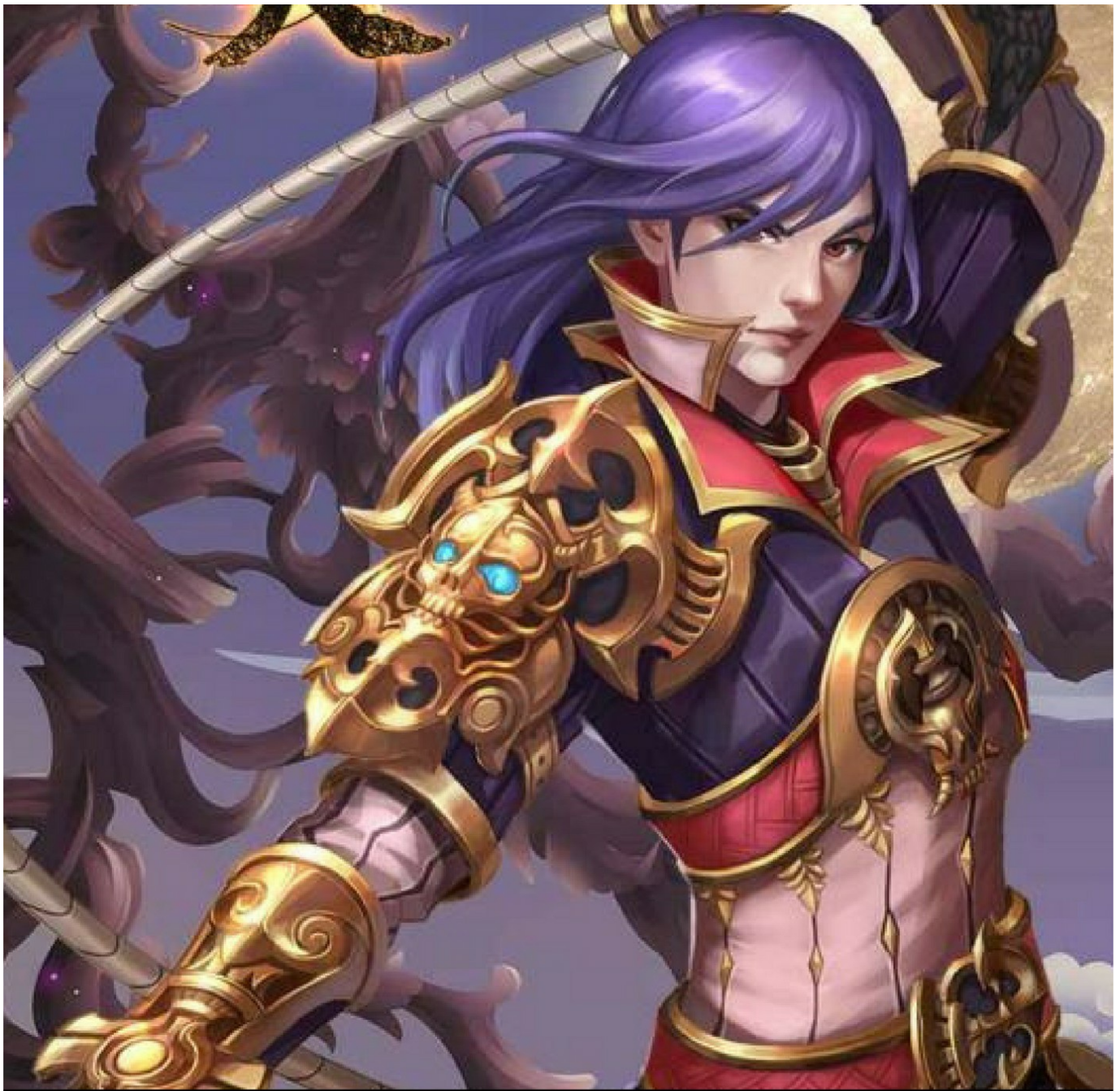

THE AVALON OF 5 ELEMENTS

BOOK 05

Fang Xiang

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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 401: Killing Numbly

When Ai Hui stuck himself onto his opponent's back, his somewhat trembling wrist had already regained stability and his expression had returned to its original calmness. That blow from [Red Muslin] had mostly been endured by his sword. Although Ai Hui used many techniques to dissolve the impact, the remaining force still made his wrist numb.

From the corner of his eyes he noticed Cao Ning and the gang charging toward him, but his hands moved without the least bit of hesitation or inaccuracy. With a flick of his wrist, the sharp sword ray pierced directly into his opponent's back while his body was like a swimming fish, nimbly making his way into the crowd.

The Grass Bandits were a mess. They knew that their enemy had intruded and in a panic they rushed, one after another, to defend. The disordered group hindered Cao Ning and a few other backbone fighters, aiding Ai Hui's shield against them.

Ai Hui was extremely fast. Be it his attack or body movement, he was going to finish it quickly and regardless of the battle outcome, he wasn't going to stay unnecessarily long.

He executed a simple [Heavenly Thrust] with his Dragonspine and sword rays flew toward the crowd like raindrops. Some smashed onto the defense barrier, producing sparks, while others collided with the grass rattan, causing leaves to fly everywhere. Some entered the bandits' bodies, causing blood to splatter.

In reality, these sword rays did not cause great damage. Instead, it triggered mass confusion and panic.

Ai Hui knew very well that one could only catch fish in muddy water.

No one noticed that Ai Hui was drilling his way through the crowd like a swimming fish. The number of leaf blades on the black wings on his back was reducing in number. Black tree leaves fell silently from his Starry Gem Swordwings like small black fishes cruising underwater.

Ai Hui had spent a lot of effort on building the Starry Gem Swordwings and he was finally able to unleash its potential.

A black shadow flashed past, causing Cao Ning to feel dizzy.

His pupils shrank. What was that?

A black leaf!

Black...

He suddenly thought of the wings on his opponent's back. He scanned his surroundings quickly and saw countless black leaves floating close to the crowd. Lights were flickering, explosions rang across the skies and angry cries could be heard everywhere. Amid this chaotic scene, no one noticed these rather motionless black leaves.

Cao Ning spotted the enemy within the crowd and noticed that his black wings had disappeared and only the skeletons were left.

He quickly understood what was going on and his face paled.

"Be careful..."

Before his frightened but loud voice could be heard, the quietly floating black leaves moved suddenly.

Each leaf was a mini black sword and Ai Hui's Starry Gem Swordwings had a total of three hundred and sixty tree leaves, which equated to three hundred and sixty mini swords.

The three hundred and sixty mini swords moved simultaneously.

The black sword rays were like rain, intertwining in the sky and forming a deathly black light net.

Anguished shrieks sounded simultaneously and a huge amount of blood splattered all over the place at the same time.

Ai Hui's premeditated move revealed its malicious fangs with its first blow. Ai Hui had progressed tremendously and was no longer comparable to when he'd first created the swordwings. But when he was creating it, he had already taken his future progress into consideration.

Even then, Ai Hui did not expect this move to be so formidable.

It was his first time operating so many mini swords and hence he was unable to exercise precise control over them. The good thing was that there were many enemies and he was alone without companions, so he need not worry about hurting the wrong people. His opponents were unguarded so whether or not his attack was fatal, this battle would end as long as their speed was quick and their power destructive enough.

The majority of the Grass Bandits did not notice the tiny black leaves and some even thought that Ai Hui's wings were faling apart as they weren't able to endure the intense battle. As such, they were caught off guard when the sword rays rose up violently.

Ai Hui succeeded on his first blow. Not daring to hesitate he quickly summoned his mini swords back.

Without the mini swords, the buoyancy of his skeletal wings was pathetically lacking. He would fall into a miserable plight if the situation before him lost its flexibility.

Countless black leaves flew onto Ai Hui's back from all directions, like many wiggling black snakes.

"Stop him!" Cao Ning bellowed, the horrifying situation making his eyes pop. He'd never seen such a terrifying scene. The sight of over a hundred people spurting blood was beyond impactful.

Intense fear enveloped him. His opponent's abilities, and even his ruthlessness, had far exceeded his expectations. He killed people as if he was picking dried grass. Even as a bandit, Cao Ning's heart felt cold.

Who exactly had they offended?

The scary sight before his eyes had completely aroused Cao Ning's determination. No matter how big a price they had to pay, even if this bunch of people were all to die, they must kill that fellow!

If that fellow was playing hide and seek with them in future, they would not be able to live another peaceful from then on.

In actuality, Cao Ning was frightened. Although Ai Hui's attack seemed dreadful, only just over thirty people lost their lives. Other elementalists weren't badly injured and their battling abilities weren't badly affected. There were also many who guarded themselves vigilantly and managed to avoid getting struck by the mini swords.

But regardless of whether they were injured or not, they were taken aback by this sudden move.

From the start of the battle up till now, their opponent had been alone. Yet, the rhythm of the battle had been under his control all this time. The number of casualties on their side continued to increase but that fellow remained unhurt.

Ai Hui's strength and agility intimidated the grass bandits, effectively destabilizing their morale.

The Grass Bandits were very different from Deathgrass Division.

Although Zheng Xiaoman and Cao Ning had rich family resources and hoped to train and develop Grass Bandits into another Deathgrass Division, it was just wishful thinking. They'd learnt from their experienced older generations when it came to selecting and training members, but what they created was still a group of roving bandits. Perhaps they were stronger than regular bandits, but they were still far away from becoming a legitimate combat division.

At least Grass Bandits had courage, were swift and wear fearful.

Upon seeing that Ai Hui's wings were not completely filled and that his movement was affected, a few grass bandits charged over without hesitation.

Like a javelin, the grass rattan shot out, releasing a sharp whistle.

A handful of grass seeds were thrown toward Ai Hui. As long as they were within three meters of him, they would burst into big nets, effectively trapping him.

A green snake, formed from strange green ripples, passed through the crowd silently and pounced on Ai Hui.

But he was faster than all of them.

It wasn't that Ai Hui had long predicted their moves. He was just very aware of his flaw and chose not to bet his life on the assumption that his enemies were going to ignore it.

He swatted his Dragonspine downward in a light movement. With a clap, as if hitting a water's surface, his body shook and an injured grass bandit appeared beside him.

There was a bloody hole on the bandit's neck. This small injury was practically non-existent to him. He growled and many grass rattans appeared around him, moving toward Ai Hui like the tentacles of an octopus.

Clap, clap, clap!

The sword in Ai Hui's hand accurately struck all of the grass rattans. The bandit's body stiffened as a sword ray shot through a grass rattan, pierced his chest and exited from his back.

Ai Hui's legs were like springs. He stepped on the grass rattan forcefully like an agile cheetah, and with a change of direction, he entered an empty spot in between two grass bandits.

The black leaves formed a black snake that flew nimbly toward the skeleton wings on Ai Hui's back. The leaves quickly adhered themselves onto the wings.

Ai Hui was fast like lightning. His outstanding body was of an important use in this crucial moment. In that small space, his body's burst of energy made his movements exceptionally quick.

At times, he would borrow the power of his Dragonspine. He would also borrow the momentum gained from his thighs or use his enemies' bodies as a shield.

He was like a demonic bolt of lightning, traveling back and forth through spaces between his enemies. His cool-headedness allowed him to make the most suitable choices amid this chaotic battle. His ability to react quickly also allowed him to deal with unforeseen circumstances with ease.

Wherever he passed, fresh blood splattered.

His sword rays were always striking the enemy's vital points from unexpected angles.

Cao Ning and his gang were chasing wildly behind, but Ai Hui was like a slippery loach, always finding ways to dodge them and throw them off. At the same time, he was like a wandering death god, accurately and efficiently collecting souls with a lack of regard for anything else.

The Grass Bandits fell from the sky like dumplings.

The once densely packed team was now much sparser, and in the

blink of an eye there were less than two hundred of them left, and many of them were injured and dripping blood.

Fear started creeping onto their faces. They were all desperate criminals, but seeing the number of lives being taken away so rapidly had their hearts and limbs turning cold nevertheless. Whatever courage they had vanished in a puff of smoke.

Ai Hui had that same expressionlessness plastered onto his face, and his sword thrusts were still fast and precise, without the slightest wavering.

The Starry Gem Swordwings on his back were back to normal, with all the leaves back in place. Mobility restored, Ai Hui was like a tiger that had grown wings, his sword moves became much swifter.

[Six Moons] appeared as six scythes, like that of a grim reaper. They would harvest a soul the moment a weakness was being exposed.

Suddenly, someone started to flee.

Once an avalanche occurred, it became difficult to contain. This was a unique characteristic of the bandits. No matter how surly bandits were, they crumbled easily when met with danger. Yet, the Thirteen Divisions had to, time and time again, battle until there were only a few people left and a definite victory was won.

Cao Ning and Zheng Xiaoman might have been able to duplicate the discipline and code of conduct of the former Deathgrass Division, but they were unable to instill in them the spirit of Deathgrass.

What were they fighting for?

For the place where all power and weakness originated from.

When things were going smoothly, they saw it as a joke that was being played on them. There was no need for reason when there was talent. Only at the end of the road did they realize that there were always things that made them afraid, unwilling and unable to retreat even if a blade was held close to their eyes.

The mental breakdown hit them hard. To the grass bandits, this battle was merely a one-sided massacre. They'd seen for themselves how Ai Hui, alone with a single sword, killed their people numbly and indifferently.

But not everyone was feeling defeated. Cao Ning and more than ten other people stood where they were and surrounded Ai Hui, trapping him in the middle. They glared at him like wolves on grassland.

Influenced by their older generations, they had been kids with lofty aspirations. Even if fate made it tough for them, even if Nature played tricks on them, and even if their faith had been destroyed, they stood strong and proud, their courage and valor unwavering.

They weren’t afraid to die in a battle!

Chapter 402: Fight Till The End

Many of the Grass Bandits who'd fled turned around and observed the battle from afar. They were afraid of receiving punishment upon return. What if Cao Ning and the others claimed victory? It wouldn't be too hard for them to escape even if Cao Ning lost. If so many of them dispersed like birds, how could their opponent, alone, chase all of them down?

They scattered around, keeping their gazes on Cao Ning and the gang.

Cao Ning glared firmly at his opponent's young face. He still found it hard to believe that this young fellow, close to his own age, could defeat almost all of his people.

Through his gritted teeth he asked, "Who are you, Sir?"

Ai Hui kept an indifferent face, as if unconcerned about the fact that he'd been surrounded. "I'm Ai Hui."

Cao Ning opened his eyes wide. He finally understood why that fellow looked so familiar.

The Lightning Blade's mirage bean pod had spread across the whole Avalon of Five Elements and Jadeite Forest as well. And why wouldn't the Grass Bandits located between Jadeite Forest and Palette Cloud Village know about it? In fact, at that time, Cao Ning couldn't help but praise that good fellow.

Ai Hui’s performance in the battle of Central Pine City was admirable even to those who were judgemental.

A complicated look flashed across the faces of not only him, but of the other bandits as well. They’d all seen the clip and were aware of Ai Hui’s past achievements.

Only after their real-life match did they realize that Ai Hui’s abilities were much stronger than what awas reflected in the movie beanpod.

A person’s reputation was like the shadow of a tree – never disappearing. Ai Hui showed potential in becoming Central Pine Faction’s leader. While the faction never did address him as their leader, they assembled from all around to serve him whenever he appeared.

If he wasn’t a leader, who was?

Cao Ning took a deep breath, suppressing his murderousness. He said in a low voice, "The Lightning Blade, why do you take Grass Bandits as your enemy?"

Ai Hui thought it funny, but kept a straight face. Instead, he asked, "Why did you guys block my path?"

Cao Ning thought back to their earlier actions and felt that things had gotten inconvenient.

Thinking about the help signal, he realized that it must have been because of the conflict his subordinates had gotten into with Ai Hui. But none of those who called for help survived, so he wasn't able to know exactly what had happened before he arrived.

He did not mind losing a small team; the problematic part was the fact that they'd offended a strong fighter. Other than the main players from the team, all other Grass Bandits were merely cannon fodder. In this messy world where people were like grass, mere cannon fodder was easily replaceable. He was more agitated because the small team leader was someone he thought highly of.

He asked in the same low voice, "There had been a misunderstanding but why did you have to kill all of them? We know about The Lightning Blade, and if the team from earlier had known about your identity, why would they have made things difficult for you?"

Ai Hui looked at him before responding, somewhat mockingly, "That was not what your noble subordinate said. Resist and be killed was what they said. After thinking about it I was certain that I could not allow that to happen, so killing them was the only way out."

Cao Ning replied harshly, "Seems like you're belittling us, with no desire to dissolve the misunderstanding or give us a proper explanation. In that case, we will have to talk with our swords and fight till the end!"

"Fight till the end?" Ai Hui nodded. "Alright, I did not say all that wanting to resolve this misunderstanding. I’m also uninterested in your explanation and words. I just want to let you know something."

He scanned slowly across the observing Grass Bandits with a piercing gaze, his voice sonorous and impactful.

"I, Ai Hui, am heading toward Asakusa City to visit Senior Mingxiu. Those who obstruct my path shall die and those who stop me shall be killed. Senior Mingxiu stays away from worldly affairs, so whoever tries to do her harm will have to face me afterwards. I will do whatever it takes to track and destroy him and all three generations of his family. Just to let you know!"

The last sentence seemed to echo, rising in spirals along with the surge of elemental energy, causing those present to turn pale.

Silence.

There was an ominous glint in Cao Ning’s eyes when he muttered softly, "So you’re here for her..."

A few others made eye contact and a vengeful look appeared on their faces.

A murderous looking Ai Hui lowered his head suddenly and laughed. "There, a simple test was all it took."

With an intense murder-lust filled smile, Ai Hui's body shot forward toward Cao Ning in a swift manner.

Confirming his suspicions, Ai Hui wasn't the least bit elated. He would rather have guessed wrongly and would rather have been overly sensitive.

Grass Bandits had plans for Senior Mingxiu indeed!

Before, he had no malice toward the Grass Bandits. There was nothing strange about getting to the top by ridding oneself of those at the bottom, just like the poor folks, Gu Tianning and so on. In this chaotic world, there was no disguise. The law of the jungle became even more direct and bloody.

The feud between Grass Bandits and Deep Sea Enterprise would make one sigh.

To Ai Hui, that was nothing. Whether or not Grass Bandits was admirable, good or evil, it had nothing to do with him. He wasn't the guild and wasn't required to determine others' fate. He need not rule the world.

His world was very small and only a few people existed within it.

Whether those outside it lived or died, whether the world lived or died, he did not care.

Such was his relationship with the Grass Bandits. Before this,

they were neither friends nor enemies and had nothing to do with one another.

But Senior Mingxiu was included in his small world, so whoever made her their enemy made him theirs as well. Those who targeted her, targetted him too.

He did not care if people treated him as an enemy. He wouldn’t take it to heart. In fact, when killing, he could even understand where they were coming from. No one had it easy, right?

But he could never forgive those who try to harm his senior. No, rather than being unable to forgive, he couldn’t stop himself detesting them.

He seldom developed such intense emotions, but when those in his world were involved he just couldn’t control the hatred within.

It was just the way he was, selfish and narrow-minded.

He was like a stingy landlord, guarding whatever barren land he had. He was just a nobody and had little tolerance.

But once his limited land had intruders, Ai Hui’s counterattack would be exceptionally ferocious and reckless. No matter how strong his opponents were, he wouldn’t hesitate to charge toward them like moths toward flames.

His world was barren and desolate to begin with and the things

he cherished were few, so why wouldn't he protect them with all that he had?

The hatred emerging from deep within his heart had no influence over his actions. He kept his usual calmness, throwing himself and his enemies onto the chessboard.

Ai Hui's objective had never been this resolute. He just wanted to kill all of them right now.

Facing Ai Hui, who was charging toward him, Cao Ning rushed forward with a growl. The elemental energy within his whole body was bubbling. Earlier, Ai Hui had been slippery, like a loach and Cao Ning couldn't even grab hold of his clothes. He could only watch him slip away and slaughter his members. It was only natural, then, that flames were raging within his heart.

Right now, Ai Hui chose to meet force with force, striking those below him. They had the advantage in terms of numbers, and regardless of how strong Ai Hui was, he wasn't a Master. He was still in Second Elemental Realm after all, so no matter how powerful his inherited arts and skills were, his elemental consumption was significant and definite.

Cao Ning practiced [Three Sun Hatchets of Aoki]. He had a tall, naturally powerful and sturdy frame, which was extremely well-suited for this absolute art. Practically every generation of the Cao family had served Deathgrass Division and had rich battling experience.

Cao Ning held onto two solid hatchets, a stopgap for the Cao family's most valued Three Sun Hatchets since they'd fallen into Deep Sea Enterprise's hands.

His moves were well-controlled, each axe producing a big sheet of green light. These green lights were firm and forceful. Ai Hui's sword rays fell onto them, but only sparks lit up. His rays were unable to deal a blow to them at all.

Furthermore, they did not disperse immediately upon appearing, causing Cao Ning's surroundings to be covered in layer upon layer of green lights that became increasingly thick. His whole body was completely engulfed in the lights, which became an incomparably solid armor.

Ai Hui executed different moves consecutively, but was unable to shake up these dense green lights.

Some others made eye contact before moving forward to surround Ai Hui.

One of them reached about twenty to twenty five meters behind Ai Hui before throwing a handful of grass seeds forward. In order not to catch Ai Hui's attention, he did not shoot them directly at Ai Hui. Instead, the seeds floated toward him slowly like how duckweeds would on water.

The others started attacking as well.

Suddenly, the elementalist who was carefully controlling the seeds shuddered, as if being spotted by a lurking poisonous snake.

Cold air tingled the back of his neck. With his rich battling experience, he just knew that he was in trouble. Not good!

With a hand summoning elemental energy, he patted his neck at lightning speed, but to no avail as nothing had been struck.

A moon-shaped sword ray about the size of a palm coiled around his neck and spun.

A head fell onto the ground.

The grass seeds lost control in mid air and exploded like stir-fried beans.

Cao Ning, who was surrounded by the green lights, shouted with his eyes popping, "Old Five!"

He realized at this point that he had fallen into Ai Hui’s evil plan!

Ai Hui had long figured out their intentions.

Cao Ning would cling onto the enemy while the rest mounted sneak attacks. This strategy was something they were very familiar with. Ai Hui pretended not to sense it and appeared as though he’d been distracted by Cao Ning when in fact he had his eyes on the

others. The time that the remaining few got ready to attack was exactly the time they had their guard down.

[Six Moons] was like a silent killer, dealing them a fatal blow.

Fresh blood splattered everywhere simultaneously once again, but the areas of attack were different. Some were wounded in their necks and hearts while others were hit in their lower vital organs, extremely treacherous and vicious on Ai Hui's part.

The sudden form reversal had everyone dumbstruck.

Cao Ning sensed danger and the odor of death. Even during the night of the bloodbath, the aura of death wasn't this intense and palpable.

He was going to die here today, he thought all of a sudden.

The Lightning Blade indeed, living well up to his name, Cao Ning thought in admiration, without the least bit of regret.

They had been planning this strategy for a long time. Lu Mingxiu was their enemy and so was the whole Lu family. Who could stand alone in this chaotic world? Who could isolate themselves completely? A white cloth that was stained with blood was no longer a white cloth.

They had to take revenge! They had to live!

Cao Ning was obdurate. Determined to fight with his life on the line, the elemental energy within his body surged as he threw the two axes toward Ai Hui with all the strength he had. Cracks started to appear on the surface of the axes, revealing a dazzling green light beneath. As the cracks started to peel off, the light became increasingly brighter.

A carefree smile appeared on Cao Ning's face. He was finally going to die!

To die for a greater cause... It was worth it!

Xiaoman, live on! Avenge us!

He grabbed both axes, his flesh rupturing inch by inch, but he seemed to feel nothing. He utilized all the strength he possessed in his body as fresh blood sprayed out. The two solid axes, wrapped in green light, got closer and closer.

As long as two balls of green light touched, [Three Sun Hatches of Aoki] would end in a final blow.

[Duo Sun Destruction].

A strange sword chime sounded overhead and Cao Ning's movements became rigid. He got distracted and his eyes glazed over.

[Sword Chime]!

Regaining awareness, Cao Ning saw that his green lights had already collided.

His final thought upon getting swallowed up by the boundless green light was this: What a pity…

Chapter 403: Great Waves

The news of Ai Hui heading towards Asakusa City spread like a hurricane. Bandit brigades of all sizes on the borders of Palette Cloud Village and Jadeite Forest knew of this news.

Before this incident, even though the Lightning Blade was rather reputable, everyone merely viewed him as a hero whose image was built by Elders Guild. Three years ago, Ai Hui's base level and strength was still very low. Furthermore, he was still a student. His achievements might be impressive, but the ones who'd really put the last nail to the coffin in the Battle of Central Pine City were actually Wang Shouchuan and Han Yuqin.

Many had believed that Central Pine Faction's absolute allegiance to Ai Hui was due to his outstanding charisma.

Until this battle happened.

Grass Bandits and Ai Hui had come face to face and a grave conflict ensued between the two sides. Ai Hui was not injured at all, while the Grass Bandits suffered disastrous losses and sustained over two hundred deaths. This was the first time the Grass Bandits had encountered such a situation since their establishment. Furthermore, the death of Cao Ning by Ai Hui's hands awed various outstanding heroes and raised Ai Hui's reputation to a new level.

Everyone had no choice but to see the legendary Lightning Blade in a completely different light.

The strength of the famous Lightning Blade was actually so powerful!

He single-handedly took on all of the Grass Bandits and slaughtered them with total disregard for their lives. He'd slain one of their key commanders and routed his men. These accomplishments had certainly shocked everyone. The number of deaths in this battle also demonstrated another side of the Lightning Blade. Similarly, this result also shocked everyone.

A lot of people had realized that the Lightning Blade was somebody that was not to be provoked.

Another person who became famous from this battle was Mingxiu.

Lu Mingxiu led a low-profile life in Asakusa City. Furthermore, the Lu family was under secret protection. Very few people knew of Mingxiu's true background.

In the past, the area surrounding Asakusa City was like a tranquil and peaceful lake. However, Ai Hui threw a huge rock into it and swept up great waves. The sensation caused by Ai Hui caught various powers, that were hiding in the dark, off guard. The serene lake had been disturbed.

Before Ai Hui even reached Asakusa City, the impact of this battle had already spread across the state.

The stronghold of the Grass Bandits was very far from Asakusa City. One would need to fly for two days and two nights straight to get there. For the last two years, in a time of chaos, the expansion of the Grass Bandits had been very fast. From the initial thirty members, their numbers had grown to over four thousand members.

The current Grass Bandits had become an influential powerhouse on the border of Jadeite Forest.

The stronghold of the Grass Bandits had grown from a few tree houses to a heavily-guarded stockade that had a perimeter of over five kilometers.

The canopy of numerous tall and imposing trees had covered the sky. If they were to be invaded by their enemies, the canopy would emit a protective light screen that possessed outstanding defensive capabilities.

Additionally, the branches that were near the canopy were overgrown with bone umbrella reishi.

The bone umbrella reishi was a type of reishi mushroom that was specially cultivated for defensive purposes. Its cap looked like a round plate and was covered with veined patterns. Since it looked like an umbrella made up of bones, it was called bone umbrella reishi. Each bone umbrella reishi had five to ten bone arrows grown within it. Whenever they encountered enemy attacks, they would fire these bone arrows continuously.

Vines could be seen everywhere on the trees, and calabashes of various colors were also hung on some of these vines. These calabashes were the famous calabash cannons. They could shoot out the calabash seeds within them. The color of a calabash cannon represented its elemental type.

Beneath the thick and dense canopy, the houses were neatly built. Pumpkin lamps that emitted a gentle glow could be found everywhere. As such, the stronghold was not at all dark even if it was beneath the thick and dense canopy.

If a stranger came to this place, he or she would have thought this was an encampment of a wood elemental combat division. In reality, this stronghold was in fact built based on the standards of a combat division.

The discussion hall was formed by four extremely sturdy and durable diamond fleabane trees. Their trunks and branches had completely fused together to form a gigantic hall.

The discussion hall was not really spacious. It could only hold up to seventy to eighty people. Out of these people, twenty of them were Zhen Xiaoman’s trusted comrades that had been part of the Grass Bandits since the beginning.

"Who exactly is the one that leaked out the news?"

"How did Ai Hui know that we want to target Lu Mingxiu?"

"It must be that Ai Hui had already gotten the news beforehand and he rushed over just for her."

Everyone was talking at once and all of them were in the state of panic. The plan to kidnap Mingxiu was devised by them meticulously. However, before the plan was even carried out, it had been leaked to the outside world. How could everyone stay calm?

Bang! Smashing her fist on the table, Zheng Xiaoman roared angrily, "Everyone shut up!"

Zheng Xiaoman was around twenty-five years old. She was tall and thick. She could not be considered a beauty. However, her coarse and wild temperament, as well as her outstanding stature always made her the focal point of everyone’s eyes.

The Grass Bandits was single-handedly established by Zheng Xiaoman and she was highly respected. Everyone shut up and the discussion hall was so quiet that one could even hear the sound of a pin dropping on the floor.

When Zheng Xiaoman thought of Cao Ning, a tinge of sadness flashed across her eyes. She raised her head and spoke with a voice that was filled with hatred, "We will put aside the issue of Lu Mingxiu first. We can’t let Old Cao die for nothing and we have to seek revenge for him! Until we have sought our revenge for Old Cao, don’t talk to me about other issues!"

After finishing her sentence, she stomped out of the discussion hall without turning back.

Everyone in the discussion hall looked at each other blankly.

A lean man seated at one corner of the hall swept his gaze across everyone occasionally while a pensive look appeared on his face.

Boss's words had made everyone feel ashamed and embarrassed. Subsequently, all of them dispersed from the discussion hall.

Remaining calm and collected, the lean man returned to his home. Upon checking that no one was following him, he closed and locked the door.

"Why could Ai Hui get this news?" a voice suddenly sounded off behind him

The lean man already knew there was somebody behind him. Upon hearing these words, he sneered, "I should be the one asking this question. For the past few days, the stronghold has been completely disconnected from the outside world and no news or information could travel out of this place."

Hiding his face in the shadow, the cloaked figure replied coldly, "My side will never divulge this information."

"Nevermind, it's not the time to talk about this. So what do we do now? Boss has already made it clear that we will not do anything if

we don’t seek revenge for Cao Ning. Our deal is going to fall through soon," the lean man replied with impatience.

"A mere Lightning Blade is enough to scare all of you to this extent?" the cloaked figure in the shadow mocked.

"Alright then, you shall go and kill the Lightning Blade and I will pass his head to Boss. We can immediately start planning now." The lean man laughed coldly.

The cloaked figure was speechless.

Cao Ning was slain and his three hundred followers were either killed or severely wounded. This was indeed an impressive accomplishment.

The cloaked figure muttered to himself irresolutely. Following which, he softened his tone, "We really have to think of a way. We can’t blankly watch on as this great deal falls through."

The lean man’s facial expression became solemn as well. He knew this deal was something that the Grass Bandits definitely could not give up on.

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Jadeite Forest.

A Fiery Floating Cloud that bore the emblem of the Lu family was flying at top speed in the sky. Apparently, heading for Asakusa City. Upon seeing that the Fiery Floating Cloud bore the emblem of the Lu family, the bamboo carts along the way quickly got out of its way. One could see how powerful the Lu family was in Jadeite Forest.

Within the Fiery Floating Cloud, in a simple and unadorned study room, an imposing man was immersed in his work. An old servant was standing in one corner of the room.

An unending stream of subordinates were entering and exiting the room, stacking his tables with countless reports. Everyone that entered or exited his room was extremely careful. They tried to make as little noise as possible for fear of disturbing their division leader.

The person who was immersed in his work was the current division leader of Deathgrass Division, Lu Feng.

Without raising his head, he asked, "Have you prepared the gifts for Mingxiu?"

The silent old servant standing in the corner of the room quickly replied, "The gifts have already been prepared. All of them are Miss Mingxiu’s favourite items. Textiles that have been passed down for past generations, some famous paintings and an ancient artifact remnant."

"Artifact remnant?" Lu Feng’s hands trembled.

"It should be a flag and it is badly corroded. However, the embroidery on the flag is extremely exquisite. I think Miss Mingxiu will like it and I made my own decision to add it as one of the gifts," the old servant replied respectfully.

"Well done," Lu Feng praised the old servant.

After staying silent for a while, Lu Feng continued, "Since you have worked diligently in handling your daily chores, I will not treat you unfairly. Ask that nephew of yours to report to the division next month."

A look of happiness appeared on the old servant's face and he quickly thanked Lu Feng, "Thank you, Sir!"

At this moment, one of Lu Feng's subordinate ran into the room hastily, "Sir, this is the report that I have just received and it's related to Miss Mingxiu. I sent it over here as soon as possible."

"Related to Mingxiu? Pass it to me now!" Lu Feng stopped what he was doing and raised his head. He had a majestic appearance. His lips were thin and long and his nose bridge was high and imposing. His forehead was sparkling and prominent and his eyes were bright and full of expression.

After taking the report, Lu Feng began to read it carefully. Following which, he could not help but let out a gasp of surprise, "Cao Ning was killed?"

The more he read the report, the more shocked he felt. More than two hundred out of Cao Ning's three hundred followers were either killed or severely wounded. This forced Cao Ning to use a move that ensured mutual destruction. However, in the end, not only was Ai Hui uninjured, but all of Cao Ning's trusted subordinates were killed.

Lu Feng definitely knew about Cao Ning.

The Grass Bandits were Deathgrass Division's arch-enemy. Lu Feng had been thinking of ways to deal with them. However, the Grass Bandits' fighting capabilities were outstanding and they were swift moving. Cao Ning was one of the Grass Bandits' generals but Ai Hui was actually able to take him down single-handedly. From the number of casualties, Lu Feng could tell that Ai Hui was a vicious and merciless individual that killed people with total disregard for their lives.

Without raising his head, Lu Feng ordered the old servant, "Go and bring me Ai Hui's file."

"Yes!" the old man quickly replied.

Very soon, the file containing information about Ai Hui was placed before Lu Feng. After comparing the file to the report, Lu Feng discovered that there was a huge difference between what was being reported on both of them.

On the file, it was written, "Base Level: First Elemental Realm.

Evaluation of Strength: Weak. Strengths: Charismatic, good at winning over people's hearts, well-supported by many people."

Lu Feng ripped the file to shreds and instructed the old servant, "Rebuild the file on Ai Hui."

"Yes!" A cold shiver went down the old servant's spine.

Lu Feng sat down and delved deep into his thoughts. He began to strum his fingers on the table subconsciously. Of course, he knew about Ai Hui. He knew everything about Mingxiu and the people around her. Ai Hui and Mingxiu had a close relationship. However, a few years back, Ai Hui was still very weak and he did not think of making friends with Ai Hui.

He did not expect Ai Hui to become so powerful in such a short period of time!

He picked up the report again. He knew everything that was written in it by heart without even looking at it. This report had given him a huge shock.

He let go of his emotions and pondered over this issue carefully. Very soon, he came to a decision.

The report had stated that Ai Hui had reached Second Elemental Realm and the speed of his progress was terrifyingly fast. However, the thing that shocked Lu Feng the most was that Ai Hui single-handedly killed Cao Ning and slaughtered more than half of his

subordinates.

The talent for combat that Ai Hui had displayed was extremely powerful. Taking his age into account, Lu Feng predicted that the possibility of Ai Hui becoming a Master in future was very high.

Suddenly, he raised his head and said, "Prepare a gift for Ai Hui."

"Yes, what standard should the gift be of?" the old servant asked.

"The highest standard," Lu Feng replied without any hesitation.

The old servant was stunned by Lu Feng's words. He looked slightly troubled and replied, "I'm afraid... it's a bit too rushed."

Lu Feng cast a glance at him and said, "Get it done."

The old servant trembled. He summoned his courage and replied, "I will get it done right away!"

Chapter 404: Entering The City

Ai Hui did not stop flying and headed straight for Asakusa City at full speed.

Asakusa City was a small border city. It was of a similar size to Central Pine City. Due to the rise in illicit businesses, it had flourished significantly; however, as the illicit businesses had taken a hard hit recently, the city became rather desolate.

With a bad economy, there were many idlers on the streets. They filled the city in small groups, chatting with one another.

Most likely because of the recent increase in bandit activities, Asakusa City's defence system was on high alert. The treetop of the towering and imposing ancient tree emitted a faint green glow. Defensive ancient trees had been planted in strategic positions around Asakusa City. Altogether, they formed a defensive light screen.

Defensive ancient trees only had one purpose: to defend. Their roots were embedded deeply into the ground. A defensive ancient tree could grow to over two hundred meters in height. As its height increased, so would its defensive power.

In Jadeite Forest, the first thing that every city built was a defensive ancient tree. Defensive ancient trees that were in their premature stage had weaker defensive power, but as time passed, their defensive power would continue to increase.

The light screens formed by defensive ancient trees were useful in protecting a city from aerial attacks.

Even though Asakusa City was not really huge, it was an extremely old city. It had three defensive ancient trees that were over one hundred meters tall. These three defensive ancient trees had extremely strong defensive power. Any ordinary bandits that wanted to invade a city like Asakusa City were simply indulging in wishful thinking.

Actually, Ai Hui felt that wood elementalists were the most suitable ones to build cities in the Wilderness. Defensive ancient trees could only be cultivated by specialized wood elementalists. If a defensive ancient tree was cultivated by a wood elemental master, its defensive power would be even stronger.

Given the current relationship between Elders Guild and Jadeite Forest, however, asking these two factions to join hands was being even more delusional than the bandits that wanted to invade Asakusa City.

Ai Hui only knew that his senior's embroidery workshop was somewhere in Asakusa City and had to ask around for its exact location. He descended from the sky and landed at the city gate.

The guard at the city gate looked at him lazily. Ai Hui did not care about him at all. When a city was not under attack, the guards at the city gate would always behave like this.

All of a sudden, the guard's lazy gaze froze. His hand

involuntarily pulled on his comrade’s sleeve.

His daydreaming comrade returned to his senses and asked with irritation, "What?"

He noticed his comrade’s gaze and followed its line of sight…

Oh, an ordinary-looking fellow. His base level is only at Second Elemental Realm. Isn’t this kind of individual found everywhere? What’s the fuss about? Erm, he still uses a sword. A swordsman… with black-colored azure wings… a slightly familiar face…

He was dumbstruck.

Ai Hui did not really care about the two guards looking at him, but felt slightly uncomfortable when the two guards’ gazes fixed onto him. He turned his face around and asked bluntly, "Is there any problem?"

The two guards returned to their senses. Their faces turned deathly white as they kept on shaking their heads.

Ai Hui cast a puzzled look at both of them, but since they were not finding trouble with him, he did not care about them and walked right through the city gate.

The entrance into the city was very long, resembling a dark and gloomy tunnel.

Exiting the tunnel was like walking out of the darkness, as Ai Hui was engulfed by sunlight. The clamor of the streets was filled with an aura of vitality. Ai Hui shut his eyes and enjoyed the warmth of the sunlight. The lively aura of vitality made him feel comfortable.

Holding his sword in one hand, he spread his arms wide open and looked as if he wanted to embrace this world.

The sunlight was warm and comfortable as usual. The lively clamor of the streets seemed to be slightly softer than just now.

It got slightly softer once more...

Silence.

Dead Silence.

What had happened? Ai Hui was stunned. He did not sense any signs of impending doom or the presence of an expert.

Ai Hui quickly opened his eyes to see what happened. Following which, he froze.

Everyone on the street looked as if they were being cursed by a petrification spell. They were motionless. The weird thing was that their gazes were fixated on him.

Silence. An awkward silence.

Ai Hui subconsciously looked at himself.

Oh, my clothes are slightly tattered, old, and dirty. What else? I did not wear my pants wrong...

He raised his head.

Whoosh. The previously statue-like figures came to life and ran off in a panic like alarmed birds. A few of them were so terrified that they tripped and fell before scrambling away.

Before Ai Hui could react, the previously bustling streets had become empty.

Dead silence.

The dumbstruck Ai Hui took a long while to return to his senses.

How do I ask for directions now?

.....

One hour later, Mingxiu was reprimanding Ai Hui inside the embroidery workshop.

"You’re no longer a teenager but a leader now, why are you always so rash? Well done, now everyone in the city knows what you did. All I want is a peaceful life and you have to mess it up. Today, the manager who is in charge of sending materials to us didn’t even dare to raise his head to look at me. He was so scared that he almost laid on the floor to talk to me. He didn’t even dare to accept payment from me. I had to spend nearly half an hour to persuade him to take the money. You tell me, how am I going to carry on my business if this goes on?"

"Do you know what everyone is calling you now? Death god! Executor! They’re saying that you have total disregard for the lives you take! You have really scared me this time around."

"Your aura of death is too strong! You only know how to resort to violence when things don’t go your way. How long have you not been practising embroidery? It’s not that I want to nag at you, but it’s time for you to grow up and stop resorting to violence for everything. You’re not young anymore. Even if you want to kill people, you have to do a clean job out of it. Why did you leave so many survivors this time around?"

"Do you need me to help you?"

Initially, Ai Hui had an obedient look on his face. Every now and then, he would say, "Yes, yes, you’re right," or "Why didn’t I think of that?" or even something like, "The next time I see them, I will be polite and amiable and talk about life with them."

However, as he continued to listen to Senior Mingxiu’s nagging, his facial expression became more and more blank. When he saw

Senior Mingxiu got more and more excited in nagging him, the blank look on his face became even more distinct.

Mingxiu was very pleased with herself. Within seconds, she turned back to her usual gentle self. She softened her tone and said with a demure voice, "Junior, no one understands your temperament more than I do. To be able to make you take action, they must be the ones who provoked you first. To be able to make you treat them so ruthlessly, they must have provoked you quite badly; however, killing people is still a sin after all. Killing people will demonize you. Junior, don't be like them. Be more forgiving and treat people with kindness. Don't endanger yourself. Furthermore, how can I let you draw your sword when you're in Jadeite Forest? Wouldn't that make me a useless Senior?"

Her tone was as gentle as water. Ai Hui felt weak just by listening to her.

"Don't make this kind of mistake in the future again, okay? Master and Mistress are not around, so Senior has to take good care of you."

"Yes," Ai Hui replied obediently.

The female embroiderers of the embroidery workshop were peeking at Ai Hui. Their eyes were filled with curiosity as they discussed him in a low volume.

One female embroiderer's face was filled with infatuation. "So he is the Lightning Blade? He doesn't look fierce or ruthless at all! He

is so cute!"

"Cute? Do you know how many people he has killed? There are enough corpses to fill up the entire embroidery workshop," another short-haired girl sneered.

Upon hearing these words, an uproar broke out among the rest of the female embroiderers. The way that the short-haired girl described the scene was too vivid.

"If I have nightmares tonight, it's all thanks to you!"

"How can you say such frightening words! It's scary!"

"Oh my god, how do I work overnight shift in the future?"

After hearing these words, the short-haired girl's face also turned slightly pale. Apparently, she had been frightened by her own words.

A female senior embroiderer looked deeply worried. "Boss is even fiercer than him. She has already scolded him for so long. I really hope she doesn't piss him off. What if he decides to create a ruckus in the workshop?"

"Then all of us will be killed like a bunch of chicks."

The infatuated girl's eyes lit up and she replied, "Am I the only

who thinks that he is cute? Look at how bright his smile is!"

"I'm sure his smile is also that bright when he kills someone," the short-haired girl sneered and blurted out.

"Are you trying to keep us from having a peaceful sleep tonight?"

"Beat her up!"

"Hehe, me too!"

"No point begging for mercy now, I will support everyone!"

The female embroiderers raised a huge ruckus.

Time did not seem to have had any effects on Lu Mingxiu. Her gentleness made Ai Hui feel a sense of warmth and familiarity. Standing in the embroidery workshop with all the female embroiderers looking curiously at him brought him back to the day when he'd first stepped into Mistress's embroidery workshop in Central Pine City.

It was then that Ai Hui realized that the arrangements of his senior's embroidery workshop were exactly the same as his mistress's.

Senior must miss Mistress very much.

"Come and help me out. Recently, the deadlines are rather tight and there are a lot of orders. We don’t have enough employees as well. Luckily, you are here."

"Alright!"

All the female embroiderers were dumbfounded when they saw the legendary executor, Ai Hui, obediently pick up a needle and start to help out. Every now and then, their boss would continue reprimanding him.

"Your skills are too rusty!"

"Wrong, wrong! Here! You wouldn’t have committed such a mistake in the past."

"The way you hold your needle is wrong!"

When Mingxiu saw the serious look on Ai Hui’s face and his rusty hand movements, her gaze turned gentle and warm. If Master and Mistress were still alive and saw Junior’s accomplishments, they would definitely be proud of him.

A lot of memories emerged in her mind.

When she thought of how Junior had passed Mistress’s test, how he’d blown up the embroidery workshop and contracted a huge debt, and how concentrated he’d been when spinning silk from the cocoons, her lips curled into a loving smile.

The days she'd spent in Central Pine City had become her most beautiful memories. There were Master, Mistress, and Junior. All of them had been together with her.

A guy with a thick and broad back was with a girl with a sweet and sincere smile on her face.

When Lu Feng arrived at the embroidery workshop, this scene was exactly what he saw. He was flabbergasted. Not just Lu Feng, but all the subordinates behind him were also frozen like a bunch of clay figurines.

After a while, Lu Feng returned to his senses and shifted his gaze to Mingxiu. With an apologetic tone, he said, "Recently I've been busy with work and couldn't come and visit you. Mingxiu, please forgive me."

Ai Hui cast a curious look at Lu Feng. Who is this fellow?

"Second Brother, you are being too polite," Mingxiu replied with indifference.

Ai Hui cast a glance at Senior Mingxiu. The moment he saw Senior Mingxiu's facial expression, he knew that this fellow had no chance. He'd seen how sweet and gentle Senior Mingxiu's smile was when she'd been together with Brother Li Wei in the past.

Wait, did he hear incorrectly? Just now, Senior had called him

"Second Brother," right? Ai Hui felt so curious that his heart was about to jump out!

Lu Feng looked as if he did not sense Mingxiu's indifference as he maintained the smile on his face. Shifting his gaze to Ai Hui, he said with a bright tone, "Is this Mingxiu's Junior Ai Hui, who is also known as the Lightning Blade? I have long heard that Mingxiu has a junior who's a genius. Having met you today, you are indeed worthy of your reputation! An extraordinary individual!"

Immediately, Ai Hui withdrew his disdainful gaze.

Such a thick-skinned individual, this fellow is not simple!

Chapter 405: Wintry Jade Blade

Even though Lu Feng was very warm, Ai Hui still had his reservations about him. Whoever Senior dislikes, I dislike!

"Mingxiu's junior is also my junior! I shall call you Junior Hui. From today onwards, we are a family. Feel free to ask me if you need help with anything. Since this is the first time we are meeting, I have prepared a small gift for you. Junior Hui, please don't decline my kind intentions."

Lu Feng enthusiastically passed Ai Hui a long, rectangular wood box. The wooden box was exquisite. Its surface was neatly embedded with dark green fish scales which gave off an elegant lustre, looking unspectacular yet luxurious.

Ai Hui glanced at Mingxiu and she winked at him.

"Junior has exquisite taste," Mingxiu said plainly.

Lu Feng smiled and did not seem to be at all flustered by her words.

Ai Hui immediately understood what Lu Feng's facial expression meant. He opened up the wooden box and found a sword lying in it.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up. He grabbed the sword hilt and held the sword before his eyes to examine it closely.

The sword was dark green in color. Its texture felt unique, seemingly carved out of a dark green jade. The wave-like dark veins on the sword overlapped each other, looking like a body of limpid autumn waters moving under the sun; it was extremely beautiful. The body of the sword was straight and thick while its blade was thick and blunt; however, when Ai Hui channeled a trace of elemental energy into the sword, two extremely sharp sword gleams appeared on both sides of the blade.

The material that made up the sword hilt felt like metal, but was not. The sword hilt was extremely heavy, causing the sword's center of gravity to shift towards it. This made wielding the sword effortless. Almost instantly, Ai Hui knew that this sword was very suitable for carrying out stabbing and piercing attacks. The sword hilt was covered with unknown fish scales, making it extremely comfortable to hold. Ai Hui did not want to let go of the sword.

"Good sword!" Ai Hui blurted out.

He channeled his elemental energy into the sword and it gave off slight vibrations. These slight and indistinct vibrations involuntarily formed a resonance with the elemental energy in his body, sparking off the desire to fight in him.

This was a Heaven-grade weapon!

The smile on Lu Feng's face became wider as he cast a glance of approval at the old servant standing in a corner. It was not an easy task to prepare a satisfactory gift in such a short period of time.

"This sword is called Wintry Jade Blade. It’s the first treasure sword forged by master weaponsmith Wei Hong and I came across it by luck. I have long heard that Junior Hui’s swordsmanship is superb and extraordinary. Giving a treasure sword to a hero will bring out the best in both!"

"Oh, Second Brother is too courteous. Then I shall accept this sword."

Ai Hui carefully took the Wintry Jade Blade and winked at Senior Mingxiu.

Whoever Senior dislikes, I dislike! Even if I accepted his gift, I still dislike him!

When Mingxiu saw the scoundrelly look on Ai Hui’s face, she almost laughed out loud. She knew her junior’s character extremely well.

When Lu Feng saw Ai Hui accept the gift and the appearance of a rarely seen smile on Mingxiu’s face, he was overjoyed. He had given Mingxiu many gifts in the past, but nothing had caused her to smile like this.

Lu Feng engaged in a little self-reflection. It seemed that Mingxiu and her junior had a very deep relationship. How had he not realized this earlier?

Luckily it wasn’t too late yet!

The smile on Lu Feng’s face became even friendlier. He patted Ai Hui’s shoulder cordially and said, "What’s there to be polite about with your Second Brother?"

Following which, he gave Mingxiu her gifts. Mingxiu conveniently placed the gifts on the table without taking a second look at them. This action reinforced Lu Feng’s resolution to use Ai Hui to improve his relationship with Mingxiu.

At this moment, Ai Hui noticed that Lu Feng’s unit of subordinates were looking at him. Their bodies emitted a fierce and powerful aura. From the faint energy waves coming from their bodies, Ai Hui could tell that their strength was not to be underestimated and that they had rich combat experience.

Every now and then, their gazes would hold an eagerness and the desire to fight him.

At this moment, a tall and burly man stood out and said, "Sir, do you want to try out your new sword? I can be your sparring partner."

His tone contained a hint of arrogance, sounding as if he was challenging Ai Hui.

For the past few days, the Lightning Blade had been rather reputable in this region. Everywhere they went, they would hear

Ai Hui’s name. News of his feat of single-handedly massacring the Grass Bandits had spread to various cities nearby. All of Lu Feng’s subordinates were elites of the Deathgrass Division. Every one of them was proud and arrogant. Naturally, they were unhappy with Ai Hui’s growing reputation.

"Don’t be so rude towards Junior Hui! Behave yourself!" Lu Feng reprimanded the burly man.

Even though the man withdrew, he still looked at Ai Hui with an arrogant gaze.

Initially, Ai Hui did not really care about him; however, when he saw a hint of anger sweep across Senior Mingxiu’s eyes, he said, "I really want to try out this new sword, but the sword doesn’t have eyes. It wouldn’t be good if I accidentally injure you."

Upon hearing these words, the burly man broke out in laughter and mocked, "I have fought an unknown number of battles. I am not even afraid of death, why would I be afraid of getting injured? I am only afraid of injuring you accidentally. If I injure you, I will be scolded by Sir."

The intention to provoke Ai Hui in his words was very obvious.

"Shut up!" Lu Feng glared at the burly man, following which, he turned around and told Ai Hui, "Junior Hui, don’t mind this brainless fool. He is very good at charging into and breaking through enemy lines, but he is brainless. All he knows is how to make trouble for me."

Ai Hui realized that these people were used to charging into and breaking through enemy lines; they were a bunch of arrogant and valiant individuals. From their arrogant and despotic attitudes, Ai Hui could tell that they must have brought a lot of troubles to Senior Mingxiu and her embroidery workshop. If even a friendly and gentle individual like his senior disliked them, then one could certainly tell how irritating they must be.

Previously, Ai Hui had also noticed something else. One of Lu Feng's subordinates looked at the workshop's female embroiderers continuously, and when his eyes met theirs, their faces turned white with fear. Apparently, they were terrified of Lu Feng's subordinates.

Ai Hui smiled. "Second Brother is being too serious. Only a true hero has such a straightforward nature. Why would a true man be afraid of getting injured? Only by engaging in a real fight can a weapon then display its true capabilities. I am truly interested in trying out this new sword gifted by Second Brother."

"Er...." Lu Feng pretended to be hesitant.

He wanted to see Ai Hui's capabilities for himself as well. After all, he only knew the rumors about Ai Hui. Rumors couldn't beat watching him in action with his own eyes. His strategy for dealing with Ai Hui would change according to his actual strength.

Ai hui continued, "Of course, it is not possible for me to fight with him."

Upon hearing this, a mocking look appeared on the burly man's face. A similar look of contempt also appeared on the rest of Lu Feng's subordinates' faces. They felt Ai Hui had bragged so much just to withdraw at the last moment.

Lu Feng felt slightly disappointed as well. Just as he was about to say something, Ai Hui spoke again, "After all, I am a slightly reputable individual now. Where will I hide my face if the news of me bullying an unknown individual like him spreads to the outside world?"

Mingxiu chuckled when she saw her junior talking nonsense with a straight face.

Lu Feng was stunned.

The burly man's face flushed with anger and his eyes looked as if they could spit flame. After being called an "unknown individual," a strong sense of humiliation engulfed his body like blazing flames; he felt as if he was going to explode. He clenched his fists so hard that they produced cracking sounds.

The rest of Lu Feng's subordinates' faces turned ugly. Ever since the rebuilding process of the Deathgrass Division began, all of them had achieved countless accomplishments. As such, it was natural for them to be infuriated after being humiliated by Ai Hui.

Ai Hui put a reluctant look on his face. "Therefore, I have to trouble Second Brother to find an assistant for him. Eh? I think

this fellow looks rather extraordinary. How about him then? Even though defeating two unknown individuals isn't something to be proud of, it's still not that embarrassing. I hope Second Brother can grant me this wish. Reputation doesn't come by easily and I need to depend on my tiny bit to make a living."

The lean guy Ai Hui had chosen was the one who had previously been checking out the workshop's female embroiderers.

The lean guy did not expect to be chosen. Soon after, he stepped out and sneered, "An unknown individual like me really wants to learn a thing or two from you. I want to see how sharp the sword of a reputable individual is."

Ai Hui's words had also made Lu Feng's face turn slightly ugly. These trusted elites of his had been specially chosen by him. They had followed him through countless battles and were his pride. He did not expect Ai Hui to look down on them, but after all, he was someone that had a renowned status. Very soon, his facial expression returned to normal and he shifted his gaze to Mingxiu to ask, "Mingxiu, can you persuade him not to do this?"

Even though Mingxiu was slightly worried, her facial expression remained the same. She replied indifferently, "I think what Junior said is right."

Actually, she knew that these two were not some unknown individuals.

The burly man was called Huo Dun. He specialized in

spearmanship and his attacks were both ferocious and precise. Among Lu Feng's subordinates, he was always the one who led the charge against their enemy lines. He was brave and valiant. The lean one was called Xiao Sen. He specialized in using grass seeds and his attacking methods were cunning and unpredictable.

All of Lu Feng's subordinates were experts that had been hired by him after he became the division leader of the Deathgrass Division. All of them had accrued countless military achievements, but due to the lack of overall experience and exposure, they were not well-known. Regardless, they were still considered elites among elites.

These powerful subordinates were directly connected to why Lu Feng could control the Deathgrass Division with absolute power.

Lu Feng nodded and said, "Since this is the case, both of you shall do your best to learn from the Lightning Blade. Weapons don't have eyes. You can't complain if you suffer from any injuries. Mingxiu, what do you think?" One could not tell whether Lu Feng was happy or angry.

"I agree."

Mingxiu's voice was calm. She would be lying if she said that she wasn't worried about Ai Hui, but she had a lot of confidence in her junior. She knew that her junior was gifted in combat. Since he had agreed to this sparring session, he must have the confidence to defeat them. Her junior would never seek to impress others by bragging about his capabilities.

"Alright, a battle between experts can also be considered a grand occasion. Let us find a location and not destroy Mingxiu's embroidery workshop," said Lu Feng.

"No need, there is a training arena in my embroidery workshop. Follow me," replied Mingxiu.

She led everyone to the backyard and a training arena appeared before their eyes.

The arena was very big and was surrounded by specially made protective fences on which hung numerous cloth strips. These cloth strips were covered with complicated-looking designs that emitted a faint glow. Four defensive ancient trees were planted at the four corners of the arena. Even though the defensive ancient trees were still young, the glow they gave off was enough to engulf the entire arena.

"I didn't expect the embroidery workshop to have such a beautiful arena," remarked Lu Feng.

The protective glow from the four defensive guardian trees and the cloth strips hanging on the fences formed a powerful protective light screen around the arena. Unless one was a Master, he or she would not be able to break through this protective light screen.

Mingxiu ignored him and opened up the arena.

Without any hesitation, Huo Dun and Xiao Sen entered the arena. Every now and then, both of them cast a malicious glance at Ai Hui.

"Be careful," Mingxiu reminded Ai Hui.

"Don’t worry." Ai Hui smiled.

Holding the Wintry Jade Blade in his hand, Ai Hui strode into the arena.

Chapter 406: [Fragmented Sword] vs. [Swirling Dragon]

The feeling of holding the Wintry Jade Blade in his hands felt really good and comfortable. Ai Hui actually enjoyed holding it.

His Dragonspine had been forged back when he was still in Central Pine City. Now, it had already become slightly unusable. After the intense battle with the Grass Bandits, cracks had formed on the body of the sword. Using the Silverfold Plum would expose his identity as Chu Zhaoyang, making it unsuitable for him to use it as well. He had been troubled over this issue for quite a while.

The best feeling in the world is when someone passes you a pillow while you're dozing off.

Ai Hui cast a grateful glance at Lu Feng. I will definitely display the might of the Wintry Jade Blade and teach your subordinates a lesson!

As Huo Dun and Xiao Sen stepped into the arena, the look of anger on their faces was replaced by a solemn one. Both of them were veterans that had been through countless gruesome battles. They knew that anger had no place in a fight.

The positions where they stood were well-coordinated as well. One was standing in front while the other was standing behind. Holding a thick vine spear in his hand, Huo Dun was standing in the front. Xiao Sen stood at an inclined angle behind him. In between his fingers, there were different types of grass seeds as he

prepared to attack at any moment.

They were indeed experts!

Ai Hui praised them in his heart. His facial expression was calm as he channeled his elemental energy into the Wintry Jade Blade. The sword vibrated slightly, resembling a wild beast pawing the ground before it charged toward its prey.

The reason why Ai Hui chose to fight two opponents at once was not because he was trying to show off. He actually had something else in mind.

After training with Qing Feng, Ai Hui's swordsmanship had improved tremendously. He could sense these improvements from his battle with Cao Ning. Recently, he was on a spree where his improvement rate was exceptionally high. The more battles he went through and the stronger the enemies he encountered during this period of time, the better it would be for his growth.

This was the main reason why he chose to fight two people at once.

Another reason was that Ai Hui could sense that Lu Feng was pressuring Senior Mingxiu, which he did not like. Whether Lu Feng behaved like this because of his nature or because of the authority and power he had, Ai Hui still did not like the way he was treating his senior. Ai Hui was worried that Lu Feng might use certain forceful measures on Senior Mingxiu in the future.

Senior Mingxiu had spent a lot of time and effort on the embroidery workshop. It was unlikely that she would leave the workshop so soon. Furthermore, her home was in the Jadeite Forest and Ai Hui would depart for the hazardous Wilderness very soon, so he was very worried about her.

Senior Mingxiu would stay in Asakusa City for a long period of time. Even though Senior Mingxiu would be under the protection of her oldest brother, Lu Chen, and no one would dare to touch her, Ai Hui still decided to intimidate Lu Feng to dissuade him from harming his senior in the future.

Ai Hui could see that Lu Feng was a strongly ambitious and unscrupulous individual.

He wanted to let Lu Feng know that no one could harm Senior Mingxiu with him around. He wanted to let Lu Feng know that his rage was not to be trifled with.

In an era where brute strength dominated, fear and worry could only be eradicated by force.

Ai Hui had a calm look his face as he slowly brandished the Wintry Jade Blade in his hand.

Even though this was the first time he wielded it, he did not feel tardy using it at all. Instead, the Wintry Jade Blade was like part of his body.

It was indeed a work of a master weaponsmith. Ai Hui mentally noted down the name of Wei Hong.

The vibrating Wintry Jade Blade looked as if it was summoning the god of fighting. The killing instinct in Ai Hui intensified. Without fooling around, he flicked his wrist and a few streaks of sword gleams were released from his sword that shot toward Huo Dun and Xiao Sen like flying arrows.

The base level of the Wintry Jade Blade was higher than the Dragonspine's. As such, the sword gleams it produced were different from the Dragonspine's. This also meant that the Wintry Jade Blade's sword gleams had a higher destructive power.

Facing the incoming streaks of sword gleam, Huo Dun took a heavy step forward and charged toward Ai Hui. It appeared as if he never saw the incoming whizzing sword gleams.

Just as the streaks of sword gleam were about to hit him and leave a few huge holes in his body, a grass seed suddenly exploded in front of him. The grass seed transformed into a basket-sized, gray air bubble.

The gray air bubble blocked the whizzing streaks of sword gleams and disintegrated them and itself at the same time.

Huo Dun had anticipated this to happen. His movements were not slowed down and his charge was unaffected.

The sword gleams released by Ai Hui were warded off by Xiao Sen's grass seed.

Every time Huo Dun took a step forward, his aura intensified and his elemental energy undulation became stronger. By the time he was near Ai Hui, the intensity of his aura had reached a terrifying level. His entire body was like a parcel stuffed with raging flames. As he exhaled, a burst of swirling elemental energy erupted from his thick spear and pierced toward Ai Hui.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up. At this point of time, his eyes resembled the stars in the night sky.

Good spearmanship.

This spear move was extremely powerful. It could be considered the best among the moves he had seen before. The weakness of the slow build-up of this move was offset by his comrade's help.

Ai Hui did not have any intention of going easy on them.

Upon witnessing such an unique spearmanship, the fire within Ai Hui's heart burned with more fervor. He took a powerful step forward and his Wintry Jade Blade moved like flowing water. His sword move did not seem very fast. Every movement he made with his sword was clear and distinct. Every time he brandished his sword, a different sword gleam would be shot out. The different-shaped sword gleams that he shot out resembled fragmented pieces of porcelain.

The slow movement of his sword was an illusion. In the blink of an eye, 13 sword gleam streaks shaped like porcelain shards shot out and formed a sword screen that braced for Huo Dun's terrifying spear move.

When the last streak of sword gleam inserted onto the sword screen like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle, the screen suddenly trembled as the elemental energy in the arena froze.

[Fragmented Sword]!

Ai Hui's strongest offensive sword move.

Meeting brute force with brute force. Ai Hui did not bother to use other strategies.

[Fragmented Sword] collided head-on with the blazing spear move. A slight dazzle erupted from the collision. The dazzle was only pinhead-sized, yet it had blinded everyone.

The sound of the collision was seemingly devoured by the dazzle

Even with the protective light screen of the defensive ancient trees, the onlookers could feel the impact, and their facial expressions changed drastically. All of them were shocked by the scene before their eyes. What kind of swordsmanship was this?

After about 10 seconds, everyone regained their vision.

They saw Ai Hui's figure appearing all over the arena like a phantasm. The sword gleam from his Wintry Jade Blade flashed across the air every now and then, warding off Xiao Sen's grass seeds.

Upon taking a closer look, they discovered Ai Hui's eyes were closed!

When the [Fragmented Sword] and Huo Dun's attack collided, Ai Hui knew that Xiao Sen, who was standing at the back, would mount a sneak attack. This was because he knew that it would be the best chance for Xiao Sen to do so.

Executing the [Fragmented Sword] technique exhausted a huge amount of elemental energy and was when his body was at its weakest. Before the collision took place, he had already closed his eyes.

As anticipated, Xiao Sen indeed mounted a sneak attack. However, having prepared for it, Ai Hui was able to react to it calmly.

Even though Xiao Sen's grass seeds were unpredictable, their destructive power was rather limited. They might be very useful as a form of support, but as a main offensive weapon, they were pretty weak and useless.

This gave Ai Hui the breathing room to recover his elemental energy.

Ai Hui's way of dealing with the grass seeds was very effective. Since the grass seeds were very unpredictable, he did not allow them to get close to him at all. He simply made stabbing motions with his sword and shot out sword gleams.

At the moment, Ai Hui was like an archer. Like flying arrows, his sword gleams accurately shot down the grass seeds in midair. One by one, the grass seeds exploded and could not do anything against Ai Hui. Just in case some of the grass seeds would release poisonous gas when they erupted, Ai Hui destroyed them with his sword gleams and followed up by forming a powerful gust of wind with his sword to blow the erupted grass seeds back to his opponents.

Ai Hui quickly gained the upperhand in the battle and headed for Xiao Sen.

Xiao Sen had not expected Ai Hui to anticipate his sneak attack. Without the protection of Huo Dun, he became unusually weak and fragile. Since he was unable to contend against Ai Hui, he could only continuously dodge. However, he had good dodging techniques and was abnormally slippery. There were a few times Ai Hui thought he was going to successfully pierce Xiao Sen, only to narrowly miss.

Xiao Sen might have done a good job in avoiding Ai Hui's attacks, but he did not lower his guard at all. His face was deathly pale. There were a few times when his heart stopped beating because Ai Hui's sword gleams were mere centimeters away from his neck.

His opponent was like a vengeful ghost that refused to go away.

The thing that scared Xiao Sen the most was that his opponent was beginning to grasp his dodging patterns. His dodging techniques were what he was the most proud of. The elemental energy within his body flowed differently from ordinary people, as such, he could make many movements and maneuvers with his body that defied logic.

Huo Dun looked extremely miserable. His entire body dripped with blood, while a section of the spear in his hand had broken off.

He was at a loss. His [Swirling Dragon] technique had never failed before. No one had ever dared to directly clash against his [Swirling Dragon]. Whenever he encountered dire beasts, he had always used this move to finish them off.

What kind of sword move was that?

Along with the terrifying vibration, the sword move that resembled fragmented porcelain reappeared before his eyes.

"Old Huo!"

Xiao Sen’s alarmed shriek woke Huo Dun up from his stupor, and he quickly turned around. When he saw the battered and exhausted Xiao Sen running about in the arena, he instantly returned to his senses.

Holding his broken spear, Huo Dun roared and charged toward Ai Hui.

Outside the arena, Lu Feng and his counterparts heaved a sigh of relief. With Huo Dun returning to his senses, they saw a new glimpse of hope in the situation. The prior unforeseen event had occurred too abruptly. Everyone had yet to regain their composure.

No one had expected both parties go straight for a head-on collision instead of testing each other out!

This logic-defying battle tempo stunned all the onlookers. By the time they returned to their senses, the battle had become completely lopsided. When Lu Feng and his counterparts saw Ai Hui chasing after Xiao Sen all across the arena, their faces turned extremely ugly.

It was only now, when Huo Dun re-entered the fight, that everyone could feel at ease.

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up when he saw that Huo Dun was still capable of fighting.He immediately turned his body around and pounced on Huo Dun.

Ai Hui had the upperhand in the collision between the [Fragmented Sword] and [Swirling Dragon]. This was because the [Fragmented Sword] was a ranged attack, while Huo Dun had to follow along with his attack.

As such, Ai Hui was able to avoid the impact of the collision, but Huo Dun had to endure the full brunt of the impact. Huo Dun's body might appear to be drenched in blood, but if one wiped away his blood, he or she would discover that there were no wounds on his body. The blood on his body had directly seeped out of his skin.

Even Ai Hui slightly admired Huo Dun's ability to withstand the [Fragmented Sword]

Huo Dun roared and pierced his spear toward Ai Hui. This attack was not as powerful as the [Swirling Dragon], but it arrived from an extremely awkward angle, resembling a poisonous dragon striking out from its dwelling.

In the midair, Ai Hui spun his body around and struck the incoming spear with his Wintry Jade Blade.

The anticipated sound of a collision did not happen. Suddenly, Huo Dun's spear became soft and flexible like a piece of rope and snaked toward Ai Hui.

Ai Hui's reaction was extremely fast as he jerked backward.

Bang!

A shadow flew past him as the strong gale that accompanied it inflicted an extreme pain to his face.

Bang, bang, bang! At this moment, explosions continuously

erupted around him.

Xiao Sen threw out 20 grass seeds in one go. All of them simultaneously exploded around Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was in danger.

Chapter 407: Cut Some Slack?

Why did they always say that real combat could sharpen the fighting capabilities of an elementalist?

It was because in real combat, one would encounter various types of elementalists and fighting styles. In real combat, one would also face bizarre and unpredictable situations that forced him or her to progress, think faster, and react quicker. As long as one could survive real combat, he or she would gain a new level of understanding toward the type of enemy he or she had just defeated.

Life-and-death situations could unleash one's potential, allowing him or her to make incredible moves, display wondrous creativity, and possess unimaginable endurance. During peacetime, one could never achieve these.

These were all because of fear, intense fear. Mankind had an instinctive fear of death. Whether it was a man or woman, an elderly or a youth, a genius or a mediocre individual, it made no difference. All of them had an instinctive fear of death.

And right now, Ai Hui could feel the instinctive fear of death.

The 20 grass seeds exploded at the same time, so there was not a single gap in between the explosions for him to escape!

Even at this point in time, Ai Hui could not help but admire the precision and viciousness of Xiao Sen's attacks. The 20 grass seeds

had various types of effects. There were spiderwebs, clouds of poisonous smog, flying masses of needles, etc.

No matter how one looked at it, Ai Hui had nowhere to escape to.

Even if he managed to break out of the surrounding explosions, Huo Dun's deadly strike would be waiting outside for him.

At this moment, Ai Hui, who was falling through the air while facing the sky, did something that no one expected.

He curled up his body and fell ferociously toward the ground. At the instant when his back made contact with the ground, he abruptly arched his back.

[Arching Fish Back]!

Even though Ai Hui had not used this move for quite a long time, he was still adept when using it now. The hard work that he had put in day and night outside of the Suspending Golden Pagoda had made this move instinctive.

The surface of the ground silently crumbled into fine powder, resembling crumbs from crushed crisp biscuits.

When Ai Hui was still in Central Pine City, his elemental energy was very weak. Now that he had reached Second Elemental Realm, the strength of his elemental energy had increased several hundred times!

Boom!

All of the onlookers lost their balance. It was as if someone had heavily slammed a gigantic hammer on the ground.

Huo Dun and Xiao Sen felt the direct impact of Ai Hui's move. The ground beneath their feet trembled. A powerful dusty shock wave suddenly erupted in the arena like a gray ring.

The first thing that was hit by the shock wave were the grass seeds. Like weak and delicate rice straws, the grass seeds were dispersed and shattered by the shock wave.

What kind of move was this?

Huo Dun and Xiao Sen's faces paled as they quickly put up their defenses.

As the shock wave swept past them,their bodies trembled, but they were still safe and sound. Both of them were stunned. They were not surprised by how powerful the shock wave was, but rather, how weak it was!

However, in the next moment, their facial expressions changed.

The shock wave that swept across the area was accompanied by an immense amount of dust. Currently, the entire arena was

shrouded in dust.

Not good!

Xiao Sen was an expert in sneak attacks. As such, when he discovered he was surrounded by dust and that his vision was impaired, he knew something was wrong. He channeled his elemental energy and moved toward Huo Dun's location. This was the only way he could survive.

Suddenly, three streaks of green sword gleam silently emerged from the fog of dust.

The three streaks of sword gleam were executed marvellously in the sense that they locked onto the position he was heading to.

Xiao Sen, whose mental state was stretched taut, suddenly stopped in his tracks. His body bent awkwardly like a piece of paper. Without making use of any external force, he changed his direction abruptly and headed for another direction.

He had just used his dodging techniques to change the outcome of the situation and heaved a sigh of relief. Success!

Luckily, his opponent had not figured out his dodging techniques. This was the first time he encountered such a powerful opponent. Ai Hui's keen observation was indeed terrifying. Xiao Sen suspected that if the battle continued, Ai Hui might figure out his dodging patterns.

Suddenly, Xiao Sen had a premonition, and his facial expression changed drastically.

Not good!

An excrutiating pain erupted through his lower body, and he could not help but release a blood-curdling scream. His body curled up as the elemental energy in his body went into chaos. His completely lost control over his body and landed heavily on the ground like a sandbag.

Xiao Sen’s scream came too suddenly and sounded extremely dreadful. Everyone’s facial expression changed drastically. Xiao Sen’s scream had set off their fear and trepidation. Everyone knew Xiao Sen was a tough individual who would not have screamed if it was a normal injury.

"Stop it!" Lu Feng yelled in panic.

Huo Dun’s face turned deathly white as well. Since he was closer to Xiao Sen, he was more frightened than the rest upon hearing Xiao Sen’s scream. Huo Dun had rich combat experience and knew that this fog of sand was the enemy’s greatest cover. Huo Dun adopted an impregnable defensive stance and used his vine spear to sweep up a gust of wind to blow the dust away.

Immediately, he could see clearly within a ten meter range.

Suddenly, a figure shot out from the fog of dust. To Huo Dun's surprise, it was Ai Hui, who was moving together with his sword.

Huo Dun clenched his teeth as killing intent swept across his eyes. Unwilling to retreat, he simply pierced his vine spear at Ai Hui.

All of a sudden, his vine spear split into five thinner vine spears that simultaneously pierced toward Ai Hui!

Apparently, his vine spear was made up of five thinner vine spears. Usually, he would use it as a single vine spear. Only when a critical situation arose would he split it into the five thinner vine spears. Usually, this move would work perfectly in a critical moment of battle.

However, he did not expect Ai Hui's body to change direction and fly over his five vine spears.

[Gale Bat Slash]!

Huo Dun's face froze as his eyes widened with incredulity. How could Ai Hui increase his speed to such a terrifying level without a single sign?

A sword gleam flashed past his vine spears.

"Ahh!"

Huo Dun let out a blood-curdling scream. His right arm flew up into the sky as blood incessantly spurted out of his right shoulder.

The sand and dust had completely settled, revealing the entire arena.

Ai Hui was the only one standing in the huge arena. His Wintry Jade Blade was not stained with a single drop of blood. Not far away, Huo Dun was half-kneeling on the floor while holding his right shoulder. He had an anguished look on his face. Meanwhile, Xiao Sen was lying on the ground and howling in pain. His body was curled up, resembling a dried shrimp. The lower part of his body was drenched in blood.

Mingxiu was flabbergasted. She knew her junior's strength had increased greatly but she still had not expected that he was actually so powerful!

Even though Ai Hui was fighting against two people, he was not injured at all, while the opponents were severely injured.

Lu Feng and his counterparts had ashen faces. They could not believe what they had just seen. No one knew Huo Dun and Xiao Sen's strength better than them. Both of them suffered a crushing defeat despite joining hands to fight Ai Hui!

Ai Hui calmly walked out of the arena and stood beside Mingxiu. "Senior, your arena needs to be repaired."

It was at this moment that Mingxiu saw an enormously deep hole in the center of the arena, which looked as if it had been created by a falling meteor. She suddenly thought of Ai Hui's [Arching Fish Back] and remembered the marks that he left outside of the Suspending Golden Pagoda.

So, Junior had already grown to such a level...

She was deeply moved.

One of Lu Feng's subordinates flew into the arena and checked on Huo Dun and Xiao Sen's injuries. Following which, he shook his head at Lu Feng. Lu Feng's face immediately blanched. How would he not know that these two had been completely incapacitated?

Xiao Sen's vital body part had been severely injured, and it was unknown that whether or not he would survive. Even if he survived, his nature would drastically change. Meanwhile, Huo Dun's right arm had been severed. How could he still wield a spear in the future?

For a moment, the rest of Lu Feng's subordinates sympathized with them. Their eyes blazed with fury as they glared at Ai Hui, wishing that they could rip him apart.

"Sir, do you not think your attacks were too ruthless!" someone yelled with hatred.

A tinge of rage flashed across Mingxiu's face. Just as she was about to say something, Ai Hui held her back.

He turned around and replied calmly, "Is it? It's on the behalf of Second Brother that I spared their lives. It seems that I should have killed them to live up to my reputation of having total disregard for human lives."

Everyone's facial expression changed as they trembled with fear. It was at this moment that they remembered that this seemingly calm and indifferent man was an executor who massacred people without blinking.

Ai Hui smiled at Lu Feng. "I am a straightforward individual. I will pay a debt of gratitude if I need to and will seek revenge if I need to. Second Brother gifted me this treasure sword, so I have to think on behalf of Second Brother. The Grass Bandits desired to harm Senior Mingxiu, so they deserved to be killed. Haha, this issue has not been settled yet. Sooner or later, I will still have to go and deal with them. I would rather cut the weeds and completely eliminate the roots than cut them some slack. Second Brother, what do you think?"

Ai Hui's smile and words made everyone's hair stand on end. One could sense a strong sense of killing intent in his words. They had met all kinds of ruthless people before, but they had never encountered someone like Ai Hui who spoke so lightly of killing people.

Everyone was speechless. They knew this seemingly young fellow was a merciless individual who was not to be trifled with.

Lu Feng had a very stiff look on his face. He forced a smile and said, "Junior Hui is indeed an extraordinary hero."

"Second Brother is the true hero. You're a division leader and hold great power and wealth. Everyone envies you. Everything about Second Brother is great. The only thing that you lose out compared to me is that I live my life as I please and I fight alone. If I want to kill somebody, I kill somebody. If I want to walk away, I walk away."

By now, Lu Feng had already regained his composure, and he chuckled. "I really envy Junior Hui! Every day, I'm busy with work and fussing over trivial matters. How can a person be carefree and happy like you?"

Both of them shook hands happily. One could not see any ill-feelings between them.

After chatting for around two hours, both of them unwillingly ended their conversation as Lu Feng and his men bade farewell to Ai Hui and his counterparts.

Ai Hui even personally sent Lu Feng and his counterparts to the entrance of the embroidery workshop.

As Ai Hui watched Lu Feng and his men walk into the distance, the smile on his face disappeared and a keen look flashed across his eyes.

Suddenly, an intense pain spread across his ear. Apparently, Mingxiu was wringing his ear.

"Tell me, where did you learn this bad habit from? Hehe, killing people with total disregard for their lives, right? So you only learned how to fight and kill after you grew up? Ah! You have become so bad after just a few years! Where has my innocent junior from the past gone to? Now you even learned how to boast! One against two! Arrogant, huh! You would rather cut the weeds and completely eliminate the roots than cut others some slack, right! Tsk, tsk, such domineering words!

"Hey, hey, hey!, Ouch, ouch, ouch! Senior, don't use so much strength! Ouch! We can discuss this nicely. Yes, yes, yes, I will cut them some slack, I will cut them some slack! I will do whatever they want!"

Mingxiu released Ai Hui's ear from her hand as her voice reverted to her usual gentle and refined tone. No one had expected her to do this.

Ai Hui grimaced in pain and heaved a sigh of relief.

"Junior."

Senior Mingxiu's tone was gentle and soothing. She gently brushed the dust off from Ai Hui's body.

A cold shiver sped down Ai Hui’s spine as he froze like a clay figurine. "Senior, feel free to order me around!"

"After thinking about it, Senior thinks that it’s better for you to clear the weeds."

"..."

Chapter 408: Using a Pretext to Make a Fuss

In a room within the Fiery Floating Cloud, Lu Feng's roars were so loud that they could tear off the roof.

"He is trying to give me a warning! He is trying to give me a warning! Who does he think he is! How dare he try to give me a warning! I know what he's trying to say! Bastard! All of you are a bunch of trash! Can't even defeat a premature bastard! Trash! Morons! Bums!"

"I want to kill him! I want to kill him!"

"Who does he think he is! Who does he think he is!"

...

Crackle! Rattle! The sound of things breaking could be heard incessantly. Eventually, only a heavy panting sound could be heard. It was as if there was a wild beast in the room.

The faces of everyone outside the room turned white. This time around, they had really screwed up and embarrassed Sir. They could tell from Ai Hui's words that he was trying to give Lu Feng a warning, but none of them dared to challenge him. What had happened to Huo Dun and Xiao Sen terrified them greatly.

After a long period of time, the heavy panting sound in the room disappeared.

The door opened.

Lu Feng walked out of the room and his facial expression had returned to normal. "Where are those two morons? How are their conditions?"

"Xiao Sen's wound has stopped bleeding. However, due to the severity of his injury, he will most likely be disabled for the rest of his life. As for Huo Dun, his right arm has been frozen and can be re-attached to his body. However, from today onwards, it can only be used for simple daily tasks and not for fighting anymore. Furthermore, the medical expenses...."

"Those two morons!" Lu Feng yelled vehemently. However, he managed to regain his composure very soon. "What medical expenses? Make sure they recover! Prepare the pension for both of their families and arrange lighter jobs for both of them, even though they have thoroughly embarrassed me... Bloody morons!"

"Sir is magnanimous!" the old servant quickly said.

The rest of Lu Feng's subordinates also yelled, "Sir is magnanimous!"

A grateful look appeared on all of their faces. Even though Huo Dun and Xiao Sen were completely incapacitated, Sir was still willing to treat them with kindness. He had indeed treated them with extreme benevolence. In a division, those who were from wealthy and powerful families could obtain their pension easily.

However, those who were of a commoner background would be constantly delayed from getting their pension. Disregarding these people was nothing out of the ordinary for the high-ups.

"Magnanimous my foot!" Lu Feng's rage had yet to subside. "All of you, keep your spirit up. It is normal to lose sometimes. I am not angry that Huo Dun and Xiao Sen were defeated. Being not as skilled as others is nothing to be ashamed of. However, if you are intimidated by others, then that is something to be ashamed of. Look at the terrified look on all of your faces! How can all of you be afraid of him when there are so many of you here. At that moment, I almost want to go up against him myself."

All of Lu Feng's subordinates lowered their heads in shame.

"Think about it, have I ever mistreated any of you before? Do you know how many people are envious of your status and salary? Aren't people out there gossiping about what all of you do to deserve these? They say Deathgrass Division is Straw Bag Division and that all of you are undeserving of your status and salary. Are all of you from powerful and rich families? No. Your strength is rather good, but there are plenty of people like you out there. Other than me, who will hire you? Other than me, who will give you such a high salary? Without me, all of you are like the dead dogs on the streets! What do you have? A pathetic life! Do you want to go back to the days when you had nothing at all? If you don't want to, then work hard and do your best! If you're alive, you will enjoy a high position and great wealth! If you're dead, I will take care of your families! If you don't want to work hard and do your best, then get lost! I don't want to take care of trash!

"All of you are a bunch of wolves! Do you know what a wolf does? A wolf will take one or two bites of its enemy even if it is dying! Look at yourself now!

"Get lost!" Lu Feng shouted.

Bang!

The door slammed shut loudly.

All of Lu Feng's subordinates were ashamed and resentful at the same time. Their faces were flushed and they were panting heavily. Everyone looked at each other and saw the blazing flames in each other's eyes.

Upon returning to his room, Lu Feng regained his composure as a smile appeared on his face, without the slightest trace of anger? Ever since his Deathgrass Division was established, everything had been smooth sailing for them and they seldom encountered any setbacks. As such, these fellows had become complacent. He had been wanting to teach them a lesson for a long time, but could not find the right opportunity to do so.

This opportunity came at the right time. Half of his rage was real, while the other half was making use of the current situation as a pretext to make a fuss. Even if his subordinates died, he wouldn't mind the humiliation, let alone if they were injured. The feeling of humiliation was not enough to make him lose his mind.

As an adopted son of the Lu family, he had been bullied and looked down on for an unknown number of times since he was young. People only looked at how fortunate he was. They did not see how he was being neglected and looked down on.

His heart had already become as cold as steel.

Ai Hui had given him a huge "surprise".

It was at this moment that Lu Feng realized the Lightning Blade he previously ignored was not a simple individual. The wisdom and tactics that he displayed had shocked Lu Feng. He knew that Ai Hui wasn’t a rash individual and certainly wasn’t a smooth-talker.

Lu Feng seemed to understand why Central Pine Faction would follow Ai Hui’s leadership.

There were a lot of new citizens in Central Pine Faction. There were also members from first-class aristocratic families like Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun. He was not familiar with Shi Xueman. As for Duanmu Huanghun, he had been observing him from the dark for quite some time. Duanmu Huanghun was a highly intelligent individual. Other than being slightly emotional and sensitive, every aspect of him was great. Whether it was his innate gifts or his intelligence, they were extremely astonishing.

There were actually so many outstanding individuals that were willing to follow Ai Hui.

Lu Feng was drooling over the talents that Ai Hui had and wished he could snatch them over. When he looked at Ai Hui's subordinates and then looked at his own ones, he could see the huge difference in the quality between them.

However, he would definitely surpass Ai Hui!

Lu Feng involuntarily clenched his fists tightly.

After a while, he loosened his fists and took out a small wooden box from one of his drawers. A stack of palm-sized cards was placed inside the wooden box. On the top of the stack of cards, there was a card with the name "Lu Chen" written on it

Lu Feng drew another card and solemnly wrote down two words.

—— Ai Hui.

.....

Embroidery workshop.

Ai Hui and Senior Mingxiu were talking about Lu Feng.

"Second Brother was adopted by our family when he was still very young. In the beginning, he was bullied terribly. I felt very sorry for him and so I asked my father to help him. When we were young, we enjoyed having a rather great relationship. He would

take good care of me. However, that was when we were around four to five years old. After that, I went to the embroidery workshop in Central Pine City and learnt embroidery from Mistress. Since then, we have not been in contact much and we grew apart. I often heard my clan members praising him. They said that even though he is not as gifted as First Brother, he is brave and tenacious.

"After that, he somehow became the division leader of Deathgrass Division and he began to rebuild the division. These few years, he has done a remarkable job in rebuilding it. However, there are still a lot of critics saying that he is not capable of the job. Even his higher-ups don't agree to him using the title of 'Deathgrass Lu'. It's most likely that he became the division leader of Deathgrass Division without the approval of his higher-ups. He is rather stressed too."

Senior Mingxiu's tone contained a tinge of sadness. She continued, "I only met him again when I came to Asakusa City to build my embroidery workshop. I disliked him the first time I met him. From his eyes, I could tell that he was extremely ambitious and unscrupulous. I don't like these kinds of people."

Ai Hui nodded his head and replied, "Even though this is my first time meeting him, I can also sense that he is an ambitious and unscrupulous individual!"

Ai Hui knew that Senior Mingxiu was exceptionally intelligent and he was not worried about her. He could tell that Senior Mingxiu disliked Lu Feng based on why she would like Brother Li Wei. At that time, Brother Li Wei was merely a member of the

Infantry Division. His status paled in comparison to Senior Mingxiu's. However, Senior Mingxiu did not care about it at all and still liked him.

