidently amazing for causing them to temporarily lose their souls.

Generations of butlers enjoyed seeing these powerful figures’ blank faces. It made them feel proud and honored.

Yet, Chu Zhaoyang had managed to regain his senses after a mere 22 seconds.

This surprised and displeased the butler. A guest had finally arrived and he was naturally going to record and note down his time for future generations to read. Thinking about how his guest was stunned for only 22 seconds made him somewhat unhappy. This 22 seconds wasn’t the shortest time, but it was within the top three.

He asked with a straight face, in a respectful tone, "Mister Zhaoyang, do you need a few introductions?"

Chu Zhaoyang's status in the Ye Residence was constantly on the rise. He had saved Madam and the young master's lives, so even if he had a bad name and was evil, the Ye Residence would still regard him as a VIP.

People started calling him 'Mister Zhaoyang' instead of 'Teacher Chu.'

Ai Hui never would have thought that the butler would care about how long he had been stunned. He shook his head. "It's alright, I'll look around myself."

Quickly, he noticed quite a few empty frames and asked out of curiosity, "Why are these unoccupied?"

The butler explained, "Some were given away while others are being used by the previous family head. The first family head once said that no matter how good a treasure is, it is useless if not used. It is good to like and cherish treasures, but using them when necessary is a bliss for the future generations. Apart from the first family head, there have been no more Grandmasters. Because successive family heads enjoyed making friends, treated people with passion, and were generous and fair, the residence has managed to expand until today."

Ai Hui praised, "Mister Huitang is great. The residence is great."

The Ye Residence’s first family head, Ye Huitang, was also the last swordsman. Not only was he strong, he also knew his way around life and the later generations did not disappoint.

The ancestors were well-celebrated while the descendants were humble and kept a low-profile. Successive family heads were good at networking, straightforward, fair, kind, and charitable.

For a family with such a rich history, there must be something unique about it.

The power the Ye Residence was able to utilize was greater than appearances led one to believe.

The butler smiled slightly. "Madam would like to have you select anything from the treasury. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me. I have been managing this treasury, so I am familiar with every single item. Of course, I would like to seek your cooperation in preventing thieves, and ask that you do not divulge any of this information."

Ai Hui nodded. "I understand."

The treasures in the case emitted different types of light. Although still separated by the seal, Ai Hui could nevertheless feel how frightening the faint elemental energy waves were. Items that could be called treasures were either retrieved from the Wilderness or were formed from special elemental energy, and they usually carried a rich, surging elemental energy. This was also the reason

why they were called treasures. Just like the treasures from the Cultivation Era, they were usually filled with spiritual force.

On the contrary, there were few treasures without many elemental energy waves. These treasures were inherently unique. Some had special characteristics, like a blue wisp of flame that Ai Hui noticed. There was a clear shadow flickering within the flame. This blue wisp did not have any elemental energy waves, but it made Ai Hui's hair stand on end.

He couldn't help but inquire, "What flame is that?"

The butler looked at it before answering, "Blue Soul Fire. Legend has it that a human soul is trapped within it. It is a piece that belongs to the seventh family head, who found it among historic relics when he was out exploring the world at a young age. The successive family heads became really interested in it, but no one has managed to unfold its secrets."

Ai Hui felt that the figure inside the flame was watching him, and while he was a gutsy person, it sent a chill through his bones.

Suddenly, Ai Hui stopped in front of a big tree and asked in shock, "Is this... a

message tree?"

It seemed as though the butler was very pleased by Ai Hui's surprised look. He replied in a mild manner, "Yes, this is a message

tree. To be precise, it is the first message tree."

Ai Hui opened his eyes wide. "The first?"

"Yes!" The butler tried to sound composed but his pride couldn't be concealed. "Its advent greatly changed the avalon while also significantly altering our lifestyles. The family head at that time saw the revolution coming, so he spent a huge fortune to purchase it. While its practical value isn't as high as other treasures, it has witnessed the change of an era, and so is extremely precious."

Ai Hui stared blankly at the message tree. His heart swelled with the realization that this message tree was exactly the same as the one he'd taken away from Vanguard Training Hall.

Pride quickly turned into relief, as it was apparent that Madam Ye and the Assembly of Patriarchs shared a deep relationship. According to the Ye Residence's style of handling affairs, it wasn't at all strange that she had such a good relationship with the assembly. It was even possible that this tree was brought over from the assembly.

Perhaps the elementalist who had invented this tree was from the assembly?

The Assembly seemed to hold more power than he'd thought.

The butler was unaware of the many thoughts that were running through Ai Hui's mind, but seeing his astonished face pleased him

very much.

Such ‘one and only’ treasures like the first message tree were not things money could buy. This was a real display of a family’s influence.

"Your residence is really terrific."

Mister Chu Zhaoyang’s praise and admiration fed the butler’s pride and joy.

Ai Hui continued walking forward and quickly realized that many of the swords were rusty and difficult to use.

Noticing this, the butler explained, "These swords are mostly treasures from the first family head’s generation. Seven of out ten treasures are swords. Some are still spiritual in nature, while others were once well-known. When elemental energy was first created, these swords contained spiritual force, but as generations passed, the last bit of spiritual force dissipated, leaving these swords rusty and obsolete. Because the first family head really adored these items, they have been kept all this while."

Ai Hui was fascinated.

Being good at discerning thoughts from body language, the butler added, "I do not recommend that you choose a sword. The swords from the cultivation era are mostly unusable. Swordsmanship has resurfaced these two years, so the contemporary master craftsmen

are only just starting to attempt building treasure swords. Treasure swords from the past, no matter their significant history or how exquisite they are, are of no practical use in battles."

Ai Hui was slightly disappointed, but very grateful. "Thank you!"

What the butler said made a lot of sense.

Swordsmanship had declined over a long period of time and sword users were pathetically few in number. So far, no famous swords had been created by famous craftsmen either.

Finishing his words, the butler gave Ai Hui time to look around.

To any individual, choosing a treasure from such a dazzling line up was extremely challenging. Each treasure had its own appeal and many contained intense elemental energy waves. Separated by the seal, Ai Hui could still feel the sharp consciousness of the elemental energy waves, as though they were about to pierce through the seal.

A few times, Ai Hui palpitated with eagerness. Some ingredients were extremely valuable. If he could find a skilled workman to fashion a sword out of them, it would definitely become an exceptional sword.

Ai Hui forced himself to hold back. He decided that no matter what he saw, he would first tour the whole treasury before making a decision.

The butler nodded as he observed Ai Hui. Chu Zhaoyang was a man of extreme willpower. Each treasure was shockingly enticing and some could even aid elementalists to enter a higher realm. Few had been able to browse the whole gallery before selecting something.

Madam had initiated this tour not only to repay his kindness for saving her life, but also to build a good rapport with him. The Ye Residence often used this method to ensure its continued existence.

Madam made such a decision because she really looked favorably upon Chu Zhaoyang. Experience had taught successive generations that they must not be petty when investing in a talented individual. They would reap exponential benefits if they invested at the right time, when the talent was still nameless.

The butler did not know if Chu Zhaoyang had good prospects, but greatly admired his determination.

Ai Hui stopped in his tracks.

Chapter 366: Selection

Mister Chu Zhaoyang's sudden halt attracted the butler's attention.

The butler was very curious as to which treasure Mister Chu would pick. Although each and every item in the treasury was rare, they had their own merits and drawbacks. Each family head had different financial circumstances and luck, so the items they had collected were also different.

The butler, who was in charge of managing the treasure, knew every treasure inside out, but if Chu Zhaoyang did not ask him, he would not mention it.

He knew very well that people like Chu Zhaoyang had their own views, and if he were to question them, it was best not to insinuate anything.

Madam must have other reasons for taking such a big gamble, so it was wiser for him to observe more by himself.

When faced with many choices, a person's final decision often said a lot about his or her personality. Especially when the choices were so expensive, personality traits often became magnified.

What would he choose?

The butler narrowed his eyes, his inquiring and deep gaze falling

upon the figure that came to a halt.

It appeared that Chu Zhaoyang had finally found his target, or something must have attracted his attention.

Eh?

The butler quickly realized that things were not as they seemed, because Chu Zhaoyang started looking everywhere, as if in search of something.

Indeed, Ai Hui was searching.

Earlier, the bandage that Ai Hui had completely forgotten about had reacted. It was a gift from Mistress and its history had always been a mystery. Until now, it had saved his life many times. Previously, it had revealed a tendency to devour blood, but following the emergence of the blood eye pattern, the bandage started to lose interest in blood.

It was as if it had fallen into a deep slumber, with no signs of movements.

It was still resistant to injuries. Ai Hui had tried to destroy it using all sorts of methods, but to no avail. He had no idea how Mistress had been able to break it into two. Because it was such an outstanding protective gear, Ai Hui kept it on him as the last layer of defense. It had been extremely functional.

Naturally, Ai Hui was beyond shocked when the bandage that had been lying dormant for a long time started to show signs of life.

He kept a straight face, but was already in search of the treasure that had triggered the bandage's response. Ai Hui was very curious about the item that could provoke a reaction from it. Could it be an item that had been blood-refined?

Ai Hui saw the bandage as being extremely inhospitable. It even was particular about the quality of blood that it consumed. It had no interest in ordinary blood.

Looking around, the glittery lights had him feeling dizzy.

The bandage was still.

Had he imagined it?

Ai Hui tried taking two steps forward and the bandage moved a little.

Ai Hui was startled. The first time might have been a mistake, but if it happened a second time, it couldn't be a coincidence. There must be something that the bandage was interested in within the treasury.

Feeling the butler's gaze on him, Ai Hui slowed down his pace, pretending to browse through the treasures in front of him.

The butler felt somewhat suspicious. He'd thought that Mister Chu Zhaoyang had already set his eyes on something, when in fact, he'd just been looking around.

He followed behind Mister Chu Zhaoyang patiently. The chance to admire the Ye Residence's rich collection was hard to come by. There had been guests who really took their time to appreciate every single item in the treasury from start to finish.

Ai Hui continued pretending, stopping every two steps to admire the items. He would ask about items he wasn't familiar with and the butler would answer accordingly and in great detail.

Even as the bandage's reaction grew stronger, Ai Hui couldn't help but drool upon seeing all these treasures. Each was matchless in preciousness and rarity, having been made from the best materials by the greatest Masters. Any randomly selected item would cause a sensation when taken outside.

Seeing the passion in Chu Zhaoyang's eyes, the butler felt proud and pleased. He'd long guessed that this selection process would take quite some time. If given such a rare opportunity, he too would make use of it to the fullest. It would be an extreme waste if he were to pick the wrong item since there would never be a second chance.

Alright, the bandage's reaction is weakening. Wrong direction.

Ai Hui pretended to be attracted by another treasure and

switched paths. He finally found the right direction after a few consecutive switches.

Now, the bandage wound around Ai Hui’s body was moving slowly, like a snake.

Its reaction was getting stronger.

Ai Hui avoided looking urgent. He kept a calm face and continued appreciating the treasures along the way and asking related questions. The thirst in his eyes, however, was genuine.

Just like that, Ai Hui and the butler passed case after case before stopping at the deepest section of the treasury.

Seeing Chu Zhaoyang’s gaze fall upon the shelves in the furthest corner, the butler spoke up. "This is the first family head’s collection. They’re mostly swords, but are basically useless now."

He thought that Mister Chu Zhaoyang had his eyes on these swords. He was a swordsman after all, so it shouldn’t be surprising, but as he’d mentioned, these rusty treasure swords were only good for being put on display for future generations to admire.

Mister Chu Zhaoyang diverted his gaze away from the swords somewhat regretfully.

It must be said that the first family head was the last, pure

swordsman and he was extremely picky when it came to selecting swords. These ancient swords were obsolete now, but one could vaguely see the brilliance they had possessed in the past. Some carried an indescribable sombreness that made it torturous for the butler to clean.

Suddenly, Mister Chu Zhaoyang pointed at a stone statue beside an ancient sword. "What is its origin?"

The statue looked very ordinary and was carved from a whole piece of granite. The sculpting was simple and raw, as if the statue had been chopped out using a big axe. Its face was blurry and looked like a semi-finished product.

Yet, this crude looking statue had an inexpressible, implicit charm that observers couldn’t turn their eyes away from.

Ai Hui felt strange the moment his eyes landed on it. He had a strong willpower and even practiced [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp], so he wasn’t someone who could be enticed easily. Despite this, his gaze and state of mind were still focused on this stone statue.

The butler retracted his gaze immediately. "This stone statue was obtained by the first family head in his early years, by chance. It isn’t clear whether or not someone carved it out. It is an antique from the Cultivation Era. It has no name, but the first family head said that with its heavenly charm, it must be extraordinary and should be kept in the treasury."

The bandage’s reaction toward the statue was exceptionally intense, as if it wanted to pounce on it.

The statue did not seem to be blood-refined, so Ai Hui felt suspicious as to why the bandage was responding so strongly to it.

There must be something strange about the stone statue!

On second thought, if the statue wasn’t at all magical, would Ye Huitang have placed it in the treasury?

Without hesitation, Ai Hui pointed to it and said, "I choose this."

Giving Mister Chu Zhaoyang a look, it seemed that the butler wanted to say something, but decided against it.

Upon seeing that, Ai Hui asked, "Is it not possible?"

"Not that. Madam has already instructed that you can select any item." The butler shook his head. "This stone statue, seemingly a gift from heaven, has been in the treasury for the longest time. The first family head would often be immersed in studying it, and successive family heads too, wanted to unlock the secret within it. Much time and energy had been employed, but there hasn’t been any result so far."

"Thanks for your guidance." Ai Hui cupped his hands and offered his thanks before continuing, "I’ll choose it then. Out of so many treasures, this caught my eyes the most. With Madam’s elemental

elixirs, my base level isn't a matter of concern. There are countless gems in this treasury, but no suitable sword. After some thought, I feel that this treasure is pretty decent. If lucky, I might even be able to unravel the marvels within?"

The butler felt that Chu Zhaoyang's explanation made some sense, other than the part about unraveling the statue's marvels. Had there been any unintelligent family head in the whole of the Ye Residence's history? Successive family heads had failed to unravel its secrets, so how was it going to be an easy task?

Of course, he had to be civil about it. "With your wisdom, I'm sure you'll be able to unlock its mystery. Please do enlighten your humble servant when that happens. The secret of the stone statue has been torturing generation after generation."

Ai Hui laughed. "Haha, thanks. I will!"

The butler placed his palm on the case and engaged his elemental energy. A light flashed and the seal's glow disappeared.

Ai Hui could tell that these seals were extremely elaborate. It wasn't going to be easy for intruders to break them. Ai Hui had also long noticed that the materials used to build this treasury were special and had a restraining and suppressing effect against elemental energy.

Situated in Silver City, which housed many experts and Masters, it could be said that the Ye Residence's defense was very solid. Even capable intruders would find it impossible to infiltrate

without a soul knowing. If they moved too blatantly, they would attract city guards, powerful fighters, and even the Elders training deep within the Silver Mist Sea.

The bandage quieted down immediately when Ai Hui took possession of the stone statue, but Ai Hui could still feel the restlessness and desire beneath its calm state.

The stone statue was about two feet tall and because it was made from ordinary granite, Ai Hui felt its weight to be as light as air. Like jade and unlike granite, it was cool to the touch, but no matter how Ai Hui looked at it, it was most definitely an ordinary piece of granite. He couldn’t help but click his tongue in wonder.

The butler smiled as he watched Mister Chu Zhaoyang tossing and turning it around.

"Do you still want to look around?"

"It’s alright! Since I’ve already made my choice, I shall stop to spare myself the heartache!"

"Hahaha, you’re right!"

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Study room.

Madam Ye asked in interest, "What did he pick?"

The butler answered respectfully, "The nameless stone statue left by first family head."

"Stone statue?" Madam Ye asked in shock. She'd thought of many treasures that Chu Zhaoyang might have picked, but not once did she imagine that he would actually select that obscure stone statue.

The butler repeated Ai Hui's explanation for his choice to Madam Ye, word for word.

Madam Ye looked much more relaxed now, but instructed nevertheless, "Pay more attention."

The butler retreated knowingly.

Chapter 367: Stone Statue

Carrying the statue back to the bamboo garden, Ai Hui closed the door before placing it on his table. Like a snake, the impatient bandage charged forward and coiled itself around the stone statue.

Ai Hui almost let out a laugh; the stone statue looked like a silly, lifeless mummy. Its heavenly charm was all gone.

Perhaps there was something powerful hidden within the statue?

Ai Hui was very curious. Of course, he already knew the power of the bandage, but for the family heads of the Ye Residence to have been stumped over the statue for so many years, it most definitely wasn't a simple object.

Ai Hui dared not look down on aristocratic families at all. Their accumulated power was shockingly deep, be it in terms of riches, treasures, or even their grasp of elemental energy.

The construction of the treasury and the method of sealing the cases were things he'd never seen before.

Perhaps the family had no outstanding representatives, but their hard work contributed to the succession of each generation for hundreds and thousands of years. Along the way, their accumulated experiences were intimidatingly profound and and extensive.

Aristocratic families were the people standing at the peak of the Elemental Era.

The bandage had actually responded to a secret these people weren't able to unravel. How exciting!

Eh?

Ai Hui suddenly stood up straight, his eyes glowing.

The face of the stone statue was starting to melt.

A change was occurring!

Ai Hui became very agitated, but calmed himself down quickly. Pricking up his ears and listening, the coast was clear. The stone statue had no elemental energy waves. It was like a candle that, upon heating, melted gradually.

Ai Hui stared intently at that statue. It most definitely was ordinary granite, he'd checked carefully!

Had his eyes deceived him?

As the statue's face melted, its coarse lines smoothed out and its uneven face softened significantly. The blurred facial features became more distinct.

Seeing the face of the statue becoming delicate and refined, that faint heavenly charm became more intense. Ai Hui was completely captivated, as if the stone status was a gaze-swallowing whirlpool. Ai Hui stared blankly at it, unable to turn his eyes away.

The stone statue in his vision started to turn blurry.

The world turned hazy as the sky merged with the ocean. He saw an unending chain of massive mountains, steep and majestic. The ancient trees reached high up into the sky, the fields were vast, and all kinds of unusual beasts were running and flying around.

Ai Hui guaranteed that he'd never seen any of these unusual beasts. Having stayed in the Wilderness for such a long time, he could be considered an expert when it came to recognizing most of the wild and dire beasts. These unusual beasts were even more primitive and barbarous, definitely foreign to him.

Scanning across the towering mountains and precipitous ridges, his gaze landed on a small valley.

From what he saw, Ai Hui reckoned this valley's terrain was very suitable for outdoor camping.

There was a meandering brook, its stream small so flooding wasn't a concern. The mountains on both sides served as partitions. They were steep and made of granite. The valley was wide, yet its mouth was extremely narrow, making it a place that was easy to guard and difficult for intruders to attack.

There was a fence made of thick, solid logs at the valley mouth. What use could such a crude defensive measure have? Ai Hui couldn't wrap his head around it. Inside, there was a tent made of animal skin and cogon grass, and within it were people lighting a fire for cooking and skinning the wild beasts. It was a rather lively scene.

Savage tribe?

Ai Hui seemed to have thought of something.

Observing for a little while, Ai Hui felt that the savages had tedious lives. They were uncivilized and appeared quite ignorant. When Ai Hui and gang were in the Wilderness, their lives had been arduous too, but compared to these savages, they were much better off.

Some time later, the tribal chief took out a sheet of animal skin and drew a rough human figure on it with charcoal and beast blood.

His strokes were very crude. Saying that it was a human figure was partially a guess.

The animal skin painting was propped up by a tree branch and stones were piled up to form a simple sacrificial table. The chief butchered a wild beast, placed it on the table as an offering, and led the worshipping process as everyone started kowtowing.

Years passed and the chief kept changing. The clothes worn by tribe members underwent developments too, from the initial animal skin to sackcloth. The drawings on the animal skin gradually became clearer and started to carry a unique, heavenly charm.

Heavenly charm?

Ai Hui reacted suddenly. Could it be...

He took a closer look at the human figure on the animal skin and found that it was indeed similar to the stone statue.

With changes to the animal skin, the tribesmen became increasingly pious and offered sacrifices more regularly. As the offerings grew, the human figure on the skin became more exquisite and lifelike.

The tribe, having been through years of campaign, was now influential and powerful. City walls were built and he overlooked them all.

Enemies infiltrated into the sacrificial hall and burned the animal skin.

The chief transmitted an order, seeking treasures from respective cities in order to create and refine a demonic god portrait. Gathering treasures, reputable priests, painters, and warlocks from all over into the hall, after twenty-two years of blood, sweat,

and tears, a new demonic god portrait was finally completed.

Campaigns against enemies and for power began abruptly as well.

In the span of sixty years, countless captives were detained and offered as sacrifices.

The heavenly charm of the demonic god portrait intensified, making it terrifying to look at.

More years passed as the tribe rose and fell, prospered and fell into decline. However, that portrait remained undamaged. It was always as good as new and sacrifices were constantly being offered to it.

On a windy, rainy night, a lightning bolt from outside the windows illuminated the dark, spacious sacrificial hall and also that portrait that hung down from the wall.

The demonic god's eyes moved and a smile surfaced on the corner of its mouth. This smile carried an evil energy, making its gentle face appear increasingly flirtatious and enticing.

Suddenly, a leg extended out from the portrait.

The demonic god had actually come alive. He moved his body, seemingly interested in all that was going on. All of a sudden, as if he sensed something, he raised his head and looked in Ai Hui's

direction.

Seeing the demonic god's eyes momentarily disrupted Ai Hui's line of thought.

Just then, the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp sensed danger and abruptly started operating, allowing Ai Hui to regain a trace of clarity. He tried with all his might to shut his eyes and block off his vision.

Hu... hu...

His rough breaths were like moving bellows, causing Ai Hui to sweat profusely. That moment of struggle had practically exhausted all his strength.

He calmed down five minutes later, but not without some lingering fear. He'd always thought himself to be firm and invulnerable to evil disturbances, especially after training his Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp. He could remain unmoved even when facing One Thousand Yuan.

Just then, however, his mental state had been completely out of his control. He couldn't think at all. If not for the lamp, he wouldn't have even been able to shut his eyes.

It was Ai Hui's first time experiencing something so strange, terrifying, and dangerous.

Unlike real combat, psychic attacks couldn't be warned against. Any slight inattentiveness would lead to an attack, causing one's body to lose all control. The mind would not be able to overpower the body to execute even the most basic resistance. The victim would be completely at the enemies' disposal.

He never wanted to experience this ever again.

Demonic god...

Shortly after, Ai Hui's body tensed up as the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp circulated unsteadily. He gathered all his focus so that whenever something felt amiss, he would shut his eyes again.

He slitted his eyes and looked outside.

Ah!

He saw a stone statue.

Where was the sacrificial hall? Demonic god?

Ai Hui was stunned. Had he been dreaming? Those scenes he'd just witnessed were too vivid. It felt as though he'd lived thousands of years alongside the tribe and demonic god.

But at this moment, he was still in his room.

Fantasy? Possibly!

But such a lifelike fantasy…

Ai Hui looked at the time and realized that not even half an hour had passed.

How mystical. That dreamlike sequence had simply been too real and he could still recall all the fine details. The mirage bean pods sold in markets couldn’t be compared to what he’d just seen.

He felt somewhat regretful, but also relieved. The scene in which the demonic god had walked out of the portrait left a deep impression on him; he still had some lingering fear.

His gaze fell upon the stone statue and his pupils suddenly shrank.

The stone statue on the table looked exactly like the demonic god!

Ai Hui remembered the demonic god’s appearance clearly, there was no mistake. The statue was, at this moment, no longer that crude piece of stone but extremely refined and lifelike.

It had a graceful figure, its waist appearing weak and delicate and its upper body masculine. It had an androgynous face with a soft outline, but a masculine nose and lips. Its eyes were cold, but the outer corners curved out beautifully.

It was Ai Hui's first time seeing such androgynous and conflicting features that somehow managed to fit nicely together, leaving a deep impression on him.

Exactly the same!

Was that vision the demonic god stone statue's doing?

It was possible!

Was that the origin of this stone statue? Ai Hui was quite convinced since there was no other possible explanation.

He never imagined that there would be such a story behind the stone statue. Ai Hui clicked his tongue in wonder and looked all over the statue.

The statue was now exquisite and lifelike, but its heavenly charm was gone. It looked like an ordinary stone statue.

So, the heavenly charm had contained the statue's history, Ai Hui suddenly realized.

No matter how he looked at it, however, the demonic god statue was still just the demonic god statue and the granite was still the granite. There were no changes. Had he just spent so much effort just to get a fine stone statue?

Ai Hui didn’t know whether to laugh or cry.

What he saw next, on his bandage, shocked him.

Its blood eye was gone; it had regained its previous white color and was now empty.

Seeing the two snow-white bandages on the table, a thought came to him as he unfolded them and laid them flat, then pieced them together. He remembered that they were originally one piece when he’d first seen them.

When placed alongside each other, the middle sections started to fuse together, forming a piece of white cloth.

This was actually possible?!

Ai Hui opened his eyes wide as he’d never thought they could be welded together.

Wait a minute!

Ai Hui’s body stiffened. He stared blankly at the white cloth on the table as an image of the demonic god portrait hanging in the sacrificial hall emerged in his mind.

After the demonic god walked out of the portrait, it became a

sheet of white, and its size… was approximately the same size as the white cloth in front of him.

The bandage… was the canvas of the demonic god’s portrait?

Chapter 368: Rumors

Silver City was in an unstable state.

Madam Ye and son were almost murdered, causing the Great Elder, who often concealed his feelings, to fly into a rage. Evidence of the Ling Residence colluding with blood elementalists pushed them into a passive state. Ling Residence denied it flatly, but the development of affairs went against their favor.

"Are you guys just going to sit and wait for death?"

The person who spoke wore a black cloak that covered his whole body. His voice was stiff and monotonous, awkward for the listeners.

Ling Sheng glared at the other party. Ling Xiao had just woken up and his face was pale. Although he had lost an arm and lost a lot of blood and energy, his elemental energy hadn’t been affected. His injuries, however, were very severe. The five residences and eight palaces were badly damaged and he would be unable to train from that day onwards. Even if he was Ling Xiao, the noble son of Master Ling, he would be useless if unable to train.

Madam Ling appeared calm, but the white hair on her temples revealed her anxious and haggard heart.

"Does Grandmaster Dai have any solutions?"

"As long as he doesn’t die, Grandmaster Dai will be able to do something." The cloaked man trembled unpleasantly. "Even if his whole body is damaged, he won’t die as long as his brain is intact."

The man lifted his cloak, revealing his body.

Ling Sheng and Madam Ling looked at the man in shock, their eyes wide open.

The man grinned at them, but their eyes were filled with fear. The man before them wasn’t human-like. His body was made from a mix of grass cord and lotus, and only his brain was that of a human.

"I never thought that I’d be able to live until today. Although this doesn’t feel like living, I feel pretty good. I forgot to tell you guys my name. I’m Qing Feng. Doesn’t it sound like a servant’s name? Haha, I’m actually a servant."

Qing Feng laughed merrily, but his voice remained rigid and rough. His laughter was unpleasant to hear, blood-curdling, in fact.

Madam Ling spoke up after a while. "The two arts, [Grasscord] and [Lotus Chiropractic Technique] that Grandmaster Dai founded are indeed freakish and brilliant."

Qing Feng shook with laughter. "What are you two going to offer Grandmaster Dai for this?"

Madam Ling answered solemnly, "We will not forget about him. Xiao Shuren is currently in the Ye Residence, so the time is not yet right."

Qing Feng responded very directly. "Then what are your plans? What happened is disadvantageous for your side."

"Don’t worry, we’ve already taken action." Madam Ling’s eyes were cold. "Great Elder has already forgotten that he needs the support of the aristocratic families. They are the pillar of the Avalon of Five Elements. When the situation gets increasingly chaotic, who’s going to be able to reinstate order?"

Qing Feng trembled once again. "I see that you guys are prepared."

Madam Ling answered dully, "An old tree’s roots extend deep down."

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Silver City became chaotic very quickly. Battered corpses and blood filled the streets every morning. The situation became increasingly intense as attacks spread across the whole city. When night fell, fighting noises and flames could be heard and seen in every corner.

A unit leader of the Sky Edge Division was attacked during his

patrol and died from severe injuries.

The family head of the slightly reputable Huo family died of sudden poisoning, and evidence found at the scene pointed toward the Gong Residence. The Gong Residence held an unyielding attitude towards accusations as a few families joined forces and reported the Gong Residence to the Elders Guild.

Accidents in the form of blatant attacks and poisonings occurred consecutively and increasingly within small families. While there wasn't any concrete evidence pointing toward the Gong Residence this time, smaller families still cooperated and started pressuring the guild to investigate the matter.

Disorder spread unceasingly, sending citizens into a state of panic.

The situation reached its peak when the Zeng and Zhong Residences fought. There had already been bad blood between both families, but this time, a conflict between servants fed their feud and before they knew it, things escalated quickly to the point of no return.

The number of families getting involved multiplied and the Sky Edge Division did not dare come out; the patrolling teams had been ambushed whenever making their rounds.

Silver City was completely out of control. Everyone was in danger and all kinds of rumors started emerging and breeding like flies.

Most rumors were about Madam Ye. The power she had displayed had long been circulated without restraint. Some news even said that the Great Elder's plan to put Madam Ye in charge of the Master's Glory was to let her nurture henchmen who would give her power.

The most sensational rumor was that Madam Ye's son was born to another man instead of her deceased husband.

The source of this rumor was unknown, but it very quickly spread rhythmically. The Great Elder's family members were all born talents. Families above the Ye family had also never produced any mentally challenged offsprings. Madam Ye's son, however, was born mentally challenged, hence fueling suspicions.

Other rumors even said that before Madam Ye's marriage, she had lived in seclusion for more than a year, and that this was actually a ruse to fool people; someone claimed to have seen her travelling in Jadeite Forest with a man. There was a released clip that was very blurry, but the figure within bore a remarkable resemblance to Madam Ye. The man beside her was tall and gigantic in stature, unlike that of her scholarly and delicate husband.

The Great Elder had been under great pressure, but not once did he lose his cool and get as angry as he did today.

He stared at the clip, his fists clenching automatically.

Initially, he had scoffed at the rumors, but upon viewing the clip, he started feeling suspicious. The manners of the woman in the clip were indeed very similar to Ye Lin’s. It was a fact that even he was unable to deny.

Thinking about his deceased son, the Great Elder felt as if a knife was being twisted in his heart.

Shortly, he loosened his fists, his eyes cold and sharp.

No one could deceive him. No one!

Thump, thump, thump. Someone was knocking on the door. He raised his head, the sharpness in his gaze disappearing as his expression returned to normal.

His tone carried the same grandeur. "Come in."

A subordinate opened the door, reporting respectfully, "Madam brought Xiaobao over and wishes to see you."

Great Elder’s heart shrank but his face remained unchanged. "Let them in."

A moment later, Madam Ye and Xiaobao walked in. Seeing Great Elder, Xiaobao shouted in delight, "Grandfather!"

Madam Ye bowed. "Father."

Great Elder chuckled. "Why are you guys here? Xiaobao, let me see if you got any skinnier."

"No, Xiaobao became stronger recently!" Xiaobao puffed his chest with a proud look on his face.

Great Elder burst into laughter.

Madam Ye stood at the said, smiling at their conversation.

After asking Xiaobao about his recent activities, Great Elder ordered a servant to bring him out for some food. Xiaobao left obediently and the servant closed the door carefully upon walking out.

Silence filled the room.

Great Elder observed that his daughter-in-law appeared calm and easy, not the least bit abnormal.

Madam Ye spoke unhurriedly with a smile at the corner of her mouth, "There’ve been a lot of rumors about me spreading and I’ve dismissed them with a laugh, but those that say Xiaobao isn’t your son’s, I can not sit idly and watch."

With a wave, Great Elder warned, "The town rumors shouldn’t be taken seriously, don’t be affected by them."

"If the rumors are about me, I will not mind, but Xiaobao is still young and naturally has a tough life. It would be better for him if these rumors were dispelled as soon as possible." She bowed and said respectfully, "Please invite all the Elders to test if Xiaobao carries our family's blood. Our family's [Sinuous Aqua Body] is pristine and unique."

Great Elder lowered his voice. "There's no need."

Madam Ye continued to bow, never raising her head. "Please grant my wish. Xiaobao has a long life ahead of him. Even if these critics get things straight, their comments would still leave a scar on Xiaobao. What's the point of us doing so much? As a mother, I'm unwilling to allow him to bear the criticisms. The test will set everything right. Mouths will shut when the truth is revealed."

After muttering to himself for some time, Great Elder spoke up slowly. "All right! Since you're so insistent, we shall do that. Don't worry, anyone who tries to smear Xiaobao will not be let off."

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The Ling Residence received the news quickly.

Ling Sheng was rather shocked. "Widow Ye is going to publicize the test?"

He looked at his wife with uncertainty. "Is your news accurate?

She must be very confident if she wants to publicize it."

Madam Ling was also somewhat swayed, but quickly calmed down. "She's just bluffing. The truth cannot be false, so let's see what she's up to. Since she's already set a date, it is our chance."

Qing Feng asked in a strange voice, "What chance?"

"The chance to seize Xiao Shuren." Madam Ling continued, "If Ye Lin is going to bring Xiaobao for the test, she's definitely going to be escorted by a strong guard. When the house is empty, that's the best time for us to strike. According to inside news, Ye Lin does not value Xiao Shuren as she's not interested in the ancient treasure."

Qing Feng responded, "The earlier we get her, the faster we can heal young master."

Ling Sheng made eye contact with his wife and both saw the determination in each other's eyes.

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Zhong Residence, secret room.

She Yu was listening to Zhong Houjun's report.

"I've followed your orders and created some conflicts with the Zeng residence. There are casualties on both sides. Silver City is in

chaos now and it started with the Ling Residence's strike. Later on, attacks became complicated and difficult to distinguish. Respective families are all very vigilant. Some suspect that the Ling Residence was creating trouble on the sly, some reckon that the residence has secret connections, while others even suspect that the new citizens are sowing discord since Yuchi Qingshan's appearance was way too coincidental. Following your instructions, we did not make any moves, so no one suspects us."

Zhong Houjun admired this Blood of God's envoy greatly. She was unpredictable and her hot and cold way of dealing with things was astonishing to see.

Without exerting much effort, she had managed to turn the Ling Residence and the Great Elder into mortal enemies, sending Silver City into a state of disorder.

No one would've thought that this unprecedented unrest was orchestrated by this woman before him.

She Yu was very pleased. "Very good. The Zhong Residence and your contributions will not be forgotten by Mister Bei. He will treat you guys well. Looking at the current situation of the Avalon of Five Elements, I believe you can tell who's going to have the last laugh."

Zhou Houjun answered without hesitation, "Yes! The Zhong Residence vows loyalty and devotion to Mister Bei! To God Nation!"

This chaos in the Avalon of Five Elements disappointed him very much, but also made him even more determined to follow the Blood of God.

She Yu looked satisfied. She asked directly, "Have you found people?"

Zhong Houjun reassured hurriedly, "Done. They're all professional and not from the Zhong Residence."

"Don't worry. You guys are not going because I do not want your identities to be exposed and not because I don't trust you all." She Yu added, "We might bump into Dai Gang's people, but I'm looking forward to it slightly. He's determined to obtain the ancient treasure. How exciting."

"Dai Gang's people!" Zhong Houjun shuddered before asking somewhat suspiciously, "Why isn't Ye Lin bothered by this?"

"She plots too much and is too ambitious." She Yu laughed coldly, "She probably already checked Xiao Shuren's background when the latter was still in Karakorum. Not only that, but reunions with old friends and what not are the most exciting."

Her radiant eyes flickered.

Chapter 369: Metal Elemental Elixir

Compared to the turmoil outside, the Ye residence was much more peaceful.

The current situation was messy. Students had been told to return home, so the Ye residence was empty.

Ai Hui could feel that the atmosphere in the house wasn't too good. He sensed that the servants were talking under the table, and since Ai Hui had keen ears, it did not take much effort for him to figure that they were discussing the rumors revolving around Madam Ye and Xiaobao.

Xiaobao wasn't the biological son of the deceased Master Ye?

Ai Hui couldn't help but shake his head. These people had too much time and would do anything to win those internal strifes.

He had no time or effort to waste on such nonsensical rumors. The stone statue had returned to its original state and did not react to anything. Even its initial heavenly charm was gone.

Are you going to give me just one episode after I've spent so much effort to get ahold of you?

Ai Hui stared at the bandage and stone statue unkindly. If they were alive, he would smash them against the brick wall.

When the bandage had been removed from the stone statue, it split into two pieces again and they coiled themselves around Ai Hui's body like a snake, even knotting themselves. Many a time Ai Hui felt that the bandages were very spiritual and alive.

The stone statue did look more exquisite, but was useless.

To a practical snob like Ai Hui, useless things were naturally treated as less. As such, the once mighty and impressive demonic god portrait was thrown aside by Ai Hui.

Ai Hui placed his attention on the metal elemental elixir. He had received a total of three metal elemental elixirs from Madam Ye.

These metal elemental elixirs came from high-level dire beasts, so none of the beasts producing them were weak. Such dire beasts were generally left alone by hunting teams; the hunters would even flee at the mere sight of them. Only elemental masters had the ability to hunt them down. Many new elemental masters would visit the Wilderness to hunt for these high level beasts as not only did doing so allow them to practice their inheritances, but it also helped them to lay the foundations of their training in the future.

Becoming a Master meant that the elementalist had entered a higher level of combat capability, so upon joining combat divisions, he or she would receive better treatment and privileges; the assistance rendered by aristocratic families thereafter would also be rather shocking. The masters' training costs, however, also rose significantly. Ordinary elemental food and ingredients were no longer effective for them. In other words, the elemental energy

within their bodies was purer than that found in most ingredients.

This was also the reason why elemental masters were preyed on by high-level dire beasts.

The three metal elemental elixirs were of different sizes, with the biggest being the size of a fist while the smallest was the size of an egg. Their shapes were also irregular. Each metal elemental elixir was covered by silver, hair-like threads. They were densely packed and formed a very complicated but fine decorative design; these were commonly known as elixir traces.

Many elemental masters believed that elixir traces represented a certain rule of elemental energy. Some aristocratic families and the Great Elder had researched them, but had formed no conclusive theories thus far.

Metal elemental elixirs needed to be kept in special light-swallowing sand cases. They could not be out in the air for a long time or they would develop intense elemental energy waves that altered the composition of the elemental energy in the nearby region.

It was Ai Hui's first time taking the elemental elixir, so he was excited but also slightly nervous.

Elemental elixirs were undoubtedly good items, but absorbing them was a test for elementalists. The surging elemental energy contained within was accumulated over a long period of time by the dire beasts, so it was exceptionally pure.

Being pure meant that the elemental elixir would be more difficult to absorb.

Furthermore, the remnant fiendish aura was another issue. The beasts which produced the elemental elixirs were vicious and must have gobbled up countless beasts and elementalists. Other than containing pure, surging elemental energy, the elemental elixirs also carried huge volumes of remnant fiendish aura.

This remnant energy was adverse to elementalists and a hindrance to the absorption process.

Elemental elixirs were the quickest way to raise one's elemental energy realm since the elemental energy they contained was much purer than that found in any other part of the beasts' bodies.

Ai Hui had always been lagging in this aspect because his body's aptitude was naturally terrible. If not for the elemental food prepared by Lou Lan, Ai Hui wouldn't have attained Elemental Externalization so easily. The good thing was that the glass body of his Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp, upon completion, improved his aptitude significantly.

It was a pity that Lou Lan wasn't around, otherwise he would know how to eliminate the fiendish aura from the elemental elixir.

He could only rely on himself now.

Without Lou Lan, Ai Hui felt as though a storm was brewing. He had to grab hold of whatever time he had to upgrade his abilities, so as to protect his own life.

It was fortunate that he had already trained the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] as it could possibly help to remove the elemental elixir's fiendish aura.

The lamp in his sky palace turned much brighter as it operated fully. Ai Hui swallowed the smallest elemental elixir.

Boom!

The surging elemental energy exploded suddenly with a howl like that of a tyrannical beast, then rushed into Ai Hui's brain, causing his mind to turn blank. His frail elemental energy was like paste in front of even stronger elemental energy.

Ai Hui had underestimated the strength of the elemental elixir.

In reality, when most young aristocrats consumed the elemental elixir, there would be an accompanying senior to prevent them from experiencing what Ai Hui was experiencing now. No matter how talented a genius was, they weren't worth a mention before this fearful energy that had been accumulated by dire beasts over hundreds of years of slaughter.

Ai Hui knew only the benefits of the elemental elixir, not the right way to consume it. When it came to precious treasures like

these elemental elixirs, ordinary folks might never get the chance to see one, let alone learn about the minute details involved about consuming one. That information circulated among aristocratic families only.

If Ai Hui could see what was going on in his body, he would realized that wisps of black fog were seeping out from amid the elemental elixir's elemental energy.

The Skyheart Flaming Lamp operated unceasingly to remove some of the fog, but more quickly emerged.

The fog gathered without dissipating and formed a mighty beast, which appeared blurry but emitted intense disdain, arrogance, and a dense, ice-cold, murderous spirit.

The beast suddenly opened its mouth and silently bellowed towards the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp.

The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp's flames shook once before dimming significantly.

Out of control, the metal elemental energy scattered within Ai Hui's body and black fog seeped out. The fog gathered and did not dissipate at all. It was a horrifying sight.

Just then, in a corner, the eyes of the demonic god statue glowed slightly.

Suddenly, the fog-formed beast appeared to be frightened, as if it'd seen a most terrifying enemy. It struggled wildly, but there seemed to be an invisible lock holding it down, preventing it from breaking free.

The stubborn black fog pointed towards the stone statue. The fog appeared to be very attracted to the statue as it continuously extended and stretched towards it frantically, like water plants.

The frontmost wisp of black fog entered the slightly opened mouth of the statue.

The demonic god statue's eyes glowed brighter.

Staring blankly, Ai Hui heard a dire beast's anguished wailing.

It was a howl filled with despair and fear.

Ai Hui quivered and snapped out of his daze. What he saw next made his jaw drop.

Innumerable wisps of black fog seeped out of his pores to form black hair-like threads that eventually ended up in the statue's mouth.

Demonic god statue...

He watched on helplessly as the statue swallowed the black fog

incessantly.

Ai Hui's body shook as the last wisp of black fog left it and an indescribably comfortable and light feeling rose from deep within his body.

This was…

Overwhelmed, Ai Hui felt very suspicious, but quickly lost the desire to ponder over the stone statue. Without the fiendish aura, the force of the pure metal elemental energy was also immediately released. It became small knives that circulated throughout his body, causing him to feel sharp pains all over.

The metal elemental energy released by the elemental elixir was much purer than Ai Hui had imagined.

Fortunately, he was quite experienced when it came to things like this. Long ago, starting from his time in the Suspending Golden Tower, he'd had to refine even purer metal elemental energy.

Ai Hui was good at persevering and being patient.

He stood up with some effort while holding onto the Silverfold Plum Sword. Without being showy, he got into a comfortable position. Enduring the acute pain, he started operating his one and only Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

Most people required a quiet room for this as they had to be in a

very relaxed state of mind. It was hard to imagine anyone being able to do it under such terrible conditions.

For Ai Hui, however, it had always been this way.

While this pain was not like anything he'd felt before, he got into the momentum of things gradually.

The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp, which had been restrained by the black fog earlier, regained its vigor. Its light started to circulate within Ai Hui's body, illuminating his flesh and making it appear glassy.

The sky dimmed slightly, but Ai Hui's glass-like body continued to glow and operate.

The blood plum blossom on his chest started moving. It could feel the abundant elemental energy; it was exactly what it liked. Just then, the bandage around his chest stuck itself onto the blood plum bosom, instantly calming it down to a motionless state.

Wisps of silver fog oozed out from Ai Hui's pores. They were like soft cow hair needles, needle-like but also fog-like. The absorption process consumed part of the elemental energy. The amount of elemental energy consumed was directly linked with the body's aptitude. The better the body's aptitude was, the lower its elemental energy consumption and higher its absorption efficiency would be.

While Ai Hui had already mastered [Glass Body], he still lost about twenty-five percent of the elemental energy. Thick metal elemental energy circulated throughout his whole body like an enveloping ball of silver fog.

The stone statue remained still this time. The silver fog seemed to be of no interest to the statue. The glow in its eyes vanished and the statue returned back to its charmless, ordinary granite rock-like state.

Time passed slowly as Ai Hui completed one Circulatory Cycle Revolution after another.

At dawn on the second day, a faint glow appeared outside the windows and on the horizon far away. The room was still dark, but a glassy sculpture of a human figure, seemingly fresh out of the oven, could be seen. The glow had yet to disperse and he was still surrounded by silver fog. He was like thunder and lightning amid the thick clouds.

He quivered suddenly before slowly opening his eyes.

Those eyes were peaceful and deep, like the night sky still lingering on the horizon.

He'd stepped into the Second Elemental Realm.

Chapter 370: The Will

Upon stepping into Second Elemental Realm, Ai Hui could clearly feel his control over elemental energy improving greatly. There were even fine traces of elemental energy swirling around his body.

Ai Hui knew that this phenomenon was occurring due to his being unable to absorb and emit elemental energy with ease, as he had just achieved the breakthrough.

Even after achieving the breakthrough, he wasn't particularly overjoyed. On the contrary, he was abnormally calm. He seemed to be lost in thought as he looked at the dawn sky outside the window.

Human beings' understanding towards the world was ever-changing. Men from the Cultivation Era used to think that the world was made up of spiritual force. In the current Elemental Era, men felt that the world was made up of various elemental energies.

From mankind's perspective, the world was ever-changing.

Perhaps from the world's perspective, it was mankind that was ever-changing.

Ai Hui returned to his senses when the first trace of sunlight shone through the window and into his eyes. After stretching his arms and feet, the elemental energy within his body surged. The abundance of power within his body made him feel as if he could

capture a tiger alive.

Stepped into Second Elemental Realm had also boosted his fusion elemental energy level. It was a happy surprise to him. Despite spending so many days in the Grass Hall, Ai Hui still could not find the notebook; however, he did not become impatient and continued to look through the ancient records one by one.

Now, even Grass Hall pretended that they didn’t see him searching through the ancient records almost every day.

As time went by, his fusion elemental energy depleted and was about to run out. Ai Hui lifted his gaze from the book in his hands. Just as Ai Hui left the Ancient Hall of Records and was about to leave Grass Hall, Manager called for him.

Slightly surprised, Ai Hui asked, "Is there anything that I can help you with?"

During the trips to Grass Hall these few days, other than greeting Manager, he had not really talked with him.

"Hua Kui is dead," Manager said bluntly. "He doesn’t have any family members. According to his will, he is leaving you all his inheritance."

Manager passed Ai Hui a key.