The main thing was that Brother Li Wei was a genuine and candid individual.

When Ai Hui thought of Brother Li Wei, he had complex feelings. The Brother Li Wei of the past had become Silver Soldier now.

Mingxiu smiled and continued, "You don't need to worry about me too much. Even though First Brother seems like a nonchalant individual, no one dares to oppose him. Even the clan leader is scared of him, let alone Lu Feng. First Brother loves me dearly and he will take good care of me."

Now that Ai Hui thought about it, he agreed with his senior too. Senior Mingxiu's first brother was White-robed Divine Physician, Lu Chen. He was also Dai Gang's eldest disciple. Lu Chen's influence and reputation in Jadeite Forest were undeniable. Anyone that wanted to harm Mingxiu would not ignore Lu Chen's existence.

Suddenly, a tinge of doubt arose in Ai Hui's mind.

Weren't the Grass Bandits scared of Lu Chen's rage when they decided to target Senior Mingxiu? The Grass Bandits must have known the deep relationship between Senior Mingxiu and Lu Chen. If that was the case, why did they still target Senior Mingxiu? Unless... Unless they had a way to deal with Lu Chen's

rage?

The only one in the entire Jadeite Forest that had the capability of stopping Lu Chen was Dai Gang.

However, Grass Bandits and Dai Gang were arch-enemies, how was it possible that they'd joined hands?

No, there was one more possibility!

The Grass Bandits' target was Lu Chen!

When this emerging thought flashed in Ai Hui's mind, he felt that the Grass Bandits were crazy!

Not only was Lu Chen a wood elemental master, his healing skills and combat skills were exceptionally outstanding. Out of Dai Gang's three disciples, Lu Chen was his favourite disciple. On more than one occasion, Dai Gang had said that Lu Chen resembled his younger self.

Being a member of the Lu family, he was wealthy and powerful. His healing skills were superb and he had healed numerous experts before. He had great relationships with everyone and even Dai Gang paled in comparison to him in regards to this aspect. The moment Lu Chen asked for help, a lot of people would certainly come forward to his assistance.

It was not a difficult task for Lu Chen to raze the Grass Bandits to

the ground. Where did they get the confidence to target Lu Chen?

Upon realizing that the Grass Bandits were not as simple as he thought, Ai Hui decided to stay in Asakusa City for a while longer. He did not care what plots the Grass Bandits were hatching. As long as he destroyed all Grass Bandits, all their plots would be strangled to death in their cradles.

He indeed had to cut the weeds and eliminate the roots completely.

Ai Hui's facial expression remained the same as he made his decision. He changed the topic and asked, "Senior, have you reached the level of Master in embroidery?"

The embroidery-related question immediately captured Mingxiu's attention. She replied with a distressed tone, "I feel like I am very close to achieving it. However, there is this area that I have stagnated in for quite some time."

Upon hearing that, Ai Hui could not help but ask with deep concern, "Which area? Tell me about it, perhaps I can give you some advice."

For one to become a Master, he or she must create his or her own absolute art. This applied to the field of embroidery as well. Mingxiu had to create her own embroidery technique. Han Yuqin was excellent with regards to this aspect. She had created more than ten embroidery techniques by herself. Her embroidery works had a special name, Rainbow Embroidery.

It was not an easy task for one to create his or her own embroidery technique.

Senior Mingxiu cast a disdainful look at Ai Hui and replied, "Look at your embroidery level, other than spinning silk from cocoons, what else do you know? Based on your level, you want to offer me advice?"

"Senior, you have underestimated me. I have travelled extensively and I am very knowledgeable. I might be able to come up with one or two ideas for you," Ai Hui boasted shamelessly.

"You have indeed become a bad boy. Your words have become flippant and insincere. My loom is spoilt. A hero that has travelled extensively, helping me to fix it." Mingxiu replied with contempt.

Ai Hui’s face was brimming with confidence as he walked to a non-operating loom and asked, "Is this the one? Leave it to me. I can easily fix this small problem."

"That is a shredder."

"No wonder it looks so ugly."

"..."

Chapter 409: Mr Small Ai

"In the past, all the looms in Mistress's embroidery workshop were made by Master and they were very easy to use. Before I left Central Pine City, I even went back to Jade Embroidery Workshop and found the most intact loom to bring here. I don't know which part of it is spoilt. Initially, it worked very well and smooth. However, it soon became stuck. I have found some blacksmiths to take a look at it, but they just can't fix it. I have tried other models of looms but I am just not used to them."

Mingxiu recalled the past fondly as she spoke these words.

"This is made by Master? Master knows how to make looms? I have never heard of this from him before."

"Yes," Mingxiu nodded her head, "Almost everything in Mistress's workshop was made by Master. Mistress will request for something and Master will make it. As the disciple of Master, it's time for your test now. Little fellow, work hard."

Ai Hui was already standing in front of the loom that his master made and examining it very carefully.

This was actually the first time Ai Hui examined a loom so closely.

When he was in Central Pine City, he was specialized in spinning silk from cocoons. After arriving at Peace City, he was still spinning silk from cocoons to make See You Laters. Ai Hui was

merely a rookie in the field of embroidery.

Fortunately, the science behind a loom was not complicated.

Thanks to the weaving experience that he'd learned from his mistress in the past, Ai Hui was able to understand how a loom worked in an hour's time.

In the past, Ai Hui used a very basic type of weaving technique called [Twin Weaving Technique]. This technique involved weaving horizontally and vertically at the same time. [Twin Weaving Technique] was the fundamental of almost all weaving techniques. Most of those complicated weaving techniques were just evolved versions of [Twin Weaving Technique].

The loom was made of a table with a pond-like hollow in the centre of it. Surrounding the tabletop was a square-shaped needle trough. Needles of all sizes were arranged neatly within the needle trough, resembling ships parked at the harbor.

On each side of the loom, there was an imprint of a palm. An elementalist needed to place his or her palms on the imprints to channel elemental energy into the loom.

Ai Hui placed his palms on the imprints and channeled his elemental energy into the loom.

The pond-like hollow in the centre of the loom emitted a layer of faintly glowing membrane, like a pond that was filled up with

water. Then the needles gave off a faint glow. The glowing needles were slowly ejected from the needle trough, resembling small ships that were leaving the harbor. The flat layer of glowing membrane was like the surface of the sea outside the harbor as the needles travelled back and forth on the membrane. Dazzling, fine streaks of light were created as the needles moved randomly on the membrane. These streaks of light looked as if they were tangled up terribly.

Under the guidance of the needles, the silk yarn was rapidly woven into a piece of cloth.

As compared to the cloths he woved in the past, this piece of cloth was of a much higher quality.

Ai Hui could not take his eyes off the weaving process. The needles were moving at an extremely fast speed. An embroidery craftswoman would need to take years of practise to move the needles with such a terrifying speed.

Ai Hui could also see that there were a huge number of needles in the loom. This implied that the loom could execute complicated weaving techniques. The more needles there were to be controlled in a loom, the more demanding it would be on the embroidery craftswoman that was using it.

Interesting!

The dazzling streaks of light interwove with the yarn silk. The elemental energy and the yarn silk had reached a magical balance.

Ai Hui exclaimed in admiration. He felt that the apparatus in front of him was very exquisite. He thought of the pile of rubbish that his master placed in his courtyard and the armor that evaluated one's eight palaces. His master seemed to like playing around with various bizarre objects. To be able to see his master's opus and have a taste of what his master had been through in the past created a deadly temptation for Ai Hui.

The most difficult part of weaving was controlling the needles. Even though the needles in the loom looked confusing to one's eyes, they actually moved in a systematic manner.

When Mingxiu saw her junior had turned a deaf ear to her and completely forgotten about her existence, she pursed her lips, smiled and silently left the room.

Ai Hui was half-squatting as he attentively stared at the fast-moving needles on the glowing membrane.

Crack!

Suddenly, the needles on top of the glowing membrane lost control and flew around like headless flies. Very soon, the yarn silk was tangled up terribly.

Ai Hui furrowed his eyebrows but soon loosened them up. He stopped channeling elemental energy into the loom and the glowing membrane disappeared. The glow on the needles disappeared too as they fell into the hollow.

Where had gone wrong?

Unconsciously, Ai Hui tried over and over again.

Mingxiu did not disturb Ai Hui. She knew that once her junior was in the zone, he would be completely lost in his own world. She made an inspection round of her embroidery workshop, just like how she did in the past. Actually, her motivation for starting an embroidery business was more just so she could continue a routine that she was used to, rather than because she was pursuing a personal goal. Since she was very young, she had been helping her mistress to manage her embroidery business. Every little detail of the embroidery workshop helped her to relax.

A travel-worn butler entered the workshop. When he saw Mingxiu, he heaved a sigh of relief, "Miss!"

"Why is Uncle Yu here?" Mingxiu looked slightly surprised.

Uncle Yu was the Lu family's butler. He had served the Lu family for decades and watched Mingxiu grow up. As such, the family head of the Lu family trusted him very much.

Uncle Yu quickly explained, "During this period of time, a lot of people have visited our residence. Upon hearing that the Lightning Blade was visiting Miss, all of them wanted to make friends with Mr Small Ai and invite him to our residence. Family Head has told us not to worry about other families. However, since a VIP like Mr Small Ai is here in Jadeite Forest, our family has to invite him to

our residence. Mr Small Ai and Miss are both disciples of Wang Shouchuan and Han Yuqin, therefore, he is part of our family as well. We have a special relationship with him and we definitely can’t commit any faux pas."

Mingxiu furrowed her eyebrows and asked, "How do they know Junior is here? And why are they calling him Mr Small Ai?"

Uncle Yu chuckled and replied, "Mr Small Ai is so famous, yet he is still so young. Everyone feels that calling him Mr Ai Hui would make him sound very old. As such, they have decided to call him Mr Small Ai. The news of Mr Small Ai slaughtering the Grass Bandits has been spread throughout Jadeite Forest. Everyone has suffered a lot at the hands of Grass Bandits. Therefore, when they heard of Mr Small Ai’s feat, they rejoiced in his victory. All of them said that it’s a matter of time before Mr Small Ai becomes a Master. They even said that he might become a Grandmaster in the future. Furthermore, he is the leader of Central Pine Faction and his future is limitless. They hope to make friends with him so that they can keep in contact in the future."

Mingxiu was shocked. Her junior had unconsciously become a celebrity.

Even though she did not care about what was going on in the clan, she roughly knew what these people were up to.

Jadeite Forest and Elders Guild had an unique relationship. Ever since Grandmaster Dai established independence, even though Jadeite Forest and Elders Guild were set against each other, their relationship wasn’t really tense.

After all, Grandmaster Dai was at the prime of his life while An Mu was in his twilight years. One couldn't say for sure whether or not Elders Guild and Jadeite Forest would join hands once again in the future. On the contrary, Elders Guild and Blood of God were arch-enemies.

Ai Hui's past achievements were what made him the leader of Central Pine Faction. The feat he had achieved in his battle against the Grass Bandits had completely eradicated the doubts that everyone had about his strength.

If a leader was not powerful enough, his followers would not have confidence in him. In an era where brute force mattered the most, the strength of a powerful individual could change the world. This world would always belong to someone like Grandmaster Dai.

Numbers did not matter to a formidable being like Grandmaster Dai.

Everyone below the level of Grandmaster would not differ much from each other. It was true that a Master was much more powerful than an ordinary elementalist, however, a Master dying on the battlefield was also a common occurrence.

Only a Grandmaster could contend against another Grandmaster.

Dai Gang had personally displayed the power, wealth and strength of a Grandmaster.

People now realized that the best investment to make was in a future Grandmaster. Becoming a Grandmaster was extremely difficult and the probability of becoming one was extremely low. However, if one succeeded in becoming a Grandmaster, they would reap an astronomical amount of gains.

In other words, Ai Hui had finally come out from under everyone's radar. He was one of their candidates that would most likely become a Grandmaster. Every family desired to make friends with a genius that had the possibility of becoming a Grandmaster in the future.

What kind of person could become a Grandmaster? This was a difficult problem that all aristocratic families were troubled over. It was very difficult to determine whether or not an individual would become a Grandmaster based on factors like his strength, his innate talents, his teachers, etc. However, there was one essential factor that everyone would look at the most. This essential factor was age. The younger an individual was, the more time he had to reach the level of Grandmaster.

The younger a genius was, the more favored he or she was.

Among so many geniuses, Ai Hui was not especially young. However, he possessed a rather impressive reputation and numerous accolades for someone of his age.

The road to becoming a Grandmaster was arduous and relentless. A moment of carelessness would consign a candidate to eternal

damnation. A mentally weak genius would always be the first to fall among the batch of candidates for Grandmaster.

Having a rather impressive reputation, an outstanding resume, a firm and ruthless nature, and talents that were displayed in his recent improvements had not turned Ai Hui into an arrogant individual, but rather, attracted some ‘fans’ to him.

Mingxiu was indifferent to fame and glory naturally. She had zero interest in the scramble for power and wealth, otherwise, she would not have settled in Asakusa City and focused on managing her embroidery workshop.

"Junior has no interest in making social connections," Mingxiu said as she shook her head.

"Family Head said that if Mr Small Ai is not free, then he shall not disturb him. Family Head has specially prepared a small gift for him and asked me to pass it to him." Uncle Yu replied politely.

"I will pass it to him," Mingxiu replied.

Naturally, she was very happy that her family valued her junior. However, she did not wish her junior to be distracted by so many trivial matters. Her junior’s strength had improved greatly and he should be focusing on his training now.

"There’s a request from a particular family that Family Head is unsure whether or not he should agree to. Eventually, he decided

to ask me to convey the message and let Mr Small Ai decide for himself." Uncle Yu paused for a while before continuing his sentence, "Duanmu family wishes to meet Mr Small Ai."

Mingxiu was stunned momentarily. She just remembered that Duanmu Huanghun was "kidnapped" by Shi Xueman and taken to Peace City.

Obviously, everyone knew what the "kidnap" was all about. The news of Duanmu Huanghun living a carefree and happy life in Peace City had already been spread throughout Jadeite Forest.

The Lu family and Duanmu family were very close. As such, she knew a lot of things about Duanmu Huanghun. In the past, because of Ai Hui, she also came across the name "Student Bangwan" and both of them had gotten closer since then. She felt that it was better for Duanmu Huanghun to stay in Peace City than in Jadeite Forest.

"I will go and ask him. Uncle Yu, stay in the embroidery workshop for the time being," Mingxiu replied.

"Sorry for bothering you, Miss," Uncle Yu smiled.

Following which, he left discreetly.

Mingxiu felt slightly excited as she strode towards the warehouse. Had Junior fixed the loom? If there was someone in this world that could fix the loom, that person must be her junior.

After all, he was the disciple of Master!

When she entered the warehouse and saw Ai Hui lying on the ground and fixing the loom, she could not help but smile.

However, when her gaze landed upon the loom, her face froze.

Chapter 410: Glimmer of Autumn Moon

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Chapter 410 - Glimmer of Autumn Moon

The appearance of the loom had completely changed. No matter how Mingxiu looked at what Ai Hui was fiddling with, she could not link it to an ordinary loom.

If this thing was a loom, it would be the oddest looking loom in the world.

Whenever the previous loom was switched on, the hollow at the centre of it would be filled with a glow, resembling the peaceful surface of a sea. In the current loom, the hollow had disappeared and was replaced by a peak-like object.

"Wait for a while more."

Ai Hui’s voice came from beneath the loom. Apparently, he had crawled under the base of it.

After a while, Ai Hui crawled out from the base. His entire body was covered in dust, but he not mind at all. "It’s fixed!" Ai Hui said cheerfully.

"You have fixed it?" Mingxiu had a puzzled look on her face.

"Yes," Ai Hui nodded his head with confidence. When he noticed Mingxiu's facial expression, he immediately knew what she was thinking. He replied with satisfaction, "Oh, I feel that the previous loom has a lot of room for improvement and I conveniently made some modifications to it. When Master made this loom, a lot of theories that he applied to it were not fully developed yet. As such, the previous loom can be considered an outdated version."

Mingxiu was filled with complex feelings. To her, this was not only a loom but an inheritance to commemorate her master and mistress. Originally, she did not wish for anything on this loom to change at all, as she did not care whether or not the loom was useful. If it was a random blacksmith who wanted to make this many modifications to it, she would not have allowed it.

However, the one who modified it was her junior, a person who had the same sentiments as her towards the inheritances from their master and mistress.

"I think Master and Mistress would want us to carry forward their theories, not leave them in the corner of a warehouse for us to commemorate them with."

Ai Hui's voice was very calm. The sentimental feeling in Mingxiu's heart was soothed by Ai Hui's voice. She smiled saying, "Junior is right. Junior, come and introduce me to this brand-new loom."

Looking pleased with himself, Ai Hui replied, "In the previous loom, the operating path of every needle is fixed. Master has created a brilliant yet complicated setting for them. However, this setting has a flaw, that is, its low operating efficiency rate. The modifications I've made are inspired by God-subduing Peak. Look at its shape, does it look somewhat like the God-subduing Peak? God-subduing Peak's elemental energy flow follows the five elemental cycle that grows and multiplies without an end. Using it in the loom, it optimizes the use of elemental energy. Then, how do we move the needles? I solved this issue by using the theories behind sword formations. Can you see that every needle actually resembles a small flying sword? A sword formation can make swords do complicated maneuvers and its operating efficiency is extremely high. Unlike swords, the difficulty of controlling the needles is much lower. The loom will work as long as you can stabilize the flight path of the needles."

"It's so powerful?" A doubtful looked appeared on Mingxiu's face.

"This is a brand-new model. Its efficiency rate far surpasses the previous model. If Senior doesn't believe me, you can give it a try." Ai Hui said proudly.

"I will definitely give it a try," Mingxiu cast a glance at Ai Hui, "If your modifications fail, that means you have destroyed Master's and Mistress's inheritance. Ahhh..."

Mingxiu's words made Ai Hui feel bad. However, he was very confident with his modified loom. "Do you want me to give it a try first?" Ai Hui asked.

"No need," Mingxiu rejected Ai Hui's offer with confidence. She had been trained in embroidery since she was very young. She had fiddled with all kinds of new looms in the market and she was extremely knowledgeable in this aspect.

She placed her palms on the imprints and channeled her elemental energy into the loom. A buzzing sound came out of the loom as the mini peak on the table suddenly shot out a few finger-sized beams of light. Then a radiance was emitted from the peak and flowed down the peak like liquid. Everywhere it passed through began to buzz loudly.

Mingxiu suddenly yelled in surprise, "Oh my god! There are so many needles!"

Mingxiu understood a lot of types of looms very well. The science behind each loom was quite different. However, the logic behind the number of needles would always be the same. The more needles there were, the higher the grade of the cloth that was produced.

The previous loom that was left behind by her mistress had a total of one hundred and eight needles. This was already a huge amount. Now, there were so many needles within the peak that Mingxiu could not tell how many there were.

This entire peak was made up of needles!

Ai Hui's proud voice rang across Mingxiu's ears.

"Nine hundred and seventy-two needles. This is already the limit of its capacity . If more needles are added in, the size of the loom will be terrifying."

Mingxiu was thoroughly shocked by the number of needles in the loom. For a moment, she forgot to channel her elemental energy into the loom and the buzzing sound immediately became softer.

Upon seeing this, Ai Hui quickly reminded her, "Don’t stop. Since this loom has more needles, you must channel enough elemental energy into it to activate the needles."

Mingxiu’s mind jolted. She quickly regained her composure and continued to channel her elemental energy into the loom.

The shock she felt had yet to disappear. An unprecedented feeling arose in her mind. To her surprise, she discovered that she could easily sense the specific position of every needle.

Every single position of the nine hundred and seventy-two needles could be clearly sensed!

Mingxiu felt incredulous. How did her junior do it?

Just as this question flashed across her mind, a whizzing sound rang across her ears. Traces of fine glowing silk erupted from the peak. They were so resplendent that she was entranced by them.

Wait!

This indescribable feeling of familiarity came silently and suddenly.

This was... [Waterfall Weaving Technique]?

Her junior’s irritating and proud voice rang across her ears again.

"Do you find these needles familiar? Since there are too many needles, the usual weaving technique will not work. That’s when I thought of Mistress’s [Waterfall Weaving Technique]. Don’t tell me you don’t know Mistress’s masterpiece?"

"I don’t know? Of course I know!"

However, Han Yuqin, the person who created [Waterfall Weaving Technique], controlled a total of nine hundred and forty-seven needles! Up till now, she held the record for the most number of needles controlled at once.

This loom had nine hundred and seventy-two needles. That was twenty-five more needles than her mistress’s record!

Mingxiu felt that her brain was in chaos. Her ten years worth of experience and knowledge about embroidery had been overturned in an instant.

"Focus!"

Ai Hi's reminder brought Mingxiu back to her senses. She took in a deep breath of air and got rid of the distracting thoughts in her head. Following which, her gaze became focused.

Wisps of light rose from the peak, resembling a school of fish that were swimming nimbly and swiftly. An observer would see a dazzling and gorgeous waterfall falling down the peak.

The focused Mingxiu could immediately sense the marvels of the loom. [Waterfall Weaving Technique] was a technique that she was very familiar with. Even though she could not control nine hundred and forty-seven needles like her mistress, she could still control six hundred needles. There were very few people of her age and base level that could achieve this feat.

However, she had never controlled so many needles before. The surprising thing was that she did not feel it was strenuous at all to control so many needles. The pain of controlling several hundreds of needles had completely disappeared. These needles were unusually tame and obedient. Every needle would react the instant she jolted her mind.

Mingxiu became excited as she understood what this meant.

Elemental energy flowed into the loom in an unending stream. Traces of fine needle gleams were swirling around the peak and interweaving with each other, releasing a magnificent burst of sparks in every direction. Deafening sonic booms, hollow sounds

of wood and hissing sounds created by the silk yarns rubbing against each other were produced at random.

Ai Hui was entranced by the process.

The needles were moving in a very shocking way. The way the elemental energy fluctuated had certainly amazed him as well. Even though he was the one that created this loom, he could never weave at such a level.

Senior Mingxiu's achievements in the field of embroidery were displayed in great detail at this instance.

A piece of pure white cloth was formed and it swirled around the peak like a huge, snow-white fish. Countless brilliant glimmers of various colors gathered at the tail of the cloth. Needles were flying around each other with a terrifying speed at the tail of the cloth. Looking from afar, the cloth looked like a huge, snow-white fish that had a tail like colorful fireworks.

The length of the cloth was slowly increasing.

The elemental energy in the air was slightly changing as well. The moving piece of cloth absorbed elemental energy from its surrounding as the elemental energy undulations coming from it became stronger and stronger. Like a whirlpool, the swirling piece of cloth was devouring its surrounding elemental energy endlessly.

Ai Hui's face displayed astonishment. Anything that could cause

changes in Nature's elemental energy was definitely an extraordinary object!

A layer of faint glimmer enshrouded the white-colored cloth.

The needles gleaming at the tail of the cloth became increasingly magnificent. Beads of perspiration appeared on the tip of Mingxiu's nose and her forehead. Her gaze remained focused.

Ai Hui was slightly nervous as well. He knew that when a piece of cloth was about to be finished it was at its most critical stage, and this moment was where mistakes could be made the easiest. At this stage, Mingxiu was already very tired and the elemental energy in her body had been almost completely depleted. A moment of carelessness would cause her to fail and waste all the effort she had put in.

Destroying the entire bolt of cloth while one was finishing it up was a common occurrence in the world of embroidery.

The densely-packed needle gleams began to give off fine, whizzing sounds. The whizzing sounds got louder and louder. At this moment, the needle gleams were moving at a speed that human eyes could not see while the whizzing sounds had turned into crisp and deafening sonic booms.

The deafening sonic booms made Ai Hui so nervous that he was gasping for air.

When the last streak of needle gleam pierced through the white cloth, all the sonic booms disappeared.

The piece of white cloth hovered above the peak while its entire body was emitting a glow. The glow was actually concentrated elemental energy.

Mingxiu lifted up her palms as she gasped for air. Her forehead was dripping with perspiration but her eyes were filled with excitement.

"Impressive! Impressive! I didn’t expect myself to weave Glimmer of Autumn Moon!"

Ai Hui froze momentarily. After a while, he returned to his senses and asked with incredulity, "This... this is Glimmer of Autumn Moon?"

In any case, Ai Hui had spent a reasonable amount of time in the embroidery workshop to know what Glimmer of Autumn Moon was. Glimmer of Autumn Moon was a top-grade cloth material. Naturally, it could emit a gentle and cold glimmer, resembling the magnificent glimmer of an autumn moon.

The concentrated elemental energy surrounding the hovering white cloth gradually disappeared and became a gentle glimmer, resembling the glow of a moon. Nothing could be more beautiful than the glimmer.

Mingxiu was mesmerized by the piece of white cloth as well. "Yes, this is Glimmer of Autumn Moon."

Every top-grade cloth material had its unique characteristic. Glimmer of Autumn Moon could only be produced using nine hundred or more needles at the same time. The weaving technique required for this cloth was extremely complicated. Since Mingxiu could only control up to six hundred needles, the piece of cloth she produced was actually Glimmer of Moon, which was a grade lower than Glimmer of Autumn Moon. The lustre of Glimmer of Moon did not contain the cold gleam that Glimmer of Autumn Moon uniquely possessed. Furthermore, the uses and prices of these two materials was extremely different.

Mingxiu never expected her first bolt of Glimmer of Autumn Moon to be produced in such a situation.

Chapter 411: Mingxiu's Breakthrough

Uncle Yu was resting in the room, pondering over things.

He could obtain the family head's trust because he knew how to use his brain by analyzing the family head's thoughts. He felt that an eligible subordinate had to be able to see and think more, and figure out the higher-ups' true intentions in order not to mess up.

A pity he hadn't seen Ai Hui earlier.

He was very curious about Ai Hui since rumors involving him had been on the rise, as if he had quickly entered the radars of people all over. The residence had been unconcerned about him previously, because, in spite of his position as little Miss' junior, his abilities were simply too lacking.

Lacking in abilities was another phrase for trash.

Although news of Ai Hui's doings in Peace City had been spread extensively, it wasn't worth mentioning in front of the big figures. Many felt that because of Ai Hui's imcompetence, people like Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun were bound to replace him in future. The internal disorder within Central Pine Faction was predestined.

But recently, everyone had been dismissing their previous standpoint, since Ai Hui had displayed great powers and astonishing progress.

There were quite a number of families, like the Lu residence, who had been analyzing Ai Hui's progress from the porridge feast up till now. It allowed them to shockingly conclude that his abilities indeed took a major leap within this short period of time.

If Ai Hui could keep up with this pace and have people like Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun by his side, Central Pine Faction would instantly become a force not to be reckoned with.

The Lu family had an advantage in this aspect since there was an unbreakable bond between Ai Hui and Mingxiu. He'd come over especially for her, evidence that they were close like siblings. As long as the Lu family did not act recklessly, they would always be ahead of the others.

The key now was for the family to express their sincerity and maintain a friendly relationship with him.

He suddenly recalled that two of Second Young Master's subordinates had been severely injured from a conflict they'd had with Ai Hui. This news made him furrowed his brows. He would have to remind Second Young Master not to go overboard.

Second Young Master adored the little Miss. Many knew that the family head held an ambivalent attitude toward it.

But Uncle Yu knew the person the family head really took a fancy to was Yu Mingqiu, who was missing. Yu Mingqiu and Miss had been childhood friends. Plus, he was the junior of First Young

Master and a disciple of Dai Gang. Who could be a better candidate than him?

But while Miss was quiet and contented, she would make sure the whole city knew of her opinions whenever she had one. Plus, she was about to become an embroidery master, so the family would require a lot of support from her. As such, her opinions weighed heavily on the family head. On top of that, a noble man admired her greatly. If the family placed considerable weight on the little Miss' opinions, Yu Mingqiu's words were basically sacred.

He was rather worried about Second Young Master. Although Second Young Master was diligent, he was overly impatient.

Suddenly, Uncle Yu stood up. Where the embroidery workshop was, an intense elemental energy wave was soaring into the sky.

A look of joy appeared on his face.

The female embroiderers rushed out, the same joy evident on their faces.

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In the courtyard of a house located in another corner of Asakusa City, a few big fellows, who were talking in low voices, stopped suddenly to look at the sky.

"That is... Lu Mingxiu's embroidery workshop!"

"She’s experiencing a breakthrough!

The few of them looked around and saw the shock in one another’s eyes. They’d not expected Lu Mingxiu to undergo a breakthrough at this time.

"What do we do? Are we going to just sit and watch?"

The leader was calmer. He responded, "We’re here to seek information, not to get involved in other issues. Boss is still waiting for us to get back. Lu Mingxiu can’t run away!"

"How can we let such a rare opportunity slip? I disagree!"

A tall, grim fellow with long arms stood up, saying, "One shot is all it takes."

The rest immediately fell silent. The grim looking man was called Ban Yan, one of the strongest fellows in the Grass Bandits. He had perfected his bow techniques and countless people had died from his arrows.

The leader clenched his teeth. "You only get one shot! The rest of you, disperse first!"

The others did not resist and left without fooling around.

.....

In the warehouse, having completed [Glimmer of Autumn Moon], Mingxiu did not immediately stop but instead, closed her eyes while standing in the same spot, soaking in and reminiscing about the feeling from earlier.

Ai Hui's eyes lit up. He'd felt the change in the elemental energy within Senior Mingxiu's body and became speechless.

Mingxiu had, for the longest time, been just a step away from becoming a Master, but was stuck and unable break to through.

Earlier, it had been her first time controlling so many embroidery needles so it was very fresh to her. Especially since the flow of the needles was completely integrated, like the natural movement of running water, it shocked and stimulated her greatly.

So embroidery needles could be this smooth flowing!

After all, Ai Hui had limited achievements when it came to embroidery. He hadn't modified this loom from the perspective of an embroiderer but instead, he'd done it with his understanding of elemental energy and Teacher's theories. Also, he'd blended in his knowledge of sword formations to create this unique loom.

All of this impacted Mingxiu significantly. The feeling of inspiration surged like an erupting volcano and whatever

questions she'd been puzzling over were easily solved.

She relished in it all, completely engrossed.

The dried up elemental energy within her body moved suddenly, as if a turning point had emerged. The surrounding elemental energy surged wildly toward her, making increasingly huge motions as all the energy flowed backward and into her body.

Ai Hui's face changed greatly. The elemental energy around him had been vacuumed out!

Despite the fact that he was in the Second Elemental Realm and that he had a very strong control of his surrounding elemental energy, the energy was still being sucked away uncontrollably.

This is...

A light bulb went off in his head. An ecstatic look flashed across his face as he rushed out of the warehouse.

Only then did he realize that people were already crowding around outside and that many of them had their eyes on him.

Uncle Yu saw him too. He'd seen Ai Hui's mirage beanpod and recognized him immediately. The elemental energy waves within the warehouse were obviously Miss' doing but now that Ai Hui was here, could it be that Missus' breakthrough had something to do with him?

The others looked on with curious gazes.

Along with the increasing commotion within the warehouse, everyone had no choice but to retreat further. Elemental energy gathered from all over and headed toward the warehouse like a hurricane.

Boom!

The strongly resistant tile roof ripped apart and shattered as the whole warehouse shook.

The female embroiderers turned pale.

Ai Hui, on the other hand, was filled with joy. Master! Senior was becoming a Master!

He raised his guard quickly, however, as his face tensed up. He wouldn't be this nervous if he was in her shoes.

Nothing must happen at this time!

Just then, Ai Hui sensed a dangerous odor and like a cat, his hair stood on end. He retrieved his sword instantly, suspiciously surveying the surroundings but finding nothing peculiar despite scanning every corner within his field of vision.

Ai Hui was in a highly nervous state. It was his first time experiencing something like this.

Uncle Yu was the first to notice his unusual behavior. He raised his guard immediately. Could it be that someone was trying to disrupt Miss' breakthrough? Better safe than sorry, he yelled hurriedly, "Stay away, everyone."

Right then, quite a number of citizens had already been alarmed. With such a huge commotion, anyone in the city would've sensed it as long as they weren't daft.

"Is Miss Mingxiu attaining the level of Master? Asakusa City is about to have a Master too!"

"Great teachers produce great disciples. Seeing how Han Yuqin was such a formidable Master, Miss Mingxiu is sure to excel as one too."

"Could it be that Ai Hui knew that she was about to break through and hence came over specially to protect her?"

"Possible. But why would she seek help from far away? Isn't the Lu family's power fearful enough?"

"True."

...

Seeing that Ai Hui hadn’t relaxed at all, Uncle Yu felt even more nervous. Just then, upon seeing a few swift and fierce figures appearing, he finally let out a breath of relief.

Mingxiu’s safety was an issue since she lived in Asakusa City alone. As such, the Lu residence had specially arranged some men to protect her from the sly.

"Uncle Yu!"

The guards heaved a sigh of relief as well, upon seeing Uncle Yu.

Without letting his guard down, Uncle Yu shouted sternly, "Be alert! Someone might cause trouble."

The guards shuddered and answered hurriedly, "Yes!"

They would all be dead if something were to happen to little Miss at this time. They stiffened their faces, sweeping their sharp eyes over the surrounding crowd. Wherever they looked, the crowd quietened down out of fear. These guards were clearly the elites of the Lu Residence so to provoke them was to dig their own graves.

The embroidery workshop was about to face a great enemy, currently located in another corner of the city.

In the courtyard, Ban Yan took out his bow with a solemn

expression on his face. His bow was ash-colored, and appeared to be made from a kind of rotten wood block. However, the bowstring was blood red in color, exceptionally eye-catching.

The arrow was over a meter long and emerald in color, resembling a mini javelin. The arrow was made from three fine rattan vines twisted together. It was aesthetically pleasing, with its perfectly straight and slender form. There were three thumb-sized, black fruits spinning around the arrowhead and the arrow tail was carved like a golden feather, vivid and lifelike.

The leader couldn’t help but ask, "Are you confident?"

Ban Yan responded coldly, "Within 5kilometers, success is guaranteed."

The big fellow knew he’d asked for nothing the moment the question left his mouth. They were less than two miles away from the embroidery workshop so there was no way Ban Yan would miss. Ban Yan had even successfully struck a wood elementalist from five miles away.

Ban Yan wrapped his fingers around the golden arrow tail, placed it on the bowstring and pulled the bowstring in one go. His moves were indescribably pleasing to the eye.

He did not release the bow immediately. Instead he shut his eyes tight and remained motionless like a statue.

Only the three black fruits continued spinning around the arrow head.

A long time later, he opened his eyes suddenly and at the same time, with a cry, his whole body rose in green flames. The green flames extended from his arm to his fingers and onto his bowstring, causing a devilish red glow to appear on it. Mixed in with the green flames, the overall sight was unexplainably eerie.

The green flames spread to the arrow and bow, and when it reached the arrow head, the three black fruits turned into burning red metal balls, emitting a bright red light.

Ban Yan was, at this point, extremely imposing and lofty. Exhaling, he released the bowstring in a swift manner.

The arrow quickly transformed into a tiny speck of light, disappearing into the horizon.

Chapter 412: Two Masters Under One Roof

The Lu Residence's guards acted cautiously, as if a great enemy was approaching.

"There shouldn't be any fools right?"

"Shut it! It's always good to be careful."

"No suspicious targets."

"No suspicious targets."

...

Uncle Yu glanced over at the reverse flowing elemental energy and breathed a sigh of relief. He could tell that the most dangerous period had past and that Miss's elemental energy waves were gradually stabilizing.

Just then, an intense uneasiness rose within his heart, abruptly alerting him.

A shadow flashed across the corner of his eye. So quick!

That was... Ai Hui!

Ai Hui's intuition toward danger grew, and he could feel the bitingly cold and terrifying blood lust. More importantly, he had locked onto the position where it was coming from–the sky!

He reacted extremely fast. Both legs sprang off the ground, and his whole body was like a loosed arrow, shooting into the sky.

A speck of cold ray appeared before Ai Hui, who was now in midair, causing his pupils to shrink.

How fast!

Right then and there, simply no words were able to describe the swiftness of the sword ray that appeared in front of him. Without any time for consideration, Ai Hui had instinctively brandished his sword.

Without any false or fancy moves, Ai Hui executed the simplest and most basic sword thrust!

Facing such an intense crisis, Ai Hui struck nine times in one breath!

Due to the practical training with Qing Feng, the improvement in Ai Hui's execution speed was clearly displayed at this instant. He was extremely speedy and managed to complete nine strikes within such a short period of time.

Without holding back, he attacked with all the strength he

possessed!

To the average person, there was only a single sword ray. A strangely resplendent and dazzling sword ray appeared in the sky all of a sudden. It was so bright that even the sun paled in comparison.

The three fruits exploded instantly upon getting hit by the first sword ray, but even before they dispersed, the second sword ray followed closely behind. And then the third, fourth...

Nine sword rays struck the arrow consecutively, all within an exceedingly short amount of time.

It was a bizarre sight.

An abrupt explosion occurred in front of the sword ray. It was as though the surging devilish flames had smashed onto a layer of invisible elemental energy and were unable to advance. The flames emitted burning heat and dripped from the sky like lava.

"Lava fruit!" Uncle Yu’s expression changed as he involuntarily cried out.

He was experienced and knowledgeable, hence he was able to recognize at first glance that these scarlet, lava-like flames were actually lava fruits. Lava fruit was an extremely dangerous material and highly explosive. If elemental energy was first channeled into these fruits, the range of the resulting explosion

would expand.

All it took for the embroidery workshop to fall into ruins was a single lava fruit.

And the perpetrator had used at least three!

Uncle Yu's face turned ashen. The opponent had actually used lava fruits and definitely wanted Miss's life. Who was this vicious person? Uncle Yu was shocked and furious at the same time. He had watched Miss grow up, so it was only natural that he felt strong affection for her. Plus, Miss stayed away from worldly affairs and never made enemies, so who in the world wanted her dead!

As if drunk, Ai Hui swayed as he descended, but no one laughed at him right now. His sword thrusts had left them dumbstruck.

That solid strike against the lava fruit arrow... what technique was that?

The impact from the explosion of the three lava fruits was appalling. Ai Hui's right arm went numb and the qi and blood within his body churned violently. He had no strength left to battle.

Uncle Yu, who had just recovered from his shock, rushed forward.

Ai Hui pointed in the direction of the incoming arrow. "That way, about one and a half miles. He’s injured."

Having no time for questions, Uncle Yu quickly ordered two guards to pursue.

Ai Hui’s right arm was still numb and fear rose within his heart. That arrow was simply too frightening. He felt that it was unbelievable that he had actually been able to block that terrifying arrow!"

In the courtyard, as if inflicted by a heavy blow, Ban Yan spat out a mouthful of blood, his face white as sheet. "Run, quick!"

The leader turned pale with fright. Without a word he pulled Ban Yan up and fled. Fear filled his heart. He had thought about the possibility that Ban Yan would fail, but had not expected him to be injured.

Shortly after they disappeared, two figures descended from the sky.

Seeing the blood stains in the courtyard, their eyes lit up.

"Here!"

"He’s injured!"

They saw the joy in each other's eyes. If the perpetrator had been unhurt, they would absolutely lack the courage to chase after him. Those able to hit their target from a few miles away were definitely strong individuals and not people they would want to provoke. Since the enemy had lost so much blood, however, it was a golden opportunity bestowed by heaven!

"Chase!"

Both left hurriedly.

In the courtyard of the embroidery workshop, Ai Hui's whole right arm was swollen and looked like a radish bloated with water. Ai Hui crinkled his brows. Poison? His arm was still numb, and his hand palace was unresponsive as well. He used his left hand to grasp the Wintry Jade Blade.

"Mister Ai, this is my family's antidote. It was refined by our First Young Master. Lava fruit is very toxic and can easily inflict internal injuries."

Uncle Yu promptly delivered a transparent, jade green bamboo joint. There was only one section, about the thickness of a thumb. A pill could clearly be seen inside.

Just from the look of it, Ai Hui knew that it was considerably valuable!

Afraid to delay, he stuck his sword into the soil and used his left

arm to retrieve it. He then proceeded to smash the bamboo joint somewhat regretfully.

This was a jasper bamboo, sold by joints.

Extravagant! Wasteful!

The light fragrance of the pill entered his nose, and he could not help but swallowed his saliva. Ai Hui placed the pill, refined from unknown herbs, into his mouth. It melted instantly without leaving any dregs.

A wisp of refreshing energy spread throughout every part of his body. He trembled involuntarily and was soon shocked to realize that his right arm had regained its feeling. The swelling reduced rapidly, and his arm quickly returned to normal along with his right hand palace.

How effective!

Seeing its effectiveness, Uncle Yu started to relax. Ai Hui was an important guest. If anything were to happen to him, they were all going to be punished without fail.

Boom!

The warehouse, which was in imminent danger, was finally unable to endure the elemental energy blast and transformed into countless shattered pieces that flew everywhere.

Mingxiu’s silhouette entered everybody’s field of view. She had a gentle and refined demeanor, fluttering long hair, delicate and pretty face, and eyes a bright as stars, but right now, her bearing was imposing and lofty, producing an air of inviolability.

Everyone understood that a new embroidery master had just been born. Considering who her teacher was, this came as no surprise, but to witness it for themselves, they could not help praising her. She really was a fairy-like figure.

Quickly, many started to notice the table and the artificial rockery.

What was that?

Many looked on curiously since the whole warehouse had been destroyed by the wild elemental energy. Only this table and artificial rockery were intact.

"What is this?"

"No idea. A treasure probably, or else why would she preserve it?"

"Definitely not any ordinary treasure. What treasures does the residence not have? Why would they protect that one at this crucial time?"

"Probably an embroidery object. Miss Mingxiu, no, we have to call her Master Lu now."

"The Lu brother and sister, two Masters under one roof. How impressive of the Lu Residence. There's nothing exceptional about having Masters within a residence, but to have two in the direct lineage? The Lu Residence's geomancy is done right!"

"Indeed! And they're both so young. The Lu family's fortune has just started!"

Uncle Yu also noticed the table and artificial rockery beside Miss, but quickly diverted his attention toward her. Happiness filled his face as pride suffused his heart.

The second Master of the Lu Residence was born!

This news spread like wildfire across Jadeite City, causing a sensation.

Uncle Yu felt somewhat rueful. Miss's position in the family will shift. Her attitude toward matters will not be overlooked from now on. She had been quiet and content since young, stayed away from worldly affairs, and everybody loved her. After following Han Yuqin, she became even more sensible and business-minded. More than once, the family tried to get her to return home. With regard to her marriage, many had opinions about it.

There would no longer be any of those vexing matters to fret over

from now on. Miss would be free.

The Lu brother and sister, two Masters under one roof. If this news spread, the Lu Residence would once again occupy the spotlight. Judging from the siblings' characters, however, Uncle Yu did not know whether to laugh or cry. They enjoyed peace and were uninterested in worldly affairs. If one was committed to handling the family affairs, wouldn't there be nothing left for Second Young Master?

He shook his head. This major matter was not something a mere servant like him should think about.

The turbulent elemental energy waves around Mingxiu gradually calmed down. Her fluttering hair fell gently in place as the external imposing aura faded as well.

She opened her eyes and smiled, looking at everybody.

Uncle Yu bowed. "Congratulations, Miss!"

The other guards cheered in unison, "Congratulations, Miss!"

The audience quickly bowed and made their salutations, crying out loud, "Congratulations, Master Lu!"

Mingxiu returned their bows. "Thank you everyone."

"Master Lu’s bearing is really worth learning!"

"Yeah, not the least bit arrogant. Wonder who’s going to be the lucky fellow to marry her!"

The crowd ceasely praised, each offering their own compliments.

Mingxiu walked toward Ai Hui and said in all seriousness, "Thanks, Junior!"

Ai Hui scratched his head. "I’m not used to you being so solemn, haha!"

Without smiling, Mingxiu expressed her gratitude. "If not for you, I really don’t know when this breakthrough would happen! Your contribution is the greatest!"

Ai Hui smiled inwardly and was just waiting for her to say, "I really don’t know how to express my gratitude" so he could uprightly answer her with, "You can convert my service into money."

Instead, Mingxiu laughingly changed her tone, "Since we’re all family, let’s speak like one. I’m your senior and you’re my junior, so I’ll cut the formalities."

Ai Hui had a sluggish expression on his face. His opened fingers were hanging in midair as he stood motionlessly.

Upon seeing this, Mingxiu pursed her lips and smiled lightly, but her smile broadened like ripples and eventually erupted into a fit of laughter.

Uncle Yu smiled too. He was somewhat shocked since he seldom saw her laughing this heartily. Plus, the thing she said about Ai Hui contributing the most, could it be that this breakthrough was also thanks to his efforts?

It seemed like Master had underestimated this guy’s potential.

He regained an awareness of his surroundings upon hearing the sounds made the gnashing of Ai Hui’s teeth.

"Accounts must be kept! Gratitude isn’t important, money is!"

"Junior, if not for me, how would you have been able to repay Teacher’s debt? How can you be so ungrateful?"

"Heh, then I’ll take this loom away."

"This was left behind by Teacher, how can you take it away? Oh yeah, you haven’t given it a name yet."

"Oh right. What should I call it? Fish Waterfall Machine? God-subduing Peak Loom? Hah, let’s call it Needle God Peak! Our loom is the God-subduing Peak of all looms!"

"Junior, you just might get beaten up if you keep going on about the God-subduing Peak in Jadeite Forest..."

Chapter 413: Farewell

Grass Hall, Hall of Ancient Records.

Ai Hui was busily browsing through the collections. Many guests had come forth in an endless stream upon receiving news about Mingxiu's embroidery master attainment. Ai Hui happily withdrew himself to the backyard to continue his search.

Just when he thought he was going to go home empty-handed, his eyes lit up. The handwriting on the notebook he was holding was careless and almost illegible, but his eyes widened in fear of missing a single word nevertheless.

When he had almost finished flipping through this stack of the collection, Ai Hui finally found the notebook that the old man had been talking about. The old man correctly remembered the author's name. The notebook indeed belonged to someone with the surname Xiao, but the only difference was that these notebook were actually a compilation of different records.

Ai Hui rejoiced. He would have missed this collection for sure if not for the fact that he had flipped through each and every book from start to finish.

Suppressing his excitement, he attentively skimmed over the notebook.

The old man was right. The notebook did talk about A land with all five elements.

"Sixteenth, cloudy, strong wind. Met a pterosaur dire beast yesterday, fought and won after half a day, completely exhausted. Found a valley to recuperate and there were many red rocks. The slopes were precipitous. Trekked two miles to arrive at a wide clearing. It was a land containing all five elements and each position was specially marked out.

"Ninth, heavy rain, couldn’t see anything beyond 100 meters. Chased by two unknown dire beasts, entered deep into the forest by mistake, and found a land containing all five elements."

"Twentieth, night. The moon was bright and stars sparse. There was a red glow flickering at the mountain peak. Thought a treasure was being born, went closer only to realize that it was actually lava in a volcano. There was low-lying ground at the side of the mountain peak that contained all five elements. The five elements bred and flourished, starting from the fire element. Bizarre."

...

Ai Hui finished reading every word and felt increasingly impressed. Alone, Senior Xiao had entered deep into the Wilderness, was surprised to chance upon a land with five elements, and started to pay attention. Later on, he would mark the position whenever he spotted a land with five elements.

There were a total of six locations mentioned in the notebook.

Ai Hui was ecstatic. He had thought that one region would be

good enough, but there were actually six. However, the words at the end of the notebook made his heart sink.

"Lands of five elements, containing all five elements, form an integral whole. They circulate and recycle, with some regenerating and others extinguishing. There's been a slight change as the balance is disrupted. Five elements wiped out. How many of these precious lands will survive the test of time? I'm old and past my prime, no longer youthful. I'll take in what I can as I go wherever I can with the company of my sword. I'll ride the wind and leave no regrets even as my hair turns white."

The message was clear. The balance of these lands with five elements was very fragile. They could not be restored the moment this equilibrium broke.

How many of those six regions remained?

A sense of urgency overcame Ai Hui as he memorized the six locations written in the notebook. He decided that he would return to Peace City immediately after completing his goals in Asakusa City.

He did not exit the Grass Hall right away. Instead, as if nothing had happened, he placed the notebook back in their original position, took out another book, and started reading. He only left when the fusion elemental energy within his body had been completely exhausted.

When he left the Grass Hall, the embroidery workshop was

finally clamor-free, but this was because the workshop was refusing visitors.

Ai Hui saw the tiredness in Mingxiu’s face.

Mingxiu laughed bitterly. "Receiving these guests is even more tiring than breaking through."

Ai Hui responded, "Getting cramps from receiving too many gifts is only natural. I’m planning to go out for a walk for a few days."

Mingxiu looked and him before asking, "Because of the Grass Bandits?"

Ai Hui had not expected her to see through him and did not deny it either. He replied bluntly, "If not for me, you would’ve been in danger. Although their motive is unclear at the moment, it’s a fact that they were aiming for you."

Mingxiu smiled sweet-temperedly. "So you want to make the first move?"

Ai Hui nodded. "That’s right!"

"You’re my junior indeed. Your reasoning is logical." Mingxiu fiddled with her fringe and asked in a different tone, Now that you’ve come to Jadeite Forest, how can I, your senior, allow you to go out to fight and even murder?"

Ai Hui shook his head. "That’s what a junior should do..."

Mingxiu smiled gently. "Why would I put on a brave front before you? After hearing about the sneak attack, First Brother was extremely angry. News has just arrived saying that he’s bringing six other battle masters to get rid of the whole group."

Six, six combat masters?"

Ai Hui was stunned and completely shocked. Six combat masters..."luxurious" was no longer a sufficient description for such an arrangement. He could only describe it as "terrifying."

From what he remembered, Senior’s first brother was scholarly and refined, a gentleman who bemoaned the state of the universe and pitied the fate of mankind. Who would have thought that he could be this terrifying.

Mingxiu explained, "First Brother feels that there’s another conspiracy within, so he had to use this earthshaking method in order to intimidate the sneaky evildoers."

Earthshaking indeed. Intimidating indeed...

Ai Hui had no opinion at this point. Thinking about a lineup of six battle masters made his eye twitch, but at the same time, he was completely relieved. With such an "earthshaking" brother, Senior’s safety in Jadeite Forest was no longer a cause for concern.

Lu Chen’s upcoming operation would make those who have designs on Senior reconsider.

The heaviest weight was lifted off his chest. Feeling relaxed, he laughed. "Things are indeed different when you have such a great brother!"

Mingxiu stretched and replied lazily, "We’re closed already, so let’s study this loom over the next few days. There are still many areas that I can’t seem to figure out. Perhaps the secret to attaining Grandmaster is within."

Ai Hui righteously rejected, "I’m not as free as you. I have to find people."

Mingxiu was taken aback. "Find people? What people?"

Ai Hui then told her about his plan to enter the Wilderness with Iron Lady and said that he needed herbalists and farmers.

Mingxiu had a blank look on her face and only regained her senses after some time. "That’s true. There’s no place that suits you better. It’s a man’s role to accomplish goals, but please be careful. They have all been your companions at one point and have complete trust in you, so do not let them down."

Ai Hui reassured her with a serious expression, "Yes!"

Mingxiu laughed. "Leave the sourcing of the herbalist and

farmers to me."

It made sense, so Ai Hui agreed gratefully, "Thank you, Senior."

Mingxiu was quick in carrying out this favor. The next day, a herbalist and five farmers appeared at their door. They looked honest and had a reserved look on their faces.

"Mister Zhou is a veteran herbalist, has over 20 years of experience managing a herb farm, and is able to grow most herbs. His salary will be 500 Heaven Merit Points a year. If he breaks into the realm of master herbalist, his pay will increase to 2,000 Heaven Merit Points a year and a fifth of the farm's yield. The five farmers are all decent, and Mister Tian here can grow elemental energy beans. Mister Tian's salary will be 500 Heaven Merit Points a year while the rest will be 100 a year." She added, "They've been sourced by First Brother."

What this implied was that these people had no associations with the family.

Ai Hui was pleasantly surprised. The herbalist and farmers before him were much better than what he had wished for.

Without hesitating, Ai Hui cried, "I'll take all of them!"

While 1,400 Heaven Merit Points was over his budget, they were worth it. A farmer who was able to plant elemental energy beans was hard to find. It was even harder for him to find a herbalist who

was about to experience a breakthrough.

Everyone exchanged bows.

Ai Hui did the same. "Nice to meet you all."

Mingxiu waited for the ceremony to end before saying, "Since you're set on your plans, I shall not keep you any longer. I've already arranged for a Fiery Floating Cloud, and the things on board are for you to keep. Do let me know your location in the Wilderness when you settle down."

Ai Hui greatly admired Senior Mingxiu's generosity and sincerity She was never bashful and high-maintenance.

He sincerely bowed. "Thank you so much, Senior. I'll leave now. Take care."

The Fiery Floating Cloud, having transported a whole load of goods, had long since been waiting in the garden. Ai Hui was not overly sentimental either as he quickly boarded with the herbalist and farmers and waved goodbye to Senior Mingxiu.

Mingxiu waved enthusiastically.

Fixing her eyes on the disappearing Fiery Floating Cloud, she was somewhat lost in thought.

Uncle Yu could not help but chime in, "Miss, why didn’t you make him stay a little while longer?"

Mingxiu replied dully, "He’s carrying a heavy burden: Born to be heroic and well-known, overcoming all obstacles within the Wilderness, and having no regard for anyone. How could he fall into this maelstrom?"

Uncle Yu shuddered. Miss’s words carried a deeper meaning, and he knew that it was not something he could grasp. After thinking for a bit, he changed the topic. "Where are the people from the Duanmu family?"

Mingxiu shook her head. "Let them settle their own matters."

Uncle Yu left it at that upon hearing her response. Instead, he asked curiously, "What are your plans?"

Mingxiu’s gaze fell upon the loom as a smile appeared at the corner of her mouth. "Rebuild the workshop."

Uncle Yu nodded. "That’s indeed necessary. It’s quite badly damaged."

Mingxiu corrected him, saying, "No, I’ll build a workshop in Jadeite City."

The familiar workshop had been destroyed and thrown into disorder, while Teacher’s loom was beyond recognition. She had

just entered the realm of master, and everything was changing and becoming part of the past.

The image of a silhouette kneeling before a grave under the pouring rain made her heart ache. She did not know how many times she had blamed herself for being weak and indecisive during that time. She dared not imagine the pain and despair Ai Hui had felt when stabbing that sword.

She knew very well how she had been holding up for the past few years. She could not imagine how Ai Hui had kept it together since the pain he felt must have been a hundred times worse.

Now that there were expectations set for him, he stood up once again. Those so-called heroes probably referred to people like Junior.

People who were as brave as him, she thought to herself.

Ai Hui was shocked by the pile of supplies on the Fiery Floating Cloud. All kinds of seeds, wood elemental ingredients, wood elemental energy beans, defensive equipment, and weapons. They were all of outstanding quantity and quality. Other than those, there were blood cores, blood crystals, and jade fruits. It was extremely challenging to gather so many materials within such a short period of time.

Ai Hui was beyond moved. Not only was the value of the goods astonishing, Senior had spent a lot of thought on these supplies.

After taking Zhao Boan and the others onboard, the Fiery Floating Cloud headed straight for Peace City.

Seeing the faraway horizon, a myriad of strong feelings filled Ai Hui's heart. He was looking forward to the future. He was about to have a brand new beginning.

Little did he realize that this brand new beginning was not just for him.

It was for the world as well.

Chapter 414: Crossing Over

Lemon Camping Ground was seldom as lively as today. Many had walked out from their tents and wooden houses. It must be a big troop.

Lemon Camping Ground was an forward camping ground located at the edge of the Palette Cloud Village. It was famous for its wild lemon trees found nearby.

Ever since the city expansion order was issued, respective forward camping grounds were greatly excited. They were temporary camps built at the fringe of the Wilderness, the final supply station for those who were about to enter deep within the Wilderness.

They housed mostly small merchants and some elementalists who'd retreated from the Wilderness, who made a living there.

When Lemon Camping Ground was first built, it was bustling with activities. Back then, Elders Guild had just declared its city expansion plans, and everyday, mirage bean pods shared a story about how a penniless pauper found an unremarkable stone from the Wilderness and sold it for a heavenly sum upon his return to the city, hence he became a wealthy person overnight.

This story brought about many fanatics who rushed forth to the Wilderness, as if treasures could be found in every corner.

But the cruelty of the Wilderness quickly dealt these ignorant

people with a heavy blow. There were many casualties and the fever died down gradually. People then realized that not only did the Wilderness offer opportunities and wealth, it was also lurking with dangers.

Nevertheless, the huge influx of elementalists had significantly expanded the volume of human activities within that region.

Following that, several mini cities were built like the sprouting of bamboo shoots after a rain. Although these cities were very small, they possessed an elemental energy pool which attracted surrounding elementalists, causing the forward camping grounds to decrease in popularity.

Lemon Camping Ground was in a better state compared to the others, since the city closest to it was about a hundred and eighty miles away. Because it was situated further in, it was basically the last depot. Nevertheless, its popularity was still affected.

What had arrived was a majestic team of groundbreakers. There were at least a few hundred of them.

Were they planning on establishing cities?

Li Yuanliang sized up the team rather curiously.

Generally speaking, one could tell the scope of a team’s mission by looking at the scale of it. An exploration team would not usually have over twelve members. The greater the number of people, the

easier it was to attract unwanted attention from the dire beasts and encounter ambushment.

A team of hundreds of members usually meant that positions had already been marked and they were ready to build the cities.

It'd been over a year since the order had been issued. As long as they hadn't been destructed, most expansion teams that were slightly larger-scaled had most likely started on their construction. Currently, many cities were already significantly developed. The new ones for example, had already gathered a huge volume of new citizens, and already surpassed two hundred thousand people. Wild Palace City, built by Silver Mist Sea's governmental residence, housed over a hundred and fifty thousand citizens and became famous for it's capability to modify the elemental energy pool.

Several months prior to that, Elders Guild had announced that Silver Mist River was going to be cut off, causing a commotion within Silver Mist Sea. When the river stopped flowing completely, the mist that had initially filled Silver Mist Sea dissipated. It was the first time, since the construction of the Avalon of Five Elements, that the silts lying on Silver Mist Sea's seabed saw the Sun. Elders Guild then organized a cleaning up of the seabed, which were silted with artifact remnants and migrated to the Wilderness after extracting all of the remnant pieces.

Everyone understood that this meant that Elders Guild's plan to build cities in the Wilderness was unstoppable.

Two months ago, the consequences of cutting of Silver Mist River

worsened. The mouth of Palette Cloud Village's spring started to dry up significantly and the water elemental energy in the air deconcentrated rapidly. But currently, only a few of them could be seen in Palette Cloud Village.

To prevent wood elemental energy from declining, Jadeite Forest started to plant trees extensively and attempted to channel the water elemental energy from the sea to nourish the forest. The sea was on the other side of the forest, a geographical location blessed by heaven but so far, the channeling process hasn't been progressing.

If one were to overlook the forest from the sky, he would be able to see countless clusters of small towns scattered in the border region that Wilderness shared with the Silver Mist Sea and the Palette Cloud Village.

Could it be an expansion team dispatched by a certain family?

After their positions were steady, the aristocratic families moved about more frequently. They had rich resources and manpower, and weren't satisfied with such small cities.

But Li Yuanliang was shocked to see someone whom he recognized from that group.

The Lightning Blade, Ai Hui.

For a period his mirage bean pod had been spreading wildly but

later on, there were no news of him. But no one really minded since such sagas were merely temporary in this mayhemic era.

He’d stopped at the camping ground.

Li Yuanliang went forward and greeted him cordially, "Welcome welcome, it’s an honor to be able to meet The Lightning Blade here. I’m Li Yuanliang, may I know how can I help you?"

Ai Hui cupped his hands in greeting. "Nice to meet you! We are going to station ourselves here for a night and set off tomorrow. Sorry to disturb."

He then threw over a small pouch containing elemental energy beans.

Li Yuanliang caught it and upon feeling what was inside, a smile flashed across his face. "Not at all not at all, you can use any empty ground nearby. Do let me know if you require any assistance."

"Thank you." Ai Hui turned around and ordered, "Pitch camp."

Without a word the team dispersed.

An unremarkable looking fellow lightly patted the ground with both his hands. The ground shook and a clay city wall rose up.

In the blink of an eye, a miniature city made from four six meter

tall walls appeared before Li Yuanliang and others'. Four twelve meter tall buildings were built on four corners.

Just then, a thin looking but elegant youth casted a handful of grass seeds within the clay walls. Moments later, pointy black thorns and thistles grew and covered the walls. The coarse and solid looking barb was beyond intimidating. The youth flew to the top of one of the buildings and planted a tuning grass. Four different vegetations were planted on each building, evidently for different purposes.

The whole process was done openly so those who saw it happened were left in awe.

Within the short period of time, a strictly guarded camp appeared before their eyes. These fellows were well-trained and weren't simple people.

The team entered in a line as a few fierce looking elites stood outside the buildings, vigilantly scanning the surroundings.

They had no idea what methods were used but they couldn't hear anything from the outside.

A broad faced fellow walked to Li Yuanliang's side and looked at the heavily guarded camp. "Where are they from? Very elite."

Li Yuanliang asked, somewhat flabbergasted, "You don't know about The Lightning Blade?"

The broad faced fellow shook his head. "Nope, powerful?"

Li Yuanliang gave him a look before saying, "My advice to you is to give up whatever you have in mind. Do not try anything funny."

The broad faced fellow shook his head again. "I'm not that bold. There's so many of them and none should be provoked. They're here to build a city. Tell me, is this going to be beneficial for our camping ground?"

Li Yuanliang's eyes lit up. "You think fast! It will be good for us if they build their city here. They're going to stop by here often and we'll more or less be able to gain some profits."

Within the clay walls.

Everyone sat down to rest as Jiang Wei explained the situation. In regards to the six targeted stepping points, he's been following Ai Hui from the start so he was extremely familiar with them.

"Lemon Camping Ground is our last supply station. There isn't any good resting place further down. Please take this time to rest. From tomorrow onwards, if things proceed smoothly, we will reach our destination in about five days."

Fatty asked curiously, "What's considered smooth?"

"It’s smooth if we don’t bump into dangerous dire beasts." Jiang Wei smiled bitterly. "We took twelve days previously because of those beasts. From tomorrow onwards, we are going to enter battle mode so please be mentally prepared."

This exploration process for the six potential locations took a whole four months as Ai Hui brought only Iron Lady, Jiang Wei, Bangwan and Lou Lan. Previously, someone suggested to split the group up to explore respective spots but the idea was turned down by Ai Hui. While he knew that everyone’s abilities had improved tremendously, they’d never been to the Wilderness after all.

In the Wilderness, at times, experience was more practical than abilities.

Facts proved Ai Hui’s apprehensions and worries were a necessity as the five of them almost lost their lives several times within the past four months of exploration. It was throughout this period that Iron Lady and the others truly experienced the dangers of the Wilderness.

Only one out of the six locations was still a land of five elements. Even if it was the only spot left, there were many other issues. Nevertheless, after much consideration, the team decided to build the city there.

While the issues were tricky to handle, it was even more difficult to get hold of a land with five elements. So far, even with the innumerable cities being built, they hadn’t heard of one that contained all five elements.

Just this point alone was sufficient for them to take a gamble.

After a night of rest, everyone felt energized, their weariness vanished.

A few children, weapon masters, herbalist and so on were told to stay in Fiery Floating Cloud while all kinds of supplies and materials were piled in other corners.

The battle crew, all fully armed, surrounded Fiery Floating Cloud as if they were expecting the arrival of a great enemy.

Li Yuanliang and the broad faced fellow saw them off.

The broad faced man asked, "How many of them do you think will survive?"

"I don’t know." Li Yuanliang shook his head. "But I hope they all do."

The broad faced fellow was rather surprised. "Eh, Old Li, you’re kind hearted now?"

"Or else who’s going to give us the money in future?" Li Yuanliang asked as a matter-of-factly. His gaze followed the disappearing team and said moments later, "I’ve seen their mirage bean pod. They’re decent fellows."

As the team left the camping ground, the atmosphere tensed up.

Not only them but even Ai Hui was very nervous. It was his first time leading so many new hands deep into the Wilderness so the pressure on him was tremendous. In spite of how he was feeling, there was no indication on his face at all, which actually made people feel calm and composed.

"Bangwan, use the tuning grass to listen for any sounds of activities."

"Iron Lady, guard the side."

"Fatty, hold the shield properly and don't glance all around."

The team's speed wasn't fast and occasionally they bumped into a few small dire beasts. Soon after their initial fluster, everybody quickly adapted to the situation. Their attacks became much more orderly. Practice would never replace real combat since many issues would only surface during real battles.

But they'd been unlucky, getting caught in a rainstorm, lost their way and had to take a detour.

But the team did not fall into disorder. In fact, because of these small setbacks, everybody became even more serious. They weren't beginners but experts who'd experienced real combats. It was just that they had not been to the Wilderness but even then,

they adapted quickly.

Everybody found a spot at the valley to rest and to take shelter from the wind.

Sitting down, Ai Hui caught a glimpse, from the corner of his eye, of a red light that flashed past. His expressions changed as he yelled, "Enemy attack!"

Chapter 415: Lava-spitting Beast

Ai Hui's warning made the team tensed up and everyone stayed vigilant, as if awaiting a big enemy.

A red glow flashed across and hit Fatty's shield.

Dong, a stifled sound rang.

Fatty was trembling, his face flushed as though he was drunk. He staggered backwards before his legs gave way, causing him to fall onto the ground. A spider web-shaped crack appeared on the surface of his shield.

Piang, the shield shattered, its fragments scattering all over the ground.

This scene had everyone turn pale.

Fatty's strength surpassed everyone in the team yet he'd failed to resist the blow from that red glow. And no one could clearly see what exactly was that red glow.

Another red glow flashed across and struck Fiery Floating Cloud.

Dong!

The defense cover of Fiery Floating Cloud had been activated all

along so it managed to block off that glow.

They then saw clearly that the red glow was actually a ball of red lava. It slowly flowed down from the protective cover.

Ai Hui reacted the quickest, shouting at the top of his lungs, "Lava-spitting beast! Hide behind Fiery Floating Cloud, everyone!"

Then he picked up Fatty and quickly went over to the other side of the vehicle. Upon seeing that, everyone else followed suit.

Yet another red glow struck onto the defense cover. With another dull boom, Fiery Floating Cloud rocked.

Ai Hui was beyond frustrated. The lava balls spat by the beast were as mighty as cannons. Slightly weaker bodies would shatter into pieces if they were hit by them.

He’d previously seen a lava-spitting beast destroyed a camp bit by bit in the past. At that point in time, he’d never expected himself to encounter such a beast himself.

"We have to take it down!" Ai Hui turned his head and shouted to Iron Lady, "A few more hits and Fiery Floating Cloud won’t be able to hold up."

Iron Lady raised her brows. "How?"

"I’m going to distract it," Ai Hui replied speedily, "and you need to try to get close to it. Your attacks will be effective."

Luckily, Iron Lady’s water elemental energy could restrain a fire elemental wild beast like this one.

Without hesitation Iron Lady agreed.

Within the short span of their conversation, the beast had already spat two lava balls and Fiery Floating Cloud’s defense cover was evidently dimmer.

Ai Hui took a deep breath and rushed out from the back of the vehicle.

He had no choice but to fly upwards. The lava balls spat by the beast moved rapidly and were too difficult to dodge. It was wiser for him to interfere with its aim.

With a complicated topography like this valley’s, he could move about more nimbly on the ground rather than in the sky.

Ai Hui crouched slightly like an agile wolf and dashed towards the mouth of the valley in a zigzag pattern.

Lagging five seconds behind him, Shi Xueman flew forward from the other side. She followed the way he positioned himself and changed directions constantly to avoid getting hit, her high speed made her hair flutter.

Shielded by the Fiery Floating Cloud, everyone retreated slowly in search for another hiding place.

Ai Hui, who was the first to rush forward, had indeed managed to capture the beast's attention. A ball of red glow shot past him but not without brushing across his body.

Boom, a big sheet of soil was raised off the ground as black smoke rose from a big scorched hole.

Ai Hui kept a straight face.

The beast's enormous body was like a lava-filled flood bag. When quiet, it was like a lava lake but when faced with enemies, it's hidden snouts will be extended and sprayed them with its lava. The lava-spitting beast had two types of snouts, one long and one short. The long one was extremely formidable and terrifying but its accuracy pales in comparison with the short snout, which was the exact opposite.

The lava-spitting beast could not fly high but floated and moved easily in mid air. Having lived amid the lava for a long time, its eyes had already deteriorated. Nevertheless, its perception was still very keen.

Even tiny targets couldn't escape his sharp senses.

Ai Hui's heart stirred. Perhaps he could make use of this. Ai Hui

kept changing direction at a high speed and black leaves flew up from the Starry Gem Swordwings on his back, dispersing like many nimble fishes. They drew strange arcs in the sky, which whizzed toward the lava-spitting beast from all directions.

While he was running, Ai Hui could feel the delay in the beast's movement. Although it was a very short delay, Ai Hui managed to catch it.

The red glow appeared once again but what Ai Hui did not expect was for it to shoot toward Shi Xueman's direction.

By now, Shi Xueman had already followed Ai Hui into the Wilderness a few times so she was rather experienced and had been careful as she was dashing and switching directions. The red glow swept, about a meter away, went past her, causing her to tremble.

Ai Hui rushed towards her, shouting, "It's sensitive to water elemental energy!"

Lava-spitting beasts were purely fire elemental beasts that lived amid the lava. They absolutely abhorred water elemental energy.

Being exceptionally intelligent, Shi Xueman understood immediately and three short water candles appeared on her hands. She channeled water elemental energy into those candles and upon lighting them up, they transformed into balls of vapor. As they left her palm, they became an exact copy of Shi Xueman, dashing forward with that same posture.

In a flash, three vapor forms of Shi Xueman appeared by her side.

Smart, Ai Hui praised inwardly.

Previously, Shi Xueman never would had used water candles, a move she deemed inferior and harmless. After she followed Ai Hui around the Wilderness a few times, she realized that combat strength solely wasn't sufficient at times. Many seemingly unremarkable moves usually had great potential.

The vapor images formed by the water candles could easily be distinguished by capable elementalists but not the wild beasts. All the lava-spitting beast could perceive was the water elemental energy that it loathed so much.

With her current abilities, controlling the vapor image was extremely easy for Shi Xueman.

And the people being shielded by Fiery Floating cloud were already hiding in another corner. Everyone heaved a sigh of relief and were ready for battle. They did not wish to see Ai Hui and Shi Xueman risked their lives .

Duanmu Haunghun had a grave look on his face. Proud and arrogant, he felt extremely unpleasant that he wasn't able to be of any crucial help.

Without a word he retrieved a grass seed from his waist pouch. He unfolded his palm, allowing the seed to roll onto the center. He

channeled wood elemental energy into the seed, which caused it to sprout and to grow quickly. A few seconds later, a jade crystal grass appeared on his palm.

He said coldly, "Archers shooting beyond a two mile range, tear a leaf and swallow it."

Sang Zijun and Jiang Wei made eye contact before tearing out a leaf each and which was then swallowed. A few other decent archers came over and did the same.

Entering their mouths, the leaf transformed into a green liquid.

Sang Zijun couldn’t help but ask, "What is this?"

"Eagle Eye Grass. Time is limited, only thirty seconds."

The archers flew off immediately.

Sang Zijun exclaimed, "I see it!"

The rest jolted as they spotted the beast too. Their visions had sharpened significantly and they could see Ai Hui and Shi Xueman sprinting at the faraway valley. They could even spot Shi Xueman’s vapor figures from where they were.

Jiangwei said gravely, "Let’s not waste time."

He drew out a shockingly long arrow and the others followed suit.

Ai Hui's black swords were the fastest. They were like a group of black bees, which appeared over the beast's head. Feeling threatened, the beast started to spray lava unceasingly from its short snout.

It's short snout was exceptionally precise. In the blink of an eye, Ai Hui's black leaves shattered into pieces, stinging his heart badly.

But the black leaves had a number advantage. While many had been destroyed, there were a lot more to intervene with the beast's attack. What Ai Hui did not expect, however, was that the black leaves brought no substantial harm to the beast, only causing concentrated clanking sounds upon landing on its body.

Just then, sharp whistling sounds rang across the sky.

As the lava-spitting beast sensed danger, it raised its short snout and quickly spurted a huge volume of lava. The lava left its snout and opened up like a web, layer upon layer, which formed a red lava shield above it.

Clang!

An arrow pierced through the shield, which revealed its head.

Clang clang clang!

The lava shield trembled continuously.

An extremely low whistle sounded and the lava shield crumbled. An arrow struck the beast’s body with astonishing force. Dong, it pierced the beast’s round body.

The lava-spitting beast let out a sharp shriek as flames rose, which burnt the arrow in split seconds. The lava within its body surged and its wound was quickly patched up, although the color of its new skin was obviously darker. It looked like a scar.

The lava-spitting beast stopped suddenly.

As he sensed danger, Ai Hui called out, "Be careful!"

An unprecedentedly bright ball of red glow shot out from the beast’s snout like a red saber and towards Shi Xueman.

Shi Xueman reacted the moment Ai Hui shouted. She twisted her body and threw herself in another direction.

Boom!

An area of approximately two hundred square meters were raised by an invisible pair of hands as fresh red flames burst and mixed together like an advancing splash of molten iron. The three vapor figures had no time to struggle and were quickly enveloped and

destroyed by this wave of terror.

Ai Hui was overwhelmed with shock. The horror of the thundering fire elemental energy surge could be felt even from afar.

Iron Lady's face changed slightly as well. She would've been struck if it weren't for the fact that she'd reacted immediately upon hearing Ai Hui's warning. Having followed Ai Hui regularly into the Wilderness for the past few months, she was highly convinced of his acute judgements. Several times, her belief that Ai Hui'd made a mistake was ultimately proven wrong as Ai Hui had been correct.

Regaining his senses, Ai Hui realized that he had unknowingly closed the distance between the lava-spitting beast and himself.

He was supposed to be the screen and Shi Xueman the main assaulter. Yet, Shi Xueman had successfully lured that beast's attention and had given him the chance to strike.

That terrifying blow from earlier took a rather heavy toll on the lava-spitting beast. The red glow within its whole body was visibly dimmer.

Although water elemental energy attacks were effective against the beast, it had the ability to restrain metal elemental energy attacks.

But Ai Hui believed in his swordsmanship.

He was unprecedentedly focused as the elemental energy within his body surged and every piece of flesh was completely adjusted.

Without the slightest delay, he brazenly thrusted his sword.

Chapter 416: Nature's Precious Land

A sword ray made from many fragmented pieces stabbed forward with a sharp hiss.

[Fragmented Sword]!

Ai Hui's [Fragmented Sword] was quite different from before. The ray was now half the bulk but consisted twice as many fragmented pieces.

With more fragmented pieces, more speed was required during execution, and a smaller bulk meant that it had more compressed elemental energy.

Ai Hui was much stronger than before; he hadn't been frittering away his time.

Sensing danger, the lava-spitting beast blew up its body like a balloon and floated backwards as its short snout sprayed wildly at the sword ray.

Balls of red glow flickered incessantly as they struck the sword ray consecutively. Yet, as each lava ball hit the ray, it splitted cleanly into two.

With its sharp whistling and unstoppable nature, the fragmented sword ray was like a rare treasure sword that could easily break through obstacles.

When the fragmented sword ray reached the lava-spitting beast, its round body released a dazzling red glow as the blazingly condensed fire elemental energy formed a layer of solid defense cover.

Sss!

The sound of a knife slashing across a piece of cloth was heard.

The fragmented sword ray broke through the flaming cover and shot the beast's body in a swift manner.

Pfff, a sound alike to the slashing of cowhide could be heard.

Another scar, more distinct this time, appeared on the beast's body, causing it to stiffen. The next moment, a piercing whine swept over the whole area like a high-rise tide.

Red lava splurt out from its wound and its balloon-shaped body deflated rapidly.

The lava-spitting beast turned around and floated away as its two snouts extended backwards and sprayed flames in a steady flow, its speed gradually increased.

Ai Hui immediately realized that it was trying to escape!

But he'd expended more than half of his elemental energy in his earlier pursuit for a destructive [Fragmented Sword] blow, leaving his body weak and empty and unable to recover in time. He could only watch as the beast sped up.

A white figure whizzed across, along with a spear as her long black hair fluttered.

It was a plain, non fanciful thrust that produced no whistling but managed to hit the beast nevertheless. The lava-spitting beast's body, as if struck by lightning, instantly exploded with a boom.

Like rain, lava sprayed at the direction where it had been fleeing.

Shi Xueman stood victorious.

Ai Hui was dumbstruck. Iron Lady's skills were becoming increasingly terrifying. That ordinary-looking thrust made it apparent that she'd already perfected her control over all her elemental energy, which kept it contained yet powerful.

Her execution had reached the realm where it appeared light as feather yet struck solid as a mountain.

Ai Hui felt that her current abilities were already of a Master's standard but she'd somehow been suppressing her base level. When asked, she mentioned that this was a special kind of training method.

Alright, Ai Hui was actually envious.

While he had been progressing significantly, there was still a relatively long path for him to become a Master.

Ai Hui regained his senses, shouting, "Clean up!"

The tense atmosphere lightened up. Dire beasts were extremely dangerous but if a victory yielded, rich will be harvested.

Fatty flew over and reminded everyone, "Do not miss any pieces of skin and lava."

Everybody burst out in laughter. It was their first time collecting war spoils from dealing with such a powerful beast without any casualties so they were all in high spirits.

Dire beast is full of treasure. How true a phrase.

The lava-spitting beast had yet to refine fire elemental elixir but its skin was a fire elemental ingredient of supreme quality. Its snouts could be reactivated by skilled workmen, and were the best defensive weapons when it came to guarding the cities. Even the lava in its body was extraordinary. It had been harvested from earth fire and was therefore, through constant refinement, it would be richer and purer. In the market, each gram was sold for an alarming price.

Lava-spitting beasts lived in a land of ample earth fire. Rarely

straying away from their homes, they were extremely difficult to hunt.

The gang swept everything within a meter radius, not overlooking any fragmented pieces at all. Their actions clearly expressed what it meant for one to be influenced by his or her environment.

Ai Hui was rather moved, "I did not expect that I would've had the opportunity to hunt down a lava-spitting beast..."

No one responded.

Among the team, Iron Lady already possessed a standard equivalent to a Master's. Ai Hui and Duanmu Huanghun excelled as well. While the others were slightly weaker, they were all in the Third Elemental Realm. Plus, none of them were lacking in standard. In fact, they made an outstanding city expansion team.

Only Lou Lan praised loudly with an approving look on his face, "Ai Hui is amazing!"

No one let down their guard. They rested and recovered their elemental energy on the spot.

The thick fire elemental energy in the valley was exceptionally eye-grabbing. Lava-spitting beasts' breath would disperse weaker dire beasts.

Elemental energy in the Wilderness was in a mix, so to everyone, training efficiency was drastically reduced as they needed a longer time and more revolutions in order to recover their elemental energy.

The team set off upon full recovery. They were in the right direction since they bumped into a lava-spitting beast. Their destination was exactly a place where earth fire surged.

The team did not meet any dangerous dire beasts again. Instead, they were caught in a rainstorm once again. Rainstorms in the Wilderness were much colder. It was bone-chilling. Advancing through a storm like this required active elemental energy to withstand the cold, hence, elemental energy consumption was very high. And because the elemental energy amid the rain was very disordered, the team could had easily lost their way.

Having learnt from their previous experiences, the team stopped in a cave on the cliff to wait it out.

No one had expected Wang Xiaoshan to be the most useful person in the Wilderness. A simple technique of turning rocks into clay had been perfected and was made magical by him.

Drinking Lou Lan’s brewed soup in the cold night was simply a wonderful indulgence.

The rain went on for a whole night and was taken over by a clear and boundless sky the next day, raising everyone’s spirits. Nevertheless, no one dared to fly high as the extremely strong dire

beasts residing in high altitudes weren't monsters they could contend against right now.

Fiery Floating Cloud was only a few feet above ground and the gang scattered around in pairs, strongest with the weakest, strictly guarding.

A few days were all it took for everyone to feel the difference between the Wilderness and Avalon of Five Elements. Take the rainstorm as an example, rainstorms in the Wilderness were more powerful, cold and even more dangerous. In the avalon, rainstorms had no effect on their flight. They could still pass through cumulonimbus clouds and fly freely.

Ai Hui was at the far front. There were many extremely dangerous plants and he had to remind the gang to avoid poisonous plants, swamps and so on.

The Wilderness was a place where experience reigned supreme. Even with master-like abilities, one would not survive long in the Wilderness without experience.

Apart from dangerous dire beasts, there were many hidden poisonous insects,which was a pain in the ass. Although Ai Hui was equipped with insecticides, there were some poisonous insects that were immune to it and hence unaffected.

After twenty days of arduous travelling, they had finally reached their destination. In the Wilderness, teams consisted of more than ten members operated in diminishing efficiency.

It was difficult to calculate the exact number of attacks they had been subjected to. The only glad worthy fact was that they hadn’t met any other dangerous dire beasts aside from that lava-spitting beast.

Fatty looked at the towering and fuming volcano before him, his eyes lit up. "Is that our destination?"

The fire here was exceptionally rich, a good training place for him.

Sang Zijun disliked the sulfur smell very much. "This stinks", she said while crinkling her brows.

Fatty responded with a drunk look on his face. "Stinks? Not at all! Such a beautiful fire elemental energy odor."

Ai Hui ignored both of them. He brought everyone across a mountain range and pointed towards the front. "This is the place!"

Crossing over the range, everybody looked over and were pleasantly surprised.

The huge valley was enveloped in a thin layer of mist. The lush green forest could faintly be seen and even the babbling of river streams could be heard.

"How magical!"

"How can there be such a lively and flourishing place near a volcano?"

"Is it dangerous inside?"

The gang was excited. Other than fire elementalists like Fatty, no one liked the blistering hot and barren volcano land.

"Already checked. No dangers." Shi Xueman, too, broke into a smile. She remembered how happy she was to see this valley when she accompanied Ai Hui over to explore.

Ai Hui was excited as well since he'd finally brought everyone over safely. In time, they were going to build a city in this valley. A city that belonged to them and a city that was going to be the foundation of their future.

"Alright, this is our territory now." Ai Hui declared. "Go down and take a look."

He led the way as others followed suit, excitement evident on their faces.

Upon entering the valley, it was as if they'd been transported into an entirely different world. The unpleasant sulphur smell was completely gone. The air within the valley was filled with the scent of grass and flowers. The exterior of the valley appeared to be

engulfed in mist but the mist seemed to become milder and did not affect their vision at all on the inside.

The terrain in the valley was uneven so they were able to spot lakes, grasses and trees.

With a closer look, one would notice that the valley's shape was like an irregular pentagon and could be divided into five sections. Its topography was also structured in a way that promoted the engenderment of the five elements. It was like a shrunken Avalon of Five Elements.

A mound was located at the highest terrain, it was likely formed from accumulated volcanic ashes. Under it was a weird, rugged cave. They did not know where it led to and the subterranean metal wind blew day and night, causing a weird whistle occasionally. The metal wind exited from the cave swept across the area, producing many gorges in a fan-like manner over time. These gorges were extremely glossy and carried a metallic luster as if the cave had sprayed silver lines outside.

Following these silver gorges of uneven thickness, the metal wind plunged straight into a mini waterfall located mid-mountain, creating a big sheet of mist. It was this mist that enveloped the valley.

The small lake was situated at a low-lying area of the valley. Abundant underground water rushed out from cracks on the waist of the mountain, forming a small waterfall that eventually formed a small and clear jade-green lake.

By the lake was the lowest-lying piece of land. Grass and vines filled the ground and a few tall trees grew sporadically. The brimming lake water formed small brooks that covered the whole area.

Beside the grassland were raised black rocks in wrinkled folds. Red glow could faintly be seen within the folds as they emitted great heat. Not even a blade of grass grew on those rocks.

This natural land of five elements had everyone enchanted.

Nature’s precious land!

Chapter 417: Difficulties Starting Out

Seeing the precious land with their own eyes had undoubtedly boosted the gang's morale. Even without Ai Hui's instructions they dispersed to survey the surroundings.

Benefits of having enough people were made apparent here since quickly, all kinds of information were gathered one after another. Soon, everyone had a rough understanding of this precious land, which surprised them even more.

The volcano sat in the west of the valley and would not block off the morning sun. This was also an important reason why the plants could grow so healthily here. This valley's formation and the engenderment of the five elements relied on many natural coincidences.

Ample earth fire supplied unlimited elemental energy like an energy source powered by the elemental energy cycle. There were countless tunnels and holes underground, a key condition for the metal wind to flourish. It was also a coincidence that the metal wind came out from an exit beside the volcanic ash mound, and on the eastern part of the valley, the waterfall that flowed out from the cracks on the cliff carried water elemental energy. Having the high and lowlying land in the west and east respectively also gave the valley sufficient sunlight for plants to grow. With consistent vegetation growth, there would be endless amount of wood elemental energy. It could take root in the valley and stabilize the whole elemental energy cycle.

It took many coincidences from the nature to develop this

precious land; nothing was dispensable.

The longest distance from east to west was about 2.5 kilometers, and 2 kilometers from south to north. The place wasn't considered big but was more than enough for now. They could always expand outwards in future, when necessary.

What shocked them even more was the fact that the highest tree in the valley was actually an defensive ancient tree, approximately fifty meters tall, grown for defense. Judging from time, it was probably planted by Senior Xiao.

Perhaps Senior Xiao had hoped that one day this valley would be used by future elementalists.

The defensive ancient tree strengthened the valley's defense, proving the phrase "trees grown by predecessors would become shades for later generations" right.

Ai Hui and the gang had already done their preliminary checks and made initial plans before they came over.

"Wood-type defense will be constructed, using this defensive ancient tree as core. According to our plan, Bangwan will be in charge of this." Ai Hui looked over at Duanmu Huanghun and asked in a deliberately uncertain tone, "Will you be able to handle it, Bangwan?"

Despite being aware of Ai Hui's tactic, Duanmu Huanghun still

felt blood rushing to his head. In an instant his white face turned flushed, as if blood was about to seep out. He shouted in fury, "You watch out!"

After that he turned around and flew towards the tree.

In mid air, Duanmu Huanghun felt his anger rising. He must show Ai Hui a little something! Whatever dog crap Lightning Blade, I'll let you know who's the real talent!"

Plus, he had already made preparations before coming over!

Imagining Ai Hui kowtowing in front of his masterpiece gave Duanmu Huanghun an adrenaline rush. He had inexhaustible energy in him. Excited, a devilish blush appeared on his white, handsome face as his eyes emitted an unnegligible ray.

Seeing Duanmu Huanghun's aggressive departure, Shi Xueman couldn't help but be annoyed. "Provoking him again!"

Ai Hui replied joyfully, "What a good deal, getting him all fired up without spending a single cent."

Shi Xueman laughed before asking, "What's my task?"

"Bring a few down to the cave and explore." Ai Hui kept the smile on his face and reiterated in all seriousness, "This is our territory now so safety over everything."

Iron Lady was the strongest so this mission was hers to complete.

"Got it." Shi Xueman nodded resolutely before turning around to make her selection.

Fatty the meat shield was a definite choice. An outstanding meat shield was a great asset to the team.

Ai Hui’s gaze fell onto Wang Xiaoshan. "You’ll have to work a little harder, Xiaoshan. With the defensive ancient tree, there’s temporarily no need for city walls but we will have to build everybody’s homes first."

Wang Xiaoshan agreed immediately. "No problem, Ai Hui! I’ll just build them according to the initial plan?"

Ai Hui nodded. "Yes, just follow that and don’t get the directions wrong."

The locations of each house were strategically arranged. Houses in different regions would have different properties to suit different types of elementalists. They were also positioned in a way to stabilize the elements’ frail engenderment process.

For example, houses in the wood elemental energy region would be constructed with wood, while houses in fire elemental energy region would be built with special volcanic lava.

Wang Xiaoshan nodded and left hurriedly. Building houses for a few hundred people wasn't an easy task. Even if he came prepared, he needed to work fast.

The farmers and herbalists were already searching for suitable areas for cultivation.

Grass-grade weapon craftsman Mo Zhong was also scouting for areas that would be suitable for planting sword reeds and so on.

Weaponsmith Blind He and Lou Lan were examining the earth fire since Blind He needed it to refine weapons, while Lou Lan needed it to brew elemental food and soup.

After delegating jobs for the rest of the group, Ai Hui started on his own task.

His job was unique–modifying the mist stirred by the metal wind. The moment he realized that the mist enveloping the valley was a result of the metal wind, an idea popped up in his mind.

Fantasyland!

The mist blown up by the metal wind surrounded the whole valley. It was definitely the best material since it was condensed and did not disperse. There had always been a close relationship between mist and fantasy land.

Here they faced the greatest threats, not from Blood of God or

elementalists but dire beasts. With their current abilities, bumping into dire beasts who had yet to produce elemental elixirs wasn't so big a deal. On the other hand, if they were to meet those that had done so, they wouldn't be able to withstand it.

It would be best if they could deceive the beasts.

If it was impossible, coupled with the valley's defense, the mist would make it difficult for the dire beasts to pinpoint their target accurately.

Battles were never about both parties standing still. It's not about you stabbed me once and I returned the favor.

Many times the so-called advantage stemmed from an accumulation of tiny details.

Since his previous inspection, Ai Hui had already been thinking about how to complete this illusion and finally, a rough idea came upon him.

After a thorough investigation of the mini waterfall flowing out from the cracks, he was quickly satisfied. He started carving on the rocks, marking out spots before fixing Color Clam Pearls that he had prepared beforehand on the cliff.

Color Clam Pearls were a kind of water elemental material that lived on the seabed and were produced by clamshells. When a bright ray casted onto the pearls a bizarre illusion would be

created, just like a mirage.

Color Clam Pearls were extremely unorthodox, but Ai Hui needed many of them so he relied on Iron Lady's family to purchase them.

He had thirty-six of them with him. They were like thirty-six elemental energy needles, stuck on the cliff, instantly filling it with overflowing colors and brilliance. Ai Hui then fixed an elemental energy bean in the middle of the pearls.

Thirty-six Color Clam Pearls immediately lit up in drizzles of colors, which gathered to form a sheet. The colored lights altered unceasingly and gradually formed a cylindrical shape, where the colors appeared to flow within its body continuously.

As if attracted by the colorful cylinder, the mist underneath was sucked into it.

Hu, a soft sound was heard.

A wisp of colorful flame rose from the cylinder that looked like a colorful candle.

That was right. Ai Hui was borrowing the idea of water candles. The flame was bright and colorful but made from water vapor. However, the materials he used were better and his design was elaborate, allowing this "water candle" to be far more effective than ordinary ones.

The flame rose in spirals, producing wisps of colored mist that continued to circle within the valley, along with the metal wind.

If you looked down from the outside, you could see that the colored mist enveloping the valley were undergoing changes. Quickly, the valley would seem to vanish into thin air and blended in together with the surrounding black volcanos. No matter how closely you look you won't find any abnormalities.

Nevertheless, no one in the valley was affected. In fact, no one sensed the changes in the mist.

Ai Hui did not stop after finishing his first task. The missions awaiting them were arduous. This extremely precious land had all five elements, which meant that they would need to build five elemental energy pools. Metal, wood, water, fire, earth. Each elemental energy would require an elemental energy pool of their own.

Ai Hui and the gang contributed mostly on this aspect. One blueprint was enough but five sets of materials were needed.

Lou Lan carefully leveled off the creases from the black volcanic rocks, which revealed the dark red rocks. He continued to dig inwards and finally reached the red lava within.

Blind He reached his palm into the lava for a short period of time, and had sustained no injury at all upon taking it out.

He shook his head. "Not hot enough."

Lou Lan exclaimed in shock, "He Wei, you're amazing! Such a hot earth fire isn't enough for you? Ai Hui and I haven't used anything like this before!"

Blind He responded warmly, "Nothing amazing."

He liked Lou Lan a lot. He appreciated his delicious elemental soup and his ever cheerful voice. With Lou Lan around it was as if he was basking in the sun. His blindness caused him to be extra sensitive to the outside world so he could feel Lou Lan's genuinity.

He felt that Boss was really lucky to have such a great sand puppet.

Lou Lan shook his head. "Really amazing. The heat here could breed fire-winged serpent eggs."

Blind He was somewhat embarrassed. "Oh yeah?"

"Yes." Lou Lan looked around, the red glow in his eyes flickering incessantly. "If the temperature here isn't high enough then... there! Found it!"

Lou Lan's cheer brought out a slight smile at the corner of Blind He's mouth.

Lou Lan walked in front as Blind He’s feet left the ground, floating slowly behind.

Lou Lan stopped and said in certainty, "Here!"

Blind He stopped as well. Surprise was evident in his pale, thin face as he shut his eyes tight. He did not feel that there was anything special about this area. He had extremely sharp senses when it came to his surroundings ashe could sense even the slightest differences between temperatures. If the earth fire was even stronger, the temperature here was only a little higher than other places.

But he did not speak up. Instead he floated quietly at the side with a gentle smile on his face. It did not matter even if Lou Lan had made a little mistake.

"I’m going to start!"

At that he transformed into a high speed spinning sandsaw that buzzed loudly.

Sparks flew everywhere the moment the sandsaw landed on the black volcanic rocks.The rocks were super thick and solid but it was as if the sandsaw had an invisible hand, cutting it cheerfully and unceasingly. Shortly a precise square cut out was created.

With a slight smile still kept on his pale face, Blind He looked rather sluggish.

Chapter 418: A Languished Top Student

A perfect square that looked as if it was drawn using a ruler appeared on the black-colored rock.

Pop. Lou Lan transformed into a fork and pierced effortlessly into the centre of the square on the rock. It felt as if he was piercing into a piece of stewed pork belly. Accompanied by Blind He's astonished gaze, the fork trembled and pulled out a cube of black rock wobbily.

The thickness of the back rock cube was at most one meter. It was thicker than what Blind He had expected. The bottom of the black rock cube was dark-red and it was still dripping with lava. For some reason, when one looked at it, he or she would think of a chunk of red braised meat that was dripping glistening braised sauce.

Of course, Blind He couldn't link it to a chunk of red braised meat. He was only surprised at the temperature of the earth fire in the square-shaped hole.

Heat waves blasted his face. Without using his hand, he could clearly gauge the temperature of the earth fire here. The earth fire in this area was much hotter than the previous area's.

However, he was still a meticulous weaponsmith.

Blind He floated down slowly from the air and kneeled on the ground. He inserted his fair and flawless palm into the square-

shaped hole and shut his eyes tightly with a solemn look on his face.

With a bang, Lou Lan transformed back to his usual form and looked curiously at Blind He.

Lou Lan also knew how to forge weapons. However, his forging skills still paled in comparison to Blind He's. Most of Lou Lan's knowledge of weapon-forging came from books. When Master Shao was still around, he spent all his resources on upgrading Lou Lan's sand core. This was how Lou Lan's Midnight came about. As for Lou Lan's second master, Ai Hui, he was also a poor bloke. However, in the process of making See You Laters, Lou Lan had gained a decent amount of experience in weapon-forging.

Lou Lan was like a baby that was filled with curiosity towards everything new.

This characteristic of Lou Lan completely set him apart from his master Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was a practical individual. Whether or not he would be interested in something depended on the utility of thing itself. If it was something that he deemed useless, he wouldn't be bothered looking at it. However, if it was something that he deemed useful, he would become abnormally greedy and thirsty for it and would try to obtain it at all costs.

Lou Lan's eyes were flickering with a red glow. He was recording and analyzing Blind He's elemental energy flow. Even though

there were multiple areas that he did not understand, he still recorded the entire process patiently.

The new sand core was exceptionally powerful. Lou Lan could feel the surging power that it contained, which resembled the unpredictable, calm and tranquil sea. Even though he still had not figured out how to activate and use this powerful force, up till now, all his abilities had not reached Midnight's limit.

Sometimes, Lou Lan would wonder why Master Shao named the new sand core as Midnight. Midnight was the darkest moment of a day and the darkest moment of nighttime. Was the name implying that the sand core was as unpredictable as the darkest moments of nighttime or as bright as the daybreak that would come after midnight?

Did Master Shao fulfill his wish? How was his life now?

Distracting thoughts flashed across Lou Lan's sand core. Sometimes, Lou Lan felt that he behaved lesser and lesser like a sand puppet. It was really abnormal for a sand puppet to have distracting thoughts.

His gaze returned to Blind He.

Blind He withdrew his palm and stood up slowly. "Let's build the smelting furnace here."

After settling a huge issue, Lou Lan was very happy. "We shall

build the smelting furnace according to Ai Hui's design?"

"Yes," Blind He replied.

"Lou Lan shall begin then!" Lou Lan said cheerfully.

A faint smile appeared on Blind He's pale face. He did not say anything, but he was filled with expectations. The earth fire in this area was abundant. This was the best spot to build a smelting furnace. Furthermore, the design of the smelting furnace had been improved by Ai Hui's modifications.

That's right. This was the first time he met a metal elementalist that knew how to modify a smelting furnace to such a successful extent. Even though they had only roughly tested out the modifications, the trial was enough to prove that the fire power of the smelting furnace did increase significantly.

No wonder Elders Guild would confer the title of Master on Wang Shouchuan. The standard of abilities Ai Hui displayed had certainly enlightened Blind He.

Blind He was filled with anticipation for the resulting flames produced by the modified smelting furnace coupled with the abundance of earth fire.

Clink, thud, clink! Lou Lan's movements were very fast. Very soon, the building process was in full swing.

Shi Xueman and her counterparts returned to the valley without good news nor bad news.

The inside of the cave was shaped like an inverted trumpet. The entrance of the cave was small but the inside of the cave was enormous in size. And the powerful metal wind was formed precisely because of the unique shape of the cave.

There were numerous passageways in the cave. This was also why Iron Lady and her counterparts had to turn back. Scouting a cave was an arduous process that would take up a lot of time.

There were pros and cons to having a cave that was connected to the outside world. The terrain of the valley was small and narrow. It would be impossible for them to escape if someone had blocked the entrance of the valley. The good thing of to have a cave connected to the outside world was that it provided the best escape route for them. However, the bad thing about the cave was that it also provided a route for dire beasts to invade the valley.

Therefore, appropriate arrangements had to be made.

Iron Lady looked at the drifting fog that dazzled with a flash of radiance every now and then above the valley. A look of amazement flashed across her eyes.

Was this inspired by water candles?

Sometimes, she really wanted to crack open Ai Hui’s head and see

what was contained inside of it.

She saw that Ai Hui was busy, hence, Iron Lady did not disturb him. She began to deploy sentries and patrols around the valley. Right now, they were situated in the depths of the Wilderness where danger might occur anytime.

Meanwhile Duanmu Huanghun was leading a team of wood elementalists to perfect the wood elemental defense system. Various types of seeds were meticulously planted in different positions. Using their wood elemental energy, the wood elementalists were able to speed up the growth of the seeds. Within two days, there were lots of young sprouts around the defensive ancient tree.

If Ai Hui was an unorthodox elementalist, then Duanmu Huanghun would be an orthodox elementalist. Due to the talent he displayed since young, his family had placed high hopes on him. Duanmu family was one of the oldest families in Avalon of Five Elements. Since young, Duanmu Huanghun received the most traditional and orthodox education.

If Duanmu Huanghun never met Ai Hui or encountered the blood catastrophe, he would have graduated from Induction Ground as the best student and became a role model for all the students in Induction Ground.

His style of defensive arrangements were very traditional. One could even say it was a classical style. His style of defensive arrangements was completely different from his arrogant and elitist nature.

In the hands of a so-called genius, any theories or styles could shine brightly and amaze everyone in the world.

Initially, the rest of the wood elementalists did not find anything special about Duanmu Huanghun's defensive arrangements. All they could see was that some of his requirements were too demanding and unnecessary.

For example, every plant must be of a certain distance from each other or the order in which the wood elementalists sped up the growth of the seeds must be correct. On the contrary, the concoctions that Duanmu Huanghun used to prepare these plants were commonly-seen and ordinary. There were nothing special about these concoctions at all.

However, as time passed, everyone began to shut up. All their complaints had disappeared. Everyone sincerely admired Duanmu Huanghun's defensive arrangements. They had been convinced by his genius.

If this was a wood elementalist's homework or examination in Induction Ground, Duanmu Huanghun would have received full marks. Everyone believed that even the teachers in Induction Ground could not have handled this task better and more impressive than Duanmu Huanghun.

Perfect! Meticulous! Impregnable!

His defensive arrangements did not seem to compliment each

other, but in reality, they did fit together perfectly. The ideas behind his arrangements were ingenious and the details involved were brilliant. Jiang Wei and his counterparts had been through multiple battles before and they had rich combat experience. As such, they were familiar with storming heavily fortified positions.

However, when they faced Duanmu Huanghun's defensive arrangements, their faces turned white with fear.

Up till now, no matter how hard everyone tested and rehearsed, they could not find a single loophole in his defensive arrangements.

Just by the make of the distribution chart of the seeds that had been planted and looking at it, everyone's eyes tangled up. At this point of time, all the wood elementalists then remembered that Duanmu Huanghun was the legendary top student of Induction Ground.

Didn't everyone say that he had languished? Didn't everyone say that he fooled around in brothels day and night? Didn't everyone say that he was utterly defeated by She Yu?

All the wood elementalists submissively followed behind the top student, sowing seeds and channelling their elemental energy.

After being crushed by Duanmu Huanghun's superb intelligence, everyone seemed to have gone through a mental rollercoaster. Right now, all of them were filled with anticipation. They could not wait to see the facial expression of their enemies when they

encountered these fully grown defensive plants.

Duanmu Huang’s facial expression remained calm. However, deep down, he was actually extremely pleased with himself.

The time and effort he spent were not in vain!

He had long thought of how to build an impregnable defense system for the valley. All he wanted was to give Ai Hui a big shock.

Duanmu Huanghun casted a glance of haughty disdain at Ai Hui. When he saw Ai Hui examined the ground full of sprouts, his mind became restless and his lips curled into a haughty smile.

Hehe, you must be shocked, right!

Suddenly, Ai Hui furrowed his eyebrows and said, "Everyone, stop!"

A look of excitement flashed across Duanmu Huanghun’s face. The chance is here. He nonchalantly asked, "Is there anything wrong?"

The rest looked at Ai Hui with a puzzled look. From their perspective, Duanmu Huanghun’s defensive arrangements were perfect.

Ai Hui looked at Duanmu Huanghun and asked, "Have you

figured out how much wood elemental energy would these arrangements need after three days?"

Everyone still remained baffled. However, Duanmu Huanghun's facial expression had already changed drastically.

At this moment, all he wanted to do now was to find a hole and hide in it.

Damn it!

How could he overlook such an important issue!

After the growth of these seeds had been sped up, their elemental energy usage would increase sharply. Furthermore, there was a limit to how much wood elemental energy that this wood elemental land could provide. It definitely could not support the growth of so many plants.

Duanmu Huanghun's mental arithmetic ability surpassed everyone's. In a blink of an eye, he had already computed the result. The critical point would not be reached on the third day, but rather, 3pm in the afternoon of the second day.

Once the supply of wood elemental energy could not keep up with the growth of the plants, the plants would not developed healthily. After they were fully grown, their powers would decrease sharply.

"All of you have to wait until my wood elemental energy pool is ready," Ai Hui told them.

After the wood elemental energy pool was built, the supply of wood elemental energy would then rise sharply.

After finishing his sentence, Ai Hui hastily left to take a look at the building progress of the smelting furnace. He had modified the design of elemental energy pool that Elders Guild had provided. There were a lot of components to be forged. Therefore, he needed the smelting furnace to be built first. Furthermore, he had to consult Blind He on some of the components needed for the five elemental energy pools.

Duanmu Huanghun’s face turned black, resembling the bottom of a wok.

An extremely strong aura of anger emitted from his body, causing the rest of the wood elementalists to steer clear of him.

At this point in time, they definitely must not provoke Duanmu Huanghun.

Chapter 419: An Chouchou

The smelting furnace that Ai Hui had modified was very different from the usual smelting furnaces.

The body of his smelting furnace was larger than the usual smelting furnaces, resembling a house that sat on top of a lava pit. On the roof of this smelting furnace, there were twelve flying pipes that resembled inverted bull horns. Surrounding the smelting furnace, there were twelve small fire pits. Each fire pit would shoot out a curved stream of flames, which would then enter the flying, inverted-bull-horn-shaped pipe corresponding to that fire pit. Upon entering the flying, inverted-bull-horn-shaped pipe, the stream of flames would come out from the other end of the pipe and shoot towards the centre of the smelting furnace.

Eventually, twelve curved streams of flames would gather in the center of the smelting furnace. The flames within the smelting furnace were white-hot and dazzling.

Even if one stood far away from the smelting furnace, he or she could feel the terrifying heat of it.

Everyone was looking at Blind He and the smelting furnace with curiosity and amazement .

Blind He was standing in front of the smelting furnace. He rolled up his sleeve and revealed his fair arm. Following which, he placed his palm into the furnace, which was then engulfed by the scorching and brilliant flames. Suddenly, a glowing eye appeared

in the hollow of his palm. Then, the eye emitted a beam of silvery white light. The scorching flames did not seem to be able to cause any damage to Blind He's palm.

In everyone's eyes, Blind He's strength was unfathomable and his entire body exuded the air of an extraordinary expert.

Ai Hui was even more formidable for being able to hire such a formidable weaponsmith.

Actually, Blind He was not as calm and collected as what his facial expression was showing. Deep down, he was unusually excited.

The quality of the flames in the smelting furnace far exceeded his expectations!

To a weaponsmith, high-level flames was something they longed for. The higher the base level of the flames, the higher the base level of materials it would be able to melt. Those truly capable weaponsmiths would always forge their weapons in Fire Prairie. The base level of the earth fire in Fire Prairie was extremely high. It was most suitable for forging weapons. That was also why the cities of Fire Prairie were built underground. Being underground, the cities would be able to better utilize the earth fire.

High-level flames!

He had never seen such high-level flames

He forcibly regained his composure and asked, "What kind of flames is this? Does it have a name?"

Ai Hui was stunned momentarily and shook his head, "No."

"Give it a name," Blind He replied.

Actually, Ai Hui felt that as long as the smelting furnace was complete, he did not really care about the name of the flames. However, he knew that Blind He's temperament and nature was not like an average person's. Therefore, Ai Hui decided to treat him with deference and replied casually, "Since this kind of flame is formed by clustering earth fire, and its color is whiter than the usual flames, let's call it White Cluster Flames."

With a serious look that contained a tinge of sincerity on his face, Blind He replied solemnly, "Then it shall be called White Cluster Flames."

Upon seeing the nonchalant look on Ai Hui's face, the rest did not care much about the flames too. But no one had expected that White Cluster Flames would make an immense reputation for itself in the future. Eventually, it would be carried forward by future generations and a series of high-level cluster flames would be developed.

In the future, there would be an addition of the title "Creator of High-level Cluster Flames" to Ai Hui's resume, and he would be revered by countless weaponsmiths.

Only Blind He seemed to have vaguely realized this.

"As long as you're happy," Ai Hui did not care about the name of the flames at all. Following which, he asked, "When can we start the forging process?"

"Let me get familiar with the smelting furnace first."

After finishing his sentence, Blind He did not pay attention to Ai Hui anymore. He only cared about adjusting the smelting furnace.

"Does He Wei need Lou Lan's help?" Lou Lan widened his eyes and asked.

"Thanks Lou Lan!" Blind He smiled at Lou Lan.

Upon seeing this, Ai Hui rubbed his nose. Even as the employer, he did not get the same level of respect and fondness as Lou Lan from Blind He.

.....

Newlight City was a city designed and built for new citizens. It was also the second largest city in Beyond Avalon. Elders Guild had named the Wilderness regions that were expanded into and developed as Beyond Avalon.

Back then, the number of cities in Beyond Avalon had exceeded ten thousand. However, most of the cities were pathetically small. The largest and most top-rate city was Skyheart City, which was built by Elders Guild.

That day, Yuchi Ba came as the representative of Elders Guild to inspect Newlight City. He was standing at the highest pagoda. As Yuchi Ba looked at the continuous stretch of buildings in the distance, his facial expression became solemn.

The faces of the few Elders from New Citizen Faction standing behind him turned emotional.

Standing beside Yuchi Ba, there was a short fellow. His body was fat and round and his legs were stout. The luxurious-looking robe on his body was tightly stretched, making one worry that it would burst any moment. On his round, biscuit-like face, there were two squinty eyes that resembled two fine slits. His facial expression was solemn, but the attire on his body made him look rather comical.

He had an odd name, An Chouchou.

However, no one dared to laugh at him.

Among the new citizens, An Chouchou had become a legend. His strength was very weak and he had not even attained elemental externalization yet. No matter how one looked at him, he or she could not see any worth in him.

However, he was the mayor of Newlight City now.

No one knew where Elder Yuchi had found him. Initially, when Elder Yuchi gave such a heavy responsibility to an unknown individual like him, everyone raised their objections. When the internal department of New Citizen Faction saw him in person, everyone was disappointed. Even the Elder who'd previously supported Elder Yuchi prepared to raise his objections when he saw An Chouchou.

However, after having a debate with An Chouchou, the entire internal department of New Citizen Faction was shocked by him.

No outsider knew what An Chouchou exactly said in that debate. There were countless different versions of what he had said circulating everywhere. From that day onwards, An Chouchou defeated his opponents and became the person in charge for New Citizen Faction's city-building project.

And reality had proven that An Chouchou did not let the Elders in New Citizen Faction down.

This unprepossessing fatty, who merely attained elemental internalization, had made Newlight City into the second biggest city in Beyond Avalon.

An Chouchou tiptoed and stretched his neck with difficulty. Even so, one could barely see his neck.

"It’s beginning!" someone yelled in alarm. Everyone became excited in an instant.

Brilliant lights blossomed from the spires of the pagodas situated at the edges of the city. The lights began to extend and come together, forming a layer of pure and holy light around the border of Newlight City. The layer of light slowly rose into the air and transformed into a silvery light screen. It extended towards the sky, appearing as if a piece light muslin cloth had been pulled over the sky of Newlight City.

The enormous Newlight City was unusually quiet. On the streets and rooftops of houses, everyone was stretching their necks and staring at the light screen that was extending towards the sky.

When the light screen reached the other side of the city and merged with the layer of light from the pagodas there, a powerful elemental energy hurricane suddenly erupted from all the pagodas.

A breeze swept across Newlight City.

The light screen stabilized, looking as if a huge, transparent, bell of glass had been placed over Newlight City.

YAY!

Everyone in Newlight City exploded into a frenzy. Numerous cries of joy broke out from every nook and cranny of the city. At this point of time, Newlight City was like an erupted volcano. Joy

was written all over the faces of everyone.

Newlight City's greatest defensive structure, Pagoda Screen, had been completed. From that day onwards, the defense of Newlight City improved to a new level.

The citizens of Newlight City were overjoyed because the safety of their homes had been improved greatly. In Wilderness, where they were surrounded by danger, nothing made a person more happy than having safety.

Newlight City was the second city after Skyheart City to have a complete defensive system. This would greatly boost Newlight City's reputation and attract more new and powerful citizens to the city.

As compared to Skyheart City's Five Peaks, Pagoda Screen was more innovative.

In the early stages of building Skyheart City, Madam Ye suggested an extremely daring idea. She wanted to use five God-subduing Peaks to form a brand-new city defense system. This was how Five Peaks came about. Madam Ye's Five Peaks was not simply about putting five God-subduing Peaks together. There were a lot of marvellous and intricate designs to it. Reportedly, this proposal was given to Madam Ye by one of her subordinates named Ma Shiji.

Ma Shiji had a mysterious background. No one had heard of him before. This person had an extremely deep understanding of Wang

Shouchuan’s research works and theories.

Even though Yuchi Ba was an Elder of Elders Guild, he could not deploy a God-subduing Peak to Newlight City without explicit approval. Luckily, Wang Shouchuan’s research works and theories were in high demand. Apparently, the birth of God-subduing Peak had popularized Wang Shouchuan’s research works and theories. Even though Elders Guild tried its best to withhold this information from the outside world, the information continued to leak. Since the leakage of the information could not be stopped, Great Elder decided to sell the information on [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] to the public. Its price was exorbitant.

However, for aristocratic families and powerful forces, they did not mind paying such a small price for it.

Pagoda Screen was built upon Wang Shouchuan’s theories but it was developed and produced by New Citizen Faction.

This was something that Yuchi Ba was extremely proud of.

"It has been hard on you, Chouchou!" Yuchi Ba turned around and thanked An Chouchou with gratitude, "From today onwards, new citizens finally have a home."

Everyone surrounding Yuchi Ba became very emotional. All along, new citizens had not been well-received in the upper society of the Avalon of Five Elements. The conflicts between new citizens and old citizens had never ceased before.

Similarly, Elders who were new citizens in Elders Guild were always at a disadvantage.

"Not hard at all!" An Chouchou replied solemnly, "No one else has the boldness and drive of you and your fellow Elders. If I was in elsewhere, I might not have been able to work hard even if I wanted to."

Elder Yuchi was very pleased with himself. An Chouchou was personally nominated by him. Therefore, when An Chouchou did a good job, he felt proud as well. With an affable look on his face, Elder Yuchi asked amiably, "Do you have any issues that are troubling you? Feel free to tell me if you do."

"Chouchou is somewhat ambitious," An Chouchou gave Yuchi Ba a bow before giving a bow to the rest of the Elders as well.

Yuchi Ba withdrew the smile on his face and signalled to Tong Gui and Yu Lin. Tong Gui and Yu Lin quickly instructed their subordinates to fall back and guard the area to prevent anyone from eavesdropping.

A solemn look appeared on the other Elders' faces too. All of them knew An Chouchou definitely had something astonishing to say. Now, everyone no longer dare to underestimate this short fatty. All along, no one had confidence in the construction of Newlight City. They blamed it on the lack of experience and resources that the Elders in New Citizen Facton had. However, now Newlight City had surpassed everyone's expectations and became the second largest city. An Chouchou had played the main role in this achievement.

Some of the outsiders had called him Ugly Elephant.

After bowing to everyone, An Chouchou straightened his body. Even though he was the shortest in height among everyone, he looked the most majestic and towering out of all of them.

"Right now, Newlight City has been completed. As long as all of you can manage it properly, it will be the holy land for new citizens in the future. However, it’s difficult to achieve anything without sufficient support. Even after Newlight City has been built, we are still lacking the cities for the other four elements."

"We know the benefits of having cities for all five elements. However, the regions around here are not suitable for building cities of the other four elements. The distance between each city is too far. The elemental energies can’t react each other well."

A smile appeared on An Chouchou’s face as he replied, "Chouchou has a premature idea."

Chapter 420: Energy-stabilizing Pillars

Ai Hui squatted at the volcanic crater and looked at the surging red-colored lava beneath him. Waves of scorching heat hit him in the face while a strong smell of sulfur choked his nose and mouth.

He squinted his eyes and carefully and examined the fire elemental energy below him. The surging lava had made the fire elemental energy look as if it was in total chaos. However, Ai Hui knew this was not the case in reality.

This volcano was out of the ordinary and it did not have a name. Since they were going to be staying here for a long time, they had to come up with a name for it. Thus, everyone had decided to call it Blackfish Mouth Volcano.

The volcano was like a huge black-colored fish that jumped halfway out of the ground. The fish head was facing the sky while the volcanic crater was the mouth of the black-colored fish.

Pop!

A sharp and clear popping sound exploded behind Ai Hui. He returned to his senses with a start and turned his head around.

A ball of sand had rolled to the volcanic crater from the valley and exploded in the air not far away from Ai Hui. It exploded into a clear and distinct line of words made of sand in the air.

"Ai Hui, meal time!"

At the end of the line of words, there was also a vivid and lifelike sand portrait of Lou Lan. In the sand portrait, Lou Lan was wearing a chef's robe with a wok in one hand and a ladle in the other hand. The ladle in his hand was pointing to the line of words. On his face, that was covered by a mask, his eyes had curled into two curved slits.

Ha. Ai Hui could not help but laugh.

Lou Lan was getting more and more fancy.

Due to having maintained his facial expression for a long time, Ai Hui's face muscles were slightly rigid. He rubbed his numb face and jumped down from the volcanic crater. Following which, the Starry Gem Swordwings on his back spread with a whizz. Like a huge, black-colored eagle, he swooped down from the sky and flew towards the valley.

Looking down from the sky, he could not see the valley. He could only see a continuous stretch of mountain range that was formed by the rocks of the black volcano.

As Ai Hui flew closer to the surface of the ground, he did not lower his speed. The scene of him smashing into smithereens did not happen as he flew right through the rocks and disappeared.

A slight chill blasted him in the face as he flew through a layer of

fog-formed mirage. The scenery in front of him transformed as an exuberant valley appeared right before his eyes.

The first thing Ai Hui saw was Fatty licking his plate. The rest were busy eating as well. Other than Lou Lan, no one raised their heads to look at him. Gulping his saliva, Ai Hui landed beside Lou Lan.

Lou Lan served Ai Hui the long-prepared elemental food and yelled, "Ai Hui, it has been hard on you!"

"Thank you, Lou Lan," Ai Hui carefully took over the food.

An alluring fragrance seeped into Ai Hui’s nostrils as his mouth uncontrollably overflowed with saliva. Like the rest, Ai Hui wolfed down his food.

Even though he had eaten Lou Lan’s food many times, he still felt extremely blissful whenever he had his meal cooked by Lou Lan.

At that point of time, a lot of people were thinking, "Ai Hui is not important at all, the most important person is Lou Lan! Lou Lan is the morale-booster! Wherever Lou Lan points his ladle at, we will go through fire and tread on water for him! Ai Hui? Who’s that! How can someone like him enjoy the delicious food that Lou Lan makes? Why don’t we split his share among ourselves? We can eat more of Lou Lan’s food that way then..."

Those who had finished their meals were staring fiercely at Ai

Hui. They were struggling with their emotions. Should they snatch the food from the tiger's mouth?

"Ai Hui, did you make any developments today?"

Lou Lan's voice rang across Ai Hui's ears. His face was nearly buried in the bowl of food. Everyone's gaze was fixated on his back.

"I still need some more time..." Ai Hui replied unclearly with food stuffed in his mouth.

Being situated in the mountain range of the Blackfish Mouth Volcano, the valley had an abundance of fire elemental energy. Right now, Ai Hui's biggest problem was to figure out how to use this fire elemental energy.

In theory, as long as the layout where the five elements could engender each other was formed, any type of elemental energy could become the fountainhead of the five elemental cycle. However, this was only proven in theory. In reality, there were still many limitations as to how one could utilize elemental energies.

Blackfish Mouth Volcano had an abundance of fire elemental energy. However, the fire elemental energy was extremely violent. If Ai Hui wanted to use fire elemental energy, he had to first understand its nature. Just like what his master had told him in the past, he had to find the nodes of the fire elemental energy first.

Only by understanding how the fire elemental energy was distributed in the area and by identifying the nodes could Ai Hui then put a leash on the ferocious "beast" and tame it.

The defensive system for the valley and the elemental energy pools had been built. All these needed a huge amount of elemental energy, which would be coming from this volcano.

Right now, they still did not dare to explore the surrounding terrain. If they were to encounter any formidable dire beasts, they could not even retreat back to the valley.

That was because the valley did not have any defensive capabilities. The fog merely provided them with an illusive mirage.

Ai Hui quickly finished up his food, leaving the food bowl spotless. The gazes that were gathered upon him shifted elsewhere immediately. Ai Hui raised his head from the food bowl with satisfaction.

After Ai Hui returned to his senses from the delicious food, he looked around and asked, "Where’s Blind He? How’s his progress?"

"He is still making energy-stabilizing pillars. Since we need a huge number of them, he is still working on them and has not had his meal yet."

The energy-stabilizing pillar was a structure designed by Ai Hui. It was somewhat similar to the sand pillars that Ai Hui made for

Gu Tianning.

The name of "energy-stabilizing pillar" was given by Blind He. Ai Hui thought that Blind He found the name of "White Cluster Flames" was given too negligently. Therefore, he decided to let Blind He choose the name this time around.

Upon hearing Lou Lan’s words, Ai Hui was stunned. This was the first time he’d met someone who was able to resist Lou Lan’s delicious food. Such a high level of focus was indeed formidable. A tinge of shame arose in Ai Hui’s heart. When comparing himself to Blind He, he felt slightly inadequate.

However, when Ai Hui saw everyone else, the tinge of shame in his heart disappeared into thin air. He said solemnly, "Where’s his share of food? I will help him finish it!"

"No, Ai Hui," Lou Lan shook his head, "He Wei has forged so many energy-stabilizing pillars and his elemental energy has been greatly depleted. He needs to replenish his elemental energy in time."

Ai Hui was defeated by Lou Lan’s bright and clear gaze. He laughed unctuously and replied, "Ahh, that’s true, I forgot about that. Otherwise, I would have given him some of my share."

Disdainful sneers broke out around him, unrestrained.

Ai Hui glared at Iron Lady. What are you laughing at?

"Finished."

Blind He’s weary voice suddenly rang across Ai Hui’s ears. Like a weightless ghost, he slowly drifted from Ai Hui’s side to Lou Lan.

Blind He’s unique way of walking resembled the drifting of a ghost.

His seemingly weightless body hovered a few centimeters above the ground and moved forward slowly, resembling a ghost. Initially, when everyone saw him moving around like this, their hairs stood on end. However, as time passed, they got used to it.

Blind He was blind and he created this moving method. Since there were too many obstacles on the ground, hovering a few centimeters above the ground would allow him to avoid these obstacles. Moving around at a slow speed allowed him to utilize his sharp sense of awareness. With a sufficient amount of time, he could avoid obstacles like huge trees or walls.

Ai Hui was stunned. He blurted out, "So fast?"

In Ai Hui’s modified design plan for the five elemental energy pools, each elemental energy pool would need twelve energy-stabilizing pillars to be set up. Since they had five elemental energy pools, they had a total of sixty energy-stabilizing pillars.

The design for these energy-stabilizing pillars was much more

complicated than Gu Tianning's sand pillars. Initially, Blind He said that he would need at least five days to complete building sixty energy-stabilizing pillars. In the end, he'd unexpectedly completed them in two days.

Blind He ignored Ai Hui and smiled at Lou Lan, "Thank you, Lou Lan."

Following which, Blind He began to eat his food slowly. After a while, he suddenly said, "The flames are good."

It was at this moment that Ai Hui realized the White Cluster Flames was the reason why the energy-stabilizing pillars could be completed so fast.

He did not expect the White Cluster Flames to provide such great help to the forging process. This certainly surprised him greatly. Ai Hui was not really well-versed in the art of weapon-forging, however, he certainly knew what it meant when five days' worth of work was completed in just two days.

He was palpitating with eagerness. If he could bring about such a huge impact just by modifying a smelting furnace, what would happen if he applied his master's theories on other things?

He suddenly realized that his master' theories had had more potential than what he had expected. Ai Hui was filled with pride and longing for his master. When Ai Hui recalled that his master was a nobody when he was still alive, he made a firm resolution to promote and develop his master's theories and research works.

Brimming with emotions, Ai Hui flew towards the smelting furnace.

The sixty energy-stabilizing pillars were piled up like a small mountain in front of the smelting furnace. Ai Hui landed on the ground and examined the energy-stabilizing pillars carefully.

As Ai Hui understood his master's theories more and more, his new designs of the energy-stabilizing pillars became smaller and smaller in size. Their effects were more remarkable as well.

Every energy-stabilizing pillar was as thin as the size of a fist. Each pillar was one meter in length. Different materials were used for different elemental types of energy-stabilizing pillars. Some were made up of silvery metal, some were carved out of wood and some were made up of rocks. All of them were extremely exquisite and their bodies were covered with complicated and mysterious veined patterns. A faintly discernible glow was circulating through these veined patterns silently, looking like an art piece.

"Beautiful!"

Shi Xueman's voice rang across the air as she landed beside Ai Hui. She was admiring the energy-stabilizing pillars as well.

"Let's go and set up the elemental energy pools," Ai Hui was high-spirited.

The rest had also gathered around them by now. Setting up the elemental energy pools was no doubt the most important thing for them to do. With a sufficient supply of elemental energy, their defense system could be activated and they no longer needed to ward off dire beasts with their physical bodies.

The effects of Ai Hui's modified smelting furnace were remarkable. Everyone was filled with anticipation. What would Ai Hui's modified elemental energy pools be like?

Everyone in the valley went into a frenzy as all of them stopped what they were doing.

Ai Hui decided to set up the water elemental energy pool first. His partner for this task was Iron Lady.

The lake in the valley was not really big. Ai Hui had already identified the locations of the nodes.

Under Ai Hui's instructions, Iron Lady nailed the energy-stabilizing pillars in the bottom of the lake. This was a task that needed to be carried out meticulously. Not only must she accurately nail the energy-stabilizing pillars in the exact spots, she must also make sure that the pillars were not damaged at all.

A solemn look was upon Shi Xueman's face as she cautiously nailed the twelve energy-stabilizing pillars into the nodes. Doing this caused her to be drenched in sweat.

When the last energy-stabilizing pillar was nailed, Shi Xueman heaved a long sigh of relief. Her tense mind was finally able to relax. Now she was only scared of doing something wrong.

Now that she thought of how Ai Hui nailed all the golden needles to execute [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth] in Central Pine City, she felt that Ai Hui could handle stress and pressure very well.

At this moment, the ground suddenly trembled.

Shi Xueman returned to her senses. Everyone’s gaze was directed at the small lake.

At this point of time, the usually tranquil lake was rolling and surging, resembling a lake of boiling water. Powerful water elemental energy was spreading throughout the valley.

Ai Hui looked slightly nervous and yelled, "Stay on guard!"

Powerful elemental energy undulations could attract dire beasts easily. However, Ai Hui and the rest were already prepared for this scenario. If a dire beast really appeared, they would have someone to lure it away.

Everyone was feeling extremely tense now. Fortunately, no dire beasts appeared.

The boiling lake began to change.

Chapter 421: Elemental Energy Pools, One By One

The surface of the previously boiling lake suddenly became sleek and smooth like a mirror. It looked like a hand had smoothened out a creased bedsheet. Wisps of mist rose from the surface of the lake, making the lake looked like a misty fairyland.

A small mass of cloud formed in the air seven meters above the surface of the lake, resembling a lump of soft cotton candy.

No one had ever seen such a mini cloud that flew so low to the ground. Its reflection was projected on the tranquil surface of the lake, resembling a phenomenon that could only be found in fantasyland. Shi Xueman, Sang Zhijun and a few other girls wished they could touch it.

The level of the lake decreased visibly while the mass of the cloud increased with a visible speed. As the mass of the cloud increased, the cloud slowly rose towards the sky.

Disappointment flashed across the girls' eyes. After the mass of the cloud had increased, it was no longer as cute as its previous smaller self. At this moment, the size of the cloud was somewhat similar to the lake's. It had flown to a height that was level with the highest point of the valley.

"It's raining," Sang Zhijun's eyes lit up.

Everyone reached out their palms at the same time. A soft drizzle, as fine as hair, rained down from the sky. In the blink of an eye, the area around the lake was draped in a misty rain.

The concentration level of water elemental energy in the area increased significantly. A slight chill engulfed the area, making it looked as if they were in the misty depths of a mountain. The peculiar thing was that the misty rain only covered a small area surrounding the lake and would not extend beyond that by the slightest bit.

Shi Xueman closed her eyes to feel the air around her. After a while, she opened her eyes and said, "The concentration level of water elemental energy has increased by approximately ten percent."

Upon hearing Shi Xueman’s words, Ai Hui replied, "The concentration level of water elemental energy here is too low. Using the elemental energy pool alone won’t increase the concentration level greatly."

An elemental energy pool did not have the ability to create something from nothing. It could not generate elemental energy on its own and there were a lot of requirements in building it. A suitable location for building it was more important than anything else.

For example, an area that had a high concentration level of metal elemental energy would be suitable for building a metal elemental energy pool.

An elemental energy pool worked in the way that it would first absorb all elemental energies from its surrounding. Then, it would preserve its target elemental energy and filter out other types of elemental energy. By doing this, the concentration level of its target elemental energy in the surroundings would increase.

The valley was generally low in water elemental energy, therefore, the water elemental energy pool could not work to its full effect. However, since the water elemental energy in the lake was pure in nature, it satisfied the requirements for a water elemental energy pool to work. Similarly, an elemental energy pool needed to consume elemental energy for it to operate. If the concentration level of a particular elemental energy was too low, the elemental energy pool would not work.

This was also why some places were worthless, even though they had all five elemental energies.

Ai Hui anticipated that this would happen and he had explained it to everyone beforehand. As such, all of them were not really disappointed.

Successfully setting up the water elemental energy pool was only the first step. There were still four more elemental energy pools to be set up. The fire elemental energy pool would be set up the last.

One could tell that Ai Hui was an ambitious individual despite his low-profile nature. His design plans had completely displayed his lofty aspirations.

The wood elemental energy pool would have to depend on Duanmu Huanghun.

Duanmu Huanghun worked extremely fast. He knew the design plan for the wood elemental energy pool thoroughly. With regards to this aspect, he was better than Shi Xueman. The first time he saw Ai Hui's modified design plan for the wood elemental energy pool, he was flabbergasted. However, two days later, he understood all the details clearly. By the third day, he could even come up with suggestions to improve the design. This proved that he had a deep understanding of the structure of the elemental energy pool.

The use of drifting jadesword bamboos was his suggestion and it was accepted by Ai Hui.

Right now, Duanmu Huanghun was cultivating drifting jadesword bamboos. He planted them near the brook so as to ensure there was a sufficient amount of water elemental energy flowing into the bamboo forest.

Before this, Duanmu Huanghun had already nailed the twelve energy-stabilizing pillars into the ground.

The body of a drifting jadesword bamboo was long and thing. Its bamboo leaves were long and narrow like the blade of a sword. The bamboo was jade-green in color. These were the reasons why it was called drifting jadesword bamboo. The bamboo leaves of drifting jadesword bamboos fell throughout all four seasons. When

they fell and drifted in the air, they resembled dancing butterflies, looking extremely beautiful.

There would be swishing jade-green bamboos, the whispering of the wind and the sword chimes from the fallen leaves.

Such beautiful scenery…

Other than its good-looking appearance, Duanmu Huanghun had chosen drifting jadesword bamboos for its other advantages too. Drifting jadesword bamboos were naturally suitable for being used in sword formations. They had defensive capabilities that could kill enemies. The bamboo leaves were also an excellent type of weapon. If there was an ample amount elemental energy in the future, they could sell the bamboo leaves to create a source of sizeable income.

Because of this suggestion, Ai Hui began to see Duanmu Huanghun in a new light.

Duanmu Huanghun could sense it and was extremely pleased with himself for a long time. He thought that Ai Hui was finally bowled over by his superb aesthetic sense. Unexpectedly, Ai Hui was already inquiring about questions like how much a piece of bamboo leaf would cost, how big the bamboo forest would be, what would be the output value and etc.

The drifting jadesword bamboos were planted on both sides of the brook. Ai Hui applied some of the insights he’d obtained from [Yin Yang Sword Formation] on them as well.

The forest of one hundred and eight drifting jadesword bamboos, each with the width of a thumb, would be split into half by the brook. On each side of the brook, there were six energy-stabilizing pillars. If one looked down at the forest from the sky, he or she would see the shape of Yin and Yang.

Even for someone like Duanmu Huanghun, it was extremely exhausting to plant one hundred and eight drifting jadesword bamboos.

When he planted the last drifting jadesword bamboo, the nature of the wood elemental energy in the area began to transform. Unlike the turbulent transformation of the water elemental energy previously, the wood elemental energy's transformation was very calm and gentle.

The drifting jadesword bamboos were growing at a visible speed. Section by section, the bamboo grew longer while the jade-green bamboo leaves grew on the branches continuously.

After around one hour, the sparse, young bamboo sprouts began to look somewhat like a bamboo forest. The bamboo leaves looked like tiny jade-made swords that hung on the branches of the bamboos.

At this moment, a bamboo leaf fell and drifted across the bamboo forest.

After a bamboo leaf broke away from the branch of a drifting

jadesword bamboo, it would drift in the air forever, not touching the ground at all. Eventually, it would vaporize into a puff of wood elemental energy and dissipate into the air. This was how the word "drifting" in its name came about.

"It’s beautiful," Shi Xueman could not help but say.

"We can make money off them as well!" Ai Hui quickly added in, "Once there are more of these bamboo leaves, we can gather them. I have already done my research. When the wood elemental energy in the bamboo leaves becomes more concentrated, the bamboo leaves will become clear and pristine like pieces of jade. They will be worth more money that way. We will earn a huge income just by selling the bamboo leaves every year!"

A vision for the future appeared in Ai Hui’s eyes.

All the wood elementalists entered the bamboo forest to experience it for themselves. This could be an ideal place for them to meditate in the future. The wood elemental energy in the bamboo forest was clearly more concentrated than in the other areas’. Furthermore, the wood elemental energy in the bamboo forest was flowing in some kind of unique way. There was a tiny difference between the two bamboo forests. The difference was subtle and thought-provoking. Some sharp wood elementalists wished they could stay in the bamboo forest forever.

However, right now, they could not do so.

The wood elementalists reluctantly walked out from the bamboo

forest. Before the entire set of design plans was executed, all the five elemental energies in the valley would be extremely weak.

The job of setting up the earth elemental energy pool was left to Wang Xiaoshan.

The hillock was made up of soot from the volcano and it was extremely sturdy and thick. However, it wasn't much of a problem to Wang Xiaoshan. Even though his fighting capabilities were not as good as the others, his construction skills far surpassed everyone else.

The shape of the earth elemental energy pool was octagonal. There would be a stone-made energy-stabilizing pillar in each corner of the earth elemental energy pool.

The other four pillars would be placed in the direction of the metal wind cavern.

When the earth elemental energy pool was set up, the ground in the centre of the eight energy-stabilizing pillars suddenly became soft and caved in, forming a hole that was of an unfathomable depth. The hole resembled a deep well.

Through the hole, loud rumbles could be heard from the depths of the ground, sounding as if there was an army with thousands of men and horses marching underneath.

The rumbles got increasingly close while the ground shook more

and more violently.

With a loud boom, quicksand erupted from the hole like a fountain. Very soon, the quicksand began to flood the surface of the ground and kept on extending outward.

Quicksand gushed out from the hole endlessly. Using the other four energy-stabilizing pillars as direction markers, a portion of the quicksand slowly flowed towards the entrance of metal wind cavern. A small river of quicksand was formed.

Wang Xiaoshan could not contain the joy on his face as he stood on the quicksand. The earth elemental energy made him felt extremely comfortable. In the blink of an eye, the earth elemental energy pool's surroundings was fully covered with quicksand.

Lou Lan curiously asked Ai Hui, "Ai Hui, will this place become the next Yellow Sand Corner in the future? Lou Lan has never been to Yellow Sand Corner. Master Shao said that Yellow Sand Corner has many types of sand materials."

Ai Hui blinked his eyes and replied, "You might be right. Give it another one thousand years and there will be a sea of yellow sand here."

When the rest heard Ai Hui's words, they could not help but roll their eyes. Was Ai Hui trying to bully Lou Lan just because he was innocent and naive?

"Ai Hui, really? If that’s the case, Lou Lan must make sure this place can last for another one thousand years," Lou Lan widened his eyes and replied happily.

"Alright, this shall be Lou Lan’s territory in the future. All of you better not vie with him over this area," Ai Hui put on a solemn look on his face and announced.

"Thank you Ai Hui! Thank you everyone!" Lou Lan was overjoyed.

The rest cast a look of disdain at Ai Hui. They had never seen such a shameless individual before. How could he even lie to the kind-hearted Lou Lan! One thousand years? Sigh, Lou Lan is really innocent and naive!

Shi Xueman, San Zhijun and the rest were filled with jealousy. They wished they could take Lou Lan for their own.

The earth elemental energy pool had been set up and the entire earth elemental section of the valley would become sandy. This process would continue slowly as time passed. But if there was an abundance of earth elemental energy, this process would speed up greatly.

Ai Hui was duty-bound to set up the metal elemental energy pool.

Everyone was amazed by Ai Hi’s actions.

He carried twelve elemental energy pillars and a huge bundle of See You Laters on his back. Following which, he closed his eyes and his body slowly floated up into the air. At this point of time, he resembled Blind He who drifted around like a ghost.

He slowly rose into the air and reached a point that was twenty meters above the ground. Everyone was holding their breaths.

Suddenly, he stopped rising and took out a silver-colored energy-stabilizing pillar. He used his fingers to hold one end of the energy-stabilizing pillar. Naturally, the pillar drooped down and pointed towards the ground.

Under everyone's watchful gaze, he let go of the pillar.

Everyone widened their eyes in an instant. To their surprise, the heavy pillar stayed motionlessly where it was. It was as if there was an invisible platform supporting it.

However, there was really nothing there!

Ai Hui carefully unbundled the See You Laters on his back and took out one arrow. Following which, he pointed the tip of the arrow at the top end of the energy-stabilizing pillar such that the arrow and the pillar formed a wide angle.

Once again, he let go of his hand and the See You Later stayed motionlessly where it was.

Ai Hui took out the second See You Later and placed it beside the first arrow while pointing its tip at the top end of the energy-stabilizing pillar at the same time. When he finished placing the twelfth See You Later, he'd formed a circular canopy of See You Laters. Suddenly, each of the twelve See You Laters emitted a faint silvery glow. The twelve silvery glows came together and formed a silvery light screen.

A silvery glowing umbrella floated silently in the air.

Ai Hui did not take a break. One by one, the silvery glowing umbrellas were propped up in the air.

Twelve silvery glowing umbrellas hovered in the air above everyone's heads, looking extremely beautiful.

Everyone suddenly realized that the piercing metal wind had disappeared. Numerous gentle air vortices appeared in their surroundings. Apparently, these silver-colored air vortices contained an extremely high concentration level of metal elemental energy. Each of them resembled an impish sprite.

Everyone was dumbstruck by this sight.

Ai Hui's words became exceptionally loud and clear.

"Now we are left with the fire elemental energy pool."

Chapter 422: Skyheart City

While Newlight City was making triumphant progress, Skyheart City did not stand still without advancement as well.

Skyheart City remained indifferent when they heard of the success of Pagada Screen in Newlight City. That’s right. Indifferent. Skyheart City was a city where the rich and powerful aristocratic families gathered. To them, Newlight City was just a city with weak foundations and it would suffer a total collapse after a few rounds of attacks from powerful dire beasts.

Furthermore, what was so powerful and special about Pagoda Screen?

At this point of time, the construction of the newest elemental energy pool was about to begin in Skyheart City.

"This new elemental energy pool will produce a result that is fifty percent better than the old model’s. The building process will take about three months. Once the new elemental energy pool is built, the size of Skyheart City will expand again. When the time comes, we will attract a huge number of elite elementalists here. They will be the nucleus of the Avalon of Five Elements."

Madam Ye was speaking with assurance beside Great Elder. At this point of time, she was doused in glory and honor. Her body was exuding magnificence and brilliance. The Elders behind her looked at her respectfully. She was like a bright moon surrounded by a myriad of stars. Who would have expected the pitiful-looking

widow from not long ago to become the woman who held the highest authority in Skyheart City today?

It was no longer a secret that Great Elder wanted to give Madam Ye absolute authority over Skyheart City. In fact, this process was already beginning. Those Elders who had good foresight had already made their moves.

It wasn't that no one raised objections to Great Elder's decision. But Madam Ye had shut up all her critics with the capabilities that she displayed. Right now, there were only some obstinate and conservative Elders that still raised objections. They were saying that Great Elder's decision did not conform to traditions.

However, in the face of an imminent crisis, who would care about traditions?

In fact, those people who'd initially raised objections against Madam Ye gradually changed their perspectives towards her. Didn't Madam Ye do a great job? As compared to the slow-reacting Elders Guild, Madam Ye's efficiency was much higher. Otherwise, Skyheart City would not have become the largest city in Beyond Avalon in such a short period of time.

The aristocratic families were overjoyed that Newlight City was beneath them.

The thriving Skyheart City had brought in waves of migrating aristocratic families. Those aristocratic families that initially ventured into Wilderness on their own eventually bowed their

heads to Madam Ye in a servile manner after encountering endless obstacles and seeing Skyheart City had progressed so well.

Madam Ye not only let bygones be bygones, she also invited them with open arms. After struggling in the cruel and cold Wilderness, these fragile and weak aristocratic families were extremely touched by Madam's gestures.

Because of this, Madam Ye's public reputation had risen significantly.

In many people's hearts, Madam Ye had obtained the people's mandate. Some fanatics even called her "Empress." The powerful Ling Residence had long been forgotten by the people and became part of the unwanted history.

Great Elder clearly looked much older than he was last year. His eyes were sunken and the wrinkles on his face had become deeper, resembling deep trenches. His eye pupils had become turbid. It was only when a rare glint flashed across his eyes that people remembered this old fogey was still in absolute control over this piece of land.

Madam Ye was holding on to Great Elder. She smiled, "The new elemental energy pool doesn't have a name yet. Everyone is waiting for you to give it a good name."

Great Elder looked at the prosperous city before his eyes and a gratified look appeared upon his face. He sighed with sorrow, "I have been wondering whether or not I made the right choice by

authorizing the Wilderness Expansion Order and throwing away the territory left by our ancestors. Every time I think of it, I feel as if a knife is being plunged into my heart.

He gradually increased his volume as his turbid gaze became sharp and clear, "However, what can we do? This is the reality of the situation we are in now. If we make changes, we might survive. If we don't make any changes, we will definitely not survive! Today, after taking a look at Skyheart City, I suddenly realize that the difficulties and dangers we have encountered are merely the path that our ancestors walked on before. The difficulties that our ancestors encountered were much more tougher than ours. However, they were still able to overcome all obstacles and take on the great task of establishing the Avalon of Five Elements. Since the ancestors' blood runs in my body, how can I be a death-fearing individual that holds a sinecure?"

Everyone lowered their heads in shame.

Great Elder looked at the sky, appearing to be lost in thought.

No one dared to say anything. A dead silence descended upon them.

"An Muda's life is coming to an end soon," Great Elder suddenly said.

A commotion broke out as a look of fear and panic arose on everyone's faces. This rumor had been spreading around like a forest fire, but no-one completely believed it. Several families that

kept in contact with Jadeite Forest in secret were not really worried as well.

Everyone still carried a tinge of hope. After all, An Muda was a Grandmaster, maybe he could come up with a way to extend his life?

However, when this news came out of Great Elder's mouth, everyone knew for sure that An Muda's life was indeed coming to an end.

A dead silence swept across the crowd. All of their faces were deathly pale. Hearing this news with their own ears had dealt a huge blow to them.

"This new elemental energy pool shall be called "An Muda". Let's hope that it can safeguard the Avalon of Five Elements, like what An Muda did," Great Elder could not suppress the grief on his face. Not only was An Muda the Grandmaster of the Avalon of Five Elements, he was also his older brother.

The atmosphere was dead and depressed. Suddenly, someone began to weep.

Great Elder straightened his crooked back abruptly as his sunken eyes widened with rage. He said with a stern voice, "What's there to cry about? Can crying prolong An Muda's life? Can crying keep the Avalon of Five Avalons intact? Such a disgrace! An old fellow that has been safeguarding all of you is going to die soon. Look at all of you, looking like a bunch of timid quails!"

Madam Ye hurriedly reached out her hand to pat Great Elder’s back to calm him down.

Great Elder’s rage subsided significantly as his gaze became sunken once more. With a softened tone, he continued, "Old fogeys like us are going to die soon. All of you have to continue walking this path on your own in the future. Whether you die or survive, it will depend on your individual capabilities. I tell all of you this news to let you know that time is running out."

After Great Elder finished his sentence, he unenthusiastically said, "All of you, take your leave now."

The rest looked at Madam Ye and she waved her hand to signal them to take their leave. Following which, everyone bade farewell and left.

The surroundings became silent in an instant.

"Father-in-law, why do you have to be so angry with them? Anger will harm your body. You can’t depend on these people to do anything. It’s already good enough if they don’t create any troubles," Madam Ye said gently.

"I’m angry at them precisely for not living up to my expectations. All of them come from powerful families and their ancestors are heroes. Why is everyone trash when it comes to this generation?" Great Elder sighed.

"There are a few who are not bad," Madam Ye consoled Great Elder.

Great Elder did not comment on her words. Then, he spoke with gratitude, "Lucky you're here. Otherwise, I can't imagine what will happen to us. It's a good thing that they listen to you now. However, it's still not enough. I told them the news of An Muda because I want them to be afraid. Now that they are afraid, they will listen to whatever you say. The new citizens are becoming more ambitious and they are untrustworthy."

"Lin-er appreciates Father-in-law's painstaking efforts," Madam Ye replied gently.

"How's Master's Glory coming along?" Great Elder asked.

"It's proceeding smoothly. The first year, which is the most dangerous stage, has already passed. There are around thirty-seven people that can't adapt. Out of these thirty-seven people six did not survive."

"Look at the big picture, don't be soft-hearted," Great Elder reminded Madam Ye.

"Lin-er will bear this in mind."

Suddenly, Great Elder looked as if he thought of something and asked, "I remember Wang Shouchuan still has a disciple, right?"

"Yes, his name is Ai Hui. He was personally chosen by Wang Shouchuan as his disciple. It’s a pity half a year later the blood catastrophe struck," Madam Ye quickly replied.

"It’s really a pity," Great Elder’s face was filled with disappointment.

He was feeling that it was a pity Ai Hui spent too little time studying under Wang Shouchuan. What could he possibly learn in half a year’s time? Wang Shouchuan’s theories were in high demand now. God-subduing Peak, Skyheart City and elemental energy pools were created based on Wang Shouchuan’s theories and research works.

Smart individuals would know that Wang Shouchuan’s theories and research works were changing the world at a terrifying speed right now.

"It’s really a pity," Madam Ye continued, "Ai Hui and the survivors of Central Pine City have gathered together. They called themselves Central Pine Faction. Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun are in it too. Reportedly, Duanmu Huanghun was kidnapped by Shi Xueman. During that period of time, Jadeite Forest had been asking us for an explanation for a long time."

"Is Shi Beihai behind this?" A vigilant look swept across Great Elder’s face.

"I’m not sure," Madam Ye replied with prudence.

"What are they doing now?" Great Elder asked bluntly.

"Some time ago, they were spotted at a place called Lemon Camping Ground. This place is in the east of Palette Cloud Village. It is located in the depths of Wilderness." Madam Ye recalled. Luckily, she had a highly retentive memory, otherwise, she would not have remembered this unremarkable piece of intelligence.

"Take note of Shi Beihai," Great Elder said with a deep voice.

"Yes," Madam Ye made a mental note.

Suddenly, Great Elder became infuriated, "Out of everyone from the aristocratic families, Shi Beihai was the most obedient. In the end, he still turns out like this. Devotion on the outside but opposition on the inside. Simply outrageous!"

"This is not the first day he's acted like this," Madam Ye laughed bitterly.

In everyone's eyes, Shi Beihai was a weirdo. No one knew what he was thinking and what he wanted. Most of the time, he kept a low-profile and his existence was completely unnoticeable. However, when one tried to pressure him, he or she would not get anything out. Other than boundlessly loving his daughter, this person did not leave much of an impression on other people.

"This is why I let him be a division leader," Great Elder replied

plainly.

……

The valley, Blackfish Mouth Volcano.

Ai Hui was encouraging Fatty, "Just do it according to what you have practised so far. Didn’t I ask Lou Lan to arrange many practices for you? Just relax and don’t worry. There’s nothing scary about it. It won’t eat you, right?"

"I’m afraid that I might break the energy-stabilizing pillars..." Fatty answered with a wobbly voice as his legs trembled.

Upon seeing the terrified look on Fatty’s face, Ai Hui was filled with anger. Smack. He slapped the back of Fatty’s head and said, "If you continue to behave like this, you’re going to be dead today!"

"Ah Hui, if I mess it up, don’t blame me..." Fatty was crying miserably.

"I will not blame you! No one will blame you! It’s okay as long as you try your best!" Ai Hui was trying to suppress his anger.

"Ah Hui, why do you have to set up the fire elemental energy pool last? Why do you have to choose me to set it up when there are so many fire elementalists around? If I mess it up, you will definitely blame me, beat me and..." Fatty was still trembling with fear.

After persuading for nearly an hour, Ai Hui finally lost his patience and exploded with rage, "I’m going to beat you now!"

Fatty curled his body up on the ground with his hands covering the back of his head. Iron Lady quickly ran over and stopped Ai Hui.

Ouch! My chest hurts! How can she elbow my chest so hard! Iron Lady has such huge strength…

Ai Hui heaved a deep sigh. When he turned around and saw Lou Lan, his eyes lit up. He beckoned to Lou Lan, "Lou Lan."

"Ai Hui, do you need Lou Lan’s help?" Lou Lan widened his eyes and asked.

"I’m very hungry, make us some elemental soup," AI Hui winked at Lou Lan.

"No problem, Ai Hui!" Lou Lan yelled.

From the corner of his eyes, Ai Hui saw Fatty’s ears twitch. Following which, Ai Hui sneered, "Lou Lan, go and make the elemental soup. We will drink the soup first. Fatty will only drink the soup whenever he is done with the fire elemental energy pool."

Fatty stood up with grief and indignation written all over his

face. He looked as if he was going to the battlefield while facing death with equanimity.

"I will kill whoever drinks my share!"

Chapter 423: Are You Looking for a Fight? Come On, Come On

Trembling with fear and trepidation, Fatty finally completed setting up the fire elemental energy pool. The fire elemental energy pool was shaped like a mini volcano and was about a man's height. If one took a closer look at it, he or she would notice that it looked somewhat similar to Blackfish Mouth Volcano.

The mini volcano continued to spout flames. The concentration of fire elemental energy in the surroundings rose sharply. Similarly, the temperature of the surroundings increased significantly. Pleasure and comfort were written all over the faces of the fire elementalists. Meanwhile, the rest quickly retreated from this blazing hot place.

Ai Hui was about to ask Fatty how much the concentration level of fire elemental energy had increased, but when he turned around, Fatty was already squatting in one corner and hungrily devouring his soup. The look of satisfaction and prudence on his face made Ai Hui smile involuntarily.

Such a useless fellow!

Luckily there were still other fire elementalists available.

"The concentration level of fire elemental energy has increased by three times! Oh my god! Training in this place feels so good!"

"I want to become a fire elemental master!"

The air was dyed crimson, a distinctive feature of having extremely concentrated fire elemental energy in the surroundings. The fire elemental energy that was given off by the fire elemental energy pool was extremely pure in nature, making it very suitable for fire elementalists to train with.

Suddenly, a brilliant ball of flames shot out from the fire elemental energy pool. Like a feather, it gently and gracefully floated to the ground. When it landed, instead of extinguishing, it transformed into a dazzling blazing flower.

"Fire flower?" Shi Xueman was startled.

She ran over and squatted to take a look, following which, she yelled in excitement, "It’s really fire flower!"

Each petal was as thin as paper, bright-red in color, and shaped like a ball of flames. Its black-colored stem was thick and short. Its texture felt exactly like that of volcanic rock.

The rest reacted immediately upon hearing the news and crowded around Shi Xueman. A look of joy appeared on their faces. Fire flowers were a unique material found only in Fire Prairie. Ever since Fire Prairie was annexed by Blood of God, fewer and fewer fire flowers were appearing on the market.

Upon seeing the fire flower, everyone felt happy and deeply

moved. Who would have expected to see fire flowers in this nameless valley?

Another ball of flames shot out from the fire elemental energy pool and swayed as it floated to the ground.

No one could take their eyes off the flowers. Most of them had never seen a fire flower from Fire Prairie before and would not be able to see one in the future either.

"When I was young, my grandfather brought me to Fire Prairie once. It just so happened that Calabash Mountain erupted and flames rained down from the sky, engulfing fifty kilometers around the mountain. On the ground, there were numerous fire flowers. When we arrived, there was nothing on the black-colored plains. In a night's time, fire flowers grew and filled the plains. It was a breathtaking sight to behold. People rushed in from all directions to gather the fire flowers. Everyone was in high spirits, looking as if they were celebrating a festival. It's a pity that we will never witness that kind of grand occasion again," Shi Xueman recalled fondly.

A faint sadness engulfed everyone's heart. They felt unusually sad when they thought of the fallen Fire Prairie. The excitement and joy they felt earlier diminished significantly.

"Be careful, don't touch their roots. I really didn't expect to find fire flowers here. A windfall indeed! Fence off the area thirty meters within the fire elemental energy pool. Fire flowers are extremely valuable. Now we have one more source of income! A land of treasures! This really is a land of treasures!" Ai Hui's voice

broke the emotional moment.

The emotional and grief-filled atmosphere was immediately spoiled.

"Why are you thinking of money all day long?" Shi Xueman glared at Ai Hui.

"Duh? What will happen if we have no money? Everyone will be cold and hungry. Money is justice!" Ai Hui replied and gave Shi Xueman an innocent look.

"If money is justice, then what about owing people money?" Shi Xueman sneered.

Upon hearing "owing people money," Ai Hui felt an indescribable guilt. Suddenly, he thought of Eighty Million Yuan. All he knew was that Eighty Million Yuan was still alive and she would prompt him to repay his debt every now and then; however, they had not yet actually met. Thinking about it now, he felt rather puzzled. Every time he asked Eighty Million Yuan where she was, she would never answer him.

Other than this matter, Ai Hui had never committed any shameful deeds. It was becoming a secret worry for him.

Poverty stunts ambition!

Once I am rich, I will repay the debt with interest, lest you haunt

me like a ghost every now and then!

"Justice might arrive late but it will never be absent," Shi Xueman snorted.

Ai Hui felt as if his secret had been revealed. Fying into a rage out of humiliation, he said, "Are you looking for a fight?"

Shi Xueman sneered as she took the red hairband from her wrist and calmly tied up her long hair. "Come on, come on."

Ai Hui touched his aching chest and felt slightly nervous in an instant. This woman had such huge strength...

Immediately, a look of disdain appeared on his face and he replied, "Childish!"

After finishing his sentence, he turned around and yelled at the meddlesome onlookers, "Why are all of you standing here! Go and take a look at the elemental energy pools!"

"Ah Hui, how can a man say no to a girl?" Someone yelled out.

"True Hero Ai Hui, Big Sister is asking you for a fight," heckled another person.

"Ai Hui is asking, where can they fight?" Another person joined in the fun.

"Bed..."

An aura of death engulfed the air. Shi Xueman's hand was already touching her Cirrus.

Everyone roared with laughter and dispersed instantly like a bunch of alarmed birds. Most of them had spent the last three years as members of various divisions. They were no longer the innocent students they used to be.

Shi Xueman held her spear and stood in an imposing manner. The faint blush on her beautiful and alluring snow-white face set off a contrast that made her looked even more gorgeous, so much so that her murderous-looking gaze displayed a tinge of gentleness and sweetness.

Puzzlement was written all over Ai Hui's face. He was still thinking of the word "bed" that had ended all the heckling instantly.

What's fighting got to do with beds? Beds have so little space...

He subconsciously cast a glance at Iron Lady. Following which, his body froze. Ai Hui had never seen Iron Lady in this manner. He'd always felt that Iron Lady was an iron warrior who possessed terrifying fighting capabilities. She was cool-headed, brave, and fearless. She was definitely a trustworthy comrade and a good partner.

Right now, there was an indescribable fascination about Shi Xueman. Like a magnet, she firmly attracted Ai Hui's gaze. He was dumbfounded by her.

When Shi Xueman noticed Ai Hui looking at her, her slightly blushing face suddenly turned bright red. She looked like blood would seep out from her face at any moment.

"What are you looking at? Are you looking for a fight?" She said fiercely to Ai Hui.

The moment she finished speaking, she knew she'd said something wrong. Right now, she wished she could find a hole and hide in it.

Ai Hui returned to his senses and blurted out, "You looked quite pretty just now."

After Ai Hui finished his sentence, he knew something was wrong as well. Iron Lady was going to flip out!

He smacked his head and exclaimed, "Oh! I forgot to do something important!"

Following which, he turned around and ran away in a panic.

An aura of death erupted behind Ai Hui. He trembled in fear and

ran even faster.

Am I tired of living? How can I praise an iron warrior like Iron Lady for being pretty? How can I humiliate a true warrior like her?

Feeling fearful, Ai Hui touched and checked his body. Luckily, there weren't any spear gashes.

Oh my god, why did I think Iron Lady was pretty? Since when did my taste become so bad?

I used to have great taste in the past. Why did it turn out like this?

After thinking it through, Ai Hui came to the conclusion that he had been influenced by the sissy Bangwan.

That's right, it must be him!

Currently, Ai Hui was doing serious, deep self-reflection.

The fire elemental energy pool was the last elemental energy pool to be set up and was also the most important one. Fire elemental energy would be the fountainhead of propulsion for the five elemental cycle. As long as there was an endless stream of fire elemental energy, the five elemental cycle would grow and multiply without end.

The concentration level of fire elemental energy would continue to increase. The air would be dyed crimson, looking as if a piece of red-colored muslin was draped over the air.

When the concentration level of fire elemental energy reached its limit and could no longer rise, the surplus fire elemental energy gushed towards the earth elemental energy pool. The concentration of earth elemental energy then began to increase continuously. The amount of quicksand gushing out of the earth elemental energy pool increased. Eventually, the hillock became a sand dune.

When the earth elemental energy's concentration level continued to increase, the air became dry and the sand dune increased in size. When the earth elemental energy's concentration level reached its limit, the narrow river of quicksand started to flow.

The river of quicksand flowed towards the metal wind cavern.

The metal wind cavern was situated at a lower ground level than the sand dune. The quicksand gathered around the entrance of the metal wind cavern, which looked as if it had put on a ring made of quicksand.

The wind speed of the metal wind in the metal wind cavern became stronger.

Ai Hui was extremely familiar with metal wind. The wind speed of metal wind could be determined just by listening to the nature

of its whizzing sound. If the wind speed increased, the whizzing sound of the metal wind would become sharper and more intense.

The metal wind became stronger and stronger.

The ear-piercing whizzing sound had become deep and low. The deep-sounding booms made everyone tremble in fear and trepidation. There was also an obvious change in the color of the metal wind.

The metal wind gave off an abnormally bright metallic lustre. Every now and then, one could even see silvery lines within the metal wind.

However, no matter how violent the metal wind was, the twelve silvery umbrellas hovering in the air stayed motionless. When the violent metal wind collided against these silvery umbrellas, they were broken down into numerous gentle-spinning air vortices.

Ai Hui felt an indescribable sense of comfort. Streaks of faint silvery light swirled around his body. These streaks of silvery light were metal elemental energy.

He had never been to a place that had such high concentrations of metal elemental energy. At this point in time, he was filled with an extremely strong sense of achievement. He felt that all the hard work he'd put in was not in vain.

He immediately restrained himself from carrying out a

Circulatory Cycle Revolution. He could not start training now. He had to wait for the other elemental energy pools to stabilize before he could truly train at ease.

When Ai Hui sensed that the metal elemental energy's concentration level had reached its limit, he quickly flew over to the lake.

Shi Xueman was already keeping watch at the lakeside. She looked normal and calm. Ai Hui sneaked a glance at her and felt at ease when he had made sure that Iron Lady would not suddenly attack him.

Shi Xueman did not look at Ai Hui. It was as if she did not see him.

The surplus metal elemental energy gushed into the mini waterfall. The waterfall did not become stronger, but the color and the lustre of the lake began to change. The lake became sparkling and clear, resembling a gigantic sapphire.

The cloud above the lake began to change as well. It became spotlessly white and thick.

The misty rain became denser as the fine raindrops drifted and danced in the air. One could feel an abundance of water elemental energy entering his lungs every time he took a breath.

Ai Hui raised his head and stared attentively at the

transformation of the cloud.

Shi Xueman closed her eyes and reached out her palm to experience the vigorous water elemental energy in her surroundings.

Two figures stood side-by-side at the lakeside that was shrouded in misty rain.

The rest of the people dispersed. They looked at each other and smiled.

Ai Hui heaved a sigh of relief and withdrew his gaze. He was relieved when he saw the condition of the cloud was very good. Following which, he could not help but sneak a peek at Iron Lady, who was standing beside him and had her eyes closed.

He almost gave himself a slap on the face. It appeared that he had not done enough self-reflection just now.

The guilty Ai Hui began to tiptoe toward the bamboo forest.

Ai Hui walked past Iron Lady behind her back.

On Shi Xueman’s beautiful snow-white face, the eyelashes on her closed eyelids flickered unnoticeably.

Chapter 424: Central Pine Valley

The wood elemental energy pool in the bamboo forest operated smoothly. Nothing went wrong.

The awkward atmosphere between Ai Hui and Shi Xueman had finally disappeared, appearing as if nothing had happened. Ai Hui had enough of his mysterious feeling of guilt. He did not even know why he felt guilty. After all, he did not owe Iron Lady any money!

This was something that continued to trouble Ai Hui. From his understanding of himself, he would only feel guilty when he owed other people money.

If Shi Xueman knew what Ai Hui was thinking, she would have sneered at him nonstop.

After three days, the elemental energies in the five elemental pools finally stabilized.

The valley looked completely different from before.

If one looked down at the valley from the sky, he or she would discover that the entire valley had been divided into five zones, each with a distinct color. The water elemental zone was like a dreamland shrouded in misty rain. The wood elemental zone was covered with lush and verdant trees. The fire elemental zone was a piece of naked, crimson land. The earth elemental zone had a prominent, yellow-colored sand dune. The metal elemental zone

gave off a bright metallic lustre.

The five elemental zones were completely different from each other.

In the center of the valley was an empty circular space. This space was where everyone lived together. The point of them living together was to enable them to react aptly to sudden situations. If all of them lived separately in the valley, then they would easily get caught in individual battles if they were attacked by dire beasts. Safety would be everyone's main priority for the time being.

Ai Hui was still pondering over this issue.

As the elemental energies became plentiful, Duanmu Huanghun's plants began to grow frantically, becoming verdant and lush. The glow that the defensive ancient tree emitted became brighter while its defensive capabilities became more powerful.

However, Ai Hui still felt that these were not enough.

The area of the valley was too large. The defensive coverage of just one ancient defensive tree could not cover such a huge area. Wood elemental defense systems had the unique characteristic of being directly connected to time. As time passed, the wood elemental defense system would gradually become stronger. Duanmu Huanghun's defense system was flawless, but it still needed time before it could take complete effect.

However, the dangerous dire beasts would not wait for their defense system to be completely set up.

Not only did they need to guard against dire beasts, they also needed to guard against other elementalists. This valley possessed all five elements. If the news were to spread out, the valley would attract powerful and covetous elementalists, including the Elders Guild.

No one could resist such a powerful temptation.

Even if Iron Lady's father was to try to protect them, he would not be able to single-handedly contend against so many people.

Shi Beihai would be unable to protect the valley, let alone bums like them.

The Wilderness Expansion Order clearly stated that whoever completed building a city possessing all five elements first would be granted the position of Great Elder, but Ai Hui and his counterparts knew that this was too good to be true. Just because one was named Great Elder, would he or she really be the Great Elder? Could he or she then govern the Elders Guild without any obstacles? Stop dreaming!

Ai Hui and his counterparts had no interest in the position of Great Elder. It was worthless to them.

Originally, the plan had been to sell this city, but now no one

could bear to do so. This city had high concentrations of elemental energy and exceptionally fertile lands. Where could they find such a place again after selling it?

They might put it up for sale in the future, but definitely not now.

They needed to think about how to safeguard the city. Ai Hui and his internal department had come to a common understanding that they could not let the outside world know about the existence of Central Pine Valley before they developed enough defensive capabilities.

Central Pine Valley was the name everyone had come up with for the valley. It was to remind them not to forget where they'd come from.

Ai Hui wanted to turn Central Pine Valley into an impregnable fortress. Doing so would make those covetous elementalists think about the heavy price they would have to pay if they were to invade Central Pine Valley. Only then would they negotiate and do business with Ai Hui.

The rest understood this as well. Every combat elementalist was training with all their might. It would be a waste if they did not train hard in such a perfect training ground!

Meanwhile, the herbalists and farmers were preparing to grow herbs and elemental beans respectively. They were extremely enthusiastic and hardworking. They had never seen such fertile

lands before. They could cultivate any types of herbs and elemental beans in this place. One should take note that the prices of fire elemental resources and earth elemental resources were exorbitant nowadays.

With such high concentrations of elemental energy, they were very confident that they could cultivate high-grade herbs and high-grade elemental beans. If they could do this, the valley would not need to worry about a lack of financial capabilities. Even the herbalists and farmers themselves would benefit.

They were filled with gratitude towards Miss Mingxiu.

At this time, nothing was more important than joining a faction with a bright future. Unless one was a Grandmaster, his or her individual strength would be extremely insignificant.

After spending some time together, all of them grew to love being in this team. No one asserted his or her authority and there were no complicated etiquettes to follow. Those who were capable would be respected. In battles, everyone was taken care of and no one would be neglected. Furthermore, with Ai Hui and his friends taking care of the front line, what was there to be worried about? Could this place get any better?

They were already envisioning the countless accomplishments they would achieve in the future.

Everyone was extremely busy. Not an idle soul could be spotted. Even the children were helping out.

Wei An followed behind everyone. His body was thin and weak, resembling a bamboo pole. He had left his aunt who had been taking care of him since he was very young to follow his teacher. Naturally, he knew who the legendary Lightning Blade was. When Ai Hui suddenly visited Wei An at his house and told him that he was his teacher, he felt as if he was dreaming. If not for the fact that Ai Hui's face was rather recognizable, he would have thought that he had encountered a swindler.

Wei An certainly had not expected his aunt to agree to Ai Hui's request without any hesitation after seeing the token Ai Hui gave her.

Following which, he'd boarded a Fiery Floating Cloud and was sent to this valley.

The period of time he spent here felt like a dream. Even until now, he still felt that he was in a dream. Fortunately, there were other children in this valley as well. Otherwise, he would be bored to death. Su Qingye and the rest were longtime disciples of his teacher. Since he came the latest, he was the youngest disciple.

Being the weakest and the youngest disciple, everyone took great care of him .

Wei An had only been through some basic training in the past. His strength paled in comparison to that of his seniors. Other than the daily trainings, they had to follow Grandpa Mo Zhong to cultivate plants like sword reeds.

Everyone in this place worked very hard. No one dared to idle around.

The busiest person was his teacher. Wei An seldom saw his teacher take a rest. Sometimes, he did not even have the time to teach them. Whenever this happened, Lou Lan or Aunt Xueman would come and teach them.

Wei An felt that Aunt Xueman was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, but they still liked Lou Lan more. Other than teaching them, Lou Lan would supervise their trainings and give them snacks.

When Wei An thought of snacks, he could not help but start drooling. He could never let the hateful Uncle Fatty see that he had snacks, otherwise, Uncle Fatty would use his malt candies to "swap" with their snacks. Wei An heard that Uncle Fatty and his teacher had been through numerous life-and-death situations in the past. Wei An could not understand why their characters were so different.

Uncle Fatty always liked to idle around. Furthermore, he was so fat...

Fortunately, there was Lou Lan to supervise Uncle Fatty and stop him from idling.

Wei An’s teacher was the most hardworking man he had ever seen. Everyone admired his teacher. When he grew up, he wanted

to be someone like his teacher.

Wei An raised his head to look at the small black dot at the volcanic crater of Blackfish Mouth Volcano. He could not see the black dot clearly, but he knew it was his teacher.

His teacher had already stayed at the volcanic crater for a day and a night.

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Ai Hui was finding the nodes for fire elemental energy in the volcano.

They ultimately had to depend on the volcano to ward off dire beasts and elementalists.

The volcano contained a boundless amount of fire elemental energy. It was their greatest resource.

Before they could use the immense fire elemental energy of the volcano, however, they first had to identify the nodes within it.

Despite this, due to the surging lava, the high temperature, and the terrifying destructive power of the violent fire elemental energy, even Ai Hui did not dare to step into the lava. This was the most complicated elemental energy flow Ai Hui had ever encountered. Since the fire elemental energy was extremely violent, Ai Hui’s perceptive energy could not reach the depths of

the lava. The fire elemental energy in the depths of the lava was unusually turbulent.

Ai Hui heaved a sigh. He knew that he still could not fully grasp the energy flow of the fire elemental energy in the volcano with his current capabilities.

He had to wait until he reached the level of Master before he could utilize the elemental energy of the volcano. As Ai Hui thought of this, he felt that he was too greedy. One step at a time.

Upon realizing that his idea was unrealistic, Ai Hui immediately changed the direction of his thinking process. A plausible defensive design plan quickly emerged in his mind.

He thought of the lava-spitting beast that they had previously encountered. Among the spoils of war, there were two intact spitting snouts.

Perhaps he could think of some uses for these two spitting snouts...

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up.

Blind He was fiddling with the White Cluster Flames. He was feeling slightly bored. Right now, there were a lot of things to be done in the valley. Everyone was busy with either training or cultivating plants. No one needed him to forge any weapons.

By having nothing to do, Blind He felt that he was wasting such high-grade flames; however, the amount of materials that they had brought on this trip was limited. They only brought the bare necessities. There was still some time before they searched for new ore veins. Furthermore, since the valley was cut off from the rest of the world, he could not buy any materials.

Blind He felt that if the city expanded in the future, the smelting furnace could be rented out.

The White Cluster Flames were burning for nothing now. Such a waste. Whenever Blind He thought of how the high-grade flames were being wasted, he felt as if his heart was bleeding.

Who wants to forge something? If you don't need weapons, I can forge farming tools as well!

Blind He had already put away his ego and aloof attitude. Asking a master weaponsmith to make farming tools? What a joke!

Very soon, the news of Blind He's willingness to forge farming tools spread among the farmers and herbalists. Everyone thought they heard the news wrongly. Their farming tools, such as hoes and sickles, needed to be forged specifically.

Then again, there weren't master weaponsmiths that would lower themselves to forge farming tools.

As such, when Blind He told everyone his intention, all the

farmers and herbalists came over anxiously, including Mo Zhong.

Blind He took over a hoe and examined it. With an indifferent voice, he said, "Its sharpness is passable. Hmm, the materials to upgrade it are not of high-grade. Alright, I get it. Elemental energy needs to be channeled into the blade of the hoe. It can't be too sharp, otherwise, it will damage the roots of the plants."

Blind He's casual remarks won everyone over easily. He was truly a Master. Anything he said hit the nail on the head.

"Thank you, Master He. Master, sorry for troubling you." The farmer bowed respectfully to Blind He.

"No big deal," Blind He replied plainly.

Following which, he picked up the hoe and placed it in the White Cluster Flames. The white-colored flames spurted over the surface of the hoe while Blind He continued turning his wrist. He was adjusting the angle from which the White Cluster Flames were spurting at the hoe. The surface of the hoe became bright red. As Blind He's wrist continued to turn, layers of wave-like patterns began to appear on the surface of the hoe.

The hoe became smaller and the glow on the hoe's blade also disappeared, but all the farmers' eyes turned red at this moment. They had rich experience and could tell that the hoe's quality had improved by one grade with a glance.

"Thank you Master He! Thank you Master He!" The farmer thanked Blind He incoherently.

"No big deal," Blind He blurted out and continued involuntarily, "Is one hoe enough? How about five hoes? Each for one type of elemental energy. Don’t all of you want to grow all five types of elemental energy beans?"

The farmers were stunned. They had never heard of anyone willing to forge such a high-grade hoe for every element.

A covetous-looking herbalist ran over. "Master..."

"No big deal. Is it enough? I thought there were five types of elemental energy? What about herb baskets? Cannot be forged? Nonsense! I shall forge it for you! Do you need a millstone? No big deal. Equipment for forging Grass-grade weapons? No big deal. One set? Do you want a spare set? Troublesome? No, it won’t be troublesome. No big deal."

Chapter 425: Scarletfire Flying Foxes

By the time Ai Hui came to Blind He to talk about his idea, Blind He had already satisfied his cravings for using White Cluster Flames. As such, now he responded indifferently to Ai Hui.

Ai Hui felt that Blind He seemed to be unhappy with him ever since he'd met Lou Lan.

Eh? Why was he unhappy with him?

Ai Hui couldn't wrap his head around it. He had not really offended Blind He before.

If Blind He wasn't blind, he would have rolled his eyes. How could someone like Ai Hui have such a good sand puppet in Lou Lan? Fortunately, Blind He had not forgotten that Ai Hui was his employer and his salary was paid by Ai Hui.

However, after he used the eyes on his palms to scan Ai Hui's design plan, he was startled. "You want to use lava-spitting beast's snout?"

Ai Hui could not help but praise Blind He in his heart. Blind He was indeed a Master. He knew Ai Hui's intentions with a mere glance at this design plan.

However, Ai Hui did not praise Blind He openly and asked, "How? Can you make it?"

When it came to work, Blind He immediately went into his zone. He became a completely different person and his nonchalant attitude disappeared without a trace. He sat up straight with his back bolt upright and his facial expression turned cold. His perception became sharp and his entire body was brimming with confidence.

"This area needs to change, this area as well. I roughly understand your plan. This area can be changed in this way. You see, am I right?"

As Blind He was explaining to Ai Hui, a rough structure model was forming in his hands.

The more Ai Hui listened to Blind He, the more he admired him. When Ai Hui took over the structure model, he adulated Blind He, "The strength of a Master is indeed formidable!"

One could tell whether or not a person was an expert just by looking at his actions. Even though Blind He had not completely understood Ai Hui's idea, his rich experience allowed him to give a lot of valuable suggestions. These suggestions stemmed from Blind He's years of accumulated experience, something that Ai Hui was lacking in.