Ai Hui was stunned momentarily. After a while, he returned to

his senses. He took the key, thanked Manager, and left.

After leaving Grass Hall, Ai Hui stood motionless, in a daze.

He'd entered the Assembly of Patriarchs with a strong sense of purpose. He'd known Hua Kui for a few years, but had not developed a friendship with him. Even when Hua Kui became his guide, he did not really feel anything for him. Being a member of the Assembly of Patriarchs, he needed to make sure his identity was not exposed at all times.

Ai Hui had always felt that Hua Kui knew about his disguise, but then he loosened up as he realized that the Assembly of Patriarchs did not really care about aliases.

Deep down, he had never treated Hua Kui as someone he could rely on.

As such, when Manager told him that Hua Kui left him with his inheritance, he was slightly shocked. To Ai Hui, one's inheritance was usually left to his or her closest family members.

Ai Hui did not expect himself to have held such an important place in Hua Kui's heart. Not only did this fact surprise him, it also put him at a complete loss. He did not feel the same way about Hua Kui.

Ai Hui could accept death calmly. From the Wilderness to Central Pine City and from the outbreak of the blood catastrophe to now,

he had seen a lot of people die almost every day. There was nothing strange or unusual about death.

Death was the ultimate end of one's life. Facing the news of someone's death, he might feel sad, but not overly sad. As long as he or she did not die the way his master and mistress had died, then it would still be alright. If he was the one to die, then how it happened would not matter to him at all.

Right now, he did not want to die because there were still things that he had not yet accomplished.

There were times when he would worry about death.

For instance, if he died, who would he leave his inheritance to? Lou Lan? Lou Lan was a sand puppet, would money be useful to him at all? If he died, Lou Lan would be rather pitiful. Then, should he leave his inheritance to Fatty? Leaving his inheritance to Fatty made him feel as if he was feeding a huge meat bun to a dog. Iron Lady probably wouldn't care about his money. Maybe he could ask her to help repay his debt. Ha, why would he need to care about repaying his debt when he was already dead?

Ai Hui finally returned from his daze and laughed at himself.

After thinking for a while, he found a wooden board and used his sword to carve two words, "Hua Kui", into it. He would use the wooden slab as Hua Kui's spirit tablet. In a huge household like the Ye Residence, burning incense was an everyday task. As such, he easily found some incense sticks.

Following which, he lit up a few incense sticks for Hua Kui.

After accepting Hua Kui’s inheritance, he had to do something for him.

"Hua Kui, as your hands are full of blood, it’s most likely that you can’t enter Heaven. I hope you can still grow and cultivate flowers in Hell. At least that way you can resume your old trade and live a happy life."

After kowtowing to Hua Kui’s spirit tablet, Ai Hui walked out of his room and was sprinkled with sunshine.

At this point of time, he did not want to do anything. He lay down on a rattan chair and basked in the sunshine.

Without his students, the place was quieter. Even the servants became slightly slack. What happened recently had dealt a huge blow to them. The usual paradise-like Ye Residence suddenly became the centre of a gigantic maelstrom. All of them felt extremely nervous and uneasy.

The sunlight began to turn harsh, however, Ai Hui remained motionless. Relaxing completely was a type of pleasure for him.

Suddenly, his hand grasped the Silverfold Plum.

.....

All the influential figures had gathered at Silver City.

From the Elders Guild alone, there were already four people in attendance. Great Elder, Yuchi Ba, Elder Song, and Elder Ling. Other than that, there were also Yuchi Qingshan, Zhong Houjun, Gong Residence's family head, Zeng Residence's family head, and Ling Sheng with his wife.

Ling Sheng's gaze was bitter and enraged while Madam Ling's was as calm as usual. In front of the four Elders, they were just insignificant individuals.

Needless to say, Great Elder was the leader of the Elders Guild. Elder Ling was the leader of the Aristocratic Faction while Elder Song was the number two figure in the Aristocratic Faction. Both of them were bosom buddies. Meanwhile, Yuchi Ba was the leader of the New Citizens Faction.

All of them surrounded a gigantic pool. In the central of the pool, there was a platform on which only one person could stand. The pool's surroundings were fully carved with complicated and fine decorative designs that flickered with light. The water within the pool was multicolored and the colors were clearly distinctive, looking like strips of brightly-colored ribbons.

"I am sorry for bringing inconvenience to everyone over such a small matter."

Great Elder saluted and thanked all the people present. Everyone did not dare to hesitate and quickly stood up to return Great Elder's salute.

"However, Lin-er said that gossip is a fearful thing. As a mother, she doesn't want Xiaobao to be disturbed by the rumor in the future. Therefore, I have to bring an end to this issue. Xiaobao is my only grandson. Ever since his birth, he has led troubled life. His father died young and I'm not frequently in Silver City to take care of him. As such, I feel extremely guilty and have to brazenly invite everyone here today.

Yuchi Ba opened his mouth and spoke first. "This rumor is mean and evil. Great Elder, don't take it to heart. All of us have watched Xiaobao growing up since he was a baby. He looks exactly like his father, how can he not be his own child?"

Yuchi Ba had a pair of naturally scowling eyebrows, resembling King Kong with glaring eyes. At this point of time, his face was brimming with resentment and anger.

Elder Ling had a refined appearance. His eyebrows were drooping and his mustache was long. With a gentle voice, he advised, "That's right. When I heard this rumor, I immediately knew it was a lie. Don't we know Lin-er's character? Furthermore, the Ye Residence's family values are matchless."

Everyone agreed with what he said.

Ye Lin smiled and half rose from her chair to thank everyone.

"Everyone, I believe there are a lot of people in this world that are capable of coming up with lies," said Great Elder.

"That’s true!"

"You’re right!"

All the Elders nodded.

With a deep and solemn tone, Great Elder continued, "If Xiaobao is not a member of the Gu Family, then it would mean our family values have been corrupted and that we have humiliated the world; however, if it’s proven that the rumor is a lie, I will not let Xiaobao receive injustice for nothing. My only grandson has been severely sick since he was born and has led a troubled life. I hereby swear that I will use whatever methods to seek revenge for him!"

A cold shiver went down everyone’s spine. They knew that Great Elder was truly enraged this time around. Given his status, one could tell how angry he was to say such words.

Elder Ling cast a glance at Ling Sheng and the latter shook his head subtly to signal that the rumor was not his doing. Upon seeing that, Elder Ling felt slightly at ease. As long as the rumor had not been spread by members of his family, no one could blame it on the Ling Residence.

If it had been another family that had colluded with blood

elementalists to attack the Fu Family and Ye Lin and her son, then that family would definitely be destroyed. With the backing of Elder Ling, however, the Ling Residence would not be affected by the so-called "evidence."

As long as this rumor had not been started by Ling Sheng, Elder Ling could just wait and see a good show.

If the rumor was a lie, then it would not affect them in any way. If the rumor was true, then things would get interesting. Elder Ling, who had been thinking of ways to neutralize Great Elder, realized that if the rumor was true, then it would create a good opportunity for him to do so.

To everyone, the look of bitter resentment and hatred on Madam Ling's face was normal. Ye Lin had chopped off one of Ling Sheng's arms. The feud between them was unsolvable.

Great Elder's prestige was matchless. Elder Ling was no pushover as well. With the addition of the New Citizen Faction's Yuchi Ba, the situation was extremely subtle.

When Xiaobao saw that everyone's gaze was on him, he felt slightly afraid. He hid behind Ye Lin and said, "Mama, Xiaobao is scared."

"Xiaobao, don't be scared, Mama is here." Ye Lin stroked Xiaobao's head gently.

Xiaobao felt slightly more at ease, but he still clutched Ye Lin’s clothes and was unwilling to let go.

When Great Elder saw this scene, he felt as if his heart was pierced by a sword, but then he hardened his heart and said, "Let’s begin. Xiaobao, stand on the platform in the centre of the pool."

Xiaobao continued to hide behind Madam Ye.

"Xiaobao, be good. Listen to Grandpa and stand on the platform in the centre of the pool. It will not hurt at all," Ye Lin said with a gentle voice.

Xiaobao turned his face and asked, "Really? It will not hurt?"

"It’s really not painful."

The gentle smile on his mother’s face calmed Xiaobao down, following which, he sobbed. "Xiaobao shall go then, Mama must wait for Xiaobao."

"Mama will not go anywhere and wait here," Ye Lin reassured Xiaobao.

"Xiaobao is the bravest! Xiaobao is scared of nothing!"

Xiaobao closed his eyes and encouraged himself loudly. Then, he opened his eyes and walked towards the platform.

When everyone saw this scene, feelings of empathy rose in their hearts. Whether it was their Gu Family or the Ye Residence, they were all top aristocratic families. They did not expect their younger generation to be reduced to this.

To an aristocratic family, nothing was more important than its heir and inheritance.

How could a mentally challenged individual carry such an enormous family on his delicate shoulders?

Some people could not help but harbor evil thoughts. Even though Great Elder was powerful and influential, he still did not have a qualified successor to carry on his undertakings at this old age. This was Great Elder's deadliest weakness.

Great Elder looked deeply at Xiaobao. He opened his mouth to say something, but nothing came out.

Following which, he cut his finger and let his blood drip into the pool.

Chapter 371: Powerful Enemies

Ai Hui sat up from the rattan chair. He could sense someone was nearby.

A faint, seductive voice suddenly rang acrossed his ears, "You're truly worthy of being my chosen one. The last time I left in a rush, but today we shall have a good, intimate time together."

"Long time no see," Ai Hui grinned, appearing rather fearless.

A lightning-fast silvery sword gleam erupted without any warning.

"I've been expecting you to do this. I know how ruthless you are. If you can even kill your own master, why wouldn't you kill me now?" Like a ghost, She Yu was maneuvering and dodging Ai Hui's sword gleam with ease.

Ai Hui turned a deaf ear to She Yu. His facial expression did not change but his sword gleam became increasingly intense. Having just achieved a breakthrough, his essence-breath-spirit was at its peak. One Thousand Yuan was trying to use her words to disrupt his mental state but her words actually made him even more powerful. He had never regretted killing his master with his sword three years ago.

He would be sad, he would grieve, but he would never regret it.

Six crescent moons were dancing in the sky and they were accompanied by streaks of odd-looking sword gleams. Meanwhile, the buzzing sound of Silverfold Plum rang incessantly through the air. Even though it was not loud, it would still cause one to tremble in fear.

A red figure was darting in and out of the fleeting streaks of sword gleam, appearing and disappearing like a wisp of smoke.

Clink, clink, clink!

The brief and repetitive sounds of collisions could be heard constantly. The flying sparks gave the two hazy figures a demonic sense of beauty and an awe-inspiring aura of killing intent.

As compared to three years ago, Ai Hui's strength had improved tremendously. Similarly, She Yu's strength had also increased sharply. Three years ago, She Yu was unpredictable. Three years later, She Yu was still unpredictable.

Three years ago, when he fought One Thousand Yuan, all he could feel was a deep sense of helplessness. However, right now, he finally had the capabilities to put up a fight with her!

A sense of fervor arose in Ai Hui's heart. Sword moves poured out of him like a torrential river.

She Yu was seemingly smiling, but really she was shocked.

When they were still in Central Pine City she'd already thought highly of Ai Hui's future, even though his aptitude was not really outstanding. However, now that she looked at Ai Hui again, she knew that he definitely would have a great future given his outstanding mind, cool-headed mentality and diligence.

She was still shocked by Ai Hui's improvements.

Even though his sword gleams were not fast, they came out in huge numbers. Furthermore, his sword gleams intertwined among each other, seemingly containing a mysterious force within them. She Yu tried to block a few streaks of sword gleams and noticed that her palms went numb, sending a cold shiver down her spine.

As the seed of Blood of God and a rare God Priest, the God Nation had spared no effort in cultivating her. She learnt the most profound and high-leveled techniques and spells in Blood of God.

[Star Divine Hallucination] was the most profound and the most difficult spell to learn in God Nation. Up till now, she was only the second person to master it. The first person who'd mastered this spell was Holy Emperor.

[Phantom] and [Smoke Saunter] were two completely different spells. She combined these two spells and granted herself the ability to become half-phantom, half-smoke. By combining these two spells, her attacks were unpredictable and impossible to defend against.

Not only that, she'd also mastered a spell that only a god shaman

could practise, [Demonic Nine-step Dance]. By combining this spell with [Phantom] and [Smoke Saunter], she created the unique [Phantom Smoke Dance]. Every movement she made would create distortion in the space surrounding her, making her almost omnipotent.

She had fought with many elementalists and had seen many absolute arts before. However, Ai Hui's sword gleam was completely different from the others' absolute arts.

When the attacks from the usual absolute arts entered the distorted space surrounding her, most of them would be displaced. However, She Yu discovered her [Phantom Smoke Dance] had very little effect on Ai Hui's sword gleam. Ai Hui's dazzling sword gleam contained a mysterious force that rendered her [Phantom Smoke Dance] ineffective.

The sword gleam had another characteristic that was trouble for She Yu.

The sharpness of the sword gleam.

This was absolutely something that She Yu had not expected. Fundamentally, blood spiritual force was spiritual force. Even though blood spiritual force could not be compared to the pure spiritual force of the Cultivation Era, it was still more powerful and of a higher level than elemental energy. When blood spiritual force collided with elemental energy, the former had an extremely huge advantage over the latter. This was also the main reason why blood elementalists could maintain superiority over elementalists during battles.

The only time where elemental energy was more powerful than blood spiritual force was when an elementalist became a Master, and the structure of his elemental energy was enhanced greatly.

She Yu discovered that Ai Hui's sword gleam remained abnormally firm and strong, even when it collided with blood spiritual force.

So this was swordsmanship?

She Yu clearly knew that Ai Hui wasn't at the level of a Master yet. She immediately came to realize that swordsmen might become the biggest threat to Blood of God in the future. There was a high possibility that Blood of God's superiority in fighting capabilities might come to an end.

Now, she slightly regretted that she'd planted [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] on Ai Hui. Otherwise, she would have killed Ai Hui at all costs.

Swordsmanship, which had been obsolete for so many years, should continue to stay obsolete. By staying obsolete, it would benefit Blood of God in the long run.

However, [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art]...

She was having a headache. This time around, she had to capture Ai Hui alive and bring him back to Blood of God at all costs. Ai Hui

had become her greatest weakness. Luckily, she was the only one who knew this.

If She Yu knew that Ai Hui had already found out about [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art], she would die of pure regret.

"Go and find Xiao Shuren."

When She Yu finished her sentence, a few figures appeared on top of the surrounding walls.

Ai Hui's facial expression changed. The aura of these people was powerful and fierce. Their strength was comparable to Jiu Gui's and Prince's, However, Jiu Gui and Prince had followed Madam Ye on her trip. At this point in time, Ye Residence had almost zero defenses.

Following which, those figures flew towards the court that Xiao Shuren was staying in.

Suddenly, an extremely awful voice resounded through the air, "Keke, all of you get lost."

A wall of vines suddenly blocked their path. Numerous streaks of green light shot out from the wall. These streaks of green light were actually straight and sharp rattans. A faint and sweet aroma was emitted from them, proving that they were highly toxic.

The elementalists that were flying towards Xiao Shuren's court

changed their facial expressions drastically, and they quickly dodged out of the rattans' way.

She Yu had just struggled free of Ai Hui's sword gleam, when her eyes froze momentarily. "Grass puppet!"

"I don't like that name," Qing Feng shook his head. His torso was made up of thick, solid grass tendons and white-colored lotus roots. Atop that torso was a human head, making him look extremely creepy.

"I am Qing Feng," he grinned.

Ai Hui was dumbstruck. This was the first time he saw such a monster. Suddenly, he thought of Shi Youguang. Actually, this grass-lotus puppet was no different from a transfigured earth elementalist's. One was from an earth elementalist, the other a wood elementalist.

Now that he thought of it this way, he felt relieved.

Body transfiguration was a forbidden art. Its process was complicated and high-leveled. Ai Hui did not favor this method of increasing one's strength as well.

"Such an interesting thing," She Yu's eyes flickered.

The Beast Venom Temple would be very happy if she could capture and bring this thing back. Beast Venom Temple loved all

kinds of weird stuffs.

Furthermore... it seemed like Dai Gang was determined in obtaining the ancient treasure!

She Yu felt more and more curious. What exactly was the ancient treasure? A Grandmaster actually wanted it so bad that he was willing to obtain it at all costs.

"Interesting thing?" Qing Feng shook his head, "Today, you're going to die here."

At this moment, a cold sneer resounded through the air.

Even though it was just a sneer, it felt as though the surrounding elemental energy was being stirred by a pair of invisible hands.

She Yu's facial expression changed drastically. A master!

Her gaze was locked on the old man beside Qing Feng. That old man was actually a Master!

There's trouble this time around!

Very soon, she understood what was going on. After she forced them into dire straits, the Ling Residence had no choice but to hug Dai Gang's legs.

Since they wanted to hug Dai Gang's legs, they had to get Xiao Shuren for him.

Upon seeing what was going on, the elementalists that She Yu had hired started to feel the urge to retreat. They did not expect to encounter a Master in the mission this time around.

One of them opened his mouth and said to She Yu, "This mission is too dangerous, pardon me for being powerless. Goodbye!"

The others retreated without any hesitation.

The old man ignored those elementalists who had just retreated. He knew that his main target was Xiao Shuren. As long as he could get Xiao Shuren, he wouldn't care about other small matters.

As long as he got Xiao Shuren it would be alright, even if the Ling Residence fell out with Elders Guild. If Dai Gang personally invited Ling Residence to join him, what could Elders Guild do?

An Muda was old and dying, while Dai Gang was at his peak. Would Elders Guild be so stupid as to fall out with Dai Gang over the Ling Residence?

Elders Guild and Dai Gang were merely vying for power. Both parties were elementalists. Ultimately, there was nothing that could not be solved.

From the perspective of aristocratic families, if they had served

and worshiped An Muda in the past, why couldn’t they do the same to Dai Gang as well?

If An Muda passed away, other than Dai Gang, who was there to stop the Holy Emperor of God Nation? Even if Elders Guild didn’t think for themselves, they would still think for their future generations, right?

Just like She Yu, Ai Hui’s facial expression changed drastically. The energy fluctuation from the metal elemental master had a huge impact on him. All the surrounding metal elemental energy was out of his control. He felt as if he was in a turbulent, stormy sea.

So this was a Master....

"Brother Chu, let us join hands. We can split the ancient treasure evenly!"

Goddamned demonic girl!

Ai Hui cursed She Yu in his heart. When Qing Feng and the old man’s gaze landed upon him, he knew something was wrong. He quickly explained, "All of you can continue what you’re doing. I have zero interest in the so-called ancient treasure!"

After he finished his sentence, he wanted to make an escape.

"So you’re Chu Zhaoyang?" the old man squinted his eyes as his

voice was filled with a chilling, killing intent, "So you're the one who fought with Xiao-er over Fu Sisi?"

"It's a misunderstanding! It's definitely a misunderstanding! All along I felt that Brother Ling and Miss Fu were a match made in heaven!" Ai Hui laughed.

"I heard that both of you are deeply in love, but it turns out that the two of you are just cowards," the old man had a disdainful look on his face. However, the killing intent within his eyes did not decrease in the slightest. "My poor Ling-er is still unconscious even now. How can the both of you still be alive? Today, I shall seek revenge for Ling-er!"

Ai Hui sighed in his heart. Men died in the pursuit of wealth, and birds died in the pursuit of food. The price of avarice was death. These were truly words of wisdom.

If he'd known at the time that the small amount of money he'd made would bring him so many troubles, he would have stayed away from Fu Sisi.

"It seems like we will either live or die together!" She Yu chuckled.

Ai Hui knew what She Yu's words actually implied, but he acted as if he did not know anything. [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] had a lot of areas that could be exploited.

If he could not escape, then he could only fight.

Ai Hui was not confident about facing a metal elementalist master. As such, he quickly yelled, "I will take on the grass-lotus puppet and you will take on the old man!"

"Deal!"

Before She Yu even finished her sentence, both of them struck out at the same time.

Chapter 372: An Enraged Qing Feng

Ai Hui had never seen a grass-lotus puppet before. However, he thought that a grass-lotus puppet should be something similar to a sand puppet. The performance of a sand puppet was usually closely linked to the character and fighting style of its master.

Ai Hui did not know Dai Gang well. All he knew was that Dai Gang was Bangwan's master, but there was nothing very special about their relationship.

However, Ai Hui had a rich amount of experience in handling sand puppets. Lou Lan was his number one training partner.

Since a grass-lotus puppet and a sand puppet were very similar, a grass-lotus's mechanics should be similar to a sand puppet's as well.

Ai Hui's brain was working rapidly.

For example, a sand puppet's body was usually quite big. Most of their bodies had a unique ability. Some could change their forms, some were very sturdy, some hid numerous weapons within them and so on.

Qing Feng's body was made up of grass tendons and lotus roots.

Ai Hui's gaze was first directed at Qing Feng's completely exposed grass tendons. Could the grass tendons be his weakness? Generally

speaking, grass-type materials were not sturdy and hard.

With a jolt of his mind, Ai Hui brandished his Silverfold Plum and the six dancing streaks of sword gleams formed an odd-looking arc in the air.

Upon seeing this, Qing Feng spread his palm and his five fingers grew in length frantically. Eventually, his fingers became five thick rattans that shot towards the sword gleams in the sky.

Ai Hui was very familiar with this type of attack. Wasn't this attack something like Bangwan's [Viridescent Flower]?

With a flick of his wrist, Ai Hui slashed his Silverfold Plum downward. The six streaks of sword gleams shot towards Qing Feng. Suddenly, the sword gleams changed direction in the air and flew through the gaps in between Qing Feng's five rattan fingers.

Qing Feng did not expect Ai Hui to be able to control the flying sword gleams.

The six streaks of sword gleams were like six nimble swallows, slicing Qing Feng's naked grass tendon joints.

Clang, clang, clang!

Sparks were flying everywhere.

The grass tendons were much more tougher than Ai Hui expected. When the sword gleams sliced them, it merely left a small and fine mark on them. However, Ai Hui was not discouraged. If these grass tendons were exposed like this, that meant they had definitely been through some process and possessed excellent resistance.

Furthermore, this was a grass-lotus puppet that was produced by Dai Gang. Ai Hui did not think that a Grandmaster would make such an amateur mistake in his work.

With a twist of his body, Ai Hui flitted by Qing Feng in a slanted position. The movement of the Silverfold Plum in his hand was changing.

The six crescent moons dispersed again and swirled toward Qing Feng.

Once again, Qing Feng tried to block them, but failed. These palm-sized sword gleams were a lot faster and nimbler than he thought.

Clang!

The crisper and louder sound of Ai Hui's attack hitting Qing Feng rang across the air. In fact, there was also a sound produced by the six streaks of sword gleams colliding together. However, due to the extremely short time interval between the two sounds, it sounded as if there was only one sound.

The six streaks of sword gleams had sliced the same position on Qing Feng's grass tendons at the same time!

This attack displayed Ai Hui's brilliant and outstanding control over his sword gleams.

The grass tendons were sliced off!

Ai Hui was overjoyed. However, when he saw the severed grass tendons begin to wiggle and connect back together with the wound starting to heal, the joyful look on his face disappeared completely.

"So this is swordsmanship? Interesting!"

Qing Feng shook his head. He did not seem to care about his grass tendons being sliced off.

Ai Hui's brain was working speedily. Grass tendons had regenerative powers. Alright, that was nothing unusual. A lot of wood elementalists possessed this type of inheritance. A war of attrition was something that wood elementalists specialized in.

The good news was that his sword gleam was able to deal damage to Qing Feng's grass tendons.

What about the lotus roots?

Ai Hui tried to attack Qing Feng's lotus roots, but soon realized

that the lotus roots were harder and sturdier than the grass tendons. His sword gleam could not even leave a single mark on them.

He decided that he shall attack the grass tendons then!

Ai Hui kept on brandishing his Silverfold Plum. Every now and then, there would be six streaks of sword gleams shooting towards Qing Feng.

The number of sword gleams surrounding Qing Feng was increasing gradually. Seen from a distance, it looked as if there was a gigantic school of fish swimming and dancing around Qing Feng.

Qing Feng tried to use his grass rattans to whip the sword gleams, but they were too fast and nimble for him to hit them.

Very soon, Qing Feng realized that something was not right. These sword gleams were flying faster and faster and he felt like he was trapped in a tornado. Woosh! A streak of flames suddenly ignited within the tornado.

Very soon, the tornado became brighter and brighter and the sword gleams flew faster and faster.

[Flaming Wind Sword Formation]!

When the swishing sound of the sword gleams and the whooshing sound of the flames merged together, they created a

sound that struck fear into one’s heart. A flaming tornado shot into the sky and engulfed Qing Feng.

Phew, Ai Hui heaved a sigh of relief. This sword formation should be able to deal some damage to Qing Feng.

At this moment, the [Flaming Wind Sword Formation] suddenly exploded with a loud bang, revealing the figure within it.

"Very interesting."

An awful voice echoed through the air.

Ai Hui was stupefied. Qing Feng’s head, limbs and all his grass tendons had withdrawn into his lotus root body’s torso. The [Flaming Wind Sword Formation] did not do any damage to him, other than leaving traces of burn marks on his white-colored lotus root torso.

Qing Feng was like a man made of rubber bands. His head, limbs and grass tendons extended out of his lotus root torso in a grotesquely weird way.

He could… do this?

Qing Feng stretched his body and shook his head, saying, "If your capabilities are only this much, you won’t survive today."

After finishing his sentence, Qing Feng crouched his body slightly. His thick and strong grass tendons resembled a bunch of compressed springs.

Ai Hui widened his eyes abruptly.

Swoosh! Qing Feng became a blur and appeared before Ai Hui. Like a bunch of vipers, ten grass rattans attacked Ai Hui from different directions.

Ai Hui's reaction was extremely fast. Instead of retreating, he moved forward and attacked. He crouched his body slightly and then dashed forward like a cheetah. The elemental energy within his body had been channeled to its maximum level. The Silverfold Plum in his hand went for Qing Feng's head directly!

He did not integrate any complicated techniques for this attack. This attack was a simple, piercing strike!

When he was trying to survive, he would go all-out. This simple-looking piercing strike was actually extremely powerful and vicious.

Qing Feng felt a strong sense of danger when he saw a cold glint flashed across Ai Hui's eyes. He did not expect Ai Hui to go all-out on his offense. As such, he was caught off guard and landed himself in a dangerous situation..

Upon seeing that he could not avoid Ai Hui's attack, Qing Feng

suddenly opened his mouth to reveal two rows of shiny sawteeth. That two rows of sawteeth were flickering with a horrifying cold glint.

Clang!

Two rows of dazzling sawteeth bit onto Silverfold Plum tightly.

The powerful force from the inertia caused Ai Hui to lose control of his body and he swung up into the air like a ragdoll.

Ai Hui did not expect Qing Feng to modify his teeth. Apparently, the two rows of shiny sawteeth were a sharp weapon made up of precious materials.

Crack, crack, crack!

Cracks began to appear on the two rows of sawteeth. However, at this point of time, Ai Hui had already used up his momentum. A premonition arose in his heart and he quickly withdrew his sword and retreated.

Clang, clang, clang!

A few spear-like grass rattans pierced the position that he was previously at.

Crash! As Ai Hui withdrew his sword, countless fragments of

Qing Feng's sawteeth flew out from his mouth and scattered in the air.

Ai Hui pulled away, distancing himself from Qing Feng. He was panting heavily. Even though the exchange was short, it was extremely dangerous. A moment of hesitation would have cost him his life. Such a short and intense exchange depleted his physical energy and strained his mind greatly. At this point of time, he could only feel numbness in his limbs.

Qing Feng was a powerful grass puppet.

His defensive capabilities were very powerful and he could heal himself. His thick and strong grass tendons were like a bunch of springs. His lotus-root torso was extremely light, making him as fast as a gust of wind. Even the teeth in his mouth were a weapon.

Damn it! He was truly a fully weaponized creature!

Ai Hui's plan on defeating Qing Feng through elemental energy fell through as well.

Metal overcame wood. This was a natural interaction The reason why he'd chosen Qing Feng as his opponent was because he wanted to make use of this natural interaction. The relationships among the five elements could be very effective against an opponent that had not reached the level of a Master.

Initially, Ai Hui still thought that he might have some advantage

over Qing Feng. However, after that previous exchange, Ai Hui realized he was completely wrong. Qing Feng's wood elemental energy was extremely weird. Ai Hui's metal elemental energy could not restrain Qing Feng's wood elemental energy at all.

Could Qing Feng be a Master-level grass puppet?

Don't tell me he is that powerful....

Ai Hui groaned in his heart. He did not dare to get distracted and fixated his gaze on his opponent. Even though his previous attack had shattered Qing Feng's teeth, he did not do any practical damage to him.

Such a pity...

A chance like that would not occur again.

Furthermore, that attack seemed to have infuriated Qing Feng.

That's right, Qing Feng was indeed enraged. His gaze was cold as he spat out his shattered teeth. His metallic tooth fragments were mixed with traces of blood. The previous dangerous exchange had left a tinge of fear lingering in him. However, he still felt more anger than fear.

Initially, he treated this battle as a cat-catch-mouse game. In the end, he almost got killed by the mouse. As such, why would he not be angry?

"I em koing do shre yoou do peethes..."

Ai Hui, who was feeling tense and anxious, could not help but laugh. However, when he saw the killing intent in Qing Feng's eyes, he quickly explained, "I didn't laugh at you intentionally. Really, I didn't do it on purpose. It's not your fault that you don't have teeth! Come, follow after me, 'I'm going to shred you to pieces!'"

Qing Feng's face swiftly became red with anger. He let out a beast-like roar, "Go ann dlie!"

Ai Hui almost laughed until he collapsed.

It was a surprise to him that he could infuriate Qing Feng.

However, when Ai Hui saw what Qing Feng did out of the corner of his eyes, he was so scared that he retreated in haste.

Qing Feng withdrew his palms and grass tendons, leaving two holes at the end of his lotus root forearms. At this moment, he began to emit a green glow. A strong feeling of danger engulfed Ai Hui.

Pop, pop, pop!

The sound of beans exploding suddenly resounded through the

air.

Qing Feng's two arms were spinning frantically as numerous lotus seeds rained down on Ai Hui.

Ai Hui brandished his Silverfold Plum with all his might. The six crescent moons around him formed a protective screen for him. The impact of those lotus seeds was extremely terrifying. After a while, the protective screen formed by his six crescent moons collapsed.

Ai Hui had a very fast reaction. He quickly unleashed another six crescent moons.

Qing Feng's intense offense caused Ai Hui to gasp for air. All he could do was unleash the six crescent moons repeatedly to block the incoming lotus seeds.

However, he did not notice that when those lotus seeds were warded off and landed on the ground, they immediately burrowed into the dirt. As for those lotus seeds that missed him, they burrowed straight into the ground.

A lot of lotus seedlings emerged from the ground. They lay flat on the ground, resembling water lilies floating on a pond. The ground was becoming soft and transforming into a swamp rapidly..

By the time Ai Hui felt that something was not right beneath his feet, he realized that he was stepping on a lotus leaf.

Lotus leaf?

At this point of time, the torrential attacks had disappeared. Ai Hui knew something was not right, and raised his head. All he saw was boundless lotus leaves.

Fifty meters away, Qing Feng was standing on a single lotus leaf. He was chuckling as he withdrew his lotus root arms.

Not good!

Ai Hui’s facial expression suddenly changed drastically.

Chapter 373: Lotus-leaf-made Mouths

Ai Hui was groaning in his heart.

Suddenly, the lotus leaves beneath his feet transformed into big, sinister, green-colored mouths. The inside of every mouth was a dark void, resembling a gateway to the netherworld. Even with scorching sunlight shining on him, Ai Hui's hair still stood on end.

A terrifying, attractive force erupted from the huge mouths. Ai Hui's body trembled. He could feel the elemental energy in his body was out of his control and was flowing towards those mouths.

Ai Hui was flabbergasted. After he stepped into the Two Elemental Realm, his control over his elemental energy had become very strong. Even though most of the time he could not control the elemental energy in his surroundings, he could still maintain a great control over the elemental energy within his body. A situation like this seldom happened to him

His surroundings rapidly became dark.

Even the sunlight was being devoured by the huge lotus-leaf-made mouths.

What kind of weird technique was this?

A cold shiver went down Ai Hui's spine. He had to take off from the ground immediately! He spread the Starry Gem Swordwings on

his back and flew towards the sky.

However, what happened next set him in fear and trepidation.

The darkness beneath was rising and catching up to him swiftly. Like the darkness from the netherworld, the surrounding light was being devoured with a horrifying speed. The speed of the rising darkness was much faster than Ai Hui's flying speed. In an instant, the darkness surpassed him, rising over him into the distance.

Ai Hui was in a void of darkness now. A beam of sunlight shone on his head from above him.

Half of his body was being illuminated but no shadow was produced. The beam of light continued on its path towards the boundless void beneath his feet. The worst thing was the beam of light was shrinking rapidly.

Ai Hui felt as if he had fallen into a huge drawstring bag and the beam of light that was shining on his head was shrinking due to the drawstring being pulled and tightened.

No matter how much effort he put in, he could not get closer to the mouth of the drawstring bag above him. The opening was becoming smaller and smaller.

When the last trace of sunlight vanished, the sky above Ai Hui's head had disappeared and his surroundings were engulfed by darkness. Only the huge lotus-leaf-made mouths beneath his feet

were still emitting a faint glow. However, very soon, the mouths started to close one by one. All of them had withdrawn back into the void of darkness like nimble jade snakes.

When the last traces of faint light disappeared, there was nothing left except for the void and darkness.

Dead silence. Absolute dead silence. Ai Hui could hear his own heartbeat. The speed at which his elemental energy was depleting was becoming increasingly fast. Eventually, it was so fast that Ai Hui became panicked.

An unknown amount of time had passed.

Ai Hui seemed to lose his gauge of time. He sensed something was amiss. To a veteran with rich combat experience like him, sensitivity towards time was an instinct to him.

However, at this point of time, his instincts had failed him!

Before Ai Hui could understand what was going on, he suddenly heard a sound.

Thump, thump, thump!

It sounded as if someone was beating a drum. With every hit of the "drum", the sound got louder and louder. It was so loud that Ai Hui’s head was throbbing.

Wait, wasn't that the sound of his own heartbeat?

He was stunned. Whatever happened here was filled with a weird aura.

The sound of heartbeats became increasingly loud, so much so that he felt he was flooded by it. Suddenly, he realized that his fingers did not seem to follow his commands. By the time he could react to it, a feeling of numbness was spreading throughout his body.

His entire body froze.

In the dead silent void, Ai Hui was like a motionless statue.

Like a venomous snake, the feeling of numbness drilled into his brain. He could feel that his thinking process was gradually becoming sluggish and numb.

Helplessness arose within his mind. The strength disparity between him and Qing Feng was so great that he could not even retaliate.

The grass-lotus puppet created by Dai Gang was so powerful!

Ai Hui remained motionless. Like a corroded gear, his brain was operating with sluggishness and difficulty. He felt as if he was

taking countless years to even let out a sigh of regret.

His stationary eyes stared blankly at the void in front of him.

She Yu did not expect herself to be so passive today.

Even though Old Ling was a Master, his strength was not enough to push her into such a difficult situation. Her attention was mainly focused on the green glowing ball. Every single lotus leaf emitted a beam of green light. All the beams of green light converged in the air and formed a green glowing ball.

Chu Zhaoyang was motionless like a statue in the green glowing ball. His eyes were hollow and devoid of any life.

She wondered whether or not Ai Hui was still alive in the green glowing ball.

What inheritance was this?

She shivered with cold. Anything or anyone that was related to Dai Gang was complicated in nature. Even a grass-lotus puppet built by Dai Gang was so terrifying...

No wonder Holy Emperor was most scared of Dai Gang.

This was no secret among the higher-ups of God Nation.

Holy Emperor referred to An Muda as a pile of dried up bones. Every time the name of An Muda was mentioned, Holy Emperor would snort disdainfully. As a Grandmaster, An Muda still let the Avalon of Five Elements fall apart. Holy Emperor saw this as incompetence.

On the other hand, Holy Emperor feared and admired Dai Gang at the same time. He viewed Dai Gang as a powerful enemy.

Before today, She Yu did not really have a high regard for Dai Gang. She felt that he was not qualified of becoming Holy Emperor's enemy. She was fortunate to be taught by Holy Emperor before, and therefore she clearly knew how unfathomable Holy Emperor's strength was. However, the terrifying capabilities that Qing Feng displayed today had certainly startled her.

She clearly knew how difficult it was to deal with Ai Hui.

Strength-wise, Ai Hui was much weaker than her. However, every time she fought with Ai Hui, he would give her so much trouble.

Ai Hui was extremely vigilant and cunning. Whenever he was in dire straits, he would become extremely determined and ruthless and fight with all he had. A moment of carelessness would cause her to be severely injured. The Ai Hui from three years ago was already very hard to deal with. The current Ai Hui was even harder to deal with.

Hence, when She Yu saw Ai Hui stay motionless like a statue in

the green glowing ball, she was extremely traumatized.

Luckily, Ai Hui had not died yet.

Without batting an eyelid, she flitted to and fro among Old Ling's attacks like an ever-changing wisp of half-smoke-half-phantom.

Old Ling's face was slightly pale. Qing Feng had already gained the upperhand, but he had not even taken down his opponent yet. This made him feel ashamed. After all, he was a Master, how could he lose to a grass-lotus puppet?

Old Ling's offense became increasingly aggressive. This caused She Yu's situation to become increasingly difficult.

A smile appeared on Qing Feng's face. He cackled, "Such powerful skills? This can only mean that you're one of the seeds of God Nation. And since you're a girl, that means you're Red Dress She Yu."

She Yu was overwhelmed with horror. There was nothing unusual about finding out who she was. However, the seeds of God Nation were confidential and unknown to many. Even in the internal department of God Nation, there were not many people who knew about it. How did Qing Feng know about it?

Could it be... Dai Gang?

Dai Gang actually knew so much about God Nation!

She Yu’s first thought was that there was a traitor in the internal department of God Nation. However, she shut down this notion very soon. No traitors could avoid Holy Emperor’s eyes.

"I heard that She Yu is a great beauty. No wonder your figure is so good. It’s a pity I don’t want to be a woman. I’m wasting such a good body."

Qing Feng’s voice was cackling and abnormally awful. Right now, his voice was leaking and unclear.

Upon hearing Qing Feng’s words, She Yu’s blood ran cold. Could Dai Gang replace Qing Feng’s grass-lotus body with a human body?

The only human part on Qing Feng was his head. Wouldn’t that mean Dai Gang could switch heads?

This kind of forbidden art had not even been developed yet in God Nation’s Beast Venom Temple.

Having been distracted, she was almost injured by Old Ling’s attack.

Qing Feng shifted his gaze from She Yu to Ai Hui, who was still trapped in the green glowing ball. After examining Ai Hui for a while, he could not help but gasp in admiration, "This body seems not bad."

The more Qing Feng looked at Ai Hui’s body, the brighter his eyes grew. This was body was simply perfect.

Ai Hui had a well-proportioned body frame and his muscles contained terrifying power. Even his eyeballs were sparkling and translucent. Qing Feng had never seen such a perfect body.

Qing Feng was overjoyed. He then chuckled loudly, "Hahaha! How unexpected! It’s really unexpected! I actually found the body I need in this place. With this body, I can become human again! I want to become human again! Hahaha!"

Qing Feng suddenly stopped laughing. He turned around, looked at She Yu and grinned, "Speaking of becoming human again, don’t the blood elementalists always keep elementalists as captives to interrogate them?"

His voice was already awful. This made his words sound even more frightening.

She Yu shuddered in fear. After getting grazed by Old Ling’s attack, there was a deep cut on her left arm. The cut was so deep that her arm’s bone could be seen. At this moment, the corner of She Yu’s eyes suddenly caught sight of something. She turned, slightly shocked.

Inside the green glowing ball, Ai Hui remained stationary like a statue. However, within the depths of his hollow eyes, a needle-like radiance was silently appearing. Upon seeing this, She Yu’s eyes lit up.

After floating in the void of darkness for an unknown period of time, Ai Hui's consciousness was slowly returning. Even though he was still very sluggish, he did not completely lose his ability to think.

Was the void of darkness an illusion?

As this thought emerged in his mind, the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] in his sky palace began to operate.

It was operating very slowly. A wisp of a small flame rose from the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp].

After this, the operating speed of the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] started to increase slowly. The light from the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] slowly scanned Ai Hui's body.

Whoosh!

Suddenly, a faint layer of flames appeared all over Ai Hui's body. The flames were extremely weak and appeared almost colorless. However, when the layer of flames appeared, Ai Hui felt his entire body become lighter all of a sudden. His sluggish mind became much clearer in an instant.

Ai Hui immediately calmed down.

Since the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] worked, this proved that the void of darkness he was in was an illusion. [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] specialized in breaking illusions. It was exceptionally effective against this kind of illusion. What happened next also verified Ai Hui's conjecture.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh!

Wisps of black smoke rose around Ai Hui's body. His body began to emit traces of weak flames. These weak flames looked as if they could burn the void of darkness.

After a while, Qing Feng lost interest in the battle between She Yu and Old Ling. He already felt extremely content about capturing such an outstanding body. If he could bring Xiao Shuren back to Grandmaster Dai, that would be perfect!

If he achieved such a great meritorious service for Grandmaster Dai, the Grandmaster would replace his body with the perfect body of Ai Hui.

No, there was no such word as 'perfect' in Grandmaster Dai's dictionary. Nevermind, Grandmaster Dai could make his already perfect body even more perfect.

He would become more powerful as well!

When Qing Feng thought of becoming more powerful and having a new body, an excitement swept across his mind.

As his gaze landed upon Xiao Shuren's court, a sinister smile appeared on his face.

Suddenly, he sensed something was amiss. He turned his body around abruptly and looked at the green glowing ball above the ground of lotus leaves.

Both of them looked at each other in the eyes.

Chapter 374: [Nether Lotus Glow]

Beast Venom Temple.

The figure lying at the bottom of the blood pool was motionless, resembling an ancient monster in slumber.

A middle-aged man stood beside the blood pool and observed the bottom of it. The man was approximately forty years old. He was thin and weak looking,his face was pale-white and his eyes were sunken. The scholar’s robe that he wore was wrinkled.

This seemingly haggard and sloppy middle-aged man had single-handedly established Beast Venom Temple. He was also the one who devised the blood catastrophe that struck Induction Ground. A lot of policies in God Nation today were planned by him.

He was the master of Beast Venom Temple, Nangong Wulian.

Nangong Wulian stared at the figure lying at the bottom of the blood pool. Without turning his head, he asked, "How many times have you changed the blood water?"

One of his subordinates quickly replied, "Six times. We have to keep on increasing the concentration of the blood water. Up till now, the concentration of the blood water has broken the all-time record, so much so that it has surpassed the concentration used for most of the blood fiends. Will it be too dangerous?"

The most important material in the blood water of the blood pool was blood core. Blood core was a material that was of a higher grade than a blood crystal. It could only be produced by using high-level blood fiends. The price of a blood core was not cheap in God Nation as well. For a blood pool like this, the number of blood cores used was astonishingly huge. And Beast Venom Temple was the only department that could spare no effort in carrying out such an operation.

Nangong Wulian’s eyes lit up with a demonic glow, as if he was admiring an exceptional treasure. Without turning his head, he replied, "Continue to increase the concentration. Don’t underestimate his limit, he will be a legend in Beast Venom Temple."

His voice seemed to contain an indescribable excitement and anticipation.

After a slight hesitation, the subordinate replied, "It seems that he does not want to wake up."

Nangong Wulian burst into laughter as his eyes filled with fervent joy, "Don’t worry, he will wake up. I have already found the key to wake him up and I have spent a lot of effort finding it."

All of his subordinates looked at each other with blank looks on their faces.

"Everyone has a weakness. If one loves money, then you give him money. If one values comradeship, then you will use comradeship

to move him."

A water coffin was carried over and placed beside the blood pool. Indistinctly, one could see a female figure lying in the water coffin.

"Even though I don’t know how to make grass-lotus puppets, my understanding towards human anatomy far surpassed Dai Gang’s," Nangong Wulian muttered. He shifted his gaze from the water coffin to the blood pool and grinned, "This is my present to you. As long as you are willing to open your eyes and start a new life, she will be yours."

The blood pool remained tranquil, resembling a smooth mirror. The figure lying at the bottom had no reaction.

Nangong Wulian chuckled and turned around to leave.

After a few minutes, the peaceful blood pool suddenly tossed and turned frantically.

.....

An intense battle was a disaster for the ancient Ye Residence. Its old structures had received irreversible damage and the fragments of its old, moss-covered walls could be seen everywhere.

Upon sensing that Ai Hui had not completely lost the ability to retaliate, She Yu became energized and focused on fighting Old Ling. Gradually, she recovered from the difficult situation she was

in previously.

Qing Feng's awful voice could be heard incessantly, making one feel as if his or her head was going to explode.

The beams of green light from the lotus leaves on the ground became thicker and stronger. These beams of green light converged at the body of Ai Hui.

Faint flames were emitted from Ai Hui's body. When the beams of green light made contact with the flames, they immediately turned into wisps of black smoke.

What kind of flame was this?

Qing Feng widened his eyes. He could not believe what he had just seen.

Since he was a grass-lotus puppet, he naturally did not have the system of five residences and eight palaces. However, his master was an exceptional genius. Using the technique of making elemental elixirs from dire beasts as a reference, his master produced a man-made elemental elixir for him. Possessing the man-made elemental elixir, Qing Feng could train like a dire beast. Furthermore, after his master made some modifications to him, his training efficiency was higher than the usual dire beasts'.

Elementalists had a wide variety of fighting styles and the system of five residences and eight palaces was just a framework.

Everyone used the framework differently and uniquely. The training method and fighting style of a dire beast was much more simpler. A dire beast usually had a few killing moves and these killing moves complemented their natural instincts. Daily training would make their strength terrifyingly powerful.

Qing Feng, being a grass-lotus puppet, had a human head. His killing moves were extremely powerful. With three ultimate killing moves and a unique and unmatched grass-lotus body, he possessed the strength of a Master.

And [Nether Lotus Glow] was one of his three ultimate killing moves.

These lotus seeds were not the usual lotus seeds. They were the lotus seeds of the extremely rare nether lotuses. Reportedly, the nether lotuses only grew in the Yellow Springs of Netherworld. They were exceptionally precious. Of course, no one knew where the Yellow Springs was. In reality, nether lotuses grew on dead lands that were completely devoid of life and vitality. For example, a necropolis.

Dai Gang had obtained the nether lotus seeds in Qing Feng's body by chance when he was roaming across Wilderness in the past.

The nether lotus seeds might have come from Dai Gang, but [Nether Lotus Glow] was created by Qing Feng himself. Even Dai Gang marvelled at this technique. After so many years, countless experts had been killed by this move.