Theoretically, Ai Hui had memorized the entire [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth]. During Ai Hui's last visit to his master before he died, his master still talked long-windedly to him about some of his theories. Furthermore, even before Elders Guild began

to study Wang Shouchuan's research works and theories, Ai Hui was already immersing himself in [Treating The City As A Piece Of Cloth]. At that point of time, Ai Hui did not realize the brilliance of his master's theories. He was only studying them based on one very simple mentality. He was his teacher's only student, how couldn't he know his teacher's theories and research works?

After studying his master's theories for quite some time, Ai Hui had a deeper understanding towards them now.

In practice, Ai Hui still faced the problem of his lack of experience. He couldn't do anything about this problem. After all, he did not have many opportunities to practise and there was no one to guide him along. For example, he could understand the science behind God-subduing Peak, but he did not know how to build it. Other than knowing that an immense amount of materials was needed to build it and how these materials could come together to create the highest possible destructive power, Ai Hui knew nothing else.

Only if he possessed a huge number of skilful blacksmiths, like Elders Guild, could he then build a powerful war machine like God-subduing Peak.

Blind He's superb attainments in his craft were extremely important to Ai Hui at this point of time. This could be seen in the energy-stabilizing pillars. Blind He's completed energy-stabilizing pillars were finer than the ones in Ai Hui's design plan. The slight reduction in the thickness of the energy-stabilizing pillars was derived from a countless amount of experience and wisdom.

Ai Hui's previous unhappiness had vanished without a trace. It was alright for a Master of his level to treat him with slightly less respect.

Suddenly, the warning alarm rang in the middle of their discussion.

Ai Hui's facial expression changed. He quickly ran out and looked at the sky.

A bat-like dire beast was circling in the sky above the valley.

Scarletfire flying fox!

Scarletfire flying fox was a type of dire beast that lived in caverns that were near a volcano. Their faces looked like a fox's and they had pointed mouths. Their bodies had a wide, darkish red membrane that allowed them to fly.

Even though their flying ability was not as good as a real bat, they were very clever. They were extremely nimble and agile when they were running on the ground as well. A scarletfire flying fox's nose was very sensitive. Even though the fog-formed mirage of the valley had deceived their eyes, they still could detect the smells of elementalists with their noses.

They circled in the sky above the valley as they were not sure what was beneath them.

Ai Hui had a headache when he saw the scarletfire flying foxes. The scarletfire flying foxes were not powerful, but they liked to operate in a large group. If one of them was provoked, the rest of the group would be provoked as well. The consequences of that were worse than poking a hornets' nest.

Ai Hui signalled to everyone not to do anything rash.

Shi Xueman furrowed her eyebrows. She was having a headache too, "Why are there scarletfire flying foxes here?"

"This is a volcanic terrain. There are more fire elemental dire beasts here," Ai Hui replied in a helpless tone, "Luckily it's just a bunch of scarletfire flying foxes. If it was a group of lava-spitting beasts, this valley would be razed to the ground."

Upon hearing the alarm, Jiang Wei and the rest ran over.

"What shall we do?" Sang Zhijun was unhappy with this situation, "Are we going to let them circle above our heads like this?"

Initially, Ai Hui wanted to find something to assail their nostrils with. Scarletfire flying foxes had sensitive noses and this was something they could make use of. However, when Ai Hui's gaze swept across the distant mountain ridge, a cold shiver went down his spine.

Ai Hui had just spotted a red glow. He subconsciously knew that

he had just seen the eyes of some dire beast!

He was sure that he was not mistaken. He took a deep breath and carefully scanned the mountain ridge with his eyes.

Shi Xueman cast a puzzled look at Ai Hui. Ai Hui was motionless and he was staring at somewhere with his pair of fixed eyes. It was as if he was frightened by the scarletfire flying foxes. However, Shi Xueman knew that Ai Hui would not be afraid, even if there were a few hundred scarletfire flying foxes.

She looked at the direction Ai Hui was staring in but she could not see anything.

At this moment, Ai Hui heaved a sigh of relief, "Phew, I almost missed it. There is a rockback earth dragon!"

"Rockback earth dragon?"

Rockback earth dragon was not of the same level as scarletfire flying fox. It was more dangerous. Rockback earth dragon had four stout and short limbs. Its head was shaped like a triangle, resembling the head of a giant frog. Its back was black in color, cragged, and had a rocky texture. It looked as if it was carrying a fake mountain on its back. This was how rockback earth dragon got its name.

Rockback earth dragon was a dire beast that lived in the depths of earth fire. It had immense strength and it could knock down those

slightly smaller peaks. It also loved to devour the fire marrows within the lava.

"Our auras are beginning to attract the dire beasts from nearby. The scarletfire flying foxes are the advance party while the rockback earth dragon is here to spy on us. If we don't put up a powerful front, they will invade this place."

"The dire beasts are so clever?" Sang Zhijun was slightly surprised.

"These dire beasts are old and experienced. What's so clever about them? They are just cunning. If you'd encountered those really clever dire beasts, they would not have used scarletfire flying foxes as their advance party."

"We have a lot of people with us and most of us are quite powerful. The aura of our elemental energy will definitely attract the dire beasts nearby. In the eyes of the dire beasts, all of us are human-shaped elixirs," Ai Hui maintained his composure as a tinge of worry swept across his eyes, "Everyone, brace yourself. This will be a tough battle. However, the more powerful we display our strength to be, the more they will be scared of us and the safer we will be then."

Ai Hui knew that they were not the only ones that had attracted the dire beasts, but the five elemental energy pools in the valley as well. Pure elemental energy was a huge supplement, not only for elementalists, but for dire beasts as well. They could not hide such powerful elemental energy undulations from these sensitive dire beasts. Now that Ai Hui thought about it, he realized he had

overlooked a lot of things.

The earth fire that a huge volcano like Blackfish Mouth Volcano contained definitely nourished a huge number of fire elemental dire beasts. He was too greedy as he tried to get everything done at once. Now that he had encountered a problem which was too difficult for him to handle, the time and effort he spent on building a large-scale defense system had gone to waste.

At this point, it was too late for him to think about all these things.

Ai Hui calmed himself down and got rid of all the distracting thoughts in his head. A tinge of ruthlessness swept across his eyes. He quickly instructed, "Ask Master He to quickly finish up the components that I asked him to make. All non-combat units hide under the defensive ancient tree. As for the rest, prepare for battle."

Everyone in the valley started to work.

"Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun will lead the archers to set up a formation on the sand dune. Fatty, you will lead some people to guard the front position of their formation. If there’s any scarletfire flying foxes approaching them, you have to block it for them."

Ai Hui looked at Fatty.

Fatty looked slightly scared but he still nodded his head, "I understand."

"I will be careful. Ai Hui, don’t worry," Fatty added.

Ai Hui patted Fatty’s shoulder and turned to Shi Xueman and said, "Both of us will go and kill the scarletfire flying foxes first. How about this? Do you want to bet who can kill more scarletfire flying foxes?"

A tinge of fire flashed across Shi Xueman’s eyes. She replied bluntly, "Alright."

Following which, Ai Hui turned around and told the rest, "After we kill these few scarletfire flying foxes, there will definitely be many more to come. I will think of a way to lure them into the valley. Jiang Wei, Sang Zhijun and all the archers, make sure all of you are prepared and launch a frontal assault. There’s no need for you to hold back. Attack with all your strength and send them into chaos. Bangwan, prepare as many high-grade grass seeds as you can. Once Bangwan takes action, the rest will follow me and Iron Lady to charge the enemy lines. Everyone understand?"

"Understood!

Everyone had a serious look on their faces. They knew the upcoming battle would be extremely important. Even hunting groups did not dare to attack a group of scarletfire flying foxes head-on. However, Ai Hui and his counterparts had to do this. Otherwise, the dire beasts would join hands and they would be in

deep trouble then.

An austere and nervous atmosphere arose in the valley.

Everyone had rich combat experience. Furthermore, they had spent a lot of time carrying out offensive drills. Whether it was setting up formations or carrying out preparatory work, they were adept at it.

This upcoming battle would be the biggest battle they'd encountered ever since they entered Wilderness.

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman stood side-by-side as an absolute silence descended upon the valley.

Shiiinnng! Ai Hui unsheathed his Wintry Jade Blade and held it beside Shi Xueman. Shi Xueman smiled with her eyes as she passed her Cirrus to her left hand and used it to touch Wintry Jade Blade lightly.

Clink!

A crisp and sharp clink resounded throughout the valley as two figures ascended into the sky together.

Chapter 426: Well-coordinated

Ai Hui knew that if they did not display their strength in this battle, the dire beasts hiding in the dark would pounce on them. Powerful dire beasts were very cunning. Bullying the weak and avoiding the strong was one of their key characteristics.

Therefore, not only must they kill this bunch of scarletfire flying foxes, they also must do it in a fearsome fashion!

Ai Hui's brain was working extremely fast. The Starry Gem Swordwings on Ai Hui's back gave off a layer of faint glow as their operating power reached its maximum.

Like a streaking arrow, Ai Hui shot out from the fog-made mirage.

The scarletfire flying foxes were circling over the valley. They were feeling slightly puzzled. The black rocks beneath them weren't any different from their surrounding terrain but they could smell the scent of humans from within them.

A cold streak of sword gleam appeared below them.

The scarletfire flying foxes dispersed in panic.

Suddenly, the streak of sword gleam exploded into a mass of rain-like sword gleams that blasted towards the scarletfire flying foxes like a huge net.

Pop pop pop. A few bloody holes appeared on the bodies of two slow-moving scarletfire flying foxes. Their blood spurted everywhere.

Scarletfire flying foxes lived in caverns that were situated nearby a volcano and they devoured fire elemental energy to survive. A scarletfire flying fox was around the size of a dog. It was not really powerful but it was extremely agile and nimble on the ground. It had a fire sack within its body that converted fire elemental energy into a unique type of scorching flame. This type of unique flame was called scarlet fire.

Scarlet fire was stable and easy to use. As such, many fire elementalists loved to use this type of fire. Since it was extremely hard to hunt down scarletfire flying foxes, the market price of scarlet fire was very costly.

In the hands of scarletfire flying foxes, the stable scarlet fire could be a very powerful weapon. One of their powerful moves was called scarlet fireball. The egg-sized scarlet fireball was dark-red in color. Any slight contact with it could cause it to explode.

One of the scarletfire flying foxes had its fire sack punctured, causing scarlet fire to leak out from it. In the blink of an eye, the leaking scarlet fire exploded into a burst of blazing fire and engulfed the scarletfire flying fox.

The traces of white mist from Shi Xueman’s spear gleam spiralled forward rapidly and went in between two scarletfire flying foxes.

Like a bunch of white-colored whips, the traces of white mist sucked the two scarletfire flying foxes into them.

After being struck by the traces of white mist, the two scarletfire flying foxes exploded into a rain of blood with a loud bang. It was as if they were being struck by lightning.

The whip-like traces of white mist were made up of concentrated elemental energy, possessing terrifying destructive power. Once they entered the body of a scarletfire flying fox, they would explode at its weakest body part.

This was Shi Xueman's typical attacking style. It looked ordinary and wasn't dazzling at all. However, the destructive power it contained was horrifying. Only a combat veteran would know how powerful it was.

Out of the four scarletfire flying foxes, not a single one survived.

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman looked at each other and they could see the solemness in each other's eyes. Before the scarletfire flying foxes died, an invisible elemental energy wave had erupted.Without any doubts, both of them knew that this elemental wave was a distress signal.

After ten seconds, a black-colored cloud rose from the other side of the mountain ridge and flew towards them with a terrifying speed.

"They are coming," Ai Hui told Shi Xueman without shifting his gaze.

"Ok," Shi Xueman acknowledged Ai Hui.

Ai Hui stretched his wrist and released a few sparks from his sword. With an emotionless look on his face, he said, "Let’s exhaust their scarlet fireballs first."

He did not want to test the immature defense system of the valley with scarlet fireballs.

"Alright," Shi Xueman replied.

Following which, both of them flew towards the army of scarletfire flying foxes.

In the shortest amount of time, they increased their speeds to the maximum. Both of their speeds were similar as they flew forward side-by-side. Ai Hui involuntarily cast a glance at Iron Lady, who was beside him. He felt that both of them had coordinated quite well with each other today. They were rather well-coordinated after all!

Shi Xueman noticed Ai Hui looking at her and asked, "What are you looking at?"

"Iron Lady is rather energetic today, huh!" Ai Hui replied cheekily.

"Are you implying that I'm usually not energetic?" Shi Xueman replied expressionlessly.

"I'm saying you're more energetic than usual! Battles would always make one energetic! Here they come!" Ai Hui chuckled.

Ai Hui raised his volume abruptly as he said the last three words "Here they come". Excitement arose upon his face. He had never thought that one day he would face an army of scarletfire flying foxes like now!

This felt extremely good.

Less than six hundred meters away from the black-colored cloud, they could already clearly see the densely-packed scarletfire flying foxes that would make one's hair stand on end.

Numerous red, glowing spots appeared in their line of sight.

A cold shiver suddenly went down Ai Hui's spine. At this moment, the strong sense of danger had created a strange feeling of excitement in him. Every inch of his muscles was twitching and burning right now.

At this moment, it just so happened that Ai Hui and Shi Xueman were looking at each other.

Shi Xueman saw the excitement and battle fervor on Ai Hui's face and Ai Hui saw the glittering star-like eyes on Shi Xueman's face.

All of a sudden, a knowing smile appeared in both of their eyes at the same time.

Like a dragon that emerged from a sea of clouds, Cirrus flew towards Ai Hui. Like a star that fell from the sky, Wintry Jade Blade flew towards Shi Xueman.

The sword and the spear collided.

A terrifying force erupted at that instant. Like two rubber balls colliding against each other, both of them bounced apart ferociously.

The force was so great that both of them looked as if they'd just disappeared into thin air.

Boom!

The next moment, rain-like scarlet fireballs flooded the position that both of them previously were at.

The scarlet fireballs missed their targets and bombarded the mountain ridge below, causing countless deafening explosions to go off continuously. The mountain ridge was shrouded in smoke

and dust and the ground beneath it was shaking.

After the smoke and dust dispersed, everyone in Central Pine Valley could see a huge chunk of the rocky mountain ridge disappeared. It was as if a huge spoon had scooped a spoonful of rocks from it. The hole was three hundred meters deep, resembling a mini valley. Pieces of huge rocks surrounding the hole were collapsing.

Everyone's face turned white. Now they understood why no one dared to provoke the scarletfire flying foxes. How many scarlet fireballs had they shot out just now? No one could grasp the exact number. Its area of damage was extremely huge. If one was to get caught in the attack, he or she would not be able to escape. A small city would not even be able to withstand a single scarlet fireball.

Duanmu Huanghun's facial expression turned ugly. He was the one that understood the defense system of Central Pine Valley the best. Right now, their defense system could withstand, at most, three waves of attack of such a degree.

A cold shiver went down Ai Hui's and Shi Xueman's spines.

However, both of them did not have the luxury of time to be frightened at this moment. A slight moment of negligence in battle would result in a defeat. In a high intensity battle like this, defeat would lead to only one result, death by being shattered to smithereens.

The two of them had no time to think about any plans. That was

because the army of scarletfire flying foxes had split into two smaller armies. Two arc-shaped armies of scarletfire flying foxes flew towards Ai Hui and Shi Xueman separately.

After the two of them witnessed the destructive power of the previous wave of scarlet fireballs, they did not dare lower their guards at all. If they were hit by the rain-like scarlet fireballs, they would face absolute death. Furthermore, the scarlet fireballs were extremely huge in number and their area of effect was extremely huge. It would be very hard for Shi Xueman and Ai Hui to dodge the scarlet fireballs.

Ai Hui's brain was operating at a very fast speed. The destructive power of the scarlet fireballs was extremely powerful and there were many scarletfire flying foxes. The only weakness of the scarletfire flying foxes that they could make use of was their poor flying ability.

At the same time, Ai Hui realized that they had to exhaust more of the scarletfire flying foxes' fireballs. Otherwise, the valley would be razed to the ground after a few more waves of bombardment by the scarlet fireballs.

If they wanted to exhaust the scarletfire flying foxes' scarlet fireballs, they could not let the scarletfire flying foxes think that they couldn't hit them. In other words, Ai Hui and Shi Xueman had to get closer to the scarletfire flying foxes

This was the time to test their dodging ability!

Luckily, the fire sacks of the scarletfire flying foxes were not huge and they could not contain too much scarlet fire.

Ai Hui was very calm and his mental state was unwavering. He began to make continuous maneuvers in the sky.

The pressure on Ai Hui decreased significantly after the scarletfire flying foxes split up into two smaller armies. Furthermore, the scarletfire flying foxes had poor flying ability. These two factors had given Ai Hui a lot of confidence. Ai Hui was extremely nimble and deft. Not only could he change direction horizontally, he could also change direction vertically.

There were a few times that the scarletfire flying foxes became dizzy after they tried to lock onto the constantly maneuvering Ai Hui.

Only by locking onto Ai Hui would their scarlet fireballs work. That was the only way they could form an accurate rain of scarlet fireballs.

Ai Hui, who had been changing his flight path constantly in the air, suddenly stopped and spurted towards the army of scarletfire flying foxes. His change of direction was very sudden and his flying speed was extremely fast.

Just as he was about to collide with the scarletfire flying foxes, he twisted his body and drew an arc in the air. The Wintry Jade Sword in his hand whipped across the air frantically and released a burst of sword gleam.

The scarletfire flying foxes had strong offense but weak defense. Since they had weak defense, Ai Hui did not need to use a powerful attack against them. This meant Ai hui's [Heavenly Thrust] would be useful in this scenario. Facing such a crowded formation, [Heavenly Thrust] would work better than [Six Crescent Moons] as it had stronger piercing power.

A torrential rain of sword gleams erupted from Ai Hui's sword and blasted towards the densely-packed scarletfire flying foxes.

At the same time, the scarletfire flying foxes shot out their scarlet fireballs that flew towards Ai Hui in a rain-like formation.

Ai Hui's Starry Gem Swordwing flapped and he flew along the rain of scarlet fireballs in an awkward arc.

However, Ai Hui got too close to the rain of scarlet fireballs and he saw a scarlet fireball coming at him at a rapid speed.

Ai Hui's pupils dilated abruptly. At this point of time, his Starry Gem Swordwings' operating power had already reached its maximum. He could no longer make another maneuver.

Damn it!

Without thinking, Ai Hui placed his Wintry Jade Blade horizontally in front of his chest. Six crescent-moon-shaped sword gleams formed in front of his sword in a dazzling manner.

Following which, the intertwining streaks of sword gleam transformed into six ring-shaped sword gleams. A mysterious aura suddenly erupted from the ring-shaped sword gleams.

Three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings!

The scarlet fireball flew into the centre of the six sword rings.

At this moment, Ai Hui's concentration had reached an unprecedented level. A cold glint flashed across his eyes as he stared tightly at the scarlet fireball within the sword rings. He could clearly feel the violent fire elemental energy contained within the scarlet fireball. This was caused by compressing the usually stable scarlet fire numerous times.

However, Ai Hui was able to come up with a solution in an instant.

At this moment, the huge sword rings erupted with a burst of radiance. Six streaks of sword gleams shot out at a terrifying speed.

The surprising thing was that the scarlet fireball did not explode and it looked as if it had fallen into a puddle of quicksand. The intertwining sword gleams created traces of pulling force. These traces of pulling force were not strong, but gentle.

The traces of gentle pulling force caused the scarlet fireball to spin in the sword rings.

Ai Hui widened his eyes as he increased his focus. He came up with this solution at the last minute. He was unsure whether or not would it work.

The scarlet fireball within the sword rings began to spin faster and faster.

Chapter 427: Well-coordinated Once Again

The three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings were a seldomly seen defensive move in Ai Hui's arsenal.

The trip to Silver City was the turning point for Ai Hui's swordsmanship.

In Karakorum Sword League, he had witnessed various impressive sword formations. He also read the incomplete swordplay encyclopedia compiled by Karakorum Savant, who was now known as Karakorum Polaris.

The swordplay encyclopedia was divided into six chapters, Variations, Flaming Wind, Anatta, Big Dipper, Yin Yang, and Life-and-Death.

The 'Variations' chapter discussed the numerous variations in swordplay. 'Flaming Wind' discussed complementary forces. 'Anatta' talked about how one's swordsmanship should be decisive and unrelenting.

'Big Dipper' talked about how the Big Dipper had shifted and how the stars had moved. 'Yin Yang' was about the marvels of Yin and Yang. 'Life-and-Death' discussed deep and profound questions in-depth. But Karakorum Polaris did not have many insights on the last chapter as well.

From the content of the sword encyclopedia, Ai Hui could see that Karakorum Polaris was an ambitious individual. She wanted

to compile a bible on swordsmanship that would be passed on for thousands of years.

Whether or not Karakorum Polaris could do it, Ai Hui still respected and admired her for having such a great ambition.

The three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings was developed on Ai Hui's trip to Silver City. It was derived from the chapter on Yin Yang in the swordplay encyclopedia and [Yin Yang Formation]. This move had saved Ai Hui's life by warding off an attack from a Master.

For the past year, Ai Hui's understanding towards swordsmanship had increased day by day. Like an artisan, he had been constantly polishing his swordsmanship.

Ai Hui learnt his swordsmanship by himself and there were a lot of areas that he was still unclear of. However, as he spent more and more time in practising his swordplay, his understanding towards swordsmanship increased and his skills improved. The sword encyclopedia and the various sword formations in Karakorum Sword League had helped him a lot. He began to come up with his own system that conformed with his swordsmanship.

The three huge Yin and three huge Yang sword rings were being improved constantly.

Within the sword rings, the scarlet fireball released a trace of red glow with a hissing sound. As the hissing sound continued incessantly, the number of traces of red glow accumulated. Like a

potato that was being peeled rapidly, the scarlet fireball was quickly becoming visibly smaller and smaller.

Pffff.

The scarlet fire ball was destroyed completely.

Ai Hui loosened his facial muscles as beads of perspiration appeared on his forehead.

The entire process took only a tiny amount of time but Ai Hui had still exhausted a significant amount of mental energy as he was required to stay highly concentrated all that time. Even so, he was still very happy that the sword rings could stop the scarlet fireball.

Upon feeling slightly at ease, Ai Hui whipped his Wintry Jade Blade through the air and he abruptly rose higher into the sky with a crisp swooshing sound

The scarletfire flying foxes were too densely-packed. The burst of sword gleams that Ai Hui shot out had inflicted heavy casualties on them. However, he was fully occupied at that moment to witness the scene.

Like a water bird that skimmed the surface of a lake, Ai Hui flew gracefully through the air.

How’s Iron Lady doing so far?

Ai Hui was slightly curious but he was not worried. Iron Lady was more powerful than him. If he could handle the scarletfire flying foxes, there was no reason for Iron Lady to fail. Ai Hui had never linked Iron Lady with the word "weak" before. On the battlefield, she was a trustworthy comrade.

The Starry Gem Swordwing on Ai Hui's back flapped as he rose higher into the sky. His field of vision expanded as he flew past the black-colored mountain ridge beneath him. He directed his gaze towards the other side of the battlefield.

A blue-white figure entered his line of sight. Scarletfire flying foxes were constantly dropping from the sky behind her.

The scarletfire flying foxes were extremely clumsy when they faced the nimble Iron Lady.

Iron Lady's azure wings were much lighter and nimbler than Ai Hui's. Starry Gem Swordwings were heavy and powerful. In terms of power, they were definitely much better than Iron Lady's azure wings. However, in terms of maneuverability, they paled in comparison to Iron Lady's azure wings.

How could he make use of the scarletfire flying foxes' clumsy nature?

Suddenly, Ai Hui's mind jolted as a daring thought emerged in his brain.

At this moment, Shi Xueman happened to cast a glance at Ai Hui. Quickly, Ai Hui made a hand signal and pointed to his front-left. Following which, the screeches of the scarletfire flying foxes erupted behind him, causing him to change his direction abruptly.

Ai Hui did not know whether or not Iron Lady had seen his hand signal. His movements did not slow down and he changed his direction a few times in a row. There were too many scarletfire flying foxes and their attacking range was very wide. As such, they just needed to tweak the angle of their flight path by a bit and Ai Hui would be within their line of sight. Ai Hui had no choice but to keep changing the direction of his flight path.

Only by changing the direction of his flight path constantly could he then prevent the scarletfire flying foxes from locking onto him and break free from their line of sight.

After Ai Hui finished a few maneuvers in a row, he was panting slightly. It was rather strenuous for Starry Gem Swordwings to make continuous maneuvers. Furthermore, ever since they Starry Gem Swordwings were damaged, he had not had the opportunity to fix them. The maneuvers had consumed his energy greatly.

Ai Hui finally completed his series of maneuvers and shifted his gaze in the direction of Shi Xueman. His eyes lit up at what he saw.

Iron Lady was flying towards the direction that he was pointing at!

She understood his intention.

As compared to Ai Hui, who was already panting, Iron Lady appeared calm, her hair was neat and tidy, and her movements were lithe.

However, Ai Hui did not have the time to admire Shi Xueman now. The Starry Gem Swordwings on his back erupted with a burst of radiance and shot towards his destination.

If one looked down at them from a higher height, he or she would see two figures being followed by two black-colored floods of scarletfire flying foxes. The two figures kept on changing their directions while the black floods behind them were pursuing them tightly. Unwittingly, the two figures were getting closer and closer to each other rapidly.

The two black floods were getting closer to each other as well, but their fervent eyes did not notice it completely. They might have a certain level of intelligence but their killing instinct had completely taken over their minds like raging flames at this moment.

Ai Hui flew in an arc and his movements looked slightly sluggish. He had yet to break from the scarletfire flying foxes' line of sight.

Numerous dark-red glows lit up behind him.

At this moment, Ai Hui changed his direction again. The

scarletfire flying foxes did not fire the scarlet fireball in each of their mouths. They somewhat identified Ai Hui's flying patterns and changed their direction according to his. The speed of them changing their direction was slightly slower, but they were certain that their prey could not avoid their attacks given their wide attacking range.

Now is the time!

Without any hesitation, the scarletfire flying foxes fired the scarlet fireball in each of their mouths! The dark-red glows suddenly intensified in brightness and became densely-packed.

Boom!

The sound created by the huge number of scarlet fireballs being fired at the same time struck fear into people's hearts. A glaring red brilliance suddenly erupted behind Ai Hui.

At the same time, densely-packed red glows lit up in front of him as well. Similarly, they gave off a horrifying sound.

The red glows in front of Ai Hui became brighter and brighter, turning into a red brilliance that engulfed his vision. In the midst of the red brilliance, the image of a valiant-looking figure was expanding in Ai Hui's eyes.

Ai Hui's lips curled into a smile. She was truly an iron lady!

The distance between Ai Hui and Shi Xueman was closing rapidly. Numerous scarlet fireballs were following tightly behind them.

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman looked at each other and smiled.

It was as if time had frozen for them.

Ai Hui was very happy. Iron Lady must've been happy because of their good coordination as well. He merely made a hand signal and both of them could coordinate perfectly. It was as if they had been partners for many years.

Wintry Jade Blade and Cirrus collided against each other once more. Perfect coordination!

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman flew towards each other in a straight line. As they got closer to each other, they abruptly soared upwards at the same time.

The scarletfire flying foxes realized they were going to get caught in a head-on collision with their comrades and the scarletfire fireballs. They were panic-stricken and their formation went into a chaos. Sharp screeches resounded through the air incessantly.

They wanted to escape but it was already too late. In the face of the fast-flying and densely-packed scarlet fireballs, they were extremely clumsy.

The two masses of scarlet fireballs collided against each other in the air and released a dazzling burst of blaze. Most of the scarlet fireballs flew past each other and smashed heavily into the two black-colored floods of scarletfire flying foxes.

Boom, boom, boom!

Huge bursts of blazes and radiance dyed the sky red. The incessant deafening explosions resembled thunderclaps within the depths of storm clouds, striking fear into people's hearts.

The scene was exceptionally spectacular, causing even Ai Hi and Shi Xueman to be dumbstruck.

The scarletfire flying foxes' charred bodies fell from the sky like dumplings. Most of them were ripped to shreds by the violent shock wave. The fact that the fragile scarletfire flying foxes couldn't withstand their own scarlet fireballs was indeed an irony.

Cries of joy broke out in Central Pine Valley.

No one had expected Ai Hui and Shi Xueman to be able to create such heavy casualties in the ranks of scarletfire flying foxes. All of them were dazzled by the battle. Children like San Xiao and Wei An were jumping and yelling in excitement. Their faces were filled with pride and adoration for Ai Hui and Shi Xueman.

However, not everyone in the valley behaved like this. There was an indifferent-looking individual, Duanmu Huanghun!

Duanmu Huanghun hovered above the bamboo forest, appearing as if he was standing on a green-colored sea of bamboos. He was trying his best to keep his facial expression calm but he still could not hide the flickering flames in his eyes.

He'd let this fellow take the limelight again!

He subconsciously ignored Shi Xueman and stared at Ai Hui with a pair of blazing eyes. He did not know whether or not it was the traumatization he'd received from Ai Hui in Central Pine Academy that caused him to act like this. As long as he saw Ai Hui was in the limelight, he would be triggered.

No, there was a switch in his head!

Once this switch was flicked on, his brain would only hold one thought.

He must not lose to that fellow!

A strong sense of battle fervor spread throughout his body like a forest fire. Duanmu Huanghun withdrew his gaze and his face turned ashen. He snorted with disdain while his robe fluttered, even though there was no wind.

A green-colored glow rose from the sea of bamboos beneath his feet, resembling the mist above the surface of a sea. This green glow was the pure wood elemental energy.

The wood elemental energy became increasingly concentrated and slowly swirled around Duanmu Huanghun. Bamboo leaves from the bamboo forest began to rise up into the air as well. Like numerous jade-made tiny swords, they swam and danced silently in the green-colored mist

After Duanmu Huanghun withdrew his gaze, his facial expression became focused. He took out a bag of grass seeds and scattered the grass seeds all around him.

The grass seeds hovered in the green mist and moved along with the flowing wood elemental energy.

Very soon, the bag of grass seeds was emptied. Duanmu Huanghun's facial expression did not change as he took out another bag of grass seeds and scattered them around him. His movements were smooth-flowing like water. He looked extremely casual but one could tell from his facial expression that his ordinary-looking movements weren't easy to carry out.

Everyone in the valley was focused on Ai Hui and Shi Xueman in the sky. No one noticed that Duanmu Huanghun had already scattered a lot of grass seeds above the bamboo forest.

As the number of grass seeds being scattered increased, Duanmu Huanghun's gaze became increasingly excited and zealous. His devilish, handsome face looked charmingly demonic.

Chapter 428: Where's the Promised Chemistry?

Ai Hui had not expected the coordination between Iron Lady and himself to actually cause such a colossal amount of damage.

When the aftermath of the explosion dispersed, fear and confusion could still be seen on the faces of the sparse scarletfire flying foxes in the sky. Approximately only half of the scarletfire flying foxes survived.

The scarlet fireball was simply too powerful, as its explosion reached across an extremely wide range.

Who would've thought that heaven had blessed the scarletfire flying foxes with such strong scarlet fireballs, but such frail bodies and even an exceedingly revengeful character.

The fear and confusion in their eyes vanished and was replaced by hatred. Deep-rooted hatred!

That disastrous impact taught the scarletfire flying foxes a big lesson. They did not return to their originally concentrated formation but dispersed instead. They also did not continue their chase but flew toward the valley instead.

Ai Hui and Shi Xueman's faces turned grave simultaneously. Only half the scarletfire flying foxes were left but there were still over three hundred of them. Especially since they were moving

separately now, the pressure brought by the whole crowd of them was tremendous.

They looked at each other before dispersing swiftly.

They harassed and disrupted the big team of scarletfire flying foxes from different directions, but only those closest to them were affected. The whole team was still flying toward the valley slowly but steadily.

Ai Hui felt a sense of urgency. If these scarletfire flying foxes were to appear overhead and release a few waves of scarlet fireballs, the valley would be razed to the ground.

What should they do?

Ai Hui racked his brains searching for a solution but to no avail.

He took a deep breath. The more tense a situation was, the more he had to remain calm. Only then would he be able to find a way to solve the issue. Nervousness would only consume time and energy.

Ai Hui had considered the fact that while there was the vapor illusion disguising the valley, the scarletfire flying foxes would simply blow up the ground with their scarlet fireballs.

The scarlet fireballs would instantly expose the disguise.

Face the scarletfire flying foxes head on? Ai Hui denied this plan since the scarlet fireballs were extremely fast and not many from the gang could withstand or dodge them. Facing their rainscreen-like attack would only cause more casualties and damages.

The scarletfire flying foxes were determined to attack the valley, so no matter how Ai Hui and Shi Xueman tried to intervene, they continued toward the direction in which the elementalist's odor was the richest.

The atmosphere in the valley became tense as everyone could sense the scarletfire flying foxes' resoluteness. Ai Hui and Shi Xueman's perfect guidance was due to the fact that they had managed to attract the scarletfire flying foxes' attention. Now that the scarletfire flying foxes were clear-headed they were no longer lured by them.

The scarletfire flying foxes' intelligence shocked everyone.

Having seen the scarletfire flying foxes' power, no one believed that the valley's defense would be able to withstand so many fireballs. The only thing in the valley that they could count on was the defensive ancient tree. Other plants needed more time to grow.

If the scarletfire flying foxes did not charge into the valley, Ai Hui's previous plan would be fruitless. Judging from the situation, it wasn't very likely that the scarletfire flying foxes would enter the valley. These clever dire beasts were very alert and would not go down until the disguise of the ground was removed.

Everybody had a solemn expression on their faces. The battle that was about to come was going to be exceptionally challenging.

Having three hundred scarletfire flying foxes was like having black, gloomy balls of cloud floating toward the valley, doubling the pressure the gang felt. But while the atmosphere was extremely grave and tense, no one panicked in fear since they were all experienced by now.

A battle between elementalists and dire beasts was crueler than a battle between elementalists only, since it always ended with the death of the defeated.

A lightbulb lit up in Ai Hui's head. He shouted at Shi Xueman, who wasn't very far off, "Return to the valley!"

Shi Xueman's eyes, which had practically not left Ai Hui from the start, lit up. She relaxed her tensed heart and mind as well. From the time she'd realized that the situation was worsening, she'd been waiting for Ai Hui to come up with a solution. Ever since the blood catastrophe, Ai Hui had always been the one providing answers whenever they faced problems.

In certain aspects, Shi Xueman was no different from the rest of the gang. They had a kind of blind trust in Ai Hui.

Hearing his voice abruptly lightened her tensed heart. She knew that Ai Hui must have found a viable solution.

Her figure disappeared and at the same time, Ai Hui felt his whole body tighten, realizing shortly after that he'd been grabbed by Shi Xueman.

Ai Hui's face flushed, his heart about to crumble.

What a joke! He could fly by himself! No matter how tough Iron Lady was, how could she grab him? How was he going to face people? Where's the promised chemistry? Did she not understand what respect was? Did she not understand what a real man was?

"Hey, hey, hey, let me go. Release me, I can fly by myself!"

In spite of Ai Hui's struggling limbs, Shi Xueman responded, deadpan, "You're slow."

Nevertheless, the corner of her eyes curved as she couldn't help but smile.

Ai Hui, as if struck by lightning, stiffened up.

You're slow... He was actually unable... unable to refute this!

He'd been mocked by Iron Lady!

When Ai Hui realized this cruel fact he wanted to cry. Didn't everyone agree to have a mutual understanding? Didn't they promise to fight the battle together, shoulder to shoulder? What

about the ‘you’re made of iron and I’m made of steel’?

Feeling dejected, Ai Hui turned limp like a dead fish, allowing the gale to penetrate his heart. But the situation was tense now and his idea required Shi Xueman’s implementation.

He needed to use this time to tell her what to do but with their strange postures, he would have to roar for her to be able to listen clearly.

He had to get slightly closer... more importantly, this position was seriously too embarrassing!

Ai Hui grabbed onto Shi Xueman’s wrist to borrow some strength. His body was like a nimble snake and he crawled upward with his limbs as if climbing a tree. He turned around and grabbed hold of her body.

Hah! Ai Hui was rather pleased. This position was much better than the previous one.

Caught off guard, Shi Xueman turned rigid and her mind went blank.

Ai Hui suddenly felt them plunging downward and was frightened. "Hey! We’re dropping!"

Shi Xueman quivered and regained her senses, her azure wings spreading open once again, bringing them back up.

Using all his limbs, Ai Hui was hanging onto her body like a sloth onto a tree. She felt feverish. No one had ever held her so tightly before and she'd never been this intimate with a man.

Wait a minute. A memory surfaced in her mind.

Amid the darkness a figure locked onto her from behind, his arms steel-like. Then...

Then... another image invaded her brain.

Those despicable arms!

All of a sudden Shi Xueman's nervousness and anxiety vanished. He was merely grabbing her.

Wait. Why was she at this stage whereby grabbing was acceptable?

She bit her lips hard, her heart in a tremendous muddle.

Ai Hui did not know that his actions would cause such a huge impact on Shi Xueman. He was still slightly traumatized from their earlier plunge. They were hugging onto each other at this moment, their postures abnormally ambiguous. The good thing was that they were now close enough!

Ai Hui's mouth was just by Shi Xueman's ear.

He quickly relayed the details of his plan to her, speaking rapidly.

Ai Hui's tone was very calm as usual, which helped Shi Xueman clear whatever distracting thoughts she had from her head. She was now clear-headed and her expression returned to normal.

Ai Hui felt her change as her body, initially rigid as tree trunk, loosened up.

Without time to overthink, the both of them arrived at the valley mouth.

They were slightly ahead.

Still hanging off of Iron Lady's body, Ai Hui was determined to get a new set of top-notch azure wings the moment he had enough money!

He was still glad that he'd been smart enough to alter their positions. Entering the valley while being grabbed by his collar would simply have been too embarrassing.

They were like a sharp sword, diving through the mist and into the valley.

The audience in the valley was stunned.

"Ai Hui is amazing!"

"Aren’t they progressing too quickly?"

Seeing how everyone was looking at them, Shi Xueman kept biting on her lips, forcing herself to remain calm. Battle first, battle first, she thought to herself.

...

Ai Hui’s face was covered by Shi Xueman’s hair so he couldn’t see clearly. He shouted at the top of his lungs, "Change of plans! Archers, get ready!"

As if awakened from a dream, everyone regained their focus, albeit with a strange expression on their faces. Could it be that their posture was part of the plan?

Luckily they had confidence in Ai Hui’s judgments and so they prepared themselves attentively.

Carrying Ai Hui, Shi Xueman descended from the sky like a sharp arrow, landing steadily by the lake that was covered with fog.

"Bamboo cart has reached its station, passengers get ready to alight."

Shi Xueman imitated the brief station announcement in a clear, confident voice without any shyness.

Ai Hui burst into laughter. Iron Lady was really interesting. He jumped off while asking, "What about the fare?"

A leg appeared behind Ai Hui’s head without warning.

Bang! Ai Hui, who was unprepared, got kicked into the lake.

Shi Xueman left him with a snort before turning around to leave.

Crash! Ai Hui flew into a rage out of humiliation as his furious voice sounded from the lake, "Hey!"

Shi Xueman was satisfied. She flew toward the mist-controlling Color Clam Pearls. Thirty-six of them had been fixed onto the waterfall cliff. They were the key to controlling the mist.

The haze and misty rain, as if blown by the wind, moved toward and gathered around Shi Xueman. The water elemental energy within the whole water element region was under her control.

Ai Hui was rather nervous as he kept his eyes on Iron Lady.

Only she could utilize such a huge amount of water elemental energy.

Above, the gloomy crowd of scarletfire flying foxes had reached them after seeing the two figures flying down amid the rocks. They did not prepare to land, but instead got ready to drop their scarlet fireballs.

Just then, a highly abundant amount of water vapor rose from the valley like a monster opening its bloody mouth wide, effectively swallowing them up.

They suddenly realized that they were surrounded by many of the elementalist they'd seen earlier!

Ambush!

Having accumulated their power, the scarletfire flying foxes released their scarlet fireballs toward those elementalists.

They only realized that they had fallen into a trap when the scarlet fireballs passed through the elementalists' bodies!

This was Ai Hui's idea. Since the scarletfire flying foxes did not enter the valley, he would expand the illusion to disrupt them.

Bang, bang, bang!

They'd sprayed the scarlet fireballs in a moment of desperation, forgetting that around them were their own companions, instantly causing explosions everywhere.

The flames blossomed upward like a devilish red flower as the scarletfire flying foxes' shrieks drowned amid the incessant explosions.

Just then, Jiang Wei and Sang Zijun's rain-like arrows whistled through the air.

Chapter 429: Victory

The arrows filled the sky like rain and whizzed into the flames and into the crowd of scarletfire flying foxes.

No one had imagined that Sang Zijun would be the one to deal the strongest blows. In the face of such dire beasts, who attacked strongly but defended weakly, Golden Silk Longbow's shocking speed carried a huge advantage.

She single-handedly shot out consecutive streaks of rain-like golden silk arrows.

The scarletfire flying foxes dropped one after another, sprinkling fresh blood all over the ground like raindrops, as the incessant whines of the scarletfire flying foxes rang across the field.

The scarletfire flying foxes fell into complete disorder.

Ai Hui had already come out from the lake and couldn't care less about the fact that he was drenched. He yelled, "Bangwan!"

A cold snort was all he heard.

Duanmu Huanghun, who had long accumulated enough power, channeled the wood elemental energy surrounding him and swept it over the huge volume of grass seeds like a green python, raising them high into the air before throwing them right at the scarletfire flying foxes.

Clap, clap, clap, clap!

The sounds of beans being fried filled their ears momentarily.

The grass seeds burst no matter what they touched. The scarletfire flying foxes that had yet to regain focus from all this confusion were quickly hit by these destructive seeds.

There were simply too many seeds and even Duanmu Huanghun had no idea exactly how many he'd thrown out. He'd practically utilized whatever usable amount he had on him.

His wildness was without reservation. If they did not survive this ordeal, it did not matter how many grass seeds he had remaining.

The scarletfire flying foxes fell in succession. Some were even struck by a few kinds of grass seeds and had all kinds of vines appearing on around their bodies and winding like spider webs, making them look like dumplings.

Nevertheless, wild Duanmu was never a passable sidekick since he had always wanted to be the lead character.

After the grass seeds came the mini, sword-like, jade green bamboo leaves that were hidden behind the seeds.

Whimpers came after the explosions of the concentrated grass

seeds. It was as if beautiful women were playing the flute in the bamboo forest under the moonlight. However, amid the mellow tunes was a quietly rising murderousness.

The drifting and floating bamboo leaves were as sharp as sword blades.

scarletfire flying foxes that were wrapped up by the seeds had no time to struggle free as they were quickly killed by these silent, yet powerful assassins. The leaves pierced the scarletfire flying foxes' bodies effortlessly without getting any bloodstains on them, remaining ever new and jade-green.

About to lead his team in the attack, Ai Hui suddenly noticed that there weren't any targets left in the sky.

Duanmu Huanghun's knees went weak, causing him to fall onto a bamboo branch bottom first. This attack required a scary amount of control over the wood elemental energy and he knew that he only had one chance to attack, so he'd channeled all his elemental energy into it. His body was now an empty vessel as sweat, albeit delayed, poured out from every part of his body. His pale cheeks were now flushed and his sweat meandered down his face. His breaths were heavy, like moving bellows and he had absolutely no energy to even lift a finger.

But when he saw the amazement and lifeless expression on Ai Hui's face, he couldn't help but let out a laugh. Except before he could laugh properly, it turned into an intense bout of coughs.

Everyone looked toward the sky.

After a moment of silence came thunder-like cheers.

Everyone was moved as the joy of having survived filled their chests. They were really being put under tremendous pressure upon seeing the number of scarletfire flying foxes that they had to deal with and the formidability of their scarlet fireballs.

No one would've thought that the battle would proceed and end so smoothly with them reigning in a victory.

Ai Hui turned around and looked toward the bamboo forest, where he saw Duanmu Huanghun laughing, wild and proud. Iron Lady, too, was close to being exhausted. In order to interfere with more scarletfire flying foxes, she'd used up all her water elemental energy.

Ai Hui flew up into the sky and saw a few lonesome scarletfire flying foxes attempting to escape. His eyes lit up.

Scarletfire flying fox cave!

They'd battled so diligently and consumed so much, but their harvest was unjustifiable. The scarletfire and fire sacks of the scarletfire flying foxes were the most valuable. There was no need to consider the scarletfire since they'd practically become scarletfire bullets and were all used up. It was the same for the fire sacks since most of the scarletfire flying foxes were killed by

explosions, arrows or bamboo leaves so there wouldn’t be many well preserved fire sacks.

Ai Hui, now out of the crisis, immediately felt the pain. As such, when he saw the scarletfire flying foxes desperately trying to flee he immediately thought of the cave that they lived in.

It seemed like not many had gone into the caves of scarletfire flying foxes!

But it made sense. These scarletfire flying foxes lived in a colony and were revengeful dire beasts that even the hunting teams avoided provoking, since they could all be destroyed if they were careless.

The scarlet fireballs were simply too powerful.

Ai Hui shouted at those below, "A few of you, follow me to their cave!"

In a split second a group of them rushed up. They were members who had been arranged to deal the final blows. They’d expected more from the toughest mission, but did not even manage to secure any soup. Feeling regretful, it was only natural that they would be the first to volunteer upon hearing that there was a follow up mission.

Ai Hui selected a few decent members who had faster speeds. The rest would stay in the valley to guard it from sneak attacks by

other dire beasts.

With a firm look on his face, Fatty spoke up, "Ai Hui, I'll go too!"

Collecting spoils of war was simply Fatty's favorite pastime. Just thinking about it made his eyes shine.

"No!" Ai Hui replied disdainfully. "Why are you trying to join the buzz when you fly so slowly?"

Fatty gave a bitter look. "You can't be so heartless. During our time in the Wilderness, when have I ever been absent from the clean ups?

Ai Hui was already immune to Fatty's tactics. He shouted to Lou Lan, "Keep an eye on him!"

"No problem, Ai Hui!"

Fatty yelled indignantly, "Mister Ai, are you just going to disown me? Are you feeding our years of friendship to the dogs? You'd better give me a proper explanation!"

Ai Hui bore his teeth as he responded, "I'll clear things up with you today!"

Fatty sensed that the situation was amiss and got frightened. He smiled meekly before saying, "Brother Hui, calm down, we can talk

things over slowly. There’s no using of fists among brothers. You’re really hitting! Ow, easy, easy! I’m wrong, I’m at fault, it’s my bad! Brother Ai! Father Ai! I’m going to flip if you keep hitting me! I’m about to flip! The scarletfire flying foxes are escaping..."

His last sentence convinced Ai Hui. "I’ll teach you a lesson when I’m back!"

He then led the team and made chase.

Fatty let out a sigh of relief. He’d pulled a fast one fortunately and saved himself by luring the enemy!

He raised his head and saw Lou Lan looking back at him. He walked toward Lou Lan with a solemn expression on his face. "Lou Lan, Ai Hui asked you to keep an eye on me."

Lou Lan opened his eyes wide. "Yes he did."

Fatty continued seriously, "Lou Lan, I’ll promise not to go anywhere if you bring out your elemental food."

Lou Lan blinked. "Really?"

Fatty was secretly delighted but kept a straight face, replying in a righteous manner, "I’m a man of my word!"

Lou Lan cheered. "Then we have a deal!"

Lou Lan brought out pieces of elemental food and placed them in front.

Fatty swallowed his saliva greedily, his heart bursting with joy. "You're still the best. There's so much! I'll enjoy them."

Fatty reached his palm out but was blocked by Lou Lan. Fatty asked in shock, "Didn't we have an agreement? You're going back on your words!"

Lou Lan shook his head. "You asked me to bring them out, which I did. I kept my word."

"Then why are you stopping me?"

"I did not agree to let you eat them."

Fatty wanted to run himself over. Why! Why did he make such a fatal mistake! The pain of being able to look but not eat was more unbearable. The enticing fragrance filled his nostrils, yet he wasn't able to taste them. Fatty was convinced that this must be the world's cruelest punishment.

"Fatty, do you want me to keep these? You don't look good."

"No! Even if I can't taste them, I'm going to look all I want! I can still smell their fragrance!"

Fatty's voice was filled with struggle and determination. He sprawled out in front of the food, his eyes wide open.

Ai Hui led the small team and followed the remaining two scarletfire flying foxes.

The entrance of the elementalists into the Wilderness turned it into an even more brutal place. Elementalists were all dire beasts' number one enemy.

The scarletfire flying foxes weren't fast enough, so Ai Hui and his team quickly caught up and were following them from far behind. The scarletfire flying foxes were already beyond frightened, so all they wanted to do was to return to their warm and safe cave, and couldn't care for anything else.

Ai Hui paid attention along the way and noticed that the place where he'd been ambushed by the rockback earth dragon was now empty. He did not notice any other beasts' odor. The earlier battle had raised too big of a commotion, so few dire beasts would provoke the scarletfire flying foxes. The scarletfire flying foxes had frail bodies but were powerful in their attacks. Plus, with that many of them, there could easily be trouble.

The rockback earth dragon, too, would not initiate an attack on the scarletfire flying foxes.

Following far behind, Ai Hui and gang maintained a strong defensive stance. Danger lurked in every corner of the Wilderness.

The seemingly barren and desolate Blackfish Mouth Volcano was home to many dangerous dire beasts. Any slight negligence could possibly cost them their lives.

Over the mountain range, the scarletfire flying foxes' cave was no more than three miles away from Central Pine Valley.

The close proximity shocked Ai Hui. It was no wonder these scarletfire flying foxes appeared near the valley.

But this fact increased his vigilance. He would have to conduct a thorough exploration of Blackfish Mouth Volcano once the valley's defense was constructed.

How could one sleep soundly knowing that his territory was susceptible to invasion?

If there were powerful fire beasts, he must think of a way to get rid of them. Just a rockback earth dragon was enough to give all of them a headache.

Suddenly, the scarletfire flying foxes flew down and into the rocks.

Ai Hui and gang flew closer and realized that there was a deep crack behind the rocks. The crack was about six meters tall but its width was wide enough for a person to go through.

Ai Hui stood in front since he was the strongest and had the most

experience.

The cave mouth was narrow but it was actually wide and big inside. It was spacious and the ceiling of the cave was about twenty meters above the ground. No one could've imagined how such a narrow opening could lead to such a huge paradise.

It was very dry inside the cave and there was a faint sulphur smell as well, the most distinct feature of caves near the volcanoes.

Advancing into the cave, Ai Hui did not walk quietly on tiptoe. He knew that the scarletfire flying foxes had incredible hearing and must have already sensed their presence the moment they stepped in. What they had to do now was to guard against the scarletfire flying foxes' sneak attacks.

The passage within the cave was curvy and uneven. The scarletfire flying foxes' excrement could be seen everywhere. Fortunately, there wasn't any odor or else the smell within the cave would be even worse.

Ai Hui did not feel any obvious air movement, a clear sign that this was a cave with only one opening.

He dared not let himself be even the least bit careless.

Chapter 430: Hellfire Pagoda Cannon

The sneak attacks he'd been expecting did not happen.

When Ai Hui and gang reached the deepest part of the cave they finally caught sight of the two surviving scarletfire flying foxes. They were already at their last breaths and were severely injured. Flying into their cave had exhausted their last bit of energy.

This land was probably the bat community's place for activities and rest. The cave was shaped like a copper bell, narrow on the top and wide at the bottom, its height not exceeding sixty meters. A vague, dark red glow could be seen through the cracks on the black, rugged cliff. The fire elemental energy within the cave was plentiful, no surprise why the scarletfire flying foxes chose to reproduce and inhabit this place.

The cave was absolutely empty. save for a huge pile of ash-colored skeletons in a corner, covered in dust and spiderwebs.

The last two scarletfire flying foxes were killed by Ai Hui and everyone finally let their tensed hearts down. Ai Hui called them over to flip the mountain of skeletons.

Lifting the dust-filled skeleton mountain, they noticed that most of the bones belonged to the scarletfire flying foxes. The scarletfire flying foxes' bones were easy to recognize since their bodies were very small. Ai Hui recalled how some wild beasts that were about to die would select a certain spot to await death.

Judging from the luster on some of the bones, it could be concluded that the scarletfire flying foxes had been residing in this cave for many years.

Suddenly, Ai Hui's eyes lit up. He found a dark red pearl among the pile of bones. The pearl was about the size of an egg and was warm to the touch. He wiped off the dust on the surface and the pearl's dark red color reflected in his eyes.

"Fire elemental elixir!"

Ai Hui was indescribably shocked. He'd used elemental elixirs before and could tell from one glance that the dark red pearl he was holding onto was indeed an elemental elixir.

Ai Hui rejoiced. They were right to come here! He was also glad that these bunch of scarletfire flying foxes had yet to formulate their own elixirs or else they situation would've been much more precarious.

If he were to say that level of Master was the dividing line between a powerful elementalist and an ordinary elementalist, the possession of an elemental elixir was the dividing line between a powerful dire beast and an ordinary dire beast.

Dire beasts that could produce elemental elixirs possessed many mystical qualities. They were much more dangerous and clever.

An elemental elixir was extraordinarily expensive, so upon seeing

it the gang's faces lit up in joy and they started searching around. Shortly, someone found another elemental elixir from within the pile.

In fear of missing out, everyone searched long and carefully, such that their bone picking movements became much more nimble.

Bones of scarletfire flying foxes that died from old age were known as flaming bones, a decent fire elemental ingredient. When a scarletfire flying fox reached the end of its lifespan, the scarletfire within its fire sacks would be at its strongest. As it inched closer to death the fire would surge out from the sack and burn its flesh and fur, eventually leaving only a complete set of skeletons. Having gone through the scarletfire's burning and tempering, the quality of the bones increased drastically, hence the name "flaming bones".

But because the scarletfire flying foxes' bones weren't robust, they were only considered to be of a decent quality even after the upgrade.

At the end of their search, Ai Hui and gang picked five fire elemental elixirs out.

Their faces were brimming with joy. Fire elemental elixirs were good stuff. If they were to sell them, each elixir would fetch a sky-high price. Many would be willing to purchase them at five thousand heaven merit points each. But Ai Hui had no plans to sell them because what was the point of having money at this moment? The priority should be to improve their abilities, since without skills they wouldn't be able to survive.

This victory had come after a fierce battle process and involved much luck. Any slight incautiousness would've caused the whole of Central Pine Valley to fall into eternal damnation.

Scarletfire flying foxes weren't the most powerful dire beasts around. The rockback earth dragon was even stronger and harder to deal with.

Passing Lou Lan the five fire elemental elixirs would provide a huge boost to the fire elementalists in the team, allowing them to enter a higher realm.

Suddenly, Ai Hui noticed a section of thick and solid bone and picked it up after a short pause. The bone was exceptionally robust and heavy, with the thickness of a bowl's mouth and the length about a meter and a half. The two ends were of an irregular, round shape, probably the leg bone of a certain dire beast.

The bone was spotlessly white and very beautiful. Ai Hui knocked it and heard a metallic sound, which revealed its solidness. What surprised Ai Hui was the fact that a few chops from his Wintry Jade Blade left no scars on the bone. It was still surprising, even though he did not channel any elemental energy into his hits.

Plus, it was really strange to find a bone, not belonging to a bat, among the pile of flying foxes' bones.

Ai Hui said to the rest, "Find more bones of this type."

Everyone, too, noticed that the bone Ai Hui was holding was special. They dispersed in search of similar bones and ended up with four of them in different sizes. The biggest one had been found by Ai Hui and the smallest one was only half a foot long and was thin as chopsticks.

If not for the identical color and aura, Ai Hui wouldn't be certain that these four bones came from the same species of dire beast. What kind of dire beast would have such strange looking bones?

He couldn't tell what was special about these bones and would have to hand them over to Blind He for analysis when he returned. In the past, he had thought that he was half an expert when it came to dire beasts, but after seeing what Blind He could do, he realized he was lagging far behind.

Keeping the bones that belonged to an unknown beast and packing numerous flaming bones, Ai Hui and gang made their way back.

Ai Hui was being cautious as usual. He'd already found their first goal, which was to rule Blackfish Mouth Volcano and dominate it!

The battle that occurred not long ago made Blackfish Mouth Volcano appear tranquil, which was a rare sight. Ai Hui and gang did not bump into any trouble on their return journey.

The dire beasts, including other rockback earth dragons, were already aware that their neighbors weren't weaklings. But the

naturally antagonistic relationship between dire beasts and elementalists would not see any changes just because of the destruction of the scarletfire flying foxes.

Ai Hui and gang arrived safely at the valley, allowing everyone to finally let out a breath of relief.

Their harvest pleased everyone further, especially the fire elementalists, who were filled with anticipation.

Ai Hui'd wanted to ask Blind He to analyze the four pieces of bones, but seeing that he was busy forging parts that he needed, Ai Hui chose not to disturb him.

Central Pine Valley could finally take a breather, but no one dared to slack off at all.

Their battle with the scarletfire flying foxes consumed a lot of their water and wood elemental energy. Although it was a single attack, Shi Xueman and Duanmu Huanghun had mobilized the maximum amount of elemental energy possible.

And the five elemental energies within the valley had been in equilibrium, causing the elemental energy concentration to reach a trough these past few days. Ai Hui estimated that the valley would need three days of replenishment to restore its energy concentration's usual state of equilibrium.

It was as if they were expecting a mortal enemy for three days,

and if nothing cropped up, the valley's defense would finally be restored.

Another good piece of news was that the parts Ai Hui needed were ready.

Upon hearing that Ai Hui wanted to fix up something new, everybody abandoned what they were doing and ran over to join the buzz.

Clanking sounds could be heard as Ai Hui was hard at work.

He'd piled the parts up not far away. They were all items forged by Blind He, and quality wise there was nothing much for Ai Hui to complain about.

Ai Hui had long been used to being watched and so his actions weren't the least affected.

First, he chiseled a fire well mouth, the red lava shining upon his face, making it appear bright red in color. His eyes were so focused, as if there were flames burning within. He then started to put the parts together in a swift manner, as if he'd long visualized how the final product would look like.

As the parts came together slowly, everybody finally saw some development.

It was actually a pagoda!

Following the capping of the roof, a black pagoda appeared before their eyes. It was about ten meters tall and had three stories. Its entire body was forged from a mix of volcanic rock and metal.

At the tower peak was a stem of round tube which everyone found familiar looking.

Wasn’t that the long, spraying snout that belonged to the lava-spitting beast?

The long snout on the top of the pagoda changed angle constantly and was very nimble.

Ai Hui had a satisfied look on his face. Clapping his hands he declared, "Finished!"

The audience, who’d long felt impatient, started crowding over and discussing.

"What’s that?"

"The long snout that belonged to the lava-spitting beast!"

AI Hui was pleased. He cleared his throat gently and answered earnestly, "This is a Hellfire Pagoda Cannon!"

"So it spits lava like the lava-spitting beast?"

Ai Hui quietened the crowd. "We'll do a demonstration now so you guys will see for yourselves."

Everyone became silent and looked on in anticipation.

Fatty was called over since the Hellfire Pagoda Cannon required a fire elementalist to control it. Fatty went inside the spacious tower, where each level was over three meters tall. Getting inside was effortless despite his bigger size.

The black pagoda cannon turned red rapidly like burning steel. A wave of heat surfaced instantly and spread to its surroundings.

The others moved away.

Suddenly, a bright earth fire rose up the six pillars in spirals before entering the eaves of the first storey. Shortly after, flames surge up the pillars on the second storey. The flames were brighter than before, appearing whitish.

This scene seemed quite familiar as well.

Someone shouted, "White Cluster Flames!"

It was no wonder everyone felt that this sight was familiar. Wasn't this the smelting furnace Ai Hui'd made for Blind He?

Their eyes fell subconsciously onto Blind He. He was floating in mid air, looking unconcerned.

They quickly noticed that the Hellfire Pagoda Cannon was more powerful that the furnace since the earth fire had undergone three amassments. The flames got increasingly white with each level and everyone could feel the terrifying power the flames contained.

When the flames gathered at the third layer they were snow-white and actually seemed cold. But everyone was aware that they were in fact unbelievably hot.

Blind He appeared extremely calm, but his heart was actually greatly stirred.

The White Cluster Flames seemed to be a genius's invention. He'd not expected Ai Hui to give him an even bigger surprise so quickly. The appearance of this layered cluster meant that the flames could be upgraded again. To him, this was beyond ingenious.

After three levels of amassments, the aura released by the white flames made Blind He palpitate. As a weaponsmith, he was exceptionally sensitive to the auras of flames. Just from smelling the emitted aura he knew that the white flames, having gone through three layers of amassments, were no longer endurable by ordinary materials.

Ordinary ingredients would instantly be destroyed under such powerful flames.

If a three layered amassment produced such good results, what would six layers do? What about nine?

A whole new world seemed to be opening its door for him with a loud bang.

Chapter 431: Snow Lava

Not everyone was as far-sighted as Blind He. Their eyes were fixed on the spray snout on the pagoda roof.

They were curious and excited. Since the pagoda cannon was actually called a cannon, it should work similar to the lava-spitting beast. The lava spat by the beast was shockingly formidable and had left a deep impression on them. If the pagoda cannon was anything like the beast, it meant that valley's defense had been added with a lava-spitting beast. This could enhance its attacking powers.

Gulu-gulu! The sound of lava being extracted was heard, intensifying the curious looks on everybody's faces.

Only Fatty, who was inside the pagoda cannon, could clearly see what was going on. The lava was being extracted from the fire well before being tempered within the White Cluster Flames, its volume rapidly shrinking.

Standing outside, Ai Hui explained, "The lava will undergo three phases of tempering, causing it to shrink significantly but also increase in quality. As to how much its quality will improve, we will only know after some tests. Oh, the pagoda cannon can temper lava consistently on normal days so it will be ready for battles. I feel that tempered lava is a very good fire elemental material. Wonder if it's possible to sell? I'll get Blind He and Lou Lan to evaluate when the time comes. We will have an additional income source if it's sellable."

Everyone was used to Ai Hui’s habit of linking everything to money.

People who did not know him would definitely think that he was the president of an enterprise, opening his eyes wide at the sight of profit.

Iron Lady had a different perspective. "How powerful is it?"

After some thought, Ai Hui answered uncertainly, "We would have to try it to know. We got to wait for a bit more. There’s a lava reservoir in the pagoda to store tempered lava so there’s no need to do it at the last minute when there’s a battle. But we will have to wait for the first batch to be completed before firing the first cannon."

Ai Hui answered her freely, as if nothing had happened between them. Ah, he’d done it in battle and under urgent circumstances. As an outstanding fighter, how could he have bothered about these minor details?

Nothing had changed between Ai Hui and Iron Lady on the surface, but what went on in their minds wasn’t clear to outsiders.

The only change was that they knew not to talk about bamboo cart in front of Iron Lady and not to mention that Ai Hui was slow unless they wanted to get beaten up. Both of them had solid fists and a bad temper so they wouldn’t get any explanation even after enduring the beating.

These two guys were really unfathomable.

The spray nose on the pagoda started to rotate, catching everyone's attention. They opened their eyes wide, in fear of missing any detail.

Boom!

The sound of the cannon blowing off wasn't loud at all in spite of their expectations. It was really soft and if the pagado cannon had been further away, they might not have heard it at all.

A splendid white light shot out from the cannon barrel, toward another mountain ridge outside the valley.

It was definitely nowhere as mighty as the lava-spitting beast. The oppressive hissing made by the beast when spitting lava was sky-shaking.

Just as everyone was getting slightly disappointed the white light struck the mountain ridge far away.

There wasn't any of the predicted boom, rising smoke or earthquake.

It was as if nothing had happened.

But Shi Xueman's pupils shrank suddenly. Without a word she

flew toward that mountain ridge speedily. Upon seeing her go, the rest followed in unison. They knew that she must have noticed something.

Ai Hui's gaze fell upon that mountain range and fell into a short daze. Lagging half a beat he immediately took flight.

The mountain ridge was about two miles away from the valley, a distance that required little time and effort to reach. Everybody got there in the blink of an eye.

Upon reaching it, everyone took in a breath of cold air, disbelief evident on their faces.

There was a table-sized tunnel in the mountain ridge that reached all the way to the other side. The pagoda cannon had actually bored a hole through the whole mountain ridge!

While the light had struck a weaker region, the rocks that had been blasted off were forty meters thick.

Boring through three to six meters of rock wasn't so big of a deal.

But no one was able to blast through forty meters of rock. There was a hole the rough size of a table and the glossy inner wall had a melted ceramic texture, a clear sign that the strike was not only shockingly forceful but also shockingly hot.

No one dared to imagine what such a terrifying attack would do

to a person.

Would the defensive ancient tree’s energy screen be able to withstand such an attack?

Duanmu Haunghun thought this over and the conclusion he arrived at distorted the expression on his face. Perhaps once? He noticed Ai Hui’s satisfied look and felt even more displeased.

Amid the shock, everybody was cheering and celebrating.

With such a strong firepower, just one hit was more than sufficient to send the dire beasts crying.

This murderous weapon could catalyze their establishment in Central Pine Valley. No matter how powerful a dire beast they met, they would be able to defend themselves. This fact instantly took a whole load of pressure off their chests.

Seeing everybody’s excitement, Ai hui called out softly, "The Hellfire Pagoda Cannon can also shoot flames."

His words caught everyone’s attention immediately.

"Shoot flames?"

"How?"

They then followed Ai Hui excitedly back to the tower.

The flames sprayed by the cannon were White Cluster Flames, but because of the layers of clustering the result was a flame of small volume, about a foot long or so.

Having witnessed the lava attack, the audience had high expectations of the flames. Upon seeing this pathetically short and white flame, all of them gave Ai Hui a strange look.

Ai Hui looked very embarrassed. He did not expect the flames to be this tiny.

But he had thick skin and laughed it off.

Blind He, on the other hand, felt that a foot long flames were just right for tempering some high grade materials. With three layers of clustering, the flames were more powerful than his White Cluster Flames. But they did not have many rare materials. Ordinary materials were forged by the smelting furnace and would not be able to endure such a strong flame.

As long as it works, Ai Hui thought and quickly forgot about his embarrassment.

He had one more spraying snout and it mustn't be wasted. Ai Hui started building his second Hellfire Pagoda Cannon. Having gained experience, Ai Hui and Blind He's speed was clearly much faster.

They took only one day to complete the second pagoda cannon. For convenience’s sake the new cannon was called "short pagoda cannon" and the first one was called "long pagoda cannon".

Short pagoda cannon attacked much more frequently than long pagoda cannon, but its range and power of attack was much smaller and hence more suitable for short-range defense. Having learnt his lesson, Ai Hui did not add a flame shooting function on the short pagoda cannon.

The two pagoda cannons were like two guardians, defending the valley and securing peace. The grave atmosphere, that once enveloped the valley, had lightened up significantly. The merry laughter of a few children, especially, made the valley livelier.

Life seemed to have gone back on track as the elemental energy was gradually recovering. All kinds of plants started undergoing a growth spurt and the valley was overflowing with the charms of spring.

Having undergone the long pagoda cannon’s tempering, the lava was of a superb quality and its body was only one twelfth its original volume. Its fresh, red color was now a splendid white. Peculiarly, its initially viscous texture was now fluid and flowed like water.

No one had seen such a lava before, and as usual, a name should be given to it. With their previous experience, everyone automatically disregarded Ai Hui despite the fact that it was his contribution.

Ultimately this completely new type of lava was named Snow Lava.

Ai Hui muttered to himself non-stop. That name wasn't any different from the one he had in mind so how dare they ignore them.

Nevertheless, everyone ignored him.

The long pagoda cannon could produce about three liters of snow lava whereas the short one could produce two.

Much practice was necessary to teach everyone how to control the cannon. At least three liters of snow lava would be consumed so only two would be left.

Although the quality of snow lava was decent, no one knew how much money it was worth.

Time had been flying past for the fire elementalists in the valley. One of the five fire elemental elixirs had already gone into their tummies. Not only did their elemental energy improve greatly, they also got to enjoy the fire elemental soup specially brewed by Lou Lan.

The only challenge was that the pagoda cannon wasn't easy to control. Training everyday really consumed a lot of their elemental energy and they were all close to collapsing. The flames from the

pagoda cannon were of an extremely high grade, so exercising any control over it was very difficult.

What surprised Ai Hui was the fact that Fatty performed the best in this aspect.

Ai Hui had to interrogate him by grabbing him before he spilled the reason. He felt safer in the pagoda cannon and hence was at ease. Another reason was that whenever he was close to exhaustion, Lou Lan would give him a little elemental food. The more tired he was the more he would get.

Fatty sneaked guilty glances at Ai Hui as he spoke.

Ai Hui knew not whether to laugh or cry at Fatty's explanation, but on second thought he had just found a method to deal with Fatty in future!

Blind He had never seen bones like the four Ai Hui and gang had picked from the scarletfire flying foxes' cave so he couldn't be sure what kind of dire beast those belonged to.

Peace was restored in the valley. The daily bombardment of the cannons also quieted the surrounding beasts. While they were still unable to walk across Blackfish Mouth Volcano, no beasts dared to have their sights on the valley as well.

The situation seemed stable, so all they had to do was to continue their development plans patiently. However, a new problem arose

shortly.

The resources in the valley were running out!

Lou Lan couldn't even gather sufficient ingredients for his elemental soup. Blind He was facing the same problem. No matter how ample the team's initial preparations were, there were still many incalculable aspects.

Just the elemental energy pools alone consumed a significant amount of resources.

Central Pine Valley was a closed one, so resources did not replenish themselves. The more they used, the less they had left. While the medicinist and farmers had already started sowing the seeds, time was needed for those to grow.

The team had to replenish the goods. They were about to embark on their first trading journey.

Everybody had already spent most of their Heaven Merit Points on the previous batch of materials and had little points left. They needed to sell produce from the valley in order to earn some points to buy other goods.

This was also going to be their experimental journey, albeit a month ahead of schedule.

Chapter 432: Fairy Devil Palace

A snarl, seemingly coming from a beast on the verge of death and who was slightly trembling, could be heard. There was pain and wildness in that growl, which echoed throughout Beast Venom Temple, piercing through layers of wall and dispersing into the clouds.

The people in Beast Venom Temple quickly dropped what they were working on. They seemed to be listening, their expressions complicated. They were shocked, sympathetic and in fear.

"You’re like an exceptional dire beast, Sir!"

"What dire beast! Sir is the Devil himself, Red Devil."

"Not human, that’s for sure. How can any human reach this stage?"

"Is the biscuit ready? Give some to Xianzi. She’s loyal and honest. I hope Sir Red Devil can lead a peaceful life, or else, what is Xianzi to do?"

"It’s already been prepared. How can I forget about Xianzi? Ahh. It’s not easy being Sir. It’s like raising a kid. Teaching Xianzi how to talk, walk and be a sensible person. Were they a married couple?"

"Definitely, otherwise why would Sir be so kind to Xianzi?"

"Sir and Xianzi are both good people but they were born under an unlucky star."

"It’s a chaotic world, who isn’t suffering?"

They sighed and lost the mood to talk.

The sunlight that day was glaring. As the palace hall doors opened one by one, a tall and sturdy figure wearing a black and red mask walked out from the darkness, his black cape surrounding him like the night sky. Sweat could be seen on the lashes of the eyes behind the mask. His blue, seawater-like pupils were steady and motionless, but beneath these deep blues was a faint blood color.

"Congratulations, Sir."

The guards outside the door bowed simultaneously with their heads lowered, the zeal and worship on their faces unconcealed.

This figure, appearing to be shrouded by darkness, had broken the previous record of Beast Venom Temple. It was his twenty-first time undergoing blood refinement. No one could even begin to comprehend this number. Even the Holy Emperor was greatly moved and bestowed him with countless treasures before his refinement.

Today, Red Devil has become Beast Venom Temple’s emblem.

Each time one went through blood refinement was like charging through hell.

Steel-like willpower wasn't enough to bring the blood refiner back from hell. Countless iron men had died from explosion. Red Devil really was a miracle. A living miracle.

No one knew how he'd done it.

But he did.

He did not reek of blood at all. He stood at the entrance, his gaze pouring down. He was like an unmeltable ink block, blocking off all sunlight.

A group of powerful looking guards, dressed in armor platings, whizzed down while supporting a woman in red and landed in the temple. The golden flag represented the Blood of God's supreme Holy Emperor.

The temple guards kneeled down with a panicked cry. Only Red Devil stood motionless.

The lady in red was She Yu. Her gaze fell upon Red Devil. While she looked indifferent, she was actually beyond shocked. Red Devil was obviously standing about ten meters away, but she felt only emptiness.

Twenty-first blood refinement... simply too terrifying.

She dared not forget her manners, bending her head down respectfully. "Congratulations, Master! His Majesty had heard of your success and was very excited about it, mentioning that our nation has another pillar. He'd specially instructed me to congratulate you and gift you a palace hall, ninety thousand god cores, three hundred carts of jade fruits, ten thousand servants. Daily expenses will be allocated to you by the palace. His Majesty wishes to become Xianzi's godbrother and wants me to ask for your opinion."

As if he'd heard nothing, Red Devil threw his gaze far away and stood still like a statue.

She Yu maintained her posture, not daring to move even the slightest. She was dumbstruck in fact. It felt as if the surrounding air had been frozen. She seemed to mistakenly feel that any slight movement on her part would result in an instant blood splash.

She would have blown him up if it had been anyone else who was being rude, but at this point She Yu simply couldn't get herself to feel resentful.

Anyone who had the ability to survive twenty-one blood refinements had the right to be rude. Sir Red Devil was now one of the most powerful people in the whole of God Nation.

A beautiful figure charged into the temple and upon seeing Red Devil her eyes lit up. She shouted cheerily, "Little Devil!"

Her tender yet crisp voice carried a deep yearning and admiration.

The icy atmosphere melted instantly as the dull sunlight regained its dazzle. She Yu and the rest relaxed their muscles only to find their backs filled with sweat.

The beautiful lady rushed over and stopped before Red Devil, putting her pitiful looking face close to his. She pleaded, "Little Devil, stop undergoing blood refinement."

The lady looked over twenty years of age but her voice resembled that of a seven or eight year old child, tender and crisp.

All the graveness and darkness had vanished, as if a dire beast had quietly retracted its sharp claws or a hedgehog had flattened all its spikes, in fear that she would be hurt the slightest.

The king, who had returned from war, took down his crown, placed his scepter down, untied his sword, removed his war clothes and washed himself.

Without all the halos, Red Devil looked ordinary.

He placed his warm palm on her tear-stained cheek, gently removing them. The lady shut her eyes, revealing an expression similar to that of a relaxed kitten.

"Alright, I won’t do it anymore."

He reassured her in a low voice, a slight smile appearing on his face.

With her eyes closed Xianzi acknowledged his words with a face full of joy.

A good while later he answered without even turning his head, "I’ll thank His Majesty on the behalf of Xianzi."

She Yu let out a breath, exultation filling her heart. She responded deferentially, "His Majesty will be ecstatic to know. I shan’t disturb your rest any longer. I’ll ask to be excused."

At that she left quietly with her guards.

"Thanking His Majesty on my behalf?"

"You’re about to have a powerful brother."

"Is it you, Little Devil? But I don’t want Little Devil to be my brother."

"Haha, it isn’t me of course."

A pair of guards entered the palace with a huge pile of gifts,

bowing respectfully. "Congratulations, Sir! Mister Bei's heard about your success and was unable to contain his joy. He specially instructed us to bring you some congratulatory gifts..."

Yet another group entered the courtyard as the head greeted, "Congratulations, Sir! I'm the person in charge of War God Palace and am here to present you with a little something on behalf of my master. He couldn't stop praising you upon hearing about your success, calling you a heroic youth..."

Group after group entered to congratulate Red Devil and offer gifts, filling up the courtyard quickly.

As though nobody was present, Red Devil paid no attention at all. His gentle and warm gaze was only focused on the beautiful face in front of him.

"We're about to have a palace. You are going to name it."

"Really? Let's call it Devil Palace!"

"But Xianzi's living in it? Let's call it Fairy Devil Palace."

"Little Devil, I'm hungry..."

The sunshine was perfect now.

.....

In Skyheart City, citizens suddenly noticed that there were many elementalists from Infantry Division and Sky Edge Division walking on the streets, emitting an unusual trace of odor. People became more careful as they knew that something major was likely to happen whenever such a situation arose.

Madam Ye stood guard before the bed couch, her eyes red. Xiaobao had fallen asleep while leaning on the edge.

On the bed lay an unconscious old man.

This old man wielded the most power in the Avalon of Five Elements but was missing his former might. He was merely an old man who was almost reaching the end of his road.

No different from any other old person.

Worry was evident in one servant’s eyes. She urged in a low voice, "Madam, please get some rest. I’ll keep watch. You haven’t had any rest since yesterday."

Madam Ye shook her head. "I’m fine."

A lady in a veil walked into the room with a long sword in her hand. Seeing Madam Ye she called out softly, "Aunt Ye."

Madam Ye let out a breath upon seeing her guest. "How is it?

How’s the situation outside?"

This young looking lady was today’s Karakorum Polaris.

"We’ve already sealed Skyheart City off. Families are still at peace but they’re all asking around so I reckon it will be difficult to hide it for long. Elder Yuchi from Newlight City had fallen ill as well and is unable to return to Skyheart City as scheduled. We suspect that he’s already gotten hold of the news."

Having learned through experience over a period of time, the lady was no longer the chief of Karakorum Sword League but a division leader of Sky Edge. She did seem more capable and experienced.

Madam Ye couldn’t help but let out, "That old fox!"

She massaged her forehead.

Just then, a weak cough was heard from above the bed, startling the two of them. They turned their heads to the side immediately. Great Elder was slightly awake.

"Father!"

"Great Elder!"

Sorrow filled their hearts. The Great Elder, who used to

dominate the Avalon of Five Elements, did not even have much energy to cough.

Great Elder opened his eyes slowly. The glimmer in his eyes was like a candlelight in the wind, causing much worry that it could go out at anytime.

His voice was frail and carried a bit of a self-mocking tone, "Looks like I'll leave before Junior, how unexpected. But this is good too. He's a Grandmaster after all and I'm just an ordinary man."

Madam Ye responded softly, "You have to stay strong, Father. Everyone's waiting for you to lead us again. You're our backbone."

The Great Elder did not answer. He was rather absent minded. Countless images appeared before his eyes. He'd had the glory of ruling over the world. Every one of his strategic decisions affected and changed the Avalon of Five Elements. But thinking about how they had to resort to struggling their way into the Wilderness, an intense guilt rose within his chest. He did not know what he'd done wrong.

But he knew that he must have done something wrong.

As the Great Elder, he was definitely accountable for the plight of the Avalon of Five Elements.

His faint breaths contained an inexpressible guilt, remorse and blankness.

He said, somewhat at a loss and somewhat relieved, "Avalon of Five Elements is yours from now onward. You’re stronger than me. Maybe you’ll think of a solution. Do not lose to Blood of God."

Madam Ye reassured unhesitatingly, "We won’t lose to them."

Her voice carried such an intensity that sent Karakorum Polaris and the servants trembled inwardly. Madam had always been composed, virtuous and sweet-tempered. It was their first time seeing Madam so resentful.

But thinking about her dead husband and her muddleheaded boy, everyone was relieved.

The Great Elder’s eyes lit up a little. "Order the three central divisions to withdraw from Old Territory and defend Skyheart City. Have the three division leaders meet me. Order North Sea Division to launch an attack against Blood of God. There’s a need to boost the morale of the Avalon of Five Elements. Tell Shi Beihai not to worry about casualties. The three central divisions will provide assistance when the time comes."

Karakorum Polaris shuddered and couldn’t help but take a quick glimpse at Aunt Ye.

Madam Ye stood up immediately. "I’ll get to it right now."

Chapter 433: Clearwater City

Yuchi Ba looked at the distant, flourishing city with fear and bewilderment in his eyes.

Up until now, the situation had been very optimistic.

From now on, all of their hope and fate was placed in this newly-built city. There was no other way out for them.

The other Elders beside him looked absent-minded as well. Their faces contained an unconcealable worry.

When the news of Great Elder being seriously ill was disseminated,Yuchi Ba knew that the fragile balance of power in Elders Guild would be immediately toppled. The conflicts and divergences between new citizens and aristocratic families could no longer be concealed.

Both parties would try to limit each other's strength and authority. No one would be able to stop the collapse of Elders Guild.

Yuchi Ba knew that Madam Ye was shrewd and formidable, but he still did not think that she could pull Elders Guild out of this critical crisis.

How could the prestige that Great Elder had built up over his lifetime be replaced by a newcomer just like this?

New citizens were filled with both fear and respect for Great Elder.

Yuchi Ba had fantasized about taking over the position of Great Elder numerous times. However, when he knew that Great Elder was gravely ill, his first reaction was to panic.

Where would their path lie in the future? What would happen to Newlight City in the future? Where could he lead the new citizens to? Were they able to withstand Blood of God?

He did not know the answers to all of these questions.

Now he truly understood that there was an uncrossable gap between him and Great Elder.

Initially, everyone resented Great Elder. Whenever things went wrong, they would direct numerous complaints at him. However, now that Great Elder suddenly collapsed, they came to the realization that he was the pillar supporting everyone.

In the past, New Citizen Faction felt that Great Elder was their number one enemy. However, now that Great Elder was on the verge of collapse, instead of rejoicing, they were feeling deeply troubled.

"Great Elder truly lived up to his status. He was a ruthless individual," Yuchi Ba regained his composure, "Shi Beihai is in

trouble."

The other Elders understood what Yuchi Ba was trying to say.

The New Citizen Faction and the Aristocratic Faction were clearly at odds. Both parties had relatively strong foundations. Neutral Faction would most likely be devoured by Aristocratic Faction first. Being a member of Neutral Faction, Shi Beihai was neither favored by New Citizen Faction nor Aristocratic Faction.

This could be seen from Great Elder's order as well. Great Elder sent the three central divisions to guard Skyheart City, but he'd sent Shi Beihai to attack Blood of God. Obviously, he was trying to diminish Shi Beihai's strength.

Another Elder could not help but ask, "Can we win over Shi Beihai? We used to have a rather good relationship with the Neutral Faction."

Aristocratic Faction always made up the majority of Elders Guild. As such, New Citizen Faction often collaborated with the Neutral Faction to contend against Aristocratic Faction.

The relationship between New Citizen Faction and Neutral Faction was rather harmonious.

"We can try, but we can't have too high of an expectation. Even though Neutral Faction sympathizes with New Citizen Faction, they are mainly made up of aristocratic families as well." Yuchi Ba

replied with a non-committal tone.

Taking a deep breath, Yuchi Ba continued, "From today onwards, Elders Guild ceases to exist except in name. We have to depend on ourselves for our future. If we are powerful, we can do anything we want. If we are weak, even if the Aristocratic Faction don't devour us, Blood of God will not let us off. Everyone, please work hard."

Everyone bowed respectfully and replied, "Yes!"

Yuchi Ba's eyes were blazing as he spoke with an aggressive tone, "Right now, since the situation hasn't been fixed, we will wait for Tong Gui and Yu Lin to come back and build a combat division that can safeguard Newlight City. We will have a combat division that belongs to the new citizens."

He turned and said to Chouchou with a deep voice, "Prepare to execute your plan."

"Yes!" Chouchou's chubby face was filled with excitement.

.....

The news of Great Elder being severely ill did not only affect the higher-ups. Its effects were spreading and developing gradually.

Clearwater City, situated in the east of Palette Cloud Village, was not affected much by the news. The locals' lives still went on as

usual.

Clearwater City was a medium-scale city. It was also the nearest medium-scale city to Central Pine Valley. Even so, Ai Hui and his counterparts needed to go on an arduous journey of twenty-six days to reach there.

In Wilderness, the distance between each city was exceptionally long. Dangers lurked everywhere and they needed to be vigilant at all times for surprise attacks by dire beasts. Other than the developed trade routes set up by the few large-scale cities nearby, the rest of the cities still lacked the capabilities to solve this issue.

There had been situations where trading caravans were being attacked by dire beasts. Some cunning and vicious dire beasts were even specialized in hunting elementalists.

Those small-scale cities that lacked sufficient defensive capabilities would become the main targets for dire beasts. Some dire beasts even formed groups to attack these small-scale cities. In areas where the situation was critical, organised attacks were being launched upon some small-scale cities. The dire beasts that carried out these organized attacks were able to form elemental elixirs.

Mankind had no choice but to invade Wilderness. Like their ancestors, they were trying to establish a new home for themselves.

This war had just begun. Who was the real prey? Who was the overlord of Wilderness? Only time would tell.

The number of small-scale cities was decreasing sharply as they were starting to gather to form medium-scale to large-scale cities. This trend was becoming an undeniable reality. Some people even predicted that only large-scale cities would survive in Wilderness in the future.

Clearwater City also gradually strengthened itself and became a middle-scale city under such circumstances. The city kept on expanding and it would become a large-scale city very soon.

Other than being a relatively short distance away from them, the healthy economy of Clearwater City was another reason why Ai Hui and the rest chose to come to this city.

Clearwater City owed its healthy economy to its mayor, Qiao Meiqi.

Before Qiao Meiqi built Clearwater City, he possessed a powerful and rich enterprise, Meiqi Enterprise, Qiao Meiqi knew how to manage his business properly and he had deep relationships with some aristocratic families. For example, he and the Gong Residence's eldest young master, Gong Chengxiu, were bosom buddies.

When the Wilderness Expansion Order was announced, Qiao Meiqi knew that the future lay in Wilderness. Without any hesitation, he decided to build a city in Wilderness and his decision was supported by the Gong Residence.

After expending a huge amount of time and effort blazing a new trail into Wilderness, Qiao Meiqi finally built Clearwater City in the east of Palette Cloud Village.

After Clearwater City was established, he actively supported people to open up trade routes and start businesses. He even offered highly-priced bounties for the surrounding dire beasts. After annexing a few small-scale cities that were defeated by dire beasts, Clearwater City strengthened rapidly. Now, Clearwater City had become a prosperous city.

Dangers could not stop people's desire for wealth.

Clearwater City was hugely appealing for combat elementalists. As long as one could hunt down a dire beast, he or she could obtain a huge bounty. The purchase prices for dire beast materials were very fair and generous as well. Those capable elementalists could obtain prestige and wealth in Clearwater City.

Having a huge amount of dire beast materials also attracted many trading caravans to the city.

Among the crowd of trading caravans and travellers, Ai Hui and his counterparts were not really noticeable. This time around, there was only Ai Hui, Iron Lady, Lou Lan and Zhao Boan.

Ai Hui and Iron Lady were in charge of safety for this trip. Zhao Boan was in charge of handling business deals and Lou Lan was in charge of replenishing supplies.

Central Pine Valley's exports were pathetically little. Other than the snow lava, they only had some fire sacks from the scarletfire flying foxes. These were their spoils of war. They had very few intact fire sacks. Ai Hui and his counterparts could only gather forty of them.

The cleverest housewife could not cook without rice. How could they buy or trade for anything if they did not have exports to sell in the first place?

Ai Hui thought of the flaming bones in the scarletfire flying foxes' cave and ordered everyone to bring them back. Even though the selling price for the flaming bones was not high, there were a huge number of them.

All the flaming bones had been tempered with the smelting furnace's White Cluster Flames to increase their quality. The base level of Hellfire Pagoda Cannon's Snow Cluster Flames was too high for the flaming bones. They could not take it and were reduced directly to ashes.

After the flaming bones were tempered, their quality had clearly upgraded. Blind He's interest was piqued and he used some of these flaming bones to create a few unique weapons.

However, all of these weapons were fire elemental ones and they were only suitable for fire elementalists. They did not need to worry about market demand for fire elemental weapons. After Fire Prairie was annexed by Blood of God, there was a shortage of fire elemental materials and production of fire elemental weapons was stopped. Right now, the market prices of fire elemental weapons

were exorbitant.

When everyone heard of this news, all of them became very excited.

Especially Iron Lady, this was the first time she was doing business and this was a completely new experience for her.

In the past, she had never fussed over money. Her family would give her anything that she needed. The price of her clothes and her daily necessities was exorbitant. She did not understand the concept of money in the past. Otherwise, she would not have offered up her Calming Indigo Bracelet as collateral for the money for a bowl of noodles.

However, now she would be happy over the small sum of profit that everyone was going to make.

Generally speaking, the cities in Wilderness were smaller than the cities in the Avalon of Five Elements. The cities in Wilderness placed emphasis on their defence first. The smaller a city was, the easier it was to defend it.

Most of the cities in Avalon of Five Elements were built after Avalon of Five Elements had completely stabilized. A stable social environment allowed them to not think so much about the issue of defence. This was why the cities in Avalon of Five Elements could be so big.

Clearwater City was considered a middle-scale city in Wilderness, however, its actual area was smaller than Peace City.

Even though the city was small, its population was a lot larger than Peace City's.

Everyone was puzzled about how so many people were gathered in such a small city.

Every now and then, a group of draught beasts would pass by them with a jingle. This was the first time Ai Hui and his counterparts saw these draught beasts. They had thick limbs and they had a circle of thick and strong bone spikes growing out from the edge of their wide backs. The circle of bone spikes acted as a huge basin for people to place their goods within it.

These draught beasts had a huge amount of strength and exceptional endurance. They were very cheap to rear as well. Since they looked like they carried a huge basin on their backs, they were called load basin beasts.

The rise of load basin beasts began after the Wilderness Expansion Order was announced.

In Wilderness, it was much more difficult to obtain elemental energy than in Avalon of Five Elements. Transporting vehicles like Three Leaves Bamboo Carts and Fiery Floating Clouds required drivers to expend a huge amount of elemental energy. They were gradually replaced by load basin beasts. Furthermore, the air space above Wilderness was lurking with dangers everywhere.

Travelling on ground was much safer than travelling through air.

Reportedly, load basin beasts were somewhat related to Blood of God.

It was reported that load basin beasts were initially a failed experimental blood fiend that Beast Venom Temple bred. Soon after, they were sold to a businessman who later brought them to Wilderness. Very soon, people began to discover their worth. They used forbidden spells to induce reproduction and multiply their numbers. After a few generations of the load basin beasts being bred, the blood poison within their bodies became more and more diluted. Eventually, the load basin beasts no longer contained any trace of the blood poison.

Strangely speaking, blood poison was invincible in the Avalon of Five Elements, spreading everywhere without much difficulty. In Old Territory, it spread and progressed much slower. In Wilderness, it could not even spread at all.

One could not help but be amazed at how mysterious this world worked.

Groups of load basin beasts that were carrying tons of goods walked on the road. Elementalists that were draped in animal hides were riding on top of these load basin beasts. Copper bells were hung on the bone spikes of the load basin beasts, producing jingling sounds as they walked through the market.

Ai Hui and the rest felt as if they had returned to the primitive

ancient times.

Chapter 434: Bargain

For the past two years, the world had undergone great changes.

These changes had impacted various aspects of the cities, for example, commodities. A huge amount of dire beast materials could be found on the market. Two years ago, these dire beast materials were considered rare commodities. Nowadays, they could be found almost everywhere. The products that could be produced or obtained readily two years ago were in scarcity now. For example, the prices of artifact remnants had increased more than ten times in the last two years. Sometimes, they could not even be bought on account of their exorbitant prices.

Those who'd barged into Wilderness to vie for territories with dire beasts without sufficient preparation had gone through countless cruel struggles. The mysterious Wilderness was filled with unknowns. For example, unknown species and unknown ores. These mysterious unknowns might provide either boundless wealth or nothing at all.

The endless stream of new materials emerging on the market had given rise to a group of appraisers who were specialized in appraising these unknown materials.

Most of them used to be smiths with rich experience and knowledge in various materials in the past. It was initially because they could not get any jobs and were very free that they decided to help people to appraise these unknown new materials. Soon after, someone identified the business opportunity behind this and changed his profession to being an appraiser.

Usually, a material's selling price was decided by an appraiser's evaluation of it. As such, an appraiser viewed his reputation and authority with great importance. Once his reputation suffered a blow, it would be very hard for him to regain everyone's trust.

Clearwater City, which possessed a healthy economy, was filled with appraisers. The most famous and authoritative appraiser in Clearwater City was Appraiser Kang Ding.

Kang Ding was not a smith in the past. He was the disciple of a smith for fifteen years. In these fifteen years, he carried out basic treatments on various materials every day.

Even though he did not become an outstanding smith, he had fifteen years of experience in handling materials. This allowed him to give exceptionally precise evaluations of materials.

Changing his profession to an appraiser allowed him to do what he was best at.

Kang Ding rose to fame around one year ago when he appraised a brand-new type of beast bone. That was a very unique type of beast bone. It had a honeycomb-like structure and its texture was soft. One could crush it into a fine powder with a little bit of strength.

At that time, other than Kang Ding, all the other appraisers gave it an appraisal grade of "Inferior". This result implied that the bone was a type of material that could not be used to forge any equipment. Perhaps it could only be used as fertilizer for soil and

was basically worthless.

The emergence of a huge amount of new materials had rendered the conventional grading system for materials obsolete. Everyone was trying to come up with a new grading system.

Kang Ding was not affected by other appraisers' evaluations of the beast bone. Fifteen years of experience told him there was something extraordinary about that piece of delicate beast bone. Three days later, he gave his evaluation and it caused an uproar in the public. The grade he gave was "B-Excellent".

Upon receiving the news of Kang Ding's appraisal grade, the other appraisers flew into a rage and denounced Kang Ding. They claimed that Kang Ding had some insider relationship with the owner of the beast bone for giving the grade of "B-Excellent" to such a trashy material

Under everyone's watchful eyes, Kang Ding took out a bottle of metal elemental floral water and sprinkled it over the piece of beast bone. Following which, something miraculous happened to the piece of beast bone. A faint golden lustre erupted from the deathly white beast bone and dazzled everyone's eyes.

The nature of the beast bone had undergone a terrifying transformation as well. The previously delicate and weak beast bone had become tough and solid, so much so that a sword couldn't even leave a scratch on it. Furthermore, it could float in the air without ever landing on the ground like a feather.

The owner was exceptionally excited. He named this unknown piece of beast bone as Kang Ding Feather Bone. Eventually, twelve Kang Ding Feather Bones were being bought by Mayor Qiao Meiqi for an astronomical price.

The owner of the Kang Ding Feather Bones wanted to pay Kang Ding ten times the usual appraisal fee but Kang Ding rejected him tactfully and accepted the normal fee.

This incident helped Kang Ding to attain an extremely good reputation. If it was a greedy appraiser that appraised the beast bones, he might have bought the beast bones from the owner at an extremely low price and then resold them to earn a huge profit.

From that day onwards, Kang Ding became the most authoritative appraiser that charged the highest appraisal fee in Clearwater City.

He even established his own appraisal shop, Kang Appraisal Shop.

The appraisal fee was not a big issue to Ai Hui and the rest. They handed over their items to Kang Appraisal Shop and went to explore the market in Clearwater City.

They were filled with curiosity towards this city.

Even though the city was smaller than Peace City, its population was five times larger than Peace City’s. It was hard to find a corner

in the city that was cold and isolated. This had something to do with one of Qiao Meiqi's policies as well. Clearwater City did not collect city admission tax.

Cities like Skyheart City and Newlight City were good for elementalists to train in, as they had a high concentration level of elemental energy. However, not everyone could stay there. Anyone who entered these two cities had to pay a city admission tax first. Only the elites could establish a foothold in these huge cities.

By exempting the city admission tax, Clearwater City had attracted a huge number of elementalists.

Qiao Meiqi was fully aware that a sufficient human population was the basis of a prosperous economy. Clearwater City was situated in an isolated location, which was a huge disadvantage. However, Qian Meiqi's painstaking efforts to manage Clearwater City had made it far more prosperous than most of the other cities in Wilderness.

The market in Clearwater City was bustling with noise and excitement and completely filled with people. Since the market was not spacious enough, many people placed their goods on the ground and hawked them. Most of these people had just returned from the Wilderness. They did not have many goods and the quality of their goods was not high. If they sold them to shops, they would not make much profit. As such, they decided to set up their own makeshift stores on the streets.

Many people liked to shop here as a lot of the things sold here had been appraised.

Not everyone could afford the expensive appraisal fees.

There were a lot of times where one would buy a seemingly good item only to discover that it was worthless after having it appraised. Every time this happened, the one who got scammed would feel extremely regretful.

Whether or not a person could pick up a good item in this market had to depend on his luck and foresight. However, not everyone could handle such a situation calmly and peacefully. Elementalists that roamed Wilderness were mostly hot-headed and brash. It was normal for elementalists to resort to violence when things went wrong.

Even so, Clearwater City still enjoyed good public order.

On the surrounding towers, fully-armored combat elementalists would scan the city with their eyes every now and then. If they discovered anyone who was creating a nuisance, they would descend from the sky and arrest that person. If the troublemaker tried to resist, the guards would have the right to kill him on the spot.

After a few incidents of tough love, all the elementalists in the city became well-behaved. After all, they understood that they were here to make business deals.

Ai Hui and his counterparts were extremely eye-catching among the crowd.

The focal point was Shi Xueman. She was tall and slim and her face was beautiful and alluring. The decorative motif on her blue-white armor was magnificent, highlighting her perfect figure. She carried a magnificent spear on her back and her frosty gaze would occasionally sweep across her surroundings.

Clearwater City was located in the depths of Wilderness. The living conditions in Wilderness were extremely terrible and those elementalists that lived here were mainly boorish and intrepid individuals. How often could they see such a gorgeous girl? Every pair of eyes was fixated on Shi Xueman.

Something bizarre happened. Everywhere Shi Xueman went, the clamor would freeze like ice.

Shi Xueman had been used to this kind of situation since she was young. When she was in Induction Ground, she was already a goddess that was widely adored. With a relaxed facial expression, she walked with confidence beside Ai Hui.

Ai Hui teased her, "Tsk tsk, our Iron Lady is truly formidable. She is way more formidable than any of our killer moves. Iron Lady, you will be in charge of bargaining with the vendors later. They might even give us some freebies."

Shi Xueman was already used to Ai Hui’s shameless and avaricious character. However, she felt that Ai Hui’s words made sense. Since they were so poor now, it would be best for them to save as much money as possible. She nodded her head and replied

solemnly, "I don’t know how to bargain. So how do you bargain? Teach me, do I use a sword or a spear?"

Ai Hui stopped in his tracks. Use a sword or a spear…

He could envision Iron Lady placing a sword on a vendor’s neck with an ice-cold look on her face while asking coldly, "Half price, are you selling it?"

The scene was beautiful…

Ai Hui gave a soft cough and replied, "Actually I shall leave it to the professionals. Boan, I shall leave it to you."

Zhao Boan quickly nodded his head and replied, "Don’t worry, you can leave it to your subordinate."

He was afraid of replying too slow. When he heard Miss Shi Xueman’s words just now, his facial expression froze. After spending so much time with her, he knew that Miss Shi would really do this kind of thing. If she really did this kind of thing, they would be in deep trouble.

Eventually, the market regained its bustle. Even though there would be people looking at Ai Hui and his party every now and then, they did it in a very subtle way. In times where public order could break down easily, a girl who dared to roam around in Wilderness must be very powerful. Furthermore, everything on Shi Xueman’s body looked extraordinary. Those who were sharp

could tell that she came from a remarkable background.

She had a servant, a guard, a butler and a sand puppet.

The guard looked somewhat arrogant. How dare he walk alongside with his mistress...

If Ai Hui knew that people thought he was Iron Lady's guard, he would be seething with anger.

However, at this point of time, his attention was on the goods placed in the stores on both sides of him. There were many things that he had never seen before. Similarly, Lou Lan was filled with curiosity too. Lou Lan had seen almost every material sold in Central Pine City. However, most of the things sold here were not recorded in the books he'd read. He found them to be very fascinating.

Ai Hui and Lou Lan stopped and squatted down at almost every store to look at their goods. A human and a sand puppet were conversing in high spirits.

"Lou Lan, do you know what is this?"

"Ai Hui, Lou Lan has not seen it before. Boss, may I know what this is?"

...

"Lou Lan, this looks rather delicious."

"Ai Hui, this cannot be eaten. This is the poison sack of a smoke beast."

...

"Lou Lan, this mud is very sticky."

"Ai Hui, this is an earth elemental material, unceasing mud. It is a very practical earth elemental material. It has excellent ductility. It can be pulled into a very fine string to be used as a drawstring for a bow."

Upon hearing Lou Lan’s words, the vendor could not help but exclaim in admiration, "Brother, your sand puppet is very formidable."

"Is that why Boss wants to give us a discount?" Ai Hui took advantage and answered cheekily.

The vendor chuckled, "Alright, since you’re quite an interesting fellow, I shall give you a twenty-percent discount. I will give you a twenty-percent discount for whatever you choose."

Ai Hui was energized.

"But your goods are still more expensive than the other stores, even after the twenty-percent discount," Lou Lan suddenly chirped in.

"Don’t say such nonsense," the smile on the vendor’s face froze.

Lou Lan lifted up his fingers and replied with a serious look on his face, "The sixth store from our left sells an owl plume for forty elemental energy beans. Boss, if you give us a twenty-percent discount for an owl plume here, it will be forty-five elemental energy beans. The ninth store from our right sells an owl plume for thirty-eight elemental energy beans. The body of that plume is thick and strong. The feathers are fine and durable without any flaws. It is of a high grade. The fifteenth store from our right..."

The vendor was dumbfounded. After a while, he suddenly grabbed the unceasing mud on the ground and passed it to Lou Lan, "I will give it to you for free!"

Lou Lan happily took over the unceasing mud. The two eyes on his mask curled into two curved, smiling slits as he stood up and thanked the vendor politely, "Thank you, Boss!"

As the vendor watched Ai Hui and his party walk away, he muttered to himself, "That sand puppet has come alive..."

Chapter 435: Your Mistress

Kang Ding arrived at his appraisal shop as usual.

He put on a silvery black working apron that was made out of a cowhide from a three-year-old sharp-horned ink cow. After going through a unique sewing process, it gave off a silvery black metallic lustre. The most valuable part of a sharp-horned ink cow was its cowhide. The cowhide was covered with natural vein patterns that flowed with a thin layer of elemental energy. This thin layer of elemental energy allowed the cowhide apron to protect its wearer from reactive and dangerous materials.

This working apron costed Kang Ding one hundred and fifty essence elemental energy beans.

Currently, elemental energy beans and essence elemental beans were much more valuable than they were two years ago.

There was practically no trade route between Wilderness and Jadeite Forest. In Wilderness, one had to grow his or her own elemental energy beans and essence elemental beans.

This made it harder for mankind to obtain elemental energy in Wilderness.

As Kang Ding's prestige increased, his workload increased sharply as well. However, he still insisted on handling all his work by himself. After all, his customers' wealth and his own reputation were on the line.

He began his work proficiently and appraised the items in the order they were sent to him.

Once Kang Ding started to work, his facial expression became unusually focused. Every movement he made was meticulous. He was filled with passion towards his job. As compared to being a disciple of a smith, this job was much more interesting and offered him a greater sense of achievement. He felt very grateful for this job. Thanks to this job, his life had become better. The respect and reverence from everyone made him understand how valuable he was.

The passionate Kang Ding had developed many new and odd appraising methods and formed his own appraising system.

His movements were natural and smooth-flowing like water, aesthetically pleasing to whoever was watching him work.

Right now, he was a reputable appraiser with rich experience. He had appraised a lot of unknown materials from numerous goods owners and vendors.

After one hour, more than half of the materials on the table had been appraised.

Suddenly, a package waiting to be appraised caught his attention.

He first saw a piece of flaming bone. Even though it looked

slightly different from the ordinary flaming bones, he could still recognize it at one glance. He took out the piece of flaming bone and examined it carefully.

Flaming bones were the bones of scarletfire flying foxes and they were considered a pretty good type of fire elemental material. However, the most valuable parts of a scarletfire flying fox were its scarlet fire and fire sack. Flaming bones were its most worthless part.

However, this piece of flaming bone had been tempered before and its base level had increased. The person who tempered it was pretty high-leveled and the flame he used was perfect. The performance of this piece of flaming bone had clearly been upgraded without any lingering damage.

He wrote down "C-Ordinary" on the appraisal grading slip.

The ordinary flaming bones were mostly graded as "D". This piece of flaming bone was given a grade of "C" due to the excellent workmanship on it.

The old grading standards for materials were no longer suitable for the current times as the world had changed too much. Every appraiser’s grading standards were different. Up until now, a unified grading system had not been formed yet.

Kang Ding appraised a material based on two things, its physical nature and its elemental nature. Physical nature referred to physical characteristics such as toughness, weight, durability etc.

Elemental nature referred to elemental characteristics such as elemental energy capacity, elemental energy purity level, special elemental effects etc.

From the best grade to the worst grade, there were four grades, A, B, C, and D. Each grade was further classified into "Excellent", "Good", and "Ordinary".

Kang Ding estimated the selling price for such a piece of flaming bone to be, at most. fifty elemental energy beans, and that was given the fact that fire elemental materials were in scarcity nowadays.

For the other party to have brought a piece of flaming bone to be appraised, they must have a huge amount of them.

Was it possible that they wiped out an entire clan of scarletfire flying foxes?

Kang Ding was somewhat curious. After all, his conjecture wasn’t baseless. Whether it was flaming bones, fire sacks, or the more expensive scarlet fire, they were in scarcity on the market.

Groups of scarletfire flying foxes spelled disaster.

He thought of a regular customer who often purchased low-level fire elemental materials in bulk. This kind of flaming bone was suitable for him. He did not immediately notify that regular customer, but merely noted it down.

Due to Kang Appraisal Shop's prestige and authority, many enterprises kept their eyes on it. If there were any good materials, they would get the news first-hand. Kang Appraisal Shop had connections with many huge enterprises. This was why so many people got their goods appraised at Kang Appraisal Shop, so that their goods could be recommended to those huge enterprises.

Of course, Kang Ding was only in charge of appraising materials and setting up connections between sellers and buyers. He would definitely not interfere with the price negotiations.

These issues came after the appraising stage. He regained his focus and opened up the second package.

There was a thumb-sized transparent bamboo bottle. Inside the bottle, there was a crystal-clear liquid.

Kang Ding's eyes lit up.

The transparent bamboo bottle was made up of colorglass bamboo. The body of a colorglass bamboo was bright and colorful like a piece of colored glass, extremely gorgeous. Colorglass bamboos that were colorless and transparent were considered to be top quality. Colorglass bamboos were usually used to make containers. These containers could not be damaged by fire or water easily and they would not affect the nature of the substances they were holding as well. Colorglass bamboos were the best material for making containers.

However, colorglass bamboos took very long to cultivate and they were very costly. Generally speaking, colorgrass bamboo containers were mostly used to hold valuable substances.

Boom. When he took off the lid of the colorglass bamboo bottle, a mass of red-colored, blazing cloud gushed out of it.

Just as the mass of blazing cloud was about to hit Kang Ding, his cowhide apron suddenly gave off a layer of faint glow and blocked the blazing cloud.

Kang Ding remained calm as a look of amazement swept across his eyes. Such a powerful aura of fire elemental energy!

Taking off the lid already produced such a weird effect, what exactly was the crystal clear liquid in it?

Given his experience, he could roughly guess that it was a kind of fire liquid. Fire liquid was a necessity for fire elementalist to train with. Most of the fire elementalists would carry a container-like vat or calabash to hold the fire liquid.

The most commonly-seen fire liquid was lava. A lot of types of fire liquid used by elementalists were concocted using special methods. There were many types of fire liquid and most of them had high viscosity. Kang Ding had never seen such a crystal clear fire liquid before.

This was a brand-new type of fire liquid!

Kang Ding’s eyes lit up. As an appraiser, there was nothing more exciting than coming across an unknown material.

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The market of Clearwater City.

Han Li’s gaze had never left that beautiful and frosty girl. Even though she was most likely from an influential family, he had not shown any fear at all. An infatuated look was upon his face. The girl did not talk much but her ice-cold nature had a deadly enticement over him.

When he thought of conquering a girl like this, his heart was blazing with flames.

Han Li’s partner noticed his odd behaviour.

His partner had a common-looking face and there was nothing special about his body. If he stood among the crowd, he would be practically unnoticeable. However, at this moment, his eyes were flickering with wariness. He lowered his voice and reminded Han Li, "Don’t cause any trouble, we are not here to have fun."

"Why would I cause trouble in front of such a beautiful girl?" Han Li chuckled.

After finishing his sentence, Han Li walked towards his prey.

His partner felt helpless and he could not do anything to stop Han Li.

Shi Xueman bent down and pointed to a blue pearl in the stall and asked, "Can I pick it up and take a closer look at it?"

The vendor was a boorish man. When he saw such a goddess-like girl, his face turned bright-red. He stuttered, "You... you can."

Shi Xueman picked up the blue bead and looked curiously at it. This was the first time she'd seen such a pearl. The pearl was around the size of a thumb. It was sparkling and translucent, resembling a sapphire. She could sense a strong aura of water elemental energy within it. Initially, she thought it was some kind of elemental elixir from a fish-type dire beast. However, she rejected this conjecture very soon. She had a water elemental elixir back at home, therefore, she knew that a water elemental elixir was of a higher base level and contained more vigorous water elemental energy than this pearl.

"I will buy this pearl."

Suddenly, a male voice came from behind her.

Everyone's eyes turned around at the same time. The voice belonged to a tall, young male who was around twenty-seven years old. He smiled at Shi Xueman and gave a light bow, "Miss, is it

possible for you to part with this pearl and let me have it?"

Ai Hui glanced at the sword in the man's hand and withdrew his gaze.

Shi Xueman's gaze stopped at the man's face for a second before turning to the vendor and asked, "How much is this?"

Upon hearing this, the vendor quickly replied, "Fifty essence elemental beans."

"I'm not going to sell it to him, I'm selling it to you," the vendor added on.

Shi Xueman felt that the vendor was rather cute and smiled, "Thank you, Boss."

Shi Xueman's invigorating smile looked as if it could melt ice and snow. Even Ai Hui's eyes lit up.

A blank look flashed across Han Li's face. Han Li was suffocating, appearing as if his heart had been assassinated by Shi Xueman's smile. However, he regained his composure very soon. There was a voice screaming in his heart, 'You must get her!'

Just as Shi Xueman was about to pay for the pearl, Han Li threw a pouch at the vendor, "I didn't know there was such an alluring smile in this world. Miss, you are a once-in-a-lifetime beauty. It's my luck to be able to witness such a beauty like you with my own

eyes. This pearl shall be my small gift to you."

Shi Xueman did not bother to look at him. Suddenly, Ai Hui blurted out, "It's merely fifty essence elemental beans. Do you think we need you to pay for it?"

Han Li was shocked. He was still afraid that the other party would ignore him. As long as the other party ignored him, things would be easier. He continued, "Brother, you're right. Fifty essence elemental beans are not enough to represent my feelings. What else does your mistress want to buy? I will buy everything for her!"

Your mistress...

Zhao Boan was stunned.

Ai Hui was stunned as well. However, he quickly returned to his senses and replied, "There are still a lot of things that my mistress wants to buy. Since you want to court her, I shall give you a chance. But I'm afraid that your wallet might be too small and can't handle what she wants. Or are you a miser?"

Han Li replied with confidence, "There is an old saying, all the gold that a man spends can be earned back again. Wealth is merely a worldly possession, I will do whatever it takes to see your mistress smile. Brother, don't worry, I am rich enough to do that."

Shi Xueman knew Ai Hui was up to no good and she decided not to say anything.

"Really? Lou Lan, do you still remember all the good things that we came across just now?" Ai Hui put on a doubtful look on his face.

Lou Lan nodded his head obediently and replied, "I still remember them, Ai Hui."

Ai Hui?

Han Li found this name somewhat familiar. However, he soon put his doubt aside. After all, this fellow was just a servant.

"Let’s go and witness the sincerity of this mister," Ai Hui said and smiled.

Han Li smiled. Like a gentleman, he replied sincerely, "I am truly sincere towards your mistress. Heaven and earth can vouch for my sincerity."

Deep down, Han Li was delighted and sneering. You can spend all my money. The more the merrier. Do you think you can get my money so easily?

Chapter 436: The Wicked Servant

Han Li’s face became uglier and uglier.

The hateful servant, along with his sand puppet, was milking him dry. Every store they passed by closed down.

When Han Li took out his last elemental energy bean, his face had turned ashen. Finally, he could no longer take it and yelled, "Enough!"

Ai Hui put on a blank look on his face and replied, "But we haven’t bought enough... There are still a lot of things that we need."

Ai Hui gave Han Li an innocent look. After a while, he acted as if he came to a realization and said, "Eh? No more money? Sigh, you should have told me you don’t have anymore money. Now you’re embarrassed, right? Sigh, Brother, you’re an honorable individual after all, don’t do such an embarrassing thing in the future again. Come on, come on, I will return everything. Give me a moment."

Ai Hui ran to a nearby store and used one elemental energy bean to buy a piece of rag.

Ai Hui carefully spread the rag on the ground and placed all the things he had bought with Han Li’s money on it, piling everything up like a small hill

With lightning speed, Ai Hui finished placing all the things on the rag and heaved a sigh of relief. Following which, he said sincerely to Han Li, "Brother, you don't have much money now and it's all my fault for not knowing your situation. I don't think we can get any refunds for these things. Hmm, since we are here, you can set up a store and get back as much money as possible. Now that I think about it, at least you can earn some travel expenses and we can get to know each other."

Han Li's face reddened as his body trembled with anger. Even after he'd been through so many different situations in his life, he still felt ashamed and wanted to find a hole to hide in at this point of time.

Up to this moment, how could he not have known that he was being fooled by the other party?

Furthermore, since the other party did not want to keep the things, he couldn't find an excuse to be angry with them as well.

He suppressed the anger within his heart and forced a smile, "Brother, you're being courteous with me. These things..."

Before Han Li could finish his sentence, Ai Hui interrupted him with an indignant tone "Sigh, Brother, why are you still so stubborn at this point of time? A true man has to be flexible. How can you be stumped by such a small problem. This is a good place to set up a store. I believe you will earn some travel expenses within a short period of time. Brother, if you're capable, you might even be able to make a small fortune."

By the time Ai Hui finished his sentence, his indignant tone had changed to a caring one. Ai Hui put on an encouraging look on his face as he patted Han Li's shoulder.

Han Li was at a complete loss. He had a blank look on his face as he stood there motionlessly.

Shi Xueman watched the entire incident unfolded from a bystander's point of view. She finally knew how evil Ai Hui could be!

When she heard Ai Hui's last sentence, she almost broke into laughter.

Previously, she was still very curious about how Ai Hui would conclude this situation. She could tell that the other party had bad intentions and she expected them to break into a fight eventually. To her surprise, Ai Hui, being a pain in the neck, did not cause any unnecessary trouble. As Shi Xueman watched Ai Hui's performance, she tried her best to suppress her laughter.

Since she was young, there had been countless boys that had tried to fawn over her. She had seen various methods these boys used to demean each other in front of her. However, none of them could put up such a marvellous performance like Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was different from other guys. Other guys would try their best to show how chivalrous and how kind they were in front of her. Ai Hui was the only one who did not conceal his wickedness

from her.

Such an evil guy!

Shi Xueman exclaimed in admiration. With an emotionless look on her face, she took out the blue pearl and placed it on top of the heap of unwanted things. She had just plunged a knife into Han Li's already bleeding heart.

Han Li felt a gush of blood rushing to his brain. His entire brain was buzzing and he could not think of anything.

He was at a complete loss.

Should he blow himself up now? He wanted to do this, but his rationality told him that this would be a bad choice. The surrounding guards had been looking vigilantly in his direction. If he made any wrong moves, he would attract these guards to him. He was not afraid of them, but rather, he was on a mission now. As such, he could only suppress his anger.

If he caused trouble in the market now, he would be expelled from the city and he would fail his mission completely.

Right now, he was filled with resentment and regret. Why didn't he make some preparations before he took action?

It was that hateful servant's fault!

That fellow had been waiting for him to fall into this trap!

That goddamned servant!

Han Li’s face was bright red as fury engulfed his mind. He stared at Ai Hui and his party, who had walked off without minding him at all. If Han Li’s gaze could kill people, Ai Hui’s body would be filled with holes now!

Everyone in the market was looking at Han Li. Mocking comments rang across his ears incessantly, tormenting his mind that was going to go insane.

"Haha, this idiot is being fooled."

"He deserves it! No one asked him to act like a wealthy man! From his arrogant face, I can tell that he is up to no good."

"How dare he try to pick up girls with such skills? He should start a store and make an honest living here, hahaha."

...

Han Li was going to go crazy soon. He had become the biggest joke in the entire market. Everyone was looking at him with mockery. Even his partner turned around and laughed at him behind his back without any intention of helping him out of this

embarrassing situation.

Bastard!

The infuriated Han Li unsheathed his sword and slashed the pile of unwanted things in front of him.

A streak of resplendent sword gleam was suddenly released from his sword. All the laughter in the market came to an end abruptly.

When Han Li unsheathed his sword, the surrounding guards stopped laughing. The sudden streak of resplendent sword gleam caused their pupils to dilate involuntarily.

In the midst of a dead silence, Han Li sheathed his sword. With an ice-cold look on his face, he walked through the market. Everyone in the market subconsciously made way for him to walk through.

Pffff. A soft burst sounded through the air, resembling the sound of a water bubble popping.

The heap of unwanted things on the rag had been reduced to a pile of ashes. Following which, it burst into colorful flames. The colorful flames were formed by a mixture of elemental energies.

Everyone, including the surrounding guards, was stunned. Their eyes were widened and their facial expressions froze.

They did not expect the fellow, whom they'd just mocked, to be so powerful. The surrounding guards looked at their leader for instructions, but he merely shook his head and signalled for them not to be meddlesome. Han Li destroyed his own things so they had no reason to confront him.

Han Li's face was gloomy as his eyes flickered with the blaze of anger.

You shall wait and see. I, Han Li, will seek revenge for the embarrassment you have given me today!

Han Li's partner shyly walked up to him. Just as he was about to speak, a slap landed on his face. Smack! The loud and crisp slap resounded throughout the market. The impact from the slap sent Han Li's partner flying in the air. Following which, he landed on the ground and stayed there motionlessly.

Han Li left immediately without looking at his fainted partner.

Ten seconds after the devil-like figure had left, the quiet market began to regain its liveliness.

"Such a terrifying fellow," the guards exclaimed in fear.

"That's right, he is too cruel."

"I think I know who he is. He is Han Li!" The guard leader's facial expression turned slightly ugly as well.

Hiss. Everyone took in a gasp of cold air.

At this point of time, the guard leader stood up and said, "Keep your eyes on the market, I have to report this to the mayor."

Every mayor cared about the experts that entered his or her city. The presence of an expert posed an uncertainty to a city. One major battle could destroy a city. No mayor would remain indifferent to an expert that could pose a threat to his or her city's safety.

An ally or a foe could determine whether they lived or died.

Only by becoming stronger could one gain more respect.

.....

Kang Appraisal Shop.

Kang Ding's apprentices were peeking at him. Today, their teacher seemed weird. From morning until now, their teacher kept on gasping with surprise. They had never seen their teacher behave like this before. From their impressions of their teacher, he had always been a solemn and meticulous individual.

Was it possible that he had come across something good?

They were filled with curiosity. What kind of good thing could make their teacher gasp in surprise like this?

Inside Kang Ding's room, he had finally completed his appraisal of the crystal-clear fire liquid. His face was filled with incredulity as he muttered to himself, "A refined fire liquid, it's actually a refined fire liquid?"

The difference between a natural fire liquid and a refined fire liquid was that the former could only be found in small amounts while the latter could be mass produced.

In an instant, Kang Ding knew what the other party's intention was for having this fire liquid appraised. The other party had a huge supply of fire liquid.

Not only that, the other party must also have mastered the method for refining this unique type of fire liquid. This also implied that the other party could produce a steady supply of this fire liquid.

This was extremely important to any city.

The crystal-clear fire liquid was the most outstanding fire liquid that Kang Ding had ever seen. Ever since Fire Prairie had been annexed, the supply of fire liquid on the market was scarce. Expanding into Wilderness alleviated the situation significantly.

Several volcanoes had been discovered and a lot of fire elemental cities had emerged around them.

From that point onwards, the supply of fire liquids on the market increased slightly. However, the supply still did not meet the demand. Such a small amount of fire liquid would be sold-out in an instant.

Most of these fire liquids were low in base level and they were mainly lava. Even deep lava was also scarce.

All those fire liquids paled in comparison to this crystal-clear fire liquid.

"A-Ordinary". This was the final appraisal grade he gave to the crystal-clear fire liquid. He had appraised more than one hundred types of fire liquid and this fire liquid was the only one with grade "A".

He could imagine how much commotion this fire liquid would cause when it appeared on the market.

He was proud of himself for being able to appraise this fire liquid personally.

Kang Ding became excited. A few buyers that might be interested in this fire liquid had already come to his mind. Whoever could afford this fire liquid would not be an ordinary individual.

No matter who bought it, Kang Ding would receive a portion of the profits made as well.

He earned the profits fair and aboveboard and he had no qualms about it.

He did not want to drag the issue any longer and walked to a short message tree in the corner. Following which, he began to write down the same content on different message leaves.

"A-grade refined fire liquid. Those who need it, come to my shop quickly."

This message tree could only transmit messages within Clearwater City. in reality, message trees, which were commonly used in Avalon of Five Elements, faced great obstructions in Wilderness. The distance that messages could travel had been reduced greatly. Connections with the nearby cities could still be established, but anywhere further than that and the message trees would be useless.

After Kang Ding finishing writing to all the enterprises that might be interested in the fire liquid, he felt much relieved.

Even so, he still looked very excited.

After a few seconds, the pieces of leaves lit up one by one with words appearing on them.

"Arriving soon!"

"Coming!"

"Give me ten minutes!"

...

Kang Ding smiled. So this is the might of an "A-grade" fire liquid.

Very soon, his appraisal shop was crammed with people.

He did not like liveliness, but he still had to work regardless. Kang Ding could still take a break for a few minutes and he sat down. Just as he was about to place this completed appraisal job aside, his hand felt something else left in the package.

Kang Ding was stunned. The other party still had something else for him to appraise?

An unknown piece of beast bone appeared in his hand.

Chapter 437: Stupefied

What a pity. Kang Ding's desire to identify the beast bone now was quickly shattered because of the visitors that came knocking one after another, disallowing him to continue his study.

A few minutes later the shop was filled with people. Kang Ding scanned the room and noticed that some of the enterprises which he hadn't notified were here as well. They'd probably heard the news since these fellows were well-informed.

Those who came weren't of low ranks. They were, at the very least, major persons in charge and they'd all brought along appraisers from respective enterprises. Each in charge had a solemn expression on their faces. The A-grade liquid was worth getting involved in.

During an era where there was a fire liquid deficiency, there was never an over-emphasis on the significance of an A-grade fire liquid.

There wasn't any more space in the shop, but visitors came in an unending stream. Kang Ding felt a headache upon realizing that he'd underestimated people's interest in the high grade fire liquid.

Without any better options he said, "There's a bigger room outside, let's go there."

He did not wish to offend any enterprise, big or small.

There had been more than one enterprise that came to look for him, seeking first-hand, exclusive news and that were willing to offer a bountiful reward.

Kang Ding rejected them since he was very clear about his own position. Once he branded himself as an associate of a certain enterprise, it was going to be difficult to gain trust from others. The entrusters would also lose confidence as well thinking that he was servicing a certain enterprise, and lacked fairness.

As such, whenever he had something good, Clearwater City's main enterprises would be informed so he had decent relationships with respective enterprises. None of them were willing to offend him, in fear of losing their rights to acquire news.

The big room outside the shop was originally a warehouse, but was modified into a place to receive his entrusters. It was very spacious inside, but the crowd filled it up nevertheless.

There was no noise as respective witnesses were all looking on in all seriousness. Those accompanying were even more cautious. The atmosphere within the room was grave and solemn.

Kang Ding stood on the stage. Knowing what those below were thinking, he kept himself from being superfluous, and instead took the colorglass bamboo out directly. There was still about a quarter of fire liquid left in it.

"This is a new kind of fire liquid. Till now, I've not seen anything

similar in any records. It’s very clear, like water, and looking at it from outside the bottle, it’s difficult to imagine that it’s actually a kind of fire liquid. It’s made from lava."

The crowd stirred. The liquid in the bottle was as clear as water, so it was difficult for them to associate it with sticky, red lava.

"It’s not clear how this type of fire liquid is being refined, but what’s certain is that it’s been through repeated refinements. We have no concrete information, but I predict it to have gone through over ten refinements before reaching such a clear and transparent state."

Admiration and confidence was present in Kang Ding’s tone.

"Being able to be classified as A-grade, this fire liquid’s most unique feature is its pureness and highly perfected state. It has no impurities at all, hence its transparency. At the same time, the fire elemental energy it contains is of an extremely high grade, which is why I believe it’s been through multiple refinements. If it serves as a fire liquid, it can practically blend in with any other fire liquids. In other words, a few drops of it is enough to raise the grade of a fire elementalists’ ordinary fire liquids."

The crowd stirred even more now. They were all proficient business people and understood what this meant.

It meant that more people could utilize this kind of fire liquid.

The rich could use all their fire liquid on this type of new fire liquid, whereas poorer fire elementalists could also purchase a few drops to upgrade their own fire liquid.

Before finishing his explanation he threw an even heavier surprise toward the audience below. "If it doesn’t serve as fire liquid, fire elementalists of Master level and above can consume it directly to quickly replenish their fire elemental energy. There’s no side effect."

Boom! The crowd below dispersed in an instant.

Each face was filled with agitation. They’d already seen a golden light path from earlier and now they saw an even more dazzling and luxurious path.

It might be difficult to pick out the richest people, but masters were definitely the richest bunch.

They were all of high statuses and countless people were willing to pay them huge sums in exchange for protection. Money to them was just a number. And wasn’t this type of fire liquid, with its ability to immediately replenish their fire elemental energy, considered a life-saving item? When it came to guarding their lives, cost wasn’t an issue at all.

And with this, what an enterprise could acquire wasn’t just money, but also a master’s friendship.

A Master's friendship was much more important than money.

Before the city expansion announcement, society had been stable and orderly. Under Elders Guild's suppression, being a Master wasn't a great deal. Which family did not have at least a few Masters under their roofs?

In the Wilderness, however, whatever order there was collapsed and Elders Guild had no time to oversee things as well as before. Powerful Masters then became the real despots.

Luckily, Masters weren't as powerful as Grandmasters, who were able to laugh at the world beneath their feet and disregard the huge number of elementalists.

But a Master did gain more privileges. Their words carried more weight. No city chief would carelessly dismiss a master's opinions. It was ten times more expensive to engage a Master now.

This was the new era.

In this context, a Master's requirements instantly became top priority. This was no different from the situation in Jadeite Forest, save for the fact that the strongest player in Jadeite Forest was Dai Gang, a Grandmaster, and his needs were always the most important needs.

Upon hearing that this type of fire liquid could be consumed directly by Masters, everyone had trouble restraining themselves.

Amid their excitement, they felt rather curious as well. If it was a rare and special treasure they could simply attribute its existence to luck. However, this magical fire liquid had been refined, so who was the refiner?

Who could produce such a high grade fire liquid?

Such a high grade fire liquid would most definitely be produced in low quantities. How many drops were there?

Doubts filled their hearts and at the same time, they were thinking about how to win this intense competition.

Their heads were aching, but soon there was no time for that.

Kang Ding looked at the record chart in his hand, saying, "The entruster lives in Cotton Tree Tavern. Mister Ai."

The moment he finished his sentence, sounds of chairs crashing down were heard as some anxious people were already rushing forward.

Ai Hui did not know that Cotton Tree Tavern was already packed. His gang was still strolling leisurely. That brief episode at the market had been long forgotten.

The market was a place to get a hold of goods, but they needed

them in large quantities, which only enterprises supplied. Most importantly, they had no money. They had to sell off some goods.

Ai Hui and gang had sold their fire sacks. The market value of scarletfire flying foxes' fire sacks was stable and each was sold at about a hundred essence elemental beans.

The main use of fire sacks was to refine fire pouches.

Fire sacks weren't as big as fire vats. They were more portable, but weren't able to store sufficient fire liquid. Since there was a lack of fire elemental materials, the forty sacks on Ai Hui's hands were quickly sold off.

Four thousand essence elemental beans gave Ai Hui and gang their first income.

It would've been a generous amount if it had been one elementalist to possess all of it. But for it to belong to a whole city, it was merely a cup of water on a burning cart of firewood.

Flaming bones were priced much lower than the fire sacks. One piece was worth only twenty elemental energy beans. Mind you, elemental energy beans and not essence elemental beans!

The exchange rate between essence elemental beans and elemental energy beans changed daily. An essence elemental bean could be converted into three hundred elemental energy beans today. The conversion rate was significantly lower than before

since elemental energy beans were more valuable these days. This also highlighted the fact that the Wilderness needed more lower grade elemental energy beans than higher grade and purer ones.

The market price of flaming bones meant that the pile of bones they'd brought weren't even worth forty fire sacks.

Ai Hui's intestines were turning green from regret. If he'd known that fire sacks were this valuable, he would've treated the flying foxes with more care. When facing the bats, he'd completely forgotten how difficult a situation they were being put in.

Ai Hui was a little anxious. Where were they going to get the money?

He felt a different kind of pressure.

In the past, he was only responsible for himself and, at most, Lou Lan and Fatty. Now, hundreds of people and a whole valley were involved, so the pressure was definitely different. If they did not earn enough money and weren't able to replenish their goods, all work would held back. There wouldn't be elemental food to provide and trainings would be affected.

Being a leader wasn't easy!

Seeing Ai Hui's frowning face, Shi Xueman couldn't help but ask, "Should I ask my family for assistance?"

Shi family had valuable inside information so providing some funding wasn’t a big problem.

Ai Hui shook his head. "We’ll continue to think of solutions, the appraisal result isn’t out yet. It’s not that simple to borrow money from your family. It doesn’t matter if we owe you money but owing your family money would be troublesome."

Shi Xueman kept quiet. He was right.

Father would be glad to support her when it came to her own affair, but things became inconvenient when her family was involved. The money belonged to the family, so many pairs of hands would reach out for payment if they were to borrow money from the family. She wasn’t in favor of using her family’s money as well, unless there was absolutely no choice.

Wait a minute. It didn’t matter if the money belonged to her? Was he not planning to return that eighty million yuan?

Shi Xueman glared at Ai Hui.

Lou Lan spoke loudly and confidently, "Ai Hui will think of something!"

At that, Ai Hui’s worries were forgotten. He raised his brows, laughing, "You have foresight, Lou Lan!"

Shi Xueman, who was staring at him just a moment ago, couldn’t

help but smile too.

The tavern wasn’t far off from the alley.

At the entrance of the alley Ai Hui stopped.

There was a huge crowd in front blocking the whole path. Many pulled their collars and waited excitedly, their faces flushed.

Ai Hui asked uncertainly, "Have we come to the wrong place?"

He remembered very clearly that their tavern was located in a remote spot and its surroundings were rather unfrequented. It wasn’t this lively before.

Zhao Boan had a suspicious look on his face. He looked around, saying, "I think it’s here."

Ai Hui looked at Lou Lan. There was no way Lou Lan would get them lost.

Before Lou Lan could speak, the crowd noticed the gang standing by the entrance. Quickly, all eyes were on them.

Ai Hui cleared his throat, feeling as if he was being watched by a pack of wolves with rapacious and thirsty eyes.

"He’s here!"

"Is that him?"

"Go ask!"

…

The crowd stirred and gushed, flood-like, toward Ai Hui and gang.

What was going on?

Standing by the alley entrance, Ai Hui was stupefied.

Chapter 438: Rules

Calm down... calm down...

Zhao Boan repeatedly encouraged himself. Seeing the dense crowd raised his heartbeat. Heavens have pity on him, he was merely a small merchant and had never seen such a scene.

Cotton Tree Tavern was just a small guesthouse, its narrow lobby about to explode because of this crowd. The boss, who was initially displeased, quickly became friendly and even offered tea upon seeing major figures.

Of course, everyone ignored him and rushed toward Zhao Boan instead.

"Snow lava right? Is that what it's called? Can I buy it now?"

"How much is it? Is there a special price for bulk purchase?"

"How do we establish a long term business relationship with you?"

...

The crowd asked their questions all at once. The alleyway was bustling.

A few in charge from big enterprises sat at a corner without a word. They looked on cooly as those small enterprises moved about eagerly, trying to secure the lowest price.

They shifted their gaze to Shi Xueman, bewilderment rising within their chests.

Among the gang, Shi Xueman was undoubtedly the most eye-catching person, since she was very beautiful. Plus, she was out in this world alone so she must have outstanding abilities and a powerful background. Her clothing and armor were evidence of that.

Who was she?

The managers were racking their brains, trying to search for similar targets in their minds.

When they first realized that the owner of the fire liquid was staying in an unknown guesthouse, they figured he must be hard pressed for money. They formed an alliance privately, agreeing to place pressure on the owner.

They'd cooperated many times for similar matters. Their enterprises were the three biggest ones in Clearwater City. Once they made a joint decision, other enterprises dared not disobey.

But seeing Shi Xueman made them uncertain.

They made eye contact and agreed to wait it out.

Ai Hui mumbled softly, "Luckily Zhao Boan is here or else us non-businessmen would be at a loss."

Shi Xueman rolled her eyes involuntarily. She'd wanted to comment that he was the real unscrupulous businessman, but seeing him looking all innocent and sincere she knew it would've been a waste of time talking to him. This fellow had the thickest skin ever.

Lou Lan nodded his head repeatedly. "Yes, Ai Hui's right."

Shi Xueman wanted to turn around. How could you say such unconscientious words? However, she felt more envious than anything else. Ay, this fellow is really lucky to have Lou Lan!

Seeing the crowd closing in, Ai Hui licked his lips, his eyes lighting up. "Snow lava is actually A-grade! Hahaha, Lou Lan, we're going to be rich."

Lou Lan smiled widely, his eyes forming two lines. "Ai Hui, we're going to earn lots and lots of money."

"That's right! Lots and lots indeed!" Ai Hui answered excitedly, waving his hand. "We're going to have money so what do you want, Lou Lan? I'll give it to you!"

Lou Lan opened his eyes wide. "Really?"

Shi Xueman couldn’t endure it any longer. "Whatever you want, I’ll buy it for you now, Lou Lan."

Lou Lan opened his eyes even wider and exclaimed even more gleefully, "Really?"

Ai Hui was displeased. What’s the big deal? Acting so arrogantly just because you have the money? Teasing other people’s sand puppet just because you have the money? Ai Hui decided to use reality to teach Iron Lady a lesson.

He snorted and said in all self-righteousness, "I want it too!"

Shi Xueman was slightly taken aback. She was shocked by his shamelessness.

Ai Hui felt more than accomplished knowing that he was responsible for the exciting expressions that emerged on Iron Lady’s ice-cold face.

Zhao Boan seemed satisfied and had gradually calmed down from his initial fluster and confusion.

He was born into a merchant family after all. How could he have possibly missed the fact that they were in possession of a rare commodity after seeing the commotion before him?

He’d accompanied Ai Hui and gang to the market for the past two days and hadn’t seen even a drop of A-grade fire liquid. B-grade fire liquid was sold at ten essence elemental beans per drop so for how much should he sell snow lava, which was a grade higher?

He had no idea, but did not make it apparent.

Zhao Boan smiled. "It’s been a long time since an A-grade fire liquid made an appearance in the market. It is very difficult to determine its price value. In order to allow more people to utilize snow lava without spending excessively, we are going to auction them off in batches. Don’t worry, everyone. We’ve prepared enough, so hopefully everyone will get to purchase some."

A few major managers made eye contact and saw the haze in their eyes. Auction was their most hated sales method since it meant that they were likely to pay much more than needed.

Bullshit like "everyone will get to purchase some" did not cool the crowd down. They weren’t dumb. Even if snow lava was a refined fire liquid, the refining process required much manpower and resources, and was definitely challenging.

In this era where ordinary fire elemental energy materials were in deficit, no supply of A-grade fire liquid could satisfy the market demand.

Zhao Boan continued, "Of course, other than holding auctions, we are very willing to work with capable enterprises. We need to procure large volumes of goods. Here’s a list for everyone to see

what your enterprise has to provide. Enterprises able to supply us with more goods at better prices will be on our priority list for the sale of snow lava. We will also offer you a special price and consider establishing a long term cooperation."

Faces of a few major managers cleared up slightly. These conditions were targeted at big enterprises.

When they took the list over their gazes stiffened. The numbers had given them a shock. They were all experienced and could tell a lot just from looking at this list.

Personal training would not require this much material. They were convinced that there was a city behind these fellows.

Only a city would consume this much material.

They had a grave expression on their faces. Their wish to push prices down disappeared instantly. The opposite party was more than what he'd revealed. And Zhao Boan did talk about establishing a long term cooperation, which moved these big enterprises.

If their enterprises could sell A-grade fire liquid steadily and for the long term, their influence would increase exponentially.

The few enterprises that had a secret agreement immediately turned hostile.

A few major managers were about to stand up when a cold voice rang from the entrance of the tavern. "I heard someone’s selling A-grade fire liquid here?"

The cold voice was like a breath of cold wind, blowing through the tavern lobby. The lobby, lively just a moment ago, was now in dead silence.

A skinny, bamboo-like figure appeared by the door.

He walked forward, as if no one was around, and the crowd opened up a path for him.

He was thin and ugly. His face resembled that of a horse and his features were flat, as if drawn on. His expression was very cold and terrifying. Five big fellows followed behind, each fierce and ominous looking. The elemental energy waves radiating from their bodies carried strong murderous spirit.

The tall and skinny man was Yang Wuchang, nicknamed Fickle Yang. He was a terrifying scoundrel from Clearwater City, known to extort and blackmail, collect protection fees, poll tax and do the dirty on other villains. Basically, he did not shrink from any crimes.

His was ruthless and domineering. Those who made him an enemy either died dubiously or disappeared.

Even though he’d offended many people, he was living free and

unfettered because he had solid backings.

Master Yang Xiaodong, consecrated by Clearwater City, was his uncle.

Even the mayor, Qiao Meiqi, had to bow down to Yang Xiaodong.

Yang Wuchang was aware of the power he had, but never committed sabotage when it came to the mayor's properties. He knew that his uncle wasn't interested in his insignificant income but if there were any rare items or objects that appeared mysterious, he would immediately present them to him.

He'd done it a few times in fact. Seeing how sensible his nephew was, Yang Xiaodong protected him even more.

Yang Wuchang also borrowed his uncle's might to get fighters onto his side. The notorious guys following behind him were known as the "four fickle devils". Evilness stained their hands. The hands that killed countless lives.

Yang Wuchang strutted in and threw out a money bag. "I'm buying all of the fire liquid."

Faces around him turned ashen, but because of Fickle Yang's evil reputation no one dared utter a sound.

Zhao Boan looked at the money bag on the ground. Just by listening to the sound it made he knew there couldn't be more than

a hundred essence elemental beans inside. He responded coldly, "Did you not hear the rules? I’m not selling!"

"Rules?" As if he’d just heard a joke, Yang Wuyang laughed it off, his expression abruptly turning malicious. "You’re here in Clearwater City and you want to talk rules with me? I’ll let you know what rules are!"

Before he finished his sentence Yang Wuchang reached his palm out toward Zhao Boan.

Zhao Boan’s teeth would shatter if this hit landed.

Clap!

A resounding slap sounded.

Zhao Boan remained motionless. Yang Wuchang flew backward like an empty burlap bag.

No one knew when, but Shi Xueman’s ice cold figure had appeared in front of Zhao Boan and that resounding slap was produced by her.

Ai Hui stood behind her, mocking, "Is this the rule? What a good rule!"

He wasn’t the least bit embarrassed about hiding behind a

woman’s back, his voice cheerful and satisfied, as if that slap had been let loose by him.

The onlookers looked at him disdainfully.

Wicked servant!

As a servant, how could he let his master take actions personally? What was he for then?

Shi Xueman’s slap shook everyone present.

Faces changed and even a few managers from respective enterprises turned pale. They knew that their fire liquid was about to slip through their fingers.

When had Yang Wuchang ever suffered such humiliation?

This turn of events came too suddenly and shockingly, causing the lobby to fall into dead silence within ten seconds.

Yang Wuchang was out of it, his ears buzzing non-stop. He regained his senses ten seconds later, half his face swollen like a bun. He flew into a rage. "Are you idiots waiting for death? Kill this slut! Do not let anyone off!"

As if awakened from a dream, the four devils saw the malevolence and murderousness in their master’s eyes and knew

that he was thoroughly pissed.

They looked at each other before drawing their weapons and pouncing on Shi Xueman.

Ai Hui had no intention of assisting her. Instead, he stood behind her watching in sympathy and admiration at the four quickly approaching figures.

Did you call her a slut? You guys are daredevils.

Chapter 439: A Very Angry Iron Lady

The chillness Shi Xueman emitted was piercing. The temperature within the tavern lobby dropped abruptly.

She was angry.

Those in the lobby had long dispersed. They'd known that something terrible was going to happen the moment Yang Wuchang walked in. Yet, they never would've expected that this outsider had actually dared to give him a tight slap.

Too crazy!

Their faces were white as a sheet. All they wanted to do was to stand as far as possible. A furious Fickle Yang spoke no reason, so those involved in this would definitely be dead.

Yang Wuchang had very decent abilities. He'd merely been careless earlier. He was different from other rich fellows who enjoyed life all day. While he was a lowly scum, he never did compromise on his own training. Plus, his uncle was a combat master and often guided him, so his abilities were rather commendable.

He threw himself toward Shi Xueman.

To the elementalists, these last two years of training had been the hardest. Elemental energy deficiency was a problem that the

majority of the elementalists faced. Things changed ever since Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner fell into the hands of the enemy. The five elemental cycle of life and the concentration of elemental energy in Silver Mist Sea, Palette Cloud Village and Jadeite Forest was starting to decline.

In the first two years, the change wasn't as severe. Silver Mist Sea, Palette Cloud Village and Jadeite Forest possessed thousands of years of accumulated elemental energy, and as the saying goes, a thin camel is bigger than a horse, they continued operating tenaciously.

However, three years passed and the accumulated elemental energy continued to be used up, to the point where it couldn't be effectively replenished. As such, the concentration of elemental energy started to drop drastically. The mist in Silver Mist Sea thinned and rivers stopped flowing. Palette Cloud Village's springs started drying up and Jadeite Forest was also conducting effortful searches for solutions.

When their accumulated energy was about to be exhausted, the situation worsened quicker than people had imagined. Elders Guild attempted to use the lesser Avalon of Five Elements to bring more vitality, but to no avail.

The enactment of the city expansion order marked the end of the era of Avalon of Five Elements. After a thousand years of elemental energy nourishment, elemental energy was no longer easily obtainable and no longer cheaply-priced.

People had to establish cities in the Wilderness and build

elemental energy pools in order to barely sustain themselves.

That’s right, barely sustain.

How many elementalists had been sacrificed because of the city expansion? No one could keep proper count. Each city’s cost was extremely high so it wasn’t without reason that many cities collected high taxes from people entering.

Even then, any city’s elemental energy concentration wasn’t comparable to the past.

Many were stuck in their current base level and unable to achieve breakthrough.

There was a popular saying spreading in the market now. From the beginning of the city expansion order, they’d entered Elemental Desolation Age. This "desolation" referred to both the Wilderness and also famine, since the elemental energy was drying up.

So the city expansion order was regarded as the beginning of the Elemental Desolation Age. That year also became the first year of reign for elemental desolation.

Could they ever return to the era of Avalon of Five Elements? No one dared to have such extravagant hopes anymore. What about recovering the fallen Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner? You must be joking!

God Nation's power was on the rise each day, and yet the Avalon of Five Elements had to resort to seeking shelter in the Wilderness. Protecting themselves was already a challenging task.

The Avalon of Five Elements was deteriorating fast, leaving people at a loss for words. All they could do was sigh in resignation.

It was difficult for them to enter a higher base level, but at the same time their battle abilities were obviously improving. As compared to the peaceful and worry-free lifestyle in the Avalon of Five Elements, the Wilderness was full of fresh blood and danger. Weaklings were buried there. Only the strong prevailed.

Although his uncle was a Master, Yang Wuchang had never slackened off when it came to training.

This punch was apparently very well controlled, its elemental energy contained. While he looked arrogant and despotic, he was actually very clever and knew how not to overstep his boundaries and irritate the city chief or even trigger an investigation.

Clearwater City wasn't just consecrating one Master.

The sinister look on Yang Wuchang's face disappeared and was replaced by a thick, murderous and cold aura. He was like a whole different person now.

The elemental energy surrounding him surged toward Yang Wuchang's right fist. Fwoom! His right fist rose in flames, rolling intensely, transforming into a brightly colored, suspended tiger head. Its deep roar sounded like a ferocious, hissing tiger that was coming out of the forest.

Just this hand alone revealed Yang Wuchang's solid foundational skills.

[Tiger Roar]!

[Tiger Roar] wasn't considered the finest inheritance, but its most unique point was that each strike had to take the shape of a tiger. The tiger-head-like energy blast, from Yang Wuchang's punch, was splendid and fierce, vivid and lifelike.

The abrupt roar seemed to have exploded right by the audience's ears, causing their hairs to stand on end. The calves of those standing near were trembling.

Those caught off guard were mentally shaken!

But Shi Xueman remained motionless, her ice cold eyes lighting up. She perceived more than the rest.

Within a three meter radius from where Yang Wuchang was standing there wasn't any elemental energy at all, since all of it had been drawn away by his fist. This strange phenomenon was hauntingly familiar. Elemental energy suffocation!

She never imagined she would be able to see this phenomenon happening on a hooligan.

But that was all.

Yang Wuchang's vile conduct had angered her already and she quickly enlightened them as to what level of an opponent they'd just provoked.

Shi Xueman did not retrieve Cirrus from her back. Instead, she placed her right palm horizontally, faced down, in front of her chest like a knife.

Ss!

The strange sound seemed to have come from the movement of wind from deep within a cave. A layer of light appeared on her snow-white and flawless palm.

It was as if a gust of wind had just started blowing throughout the whole lobby as the calabash lights hanging on the lobby beams dimmed into a dull yellow, like they could extinguish at anytime.

What followed after was an indescribably intense feeling of suffocation.

A few managers' eyes were about to pop out, their expressions

plentiful and varying.

This... elemental energy suffocation!

They'd never experienced such an intense and overbearing elemental energy suffocation. In fact, they felt as though the elemental energy within their bodies was about to be drawn out. This suppression made them feel an instinctive fear.

Yang Wuchang's eyes revealed fear. He opened his mouth, attempting to call for help but he had no voice. The surrounding space affected by the elemental energy suffocation broke everything that touched it. The tiger head that enveloped his right fist started to distort.

In the contest of elemental energy he had fallen into an unfavorable position and he knew what it signified.

Boundless fear, like the violent sea, was about to drown him.

To others, the air around Shi Xueman seemed to be warping.

Ai Hui was, at that moment, in shock and admiration. Iron Lady's plain, non-technical move only displayed her superb control over elemental energy!

The moment this ability, completely honed through an accumulation of experience, was developed, it could throw people into despair even without technique.

At that point, Shi Xueman and Ai Hui did not realize what effect this move would produce.

The elemental energy pool in Clearwater City was a large one. Qiao Meiqi came from a rich family and did not hesitate to splurge on this water elemental energy pool, the largest within the region.

The sky above Clearwater City was covered in a thick layer of mist, formed from water elemental energy. It also served as the city's defense layer, which could transmit sunlight but block off the spying eyes of flying dire beasts.

A moat, connected to an underground spring, surrounded the city and flowed unceasingly.

Rain sprinkled over the surface of the moat, as if pulling up the curtains around the city. The ring-shaped rain screen outside the city constructed an environment with sealed elemental energy, diverting the obstructed water elemental energy outward. It also possessed great defensive power.

And every day, there were elite combat elementalists stationed amid the cloud defense layer above the city. These elementalists were tasked to guard against attacks from flying dire beasts and to monitor alterations in elemental energy within the city.

This wasn't the era of peace. Bandits were on the rampage and the city had to be vigilant at all times.

Tu Xiaojun was training among the clouds as usual. He was a water elementalist and being stationed in the cloud defense layer was a lucrative job. The water elemental energy within the cloud defense layer was twice as concentrated as that within the city.

The only regrettable thing was that he had to check for changes in the city's elemental energy every hour, hence disrupting his trainings. But he had no complaints and work mustn't be delayed.

Tu Xiaojun, who'd just detached himself from his circulatory cycle revolution, was checking for energy changes as usual.

The concentration of elemental energy wasn't consistent throughout the city. Some key regions possessed much denser elemental energy. Examples included the mayor's residence, Masters' residences and so on.

Living high, a panoramic view of Clearwater City could be taken in. With such a magnificent field of vision, it was easy for Tu Xiaojun to check, at a glance, the concentration of elemental energy in respective regions

As a water elementalist, he was extremely sensitive to the water elemental energy concentration. One look was all he needed. Within his field of vision, places with denser energy would be bluer and places with a lower concentration would appear dimmer.

He scanned across the whole city unhurriedly and did not notice any abnormalities.

Eh?

He paused. There was a white space down in the northwestern part of the city.

He wrinkled his brows, thinking that there was a battle going on.

The white dot indicated that the concentration of elemental energy was practically zero, a rare phenomenon.

While many were stuck in their base levels over the past two years, their battle standards had increased greatly. The legendary elemental energy suffocation, which had once been almost unattainable, was now in sight and reachable.

Survivors were not weaklings.

But white dots formed from elemental energy suffocations were usually small, rarely expanding over a twelve meter radius. When seen from above, that area appeared no bigger than a needle point.

The front line separating Clearwater City and the Wilderness was the cruelest place where blood and courage were most abundant.

It was common for any disagreement to result in flying fists.

But everyone exercised careful control since the guards weren’t

vegetarians. They needed to be swifter and fiercer when dealing with these powerful fellows.

Overall, Clearwater City was a place with decent security. The mayor was a businessman and absolutely abhorred disorder.

Also, since the city had two consecrated Masters, evildoers had to think twice before attacking.

The number of consecrated Masters in a city was directly related to the city's abilities.

Wait!

That white dot was increasing in size. Tu Xiaoqun was stunned and couldn't help but take a closer look.

It'd grown in size indeed!

This area of elemental suffocation covered over thirty square meters!

Over thirty square meters of elemental energy suffocation!

Tu Xiaoqun understood what level of abilities this dot signified. He was going through familiar names in his mind, trying to figure out who was responsible for it.

Before he could get a name out the white dot below grew yet again. Over fifty square meters!

Fifty square meters!

Tu Xiaojun inhaled a breath of cold air.

What happened next was even more unbelievable and shocking.

Sixty square meters... eighty square meters, ninety square meters, a hundred and fifty square meters...

It was as if there was a thirsty monster, greedily swallowing up all the surrounding elemental energy.

Tu Xiaojun was frightened and his face was colorless. Both Masters were out of town... He stared blankly for a few seconds before ringing the emergency alarm frantically.

The mournful alarm tore through the city, thoroughly invading every corner of it. There was only one possibility.

Intrusion of a powerful enemy!

Chapter 440: Mist Cage

Translator: YH Editor: TYZ, KLKL

The guards came from all corners of Clearwater City. Fear and anticipation filled their faces as they were about to face a situation that they had only been practicing for.

They took to the skies and managed to locate their target swiftly.

The target was extremely eye catching.

A black hole lurked in the northwestern corner of the city. It was frantically sucking in elemental energy from all directions.

Elemental energy suffocation!

Clearwater City's guards were of the highest calibre. Elementalists who joined their ranks had to be powerful, skillful, and rich in combat experience. Clearwater City only recruited guards with superior qualities, and applicants were mostly of a certain calibre. Those who eventually rose above the competition to become guards of Clearwater City were definitely among the very best.

However, colour drained from these elite guards' faces when they saw their target.

They knew what elemental energy suffocation was, and many of

them had already mastered it. But the chaotic way in which the black hole before them expanded made them slightly afraid.

This range...

Only a Master was capable of something like that!

On any other ordinary day, they wouldn't be this flustered, since Clearwater City had consecrated two Masters for protection. Unfortunately, today was one of those rare occasions when both Masters were away.

There was usually at least one Master keeping watch over the city.

It appeared that the enemy knew exactly when to strike.

Everyone looked pale, but they gritted their teeth and flew towards the area of emergency. The present situation did not look good, but a prestigious job like this was hard to come by. They had achieved their standing today by emerging victorious in a fierce competition. Fleeing instead of fighting would definitely cost them their job, and there won't be any second chances.

A guard with a tarnished reputation would never be employed by any city. No man would put his life and wealth in the hands of a coward.

Inside the tavern, Yang Wuchang's face turned ashen. He knew

that this was the end.

He had been extremely cautious all this while, and had effortfully avoided the big shots. He had a clear understanding of the law of the jungle, which dictated that only the strong survive. Even having an uncle who was a Master couldn't guarantee anything. In the eyes of most people, Yang Wuchang was arrogant and defiant. What they didn't notice was that he never set foot in the richer districts and never provoked sectors that were thriving. He only ever targeted corners that these people probably didn't even know existed.

Cotton Tree Tavern was a nearby budget tavern. Only the poorest of people would stay in such a place.

When he learnt that the target was staying there, he couldn't control his greed any longer.

Even so, he did not let his guard down. Yang Wuchang had gone after Zhao Boan only after he was sure that the guy was a servant.

He had it all thought out.

What's a little extra suffering to a servant?

If the other party was someone remarkable, he would simply lower himself and apologize. He was sure that the other party would let the matter go out of respect to his uncle.

Nobody would risk offending a Master over a mere servant.

However, it seemed like he had miscalculated. He did not expect the other party to react so fiercely, going so far as to give him a tight slap.

Yang Wuchang had never been so humiliated before. Infuriated, he had responded with even greater force.

He soon realized his folly. As he lost control over his own elemental energy, Yang Wuchang became filled with fear.

His eyes were focused on his adversary's palm. It grew brighter by the second and was now almost as bright as the sun, making his eyes tear involuntarily.

Yang Wuchang's body instinctively tried to turn around. Like an agile cat, he immediately shifted his stance.

Escape!

A strong suction force suddenly grabbed him from behind. It felt like an invisible palm was gripping him hard,

A Master!

Fear was swiftly spreading through Yang Wuchang's body. He was no stranger to this feeling, it was the same kind of fear that he

experienced whenever he went up against his uncle. A casual attack by his uncle was enough to send his mind racing, making him feel like there was nowhere to run.

Yang Wuchang bit down on his tongue. The severe pain, along with the strong taste of blood, gave him a moment of clarity. He ripped the blue water droplet off his neck and crushed it with all his might.

With a pop, the blue water droplet turned into a large bubble that encased Yang Wuchang within. The bubble was very thin and almost imperceptible to the naked eye. No one would have noticed it if not for the ripples that occasionally appeared on the bubble's surface.

Yang Wuchang finally managed to break free from the immense suction. Given to him by his uncle, the Mist Cage could last for up to four hours upon activation.

Bang!

An explosive sound blasted through the air as a streak of dazzling light whipped at the bubble. The impact sent the bubble flying through the tavern's front doors at an insane speed.

Yang Wuchang felt the world around him spin and lost all control of his body.

Loud ringing filled his ears while he slumped in a daze. It was

quite a while later before he realized that the bubble had become embedded in a wall. Realizing he was still alive, Yang Wuchang felt a wave of happiness rush through his body.

Shi Xueman was slightly shocked by the bubble's durability. Taking a second look at it, she realized that it was the work of a Master.

She calmly strolled out of the tavern and headed towards the bubble.

A spark of interest lit up in her cold eyes. She was excited to see a master water elementalist's creation up close.

Yang Wuchang had just recovered from his daze when he noticed Shi Xueman walking towards him. The curiosity in her eyes gave him a bad feeling. Trembling, he hastily said, "Misunderstanding, this is all a misunderstanding!"

Shi Xueman ignored him. She looked up and noticed that there were many elementalists advancing to their position.

Out of nowhere, Ai Hui appeared behind her, "These are guards from Clearwater City."

"It's a misunderstanding, really!" Yang Wuchang mopped his face and whimpered. "My uncle is Master Yang Xiaodong, you can ask around to verify. I deserve to die for offending you, but please give my uncle some face and let me repay you for my transgression!"

He had seized the slightest opportunity to bring up his uncle’s name.

He was truly frightened this time.

Ai Hui saw Shi Xueman brush her hand against Cirrus that was strapped against her back. He said, "Go finish him off, I’ll handle these guys."

Shi Xueman retracted her palm. Acknowledging Ai Hui’s words, she continued to walk towards Yang Wuchang.

Yang Wuchang cried out in despair, "Spare me please Madam! Mercy! Surely a great person like you won’t bother with a lowlife like me! I must have been blind..."

Shi Xueman completely ignored him. She stood silently in front of the bubble, her beautiful eyes unusually bright. She was intrigued by the Mist Cage and very much wanted to explore its capabilities.

"Identify yourselves! Stop whatever you are doing!"

One of the guards shouted down at them. Their sheer numbers gave them courage.

Ai Hui stroked his chin as he rolled the Wintry Jade Blade in his

palm. He had no intention to attack, but the day's events reminded him of something. The A-grade fire liquid was highly coveted, and others would jump at any chance to rush them. The only way to deter these greedy people was to scare them back with a display of pure power.

A show this big was going to be a pain.

Ai Hui was motivated by the thought of earning some more money. He called for Lou Lan, "Lou Lan, grass sword!"

"Coming, Ai Hui."

Lou Lan answered loudly and threw a bundle of grass swords to him.

Ai Hui grabbed the bundle, separated them and methodically inserted them into the ground.

Thump!

The earth trembled and the mountains swayed.

Shi Xueman suddenly gave the bubble a good, solid punch. Yang Wuchang, who was still inside, felt as if he had been struck by lightning.

The guards who had rushed over were furious when they found

Shi Xueman continuing with her assault. They glanced at each other before diving towards her.

Shrill howls resounded throughout Clearwater City. More than a dozen streaking lights sped towards Shi Xueman like unstoppable arrows.

Ai Hui was completely immersed in placing the grass swords in the ground and was blissfully unaware of the approaching guards.

Ai Hui put the last sword in place just as the guards were right above his head. Surrounding him were thirty or so grass swords that were sticking out of the ground at all angles.

Ai Hui stood in the middle of the swords and looked up at the sky.

His eyes shone faintly, like stars in the night. He solemnly mumbled to himself.

"My dear swords, please let us make more money."

.....

In the mayor’s residence, Qiao Meiqi’s face turned ghastly pale when he heard the alarm wailing.

He felt embarrassed that his guests had to witness this

unpleasant situation.

There were two guests sitting in front of him, an old man and a young lady. The young lady was about eighteen or nineteen, naive and innocent. The elderly man was lying on a long couch, eating snacks non stop while humming a tune.

The mayor’s residence entered defensive mode.

The river that surrounded the mayor’s residence created a water screen that enveloped the entire place.

Qiao Meiqi gloomily asked, "What’s happening? Who sounded the alarm?"

His subordinate quickly reported, "It was from the cloud defense layer, Tu Xiaojun is on duty today."

Qiao Meiqi calmed down slightly. He remembered Tu Xiaojun as a steadfast individual.

Further updates came two minutes later, "A fight broke out in the northeast corner. We have detected elemental energy suffocation across a large area, its range is about 150 meters. Our troops are rushing over as we speak."

The old man who was busy snacking paused and sat up. An elemental energy suffocation of such a scale implied that someone who was almost as strong as a master was involved.

Qiao Meiqi felt a chill running down his spine. He asked, "Is it Han Li?"

His subordinate reported, "No, not Han Li. It’s a lady who we have yet to identify."

The young lady became excited upon hearing that the other party was a woman. "Uncle Qiao, let’s go check it out!"

Qiao Meiqi looked at the old man, who nodded. "I would like to take a look as well."

Qiao Meiqi felt relieved. With them around, things shouldn’t get too out of hand.

He stood up and sneered, "Let’s go and take a good look at these ‘heroes’!"

Chapter 441: The Bigger the Scene, the Bigger the Earnings

Translator: YH Editor: TYZ, KLKL

Han Li was alarmed by the siren. He furrowed his brows and walked faster, following the direction the guards were flying in. He did not take to the sky after the alarm sounded, as the sky of the city had become a no-fly zone. Unauthorised flyers would be treated as the enemy and attacked violently.

He wondered who the assailants were.

It was common to have disturbances in the city, but to have the alarm activated was another matter.

If the situation was minor, the invaders would merely be punished as unwelcome guests. Those who caused major disturbances would be seen as an enemy of the city and would be marked for death.

Who could it be?

Could it be an enemy of Qiao Meiqi? Han Li's heart skipped a beat. He walked faster and thought that if this was the case, he might be able to make use of the situation.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

A dull, rhythmic sound, like the beating of a drum, could be heard. Han Li was keenly aware of the vibrations moving along the ground. He immediately associated it with heavy weapons, such as heavy hammers or siege rams.

He hopped lightly onto the roof of a shop and from there, gently bounced across several other roofs until he reached a higher vantage point.

There were guards forming up in the sky above the city. Even Han Li, who was only there to take a peek, could feel the tremendous pressure.

The guards were about to act.

He focused his mind. He was curious to see who the troublemakers were and was contemplating if he should lend them a helping hand. While the saying "an enemy of my enemy is my friend" wasn't always true, actual circumstances usually didn't stray too far from it.

Han Li's eyes opened wide with shock when he looked towards the source of the sound.

A beautiful lady clad in blue and white armour was continuously punching a thin bubble. The guy within the bubble was completely knocked out.

Visible ripples would appear on the bubble whenever her snow-

white fists struck it.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Han Li was transfixed. He was unable to associate this beautiful, esteemed lady with the sledge hammer-like blows she was dishing out. He recognized the thin bubble as being a Mist Cage, something that only a handful of people were able to create. One of them was Master Yang Xiaodong.

Han Li had read about Yang Xiaodong before he came and so knew that the man in the bubble wasn't him. The Mist Cage was still intact, but they lady's terrifying power was able to penetrate it.

The man in the bubble was completely overwhelmed by the armour-clad lady's powerful blows. He was unconscious and foaming at the mouth.

Was there a need for this much force?

Despite her terrifying display of force, Han Li actually had thoughts of flirting with her. A moment later, he snapped out of it and shuddered. Just what was he thinking!

Was an ancient dire beast hidden within that graceful body?

Flying overhead, more guards arrived. They were bewildered by the chaos below them.

Being more resilient and powerful than the rest of the guards, the head guard regained his composure in half the time. He recognized the man in the bubble as Yang Wuchang, the nephew of Master Yang. He had heard of the man’s many shady misdeeds and despised him greatly. The head guard however, still had a duty to fulfil. If Yang Wuchang was to die under his watch, Master Yang might blame him for dereliction of duty.

He ordered, "Hands off!"

By then, the other guards had recovered from their shock as well. They looked at Shi Xueman with fear. Although they were afraid, they didn’t dare to retreat. Unable to advance or retreat, the guards fanned out and surrounded the area.

The lady below continued to land blow after blow. It was as though she hadn’t realized what was happening.

"I’ll have to take action if you don’t stop!"

The head guard wavered a little inside. He wasn’t as confident as he looked or sounded, but at this point he had no choice but to advance. He gritted his teeth and signaled his men to get ready.

"Hey, hey, hey, am I really that unremarkable?"

A languid voice came from below.

Ai Hui felt a little annoyed that he had been overlooked. There were so many people yet not a single one had bothered to look at him even once. He'd created such an eye-catching scene yet was completely ignored.

Although Ai Hui wasn't someone who sought fame and attention, he still felt really unhappy about this.

It doesn't pay to be too nice...

Before he even finished his sigh, the Wintry Jade Blade in Ai Hui's hand had already traced out several sword rays. Oddly, they didn't vanish, but instead lingered in the air.

Haphazardly inserted into the ground were a pretty large number of grass swords. A soft, high-pitched whistle could be heard from the grass swords that were trembling in unison.

Upon noticing Ai Hui's movements, the guards became aggressive. They couldn't quite explain it, but the sight of Ai Hui made them feel threatened.

"How dare you!"

"What insolence!"

...

The guards cried out and gathered into a large mass. Below, an innocent-looking young man flashed a bright smile as he gracefully brandished his sword.

A faint light erupted from the sword's blade, dancing around the guards.

"Welcome!"

The young man's languid voice momentarily lulled the guards into a false sense of comfort.

His soothing voice was soon swept away by the grass swords' high-pitched whistle.

The guards could see bright spots in the sky around them that looked like stars amidst a lightless night sky. Out of nowhere, immensely sharp sword rays began to fly towards them at a high speed.

Without thinking, the guards instinctively dodged and attempted to deflect the attack.

The anticipated attack, however, did not take place. The piercing rays vanished, as if they had never existed.

Have we been fooled?

After they recovered, the guards noticed that there were many grass swords floating around them. The grass swords were nimbly weaving their way amongst them, like agile fishes swimming down a river.

What was happening?

Utterly confused, none of the guards were able to figure out what these grass swords were for. They were emitting a faint light, but did that even matter? Grass swords were weak and unsuitable for large scale attacks.

What's more, the grass swords didn't seem to have any intention of attacking them. They merely drifted through space, completely ignoring the guards' existence.

Han Li was so distracted by Shi Xueman that he was taken aback when he heard Ai Hui speak.

He would never forget that mockery-filled voice for as long as he lived!

Looking towards the direction of the sound, he saw Ai Hui standing in the middle of many grass swords.

Han Li was deeply annoyed.

The smirk on that fellow's face was incredibly detestable!

One of the guards had enough of his games and prepared to rush down.

He felt resistance the moment he tried to move. It was as though they were all suspended in some sort of liquid, making it difficult to move.

He quickly shouted, "Be careful, something’s not quite right!"

The others were finally waking up from their daze. They were disconcerted upon discovering that their physical and elemental energy movements were hampered.

"Crap!"

"Let’s break out!"

Their immense collective combat experience allowed the guards to quickly think of a solution. They coordinated their efforts and aggressively attempted to fly out of the area.

Ai Hui nonchalantly stayed on the ground. He glanced at Shi Xueman who was still happily punching the bubble, and felt a bit sorry for the guy inside.

He retracted his gaze and looked upwards when he detected the guards’ movements.

Shi Xueman is obsessed with the bubble.

It’s rare to see my good friend here actually show interest in something... Please stop trying to disturb her...

"The bigger the scene, the bigger the earnings," Ai Hui murmured, as he drew a circular sword ray in the air with the Wintry Jade Blade. An indescribable feeling pervaded the air around him.

The faint light from the floating grass swords began to change. Half of them were shining even brighter, while another half became much dimmer, as though they were covered by a layer of fog.

The two distinct versions of the grass swords intertwined with each other, creating strange, undulating waves.

The airborne guards had a grim look on their faces. If they were previously stuck in water, they were now rapidly sinking into quicksand. The resistance they felt was ten times greater than before!

"Elemental energy suffocation!"

Tu Xiaojun, who was standing guard in the cloud defense layer, was mortified.

Beneath him, a circular void was expanding wildly. This one was somehow even more terrifying than the elemental energy suffocation from before.

Two hundred and ten meters...Two hundred and forty meters ... Three hundred meters..

The huge expanse of nothingness below him left his limbs numb with cold.

The mayor and the others, who'd just flown over, arrived just in time to see the grass swords flying up into the sky. They hadn't thought much about the grass swords.

The old man soon picked up on the mysterious elemental energy waves that were propagating through the air.

"Be on your guard! The other party is very powerful!"

It was as if the old man had become someone else. His hair was standing on end and his gaze was as solid as a rock. He was emitting strong elemental energy fluctuations and not a trace of his typically leisurely manner could be seen.

Qiao Meiqi knew that something was up. For the old man to say something like that, the other party must be incredibly strong.

—— A Master!

He took a deep bow and begged, "Respected elder, you must save us! All of my assets are in Clearwater City. I'll be left with nothing if it's ruined."

The old man looked at the young lady gravely as he sighed, "Don't worry, I'll not let them mess around."

"Uncle Qiao, you shouldn't be too worried," the young lady gently reassured Qiao Meiqi.

Hearing the old man's words made Qiao Meiqi feel slightly more secure. All they needed to do was to survive for the next two days until the Masters returned. Qiao Meiqi wondered whether he had offended someone recently and was reminded of some gossip he had picked up some days before.

The old man lowered his tone, "I'll go take a look."

Han Li, who was perched atop a high roof, was as pale as a sheet. He stared at the floating grass swords in utter disbelief.

Hailing from the Karakorum Sword League, he naturally knew exactly what he was looking at. Anyone who had stayed for an extended duration in Karakorum would definitely recognise this.

Yin Yang Sword Formation!

However, he had no deeper understanding of it beyond mere recognition.

He once believed that he would be able to break through the enigmatic Yin Yang Sword Formation, but the sight in front of him shattered every last shred of that belief.

The Yin Yang Sword Formation was truly beyond his comprehension. It appeared to exist in a realm beyond Karakorum's understanding.

Han Li's world had been turned upside down.

Chapter 442: Old Friend

The dancing and circling grass swords drew a cylindrical area of over sixty cubic meters in the faraway sky. It looked like a huge, invisible wind pillar with circles of ripples raging back and forth within. The guards floated and sank but were unable to struggle free.

The closer they got the more the interwoven and fluctuating wave motion brought fear and trepidation, even to the old man beside Mayor Qiao Meiqi.

The wave motion was indistinct and unpredictable. Weaker elementalists were unable to sense it, but the old man felt its threat. Even when sensing unfamiliar forces, Masters would still be able to instinctively detect the danger within.

Their understanding of force far exceeded ordinary elementalists.

The old man was rather curious. Who could it be?

He glanced slightly toward the mayor and wondered to himself, ‘When had this guy offended such a powerful opponent?’ He had a high position in the Gong residence and was seldom kept from secrets. In this era, however, carelessly antagonizing others wasn’t a wise choice.

Qiao Meiqi was worried sick, sweat unknowingly surfacing on his forehead. He had a majestic appearance, face squarish and broad,

that gave him an air of grandeur even without trying. He was definitely not an ordinary businessman, since it wasn't easy to build a friendly relationship with the son of an official. Many times he'd made people forget his identity of a great merchant.

But a hostile enemy of Master level had to enter the city when both consecrated Masters weren't around. This was worse than the invasion of the Wilderness.

The dancing and circling grass swords in the sky were like a leisurely swimming arrowfish that carried little malice. Upon seeing the guards' clumsy moves and blunders, however, a coldness rose from Qiao Meiqi's tailbone and spread throughout his whole body.

He tried his best to keep cool, asking, "Look, what is that?"

The old man was knowledgeable, but did not answer immediately. He observed for some time before responding, "It looks like a kind of sword formation, but one of such scale is rarely heard of.

"Sword formation? Isn't that something from Karakorum Sword League?" Qiao Meiqi raised his brows, fire flickering in his eyes. "Could it be Han Li at the bottom?"

Hearing Han Li had just caused trouble and seeing Karakorum's sword formation, it wasn't surprising that he would associate one with the other. He appeared to be seething, but was actually relieved. As long as they were certain Karakorum Sword League

was involved, the Gong residence would not just sit and watch.

It was only after Karakorum's chief became Sky Edge Division's division leader, Karakorum Polaris, that her secret relationship with Madam Ye gradually became apparent.

Karakorum Polaris did not emerge alone, but brought along newly recruited soldiers.

As a despot, Qiao Meiqi naturally wasn't someone with a simple brain. He'd understood that with Great Elder falling sick, Madam Ye was now unstoppably powerful.

Karakorum's Han Li's appearance in Clearwater City made people ponder and question.

Qiao Meiqi felt calm instead, since Gong Residence would not sit idly as Madam Ye roped them in. Qiao Meiqi had no intention to rely on Madam Ye as well. He had a few decades of friendship with the Gong Residence so the trust they shared was foundationally deep.

Plus, Qiao Meiqi was clear that Madam Ye's army was well-trained and powerful and her subordinates were valiant. If he were to go over to her side at this time, he wouldn't be able to reap much benefits and wouldn't be much valued, so why would he do that?

Clearwater City was remotely located, deep within the

Wilderness, so within such a short period of time, repairing the situation was beyond Madam Ye's abilities.

Han Li's appearance in Clearwater City... he's coming for Gong Residence!

Qiao Meiqi quickly found the crux and came to a realization. The relationship between the Gong Residence and Madam Ye was already hostile, and now they were establishing themselves in the few aristocratic families, doing as they please without adhering to Madam Ye's order. This was made apparent when they constructed Palacefield City instead of entering Skyheart City.

He composed himself. The battle between Gong Residence and Madam Ye wasn't something a person of his rank should participate in.

As the target flew closer, the old man and young lady cried out simultaneously.

"It's him!"

"It's her!"

Qiao Meiqi snapped out of it instantly. Were they acquainted?

In charge of the Yin Yang sword formation, Ai Hui couldn't help but howl at Iron Lady. "Done?"

He was answered with an even more intensive whisking that sounded like metals clanging, a plaintive lament.

Finally, a loud crash, surpassing all previous sounds, was heard. Ai Hui breathed a sigh of relief.

While his Yin Yang sword formation was powerful, grass swords were still grass swords and were unable to be sustained for long. He attacked because there was more to gain. It would be embarrassing if things backfired.

Iron Lady pulled back and returned to Ai Hui's side without even looking at Yang Wuchang, who was lying unconscious on the ground and bleeding from his nose and mouth.

Just then, the circling grass swords in the sky started flaming. There were white flames and black flames. In the blink of an eye they turned to ashes.

That strange, invisible force disappeared all of a sudden and the trapped guards instantly felt their bodies loosen up as the resistance all around vanished completely.

Below, Ai Hui and Shi Xueman stood back to back, holding a sword and a spear respectively.

Making such a big scene and disregarding their honor... no one would take it lying down.

There was no need to worry about not having the chance to speak. With a sword and with skills, anyone would get a chance to speak up.

Only weaklings' voices would be drowned out.

Without turning his head Ai Hui asked, "How did it feel?"