From Qing Feng's perspective, even though Chu Zhaoyang's swordsmanship was rather good, his base level was only at Second Elemental Realm. The moment [Nether Lotus Glow] was unleashed, his hands would be tied and he would only wait to be captured.

As such, when Qing Feng saw his time-tested ultimate killing move facing resistance from Chu Zhaoyang, he was startled.

[Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] was not a very well-known inheritance and not a lot of people practiced it. When Qing Feng saw the weak flames on Chu Zhaoyang's body, he did not recognize them.

Luckily, he intensified the strength of [Nether Lotus Glow] and the flames on Chu Zhaoyang's body became much weaker.

Qing Feng heaved a sigh of relief. This was the first time he'd encountered such a situation.

Qing Feng might appear muddle-headed and careless, but in reality, he was extremely cunning and paranoid. He did not like to fight with unknown enemies. Even though he was a grass-lotus puppet that trained like dire beasts and had many marvellous tricks up his sleeves, he still had weaknesses.

His body was not as strong and sturdy as a dire beasts'. If he was struck by a brutal attack, his body could get damaged easily.

Once his body was damaged, he had to return and stay in his master's lotus pond for a long time to recover fully.

He did not like staying in the lotus pond at all. His entire body would be lodged under the sloshy mud with only his head left outside. That was a terrible experience.

Usually, if he sensed something was not right, he would immediately retreat and wait for a new opportunity to strike again.

Even though Qing Feng had loosened up, his gaze still did not leave the trapped Ai Hui.

He did not go and capture Xiao Shuren immediately. Since the situation was well under his control, how was it even possible for her to run away?

Ai Hui noticed that [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] was beginning to dim. The surrounding emptiness and darkness was boundless. Gradually, the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] dimmed and its operating speed became very slow.

The glimmer of hope he had just seen was being extinguished in an instant. However, Ai Hui's mind did not falter because of this. At this point in time, his mind had already returned to its normal state.

What should he do?

Ai Hui was exceptionally calm. His brain was operating very fast as he thought of ways to break out of the green glowing ball.

[Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] suppressed illusions and psychic attacks. Since it worked against the void of darkness, this meant that the surrounding emptiness and darkness was some kind of illusion.

This illusion was so real that Ai Hui could not even budge the slightest bit when he tried to move his body,

The [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp]'s operating speed decreased. This showed that the other's party's psychic attack was very strong and the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] was being suppressed.

His body was imprisoned but his mind was free. What else could he do?

Eh? Ai Hui suddenly realized that the elemental energy in his body could still flow. Previously, he felt that his elemental energy was being devoured. Apparently, that was also an illusion.

It was incredible to see an illusion being so real.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up when he knew he could still channel his elemental energy. But every time his elemental energy reached the periphery of his body, the elemental energy could not proceed on. This applied to his palms as well. When the elemental energy reached his palm, it could not escape his palm and entered the

Silverfold Plum.

His elemental energy could only flow within his body…

Ai Hui was slightly disappointed. If his elemental energy could not enter Silverfold Plum, he could not utilize his swordsmanship.

Almost all of his fighting capabilities were based on his swordsmanship. The inability to utilize his swordsmanship was equivalent to him losing more than half of his strength. Furthermore, with the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] being suppressed, he lost the tiny bit of strength that he was left with.

The situation was becoming worse. However, Ai Hui did not intend to give up just like this.

He kept on channeling the elemental energy within his body and the elemental energy flowed faster and faster. Ai Hui wanted to see if the elemental energy could break through the confinement of the illusion. An illusion spell that could confine elemental energy had surpassed the usual illusion spells in terms of strength and level.

Ai Hui’s movements immediately caught Qing Feng’s attention.

When Qing Feng saw what Ai Hui was doing, he could not help but laugh. He was very proud of himself.

He stepped on the lotus leaves and walked nearer to the green

glowing ball. He widened his eyes and admired his masterpiece.

The fact that Ai Hui could still channel his elemental energy was a trap set up by Qing Feng on purpose. Just as Ai Hui had expected, the illusion wasn't any ordinary illusion. He certainly did not expect that what he had encountered was a type of illusion poison.

Nether lotus seeds grew in places which had the highest concentration of aura of death. These places were also known as gateways to the netherworld. The green light emitted by the lotus leaves was actually a bizarre mixture of light and smoke.

The light could imprison Ai Hui and create illusions, but it was not deadly. The deadly thing was the smoke. The smoke was a formless and invisible poisonous smoke. It could seep into an elementalist's body without him knowing.

The faster the elementalist channeled his elemental energy, the faster the poisonous smoke would seep into his body and the stronger its toxicity would get. It would draw the elementalist nearer and nearer to his death.

Qing Feng purposely designed the green light to only imprison an elementalist's body and not the elemental energy within his body. By designing the green light this way, an imprisoned elementalist would see this as his only chance to escape and keep on channeling his elemental energy. Doing this would only give the poisonous smoke the chance to strike.

Therefore, when Qing Feng saw that Ai Hui kept channeling his

elemental energy, he broke into laughter. It was a pity that his smile was extremely ugly and weird-looking.

The numbness caused by the poisonous smoke was very subtle, making it difficult for one to sense it. However, Ai Hui could immediately sense something was wrong.

When Ai Hui was in Wilderness in the past, other than the sword embryo, poison was the greatest helper. He had spent a lot of time and effort studying and using poison. As such, he was extremely sensitive to the presence of poison.

When the first trace of poisonous smoke entered his body, he could already sense it.

Poisonous!

The first thing he did was to stop channeling the elemental energy in his body. He knew of a lot of poisons that could use elemental energy as a medium of travel to spread throughout a body.

At this moment, a trace of weird energy suddenly emerged from his body.

Ai Hui was stunned. Wasn’t this fusion elemental energy?

In order to spend a longer time in the Hall of Ancient Records, Ai Hui trained diligently to develop his fusion elemental energy. His

training progress in fusion elemental energy had improved extremely fast.

The trace of fusion elemental energy pounced towards that trace of poisonous smoke, like a predator that spotted its prey.

Chapter 375: The Opportunity To Live

The reason why Ai Hui had developed his fusion elemental energy was so he could enter the Grass Hall to find that notebook.

In his eyes, the person who created fusion elemental energy was a genius. Developing fusion elemental energy was equivalent to developing five elemental energies at once. This defied the current system of developing only one elemental energy at a time. A lot of theories and designs related to fusion elemental energy were eye-opening and marvellous.

Even though Ai Hui marvelled at fusion elemental energy, he did not spend much time or effort on studying it in depth.

Being heterogeneous might not be a good thing to an elementalist.

Ai Hui's attention was mainly placed on swordsmanship. There was no limit to what he could learn from swordsmanship and he was just getting started on this path. The swordsmanship of today was not as prosperous and flourishing as it was in the past. As such, there were not many references or teachers that he could learn from and he had to learn a lot of things by himself. This required a lot more energy than for other more prominent fields, where one could just learn and copy slavishly.

As for Master's [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth], how could he lose it? Using [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth], a powerful weapon in God-subduing Peak had been created.

Similarly, the [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] was deep and profound and there were a lot of areas that Ai Hui had yet to understand.

Ai Hui was fully aware that a person's energy was limited. He knew that he himself wasn't a genius and he did not want to waste too much time on developing fusion elemental energy.

Fusion elemental energy might be powerful, but it was not what he wanted to develop.

Hence, when a trace of fusion elemental energy suddenly appeared and pounced towards the trace of poisonous smoke, Ai Hui was shocked.

As the fusion elemental energy wrapped around the poisonous smoke, the latter, which was previously invisible, suddenly emitted a strong decaying aura of death.

Ai Hui seemed to have seen countless white skeletons rise from the decaying mud. Any living beings nearby lost their vitality rapidly and were reduced to grey ashes.

What kind of poison was this?

Ai Hui, who was very knowledgeable on the topic of poison, had his facial expression change drastically. He could immediately sense how dangerous and frightening this unknown poison was.

The trace of fusion elemental energy that wrapped around the poisonous smoke swiftly transformed into a cloud of bright, multicolored mist. After this, the multicolored mist engulfed the poisonous smoke.

Like a chameleon, the cloud of mist kept on changing its color, and was extremely beautiful.

The aura of death suddenly reduced sharply.

The multicolored mist was like the natural enemy of the poisonous smoke.

Ai Hui widened his eyes and focused his attention completely. After a while, he seemed to come to a revelation.

The fusion elemental energy contained all five elements. It happened to form a cycle of five elements that grew and multiplied without an end.

Even though the mysterious poisonous smoke's toxicity was overpowering, it was still part of the five elements. As long as it was part of the five elements, it would be affected by the fusion elemental energy's cycle of five elements. When it entered the cycle of five elements, its elemental nature would be evoked and it would be broken down by whichever element it was typically restrained by.

No matter how deadly a poison was, once its elemental nature

underwent changes, its physical nature would undergo changes too. When this happened, the poison's toxicity would be removed.

Did that imply fusion elemental energy was the bane of all poisons?

Theoretically, this was true. Once something's elemental nature underwent changes, its physical nature would undergo changes as well.

Ai Hui's brain was operating vigorously. Without any hesitation, he quickly channeled his fusion elemental energy.

Suddenly, the amount of fusion elemental energy in his body increased sharply. Ai Hui felt his body become lighter. His previously unmovable body regained its mobility.

Ai Hui's mind jolted. This method was effective!

The changes taking place within the lotus glow could not slip past Qing Feng's eyes unnoticed. He saw Chu Zhaoyang's body suddenly light up with a dazzling, multicolored glow. As compared to the previously weak flames, this multicolored glow was able to make Qing Feng feel extremely uncomfortable.

What was that?

Qing Feng felt bewildered and nervous. This was the first time that he'd felt this way.

His instincts told him that this multicolored glow might cause harm to him.

Clink, clink, clink!

It sounded as if an ice chunk was being hit by numerous needles, striking fear into one's heart. Qing Feng's eyelids twitched as he stared at the green glowing ball. Densely-packed light spots suddenly appeared on the surface of the green glowing ball.

That was...

The needle-head sized light spots began to inflate and become coin-sized, multicolored spots in an indescribably weird way.

The multicolored spots were expanding at a visible speed. In the blink of an eye, the green glowing ball transformed into a multicolor-spotted glowing ball, resembling a huge soap bubble that was under the sun.

Pop!

The bubble popped and revealed an uninjured Chu Zhaoyang.

They made eye contact.

Qing Feng's facial expression changed drastically. He suddenly

realized that the distance between him and Chu Zhaoyang was...

Too close!

Damn it!

Previously, Chu Zhaoyang's swordsmanship had left a deep impression on him. As such, he knew how dangerous it was to be so close to Chu Zhaoyang. Without any hesitation, Qing Feng made a hasty retreat.

A streak of sword gleam lit up.

When the retreating Qing Feng saw that the sword gleam was only palm-sized, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Eh? There was one more streak of sword gleam. No, there were two more...

Very soon, Qing Feng discovered that something was not right. The number of sword gleams was increasing rapidly. In the blink of an eye, a mass of sword gleams was formed. Like a school of fish, the mass of densely-packed sword gleams shot towards Qing Feng.

There was one more thing that caused him to tremble with fear. These fragmentary sword gleams had assembled together to form an unblockable, powerful force and it was locked on to him!

Qing Feng's face paled. Damn it. What the hell was this thing?

The mass of sword gleams were getting closer to him. He felt more and more appalled. Even though these sword gleams were fragmentary, their aura had fused together well. The aura was solid in nature, biting cold and sharp and it was heading straight for his head.

In a moment of desperation, he couldn't care less and plunged himself deep into the sloshy mud beneath the lotus leaves.

At the same time, the glow of the lotus leaves intensified and a screen of green-colored light appeared above the lotus leaves.

The mass of fragmentary sword gleams collided violently with the green-colored light screen.

Boom!

The sound of the collision resembled a thunderclap.

The front part of the mass of sword gleams exploded into countless fragments that rained torrentially all over the place. The green-colored light screen began to wobble, and then trembled violently. Finally, the light screen could no longer hold on and shattered.

The rear part of the mass of sword gleams plunged ferociously into the sloshy mud.

Boom!

The sloshy mud flew up high into the sky while the fragmented sword gleams rained down on the lotus leaves. Without protection from the green-colored light screen, the lotus leaves were extremely fragile. In an instant, they were punctured with countless holes and their stems were broken.

She Yu and Old Ling, who were engaged in a fierce battle with each other, were alarmed by what happened on the other side.

The sloshy mud that flew up in the sky came flying down like a rain of arrows and covered everything in mud.

Both of them stopped fighting at the same time and quickly pulled away from each other. They waved their hands to protect themselves from the torrential mud rain. The rain-like mud landed on the surrounding walls and made densely-packed popping sounds. Numerous honeycomb-like holes were created on the walls.

She Yu and Old Ling shifted their gazes in unison to the area where the explosion had just occurred.

The verdant green that filled the courtyard had disappeared. Broken branches and torn leaves were scattered everywhere. Sloshy mud was everywhere on the surface of the ground. A gigantic pit was formed in the center of the courtyard. Qing Feng stood in the middle of the pit, appearing extremely pathetic.

At this moment, incredulity and fear appeared on his face. He could not believe a fellow who had only just reached Two Elemental Realm could unleash such a powerful and frightening attack.

However, the fear and incredulity he felt soon turned into pain.

Only half of the lotus leaves were left in the badly damaged courtyard. When Qing Feng saw the leaves dispersed everywhere, he could only think of three words.

A heavy loss!

Approximately one-third of his nether lotus seeds had been completely destroyed and these nether lotus seeds were unrestorable. He only had three completely intact nether lotus seeds left! As for the remaining nether lotus seeds, they had to be thrown into the Well of Netherworld to be nourished and restored.

Agonizing pain spread throughout his body as an angry flush rose from Qing Feng's neck all the way up to his head.

The nether lotus seeds were not easy to come by.

When Grandmaster Dai was young, after he obtained the first batch of nether lotus seeds from the depths of Wilderness, he painstakingly built the Well of Netherworld. Only after he'd built the well could the number of nether lotus seeds slowly increase.

If every nether lotus seed was converted into money, the amount of money yielded would be astronomical.

Any damaged nether lotus seed would make Qing Feng feel as if his heart was bleeding. The heavy loss that he suffered this time around made him felt as if he was being pierced by a sword. In this case, his heart was not bleeding but spouting out blood!

"Gie! Gamn it! You fhall gie!"

Qing Feng's words were still unclear, yet filled with an intense killing intent.

He swayed his head as he tried to look for Chu Zhaoyang. He wanted to shred that bastard to smithereens.

However, even after he scanned through every nook and cranny of the courtyard, he still could not find Chu Zhaoyang.

With a pair of bloodied eyes, Qing Feng aggressively flew up into sky. He swept his eyes across the area and still could not find Chu Zhaoyang.

Qing Feng calmed down slightly. It was not possible for Chu Zhaoyang to escape in such a short period of time.

At this moment, Old Ling yelled anxiously, "Xiao Shuren! He is

going to hold Xiao Shuren hostage!"

Qing Feng's facial expression changed slightly. His anger-filled mind calmed down abruptly.

Before he embarked on this mission, his master had exhorted him to bring the ancient treasure or Xiao Shuren back to him, no matter what.

Qing Feng clearly knew that all he had was owed to his master. His master's interests were of paramount importance.

Until now, he still remembered the angelic voice that rang across his ears when his body was in anguish and his eyes were filled with blood.

"Do you want to continue to live?"

Henceforth, he had become the monster now, a grass-lotus puppet.

He did not like being a grass-lotus puppet. Very often, he felt that he was like a monster. His master told him that he could become a human again only if he found a suitable body.

Becoming a human again held an absolute temptation over him.

However, he must first fulfil his master's interests. Whether he

could become human once more or remained as a grass-lotus puppet, he must not defy his master's orders.

His master had seldom reminded him of his mission with such solemness. As such, Qing Feng knew that he definitely had to complete this mission at all costs.

If he lost the nether lotus seeds, his master still could grant him more.

However, if he failed to complete the mission, he would fall out of favor with his master.

What was the point of having a useless grass-lotus puppet around?

All his anger disappeared without a trace in an instant. The cunning grass-lotus puppet had returned.

This time around, he had encountered a troublesome opponent.

After Ai Hui had unleashed the fragmentary sword gleams, his elemental energy was almost depleted completely. Therefore, he turned and ran without any hesitation. He did not even have the time to see what his attack had done.

He was completely uncertain about the power of [Fragmented Sword]. This was the first time he'd used [Fragmented Sword] in a real battle. He did not have much time to decide what to do. A

slight hesitation could have caused him to lose the chance of making any moves at all.

The strength of the grass-lotus puppet was definitely at the level of a Master.

Ai Hui made a precise assessment of Qing Feng.

Ai Hui did not try to escape directly. The strength disparity between him and Qing Feng was too great, it was impossible for him to try to escape.

The cool-headed Ai Hui thought of a lifeline at this instant.

Xiao Shuren!

As long as he could hold Xiao Shuren hostage, Qing Feng would not dare to attack him for fear of injuring Xiao Shuren. Ai Hui could tell that Qing Feng was determined to capture Xiao Shuren alive.

Like a flying arrow, he flew into Xiao Shuren's court.

Xiao Shuren was not shocked to see him. On the contrary, she was smiling at him.

Ai Hui was startled. However, there was no time for him to hesitate at this moment. He could hear Qing Feng's roar coming

from outside. Like a lithe bat, he landed behind Xiao Shuren and placed his Silverfold Plum on her throat.

Xiao Shuren did not resist him and looked smilingly at him.

Upon seeing this, a cold shiver went down Ai Hui’s spine.

Step by step, Qing Feng moved closer to the court. With a chilling voice, he said, "Let go of her and I shall spare your life..."

Just as Ai Hui was about to open his mouth to speak, he suddenly sensed something and raised his head to look at the sky.

Chapter 376: Destiny

In Silver City, high in the sky, there was a man and a woman floating on a cloud.

The woman’s deep green and white robe was fluttering loudly, while the veil on her face was drifting in the wind behind her. Karakorum Savant was holding a sword with one hand. The silver-white azure wings on her back were light and dazzling. They were covered with exquisite feather-shaped patterns, looking unimaginably beautiful.

Beside her, there was a tall and burly man. He was wearing a silver-white mask on his face. The mask was so well-polished that it looked sleek and glossy. There was a simple and unadorned word engraved onto his forehead, "Infantry".

Behind the mask, his exposed eyes were deep and reserved.

The most attractive part of his body was his arms. He had a pair of muscular, metallic arms. From his shoulders down, everything was made of metal. The joints were elegantly built. Mysterious and complicated veined patterns were engraved all over his two arms.

Similarly, the azure wings on his back were also silver-white in color. However, his azure wings had a bigger framework and were sturdier and stronger than Karakorum Savant’s.

"Senior, let’s go down."

Karakorum Savant’s voice was very light, so much so that it sounded as if it could be carried away by the drifting wind. Beneath her veil, her beautiful eyes emitted a faint glow that seemed to bring an indescribable sense of hope.

The burly man could hear her light and gentle voice clearly. He nodded his head and replied, "I will be at the front. Take care of your safety."

"Ok," Karakorum Savant replied.

The burly man spread the azure wings on his back. Like a vigorous winged dragon, he swooped down from the sky.

As the thick and solid azure wings flapped, they produced a heavy wind sound.

His speed increased. The eyes that his silver-white mask exposed remained deep and composed.

As he got nearer to the ground, the azure wings on his back withdrew. Like a meteor, he was approaching the ground at a terrifying speed. His entire body was lit up with a dazzling blaze. The blaze was flickering non-stop and the light it emitted was reflected in his eyes.

The sharp sound of wind rapidly became deep and trembling. The blaze became increasingly intense as it was stroked by the

fluttering wind. The deep, trembling, whizzing sound of wind was combined with the whirring sound of the intense blaze.

Everyone on the ground immediately sensed something strange and raised their heads.

A faintly discernable figure that was engulfed in flames was falling from the sky like a meteor. His momentum was terrifying.

Everyone's facial expressions changed drastically. This person did not show any sign of slowing down. On the contrary, he was still increasing his speed.

A similar thought appeared in everyone's mind. Was this man crazy?

Flying down at such a high speed would make it impossible for him to slow down before he landed. The powerful impact would smash his body to smithereens on first contact.

The flight speed of the fire-engulfed figure did not change the slightest bit. The two eyes that his mask revealed were calm and deep.

Following which, his body began to transform. An intense, metallic luster rapidly extended over the surface of his body. In the blink of an eye, his entire body was covered with an intense, copper-yellow luster.

[Copper Skin]!

The most basic level of body-tempering looked completely different on his body. The copper-yellow luster gradually became brighter, eventually becoming silver-white in color. The clothes on his body emitted a silver-white luster as well, as if they were made up of thin pieces of silver. Under the illumination from the blaze around his body, his clothes became blinding to the eye.

Everyone's facial expressions changed. Without any hesitation, they quickly retreated to safety.

This fellow was going to land without slowing down his speed!

A streak of blaze descended from the sky with 10,000 newtons of force.

Boom!

An earth-shaking explosion erupted and released a terrifying shock wave that was mixed with flames and debris. The shock wave rushed towards everyone like a whizzing iron wall filled with chaotic elemental energy.

She Yu disappeared into the air like a wisp of smoke and appeared a hundred meters away from the explosion.

Old Ling shrieked and flew towards the sky abruptly. His figure flew higher and higher before barely avoiding the whizzing,

violent shock wave.

Ai Hui's reaction was extremely fast as well. He could already sense the presence of the person when they were still in the sky. Then, when the person began to swoop down from the sky, Ai Hui immediately knew what he was trying to do.

Ai Hui knew because he had used a similar type of move before. The only difference was Ai Hui used a sword move to negate the recoiling impact, while the man used his body to do it.

Previously, Ai Hui was already very impressed by Gui Hu's tempered body. However, in front of this freak, Gui Hu's tempered body was not even worth mentioning.

This was too sick!

At the first instance, Ai Hui dragged Xiao Shuren along with him and made a hasty retreat.

Initially, Xiao Shuren still did not know what was going on. However, when she saw the descending streak of blaze in the sky, her facial expression changed. As she retreated with Chu Zhaoyang, she saw the surrounding walls in the courtyard being destroyed by the shock wave. The walls collapsed and a wave of debris flew towards her like a grey-colored monster that was baring its fangs and brandishing its claws at her.

In an instant, her face turned deathly pale.

At the most critical moment, her vision went dark. She had being dragged into a tall drain by Chu Zhaoyang. The whizzing shock wave blew over the top of her head while the ground trembled. Xiao Shuren's mind went blank as her body shivered with cold involuntarily.

The one who suffered the most was Qing Feng. He had just sustained huge losses after being severely injured by Chu Zhaoyang. Hence, when such a powerful attack suddenly came, he could not react in time. As the violent shock wave swept across the courtyard and hit him, he felt as if he had collided head-on with a monster that was charging wildly.

With a groan, he suddenly burrowed his feet into the ground. Like a tree that had embedded its roots deep into the earth, he held on tightly to the ground.

Crackle, rattle. The rain-like debris hit his body and produced sparks that flew in all directions. His body was swaying violently but luckily his feet had grown roots to stabilize his body by force.

He felt that he had been swept into a hurricane.

Crack, crack, crack!

Every second felt like forever.

Huff, puff, huff. Qing Feng was panting heavily as he held on

tightly to the ground. At this moment, he looked extremely pathetic. The previously bright and clean surface of his lotus roots was covered with cracks now.

When he raised his head, the cracks on the surface of his lotus roots disappeared and became as good as new. However, Qing Feng knew that it was only the surface that had recovered. In reality, his body was severely damaged. After he returned home, he would have to stay in the lotus pond for a period of time to have his body completely healed.

However, now was not the time to think about that.

His gaze was fixated on the half-crouching, silver-colored, burly man in the middle of the courtyard.

The entire body of that man emitted an intense, metallic luster. He looked like a metal man that was cast out of silver. His sturdy muscles resembled the most perfect masterpiece of a classical sculptor.

Any pose he made was filled with the beauty of power.

The most attractive part of his body was his silver-colored metallic arms. The exquisite veined patterns on his arms exuded an indescribable surrealness. By taking a single glance at them, Qing Feng could tell that they had been made by a master.

When the silver-colored burly man stood up straight, Qing Feng

could see the simple and unadorned word carved on his forehead.

"Infantry!" Qing Feng's pupils dilated.

Infantry Division was one of the Thirteen Divisions. Was the word "Infantry" engraved on his forehead referring to Infantry Division? What unique meaning did it convey?

Suddenly, a phantom appeared behind the silver-colored burly man. It was She Yu and her eyes were filled with killing intent.

Similarly, when she saw the word "Infantry" on the man's forehead, her heart skipped a beat. Certain secret information emerged in her mind and her killing intent arose all of a sudden.

A cold shiver went down She Yu's spine as she sensed something was wrong.

A cold and sharp aura locked onto her from above her head.

The other party had an ally with him!

She made a prompt decision. Following which, her body became light and wavy, like a willow branch fluttering in the wind. Suddenly, her body split into three phantasms that flew away in three different directions.

A cold dazzling sword gleam descended from the sky. Its crisp

and clear sword chime gave off an aura of killing intent that engulfed the place.

The three phantasms could not escape in time and were pierced by the sword gleam. They vaporized into three clouds of black-colored mist and vanished into thin air.

A hundred meters away, She Yu was looking with fear at the veiled lady that was holding a sword.

Karakorum Savant!

The first master swordsman in the Avalon of Five Elements.

When everyone saw Karakorum Savant, everyone immediately thought of one name, Madam Ye!

Karakorum Savant’s relationship with the Ye Residence was very deep. Was it a coincidence, or was it pre-planned that Karakorum Savant brought such a powerful assistant all of a sudden?

Everyone’s faces turned slightly ugly.

Old Ling’s gaze was fixated on the silver-colored burly man. He looked like he’d thought of something and his facial expression changed slightly. With killing intent in his eyes, he suddenly said, "Shall we join hands?"

At this point of time, arrogance could no longer be found on Qing Feng’s face. He replied, "Let’s kill these two persons first!"

"I second that," She Yu smiled lovably.

The three of them immediately spread apart and surrounded the two people.

The silver-colored burly man did not show any sign of fear and remained calm and cool-headed. Karakorum Savant held her sword firmly as her gaze remained calm and composed as well.

Ai Hui dragged Xiao Shuren along with him and hid behind a half-destroyed wall. He felt that life was really unpredictable. Just a moment ago, She Yu was engaged in a bitter battle with Old Ling. But now, they had joined hands.

When Ai Hui saw his chief and the silver-colored burly man, he instantly felt at ease. The two of them were really too powerful!

However, for some unknown reason, the silver-colored burly man gave Ai Hui a mysterious sense of familiarity.

.....

At Beast Venom Temple, the hall where the blood pool was situated was spacious and empty.

The scarlet red, thick and bloody water in the pool had become clear without any impurities.

There was a man lying at the bottom of the pool. His body was naked and his eyes were tightly closed. His long black hair was scattered and wavy, resembling graceful seaweed at the bottom of a sea.

He slowly opened his eyes. The world gradually became clearer in his vision. Through the clear water of the pool, he saw a beautiful mural on the domed ceiling. The mural depicted the story of a man who defeated a monster and kept it as a pet. It showed red-colored blood, a blood-stained weapon and numerous hollow tree trunks that were flowing with blood. He seemed to have seen his own destiny.

He sighed in his heart as his body slowly rose from the pool.

When his head left the surface of the water, cold and crisp air filled his lungs. The familiar water elemental energy that filled his body had disappeared and was replaced by a unfamiliar power.

It was a type of scorching and surging power that made him stronger than before.

He did not feel surprised or happy at all. All he felt was emptiness and despair.

‘Since I have already accepted it, I can’t be wishy-washy about it,’

he told himself.

His gaze landed upon the water coffin on the side of the pool. His heart skipped a beat when he saw the vague yet familiar figure lying in the water coffin.

He stood up and stepped onto the surface of the water. Under his feet, the water was like a level road.

He walked to the water coffin and stared at the girl lying within it. That beautiful and familiar face made him feel as if he had gone back to the past.

If only... things could go back to the way they were, then how good would that be...

"I’m very sorry. When we found her, her body was already badly injured and incomplete. Luckily, she hasn’t died yet."

A voice came from behind his back.

The voice belonged to a shabby-looking scholar. It was the master of Beast Venom Temple, Nangong Wulian.

The man did not turn his head and asked, "Have you healed her?"

Nangong Wulian smiled, "It’s very difficult, I can only try my best."

"What do you need me to do?" the man asked plainly.

Nangong Wulian threw him a red-and-black mask and he caught it.

The color of the black was deep and dark like the night sky, while the color of the red was blazing like scorching flames.

"From today onwards, you are the Red Devil!"

Nangong Wulian’s fanatic voice echoed through the spacious and empty hall.

Without saying a word, under the gazes from the hero and the monster in the mural on the domed roof, the man put on the red-and-black mask.

Chapter 377: An Old Friend

Ai Hui dragged Xiao Shuren along with him and hid behind a wall. All his attention was caught by the intense battle.

Chief and Silver Soldier could actually withstand the combined offenses from Old Ling, Qing Feng and She Yu.

Karakorum Savant's robe was fluttering and her veil was dancing. Her beautiful eyes remained calm and composed. The elegance of the first ever master swordsman had been displayed without restraint. The sword in her hand emitted an extreme chilliness. Every time she brandished her sword, she would unleash a sword gleam that criss-crossed in the air.

Ai Hui had no choice but to admit that Karakorum Savant's swordplay and her understanding of swordsmanship were better and more powerful than his.

For example, sword formations. Ai Hui always utilized sword formations in his sword moves as he felt that sword formations would be an important aspect of swordsmanship in the future. But compared to Ai Hui, Karakorum Savant's sword moves could display traces of sword formations at will.

She used sword formations with more flexibility and ease than Ai Hui did. One could tell that her understanding of swordsmanship was much deeper than Ai Hui's.

Furthermore, her fighting style lit up Ai Hui's eyes as well.

Her body moved along with her sword.

Her body seemed to be weightless, behaving as if she was the tassel that hung on her sword hilt. As her sword moves lit up and whizzed towards her target, she hid herself behind the sword gleam and flew along with it.

Immediately, AI Hui could see the marvel behind this unique fighting style.

The range of a sword gleam was not as far as an arrow's. However, in terms of short-distance explosive power, it was much stronger than an arrow's. Accompanied by the sharpness of a sword gleam, this kind of explosive power was extremely deadly at short distances.

And by hiding herself behind the sword gleam, she could reduce her exposed surface area, making it nearly impossible for her enemy to land an attack on her. Karakorum Savant's enemy had to first destroy the sword gleam before he or she could attack her.

Of course, this kind of fighting style had its weakness too.

Even though this fighting style was fast and precise, it was too straightforward and lacked variability. As long as the opponent could dodge the sword gleam and launch an indirect attack, they could obtain the opportunity to injure Karakorum Savant.

However, with Silver Soldier by Karakorum Savant's side, this kind of simple and direct fighting style immediately became extremely powerful.

Karakorum Savant moved like a flying treasure sword that swirled around Silver Soldier. At this point of time, Silver Soldier was surrounded by a streak of sword gleam that was striking its enemies from all directions unpredictably.

Silver Soldier's burly body was like an unreasonable monster. When an ordinary attack landed on his shiny silvery body, it could not even leave a single scratch on him. His metal-made arms were changing its form unpredictably. Sword, fist, hammer, polearm, axe, truncheon....

A variety of moves were unleashed in an innumerable succession.

However, even so, this was not enough to cause trouble for his opponents. The most troublesome aspect of his offense was that his variety of moves was accompanied by a straight-on and explosive attacking style. This type of offense was overwhelming and terrifying for his opponents.

No one dared to fight him head-on. Old Ling, who was metal-attributed just like Silver Soldier, had his face turn ugly after exchanging a few blows with him.

Qing Feng was suppressed by him until the point that he no longer had any fighting fervor in him. Right now, he only focused on dodging Silver Soldier's attacks. After his nether lotus seeds

were severely damaged by Ai Hui, he' lost his trump card and his strength had reduced sharply. This put him in an extremely pathetic state.

Karakorum Savant swept up streaks of biting-cold sword gleams around Silver Soldier. There were a few times where She Yu tried to mount a sneak attack on Silver Soldier but failed to find an opening to attack. Instead, she was almost injured by the swirling sword gleams.

The injury that Old Ling had previously inflicted on She Yu was making her movements sluggish at this point of time.

Even when Karakorum Savant and Silver Soldier fought against three experts at once, they did not succumb to a disadvantageous position. Ai Hui could not take his eyes off the intense battle.

To be able to see such an intense battle between experts was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. It was highly beneficial for Ai Hui to be able to observe and learn from the battle while on the sideline.

Ai Hui was not surprised at Karakorum Savant's superb swordsmanship. However, he was slightly shocked at how powerful Silver Soldier was. From what he knew of Infantry Division, they were not really popular among the public.

Even though Infantry Division was part of Thirteen Divisions and was one of the two major metal elemental divisions, their status differed greatly from Sky Edge Division, the other metal

elemental division.

Sky Edge Division's fighting capabilities were more outstanding and their inheritances were more formidable than Infantry Division's. There were a lot of areas in which Sky Edge Division was better than Infantry Division. Honestly speaking, Infantry Division was a 'laborers' division. The missions and things they did were strenuous and unrewarding.

There were many reasons why Infantry Division was not popular. However, the main reason was their choice of training specialization. Infantry Division specialized in body-tempering. Out of so many specializations, body-tempering was the most challenging and arduous.

At the initial stage, practicing body-tempering was relatively less difficult. However, as one progressed along this path, the difficulty of practising body-tempering increased sharply. Furthermore, when it came to battles, the elementalists from Infantry Division would usually play the role of meat shields in the front line. This caused their casualty rate to be extremely high. The tasks they did were difficult and tiring. It was no wonder that they were so unpopular.

And because of all these reasons, Infantry Division was the lowest ranking division among the Thirteen Divisions.

Ai Hui knew little about Infantry Division. The only person he knew from Infantry Division was Brother Li Wei, whom he'd first met in Central City.

As this thought emerged in his mind, Ai Hui was suddenly stunned.

He raised his head abruptly and started at the view of Silver Soldier's back.

Countless fragmented memories appeared in his mind. These blurred fragmented memories began to stack on top of the silver figure.

Ai Hui stared blankly at the silver, burly figure and found him to be more and more familiar.

Brother Li Wei... He did not!

Ai Hui's mind went blank upon realizing that Li Wei did not die.

Three years ago, when the blood catastrophe had just broken out, there were only two elites from Thirteen Divisions. They were Li Wei and Zhou Xiaoxi. Zhou Xiaoxi was the one that accompanied Ai Hui and the other students to Garden of Life. After the blood catastrophe broke out, Zhou Xiaoxi, who was then infected with blood poison, had to seek reinforcements for the students by himself. Eventually, he met with a mishap and died. As for Brother Li Wei, he'd disappeared without a trace after taking part in an operation.

Senior Mingxiu had grieved over Li Wei's death for a long time.

He did not expect Brother Li Wei to still be alive…

Ai Hui's gaze landed upon Li Wei's metallic arms. It was then he remembered that Brother Li Wei lost his arms during the fight with Tian Kuan three years ago. Eventually, Ai Hui calmed himself down from the excitement. The silvery figure looked more unfamiliar than familiar.

He was exuding such an invincible and overbearing aura. Brother Li Wei had changed completely.

Brother Li Wei was not the only one who had changed completely. If the old Brother Li Wei saw what he had transformed into now, he would be surprised as well, right?

In troubled times, everything was changing every day. Every life was as fragile as a blade of grass. If one did not want to die, he or she had to become stronger at all costs.

Would Brother Li Wei still remember Senior Mingxiu?

The excitement in Ai Hui's heart had disappeared and was replaced by an indescribable tinge of sadness.

He did not want to know the answer at all.

Suddenly, Xiao Shuren, who was in his embrace, fidgeted and

said, "You are hugging me too tight."

Ai Hui returned to his senses and warily tightened his sword against her neck. Previously, in a moment of desperation to avoid the impact from Li Wei's landing, he'd dragged Xiao Shuren with him and made a hasty retreat.

At this point of time, both of them were in a rather dubious position. To restrain Xiao Shuren and prevent her from getting injured by the shock wave, Ai Hui pressed her against his chest and placed his Silverfold Plum on her neck.

"Don't move about!"

Ai Hui warned her coldly. He loosened his grip as he could hear Xiao Shuren had slight difficulty breathing properly.

Xiao Shuren panted heavily. She looked extremely pathetic now. Her head and face were filthy with dirt and her fringe was messy. Even so, her beauty still could not be concealed.

Ai Hui was extremely wary of her. Every movement Xiao Shuren made, he would react to it. No matter what ancient treasure she had, he did not care about it at all. This woman was cunning and vile. A slight moment of carelessness would cause him to fall into her trap.

"Let's make a deal," said Xiao Shuren calmly as she composed her breathing.

"You better not play any tricks," Ai Hui said coldly as doubt filled his mind.

"A person who is about to die has no reason to do that," Xiao Shuren smiled sadly and continued, "Don’t tell me, does Mr Chu still think that I can continue to live?"

Ai Hui was stunned.

.....

On the platform at the center of the pool, Xiaobao had a blank look on his face. He did not know what was going on.

Bendy strips of dazzling light appeared on his body. These translucent light strips swirled around his body like meandering roads on a mountain.

[Sinuous Aqua Body]!

This was a body constitution unique to the Gu Family.

Great Elder widened his eyes. One could see the excitement and happiness in his eyes.

One by one, everyone on the side of the pool widened their eyes as well. Nine sinuous traces! It was the most outstanding level of

body constitution in [Sinuous Aqua Body]

Very soon, a look of marvel appeared on their faces.

However, they also felt that it was a great pity for a mentally challenged boy to have such an excellent body constitution. The gods were really too cruel to the Gu Family. However, even if Xiaobao wasn't too smart, as long as he was physically healthy and he could make use of his natural gift, his future would be limitless with the backing of Great Elder.

The Gu Family was unlikely to go so far as to go without having a qualified successor to carry on its undertaking.

A look of disappointment flashed across Elder Ling's face.

Great Elder was very emotional. Even though he tried to suppress his emotions, those who knew him well could still see how emotional he was. The malicious rumor that had been spreading the last few days had taken a toll on his mind. Even though he kept telling himself that it was only a plot set up by his enemies, he was still disturbed by it.

His only son had died young and his grandson was born with a mental disability. These no doubt made him feel forlorn. However, no matter how big of a weakness Xiaobao had, he was still his only grandson and mental support.

The vicious rumor found his weakness so easily.

At this point of time, Great Elder looked at Xiaobao with a gaze which was filled with a mixture of love and guilt.

When he shifted his gaze to Madam Ye, he felt even more guilty. All these years, his daughter-in-law had been taking care of Xiaobao by herself, and she still had to go through such unredressed injustice. However, he knew that he was mainly responsible for this incident as well. He had a lot of things that he wanted to say, but could not do so.

Madam Ye understood how he felt and smiled gently. Even at this point of time, she was still composed and virtuous

Elder Ling cast a glance at Elder Song, who shook his head to imply that the result was real. Elder Ling was extremely disappointed. He thought he would obtain a good opportunity this time around. If Great Elder's family was involved in a scandal at this point of time, Great Elder would not be able to stay in his position for long.

Even though Elder Ling was disappointed deep down, his face was brimming with joy. He said in a loud voice, "I told you so. We watched Lin-er grow up, how can we not know her character?"

Yuchi Ba smiled, "That's right. Why would one doubt Ye Residence's family values? Their family values are matchless! I can't fathom how there are people who actually believe in such an absurd rumor. This time around, with everyone present as witness, no one can harass Xiaobao with such a rumor again."

The speaker had no particular intention in saying this, but the listener read his own meaning into it. Great Elder felt more guilty upon hearing what Yuchi Ba said. However, he still felt more anger than guilt. With a cold voice, he said, "Everyone, please be my witness. If I find out who started the rumor, I will not hesitate to punish him ruthlessly."

"Indeed! That person has to be punished! A rumor like this is far too malicious!"

"The person who started this rumor is too malicious! The person deserves to die!"

The rest agreed as well.

Madam Ling's face turned deathly white. She stared at Xiaobao and could not believe her eyes. How could it be? How could it be? She definitely would not make a mistake!

Madam Ye smiled as usual. Her gentleness could make one enchanted with her.

At this moment, a scout from Sky Edge Division walked to Tong Kui and whispered something in his ear. Tong Kui's body froze momentarily. Then he walked silently to Yuchi Ba. Everyone present was an influential individual and all of them were shrewd and sharp. At once, they knew something was wrong.

A premonition arose in Great Elder’s mind. He withdrew his smile and asked, "What has happened?"

Yuchi Ba nodded his head and told Tong Gui, "Report everything to Great Elder."

Tong Kui bowed and replied, "Yes. Ye Residence has been attacked."

An absolute silence descended upon everyone.

Chapter 378: The Ancient Treasure

The fierce battle sounded nonstop but Ai Hui's attention was completely on Xiao Shuren's words.

"Madam Ye's strategy is brilliant, I'm impressed." Xiao Shuren's voice was full of praise, "First was the empty residence after Madam took Xiaobao out. And the ancient treasure I have on me is a bait to attract intruders, especially those from the Ling Residence. Karakorum Savant and this Silver Soldier are her assistants and their mission is probably to tangle the enemies."

Upon hearing her words, Ai Hui automatically looked toward the battleground.

He'd not felt it previously, but upon hearing Xiao Shuren's comments, he couldn't help but notice some of these clues. "Why?" he asked, unable to bear his curiosity.

Xiao Shuren's tone carried admiration. "Because Madam wishes to use this opportunity to annihilate the Ling Residence. Madam Ye put on a weak front in regard to the relentless spreading of rumors involving Xiaobao. When the truth gets out, the grievances she felt before would intensify, evoking more sympathy from the people. And if people saw how the Ye Residence is being bullied, what would they think?"

"They would only feel that Madam Ling went overboard and that the orphan and widow are extremely pitiful. If Ye Residence is really weak, there might not be anyone who would dare stand up

for her. But there's Great Elder behind Madam Ye. Great Elder is beyond furious about the rumors that smear Xiaobao's reputation so it's inevitable that he will take action. And if Great Elder teaches the Ling Residence a lesson, would anyone stand up for them? No. This is true power."

Xiao Shuren said laughingly, "Madam Ye will have everyone see for themselves. Look, it's the Ye Residence. The residence that houses all elementalists with the surname Ye, an orphan and a widow is about to be razed to the ground by the Ling Residence. Aren't they wretched? Aren't they pitiful? Shouldn't the Ling Residence die?"

Ai Hui's heart turned cold. These people's shrewdness and cunningness was absolutely frighteningly.

"Ling Residence is done for." Xiao Shuren sighed softly. "And the bait? It will be handed over to Elders Guild of course. Ye Residence, being sensible, has no interest in the ancient treasure at all. Why wouldn't the Elders Guild be enticed by the ancient treasure, when even Dai Gang is drooling over it and they can shut everyone's mouth with it?"

Ai Hui remained silent. He wasn't proficient in crafty plots and manipulations, but he wasn't foolish. He understood what Xiao Shuren was saying about the gains and losses involved.

And unfortunately, Xiao Shuren was right.

"Actually, I've been thinking about some questions for the past

few days. How did I land myself in the Ye Residence? It was because I fell into the hands of Karakorum chief, and her relationship with Madam Ye wasn't superficial. Why did I fall into the hands of the chief? Because rumor had it that the ancient treasure was related to swordsmanship. And where did that rumor come from?"

"Don't you find it too coincidental, Mister Chu?" Xiao Shuren asked with a smile.

Ai Hui found it unbelievable. "Could it be Madam Ye?"

"I have no proof," Xiao Shuren said faintly. "But if that's the case, our Madam Ye is really not a simple character."

Her next sentence was even more shocking. "Only two people from Great Wei Enterprise know about the ancient treasure. One is already dead and the other is me. Other than that, there's only Dai Gang. If my theory is valid, I'm afraid that Madam Ye's people are beside Dai Gang."

Ai Hui was dumbstruck. Reason told him that Xiao Shuren's guess was simply too out of this world, but somehow, intuition told him that it was possible.

"Isn't our Madam Ye amazing?"

Xiao Shuren spoke with admiration and regret. While she combed this theory out from threads and traces, it was very

difficult for her to link it with this single mother who had raised a handicapped son for over ten years.

"I do not want to fall into the hands of the Elders Guild. Plus, I have personal matters to take care of, so I'm willing to hand over the ancient treasure. I only seek your compassion."

Xiao Shuren's tone was sorrowful.

Ai Hui shook his head. "I'm not interested in the ancient treasure."

The ancient treasure was a big inconvenience that brought bad luck to its possessor. Countless people had died because of it, including those who perished in the Great Wei Enterprise massacre.

There were still many things Ai Hui had to do, so he did not wish to get involved. If he did get involved, he wouldn't be able to accomplish anything anymore.

Xiao Shuren was rather shocked and also extremely surprised. She could tell that Chu Zhaoyang was speaking the truth.

She let out a distressed, bitter laugh. "Those who heard about the ancient treasure scrabbled for it like moths for a flame. Who would've expected you to deem it as trash."

Ai Hui did not respond.

No one disliked treasures. Himself included, but in this world there were always things more important than money and wealth.

Xiao Shuren’s tone changed. "A virtuous man should have the ancient treasure, so I’m giving it to you."

Before Ai Hui could open his mouth, Xiao Shuren’s next action had him dumbfounded.

She stuck her palm into her own chest!

Was she committing suicide?

Ai Hui was extremely shocked, but he reacted quickly and noticed that there was no blood coming out from her chest at all.

He cried out involuntarily, "Transfigured elementalist?!"

"I had been severely injured and almost lost my life. To survive, I had to transform my body into sand," Xiao Shuren explained gently. The image of her drawing her tender, snow-white palm out from her snow-white chest carried an inexpressible, devilish beauty.

There was a trace of satisfaction and craftiness in Xiao Shuren’s tone. "They did not expect that I would place the ancient treasure inside my body."

Ai Hui had not expected that too.

Her snow-white palm opened, revealing two transparent and flawless crystals.

Each was about the size of a finger and in the centre of each was a drop of golden liquid.

Ai Hui couldn’t take his eyes off of them. The golden liquid within was swiveling and changing in countless exquisitely complicated patterns. He could feel its extraordinariness.

Before he could react, a white cloth flew out from his palm swiftly, and like an agile white snake it coiled itself around the crystals.

Ai Hui was stunned.

Xiao Shuren was taken aback as well but she dismissed it with a smile. "It’s for you anyway."

Regaining his senses, Ai Hui immediately felt a headache. He hadn’t intended to get involved in this inconvenience, but alas, it came and stuck itself onto him like a stubborn stain, unable to be removed.

The bandage was very interested. Could it be that the golden

liquid inside the crystals was some kind of blood?

Gold-colored blood was very rare.

Ai Hui looked on helplessly as the bandage went on to swallow its food, a sight scarier than a tiger seizing its prey. He said, "Do you have any unfulfilled wishes, Madam?"

Xiao Shuren became excited. "You're a good man of honor indeed, Mister Chu!"

Man of honor?

Ai Hui laughed in spite of himself. He shook his head, replying, "I'm no man of honor. Men of honor die early. I would like to live a little longer. Cut to the chase, tell me."

Xiao Shuren, too, understood that time was tight. She responded speedily, "At that time, I was worried that something would happen, so I had the caretaker take my young son out of the enterprise to live in another city with a different identity. Now that Great Wei Enterprise is gone and nothing remains, I can only beg that Mister Chu accepts him as your disciple."

Ai Hui did not agree immediately. He muttered, "I'm homeless and miserable, and the things I do come with danger. Not only will he suffer, he might also lose his life if he follows me."

With a steady gaze, Xiao Shuren spoke up. "Is there any

permanent haven in this chaotic world? Silver City was a beautiful city that flourished but with some dried grass and a fire, it has now turned to ashes. This is all that I can do to help him. Whether or not he lives well from now on, it’s his life."

Upon hearing that, Ai Hui nodded his head solemnly. "In that case, I’ll agree."

Xiao Shuren heaved a sigh of relief and handed her son’s address and the caretaker’s name to him. She also gave him a keepsake.

Ai Hui recorded the information and felt rather curious. "Why me?"

Xiao Shuren replied, "You put aside your own safety to save Xiaobao. You have compassionation."

Ai Hui then understood that with her wisdom, tactics and ways of doing things, she was not a simple person. He couldn’t help but feel admiration for her.

A group of tiny black dots appeared on the faraway horizon. Looking around, Ai Hui realized that people were also closing in from other directions.

The Ye Residence had been surrounded.

Till now, Xiao Shuren’s conjecture had been proven right, impressing Ai Hui even further. "What plans do you have next?"

Since she’d guessed Madam Ye’s plan, she must be prepared.

Xiao Shuren combed her fringe, answering, "Just hand me over to Madam Ye later on."

Ai Hui felt somewhat suspicious. Xiao Shuren had mentioned earlier that she did not want to fall into the hands of the Elders Guild.

Xiao Shuren smiled slightly. "My heart had been damaged from past injuries and I have to change the sand material every two months. But I’ve not changed it for four month so my time is limited, there’s no cure."

Ai Hui understood instantly and kept silent.

"Please do not feel sad. I am beyond happy that you’re willing to accept my request." Xiao Shuren consoled him genuinely without the least bit of sorrow. "The people on this side only know about the ancient treasure, but as to what it is exactly, they aren’t clear. Although Dai Gang never said it outright, I believe he knows what these crystals are. They are extremely important to him, so he will not step down. I’m afraid that as a Grandmaster, he would have special means to get what he wants, so please be careful."

Ai Hui nodded. "I will."

As the crowd grew close, Madam Ye, Great Elder and some

others' silhouettes could be seen clearly.

"The dust has settled." Xiao Shuren seemed to be sighing and reminiscing at the same time. She smiled suddenly. "I'll not bid farewell. The bad thing about transfigured elementalists is that we die uglily."

Before Ai Hui could respond, Madam Ye's voice sounded, "Mister Chu, please release Madam Xiao!"

Ai Hui took away the sword on Xiao Shuren's neck.

Many of them exhaled in relief.

Immediately after, countless burning and avaricious gazes fell upon Xiao Shuren. The rumors about the ancient treasure had many palpitating. How could something that Dai Gang had spent so much effort and strength in obtaining be anything ordinary?

Freed, Xiao Shuren looked ecstatic upon seeing Ling Sheng and his wife. She cried out urgently, "Save me Master Ling! Dai Gang said that you..."

She caught herself in time and closed her mouth immediately.

The expressions of those present changed instantly. They looked toward Ling Sheng and a look of enlightenment flashed across their faces. The Ling family was here to seize Xiao Shuren on Dai Gang's behalf!

People from the Ling family turned pale. It was okay to have secret connections with Dai Gang, but they absolutely must not publicize it.

Ling Sheng glared at Xiao Shuren and saw the hatred and pleasure in her eyes. He then recalled how Great Wei Enterprise was destroyed with his own hands.

This woman had finally found her chance for revenge.

His expression worsened. It was his doomsday.

"Elder Ling, anything else to say?"

Great Elder’s tone was flat, joy and anger absent. But everyone knew that he was seriously furious.

Chapter 379: The Tides Turn

Elder Ling’s throat was dry. He looked at his close friend Elder Song, whom he had known for decades.

Elder Song stood still and expressionless, with no intention to speak up for him.

Elder Ling had given up. If even Elder Song would not help, the others definitely wouldn’t as well.

Yuchi Ba announced, "I think Elder Ling is no longer suitable for his role as an Elder in the guild. As such, I propose to dismiss him from his formal duties."

Yuchi Ba was the leader of the New Citizen Faction, while Elder Ling led the Aristocratic Faction. The two were rivals, so he didn’t feel any guilt about adding insult to injury.

Elder Song momentarily fell silent before suddenly speaking, "I second the motion."

Elder Ling’s face turned ashen. Any proposal required the support of two elders before it could be brought up for voting by the Elders Guild. Although he knew he had little chance of emerging unharmed this time, he didn’t think that the fatal blow would be delivered by his most trusted friend, Elder Song.

Elder Song sat quietly and averted his gaze, deliberately avoiding

Elder Ling’s eyes.

The Great Elder said flatly, "We will vote during the next meeting. Elder Ling will have to wait to hear the verdict."

Elder Ling did not resist, as resistance was futile. He and the Ling Residence were finished. The Aristocratic Faction had always been behind him, and Elder Song was someone he trusted deeply. Now, he realized that they had switched sides long ago.

His gaze fell on the dull and plain looking Great Elder. He suddenly had suspicions that the Great Elder was the true mastermind, even though Yelin was the one who’d pulled the trigger.

Only the Great Elder was capable of taking down the Ling Residence without any bloodshed.

Elder Ling trembled slightly when he looked upon the mountain peak floating in the sky. The majestic God-subduing Peak seemed to sparkle brilliantly under the sunlight. This one had yet to have anything written on it, indicating that it had just been constructed.

Beneath the God-subduing Peak was the Ling Residence.

Such ruthlessness!

Elder Ling felt as though he had been stabbed in the heart. He shut his eyes in despair, as all ideas of fighting to the death

vanished from his mind.

The God-subduing Peak was like a guillotine hanging ominously over the Ling Residence. If he were to have any thoughts of resistance, the entire Ling family and its legacy would be erased from the Avalon of Five Elements forever.

Elder Ling looked as though he had aged several decades. He said, "Tianjiang is willing to accept whatever decision the guild makes. Considering our many years of working together, I hope that you'll spare my family."

The other Elders were too shocked to speak. They were taken aback by the Great Elder's ruthless moves. Nobody had expected the Great Elder to just simply deploy the newly constructed God-subduing Peak like that!

What was more frightening was that no one knew of the Great Elder's plans to make use of the God-subduing Peak prior to this. They had spies stationed throughout Silver City, yet none of them were able to provide any information.

The Great Elder had appeared to switch to a policy of non-interference over these past few years. He was hardly involved in any of the conflicts between the various factions. The other elders now realized that the Great Elder hadn't changed one bit.

The tiger was merely taking a nap.

The Great Elder said flatly, "As long as the Ling Residence is willing to cooperate with the Elders Guild's investigation, we will not treat them unfairly.

The last shred of hope in Elder Ling's eyes dimmed as his final plea for mercy was turned down.

Elder Song came forward and sealed Elder Ling's elemental energy. Elder Ling accepted his fate solemnly.

Following Madam Ye's instructions, Ai Hui stood beside her and XiaoBao.

Having witnessed the cruel fights between the aristocratic families, Ai Hui felt even more compelled to leave. The bright sunshine was unable to give him any warmth, making Silver City feel like an extremely depressing place to be in.

The Avalon of Five Elements only had Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village left, yet these people were still involved in merciless internal fighting.

Countless other families happily struck at those aristocratic families that had collapsed. Such disgusting and ridiculous behaviour appeared to be driven purely by jealousy and competition.

The Avalon of Five Element's precious remaining fighting power was constantly being wasted by internal conflicts. If these forces

were instead channeled to the front lines, they'd probably be in a much better state.

It didn't matter much to him.

Ai Hui was increasingly missing his companions in Peace City. He did not like Silver City one bit.

Ai Hui now understood how difficult it was to work with people who had different goals.

Keeping his emotions in check, Ai Hui secretly observed the audience. He was worried about She Yu.

The [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art] was going to cause him trouble again.

It would be problematic if She Yu was caught by the Elders Guild.

His head started to hurt.

"No! You can't do this!" screamed the pale-looking Madam Ling. "They've all been fooled by you! Ye Lin! You liar! You skank! I saw that man with my own eyes..."

Madam Ye expressed incredulity.

A commotion broke out.

To think Madam Ling was the source of the rumors!

Two elites from the Sky Edge Division swiftly stepped forward and restrained Madam Ling.

Using elemental energy, they rendered her unable to speak. The scene became all the more dreadful as Madam Ling's face became twisted with agony from being unable to voice out her grievances.

Just as everyone heaved a sigh of relief, the Sky Edge Division elite who was standing on Madam Ling's right sprang into action.

Bang!

A flash of silver light, as quick as lightning, smashed into the other elite's body.

Caught off guard, he had no means of defending himself. Blood splashed everywhere and he died on the spot.

The attacker grabbed Madam Ling and fled the scene.

Everybody was stunned by the events that were unfolding before their very eyes. They were completely blindsided and nobody could even react.

The attacker was incredibly fast, demonstrating power far beyond that of any Sky Edge Division elite.

Recovering from the initial shock, Yuchi Ba snorted, "Let’s see how far you can go!"

He extended his palm towards the figure that was now fairly far away. There were no visible signs, but a slight fluctuation of elemental energy could be felt.

A sharp ray suddenly appeared half a foot behind the attacker.

The ray took the form of a skull with razor sharp teeth. Ghostly cries and haunting howls filled the air, creating an eerie atmosphere.

Ai Hui could not help but shudder in fear when he felt the elemental energy in his body fluctuating uncontrollably.

The Elders had such incredible strength!

Just before the ray could strike him, the "Sky Edge Division elite" swung his right palm behind him.

A thunderous roar resounded through the air.

A silver dragon shot out his palm and rammed head on into the ghastly skull behind him.

Boom!

A dazzling bright light burst forth from the point of collision.

A vast expanse of white washed over the entire area. Nothing could be seen.

After a second, the blinding, silver light disappeared.

However, Madam Ling and the attacker were nowhere to be seen by the time everyone's vision was restored. What made everyone even more furious was the fact that the mysterious lady and the grass-lotus puppet had taken the chance to flee as well.

"It's Yang Zhen! Yang Zhen from Dragonrise Training Hall!"

Yuchi Ba was enraged. Dragonrise Training Hall was Silver City's, as well as the Avalon of Five Elements' largest training hall. Yang Zhen, a master of combat, was its chief.

The profound relationship between Dragonrise Training Hall and the Ling Residence was not a secret. In fact, Dragonrise Training Hall was close to many families. However, nobody expected that Yang Zhen would dare to risk universal condemnation just to rescue Madam Ling.

Great Elder ordered in a grave tone, "Seal the entire Dragonrise

Training Hall and investigate the matter thoroughly. Since the rumors came from the Ling Residence, Yang Zhen is likely to be the accomplice. Send out an order to arrest Yang Zhen and Madam Ling!"

Just as Tong Gui was about to execute the order, Yuchi Ba exclaimed, "You'll go personally!"

Ling Sheng's face was drained of all colour.

Earlier, Madam Ling's hysterical scream had exposed her as the source of the rumors.

The Ling Residence was doomed!

Those who initially still had some compassion for the Ling Residence no longer did.

Such vicious rumors and they turned out to have come from the Ling Residence!

Using unscrupulous means was not uncommon, but getting caught meant losing the trust of all others.

The Ling Residence was now facing such a situation. Nobody would be willing to lend them a helping hand.

Upon seeing She Yu escape, Zhong Houjun felt a burden lifted off

his shoulders. However, as his gaze landed on Silver Soldier, his expression turned grave.

The Zhong family had a long history, and Silver Soldier reminded him of some rumors he had gotten wind of. Zhong Houjun was slated to become the next division leader of the Infantry Division, but with the appearance of this guy, things were not looking good for him.

The mysterious lady and the grass-lotus puppet had fled. Old Ling had lost every bit of fight he had in him. He remained listless and passive as the guards led him away.

The battle had ended, and the Ye Residence lay in ruins.

Everyone’s attention was fixed on the Karakorum Savant and Silver Soldier.

The Great Elder smiled, "I’ve seen the Karakorum Savant before, but it’s my first time seeing this hero with such extraordinary skills. Yelin, would you please introduce him to us."

Madam Ye smiled in return and replied, "All of you must be making wild guesses right now. His mentor’s family name is Heng, and the Heng family has many quirky rules. Silver Soldier has inherited the Heng’s Infantry bloodline. The Karakorum Savant is his junior. She has inherited the Heng family’s Sky Edge bloodline. However, she has an innate passion for swordsmanship and is the first ever master swordsman."

Silver Soldier and the Karakorum Savant bowed to the elders in respect.

The Elders quickly returned the gesture.

Elder Song exclaimed, "Ah, disciples of a prestigious family! According to past records, the Sky Edge and Infantry originate from the Heng family. Looks like this is indeed true. The preservation of the Heng's heritage deserves our utmost admiration. Looking at our young brother here with his Infantry inheritances made me wonder if the Infantry Division actually produced a new talent! But no, his heritage is much purer than that!"

Both Yuchi Ba and Zhong Houjun did not look pleased.

The Sky Edge Division's division leader had not recovered from his serious injury. At present, the division was led by the two vice division leaders Tong Gui and Yu Jin. As the first ever master swordsman and a disciple of Heng family, the Karakorum Savant was well-qualified to be the head of the Sky Edge Division.

The Infantry Division was in an even worse state. Zhong Houjun was the only one left to take over the division. After seeing Silver Soldier's strength, however, he no longer had the confidence to do so.

Moreover, this name made Zhong Houjun feel like vomiting blood. According to their practices, only the division leader of the Infantry Division was qualified to be addressed as "soldier".

And here was this guy, calling himself Silver Soldier and possessing such a pure heritage. Zhong Houjun was simply not on par with him.

The Great Elder was about to wrest control of two divisions, but nobody dared to say anything.

The older, the wiser, it seemed. He was still the Great Elder after all!

Ai Hui looked at Silver Soldier up close and was a hundred percent sure that the man hidden behind that mask was Brother Li Wei. He was very sure that Brother Li Wei and the Karakorum Savant's mentor was the long lost Heng Bingfeng from the Vanguard Training Hall.

He felt extremely vexed. It was as if the threads of fate were linking them all together.

What lied ahead?

Nobody knew.

Chapter 380: Leaving

Ai Hui observed Silver Soldier - his position beside the Karakorum Savant, the way he talked leisurely with the Elders - and saw a man born destined for great things.

His mild sorrow began to fade and was soon replaced by a slight tinge of happiness.

Regardless of how the lines of fate intertwined, regardless of what Brother Li Wei had experienced during these tumultuous three years, being alive was a good reason to be happy.

Ah, I should find a time to visit Senior Mingxiu.

Ai Hui thought to himself.

After talking to the Elders, the two of them went back to see Madam Ye.

The Karakorum Savant respectfully addressed her, "Aunt Ye."

Silver Soldier bowed, "Madam."

Ai Hui noticed that they addressed Madam Ye differently. The way things looked, Heng Bingfeng appeared to be closely related to the Ye Residence. Ai Hui guessed that Heng Bingfeng must have been a core member of the Assembly of Patriarchs, just like the old

prisoner. No wonder Madam Ye seemed to be closely related to the Assembly of Patriarchs as well.

Madam Ye beamed at the two of them and began to introduce Ai Hui, "This is Mister Chu Zhaoyang. He has exceptional swordsmanship and previously saved Xiaobao and I. We're all one big family and I'd like for the three of you to know each other better."

Karakorum Savant said to Silver Soldier, "Zhaoyang has excellent swordsmanship, and I hope that he can assist me in compiling a swordsmanship encyclopedia."

Ai Hui humbly replied, "My swordsmanship cannot be compared to that of Chief. My thanks to the two of you for saving my life in the nick of time."

"Brother Chu, you are too humble. We'd have been in deep trouble if you hadn't dealt such a heavy blow to the grass-lotus puppet," replied Silver Soldier.

Madam Ye laughed, "Alright, alright, all this modesty is making me tired. Give me a moment, we'll speak again later."

She turned towards Xiao Shuren and said, "Madam Xiao, you must have been frightened. We still need you to cooperate with the Elders Guild in their investigation of the matter. I sincerely apologize."

After hearing what Madam Ye said, Ai Hui couldn’t help but glance at Xiao Shuren. She had completely preempted Madam Ye’s actions.

Xiao Shuren did not look at Ai Hui, her eyes were fixed on Madam Ye instead. The corner of her mouth curved up in contempt as she spoke, "Madam, are you burning bridges now? Didn’t you promise to ensure my safety when I disclosed the location of the treasures? Are you trying to go back on your words?"

All eyes were on Madam Ye. Suspicion filled the air.

Ai Hui mused that she was really cunning!

Xiao Shuren’s move was truly brilliant.

Madam Ye immediately stopped smiling and said in a serious manner, "Madam Xiao, are you trying to mislead the public? Wrong move. Don’t forget that there’s still the Judgement Division, and you won’t be able to fool them. I urge that you think before you speak."

Her rebuttal greatly reduced the number of suspicious looks from the crowd.

Surveillance, Judgement, and Dread were the ever mysterious three central divisions. The Surveillance Division was specialised in gathering intelligence, the Judgement Division gave

unparalleled judgment, while the Dread Division was also known as the "King of Warfare".

Once the Judgement Division became involved in an investigation, attempting to falsify information would only end badly. The Surveillance Division had a myriad of methods at its disposal. It was practically impossible for any criminal to evade their inquisition.

Xiao Shuren became even more sarcastic. "That's true, why should a high and mighty person like you keep your promise to a small fry like me? You used me as bait, and even used me as Chu Zhaoyang's shield. But a word of warning, Mr Chu Zhaoyang, even though you've saved their lives before, she has never truly considered you as one of them. Why else would she leave you alone in Ye Residence?"

Madam Ye furrowed her brows, "What a load of nonsense!"

She felt an ominous premonition as she looked into the lucid eyes of this seemingly insane woman.

'Spouting rubbish like that, isn't she worried that I'll just finish her off right now?'

Unless...

Madam Ye's heart was beating wildly.

Ai Hui silently observed Xiao Shuren since he already knew what she was going to do. Xiao Shuren had not looked at Ai Hui the whole time, but Ai Hui knew that whatever she was doing was meant to remove all suspicions from him. After this, nobody would think that Ai Hui had the ancient treasure.

Even though he already knew that Xiao Shuren didn’t have long to live and was doing all these things for her son, Ai Hui invariably still felt sad about what was about to happen next.

"An ancient treasure that even Grandmaster Dai covets. It was first rumoured to be related to the swordsmanship, and shortly after it landed in the hands of Karakorum. Next thing you know, I was sent to the Ye Residence. Madam Ye, isn’t this too much of a coincidence? Since you’ve spent so much effort obtaining it, I hope you manage to utilize it well."

Her words immediately made everyone else suspect Madam Ye again.

An eerie smile appeared on Xiao Shuren’s face.

Madam Ye suddenly shouted, "Stop her, she’s going to commit suicide!"

Just as she finished her sentence, Xiao Shuren’s body began to crumble into a pool of sand. The upper half of her body lay in the sand, her beautiful face was like that of a lifeless doll.

"Transfigured elementalist!"

The crowd was stunned by this sudden turn of events.

Madam Ye stared blankly at the sand, recovering after a moment. She had a perplexed look on her face.

Her plan had gone perfectly, and the Ling Residence was finished. To think that this Xiao Shuren would give her a direct hit just as she was about to enjoy her sweet victory.

Madam Ye knew she was in big trouble.

It was going to be hard for her to maintain her innocence and prove that she didn't know anything about the ancient treasure. What's more, now that it was exposed, her relationship with Chu Zhaoyang was going to be equally difficult to explain.

Xiao Shuren's last offensive was merciless.

Since she was already dead, Madam Ye found it hard to get angry. She instead felt some admiration for the lady.

The entire place was dead quiet.

Xiao Shuren's last move had left everyone deeply shaken.

Soon after, one of the many bodyguards beside the Great Elder walked towards the pool of sand. He crouched down and grabbed a handful of it. After examining it for awhile, his face lit up in realization.

"The sand within her body hasn’t been changed for quite some time. She was doomed anyway."

Everyone now understood why Xiao Shuren had committed suicide - she had known that her time was almost up.

Even though Madam Ye had already guessed the reason, she still felt extremely annoyed. Why didn’t she examine Xiao Shuren earlier? She would definitely have been able to discover that she was a transfigured elementalist if she had done so.

While her final frenzy managed to convince some people, it wasn’t able to win over all of them.

Despite that, the seeds of suspicion were now firmly planted and would be difficult to eliminate.

Regardless, dead men tell no tales, and Xiao Shuren was no longer around for questioning.

Madam Ye remained composed. To her, this was just another inconvenience.

She wasn’t some powerless civilian. Without solid evidence, who

would dare to openly question her?

Rumors and suspicions were only devastating against the weak. They were completely useless against those in power, just like sparrows chirping away in the darkness. A little noise could be heard every now and then, but they presented no harm whatsoever.

Except for the Great Elder and her, the rest of them were sparrows.

Today's drama had pried opened everyone's eyes. They had just witnessed the collapse of a one-thousand-year-old influential family, the appearance of descendents from the Heng family who had disappeared for many years, the chief of Dragonrise Training Hall sacrificing everything to save Madam Ling, as well as the final, sorrowful, yet resolute, counterattack of Xiao Shuren.

All of them were dazed, and the Elders had a grim look on their faces. They knew that a storm was brewing.

The Avalon of Five Elements' power hierarchy would change dramatically.

But all these things had nothing to do with Ai Hui, and he took the opportunity to leave the Ye Residence.

The recent spate of infighting was considerably disturbing to Ai Hui, who had not seen anything like that before. He had previously

thought that Silver City would be an easy place to make money, but had since realized the true costs involved. The slightest mistakes could easily cost him his life.

The Ye Residence was severely damaged. Madam Ye had brought Xiaobao to stay at the Great Elder's other villa to avoid the chaotic situation.

Madam Ye invited Ai Hui along, but he politely rejected. He claimed that he needed to further explore his recent breakthrough in base level.

Madam Ye thought that Ai Hui was still brooding over Xiao Shuren's last words. She smiled faintly and didn't probe further. After all these days of contact, she understood that Mister Zhaoyang was a pragmatic person.

Who is able to offer a higher price than me? Who dares to offer a higher price than me?

She would soon find out.

Madam Ye gently told Chu Zhaoyang to train well since she might require his assistance in the future.

Karakorum Savant invited Ai Hui to stay in Karakorum Sword League for a short while so that they could learn from each other and compile a swordsmanship encyclopedia.

This suggestion tugged on Ai Hui's heartstrings, but he rejected the invitation. He did not like Silver City one bit and wanted to leave this place as soon as possible. He had been contemplating whether to catch up with Brother Li Wei, but after some deliberation, he decided that it wasn't a good time to do so.

Chu Zhaoyang's identity was a complex matter.

However, taking into consideration the relationship between Karakorum Sword League and the Assembly of Patriarchs, Ai Hui didn't say much else. He only mentioned his recent realizations and how he'd like to reflect deeper on them. Once the dust had settled he'd come back to swap pointers.

He wasn't going to get barred from entering the Hall of Ancient Records before he found those notes.

Although Karakorum Savant felt slightly disappointed, she was still extremely understanding. However, she kept emphasising repeatedly that Mister Chu must eventually return to aid in the compilation of her swordsmanship encyclopedia.

Ai Hui bade farewell to the crowd and ventured out of the city alone.

Karakorum Savant noticed her senior looking at Chu Zhaoyang quizzically. Slightly worried, she asked, "What's wrong?"

Silver Soldier was roused from his contemplation. He shook his

head, "Nothing, just thinking of an old friend."

"A friend?"

"Yeah."

Ai Hui was a good distance away from Silver City. He felt like someone who had just successfully escaped from prison, feeling unspeakably free and relieved.

The treasures of Silver City weren't meant for him, and he no longer cared for them.

Silver City may be a paradise for others, but it was a hell for him.

The Starry Gem Swordwings flapped powerfully against the strong winds, creating a trail of lightning as he flew through the clouds while the sun shone beautifully in the sky.

Ai Hui felt agitated. The suppressed emotions he had felt over the past few days were now gushing out like an exploding volcano.

Amidst the strong gales, Ai Hui screamed and howled at the top of his lungs. Awful singing? Who cares as long as I'm enjoying myself! No rhythm? Who cares as long as I'm happy!

Singing loudly with sword in hand, Ai Hui felt like he could go anywhere.

He’d enjoy his time with the others, taking revenge, fighting and exploring with them.

Before old age and death arrived. YOLO.

Chapter 381: Recouping Losses

A long, arduous journey filled with trials and tribulations.

After flying consecutively for three days and three nights, Ai Hui finally stopped in his tracks and landed in a hidden valley. He continuously shifted his location during the journey to ensure that no one was following him.

After experiencing days of heavy rain rushing on the road, Ai Hui looked rather haggard, but his eyes were unusually bright. They shone like two endlessly burning flames, which could not be wiped out by the rain.

As he brushed the gloominess aside, Ai Hui felt like he was born anew.

The elemental energy within his body was depleted and he desperately needed a rest.

Silverfold Plum in hand, he heaved a heavy sigh and started a Circulatory Cycle.

A sharp hissing sound could be heard as Ai Hui absorbed strand after strand of metal elemental energy. A spring of clear water began to gurgle out of the dried earth around him, shooting into the air and whirling around his body. The water condensed itself into balls of elemental energy sword pills which became a part of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

A white mist slowly creeped over Ai Hui's body, shrouding him in a cloak of fog. Rain began to fall from the sky, each drop vaporizing as they came into contact with the mist.

If there was a metal elementalist flying in the vicinity, he would notice that the impending storm's metal winds were being channeled into this small valley.

A circle of light that had two distinct colors could be seen on the ground beneath Ai Hui's feet. A brown colored outer ring surrounded a white circle.

The outer ring of the circle was extremely dense earth elemental energy. The brown color faded towards the centre of the circle, which was purely silver in colour. The pure silver circle in the middle was metal elemental energy.

In the Second Elemental Realm, Ai Hui was able to transform earth elemental energy into metal elemental energy. This meant he could control both types of elemental energy.

As he recovered his elemental energy, the stress on his body rapidly decreased and Ai Hui's mind became more lucid. He had clearly improved after his experience in Silver City. Having been through all sorts of physical and emotional obstacles, Ai Hui was now much more resilient.

Having a clear mind and understanding one's self was essential to achieving a higher level of consciousness.

He experienced a slight improvement in his control of elemental energy as well.

Ai Hui was enlightened. He realized that achieving elemental externalization meant that a deep understanding of one's own spirit was required in addition to a profound understanding of elemental energy.

He remembered something he'd once read in a book.

'A strong body needs an equally mighty soul.'

The Circulatory Cycle Revolution was executed in perfect order.

The round, spinning elemental energy sword pills were his secret weapon. The explosive power granted by the elemental energy sword pills were the reason why his sword skills were so powerful.

With his attention focused on the Circulatory Cycle, he soon discovered a problem.

The elemental energy within his body was exceptionally dense. After reaching the Second Elemental Realm, his control of ambient elemental energy was greatly enhanced. He had since been able to increase the concentration of elemental energy around him. However, his rate of absorption did not increase much.

This was not surprising. In fact, this was a problem that all elementalists would eventually face.

Attaining elemental externalization meant that the body had already reached the upper limit of the amount of elemental energy it could store. The rate of absorption would also be at its maximum. The body of an elementalist was like a valve, and by the time he achieved elemental externalization, this valve would have been opened to its maximum capacity. Most people found this amount adequate, and instead focused on controlling elemental energy that was external to the body.

Ai Hui had a different perspective.

During his battles, he noticed that the control of external elemental energy was directly affected by the elemental energy within the body. If the elemental energy within his body was depleted, his control over external elemental energy would likely be lost as well.

In a high intensity battle, the ability to quickly restore elemental energy significantly improved combat effectiveness. There were only two known ways to improve recovery speed. The first was to expand the "valve", and the other was to increase the power of extraction. The power of extraction came from one’s Circulatory Cycle Revolution. The faster the revolution of the cycle, the faster the rate of absorption of elemental energies. However, this speed could not simply be increased at will, since external elemental energies contained a large amount of impurities. Continuous, effortful refinement through the use of the Circulatory Cycle was necessary to properly purify external elemental energies.

If the cycle was too fast, impurities might remain in the elemental energy during absorption. Elemental energy that was not pure enough could be extremely harmful to elementalists.

Since increasing the speed of the Circulatory Cycle Revolution wasn’t possible, could the "valve" become larger?

A bold idea suddenly sprang out of his mind. Was this possible? Ai Hui was captivated by his own idea and he promptly began to explore its intricacies.

The Circulatory Cycle Revolution largely involved the five residences and eight palaces within the body. As such, elemental energy from the surroundings must go through the body before it could be fully incorporated into the Circulatory Cycle Revolution,

Hang on!

Ai Hui remembered that his Circulatory Cycle Revolution was different from others’. In addition to the five residences and eight palaces, his Circulatory Cycle Revolution had an additional aspect - his sword.

This was a practice he had continued with even after the sword embryo had shattered. Back when he still had the sword embryo, holding a sword had helped to improve his control of elemental energy.

Absorbing elemental energy through the sword instead of his lungs and skin? Would it not greatly increase the Circulatory Cycle Revolution's efficiency?

Feeling motivated, Ai Hui began to test his hypothesis.

He had tried to absorb elemental energy directly from his sword before, but it wasn't particularly effective. This time round, Ai Hui stopped all other parts of his body from absorbing elemental energy before attempting to directly absorb elemental energy via the Silverfold Plum.

What happened next gave him a surprise.

Metal elemental energy from his surroundings accumulated around him. The sheer amount of it gave him a shock.

The Silverfold Plum was forged from metal and as such had an extremely high affinity for metal elemental energy. Metal elemental energy flowed easily into the sword, and not even the slightest resistance could be felt.

Humans were creatures of flesh and blood. Even if their bodies was fully tempered, they were still made of flesh. As such, despite being stronger and having a higher affinity for metal elemental energy than usual, Ai Hui's tempered body would still never be able to match up to pure metal's affinity for metal elemental energy.

However, Ai Hui soon ran into new problems. The amount of ambient elemental energy was too large, and the Silverfold Plum quickly became saturated with elemental energy. The excessive amount of elemental energy caused an obstruction in the Circulatory Cycle and the revolution ground to a halt.

The Silverfold Plum appeared to encounter some issues as well. It exuded an intense, dazzling light, as if the entire blade was covered in a layer of mercury. A continuous buzzing sound could be heard.

It was overburdened.

Metal was the material that contained the greatest amount of metal elemental energy. Metal that was formed in areas rich in metal elemental energy would constantly be bathed in it. This process greatly increased the grade of the metal, and could even make it transform.

However, all kinds of metal still had a limit on how much metal elemental energy they could withstand. A sudden influx of excessive metal elemental energy could cause it to blow up.

Silverfold Plum was a high-grade product from the Assembly of Patriarchs that was as powerful as Heaven-grade weapons. This meant that it should be able to last till Ai Hui became a Master.

The stronger an elementalist, the purer and more explosive the elemental energy. Weapons made of ordinary materials were unable to withstand such pure and powerful elemental energy.

Ai Hui wasn't expecting his idea to work this well, to the point where even the Silverfold Plum would become overloaded.

He hurriedly forced the excess elemental energy out of the Silverfold Plum.

Ai Hui then started his second attempt. This time, he tried to slow down the speed of his Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

A thin strand of elemental energy flowed from the Silverfold Plum's blade into Ai Hui's right hand palace and seamlessly became integrated into the Circulatory Cycle. As it flowed through the cycle, the thin strand of elemental energy was condensed into sword pills.

After completing one revolution, the elemental energy sword pills were now flowing back into the Silverfold Plum.

The first elemental energy sword pill to enter collided with the external elemental energy that was being absorbed through the Silverfold Plum. The strands of elemental energy began to wrap around the rapidly rotating elemental energy sword pill, increasing it's size. The same thing happened to the subsequent elemental energy sword pills.

These new elemental energy sword pills would then continue flowing within the Circulatory Cycle.

As he continued with the process, Ai Hui soon discovered that he

was unable to speed up the blade's absorption of elemental energy. The Circulatory Cycle would become jammed once the amount of elemental energy being absorbed was increased.

Increasing the recovery rate of elemental energy wasn't going to be that easy after all.

However, Ai Hui was not disappointed by this. He was completely focused on the elemental energy sword pills within his body. A few of them were very large, almost twice the size of those he was previously able to form.

Up till then, he had never once thought of forming larger elemental energy sword pills.

Ai Hui wondered what new changes these enlarged elemental energy sword pills would bring.

After finishing one last revolution, Ai Hui opened his eyes. Sure enough, his judgment was correct. He took slightly longer to recover his elemental energy this way.

He decided to experiment with the enlarged elemental energy sword pills.

With a flick of his wrist, the Silverfold Plum emitted a brilliant sword ray across the empty space in front of him.

[Heavenly Thrust]!

A small hole silently appeared in a rock that was about twenty feet away .

Ai Hui could sense the difference from this move alone. The enlarged elemental energy sword pills were much more explosive - it felt as if he was firing a cannon.

He flew over to the rock and inspected it. His move had bored a clean hole right through the 3 meter wide rock. Ai Hui was pleased with the power he had just unleashed.

Taking to the sky, he executed the [Heavenly Thrust] again.

A slender sword ray soared through the air like an arrow.

The ray flew a good two hundred meters before gradually fading away.

His eyes lit up in delight. Right up to that instant, [Crescent Moon] had been his only long range attack. Skills like [Six Moons] had a maximum range of only thirty meters.

The [Heavenly Thrust] he'd just executed was very similar to shooting an arrow. However, the sword ray produced was even sharper and quieter than an arrow.

On the other hand, it's range was pathetic when compared to a

bow and arrow.

A master bowman could easily hit a target a dozen miles away.

So far, the record stood at a hundred and fifty seven kilometers.

It was set more than six hundred years ago, when a master bowman managed to kill a dire beast with one shot at that range. This feat took the world by storm and made archery immensely popular. It was then that careers as long-ranged assassins took off as well.

Insane shots like these were, of course, extremely taxing to fire. Even a Master wouldn't be able to fire more than a handful of them over short periods.

Ai Hui was satisfied with the two hundred meters he had gained.

Moreover, this was only the beginning. He was confident that he could improve even further.

While he may not have been successful in increasing his recovery rate, Ai Hui unexpectedly managed to greatly enhance his attacking range.

Chapter 382: Seeds

With his elemental energy restored, Ai Hui was feeling refreshed, just like the treasure sword that had been inserted into its sheath, its vigor contained.

Even the rain, that had been pouring consecutively for days, was gradually stopping. The thick clouds overhead cleared, revealing the clean sky. The bright and beautiful sun shone down along with a slight breeze, and a cozy and slightly intoxicating feeling spread throughout his body.

How comfortable.

Basking in the beautiful sunlight after days of pressure relaxed his body completely.

Ai Hui casually chose a flat grass surface to sit on, before plucking a blade of grass to chew on.

The unripe taste of the grass spread throughout his mouth as he studied the crystals in his hand meticulously.

They were transparent and flawless, without the least bit of impurity. Examining them closely, Ai Hui noticed that he was actually unable to confirm if they were actually crystals, since he'd never seen such pure ones before.

The sunlight shone down on the golden liquid, instantly

producing a faint golden halo. Strangely, this layer of golden halo changed irregularly like layers of flickering, delicate ripples, fading and reappearing, and multiplying without end.

How beautiful!

Ai Hui gasped in surprise. While he felt that he wasn't an artistic person, he couldn't help but be mesmerized by this ever-changing halo.

While admiring it, Ai Hui noticed something amiss.

He'd suspected before that the golden liquid was blood from a certain monster, thus attracting the bandage's interest. But Ai Hui suddenly realized that if that were really the case, the bandage would've swallowed them mercilessly instead of keeping them.

Were the crystals encasing it obstructing the bandage?

Wrong!

Perhaps the bandage had been wrapped around his body for a long time, so it had developed a faint connection with Ai Hui.

He suddenly recalled that the bandage did this exact same thing to that demonic god stone status! The moment this idea popped up, Ai Hui's eyes lit up and a bold thought surfaced in his head. Is there any link between these items?

The more he speculated, the more he thought it was possible.

He quickly opened the sand compass to retrieve the stone statue. Previously when he had consumed the metal elemental elixir, the statue had been of great use to him as it sucked all of the elixir's fiendish aura away, cutting his pain short.

Otherwise, just eliminating the fiendish aura alone would have required much effort and energy on Ai Hui's part, not to mention that it was a very dangerous process too.

The moment Ai Hui took the statue out, the bandage slithered, like two white snakes, down his body. Two bandages joined together unhurriedly to become a big white cloth. It slid underneath the statue, as if worried that the statue would get dirty.

Ai Hui's heart turned cold from witnessing this strange sight.

The statue and bandage carried a tinge of evilness. If not for the fact that the bandage was a gift from Mistress and had been with him for a long time, Ai Hui most definitely would've been on guard.

Seeing the bandage at work made him miss her again.

Emotional people were like warmth that surrounded an ice-cold object, or a slight glimmer amid the lonely void.

Even if the bandage was really evil, AI Hi would find it difficult to detest it, since to him, righteousness or evilness was insignificant. He'd never felt himself to be important. It made no difference whether there was another good or bad version of him in this world.

However, to him, some feelings were more important than himself.

He placed the two crystals on the white cloth.

Ai Hui felt that the sight before him was pretty interesting. It was as if he had just given the statue some offerings, and all that was left to do was pray. Yet, the statue did not seem the least bit grateful or appreciative. It gave the same, aloof look.

Could he be wrong?

Ai Hui was having a headache. Guessing wasn't his forte. He picked up a crystal and placed it by the statue's mouth, mumbling, "Old demon, be sporting, give one a try!"

The stone statue remained unmoved, as if despising the food of mere mortals.

Still wrong?

Or was he supposed to crush the crystal?

Ai Hui was slightly spooked.

He had a feeling that the golden liquid within the crystal was something extraordinary, and extraordinary objects usually meant money and risk. Good things were valuable of course, but what if it was a potent poison?

Ai Hui knew himself well. His current abilities had given him a chance against the grass-lotus puppet and She Yu. But against ancient evil, he simply wasn’t qualified enough.

And of course, these crystals had to be the "ancient treasure".

‘Alright,’ he thought. He would not achieve anything from inaction. He would smash one and see, since he’d gotten this "ancient treasure" by luck anyway.

Considering that fact, he felt more calm instantly.

Getting into the moment, Ai Hui smashed the crystal hard.

Crack!

The crystal broke open immediately and the golden liquid seeped out. Ai Hui carefully placed the liquid on the bandage.

The bandage had always been extremely interested in, and thirsty for, fresh blood, especially stronger ones.

What made Ai Hui's eyes fall out was the fact that the bandage showed zero interest in the golden liquid. The golden liquid was like a dewdrop on a lotus leaf. It was round as a ball, bright and dazzling. Without the crystal's protection, the golden liquid rapidly formed a ball of condensed, golden fog. The sunlight shone on the fog, reflecting its vibrant rays. It was very beautiful.

Those abstruse ripples became more exquisite upon touching the sunlight. Their movements were indeterminate and Ai Hui couldn't take his eyes off them.

Suddenly, the golden fog surged and pulled out into a fine, long thread of fog.

As if awakened from a dream, Ai Hui raised his head and looked toward the statue.

He saw the demonic god's eyes open slightly as its gentle, androgynous face carried a layer of exotic luster. Then, its mouth opened slightly.

Ai Hui shuddered. Something was happening indeed!

The fine golden thread of fog entered the demonic god's mouth steadily, its needle-like golden luster lighting up the statue's pupils.

The aura of the stone statue was undergoing rapid changes as an ancient, bleak odor pervaded the air.

When the last wisp of golden fog entered the statue's mouth, there was nothing left on the bandage.

Ai Hui inspected the demonic god stone statue curiously in anticipation. What sort of changes would occur now that the statue had swallowed this drop of golden liquid?

Suddenly, the demonic god's eyes lit up in a ball of golden glow. Ai Hui opened his eyes wide for fear of missing any details.

The golden glow transformed into two balls of golden whirlpools. Unguarded, Ai Hui found himself getting swept into it. All he could feel was the sky spinning before him as the surrounding scenery skimmed past him at flying speed.

Not again?

Having experienced this once already, Ai Hui couldn't help but curse inwardly. But at the same time, he was no longer as terrified. He was somewhat curious as to what kind of images the demonic god statue was going to present him.

He lept back in time once again.

Some time passed and all of a sudden, Ai Hui saw the demonic god.

It floated above a valley, fixing its eyes somewhere far away. Ai Hui automatically looked toward that faraway place and the blurry scene became clear immediately.

Countless sword rays cut across the sky and scarily thick lightning dove down like silver snake monsters. Underground flames soared into the sky and collided with the lightning bolts, splashing flames all over the sky like floating cherries and painting the sky red.

The flying swords brought blinding rays that filled the sky, making the sky looked as if it got slashed into pieces.

Ai Hui was stupefied. His heart palpitated.

He'd never seen something so spectacular. The sun had lost its splendor as the mountain range was shattered. Sword scars stretched over hundreds of miles as the ocean seethed and the flames burned boundlessly.

'This is... a battle between ancient cultivators?' Ai Hui thought absentmindedly.

When he first saw God-subduing Peak, he'd felt that it was the most powerful combat weapon. But placed in this battlefield, the majestic and imposing God-subduing Peak became as insignificant

as dust.

So the descriptions in those swordplay manuals were true...

Ai Hui was deeply moved.

He gradually calmed down upon seeing the same shock and absentmindedness on the demonic god's face.

The battle ended and the ground was completely smashed, but the demonic god had a great harvest. Remnant treasures, secret arts, and so on...

The demonic god did not leave the valley, as his abilities grew stronger. He was preparing to leave.

But when his strength grew to its peak, he suddenly felt the heavenly law starting to crumble as the spiritual force weakened. He realized that the collapse was inevitable and the spiritual force would eventually vanish.

He sat, deep in thought, in the valley through many long years.

The way he had been formed was very unique and different from conventional cultivators. This gave him a chance for survival amid the collapse of the heavenly law.

A chance for survival in the far future.

For someone who'd lived as long as he had, a thousand years of waiting wasn't unacceptable. He gathered his essence blood and soul and formed ten drops of true blood of God, which were also known as the ten seeds.

During the afternoon of the seeds' formation, the intense sun shone overhead, but the sky darkened momentarily and the sun was dull and lightless, like a blown out candle in the wind.

Ten drops of blood of God bore the weight of his resuscitated wish, and were sprinkled over different corners of the earth.

And his body turned into a statue.

Ai Hui finally understood the history of the golden liquid!

It was actually the genuine blood of God!

Thinking about the blood of God made Ai Hui feel suspicious. Could the origin of the blood of God be related to the demonic god?

Alright, he was thinking too much.

It'd been over a thousand years since mankind had stepped into the elemental era, and the demonic god was after something of the Cultivation Era. Only the heavens knew if it still contained some power!

Wait!

Ai Hui suddenly recalled that the bandage appeared to be able to restrain the blood poison and even swallow it.

This… isn’t a coincidence right?

Ai Hui was somewhat uncertain. Just then, the skies started spinning, and once again it felt as if he’d been swept into the whirlpool as the surrounding light receded speedily.

Ai Hui steadied his body as he opened his eyes. Everything was back to normal and he was amazed to find out that he was still standing in the exact same spot, not even a step off.

His gaze fell subconsciously onto the stone statue.

He was stunned.

Chapter 383: Choice and Path

The stone statue was gone, replaced by black armor.

Ai Hui had never seen this type of armor.

It looked like a human skeleton, its whole body made up of a type of unknown black bone. It was dark and rough. These black bones of different sizes were actually naturally woven together. Completely sealed off, the skull had a slightly indented surface and its empty eye sockets were like two black whirlpools, mildly captivating. A ring of sharp bone grew on top of the head, pointing straight at the sky like a crown.

There was a pair of wide, black wings attached to the back of the armor. Thin, black spicules grew on the solid framework and covered it like black feathered wings.

Rough, evil, strong… what a freak!

Ai Hui swallowed his saliva with some difficulty. Thinking about what he'd just seen made his heart feel weak. There's no way this black armor is the demonic god's body… right?

A body becoming an armor… How economical!

No matter how he looked at it, the black armor before his eyes possessed an evil aura that suited villains guilty of heinous crimes.

Ai Hui felt his mind was in a state of confusion as there was too much information to take in. The scenes he'd seen were likely to be messages left by the demonic god.

But, demonic god reviving? Sounded like a load of bull crap.

Alright, since that was the case, he would play along seriously.

He sorted his thoughts out according to his own understanding of these chaotic, primitive, blurry and strange images.

The bandage used to be the canvas which the demonic god was painted on, and the demonic god came alive and walked out of the portrait after some thousands of years of worship. Some time passed again and the demonic god realized how terrifying the world was, upon witnessing a big battle between cultivators. And the demonic god was spooked!

At this point, Ai Hui paused and suddenly felt that the demonic god wasn't very scary after all. His tensed heart loosened up significantly.

A demonic god that knew fear seemed less threatening indeed.

After being frightened, the demonic god stayed devotedly in the valley and even cleaned up the battlefield and picked up a bunch of artifacts remnants, remnant books about spells and so on.

Momentarily, Ai Hui felt close to the demonic god. They spoke

the same language and even the cleaning up of the battlefield was something he did often.

The demonic god trained diligently for countless years and when he finally felt a surge in his abilities, he got ready to step out of the valley. Yet, he realized that the skies were about to fall apart and the spiritual force in the world was dissipating. Thus, unwilling to die just like that, the demonic god started preparing his revival plan, in the hope of dodging this major ordeal.

Ai Hui felt an indescribable sympathy toward the demonic god. Having landed in this plight, he did seem a little pitiful.

He'd undergone thousands of years of formation before arriving on this world, and had been frightened, by the cultivators' battle, into residing and training in the valley for yet another thousands of years. And as he was finally about to leave, the heavenly law started to crumble...