Shi Xueman replied, "Very sturdy."

She hesitated for a bit, but added nevertheless, "That last one was gratifying."

Ai Hui burst into laughter. It was difficult to imagine such words coming out of Iron Lady's mouth. She sounded like a mischievous little girl who'd just done something naughty.

The guards in the sky were raging at this point, their eyes on fire. They'd been immobilized by their opponent in the eyes of everyone. It was utterly embarrassing.

Right at this moment someone shouted, "Stop it!"

The guards who were about to attack turned rigid. That imposing voice was beyond familiar to them. The mayor!

They turned around and saluted, "Mayor!"

Before Qiao Meiqi could speak, the two old and young people beside him flew down.

"Sister Xueman!"

"So it’s you!"

The familiarity in their tones made Qiao Meiqi let all his guard down. Wait a minute, Sister Xueman? Who could have a little princess of the Gong Residence address her that way? A name came up to him suddenly, causing his eyes to open wide.

Ai Hui looked at the luxuriously clothed man in front of him and asked in puzzlement, "You are...?"

He found the old man vaguely familiar looking but had no idea where he might’ve seen him. Even his voice sounded familiar.

Seeing that Ai Hui had not recognized him the old man was somewhat pleased. "No recollection eh? I drank some of your porridge before."

Drank his porridge? Ai Hui reacted all of a sudden, his eyeballs about to fall out. "Volcano Old Man!"

The old man smiled in satisfaction. "Can’t recognize me eh, have I changed a lot?"

Ai Hui clicked his tongue in wonder. "Couldn’t recognize you indeed. You were like a beggar when I last met you, but now you’re acting all elegant. I can tell from one glance that your clothes are expensive stuff!"

Upon hearing the words "acting all elegant" Qiao Meiqi trembled slightly. He raised his head forcefully and look toward Ai Hui like a madman.

How dare he say that to a Master? Not just any Master but bad-tempered Venerable Volcano. Was he trying to die?

What threw him off even more was the fact that Venerable Volcano wasn’t the least bit offended.

He smiled, saying, "I have recovered and was able to live on, thanks to your porridge. I wanted to look for you guys after to return the favor but it slipped my mind, hahaha."

He seemed to have felt that forgetting someone else’s kindness wasn’t something to feel embarrassed over.

Ai Hui did not mind it. He smiled, "That’s not true. If not for the fact that you guarded the door, we wouldn’t have been able to enjoy the porridge."

Just then, Shi Xueman brought an innocent and unaffected girl over. "This is Ai Hui, we all call him Ah Hui. This is Yaoyao, Gong

Peiyao. She is Uncle Gong’s daughter, we used to play together in the past"

Gong Peiyao greeted hurriedly, calling out respectfully, "Brother Ah Hui."

Ai Hui returned the greeting, "Yaoyao."

Shi Xueman recognized Venerable Volcano at this point and was rather shocked. "You changed so much."

Venerable Volcano laughed out loud. "The young lady’s eyes are working better after all. Better than yours."

Shi Xueman had already pulled Yaoyao to another side.

"Lou Lan, this is Yaoyao."

"Hi, Yaoyao. I’m Lou Lan, very pleased to meet you."

"Wa, Lou Lan is so cute! Can I hug you, Lou Lan?"

"Of course!"

"Wah, you’re so soft! Do you wanna hug him, Sister Xueman?"

"I"m not a little girl like you!"

"You don’t want to? Really? He’s so soft and comfortable to hug! Why are you so soft, Lou Lan?"

"There are two reasons. Firstly, I’m made of millesimal soft sand. Secondly, my sand core is constantly optimizing and I can simulate about three thousand four hundred and sixty different sand textures."

"Lou Lan, Lou Lan! Can you become a bed?"

"Yes I can!"

Boom, a sand bed appeared before the two of them.

Gong Peiyao threw herself on it, instantly becoming excited. "Ahhhhhh so soft! Lou Lan is so amazing! Quick, come up, Sister Xueman!"

Shi Xueman was rather tempted, but looking at her surroundings she decided to resist the urge. She coughed, "Get up quick, Yaoyao. You shouldn’t act like this..."

"I’m not getting up, I’m not getting up, I’m not getting up..."

Shi Xueman pulled her up with one hand, ignoring her squirms and struggles. She said, somewhat embarrassed, "Sorry to have made you suffer, Lou Lan. Yaoyao has always been mischievous."

Lou Lan broke into a wide grin. "Not at all, I’m very happy."

Qiao Meiqi was now in front of Ai Hui. He spoke cordially, "I did not expect to see the renowned Lightning Blade over here. Your presence really brings light to my city. I’m deeply honored. My name is Qiao Meiqi and I am guilty of calling myself the mayor. Unable to take care of my people properly, I feel utterly ashamed. Really sorry to have caused you an unhappy experience. Please do me the honor and give me a chance to make up for my negligence."

Yang Wuchang woke up from his coma, but upon hearing the humble tone in which the mayor was addressing them with, he blacked out once again.

Chapter 443: The Grief of Balls

The mayor’s residence was bustling with noise and excitement that night. The ill-feelings between everyone had disappeared. People were toasting each other while laughing and cheering happily. Qiao Meiqi was exceptional at adjusting the atmosphere of a social setting. The atmosphere of the banquet was very lively now.

Everyone had heard of the renowned Lightning Blade. In front of the wealthy and powerful Shi family and Gong family, the local rich men were nobodies.

"So you own the A-grade fire liquid?"

Venerable Volcano asked impatiently, looking as if he was about to run up to Ai Hui’s face.

The lively banquet quieted down in an instant. Among the invited guests tonight, many of them were presidents of enterprises. They had obtained the news of the fire liquid at an earlier time. Those who had a general knowledge of business knew the worth of an A-grade fire liquid.

Qiao Meiqi knew very well how to conduct a business. Similarly, he knew the worth of an A-grade fire liquid. However, instead of withholding the news, he released the news with great fanfare. He’d invited numerous enterprises to the banquet that night.

He clearly knew what was important and what was not. The A-

grade fire liquid might be important, however, it paled in comparison to the worth of Ai Hui's presence. Furthermore, there had been some misunderstandings previously and this banquet would be the best chance to remedy everything.

Qiao Meiqi had a smile on his face the whole time. Every now and then, he would fawn over Ai Hui and advertise his fire liquid to everyone.

"It's A-grade refined fire liquid," Qiao Meiqi added motionlessly.

All the guests became restless. The word "refined" implied that the fire liquid could be produced indefinitely. Everyone loved treasure, but most treasures were exhaustible. To businessmen, the only way to make money was to sell something that was inexhaustible.

Ai Hui looked at Qiao Meiqi with surprise. This mayor was indeed a shrewd individual.

"Mr Kang knows this fire liquid the best. Why don't we have Mr Kang give us an introduction of it?" Qiao Meiqi smiled.

Qiao Meiqi clearly knew of Ai Hui's intentions so he invited Appraiser Kang Ding to this banquet. With Kang Ding's endorsement of the fire liquid, everyone would not have no qualms about purchasing it.

Everyone's gaze was directed at Kang Ding. He stood up to greet

Ai Hui and Qiao Meiqi and began the introduction, "It’s my honor to have Mr Ai Hui place his faith and trust in me. Right now, I will introduce snow lava’s characteristics to everyone..."

Everyone, including Venerable Volcano, listened to Kang Ding attentively.

Ai Hui raised his cup and gave Kang Ding a toast. Kang Ding smiled and raised his cup to return the toast.

Both of them smiled at each other and downed their wine cups.

Such a shrewd individual.

The same thought arose in both of their minds at the same time.

Every now and then, an alarmed cry would ring across the meeting hall. A-grade fire liquid was seldomly see on the market. Kang Ding was fully aware of his role. His introduction of the snow lava was filled with flowery compliments. Of course, being an A-grade fire liquid, the snow lava deserved such compliments.

As the fine wine slid down his throat, a fragrant and burning sensation erupted in his chest.

Ai Hui seldom drank alcohol. However, he felt a rare satisfaction at this moment.

Beside him, Iron Lady was whispering something to Gong Peiyao. Wrong, Gong Peiyao was whispering something to Iron Lady. Like a bottle of glue, the little princess from the Gong Residence had been sticking to Iron Lady and chattering nonstop since the moment she met her.

The bright, swaying light, the tipsiness from the fine wine and the clamor from the guests in the meeting hall made Ai Hui feel as if his mind was shrouded in mist.

Since the atmosphere is so lively, I should be able to sell the snow lava for a good price…

Ai Hui did not know whether it was because of the tipsiness from the fine wine or because his pressure was relieved that his entire body felt relaxed.

Every step I took, they are all still vivid in my mind.

My heart is filled with regret, my life is filled with tears.

The hardships of beginning an undertaking.

Is it easy? No, it’s not. Is it hard? It’s very hard.

What if I could restart my life? Which path would I choose?

It will still be the same.

One who holds the sword feels fear. One who bears responsibility is tied down. One who seeks revenge has difficulty in recovering from his wound.

Since when have I forgotten the warm sunshine, the cool breeze, the tranquil morning, the whooshing sound of Three Leaves Bamboo Carts, the sleepy shop assistants, the dancing smoke from the kitchen chimneys... in Central Pine City?

Ai Hui’s turbid eyes slowly regained their clarity and his hazy vision became clear once more.

At this moment, someone asked, "May I know how much does the snow lava cost?"

Ai Hui raised his wine cup and took a sip. Just as he was about to speak after moistening his lips with the wine, someone interrupted him.

"No matter how much it costs, I want all of it!" Venerable Volcano roared with his eyebrows raised.

At this point of time, no one dared to say anything. Whether it was because of his status as a Master or because he had the backing of the Gong Residence, these businessmen did not dare to offend him.

Ai Hui laughed involuntarily, "You want all of it? Do you have

enough money?"

Venerable Volcano replied proudly, "You have underestimated me. When I attained the level of Master, your balls were not even fully grown yet."

Laughter broke out in the meeting hall. Ai Hui gave a soft cough as a tinge of embarrassment appeared on his face.

Hey, hey, hey, you better leave your insults off my balls.

Old fogey!

Deep down, Ai Hui was fuming with rage. On the surface, he put on a nonchalant look and replied, "You want all of it, right? On the account of our deep relationship, I shall give you a discount. One hundred essence elemental beans per drop, what do you think? I'm not scamming you!"

"Alright. There's some conscience in you after all. Give me one hundred and eighty drops!" Venerable Volcano replied.

He was a fire elemental master and he was very familiar with the market prices of various fire elemental materials. This price was not expensive at all. Even B-grade fire liquid costed around twenty essence elemental beans per drop.

"One hundred and eighty drops?" A mysterious smile appeared on Ai Hui's face.

Venerable Volcano looked slightly worried and replied, "You don’t have one hundred and eighty drips? Sixty drops will do for me as well."

Even though high-grade fire liquid was sold in drops, they could not be used in singular drops. In the terminology of fire elementalists, there was a very special term used for drops, which was called "seal". "Seal" was used as a unit of measurement for many types of fire liquid. One seal of fire liquid was equivalent to around twenty drops of fire liquid.

A tiny amount amount of fire liquid was useless to a fire elemental master like Venerable Volcano.

An ordinary individual definitely could not afford to use an A-grade fire liquid for battles. However, for a Master, this wasn’t much of a problem. One hundred essence elemental beans per drop. Therefore, a seal of fire liquid would only cost at most two thousand essence elemental beans.

If a Master decided to spend money, he or she definitely would not just spend a few thousand essence elemental beans only.

Take Venerable Volcano as an example, he was definitely capable of forking out tens of thousand of essence elemental beans. That was merely his monthly salary.

Tens of thousand of essence elemental beans were an immense sum of income in a small city.

A Master, who was at the top of the food chain, was a representation of wealth and prestige. Each city did not have many Masters. Other than the fact that they were hard to find, their exorbitant salaries made it hard for one to hire them as well.

A Master was like a beast that devoured money. Other than having to pay them salaries, one had to offer them various rare food ingredients and materials and provide them with sufficient elemental energy too.

Clearwater City was considered wealthy to be able to sustain two Masters.

Deep down, Ai Hui was surprised at how wealthy Venerable Volcano was. However, he was still slightly annoyed that he was being looked down on by him. Following which, Ai Hui yelled, "Lou Lan, let’s show this old man something."

"Ai Hui, here."

Lou Lan took out a basket-sized, black-colored volcanic rock ball. The volcanic rock ball was generating waves of heat.

The old man chuckled with raised eyebrows, "Woah, such a big ball. I shall take back my words just now! Lad, your balls are quite huge after all! Huge!"

After finishing his sentence, the old man shook his head and

laughed even louder.

Ai Hui felt like smashing the volcanic rock ball onto the old man’s face. He restrained himself and muttered silently to himself, "Money is a devil, money is a devil..."

Following which, he unsheathed his Wintry Jade Blade and carved a circle on the volcanic rock ball. With a flick of the tip of his sword, a circle-shaped piece of rock flew out.

Crystal-clear flames gushed out of the hole on the volcanic rock ball.

Venerable Volcano yelped and appeared beside Ai Hui and snatched over the volcanic rock ball. The snow lava within the volcanic rock ball remained motionless. The layer of volcanic rock was thin and the lava within the rock ball was crystal-clear.

"Not bad! How much snow lava is there inside this volcanic rock ball?"

"One liter!"

"I want all of it!"

"Pay the money first!"

Everyone stretched their necks and looked blankly at the

volcanic rock ball. They wished they could snatch it over from the old man’s hands now.

"Do you think I won’t be able to pay you this small amount of money?" Venerable Volcano replied with irritation.

"Pass me the money and I will hand it over to you," Ai Hui sneered without any intention of submitting to the old man.

Venerable Volcano glared at Ai Hui. Even so, Ai Hui did not submit to him and glared back at him.

Everyone was shocked by this scene. They had never seen anyone that dared to go up against a Master directly like this before. Lightning Blade was indeed vicious. One should try his or her best not to provoke a vicious individual like him.

"Humph, how much?"

"One liter is equivalent to five hundred drops, so that will be fifty thousand essence elemental beans."

Venerable Volcano gritted his teeth as he felt heartache. After all, this was worth a month’s salary. Even though he had a high income, his expenditure was high as well. Ordinary elemental food no longer had any effects on him. As such, only high-grade elemental food was useful for his training.

Venerable Volcano didn’t expect himself to give in and clenched

his teeth, "Here!"

He could only eat ordinary elemental food for the rest of this month now. However, now that he had A-grade fire liquid, he was filled with satisfaction while tears ran down his cheeks.

Of course, the old man had not brought tens of thousands of essence elemental beans with him. Instead, he brought high-grade essence elemental beans. Each high-grade essence elemental bean was equivalent to roughly one hundred regular essence elemental beans. Naturally, this exchange rate could change at any moment.

When Ai Hui obtained the five hundred high-grade essence elemental beans, he was exceptionally excited. Regardless of elemental energy purity level or elemental energy capacity, essence elemental beans paled in comparison to high-grade essence elemental beans. Ai Hui had an urge to absorb these high-grade essence elemental beans on the spot. Nowadays, who would be so free to cultivate high-grade essence elemental beans? Only a wealthy aristocratic family like the Gong Residence would spend so much time and effort in cultivating such high-grade essence elemental beans.

These high-grade essence elemental beans could have been from their stockpile as well.

The Gong Residence was indeed rich and powerful. Ai Hui’s eyes flickered. He couldn’t do the same thing with the Shi family as he was too close with Shi Xueman. However, for the Gong Residence, why shouldn’t he make a huge profit off them? After all, they were the ones who offered themselves to him.

Let me milk this old fogey dry!

The smile on Ai Hui’s face became more affable. He reached out his hand and told Lou Lan, "Lou Lan, one more ball!"

He was unusually excited.

Lou Lan replied happily, "Ai Hui, here!"

When the second volcanic rock ball appeared, the atmosphere in the meeting hall became lively all of a sudden. Everyone’s eyes were filled with shock. There’s more snow lava!

Ai Hui casually carved a hole on the volcanic rock ball and teased Venerable Volcano, "I can sell this to you as well! Do you want to buy it?"

A look of distress appeared on the old man’s face. However, very soon, he clenched his teeth and replied, "I’ll buy!"

Ai Hui grinned. Suddenly, his smile vanished into thin air.

"Lou Lan, more balls!"

"Lou Lan, more balls!

"Lou Lan..."

A row of volcanic rock balls were placed neatly in front of Ai Hui. All of them were burning with crystal-clear flames, resembling a line of soldiers waiting to be inspected.

The old man was dumbstruck.

Everyone was dumbstruck.

A dead silence descended upon the meeting hall.

Chapter 444: Sold Out

An unusual silence descended upon the meeting room.

Everyone recovered from their shock but they did not speak at all. All of them were digesting the information presented within the scene in front of them.

Twelve liters of snow lava, including the two liters sold to Venerable Volcano, were placed in front of everyone. Undoubtedly, these twelve liters of snow lava had shocked everyone. According to the price set by Ai Hui just now, one liter would cost fifty thousand essence elemental beans. As such, twelve liters of snow lava would cost six hundred thousand essence elemental beans.

Even Qiao Meiqi, who was used to encountering big situations and wealthy people, could not stay calm at this moment.

The number of essence elemental beans involved was astronomical.

This astronomical number was thought-provoking.

Everyone no longer doubted the fact that Ai Hui possessed a refinement method to mass produce snow lava. Otherwise, he would not have so much snow lava.

A refinement method that mass produced A-grade fire liquid!

A lot of people began to breath heavily. Even the seemingly impish Gong Peiyao could not help but widen her eyes at this moment. She clearly knew what this meant. The snow lava was an unbeatable moneymaker.

There were surprised gazes, greedy gazes, pensive gazes and sympathetic gazes. However, everyone was keeping quiet.

It was as if the crystal-clear flames contained a mysterious power that froze their mouths and the air.

Ai Hui smiled in the midst of the silence. He casually picked up a wine cup from the table but then realized that it was empty. Being too lazy to pour himself another cup of wine, he took Iron Lady's untouched cup of wine and downed it in one gulp.

The wine slid down his throat and a burning sensation erupted in his chest.

With a cold glint in his eyes, Ai Hui stood up and picked up his sword and walked towards the centre of the meeting hall.

Every's eyes converged on him.

His sharp gaze slowly swept across the meeting hall. At this point of time, Ai Hui resembled an unsheathed sword, cold and sharp. Everyone felt as if Ai Hui's gaze could pierce their bodies. A cold shiver went down their spines as they subconsciously avoided his

gaze.

"Initially, I intended to sell the snow lava through auction but I didn’t expect the Mayor to treat me with such magnificent hospitality. I am indebted to him and I can’t thank him enough. Since everyone is so happy and it’s such a good day today, I shall not wait for the auction anymore. The selling price for the snow lava shall be the same as before. You can use essence elemental beans or materials to pay for them." Ai Hui said with a loud and clear voice.

Immediately, a commotion broke out among the crowd.

The price of fifty thousand essence elemental beans for one liter of A-grade fire liquid was rather enticing. If it was sold through auction, it could easily fetch an auction price that was twice the current selling price. This implied that they had a higher profit margin now.

A-grade fire liquids were extremely scarce on the market. As such, they did not need to worry about the demand for it. Some of them had even thought of suitable buyers for it already. If they could sell the snow lava to Newlight City or Skyheart City, they could even get ten times their usual profits.

They were waiting and calculating in their hearts.

Ai Hui remained composed. The reason why he’d changed his mind and decided to sell the snow lava at a low price rather than selling it at an auction was because he suddenly understood the

situation everyone was in.

The snow lava was very valuable in the market now and Central Pine Valley was able to mass produce them. However, rather than trying to find a high selling price for the snow lava, what they needed to do now was to quickly open up a market for it. Following which, they had to obtain more essence elemental beans and use them to exchange for more resources.

They needed to increase their strength fast.

Ai Hui could see greed and desire in many people's eyes. The snow lava was a sure moneymaker that held a deadly enticement over anyone with any powers. As long as they could obtain the refinement method for snow lava, their strength could rise sharply in a short period of time.

For sure, when the news of snow lava spread to the outside world, there would be people trying to find out about the city they had built and the refinement method for making the snow lava.

These people would rack their brains to achieve these goals by hook or by crook.

Even Masters would covet this moneymaker.

Ai Hui knew that they were in a race against time. Only by making sure they had sufficient self-defense capabilities, before those covetous individuals knew of Central Pine Valley's existence,

could they then protect this moneymaker.

So they must act fast!

The faster they sold the snow lava, the quicker they would grow stronger.

Ai Hui was clear-headed. By the time he thought of the crux of the issue, his back was drenched in sweat. Right now, he was rejoicing. He was glad that the two Masters in Clearwater City weren't in the city now and they were dealing with Venerable Volcano instead. Otherwise, they might've been in deep trouble.

If Qiao Meiqi bore malice towards them, he would definitely have the capability to detain them with the help of his two Masters.

Tackling the root of the problem was always the best solution.

Ai Hui looked very calm. Only by staying calm could he make other people feel that he was unfathomable and not easily predictable.

If he behaved slightly flustered, these people would engulf him like sharks that had smelled blood.

"A good product like this is rare."

Qiao Meiqi's voice broke the silence. With a wide smile on his

face, he stood up and saluted Ai Hui. Following which, he said, "Since no one wants to say anything, then don’t blame me for being too greedy. I will buy five liters of the remaining ten liters of snow lava. As for the materials that Mr Ai Hui needs, I will procure them via various channels. It would be an extraordinary humiliation and shame to Clearwater City if we let Lightning Blade return home empty-handed."

Ai Hui had to admit that Qiao Meiqi was a very formidable individual.

This man was able to move calmly towards the prevailing position at the most critical moment. Furthermore, he did not covet petty profits and always thought of the big picture. He had an extraordinary breadth of mind.

Upon hearing Qiao Meiqi’s words, the rest of the crowd heaved a sigh of relief and followed suit.

"It’s our loss if Mr Ai Hui can’t buy anything from a business hub like our Clearwater City! Our enterprise will purchase one liter and we will try our best to obtain the resources that Mr Ai Hui needs."

"I want one liter! Mr Ai Hui, I have seen your list of resources, no problem!"

"I want one liter too! Our enterprise will do our best to get what Mr Ai Hui needs!"

...

In the blink of an eye, all of the remaining snow lava was sold.

Ai Hui could not help but express his gratitude to Qiao Meiqi, "Mayor, I will always remember your kindness. From today onwards, Clearwater City is my friend."

Ai Hui had to return this favor.

If not for Qiao Meiqi, these enterprises would not have gone all out in buying Ai Hui's snow lava. Qiao Meiqi was truly worthy of being the mayor of Clearwater City. His influence over Clearwater City was unmatchable.

Furthermore, Ai Hui could also sense that the number of the surrounding covetous gazes had reduced significantly after Qiao Meiqi had spoken.

Everyone here was shrewd and sharp. Even though they did not know exactly why the mayor would think so highly of Ai Hui, they would not do anything stupid after seeing that the mayor had made his stand.

Ai Hui had yet to find out Qiao Meiqi's real intentions. However, from the look of it, Qiao Meiqi did not seem to have any malice towards Ai Hui and his party.

After the snow lava was sold out, the mood was dampened

significantly and all of them left one by one. The banquet had come to an end as well. A lot of people approached Ai Hui and tried to find out the location of his city, but Ai Hui merely smiled at them.

When most of the businessmen had left, Kang Ding walked towards Ai Hui and said, "Mr Ai Hui, do you still remember you have one more item that you've entrusted to me to appraise?"

Ai Hui thought of that unknown beast bone and quickly asked, "How about it? Is the result out?"

Ever since Ai Hui found the unknown beast bone in the pile of scarletfire flying fox bones, he had been racking his brain to find out which beast it came from. The texture of the beast bone was rather outstanding. It could not be easily damaged by any weapons.

Kang Ding's face was filled with regret as he took out a package and passed it to Ai Hui, "I'm very sorry. My knowledge is too shallow and I can't determine which beast it comes from."

Ai Hui took over the package. The beast bone within it was in good condition. Since even Appraiser Kang Ding did not know where it came from, it most likely belonged to a dire beast that was extinct or a dire beast that had migrated to the depths of Wilderness.

"There's a limit to anyone's capabilities. Furthermore, there are numerous species of dire beasts in this world. Mr Kang, don't be

too hard on yourself," Ai Hui consoled Kang Ding.

Kang Ding smiled, "Mr Ai Hui, there's no need for you to console me. There are too many things and creatures unknown to us. Elementalists' understanding towards Wilderness is still very shallow. However, even though I can't recognize which beast it is from, I was still able to discover some interesting features of it that might interest you."

"I'd like to hear about them," Ai Hui was slightly curious.

"While I was appraising it, I found out that its fire attributed nature is hidden, as if it's being covered by a layer of hard crust. If you truly want to understand its characteristics, you will have to break through the layer of crust." Kang Ding explained.

"How do I break this layer of crust?" Ai Hui asked.

"Since it's a fire elemental material, the best way to break it is with fire. Since you can mass produce snow lava, that means you have very high-grade flames. You can try using high-grade flames to burn through it. Of course, this is just my assumption. Whether it will work or not, I'm not sure. Furthermore, by doing this you will risk damaging the beast bone. Think twice before you try this method." Kang Ding answered.

Ai Hui nodded his head solemnly and replied, "Yes, I will."

He was thinking of using White Cluster Flames to burn it and see

what would happen to it.

After settling the issue, Kang Ding bade farewell to Ai Hui and left.

At this moment, Qiao Meiqi walked towards Ai Hui and said, "Mr Ai Hui, you might have to stay in Clearwater City for some time. I will need a few days to prepare the resources. The amount of resources you need is far too massive."

Ai Hui knew Qiao Meiqi wasn’t exaggerating.

It was not possible for a purchase that was worth six hundred thousand essence elemental beans to be completed in a short period of time. This purchase was the largest business deal in the history of Clearwater City.

"Many thanks to you, Mayor, for your help today," Ai Hui expressed his gratitude to Qiao Meiqi.

"I should be the one thanking you for taking care of my Clearwater City. We are going to make a huge ton of money off such a huge business deal this time around. I am a businessman and I built Clearwater City so that I can do business at ease," Qiao Meiqi laughed cheerfully.

Qiao Meiqi was right. Such a big business deal was rarely seen in Clearwater City. He bought five liters of snow lava in one go and this would allow him to make a terrifying amount of profit.

"Mayor, I am thinking of giving the exclusive dealership of snow lava to Clearwater City, what do you think?" Ai Hui suddenly said.

Qiao Meiqi’s body trembled while his eyes lit up brightly all of a sudden. With excitement, he replied, "Really?"

Even Venerable Volcano was startled upon hearing Ai Hui’s words. Gong Peiyao’s jaw dropped involuntarily as incredulity filled her face.

Is this guy mad? Doesn’t he know how much profits he will lose by doing this?

The next moment, a strong sense of jealousy arose in her heart.

That’s right! Jealousy!

So much money!

She looked at Uncle Qiao and it was like she’d seen an enormous piece of meat pie fall from the sky and drop on his face!

Chapter 445: Conditions And An Unforeseen Event

In everyone’s eyes, Ai Hui remained calm. "Yes, I have this intention. Is the Mayor willing to agree to this deal?"

At this point in time, Qiao Meiqi’s facial expression was solemn, "Yes, I am very willing to agree to this deal. What are your conditions?"

Ai Hui nodded his head and replied, "I have a few conditions."

Qiao Meiqi’s facial expression relaxed. It was normal to have some conditions for business deals. He would have suspicions if there were no conditions at all. With a deep voice, Qiao Meiqi replied, "I’d like to hear about the details."

"The first condition, for every transaction, payment using essence elemental beans cannot exceed thirty percent of the full amount of the transaction. The remaining amount has to be paid using various resources. We don’t care where Mayor obtains the resources from. We will provide you with a list of the resources we need," Ai Hui said.

Qiao Meiqi did some mental calculations and nodded his head, "If the resources that are used for the payment do not exceed the value of one million essence elemental beans, then it shouldn’t be much of a problem. Other than my own trade route, I will form a Clearwater Trade Association with other enterprises to obtain other trade routes as well. However, if the amount of resources

exceeds the worth of one million essence elemental beans, this deal will be very difficult to pull off. After all, the location of Clearwater City is rather isolated. It is not an ideal business hub."

Ai Hui smiled and replied, "It won't be that much."

One million essence elemental beans was equivalent to twenty liters of snow lava. At this point in time, It wasn't much of a problem for Central Pine Valley to produce this amount of snow lava. However, if a huge amount of snow lava appeared on the market, the price of snow lava would decrease sharply.

"That's good then," Qiao Meiqi heaved a sigh of relief, "Right now, A-grade fire liquids are in really severe scarcity. However, ordinary people might not be able to afford them at the current price. Furthermore, most of the fire elementalists are not very rich now. These factors will affect the sale of snow lava. I feel that we shouldn't put up more than ten liters of snow lava on the market every month for the time being. We still need time to expand the market for snow lava."

"Alright, we will settle on ten liters of snow lava every month for the time being," Ai Hui agreed.

What Qiao Meiqi said made sense. This was also why Ai Hui decided to give him the exclusive dealership of snow lava. With regards to managing a business, Ai Hui and his counterparts paled in comparison to Qiao Meiqi. Furthermore, the amount of resources that Central Pine Valley needed was massive. It was practically impossible for Ai Hui and his counterparts to obtain these resources all by themselves.

Right now, the most important task for everyone, including Ai Hui and Iron Lady, was to train.

Especially Ai Hui himself.

Iron Lady had purposely suppressed her base level. This was a very unique training method. In reality, her strength was already equivalent to a Master’s.

If there were two Masters in Central Pine Valley, any average strength person would not dare to mess with them.

As such, it was very important for him to increase his strength.

This was also why Ai Hui was willing to give the exclusive dealership of snow lava to Qiao Meiqi. Their time was very precious and he did not want to waste it on the issue of selling snow lava.

Even though Ai Hui was a money grubber, he clearly understood that wealth would only push Central Pine Valley to death if they did not have sufficient strength.

"What about the second condition?" Qiao Meiqi asked.

"The second condition is related to the delivery method. I hope you can deliver the goods to our forward operating base," Ai Hui

continued.

Qiao Meiqi did not agree immediately and asked carefully, "Where is your forward operating base?"

"Lemon Camping Ground," Ai Hui replied.

Upon hearing this, Qiao Meiqi was slightly surprised. He cast a glance at Ai Hui and said, "I didn’t expect your city to be located even deeper in Wilderness than us."

Qiao Meiqi knew where Lemon Camping Ground was. Therefore, he could guess that Ai Hui’s city was in the depths of Wilderness.

Ai Hui continued to ask, "So what do you say?"

"If it’s at Lemon Camping Ground, then there shouldn’t be any problem," Qiao Meiqi replied.

Ai Hui reached out his palm for a handshake and smiled, "So we have reached a deal?"

A smile spread across Qiao Meiqi’s face as he reached out his palm to shake Ai Hui’s hand, "Deal!"

Both of them looked at each other and smiled.

Qiao Meiqi knew he could make a massive profit from this huge meat pie. By importing and exporting snow lava and various resources, he could make money off of both sides. Ai Hui did not have enough time to trade to individuals and found this troublesome to do. On the contrary, he had plenty of time and did not find it troublesome at all.

Ai Hui felt that he had made a gain as well. Even though he had lost out on a huge amount of profit, he had saved a lot of time from agreeing to this deal.

There were many advantages of setting Lemon Camping Ground as the delivery point. They could conserve their manpower, cut short the journey for collecting the delivery, and they were more familiar with the area around Lemon Camping Ground as well.

They could also avoid covetous individuals that were trying to find out the exact location of Central Pine Valley.

The exact location of Central Pine Valley would be found out sooner or later. However, the later this day came, the better it would be for Ai Hui and the rest.

Ai Hui had made up his mind that once he returned to Central Pine Valley, he was going to supervise everyone in carrying out an intense training regime. Without sufficient strength, they would not be able to preserve the refinement method for snow lava.

This period of buffer time was exceptionally important to them.

The excited Qiao Meiqi could not help but go straight to work. The amount of resources that Ai Hui needed was immense. And searching for these resources was much more troublesome than just giving Ai Hui essence elemental beans.

Venerable Volcano examined Ai Hui with a complicated look on his face.

Ai Hui cast a glance at him and said, "Old fogey, what's with this facial expression? Are you implying that the price I sold the snow lava to you for is too expensive, or the price I sold to Qiao Meiqi is too cheap?"

Venerable Volcano shook his head and replied emotionally, "No, it's just that I didn't expect you to have grown to this level. You're amazing."

He was shocked by Ai Hui's performance today.

It was very hard for him to link this Ai Hui, who had a sense of propriety and knew how to grasp the situation well, with the Ai Hui that had hosted a porridge banquet for everyone in Peace City.

The current Ai Hui had an indescribable sense of calmness and bearing.

He was decisive, did not covet petty gains, and was able to defuse dangerous situations in the blink of an eye. After bringing Clearwater City on board, no one would dare to trouble Ai Hui and

his counterparts without taking Clearwater City into consideration.

Such a cunning lad!

Venerable Volcano shook his head and smiled to himself. Youngsters nowadays are getting more and more cunning.

.....

Under tight protection, the luxuriously dressed, purple-robed Jiao Shien returned to his home. On the way back, all his guards were on high alert.

Other than being vigilant, all the guards' faces were also filled with pride and glory. Apart from the mayor, there were only five enterprises that had bought the snow lava. If one was familiar with Clearwater City, he or she would realize that these five enterprises were the largest enterprises in Clearwater City. Being one of these five enterprises, the Jiao Enterprise's strength and reputation in Clearwater City was top-notch.

A bunch of Jiao Enterprise's employees were waiting at the main hall of the house.

Jiao Shien walked into the main hall and sat in the seat of honor. Everyone stepped up to congratulate him one by one.

A look of satisfaction appeared on Jiao Shien's face. Being among

the first batch to buy the snow lava symbolized the social status of his enterprise.

After everyone took a look at the snow lava, Jiao Shien said with a plain tone, "The other party does not need essence elemental beans. He prefers materials and supplies. Everyone put in more effort to obtain these resources and don’t bring disgrace to our enterprise."

All the employees bowed and acknowledged Jia Shien’s words.

Jiao Shien waved his hands and continued, "Everyone, go and do your work. I don’t need anyone here."

The employees bowed and walked out of the main hall in a line.

The huge main hall became empty once more. Jiao Shien did not show any intention of leaving the main hall and continued to sit on the chair while drinking his tea.

"You have done a good job."

Suddenly, a delicate voice resounded through the main hall.

Two figures mysteriously appeared in the empty main hall.

There was a man and a woman.

The man was short and he was holding a dark-green vine staff. His face was haggard and he looked as if he was around fifty years old. His eye sockets were huge but they were empty, looking extremely horrifying.

On the contrary, the woman was tall and slim and her legs were long and slender. Her face was shaped like a peach and her limpid and bright eyes looked as if they could steal people’s souls.

"Sir! Madam!" Jiao Shien stood up hurriedly.

The woman walked towards the snow lava. Filled with curiosity, she reached out one of her fingers and dipped it into the crystal-clear snow lava. "So this is snow lava!"

"Madam, don’t do that!" Jiao Shien’s face turned pale with horror.

The woman’s finger began to burn in a wisp of flames. In the blink of an eye, her pale white fingerbone could be clearly seen. The lady did not show any signs of being in pain. With a flick of her finger, the flames on her finger were extinguished. Brand-new flesh was already growing back on her pale white fingerbone at a visible speed. Within a short period of time, her finger became snow-white and tender once more, showing zero signs of being burnt at all.

Jiao Shien was dumbstruck.

The blind old man stood in front of the snow lava and reached out his palm and placed it on the snow lava. After a while, he gasped in surprise, "An excellent fire liquid! How much money have you spent on it?"

Jiao Shien looked as if he had just woken up from a dream and quickly replied, "Fifty thousand essence elemental beans."

The blind old man replied, "This price is rather good. Do you know the refinement method for it?"

"I don’t know," Jiao Shien shook his head.

"How is it? It’s very valuable, right?" the woman said cheekily, "If we can get the refinement method for it, it will be a legitimate moneymaker for us. You will have enough money to take care of your people for rest of their lives."

The old man did not care about her and carried on examining the snow lava.

After a long while, the blind old man withdrew his palm and replied with a hoarse voice, "Excellent fire liquid. It’s worthy of being an A-grade fire liquid. I am in."

"This business has no cost price. Once we get the refinement method for it, we have no worries for the rest of our lives. Let’s split the refinement method fifty-fifty."

"Alright, fifty-fifty."

The blind old man nodded his head.

Jiao Shien was extremely excited as a greedy look flashed across his face. The worth of even half of the refinement method was incalculable. Once they succeeded in obtaining the refinement method, Jiao Enterprise would become the most powerful and wealthy enterprise. He no longer needed to fear Qiao Meiqi.

A flush appeared on Jiao Shien’s face as his breathing became heavy.

Suddenly, his body froze.

A dark-green vine pierced through his heart.

"It’s better to have less people who know about this kind of matter," the blind old man said indifferently.

Jiao Shien looked blankly at his bosses. The woman smiled at him without showing any intention of saving him. Following which, Jiao Shien became dizzy and his vision became fuzzy. Then, he collapsed on the ground.

Until the point where his consciousness had completely disappeared, he still could not understand why he was killed.

The woman spread her arms innocently and said, "I have said before that this is not a trap. Brother Long, do you believe me now? All I want is to obtain the refinement method for the snow lava."

"Such a vicious heart. He must have been blind to have served you wholeheartedly," the old man sneered.

"You're indeed right. I also don't understand why so many people are willing to serve me wholeheartedly. Brother Long, don't think of hogging the entire proceeds from the refinement method." The woman smiled.

"Hogging?" The blind old man shook his head, "No one can hog such a gigantic piece of meat."

"Seems like Brother Long has agreed to my proposal?"

"After we succeed in obtaining the refinement method, you will go your way and I will go mine."

"No problem."

"Then how should we handle this?"

"How can you kill someone without setting fire to the place as well?" the woman chuckled, "As for this snow lava, we will of course split it fifty-fifty. I know how to behave myself."

Raging flames engulfed Jiao Enterprise, lighting up the night sky of Clearwater City.

Chapter 446: Han Li's Challenge

"Something happened to Jiao Enterprise?"

When Ai Hui received this news in the early morning of the second day, he was slightly shocked. He had been thinking about the uses for [Yin Yang Sword Formation] for the whole night and came up with some new ideas.

Ai Hui was rather bold in his path to pursue swordsmanship. He had not received a systematic education on swordsmanship and this kept him from being bound by too many restrictions. As he kept on learning, he found a new path of swordsmanship that belonged to him. He valued his own ideas. Even if his ideas lasted for merely a second, he would still try to gain some insights from them.

"Yes, Mayor is already on his way there and will be back soon. Please wait for a moment," the guard replied politely.

"Yesterday night I saw a blaze in the direction of Jiao Enterprise," Shi Xueman whispered to Ai Hui.

"Ai Hui, Lou Lan saw it too," Lou Lan said with a solemn tone too.

"Alright, got it," Ai Hui nodded his head.

His facial expression turned grave. Was it a coincidence that a fire broke out at this point of time? He remembered that Jiao

Enterprise was one of the enterprises that had bought the snow lava.

Was someone creating trouble?

Ai Hui went into deep thought. However, he had limited knowledge of Clearwater City and could not think of anyone who would do this kind of thing.

He decided to wait for the mayor to come back before thinking about it again.

After a while, the mayor and his counterparts had returned. To Ai Hui’s astonishment, Gong Peiyao and Venerable Volcano had gone along with the mayor too. Ai Hui realized that Qiao Meiqi and the Gong Residence had an extraordinary relationship. Their relationship was far deeper than what outsiders had expected.

Ai Hui stood up and welcomed them, "What happened? Did you make any discoveries?"

With a gloomy look on his face, Qiao Meiqi shook his head and replied, "No, I have not made many discoveries. The corpse has been incinerated. I suspect the victim might have overturned the snow lava and burned himself in it. The snow lava has disappeared without a trace. However, there are some remnants of the snow lava’s aura in the air."

"Only Jiao Shien is dead, everyone else in Jiao Enterprise was not

harmed," Venerable Volcano interjected, "All the bricks and slabs at the scene have been incinerated. The aura of snow lava in the air is very strong. The fire should have been caused by the snow lava."

"Snow lava can’t create such a huge fire," Ai Hui furrowed his eyebrows.

"I don’t know about that. A fire liquid like snow lava is very dangerous. If it’s not a fire elementalist that handles it, a slight moment of carelessness can lead to a terrible tragedy," Venerable Volcano shook his head.

"According to the employees of Jiao Enterprise, after Jiao Shien spoke to them, he stayed in the main hall by himself. This is his daily habit," Gong Peiyao added at this point in time.

"Don’t worry, I will fork out the resources that Jiao Enterprise owed you. I have known Old Jiao for many years, so I will still help him out at this point of time," the mayor said.

Ai Hui did not reject Qiao Meiqi and asked, "Is it possible that someone is plotting something in the dark?"

The mayor and Gong Peiyao looked at each other. Following which, the mayor replied, "We are worried about this as well. Due to Han Li’s appearance in Clearwater City, we suspect it has something to do with Madam Ye."

"Who is Han Li?" A blank look appeared on Ai Hui’s face.

"You make a fool out of him at the market and you still act as if you don’t know him?" the mayor chuckled.

Ai Hui came to a realization. "Oh, it’s him! However, this is really my first time hearing his name. Mayor, pardon me for being ignorant, but can you give me a brief introduction about this guy?"

Upon seeing that Ai Hui really did not know who Han Li was, Qiao Meiqi began to explain to him, "Han Li is a rising swordsman and he is from Karakorum Sword League. He is widely regarded by many as the one who will most likely become the second master swordsman. Reportedly, he is much more powerful and talented than the Silverwheel Swordsman, Chu Zhaoyang."

Ai Hui was stunned when he heard the name "Chu Zhaoyang".

Shi Xueman laughed silently to herself on one side. With a calm and collected tone, she asked, "He is more powerful than Chu Zhaoyang?"

Upon noticing the change in Ai Hui’s facial expression, Qiao Meiqi thought Ai Hui was annoyed by his words. He hurriedly said, "Chu Zhaoyang isn’t really that impressive. Those who said he is the second best swordsman in the world are merely ignorant individuals. After witnessing Brother Ai’s swordsmanship, I feel that Han Li is not a big deal after all.

At this moment, a long and loud whistle suddenly sounded off outside the mayor’s residence.

"I’m Han Li from Karakorum Sword League. I heard that the renowned Lightning Blade has arrived in Clearwater City and I’m here to learn a thing or two from you! The path of swordsmanship is solitary and arduous. It inspires me to see someone like Brother Ai, who takes on the same path as me. I hope that Brother Ai can be generous enough to give me a chance to spar with you."

Everyone in the mayor’s residence froze. Qiao Meiqi stared blankly at Ai Hui.

Gong Peiyao and Venerable Volcano looked as if they had seen a ghost.

Ai Hui was very surprised when he heard Han Li challenging him. However, he did not bother with him and shifted his gaze to Gong Peiyao and asked, "Is the Gong Residence on bad terms with Madam Ye?"

"The Gong Residence has no interest in the disputes between aristocratic families," Gong Peiyao answered with prudence.

Gong Peiyao was no longer the little girl of the past. Now, she looked extremely mature and experienced.

Even though Gong Peiyao did not give a direct answer, Ai Hui understood the meaning behind her words. Apparently, the Gong Residence was trying to stay out of the disputes between aristocratic families by not kowtowing to Madam Ye.

However, even if the trees longed for peace, the wind would never cease. Why would Madam Ye let off a powerful family like the Gong Residence that had a massive influence over the aristocratic families?

After Ai Hui had gotten to know Madam Ye personally, he knew that the seemingly virtuous and dignified widow was actually a ruthless and decisive individual.

However, that was the Gong Residence's business and Ai Hui did not have any intentions to meddle in it.

The Gong Residence's attitude made Ai Hui understand why the mayor and the rest thought that Han Li had come to Clearwater City to stir up trouble. When the chief of Karakorum Sword League became the division leader of Sky Edge Division, the Karakorum Sword League automatically became a force that Madam Ye could trust and rely on. The Gong Residence had anticipated that Madam Ye would not be willing to take things lying down.

Han Li's voice was surging with elemental energy and it could be heard throughout the city.

Everyone was staring at Ai Hui. They were very curious about whether or not Ai Hui would accept the challenge.

Standing outside, Han Li was not discouraged. He yelled the same words once more. Upon hearing his thunderous voice, a lot of

people came out of their houses to see what was going on.

Han Li was an exceptionally talented swordsman that became very famous recently after defeating numerous experts in Skyheart City. Similarly, Ai Hui was of greatly renowned as well. One year ago, he'd single-handedly inflicted heavy losses on the Grass Bandits in Jadeite Forest. The famed snow lava was brought about by Ai Hui as well.

Everyone jumped on the rooftops of their houses and flew towards the mayor's residence. Not only could they enjoy a show, the show had some heavyweight stars as well.

Under numerous gazes, Han Li remained calm and grasped his sword hilt tightly as a look of determination swept across his eyes. Ever since he saw Ai Hui executing Karakorum Sword League's [Yin Yang Sword Formation, no, a [Yin Yang Sword Formation] that was more complicated and exquisite than the one in Karakorum Sword League, he knew Ai Hui's swordsmanship was comparable to his.

At this moment, he had thrown all his missions to the back of his mind.

He only had one desire in his mind and that was to have a good fight with Ai Hui. He wanted to see what another swordsmanship expert was like.

In Karakorum Sword League, his swordsmanship was unbeatable. Currently, other than Karakorum Polaris, no one

could match up against him in terms of swordsmanship.

It was so difficult for him to encounter a swordsmanship expert. As such, he was extremely excited. He could only think of two things.

Sparring! Discussion on swordsmanship!

Undying determination, everlasting passion, this was his path of swordsmanship.

Inside the mayor’s residence, Gong Peiyao looked at the unconcerned Ai Hui and asked unwittingly, "Ai Hui, you’re not intending to accept the challenge?"

"Why should I accept the challenge?" A puzzled look appeared upon Ai Hui’s face.

Gong Peiyao was speechless. Unwilling to accept Ai Hui’s answer, she asked again, "Aren’t you worried that other people will think you’re not as good as Han Li?"

Ai Hui cast a glance at her and replied, "What have other people’s opinions got to do with me?"

Gong Peiyao was stunned by Ai Hui’s words and she did not know how to react.

"You’re still young. When you’re older, you will understand that time is money. You won’t give your money to someone who has nothing to do with you, right? Then why are you wasting time on them?" Ai Hui continued with a solemn tone.

Gong Peiyao was dumbstruck.

Shi Xueman, who was holding back her laughter, turned her face around.

Qiao Meiqi looked startled. Apparently, this was the first time he’d heard someone interpret the phrase "time is money" like this. He was unable to refute Ai Hui at all.

After holding herself back for quite a while, Gong Peiyao clenched her teeth and asked, "How then will you come to accept the challenge?"

"Pay me money," Ai Hui said as if it was a matter of course, "Shouldn’t he pay me money if he is wasting my time? My time is very precious and the price for my time is very high. I am an expensive individual!"

"What if I pay you money?" Gong Peiyao gritted her teeth.

Ai Hui’s eyes lit up and put on an aloof look on his face, "Hmm, that depends on how much you pay me. I am an expensive individual. You see, if he wants to learn a thing or two from me, I have to charge him a school fee. If you want to see me and him

fight, that means I am putting up a performance for you and I have to charge you a performance fee. When an expert of my level performs for you, it’s a disservice to me. Since it’s a disservice to me, the performance fee will be higher. I can’t accept a low performance fee. It’s not that I look down on you and think that you don’t have enough money."

"How much?" Gong Peiyao asked annoyed.

"Since we have known each other for so long, I shall give you a discount. The price of two liters of snow lava. As long as you can pay up now, I will beat him up on the spot for you," Ai Hui replied.

Gong Peiyao was shocked. The price of two liters of snow lava was equivalent to one hundred thousand essence elemental beans. She naturally did not have such an amount of money.

She cast a piteous look at Shi Xueman, crying for her help

A smile appeared in Shi Xueman’s eyes as she replied, "Don’t look at me like that, he was always this self-interested."

This was the first time Gong Peiyao had came across such a weird fellow. She continued angrily, "What about your honor? What about your reputation?"

With his face filled with contempt, Ai Hui replied nonchalantly, "Can these two things be exchanged for money? They can’t, right? If they are things that can’t be exchanged for money, what’s the

point of having them? Lou Lan, let me ask you, do you want honor and reputation or do you want money?"

Lou Lan crooked his head and thought about the question. After a while, he replied with a serious tone, "Lou Lan wants Ai Hui."

"Hahaha, Lou Lan is still the best," Ai Hui beamed with joy.

"Lou Lan, what about me?" Shi Xueman chirped in.

Once again, Lou Lan crooked his head and answered with a solemn tone, "Lou Lan wants Xueman."

"Xueman likes Lou Lan too," A sweet smile that could melt icebergs appeared on Shi Xueman's face.

"Lou Lan, what about me? What about me?" Gong Peiyao hurriedly reached out her arms and asked.

"Yaoyao, you're welcome to play with me anytime," Lou Lan replied with a solemn tone.

Gong Peiyao's face was filled with jealousy as the maturity she displayed earlier vanished into thin air. She shrieked frantically, "Ahhhhh! Why don't I have a sand puppet like Lou Lan!"

At this point of time, everyone had already forgotten about Han Li who was still standing outside the mayor's residence.

A smile appeared on Qiao Meiqi's face as he looked at all of them having fun together. A look of admiration flashed across his face as his gaze landed upon Ai Hui.

In the past, Qiao Meiqi could not understand why Shi Xueman and the rest would follow a nobody like Ai Hui. However, after getting to know Ai Hui personally, he had to admit that he was a very interesting individual.

Han Li's challenge to Ai Hui resounded through the air for the third time.

Everyone looked at each other and laughed. That's right, why should they waste their time on someone who had nothing to do with them?

Chapter 447: The Death Of Great Elder

Yang Xiaodong did not expect such a terrible mess to await him upon his return to Clearwater City.

Yang Wuchang had created a huge trouble for him. The mayor sent for him to reprimand him, which he seldom did. Afterwards, the mayor still wanted him to apologize to Ai Hui.

Yang Xiaodong felt somewhat gloomy. He was a Master and had to apologize to someone who wasn't. If not for the fact that he knew the mayor's character very well, he would have fallen out with him.

After making some enquiries, however, he finally learned who his nephew had offended.

Shi Beihai's daughter, Shi Xueman!

Yang Xiaodong was scared out of his wits. Shi Beihai!

Even though he and Shi Beihai were both Masters, the disparity between their strengths and statuses was extremely wide. Yang Xiaodong finally understood why he had to apologize to the other party. Wait, wasn't he supposed to apologize to Ai Hui?

Who is this Ai Hui? He did not act rashly and made some enquiries once more. It was then that he realized that Ai Hui was the leader of the Central Pine Faction, that Shi Xueman was a

member of the Central Pine Faction, and of the sensational snow lava.

Even though he was a water elemental master, he still knew the worth of an A-grade fire liquid. A hint of greed flashed across his mind. Why wasn't he the one who possessed the valuable snow lava?

Within the blink of an eye, however, this hint of greed vanished into thin air.

The information he'd obtained was very detailed. Other people might not realize it, but as a Master, Yang Xiaodong realized that Shi Xueman was completely capable of making the breakthrough to become a Master. For some unknown reason, she was suppressing her breakthrough.

As for Ai Hui's strength, Yang Xiaodong was still unsure how to measure it. He had never seen anything like the [Yin Yang Sword Formation] and so could not determine Ai Hui's strength. The fact that Ai Hui had refused Han Li's challenge, however, had become the main topic of idle conversations in Clearwater City.

With the backing of a colossus like Shi Beihai and the Central Pine Faction, he had no chance of contending against the other party.

A wise man would submit to circumstances. Yang Xiaodong went straight to the mayor's residence and sincerely apologized to Ai Hui.

The atmosphere between both parties was rather harmonious.

Yang Xiaodong knew he was in the wrong and lowered his tone. Ai Hui was also not foolish enough to offend a Master over such a small issue.

This unhappy incident was forgotten just like that.

Yang Xiaodong heaved a sigh of relief. He was rather satisfied with his life in Clearwater City and did not want to change his home for the time being. He even gave Yang Wuchang a warning, instructing him to stay well-behaved.

Qiao Meiqi had built a Master's residence for each of his two Masters. Yang Xiaodong’s was in a corner of Clearwater City. He liked tranquility and there weren’t any buildings around his residence.

He entered his residence as usual.

Along the way, his servants stopped and greeted him one by one.

He climbed the flight of stairs and walked straight to the study room. Usually, if he encountered any difficult problems, he would lock himself in the study room to ponder them alone.

Just as he placed his hand on the doorknob and was about to

enter the room, he suddenly froze mid-motion.

"Xiaodong, you really have poor vigilance."

A deep, hoarse voice came from the study room.

Upon hearing this voice, Yang Xiaodong raised his head abruptly as an emotional look swept across his eyes. Without any hesitation, he pushed open the door and entered the room. Within the study room, the back view of a short man holding a staff appeared before his eyes.

.....

This was not the first time Ye Baiyi had an audience with the Holy Emperor.

In the high dome-like sky was a figure who appeared to be sitting amidst the clouds. Before the Holy Emperor's face were energy undulations that made his face look fuzzy. The oppressive aura he released was far stronger than it had been in the past, making the onlookers beneath him feel as if there was a knife at the back of their necks.

Ye Baiyi knew that the Holy Emperor had already suppressed his energy undulations.

The Holy Emperor led a reclusive life and seldom asked about daily matters, yet still possessed absolute authority. In the face of

absolute authority, no one dared to show any intention of rebelling against the Holy Emperor.

On one occasion, there had been an official who had performed his job poorly and incurred the wrath of Holy Emperor. At that time, the sky had been dyed scarlet and the air had blazed with searing flames. That official had been devoured on the spot without any remaining dregs.

No one had any complaints about Holy Emperor. Absolute power gave rise to absolute order. Nothing was more important than this for the newly established God Nation.

The Holy Emperor had a mysterious origin. Even God Nation's internal department knew almost nothing about him.

Bei Shuisheng was one of the few people who knew a thing or two about Holy Emperor, but he seldom spoke about it. The Sick Tiger of God Nation never left his cage, the piercing Cold Palace.

Ye Baiyi did not know Holy Emperor's purpose in calling him over.

Currently, God Nation had harvested its first batch of jade fruits, of which there were countless numbers. The internal department of God Nation was steadily strengthening. Compared to the Elders Guild and Jadeite Forest, God Nation's strength was no doubt the best.

"Official Ye, how is the ongoing battle at the front line?

Holy Emperor’s voice echoed through the sky from a distance. The voice was imposing and domineering, causing the air to tremble.

"Reporting to Your Majesty, the situation at the front line is stable. There are victories and defeats for both our side and the enemy’s side," Ye Baiyi reported with honesty.

"Is the opposing general Shi Beihai?" Holy Emperor asked.

"Yes," Ye Baiyi replied.

"Does Official Ye have confidence in obtaining victory?" Holy Emperor asked again.

"No, I have no confidence," Ye Baiyi summoned his courage and replied.

Soft laughter sounded from above Ye Baiyi, but it sounded thunderous in his ears. Ye Baiyi’s heart sank. Holy Emperor was known for his moodiness. If Ye Baiyi was unlucky, he would be in deep trouble.

However, Ye Baiyi did not expect to hear the Holy Emperor’s next words. With a cheerful tone, the Holy Emperor replied, "I know that Shi Beihai is a courageous and resolute individual. He is a valiant general. It’s a pity that this valiant general is not under

me."

Ye Baiyi somehow did not know what Holy Emperor was thinking. It was obviously something regretful, but he said it with such a cheerful tone.

Ye Baiyi did not dare to question further.

Holy Emperor stopped laughing and his tone became solemn once more. "If I want Official Ye to annihilate the North Sea Division, how many people will you need?"

Ye Baiyi replied with a deep voice, "It's hard to determine the exact number. The North Sea Division has a complete organizational structure and is very powerful. Other than the North Sea Division, the Elders Guild also has a few rather well maintained combat divisions. Especially the three central divisions, their strength is unfathomable. Once Elders Guild sees that the North Sea Division is in danger, they will definitely send out reinforcements. Once this happens, we will be engaged in a long, drawn-out and deadlocked battle against them. Your Majesty, we cannot yet determine the outcome..."

"What if Shi Beihai doesn't have reinforcements?" Holy Emperor interrupted Ye Baiyi.

"No reinforcements?" Ye Baiyi was stunned. Suddenly, he understood what Holy Emperor meant and a cold shiver went down his spine.

"Official Ye, if the North Sea Division doesn't have reinforcements, how do we annihilate them?" Holy Emperor's voice sounded as if it was drifting aimlessly in the clouds.

Ye Baiyi fell silent as he felt an indescribable sadness. After a while, he raised his head; his eyes were red. With a hoarse voice, he replied, "Shi Beihai is brave and shrewd. Other than engaging him in war of attrition, there is no other way. One soldier for one soldier, one general for one general."

Holy Emperor gave a soft chuckle and said, "One soldier for one soldier will do, there's no need for us to sacrifice our generals. God Nation has sufficient soldiers. With Official Ye leading our troops, how can we lose this battle? All the armies in God Nation are available for Official Ye to use and deploy. No matter how many soldiers we lose, I only have one request."

Ye Baiyi bowed and replied, "Please tell me your request, Your Majesty."

"I want to see the head of Shi Beihai."

The crazy and domineering voice resounded through the air like surging flames. It was as if the air was being hit by a heavy hammer, creating a buzzing sonic boom that caused the entire palace to tremble.

Outside the palace, the sun became blood red.

.....

Skyheart City looked as if it had become a black and white world, devoid of any colors.

Everyone was mourning. A candle was lit at the door of every house. As night fell, the candles in the city became brighter, resembling the countless stars in the night sky.

Great Elder had passed away.

Emissaries from various cities had gathered at Skyheart City to pay their respects to the deceased Great Elder.

With regards to Great Elder's death, everyone was feeling extremely complicated. Having been in power for so many decades, he did not really commit any irreversible mistakes. He even had a few admirable achievements. Despite all this, the fall of the Avalon of Five Elements happened entirely in his hands.

Facing the menacing Blood of God, the Elders Guild had been slow and senile in its reactions, like Great Elder. The foundation of the Avalon of Five Elements had been destroyed in his hands.

Now, they could only struggle to survive in the Wilderness.

The prosperous age of the Avalon of Five Elements seemed like it was just yesterday. The state that elementalists were in now was miserable.

Had Great Elder been incompetent? Who other than Great Elder could save the Avalon of Five Elements from this desperate crisis? Who could lead everyone to the light?

Not only was everyone feeling sad over the death of Great Elder, but they were also feeling worried for their own futures. The future was now shrouded in heavy winds and torrential rain; which path should they now follow?

No one knew the answer and it only made them more sad.

Great Elder passed away in the second year of Elemental Desolation Age. It marked the end point of the Elders Guild that had ruled Avalon of Five Elements for thousands of years. Only three Elders attended Great Elder's funeral.

Even the emissaries sent by powerful aristocratic families like the Gong Residence were unknown and insignificant individuals.

As compared to the absolute authority and supreme status Great Elder had held while he had been alive, the turnout for Great Elder's funeral made one sigh in sorrow.

Madam Ye's face turned ashen.

Everyone knew an era had ended; this was the beginning of a new era.

The isolated Clearwater City appeared to have nothing to do with the maelstrom, but Ai Hui and his counterparts still heard the news of Great Elder's death at the first instance.

The Gong Residence's unique way of transmitting messages allowed them to obtain the news almost immediately.

Everyone was feeling complicated now.

As an important figure who represented the past era had left this world, everyone could not help but sigh in sorrow.

Gong Peiyao was deep in thought. Madam Ye and the Gong Residence had an irreconcilable relationship. With Madam Ye in power, she would not let the Gong Residence off easily.

Gong Peiyao was preparing to go home, but a message from the Gong Residence told her to stay in Clearwater City.

Whether it was in Skyheart City, Newlight City, or the Gong Residence's Palacefield City, it was unusually quiet. It was so quiet everywhere that it was as if nothing had happened. A terrifying storm seemed to be brewing.

Now was the calm before the storm.

Ai Hui thought that they would not be affected since Clearwater City was very far away from Skyheart City.

Unbeknownst to him, however, the undercurrents of Great Elder’s death were silently surging toward them...

.....

Han Li had become a madman. Everyday he would go to the mayor’s residence to challenge Ai Hui, and everyday the latter would turn a deaf ear to him, completely ignoring him.

Failing once again to get Ai Hui to accept his challenge, Han Li returned to his inn.

He was in a very bad mood. He did not expect Ai Hui to completely ignore his challenge.

"Han Li, you have forgotten about your mission."

A sweet and delicate voice rang across the room. It belonged to a tall, slim woman.

Han Li immediately grasped the hilt of his sword, but soon loosened his grip. With an ugly facial expression, he snorted, "Don’t talk to me about the mission, I’m not in the mood right now"

"You merely failed in getting Ai Hui to accept your challenge, right? I have a way to make him accept your challenge." The

woman smiled.

"How?" Han Li became energized.

Chapter 448: As You Wish

Ai Hui had a headache. He could not understand why such a senseless individual was in this world.

He rubbed his temples and asked with extreme annoyance, "So Han Li wants a public competition?"

The mayor's face turned ugly as he replied, "Yes, he said that if you don't accept his challenge, he will disrupt your business of selling snow lava by sending threat letters to those enterprises that bought it."

"Is this fellow crazy?" Ai Hui widened his eyes and almost blurted out vulgarities. "Why does he insist on fighting with me? Doesn't he know that it won't make him any money? What exactly is he thinking about? If he doesn't want to make money, then fine by me, but now he is threatening me and keeping me from making my money!"

When Gong Peiyao saw the helpless look on Ai Hui's face, she was secretly happy. She chuckled. "I didn't expect Han Li to be such a sword fanatic. Ai Hui, you have to understand the mentality of a sword fanatic. Sword fanatics don't care about money."

The rest of the people looked like they were watching a show.

In fact, everyone felt that Ai Hui's unique money-minded mentality was weird and unusual. From their perspectives, a challenge like Han Li's was of great significance. It was tightly

linked to one’s honor and reputation and represented one’s pursuit of perfection in his or her art.

Everyone was filled with disdain towards Ai Hui when he connected the challenge to money and complained about not making any, but their disdainful looks had no effect on the thick-skinned Ai Hui.

Normally, they could not do anything to Ai Hui. Now, all of them were very happy that someone had found his weak spot.

With a solemn look on his face, Ai Hui turned around and said to the mayor, "Why don’t we send someone to kill him? It is better for someone like him, who is disrupting our business, to die."

The mayor laughed bitterly and replied, "I do not think this is justifiable. He only wants to challenge you and swap pointers on swordsmanship. If we kill him, who will dare to deal business with us in the future?"

"This is not a good plan." Shi Xueman shook her head.

She was born in a family that placed great emphasis on honor and glory. Since she was young, she had never backed away from a challenge. Furthermore, those who dared to challenge other people were usually praised for their spirit.

Ai Hui did not care about Iron Lady’s opinion as he knew that she was a straightforward individual. He turned around and asked the

mayor, "Is snow lava our business?"

The mayor was a businessman and quickly understood what Ai Hui meant. With a straightforward tone, he replied, "That's right, Han Li threatens our business and you shouldn't be the only one to bear the consequences. Feel free to tell me your requests."

"Since he wants to challenge me so badly, I will give him a chance; however, I am interested in neither honor nor reputation. I can accept his challenge provided there are enough incentives for me to do so. Mayor, you will be in charge of providing the incentives. You provide the money while I provide my strength. What do you think?"

"No problem, it's a reasonable request." The mayor chuckled.

He felt that Ai Hui was an extremely interesting individual. He behaved more like a businessman than the mayor himself.

Gong Peiyao widened her eyes and stared at Ai Hui. After a while, she turned around and said to Shi Xueman, "Oh my god, Sister Xueman, how can you even put up with such a miser?"

"He is poor," Shi Xueman replied with ease.

Gong Peiyao became speechless.

Ai Hui spread his arms, feeling joyfully proud of himself.

When Venerable Volcano saw the cheeky look on Ai Hui's face, he could not help but burst out in laughter. He felt that Shi Xueman's indifference and Ai Hui's cheekiness were a perfect match.

Only Gong Peiyao was still puzzled. Shouldn't Ai Hui be angry that Sister Xueman called him poor? People she had encountered in the past felt humiliated when they were called poor by others. Why does Ai Hui look so happy, as if he is being praised?

Such a weird duo.

Mayor Qiao Meiqi was very efficient. When Han Li heard that Ai Hui had accepted his challenge, he was overjoyed. As for the condition of the incentives, he accepted it without any hesitation.

The issue was settled in the late afternoon of the day itself.

The battle would begin in the early afternoon of the second day, but out of fear of destroying the city, the battle site was set outside of it. The incentive that Han Li provided was a piece of peacock gold while Qiao Meiqi provided a bottle of clear water.

The two items were extraordinary and both were of a higher grade than snow lava.

Peacock gold was a newly discovered metal. It was bright, colorful, and gorgeous, resembling the feathers of a peacock.

Peacock gold had a grade of "A-Excellent" and was extremely expensive.

Meanwhile, clear water was a unique product of Clearwater City and only a very small amount was being produced. Similarly, it had a grade of "A-Excellent." It was formed from the purest water elemental energy. By providing this bottle of clear water, one could see Qiao Meiqi's sincerity.

Iron Lady's ice-cold face seldom showed any emotions, but when she saw the bottle of clear water, a rare hint of amazement appeared on her frosty face.

Ai Hui noticed the change in her facial expression.

On the second day, with the blazing sun high in the sky, all the residents of Clearwater City turned up for the battle.

The news of Ai Hui accepting the fight had spread throughout Clearwater City. Life in Clearwater City was extremely arduous. There weren't many recreational activities. This was the first time such a high level competition took place in Clearwater City.

Even though the two participants of this battle weren't Masters, they had exceptionally high prestige.

Han Li was a rising swordsmanship genius and was revered by many. He had defeated several experts in a row and was considered a representative figure of swordsmanship.

Ai Hui had become famous even earlier than Han Li. His reputation as the Lightning Blade began during the Battle of Central Pine City. It had been five years since the Battle of Central Pine City.

As compared to the spotlit Han Li, Ai Hui had not been in spotlight much recently. Most people knew Ai Hui from the movie beans two years ago, but those movie beans did not show much of his capabilities. They rather focused on his impact on the Central Pine Faction.

A lot of people knew who Ai Hui was, but they did not know how powerful his swordsmanship was.

The sky above Clearwater City was densely packed with people. Those who wanted to get a better view of the battle flew even higher into the sky, but none of them were higher than the heavily guarded clouds. As the mayor of Clearwater City, Qiao Meiqi had the special right to spectate from the clouds. Along with Shi Xueman, Gong Peiyao and the rest all sat on the solid layer of clouds.

Venerable Volcano and Yang Xiaodong were also there.

Even though both of them were Masters, Venerable Volcano had a higher prestige and was more powerful than Yang Xiaodong.

"The epic battle is about to begin. Junior is very curious. Senior, who do you think will win this battle?" Yang Xiaodong asked

casually.

"Who do you think will win, Master Yang?" Venerable Volcano asked Yang Xiaodong back.

"Both of them are very powerful and they are similarly specialized in swordsmanship. It's really hard to determine who will win, but if we are talking about the probability of winning the battle, I will vote for Han Li. After all, Han Li comes from Karakorum Sword League, the holy land of swordsmanship," Yang Xiaodong muttered.

There were a few people nodding in agreement.

A person's background played a very important factor in others' evaluation of him or her. Karakorum Sword League had already produced a master swordsman. In many people's eyes, Karakorum Sword League was the holy land of swordsmanship where all the elite swordsmen gathered. By distinguishing himself from the rest of the swordsmen in Karakorum Sword League, Han Li had displayed his strength. On the contrary, Ai Hui's swordsmanship was unorthodox.

Deep down, Venerable Volcano agreed with Yang Xiaodong's evaluation, but due to his close relationship with Ai Hui, he did not say that he would be defeated. He merely said, "Since both of them are swordsmen, let their swords do the talking."

At this moment, Gong Peiyao asked Shi Xueman curiously, "Sister Xueman, who do you think will win?"

"Ai Hui," Shi Xueman replied bluntly.

Gong Peiyao was shocked at Shi Xueman’s absolute certainty. "Sister Xueman has so much confidence in him?"

Surprised, Qiao Meiqi, Yang Xiaodong, and the rest of the company looked at Shi Xueman. They had not expected Shi Xueman to give such a confident reply.

A look of reminiscence appeared on Shi Xueman’s cold and beautiful face, and she appeared as though she was lost in thought. After a while, she suddenly said, "When it comes to combat, he has never lost."

Everyone was stunned by these words.

Some people scoffed at her, thinking that these were just boastful words, but others appeared to be in deep thought, looking as if they were thinking about something.

No one dared to retort to Shi Xueman. Shi Xueman had the honorable status of nobility and was a great beauty. With the addition of her strength, no one dared to embarrass her.

"Let’s see our Brother Ai display his might." Qiao Meiqi smiled.

Everyone’s gaze was directed at the two figures facing each other

in the sky outside the city.

For the past two years, swordsmanship had been on the rise, and although many people began to learn swordsmanship, a high-level swordsmanship competition like this was rarely seen. A lot of people opened their mirage bean pods and prepared to record this legitimate battle between two swordsmen.

When the both of them were together, the onlookers realized that they had a few similarities.

For example, their physical builds. Neither of them were overly tall and muscular, nor overly skinny and weak. Their body builds were well-proportioned. They were also both very quiet. They looked confident as their robes fluttered in the wind.

If one took a closer look, however, he or she would realize that there was a difference in their temperaments.

Han Li appeared to be quiet, but his eyes contained a blazing zeal and sincerity. He did not try to conceal his battle fervor.

Ai Hui also appeared quiet, but his eyes contained an ice-cold indifference, not showing any emotions at all.

At this moment, Han Li was extremely excited as he surged with battle fervor. With a loud and clear voice, he asked, "May I ask where Brother Ai learned his [Yin Yang Sword Formation]?"

"I learned it on my own," Ai Hui replied plainly.

Ai Hui could not reveal his identity as Chu Zhaoyang.

Upon hearing Ai Hui's words, the flames in Han Li's eyes burned more intensely. "Brother Ai is indeed a rare genius. Karakorum Sword League also has a [Yin Yang Sword Formation], but it is not as good as yours."

Ai Hui was slightly surprised as he found this fellow much more pleasing to his eyes.

Not a lot of people could openly admit that their families' skills and knowledge were not as good as those of others.

Han Li bowed respectfully to Ai Hui and said, "I am excited to be in this position to fight with you. Pardon me if I have offended Brother Ai in any way. Having witnessed your supreme swordsmanship, I will have regrets for the rest of my life if I don't get to spar with you. I hope that Brother Ai will not hold back. To pursue the path of swordsmanship, I am prepared to die!"

Han Li's eyes seemed to contain a boundless sea of surging fire, giving off an aura that made one palpitate in fear.

Excitement gushed upon Ai Hui.

This was the first time Ai Hui encountered a zealous and sincere swordsman like Han Li. He unknowingly felt touched. Perhaps

those legendary swordsmen from the Cultivation Era had been zealous and sincere like him.

The cold and detached look on his face disappeared like the melting of an iceberg and was replaced by a grave and solemn look.

Ai Hui raised the Wintry Jade Blade in his hand and pointed it at Han Li. Suddenly, a sharp glint flashed across his eyes, resembling a sword being unsheathed. Elemental energy gushed out of his body and his robe fluttered even though there was no wind. Three words came out of his mouth with pauses in between.

"As. You. Wish!"

Chapter 449: [Red Dust]!

Two figures could be seen entangled in the sky and colliding rapidly.

A dazzling sword ray flashed across the sky from time to time like a shooting star. The blossoming rays were at times like sprinkling raindrops, falling over the deserted mountain outside the city and leaving seemingly bottomless holes.

Han Li's azure wings, Flowing Wind Wings, were light green in color and very nimble.

Ai Hui felt the pressure.

His Starry Gem Swordwings were powerful and heavy, but were not made for such small scale and close quarters combat. Plus he had been unable to repair the damage from before due to the lack of ingredients.

Basically, the Starry Gem Swordwings were no long able to keep up with Ai Hui's abilities.

Han Li's Flowing Wind Wings were light and fast. They left a long and beautiful trail of faint, green mist in the air. The wings gave Han Li a speed and agility advantage. Without wasting it he cruised around Ai Hui without stopping. Amid the continuous and diverse moments of the sword moves. the faint green sword ray whizzed toward Ai Hui from a crafty angle.

Ai Hui was very calm. The Wintry Jade Blade was exceptionally nimble and its moves came naturally as Ai Hui blocked Han Li's attack.

Six palm-sized moon blades circled around Ai Hui efficaciously. In Ai Hui's hands, [Six Moons] was strangely hard to fathom.

[Six Moons] emerged from one of the three moves, [Crescent Moon], from the sword pills. but it was much more complex and exquisite.

Han Li was highly guarded against [Six Moons] as he had almost been injured by one of the sword blades. Frightened, Han Li quickly pulled away and did not dare to follow so closely.

He had never seen such a peculiar sword technique. Contrasting his alertness, he felt more excitement.

What other weird moves would he have?

Stimulated, Han Li decided to pressure Ai Hui even more. Silver rays lit up around his body to form a closed wheel. The eye-piercing rays were like silver spikes.

The spiked silver wheel was like a meter dial on a clock. Han Li extended his arm to form a straight line with his sword. His body was the axis, while his sword and arm were the clock hands that agilely spun around.

The sword swept past each silver spike, producing a clanging sword chime and brightening the body of the sword ray.

A crisp sword chime sounded incessantly.

Ai Hui sensed changes happening behind him as an extremely sharp sword consciousness firmly locked his body down. An intense sense of danger enveloped his body. His figure rose suddenly as he charged toward the sky.

With a light swoosh Han Li waved the silver-clad sword in his hand.

A silver light flashed past.

A sharp sky-shattering sound rang without any warning, as if a nail had been hammered into Ai Hui's forehead. The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp from Ai Hui's sky palace brightened dramatically, and the ache vanished instantly.

Ai Hui jolted. He knew that he was unable to rely on his azure wings to break away from Han Li's attack.

Slightly, but rapidly trembling, he made a loud cry as he thrusted the [Wintry Jade Blade] in the opposite direction.

Pieces of tiny sword rays sprayed out from the tip of the sword

and assembled into a fragmented sword ray before facing the silver light head on.

[Fragmented Sword]!

The silver light collided with the fragmented sword ray.

Closing in, Han Li's expression changed. The fear and trepidation he felt made him aware of the extreme danger he was in. Suddenly, he forcefully flapped his [Flowing Wind Wings], practically diving perpendicularly downward.

Boom!

A dazzling light ray blossomed on the top of his head as the copious elemental energy storm smashed into Han Li's back like a heavy hammer.

As if receiving a push from behind, Han Li's speed increased.

Already prepared, Ai Hui bent his knees slightly to gain momentum and shot about 30 meters up like a rocket.

Boom, boom, boom!

The sound of rolling thunder rang loudly before dispersing.

Fear and shock could be seen in faces of the observing elementalists. The battle intensity, especially its tempo, had far exceeded their imagination and many things were occurring beyond what the naked eye could see. The previous tangle, resistance, and probing could be described with one word–"fast." Things happened as fast as lightning, and it was too much for the eyes to take in. The tension was suffocating, as depicted in swordplay books.

The powerful explosion and impactful collision shook them to the core.

When the light ray blossomed, it was as if there was an additional sun in the sky. The fluctuating waves forming ripples in midair.

Those above the protective mist layer had a grim expression on their faces.

Venerable Volcano muttered to himself, "This kid is improving very quickly."

It had been less than two years since the porridge feast. He clearly remembered the ability level that Ai Hui had possessed during that time. The Ai Hui before him now was like a whole different person.

How did he achieve this?

Venerable Volcano found it hard to believe. Ai Hui was not gifted

and, while training the [Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp] technique could improve one's constitution to a certain extent, it should not turn one into a genius.

Swordsmen were a type of elementalists as well, so there was not a fundamental difference in the elemental energy that they trained with. Affinity with elemental energy was the determining factor when it came to an elementalist's progress.

This point alone meant that Han Li was much stronger than Ai Hui.

Yet Ai Hui actually had the upper hand!

Both shared the limelight in the previous probing and entanglement, but in this direct collision, Ai Hui was at an advantage.

In the sky, Ai Hui's body was extended like a legendary roc. On the ground, Han Li's face was ashen. He had underestimated the force of the collision between the sword rays.

Yang Xiaodong's face was grave. Ai Hui's abilities were greater than he had expected. Earlier, elemental energy suffocation had occurred around both of them, but their speed in changing position was simply too quick.

Gong Peiyao looked on speechlessly. Ai Hui was amazing!

Shi Xueman did not appear very surprised. She had fought the scarletfire flying foxes alongside Ai Hui and was aware of his abilities. No one noticed that Shi Xueman's eyes were exceptionally bright, with a trace of joy evident.

Ai Hui had improved once again...

Similarly, no one noticed Lou Lan, who was standing behind the crowd. The flickering, red glow in his eyes was everchanging. The sand core within his body was operating at an alarming speed.

Han Li raised his head and reflexively looked toward the sky.

He stood at the bottom of a conical pit that had a diameter of over 10 meters. The pit was formed from the impact of his landing.

The zeal in his eyes burned with increasing ferocity. The moon blades were strangely unpredictable, and although the sword ray that seemed to be assembled from fragments had stopped transforming, its power was astonishing, yet he did not know why.

The styles of the two moves were completely different.

While they were far away from each other, Han Li's line of sight collided with Ai Hui's.

Ai Hui looked him in the eye before swooping down.

Han Li jolted, his fighting spirit intensifying. Show me whatever powerful moves you've got!

Diving down at a rapid speed, Ai Hui constantly altered the oblique angle in which his Wintry Jade Blade slashed. Red flowing flames blossomed from the sword tip.

The whizzing of the wind was deafening, but Ai Hui wasn't the least bit affected. He was thoroughly focused as his Wintry Jade Blade transitioned through unimaginable angles.

The red flowing flames rose up like a muslin curtain.

The momentum of his dive was terrifying.

Han Li, who was still on the ground, had no intention of dodging. In fact, his legs were stuck firmly in the ground since he had no intention of leaving his spot. A high spirited smile appeared at the corner of his lips, revealing his desire to battle.

[Red Muslin]!

Han Li had seen this move before. He had no idea what Ai Hui called it, but he named it [Red Muslin].

This move had appeared in Ai Hui's mirage bean pod clip. It was precisely this move of his that razed the Sha family's courtyard to the ground. Others might be more interested in the legend of The Lightning Blade, but Han Li, who was determined to become a

swordsman, placed all his attention on this move.

He pondered over it for a long time. Ai Hui had displayed a deep foundation when executing this move.

At that time, he had thought about how he would defend against the [Red Muslin].

Han Li placed his sword by his side, his palms clasped the hilt, and his was face solemn. Light rays appeared under his feet, circling unceasingly like a light whirlpool.

If Han Li was known as "a genius who could possibly become the second ever master swordsman," how could he not possess a killer move of his own?

Swords of light surfaced and rose from the light whirlpool underneath his feet.

The booming and rumbling of thunder filled the sky, causing the air to vibrate.

An astonishing amount of pressure closed in on everyone, as if it was about to shatter the ground into pieces.

Was this merely due to the [Red Muslin]?

Behind the flowing flames, an intimidatingly bright ray emerged

in Ai Hui's eyes. The ray was a very controlled, sharp, and cold one.

No one noticed that the six moon blades had started circling.

Minute traces of bright light surfaced in the sky from the fluttering brilliance of the moon blades.

They looked as if they could break at anytime as they wound around the red muslin. The raised and dispersed red muslin was drawn in bit by bit.

When completely coiled around the muslin, the light traces turned the red muslin into an enormous red flowing flame sword.

The six moon blades stuck closely to the sword's surface, spinning rapidly. The silver light ray chaotically roamed between them, giving the sword a silver layer of electric web.

The whizzing sound vanished all of a sudden, and this enormous flowing flame sword became silent.

Han Li had not expected Ai Hui to be this sly.

This was not the [Red Muslin]!

The latest changes in the red muslin emitted a dense killing intent. It felt as if he was in a world of deathly stillness as sounds

disappeared. He felt as if his elemental energy had become significantly more sluggish.

Elemental energy suffocation!

Han Li quivered. Elemental energy suffocation was not a big deal, but an elemental energy suffocation that was able to affect the operation of his elemental energy was not ordinary.

This new [Red Muslin] seemed extraordinarily mighty!

Yet, he was no weakling himself. Han Li narrowed his eyes and bit his tongue, causing a mouthful of fresh blood to spurt onto the sword before him.

The light ray on the sword body brightened drastically as the light whirlpool beneath his feet resumed operating. The suspended light swords had been like a forest. They now moved swiftly like a shoal of fish circling and crisscrossing around him.

Then, the light whirlpool started to change. Some swords dimmed, while others brightened. It was as if they were playing tag and frolicking, or as if their changes were unfolding naturally.

An enormous Yin Yang fish swam unceasingly beneath Han Li's feet as the surrounding light swords circled nonstop. The sword formation was dense.

He looked ecstatic.

Ai Hui's [Yin Yang's Sword Formation] had impacted him tremendously. He had been on the verge of a breakthrough for the longest time, but seemed to be separated by a layer as thin as window paper. It was not until he felt the huge pressure that Ai Hui inflicted on him that he achieved enlightenment.

Come on!

He looked toward the sky, his battle lust overflowing!

Ai Hui, who was in the sky, saw the [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation] on the ground with his keen, cold, and calm eyes.

With his long fingers clasping the sword hilt, he thrusted it downward with a gentle movement.

[Red Dust] landed noiselessly.

Chapter 450: Han Li's Transformation

The red light descended from the sky and landed on the [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation].

The rapidly spinning moon blades carried fine, multiplying thunder webs. They were like sharp drill bits, approaching, twisting, and shattering the light rays, all in the blink of an eye.

Light swords flew out from the ever shifting [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation]. They were like fish leaping out of the fountain, one after another.

The light swords operated even more wildly, They entered the red glow of the sword formation and instantly underwent an indescribable sluggishness. It was as if they had gotten themselves trapped in a quagmire.

Han Li was no longer looking at Ai Hui. Instead, he obsessively observed the incessantly moving Yin Yang Fish beneath his feet. He had seen and read about the Yin Yang Fish in an ancient sword manual, but had not expected it to be this earth-shaking.

At this moment, he had totally forgotten about the battle.

He stood blankly in the sword formation, his eyes never leaving the Yin Yang Fish. He felt cheerful, admiration, joy, and grief as his body underwent this baptism.

It was as if he had seen light and shadow, love and hate, life and death, spring and autumn, reincarnation...

It turned out that the Yin Yang was composed of two fish that were linked at their heads and tails. One was born as the other was extinguished. It was difficult to individualize them.

He was completely absorbed.

Having witnessed Ai Hui's Yin Yang sword formation, Han Li felt its extreme power and was motivated. This [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation]] was his new result, one that was superior to Ai Hui's Yin Yang sword formation.

He was not worried about the battle.

The moment the [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation] took shape, strong confidence filled his body and mind. He did not think that Ai Hui was able to break this formation because even he, himself, was unable to do so. The [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation] was his most outstanding work so far.

The invisible resistance of the sword formation was 10 times stronger than that of Ai Hui's.

Once a person fell into the sword formation, he or she would be trapped by the interweaving Yin Yang force. For elementalists, they would immediately lose control of their body and be confined. Time would pass as the Yin Yang force continuously corroded their

bodies until they lost any signs of life. Injuries inflicted by the Yin Yang force could only be neutralized and cured by Yin Yang force.

Another unique aspect about Yin Yang force was that it was sustainably powerful because it multiplied without end. If one did not break through it the first time, the task became impossible as it would only become stronger.

Han Li was exceedingly certain that Ai Hui's "[Red Muslin]", even with any new changes, would not be able to destroy his [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation].

He was not as confident, however, that a Master would fail to break his formation. It was difficult to understand the ways and strengths of a Master before becoming a Master and experiencing it firsthand.

But there was something he had thorough confidence in.

It was impossible for those below the level of Master to break his formation!

Ai Hui was strong, but he was not a Master after all, so how could he possibly do it?

In the next moment, the sword formation shook violently with a huge boom, snapping him out of his reverie. Confused, he raised his head. What had happened?

Before he could react he was blinded by dazzling white sheets.

Out of nowhere, a wisp of electricity stuck his body, causing it to tremble and turn numb.

Han Li was stupefied.

Observers were basically as confused as Han Li. They could not wrap their heads around the situation. Only a few had clearly captured the earlier scene.

There was a dense crowd beneath Clearwater City’s cloud layer. In an inconspicuous corner stood a blind man and a tall lady that were completely enthralled by the battle.

The tall lady could not help but cover her mouth in alarm. With teary eyes, she was completely overwhelmed with shock.

The blind man looked expressionless, but he grasped onto his cane as if his life depended on it, and his hand trembled. It was as if his forehead had been brutally hammered and he had not even realized that he was mumbling to himself. "Lightning! It’s lightning!"

Above the cloud layer, Yang Xiaodang jolted up, evidently frightened. He felt a destructive force, one that was so terrifying that he wanted to stay clear of it.

Venerable Volcano was stunned as well. Lightning was one of the

most masculine and domineering forces. It was also a power that elementalists had yet to tame. Having seen the violent lightning flashes and rolling thunder, many yearned for such incomparable strength, but few succeeded. Even to this day, lightning-type inheritances were pathetically few. They were practically the favorites on the market.

Shi Xueman’s eyes lit up. "[Dust Fall]?"

While in Central Pine City, she was extremely familiar with the three moves from Ai Hui’s sword pill. [Crescent Moon] was modified into [Six Moons], while [Night Epiphyllum] was the move he used to end his master’s life, so he stopped using it ever since.

Only [Dust Fall] remained.

Shi Xueman had a very deep impression of [Dust Fall]. Ai Hui had used it to save everyone during the bloody Battle of Long Street. Blood fiends feared the aura of lightning so Ai Hui used it often.

Lou Lan spoke up suddenly, "It’s a combination of [Soaring Flames, Cascading Muslin], [Six Moons], and [Dust Fall]."

Mixing sword moves was not an easy task. If done well, the resulting move would naturally double in strength and become more exquisite. If done poorly, not only would its power decrease, it would leave many loopholes and put the elementalist in danger.

Ai Hui had done an extremely fine job of combining the three

moves.

They could clearly see that the six rapidly spinning moons were slowing down and weakening. Suddenly, the thunder web connecting all six moons exploded.

Lightning was one of the scariest forces in the natural world, and in that moment, it displayed its terrifying destructiveness.

Silver snakes danced in disorder.

The surrounding light swords gave way to an empty region of about several squares.

Yin Yang force could multiply nonstop, but it required time. Even if the light swords were continuously flying out from the Yin Yang Fish, they were unable to fill this gap.

Without a sound, an enormous red sword shot into the empty space.

Boom!

Orange flames blossomed together with the release of the absolutely terrifying, built-up force. It was as if a heavy hammer had smashed into the ground, causing its surface to pulse.

The unrestrained and brutal flames flowed like wildly charging

dire beasts, tearing and shattering the light swords.

Ai Hui, who was in the sky, coldly looked down under his feet as the orange flames blossomed, spread, and burst through the sword formation, eventually swallowing it up. An enormous flaming flower blossomed on the ground.

The rising heatwaves soared and the explosive shockwaves rapidly spread outward like ripples. Wherever they passed, the rocks shattered, mountains collapsed, and the ground split, leaving bottomless cracks that extended across several miles.

Ai Hui spread his azure wings, flying up even higher.

He looked very calm, without the least bit of joyous victory on his face.

In actual fact, he did not find it worth celebrating. Han Li's [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation] was indeed superior to his. Given time, Han Li's formation would only become stronger.

The [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation] was still at its weakest, while the full potential of [Red Dust] had already been unlocked, so it was difficult to improve it further.

Han Li had already grasped a way of doing things.

Yet, what was his style? Ai Hui was at a loss.

Ai Hui’s killer move was extremely powerful, but he knew that his moves were very heterogeneous, so forming a system that connected them was unlikely. Han Li chose Yin Yang. What should he choose?

A figure shot up from amid the flames. It was Han Li.

Han Li was in a sorry state. Only half of his Flowing Wind Wings remained, his garments were torn and tattered, half of his eyebrows were burned, his face was filthy with grime, and there were bloodstains on parts of his body.

Yet, he was not the least bit discouraged or dismayed. Instead, he was in great spirits, emitting an indescribably glow.

He saluted from afar. "Thanks for being lenient."

He looked sincere. It was from the bottom of his heart.

Ai Hui returned the salutation and shook his head. "Brother Han’s abilities made it so, I was extremely lucky."

Han Li laughed. "I lost and you won. Why so polite? The battle today was like a monastic practice. I have been enlightened and benefited a lot. It has also allowed me to see the future of swordsmen and how vast and boundless the future of swordsmanship is."

Ai Hui listened quietly and felt somewhat envious.

Han Li’s eyes were as clear as water and free from distracting thoughts. He was like a whole different person, like a butterfly emerging from its chrysalis.

He had a solemn expression on his face. "Before today I was muddled, drifting with the waves and going with the flow. I was born in a fleeting time and had been trapped in dangerous situations, constantly worrying about daily affairs. Today, I finally understand what I have to do from now on. The marvel of swordsmanship is boundless and requires a lifetime of dedication."

Ai Hui could feel Han Li’s devotion and was genuinely happy. "Congratulations, Brother Han!"

Han Li also could fell Ai Hui’s sincerity. With bright eyes, he said, "Although I have lost today, I have already advanced. If Brother Ai slacks off, you’re going to be left far behind."

Ai Hui’s heroic spirit vanished as he burst into laughter. "The next time we meet will be the day I defeat Brother Han once again!"

Han Li laughed as well. "Such a heroic speech. I’ll wait and see. I’ll bid you farewell for now. See you again!"

Ai Hui replied, "Have a pleasant journey."

All of a sudden, Han Li said in a low voice, "The Assembly of

Patriarchs has its eyes on you. Be careful, Brother Ai."

With that, he turned around and flew off.

Ai Hui looked at Han Li's disappearing silhouette and appeared to be lost in thought, but was actually overwhelmed with shock.

The Assembly was watching him? Why? Because of the snow lava or because they had found out about Chu Zhaoyang's identity? Or were there other schemes?

Clearwater City. Seeing Han Li flying further and further away, the tall lady's face turned ugly.

The blind old man could not help but mock. "That's all there is to the Assembly. I thought you guys had more control over Han Li. Haha!"

The tall lady's expression returned to normal. "Without Han Li we still have Zhang Li and Wang Li. You didn't think we were placing our hopes solely on Han Li, did you?"

The blind old man snorted. "I hope you mean what you say and those words aren't just nice to listen to."

The tall lady smiled. "Don't be angry. You need money, and so do we. We have the same goal. Rest assured. How can we let this money tree slip away from our fingers?"

The blind old man’s expression loosened up slightly. Just thinking about the snow lava made his heart palpitate eagerly. He said faintly, "Then how are you guys going to take action? That Ai fellow is a tough nut to crack Plus, there’s that woman from the Shi family too. Attacking head on isn’t such a good idea."

The tall lady laughed softly. "We can’t do that of course. We have a more clever method. It isn’t that difficult."

Chapter 451: What Are They Here For?

Ai Hui's victory was beyond the expectations of the majority of people.

When Ai Hui returned to Clearwater City, people were looking at him with greater veneration. They moved aside automatically and the female elementalists' gazes were filled with extraordinary splendor.

"Congratulations, Brother!"

Qiao Meiqi's laughter echoed through the clouds as he descended with a group of people. The guards beside him were full of admiration and respect.

As they said, skill deserves respect. There was no doubt.

In the past, people were more interested in Han Li, who was coined a genius. However, after witnessing the whole battle and seeing that Ai Hui had completely suppressed and defeated Han Li, they finally realized how powerful Ai Hui really was.

Winners won everything. Respect, riches, power.

Yang Xiaodong cried out, "Miss Shi mentioned that Brother Ai has never ever lost any battles. I found it hard to believe at first, but today I have seen for myself how masterful you are during a battle!"

Ai Hui smiled modestly. "How can I talk about being masterful in front of Master Yang? My limited swordsmanship is merely something fresh."

Shi Xueman couldn’t help but give Ai Hui a second look. She felt it strange. Why is this fellow being so honest today? It’s not his usual style.

Yang Xiaodong shook his head. "I do not praise easily. Brother Ai’s skills are already at the next level. You can easily become a Master. Plus, you’re still so young and your future is boundless. You’re not somebody old people like us can compare to."

There was unconcealed envy in his speech.

Being young brought unlimited possibilities. There was a huge difference between someone who became a Master at thirty and at fifty. A thirty year old Master had a few decades to work toward becoming a Grandmaster, whereas it was unlikely for a fifty year old Master to improve much because of their stagnating vigor.

Venerable Volcano patted Ai Hui on his shoulder. "Not bad! That last strike frightened me. What’s the name of that move?"

"[Red Dust]."

Venerable Volcano was stunned. "That’s a strange name but it doesn’t matter. Rolling red dust can nibble away bones and souls,

and produce plentiful of lightning bolts."

The more he thought about it, the more he thought there was to [Red Dust].

Ai Hui felt a little embarrassed and wanted to explain that [Red Dust] was actually a combination of [Red Muslin] and [Dust Fall].

Qiao Meiqi came over and said in a loud voice, "We're going to properly celebrate your return and victory tonight!"

Upon hearing this, Ai Hui hurriedly replied, "Thanks for your kindness, Mayor, I really appreciate it. But I still have things to ponder over from that earlier battle, so please find me a meditation room to sort out my thoughts."

Qiao Meiqi was in high spirits. "You've got something from it? Then I'll have to congratulate you more. Meditation room? No problem!"

He'd long thought it over clearly. The stronger Ai Hui was, the better their business became. He'd guessed that Ai Hui was short-handed. As for trivial matters, Ai Hui had no energy to bother. He had greater ambitions.

Qiao Meiqi wasn't worried that Ai Hui had too big of an ambition, only that he did not have enough. He was interested in the things Ai Hui wasn't, as long as he could earn a profit.

The skills and potential Ai Hui had displayed made Qiao Meiqi willing to do all he could to maintain their friendly relationship.

If Ai Hui could become a Master at twenty plus and have Shi Xueman by his side with Central Pine Faction behind him, they could, at the very least, protect a whole city. Plus, with such a money-spinning and powerful weapon like snow lava, they would only become stronger with time.

Shi Xueman spoke up suddenly. "I'll keep guard."

Hearing that, Gong Peiyao looked at Shi Xueman, her eyes flickering.

Rumor had it that Shi Xueman had already set her heart on Ai Hui. Many scoffed at this news, but most believed it. Otherwise, why would she follow him? How could the mere Central Pine Faction have space for someone like her? Even if she had stayed in Central Pine Faction, she should've become the leader. How could it have been Ai Hui? It was simply not right and unimaginable for her to become an assistant to Ai Hui.

So it's true, Gong Peiyao thought to herself.

Gong Peiyao had been following Shi Xueman since she was young and she knew how cold a person she was. But Shi Xueman's feelings had been exhibited through her offering to stand guard the moment Ai Hui said he wanted to be in seclusion.

The rest could see this too, but being experienced and well-acquainted with the ways of the world, they said nothing.

The meditation room Qiao Meiqi arranged for Ai Hui was in the residence’s basement. It was extremely quiet and well-guarded.

Seeing the guards retreat, Ai Hui shut the door.

Shi Xueman asked, "What happened?"

Ai Hui was rather surprised. "How do you know something happened?"

Shi Xueman answered dully, "You won, but you aren’t happy and you didn’t even ask about the rewards. It’s unlike you."

Lou Lan agreed, "Yeah."

Ai Hui looked at the door and Shi Xueman reassured him that there wasn’t anyone outside.

Ai Hui said in a low voice, "Before he left, Han Li warned me that Assembly of Patriarchs is watching us."

Shi Xueman looked alert. "Assembly of Patriarchs? Are they still checking Chu Zhaoyang’s identity? Or is it something to do with Xiao Shuren?"

Only Iron Lady and Lou Lan knew about Chu Zhaoyang. Ai Hui had brought a small child, Wei An, and no one knew he was Xiao Shuren's son. He used to be called Xiao An, but in order to avoid suspicions, Ai Hui renamed him Wei An, to commemorate Great Wei Enterprise.

Shi Xueman had also seen that strange, demonic god armor and that golden drop of liquid sealed within the crystal. She could tell from one glance that they were extraordinary, but was unable to point out their origin.

She then specially investigated the situation and the information she obtained had her trembling inwardly.

Dai Gang could promise everything to every aristocratic family, without regard for costs and consequences, in order to obtain these items. According to the Shi family's probing, Great Wei Enterprise's destruction was, in countless ways, connected to Madam Ye. Also, with She Yu contesting them, practically all influencers were fighting over these item.

What were these items exactly?

Ai Hui, Shi Xueman and Lou Lan had been researching for a long time, but there was still insufficient information.

No one dared to lift the ban before getting a clear idea of what the golden liquid was. Wasting a treasure would only cause people's hearts to ache, but if it contained demonic qualities, unknown dangers might arise too.

They did gain insights about the demonic god armor however.

Lou Lan had spent a lot of time on this, and with the help of his Midnight sand core, he finally figured out some of the unique qualities of the armor.

Facts had proven that Ai Hui made the right choice by not wearing the armor at that time.

The demonic god armor emitted a kind of black mist. It was a strange kind of force that could stimulate the wearer and improve his skills tremendously. However, it would also continuously draw upon his energy.

According to Midnight's analysis and speculation, only Masters could resist such a corroding force, and a key was required to propel this demonic god armor.

And that key was the blood bandage.

Lou Lan had already concluded that the golden liquid, demonic god armor and blood bandage carried the same aura. They came from an integral whole.

Upon hearing what Ai Hui said about the assembly, Shi Xueman immediately thought of Xiao Shuren's ancient treasure and felt nervous.

Ai Hui said in a low voice, "I don’t know. I did not inform the mayor in fear that the Assembly of Patriarchs would infiltrate from his side. The Assembly of Patriarchs always gets things done, by hook or by crook."

Ai Hui, who had once infiltrated the Assembly of Patriarchs, understood their style well.

The Assembly of Patriarchs was like a killer organization that existed for money. They would be engaged as long as money was involved.

Shi Xueman muttered, "The Assembly of Patriarchs isn’t in too good of a condition lately. They seem to have fallen out with Madam Ye and received a significant blow."

Ai Hui fell into a short daze before responding, "Madam Ye? But they share a friendly relationship with Madam Ye."

Shi Xueman explained, "When Madam Ye was reorganizing Skyheart City, she raided the Assembly of Patriarchs’ headquarters. A reliable news source has it that the Assembly of Patriarchs has information that can be used against Madam Ye. They’ve been working together for so long after all."

"Let’s forget about Madam Ye." Ai Hui shook his head. "Our Madam Ye holds a lot of power now and certainly has no time for trivial matters. If the Assembly of Patriarchs sustained serious damage, they would be in need of a huge sum of money. It won’t be surprising, then, that they have designs for our snow lava."

Shi Xueman asked directly, "What now?"

Lou Lan added, "Ai Hui, I'll go ask around."

"No!" Ai Hui and Shi Xueman countered in unison.

"But Ai Hui needs to close himself off." Lou Lan opened his eyes wide, his expression serious. "The elemental energy in Ai Hui's body is bubbling. He needs to calm them down or he will get injured, and if it's serious his base level would drop."

Shi Xueman turned her head suddenly and grabbed Ai Hui's hand to check his body's condition. She'd thought that he wanted to avoid the crowd. It was only now that she realized his body wasn't doing too well.

"Hey, hey, hey, men and women shouldn't be this close. Even though we've hugged..." Ai Hui blurted out, without any sense of shame.

Shi Xueman couldn't be bothered with him. Soon, her facial expression worsened. She loosened her grip and said resolutely, "You must recuperate immediately, I'll stand guard."

"I know my own condition. It's no big deal..."

The next moment he was being pulled up off of his feet by Shi

Xueman.

Ai Hui raged. "You may kill me, but you cannot humiliate me. Are you trying to pick a fight, Miss Shi?"

Shi Xueman responded coldly, "I'll use only one hand."

At that she pulled him into the meditation room and threw him on the ground.

"Ow! Iron Lady. You and I, we've got a problem..."

Bang!

Shi Xueman had shut the door.

The meditation room was completely soundproof, so those outside could hear nothing at all.

Lou Lan said in all seriousness, "I'm going to get information, Xueman. Be back soon."

Shi Xueman looked at him without a word.

Lou Lan opened his eyes wide. "I'm very capable, Xueman."

A warm smile appeared on Shi Xueman's unchanging, iceberg-

like face. "Go ahead, Lou Lan. I trust you!"

Lou Lan was joyed, his eyes taking the shape of crescent moons. He cried out, "Thanks, Xueman. I'll give it my all!"

With that he transformed into a pool of sand and disappeared into the ground.

Shi Xueman smiled slightly and the dusky entrance seemed to brighten up a little.

Her smile flashed like a glimmer in the night.

She returned to her icy, wordless self. She untied Cirrus from her back and placed it beside her, sitting upright by the door.

Chapter 452: Disturbance

An unremarkable looking private house.

The blind old man sat in the shadow, his withered body quietly swallowing the light rays and deepening the shadows. His vacant eyes carried a strange glimmer, like a will-o'-the-wisp in the dark, late night, swaying silently and gently.

He stroked his staff with his pale, wrinkled palms, producing a hair-raising rustling sound, like that made by a snake slithering through crisp leaves.

The tall lady sat far away with a smile on her face. Those unfamiliar with her watery eyes would think that her face was filled with sensuality and passion. But it could be seen from her slightly tensed body, in a position that made it easy to stand up, that she was afraid of the old man.

The old man had this might.

He had been well-known for a few decades, and even in comparison to the Venerable Volcano, he wasn’t inferior in any respect. His name wasn’t prominent among ordinary people and many were unaware of what he knew. In the dark world, however, he was a strong figure known to everybody.

Northern Underworld King, Mister Dou.

No one knew what his real name was, but everything he did would shake heaven and earth.

Before the city expansion order, Masters weren’t receiving as good a treatment. Every rich and powerful family looked after a few of them, but many Masters were unwilling to attach themselves to those families. They were unyielding and untamed. Coupled with their tyrannical abilities, any slight disagreement would have them drawing their knives out. At that time, quite a number of Masters blended into the underworld as assassins, robbers and so on.

But most of them kept a low-profile. Naturally prideful, they seldom attacked, a reason why they weren’t very famous among the ordinary crowd.

But the aristocratic families during that time did suffer under their hands.

The tall lady’s background wasn’t ordinary either. Her nickname was "Autumn Water". The Assembly of Patriarchs had been expanding at an alarming rate over the past two years and had recruited a bunch of valiant elites, the twelve brilliant and well-known Patriarchs.

Patriarch was a position filled only by the most outstanding elite. Being a Master was a prerequisite.

Autumn Water was the Ninth Patriarch.

The Patriarchs were only engaged for the most important missions.

This was one of the reasons why Mister Dou was willing to cooperate. He could tell that the Assembly of Patriarchs was determined to win.

Mister Dou said, " I heard that your Assembly of Patriarchs isn't doing too well recently. Madam Ye isn't going to leave the matter at that. How many Patriarchs are dead?"

His voice was hoarse and sounded like the chafing of leather. It was a voice that made people instinctively feel uncomfortable.

Autumn Water did not mind. "Three. Widow Ye is destroying the bridge after she crosses the river. Women are selfish."

She spoke as if the death of the Patriarchs was of no relevance to her.

Mister Dou'd thought that she would have masked this matter, since it was a piece of news that he'd spent a decent amount of effort in obtaining. Her casual acknowledgement of it made him think.

He tried to sound things out a few times. "Then does your side still have the capability to finish this business?"

Autumn Water laughed lightly. "There's one more Patriarch who

will arrive within three days so don’t worry."

Mister Dou pulled his mouth before saying dully, "So we’re just going to wait like this?"

He was feeling rather anxious.

The longer things dragged on, the further the news about snow lava would spread and the greater the number of eyes would be fixed on this gold mine, increasing their competition. This was also why he wanted the battle to take place in Clearwater City and not during Ai Hui and gang’s return journey.

No one knew where their city was or which path they would take to return. It was the Wilderness after all, and if Ai Hui went straight for the deepest part of the Wilderness, should they make chase or not?

Placing hopes on their return journey would yield unpredictable results. All sorts of accidents could occur. It wasn’t a wise choice.

He felt apprehensive about Ai Hui’s skills. Together with Shi Xueman, a bigger trouble ensued.

Autumn Water replied confidently, "Relax, we have people in the mayor’s residence. No movement can escape our eyes. Ai Hui is still recuperating. He’s pretty badly injured but I suggest that we don’t deal with him."

Mr Dou asked faintly, "Then who?"

Autumn Water laughed softly. "That little girl in the Gong Residence."

Mister Dou laughed coldly. "There's Venerable Volcano beside her. Plus, provoking the Gong Residence will cause no end of trouble."

Autumn Water was rather surprised. "Don't tell me you're still afraid of the Gong Residence? You shouldn't be. To think that you used to look upon these rich aristocratic families as if they were swines and sheep, slaughtering them as you please. How thrilling."

"Not worthwhile." Mister Dou kept a calm expression, as if unoffended. "While I would like to fish up a sum, causing a feud with the Gong family is simply too big a price to pay."

Declining to comment, Autumn Water said instead, "If Ai Hui doesn't come out, what are you going to do? It's better to make a move on the mayor but Qiao Meiqi and Ai Hui aren't that close so Ai Hui might not hand over snow lava's refining method."

Mister Dou kept silent.

Autumn Water wasn't wrong. Gong Peiyao really was a more suitable target. Shi family and Gong family shared a deep relationship so Shi Xueman would never sit and watch Gong Peiyao falling into danger.

While snow lava brought tremendous profits, he believed that Shi Xueman would choose Gong Peiyao.

But if things were to be done this way, the matter was going to blow up.

Kidnapping Gong Peiyao would mean offending the Gong Residence and forming an unending feud with them. The Gong Residence was one of the three superpowers alongside Madam Ye and New Citizen Faction, so one could well imagine the dire consequences of offending them.

The world now wasn't like that during the era of the Avalon of Five Elements. Aristocratic families held many advantages but also faced many restrictions. The ways of the current world rendered aristocratic families, like the Gong Residence, worry-free. Many things that weren't easily done in the past posed no problems today since no one cared.

A worry-free and unrestrained Gong Residence was like a dire beast free from shackles and chains.

Unless it was absolutely essential, he had no wish to provoke such a monster.

But thinking about the profits Snow Lava brought, he couldn't help but feel tempted.

He spoke up after a long silence, "Wait a bit more. Let’s reassess the situation when your backup gets here."

Autumn Water nodded. "Okay, but we have to delay their transaction time."

Mister Dou replied, "I’ll instruct them."

.....

Mayor’s residence.

Qiao Meiqi was under much pressure.

He hadn’t managed to gather all the materials needed to exchange for snow lava. He’d lost his temper more than once, but that brought little results and progress remained slow. Qiao Meiqi was born into a family of merchants and hence was extremely sensitive to efficiency. From information passed to him through various channels, it seemed that someone was obstructing their material collection process.

Qiao Meiqi was having a headache. Who was it?

His first guess was that it was highly likely that the news about snow lava had spread and someone had set his eyes on it. He sent people to investigate, but no news came back thus far.

He suppressed the jitters within his heart and asked Yang Xiaodaong, who was beside him, "Is Ai Hui not out yet?"

Yang Xiaodong shook his head. "Nope. He’s probably got a big gain."

Just then, Gong Peiyao and Venerable Volcano dashed in. They did not look good.

Qiao Meiqi’s heart made a loud thump as he stood up hurriedly. "What happened?"

Gong Peiyao bit her lips. "Great Elder passed away a few days ago."

Qiao Meiqi couldn’t help but cry out in alarm. Not only he but Yang Xiaodong, too, revealed a face of shock.

Even the stupidest person knew that Great Elder’s death meant that the last rope around the cities’ necks was gone. Nevertheless, no one felt happy. Disregarding the Great Elder’s achievements and mistakes, he was still the last leader who was able to guide the masses.

Now that he was no longer around, anything related to him was thoroughly finished.

What did the future hold? No one knew.

Clearwater City was located in such a remote area that this news took several days to arrive. Skyheart City was probably already in a state of chaos by now.

Skyheart City was indeed a mess.

The disturbance started from disputes between diplomatic mission teams from respective cities and things worsened from there.

Flames soared in the night sky as battling noises fell incessantly on the ear.

Fresh blood and blood-filled corpses covered the streets the next morning.

Things were getting increasingly intense. Two small families had been wiped out and only a mess had been left in the houses. The houses had been completely plundered.

It was said that there were evil thieves who infiltrated the diplomatic mission that had no lack of Masters. These people were very crafty and did not face Sky Edge and Infantry divisions head on.

Both combat divisions had just been built and were still relatively weak. Only the division leaders were Masters. They were unable to attend to many things at the same time and did not manage to

achieve anything. Eventually, Madam Ye decided to call them back.

All kinds of rumors flew around.

Some said that Madam Ye wanted to get rid of dissidents but couldn’t do it openly so she had to resort to such methods.

Others said that these thieves were had just come from the front line, with over ten roving thieves gathering, and that they had been lusting after Skyheart City, the biggest city, for the longest time.

Citizens in Skyheart City were anxious and aristocratic families dared not dispatch their Masters in fear of having their homes wrecked.

The Great Elder’s mansion was the most luxurious and well-guarded place in Skyheart City. The elites of Sky Edge and Infantry Division were all guarding it and even the two division leaders were keeping watch.

Madam Ye sipped on her tea. "All checked?"

Her subordinate answered respectfully, "All checked. A few Elders are participating in this."

"What about the roving thieves?"

"They’re close by. About sixty miles away from here."

"The news about roving thieves is accurate. Many have gathered and are approaching Skyheart City. The news that Grandmaster An Muda has no power to reverse the situation has also spread. No one can stop them."

Many citizens in the city started packing their things and got ready to flee.

Madam Ye felt rather regretful. "Colluding with both inside and outside? Do they really disapprove of me this much?"

"They’re short-sighted and blinded by greed..."

Madam Ye shook her head and sneered, "I know they’re not. They just don’t believe that I can remedy the situation because I’m a woman! Do they think they’re able to then?"

Yes she found it ridiculous.

Didn’t these people think about who they were going to put on top after taking her down?

They were just a bunch of blockheads who wanted to stop others from obtaining what they weren’t able to.

What disappointed her was the fact that the few Elders who used to support her chose to watch from the sidelines. This was the real reason that made her fall into such passiveness.

No Elder openly supported her.

This being the case, there wouldn’t be any more Elders from now onward.

Her cold eyes flickered but her tone was exceptionally gentle and calm. "Have the three central divisions enter the battlefield and pacify the mutiny."

Chapter 453: Ai Hui's Own Path

Whether it was openly or discreetly, many were paying attention to Ai Hui's recuperation. No one noticed, however, that the sand puppet beside him was gone.

Even Gong Peiyao, who adored Lou Lan, was focused on the news of Great Elder's death and had no mood for playing with Lou Lan.

A rustling sound could be heard coming from the underbrush in an empty corner of Clearwater City.

Shortly after, a faint and cheerful voice sounded from the bushes.

"No one on the left."

"No one on the right."

A moment later, a finger-sized Lou Lan made his way out of the bushes.

"Keep watch from the rooftop, Lou Lan!"

"Keep watch from the alley mouth!"

"Watch the left side, Lou Lan."

"Watch the right side, Lou Lan."

A few mini Lou Lans called out to each other, one after another, before turning around and running off. One jumped to the rooftop and hid within a crack between the tiles. Two ran to the junction of two walls by the alley mouth and stood watch, one for the right and the other for the left side.

"Lou Lan’s here!"

"Lou Lan’s here!"

...

Cheerful shouts sounded incessantly as, one after another, Lou Lans started threading their way out from the bushes. They dashed toward one another joyfully and their mini bodies joined together and expanded to eventually become one big Lou Lan.

Having recovered his appearance, Lou Lan’s glowing red eyes flickered non-stop. He was processing every mini Lou Lan’s feedback. After a short while he muttered to himself, "There’s nothing in this region. To the next, Lou Lans, let’s go!"

Lou Lan did not use any clever method. What he used was actually silly.

He’d separated the whole city into different sections and upon reaching each region, he would scatter into many mini Lou Lans

and scour the region like sand. Mini Lou Lans would remember the conversations they eavesdropped on and the people's faces. Finally, the information the mini Lou Lans gathered would be summarized.

Such a huge amount of information would cause ordinary sand puppets to overheat. But Lou Lan's sand core, Midnight, could sort out all this information effortlessly.

If there was any suspicious target, Lou Lan would arrange a mini Lou Lan to stand guard. No one would pay attention to a tiny pile of yellow sand hiding on the ceiling beams, under the bed, within the cracks between bricks or in a dark corner of their rooms.

There'd never been such a sand puppet.

What people generally knew about sand puppets was that they were all about the same size and had about the same abilities. The bigger the body the stronger in battle they usually were. An example would be a Sand Sentinel, because the bigger its size the more the sand core could do.

Sand puppets weren't suitable spies since they weren't quick or smart enough. They weren't good at disguising themselves too. When sand puppets were first invented, people were easily deceived. Now, an extra pool of sand would alert everyone.

No one used sand puppets to spy nowadays, unless the earth elementalist really had no team-mates to rely on.

Lou Lan's method depended solely on Midnight's capability, so while it wasn't clever it was extremely effective.

It worked also because Clearwater City did not cover a big area. If Lou Lan were to use this method on a big area like Silver City, he would need at least ten to fifteen days to investigate.

Lou Lan, who had arrived at the newest area, repeated the steps.

He found something this time.

.....

The mayor had paid an enormous sum to build the underground meditation room. Not only was it soundproof, it had been reinforced by an earth elemental master. No matter how violent things went on inside, the meditation room was indestructible.

Only slamming sounds could be heard from the meditation room.

Ai Hui's whole body was red as his blood surged and his head steamed. It was as if he'd just been taken out from the oven.

He held onto Wintry Jade Blade and walked around the room barefoot, waving his sword from time to time. Sword rays flew out from its tip and struck the fortified walls, causing impacted spots to light up.

The elemental energy within his body was like boiling lava. It was losing control.

To Ai Hui, using [Red Dust] had simply been too forced. Han Li's judgment wasn't wrong. No one under the level of Master would be able to break his [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation].

And [Red Dust] was actually a Master-level move. It was his first time using it since conceptualizing it.

Ai Hui's judgment was very accurate as well. When he saw Han Li's [Yin Yang Fish Sword Formation] he knew that ordinary moves weren't going to be effective and the only usable move was [Red Dust].

But how could there not be a price to pay for using a Master-level move when he wasn't a Master yet?

The surging and disorderly elemental energy within his body was the consequence of forcefully using [Red Dust]. If he was unable to tame the elemental energy, his five residences and eight palaces would be damaged. If it was serious, his base level would drop.

But how was he going to calm the elemental energy down?

Ai Hui tried operating Circulatory Cycle Revolution but to no avail.

He then tried exhausting all his elemental energy but still to no

avail. The newly born elemental energy continued to be in a chaotic state, unable to be suppressed.

What could he do?

Ai Hui panted heavily while his brain spun rapidly.

He suddenly recalled the contents from some notes he'd read. The notes were left by a senior from the Hall of Ancient Records. In his attempt to search for Senior Xiao's notes, Ai Hui'd practically flipped through every single book in that hall. He'd been helpless at that time, but because of that he'd gained many strange insights and all sorts of preposterous sounding ideas. Also, he got to read more about rare treasures and all kinds of weird situations.

Ai Hui read them as he read storybooks, just like how he'd done for swordplay manuals left from the Cultivation Era.

He suddenly recalled a situation described by the senior. It was precisely what he was facing now.

How did that senior resolve the issue?

Ai Hui racked his brain and wanted so hard to open it up. He'd only read through them very briefly out of interest. Now, he was depending on that last straw of hope and was afraid of missing that moment of realization. He wrinkled his brows, pondering hard.

After a long time Ai Hui finally remembered the contents.

That senior did face the same situation as him. He remembered it so clearly because the writer described every detail very meticulously. However, the senior did not share the method to resolve it. Instead, he mentioned that this happened to him the night before he became a Master.

Wait, the night before a breakthrough?

Ai Hui received a jolt. Was it going to happen to him too?

This thought calmed his restless heart significantly and his almost burning body cooled off a little as well.

After calming down, Ai Hui’s mind spun quicker.

What should he do if this was indeed the sign of a breakthrough?

There were two conditions for an elementalist to become a Master. He must satisfy the elemental energy’s base level requirement and create his own absolute art. Ai Hui had already fulfilled the first condition. What about the second?

All of a sudden, Ai Hui’s understanding of a Master seemed to have skewed.

The keyword in the second condition wasn’t "absolute art" but

one’s "own art".

Ai Hui fell into a daze.

His own…

He realized that he’d never thought about this before. His mind went to Han Li. Han Li’s choice was clear at first glance. He’d chosen the "Yin Yang" path. Ai Hui felt it a decent choice. Yin Yang appeared simple but was profound, unpredictable and everchanging.

What was his own path?

Ai Hui sunk into a deep, reflective state and completely forgot about his discomfort.

He’d seen quite a number of absolute arts and swordplay techniques. He thought about Karakorum chief’s ambitious swordsmanship encyclopedia, all-inclusive and diverse. Ai Hui thought about them one by one and felt even more bewildered.

Any force would become shockingly mighty with consistent practice and reflection. Each type of force had its own allure.

He started to understand the idea that finding his own path was the key to becoming a Master. This world was too huge and there were too many types of forces. Yet, human energy was limited. In order to grasp the true essence of the force, he’d had to give things

up along the way since only focus and devotion could take him further.

Which kind should he choose?

Ai Hui felt calm now. He knew that his choice was going to influence his future greatly.

It was an important decision.

Ai Hui starting thinking about why he wanted to become an elementalist. His idea was simple at that time. He just wanted to survive. Three years in the Wilderness showed him that elementalists had a much higher chance of survival as compared to the laborers.

He had been muddleheaded and merely wanted to live on. Being able to live was good enough.

It wasn't until he met his master, mistress and senior that his dull life started to brighten up.

It wasn't because of the cold sunlight that shone down through cracks on the houses as he walked soullessly on the streets after the closure of Swordsman Training Hall. It was the warm and bright sunlight, accompanying the cool breeze, that fell before the drowsy-eyed fellow who was sweeping the entranceway, the peaceful morning in Central Pine City where smoke rose up from kitchen chimneys in spirals.

Patter.

Amid the loneliness, sounds of water droplets falling filled the dark, meditation room.

Ai Hui's eyes were shut tight. Tears willfully made their way to the corners of his eyes before flowing down his cheeks.

He'd found his answer.

A colorless image surfaced before his eyes.

In a street that wasn't very wide, tide-like blood fiends were trampling about. It was a blood-colored flood. A youth grasping a sword stood motionless in the center of the street like a reef.

The sharp, cold sword cut everything before it. Fresh blood splattered and limbs of blood fiends flew in all directions.

The rich, choking, bloody smell seemed to have traversed through time and memory, hitting him.

The image blurred but the sword became heavier.

Only the blurry sky remained. Countless silver rays descended from the sky, illuminating the dark, cruel world.

The blood fiends lay limp and lost on the ground and the powerful red flood turned into soft red soil. Indistinct cheers sounded like a landslide or a tsunami. It was so vague, yet reassuring.

Darkness took over once again. It was so quiet that he could hear his own heart beating.

...

"Do you know what people call you?"

"What?"

"The Lightning Blade! Descending from the sky with so many lightning bolts. You frightened everybody. That big lightning storm made all blood fiends drop their resistance and the mayor took the chance to block off the city gates."

"The Lightning Blade..."

...

"Ai Hui, blood fiends are afraid of the aura of lightning."

...

"Yeah."

Chapter 454: Conspiracy

Clearwater City guards interrogated passing caravans vigilantly. Recently, each respective enterprise faced a whole series of issues. If their goods were not delayed, the funds or channels were problematic.

The goods that were meant for exchange with snow lava were only half processed.

There was an invisible hand disrupting them from behind.

Qiao Meiqi had seen all kinds of dangerous situations and was very knowledgeable in that aspect. Although his investigations brought no results, he could smell the odor of a conspiracy. He immediately ordered guards to question people entering and leaving the city. They had to check for city medals on registered elementalists of Clearwater City. The city medal was a management method used extensively following the city expansion order and the construction of new cities.

In order to obtain a Clearwater City medal, elementalists had to register to get their names into the database. They had to get their elemental energy tested as well and a detailed analysis would be kept. They also had to reside in Clearwater City for a least a year.

Unfamiliar looking faces would be strictly interrogated. There were specialized elementalists outside the city gates, in charge of testing newcomers' elemental energy, base level and so on. With such tests, even Masters were unable to conceal their abilities.

Caught off guard, many newcomers protested against the rigorous tests. A few even tried to cause trouble and were killed on the spot. Witnesses then kept quiet out of fear.

Qiao Meiqi had a premonition that someone was preparing something, and that now was the calm before the storm.

He'd personally relayed an order with such a serious tone that practically the whole city was awaiting the arrival of the enemies.

Even Yang Xiaodong was supervising the scene to prevent any accidents. The other consecrated Master of Clearwater City was still uncontactable somehow, causing Qiao Meiqi to feel more uneasy.

As the only Master left in Clearwater City, Yang Xiaodong had limited power to intimidate enemies.

Qiao Meiqi had spent a huge fortune building the city's defenses. Even a Master would be unable to attack efficiently. Plus, there was Master Yang Xiaodong standing guard.

The guards flagged down a caravan that wasn't big and only had just over ten load basin beasts. However, some carried completely screened off tents on their backs. It was a garish sight.

A few guards questioned, "Where are you guys from?"

A manager from the caravan rushed forward and said in a flattering smile and tone, "Cold Rock City. What is going on, Sirs? I've never seen such a disposition of troops before."

The guards looked suspicious. "Why haven't I seen you if you've been here before? Do those belong to the enterprise?"

The manager replied hurriedly, "Look at what you're saying. You're a noble person and are busy with official business. I'm just a lowly worker from Li Clan Enterprise. The goods inside were ordered by Master Yang."

The guards made eye contact upon hearing the words "Li Clan Enterprise" and "Master Yang". They knew that Li Clan Enterprise and Master Yang shared a deep relationship and the materials Master Yang needed had always been purchased from the enterprise.

Just then, a man whom the guards recognized as Master Yang's servant, strode over without getting obstructed. He looked furious, hair all over his face. "Such a shilly-shally enterprise, spreading your bad luck to me at that. Master Yang has asked if the goods are here yet. Why are they only arriving now? How long has it been already!"

The manager apologized hastily. "It's not that I did not try my best, but we met a few dire beasts on the way and fell into critical danger..."

The servant interrupted coldly, "I'm not here to listen to your

grievances. Go find Master Yang if you have the energy to whine. Send those goods in and the accounts will be settled with you by Master Yang."

The manager wept and pleaded non-stop but the servant looked on, ashen-faced and absolutely careless.

Having witnessed this, the guards made eye contact and no one went forward. Weren't they seeking death if they were to provoke Master Yang at this time? Master Yang was supervising the city from above and Clearwater City would lose its footing if they offended him.

Li Clan Enterprise's load basin beasts then entered the city gates amid pleads and cries but no one went forward.

The load basin beasts quickly reached Li Clan Enterprise's entrance and went straight in without stopping. The enterprise gate only closed after the last load basin beast entered.

No one noticed a few shadows coming out of the tents and disappearing.

Deep within the enterprise was an inconspicuous looking house.

Autumn Water, with her tall figure and huge watery eyes, looked as though she could steal people's souls. She said tenderly, "You really have your ways. Who would've thought that Master Yang is one of your people. We have more confidence now."

Mister Dou responded coldly, "Cut the crap."

He looked scary with his empty looking eyes and withered face. He emitted a sinister odor and spoke with a hoarse voice, sending chills down people's spines.

Autumn Water did not get angry. She laughed softly, saying, "This is the Seventh Patriarch, Jiu Gui."

[Jiu Gui - literally meaning 'Liquor Cabinet' (The skill he practiced was related to liquor)]

Beside her stood a lazy looking scholar, who looked like a teacher. His eyes were narrow and hazy, as if intoxicated. Jiu Gui cupped his hands together and laughed gently. "I've heard of your glorious name, 'Northern Underworld King' for the longest time. It's an honor to meet you."

"I've heard of you." Mister Dou said expressionlessly. "Clearwater City is a water elemental city and the path you followed is, after all, a subdivision of water, so this city is a good place for you to unleash your potential."

"You flatter me." Jiu Gui took out a long table and placed the wine pot and cups on top. Without raising his head he said, "Would you like to try some, Mister Dou?"

Mister Dou answered coldly, "No need."

Jiu Gui wasn’t angry. He laughed cheekily, "Then I’ll help myself."

At that he poured himself a cup and took a mouthful of it, his face appearing intoxicated. "This is life!"

Old Dou remained aloof, his expression the same. He did not get angry because of Jiu Gui’s unruly behavior. Elementalists turned Masters were all outstanding characters and had all kinds of temperaments. When one became a Master, being able to follow one’s heart was the most important principle.

He asked in a deep voice, "I wonder what plans Assembly of Patriarchs has in mind?"

The Assembly of Patriarchs had dispatched two Patriarchs, but the others’ elemental energy waves were also exceptionally stable and calm. They were all extremely capable elites. The Assembly of Patriarchs’s power was indeed noteworthy.

Jiu Gui pointed at Autumn water without lifting his head. "Ask her."

Autumn Water laughed before adding, "I’ve got to ask Old Dou about the rules. Master Yang is crucial to us. I wonder what relationship you two share?"

As if he hadn’t heard the later part of her sentence, Mister Dou

said faintly, "My rules are simple. We already have four Masters, so no fancy moves are needed. We can meet them head on. Venerable Volcano moves solitarily and hence is not a cause for concern. Plus, we can sabotage the cloud defense layer now. Those people below are all chickens and dogs."

As if he hadn't caught Mister Dou's words, Jiu Gui helped himself to the drink, his face filled with enjoyment. Only a trace of bright light that flashed across his hazy eyes made his extraordinariness apparent.

Autumn Water smiled delicately. "That's a good way. That Ai fellow is in seclusion so that's not an issue, but you have forgotten about Miss Shi. She's a tricky one. I'm worried since you've been unable to take action. It's not easy to avoid offending the Shi family and the Gong Residence.

Mister Dou kept quiet. Autumn Water had nailed his Achilles heel.

Indeed, he had no wish to offend the Gong residence or the Shi family. The Gong residence was a better choice, since Gong Peiyao did not have much combat strength and killing a consecrated Master wasn't going to be a problem. On the other hand, trouble ensued if anything happened to the Shi family's lady, Shi Xueman.

Shi Beihai was a division leader and in a position of power. Plus, Shi Xueman's master was Grandmaster An Muda.

News of An Muda's decline had long been spreading all over

every city, but as long as he was still alive no one dared do anything to Shi Xueman.

A Grandmaster at his last breath was still a Grandmaster.

They were all Masters, but they had no confidence in defending themselves from a blow dealt by a dying Grandmaster.

Old Dou threw the ball into Autumn Water's court. "What should we do?"

Autumn Water smiled charmingly. "From what I can see, Gong Peiyao is the way to go. Shi Xueman is simply too capable and she isn't weaker than a Master. It will be tricky. Things might blow up if we actually go for her instead, and we don't want any injuries or even deaths. Ai Hui is her old lover so she will protect him with her life. I heard she's standing guard outside the meditation room Ai Hui is recuperating in. Tsk tsk, how affectionate."

She added, "By comparison, Gong Peiyao is a much easier target. As long as someone lures Venerable Volcano away, won't Gong Peiyao just be at arm's length? She grew up with Shi Xueman and their families share a deep relationship, so Shi Xueman will definitely compromise and hand over the formula of snow lava. We'll return Gong Peiyao to them afterwards. Isn't it perfect?"

Mister Dou muttered to himself for a bit before setting his mind onto this plan. He asked in a cold voice, "When do we move?"

Autumn Water’s big, watery and bright eyes flickered. "They’re tired from their journey and are going to rest and continue tomorrow night. What do you think?"

Mister Dou nodded. "Okay! Tomorrow night it shall be!"

As soon as he finished his sentence his face changed. He turned his neck swiftly and looked toward the walls outside the courtyard. In a stern voice he shouted, "Who is it!"

There were a few potted plants on the walls.

Mister Dou waved his cane in the direction of the walls and the potted plants shattered instantly.

Amid the shattering, a pea-sized yellow body landed and jumped over the walls.

The faces of those present changed completely. They’d actually failed to detect a spy and leaked such a crucial discussion!

Damn it!

Everyone was cursing inwardly and the walls turned into fine powder.

Yet, that pea-sized yellow figure was nowhere to be seen anymore.

Being knowledgeable and experienced, Mister Dou called out sharply, "It’s a sand puppet! It mustn’t be far. Take one direction each! I’m going east."

In such a critical moment, Autumn Water did not hesitate at all. "Jiu Gui, west. I’m going south. You guys go north. Kill every sand puppet and earth elementalist you come across."

The drunk look on Jiu Gui’s face vanished and everyone started dispersing.

Autumn water flew up and toward the south.

In an alley about half a mile north from Li Clan Enterprise, the red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes flickered as if he’d sensed something. Then came a pea-sized mini Lou Lan pouncing onto him.

The pea-sized Lou Lan shouted, "Bad guys are here, run quick!"

Lou Lan extended his palm and grabbed onto pea sized Lou Lan, effectively merging it into his body. With a flash of his eyes he immediately retrieved the information from before.

"There!"

A few figures appeared overhead.

The red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes flickered and Lou Lan’s body melted like snow and seeped into the ground in the blink of an eye.

A few light rays exploded in the spot where Lou Lan had just disappeared but there was nothing in the big pit that formed from the explosion.

Whoosh. Autumn Water appeared by their side and asked gloomily, "Where did he escape to?"

"Into the ground."

"Thinks he can escape just like that?" Autumn Water gave a bitter grin, her face ice-cold.

There was a bronze lantern in her hand.

Chapter 455: Lou Lan’s Idea

Autumn Water channeled elemental energy into the bronze lantern she was holding and a wispy, bean sized flame lit up. The flame shot out a green light ray that shone onto the ground.

The green ray was very weak, but the illuminated spot on the ground quickly became transparent and the maze-like sewerage system appeared before their eyes.

The rest were startled as it was the first time they’d seen something like this.

Autumn Water’s lantern, "element-chasing lantern", was a weapon used to track enemies. Elemental energy would be needed to track sand puppets who’d fled this way since there would be traces left behind, unconcealable before the element-chasing lantern.

The green light followed the elemental energy traces and moved rapidly.

Where the light passed the ground, it returned to normal. When the light shone on the thick, solid ground it became crystal clear and so did the underground structure.

Suddenly,the shadow of a pool of sand appeared on the ground before everybody’s eyes.

"There!"

Everyone reacted instantly. As Autumn Water held onto her lantern, the rest went forward and fusion elemental energy's unique, brightly-colored light rays shot toward the ground like raindrops.

Moving stealthily underground, Lou Lan had sensed the light ray. He was extremely sensitive to changes in elemental energy, even more so than Ai Hui.

In the moment the light shone onto the ground Lou Lan immediately moved further down. Passing through the complicated sewer, he continued moving downward, closer to the city stabilizer blocks.

Benefitting from his previous network scouting and monitoring, Lou Lan was very familiar with every corner of Clearwater City.

Feeling the danger overhead, Lou Lan immediately activated the city stabilizer blocks' seals.

The deep black city stabilizers lit up.

Each city would lay city stabilizer blocks underneath to prevent underground dire beasts from entering into the city.

During the blood catastrophe in Induction Ground, many cities had been invaded by blood fiends from underground. Having

learnt a painful lesson from that, cities fortified their underground defense system by adding a large amount of elemental trace seals, which combined with elemental energy to strengthen it.

And Clearwater City's city stabilizers were even more well-configured.

Qiao Meiqi was rich and powerful, and spared no effort in ensuring that Clearwater City was uncollapsible. The city's defense was made up by two sections, one above ground and one under. Above, the cloud defense layer blended well with the sprinkling water screen. They were like an overturned bowl, covering the city completely and tightly.

Underground, the city relied mainly on city stabilizers. In order to strengthen their resistance, each block was engraved with the most updated elemental traces. Some versions of the traces had been used on God-subduing Peak as well. The Gong Residence had exerted themselves in this aspect.

Other than that, Qiao Meiqi had especially set aside a large sum of money to build an elemental energy pool to supply the city stabilizers with elemental energy, which significantly strengthened their power.

Lou Lan was extremely familiar with elemental traces, since Ai Hui often asked him to analyze the composition of elemental traces. Triggering the elemental traces on the city stabilizers couldn't be easier for Lou Lan.

However, those above ground still had no idea what kind of sand puppet they were dealing with.

They were oblivious to what was about to come.

The light rays, released by the few elites of the Assembly of Patriarchs, shot toward the pool of sand beneath the ground like sharp knives cutting into tofu.

They did not want to alarm the city guards so they avoided making a commotion. It wasn't the time to attack yet. While they had the enterprise's shielding, they'd traveled a long way after all and weren't in the right state to battle. They needed time to recover from their exhaustion.

Although there wasn't a huge commotion, they did not relent. They could not believe that a sand puppet could actually dodge their attacks.

Fusion elemental energy's power and might was highly destructive. Any pure elemental energy was like tofu in front of fusion elemental energy.

The green light locked onto that pool of sand despite its constant downward movement.

The brightly-colored light rays followed right behind and were rapidly closing in.

As they were about to overtake, the sand figure vanished suddenly.

Autumn Water was shocked. What happened?

The element-chasing lantern had never slipped, so why did the opponent disappear all of a sudden?

As she was lost in thought the transparent ground warped like a surging water's surface. The flame in the element-chasing lamp trembled and swayed violently like a candle flame in a storm.

Pop. The candle flame exploded with sparks.

The sudden change of events caught Autumn Water off guard.

The element-chasing lantern was a high-grade item made by the Assembly of Patriarchs's craftsman. If it weren't for the fact that she had performed outstandingly in a crucial mission, she wouldn't have gotten the chance to use it. Ever since the lantern fell into her possession it had never slipped. This was the first time ever that she'd been in a situation like this.

But Autumn Water was a Master, after all, so she reacted quickly. The lantern tracked elemental energy waves. Even the smallest ripple couldn't escape its senses so there was only one possibility to explain this situation – the elemental energy waves were overly-intense.

Overly intense...

Autumn Water's face changed. Before she could issue a warning a big piece of the solid ground rose up, as if a monster was about to drill its way out.

"Quick..."

The raised ground was like a crispy biscuit, breaking into many pieces as a faint blue light shot out from the cracks.

The surging water elemental energy broke through the ground effortlessly. A water pillar soared and exploded in mid air, causing hundreds of thousands of raindrops to sprinkle down.

Standing too close to the pillar, two Assembly of Patriarchs's elites weren't able to dodge the rain in time and their bodies were soon filled with dense, honeycomb-like holes. The weirder part was that their honeycomb-like corpses had no bloodstains on them. Not only did these water droplets, that were made from water elemental energy, take away their lives, they took away all the moisture from their bodies.

Mister Dou, Jiu Gui and the rest of the gang were all searching for earth elementalists. Generally speaking, once sand puppets moved too far from their owners, their movements became clumsy and their reactions slow. This sand puppet acted nimbly so there must be an earth elementalist controlling it. Upon seeing the sand figure, Autumn Water locked onto it once again, they were relieved. They needed to get rid of the hidden earth elementalist.

But at that point in time the sudden surge of water elemental energy frightened everybody.

Mister Dou burst out in anger, "Are you guys crazy? Why did you activate the city stabilizers?"

The elites wanted to cry but no tears came out. They weren't the ones activating the city stabilizer blocks. The blocks were buried deep down, so it just was impossible for them to do it.

No one was in the mood to listen to their explanation however. Everyone knew they were in trouble.

Indeed, a mournful alarm rang and echoed throughout the whole city.

Autumn Water turned pale. She trilled, "What now?"

Mister Dou spoke up with an ominous glint in his eyes, "It's do or die, move it! Attack the mayor's residence!"

A few of them made eye contact . Their plan had already fallen through so they had no other choices. The further they delayed, the more passive they would become. While it wasn't the best time to attack, since they weren't sufficiently prepared, their targets were even more unprepared. Plus, with four Masters by their side, they did have the upper hand.

"Mayor’s residence!"

The few of them flew toward the residence without hesitating.

They had no time to waste on a tiny sand puppet. Time was of the essence.

The victors gained everything whereas the losers were left with nothing.

The alarm sounded and the guards in the cloud defense layer tensed up instantly.

One of them cried out loud, "Master Yang, intruder alert!"

Yang Xiaodong went over and asked in a low voice, "Where?"

The guard answered hurriedly, "Wei River Street."

Master Yang’s voice followed. "I see it."

Crack.

The guard saw black as he lost consciousness.

Without even looking at the broken-necked guard, Master Yang turned around and disappeared.

The other guards were stunned as a chill rose up their spines. Master Yang was a traitor! They turned around in hopes of escape, but they too saw black and fell to the ground one after another.

Yang Xiaodong's silhouette resurfaced as a tinge of worry flashed across his eyes. He knew they must have met with an unexpected situation, or else they wouldn't have chosen to act at this point in time.

And it was just an impudent attack.

He could tell with a glance that they were advancing towards the mayor's residence.

Head on?

At this point he, too, threw all concerns aside. His eyes were filled with hatred. Head on then!

He conveniently shattered the cloud that was controlling the cloud defense layer, and everything shattered into bits and pieces like glass.

The ever-present cloud layer that enveloped the city started to melt like snow and disappeared rapidly. Blue sky appeared over the city and the water screen outside weakened and vanished eventually.

Citizens who found it strange raised their heads to look. They did not understand what had happened.

Were dire beasts invading the city?

Qiao Meiqi was alarmed as well. He went up to the balcony and looked at the cloudless sky, his face turning strange.

He had a premonition that something bad had happened.

Fear enveloped him.

Just then, Yang Xiaodong came flying over with a panicked look on his face. Qiao Meiqi's heart sank. Master Yang's anxious state gave him an idea of how grave things were. Nevertheless, he was feeling somewhat calm, just as how victims grabbed onto their last straw of hope when drowning.

QIao Meiqi asked in an unstable voice, "What happened, Master Yang?"

Yang Xiaodong yelled as he flew in, "Intruders have entered the city with errant intentions! They're extremely powerful, so quick, find somewhere to hide, Mayor!"

Qiao Meiqi's pupils shrank as he looked toward the faraway sky.

In an instant, right after he activated the city stabilizer blocks,

Lou Lan dodged to the side, knowing exactly which spots were safe. He listened to the conversation overhead and until he could no longer sense the presence of those people, he returned to the surface.

He looked up in the sky and understood that the opponents had already launched their attack.

Ai Hui and the rest were still unaware of the situation!

Being unprepared, they would easily get struck, especially since Yang Xiaodong was a traitor.

But Lou Lan did not know how to fly and his speed was much slower than his enemies.

How should he inform Ai Hui?

He cocked his head and racked his brains. The red light in his eyes flashed. He'd thought of an idea. While he wasn't certain of its effectiveness, he could only try.

A pool of yellow sand rose into the sky like a cannonball.

Boom!

An unusual, resounding explosion sounded throughout the city. The yellow sand exploded and formed a row of words in the air.

"Yang Xiaodong is a traitor. There are three other Masters!"

The words were exceptionally eye-catching. After the row of words was a vivid and lifelike image of a mini Lou Lan. He was wearing a chef's apron, raising a pot with one hand and holding a spatula in another.

On the balcony with his pupils shrunk, the mayor looked at the faraway sky and ordered in a stern voice, "Stop him!"

The other guards saw the words in the sky. With an angry howl they immediately went to seek out Yang Xiaodong. "Leave quick, Mayor!"

A few other guards escorted the mayor away in a panic.

Chapter 456: Jiu Gui Takes Action

Yang Xiaodong stared gravely at the rising water screen in front of the mayor's residence. The entanglement by the few guards just now gave the mayor's residence enough time to activate the water screen defense system.

By the time the rest arrived, everyone's faces turned ugly. Their sneak attack had become an all-out attack. This increased the risk and uncertainty of this mission.

"What happened?" Yang Xiaodong asked with a deep voice.

Mister Dou knew it was better for him to explain the situation and replied, "Someone eavesdropped on our plan."

Yang Xiaodong slowly regained his composure and looked at the distant sky. The line of sand-made words had disappeared. It was that line of sand-made words that exposed his identity.

"Is it Ai Hui's sand puppet?" he asked.

Yang Xiaodong had a deep impression of Ai Hui's sand puppet. As Gong Peiyao liked Lou Lan very much, Yang Xiaodong could not help but take notice of him as well. Lou Lan was too smart for a sand puppet.

Mister Dou nodded his head.

"Ai Hui is metal-attributed, why would he have a sand puppet?" Yang Xiaodong was slightly confused.

The rest were puzzled as well. Due to the fact that only earth elementalists could control sand puppets, the use of sand puppets by other types of elementalists was unpopular. A sand puppet that was not controlled by an earth elementalist would be very stupid and was practically unusable.

"Could he be a transfigured earth elementalist?" Jiu Gui interjected.

Some extremely transfigured earth elementalists would modify more than ninety percent of their bodies, so much so that they resembled sand puppets.

Autumn Water shook her head. Her beautiful eyes flickered as she answered with certainty, "No, he is a sand puppet, not a transfigured earth elementalist."

She had personally crossed swords with Lou Lan and she was very certain that she was facing a sand puppet, not a transfigured earth elementalist. Now, she was very interested in the sand puppet named Lou Lan. She had never come across such a unique sand puppet.

She had already made up her mind to capture that sand puppet after everything had been settled.

Lou Lan, such a nice name. It just so happened that she lacked an interesting toy to play with.

No one knew that Autumn Water was already planning on capturing Lou Lan. However, when they thought of the series of unfortunate events that had happened, they became silent.

Autumn Water noticed the depressing atmosphere around her and started talking, "Let's not care about that sand puppet. Right now, we have no way out. Only by taking down the mayor's residence and capturing Gong Peiyao or Ai Hui, can we then obtain the refinement method for snow lava. Everyone, do you know how much an A-grade fire liquid is worth?"

Usually, her voice was gentle and alluring. However, at this point of time, it sounded forceful and motivating, energizing everyone.

Now, all they needed to do was to take down the mayor's residence and they would get what they wanted. There were four Masters in their team. Even if the mayor's residence had activated its defense system, they merely needed to put in a bit more effort before they eventually took it down.

The cloud defense layer in the sky had already been completely destroyed. As such, they did not need to worry about it.

"Let me do it," Jiu Gui volunteered.

Yang Xiaodong and Mister Dou stood aside for him. They were

very curious about how powerful the Seventh Patriarch was. Accordingly, Jiu Gui was more powerful than Autumn Water.

Mister Dou had experienced Autumn Water's strength before. He did not know how powerful Jiu Gui was to be able to outshine Autumn Water.

Even though both of them were partners, their trust for each other was very limited. All along, they had guarded against each other.

Upon seeing that the water screen was set up, everyone within the mayor's residence felt slightly more at ease.

Qiao Meiqi was timid and scared of death. At the same time, he was extremely wealthy. As such, he had spared no expense in building a defense system for his residence. The layer of water screen appeared to be very thin but its defensive power was exceptionally strong. It was directly connected to the water elemental energy in the underground rivers.

The motivation for him building Clearwater City here was tightly linked to the favourable natural advantages of this place. Beneath Clearwater City, there were several underground rivers that provided an abundance of water elemental energy and they could even produce Clear Water. This was truly a blessed water elemental land.

With an abundance of water elemental energy flowing into the mayor's residence, the defense system was nearly impregnable.

Venerable Volcano appeared in the main hall and asked solemnly, "What happened?"

Qiao Meiqi’s face turned deathly white but he did not lose his composure, "Yang Xiaodong colludes with outsiders to conspire against us!"

Venerable Volcano looked through the water screen and heaved a cold breath. "Three Masters?"

He could sense a similar aura from the other party.

At this point of time, Qiao Meiqi had completely regained his composure. He loosened himself from his guards’ support and said, "With the addition of Yang Xiaodong, they have a total of four Masters."

The look on Qiao Meiqi’s face was malevolent. With his eyes filled with hatred, he gritted his teeth and roared, "I must kill Yang Xiaodong the traitor! I have to seek revenge for my guards!"

At this moment, the eyes of the few guards beside him turned red and teary. They saw with their own eyes how Yang Xiaodong had killed their comrades.

Venerable Volcano did not say anything. With four Masters outside, they were definitely in a disadvantageous position.

Venerable Volcano’s gaze landed upon the old man holding a vine staff with empty eye sockets. Suddenly, he thought of someone and his facial expression changed. He walked directly to the balcony and yelled towards the sky, "Are you Northern Underworld King, Mister Dou?"

"I didn’t expect Venerable to be able to recognize me. Venerable, I trust you have been well since we last met," Mister Dou replied with a deep voice.

A hoarse and awful voice drifted across the air, making it unbearable for people to listen to.

Venerable Volcano’s face turned solemn as he replied, "Everyone minds their own business. Can you tell me, what’s the reason Mister Dou has come to attack us?"

"I am here for the sake of money and I don’t wish to hurt the innocents. We will leave as long as you hand over the refinement method for snow lava."

Yang Xiaodong was expressionless. Autumn Water and Jiu Gui looked at each other.

Venerable Volcano realized what was going on and his heart sank. Ai Hui would definitely not hand over the refinement method as the snow lava was of great importance to him. Venerable Volcano knew Ai Hui’s temperament. It had always been Ai Hui taking advantage of others, not the other way around. It was impossible for anyone to take advantage of this fellow.

Ai Hui might appear cheeky and impish, but in reality, he was an extremely steadfast and stubborn individual. Back in the days, when Venerable Volcano was trying to get a bowl of porridge from Ai Hui, he had done some research on the Battle of Central Pine City. As such, he clearly knew about Ai Hui's temperament. Furthermore, Shi Xueman, who was extremely resolute and stubborn too, was here as well.

Venerable Volcano would definitely not pressure Ai Hui.

The Gong residence was his employer, but he still owed Ai Hui a favor.

To Venerable Volcano, the person whom he owed a favor to was far more important than his employer.

"I see. It's a pity I am not the one who makes this decision so I have to discuss it with the rest. May I know who are the other two Masters?" Venerable Volcano replied calmly.

"These two are Patriarchs from the Assembly of Patriarchs," Yang Xiaodong said plainly.

He purposely revealed the identities of Jiu Gui and Autumn Water to make sure they would not back out of this mission.

Autumn Water smiled and did not bother about Yang Xiaodong's move. She bowed and greeted, "Nice to meet you, Venerable! I am

the Ninth Patriarch of the Assembly of Patriarchs, Autumn Water."

"I'm the Seventh Patriarch of the Assembly of Patriarchs, Jiu Gui," Jiu Gui bowed and greeted Venerable Volcano as well.

"All of you are indeed talented and youthful, becoming Masters at such a young age. I feel really old," Venerable Volcano praised them.

Autumn Water smiled sweetly, "Venerable has a well-known reputation and I have admired you for a long time. As a form of respect to you, as long as you can hand over the refinement method for the snow lava, we will definitely not harm anyone."

"We will have to discuss about it first," Venerable Volcano muttered.

Autumn Water did not agree to his request and looked at Mister Dou.

Mister Dou nodded his head and replied, "As a form of respect to Venerable, give him an hour to think about it."

Venerable Volcano replied, "Thank you, everyone."

After Venerable Volcano finished his sentence, he returned to the main hall. Everyone was looking at him at this moment.

"Why are all of you looking at me?" Venerable Volcano asked.

Gong Peiyao's face turned white as she replied, "Sister Xueman and the rest will definitely not agree to their request. Furthermore, these people are not to be trusted."

"Of course I know about these things," Venerable Volcano chuckled.

"Then...."

"Having an hour to delay their attacks is better than having none," Venerable Volcano replied.

Everyone realized what was going on.

After thinking for a while, Venerable Volcano said, "Go and notify Miss Shi, all of us are in the same boat now."

Qiao Meiqi quickly instructed one of his guards to notify Shi Xueman in the underground meditation room.

After a while, Shi Xueman hurried over to the main hall.

After Shi Xueman finished listening to everyone's recounts of what had happened, she asked, "How about Lou Lan? Is he back?"

Qiao Meiqi shook his head and replied, "Once the water screen is activated, we are disconnected from the outside world. Lou Lan can’t enter the mayor’s residence. Luckily he used the sand-made words to alert everyone about the intruders. Everyone arrived here pretty fast, Lou Lan should be alright."

Shi Xueman regained her composure. Shi Xueman’s gaze swept across everyone as she asked, "What do all of you think we should do?"

Venerable Volcano laughed bitterly in his heart. If they did not give a good answer, this lass was going to flip out. He gave a soft cough and replied, "I will disagree with anyone who suggests to hand over the refinement method for snow lava. I haven’t forgotten that I still owe that lad a favor."

"We will fight them to the death!" Qiao Meiqi gritted his teeth.

"Everyone joins hands and fights them together," Shi Xueman nodded her head.

Very soon, one hour had passed.

"Let’s attack now," Mister Dou said plainly.

Jiu Gui nodded his head and stepped forward with a flat wine flask in his hand. There was a reluctant look on his face, but he still opened the lid of the wine flask and drank a few mouthfuls of the wine inside.

The wine flask contained his specially concocted Dragoncry Spring Wine. More than half of his income had been spent on concocting this fine wine.

Dragoncry Spring Wine was his trump card. Usually, he would be reluctant to use it but he had to take it out at this point of time.

An intoxicated flush appeared on Jiu Gui's face. His eyes became hazy and his body began to sway. Traces of mist were being emitted from his body, pervading the air with an unusual wine fragrance.

A mysterious aura of might was given off by his body.

Yang Xiaodong and the rest were surrounding him, and their hairs stood on end.

In everyone's eyes, the seemingly wobbly, scholar-like man looked like a horrifying dire beast that had descended from the prehistoric era.

This was definitely not a misperception!

The elemental energy surrounding Jiu Gui began to undulate violently. His swaying body in the air was giving off a vibrating buzz. He resembled a massive, unknown dire beast that was flapping its wings.

Jiu Gui's hazy eyes suddenly widened. Oddly, his intoxicated pupils became almond-shaped, resembling the eyes of a serpent. They were completely devoid of warmth and emotions.

He opened his mouth and let out a neigh-like sound. The sound was completely inhuman, resembling an angry roar of an unknown dire beast.

Everyone there was an experienced veteran, but they had never heard this kind of sound before.

A tinge of fear appeared on Autumn Water's face.

Suddenly, Jiu Gui's figure vanished into thin air.

The next moment, a loud boom resounded through the air as the water screen in front of the mayor's residence trembled violently.

A sonic boom exploded in the air.

Within the mayor's residence, everyone's facial expressions changed drastically. Their ears were ringing, as if their ears were being punched. Those servants who were of lower base levels had blood seeping out of their mouths and noses.

Gong Peiyao uttered a yelp and fell to the ground. Venerable Volcano's face turned grave as a surprised look flashed across his eyes.

He had never seen such a weird Path of Master.

The loud sound was produced when the other party landed a punch on the water screen. It was a punch that contained pure power, without any techniques involved.

At this moment, the previously frail-looking Jiu Gui was exactly like a prehistoric dire beast that possessed a combination of terrifying strength and speed.

Venerable Volcano could not see this monster's figure with his eyes. All he could see was a blurry afterimage.

Venerable Volcano was shocked. What is this Path of Master?

Chapter 457: A Swap Between Master And Slave

Boom, boom, boom!

Earth-shaking, loud booms resounded throughout Clearwater City. Every boom caused the earth to tremble violently. The entire city was shaking and its residents were escaping the city in panic.

The clash of Masters could destroy the city and the area of effect would be very huge.

The skinny Jiu Gui put up a terrifying display of power. A series of intimidating neighing sounds resounded through the air as a fleeting afterimage appeared and disappeared at random in the sky.

Every punch he unleashed was not fanciful at all. They landed heavily on the water screen. Jiu Gu was like a city sieging machine, his punches were filled with terrifying strength.

Initially, there were merely undulating ripples on the water screen. Subsequently, the water screen began to tremble. Now, splashes of water erupted from the water screen with every punch that landed on it.

"The water elemental energy pool has half of its energy left!"

A guard who watched over the water elemental energy pool in the mayor's residence yelled. His voice was trembling with fear.

The water elemental energy from the underground rivers was being directed to the water elemental energy pool in the mayor's residence to power the water screen. The water elemental energy was depleting at a much faster rate than what they had expected.

Venerable Volcano's facial expression became solemn. The skinny fellow's body seemed to contain boundless energy. He was very different from the conventional Masters that Venerable Volcano had encountered before. Most Masters were focused on the understanding and applications of elemental energy.

Unknowingly, a feeling of strangeness arose in Venerable Volcano's mind.

Since when had the world undergone so many changes? He did not know. Even the training system had changed completely these days. New developments and things were appearing every day.

Conventional ideas were being toppled constantly while new ideas began to dominate the world.

Even though aristocratic families were still very powerful, they were no longer invincible like they were in the past. All of them were in their twilight years. Venerable Volcano had a deep relationship with the Gong residence, otherwise, they would not have given him offerings. He had seen how powerful and arrogant the Gong residence was in the past. But the current Gong residence

wasn’t that insufferably arrogant anymore.

Furthermore, now was the Elemental Desolation Era.

As Venerable Volcano put away his distracting thoughts, a voice suddenly rang across his ears.

"It’s the legendary [Sky Palace Possession Technique]. The skill uses wine as a medium to activate it and it is an ingenious skill. The elemental energy in his body is very unique as well. It should be the unique fusion elemental energy from the Assembly of Patriarchs."

The voice belonged to Shi Xueman.

Venerable Volcano’s eyes lit up as he realized what they were dealing with. "So it’s [Sky Palace Possession Technique]. I have heard about it before. Reportedly, it had been lost for many years. I didn’t expect it to reappear in the hands of the Assembly of Patriarchs."

Venerable Volcano could not help but look at Shi Xueman. Youngsters nowadays are really formidable!

"Sister Xueman, do you have any ways of countering it?" Gong Peiyao asked hurriedly.

"[Sky Palace Possession Technique] has a very long history, but it is a weird and unpredictable skill. It is very risky and dangerous

for one to practise it as well. Ever since it was created, only a small number of people have successfully mastered it. Outsiders know very little about this skill. I merely know a thing or two about it."

Everyone pricked up their ears to listen to Shi Xueman.

"The wine that he drank should have been specially concocted and it contains the breath of a mutated dire beast. The breath of a mutated dire beast can stimulate his sky palace. By using this skill, his sky palace will treat his body as a mutated dire beast's. The bodies of most elementalists like us contain only one element, while dire beasts are heterogeneous in nature. Fusion elemental energy contains all five elements and it suits the unique characteristic of the skill. His body might look frail and skinny, but it actually possesses the fighting capabilities of a mutated dire beast."

Shi Xueman paused for a while before continuing, "The most powerful part of [Sky Palace Possession Technique] is that it allows its practitioner to possess the abilities of a dire beast without losing his or her consciousness."

Hiss. Alarmed gasps broke out in their surroundings.

This was the first time that most of them had heard of [Sky Palace Possession Technique]. All of their faces turned ugly.

The deafening booms sounded as if someone was using a huge hammer to knock their foreheads continuously.

"[Sky Palace Possession Technique] has its weaknesses as well."

Shi Xueman’s words energized everyone.

"Even though he possesses the abilities of a mutated dire beast, he still has the physical body of an elementalist. Even with the help of fusion elemental energy, he is still very far from being a real mutated dire beast. He can’t keep on unleashing those powerful attacks, otherwise, his body will completely collapse."

"Are his attacks now considered powerful?" Gong Peiyao could not help but ask.

Shi Xueman shook her head and replied, "I’m not sure, it will have to depend on the mutated dire beast that possesses him. From his aura, I can’t tell which dire beast it is."

Qiao Meiqi looked at Shi Xueman and asked, "So what will we do now?"

"We will wait," Shi Xueman answered.

Qiao Mei nodded his head continuously and took in a deep breath of air. "We will wait for them to exhaust their energy before we take action."

Even though a Master was very powerful, this did not mean he or she couldn’t be defeated. Everyone was feeling scared, but they were not feeling despair. The guards in the mayor’s residence were

the elites in Clearwater City. Right now, there were still around fifteen of them left. If they fought with all their might, they still had a chance of winning this battle!

At this point of time, Qiao Meiqi had fully displayed the ruthlessness and decisiveness of a competent businessman.

When Qiao Meiqi's guards saw that he was not afraid of death, they became less fearful as well.

They would wait! They would wait until their enemies were exhausted before they took action.

A glint of hatred flashed across their eyes.

However, no one knew that Shi Xueman's purpose for asking them to wait was different from what they thought.

The underground meditation room was trembling.

The power from Jiu Gui's punches was immense. Dust kept on falling from the trembling ceiling of the meditation room. However, in the darkness, Ai Hui could not feel anything.

He looked as if he was being possessed, walking around the dark meditation room bare-footed. He kept on slashing the air with his Wintry Jade Blade, leaving streaks of sword gleams in the air.

Sometimes, he would stop moving momentarily and pondered about something with knitted eyebrows. Sometimes, he would keep on brandishing his sword. His sword gleams were in complete disorder, making him look like a childish kid that was scribbling carelessly on the wall with a pencil.

Whatever happened outside did not affect him the slightest bit.

The boiling steam cloud around his body kept on reducing in size.

Boom. An impact that was more powerful than before occurred. Even the soundproof meditation room could not block off the loud boom.

At the same time, a silvery lightning arc flashed across the darkness.

In the midst of the deafening booms, the lightning arc released by the sword tip illuminated Ai Hui's face and limpid eyes in the darkness. He wasn't lost, hesitant, helpless or confused. The lightning arc gave off a resplendent glow, resembling bright stars in the night sky that overlooked the vast earth.

He did not bother about the loud booms outside. In fact, he did not even hear them.

Ai Hui placed all his attention on the streak of lightning arced on the tip of his sword, staring at it without looking away for even a slight moment.

He had never observed or experienced lightning at such a close distance.

Ai Hui did not know that the previous loud boom was the sound of the water screen being broken. The battle on the surface was extremely intense at this moment.

As time passed, the lightning arc on his sword became increasingly hot and dazzling.

At the same time, there was another battle ongoing in Ai Hui's body.

More and more lightning streaks were formed in Ai Hui's body. They were remodelling his body. This was a process that all Masters had to undergo. This was also one of the reasons why a Master was so powerful.

The lightning streaks became increasingly compact. It was as if a silvery chainmail had been draped over Ai Hui's body. When those lightning streaks flitted across the blood plum blossom on his chest, the blood plum blossom trembled, resembling a frightened monster that was digging into Ai Hui's body with all its might.

The movement of the blood plum blossom immediately caught the lightning streaks' attention.

One by one, the streaks of lightning ensnared the blood plum

blossom. As the blood plum blossom continued to dig into Ai Hui's body, the lightning streaks that ensnared it increased in number. Buzz, buzz. Cracks began to appear on the blood plum blossom's petals.

A red-colored blood mist gushed out from the cracks. However, the next moment, the blood mist became entangled in layers of lightning streaks and was destroyed completely.

The blood color of the blood plum blossom faded as silvery lightning streaks gushed in. The cracks on the petals of the blood plum blossom began to heal. Eventually, it became a silver-colored plum blossom. One could even see fragmentary lightning streaks flitting across the petals.

At this moment, in the depths of the distant God Palace, She Yu's body suddenly froze.

She lifted up her sleeve abruptly. On her snow-white arm, the dark-red blood plum blossom was gradually sinking into her skin.

"No!"

She let out a yelp as fear filled her eyes.

The blood plum blossom had caved in towards the depths of her body!

She was frightened out of her wits.

She Yu, who had mastered [Life and Death Flower Sacrificial Art], clearly knew what was happening when this situation occurred.

The Flower of Destruction and the Flower of Life were representations of Yin and Yang respectively. Under normal circumstances, the Flower of Life was the master while the Flower of Destruction was the slave. However, this status quo would not always remain. Under special circumstances, if the flower slave's power became stronger or could restrain the flower master's, the positions of the flower slave and the flower master would swap. This logic was similar to the fact that Yin and Yang would swap positions under special circumstances.

However, the conditions needed in order for this event to take place were extremely strict and demanding. This would only take place when the strength of the flower slave was exactly one base level higher than the flower master's.

How could he be stronger than her? And by exactly one base level?

She Yu, whose face was deathly white, felt as if she was being locked in an icehouse as her body trembled involuntarily.

No, there was one more possibility!

Ai Hui's power was restraining her power!

What exactly did he do?

Fear kept on engulfing She Yu.

Right now, the Blood of God was thriving and unsurpassable. On the battlefield, god elementalists had held dominance over elementalists. The fact that blood spiritual force restrained elemental energy was no longer a secret. In terms of training, Blood of God had a huge advantage over elementalists as well. The ripening and harvesting of jade fruits and the abundance of blood cores and blood crystals made god elementalists stronger with each passing day.

The birth of Red Devil was one of the epitomes of Blood of God's greatness.

She did not understand what was going. What kind of power could restrain blood spiritual force?

How could there be a power in this world that could restrain blood spiritual force?

She felt helpless as she did not know what to do.

What could she do?

She did not want to become the flower slave. If she was to

become the flower slave, her life would be placed in the hands of the flower master. She would become the fertile soil for the flower master. All her hard work, vitality, essence-breath-spirit and soul would be devoured by the Flower of Destruction. She would become a supreme treasure to be used for the flower master's training!

When She Yu thought of the fact that her life was going to vanish in a puff of smoke, her body became ice-cold. A piercingly cold shiver went down her spine, causing her to tremble non-stop in fear.

No!, She definitely must not become a flower slave!

She must beg His Majesty for help!

His Majesty must have a solution!

She was like a person that was drowning and holding on to her last lifebuoy.

Like a madwoman, she dashed towards the door. The afternoon sun was exceptionally dazzling, casting a snow-white light through the door. Her feet stopped right on the thin line separating light and darkness.

Her body was swaying as intense fear engulfed her pale-white face.

Suddenly, she tore apart the front of her red dress.

On her snow-white, perky breasts, there was a glistening, blood-red plum blossom.

Far away, in a dark meditation room, a silver-colored plum blossom silently appeared on Ai Hui’s left arm.

Chapter 458: Battles Of Masters (1)

Lou Lan's head popped out from behind a half-destroyed wall. He blinked his eyes and looked at the distant, intense battle near the mayor's residence.

He had not left yet, Why would Lou Lan leave first when Ai Hui and Xueman were still there?

The red light in Lou Lan's eyes kept on flickering.

The lightning-fast afterimage in the sky was like a ferocious dire beast. It kept on colliding against the water screen. Every collision caused the earth to shake. The wall in front of Lou Lan had collapsed because of those collisions.

Clearwater City was completely empty. All its residents had escaped to a mountain outside the city. That was the mountain where the fight between Ai Hui and Han Li had taken place. Everyone on the mountain was looking at the distant Clearwater City with deep worry in their eyes. There were many people crying at this moment. Even though Clearwater City was built merely two years ago, it had become a home to many people who longed to live a peaceful life.

In times of chaos, peace was an extravagant privilege!

They could not afford to offend any of the Masters in the sky. Even if their home was destroyed, what else could they do other than cry their hearts out?

The lives of lowly individuals like them were as fragile as blades of grass.

Boom, boom, boom!

The booms coming from afar sounded like thunderclaps.

The atmosphere inside the mayor’s residence was very tense.

The guard who was watching over the elemental energy pool yelled, "The elemental energy pool has twenty percent of its energy left!"

Shi Xueman turned a deaf ear to him. With a calm and collected tone, she said, "From now onwards, everyone listens to my commands."

Venerable Volcano did not feel belittled. Instead, a look of admiration swept across his eyes. Shi Xueman was indeed like her father. Without any hesitation, Venerable Volcano replied, "Okay!"

Qiao Meiqi agreed as well. "Everyone shall listen to Miss Shi’s commands. Those who disobey her will be killed on the spot!"

"The elemental energy pool has fourteen percent energy left!"

The voice of the guard who was watching over the elemental

energy pool was trembling. If the elemental energy pool dried up, the water screen would shatter with a loud bang.

An uproar broke out in the mayor’s residence.

Shi Xueman remained calm and collected. However, she had begun to speak with a faster speed. "The other party doesn’t have any earth elementalists. Mayor, Yaoyao, all the women and children, head down to the underground meditation room. You, you shall be in charge of leading all the guards."

Shi Xueman chose a seemingly calm-looking guard to lead the rest of the guards.

"All of you stay behind me. Every time you attack, you must lock onto a target and attack that target together," Shi Xueman said to that guard.

A lot of guards’ faces turned red. Even though they knew Shi Xueman was much more powerful than them, they still felt embarrassed for having to stand behind a woman.

"The elemental energy pool has ten percent energy left!"

Qiao Meiqi and the rest quickly scrambled towards the underground meditation room. Shi Xueman looked at Venerable Volcano and asked, "Venerable, can you deal with Northern Underworld King?"

"Alright!" Venerable Volcano replied with dignity.

His whole life had been rough. He had undergone countless moments of both glory and misery. At his age, he was no longer scared of death.

Similarly, Shi Xueman was calm and collected. And like she had said, she stood in front of all the guards.

She stood there with a spear in her hand and her hair drifting in the wind.

"The water screen is going to break!"

Just as she finished her sentence, a boom that was louder than all the previous collisions resounded through the air. Like a shattered bell glass, the water screen collapsed completely and a surging air current swept across the main hall. Shi Xueman’s cape fluttered violently in the wind.

With calmness in her beautiful eyes, Shi Xueman casually took off the cape on her body and let the strong wind blow it away, revealing her blue-white armor.

The fully-armored, beautiful and alluring girl plunged her Cirrus in the ground beside her feet.

She took off the red hairband on her wrist, raised her beautiful, ice-cold face and calmly tied up her long, drifting hair. Her pursed

red lips gave off an austere aura. Plunged vertically into the ground beside her feet, her Cirrus was vibrating non-stop due to the surging air current, giving off a loud buzzing sound.

The magnificent dome roof of the mayor's residence shattered with a loud bang. Stone pillars and beams that were supporting the roof collapsed, causing crushed stones to fall like rain.

The pony-tailed girl raised her elegant eyebrows and a determined look flashed across her beautiful eyes. Following which, she reached out her hand to grasp the Cirrus beside her.

She had decided to release the restraint on her base level!

The moment her soft, slim and snow-white hand grabbed her Cirrus, a powerful aura suddenly erupted from her with a loud rumble.

The crushed rocks and beams falling above her head froze in the air, as if there was a pair of invisible hands catching them.

Shi Xueman brandished her spear casually.

The frozen, crushed rocks and beams above were reduced to fine powder and became a grey-colored shadow. Behaving like a gigantic hammer, the grey shadow swept across the remaining walls surrounding the main hall and crushed them to smithereens!

The main hall had transformed into an open-air terrace.

Thud, thud, thud!

Holding Cirrus in her hand, Shi Xueman walked forward slowly. Mist began to form and swirl erratically around her body. Every step she took, her aura increased in intensity.

In the sky, the facial expressions of Autumn Water and her counterparts changed drastically.

All of them did not dare to underestimate Shi Xueman. She was born in an aristocratic family and her father was Shi Beihai. Since childhood, her talents were exceptional and she was extremely strict with herself. Reportedly, a lot of Elders in Elders Guild had felt that Shi Xueman was a candidate to become the next Great Elder. However, no one expected Shi Xueman to abandon her bright future and follow Ai Hui, causing a lot of people to feel pity for her.

Autumn Water and her counterparts could sense how powerful Shi Xueman was. However, they did not know why she wanted to restrain her base level.

As such, they had treated her as a Master since the beginning.

However, Shi Xueman's strength was far more powerful than they'd expected.

How could it be?

How old was she? How could she possess such fundamentally sound and terrifying powers?

When Shi Xueman released the restraint on her base level, all of them were stunned. That was because Shi Xueman was extraordinary.

Most of the youngsters that attained the level of Master were well-versed in their understanding towards elemental energy.

However, Shi Xueman was completely different from the rest. She did not solely depend on her innate gifts. From her aura, one could tell that she had put in hours of hard work into her training and her powers were fundamentally sound and flawless, so much so that they caused her enemies to despair.

The swirling mist around her body was spotlessly white like snow, but it appeared as if it was heavy and solid.

Something was wrong!

All along, Mister Dou hadn’t wanted to offend the Shi family. Now that he saw how powerful Shi Xueman was, he did not want to become the Shi family’s enemy even more. As such, he took the lead and said, "Venerable, let the youngsters fight it out. Old fogeys like me and you should swap pointers with each other."

Venerable Volcano burst out in laughter and replied, "Come on,

come on. Old Dou, today we shall put up a great performance."

Venerable Volcano flew up into the sky. Following which, he waved his hand casually and shot a cluster of blazes towards Mister Dou. The cluster of blazes looked extremely ordinary. However, Mister Dou did not lower his guard and plunged his vine staff into the ground.

When the vine staff was plunged into ground, countless root hairs grew at its bottom end. Meanwhile, leaves and green sprouts began to grow on the top half of the vine staff. In the blink of an eye, the vine staff had transformed into a gigantic tree.

Oddly, when this gigantic tree appeared, the sky began to darken.

The blazing sun that hung high in the sky dimmed significantly, resembling the setting sun during dusk.

Mister Dou had a unique Path of Master that was derived from this Northern Underworld King Tree!

This tree could devour all the light in its surroundings.

The cluster of blazes released by Venerable Volcano kept on emitting a dark-red glow as it flew through the air. However, as it flew closer to the gigantic tree, its brightness became more and more dim. By the time it reached the tree, its glow had completely disappeared, revealing its true from. It was actually a handful of lava. At this point of time, the lava had cooled down and became a

piece of rock. With a pop, it was reduced to ashes in the air.

"You're truly worthy of being called Northern Underworld King!"

Venerable Volcano praised. His previous attack was merely used to feel out Mister Dou's strength. However, now he could see that Mister Dou was really powerful.

"Venerable, there's no need for you to hold back," Mister Dou said plainly.

A serious look appeared on Venerable Volcano's face. Like a lead ball, he plunged into the ground with a soft popping sound.

After a while, a bump suddenly rose on the ground's surface with a loud rumble. Following which, more and more bumps appeared on the ground's surface. Rumble, rumble, rumble. It was as if there were tens of thousands of horses stampeding across the city.

A volcano rose from the ground not far away from the mayor's residence with a visible speed.

Surging, thick smoke from the volcanic crater hid the sky and covered the earth while raging, scarlet lava erupted from the volcano.

Venerable Volcano's Path of Master was [Volcano]!"

Venerable Volcano could directly harness the earth fire deep in the ground and form a volcano.

Boom!

A gigantic ball of flames, that was ten meters in diameter, erupted violently from the volcano. It shot towards the Northern Underworld King Tree with a terrifying force and whizzing sound.

The Northern Underworld King Tree became darker and darker, looking as if it was shrouded in ink-black darkness.

Traces of red glow were being pulled out from the fireball and absorbed by the Northern Underworld King Tree. The glow of the fireball dimmed rapidly. Eventually, the lava within it cooled down and it became a round-shaped rock ball.

Pop!

Intertwining cracks appeared on the surface of the rock ball and a dark-red glow gushed out from those cracks.

The outer shell of the rock ball shattered and revealed a fireball within it. Even though the fireball had become smaller in size, its glow was brighter and hotter.

When the fireball flew into the zone of darkness around the Northern Underworld King Tree, its speed suddenly reduced significantly. In a flash, the glow of the fireball was extinguished

and became a rock ball once again.

Just as a relieved look appeared on Mister Dou's face, the rock ball exploded with a loud bang and brightly-colored, dancing flames erupted from it.

The explosion was too close to the Northern Underworld King Tree!

Even though the Northern Underworld King Tree had a ring of darkness as its protection, a few of its leaves were still burned.

A distressed look appeared on Mister Dou's face. The powers of the Northern Underworld King Tree had a direct connection to the number of leaves it had. Not only was the growing process for the leaves unusually slow, the tree also needed to devour an immense amount of light just to grow a single leaf.

The battle had just begun.

The battle between two Masters was long and bitter!

The battle between Mister Dou and Venerable Volcano appeared as if it had no impact on everyone else.

Yang Xiaodong looked at the mighty Shi Xueman below, as a tinge of regret creeped into his mind. He couldn't believe that she was so powerful. However, he threw these distracting thoughts to the back of his head very soon. He was given life by Brother Dou.

He would never reject Brother Dou's request for help.

Back in the day, Brother Dou had lost his eyes when saving his life.

And if worse came to worst, he would return his life to Brother Dou.

When Yang Xiaodong thought of this, he felt relieved and regained his composure.

"Kill him!"

Suddenly, the mayor residence's guards on the ground bellowed in rage. Countless light beams shot towards Yang Xiaodong who was in the sky.

All the guards loathed Yang Xiaodong, the traitor, and their first target was him. They still remembered Shi Xueman's instructions. All of them had to lock onto the same target and launch their attacks together.