Pitiful. How pitiful!

Ai Hui looked at the black armor ruefully before placing it simply into the sand compass. He also placed the remaining drop of the demonic god's blood back into the sand compass.

To feel sorrowful was one thing and to gloat was another. Ai Hui had not lost his reason.

He was dealing with a demonic god.

It would be foolish of him to underestimate a demonic god.

Was what he'd seen real? Debatable. It was certain, however, that regardless of authenticity, the images were what the demonic god wanted him to see.

The demonic god could easily pull him into that fantasyland, so surely he could also easily create confusing scenarios. If those scenes were false, what would the demonic god's intentions be?

Ai Hui did not want to risk his life testing the demonic god's limits.

Especially in regards to his revival plan, the demonic god would definitely achieve it by hook or by crook. The liquid sealed within the crystal was the demonic god's blood and also the seed for his revival.

How would the demonic god be revived?

Ai Hui felt that the likeliest method was to seize another's body!

Perhaps he was thinking too much, but Ai Hui did not want to take the risk. Except, the bandage had been following him for a long time and had even saved his life, so it was definitely safe.

However, be it the blood of the demonic god or the black armor,

nothing was certain about them.

Ai Hui's abilities were going through a period of steady improvement. To be exact, it was currently in a skyrocketing phase, so it wasn't worth taking this risk.

Choosing the demonic god's blood could either bring him instant success or leave him with no hope of reprieve.

Ai Hui hoped that he would never need to use them because that would mean that he was in a perilous situation, so precarious that he had to place his bets on them.

Ai Hui was delighted. It was as if he'd finished a film from the mirage bean pod, and the story within was a very memorable one which filled him with sorrow and tears.

At least the scene was rather huge.

The battle scene between the cultivators was really shocking. Seeing the sky-shattering rays produced by the swordsmen really made Ai Hui's own sword rays seem like tiny bean sprouts.

The pleasure he'd felt from his recent breakthrough vanished in a puff of smoke.

Shaking his head, Ai Hui sat himself down again, activated the patriarch grass and entered Grass Hall. As usual, he stepped into the Hall of Ancient Records to look for information. The fusion

elemental energy within his body was about to be used up, but he still wasn't able to find anything.

He saw that there was still half a shelf left to look through, but this time he wasn't overly impatient. Instead, he felt hopeful.

Having witnessed the cultivators' battle, Ai Hui's restless heart regained its calm.

Many things seemed insignificant when viewed from a historical perspective. How many people today would even remember the names of those cultivators who had the ability to destroy the world?

Legends belonged to heroes, and he was just an ordinary man.

He checked through the information steadily and trained steadily. He did his utmost best every single day, and left worrying about the outcome to the future.

Feeling peaceful, Ai Hui waited for his elemental energy to recover before starting his sword training.

He'd read the swordplay manuals and had witnessed the swordsmanship of Karakorum Savant, the first ever master swordsman in the whole of the Avalon of Five Elements's history. He had also seen the exceptional sword consciousness sealed within the Ye Residence, he'd crashed his way through sword formations, fought with the Ling residence, She Yu and even the

grass-lotus puppet, Qing Feng...

He had learned a lot and felt more appreciative. He needed time to confirm the swordsmanship insights he'd gained during this period.

As such, Ai Hui stayed in this nameless valley to search for the notebook, train, ponder and consume the elemental energy from the remaining elemental elixirs.

His days were extremely packed, but he did not feel tired at all. In fact, he felt very enriched. His method of using his sword to absorb elemental energy had been perfected and named [Sword-style Breathing Technique].

The elemental energy sword pills were strengthening non-stop, along with the range from which Ai Hui's sword rays could attack. The range had increased from its initial six hundred feet to over nine hundred feet.

These few days, Ai Hui had been using this move to hunt, and the nearby prey in flight had all been taken down.

Swordsmanship wasn't like archery. Ai Hui had no intention of blindly increasing his range of attack.

The most unique aspect of swordsmanship was its variability. In the Cultivation Era, swordsmen produced the most variable kinds of systems. Ai Hui had to find his own, and this was the greatest

problem he was currently facing.

His sword moves weren't weak. With the addition of [Sword-style Breathing Technique], his moves became even more outstanding. But his moves, from [Heavenly Thrust] to

[Oblique Slash], [Crescent Moon] to [Six Moons] and [Dust Fall], [Night Epiphyllum], [Gale Bat Slash], [Red Muslin], [Sword Chime], [Fragmented Sword], [Three Yin Yang Sword Ring] and so on, did not form a system. Some were moves from the sword pill, while others were created in passing. They were all powerful moves but were very scattered and did not form a system.

Ai Hui tried to form his own system, a huge task to undertake. There wouldn't be any effect short term but it was extremely important to him in the long run.

Karakorum Savant served as the best example.

Yet, his circumstances were more challenging than Karakorum Savant's. Her swordsmanship originated from the Ye Residence, and Ye Lin had been perfecting this project unceasingly for generations. Thus, Karakorum Savant had been practicing the completed system of swordsmanship since young. She became the first ever master swordsman largely due to Ye Residence's swordsmanship inheritances. The hard work of many generations finally bore fruits.

Ai Hui wasn't so lucky. From the time he's stepped into the Wilderness to the day he met Karakorum Savant, whatever

insights he'd gained in regard to swordsmanship were obtained personally.

He was walking a different path.

Ai Hui was very clear of the fact that his path was different from that of Karakorum Savant. He would read swordplay manuals and try to understand sword formations, but instead of imitating, he tried developing his own moves from his comprehension of things.

This was an arduous, rugged path, but Ai Hui did not hesitate at all.

As Ai Hui was training hard in the valley, the Avalon of Five Elements was experiencing raging turbulence.

The series of changes dazzled everyone.

The battle between the Ling and Ye families erupted and then ended abruptly. Great Elder's profound scheme and terrifying means of doing things intimidated numerous aristocratic families. Elder Ling resigned from his post in the Elders Guild and was dispatched to the front line. Such a huge residence disappeared just like that. Its sudden collapse had everyone sighing and feeling terrified.

Were there aristocratic families who dared to believe they were stronger than the Ling family?

But the Elders in the Elders Guild were mostly reserved and dared not to act rashly.

Madam Ye's prestige soared. Because of her splendid performance in this "riot", she started moving to the foreground. She received her first mission to host Master's Glory.

No one had objections. Great Elder was in his most powerful state now, so standing up to him now meant death.

Many were guessing that Great Elder was laying a path for Madam Ye. As the host of Master's Glory, wouldn't she also become half a teacher of the Avalon of Five Elements's future Masters?

Great Elder did not pull back. What he did next confirmed people's guess.

Great Elder headed toward the Pagoda of Hidden Edge, which was deep within Silver Mist Sea, to have a deep, overnight conservation with Yuchi Ba before leaving the next morning.

Three days later, Karakorum Savant was appointed as the division leader of Sky Edge Division and she was renamed "Karakorum Polaris".

Two more days passed and Silver Soldier became the division leader of Infantry Division. Fame followed merit and he started rebuilding his combat division.

Within a short period of time, a small team that had surrounded Madam Ye appeared within the people's field of vision. The path laid down for her by Great Elder was a clear display of his intentions.

Soon after the circulation of Madam Ye's brave speech, she became an overnight sensation, leaving many to look forward to her performance.

Just as everyone was waiting for Madam Ye to take action, Madam Ye did something that shocked the world.

Chapter 384: Awkward Silence

Peace City, Swordsman Training Hall.

"Morning, has everyone seen the latest news through the mirage bean pod?" Fatty pulled a chair out and sat down before shouting, "Lou Lan, a cup of tea, thanks!"

"Morning Fatty, any sugar for you?"

Fatty smiled widely. " More, please. Thanks, Lou Lan."

Among these people, they had to fawn and favor Lou Lan the most, since he had control over their elemental food.

Lou Lan poured a cup of tea and placed it in front of Fatty after adding some sugar. "Fatty, your tea."

"Fatty, you have to cut down on sugar," Sang Zijun persuaded. "You're severely overweight."

Fatty took a big gulp without the least care in the world. "Little Sang Sang, life is shoooort," he cried, dragging out the last syllable.

Jiang Wei sipped on his tea before commenting, "What Madam Ye has done has probably made her rather popular, but at the same time she's probably offended all the other aristocratic families."

His indifferent tone carried a trace of admiration.

In these past two days, Madam Ye announced her plan of Master's Glory and opened it to the whole of the Avalon of Five Elements. Anyone could enter Master's Glory regardless of their origin and background as long as they were gifted, capable, and passed the initial selection.

Immediately upon the release of the news, it captured the whole Avalon of Five Elements's attention.

The aristocratic families kept quiet, but the new citizens were celebrating.

The treatment of new citizens was incomparable to aristocratic families in all aspects. Past selections had always favored the aristocratic families and the new citizens had long felt resentful. But at that time, the Avalon of Five Elements did not believe in internal worries and foreign aggressions, so the higher-ups did not pay attention to the new citizens' appeals. In regard to their attitude toward new citizens, the higher-ups were split.

Some felt that new citizens occupied the majority of the Avalon of Five Elements and so they had to be treated better since they were the future of the Avalon of Five Elements. Others, however, believed that the new citizens were unable to represent the Avalon of Five Elements. They were often associated with Old Territory and hence unable to truly fight for the Avalon of Five Elements. Ye Baiyi was the best example.

Madam Ye’s move evoked an intense response from the new citizens because they saw it as a new beginning.

Jiang Wei was a new citizen and naturally admired Madam Ye’s conduct.

Duanmu Huanghun sneered. "Don’t be naive, is it really open to the public just because she says so? She’s already made deals with other aristocratic families. They have a silent agreement and she’s merely placating the public with these words. But, this woman is formidable indeed."

Jiang Wei knew that Duanmu Huanghun was right but he didn’t mind. He was worried about something else. "I wonder if she can stabilize the situation? Is Master’s Glory really that powerful?"

"Do not participate in it."

Shi Xueman’s voice sounded from behind the group. Her hair was wet and a white towel was hung around her neck. She’d just come out of the shower after a training session.

Lou Lan was very happy to see her. "Morning, Xueman. Breakfast for you?"

Shi Xueman smiled. "Morning, Lou Lan. One set please. Thank you!"

A gossipy expression flashed across Fatty’s face. "Any inside

news?"

Those around had a curious look on their face too. Why would Iron Lady say that? They knew that she had special news and connections.

"My teacher warned me repeatedly." Shi Xueman tore the pastry into smaller pieces and ate them seriously.

The atmosphere instantly became solemn. Shi Xueman's teacher was Grandmaster An Muda. A Grandmaster's repeated warnings about Master's Glory toward his student surprised everyone.

Shi Xueman continued, "Teacher's words have always been more reserved, but I understand the meaning behind them. Do not ask me for the reason because I don't know either. Teacher did not mention it."

Everyone pondered over her words.

Shi Xueman turned toward Duanmu Huanghun. "Didn't your teacher say anything, Bangwan?"

"No." Duanmu Huanghun shook his head and said self-mockingly, "My teacher... Hah, he's most probably forgotten about me already. But that's good too, or else I wouldn't be standing here."

"Ignore Master's Glory. Although I think Madam Ye is powerful,

only time will show the results." Shi Xueman added, "The situation at the front line isn’t too good."

"What happened?"

Everyone was more concerned about the front line than the complicated internal fightings and schemings that were going on in Silver City.

Shi Xueman ate her pastry seriously without even lifting her head. "There’s a powerful figure named Red Devil in Blood of God now. We’ve lost a lot because of him."

Jiang Wei asked in shock, "Even Shi Beihai?"

Shi Xueman placed her food down and answered gravely, "It appears that he is avoiding a fight with Father by keeping away from Father’s protection zone. Cloud Cicada Division sustained greater losses, with a few captains and a vice division leader injured, so Father suspects the opponent is an acquaintance."

Everyone looked extremely solemn.

The captains of the Thirteen Divisions were all the cream of the crop. They were basically powerful players with excellent skills. As for the vice division leaders, they were either Masters or pseudo Masters. Yu Jin and Tong Gui, for example, were just a step away from becoming Masters and could break through at any time.

Duanmu Huanghun asked abruptly, "Are the combat masters activated yet?"

Shi Xueman replied, "Yes but the opponent is very sly and seems to be very familiar with our habits, hence they escaped a few times. Plus, the Masters who have had a match with him are very worried as his skills are improving extremely quickly."

The daily affairs of a combat division were mostly managed by three vice division leaders. When a vice division leader became a Master, they could either choose to continue serving their role, or if they wished for more time to train, they would become combat masters.

Combat masters had nothing much to take care of so they had ample time to train, and adequate resources were provided as well. Only important missions would require them to step up.

For those who were certain about going down the training path, becoming a combat master was a very decent choice.

Even the division leaders had to show respect toward the combat masters. The former had no power to press the latter into service, and the number of combat masters in a combat division would depend on the capability of the division leader.

North Sea Division used to have only one combat master, but after wielding power, Shi Beihai managed to increase the count to six. He quickly won the support of his troops and North Sea Division lept to the top within a short period of time.

Jiang Wei asked, "What about God-subduing Peak?"

His experience on God-subduing Peak had left a deep impression.

"The opponent's found its weakness and Father is really worried about this." Shi Xueman added, "God-subduing peak is very powerful but isn't very effective when dealing with a single, small target."

Duanmu Huanghun spoke up after some thinking, "They might have been told by Ye Baiyi. No one would be more familiar with your father and his subordinates than him."

The situation at the front line was what everyone was concerned about. Failing to keep hold meant a disaster for everyone. How could there be intact eggs when the whole nest had collapsed?

An awkward silence filled the table.

In response, Wang Xiaoshan hurriedly changed the topic, "How's the Wilderness expansion project coming along?"

"Luckily we weren't the first batch to go," Fatty commented with an exaggerated look on his face. "You don't know how many died there, it was disastrous."

Dunmu Huanghun laughed grimly. "The higher-ups meant for

this to happen. It doesn’t matter how many cannon fodders lose their lives."

Another awkward silence took over as no one knew what to say.

Shi Xueman finished her food, pulled out her chair and stood up. "I’ve gathered some inheritances and absolute arts so go choose from them yourselves. We have to use whatever time we have to train before Ai Hui comes back! Lou Lan, supervise Fatty."

Lou Lan cheered, "No problem!"

With a defeated look on his face, Fatty asked, "Why me again?"

"Do you want to learn the absolute arts?"

"Yeah..."

"Then practice hard. Lou Lan, draw up a training plan!"

"No problem!"

Duanmu Huanghun seemed to have realized something and started mumbling to himself, "I know! The aristocratic families suffered great losses and are starting to face a manpower shortage. They would need to replenish themselves with new, fresh blood in order to live on! No wonder no one objected to Madam Ye’s plan..."

Everyone looked at him before resuming their respective work.

Awkward silence.

Standing in the training hall's garden, everyone looked at the mountainous pile of books and was astonished. They looked at Shi Xueman somewhat suspiciously. To the aristocratic families, absolute arts were the real riches. They were the key to their continued existence.

"Most of these are from my family's collection. I took all of them out with the permission of father. They're yours to keep so please treasure them and practice hard."

Everyone looked at her but no one dared to make a move. Even Fatty, the money grubber, had a solemn look on his face.

Shi Xueman looked carefree. "This is all of the family's inheritance, but what would become of the family if the Avalon of Five Elements is destroyed? These books won't mean anything when that happens. They would be no different from the artifact remnants left over from the Cultivation Era. In that case, we might as well make use of them when they've still got value. There's nothing to lose."

The doubt vanished from the faces of those who were listening, and was replaced by smiles and excitement. Everyone was looking forward to it.

"Haha, if only aristocratic families were as good as Iron Lady's family!"

"That name is not for you to call! Kneel before your goddess!"

"Long live the Goddess!"

...

A faint smile appeared on Shi Xueman's face. She set the gaze far away, worry somewhat filling her heart.

How was Ai Hui doing? He shouldn't be in trouble right?

At this point, she laughed involuntarily.

Why was she even worried about that when she should be worrying about the trouble her people might cause him?

She said, in all alertness, "From today onwards, increase your training capacity by thirty percent."

Cheers instantly turned into cries.

"Nooo, Goddess!"

"You're asking us to die!"

Shi Xueman responded with a steady face, "I will train with you guys and increase mine by forty percent."

"Ahh let me die. I don’t want the absolute arts anymore."

"Ahhhhhhh, my ideal goddess is gone just like that. Scary Iron Lady has returned!"

No one knew when, but Duanmu Huanghun was already squatting before the pile of books.

"I’ve seen this."

"Learned this."

"Seen it."

"Done it."

...

"Eh, this is new. Yes, I haven’t seen it. Interesting. Oh, I’ve read it."

Awkward silence.

Chapter 385: A Small World

There was no ending in learning.

Ai Hui rubbed his eyes. After reading for a long time, he felt exhausted. But about one fourth of the books on this level were still left unread.

It seemed that luck was not on his side this time.

Now what worried him the most was that the reading note had disappeared. After all, so many years had passed, and anything could happen. Of course, during these days of reading, Ai Hui had gained a lot. The fantastic ideas, the wonderlands deep in the Wilderness and the disappearing legends and customs had largely broadened his horizon.

Well-written books could be read with pleasure, and time flew very fast. But even if the books he fell on were the types that he didn’t really like, he would still force himself to finish them, because he didn’t want to miss anything.

When he was about to leave, Manager suddenly said, "Wait a minute. Here’s a letter for you."

A letter?

Ai Hui paused, and then asked with curiosity, "Where?"

A luminous ball appeared in Manager's hand, in which there was a letter.

Ai Hui took the ball. As soon as he touched it, he knew who'd sent it: it was Prince. The luminous ball was created with elemental energy and had Prince's special mark.

In the Elemental Era, it was easy to change one's appearance or name, but there was one thing that could not be forged, which was elemental energy. Each elementalist's elemental energy had unique features.

Just as there were no two identical leaves in the world, there were no two elementalists with the same elemental energy.

Even if there were two people who were of the same attribute, and who practiced the same inheritance, there would still be apparent differences between their elemental energies. Its uniqueness enabled identity authentication through elemental energy, which was a significant method of identity verification in the Elemental Era.

The luminous ball was Prince's way of delivering letters. It was like the mud seal of a letter, which would no longer be intact when the letter was read. So the existence of the luminous ball indicated that no one had ever read the letter.

There were also luminous balls that had certain passwords. If anyone who didn't know the password wanted to open it with force, the letter inside would explode or be devoured by fire.

Ai Hui reached out to the luminous ball, breaking the ball to get the letter. Then he began to read it carefully.

In the letter, Prince said he was informed of Hua Kui’s death, and knew Ai Hui must be very grieved. He also reminded Ai Hui that the Assembly of Patriarchs would recruit many new members as it was expanding, and the competition would be more fierce. If anything happened, Ai Hu could directly contact him or Jiu Gui. Besides that, he mentioned that there was a task in the Wilderness, and asked if Ai Hui was coming with them.

Having finished reading the letter, Ai Hui folded the letter and asked Manager, "How can I write back?"

Manager took out a brush and paper and said, "When you finish, seal it and give it to me. I’ll deliver it to him."

Ai Hui nodded, and soon began to write, saying that everything was going well, and wished them good luck and a safe journey. He didn’t know what else to say.

Just like he hadn’t opened the things Hua Kui left him, he didn’t think he and Hua Kui were so close. But Hua Kui’s former friends, Prince and Jiu Gui, did treat him very well.

Actually Ai Hui didn’t know how to face them.

Many new faces had appeared in the Assembly of Patriarchs,

which indicated its rapid expansion. Ai Hui knew that the Assembly of Patriarchs was under the support of Madam Ye. Now it was a good time for her, so she didn't even need to lift a finger to help them. Besides, Madam Ye had deep connections to the Assembly of Patriarchs as both Heng Bingfeng and the old prisoner were the previous backbones of it. Ai Hui did suspect long ago that Heng Bingfeng was a relative of Madam Ye. Otherwise, why would Karakorum Savant call Madam Ye "aunt"?

Madam Ye also needed the help of Assembly of Patriarchs to step up.

Each side took what they needed.

Ai Hui was glad to see the smooth development of the Assembly of Patriarchs. Although the management of the Assembly of Patriarchs was still a secret, one thing was for sure - the Assembly of Patriarchs and the Blood of God were sworn enemies. As the proverb goes, the enemy of one's enemy is his friend. The more powerful the Assembly of Patriarchs was, the more troubles the Blood of God would face.

Ai Hui left the Grass Hall, and planned to get moving after a quick rest.

He had been making progress in elemental energy level every day. Now that the two metal elemental elixirs had been fully absorbed, his level was further improved. He had the feeling that he would be able to reach Second Elemental Realm very soon.

These days his elemental energy had been growing extremely fast, like a jetpack.

If the elemental elixirs could be made into elemental food by Lou Lan, it would be more fully usable. Besides, Lou Lan could remove the impurities of the elemental elixirs to reduce its potential risks. The way Ai Hui used the elemental elixirs could be counted as extravagant. Fortunately, the demonic god statue, which was called demonic god armor now, could also absorb the fiendish aura of the elemental elixirs.

It would be great if there was one more elemental elixir. If only he had elemental elixirs, he would be confident that he'd be able to make it to the Third Elemental Realm.

Then he shook his head and smiled. When did he become a discontent person? Elemental elixirs were priceless treasures that were hard to find. The fact that he had already taken three elemental elixirs was a rare opportunity. He shouldn't waste more time on such wishful thinking.

He reminded himself not to indulge on improving his elemental energy level depending on external stimuli only.

The process of training was boring and insipid, and the progress one could make every day was so little that it was almost unnoticeable. Therefore, training was also to hone one's heart and spirit. A person who was not steadfast and tough, but had only strong elemental energy could be defeated as easily as poking a soap bubble.

Ai Hui decided to leave the valley.

Having flown for five to six hours, a village appeared in the wood.

The village was small both in size and population, and looked destitute. There was only one inn with a few guests. The owner of the inn was taking a nap at the front desk.

Ai Hui woke up the owner.

The owner opened his eyes blankly, but immediately became sober when he saw there was a guest. He smiled and asked, "You want to check in?"

"Find a clean room for me." Ai Hui threw an elemental energy bean to him.

The owner caught the bean and smiled even kinder. "I'll get the best room for you."

Ai Hui waved his hand. "The room can be prepared later. Get me something to eat first."

Having stayed in the mountains for such a long time, he was missing having delicious food very much.

The elemental energy beans were well spent. The owner soon got him dishes that filled the whole table. Ai Hui sat in the hall alone, glutting himself with the delicacies.

Having dined to satiety, Ai Hui chatted casually with the owner, "You don’t have much business here, do you?"

The owner sighed in despair, "This inn was started by my grandpa, and now it’s been passed to me. I never thought that it would be closed by my hands. But there’s nothing I can do in such troubled times. You see, there are hardly any people in the village."

Ai Hui asked in thought, "They’ve all gone to the Wilderness?"

"Yes." The owner was morose, "If I were younger, I would have gone with them. Before the blood catastrophe broke out, everything was fine. But the war lasted for several years, and business became worse and worse. Our village does not have any specialties. So there’s no hope."

Ai Hui fell into silence.

The war could make small cities like Peace City flourish, but it brought more destruction and ruins. The life of the residents of many cities and towns became hard. Without the Yellow Sand Corner, the Fire Prairie and the Jadeite Forest, they lost three material-producing places. This also implied that they lost three markets.

Most of the industries were shrinking, and most of the elementalists had nothing to do. Now the destitution of all walks of life could be seen anywhere in the Avalon of Five Elements.

The experience and progress he had achieved in these years had broadened Ai Hui's horizon and strengthened his mind.

He stayed in the inn for only one night, and he was the only guest. There was a message tree in the inn, through which Ai Hui communicated with the Swordsman Training Hall and informed them of his current situation. He also told them that it would take him a while to get back.

Hearing the Iron L say that everyone was practicing hard, Ai Hui was relieved.

He left the village early the next morning.

Having flown hundreds of miles away from the village, Ai Hui suddenly changed his direction and rushed into a cloud. In the cloud, he took off his elemental mask, and his Starry Gem Swordwings returned to black. Then, he changed from his Star Reaper Gloves to a different pair and switched his Silverfold Plum back for his Dragonspine.

When Ai Hui flew out of the clouds, his appearance had totally changed.

Although he had detected and confirmed that no one was around,

he still remained cautious.

He decided to pay Senior Mingxiu a visit. He would be going to the Wilderness later, and didn't know how long he would spend there. When he saw Li Wei, he couldn't help thinking about Senior Mingxiu, and decided to pay her a visit.

When he thought of Senior Mingxiu, Ai Hui felt guilty.

Before Mistress had passed away, she told Ai Hui to take good care of Mingxiu, but Ai Hui failed to fulfill his promise. Ai Hui didn't live close to Mingxiu. Many of the things he did were too dangerous, and he didn't want her to be involved.

But he had been in contact with her.

Mingxiu didn't go back to the Lu family, but was living in Asakusa City, a city that was not far away from the border of Jadeite Forest and Palette Cloud Village.

She was running an embroidery workshop there and the business was good. The Lu family was so powerful that Ai Hui didn't worry about Mingxiu's safety in the Jadeite Forest at all.

Stretching his Starry Gem Swordwings in full, Ai Hui flew to Asakusa City like a big bird.

On his way, he witnessed many destitute cities. The once flourishing streets were now empty. The prosperity of the past was

now gone, like yesterday. The most striking impression on Ai Hui was the decrease in population. Now only the elderly and the children were left, and all the youngsters and adults had gone to the Wilderness.

They needed to create their homeland in the Wilderness, which was a hard journey. In the process, many people would sacrifice their lives. They came one after another, like tides that aimed to wash the Wilderness and turn it into a fertile plain.

The issuance of the city expansion order meant that the management had abandoned the idea of rebuilding Avalon of Five Elements, and that Silver Mist Sea and Palette Cloud Village were abandoned too.

In their eyes, the Wilderness was the only hope.

Were the civilians thinking the same? No one knew.

They had no choice.

Well, he was not a hero anyway. He didn't have the power to save anyone from their sufferings.

Suddenly he looked ahead, as he sensed a strong flow of elemental energy. There was a fight!

Ai Hui wanted to avoid whoever was there, since he was not interested in poking his nose into other's business. But suddenly

his expression changed and he looked weird. It seemed that they were flying toward him now.

Bad luck!

After a few breaths, two figures appeared in front of him.

The one who was running in the front was a young man. He was extremely panicky. And the one chasing after him looked fierce.

But the moment he saw the chaser clearly, Ai Hui laughed out loud.

It was indeed a small world.

Chapter 386: A Free Gift

Zhao Boan was fleeing for his life and his brain was completely blank.

He had just witnessed his caravan being cleared up within a very short period of time. Yes, it was "cleared up", as if the guards he'd hired with a large sum of money were nothing more than rubbish and were cleared up immediately by a broom.

And his enemy was only one person.

Zhao Boan's heart was like dead ashes.

He had spent all his savings and a huge loan he borrowed in order to knock together this caravan, which was fully loaded with wood elemental materials. If he'd managed to make it to the Wilderness, he could have made at least ten times profit.

If he succeeded, he would become famous. But if he failed, he would be doomed eternally.

The huge amount of debt would kill him. All the creditors would come to him and take away everything he had, including his life.

He didn't want to die.

He tried to negotiate with the looter and implored him to let him

go. But the looter seemed to have heard nothing. All his guards had run for their lives, as life was the most critical thing at this critical moment.

Zhao Boan, however, could not escape. Without the goods, he was dead meat anyway.

Pale-faced, he was shivering all over and was stammering to beg for mercy. But the next scene he saw made him desperate.

The person removed his cloak, and it turned out to be a grass-lotus puppet. It opened the carriage gates of the Three Leaves Bamboo Carts and poured all the materials into its mouth. Its grass and lotus body was not strong, but was like a bottomless pit that could never be filled.

The grass-lotus puppet poured the wood elemental materials from each cart, one by one, into his mouth.

Zhao Boan became more and more desperate. When half of the materials were gone, Zhao Boan knew he was finished.

But as soon as this idea occurred to him, he was no longer afraid, and suddenly broke out into curses.

He was not good at cursing at all, but he racked his brains to collect all the curses in his mind and used them on the puppet.

The grass-lotus puppet was stunned, and came to his senses only

after a while. He was irritated, and rushed towards Zhao Boan furiously.

Zhao Boan thought he no longer cared about life or death, but when he was faced with the ferocious grass-lotus puppet, his mind went blank and all his courage was gone. He howled in fear and turned to run at once.

The instinct to survive didn’t leave him any room to think further.

Zhao Boan never knew that he could run so fast, like a mad dog. Even the grass-lotus puppet was left far behind him.

Just at this moment, he noticed that someone was not far in front of him. Like a drowning man who grabbed a straw, he would not miss the chance and shouted loudly, "Help! Help!"

Qing Feng also noticed the figure in the front, but he didn’t intend to stop at all. He was also outraged.

His mission had completely failed. The Ling Residence collapsed, the ancient treasure was missing, Xiao Shuren committed suicide, Qing Feng himself was severely injured, and the nether lotus seeds suffered a great loss.

Qing Feng had been working for Grandmaster Dai and had accomplished numerous tasks. This was the first time that he had been so awkward. He was an arrogant guy, and the failures were a

slap in the face.

He was furious and resentful.

If his opponent was Karakorum Savant, he would not be so furious. After all, it would be normal for him to lose to the first ever master swordsman ever.

But who was Chu Zhaoyang?

A nobody!

He was wounded by a nobody's sword!

Not only his body, but his mind and spirit had also been wounded by this accident. These days he always woke up with nightmares at midnight. Fragmentary mind and spirit were taboos for elementalists, because mental recovery was far more difficult than physical recovery.

The sky palace had always been the most mysterious palace.

Moreover, Qing Feng was a grass-lotus puppet. His body was not his own, but consisted of grass and lotus, and therefore rejected his mind in many aspects. Many of his weird behaviors were due to such rejections.

Usually he had to take medicine to restrain these adverse

reactions.

The medicine was prescribed by his master, who once told him frankly that so far he could not solve the problem of adverse reactions.

After the injury, all the adverse reactions that had been restrained before immediately reappeared. Qing Feng realized that his body was like a broken machine that went out of control now and then. Sometimes his hands and feet came loose and became knotted grass ropes, or his body lost balance. Such incidents occurred endlessly. Otherwise he would have already killed this little bug.

The wood elemental materials he had devoured had largely restored his elemental energy. Although not as effective as his master's mud pool, the wood elemental energy he extracted from the materials was nourishing for his body.

This place was far away from the dangerous Silver City. So there was nothing to fear.

Silver City was really horrible. It seemed to be a shabby house that might fall down at any moment, but once you stepped into it, you would find that crisis and traps were everywhere.

Seeing the figure ahead, Qing Feng didn't pay much attention. He wouldn't bother to kill them both.

It was a pity that eating human beings could not restore his elemental energy. Qing Feng licked his lips in disappointment.

Wood elemental materials were hard to find, but elementalists were everywhere.

Qing Feng was annoyed that Zhao Boan cried for help and hid behind some passer-by.

Little Bug, if you thought that anyone is competent to fight against me, then you're too naive!

With a grim smile, Qing Feng said ambiguously, "I didn't want to kill you. You asked for it!"

Qing Feng opened his palms and the grass cords stretched and almost covered Ai Hui like five whips.

He was wounded by Chu Zhaoyang, which made him resentful towards all swordsmen. Now that he saw a bone sword in Ai Hui's hand, his killing intent was stronger than ever.

Ai Hui was happy when he realized, after a glance, that Qing Feng hadn't recovered from his injuries. Ai Hui had absorbed two elemental elixirs in the last few days that greatly improved his elemental level. Moreover, he was devoted to in summarizing his understandings which largely improved his swordsmanship.

So he shouted loudly, in a similar tone to Qing Feng, "I didn't

want to kill you. You asked for it!"

And the Dragonspine directly confronted the grass cords.

Qing Feng was surprised by Ai Hui’s shout, and became more furious.

Their speeds were very fast. The five grass cords constituted a thick net and swept towards Ai Hui like a violent storm. But to his surprise, his enemy was not slower than him at all.

The thick sounds of crashing was like rain rattling on banana leaves.

Ripples of elemental energy appeared, spread and were smashed between them.

At this moment, Qing Feng realized something weird. This guy’s swordsmanship was good!

He couldn’t figure it out why so many strong swordsmen had emerged all of a sudden. They seemed to be neck and neck, but Qing Feng already wanted to quit, since he hadn’t fully recovered and he still feared swordsmen from the bottom of his heart.

So once he encountered a master-hand, he wanted to escape.

But then he noticed, in fear, an attraction to his grass cords

coming from the guy's sword. His grass cords were sucked in, making him unable to escape.

What kind of swordsmanship was it?

He felt more fearful.

But Ai Hui felt fine. After all, Qing Feng had a solid foundation and great strength. The grass cords that stretched from his fingers were like the tentacles of an octopus that were extremely flexible and fast.

Ai Hui realized that his stabs could hardly follow the grass cords' speed. He had never met with an enemy whose attacks were so fast. With such a high frequency, there was no time for him to use any fancy moves, and he could only fight back with the basic stabbing attack.

Crack, crack, crack!

Sounds of explosions could be heard up in the sky. Each collision was accompanied by a light that flickered between the two.

Realizing that he was on the disadvantageous side, he put his other hand into the fight. Ten grass cords immediately caught Ai Hui unprepared and whipped him several times.

Qing Feng was overjoyed. The ten grass cords attacked towards Ai Hui at the speed of lightning.

Ai Hui was awkward dodging the attack and was almost pierced by the cords several times.

This made Qing Feng more excited. As long as his enemy was pierced by his grass cord, his blood could be drained within a short period of time.

The ten grass cords were even more faster and transformed into an illusory image.

Crack, crack, crack!

The sound became louder, and the light shrouding Ai Hui became brighter.

One second, two seconds...five seconds...ten seconds...

Qing Feng found, in astonishment, that Ai Hui was wobbling and seemed as if he was about to fall, but he never really fell.

Damn it! Why?

Qing Deng began to feel anxious. His elemental energy was being consumed fast. He had accumulated this energy from the elemental materials he had just devoured.

Once his elemental energy was used up, he could not even run for

his life.

So he suddenly started an even faster attack that suppressed Ai Hui and made him very awkward. But this time, he didn't hesitate and decided to turn and run at once.

Wheeze, wheeze, wheeze...

Ai Hui was soaked in sweat. This was the first time that he'd encountered such a high-frequency attack. If it were not for the improvement of his swordsmanship, he would be doomed this time.

But luckily, he managed to withstand the attack. When his enemy's moves were at their fastest, he totally reacted with his instincts. The speed at which he stabbed with his swords was faster than his thinking.

Under such high pressure, Ai Hui could feel the change in his moves. His stabs became faster, and the gestures and angles of his attack became more reasonable.

Ai Hui, soaked in sweat, breathed heavily. He stared at Qing Feng who was running away as if he was a priceless treasure.

Trying to escape?

Ai Hui smiled evilly. No precious things could escape from him!

Flapping his Starry Gem Swordwings, he rushed forward like lightning.

The Dragonspine was as flexible as a snake. It stabbed forward and kept dispersing the air in front of Ai Hui to reduce the resistance. Thus, Ai Hui's speed was again raised to a higher level.

Qing Feng, who was fleeing, heard the thundering sound behind him. He turned back and was scared by what he saw.

Behind them, Zhao Boan was dumbstruck to see that the grass-lotus puppet that was trying to kill him was now running for his life in a huge panic.

And then, the swordsman also rushed out at an amazing speed. He watched the swordsman speeding up and up and up in a supernatural way. Suddenly, after a deafening thunder, the air around him suddenly exploded, creating a ring-shaped shock wave.

The ring-shaped shock wave seemed to freeze in the air, but the figure in the circle disappeared.

Chapter 387: A Deal

Bang!

Qing Feng felt as if he was bumped by a wildly running beast from the back. The huge impact greatly distorted his body. He flew out, body almost parallel with the horizon. The azure sky was reflected in his glazed eyes.

What on earth happened?

The impact made him confused.

In the air, Ai Hui was still in the motion of swaying his Dragonspine like he was swaying a hammer. He exerted all his strength, and even his shoulders were numb. Seeing Qing Feng who was thrown away in the sky, he slowly breathed out in relief.

Wheeze, wheeze, wheeze...

Ai Hui was breathing heavily in the air. Sweat gushed out from each of his pores all over his body like springs. His clothes were all soaked in sweat as if he was just pulled out of the water.

After a while when Ai Hui could finally calm his breathing and his chest, which expanded and contracted, became stable, he shook his body, and the sweat transformed into white fog that rose up and disappeared in the sky.

The sudden attack just now was only a variant move he thought of during the emergency. At that point, his speed had reached the highest level, and the huge pressure from the wind was like an iron wall. Piercing the wind wall with his sword was only an impromptu action, and it turned out to be surprisingly effective.

But on the other hand, the move consumed too much energy, and for an instant Ai Hui felt that his body was almost torn apart by a huge force.

He decided to improve this move later. If he could make a breakthrough in this, his opponents on the battlefield would definitely be taken by surprise.

Calming himself down, Ai Hui landed near Qing Feng.

It was a coincidence that Qing Feng happened to fall into the caravans. He was the one who was holding the power over Zhao Boan's life just now, but he was likely to be killed at any minute. On this day, Qing Feng experienced the transience of life.

His body was totally scattered by Ai Hui's attack. The grass cords fell on the ground in a mess, some of which were attached with a lotus root.

Crack, crack, crack. The grass cords convulsed now and then like eels. The scene looked very weird.

Qing Feng had completely lost control of the grass cords. Now he

was like an octopus with a human being’s head.

Qing Feng said with hatred, "Grandmaster Dai will not let you off!"

Ai Hui burst into laughter, and then managed to hold it back and said like a hooligan, "What can I do? I didn’t want to kill you. You asked for it."

Qing Feng didn’t know what to say and his face flushed. He said with hatred, "Then kill me! I don’t want your humiliation!"

Ai Hui seemed surprised. "Kill you? Why shall I kill you."

Hearing what he said, Qing Feng was a bit relieved. Although he was talking tough just now, deep in his heart he was really afraid to die. So he said at once, "Then let me go. I’ll pay you back. How much do you want?"

"Let you go?" Ai Hui shook his head, "What if you come back to take revenge on me? You work for Grandmaster Dai whom I dare not provoke."

Qing Feng’s face became gloomy. "Then what do you want to do?"

Zhao Boan ran to them in gasps. He heard their conversation and said loudly, "Sir, don’t listen to him. As long as he devours wood elemental materials, his elemental energy will be restored."

Qing Feng’s expression changed drastically. He intentionally chatted with Ai Hui to divert his attention, and meanwhile was stretching his grass cords to the goods in the caravan. But now his plan was revealed by Zhao Boan.

This made him very angry, "You are dead meat!"

A grass cord suddenly bounced and rushed straight towards Zhao Boan like a flying arrow.

Suddenly, with a cracking sound, the grass cord was again hit and thrown away by Ai Hui.

"What an arrogant captive! I like your temper!"

Ai Hui again landed near Qing Feng, and looked at him with a spurious smile.

Qing Feng was frightened in his heart, but still said in a threatening manner, "What do you want to do? Let me tell you..."

Ai Hui interrupted him and said fluently, "Grandmaster Dai will not let me go. I know."

Being interrupted, Qing Feng was embarrassed and his face flushed.

Then Ai Hui turned to Zhao Boan, "You said his body can recover with the wood elemental materials?"

Zhao Boan said cautiously, "Yes, Sir. You see, half of the goods on the caravan have been devoured by him."

Ai Hui murmured, "I see."

But his next move totally astounded Zhao Boan. He lifted up Qing Feng with his sword and threw him into the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart.

Smashing into the goods, Qing Feng felt dizzy, and it took him a long time to come to his senses. But the moment he realized that he was surrounded by wood elemental materials, he rejoiced with wild excitement and began to devour the materials crazily without saying anything.

The scattered grass cords began to gather towards its body.

Having devoured the materials in several carriages, Qing Feng returned to what he was like before. While he was eating busily, his eyeballs were rolling.

Soon there were less than half of the goods left in the carriage, and Qing Feng, who was eating, suddenly turned to run.

But this time he didn’t fly up to the sky. Instead he was running wildly towards the forest. The grass cords constituting his legs

dispersed, and he was like a fast-moving spider.

The moment he was about to rush into the wood, an expression of great joy appeared on his face.

Suddenly, he was caught by a chill in the air.

Qing Feng's body froze. The chilled air accompanying the sword almost made him frozen. Ai Hui's aura of killing intent covering him was so real that he knew if he dared to move, the killer move would immediately arrive.

"You..."

Qing Feng trembled in fright.

"I know, Grandmaster Dai will not let me off," Ai Hui said lightly.

The joke made Qing Feng feel as if he was in the icehouse.

He didn't understand why he always encountered swordsmen with strong fighting skills. This guy standing in front of him came out of nowhere, but was even stronger than Chu Zhaoyang.

"Come here."

His tone was relaxed but indubitable.

Qing Feng stepped back tamely. He was dejected, but was also a bit relieved. He was sure now that the swordsman didn’t want to kill him.

Although he didn’t know exactly why, he was sure it was not because of Grandmaster Dai.

The killing intent totally disappeared as if it was just his imagination.

The swordsman smiled like a friendly boy next door. But this made Qing Feng more scared.

"Your move just now was good. Come on, let’s try again."

Ai Hui’s tone was soft and even encouraging, which, however, made Qing Feng even more fearful and desperate. His enemy’s face was so young, but was like a demon in his eyes. Qing Feng was trembling, and wondering why the guy who came out of nowhere could be so strong.

Young and strong as he was, this guy was more sophisticated than people of his age.

But even so, he would not obey any of his commands, Qing Feng thought.

But the words on the tip of his tongue were swallowed back, and he blurted out, "Try...try what?"

But as soon as the words were out of his mouth, Qing Feng felt extremely ashamed. After all he was a follower of Grandmaster Dai. How could he be frightened by a young guy.

Ai Hui didn't know what Qing Feng was thinking. He gesticulated with the stab move, "This one. You are my sparring partner now. if you can do a good job, I'll set you free."

This was a great humiliation to him. My God! How could the dignified Qing Feng be some small potato's sparring partner?

Who was he? Qing Feng! A violent, and wicked guy who held the power to take other's lives, and who had killed numerous people! Now a kid regarded him as a sparring partner?

If this could be tolerated, what else couldn't?

Better die standing than live kneeling.

He was an outstanding person when alive. And he would be the hero of all the ghosts after he died.

With an impulse, he blurted out, "Really?"

After having said this, he couldn't wait to slap himself on the

face. His face was now flushed as if a fire was burning beneath.

Ai Hui blinked and said sincerely, "Of course. A gentleman always keeps his promises."

Then he further lured him, "You see, I can provide you with enough wood elemental materials. Why do we have to fight against each other? There's no hatred or rancor between us, right? I need a sparring partner, and I'll pay you. This is a fair deal, or a business transaction, isn't it?"

Qing Feng was kind of persuaded by him. His mission had completely failed this time. He didn't know what his master would do to him. This was a question he had not thought about before.

Before he left, his master had told him again and again that they could afford no failure this time.

Now he had to go back empty-handed, and his body was so broken - the nether lotus seeds were also destroyed and it would take a long time and many precious materials to restore it to its previous status. Besides, his mind and spirit were also disturbed. Even if his body recovered, he could hardly recover to his best condition.

His master would not waste so many precious materials on a useless puppet.

This was the worst day of his life. And it came earlier than he

thought.

Qing Feng felt dejected, but also a bit relieved.

The destiny awaiting him made him quail. Therefore, the fact that he could not go back made him feel relieved, and a bit at a loss too. After all, it was his master that gave him this second life. He was grateful for his kindness, and was used to following the commands of his master to kill one after another. Actually he didn’t know what to do in the current situation.

Being silent for a long time, he suddenly said, "If I want to leave one day, you cannot stop me."

Ai Hui answered quickly, "No problem! Then let’s make it a deal!"

"Okay," Qing Feng said. Then he walked to the caravan and began to devour the goods left in the carriages.

Ai Hui was satisfied. After all, it was difficult to find a good sparring partner. Those too weak could not improve his strength, but no strong fighters were willing to be a sparring partner.

Then he looked at Zhao Boan, who was standing aside in shock, "I’ll buy all your goods. How much?"

The situation was changing too fast for Zhao Boan to understand. Wasn’t it a life-or-death fight just now? Why did they become so harmonious at this moment?

Hearing Ai Hui’s question, he suddenly came to himself and said, "I’m willing to follow you, Sir!"

He became disillusioned with his previously unrealistic dreams from today’s experience. Now he knew that in troubled times, without strong fighting skills, one’s fortune would be gone sooner or later.

Ai Hui was surprised, but didn’t refuse. Instead, he asked, "What are you good at?"

His horizon had been largely broadened. He knew his limits, and knew that many things should be done by others, especially by people with that particular profession. His fellows at the Swordsman Training Hall were good at fighting, but not at other things.

Ai Hui felt inspired. Maybe he needed to recruit some experienced people, such as blacksmiths and businessmen.

No city could be built by fighters and killers alone.

Chapter 388: Sharpening Skills

Zhao Boan was born to a merchant's family. His father was a small itinerant merchant. Now the family property was in his hands, but the business environment had become harder than ever.

Small merchants needed a stable society. To them, troubled times were like natural disasters were to peasants. They could hardly fight against them.

Now was the time for bandits and robbers to rise, because one could earn more by robbing than by doing business. If you had strong fighting skills, you could protect yourself and make a fortune, but if not, then you could only become a target for bandits.

The trade route between Jadeite Forest and the Avalon of Five Elements had not been formally recognized by the Elders Guild, which meant that it was still a smuggling route. Despite this, the caravans were secure as they all had aristocratic families backing them.

To small traders like Zhao Boan, however, participating in the smuggling business was like dancing on the edge of a blade. Any carelessness might send them down the road of destruction. As a result, Zhao Boan hadn't dared involve himself in such practices, but nowadays, business was getting increasingly worse as trade in the Jadeite Forest was almost entirely monopolized by Deep Sea Enterprise. If he didn't do anything, his family would go bankrupt by next year.

Overtaken by circumstances, Zhao Boan made his decision. He borrowed a considerable amount of money from his relatives and sold all his possessions to purchase a caravan of goods.

However, he didn't expect the situation to be even worse than he'd imagined.

After the city expansion order was issued, elementalists from the Avalon of Five Elements all left for the Wilderness, leaving depressed and dilapidated cities and towns behind. The decline in population and the transfer of the enterprises' power forced the guards to focus on the Wilderness.

This led directly to a state of lawlessness and havoc caused by bandits and robbers. They were almost everywhere in the cities, like bamboo shoots after a spring rain.

The caravans of the large enterprises were heavily guarded; no robbers dared to attack them. Instead, they focused on robbing small merchants like Zhao Boan.

Zhao Boan had been forced to spend heavily to hire guards for protection.

Although they did not have the qualifications to be caravan guards during peacetimes, Zhao Boan had no alternatives and was forced to hire them.

Unfortunately, he had been too unlucky and met the grass-lotus puppet, which was even worse than robbers. After the first round of confrontation, except for those who had been killed, the rest of the guards all fled for their lives.

Zhao Boan became desperate and thought he would be killed for sure, but unexpectedly, he met his new boss.

Yes, he had been hired by Ai Hui and was now his manager.

At the time, seeking refuge with his boss was the only choice he could make, but later he felt that his new boss was good. When his boss learned that he'd borrowed a lot of money from his relatives, he generously paid him an amount equal to half the goods and told him to repay the loan first.

This alone was enough to make Zhao Boan grateful. He was now willing to die for Ai Hui without saying a word.

Two years ago, morals had not been as terrible as they were today. Elders Guild was still influential and powerful then. This year, however, especially this half of the year, righteousness and justice no longer seemed to exist and the rules of society quickly collapsed. It was like an avalanche; once the layer of snow covering the mountain peak collapsed, it poured down with a roaring sound and an unstoppable momentum.

The strong overlooked those beneath them while the weak were as minor as mites. They were bullied more and more often, almost everyday. Bandits and robbers were everywhere, but no one

stopped them.

Nowadays, a robber could be praised and called a righteous robber as long as he didn't kill anyone during a robbery. It was perfectly justified for the strong to take your belongings without paying.

Anyone capable had already gone to the Wilderness.

Except for pivotal huge cities like Silver City, the Silver Mist Sea, and Palette Cloud Village, the rest of the cities were like dried up corpses. The Elders Guild didn't bother to pay them any attention and just left them to rot and die.

The rotten atmosphere could not give birth to vigor; it would only attract vultures that were fond of carrion.

His boss had done more than he could.

Zhao Boan glanced at Qing Feng in fear. He knew that he'd better not provoke this monster, especially so after hearing from his boss that Qing Feng was a follower of Grandmaster Dai. He completely gave up the idea to revenge.

In the Jadeite Forest, no one dared to disobey Grandmaster Dai. He was the god of Jadeite Forest, and even his followers were beyond the reach of ordinary people.

It seemed that his boss was not afraid of Grandmaster Dai. He

was a bit worried at first, but when it occurred to him that his boss was not a member of Jadeite Forest, he was more or less relieved.

His gaze focused on his bossr, who was training.

Zhao Boan marveled; he had never seen anyone more hardworking than his boss. No, the word "hardworking" was not enough to describe his boss's training. It should be "crazy."

His boss seemed to be extremely stubborn about power. When he was practicing, it was as if he was possessed by the devil.

This made Zhao Boan more relieved. In these troubled times, nothing could comfort one better than strength.

He stood reverently aside and waited for his boss's training to end.

Ai Hui was more focused than ever and the Dragonspine moved so fast that naked eyes could hardly follow it. In front of him, grass cords flew like ghosts, making whistling sounds that could get on your nerves.

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkle!

Each collision between the Dragonspine and the grass cords would produce sparks.

After a while, Ai Hui was soaked with sweat and white fog slowly rose from his body, but as if he felt nothing, he simply moved his sword faster. Standing opposite him, Qing Feng's mood was complicated and hard to describe.

This guy's sword moves were a bit faster than yesterday. Although it was not readily apparent, Qing Feng was sensitive enough to feel it.

Qing Feng had always been described as a monster by others, but now he felt that those people had just never met this guy here. This guy was the real monster.

Since he'd agreed to be Ai Hui's sparring partner, only one hour had passed before he was made to work.

Qing Feng was completely unprepared. Although they had made a deal, shouldn't they start the next day?

An hour's training had drained every bit of his energy and his mind was totally blank. Fortunately, his boss was generous enough to supply him with food. After devouring all the materials, he more or less recovered.

Coming back to his senses, Qing Feng realized that being a sparring partner was not an easy job.

Unfortunately, it was too late. After only two hours, he realized that he had still underestimated the difficulty of this business.

He was asked to spar with Ai Hui again.

When he heard the guy call, his face almost froze and he wondered if he'd heard wrong. He clearly remembered how that guy had been lying on the ground as tired as a dog just now. When he blankly turned his face and saw the energetic Ai Hui, he thought he might have a problem with his eyes.

Then Qing Feng finally learned what a nightmare was.

Basically, he could only rest for two to four hours before being asked to train. The frequency was abnormally high.

It went on like this for a consecutive three days. Qing Feng finally couldn't bear it. The training was driving him crazy. Even when he'd been training before, he'd never been so crazy. He didn't understand why his boss had so much energy and why he fought so hard.

To Qing Feng's ears, Ai Hui's voice was like that of a demon.

Moreover, he marveled at Ai Hui's progress. He improved at a speed Qing Feng had never seen before. As a sparring partner, he could sense more clearly than anyone else how horrifying it was every day.

His pressure increased day by day.

He was becoming more and more proficient in using grass cords each day, from using one at a time, to five, six, and seven...

During the last fight, Ai Hui had been awkward when resisting Qing Feng's attacks using ten grass cords, and was whipped several times. Now, however, Qing Feng knew he would no longer be able to whip Ai Hui at all, no matter how many grass cords he used.

Ai Hui's sword moves became more and more simple, but his speed became increasingly fast and fluent.

Qing Feng was not stupid. He knew Ai Hui wanted to sharpen his swordsmanship, but what surprised Qing Feng was that Ai Hui thought of doing so at such a young age. Other people his age were all practicing inheritances or absolute arts.

Ai Hui was just a young man, but Qing Feng felt that he couldn't see him through at all.

"Stop!"

Hearing Ai Hui's shout, Qing Feng came back to his senses and immediately stopped.

Ai Hui sat on the ground and his sweat flowed in a stream beneath him. His breath was so heavy that he sounded like bellows. Qing Feng was extremely tired as well. He lay on the ground without caring about his image at all. He did not even want to move his fingers, no, grass cords.

Ai Hui's heavy breathing finally died down and his blank eyes returned to normal.

He struggled to stand up with the Dragonspine in his hand, then began his unique Sword-style Breathing Technique.

Fizz, fizz, fizz.

The sound of inhalation could be heard around the sword, like a snake hissing, making people feel scared and nervous. The metal elemental energy around them converged from all directions and soon infused into the sword.

Ai Hui's face became ruddy again and his breathing became stable, until it was finally soundless.

Time flew by quietly. When Ai Hui opened his eyes again, he looked mild.

He stretched his limbs and waved his sword. Seeing several sword rays flash in the air, Ai Hui looked complacent. Qing Feng was indeed a good sparring partner. His grass cords gave him huge pressure.

To block such intense attacks, Ai Hui had to continuously revise how he attacked and the flow of his elemental energy. Previously, he had taught himself sword moves according to the ancient swordplay manuals using trial and error, but had never wondered

if there was room for improvement.

Some details were continuously adjusted and improved to make his moves faster and more accurate. That was why Qing Feng could feel Ai Hui's progress every day.

This was because Ai Hui was indeed improving every day, which he himself could feel.

Having tasted the benefits, Ai Hui wondered if he could improve things other than swordsmanship in this way. He kept this idea in mind and decided to think about it further after the training for this period.

Faster moves meant you could gain advantages faster in a fight.

He glanced at Qing Feng, who was apparently too tired to stand up. He lay on the ground with his grass cords scattered around him, like he had just been ravaged.

Qing Feng's elemental energy recovery was not as fast as Ai Hui's. The Sword-style Breathing Technique was Ai Hui's exclusive secret and the reason why he could bear highly-frequent practices like this. Although his sword breathing had not yet reached the efficiency level Ai Hui expected, the elemental energy it absorbed was stable and placid enough.

Seeing Zhao Boan standing aside, he walked to him and asked, "How is it going? Any progress?"

After days of interaction, Ai Hui believed Zhao Boan was a competent man, so he told him what he was thinking and asked him to look into it for him.

It seemed that he had brought back some news.

Chapter 389: Inquiring Information

Zhao Boan said reverently, "Boss, we are close to Crooked River City, where craftsmen are the most reputable. I heard that the living conditions of the local craftsmen is not good, especially in recent days. One reason is that they are short of raw materials and it’s hard to collect all the ingredients, among which the wood elemental materials are the easiest to find, but the earth and fire elemental materials have almost disappeared from the market. As a result, they cannot produce anything but simple and primary goods. The other reason is that the trade route is cut off now and the total population has dropped, so buyers are very few. Now, their incomes can barely support their families, which has driven many people to find opportunities in the Wilderness, although the majority are still hesitating about it."

Hearing what he said, Ai Hui couldn’t understand. "What is holding them back?"

Zhao Boan explained, "The climate of the Wilderness is unpredictable and there are no cities of a proper scale located there. Even if they go, they do not have the ability to build a workshop in those conditions. In addition, there have recently been many casualties in the Wilderness. It will be extremely risky for them since they cannot protect themselves if they run into danger. That’s why they are still hesitating."

Ai Hui said in a low voice, "We will be going to the Wilderness in the near future. If anyone wants to go with us, we can guarantee his or her safety. In your opinion, what kind of craftsman do we need?"

This answer excited Zhao Boan. Although he foresaw that Boss would go to the Wilderness, he was still thrilled when he admitted it in person.

Taking a deep breath, he calmed down and said after thinking for a second, "My understanding of Boss is limited, so I can only give opinions from my point of view. The Wilderness is home to numerous dire beasts that will be our daily targets for hunting, so elementalists who have the ability to turn dire beast corpses into food are essential to our team."

Ai Hui nodded and said, "We don’t need extra hands on that."

Ai Hui could deal with the dire beasts and Lou Lan was good at cooking.

Zhao Boan continued, "We need masons for building camps and constructing a city."

Ai Hui nodded again, "We have an expert in that field as well."

Wang Xiaoshan was outstanding and trustworthy in that respect, for he had been practicing his skill throughout these years.

That did not surprise Zhao Boan. His boss seemed wealthy, so it was impossible that he was all alone. He continued, "In that case, we need several craftsmen who can produce weapons, especially weapon craftsmen who are familiar with metal elemental energy

and Grass-grade weapons, craftsmen who are familiar with wood elemental energy. Also, we need farmers with high-standard skills so that more people can count on them. Besides these, two physicians specializing in wood and water elemental energy respectively are also required. Herbalists are also essential to us, because the Wilderness will be short of all kinds of herbs for a long period of time."

Ai Hui thought about it and asked, "What is the current price for hiring these elementalists?"

Zhao Boan had compiled a detailed and comprehensive report. "Different prices for different professionals. The price for physicians is the highest, and the better physicians have already been employed by others. According to the market, to hire a physician, we have to pay about five hundred Heaven Merit Points each year for at least 3 years. After all, Wilderness is our destination, so risks are unavoidable."

Ai Hui was shocked by the price, "So expensive!"

Then it would be one thousand five hundred Heaven Merits Points for three years, which was a great deal of money.

He had twelve thousand Heaven Merit Points with him in total, so that was a tenth of his wealth altogether.

Zhao Boan nodded. "That is so. Physicians have always been popular because they are vital to every team. Physicians with rich experience have long since been hired."

Ai Hui said without hesitation, "We have physicians. How about others?"

Lou Lan was equipped with high-standard healing skills.

Zhao Boan relaxed and continued, "Good. The physicians within our pool of choice barely meet the average standard. As for the other professionals, herbalists are not cheap - about three hundred Heaven Merit Points per year. The Jadeite Forest has almost all the high-class herbalists, but normally they are not willing to go to the wilderness. Farmers are easy to find, but the superior ones also live in the Jadeite Forest. Their price is acceptable, which is one hundred Heaven Merit Points per year. We need at least five. Those who can plant elemental energy beans will cost even more, at least five hundred Heaven Merit Points per year, and are hard to find. Grass-grade weapon craftsmen and weapon craftsmen can be hired at two hundred Heaven Merit Points per year. Their price is cheaper because Grass-grade weapon craftsmen can only produce low-level weapons and weapon craftsmen lack the necessary materials."

Ai Hui did the math and said, "We need an herbalist, five farmers, a Grass-grade weapon craftsman and a weapon craftsman, which makes the price amount to one thousand two hundred Heaven Merit Points per year."

Ai Hui didn’t bother to count in farmers who could plant elemental energy beans.

Zhao Boan reminded Ai Hui, "Those prices are only for the average professionals. Superior ones would charge double or even higher. Besides, we'd better get a cook, because the Wilderness is short on elemental energy beans. It will be more practical for us to take elemental energy food to support our practice."

Ai Hui smiled and said, "We have an excellent cook."

Who could be a better cook than Lou Lan?

Ai Hui thought for a second. "You are from the Jadeite Forest, so you should be familiar with Asakusa City."

Zhao Boan responded quickly, "Yes."

Ai Hui said, "Our destination is Asakusa City, so we will hire farmers and herbalists there. We can seek out weapon craftsmen and Grass-grade weapon craftsmen in the cities we will pass by on our journey. If there are any proper ones, we can hire them."

Ai Hui and Lou Lan were capable of making weapons, but Ai Hui couldn't spend much time on doing so. Producing weapons would cost too much time that could be used to practice and Lou Lan was already overloaded.

Zhao Boan nodded and bore it in mind.

"Are you going to the Asakusa City?"

Qing Feng asked from behind Ai Hui.

Ai Hui turned around and said, "Yes, do you have enemies there?"

Qing Feng didn’t answer and was lost in his thought.

Crooked River City was a small city located on the riverbank of the branch of the Silver Mist River. The city was surrounded by the river on three sides; it encircled the city in an "n" shape and the city had been named after it.

This unique feature of the landscape infused Crooked River City with intensive metal elemental energy, which was beneficial to producing weapons. That was why the city was home to plenty of weapon craftsmen and Grass-grade weapon craftsmen.

The weapons of Crooked River City enjoyed a certain reputation in the Silver Mist Sea.

Unfortunately, as a branch channel, the Crooked River’s metal elemental energy was weaker than that of the trunk stream. Although the advantage of the landscape improved its metal elemental energy, it was hard for the city to further enhance its metal elemental energy.

Workshops along the Crooked River were all closed except for a few. The whole place was desolate.

In order to practice, Ai Hui found an independent courtyard so that others would not be scared by Qing Feng's appearance. Zhao Boan was sent to inquire about the market information and hire weapon craftsmen and Grass-grade weapon craftsmen.

Oddly enough, the Elders Guild had issued an order to arrest She Yu, but there was no such thing for Qing Feng.

Ai Hui was curious, so he led the topic to it. "Those from the Blood of God are under surveillance in the Avalon of Five Elements. Why can you be so free as a disciple of Grandmaster Dai?"

Qing Feng smirked. "Who dares? Although Madam Ye has complained about Grandmaster Dai out loud, she still doesn't dare to make any trouble with him. An Muda is about to die, so if Grandmaster Dai is offended and wants to strike the Avalon of Five Elements, no one would be safe."

Ai Hui was shocked that An Muda was about to die. This would trigger turmoil in the Avalon of Five Elements. The Avalon of Five Elements could stay peaceful not because of the Elders Guild or God-subduing Peak, but because of An Muda. What would it become if An Muda died?

This was beyond Ai Hui's imagination.

Ai Hui was shocked by the news and his mind wandered the whole day because of it. He finally understood why the Elders Guild had issued the Master's Glory and the city expansion order.

This was the reason.

Without its patron saint, the Avalon of Five Elements would confront an even tougher situation.

By nightfall, Zhao Boan had not yet returned and Ai Hui returned to his senses.

Qing Feng mocked, "Your subordinate must have fled."

Ai Hui guessed that Zhao Boan must have encountered some accident, because after getting along with him for several days, he believed that Zhao Boan didn’t intend to leave.

"Don’t count on me. I’m your sparring partner, not your subordinate."

Qing Feng was gloating obviously.

Ai Hui glanced him and said, "You’d better stay here. If you run away, I will report you to the Elders Guild. Let’s see if they really are that scared of Grandmaster Dai."

Hearing that, Qing Feng’s face turned pale. Creating such a disturbance in Silver City, he had been worried all this time that the Elders Guild would hunt him down. Although he was not in the arrest order, he’d heard from the others that the Elders Guild was very likely to choose to arrest him as well. Qing Feng’s power was largely reduced now. If he encountered any powerful

elementalists, he would be defeated easily.

The thought of running away had completely vanished from Qing Feng's mind. By staying with Ai Hui, he at least didn't need to worry about his safety.

Ai Hui flew to the district where many weapon craftsmen lived and asked the shop owners about Zhao Boan. It didn't take him too long to figure out what had happened.

Zhao Boan had been kidnapped!

Ai Hui's face grew serious.

Although Zhao Boan was the newly hired manager, he'd already became a member of the team. A team member being kidnapped triggered Ai Hui's intent to kill, but he didn't show his anger. Instead, he focused on asking about the minute details of the situation.

"What a sad story! Many years ago, Old He produced a Heaven-grade weapon, but it led his whole family to ruin. Some members of the family died and others were severely injured. Only one blind son survived. The son, Blind He, is a brilliant guy. Although blind, he produced a Heaven-grade weapon. Unfortunately, this news was discovered by the bandits of Sky Capital Peak, so they kidnapped him. Your manager unluckily happened to encounter the kidnapping and was also brought away. Don't bother to think about saving him. Those from Sky Capital Peak are all cruel killers. You will also be killed if you insist on going there. No one here

would try to challenge them. Gosh, how can we survive in such troubled times..."

Blind He's workshop was in a total mess, almost ruined.

In Peace City, the impact of war only influenced the price of commodities. Here, within less than one year, the public security had declined sharply. Bandits were everywhere and could even openly kidnap people. The residents here were too afraid to contend with them.

Ai Hui knew that as time went by, the situation here would only get worse. The city would be left behind and become a nest of chaos and sin.

No one could change it.

Ai Hui thanked the shop owner and left.

Ai Hui walked back to the street. Having confirmed the location of Sky Capital Peak, he disappeared into the dark night.

Chapter 390: Sky Capital Peak

Even though Sky Capital Peak had a "peak" in its name, it was actually a vast stretch of mountain range in reality. It had numerous karst caves and its terrain was extremely complicated. Those who were not familiar with the area would get lost easily.

In the dark night, a few figures lying in ambush in the shadows were whispering to each other.

"Brother Ning, will they really come?"

"Definitely. We are really unlucky. We only wanted to kidnap Blind He, but then the manager popped out of nowhere. Tell me, if you lost your manager, would you look for him? From the manager’s words, it seems like his master is rather powerful. We have to be careful."

"I will listen to Brother Ning."

"Alright. Don’t panic later on and listen to my commands. Don’t be afraid."

"Brother Ning, don’t worry, this is not our first time."

"Shh, he is here."

Ai Hui flew one round around the sky above Sky Capital Peak.

Upon seeing that there was not a single trace of light coming from the mountain, he conjectured that the robbers must be hiding within the karst caves. He did not land directly on the mountain itself, but rather, at the foot of the mountain.

He silently advanced along the terrain of the mountain.

He was going at a very high speed. The precipitous terrain did not seem to have any effect on him.

Suddenly, Ai Hui raised his head and looked in a certain direction. He could sense someone was spying on him from in the dark.

The other party was prepared for him!

Knowing that he could not mount a sneak attack, Ai Hui blatantly flew forward at top speed.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh!

Sharp whizzing sounds suddenly rang across the air. A few streaks of arrow gleams shot towards Ai Hui from different positions of the mountain.

Seven arrows!

In the blink of an eye, Ai Hui accurately identified the positions

of where the arrows were shot from. A cold shiver went down his spine. The positioning of the seven arrows was ingenious. The seven arrows were locked onto the areas that he would possibly try to move into.

The other party was a veteran.

Ai Hui immediately made a judgement in his mind. His hand moved swiftly into action and a sword gleam streaked across the air.

Training continuously for the past few days had sharply increased his attacking speed. This improvement was very obvious in such a sudden situation. The tip of his Dragonspine accurately struck the first arrow.

Keeping his arm stationary, he flicked his wrist gently, drew a minute arc in the air with his Dragonspine and struck the second arrow.

Making use of the force coming from the tip of his sword, he sprung Dragonspine upward and struck the third arrow from an oblique angle.

Ai Hui was one-hundred percent focused.

Clink, clink, clink!

Concentrated sounds of collision rang across night sky. The

process was a feast for the eyes. Sword gleams were blossoming in the dark night. The sparks produced from the collisions between the sword gleams and the arrow gleams floated before Ai Hui's eyes like a cloud of shining mist.

Phew. Ai Hui finally breathed out. His hand felt slightly numb. The force from the seven arrows put together was not something to be reckoned with.

The arrows would likely have been shot out from some kind of trap-like mechanism. He could not sense any elementalist's aura.

He was very satisfied with the seven strikes that he'd unleashed just now. This proved that his recent training was effective. In the past, he would have been able to ward off this type of attack as well, but he certainly could not have done it with such ease. In the past, he would strike three or four arrows and find an opening to escape. He definitely could not strike down all arrows.

This scene left the robbers dumbstruck.

"Brother Ni... Ning, this guy is very powerful!" said the robber, his voice trembling slightly. It sounded as if he was stuttering.

The robber who was called Brother Ning was very shocked as well. After all, the traps were set up by him. He had meticulously set up the traps in such a way that they would attack the possible areas where the enemy would move to. No matter which direction his opponent moved to avoid an arrow, he or she would be hit by a follow-up arrow.

He absolutely did not expect the other party to strike down the arrows instead of avoiding them. This caused his traps to fail.

"He’s an expert."

Brother Ning’s voice was composed. This made the others felt a lot more at ease. Brother Ning was their backbone. As long as Brother Ning could hold his own, they felt they would have a chance at victory.

"However, this is only the beginning."

A cold glint flashed across Brother Ning’s eyes in the dark. His voice contained a strong sense of confidence.

Everyone felt energized as Brother Ning’s confidence motivated them. They had followed Brother Ning through countless battles, and they had obtained victory in every single battle. They respected and had absolute confidence in Brother Ning.

Ai Hui scanned his surroundings warily. The traps set up by the other party were well thought out. A moment of carelessness would cause him to fall for them.

After waiting a while, there were no more arrows shooting at him.

The precipitous Sky Capital Peak was like a gigantic monster hiding within the darkness, containing countless dangers and a murderous intent.

Ai Hui did not wait any longer and continued to advance.

A weird feeling came from beneath his feet.

Ai Hui's facial expression changed slightly. Oh no... Before he could react in time, the seeds buried deep within the ground beneath his feet suddenly exploded. A few demonic-looking green vines erupted from the ground and wrapped themselves around Ai Hui's feet.

Beast-trapping grass seeds!

This was a very useful type of grass seed. Once something made the slightest contact with the seed, its husk would break instantly and a grass vine would grow frantically out of it to wrap itself around the nearest living thing. In the hands of a powerful wood elementalist, the beast-trapping seeds could strangle a ferocious wild beast to death.

The grass vines kept tightening their grip on Ai Hui, slowly digging into his skin.

Ai Hui could not struggle at all. At this moment, a huge, dark-green net came flying down on his head.

Green flames spiderweb!

Green flames spiderweb was produced by green flames spiders. The spiderweb was dark-green in color and more than ten meters long. The dark-green color flowing along the spiderweb came from a very deadly, poisonous fire. A tiny amount of it was enough to pose an extreme danger to an elementalist. It could seep under one's skin rapidly and infect his elemental energy, causing the nature of his elemental energy to change drastically.

The poison fire was extremely dangerous to an elementalist. The probability of an elementalist getting killed by it was extremely high. Even if he did not die on the spot, the nature of the elemental energy within his body would change abruptly, causing him to be in anguish.

For example, a metal elementalist's body was both filled with and made up of metal elemental energy. This way, his inner body and physical body complimented each other very well. However, if the metal elemental energy within his body suddenly became another type of elemental energy, his body would strongly reject the new elemental energy.

When an elementalist's body and the elemental energy within his body clashed, the pain he suffered was worse than being tortured by the cruelest torture machine.

Ai Hui did not dare to let the green flames touch his body. He made small movements with his arm, and then with his arm he held his Dragonspine upright.

A faint red-colored sword gleam, that resembled a red muslin cloth, was released from the tip of his sword.

[Lesser Red Muslin]!

[Red Muslin] was the move that he'd used to destroy the Sha Family's residence. At that time, he used the momentum from the high-altitude dive to unleash that breathtaking sword move.

At that time, the impact of [Red Muslin] almost completely razed the Sha Family's residence to the ground.

[Lesser Red Muslin] was developed from [Red Muslin]. Since he was in a confined space now, [Red Muslin]'s destructive power was greatly reduced. Hence, he named it as [Lesser Red Muslin]. Even though [Lesser Red Muslin] was not as powerful as [Red Muslin], it required less time to be unleashed. This, in turn, increased the difficulty of unleashing the move sharply. Despite this limitation, the practicality of the move had increased tremendously from [Red Muslin]'s.

[Lesser Red Muslin] was proof of Ai Hui's improvements in his swordsmanship. This new move proved that his swordsmanship had moved on to a higher level.

In the night sky the red-colored, muslin-like sword gleam was like an illusion. It flew gracefully towards the green flames spiderweb.

When the red sword gleam made contact with the green flames spiderweb, surging elemental energy erupted through the air with a loud bang. Following which, the elemental energy transformed in a violent and chaotic burst of flames. Even though the green flames spiderweb was very dangerous, it did not have high durability. It was shredded to smithereens on the spot by the violent burst of flames.

Directional impact was an important characteristic of [Lesser Red Muslin].

The robbers on the mountain saw a huge burst of flames rise into the sky. As it rose higher and higher, it suddenly exploded into a drizzle of flames that sprinkled all over the mountain, resembling a gigantic fire umbrella.

The rain-like flames disappeared rapidly into the night sky.

Tranquility and darkness returned to the sky once more.

A commotion broke out among the robbers. Their traps had been destroyed once again.

"He is troublesome!"

"Since when did Crooked River City have such a powerful individual?"

"Who knows him?"

"I don’t"

The leader of the robbers, Brother Ning, did not say anything. His face had turned slightly ugly. He had spent a huge sum of money on the green flames spiderweb and beast-trapping grass seeds. Initially, he still thought he had the victory in the bag. He did not expect the other party to completely destroy his traps.

He felt slightly anxious. He had provoked a powerful fellow this time around.

Beads of perspiration appeared on Ai Hui’s forehead. Whenever he was being attacked, he would be extremely focused and felt nothing else. However, this time around, he was slightly afraid. The traps on this mountain were in an innumerable succession.

When Ai Hui hacked at the grass vines, he realized that the grass vines were unusually strong. He did not sever even a single grass vine, making him feel slightly shocked.

He channeled his elemental energy and severed all the grass vines with a few slashes.

Brother Ning’s heart was bleeding. The losses he suffered this time around were huge.

If the beast-trapping grass seeds’ grass vines were not destroyed

completely, he could sprinkle a specially concocted restoration potion on them to restore them to the state of beast-trapping grass seeds. From there, they could be used again. However, if the grass vines were badly damaged, the seeds which they grew from could no longer be used.

Ai Hui took a deep breath and continued forward.

This time around, he learnt his lesson. It seemed that he was advancing as usual, but in reality, his feet were not touching the ground. He was actually hovering slightly above the ground. The Starry Gem Swordwings on his back were flapping indistinctly.

He no longer saw the other party as just a bunch of ordinary robbers.

Ai Hui was specialized in setting up traps. The two traps that he'd just consecutively encountered did not seem complicated, but they were very powerful and dangerous. From these two traps, he could gauge the strength of the other party.

However, he did not show any signs of retreating. Instead, he plucked up his courage and continued forward.

Along the way, there were rugged rocks that resembled oddly-shaped monsters in the dark night, surrounding him with killing intents.

Suddenly, out of the corner of his eyes, Ai Hui saw some rocks

vibrating on the ground.

At this moment, the rocks in other areas began to vibrate as well. Soon, all the rocks on the mountain were vibrating, resembling monsters that had woken up from their slumber.

All the rocks within his line of sight were vibrating. The scene appeared extremely weird.

Before Ai Hui could understand what was going on, those numerous vibrating rocks began to rise from the ground. To his astonishment, the rocks subsequently fused together and formed humanoid rock monsters everywhere on the mountain.

Rock puppets!

Ai Hui's eyelids twitched. Rock puppets were the lowest ranking among all the earth elemental puppets. Their rank was even lower than that of sand puppets. The only good thing about them was that they had huge strength. They were usually used by earth elementalists as laborers.

Other than having huge strength and the ability to throw rocks, the rock puppets' fighting capabilities were not really powerful.

However, when they appeared on mountains, they would pose a great hassle to anyone who encountered them.

Rumble, rumble. The earth shook. With clumsy-looking and

abnormally heavy footsteps, the rock puppets flooded towards Ai Hui from all directions.

Chapter 391: An Old Friend

Ai Hui felt that the entire mountain beneath his feet was trembling.

Normally, anyone who encountered such a situation would be shivering with fear. However, Ai Hui did not. Even though these rock puppets looked frightening, they paled in comparison to the Sha Guards, let alone a Sand Sentinel.

Ai Hui spread the Starry Gem Swordwings on his back and flew up into the sky abruptly.

The rock puppets on the ground began to throw rocks at Ai Hui. The millstone-sized rocks were emitting a faint glow as they flew towards Ai Hui like torrential rain.

Ai Hui was shocked by this scene.

He hastily flapped his Starry Gem Swordwings and disappeared from his current position.

When a piece of rock brushed past Ai Hui's body, he broke out in a cold sweat. If he was hit by that piece of rock, he would not be able to tolerate the pain even if his body had become strong and sturdy now.

He realized he had underestimated these rock puppets. Apparently, their fighting capabilities had been upgraded.

The rocks that the usual rock puppets hurled were not imbued with elemental energy. That was because the base level of rock puppets was very low and they did not possess any elemental energy. However, all of the rocks that these rock puppets threw had been imbued with elemental energy.

Someone was controlling them from the dark.

In the sky, Ai Hui quickly discovered that the entire mountain was filled with rock puppets. They might have looked very messy, but in reality, they were in order and their attacks were orchestrated. For a moment, Ai Hui looked to be slightly helpless in the sky. He had no choice but to fly higher. When he saw the mountain was filled with densely-packed and chaotic rock puppets, he felt a slight headache.

Should he use [Red Muslin]?

Ai Hui shook his head and rejected this idea. He was uncertain if [Red Muslin] could beat so many flying rocks being hurled at him. He felt that it would be rather painful if his physical body collided against so many flying rocks. He couldn't believe that he could defeat a fearsome Sand Sentinel, but not a bunch of mere rock puppets.

Ai Hui began to admire this brigade of robbers.

The other party did not do much for this trap other than upgrading the rock puppets' base level, increasing their numbers

greatly and finding a suitable terrain to create a trap that was difficult to escape from.

If he wanted to enter the karst cave, he had to land on the mountain. By doing this, he would be surrounded and attacked by the overwhelming number of rock puppets.

Such a thoughtful bunch of robbers.

Now, Ai Hui was filled with interest towards this brigade of robbers. However, he had to resolve the issue in front of him now.

Inside the karst cave, the robbers' morale was boosted sharply.

"I knew he wouldn't break this rock puppet formation!"

"That's the ultimate move of Brother Ning. Tell me, who is able to break it?"

Everyone started talking at once and their voices were filled with excitement. Ai Hui's outstanding performance against the previous two traps was somewhat nerve-racking for them.

"Keep your guards up, the battle hasn't ended yet," Brother Ning reminded them in a low voice.

Everyone shut their mouths.

Brother Ning observed the figure flying in the sky outside and found that he looked slightly familiar. Then, he shook his head. He did not have the time to think about such a thing now. He had a premonition that the other party would not give up just like this. He felt somewhat vexed too. If he had known that the other party was so troublesome, he would not have kidnapped the manager as well.

Suddenly, Brother Ning's eyes froze. The other party started to dive down from the sky.

Ai Hui felt as if he was flying through a rain of rocks. He kept on changing his flight path as he avoided those flying rocks narrowly every now and then. He was more and more sure that these rock puppets were indeed controlled by someone. There were a few times where the rocks appeared right in front of his flight path and he almost crashed into them. Rock puppets did not have the intelligence to predict his flight path.

When the robbers saw Ai Hui fly aimlessly for a few rounds in the air, they heaved a sigh of relief.

The enemies they encountered in the past were all the same. They would flew a few rounds in the sky and if they still could not find any opening, they would take the initiative to leave.

As long as they had no blood feud with them, why would anyone waste so much time on a bunch of robbers? The more powerful an elementalist was, the more precious his time was. Time was money. These words of wisdom were indeed true.

For a small place like Crooked River City, there were very few experts. Occasionally when they encountered one, they would use this tactic to exhaust that expert's patience and force him or her to take the initiative to leave.

After all, they were just a bunch of robbers. They did not care about their reputation.

Brother Ning's gaze had not left the other party once. Even though the mountain was pitch-black and they were separated by a huge distance, he could see the facial expression of the other party.

The other party was grinning.

Suddenly, Brother Ning's mind jolted as a strong sense of danger engulfed him. He yelled involuntarily, "Be careful!"

At this moment, Ai Hui suddenly increased his speed and lowered his flying altitude. Everyone quivered and controlled the rock puppets, making them hurl rocks hastily at Ai Hui.

However, Ai Hui made a turn toward an unexpected direction and increased his speed abruptly. All of a sudden, a thunderclap-like explosion resounded through the sky.

Ai Hui's figure suddenly disappeared!

The unforeseen event shocked all the robbers.

Brother Ning’s facial expression changed drastically, "Quickly retreat! He has discovered our position!"

Brother Ning turned around and dashed towards the depths of the karst cave. Now he realized that the other party had not been circling in the air aimlessly, but rather, he was searching for them.

Boom!

The concealed cave entrance suddenly exploded. Surging elemental energy gushed in like a torrential flood with a loud bang.

All the robbers flew up in the air and slammed heavily against the cavern walls. They felt extremely dizzy and their visions blurred. After a long while, they still could not stand up straight.

In the cave, there was a figure holding a sword. He looked extremely prominent among the swaying and wobbly robbers.

"We surrender."

A hoarse voice rang across the air. Brother Ning stood up from the ground. His face was brimming with agony.

Ai Hui’s gaze swept across everyone and felt slightly surprised. He wasn’t surprised at how strong these robbers were, but rather,

how weak and fragile they were.

They had very little and shallow elemental energy in their bodies. The only strong one was the guy who had just initiated their surrender. He should be the leader of this brigade of robbers. However, even he had merely achieved elemental externalization.

This bunch of low-leveled and weak robbers were able to give him so much trouble?

The killing intent within Ai Hui's heart had disappeared. Not wanting to waste his breath on these people, he asked bluntly, "Where's my man?"

The robber who was known as Brother Ning replied, "He's inside and he's alright. I will lead the way. If you want to kill someone, kill me. The only request I ask of you is to let them off. They have just arrived here from Old Territory and they didn't commit any heinous crimes."

"Brother Ning!"

"Let's die together!"

A few of the robbers returned to their senses and became extremely agitated.

"All of you shut up!" Brother Ning roared.

Ai Hui could tell that Brother Ning was well respected among these people. Everyone immediately shut their mouths after Brother Ning told them to do so.

Ai Hui was very surprised. No wonder these people were so weak. Their strength would not even compare to the strength of those students in the Induction Ground last time.

Ai Hui remained calm and collected. "They are from Old Territory? Since when could people from Old Territory enter Silver Mist Sea anyhow?"

"Not long after the city expansion order had been enacted, the border no longer had any guards anymore. One can make it here as long as he or she can cross the Lava River. Since it’s difficult to cross the Lava River, we have to use Three Leaves Bamboo Carts to fetch them over. This way is much easier."

Ai Hui had a lot of questions, but he did not ask them immediately. He merely said, "Lead the way and don’t play any tricks."

"Understood."

Brother Ning nodded his head and led the way.

Ai Hui had a whole new level of respect for the leader of the robbers. He remained composed even after he had surrendered. He

was rather capable considering he led a bunch of weak individuals into giving Ai Hui such a big headache.

Very soon, Ai Hui saw the tied-up Zhao Boan. Beside Zhao Boan, there was a very young man who was being tied up as well. That young man’s eyes were tightly shut. He must be Blind He.

When Zhao Boan saw Ai hui, he was extremely emotional. "Boss!"

Even though he believed his boss would come and save him, he was still very emotional when he saw his boss appear before him.

With a swipe of his sword, Ai Hui severed the ropes tied around Zhao Boan and Blind He.

"Give me a moment, I have something to ask them," Ai Hui said to Zhao Boan.

Then, Ai Hui turned around and asked Brother Ning, "Are there a lot of people here from Old Territory?"

"Yes, there are a lot of them here. Initially, there were some new citizens who went back to fetch their fellow clansmen over. Later on, some people began to start businesses of illegal immigration. As such, there are more and more people from Old Territory coming here." Brother Ning replied.

"Why do they want to come here?" Ai Hui asked.

After Ai Hui finished his sentence, he realized he asked a stupid a question.

"The concentration of elemental energy here is higher," Brother Ning explained plainly, "Even though it's not as high as it was in the past, and it will still continue to drop in the future, it's still higher than Old Territory's. In the past, everyone could only dream about coming to the Avalon of Five Elements. New citizens like us are luckier, however, most of our clansmen are still in Old Territory. Since the Elders Guild has given up on this place, we decided to bring our clansmen here. At the end of the day, this place is still better than Old Territory."

Ai Hui felt slightly sad. He was also from Old Territory, even though he did not have any family members there.

After staying silent for awhile, he asked again, "Do a lot of people become robbers?"

"Basically, yes," Brother Ning said in a low voice, "Even though Elders Guild is not here, there are still a lot of people from the Avalon of Five Elements here. No one welcomes us and we can't enter the city. Even if we want to buy something, no one is willing to sell anything to us. The currency of Old Territory is not worth anything here and we can't find any jobs as well. They feel that this is their homeland and as long as they are here, they won't welcome us."

Ai Hui was speechless. This was an intractable problem.

He knew that the situation would continue to worsen. The deep estrangement between Avalon of Five Elements' people and Old Territory's people had intensified over a thousand years. Even new citizens had difficulty integrating into the society of Avalon of Five Elements. It was impossible for them to integrate into the upper class of Avalon of Five Elements, even though they make up a relatively huge portion of the population of Avalon of Five Elements.

"Have you thought of going back?"

"No," Brother Ning shook his head, "I don't want them to turn into blood elementalists. I have been through the blood catastrophe in Induction Ground and I hate Blood of God. Blood of God has been devouring Old Territory."

When Ai Hui heard the word "Induction Ground", he quickly asked, "What's your name?"

"Gu Tianning."

Ai Hui found this name somewhat familiar. He was a student that was of a rather remarkable ranking in Induction Ground. If he hadn't remembered wrongly, this student was defeated by Bangwan before. It was not easy for Gu Tianning to survive the blood catastrophe in Induction Ground.

A smile appeared on Ai Hui's face. "I didn't expect to meet a fellow schoolmate here, my name is Ai Hui."

Gu Tianning widened his eyes and became emotional in an instant, "It’s you! Yes, I should have known it was you. No wonder I find you familiar! You’re Ai Hui from Central Pine City, the Lightning Blade! You and your unit are indeed powerful. Your unit had the most people who made it out alive of Central Pine City. Our unit was not that lucky. Only sixteen of us made it out alive. My teacher and fellow students all died. At that point of time, I thought I would die as well. Then, my teacher saved me..."

Initially, there was a smile of joy on his manly-looking face that was derived from his reunion with an old friend. But as he continued his story, tears began to flow down his cheeks drip by drip.

All of a sudden, the grey memories that were buried deep within his mind were suffused with the color of blood.

He could not continue.

All he wanted to do now was to hold back his tears.

His smile was trembling. He used all his might to control his facial expression and make it look calm. It was as if he tried to stay calm as he faced the feelings of regret, reminiscence and anguish from those bloody memories.

Tears flooded his cheeks silently.

Chapter 392: Blind He

Zhao Boan felt that he was really stupid.

His boss was actually Ai Hui!

Even though he lived in Jadeite Forest, he still knew who Ai Hui was. There was a period of time where the mirage bean pods of Ai Hui were spread around. Everyone knew about his history and achievements. Born as a laborer, got accepted into the Induction Ground as an exception, the key player in the Battle of Central Pine City, the current leader of Central Pine Faction.

After staying low for several years, he had risen once more.

Zhao Boan felt as if he was in a dream. In this era, those who had excellent reputations were powerful individuals, and those who could establish a faction were definitely heroes.

Even the almighty heir of the Duanmu Family in Jadeite Forest and disciple of Grandmaster Dai, Duanmu Huanghun, followed Ai Hui as well.

In Zhao Boan’s eyes, Duanmu Huanghun was definitely an extraordinary individual.

Zhao Boan could not help but cast a glance at his boss. That absurdly young face exhibited a calmness that surpassed his young age.

Zhao Boan could roughly understand the low-volume conversation between his boss and the robber leader. The robber leader was a student of Induction Ground in the past and his brigade of robbers had just illegally immigrated from Old Territory to Silver Mist Sea. His boss was from Old Territory and he naturally sympathized with these people from Old Territory. However, Zhao Boan also knew that this issue was unresolvable.

Gu Tianning had regained his composure. If not for the fact that his eyes were still slightly red, one definitely could not tell that this burly-looking man had just cried his eyes out.

When Gu Tianning's clansmen heard that Ai Hui was also from Old Territory, the wariness in their eyes disappeared in an instant and became much more amiable.

Ai Hui followed Gu Tianning to the depths of the karst cave and arrived at an area where they spent their daily lives.

In the damp and gloomy karst cave, clansmen who were sitting in meditation were everywhere. When Gu Tianning walked in, all of them stood up. Most of them were still very young. They looked curiously at Ai Hui and his counterparts.

"The elderly clansmen don't want to move, therefore, those who have come here are the youngsters in the clan. Even though it's too late for them to train now, it's still generally better than staying in Old Territory." Gu Tianning said with a low voice.

"Everyone is earth-attributed?"

Gu Tianning nodded his head and replied, "Basically, yes. We can't go to Yellow Sand Corner. Even though Silver Mist Sea is metal-attributed, there is a Silver Mist River. Since we are staying in the mountain, the concentration of earth elemental energy here is rather strong and much better than Old Territory's.

This place was indeed better than Old Territory. Ai Hui knew what it was like in Old Territory.

The concentration level of elemental energies in Old Territory was very low and the training efficiency there was so low that it raised one's hackles. Not only was the concentration level of elemental energies in Old Territory very low, the materials and equipment available there were pathetically little.

When a person from Old Territory was selected to enter Induction Ground, he or she would stay in Avalon of Five Elements forever. There were extremely few elementalists that would return to Old Territory and build training halls to train the locals after they grew old.

Once an elementalist returned to Old Territory, not only would he be unable to train, it would be difficult for him to maintain his current base level as well.

Ai Hui was not surprised at all that people from Old Territory would illegally immigrate to this place. Compared to the poor and barren Old Territory, a piece of land that was abandoned by Elders

Guild would still be considered rich and fertile.

Ai Hui could see that the youthful faces of Gu Tianning's clansmen were brimming with hope.

Ai Hui suddenly thought of those laborers that had died in the labor camp and became silent. After a while, he raised his head and said, "Perhaps I can help all of you to raise the concentration level of earth elemental energy here."

A surprised look flashed across Gu Tianning's eyes. Before he could say anything, his clansmen began to crowd around and break into a lively discussion with everybody talking at once.

"Really?"

"That's good!"

"Our training efficiency can be increased now."

Gu Tianning quickly chased them to one side and said, "What are all of you doing here? Quickly disperse and start training."

Peace and silence returned to Ai Hui's surroundings once more.

Gu Tianning could not help but ask, "Really?"

"It’s just an idea. However, I can’t promise you that it will work," Ai Hui smiled.

Gu Tianning rubbed his hands and said with excitement, "We can try first, what if it succeeds? What do you need us to do? We will fully cooperate with you!"

"I only have a rough idea so far. I need to go back and think about it in detail. I also need to prepare certain things. All of you stay here for the time being and don’t go out."

Without any hesitation, Gu Tianning replied, "Alright, I shall wait for your good news!"

Ai Hui brought Zhao Boan and Blind He with him and flew back to Crooked River City.

Along the way, Zhao Boan could not help but ask, "Boss, can you really raise the concentration level of elemental energy?"

He had never heard of the idea of increasing the concentration level of elemental energy in the surroundings. If this idea was possible, then wouldn’t anyone be able to train anywhere in this world?

"Yes," Ai Hui gave a simple one-word reply and did not say anything else.

When they reached the tavern, Qing Feng was already very

impatient. "Did you really need so much time to deal with a bunch of robbers?"

He was extremely curious as he knew Ai Hui was strong. Even though it was due to the sharp decrease in his strength that allowed Ai Hui to dominate him like this, Ai Hui's strength was still very powerful to begin with.

Ai Hui could not be bothered with Qing Feng. After he put down Zhao Boan and Blind He, he said to Zhao Boan, "Start from the beginning."

Zhao Boan quickly explained how he had made enquiries about weapon craftsmen, how he met Blind He and how they ended up in the hands of Gu Tianning and his counterparts. Ai Hui listened carefully as his gaze fell upon Blind He.

Throughout Zhao Boan's narration of what had happened, Blind He remained silent.

Blind He looked completely different from Ai Hui's impression of a weapon craftsman. Unlike the usual fat and burly weapon craftsmen, Blind He looked thin and weak, and his face was pale-white. His eyes had always been closed. He looked more like a delicate and frail scholar rather than a weapon craftsman.

"May I know Mr He's full name?" Ai Hui asked politely.

Blind He, who was sitting on the floor, bowed slightly and

introduced himself, "My full name is He Wei. Sir, are you the Lightning Blade, Ai Hui?"

Ai Hui returned the greetings and replied directly, "Yes, I am Ai Hui."

At this moment, Qing Feng jumped up in shock, "So you're Ai Hui. I have heard of your name before. No wonder your swordsmanship is so powerful. You are definitely on par with that guy whose surname is Chu. It's a pity that I didn't make it in time for your porridge feast. Such a pity."

Due to the constant reporting of news through the message trees, everyone knew about Ai Hui's feats in Central Pine City. He was considered an influential figure.

A man's reputation would follow him throughout his entire life like his shadow. Qing Feng's embarrassment disappeared in an instant. There was nothing embarrassing about getting defeated by Ai Hui. Then, when he thought of Ai Hui's recent improvements, he couldn't help but click his tongue in amazement. No wonder, no wonder....

Blind He regained his composure and replied, "Sir, if you need a weapon craftsman, why not allow me to offer my services to you."

His voice was calm and steady, sounding as if he was talking about something casual.

Upon hearing these words, Zhao Boan could not help but look at Blind He. Previously, he had talked until his jaws ached, and Blind He still wouldn't agree to his request. Now, when he saw Blind He recommending himself to his boss, he was deeply moved by his boss's reputation.

Ai Hui was slightly pleased with himself as an indistinct smile appeared on his face.

This life had been tough on him so far! It was finally the day for him to actually make some gains with his reputation!

Ai Hui could not help but ask, "May I know what's the reason?"

"My parents died in the blood catastrophe," Blind He replied.

Ai Hui withdrew the smile on his face and said solemnly, "Understood. I heard that Mr He has forged one Heaven-grade weapon before?"

"Two to be exact," Blind He replied as if there was nothing unusual about it.

Zhao Boan and Qing Feng were shocked. As long as one could forge a Heaven-grade weapon, he or she would be qualified for the title of "weaponsmith". "Weapon craftsman" might differ from "weaponsmith" by one word, but the difference between their statuses was immensely huge.

There was a lot of luck involved in forging a Heaven-grade weapon. Most weaponsmiths could only forge one Heaven-grade weapon in their lifetime.

Most of the weaponsmiths had been hired by various powerful aristocratic families. Only an aristocratic family could provide ample precious resources for a weaponsmith to practise his forging skills constantly. Only with the right conditions and amount of resources could a weaponsmith then improve and become a master weaponsmith.

For someone who had forged two Heaven-grade weapons, his strength definitely surpassed any ordinary weaponsmiths'.

Ai Hui was very surprised and happy. Initially, he thought it would be good enough if he could hire a weaponsmith. However, he'd managed to encounter an outstanding weaponsmith in the end. Even though he was very happy, he still warned Blind He, "We will be heading toward the Wilderness and it will be very dangerous and arduous on the way there. Mr He might want to think over this issue properly."

"I can agree now so as to save time," Blind He replied calmly. "However, my price will not be cheap. I want one thousand Heaven Merit Points for my yearly salary. Sir, you should think over this properly before hiring me. I also have another request. That is, you, Sir, and other people shall not interfere with my work."

Ai Hui, who had always been a miser, was unusually decisive this time around. He replied, "I have no problem giving you a yearly salary of one thousand Heaven Merit Points. As for the issue of

interfering with your work, we will definitely not do that. However, if an emergency arises, then we may have no choice but to do that."

"Sir, don’t worry. When an emergency arises, overall interests naturally come first." Blind He agreed.

Upon hearing that, Ai Hui replied, "We have come to an agreement then. Right now, I need Mr He to forge something for me."

"I wonder what it is?" Blind He asked.

"Its design is rather complicated, I really don’t know how to describe it," Ai Hui felt slightly embarrassed.

"No problem, Boss can just draw a blueprint for me," Blind He replied plainly. His way of addressing Ai Hui had changed automatically.

Ai Hui knew Blind He must have some unique methods, hence, he began to draw the blueprint. To everyone’s surprise, he drew a pillar with numerous exquisite decorative patterns on it. Every decorative pattern was uniquely drawn by Ai Hui.

"You can just place the blueprint in front of me."

Ai Hui quickly placed the completed blueprint in front of Blind He.

Facing the blueprint, Blind He reached out his right hand and spread out his palm.

Suddenly, the center of his palm lit up with a silvery glow, which extended and became a silvery glowing line. The line opened up and revealed a silver-colored eye. Then, the eye shot out a faint white light that engulfed the blueprint in front of him. Immediately, the blueprint projected a hologram into the white light. It was a hologram of the pillar drawn on the blueprint. The hologram of the pillar was spinning slowly and one could observe it from all angles.

This method stunned everyone, including Ai Hui. Previously, he was thinking, ‘How could Blind He look at the blueprint if he was blind?’

"Understood."

Blind He’s indifferent voice pull everyone back to their senses. The faint white light disappeared as the silver-colored eye in the centre of his palm slowly closed. The drawing of the pillar on the the blueprint had disappeared, leaving a piece of blank paper again.

Blind He continued, "The materials needed for this pillar are rather easy to find. How many pillars does Boss need?"

Ai Hui returned to his senses and replied, "Twenty."

"I can complete them by sunset tomorrow," Blind He replied.

Ai Hui almost thought he'd heard Blind He wrongly. Naturally, the rest did not know what this pillar was. However, Ai Hui knew clearly what it was. This pillar followed the original design of the gold needles used for [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] in Central Pine City three years ago. However, the pillar was a simplified version of the gold needles. Even though it was a simplified version, Ai Hui still made some modifications to its design. The decorative patterns on the pillar were extremely exquisite and complicated-looking.

Complete twenty pillars by sunset tomorrow?

Ai Hui absolutely could not believe what he heard until he saw Blind He's smithing process with his own eyes.

Chapter 393: Excavation

The stone materials Zhao Boan bought were stone cuboids that were as tall as a full-grown man.

Blind He squatted in front of the stone cuboids. He did not start working immediately, but merely felt the coarse stone cuboids with his hands.

It was at this moment that the onlookers noticed his palms were snow-white and sparkling, and his fingers were slender and long. Every movement he made with his hands was filled with an indescribable sense of beauty.

Blind He's slim figure resembled a bamboo pole, appearing as if he was extremely delicate, but now, he seemed to have become a completely changed man. His eyes were tightly shut, and his face was solemn. Currently, he was exuding an aura of extreme confidence. It was as if he was confident in every move he made.

The onlookers were infected by his overwhelming confidence. They involuntarily held their breaths and widened their eyes.

Blind He's long and slender fingers slid gently across the stone cuboids like a bamboo branch skimming across a smooth water surface.

He withdrew his palms and stood up straight. Then, he spread his legs slightly apart and extended his two hands with his palms facing down over the stone cuboids.

A silver eye appeared on each of his palms, followed by a white glow that shot out from the pair of eyes and engulfed the stone cuboids. Suddenly, numerous tiny objects began to form within the faint white light.

These glittering, silver tools were very elaborated. Drill bits, saws, chisels, etc. There was a huge number of each item. Just counting drill bits, there were ten of them. Some were as thick as a person while some were smaller than a toothpick. This equipment appeared to be controlled by a pair of invisible hands, flying and dancing around the stone cuboids. Even though there was a huge number of them, they were working in an orderly manner and were not at all messy.

Every now and then, the stone cuboids would release flying sparks and stone fragments. However, not a single noise was made.

The coarse and rough stone cuboids became circular stone pillars. Decorative patterns were forming on the stone pillars at a visible speed. Subsequently, with a perceptible speed, these patterns became increasingly fine and distinct!

The whole process was smooth and natural, warming and delighting one’s heart and eyes, respectively. It was unusually precise and exhibited a matchless sense of beauty.

Within two hours, a stone pillar that was covered with fine veined patterns appeared before Ai Hui. Ai Hui walked closer to take a clearer look. The stone pillar was flawlessly made, and the

detail of its vein patterns had exceeded his expectations.

Ai Hui was trembling with astonishment. However, at the end of the day, he still felt more joy than astonishment. It was extremely worth paying a yearly salary of 1,000 Heaven Merit Points for such an exceptional weaponsmith!

Blind He’s performance had not ended yet.

He took an even shorter amount of time to make the second stone pillar. Within one hour, he had completed the second stone pillar. The time taken for the third stone pillar was reduced once again. His final speed was maintained at two stone pillars per hour.

Within 12 hours, he had completed all 20 stone pillars. Right now, it was only noon.

Everyone was shocked by Blind He’s skills after witnessing the whole process with their own eyes. From the first stone pillar to the last stone pillar, their eyes had not shifted away from Blind He.

Qing Feng was no doubt the most knowledgeable among all of them. Even he exclaimed in admiration, "I can’t believe there is such an expert in a small place like Crooked River City. I have come across many weaponsmiths, but I have never seen such skills before. Incredible, incredible!"

He uttered "incredible" twice in a row to describe the shock he was feeling.

Meanwhile, Zhao Boan stuttered, "You’re indeed brilliant!"

Blind He just sat silently on one side. Other than have a slightly pale face, he looked no different from his usual self. The praises from everyone did not seem to cause any changes to his facial expression.

"It is an eye-opening experience," Ai Hui praised. Then, without saying anything unnecessary, he continued, "Since the stone pillars have been completed, I will move out now. Boan and Mr. He, go and see if there are anything else that we need to buy. We will not be staying in this place for too long. Oh, please remember to buy a Bamboo Cart."

Zhao Boan quickly replied, "Yes."

Blind He stood up quietly and stood beside Zhao Boan.

Ai Hui had Qing Feng haul the stone pillars, while he carried Qing Feng and flew toward Sky Capital Peak.

"Are you afraid that I might harm them?" Qing Feng suddenly sneered.

"That’s right," Ai Hui replied bluntly without denying it.

Qing Feng flew into a rage. "Do I look like someone who will go

back on my word?"

"You have to ask yourself that." Ai Hui remained unmoved.

Qing Feng froze.

Ai Hui knew how cunning and treacherous Qing Feng was. Even though Qing Feng did not seem to have any chance of making a comeback, Ai Hui still would not lower his guard against him.

"I am already in an impasse. I don't even know what are you afraid of?" Qing Feng asked coldly.

"Nothing can go wrong by being a bit careful," Ai Hui replied casually.

Qing Feng was speechless.

Gu Tianning had been waiting on the mountain. When he saw Ai Hui's figure, he was overjoyed. He had heard of Ai Hui's reputation, but had never interacted with him when they were in the Induction Ground. He did not have much confidence in Ai Hui's promise.

Gu Tianning ordered his clansmen to handle the stone pillars and reminded them to be careful and not to ruin them. Every Gu clansman cautiously and gently carried the stone pillars as if they were holding precious porcelain wares.

Qing Feng took a sweeping glance at the Gu clansmen and said disdainfully, "The quality of the people you're encountering is getting lower and lower. I can't believe you spent so much effort on such a bunch of weak fellows. Are they from the Old Territory? Ahh, I get it. You're from the Old Territory as well. No wonder you're willing to help them. However, there are so many people in Old Territory. Are you able to help them all?"

Most of the Gu clansmen that made it to Sky Capital Peak were youngsters. Hence, when they heard Qing Feng's words, they glared at him angrily.

Ai Hui could not be bothered with Qing Feng and replied bluntly, "You better shut up."

Qing Feng flew into a rage, "I am a follower of Grandmaster Dai, how dare you behave so rude toward me!"

The Gu clansmen who had been glaring at Qing Feng quickly withdrew their gazes. Even though they had not spent a long time in the Silver Mist Sea, they still knew who Grandmaster Dai was.

Even Gu Tianning cast a bewildered look at Qing Feng.

"Have you forgotten the pain after your wounds recovered?" Ai Hui sneered.

Qing Feng became terrified at once. Initially, he thought Ai Hui

was a carefree lone wolf who was not afraid of Grandmaster Dai. When he discovered Ai Hui's identity, he expected Ai Hui to be afraid of provoking Grandmaster Dai.

However, he now realized that Ai Hui did not seem to care much about Grandmaster Dai.

Qing Feng was confused. Was Ai Hui really not afraid of Grandmaster Dai? He was not a carefree lone wolf. Furthermore, he was the leader of the Central Pine Faction. Was he not scared of causing troubles for the Central Pine Faction?

Or was this fellow already thinking of silencing him?

Qing Feng gulped his saliva with difficulty as a tinge of fear arose in his heart. He was a paranoid individual. Just now, he purposely said those words to feel out Ai Hui. Qing Feng thought that his mission was a well-concealed secret and that Ai Hui did not know he had fallen out of favor with Grandmaster Dai. Clearly, he did not realize Ai Hui was Chu Zhaoyang.

The result he had gotten disappointed him greatly.

Ai Hui did not seem to have any respect for Grandmaster Dai. He did not know whether Ai Hui was extremely daring or if he had someone's backing. Regardless of the reason, disrespecting Grandmaster Dai would not benefit him in any way.

Ai Hui could not be bothered with Qing Feng. As long as Qing

Feng did his job properly as a training partner, Ai Hui would not purposely make things difficult for him. However, if Qing Feng was up to no good, he would kill him on the spot.

As for Grandmaster Dai, he was still something that was too far for Ai Hui to think about.

When Qing Feng saw that Ai Hui was not afraid of his threat, he quieted down.

The way that Gu Tianning and his counterparts looked at Ai Hui could not help but change again. Gu Tianning knew about Ai Hui's past achievements. Now, he realized that Ai Hui was far more powerful and unfathomable than he had expected.

This made Gu Tianning and his counterparts feel filled with hope and expectations for Ai Hui.

Ai Hui did not think so much. All he wanted to do was to help them. As for the people that were still in the Old Territory, they were the responsibility of the Old Territory's native heroes. Ai Hui did not think that he was a hero. The outside world might praise him to the skies, but he knew how much he was really worth.

"We need earth fire. Is this place the deepest karst cave?" Ai Hui asked Gu Tianning.

"There is still a deeper one," Gu Tianning quickly replied.

After finishing his sentence, he began to lead the way. He and his counterparts knew all about the karst caves in Sky Capital Peak.

With Gu Tianning leading the way, they advanced toward the depth of the karst cave. Within a short period of time, they reached the depths. They could hear sound of underground rivers. Usually, the deepest parts of karst caves would contain underground rivers.

Gu Tianning did not stop and continued moving forward. As he walked, he said, "This region is filled with underground rivers. The region where earth fire can most likely be found is at the deepest cavern."

As they advanced forward, the cavern became smaller and narrower. The surrounding cavern walls had become dry as well. The air was pervaded with a faint smell of sulfur.

Ai Hui was energized. His plan could only be carried out if he had earth fire.

Finally, they came to a small cavern that could only fit three to five people. The temperature of this cavern was also much higher than the other caverns.

"This is the place."

Gu Tianning looked expectantly at Ai Hui.

Ai Hui examined his surroundings and nodded his head in silence. This cavern should not be far from the earth fire.

"This is the place I'm looking for. Excavate this cavern and make it bigger and wider. How many people do you have?" Ai Hui asked.

"56," Gu Tianning replied swiftly.

"Expand this place until it can fit 100 people. Excavate through four directions and maintain the height of the cavern at around 3.5 meters."

Gu Tianning acknowledged Ai Hui and quickly got everyone to work. Even though their base level was low, they had developed elemental energy before. Furthermore, the elemental energy they developed was earth elemental energy. Underground rocks were similar to the ordinary rocks above the surface. When everyone worked together, the process became faster.

After around four hours, they had already expanded the cavern to the point that it could fit 100 people.

Gu Tianning placed some glowing stones on the surrounding walls of the wide and spacious cavern to serve as lighting. The cavern was illuminated in an instant.

These glowing stones contained a small amount of elemental energy that enabled them to give off light. Other than that, they did not have many uses and were very cheap.

Ai Hui pointed to the center of the cavern and instructed, "Dig a fire well at this spot. The diameter of the fire well should be around 1.5 meters."

"Yes."

Without any hesitation, Gu Tianning started digging at the center of the cavern. He was an earth elementalist, so the hard underground rocks were like soft mud to him. Meanwhile, his clansmen kept on transporting away the underground rock that he had dug up.

As he dug deeper and deeper, the underground rocks got hotter and hotter. The color of the rock had turned from green to black. Beads of perspiration began to appear on Gu Tianning’s forehead.

Bang.

The sound of an underground rock cracking resounded through the air. A flash of red glow emitted from the crack.

After the cracked underground rock was removed, a dazzling red light shot out from the fire well and lit up the entire cavern with a bright red color. The temperature of the cavern rose rapidly. The low-level Gu clansmen could not tolerate the heat and began to retreat from the cavern.

Gu Tianning heaved a sigh of relief. "I’m glad I did not fail you."

Unwittingly, he used boss-subordinate tone.

"All of you leave the cave now."

"Yes."

Gu Tianning quickly led his clansmen out of the cave. While he guarded the entrance, he kept on looking curiously into the cave.

Qing Feng stood at the entrance of the cave with a curious look on his face. Initially, he still did not know what was going on. Now, he knew that Ai Hui wanted to help the Gu Clan by increasing the concentration of earth elemental energy in this place.

He did not believe in this plan. Briefly increasing the concentration level of elemental energy in a place was not difficult. The difficult part was maintaining the increased level of elemental energy. This would require a huge amount of high-grade materials. The gains simply could not make up for the losses.

The Gu Clan was in a destitute state. How could they afford high-grade materials?

Qing Feng disapproved of this plan in his heart.

Suddenly, he froze. He had just that remembered that Ai Hui’s

master was Wang Shouchuan.

The Wang Shouchuan who came up with [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth]!

Chapter 394: Success

"Wang Shouchuan, who had been working diligently and conscientiously throughout his life, probably did not expect that his last brilliance would have such a deep impact on the world. The Elders Guild conferred the title of Master on him without knowing that his research possessed the power of changing the world. They did not know this even after they built the God-subduing Peak using his knowledge. Perhaps the Elders Guild did not care about this at all. Seizures of power, fighting, and scheming among one another had depleted their time and energy, causing them to lose interest in knowing how the world would change. Far away from them, Wang Shouchuan's disciple, Ai Hui, who had a bit of fame at that time, understood the value of his master's research and became a forerunner in the field of elemental energy development. It was certainly unnecessary to elaborate on how Ai Hui's later accomplishments were engraved in everyone's memory."

—— <An abstract from The History Of Elemental Energy Development>

The emergence of the God-subduing Peak had made a lot of people realized the value of Wang Shouchuan's research. However, all of his research was confiscated by the Elders Guild and not a single piece of paper was left. The God-subduing Peak was a powerful and precious war machine, so it was heavily guarded. It was extremely difficult for someone to get close to it, let alone study it.

The Elders Guild was very pleased with themselves for their fast reaction in confiscating Wang Shouchuan's work.

However, everyone overlooked one person: Ai Hui.

Logically speaking, no one would overlook Wang Shouchuan's disciple. However, everyone quickly realized that [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] was Wang Shouchuan's last-minute, custom-made plan and that the science behind it was poles apart from his earlier theories.

At that point in time, Ai Hui was still fighting with blood fiends and blood elementalists. By the time he first came into contact with the plan, he was already preparing to lead a team to execute it. The science behind [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] was extremely complicated and there were many blueprints on it. The Elders Guild did not believe that anyone could memorize everything about it in such a short period of time. All the craftsmen that were involved in building the gold needles were taken away by Elders Guild as well.

Furthermore, Ai Hui was only interested in swordsmanship. He was a typical fighting elementalist.

No one expected Ai Hui to not only memorize all the blueprints, but also to know the plan inside and out. For the past three years, he had never stopped studying the plan. To him, this was the last gift that his master had left him. If he did not understand it at all, how was he fit to be his master's disciple?

There were two key points to setting up [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth]. The first one was to find the nodes of elemental

energy, and the second one was to form the elemental traces.

The regions where elemental energy was distributed were important and would affect the flow of elemental energy. This logic applied to regions where multiple types of elemental energy existed as well.

Wang Shouchuan named these regions as nodes. If one wanted to control the elemental energy of a particular place, he or she would have to control the node of this region first.

So how does one control a node? Here was the second key point, elemental traces.

Elemental traces were nothing new to this time and age. The theories behind them were based on the spiritual traces from the glorious Cultivation Era. Forbidden arts, spells, and refinement of equipment were applications of spiritual traces.

Wang Shouchuan was not the first person to research elemental traces. There were countless people before him that desired to find the most important power of the Elemental Era, but they eventually failed to do so.

The reason why Wang Shouchuan succeeded was that he was the first who understood the importance of nodes. The energy level of elemental energy paled in comparison to that of spiritual force. Thus, only at nodes would the energy level of elemental energy be higher than the spiritual force. This was where the elemental traces would be formed.

Right now, Ai Hui was finding these nodes.

He had personal experience with finding such nodes. All the gold needles from the original [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] plan were personally nailed by him.

In other people's eyes, Ai Hui was just pacing around the cavern nonstop. There would be times where he stopped for a while and drew a circle on the ground with his sword.

They did not understand what Ai Hui was doing, but they could see the solemn look on his face. Everyone could not help but hold their breaths in anticipation.

For two hours, Ai Hui paced around in the cavern. More and more circles appeared on the ground.

When Ai Hui drew his last circle, he stopped and heaved a sigh of relief.

Then, he told Gu Tianning, "Nail the stone pillars 30 centimeters deep into these circles."

Gu Tianning acknowledged Ai Hui and quickly set off to work. He noticed a layer of perspiration on Ai Hui's forehead and realized that he had exhausted a lot of energy just by pacing around the cavern for the past two hours.

"Let me do it as well!" Qing Feng volunteered.

He was filled with curiosity and wanted to see what was so special about the stone pillars and the circles that Ai Hui drew.

However, when he nailed a stone pillar into a circle on the ground and saw that there was no reaction, he was slightly disappointed.

When all 20 stone pillars had been inserted into the ground, the initially spacious cavern looked cramped and small. At this moment, everyone noticed that the positions of the 20 pillars did not correspond to one another. They were randomly scattered all over the cavern, appearing to be in disarray.

A lot of people felt apprehensive. They really could not see the use of these stone pillars.

Ai Hui found a corner, sat down ,and called out to Gu Tianning, "We need to wait for two hours."

Gu Tianning walked over to Ai Hui and sat beside him. He was not worried that Ai Hui was just talking big about increasing the concentration level of elemental energy in this place. Why would someone spend so much effort if he was just talking big?

Ai Hui did not have the free time to do that. If someone said that Ai Hui was trying to scam them, then what would be the point of him scamming them if they had nothing and were poor to begin

with?

The two of them began to chit-chat. It had been a long time since Ai Hui had left the Old Territory. He did not know what the current situation there was like.

Upon seeing that Ai Hui was interested in the situation of the Old Territory, Gu Tianning tried his best to tell him more about it.

The advancement of the Blood of God in the Old Territory was not smooth at all. Since the people in the Old Territory possessed a tiny amount of elemental energy, the speed at which the blood elementalists developed their blood spiritual force was very slow. Furthermore, the Blood of God still needed a very long period of time before they could fully absorb the Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie. This was also one of the reasons why the Blood of God was not anxious about their expansion in the Old Territory.

When compared to the decaying Avalon of Five Elements, the Old Territory was less impacted by the Blood of God because the Old Territory was poor and barren to begin with.

For the past few years, after the collapse of the Induction Ground, youngsters from the Old Territory did not have the chance to even be selected for schooling. This caused a lot of youngsters to feel disappointed. For the last 1,000 years, no matter how much everyone disliked the Avalon of Five Elements, gifted youngsters from the Old Territory were always given a chance to study in the Induction Ground and change their fates.

The Elders Guild, which could hardly look after itself, no longer cared about the Old Territory.

Gu Tianning was very worried that these gifted youngsters would swear allegiance to the Blood of God.

When Ai Hui heard Gu Tianning's worries, he could not think of any good solutions either. Nowadays, with a shortage of resources, price inflation, the issue of rebuilding the Thirteen Divisions, and the project of constructing God-subduing Peaks, how would the Elders Guild have the strength to care about the Old Territory? Ai Hui, himself, was a poor fellow too.

Two hours of idle conversations passed just like this.

"The stone pillars are changing color!" someone cried in alarm.

The cry of alarm interrupted the chit-chat session between Ai Hui and Gu Tianning and made everyone look in the direction of the stone pillars.

At this moment, the granite stone pillars had become dark-red in color, resembling heated iron pillars.

The weird thing was that the temperature of the cavern had not increased by much. The dark-red stone pillars rhythmically lit up and extinguished.

As Ai Hui walked among them, a look of satisfaction appeared on

his face. It seemed that the positions of the nodes he found were rather accurate. Setting up the stone pillars was merely the first step. They absorbed the fire elemental energy from the earth fire and converted it into earth elemental energy.

If one took a closer look, he or she would realize that rich earth elemental energy was gathering at the top of each of the stone pillars.

Ai Hui took out 20 Earth Sentinels from his sand compass. These were the spoils of war that he obtained after defeating the Sand Sentinel. An Earth Sentinel was a particular sand puppet model from the Sha Family. Their quality was first-class and considered one of the best sand puppet models currently available.

When Gu Tianning and his counterparts saw the 20 Earth Sentinels, their jaws dropped. After the Yellow Sand Corner was annexed by the Blood of God, the prices of sand puppets had been continuously climbing. With a single glance, one could tell that these Earth Sentinels were of superior quality and that their prices were extremely expensive.

Furthermore, there were 20 of them... How much would that cost?

The sound of heavy gasps resounded through the cavern in unison. The faces of the Gu clansmen were bright-red. They wished they could pounce on the Earth Sentinels.

Qing Feng was an individual who had experienced a lavish

lifestyle. As such, he was not fazed by the mere 20 Earth Sentinels. However, he was rather curious about what Ai Hui was going to do next. The dark-red glow of the 20 stone pillars was pulsating rhythmically, and he could sense the powerful auras of fire elemental energy and earth elemental energy from them. He could also feel another mysterious aura within them as well.

Ai Hui picked up a Earth Sentinel and placed it on top of a stone pillar.

Following which, something weird happened.

The Earth Sentinel melted and became a pool of quicksand that flowed down the stone pillar. After a while, the pool of quicksand completely engulfed the stone pillar. Like a yellow snake, the quicksand wrapped around the stone pillar and kept on swirling around it. Its swirling speed became faster and faster.

Eventually, the quicksand became a high-speed spinning sand tornado that engulfed the stone pillar and gave off a vibrating buzzing sound.

The sand tornado began to grow taller and taller. The top of the sand tornado opened up and the border of its mouth started to extend outward, resembling an umbrella that was being opened up.

Gradually, more sand tornadoes were formed with their mouths opened up and extended outward.

The buzzing sound of the sand tornadoes was intolerable. Other than Gu Tianning and Qing Feng, the rest retreated in panic and stayed away from the cavern.

Gu Tianning's face turned white. He felt that his entire body was trembling violently, causing him to feel extremely nauseous.

Excitement swept across Qing Feng's face as he widened his eyes. He was afraid of missing out on any details of the process. Until now, he still did not know what was going, but this did not stop him from acknowledging that the scene before him was spectacular.

Ai Hui had inherited Wang Shouchuan's knowledge!

This thought flashed through his mind.

When the last sand umbrella opened up, the 20 sand umbrellas extended toward each other and fused together, appearing as if they were attracted to each other like magnets of the opposite polarity. When the last gap was closed up, all the vibrating buzzing sounds suddenly disappeared. A dome-shaped sand canopy was formed at the roof of the cavern. The 20 sand tornadoes supported the dome-shaped sand canopy like 20 pillars.

If one took a closer look, he or she could clearly see that ripples were formed continuously on the dome-shaped sand canopy.

The sudden moment of silence stunned everyone.

Very soon, Gu Tianning yelled in alarm. His voice was filled with ecstasy "The concentration level of the earth elemental energy is rising!"

The rest of his clansmen rushed into the cavern. Cries of alarm and surprise resounded through the air incessantly.

"Oh my god, it feels so comfortable!"

The concentration level of the earth elemental energy is still rising!"

Shocked, Qing Feng stared at Ai Hui. He had not expected Ai Hui to succeed!

At this point in time, Ai Hui felt a sense of achievement. This was the first time he put his master’s theories into practice. Even though it was a simple process of convert fire elemental energy into earth elemental energy, it was still not easy to create a well-distributed amount of rich earth elemental energy.

The earth elemental energy within the stone pillars was transferred to the dome-shaped sand canopy and gushed out from the countless grains of sand. This in turn caused the concentration of earth elemental energy in this area to rise.

Gu Tianning was unable to control his emotions. Since when had he trained in such an area that contained so much earth elemental

energy?

A lot of Gu clansmen embraced each other and cried tears of joy. The concentration level of elemental energy in the poor and barren Old Territory was pathetically low. After they arrived at Silver Sea Mist, they did not know what to do next and their future was bleak. The earth elemental energy in Silver Mist Sea might be more concentrated than Old Territory's, but the place was still metal-attributed after all.

It was only until now that their bodies were filled with immensely rich earth elemental energy. This was a scenario that they did not even dare to dream of.

"Brother Gu, I have completed setting up this place. However, there is one flaw with this place that Brother Gu must take note of."

Ai Hui's voice rang across the air in an untimely manner.

When everyone heard that there was a flaw with this place, their palpitating hearts stop momentarily in unison.

Chapter 395: Overflowing Elemental Energy

The cavern suddenly quieted down. Everyone looked anxiously at Ai Hui in unison.

Gu Tianning took in a deep breath of air and appeared slightly calmer, "Brother Ai, please tell us what's wrong!"

As compared to the rest of his clansmen, Gu Tianning was more knowledgeable and experienced. He knew the Avalon of Five Elements wasn't the paradise that everyone from Old Territory thought it was. He knew this wasn't the most advanced technology right now, but he also knew that it was not easy to set up such a wonderful training ground. Having one or two weaknesses was normal. On the contrary, it wouldn't be right if there were absolutely no weaknesses.

Otherwise, wouldn't there be training grounds like this everywhere?

Ai Hui replied with a solemn look on his face, "The concentration level of earth elemental energy will keep on increasing. If the elemental energy can't be consumed in time, the grains of sand will become heavier and the sand canopy will eventually fall. So everyone has to make good use of their time to train and to make sure they don't let the elemental energy overflow."

Don't let the elemental... elemental energy overflow...

Gu Tianning was stunned momentarily. He thought he'd heard

wrong. Not only he, but the rest of his clansmen were stunned as well. They were always in lack of elemental energy. Now, suddenly someone was telling them the elemental energy would overflow...

"Brother Ai, stop joking..." Gu Tianning muttered.

"I'm not joking." Ai Hui had a serious look on his face and said, "All of you have to quickly absorb the earth elemental energy surging out from the sand canopy. If the earth elemental energy accumulates and overflows, the sand canopy will collapse."

Gu Tianning's facial expression changed drastically. He turned around and roared, "What are all of you waiting for! Start training! Make good use of your time and start training!"

The Gu clansmen immediately went into a state of panic and hastily sat down to meditate and train.

When Qing Feng, who had seen various aspects of society before, saw what happened, he could not help but feel slightly envious. "You're making it too convenient for these poor bums. Now that they have fallen into a pile of sh*t, they can fill their stomach with it!"

Gu Tianning was smiling and feeling extremely content. He did not get angry even after hearing Qing Feng's words. Other than feeling slightly annoyed that they were being called bums, he was actually quite happy as Qing Feng spoke his mind!

Actually, Ai Hui was partly joking about the flaw. Gu Tianning wouldn’t believe him anyway. But both of them never expected that this flaw-cum-joke would keep on increasing the Gu clan’s training efficiency till the point where they eventually became successful in the future.

"Brother Ai, hold on."

After Gu Tianning finished his sentence, he went away for a while and came back with a wooden box on his hand.

He passed the wooden box to Ai Hui and said gratefully, "These are some artifact remnants that we obtained by chance. Initially, we intended to ask Blind He to make us a Heaven-grade weapon using these artifact remnants. But right now, we don’t need them. This is a small present from us to thank you, please don’t be courteous with us. The Gu clan will forever remember your kindness for giving us a new lease on life. In the future, if Brother Ai needs any help from us, the Gu clan will not hesitate to go through fire and tread water for you!"

Without any hesitation, Ai hui took over the wooden box and bade farewell to Gu Tianning, "Thank you very much, Brother Gu. It didn’t take much effort, you’re welcome, Brother Gu. I’m from Old Territory as well. Even though my capabilities are limited, I will still do whatever I can to help. I still have things that I need to attend to, and I shall bid you farewell here. This is my message leaf. If Brother Gu wants to find me for anything, you can contact me through a message tree. I will stay in Crooked River City for a few days. If you have anything that you need help with these few days, you can find me at Crooked River Tavern."

Gu Tianning carefully took over the message leaf.

Ai Hui carried Qing Feng and spread his Starry Gem Swordwings like the gigantic wings of a roc. He rose into the sky with Qing Feng and flew into the distance.

Gu Tianning stood motionlessly as he watched the tiny black dot disappear into the distance.

On the way back, Qing Feng suddenly said, "Giving such a treasure to a bunch of weak and frail fellows, don’t you feel you’ve suffered a loss? If you are willing to present a treasure like that to Grandmaster Dai, no matter what you want, Grandmaster Dai will agree to it! What in this world is Grandmaster Dai not capable of doing?"

"I want my master and mistress to come back to life."

Qing Feng was speechless.

Refusing to submit to Ai Hui, Qing Feng continued after a while, "A person who is dead is unable to come back to life. One should always move forward in life. Why do you have to be so obstinate?"

Ai Hui was slightly surprised by Qing Feng’s words. Then he replied, "I thought you said a dead person could at least become like you?"

Qing Feng shook his head and replied, "There’s nothing good about being something that is neither dead nor alive like me."

"Why?" Ai Hui was surprised.

"I can’t do whatever I want and I am created to be used by someone else," Qing Feng replied. "It doesn’t matter if one lives in degradation and drags out their ignorable existence. Aren’t most people living like that as well? It also doesn’t matter if one has a body that he can’t control. Aren’t there many disabled people in this world as well? However, if one’s memory is erased every now and then, what’s the difference between him and a sand puppet?"

Ai Hui was speechless.

For the remaining part of the journey, both of them didn’t talk to each other.

Carrying Qing Feng in his arms, he flew back to Crooked River Tavern.

When they arrived back at the tavern, Zhao Boan had already bought back a Three Leaves Bamboo Cart. Its price was extremely cheap as it was second-hand. Not many trade routes went through Crooked River City, as such, there weren’t many transportation businesses and a huge number of Three Leaves Bamboo Carts were available for sale.

However, Ai Hui did not prepare to leave at once. Recently, his

swordsmanship had improved by leaps and bounds and he did not want to disrupt his excellent training momentum. As such, he decided to stay in Crooked River City for a few more days, and made good use of the time to train with Qing Feng so he could achieve the next breakthrough soon.

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Silver City.

The debris in the Ye Residence had not been cleared up yet. Everywhere was littered with broken wall fragments. From the amount of debris in the Ye Residence, one would instantly know how intense the multiple battles that took place that day were. During daytime, there would be a lot of servants clearing up the debris. During the night, everywhere would be filled with guards.

Right now, Madam Ye was gaining reputation day by day. She had become a powerful and influential figure in the Avalon of Five Elements. However, since she had to host Master's Glory, she was extremely busy and she had to travel nonstop. It had been many days since she'd last returned to the Ye Residence.

The Ye Residence still needed a long period of time before it could return to its former self.

The night was quiet and tranquil. One tall figure and one short figure were standing on a heap of debris in the Ye Residence. The guards in the distance could not sense their presence at all.

The tall figure looked as if he was standing on a pair of stilts. His clothes were huge and airy. His face was deathly pale and his cheekbones were sunken, resembling a dried corpse. His gaze swept across his surroundings and his nose was twitching every now and then. He shook his head and said, "Xiao Shuren self-detonated in this spot."

The short figure could not help but ask curiously, "But I can't sense the aura of the ancient treasure. Could it be that the ancient treasure isn't with her?"

The short figure was short and round, resembling a watermelon. His nose was bright red, looking extremely joyful.

"No, it must be with her," the tall figure shook his head and replied.

He inserted his fingers into the debris. After he took them out, there were a few grains of sand between his fingers. He then continued, "Her body had undergone transfiguration before. She had placed the ancient treasure within her body. These grains of sand contain the aura of the ancient treasure. Judging by the time, the ancient treasure was still in her body before she died. Whoever came into contact with her before she died is the greatest suspect."

Upon hearing these words, the short figure replied, "Who came into contact with her before she died? Chu Zhaoyang! He was holding Xiao Shuren hostage!"

The tall figure replied with a deep voice, "That's right, he is the

biggest suspect. Furthermore, he left Silver City immediately after the incident. This makes him an even bigger of a suspect."

"How do we carry out our investigation on him?" The short figure looked worried. "We have suffered a huge loss this time around. Recently, none of the families would dare to contact us, not to mention how we wouldn't go seeking their help. The two of us alone are not capable of tracking down Chu Zhaoyang."

"That's Grandmaster Dai's business," the tall figure replied without any hesitation. "We will just report our findings and then more powerful people will take over the case. I will chase down Demonic Girl and you will go after Qing Feng. Until now, he hasn't made any contact with any enterprise. I guess he is trying to run away."

"Alright! Qing Feng's body has been marked, he can't run away," the short fellow agreed. Then, he asked again, "Are you confident in handling Demonic Girl?"

"She can't run away." The tall figure was very composed.

"We shall split up."

The two figure split up and flew off in different directions without the guards in Ye Residence noticing at all.

.....

Crooked River City.

Ai Hui was extremely focused. The sword gleam from his Dragonspine was fast like a lightning bolt as it warded off the incoming torrential grass vines.

Now, Ai Hui could already ward off the ferocious attacks from Qing Feng's 15 grass vines. He could feel the improvements he had made. His attack speed had become faster as well.

Having an increase in attack speed, his degree of control of his elemental energy increased sharply too. This allowed his sword moves to be more complete and perfect. Furthermore, the process of switching between sword moves and the flow of his elemental energy also became much smoother.

Every day, he would train, ponder and search for the notebook in the Hall of Ancient Records. In other people's eyes, Ai Hui's life was as dry as a monk's ascetic life, but still admirable.

Another person who was leading an ascetic life was Blind He. Blind He was a very quiet individual. He would always sit in one corner by himself and his hands would always hold something. He might hold a piece of wood, a rock, or a metal ingot in his hands. No matter what he held in his hands, he would always carve something on it and treat it as carving practice.

Anything that he held in his hands would become smaller bit by bit and eventually became a small heap of fine powder. After this happened, he would take out another block of material and repeat

the process again.

Meanwhile, ever since Zhao Boan found out his boss was Ai Hui, he worked extremely hard. Every day, he would go out and see if there was anyone that was worth hiring. Eventually, he managed to hire a craftsman who forged Grass-grade weapons.

Mo Zhong was a miserable-looking old man. He also brought along his granddaughter, who was around seven to eight years old.

Initially, Zhao Boan wanted to hire a Grass-grade-weapon weaponsmith but there weren't any in Crooked River City. In the end, he only managed to find a Grass-grade-weapon craftsman and he wasn't too satisfied with him. If Ai Hui showed the slightest bit of disinterest in Mo Zhong, Zhao Boan would fire him straightaway.

However, he did not expect the reserved and mysterious Blind He to praise Mo Zhong's capabilities in forging Grass-grade weapons.

Eventually, Mo Zhong decided to stay after Ai Hui agreed to pay him a yearly salary of 300 Heaven Merit Points.

Ai Hui felt that his swordsmanship had reached a plateau and it was very hard for him to make any improvements for the time being. As such, he decided to leave Crooked River City and headed for Asakusa City.

The Three Leaves Bamboo Cart rose in the air.

Even though Zhao Boan had weak fighting capabilities, he was still a wood elementalist from Jadeite Forest and he was adept in driving the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart. Meanwhile, Qing Feng was an abnormally fast driver. With both of them taking turns to drive the bamboo cart, they did not really feel tired at all.

Of course, Qing Feng grumbled throughout the whole journey. He kept on stressing that he was a sparring partner, not a driver.

In order to get to Asakusa City earlier, Ai Hui decided to take a shortcut

If they went by the usual route, they had to fly across Silver Mist Sea to Peace City. From there, they would enter Palette Cloud Village. After they flew across the entire Palette Cloud Village, they would reach Asakusa City.

As such, Ai Hui wanted to take the shortcut.

By taking the shortcut, they would cross the Lava River from Crooked River City and enter the Old Territory. From there, they could fly straight to Asakusa City. This route could greatly reduce the travelling time.

Ai Hui wanted to see what the Old Territory looked like now.

But it was not only him. The rest were curious as well.

Chapter 396: Bitterstone Seeds

When Ai Hui and his counterparts flew across Lava River, a lot of people crowded around their bamboo cart. These people thought this was a bamboo cart for stowaways. However, just as soon as they appeared, Qing Feng, who was sitting at the driver seat, began to whip them and chase them away with his grass vines.

However, on the behalf of Ai Hui, he did not try to injure them.

It was at this moment that these Old Territory's citizens realized the bamboo cart was not for stowaways and there were honorable elementalists sitting in it. They turned green with envy when they saw Ai Hui and the rest.

Having a panoramic view of this scene, Ai Hui did not feel happy at all.

After a while, everyone began to feel discomfort as the surrounding concentration level of elemental energy was too low. In the Avalon of Five Elements, whether one was in Wilderness or a city, he or she would be surrounded by an abundance of elemental energy. Everyone was accustomed to those environments.

However, the elemental energy concentration level in this place was unusually low. Everyone felt as if the elemental energy within their bodies was escaping into their surroundings.

Qing Feng could not help but ask, "How do people live in this

kind of place?"

"The population of Old Territory is ten times more than the population of Avalon of Five Elements," Ai Hui replied plainly.

Qing Feng decided to shut his mouth. If he provoked Ai Hui, then Ai Hui might make him suffer again.

Ai Hui felt very uncomfortable as well.

If one attained elemental externalization, he could control the elemental energy in a particular region. However, what would happen to him if the surroundings were filled with little or no elemental energy? He would feel breathless and his elemental energy would keep on draining without any chance of replenishment.

Ai Hui laughed bitterly in his heart. He did not expect himself to face such a situation upon returning to the Old Territory.

"My elemental energy is draining faster than usual. What do I do if my elemental energy is completely drained?" Qing Feng grumbled.

"I have elemental beans."

Ai Hui’s words made everyone feel at ease. As long as they had elemental beans, they could replenish elemental energy. And as long as they could replenish their elemental energy, no one could

threaten them.

The region surrounding Lava River was barren. As they flew deeper into the depths of the Old Territory, the vegetation on the ground became more luxuriant.

Everyone curiously stuck their heads out of the bamboo cart and looked at their surroundings. Apart from Ai Hui, this was the first time that everyone else had come to the the Old Territory. Actually, Ai Hui also found the surroundings to be unfamiliar.

Ai Hui felt embarrassed to even talk about it. When he was still in the Old Territory, he did not go to the countryside at all. He also knew nothing about the plants and animals beneath the ground. However, he was extremely familiar with the plants and dire beasts in the Wilderness.

When it was evening, their Three Leaves Bamboo Cart had to land on the ground as Qing Feng and Zhao Boan's elemental energy was completely depleted.

Ai Hui had to admit that he underestimated the situation in the Old Territory.

The speed at which their elemental energy was depleting was faster than he expected. If they were in the Avalon of Five Elements, Qing Feng and Zhao Boan could fly for two to three days straight.

However, Ai Hui did not give up. He had another purpose for entering the Old Territory this time around.

He thought of the discussion that everyone had had about Central Pine Faction's future direction back in Swordsman Training Hall. Ai Hui told everyone that the Old Territory would be the key area for their battle against Blood of God in the future. That was because the Old Territory had the human resources and artifact remnants that Blood of God needed urgently.

This idea was suggested by Ai Hui. As such, Ai Hui now wanted to see if this idea was possible or not.

From the look of it, the Old Territory was an extremely unsuitable place for elementalists to be stationed for long. Due to the low concentration level of elemental energy, elementalists would make progress only with great difficulty. Previously, Ai Hui had already known that the low concentration level of elemental energy in the Old Territory would impact elementalists. However, he did not expect the impact to be so great.

If this was the case, they would not be able to execute their expansion plan into the Old Territory.

Wait!

Suddenly, Ai Hui thought of something. He asked Qing Feng, "How do the three central divisions that are stationed in the Old Territory solve the issue of the low concentration level of elemental energy?"

"God knows," Qing Feng mumbled.

The rest had blank looks on their faces.

Ai Hui noted this down in his mind, intending to ask Iron Lady to find out more about the three central divisions. If the three central divisions could be station here, that implied they had a solution for the low concentration level of elemental energy in this place.

Furthermore, if elementalists encountered this problem in the Old Territory, what about blood elementalists? Blood elementalists practised blood spiritual force. Since spiritual force had a higher energy level than elemental energy, that meant blood spiritual force would be drained at a higher rate than elemental energy. That also implied that blood elementalists would have a harder time surviving in the Old Territory than elementalists.

Was this perhaps the reason why Blood of God’s expansion into the Old Territory was not successful, even now? Even the plants in the Old Territory lacked elemental energy. This would cause the power of blood poison, which used elemental energy to proliferate, to reduce greatly.

Ai Hui was excited. He already found it hard to survive here and his enemies found it even harder to do so. This was a huge advantage to him.

They landed beside a creek. The flowing water of the creek was bubbling and there were pebbles all around the creek. In the

distance, there were a few huge rocks as well.

Very soon, Ai Hui and the rest found a piece of flat land to set up camp.

Zhao Boan was a travelling merchant and he had travelled extensively. For him, camping in the wild was nothing out of ordinary and his camping skills were adept.

Qing Feng ran to the creekside and caught a few fish.

As compared to the dangerous fish in Wilderness, the fish here were not only small, but they were not aggressive at all. The fish in Wilderness were extremely aggressive. If one encountered a fish-type dire beast, it would spell trouble for him or her. The rivers in Wilderness were places where massacres took place. A low-level elementalist would not dare to get close to a river in Wilderness.

Even though the fish here did not contain elemental energy, they still tasted very fresh and delicious.

After they finished eating the fish, the color of the sky dimmed gradually. The glow of sunset shone upon their bodies. Due to the lack of water elemental energy, the clouds in the Old Territory were not as thick as the ones in the Avalon of Five Elements. As such, the sky in the Old Territory was usually cloudless.

Ai Hui noticed Blind He had a fist-sized pebble in his hand and he was carving it. Apparently, he picked it up from the creekside.

Ai Hui could not help but smile.

He often admired focused individuals like Blind He.

Mo Zhong had brought along his granddaughter on this trip. At first, he was still worried that his granddaughter might not get used to their new lifestyle. However, he had not expected his granddaughter to be even more daring than him. She was filled with curiosity towards her surroundings.

The small girl was called Mo Buyu. Initially, she was slightly shy and constantly on her guard. After she familiarized herself with everyone, she became much more active. She would pluck grass stalks, climb up onto rocks, and even try to catch river crabs in the creek. Mo Zhong could not do anything about her.

Ai Hui enjoyed the glow of the sunset as distant memories flashed across his mind. He thought about the times when he was still in the swordsman school in the Old Territory. Usually, around this time of day, he would bring a chair to the courtyard and sit down to read his swordplay manual.

At that time, he did not possess any elemental energy. He only knew how to enjoy the satisfaction and tranquility derived from the cool breeze.

Clink.

Suddenly, a crisp and clear sound echoed through the air.

Ai Hui's thoughts were disrupted. He followed the direction of the sound and realized that it was made by Blind He.

Blind He had a weird look on his face. The pebble in his hand had been carved and reduced to the size of a finger. Stone crumbs were all over his clothes and his face.

Ai Hui felt slightly puzzled. Did the sound come from Blind He's hands?

Previously, he had closely observed the way Blind He carved materials. Even those hard metal ingots would melt like butter and crumble like biscuits in his hands. All the materials would be reduced to a pile of fine powder without the slightest bit of noise.

"Boss, look at this!"

Blind He yelled and threw the finger-sized pebble at Ai Hui.

Ai Hui felt slightly puzzled and caught it.

When Ai Hui caught it in his hands, he felt that something was unusual about it. When the tiny pebble was placed on his palm, it felt dense and heavy, resembling a metal ball. Ai Hui tried to channel a trace of elemental energy into it and realized it was very difficult for the trace of elemental energy to go through it.

He furrowed his eyebrows and pinched the pebble. The shape of the pebble remained the same.

Its degree of hardness was very high!

Ai Hui whipped out his Dragonspine and a streak of sword gleam slashed across the pebble. Ai Hui could feel an obvious sluggishness in the slashing motion. The thing that surprised him was that his sword gleam did not shatter the pebble, but only split it in half.

Ai Hui was very shocked. Given the current sharpness of his sword gleam, he still could not shatter the pebble!

Only upon his second try could he then shatter the pebble. The inner part of the pebble was slightly darker in color and smoother in texture than its surface. If Blind He had never practised his carving skills on this pebble, no one would know how hard the core of the pebble actually was.

Blind He found another pebble from somewhere. Both of his hands were flickering with light as fine stone powder fell on the ground with a rustling sound. After a while, a stone that was even smaller than the previous one appeared in his hand. At this moment, a serious look appeared on his face. A thin beam of light shot out from his fingertip and he began to carve it.

Qing Feng let out a soft gasp of surprise. He saw what was going on and used the grass vines in his hand to take a pile of pebbles from the creekside.

He chose a pebble and whipped it with one of his grass vines. Immediately, the little pebble was shattered, revealing the slightly darker core within it. Subsequently, he whipped the entire pile of pebbles violently with his grass whips and shattered all of them to smithereens. Then, he collected the cores that were leftover.

Mo Zhong brought his granddaughter along and quickly ran over to see what was going on. Mo Buyu was inquisitive, while Mo Zhong was extremely sensitive to materials, as he was a Grass-grade-weapon craftsman.

He picked up the inner core of a pebble and examined it closely with his eyes. His eyes were darting non-stop. Suddenly, he did something weird. He stuck out his tongue and licked it.

"Boss, this is a stone core."

Mo Zhong’s voice was filled with certainty and surprise.

Ai Hui did not expect Mo Zhong to know anything about it. He could not help but ask, "Stone core?"

"Ancient records have mentioned that there are cores within stones. These stone cores are as hard as metal. When one first tastes a stone core, he or she will taste saltiness and bitterness together. Subsequently, its taste will turn purely bitter. As such, they are also known as bitterstone seeds."

Upon hearing Mo Zhong's words, Ai Hui gave it a taste. Indeed, he tasted saltiness and bitterness at first. Quickly after, he could only taste bitterness.

It was magical!

As a citizen of the Old Territory, Ai Hui knew nothing about bitterstone seeds at all. He asked, "What uses does a bitterstone seed have?"

"This is the first time I've seen one in real life too. I have to study it before I can identify its characteristics and uses. However, since it's a new type of material to us, there are definitely some uses for it," Mo Zhong replied respectfully.

"Thank you for your trouble," Ai Hui nodded his head.

"It's part of my duty," Mo Zhong quickly replied.

Ai Hui cast a glance at Blind He and saw him carving something on the stone core with all his attention. The surface of the stone core on his hand was covered with many finely veined patterns. Suddenly, Ai Hui noticed there were beads of perspiration on Blind He's forehead. He could not help but take a closer look. Usually, no matter what material Blind He was holding, he would easily and skillfully carve something on it.

This was the first time Ai Hui saw such a strenuous look on his face while he was carving something.

Ai Hui picked up a bitterstone seed as well. He was filled with curiosity towards this material. Apparently, the bitterstone seeds were not compatible with elemental energy at all. They were extremely repulsive towards elemental energy

Could they be used to make weapons? But they did not seem to be strong enough.

How about shields? Alright, the bitterstone seeds were too tiny.

Then what could they be used for? Ai Hui was racking his brain.

This was a brand-new type of material, unknown to everyone. No one knew what opportunities were contained within these bitterstone seeds. It was absolutely great news to Ai Hui. This also made Ai Hui realize that the Old Territory was not as barren as he thought.

Would there be other materials that were unknown to people, like the bitterstone seeds?

This thought excited Ai Hui in an instant.

Chapter 397: An Impromptu Trip

Everyone's interest had been piqued and they began to look for other materials, hoping to discover something unique.

After searching the whole night, no one found any unique materials like the bitterstone seeds. However, the bamboo cart was still filled with various unknown stones, timbers, plants and animal bones. Ai Hui intended to study them when they reached Peace City, or after they had arrived at the Wilderness.

When the sun rose, everyone was so tired that they sat on the ground motionlessly.

Even someone like Ai Hui, who had a physically strong body, felt fatigued. Their elemental energy depleted faster in this place than when they were in the Avalon of Five Elements. Similarly, the physical energy also depleted at a faster rate too.

Ai Hui had mentally noted down that he must find a solution to this problem before he came to Old Territory again in the future. There was certainly a solution to this problem, otherwise, how would it be possible for the three central divisions to station themselves here long-term?

As Ai Hui thought about the three central divisions, he felt something was amiss. The three central divisions were widely regarded as the three most powerful divisions, and they were the ones that led the Thirteen Divisions. Logically speaking, they should be stationed in vital, central areas, but why were they

stationed in Old Territory?

It would be complete bullshit to say that Elders Guild valued Old Territory.

Ai Hui intended to ask Iron Lady or Bangwan about this when he went back. Both of them should know the reason behind it.

Even though it was painful for his wallet, Ai Hui still took out his essence elemental beans and asked everyone to come over, "We can only absorb the elemental energy from these essence elemental beans for the time being."

Essence elemental beans were extremely expensive. Using these to regain elemental energy would indeed hurt one’s wallet. Currently, Heaven Merit Points were the most approved form of currency. As long as Elders Guild did not collapse, Heaven Merit Points would still be a powerful currency. Similarly, essence elemental beans were used as a form of currency as well. If Elders Guild collapsed, elemental energy beans would continue to exist in this world. No matter what happened, everyone still needed elemental energy to survive.

Basically, Heavenly Merit Points were used in a few, high-end markets while essence elemental beans could be used everywhere.

Now was too late for regret. Old Territory’s impact on their elemental energy had exceeded Ai Hui’s expectations. It was not a bad thing to experience it for himself. Ai Hui said these words to console himself. Other than this minor issue, they weren’t met

with any serious troubles. This trip to Old Territory could be considered as setting out in advance to make the necessary arrangements. This could prevent the main party from being ill-prepared when they came here in the future.

Just as Ai Hui thought that there wasn't any serious problems, an unforeseen situation happened.

"There are only this many wood essence elemental beans?"

Qing Feng counted the essence elemental beans and looked at Ai Hui.

Ai Hui had two hundred plus essence elemental beans, but most of them were metal elemental and water elemental. There were only twenty-six wood essence elemental beans. This implied that Qing Feng and Zhao Boan would each get thirteen wood essence elemental beans.

Ai Hui began to reflect on himself. He was really ill-prepared for the operation this time around.

After muttering irresolutely to himself for a while, Ai Hui made a decision, "You will take all the wood essence elemental beans since your elemental energy usage is higher than Boan's. We will cancel the original plan of staying here. Right now, we fly straight to Asakusa City at full speed. Are twenty-six wood essence elemental beans enough?"

After pondering for a moment, Qing Feng shook his head and replied, "It’s hard to determine now. If we encounter any situation along the way, then this amount is definitely not enough."

Upon hearing these words, Ai Hui continued, "We will fly towards Palette Cloud Village then. It’s much nearer this way. We will fly along the Lava River. If we run out of essence elemental beans, we will fly across Lava River and enter Palette Cloud Village."

He did not choose to backtrack. They had already entered the Old Territory and it would be a waste of time and resources if they didn’t explore it.

No one had any objections and Ai Hui began to distribute the essence elemental beans.

Since all the wood essence elemental energy beans were given to Qing Feng for him to drive the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart, Zhao Boan had no choice but to endure the lack of elemental energy in his body.

When everyone completed absorbing the elemental energy from the essence elemental beans, the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart rose into the air and flew towards Palette Cloud Village.

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Several days had passed. A plump and short figure appeared

beside the Lava River and there was a surprised look on his face.

Qing Feng actually hid in Old Territory?

After having second thoughts, his facial expression returned to normal. Other than Old Territory, where else could Qing Feng escape to? As long as he was in the Avalon of Five Elements, he would be tracked down by them. Qing Feng clearly knew about this. Escaping to Old Territory was his only option.

However, could he survive if he escaped to Old Territory?

There was no way for him to replenish his elemental energy here. This place was like a dead end for him. Qing Feng only had himself to blame.

Not only did he fail to obtain the ancient treasure, the fall of the Ling Residence also caused Deep Sea Enterprise to suffer a huge loss and sharply reduced its influential power over the Avalon of Five Elements.

The worst thing was that the few families who used to keep in contact with their enterprise refused to do so nowadays. These families were mainly the ones that provided Deep Sea Enterprise with intelligence on Elders Guild. Right now, the intelligence gathering ability of Deep Sea Enterprise had decreased significantly.

Deep Sea Enterprise had stringent rules and regulations and was

fair in giving out rewards and punishments. Failing such an important mission would result in absolute death for Qing Feng. If Qing Feng still had family members, they would be implicated as well.

The plump and short fellow turned around to return to the enterprise to report his findings.

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A rarely seen Three Leaves Bamboo Cart was flying through the air in the desolate Old Territory. The whirring sound produced by the flapping of the three leaves on the bamboo cart alarmed the wild beasts in the forest and caused them to run in all directions in panic.

There were more and more timbers and stones piled onto the bamboo cart, all of which were collected by everyone along the way. Every piece of stone or timber had been marked with the location of where it was found. If they were to discover anything unique about a particular material in the future, they would know where it was from and this made the gathering process easier.

Since there was a lack of earth elemental energy in Old Territory, Ai Hi could not use his sand compass. All the materials they gathered had to be put on the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart.

Even though the trip to Old Territory this time around was done in haste, Ai Hui had learned a lot of new things. He had worked as a laborer in Wilderness for three years and spent nearly a year as a

student in Induction Ground. After the blood catastrophe broke out, he left Central Pine City and stayed in Peace City under a disguised identity for three years. Now, another half a year had passed.

It was almost eight years since he'd left Old Territory.

Eight years was not a short period of time to anyone.

When Ai Hui was in the Avalon of Five Elements, other than reminiscing about the times he'd spent in swordsman school, he seldom thought of Old Territory. Before he arrived at the swordsman school, he wandered about Old Territory in a desperate plight. He did not have a home and he was poverty-stricken. He did not know when that kind of life started for him. It appeared that he had been leading this kind of life since the day he was born.

He did not have any family members in Old Territory. As such, there was nobody and nothing for him to reminisce about.

All kinds of situations had happened on this impromptu trip to Old Territory and most of them got to do with the low concentration level of elemental energy in the surroundings. However, to Ai Hui's surprise, unlike the desolate cities in Old Territory, the wilderness of Old Territory was full of vitality.

The concentration level of elemental energy in surroundings was very low but plants continued to grow and wild beasts continued to breed.

Sometimes, Ai Hui felt that this place was not a vassal state of the Avalon of Five Elements, but rather, a completely different world of its own.

Having a lack of elemental energy, Ai Hui could not carry out his usual trainings or enter the Grass Hall. There was no way for him to use the message tree as well. How did the three central divisions convey messages to Elders Guild? If one needed to differentiate directions, he or she had to use the traditional compass.

Ai Hui meticulously noted down these questions. If they really were to come to Old Territory in the future, the answers to these questions would be very important.

However, Ai Hui discovered something unique. In Old Territory, the speed at which fusion elemental energy was depleting was much slower than elemental energy's. Amidst his surprise, Ai Hui was thinking about whether or not it was due to the five elemental cycle in fusion elemental energy. The five elemental cycle grew and multiplied without an end. To a certain degree, this could prevent the fusion elemental energy from escaping one's body. If this was the case, a killing machine that possessed the five elemental cycle like God-subduing Peak would be very suitable for Old Territory.

All these were Ai Hui's conjectures. Since he could not verify them now, he noted them down as well.

Not having enough essence elemental beans would put Ai Hui and his counterparts in a precarious situation. Especially Qing Feng, whose body was formed of elemental materials, had a high

usage of elemental energy. In Old Territory, a place where the concentration level of elemental energy was low, Qing Feng was like a fish that had left the water. An intense feeling of suffocation engulfed him incessantly.

Not needing Ai Hui's supervision, Qing Feng drove the Three Leaves Bamboo Cart, day and night, like a madman.

Sometimes, they would pass by some of Old Territory's cities. Most of these cities were very small in size and they were widely scattered. A city like Silver City was rarely seen. In Old Territory, flying was considered a very powerful ability. Very few people possessed the ability to fly. As such, the structures in Old Territory were very short and there were very few tall buildings. Occasionally, one could see a few pagodas. These pagodas were from the Cultivation Era and they were covered with traces of age and time.

There were a lot of ruins in Old Territory. Even now, the ruins of grotto-heavens were found occasionally. For the past two years, the prices of artifact remnants had been rising continuously. Elders Guild was not the only one who was buying them, the Blood of God was doing so as well.

A quick glance and a hasty passing-by was enough to wake the countless memories of Old Territory in Ai Hui.

The Three Leaves Cart flew across the sky of Old Territory.

They flew at top speed for a few days and nights. When everyone

saw the bright-red Lava River in the distance before the wood essence elemental beans ran out, they heaved a sigh of relief. There many people around the Lava River. They were the citizens from Old Territory and all of them were waiting for a chance to steal across the border to Avalon of Five Elements. From the sky, the people below them looked like ants. When the Old Territory's citizens saw their Three Leaves Bamboo Cart, a commotion broke out. Some people were waving their arms frantically while some were screaming at the top of their voices. All of them looked extremely agitated.

The citizens of Old Territory viewed the Avalon of Five Elements as the shore they had to get onto, while the citizens of the Avalon of Five Elements placed their hope on Wilderness.

Which one would be the shore they reached then? Who knew?

The Three Leaves Bamboo Cart did not stop and flew across the Lava River. It flew away from the fervent gazes and anxious shouts of the onlookers. After they flew across the Lava River, everyone was energized by the vigorous elemental energy from their surroundings. Their dried-up bodies were being nourished by the elemental energy in the air. Qing Feng quickly found a flat piece of land to land on.

Everyone jumped down from the bamboo cart and began to carry out Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

Ai Hui used his Sword-style Breathing Technique. The hissing sound of wind from his Dragonspine was remarkably striking. Elemental energy flowed in from all directions and entered Ai

Hui's body through his sword. The elemental energy formed numerous huge sword pills that whirled around within his body. Traces of elemental energy seeped into his muscles and nourished them. If an elementalist that specialized in body-tempering spent too much time in Old Territory, and his muscles lacked the nourishment of elemental energy, the tempered muscles would degenerate.

Not too long later, a few Three Leaves Bamboo Carts flew over. These bamboo carts were for conducting illegal immigration businesses. When they saw Ai Hui's Three Leaves Bamboo Cart, they thought Ai Hui and his counterparts were of the same trade. However, when they realized Ai Hui's base level was a lot higher than theirs, they quickly came over to greet him.

Those who ran illegal immigration business were usually elementalists that possessed Three Leaves Bamboo Carts. Their strength was average and most of them used to do transportation businesses in the past. Since the trade routes nowadays were broken, they could not carry on with transportation businesses. Since they were not powerful either, they did not dare to head to Wilderness as well. They could only rack their brains to find a new lease on life.

In times of chaos, strength was everything.

They stood respectfully at one side while waiting for Ai Hui and his counterparts to complete their Circulatory Cycle Revolutions.

Chapter 398: Grass Bandits

Qing Feng watched Ai Hui attentively as his sword-style breathing technique posture was simply too odd. While he'd already seen it many times, he just couldn't help but feel curious. Elemental energy was being absorbed through the sword and added into the circulatory cycle revolution. He'd never heard of such a technique.

He'd always felt that Ai Hui kept many secrets and behaved mysteriously, but when he tried to recall, he realized that Ai Hui's actions appeared very normal. What he found weirdest was the fact that he felt a sense of familiarity around Ai Hui, as if he'd seen him somewhere before. But his memory failed him regularly, so even if he felt that he'd seen something before, he simply couldn't remember the details.

Ai Hui was the last to complete his circulatory cycle revolution as his sword-style breathing technique needed more time than a regular cycle.

Seeing that the others were waiting for Ai Hui to complete his circulatory cycle revolution, the waiting elementalists instantly understood that Ai Hui was the leader of this group.

Ai Hui opened his eyes and saw the elementalists standing respectfully by on side, and knew what was going on.

But he was still not used to receiving such treatment.

Because of these elementalists here, Ai Hui knew that they were in Palette Cloud Village and were still quite far from Asakusa City, a fact that made everyone happier.

Ai Hui asked more about the stowaway business, about how good it was, how many people they could stow away in a day, and so on. These elementalists knew that the small businesses wouldn't be targeted by this group, so they answered candidly.

It was through this that Ai Hui gained some insights into the stowaway business.

They could make seven to eight trips a day, but they weren't without dangers, especially during the boarding process. It was easy for accidents to happen when there was a crowd. They took flight the moment they sensed something amiss. And they complained more than once about how poor the people from Old Territory were, and how the only thing they could offer as payment was artifact remnants. As such, all they could accumulate at the end of the day was a pile of old remnants.

The good thing was that the value of these remnants had increased significantly and were easier to sell. The cumbersome part was that they had to head toward larger cities in order to find merchants who would buy them. A lot of their time was spent on this.

Ai Hui took out some elemental energy beans and gave them to the elementalists as his transportation fee.

The elementalists were beyond joyful. They hurriedly reminded him that there was a group of Grass Bandits lurking at the edges of Jadeite Forest, waiting to ambush caravans, so he should be extremely careful.

Bidding them goodbye, Ai Hui waited for the man driving Three Leaves Bamboo Cart and headed toward Jadeite Forest.

On the cart, Ai Hui asked Zhao Boan, "Do you know anything about Grass Bandits?"

Zhao Boan quickly answered, "I know a little. The group was created by Zheng Xiaoman, who was ex-Deathgrass Division's Division Leader Zheng Yuanhong's adopted daughter. Deathgrass Division had refused to surrender to Da Gangi, and was massacred. It was said that someone secretly leaked the news, so Zheng Xiaoman and some principal members escaped the misfortune and named themselves Grass Bandits. There hadn't been much movement from them before, but now that the number of citizens in Palette Cloud Village has reduced, they're becoming more active. Many elementalists, who are displeased with Grandmaster Dai, joined upon hearing the news, so the group has been pretty influential recently. Grass Bandits was most ruthless toward caravans from Deep Sea Enterprise, letting neither the goods nor their people off. They will extort money from big enterprises and let them pass, while they are harmless to small enterprises."

From his speech, it was apparent that he rather admired the Grass Bandits.

Ai Hui was somewhat surprised. "These Grass Bandits seem

pretty decent?"

"Not bad indeed," Zhao Boan explained. "Although Zheng Xiaoman was a fiery character, she never harmed the innocent. Grass Bandits have strict and righteous laws of conduct, much better than the current Deathgrass Division. Grandmaster Dai often isolates himself, but the greedy fellows beneath him are trying to damage his reputation."

Ai Hui asked, "Deep Sea Enterprise?"

"No!" The anger in Zhao Boan's tone increased a few folds. "Deep Sea Enterprise gets their hands on all big and small businesses going on in Jadeite Forest. If you want to earn money, you have no choice but to join them, or they will smear your business, seek trouble or frame you. They are unscrupulous in all ways. But if you join them, a big cut of the profits goes to them and gifts must be offered monthly, so your hard work amounts to little eventually. Plus, your whole family will be under strict restrictions in all aspects of life. Any mistake that you make will implicate your family too."

Qing Feng stared blankly for a while before asking, "It's that serious?"

Zhao Boan looked at him. He'd heard Qing Feng calling himself one of Grandmaster Dai's fellows and couldn't help but mock him, "Those under Grandmaster Dai are naturally flowery, but they are extravagant, wasteful and without substance. Why would they care about our wellbeing? We're merely commoners."

Ai Hui asked, "With Deep Sea Enterprise's abilities, it shouldn't be difficult to eliminate the Grass Bandits right?"

Zhao Boan shook his head. "Just the opposite. Deep Sea Enterprise has lost many battles and can't do much to the Grass Bandits. The backbone of the people comes mainly from the old Deathgrass Division. They have a rich family history and imparted many skills, and they are good at handling military affairs. Plus, either out of affection for the Grass Bandits or hatred toward the enterprise's avariciousness and ruthlessness, many people in Jadeite Forest secretly relay news and information to the Grass Bandits. The enterprise has punished many families for this, but they are unstoppable."

Ai Hui nodded. "So now that there are fewer people in Palette Cloud Village, Elders Guild isn't bothered that the Grass Bandits have more freedom to move."

Zhao Boan answered confidently, "Yes, don't worry, Sir. As long as it's not Deep sea Enterprise, the Grass Bandits will not make things difficult for us."

Ai Hui shook his head. "It's better that we don't bump into them."

He just wanted to visit Senior Mingxiu and did not want to complicate things.

Qing Feng spoke up suddenly, "Let's bid our goodbyes if you guys

are going to Jadeite Forest."

Ai Hui was taken aback. "Why?"

Qing Feng replied frankly, "Grass Bandits has nothing against you all, but they will not let me off. Plus, the moment I set foot into Jadeite Forest, Deep Sea Enterprise has its way of tracking me down with their forbidden arts. I see that your sword skills have been stymied by a bottleneck and it’s meaningless to train with me, so let’s bid farewell."

Ai Hui thought over his words for a bit and felt they were logical. He stood up, saying, "Since that’s the case, goodbye. Take care of your safety and let’s not turn into enemies, hopefully."

Qing Feng shook his head. "Why would I do that? You are eventually going to become a Grandmaster and will have a limitless future ahead of you. I’m not one to overestimate my capabilities. Farewell!"

Finishing his words, he flew down from the cart and disappeared in another direction.

Ai Hui watched attentively for a bit before retracting his gaze. In this chaotic world, people come and go like duckweeds. Nature messes with people so who could tell the future?

Without Qing Feng, only Zhao Boan was left controlling the cart.

Zhao Boan's speed was evidently much slower than Qing Feng's, but Ai Hui did not rush him. He pondered over swordsmanship and analyzed them, and when they pitched camp, he would enter Grass Hall to continue his search for the notebook.

Entering Grass Hall each time, Manager would recommend a few missions to him. The development of the Assembly of Patriarchs had been going extremely well, so the range of missions received was much wider than before. Plus, due to public appraisal between aristocratic families, there was a shortage of manpower. Manager even handed him a letter written by Madam Ye.

In her letter, Madam Ye told him in all earnesty that there were few whom she could trust over there, and hoped that he would go over to help. She then implicitly suggested that she had much power and influence, and could offer him greater prospects and so on.

Ai Hui returned a letter, saying that he had decided to travel the world to hone his swordsmanship. He thanked her for her recognition and added that he would express his gratitude if there was a chance and so on.

As for the recommended missions, he rejected them all.

His daily life was exceptionally simple.

Blind He and Mo Zhong had no time to care about him as they placed all their heart into the cart's tree roots, logs and stones. In Old Territory, they were deficient in elemental energy and were

unable to analyze these materials. Now that there was nothing bothering them, they immediately threw themselves into the research.

Before this, they'd neither been to Old Territory, nor been in touch with materials from there. To them, it was like a whole new world.

Silent Mo had a lively personality but was quiet and focused when it came to work. She had inherited Mo Zhong's craftsmanship, and while she seemed inexperienced, it was obvious that she had real talent. She had a natural intuition when it came to plants and for a grass-grade weapon craftsman, this was the greatest gift.

Weaponsmiths and grass-grade weapon craftsmen were slightly different in that one forged weapons with metal element, whereas the other forged them with wood element. Other than that, they had many similarities.

Blind He was usually a taciturn person, but when theorizing with Mo Zhong he became a chatterbox and his words were harsh. Mo Zhong, on the other hand, was honest and sincere, but when discussing refinement, he became an angry person who was adamant about his ideas. Any slight disagreements with him and he'd look as if he was about to throw his fist.

While Zhao Boan came from a family of itinerant merchants, Ai Hui thought that he was much more of a scholar than a qualified merchant. The good thing was that despite his lack of experience, Zhao Boan had been influenced from a young age and had been

through practical training. As such, he gradually became a seasoned merchant too.

The desolate scenes along the way were graver than those in Silver Mist Sea.

The once busy trade routes were mostly empty and only a few caravans could be seen. This was partly due to the havoc the Grass Bandits had been wrecking, but it was more so the fact that the number of people in Palette Cloud Village had decreased. The cities along the way fell into a slump and caravans' profits were scanty.

They could only make significant profits if they transported the goods to the Wilderness. Otherwise, they basically had nothing to earn. But it was a risky task as there were too many bandit attacks. Plus, the Wilderness was no peaceful land. For the groundbreakers, their lives were already on the table, so there wasn't any way they could resist the temptation of the goods in the caravans. They could easily and willingly take that risk out of desperation.

The closer they got to Jadeite Forest, the fewer caravans they saw.

Zhao Boan reminded Ai Hui that they'd already stepped into the territory of the Grass Bandits.

Although Zhao Boan seemed rather confident in the Grass Bandits from the way he spoke about them, Ai Hui could still tell that he was somewhat nervous.

Ai Hui wasn't too worried about himself. He was worried about Senior Mingxiu, who was in Asakusa City. She was from the Lu family and her brother, Lu Chen was one of Grandmaster Dai's oldest disciples, so even if the Grass Bandits did not hate her to the bone, they would not let her off easy, that was for sure.

Plus, if they could seize her, they would be able to blackmail the Lu family and demand a ransom.

He hoped there were enough guards around her. With the Lu family's status in Jadeite Forest, they probably wouldn't neglect her safety.

Ai Hui wasn't sure if he was feeling slightly uneasy due to the fact that he was about to meet her.

He had Zhao Boan stop in the closest small town and wait for his return.

He'd decided to fly into Asakusa City himself to speed things up.

Chapter 399: Encounter

Ai Hui's Starry Gem Swordwings flapped powerfully. Ai Hui was like a giant crane soaring high up in the sky. Amid the humming of the wind he focused his gaze far away.

The distant, green forest extended on and on and Ai Hui couldn't see where it ended. Its vastness was admirable. A slight wiggle for it was like a big, furious wave, its surging force overflowing.

Jadeite Forest had never been this formidable.

Be it Elders Guild or Blood of God, both held it in high regards.

With a Grandmaster who was at his peak overseeing it, Jadeite Forest was like a green monster and no one could ignore its power.

Ai Hui was startled as the closer he got to the forest, the more he felt it was different. The Nature's elemental energies were different from that in other places.

Jadeite Forest's elemental energies were flowing toward a certain direction, and it seemed as though there was a bottomless pit in that area, constantly absorbing the energy.

The energy flow was very slow. He wouldn't have sensed it if not for the fact that Ai Hui had knowledge about his teacher's theories, and was extremely sensitive to the flow of elemental energy.

Generally speaking, Nature's elemental energies rarely flowed toward one direction. Instead, they would intertwine through many, tiny, turbulent flows. The energy flow here was abnormally neat.

Where are these energies flowing toward?

Ai Hui was full of curiosity.

Such a large-scale energy flow would require a terrifying force. Only an area like Silver Mist Sea could create such a huge motion. But Silver Mist Sea, blocked by a dam, had only managed to accumulate such strength through over a thousand years of expansion. Jadeite Forest wasn't like that in the past. Who could have developed a scene like this within such a short period of time?

There was only one person of course. Grandmaster Dai Gang!

Only Grandmasters' profound and immeasurable knowledge and power could produce such a breathtaking sight like this.

Could it be that Grandmaster Dai was trying to build a miracle like that of Silver Mist Sea?

Furthermore, Ai Hui had yet to figure out how to recycle elemental energy. If the energies in this large-scale flow weren't recycled, this place would have long become an elemental energy desert, like Old Territory.

Nevertheless, Jadeite Forest had not dried up so there must be something special about the way elemental energy channeled. Ai Hui was brimming with curiosity now. This unexplainable method of energy flow interested him greatly. Teacher's plan of [treat the city as a piece of cloth] essentially controlled elemental energy flow through nodes and elemental traces.

Was Dai Gang using this method as well?

But this wasn't the time to delve into it.

Ai Hui noticed a group of people flying in his direction from far away. There were about ten of them.

Grass Bandits?

Ai Hui was rather curious, but seeing that they did not slow down, his gaze sharpened.

"This path is blocked! Retreat quickly!" Someone shouted from over there.

Ai Hui furrowed his brows and raised his voice, "I'm heading towards Asakusa City, if you guys could make it easier..."

Upon hearing that, a cold gleam flashed across the lead elementalist's eyes. He cried out in a stern voice, "Dubious intentions, arrest him! Resist and you shall be killed instantly!"

The Grass Bandits split up and got into their formation quickly. They formed three sections and the few in the middle section pounced on Ai Hui, while the other two groups closed in from both sides to prevent him from escaping.

Ai Hui had not expected their response to be this aggressive. He then thought about how he had mentioned Asakusa City. Could it be that the Grass Bandits were doing something in the city?

A murderous glint flashed across his eyes.

If the Grass Bandits were doing a big operation in Asakusa City, the only thing Ai Hui could think of was that they were targeting Senior Mingxiu. From Zhao Boan's description, Ai Hui felt no malice toward the Grass Bandits, in fact he felt sympathetic. But if it involved Senior Mingxiu, Ai Hui absolutely would not relent, no matter who the opponents were.

Senior Mingxiu was Ai Hui's Achilles's heel.

Ai Hui's temperature decreased abruptly, emitting traces of coldness. Seeing the incoming groups, he narrowed his eyes and flapped his Starry Gem Swordwings forcefully, his body dashing straight for the people in front.

Ai Hui's move alarmed this group of Grass Bandits instantly.

"Watch out!" The elementalist at the front shouted. He took the

lead and threw pine needles toward Ai Hui.

The flying needles exploded and split up. One became two and two became four…

In the blink of an eye, closely packed pine needles flew toward Ai Hui like dark green drizzle. Each needle had a wisp of fine green fog. It was a type of highly toxic poison.

The other elementalists were in shock. They did not expect their leader to execute such a fatal blow the moment he attacked.

Not only did [Autumn Drizzle] have plenty of pine needles, the area it covered was very wide, leaving enemies with no place to escape to. After a long period of refinement, pine needles could break elemental energy, and the fine wisp of green fog that was wound around them was highly poisonous. It had a very good affinity for elemental energy and could easily infiltrate it and enter the enemies' bodies.

Ai Hui had no intention of dodging them, causing everyone to relax their beating hearts.

As the distance between the needles and their target closed in, even the head elementalist smiled. According to the effective range, his target was no longer able to escape.

Ai Hui had never thought of escape.

He increased his speed further and the familiar wind barrier reappeared as he thrusted his Dragonspine repeatedly. The results of his sparrings with Qing Feng were thoroughly evident in his strikes. They were faster and sharper, and three consecutive thrusts were all it took to shatter the barrier.

Ai Hui felt his body become lighter.

The Grass Bandits, who thought they'd succeeded, became dizzy as the pine needle rain disappeared suddenly.

A hole appeared in the densely packed needle rain, facing them directly.

A blurry silhouette appeared before them and the sharp and fast sword momentum overwhelmed them. An explosion resounded like rolling thunder from deep with the cloud layers, arriving a little later.

The leader of the Grass Bandits opened his eyes wide as his pupils dilated. He cried out in alarm, "Stop..."

Ai Hui was like a ferocious tiger breaking free from its cage. With an indistinct shadow, his rainbow-like sword gleams drew breathtakingly cold light traces that went straight for the leader.

The other Grass Bandits, as if awoken from a dream, were pale faced, but proceeded to defend out of instinct.

Multi-colored light screens appeared before them and before things could stabilize, the sword rays struck them like meteors from outer space.

Upon breaking the wind barrier, Ai Hui's speed was so fast that he couldn't change moves. But at such a terrifying speed even a small stone had shocking destructive power, so he didn't need to change moves.

Boom!

A dull, drum-like sound resounded throughout the plains as all the light screens collapsed in a split second and the fragmented rays vanished into a surging puff of colored fog.

Under the strong impact, four elementalists were being tossed about and started spurting blood.

Four were injured with one hit!

The faces of the other bandits changed greatly and they threw themselves on Ai Hui simultaneously. One of them hoisted his arm up and shot an arrow towards the sky. The arrow travelled miles up and with a cry it transformed into a huge ball of flame. At such a height, the bright red, eye-catching flame could be seen from far away.

Ai Hui shot a glance over and knew that they were calling for backup but he did not mind.

Guessing that Senior Mingxiu was likely to be in danger, Ai Hui's murderousness intensified.

With a bend of his body, he pounced on the remaining few Grass Bandits. He was fast as lightning and his moves were sharp, without the least bit of compassion. Executing [Six Moons], he drew six fatal arcs which emerged quietly in unguarded spots, looking like six deadly bats in the sky.

Fresh blood spattered everywhere as a few Grass Bandits held onto their throats with their eyes were wide open.

"No!"

The leader had a look of desire on his face but in the next moment, his eyes bulged out as a sword ray pierced through his throat, squirting blood foam out.

Ai Hui did not hold back. He had not planned to provoke them, but their attack had been too sudden. He was not afraid of offending them, and he would not place his hopes on them being courteous and moderate.

None of the twelve Grass Bandits survived.

Ai Hui was not in the mood to collect the spoils of war. He held onto his sword with a cold expression on his face as he continued his journey toward Asakusa City.

While he was expressionless and apathetic, the murderous spirit enveloping his whole body was so thick that it seemed substantial.

The gale whistled past as Mistress's last words echoed in his ears. If anything happened to Senior Mingxiu, he would never be able to forgive himself. The war of Central Pine City, the rainy night and the color of blood buried deep within his memory came back to him and spread throughout his whole body.

He felt as though he had returned to the final battle in Central Pine City.

The thick, black sky and the fresh blood mixed together. He looked at the blurry figure in the sky, his heart sinking bit by bit. On the verge of desperation, he tried with all his might to search for a chance until he realized that he was in a plight with no way out, and his last trace of hope was lost. Then, a sudden grief and sadness overtook him and destroyed him in an instant.

Peace came after grief. There was a certain consolation in knowing that whatever he did would not be enough to save him from despair.

He had fallen into an abyss, lightless and isolated.

It all felt clear to him.

A murderous spirit engulfed Ai Hui. He was like a dried up

mummy, walking out from his rotten grace with the aura of death lingering around him.

Many closely packed black dots appeared on the horizon. More Grass Bandits had come upon seeing the signal for help.

Ai Hui turned a blind eye to it. Alone, he held onto his sword and flew toward that very direction.

There were about three hundred of them and the leader was a towering and fierce looking man. Seeing that Ai Hui was alone and that he wasn't trying to avoid them, but was instead coming for them, the leader knew that he must be a strong fighter.

Plus, they did not see any of their own elementalists. Needless to say, they could tell just how disastrous the situation had been.

While he looked crude and forthright, he wasn't rude and impetuous. He was extremely calm.

Provoking a strong fighter was the last thing these Grass Bandits wanted. Many of them had died because of that. Some enraged Masters were taken down immediately. Others started feuds but let their opponents slip away, eventually losing their lives when those opponents became stronger and came back for them.

Bandits were bandits. What kind of bandits would they be if they were living harmoniously and amiably?

Real bandits were those who were pleased to avenge, kill for property and plunder like the wind.

They weren’t afraid of death to begin with, and killing was a common occurrence. It was kill or be killed.

No matter how powerful the fellow before them was, he wasn’t a Master. Since that was the case, they would not give him the chance to become a Master.

"Kill!"

With the burly man’s order, three hundred Grass Bandits sped up. Sharp, non-stop hissing noises sounded like waves as murderous spirits permeated the whole place.

With an aura of death lingering around Ai Hui, he advanced forward, carrying an apathetic expression like that of a death god when walking out of hell.

Chapter 400: Big Biscuit and Red Muslin

Zheng Xiaoman was the leader of the Grass Bandits and Cao Ning was her right-hand man, just as Cao Ning's father was Zheng Yuanhong's. Both families had been been acquainted for a long time and their friendship wasn't ordinary. Once again, they escaped the bloodbath of Deep Sea Enterprise together and they strongly trusted in each other.

Cao Ning was a brave and attentive character with outstanding capabilities and a shrewd gaze.

The stranger before him was faintly familiar looking and he felt as though he'd seen him somewhere. But at that point, he had no time to entertain that thought, since once the battle started, he was going to use his sword to talk.

Three hundred people besieged one man, giving him no chance to flee. He heaved a sigh of relief before worry set in. If that man came over so boldly, he must have something up his sleeves.

Cao Ning increased his guard and the incoming Ai Hui sank down suddenly.

The distance between them decreased and everyone's hearts tensed up continuously. Ai Hui's abrupt move caused some of the more tense Grass Bandits to react instinctively.

Cao Ning's face changed slightly. He wanted to make a sound to stop them but was too late.

Quite a few of his comrades had already struck and some others quickly joined in upon seeing that.

"Ooh... My goodness!"

Initially, the cries were fragmentary. Soon, they became clearer and more resounding.

The sight of three hundred people releasing an attack was beyond spectacular. Multi-colored elemental energy light rays gathered together like surging waves. Ai Hui threw himself forward and the hiss that filled the sky abruptly increased in pitch, drowning their bellows.

Cao Ning did not look too good. Their attack appeared mighty but was in fact far from passable. For them to have survived in this chaotic world and resisted Deep Sea Enterprise, they naturally had their own means of existing. Their attacks were skillfully coordinated and ingenious. Those who weren't of the level of Master absolutely wouldn't be able to directly withstand the elemental energy current amassed by hundreds of elementalists. Plus, under their meticulous arrangement, their scope of attack was extremely wide, so it was difficult for their target to escape once they were close enough to him.

Even Deep Sea Enterprise hadn't managed to take advantage of them.

This was the correct way of battling – the way Cao Ning had been

taught since young, so he had precise control over this type of battling method.

What this meant was that in the battling aspect, the current Deathgrass Division couldn't compare to the Grass Bandits.

But Cao Ning looked grave at this point as his opponent was slyer than he had expected. His sudden downward movement was made with perfect timing. Not only did he disrupt their momentum, he also triggered some impetuous members to strike first, throwing the team's rhythm off.

Any elementalist could do what he'd done but the key was to grasp the correct timing. His opponent was evidently a seasoned fighter with rich experience.

An absolutely simple move could actually lead to an extraordinary outcome.

An expert!

Their seemingly powerful attack was unlikely to intimidate him.

Indeed, Ai Hui, who had made that sudden drop, rose upwards suddenly and flew straight for the Grass Bandits from the side. His azure wings flapped full force but the hissing elemental energy current was approaching him at a rapid speed.

A trace of joy was seen in Cao Ning's eyes. It was too late for his

opponent to escape from this wave of attacks!

While this wave of attacks was somewhat messy, it was of a tremendous volume, so once the target was caught in its ripples, it was very difficult to escape.

Suddenly, Cao Ning noticed his target's posture.

Ai Hui's posture was very unique. His azure wings stuck close to his back and his body was extended. The sword in his hand swallowed and spat light rays like a swordfish migrating deep underwater at a high speed.

Cao Ning's pupils contracted.

The elemental energy current appeared to be swallowing the target, but then he vanished from his line of sight suddenly.

This...

Cao Ning had seen many speedy elementalists. During his time in Deathgrass Division, their scouting speed was usually astonishing. Some could even leave a lifelike afterimage in the sky. Some moved like fog while others could conduct long distance raids lasting for days. But he'd never seen such a valiant and short-range sprint.

For that split second, he was actually unable to catch sight of his opponent's silhouette.

A delayed boom sounded.

Cao Ning was stunned. Wind barrier?

Did he break the barrier in that moment?

He raised his head abruptly, fixing his gaze on the left side of the sky. The zooming afterimage was like a black dot.

So fast...

Was he escaping?

He did not know why, but this thought relaxed his tensed mental state. When he came around to react to it, he couldn't help but mock himself. Although his opponent's attack was very brief, his performance had far exceeded theirs. He had a profound understanding of battling and had a perfect grasp on timing.

This was the kind of enemy he had hoped not to meet, because even if they did win, a substantial amount of damage would be inflicted on them. Cao Ning thought about who his opponent might be. To possess such skills, he mustn't be someone nameless.

Upon failing their first wave of attacks, the team readjusted themselves, albeit in an unorganized manner.

It was always like that when it came to battling. The moment they lost the upper hand, it meant that their rhythm was also disrupted. If it had been the former Deathgrass Division that was in their position, the team would've been able to readjust themselves quickly because of their experience and cool-headedness.

A pity Grass Bandits were Grass Bandits and the Deathgrass Division, the Deathgrass Division.

Alright, even the current Deathgrass Division wasn't as impressive as before.

Cao Ning also felt that he'd been over-demanding. Although the team was somewhat disorganized, they were still adjusting and their daily trainings hadn't been for nothing. He replaced his focus onto the target high in the sky. Eh?

His opponent was already in position and facing them. This is...?

Cao Ning and Ai Hui made eye contact.

Not good!

Cao Ning realized in an instant that his opponent hadn't planned to flee. He was going to attack!

His Starry Gem Swordwings spread open mightily and Ai Hui swooped down like a falcon.

His posture diving down was extremely sharp and agile. The grass bandits below were taken aback, messing up the team's formation once again.

"We have a lot of people!" someone shouted, instantly giving the team a confidence boost. That was right, there were three hundred of them.

"Kill!"

"Get rid of him!"

The crowd was stirred. A few archers initiated an attack, shooting raindrop-like arrows toward the figure in the sky.

Cao Ning knew things were bad. The opponent was a seasoned battler with rich experience. Once he gained an upper hand high in the sky, it wasn't going to be easy to stop him.

Ai Hui dove down fast, his figure rapidly swaying and his flight path instantly becoming strange and unpredictable.

Ai Hui's rapid speed brought an oppressive atmosphere to the sky, where many Grass Bandits felt themselves being locked into place. They were trying wildly to attack and stop him but they couldn't even get hold of the corner of their enemy's garments. Intense fear caused them to lose all coordination. They battled individually, creating a complete mess.

Ai Hui, on the other hand, was like a nimble fish, dodging the raindrop-like light rays.

His swiftly moving figure produced layers of aftershadow, which magnified within everybody's field of vision and became increasingly daunting.

His apathetic and cold face carried not the least bit of warmth. There was no malevolence, no clenching of teeth. He was exceptionally calm.

Amid the countless elemental light beams, his unusual calmness became jarring.

It was fear evoking.

Even Cao Ning shuddered. His judgment had once again been overthrown. How many times had it been today? He couldn't remember but he knew that he'd provoked a truly ruthless person.

"Big Biscuit!"

He shouted with all the voice he had. Because he used too much force, the veins on his neck and forehead surfaced. It was a scary sight.

A faint, red muslin appeared at the tip of the sword held by the

swooping figure.

Old Five was the backbone of the team and also a member of the younger generation of Deathgrass. In the team, there were a total of six members who were like him. They were all well-coordinated and had outstanding battle tactics, as well as rich family histories. They instantly understood Cao Ning’s intention.

They had to block off the opponent’s attack or there was going to be a bloodbath.

As if their hearts were linked, the six of them executed their own defensive moves simultaneously. They practiced different inherited arts but knew guarding moves. Wood elementalists emphasized control and guarding techniques needed training.

Six multi-colored light screens with different thicknesses stacked over each other, like a glazed, thousand layered biscuit.

This move was named [Overlapping Defense], a standard battle technique of Deathgrass, but everyone liked calling it "Big Biscuit". Cao Ning had been following his father since young and under his influence, he too, started calling it big biscuit.

The six light screens were not stacked randomly but instead, meticulously arranged in a way whereby some were solid and others were flexible. That way, they would be able to keep off the opponent’s attack more effectively.

Ai Hui appeared unconcerned, but the Dragonspine in his hand was trembling rapidly.

The red muslin was spreading and becoming increasingly vivid. It was about ten meters long. It was as if he was wearing a long, dull red muslin belt while descending from the sky.

[Red Muslin]!

Having seen Brother Li Wei's domineering move in the past, Ai Hui had made some minor adjustments to create this move. Brother Li Wei's body was incomparably strong, so coupled with a soldiers' inherited art, the combination was indestructible. Launching such an explosive attack was extremely complementary.

With Ai Hui's [Red Muslin], it was the sword which bore the attack. His body wasn't strong enough to endure such a terrifying attack.

Upon witnessing Brother Li Wei's attack, Ai Hui thought to himself, "How can I increase the force of the impact?"

His speed increased unceasingly as the sword in his hand underwent changes. Because of Qing Feng's accompanied trainings, Ai Hui's execution was much more concise and efficient, thus allowing him to significantly increase the number of blows. Furthermore, with better controlling ability, Ai Hui was able to shorten the length of the red muslin, making it more formidable.

Previously, Ai Hui's red muslin could clearly be seen by the whole of Peace City but now, it was only about ten meters.

The reduction in length made it denser and sturdier.

Ai Hui was like a meteorite falling from the sky, and the soft and gentle red muslin belt around him smashed onto the light screen forcefully.

Bang!

When his speed reached its peak, the impact it brought was exceptionally terrifying. The power contained in the red muslin belt exploded at the same time.

In a split second, the six layers of light screen had been pierced and the Big Biscuit shattered with a loud rumble.

The enormous recoiling force made Ai Hui dizzy, but he knew that this was a crucial moment so he forced himself to stay calm. He thrusted the Dragonspine sword, which he held tightly in his hands, toward the crowd.

The force of the thrust was extremely tremendous, as evident from a few additional cracks that appeared on the sword.

Cao Ning and his gang were in a much worse state. The force of the impact had injured them on the spot. [Red Muslin], still yet to release its complete power, stirred up a burst of bloody rain onto

the troop when it hit them. A few unlucky elementalists were blown into pieces even before they could utter a cry. The tremendous force of the impact threw them all into a state of complete chaos.

What was worse was that their enemy had crashed into their formation.

The thing Cao Ning dreaded the most had happened after all.

The tiger had invaded the herd!

These words emerged in his mind.

Killing close-range required a lot of willpower and courage, something ordinary elementalists weren't able to do. Plus, now that the opponent had intruded, his soldiers would refrain from attacking in fear of hurting their own people. Their hands were tied in that case, and their opponent could easily take advantage of them.

But at this point, it was too late.

What Cao Ning had to do now was to cling onto his enemy so as to allow his people to regain the upper hand in terms of numbers.

He gritted his teeth and charged toward Ai Hui, who was coming for them, set to kill.