They were filled with expectation as they widened their eyes. They couldn't wait to see Yang Xiaodong's blood splashing across the air.

Just as their torrential attacks were about to hit Yang Xiaodong, a mirror-like gleam flashed across his body.

Densely-packed, transparent prism pillars hovered upright around Yang Xiaodong, resembling a huge forest of prism pillars. These prism pillars were formed from water elemental energy. They were pristine and crystal-clear, containing rushing water that was flowing silently.

The whizzing beam of gleam pierced into the forest of prism pillars. Unexpectedly, it changed its direction and was deflected one meter away from Yang Xiaodong.

Yang Xiaodong's Path of Master, [Refraction Forest]!

Chapter 459: Battles Of Masters (2)

Yang Xiaodong seldom took action himself. The guards of Clearwater City were rather powerful elites. Clearwater City was located in the depths of Wilderness and the living conditions here were extremely dreadful. Elementalists that could survive here were neither weak nor stupid.

After quelling a few brawls in the past, Clearwater City's public security had been pretty good since then. They also did not encounter any powerful enemies from the outside world. As such, Yang Xiaodong seldom appeared in public.

Everyone was more familiar with his nephew, Yang Wuchang instead.

Yang Xiaodong's betrayal had caused all the guards to loathe him. All of them felt that he was someone who merely fished for fame. However, [Refraction Forest] made them realized that Yang Xiaodong was still a Master, despite his vile character.

Yang Xiaodong broke out in a cold sweat as well.

Apparently, the combined attack from the guards was premeditated. If he had not not activated [Refraction Forest] just in time, he would have been destroyed by those densely-packed attacks.

A blaze of rage suddenly ignited in the panicked Yang Xiaodong's heart. Having lived like a prince for a long time, he had never

encountered such a dangerous situation. It had also been quite a while since someone provoked him like this. Even the mayor Qiao Meiqi talked to him in a polite and respectful tone.

Yang Xiaodong snorted coldly and the densely-packed prism pillars around him began to move.

Immediately, countless light beams were reflected off the forest of prism pillars, flickering erratically and dazzling people's eyes.

The guards could not help but squint their eyes. These light beams were unusually dazzling, making them feel as if their eyes were being pricked by needles.

On the ground, there were a lot of water stains that were formed when the water screen collapsed. At this moment, these unremarkable water stains were extremely deadly, behaving like pythons that were hiding in the dark.

Silently, the water stains gathered together and transformed into numerous, thin ice spears with extremely sharp tips. Without making any noise, they shot towards the guards. At this instance, the sky was filled with dazzling and fascinating light beams, distracting the guards from the impending doom on the ground. The ice spears on the ground were like pythons hiding in the darkness, slowly revealing their poisonous fangs.

Just as the ice spears were about to pierce through the bodies of the guards, a wisp of mist suddenly appeared. Like a nimble-moving snake, it flashed across the guards.

The wisp of mist was only as thick as a thumb, but it was exceptionally strong. In the blink of an eye, the sneaky ice spears were completely smashed.

In the sky, Yang Xiaodong looked at Shi Xueman with shock in his eyes.

However, Shi Xueman did not have the time to bother about Yang Xiaodong. In front of her, Autumn Water had begun to take action too. She threw out a ragdoll which consisted of five different colors: white, green, black, brown and red.

The ragdoll looked as if it was made using patches rags that were of five different colors. Its mouth was made up of stitches, making it looking sinister and scary.

When the ragdoll landed on the ground, it melted like snow and formed a five-colored light spot on the ground’s surface.

Autumn Water’s eyes flickered as she smiled, "Come out, King!"

The shape of the light spot on the ground began to distort. Following which, a short figure climbed out of the light spot. The figure resembled a seven year old child. Its entire body was slick and slippery, looking as if it had been dyed with a multi-colored fluorescent paint. Its face was flat and multi-colored as well. It had no eyes, ears or nose. It only had a strip of stitches as its mouth.

When the King appeared, an eerie aura engulfed the entire place.

"Kill!"

The guards launched their second wave of attacks.

Since their attacks were ineffective against Yang Xiaodong's [Refraction Forest], they changed their target and locked onto the multi-colored, man-like doll.

Boom!

Dazzling streaks of light engulfed the short and stout doll.

The violent explosion set the guards' minds at ease. The odd-looking, short doll should be destroyed by such a concentrated, combined attack.

However, when the light and smoke cleared away, the guards' facial expressions changed drastically.

Not only was King not injured at all, it had increased significantly in size as well. Its stitch-made mouth began to spread apart.

It was smiling.

Upon seeing this, the guards were overwhelmed with horror.

This weird doll could devour all types of elemental energy.

[King] was Autumn Water's Path of Master. Fusion elemental energy's unique characteristic of not being restrained by any types of elemental energy had been put on full display by Autumn Water.

This was King, the doll that could devour all types of elemental energy.

Shi Xueman was roused.

Her mind was filled with killing intent.

She had discussed with Ai Hui about fusion elemental energy before. Both of them felt that fusion elemental energy was an extremely powerful force. It had the potential to become an enormous energy system on its own.

Their conjecture had been verified by what she had just seen. Jiu Gui's [Sky Palace Possession Technique] was completely different from Autumn Water's [King]. However, both were remarkable and unfathomable.

They did not expect the Assembly of Patriarchs to become their enemy.

Shi Xueman moved extremely fast and appeared out of nowhere beside the doll. With two currents of mist swirling around her

Cirrus, she thrusted it towards King.

The King's reaction was very fast as it reached out its hand and grabbed the tip of Shi Xueman's spear.

Cirrus and King's hand collided together. At the same time, the mist swirling around Cirrus was heading towards King too.

The spear tip pierced through King's palm but it looked as if it felt nothing. Its other hand extended like a rope and lunged towards Shi Xueman.

However, at this very moment, the mist from Cirrus struck the doll's palm.

Boom!

The doll's body and its pierced palm disappeared all of a sudden. It was as if a charging, wild beast had slammed into King, causing it to fly backwards through the air.

Autumn Water's facial expression changed drastically. She vanished into thin air and appeared beside King.

King's colorful right forearm had disappeared. It only had half its right arm left.

Shi Xueman slowly retracted her Cirrus. This was her Path of

Master, [Cloud of Firmament Iron]!

"Firmament iron is made up of a very simple raw material, water. The method of forming it is very simple as well, compression. As long as you can compress one thousand buckets of water into one single bucket, firmament iron will be produced. Cloud can be compressed into water, water can be compressed into firmament iron. What about a cloud that is made up of firmament iron?"

"After putting in an immense amount of hard work, even the most ordinary technique can become magnificent."

"Water can become iron, ice can become steel!"

"For the Shi family, inheritances and absolute arts do not form the foundation of our greatness. It's our lofty ambitions to put in hard work and the solitude that comes along with it that forms our greatness. It's all about putting in more hard work, even after you have put in tons of hard work!"

"Focus on your spearmanship and don't care about other things."

"This world has nothing to do with you."

After Shi Xueman released the restraint on her base level, a colossal amount of water elemental energy gushed into her body. The elemental energy level in her body kept on rising while her aura kept on intensifying.

Shi Xueman remembered her father's words and intentionally restrained her base level all this while. She absorbed the water elemental energy and released the clouds within Cirrus. Following which, she compressed the clouds into water and then compressed the water. She repeated this process over and over again without finding it a hassle. Her goal was to compress Cirrus's clouds into firmament iron and shatter it into numerous tiny granules. Ultimately, she would use these granules to reconstruct the clouds of her Cirrus and form the real Cloud of Firmament Iron.

This process was much harder than her father's process of forming firmament iron. Her workload was a lot more than her father's as well.

Until now, she had never formed the real firmament iron.

However, her spear clouds were already extremely heavy, so much so that they were heavier than steel. The power of her spearmanship had become extremely terrifying as well. Even her most ordinary spear move was exceptionally deadly and formidable.

This was Shi Xueman. She was an individual that never cut corners and always chose the most challenging path. She overcame all obstacles along her path and progressed steadily.

She had neither the brilliance of a genius, nor an amazing creativity.

But her greatness always caused despair in people, as they did not

know how to withstand it.

Autumn Water's face turned pale-white with agony. Her life was connected to King. If King died, she would die as well.

This was the unique characteristic of a Path of Master. Path of Master was intolerant of hesitancy and indecisiveness. One could only become a Master by pursuing a path that he or she believed in and committed his or her life to.

How could one become a Master by fluke?

Viciousness returned to Autumn Water's face as she channeled fusion elemental energy into King's body with all her might. King's severed right arm began to wiggle and a brand-new forearm regenerated rapidly.

When Yang Xiaodong saw this, he was overwhelmed with horror.

Autumn Water's King set him off in fear and trepidation. It could actually devour its enemy's elemental energy. King was the bane of all elementalists!

Shi Xueman was even scarier. Her spear move was plain and simple, but it was extremely deadly.

Yang Xiaodong could not understand why such a simple-looking spear move was so powerful.

The guards returned to their senses and began to attack Yang Xiaodong.

Even though Yang Xiaodong's [Refraction Forest] could deflect their attacks, it was still better than the doll that could strengthen itself by devouring their elemental energies. They felt that Yang Xiaodong was a better target.

Yang Xiaodong composed himself. He had decided to place his attention on these guards.

Shi Xueman could not leave the open-air terrace, otherwise, the guards behind her and the people in the underground mediation room would suffer. When she saw that King was knocked back far away by her spear move, she took in a deep breath of air and thrusted her spear forward.

Hiss!

It sounded as if the air was being ripped apart by the thrust of her spear.

Two long and slender streams of cloud intertwined like two white snakes and shot towards Autumn Water.

Far away, Autumn Water, who had been channeling fusion elemental energy into King, changed her facial expression drastically. At this moment, a shadow appeared in front of Autumn

Water.

Boom!

A deafening explosion resounded through the sky as the air in front of Autumn Water suddenly exploded.

A frail-looking man stood in front of Autumn Water with an indifferent look on his face. His almond-shaped pupils did not have any emotions. His entire body was emitting an intense, savage aura.

Jiu Gui had regained his energy.

Bombarding the water screen had put an enormous strain on Jiu Gui's body. When the water screen collapsed, Jiu Gui had no choice but to rest. However, since Jiu Gui possessed the abilities of a mutated dire beast, he was able to regain his energy at an incredibly fast speed. Most of the mutated dire beasts possessed a powerful regenerative ability. All of them had an extremely vigorous and strong vitality.

At this point of time, Jiu Gui did not seem tired at all.

In the sky, Jiu Gui vanished into thin air and appeared before Shi Xueman in almost the same moment.

Shi Xueman's Cirrus mysteriously appeared in front of him.

Jiu Gui dodged slightly to his side and his claw-like fingers lunged towards Shi Xueman's spear. When his fingers made contact with the clouds spiralling around Cirrus, his body was knocked back over thirty meters. Shi Xueman's body sank into the ground as countless cracks appeared on the ground beneath her feet, resembling two huge spiderwebs.

Jiu Gui disappeared once more.

Shi Xueman thrusted her spear forward once more.

Boom!

Another explosion broke out. Dust beneath Shi Xueman's feet flew up into the air and engulfed her. Once again, Jiu Gui was knocked back thirty meters into the air.

Jiu Gui's fingers became oddly distorted, but he did not care about them at all and charged towards Shi Xueman once more.

Autumn Water observed all the ongoing battles from one side. No one took notice of her as a gleam flashed across her eyes.

Having regained its fighting capabilities, King silently sank into the ground like a puddle of mud.

Chapter 460: Battles Of Masters (3)

The meditation room lit up and darkened at random.

A dark-green sword was engulfed by countless streaks of lightning that resembled numerous long and slim, silvery water plants. Suddenly, a lightning arc that was as thick as a thumb extended from the sword towards the depths of the darkness, illuminating more than half of the room.

His face was clearly defined when the flickering light shone on it. His firm and sharp nose and his brow ridge were flickering with silvery lines. In the darkness, his lips merely appeared as a faintly discernible, cold line, resembling the distant horizon of the wilderness in the night.

Within his eyes, there was a dark, deep lake that contained the reflection of a starry sky.

The reflection of the starry sky was staring at the sword in front of it.

Placed perfectly upright, the blade of the sword happened to split his field of vision exactly in half, resembling an abyss-surrounded, narrow pathway that led to the depths of an unfathomable darkness.

The streaks of lightning on the sword had filled this path with thistles, thorns and swords.

As he stared at the lightning streaks, the sword and the darkness, his breathing remained slow and steady without a single sign of trembling.

I should not be distracted when trekking along a precipitous path. I have to endure the agony of walking through a path that is filled with thistles and thorns. I should not leave empty-handed when walking through a path that is lined with swords. In the darkness, as long as I can slay my enemy, there's no need for me to care whether or not there is light.

Yes, this is the way.

Lightning erupted from the sword and his palms felt an intense pain, as if numerous needles had sprouted out from the hilt of his sword. Even so, he tightened his grip on the hilt of his sword. Ai Hui's face remained indifferent as usual. His goal wasn't based on a sudden impulse.

He'd set this goal a long time ago and it had never changed.

The path to power always came with agony.

The elemental energy in Ai Hui's body was undergoing drastic changes. They were remodelling.

In the Cultivation Era, lightning was the most dominant power. It was also one of the powers that had an extensive range of

applications. Almost every sect had its own lightning-related techniques. However, when it came to the Elemental Era, where spiritual force disintegrated and elemental energy prospered, lightning became a forgotten power. People only knew of it as the wrath of nature, and that it lived in the depths of the sky and clouds.

Before Ai Hui, there were countless elementalists that had tried to harness the power of lightning but ultimately failed to do so. Ai Hui was mainly inspired by the artifact remnants in Dragonspine Inferno and [Dust Fall].

The artifact remnants within Dragonspine Inferno contained an ancient seal. It was a lightning seal that was left behind from the Cultivation Era. At that time, Ai Hui used the blood crystal to activate the lightning seal.

It wasn't until the Battle of Long Street that he used [Dust Fall].

If one compared the lightning seal to a one-thousand-year-old rusty lock, then [Dust Fall] would be the key to that lock.

[Dust Fall] was one of the three moves in the sword pill.

When Wang Shouchuan gave the sword pill to Ai Hui back in the day, he definitely never thought that the tiny sword pill would have such a deep impact on Ai Hui's life.

[Crescent Moon] gave rise to [Six Moons], which became one of Ai

Hui's most used moves. [Dust Fall] became one of the driving forces that gave rise to Ai Hui's Path of Master. [Night Epiphyllum] was used to end his master's life, leaving a deep and painful scar in his heart. Ai Hui had told himself never to use [Night Epiphyllum] in his life again.

Were these events his fate?

One by one, the elemental energy sword pills in his body shattered. More and more lightning streaks were produced. Their thickness increased continuously as well.

Ai Hui's lightning-tempered flesh began to spasm and tremble at this moment. The lightning streaks were far too powerful, even the flesh at the innermost part of his body was affected.

The lightning streaks became increasingly stronger while his flesh trembled more and more violently. Not only was Ai Hui's body being tempered by the lightning, it was acclimatizing to the lightning as well. His body had to acclimatize to the lightning, otherwise, it would disintegrate.

Luckily, he was metal-attributed.

This was the only thing that Ai Hui was glad about.

Ai Hui controlled his breathing and maintained its stability. He imagined himself as a sword, a metal sword that was being forged in a lightning-filled smelting furnace.

More and more elemental energy sword pills were shattered. Like a surging, silvery river of lightning lava, the lightning streaks flowed through his body with the Circulatory Revolution Cycle. They flowed very slowly and everywhere they passed through was destroyed thoroughly.

Ai Hui was the first person to experience the destructive aura of the lightning streaks before his enemies could. His body was shivering involuntarily. He wanted to bellow in rage and howl in agony but he couldn't make any sound.

He had anticipated the agony and decided to endure it. However, when the moment finally came, he still wailed, moaned and shivered in pain. These were unavoidable.

He had neither a strong faith nor a grand ambition. At this point of time, he only had an instinct, the instinct to survive.

His mind was blank and his body was out of control. He had not choice but to be brave and endure whatever was coming his way.

Frantic elemental energy gushed towards Ai Hui. The glow from the surrounding walls began to flicker frantically. Long shadows were being pulled out from them and absorbed by Ai Hui's body. This phenomenon was caused by the gradual disintegration of the seal on the walls due to a strong suction force.

The earth elemental energy beneath Ai Hui's feet was frantically gushing towards Ai Hui. A brown-colored earth elemental ring

appeared beneath Ai Hui's feet. The inside of the earth elemental ring gradually became silver-colored. Earth engendered metal. The newly converted metal elemental energy quickly rushed into Ai Hui's body, but it was still not enough.

At this point of time, Ai Hui's body was like an insatiable and avaricious beast. The elemental energy that it had just devoured was insignificant and insufficient.

Very soon, the perimeter of the earth elemental ring began to expand continuously and became scarlet in color. The temperature of the meditation room started to increase as well. The scarlet ring kept on expanding and became a fire elemental ring. Fire engendered earth.

Now, the metal elemental energy in his body had surpassed the limit of his previous elemental energy capacity. The lightning streaks flowing in the elemental energy within his body became increasingly concentrated.

The first one to sense Ai Hui's abnormality was Venerable Volcano.

He realized a portion of the earth fire had been involuntarily channeled to a particular place. To his surprise, that place was the underground meditation room. Initially, he was shocked. However, very soon, his shock became ecstasy. He did not expect Ai Hui to attain a breakthrough at this critical moment.

If Ai Hui could become a Master, they would have one more

Master on their side and their chances of winning this battle would greatly increase.

Immediately, Venerable Volcano increased the intensity of his offense.

Mister Dou was able to sense Venerable Volcano's action very quickly.

Ahh, Venerable Volcano is fighting with all his might...

Mister Dou quickly retaliated with increased intensity as well.

A chain reaction set off and the overall intensity of the ongoing battles increased.

The fierce, ongoing battles concealed some fine details.

Qiao Meiqi, Gong Peiyao and those who lacked fighting capabilities were waiting at the entrance of the underground meditation room. The atmosphere was very tense and everyone was feeling nervous. Explosions from above the ground's surface fell incessantly on their ears and the ground kept one trembling violently.

The pumpkin lamps in the basement kept swaying, looking as if they would fall any moment.

Qiao Meiqi was feeling vexed. Clearwater City was his baby and his home. After this battle, even if they won, Clearwater City would be badly damaged. One could imagine how he felt when he saw his baby being harmed continuously. Furthermore, he had placed all his fortune on building Clearwater City.

Gong Peiyao's face was slightly pale as well. However, she was still able to console Qiao Meiqi, "Uncle Qiao, don't worry, my father definitely will not treat your situation with indifference. The Qiao family and Gong family have been on good terms for so many generations, we will definitely help you out."

Qiao Meiqi gave a bitter smile. He did not want to be consoled by a small girl and gritted his teeth and replied, "Don't worry, Uncle Qiao will not be defeated so easily! It's no wonder why all the enterprises previously faced obstructions in obtaining the resources that Ai Hui needs. The Assembly of Patriarchs was creating trouble in the dark! Assembly of Patriarchs, I will definitely seek revenge on you!"

"It's a pity you'll no longer have the chance to do so."

Suddenly, a sweet and gentle voice rang across the air from a corner in the darkness.

With a drastic change in his facial expression, Qiao Meiqi roared, "Who's that?"

A multi-colored doll slowly emerged from the ground.

The colorful King wasn’t looking at Qiao Meiqi. Its flat, eyeless and noseless face was looking at Gong Peiyao who was standing behind Qiao Meiqi. Suddenly, its stitch-made mouth split apart, "Miss Gong, Older Sister has been looking for you for a very long time. Don’t worry, Older Sister can’t bear to hurt you. Come and stay with Older Sister for a few days."

When a lovely and delicate voice came out of the sinister-looking doll’s mouth, everyone felt a cold shiver go down their spines.

Gong Peiyao’s face turned white as she raised her head abruptly and asked, "Are all of you here for me?"

The stitch-made mouth of the doll opened and closed as it replied, "Hehe, Older Sister will never let off such a good thing like the snow lava. Recently, I’ve become quite poor."

Qiao Meiqi was a businessman who had been through vicissitudes of fortune. At this moment, he had already regained his composure. With a deep voice, he replied, "What does the Assembly of Patriarchs want? Do you want to deal with Madam Ye? An enemy of my enemy is my friend. No problem, I can agree on behalf of the Gong residence. There’s no need for you to resort to such a method to obtain the snow lava. We can prevent any misunderstandings from happening between the Assembly of Patriarchs and the Gong residence."

The Assembly of Patriarchs’ long-term partner, Madam Ye, had dealt a huge blow to them. Even their headquarters had been annihilated, causing them to sustain huge losses. The first time Qiao Meiqi obtained this news, he had a premonition. Could it be

that Assembly of Patriarchs wanted to kidnap Gong Peiyao and pressure the Gong residence into confronting Madam Ye?

No matter what, Qiao Meiqi couldn’t let anything happen to Gong Peiyao here. He and Gong Peiyao’s father were lifelong buddies and he treated Gong Peiyao like his own niece.

"Don’t worry, as long as all of you cooperate with me obediently, I won’t hurt you."

The sweet and delicate voice sounded unusually pleasant as it gave off elemental energy undulations silently. A blank look appeared on the faces of Qiao Meiqi and the rest.

Inside the meditation room, Ai Hui’s body suddenly trembled.

His elemental energy, which contained a boundless amount of lightning streaks, flooded into his sky palace.

The hovering Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp in Ai Hui’s sky palace sensed a danger and its glow intensified. It began to revolve quickly, giving off a high intensity glow.

However, even so, the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp was exceptionally weak and incompetent against the flood of lightning streaks that were filled with a destructive aura.

The glow from the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp managed to withstand the flood of lightning streaks for only a short moment.

Then, the flood of lightning streaks devoured the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp with a loud bang, resembling the sound of an air bubble being punctured. The Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp vanished in a puff of smoke and had ceased to exist.

At this point of time, Ai Hui, who had been struggling strenuously all this time, managed to obtain a moment of clarity.

He laughed bitterly in his heart. His elemental energy sword pills were gone and his Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp had disappeared as well. It was a fresh start for him.

In the next moment, his consciousness was flooded.

After devouring the Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp, the turbulent flood of lightning streaks strengthened significantly. The metal elemental energy that was mixed with lightning in his sky palace became even more vigorous.

Furthermore, there seemed to be something forming in both of Ai Hui's hand palaces and his earth palace.

As usual, the boundless, impure elemental energy flowed through the path that it was most familiar with and headed towards the most unique area of Ai Hui's sword-style breathing technique.

His sword.

In the darkness, the glow of Wintry Jade Blade suddenly intensified as a lightning snake, the thickness of an arm, coiled around it.

Wintry Jade Blade chimed.

It was completely different from Ai Hui's previous clear and melodious sword chime.

It was loud and thunderous, resembling a muffled thunderclap that sounded off in the depths of the clouds.

Ai Hui woke up. Lightning streaks were reflected in his clear and limpid eyes, resembling lightning bolts that streaked across a cloudless and starry night sky.

A terrifying aura erupted from his body abruptly.

The meditation room's wall, where its elemental energy had been completely devoured, exploded outwards with a loud bang.

Chapter 461: Battles Of Masters (4)

The wall of the meditation room suddenly exploded with a loud bang.

Along with dust and rubble, the terrifying air current from the explosion swept across everyone like a pulverizing iron wall. As it stood nearest to the wall, King bore the brunt of the explosion.

By the time it realized what was going on, the air current had already hit it.

Before it could react, it was hit squarely by the air current. Like a heavy hammer, the powerful impact slammed heavily against it. Its body went out of control and flew backwards through the air. Bang. It collided against the wall behind it.

The rest weren't any better off than King. They lost control of their bodies and fell all over the place.

Immediately, King struggled to get back on its feet. After all, it was imbued with Autumn Water's Path of Master and its strength far surpassed that of the others. King and Autumn Water were telepathically connected, so the latter was able to immediately learn what happened.

"Capture Gong Peiyao!"

King got up and locked onto Gong Peiyao, who had fallen on the

ground. King's movements were extremely fast and nimble as it was completely unaffected by the impact of the solution. Like a flying arrow, it charged towards the dazed Gong Peiyao.

At this time, the others were dizzy and wobbling because of the explosion's impact, so none of them stepped forward to stop King.

King's palm closed in on Gong Peiyao. As long as they could capture Gong Peiyao, they would succeed in their mission. Mister Dou and Yang Xiaodong did not know that the Assembly of Patriarchs's actual target was Gong Peiyao. Autumn Water's original plan had been to use Han Li to seduce Gong Peiyao. Han Li, however, became entirely preoccupied with sparring with Ai Hui and neglected his mission.

Autumn Water had put a lot of time and effort into ensuring the success of this mission. Clearwater City had a huge number of guards and a powerful defense system. It was impossible to capture Gong Peiyao using ordinary methods.

When Autumn Water saw that she was about to succeed, an overjoyed look appeared on her face.

At that moment, however, a gleaming streak flashed across the air in front of King. A destructive aura made King instinctively came to a halt.

King was very sensitive to different types of aura. Since its body possessed all five types of elemental energy, none of the elemental energies could deal any severe damage to it. On the contrary, it

could devour all five types of elemental energy. As such, it had a huge advantage when fighting against an elementalist.

Despite this, it sensed danger from the aura of the sword gleam.

Before King could make a move, it realized that its own aura was being targeted by something, following which, It was engulfed by a feeling of danger. This time around, Autumn Water, who was telepathically connected to King, turned pale.

Autumn Water was petrified. What kind of aura was that?

Her brain was processing extremely quickly. The first thing that came to her mind was Ai Hui.

Could it be that Ai Hui had become a Master?

Her heart sank, but she felt such a coincidence couldn't happen...

The ongoing battles aboveground were very intense and had become deadlocked. Venerable Volcano and Mister Dou were evenly matched and it would be difficult to determine the outcome of their battle within a short period of time. Meanwhile, Yang Xiaodong and Jiu Gui could not suppress Shi Xueman even though they had joined hands. If Ai Hui was to become a Master, they would completely lose the overall battle.

However, Autumn Winter did not have time to think about this problem.

King was being continuously attacked!

Autumn Water's face turned pale. What was going on beneath the ground?

Gong Peiyao struggled to sit up straight. She looked blankly at the meditation room that had one of its four walls missing.

A figure was standing in the darkness. The figure's face was unclear and he was holding a sword fully imbued with lightning streaks, appearing extremely dazzling. The glow from the lightning streaks illuminated the vibrating air around the figure, making his body look slightly fuzzy.

The figure's face that was hidden in the darkness seemed to turn and look in her direction.

All the lights in the basement had been destroyed and everything was dark. The lightning-imbued sword gave off an ice-cold glow in the darkness. Other than the glow from the sword, there was also the bright and colorful fluorescence of King's body.

Gong Peiyao did not understand what she was seeing. Strangely speaking, the sword was in Ai Hui's hand, but she could not see any part of his body other than the sword and the palm that he was holding it with.

Gong Peiyao was speechless. She was completely stunned by Ai

Hui's aura.

King sensed that its own aura was being targeted and quickly dashed towards the exit.

Its bright and colorful fluorescence was unusually striking in the dark.

At almost the same time, however, a shadow appeared behind Ai Hui.

Suddenly, Ai Hui's figure, hidden in the darkness, seemed to move. A resplendent streak of silvery lightning abruptly erupted in Gong Peiyao's eyes and she subconsciously uttered a yelp. The sudden burst of dazzling lightning blinded her, engulfing her eyes with nothing but bright whiteness.

Boom!

The ground trembled. Something seemed to hit the ground heavily.

Ai Hui swung his sword like a mace and struck the shadow behind him with it heavily. The whole motion was as smooth as flowing water, appearing as if he had anticipated the sneak attack.

At this moment, the colorful fluorescence from King, who was frantically running away, began to dim gradually. Its movements also slowed down until it eventually became a frozen mud statue

and collapsed to the ground, creating a huge pit in the process.

An ordinary elementalist would easily fall for such a deceptive move, but due to his frequent training sessions with Lou Lan, Ai Hui was used to seeing and experiencing such deceptions.

Initially, Lou Lan had not been used to using such deceptive moves, but as he spent more time with Ai Hui, he became corrupted by him. Furthermore, Lou Lan was very intelligent and his moves were much more deceptive compared to King's. Even Ai Hui had to be alert when facing Lou Lan, otherwise, he would easily fall for his deceptive moves.

King was severely injured.

It was lying face up in a huge pit, resembling a dead fish. Its stitch-made mouth had split open. Every now and then, lightning streaks would appear on its body, causing its limbs to twitch.

This was Ai Hui's first battle after mastering the Path of Lightning. The result was extraordinary.

Ai Hui looked at the lightning-imbued sword in his hand and the corner of his mouth curled up, revealing a bitter smile. No one saw him smiling as he was concealed in the darkness. Holding the sword hilt caused a pricking sensation in his palm. The Wintry Jade Blade was imbued with the terrifying power of lightning.

Deep down, Ai Hui was glad to possess the sword-style breathing

technique, otherwise, the amount of lightning in his body would exceed his capacity limit. When that happened, he would most likely explode and die or disintegrate into ashes.

The sword-style breathing technique had directed a huge amount of the lightning in his body to the Wintry Jade Blade, relieving the pressure on his body.

Ai Hui's advancement to Master level was only halfway complete.

He couldn't care much about it at this time. He had smiled bitterly just now as the lightning-imbued Wintry Jade Sword had begun to show signs of melting.

The Wintry Jade Blade could not handle the huge burden imposed on it.

Furthermore, Ai Hui was unable to absorb the lightning from the Wintry Jade Blade back into his body. His body was like dynamite now.

In a battle, he couldn't care about too many things.

Ai Hui cast a glance at the twitching King and bluntly plunged his sword into King's chest.

It felt pretty good to reduce the amount of lightning in his sword.

Lighting bolts that were as thick as an arm travelled around King's body. King's limbs twitched more intensely, but after around ten seconds, King's twitching began to slow down until it stopped moving altogether.

King's body was reduced to a puddle of colorful mud.

Buzz buzz. Densely packed lightning streaks swam and danced on the puddle of colorful mud. Subsequently, the puddle of colorful mud became scorched black and disintegrated into ashes.

King disappeared from this world completely.

After Ai Hui pulled his sword out of the ground, the pricking sensation from the sword hilt reduced significantly. The tip of the sword also seemed to have stopped melting.

He heaved a sigh of relief in his heart.

The person who had given him the Wintry Jade Blade wasn't exactly a nice person, but the sword was still a good sword. It was currently impossible for him to find a better sword than the Wintry Jade Blade.

The more powerful one became, the more demanding he would be of his weapon. Only high-level weapons could endure elemental energies that were of high purity levels. Furthermore, the Path of Lightning that Ai Hui had mastered was extremely destructive, causing heavy damages to his weapon.

Ai Hui's body was filled with elemental energy that was mixed with lightning lava, causing him to feel as if he would explode at any moment.

He moved with extreme caution. He was afraid that if he made any huge movements, the elemental energy in his body might explode. Right now, instead of the safe elemental energy sword pills, his body contained the lightning-lava-mixed metal elemental energy.

The worst thing was that the metal elemental energy in his body continued producing lightning and Ai Hui did not know how to stop the process.

A huge amount of lightning lava was forming in both of his hand palaces and in his earth palace. Ai Hui knew that this had something to do with [Dust Fall] as this skill required both his hand palaces and earth palace to work.

Now was not the time to think about this. Ai Hui took in a deep breath of air and started walking carefully.

The rest were dumbstruck.

King had been destroyed with a single blow.

At this moment, however, Ai Hui was carefully ascending the flight of stairs.

He moved extremely slowly and his facial expression was unusually solemn. It was as if the flight of stairs beneath his feet was his arch-enemy.

Aboveground, blood seeped out from the corners of Autumn Water's mouth. Her eyes were filled with fear. Before she could know what happened, she had already lost contact with King. There was only a deep fear in her mind. King had been defeated with a single blow...

She could not imagine what had happened. Her face was pale-white and her mind was blank.

King was made up of extremely precious materials. Since it possessed all five types of elemental energy, none of the five elemental energies was its weakness. This was one of the reasons why she could become the Ninth Patriarch with the use of King. If she used King as a shield, it would not be easy to destroy it even for a Master-level attack.

Furthermore, King could devour all types of elemental energy. In its body, there was a five elemental cycle that allowed it to break down and devour attacks that were of any type of elemental energy.

In past battles, King would only get stronger and stronger without being injured. If they carried a small-scale attack, King would always stand in front of the unit and act as a meat shield. This plan had never failed before.

King was also specialized in carrying out psychic attacks. These odd moves would usually work in critical moments.

She really could not imagine what kind of attack could defeat King with one blow. She stared at the entrance to the basement as her body trembled involuntarily. Fear was devouring her mind, but she still wanted to see what was going on below!

Suddenly, the air surrounding the basement's entrance began to distort.

It was as if there was a fire in the basement and heat waves were gushing out from the entrance.

An indescribable aura suddenly appeared. Everyone fighting aboveground had extremely sharp senses and all of them immediately stopped moving. This aura was something that they had never encountered before. They found it somewhat familiar and unfamiliar at the same time.

All of them stopped fighting and shifted their gazes towards the basement entrance at the same time.

The air surrounding the entrance became more and more distorted. A fuzzy figure appeared before everyone's eyes.

A powerful aura pervaded the air, causing everyone to feel fear and trepidation.

This was the first time an emotion appeared in Jiu Gui's unmoved almond-shaped eyes.

It was fear.

Chapter 462: Victory

Dead silence and stunned gazes greeted Ai Hui when he walked out with a snail's pace and a cautious look on his face.

The air surrounding him loudly crackled, as if there was an invisible fire burning and trembling violently.

Ai Hui's body was shrouded in an air current, appearing fuzzy to everyone's eyes.

Everyone was looking at the lightning-imbued sword in Ai Hui's hand. They couldn't believe what they had just seen and looked as if they had seen a ghost.

Lightning!

They knew Ai Hui's nickname was "Lightning Blade," but they seldom linked it with real lightning. Even when the survivors of Central Pine City recounted the Battle of Long Street, other people would merely laugh. Everyone understood the term "lightning" as a metaphor to describe Ai Hui's courage and dominance on the battlefield.

However...

At this moment, the streaks of lightning curling around Ai Hui's sword seemed to be telling them how ignorant they were. For a veteran with rich experience like Mister Dou, this was far beyond

his comprehension of the term "lightning".

If they weren't remembering incorrectly, Ai Hui was the first Lightning Master in the history of the Avalon of Five Elements!

They were petrified.

Anyone who was a "first in history" for something definitely could not be considered normally.

This person was extraordinary.

How could a person who would leave his name in the history of the Avalon of Five Elements be an ordinary individual?

Mister Dou was much calmer than the others. Yang Xiaodong had already shown signs of retreating.

Autumn Water's last bit of hope disappeared. Her body stopped trembling as she was engulfed by boundless despair. Her limbs were ice-cold; she had never felt this cold before. She finally understood why King had been defeated in such a short period of time.

Her eyes were hollow and despondent. Cracks began to appear in her sky palace as her base level dropped. [King] was her Path of Master and she had put her blood and soul into it. When King died, the pillar supporting her base level collapsed.

Similarly, deep reverence and fear appeared in Jiu Gui's serpent-like eyes at this moment.

His Dragoncry Spring Wine allowed him to be possessed by an ancient great dragon; however, even the ancient great dragon was filled fear and reverence when confronted with lightning. These feelings were passed on to Jiu Gui.

When Jiu Gui shifted his gaze to Autumn Water and sensed her aura rapidly weakening, he knew it would be impossible to win today's war.

A shadow flashed across the sky and Jiu Gui appeared beside Autumn Water. He picked her up and abruptly flew towards the outskirts of Clearwater City.

Jiu Gui's actions were very sudden without any forewarning. Quick and straightforward.

By the time anyone could react, he and Autumn Water were hundreds of meters away from the city.

Mister Dou, who had remained calm all this time, changed his facial expression. Meanwhile, Yang Xiaodong's face had turned ashen. Both of them had not expected the Assembly of Patriarchs to escape without informing them first.

Mister Dou was so angry that he almost cursed. His [Northern

Underworld King Tree] had formidable power and could both attack and defend, but it had one weakness; its mobility was very restricted. Once it had taken root, it would take around half a minute for its user to withdraw it and the process was rather troublesome.

Usually, half a minute was not considered long, but in an intense battle, it was exceptionally important. One's enemy wouldn't even give him or her a few seconds to catch a breath, let alone half a minute to retreat.

This was why Mister Dou seldom fought solo. If not for the fact that the Assembly of Patriarchs had paid him a very huge sum of money and that snow lava could fetch a terrifying price, he would not have taken action.

He had not trusted the Assembly of Patriarchs, which led to him bringing along Yang Xiaodong.

He and Yang Xiaodong had an extraordinary relationship and absolute trust in each other.

Now, however, Mister Dou was filled with regret as he had pulled Yang Xiaodong into this trouble.

Initially, he had thought that both of them could make a massive amount of profit off of the snow lava. This profit could even feed them for the rest of their lives. The main driving factor was that their chances for success on this mission were extremely high. There was no reason why four Masters would be unable to take

down the mayor’s residence. Furthermore, with Yang Xiaodong as their spy, wasn’t it in the bag?

The initial development of the situation wasn’t too far from Mister Dou’s expectations. They were in an advantageous position.

In a blink of an eye, however, the situation was overturned. The Assembly of Patriarchs was actually frightened out of their wits and abandoned them to make their own escape.

Right now, they only had two Masters to deal with the other side’s three Masters and the "first ever Lightning Master."

It was obvious which side had the upper hand.

All Mister Dou could feel was agony. With a deep voice, he said, "Xiaodong, leave first!"

Yang Xiaodong did not move.

"Xiaodong, there’s no point in us dying together. If you live, you can still help me take care of the stronghold." Mister Dou sighed.

Yang Xiaodong’s body trembled.

Mister Dou looked as if he was reminiscing as he continued to speak with a hint of grief in his voice, "Out of all of my followers, you are the most successful. Some have died and some are injured.

The children are still young and I'm worried about them. I leave them to you. Help me take good care of them."

Yang Xiaodong's eyes turned red.

No one would expect Mister Dou, who was an underworld overlord that murdered people without batting an eye, to have adopted so many orphans.

Yang Xiaodong was one of the orphans he had adopted.

In his heart, Mister Dou was his big brother. Back in the day, Mister Dou lost his eyes to save his life.

After Yang Xiaodong grew up, Mister Dou expelled him from the stronghold. This was a traditional custom. Mister Dou felt that they should lead a decent life and not indulge in fights and killing every day.

After Yang Xiaodong was expelled from the stronghold, he changed his identity and led a new life. Yang Wuchang was actually his adopted son, but he publicized him as his nephew.

Yang Wuchang was also an orphan. The first time Yang Xiaodong saw him, he'd thought of himself and Mister Dou.

No one had expected Yang Xiaodong to eventually become a Master.

Before Yang Xiaodong could reply, they were interrupted by a voice.

"Do you think this is a market where you can come and leave as you wish?"

The voice belonged to Ai Hui.

However... his voice sounded very weird.

The cautious Ai Hui had remained stationary for fear of agitating the lightning streaking throughout his body. He did not even dare to move his facial muscles. Gritting his teeth, he squeezed the words out.

When Shi Xueman noticed Ai Hui's abnormal behaviour, a worried look swept across her eyes.

Mister Dou's attention had been on Shi Xueman all this time. Suddenly, he roared, "Faster, run!"

Yang Xiaodong clenched his teeth and frantically flew away. In the blink of an eye, he had disappeared.

Ai Hui was shocked. Now he realized that a Master was not only powerful, but his or her observation skills were exceptionally sharp. When a Master discovered something was wrong, he or she

would definitely make an escape without dilly-dallying. Ai Hui seldom saw a Master that would fight to his or her death.

However, when Ai Hui thought about it again, he felt that this made sense. How could a brash fool become a Master? An individual could become a Master only if he or she was gifted, diligent, smart, and lucky.

When Ai Hui thought of this, he felt slightly pleased with himself.

He looked at Mister Dou and felt eager to test his new abilities. He did not think the doll he had already killed was powerful. Right now, he wanted to find someone powerful on whom he could test his newly improved swordsmanship.

This old fogey looked quite strong.

Ai Hui’s piercing gaze constantly swept across Mister Dou’s Northern Underworld King Tree as he thought about how to attack it.

Mister Dou noticed Ai Hui’s gaze and remained composed, without any fear.

"I surrender."

These sudden two words stunned everyone, including Ai Hui.

An unusual silence descended.

Mister Dou took the initiative and walked out from the defensive range of his Northern Underworld King Tree. "I surrender," he repeated.

This scene put everyone at a loss.

"Iron Lady!" Ai Hui yelled at the top of his voice.

Shi Xueman appeared beside Mister Dou, tied him up, and shackled his elemental energy. Mister Dou did not resist. Upon losing its master's control, the Northern Underworld King Tree reduced rapidly in size and, after a few minutes, became an unremarkable vine staff.

One could not see any fear on Mister Dou's face. He was indeed not afraid of anything. All along, before the Wilderness Expansion Order had even been announced, a Master's position in society had always been high and mighty. When a Master initiated a surrender, no one would vent his or her anger by killing the Master.

This was one of the many precious advantages of being a Master.

Even if a Master did not want to take part in combat, their immense knowledge and deep understanding towards elemental energy were exceptionally valuable. Every Master had to have

identified his or her Path of Master and his or her understanding towards elemental energy necessarily far surpassed any ordinary elementalist. They definitely had gone through a huge number of battles and had rich combat experience.

If they were to become teachers, any family or force would be extremely eager to hire them.

Therefore, Mister Dou did not worry about his safety at all.

They might place some limitations on him, but there wouldn’t be any problems with his life and safety.

At this moment, Ai Hui gave Shi Xueman an eye signal and said cheekily, "If you cut the weeds, you must eliminate the roots!"

Shi Xueman place the tip of Cirrus at Mister Dou’s throat.

Upon seeing this, Venerable Volcano, who had just gotten up from the ground, turned pale with fright. A Master who had surrendered could not be killed. This was an unwritten rule. Other than how precious a Master was, his unique status played an important factor as well. If Mister Dou was killed after he had surrendered, it would rouse the ire of other Masters.

Just as he was about to stop Shi Xueman, Ai Hui yelled, "Master Yang, come out now!"

Mister Dou was shocked, but he forcibly composed himself.

No one came out.

Venerable Volcano now understood Ai Hui’s intention.

"Master Yang, I will count to three. If you don’t come out, I will kill this old fogey."

A man with a gloomy face walked out from behind a half-destroyed house around one hundred and fifty meters away. It was Yang Xiaodong.

Mister Dou’s facial expression changed.

Venerable Volcano looked at Ai Hui with astonishment. That house should be out of Ai Hui’s line of sight and was more than one hundred and fifty meters away from him. Furthermore, there were many obstacles within this long distance. How could Ai Hui have discovered Yang Xiaodong?

"You won’t dare to kill him," Yang Xiaodong said with a deep voice.

"We will see. If you don’t surrender within ten seconds, I will kill him," Ai Hui sneered.

After Ai Hui finished his sentence, he did not even look at Yang Xiaodong and began to count, "Ten, nine, eight, seven..."

When Ai Hui counted to five, Yang Xiaodong blurted out, "I surrender."

"Venerable, sorry for troubling you," Ai Hui said.

Venerable Volcano was filled with admiration towards Ai Hui.

Take a look! Every man is different, every Master is also different! What have I been doing with my life after living for so many years?

"It’s not troublesome, it’s not troublesome..." Venerable Volcano quickly replied.

He walked over, tied up Yang Xiaodong, and pulled him to Ai Hui.

Yang Xiaodong lowered his gloomy face and asked, "I have a question, how did you discover me?"

Even Venerable Volcano looked at Ai Hui with curiosity. Only Shi Xueman turned her head around, looking as if she couldn’t bear to see what was about to happen.

"Do you really want to know?" Ai Hui asked cheekily.

"I want to know."

"Look behind the spot where you were hiding," Ai Hui said.

Venerable Volcano and Yang Xiaodong turned their heads and looked towards that house. There was nothing. Then, they looked even further back...

A line of huge, sand-made words floated in the distant sky.

"Yang Xiaodong is hiding behind this house."

Behind the line of sand-made words, there was a mini sand-made Lou Lan wearing an apron while holding a wok and spatula in each of his hands, appearing vivid and lifelike.

Blood rushed to Yang Xiaodong’s head and darkness engulfed his vision as he almost fainted.

Chapter 463: Changing The Name To Thunder City

During this period of time, Clearwater City was bustling with life.

The scars from the great battle took merely a few days to disappear. Like a colony of hardworking bees, the earth elementalists repaired the destroyed houses night and day.

At this point of time, no one was bothered about the money spent.

What was better than having your home being intact after a great battle?

Without anyone to direct them, all the earth elementalists automatically joined the rebuilding project of Clearwater City.

The passion for life, the longing for a home, the vision for the future and the yearning for happiness gathered these total strangers together, with everyone helping and supporting each other.

Such a sight could be seen all over Clearwater City.

When they were tired or free, they would sit leisurely on the rooftops and look at the thunderous lightning flashes in the sky

above a distant mountain. All of them were well-prepared. They would even bring along tea and melon seeds, clicking their tongues in astonishment at the lightning flashes while chit-chatting about their daily lives. At this point of time, they were filled with pride and admiration towards the few foreign elementalists as they vividly recounted the scene that had happened a few days ago.

"Let's see, have you heard of Lightning Master? The word 'Lightning' sounds powerful, right?"

"None of you were there at that time. The moment Master Ai appeared and gave everyone a glare, lightning bolts that had the thickness of an arm streaked across the sky! So cool! All of the Patriarchs from the Assembly of Patriarchs were Masters, the elites of the elites but so what? When Master Ai glared at them, it made one of the Patriarchs reverse her base level and she became half-dead, while the other one was frightened out of his wits and picked up his comrade and fled. When Master Ai saw that, he said to himself, 'Who can I glare at now?'. After he finished his sentence, he turned his murderous-looking face around and his eyes were popping out. Buzz! Before the lightning bolts shot out.... the legendary Northern Underworld King, Mister Dou, who had dominated the underworld for decades, surrendered without demurring."

...

At this point of time, on a distant mountain, numerous lightning bolts were coiling around Ai Hui's body. Not far away, Lou Lan's eyes were flickering with a red glow.

Ai Hui was releasing the lightning within his body with all his might. Silvery snakes were dancing wildly in the sky while deafening thunderclaps resounded through the air incessantly.

After ten minutes, Ai Hui finally stopped. He was panting heavily, but the lightning streaks around his body had reduced in number significantly.

"Lou Lan, how was it?" Ai Hui asked while panting heavily.

The red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes stopped flickering as he replied, "Ai Hui, the results are out. Your earth palace produces sixty percent of the lightning in your body while your left and right hand palaces produce twenty percent each.

Ai Hui stopped panting and a pensive look appeared on his face. "This result is very close to my prediction. The earth palace is the king while the hand palaces are the subjects. However, sixty percent is a lot more than what I expected."

...

Another round of thunderous lightning flashes streaked across the sky.

The red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes stopped flickering and he quickly reported the result, "Ai Hui, the elemental energy from your hand palaces is flowing towards your earth palace."

...

In the midst of the thunderous lightning flashes, the red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes flickered with an unprecedented rhythm.

If one took a closer look, he or she would discover that the red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes was flickering at the exact same frequency as the lightning bolts streaking across the sky.

Suddenly, Lou Lan yelled, "Ai Hui, your left hand palace and right hand palace are opposite in nature! The elemental traces in your left hand palace and right hand palace are opposite in nature as well!"

...

Another round of thunderous lightning flashes had passed.

The red glow in Lou Lan stopped flickering as he spoke with excitement, "Ai Hui, I have identified it! Your earth palace is the one that is producing the lightning! The two completely different metal elemental energies from your left and right hand palaces gather at your earth palace to produce the lightning!"

...

The Battle of Clearwater City had created a sensation in the vicinity of Clearwater City.

There were a total of seven Masters that took part in the battle initially. Undoubtedly, it was extremely sensational to see seven Masters fighting in a reasonably well-off city that normally only hosted two Masters.

The fact that the first ever Lightning Master was born was even more sensational.

The name Lightning Blade was widely known for his impact on Central Pine Faction, not his fighting capabilities.

During this period of time, Ai Hui's performance had shocked the entire Beyond Avalon region.

After defeating the swordsmanship genius Han Li, he was severely injured and had to enter seclusion. However, when he came out of seclusion, he had become a Master, the first ever Lightning Master. He single-handedly overturned the situation in the battle. Facing four Masters, he injured one, scared away one, and held the remaining two as captives.

Upon seeing such an impressive feat by Ai Hui, everyone could not help but link him to those legendary figures in the history of the Avalon of Five Elements.

Ai Hui became renowned from this battle.

The title of "the first ever Lightning Master" had attracted a lot of

elementalists from nearby cities to Clearwater City. All of them were here to revere the Lightning Master.

The first thing that every elementalist noticed upon arriving at Clearwater City was the distant mountain. Every now and then, thick and long lightning bolts streaked across the sky. Electrifying silvery snakes danced in sky while deafening thunderclaps echoed incessantly through the air.

When they saw such a spectacular sight, four words came to their minds. The might of Heaven!

Then, the residents of Clearwater City would tell these people that was the same mountain where Master Ai defeated swordsmanship genius Han Li.

Initially, that was a nameless and unknown mountain. Now, it had a name, Thunder Mountain. There was a rumor going around Clearwater City stating that Ai Hui was practising his lightning techniques on Thunder Mountain.

"In the future, Thunder City will be the holy land of Clearwater City!" Qiao Meiqi was high-spirited. The dismay on his face a few days ago was nowhere to be seen now. Filled with confidence, he said, "When I have enough money, I must purchase the Thunder Mountain. This might be a landmark that can last for all eternity. The first ever Lightning Master, Ai Hui, practises his lightning techniques here. Lightning bolts descended from the sky endlessly for hundreds of days..."

"Uncle Qiao, it has only been two days!" Gong Peiyao could not help but interrupt Qiao Meiqi.

The residents thought that Ai Hui was practising his lightning techniques but he was actually releasing the overflowing lightning bolts in his body. To prevent himself from injuring the innocent residents, he could only do this on the distant isolated mountain outside of the city.

"Hundreds of days sounds more impressive!" Qiao Meiqi was extremely pleased with himself, "Then, I will spread the rumor that Ai Hui has left marks of lightning on Thunder Mountain and whoever that can comprehend the marks of lightning, he or she will obtain the power of lightning and become a Lightning Master! How about it? This is a flawless plan, right! When the moment comes, there will be numerous elementalists travelling over thousands of miles to Clearwater City to admire Master Ai's remnants. When you visit a holy land, you have to pay a fee, right? What if you don't have money? You will work for me. Hmm, the name of Clearwater City doesn't seem too nice. It's overshadowed by the name of Thunder Mountain. This name needs to be changed. We have to change the name! In the future, our city shall be called Thunder City! Yes! I have to use Thunder City to pay respects to Master Ai! Send out an announcement now. To celebrate the birth of the first ever Lightning Master, we will rename Clearwater City as Thunder City."

Everyone was dumbstruck when they saw the excitement on Qiao Meiqi's face. They were stunned by Qiao Meiqi's greed.

"Truly an unscrupulous businessman!" Venerable Volcano sighed

with sorrow.

He was an elementalist and he knew if Qiao Meiqi spread the rumors, a huge number of elementalists would come to Clearwater City, no, Thunder City.

When the chief of Karakorum Sword League became the first master swordsman, Karakorum Sword League expanded rapidly and countless elementalists visited them.

Most of the members in the newly established Karakorum Division were elite swordsmen that were selected from Karakorum Sword League.

One could imagine the number of elementalists that would come to Thunder City to admire Ai Hui. Whenever a brand-new type of power was created, it would present new opportunities for many elementalists. If one could be a part of it, he or she would obtain a head start. How did those powerful and wealthy aristocratic families come about? They did so by adopting this method.

Immense wealth came from having great power.

Suddenly, Ai Hui’s voice rang across the main hall. "I want half!"

Qiao Meiqi’s mayor residence was the first building to be repaired. Due to the lack of time, only the external part of the mayor’s residence was repaired. The mayor residence’s defensive rainscreen needed more time and an earth elemental master to be

fully restored.

Ai Hui, who had just returned to the mayor residence, seemed to look slightly different. However, everyone found it very difficult to identify what the difference was. The most noticeable part about him was his eyes. His eyes were unusually bright, so much so that they were dazzling.

The glow of the Wintry Jade Blade in his hand had dimmed significantly, giving off a soft glimmer. Even the lightning arc that streaked across it occasionally looked weak.

"How are you feeling?" Shi Xueman’s eyes lit up.

"It’s finally under my control, thanks to Lou Lan," Ai Hui gave a smile.

Everyone knew Ai Hui was training on Thunder Mountain, but they did not know that Lou Lan was by his side.

Ai Hui kept on releasing lightning bolts from his body and Lou Lan recorded the whole process. The analyzing ability of Lou Lan’s Midnight was very powerful. Lou Lan specialized in obtaining unnoticeable, important information from an immense number of samples. Using his method, Lou Lan helped Ai Hui to analyze his elemental traces and obtain many valauble elemental traces.

Lou Lan’s eyes had curled into two crescent moons as he said cheerfully, "Lou Lan likes to help Ai Hui."

Gong Peiyao was filled with jealousy. She wished she could throw herself at Lou Lan.

With Lou Lan's assistance, the lightning within Ai Hui's body was brought under control for the time being. At least now he did not need to worry about his body exploding.

After Ai Hui knew how the lightning in his body was produced, he quickly grasped the ability to control the rate at which the lightning was produced. Without an endless stream of lightning flowing through his body, the danger within Ai Hui's body had decreased by half.

Of course, there were still a lot of problems waiting for Ai Hui to resolve them. However, as long as he got rid of the danger of his body exploding, he had enough time to resolve the other problems.

He still had a long way before he could fully control the power of the lightning in his body. This was just the beginning.

This was the problem with being a forerunner, but it was a unique characteristic at the same time. Forerunners faced too many unknowns. The path ahead of them was covered with dense fog and they had no idea how to proceed forward. The only thing they could do was to slowly fumble their way through.

However, since no one was familiar with the new field, these forerunners would usually put up impressive performances and become influential and powerful individuals in their eras.

Ai Hui looked at the mayor and asked, "How are the preparations for our resources? Once you are done preparing our resources, we will leave."

"Congratulations, Master Ai. The resources have been prepared properly. You can set off at any time," Qiao Meiqi congratulated Ai Hui.

Even though the battle from two days ago had caused Qiao Meiqi to suffer huge losses, he was not bothered at all. In the past, Central Pine Faction was a promising power. Now, it had become a formidable power that could not be underestimated.

With the first ever Lightning Master, the Shi family's heiress who could match up against two Masters at once, and the two captive Masters, Central Pine Faction had a total of four Masters!

Qiao Meiqi and the Gong Residence had no issues with handing the two captives over to Ai Hui.

In this way, the strength of Central Pine Faction's lineup far surpassed Thunder City's.

Furthermore, Central Pine Faction was filled with youngsters. Youth implied boundless potential. With the refinement method of snow lava in the hands of Central Pine Faction, they possessed an endless stream of wealth. By looking at Ai Hui's decision to use the profits from the sale of snow lava to purchase a huge amount of resources, one could tell that he was very ambitious.

Central Pine Faction's position in Qiao Meiqi's heart had been raised a few levels.

The current Central Pine Faction was no longer inferior to those newly established families. It was a newly established family that possessed great potential.

Chapter 464: Departure

Ai Hui and the rest had come quietly without anyone's knowledge, but when they left a huge load team followed. All the load basin beasts were given to them by Qiao Meiqi, together with a group of servants and porters.

When they first arrived, there was no Master in Central Pine Valley. They had no ability to defend themselves. Ai Hui today, relying on his reputation as the first ever Lightning Master, was able to intimidate their enemies. Plus, Shi Xueman was by his side.

And there were Mister Dou and Yang Xiaodong, who were held captive, so four Masters were overseeing the place. Coupled with the valley's defense, no team could ever think of breaking into their territory without at least six or seven Masters on their team.

Full of confidence, Ai Hui's display made a good spectacle.

The masses, upon hearing the news about Thunder City, walked out of their houses to take a look. They stood on both sides of the road, not daring to make a racket. Where the squadron passed the audience bowed their heads in respect.

They weren't bowing to the fact that Ai Hui had become the first ever Lightning Master but that he was protecting their homeland.

Unless they had no choice, who would be willing to wander about miserable and desperate?

The battle that had happened earlier shook up Beyond Avalon. It wasn't merely because of the birth of the first ever Lightning Master, but also because it was the first battle between two power figures since the city expansion order and the elementalists' entrance into the Wilderness.

A group of thieves and bandits participated in the battle of Skyheart City, thus it was regarded merely as an armed rebellion.

And the battle of Thunder City was a conquest of power.

The elementalists had charged into the Wilderness to build their own cities, facing pressure from dire beasts during the whole process. The cities were previously broken into because of these dire beasts and not because of conflicts among the people.

Probably no one would've thought that in future history books there would be a name for this battle, "Battle of Thunder City". This battle was viewed by future historians as a turning point.

The battle marked the start of the chaotic era where Beyond Avalon started invading other cities to conquer them.

Later on, there were many elaborations on this event.

Some felt that the root cause was that the elementalists started to become ambitious after settling down in the Wilderness. Others thought that Madam Ye's rise had evoked much unhappiness and

the Assembly of Patriarchs was one of the dissidents. There were also people who believed that the death of Great Elder gave way to the disorder in Beyond Avalon since there was no more leader.

At this moment, no one knew exactly how impactful and far-reaching this battle was going to be.

But to the citizens in Thunder City, this battle was more important than all the expounding done in history books.

Their homeland belonged to them but history belonged to time.

Not only was Ai Hui protecting their homes, he left a Thunder Mountain. This was one of the deepest cities within the Wilderness, where the mightiest and most dangerous dire beasts resided.

Every single citizen had a deep understanding of dire beasts.

Master Ai had pondered and analyzed lightning techniques at Thunder Mountain for consecutive days. Thunder rolled, displaying might and power, and could clearly be heard from miles away.

Dire beasts' fear of thunder exceeded that of humans, and elementalists who had been out scouting were all pleasantly surprised. Within a few mile radius practically all dire beasts, even the stronger ones, had vanished.

They'd all thought that they were on the wrong path.

Thunder Mountain left a strong thunder aura, which caused dire beasts to stay away instinctively. This region then became a forbidden area for dire beasts. As long as the thunder aura did not disappear, the area around Thunder City would still be a dire-beast-free zone.

In the Wilderness, nothing was more blissful than being safe. The future of Thunder City was bright. As residents of the city, the citizens benefited the most.

In this chaotic world, mere citizens' wishes were being ignored. They, too, knew that Master Ai wasn't fighting for them, but Thunder City survived because of Master Ai and would benefit for a long time because of him as well.

He, the legend, was the stars in the sky and they were the grass on the ground. They were worlds apart and weren't able to associate themselves with him.

They bowed to him without expecting a response. They did it out of gratitude.

The closely-packed crowd bowed unceasingly and only the footsteps of the heavy load basin beasts echoed throughout the big street.

The atmosphere was exceptionally solemn.

Sitting on a load basin beast, Ai Hui's smile vanished. He pursed his lips, his expression turning serious. His relaxed posture disappeared too as he automatically straightened his back.

In that instant he felt somewhat stifled and panicky.

He did not know the reason, but was unwilling to think about it.

It wasn't easy for anybody in this chaotic world, was it?

Amid the silence the load team left Thunder City and disappeared into the dense Wilderness.

A short while after they left the city, Ai Hui returned to his usual state. The unhappiness and indescribable emotions were all thrown to the back of his mind. He wasn't a heroic figure so the mission of saving the world should be left to someone else.

Ai Hui fiddled with Mister Dou's walking stick, his face full of curiosity.

Mister Dou and Yang Xiaodong did not receive any harsh treatment. Their elemental energies were merely being suppressed. Yang Xiaodong had a dark expression on his face and behaved indifferently toward Ai Hui. Mister Dou, on the other hand, was much more straightforward and patient, responding to all the questions he had answers for.

"Why does this stick swallow light rays?"

Upon hearing Ai Hui's question Yang Xiaodong couldn't hold back. "This isn't a stick!"

With an "ah", Ai Hui looked the cane over a few times. With a I've-had-my-fare-share-of-experience-so-don't-try-to-deceive-me look on his face he responded, "This is obviously a stick."

The veins on Yang Xiaodong's forehead throbbed. He could only see the repulsiveness in that person and wanted so badly to stick a knife into his bloody face. He clenched his teeth, saying, "Northern Underworld King Tree!"

A rare treasure being called as a stick left Yang Xiaodong feeling horrible, as if he'd just swallowed a fly. While he kept telling himself that he had no choice but to lower his head, since he was under someone else's roof, he couldn't help but feel the rage surging within his chest.

He practically stopped after each word for emphasis.

Ai Hui exclaimed in realization, "I understand, it's a high-grade stick!"

Yang Xiaodong flew into a rage. "You're the stick!"

With a foolish look on his face Ai Hui asked Yang Xiaodong, "Why the face? Is it such an amazing stick?"

Yang Xiaodong turned his face, his body trembling from anger.

Mister Dou laughed and explained in a slow-moving tone, "It can absorb light because it is Northern Underworld King Tree. Northern Underworld was a remote and desolate place with no sunlight all day long because there grew a very unique type of tree, "Dark Tree". Dark trees live off of light rays as well, but the difference is that they swallow light and spit out darkness. There is a dark layer on their leaves that can swallow all surrounding light. And this one here is the King of Dark Trees. Only one is born out of every hundred thousand trees."

Ai Hui felt as though he was listening to a story. "Where's Northern Underworld?"

"No idea." Mister Dou shook his head. "No one knows where it is anymore. Perhaps they couldn't go there even if they knew. However, many powerful cultivators entered the Northern Underworld during the Cultivation Era."

Ai Hui responded in interest, "So this is a remnant from the Cultivation Era?"

"What I got was a seed." With a reminiscent look on his face he continued, "At that time I did not know that it was the seed of the King of Dark Trees. I'd thought that it was just an ordinary seed. Even then, to me it was a treasure, so I cherished it very much and spent much effort nurturing it. It was later on, under a fateful coincidence, that I realized it was the King of Dark Trees."

With his eyes lit up Ai Hui stated shamelessly, "It is mine now."

Yang Xiaodong stood up and howled, "Shameless!"

He knew how important Northern Underworld King Tree was to Mister Dou. Mister Dou was an extremely powerful Master with the Northern Underworld King Tree, but without it he was merely an ordinary elementalist.

Mister Dou waved his hand, saying, "Northern Underworld King Tree has been yours ever since you caught me. I have a bold request, however, and am unsure if I can say it."

It was then that Yang Xiaodong remembered he was now a captive. He sat down with a defeated look on his face.

Ai Hui glanced over at Yang Xiaodong. This gloomy fellow was easily agitated when it came to Mister Dou’s affairs.

Mister Dou was calm and honest, which in actual fact made Ai Hui admire him. The old knew better indeed.

Ai Hui became a tad more respectful. "Please speak."

"I don’t have much time left to live. The Northern Underworld King Tree would be wasted in my hands. It has an extremely long life and the ancient books mentioned that it will not be destroyed

as long as there's light and that it will only grow each day. It's only been in my hands for a few decades. It would be a real waste if this were to be buried and disappear."

Yang Xiaodong had calmed down significantly and kept silent. He knew that these words were for him.

"I've been trying to understand the Northern Underworld King Tree for a few decades and have obtained some insights. I'm willing to pass it all down to you without concealment. I only hope that you can take the children of my stronghold into your care."

Yang Xiaodong's expression returned to normal. He'd understood the moment Mister Dou spoke. He was, after all, born from the stronghold and knew what Mister Dou was concerned about."

"Stronghold's children?"

Ai Hui fell into a short daze, but after thinking about it he thought that it was only human nature. He nodded in agreement.

Everybody then followed Mister Dou to the stronghold.

Ai Hui looked at the extremely tanned kids who had gathered around. Shocked, he shouted, "You're surely formidable, aren't you? So many of them!"

Awkward silence.

Mister Dou who kept a straight face always, became very emotional for the first time. His face turned rigid, his expression hardened. His whole body stiffened up and his face turned red.

He opened his mouth but no sound came out because he did not know how to start.

The rest looked on awkwardly.

Yang Xiaodong was about to speak up, but Ai Hui had already tapped Mister Dou’s shoulder and said, "Don’t worry, Old Dou. From now on, Central Pine Valley is home to you and your children. You’re a responsible man, Old Dou! It mustn’t be easy having so many children!"

Mister Dou’s face turned redder. He’d experienced a cruel life and had never seen such a scene. He was at a loss.

He was about to explain himself, but Ai Hui had already turned around and started mingling with the kids, his face full of smiles.

The little kids were initially very guarded, but quickly warmed up to Ai Hui.

Mister Dou, whose face was initially flushed, started to calm his emotions down. A smile appeared on the corner of his mouth. He had no regard for the material world but had an exceptionally keen intuition when it came to emotions. He could feel that Ai Hui had

not the least bit of enmity toward the children. Even Shi Xueman and Lou Lan were genuinely happy.

Yang Xiaodong looked at him without speaking a word, but his gloomy face brightened up a little.

Chapter 465: Guillotines on a Snowy Night

When military banners of the three central divisions appeared on the battleground, the fight lost its suspense.

Ever since the founding of the Thirteen Divisions in the Avalon of Five Elements, the three central divisions were the most unusual and mysterious divisions. The direct subordinates of the Elders Guild, these three central divisions were Surveillance, Judgement, and Dread. The outside world had little understanding of them.

They only knew that Surveillance was good at obtaining news as they had countless spies. Judgement was in charge of trials and convictions. Only very specific crimes would require the involvement of Judgement. Dread was the most mysterious group, and news about them spread the least.

A peculiar thing was that the three central divisions were not in the Avalon of Five Elements, but defended the Old Territory instead.

Why did they do that? Which part of the Old Territory? No one knew.

Even the powerful members from aristocratic families who knew a lot of rare inside information were unaware of the reason.

Mystery always bred rumors.

Some said that the three central divisions guarded a large-scale treasury. It was the Avalon of Five Elements's last hope and preserved boundless riches, rare treasures, weapons, and so on. When the Avalon of Five Elements reached the juncture of life and death, this treasury would be its last opportunity to overturn the situation.

Some also said that the place where the combat divisions were stationed was a big crack leading to a deep part of the Wilderness. In order to prevent dire beasts from entering the Old Territory through this crack, the combat divisions stood guard.

There were others who even believed that it wasn't a crack that lead to the deep Wilderness, but to an abyss.

All kinds of strange and interesting rumors spread unceasingly through the years. This was still a riddle to this day. The other tencombat divisions had a retirement system, but once involved with the three central divisions, it was a lifetime commitment.

No matter which version of the rumors, there was something unanimous–the magnitude. There was no doubt that the three central divisions were powerful. It was common knowledge that the strength of the three central divisions were much stronger than the other tencombat divisions.

Even the strongest among the tendivisions was incomparable to any one of three central divisions.

Other opined that only Masters could join the central three. Of

course, those with common sense knew how nonsensical this was.

There weren't that many Masters in this world.

The appearance of the three central division military banners on the battleground immediately led to an all out attack. The rebel army formed from more than tenbandit teams was utterly defeated. Where the banner passed, the bandits crawled on the floor, put their hands behind their heads, and surrendered in fear.

It was as if boiling oil had been poured on snow.

The rebel army fled and surrendered without any effort on the part of the central divisions.

The battle ended quickly, shocking the crowd that covertly observed this rebellion. Captives continuously appeared outside the city, causing Skyheart City to bustle. During this period, people were alarmed and feared that the rebel army would enter the city and wipe them out.

Trial, conviction, execution..

The Judgement Division's efficiency was astonishing. Their methods were so cruel that the audience was left speechless and overwhelmed. The Judgement Division wasn't the least bit lenient toward these bandits.

Everyday, there were rows of bandits waiting to be publicly

beheaded outside Skyheart City.

It was the people's first time seeing the expressionless team members of the Judgement Division. They had an apathetic look on their faces, similar to that of experienced executioners. The captives' uncontrollable screams, flying heads, spurting blood, and headless corpses weren't able to even slightly change the expressions of the team members.

Yet, the Judgement Division did not kill everyone. They did not kill the Masters among the bandits, but handed them over to Madam Ye to determine their fate instead.

There were six of them.

Masters were excused from capital punishment. It was an unwritten rule.

The six Masters were all willing to follow Madam Ye's orders. No matter where they went, they were a force that was difficult to ignore. This was also why the lives of the six Masters were handed over to Madam Ye.

Madam Ye, however, did not accept their surrender. The six of them were publicly beheaded.

When the heads of the six Masters were hung high up on the wooden poles outside Skyheart City, the city fell into a storm of protest.

If the rabbit dies, the fox grieves. Many Masters, cared for by their respective family clans, were disgusted by Madam Ye. During a private banquet among the Masters, many openly stated that they would never serve Madam Ye.

These rumors also spread to the ears of Madam Ye, but she was unaffected and continued doing as she pleased.

This was only the beginning.

People were then shocked to realize that the dignified and virtuous Madam Ye actually had an iron fist.

On that night, countless people tossed and turned restlessly in their beds, unable to sleep.

On the next day, before the sky brightened up, there was an endless stream of horse and carriages outside the mayor's residence. Family patriarchs queued in a long line, waiting for Madam Ye to receive them. They were all well-celebrated figures.

The citizens of Skyheart City were rejoicing over the stabilizing situation of the armed rebellion, but the aristocratic families weren't. They occasionally glanced over at the hanging Masters' heads. It was as if those heads had a magical power that automatically attracted people's attention.

Madam Ye was really ruthless to kill all the Masters!

Just then, the first ever snow since its construction fell over Skyheart City.

The ice-cold, bone-piercing snowflakes were sharp spinning blades that danced to the gale. A gale storm was extremely terrifying. Wherever it passed, the rocks and trees on the ground were destroyed. It hid the sky and covered the earth. Even the sunlight was obstructed, making seem like night.

Many secretly gossiped that this frightening snow gale must be the heaven's doing since even the gods could no longer stand seeing Madam Ye's careless behavior.

The five God-subduing Peaks in the Skyheart City were activated to stop the whistling snow gale and bring warmth to the city interior.

Nevertheless, people panicked inside and could not feel the warmth at all. Many thought of every possible method to leave this city, which protected them, because it was even colder and more bone-chilling inside.

Without a sign, Surveillance Division made a move.

More than tenfamilies had been investigated and were charged with colluding with the bandits and acting from the inside. Irrefutable evidence surfaced and proved that these families had committed dreadful crimes that could not be wiped away.

Arrest, trial, conviction.

The Judgement Division did not appear this time, and standing in their place was the Surveillance Division. It was said that the Judgement Division maintained silence with regard to this operation, while the Dread Division wasn't in favor of this operation. Only the Surveillance Division returned to Skyheart City without any apprehension of becoming Madam Ye's sharpest knife.

Scouting for news couldn't get any simpler for the Surveillance Division.

In Skyheart City, heads were rolling and the amount of blood spurting all over could form a river. There was even a faint bloody smell that filled the air.

The whole operation lasted for three consecutive days.

There was no warmth in the recollections of the survivors. Whenever they told their stories, their voices spontaneously trembled. The snow gale enveloped Skyheart City, blocking out all sunlight for three days. It was as dark as night, and even the light emitted from the never-extinguishing southern light lanterns along the streets brought about a horrifying chill.

The row of lever operated guillotines looked exceptionally magnificent.

39 families had been trialed and over 7,000 had been condemned. Among these were weak servants and strong Masters.

1,622 were beheaded.

In the entire history of the Avalon of Five Elements, there had never been such a spectacular sight. This unprecedented blood purge seemed to have added a layer the color of blood to Skyheart City’s light screen.

These three days came to be known as "Guillotines on a Snowy Night."

When the snow passed and the sun rose up again, the sunlight sprinkled over the field, making the once bustling city appear much more spacious and empty. The marketplace was even more desolate as people did not dare to leave their homes.

A few days later the tense atmosphere gradually dissolved, and the city returned to its usual tranquility.

The mayor’s residence.

A man with his hair bunned up and a pale face smiled. His eyes weren’t big, but they were bright and clear. His smile was very fresh and contagious.

No one would've thought that this seemingly warm man was the division leader of the Surveillance Division.

His speech wasn't slow as he reported the details of this operation in an organized and clear manner.

Madam Ye listened carefully and asked questions from time to time.

When the report was finished, she smiled and said, "It's hard to guard against internal thieves. Who would've imagined that so many people would rather hand the city over to bandits than to let me keep my position. If they have the ability, what harm is there in giving my position up to them? I'm just a woman who wants to raise Xiaobao. Father-in-law entrusted this to me before he left, and I'm only doing this in order to not waste his previous efforts. If there is a worthy person, I will definitely give up my spot and hand it over personally."

Nian Tingfeng consoled, "Why care about those vulgar people, Madam Ye? You're the only one who can turn this desperate crisis around! I'll feel uneasy when you say such angry words."

Madam Ye responded graciously, "I'm not that great. This is all thanks to you, Division Leader Nian. It's not a pity if I lost my position, but if the bandits entered the city, the people would fall into a terrible situation. The city and its people would die and countless families would be destroyed."

Nian Tingfeng replied respectfully, "You're right, Madam. If

people remain undisciplined, they would fall apart like a sheet of loose sand. Beyond Avalon needs a new leader in order for us to progress. These mindless people are harboring unfathomable motives and are conspiring against us. It’s not a pity even if they all die."

Madam Ye sighed. "A pity for all those who are Masters."

She wasn’t feeling regret for those Masters among the bandits, but for the consecrated Masters within the city. These Masters were numerous, and if they could serve her, she would be like a tiger that had grown wings.

Unfortunately, these Masters were practically all implicated, and more than half had been beheaded.

"Why do you care, Madam? Your Master’s Glory is a genius creation. Once the time is right, a large batch of Masters will emerge." Nian Tingfeng added seriously, "We just have to endure this period and all the Masters will be ours. No one can hold us by the elbow anymore. The others will naturally shut their mouths so that Madam can unleash your full potential and save Skyheart City from catastrophes. It’s always better to get the pain over with rather than prolonging the agony. Rather than letting them rot, why not eradicate the rotten meat?"

Madam Ye looked pleased. "With your assistance, I feel truly at ease. I still have something to trouble you with."

Nian Tingfen hurriedly asked, "What instructions?

"Help me investigate somebody."

"Please tell me."

"The Lightning Blade, Ai Hui."

"Yes, Madam!"

Chapter 466: Three Division Leaders in a Meeting

Chapter 466 - Three Division Leaders in a Meeting

The snow gale dispersed and sunlight returned to the earth. Nevertheless, within a night, Skyheart City became even more solemn. The nights once filled with music and songs were gone. Aristocratic families had their tails tucked between their legs. No one wanted to offend Madam Ye at this time.

Bloodstains left by the Guillotines on a Snowy Night event had yet to fade.

No one knew what Madam Ye's next move was going to be, but discerning people knew not to provoke her.

The three central divisions had strict military discipline.

After Guillotines on a Snowy Night, not even one elementalist from the central divisions could be seen on the streets.

Brilliant military glory, unfathomable, valiant with unsurpassable abilities, cold-blooded and cruel, killing without blinking, strict military conduct... These were the impressions and memories that the city had of the three central divisions.

The three divisions were stationed in different places.

The Surveillance Division was stationed in a military camp located within Skyheart City. They were supposed to be stationed in a practice ground of the Sky Edge Division but the Judgement Division was stationed there temporarily. It wasn't a big area and its facilities were very simple and basic, but the Judgement Division did not mind at all.

In fact, the military camp had more than enough space for the Judgement Division.

Aside from the three central divisions' glory, their strength exceeded the other 10 divisions even though they had the three smallest battle teams among all Thirteen Divisions of the Avalon of Five Elements. The Surveillance Division had the biggest team, and even then, it was made up of under 1,000 members. The Judgement Division had only 800 people, whereas the smallest division, Dread, had 500.

In actuality, the three central divisions had never ever been fully filled.

The member selection process of the three divisions was extremely strict. They would rather be shorthanded than recruit unsuitable elementalists. They had exceedingly high psychological demands from their elementalists and would abandon those with slightly weaker willpower.

An unremarkable looking Three Leaves Bamboo Cart appeared at the military camp entrance.

There was no marking and nothing conspicuous. It was just a commonly seen cargo transport cart except that its body was covered in a thick black cloth so its interior couldn't be seen.

By now, few people used Three Leaves Bamboo Carts to ferry goods since they were more difficult to use and elemental energy cost more. The cart required a huge volume of elemental energy and was simply not cost effective for transporting goods. The trend now was to make use of load basin beasts, which consumed less elemental energy. They had the heaviest cargo capacity, were easy to raise, and had a high survival rate outside the city.

This was Skyheart City, the biggest city in Beyond Avalon after all. It housed the most aristocratic families and was one of the most prosperous lands, but the number of Three Leaves Bamboo Carts was still lower.

Nearing the camp entrance, the cart instantly slowed down. An elementalist stood guard at the gate with a fixed expression on his faces. He would detect over 10 wisps of energy locking down on him from within the shadows if he had keen senses.

The cart door opened and a seven or eight year old girl alighted. Her hair reached her ears and was glossy and smooth. Her hairstyle resembled a round apple with a neat fringe covering her forehead. She had chubby cheeks, jade-like skin, and long eyelashes like brushes. She was like a cute little doll.

A few expressionless guards followed behind.

The elementalist, who stood guard with a stern expression, saluted. "Madam Caijue !"

The girl nodded calmly before walking over from the door.

This scene was rather comical. An adorable little girl behaving like an adult made her even more adorable. Her steps were very small and her walking speed was slow because of her size and short legs. Those immeasurably strong people behind her followed her pace, so they were practically inching forward with small, quick steps.

A fierce and tough looking elementalist, who stood rigidly, bowed respectfully with a stern expression and a fixed gaze.

No one would’ve thought that this young little girl, Ximen Caijue, was actually the division leader of the mysterious Judgement Division.

Upon entering the military camp, elementalists could be seen practicing with all their might. Some practiced alone while others were sparring. There was almost no difference when compared to the other battle divisions, but if the other 10 divisions were to witness this scene, they would notice something strange.

Silence. Unusual silence.

Lone trainers analyzed, pondered, and gestured quietly. Training

with a partner was much more intense. Blood splattered from time to time, and some elementalists already had many injuries. No one complained, however, as if they had no concept of pain.

It was a strange scene.

Ximen Caijue and her guards looked on indifferently as it wasn't their first time witnessing something like this.

Nian Tingfeng saw Ximen Caijue and her group approaching and greeted, "What occasion is it today that Madam Ximen Caijue is visiting personally?"

The girl answered coldly, "Wan Shenwei is here too!"

The smile on Nian Tingfeng's face remained, but the cheery expression in his eyes was gone. "Why such a big fuss? Then let's talk in the meeting hall."

With that, he turned around and led the way.

Ximen Caijue's guards and Nian Tingfeng's subordinates stopped outside the meeting hall.

In the spacious meeting hall, Nian Tingfeng brewed his own tea. While boiling the water, he said, "Skyheart City's tea leaves are much better than the Old Territory's. I got this from confiscating possessions ,so I forgot which family it belonged to. Asking these fellows to battle and kill enemies is bothering them, but they are

all experts in enjoying life. I've not tried more than half of the tea leaves that I seized. I'll go get more from different families once this batch finishes."

Ximen Caijue kept quiet, her apple face remaining stern and cold.

Not long after, a lushly bearded man pushed open the door and entered the hall. This big man was exceptionally tall and sturdy, like a man from the mountains. His hands were much longer than an ordinary person's. He looked a little like an ape. It could be seen from his face that he'd face many hardships. There were many fine crisscrossing scars and his arms and legs were also covered in scars.

His eyes were very unique looking. He had light colored pupils, which made his eyes seem pale.

The Dread Division's division leader, Wan Shenwei.

Wan Shenwei strode into the hall and took a seat, commenting, "I smell a fragrance."

"New tea. Guarantee you have not tried it before."

Nian Tingfeng picked up the steaming teapot and poured a cup each for Wan Shenwei and Ximen Caijue before serving himself one as well. He took a sip and relished in its taste, his face appearing drunk.

Silence momentarily filled the hall as only the sound of the steaming teapot, which sat on the stove, could be heard.

Without even looking at the tea in front of her, Ximen Caijue coldly asked, "What exactly are you doing, Nian Tingfeng?"

As if he'd not heard her, Nian Tingfeng slowly replied only after a short while, "What do you mean?"

Ximen Caijue gave him a cold look. "Putting down the revolt was our job. It's okay to kill all the bandits and the Masters among them, but why kill the Masters in Skyheart City?"

Nian Tingfeng asked her calmly, "Why not?"

Ximen Caijue answered indifferently, "You know they're innocent."

"So?" Nian Tingfeng laughed. "There are many innocent people, Madam Caijue, so who should die? Only a few have died and you're feeling the heartache already?

Wan Shenwei put his teacup down. "Talk things over nicely."

Nian Tianfeng leisurely took another sip of his tea before saying, "I understand what you're thinking. They are Masters and are on the aristocratic families' sides, so by right they are our people, and it would be a pity to destroy our own military strength, but this is not what I think."

They other two remained silent and only Nian Tingfeng’s voice echoed.

"They were Masters and our people no doubt, but they were already rotten. Look, we’ve been forced out of the Avalon of Five Elements and into the Wilderness and Skyheart City’s still new. What are these fellows doing? Only thinking about enjoying life. These Masters are amazing at creating new teas, I’ll give them that."

Sarcasm was evident in his words.

Ximen Caijue and Wan Shenwei kept quiet as they knew that Nian Tingfeng wasn’t exaggerating.

"Are we so pathetic? Are we lacking in abilities? We are indeed, but what’s worse is that we are lacking in courage and fight. Look, these aristocratic families are our pillars of support, but they’re all absorbed in self-indulgence. They withdraw when there’s danger. What purpose do they serve even if they’re our people?"

Nian Tingfeng became increasingly worked up.

"They are all pieces of rotten meat, so don’t hope for them to turn into good meat. There’s only one choice if you want to live on and that is to get rid of all this rotten meat! Yes, the damage is significant and painful, and it’s difficult to make a move, but we are driving ourselves to a dead end if this drags on."

His tone became calm suddenly, but carried a tinge of zeal.

"So our decision is simple. Madam Ye is our only way out. Can you give me another option? Who can? I don’t know if she can succeed, but I do know that she’s our only hope. The Avalon of Five Elements loses if she loses."

He glanced over at the both of them and said meaningfully, "It’s fine as long as we win. A knife is still a knife, so does it matter who it belongs to?"

Ximen Caijue asked dully, "What else do you know?"

Wan Shenwei looked at Nian Tingfeng as well.

Nian Tingfeng was the division leader of Surveillance Division, which specialized in obtaining information, so it wouldn’t be surprising if he had special insider news.

They knew Nian Tingfeng’s personality well. He was cautious and only did things he had confidence in. If he acted, there must be a reason behind it.

Nian Tingfeng smiled and picked the teacup up again. "I’m optimistic about Madam Ye’s Master’s Glory."

Ximen Caijue and Wan Shenwei made eye contact.

Master’s Glory wasn’t any secret since the all of Beyond Avalon knew about it. Madam Ye had even held a series of selection processes. No one knew what happened behind the scenes of the program, however.. No one knew where these people actually came from.

Both division leaders were confident that Nian Tingfeng must have heard something, but Nian Tingfeng’s mouth was sealed, so it was impossible for them to probe.

Ximen Caijue responded coldly, "We can’t win without a Grandmaster."

Nian Tingfeng spread his hands. "Everyone wants to become a Grandmaster, but it’s more practical to rely on Masters. They would at least prevent our side from looking too unsightly."

Ximen Caijue snorted before standing up and walking toward the door.

Nian Tingfeng stayed in his spot, drinking his tea.

Wan Shenwei got up and strode to the door before stopping.

"Tingfeng, you’re not being honest."

With that, he pushed the door open.

From start to finish, Nian Tingfeng sipped on his tea with a smile on his face. His expression never changed.

Chapter 467: Windy Resonant Pagoda

Translator: YH Editor: TYZ, CakeHermit

A peculiar looking pagoda stood prominently in the northwest sector of Newlight City.

Yuchi Ba looked at the newly built Windy Resonant Pagoda with pride and satisfaction.

The pagoda was one thousand and eighty feet tall and made purely out of metal and rock. Engravings covered the entire structure, giving it an overall majestic feel. Normal pagodas were thick at the bottom and tapered towards the top, yet here stood one that was the other way around. The first five hundred feet of the pagoda were cylindrical in shape, much like a huge circular pillar. Above that, branches began to emerge. These branches were loosely scattered, but became denser higher up the pagoda. From afar, the entire structure looked like a pine cone.

The most wonderful aspect of the building was the countless wind chimes hanging at the top of each branch.

Whenever the wind blew, the sound of the wind chimes would spread for miles around.

Elder Yuchi spoke with gratitude to the white-haired, bearded old man standing in front of him, "My thanks to Master Di. This pagoda is truly a marvellous creation and will be the very foundation of Newlight City. Only Master Di is capable of

accomplishing such a feat."

The old man gazed at the pagoda with satisfaction before shaking his head and replying, "I dare not take another's credit; the inspiration for this pagoda came from Mayor An. All I can do is incorporate the ideas of others to achieve satisfactory results. I can rest easy with capable people like Mayor An in Newlight City."

This simple and plain looking old man was the famous music master Di Xinyuan. He had returned to the Induction Ground to retire, built the Hall of Nine Tones, and lived a carefree life ever since. When the blood disaster broke out, he roamed the world to avoid getting caught up in it.

Di Xinyuan was a new citizen. He lived a tough childhood, wandering from place to place and enduring many hardships before becoming a famous Master.

Music theory was not a mainstream area of interest. People had been seeking power since way before the blood disaster; who would bother studying music? As such, music masters were extremely rare throughout history.

Di Xinyuan was the only one still alive.

The construction of the Windy Resonant Pagoda had aroused his interest because a building of this size involving music theory was very rare.

Another reason was that he carried the status of being a new citizen.

The young Di Xinyuan had been slighted by others due to being a new citizen and thus developed an instinctive aversion to the aristocratic families. He rejected offers from many aristocratic families and chose to retire from the Induction Ground after his promotion to Master.

After the city expansion order and construction of new cities, he followed the flow and arrived at Newlight City.

He had initially been shocked by the Windy Resonant Pagoda's blueprint when An Chouchou showed it to him, then while participating in the project, he grew to appreciate the fatty whose name personified his look. He deliberately mentioned his admiration for An Chouchou to Yuchi Ba.

With his status, Yuchi Ba would not ignore his comments.

Yuchi Ba delightfully commented, "Newlight City can be without me, this old man, but not without Chouchou. The word 'elephant' in the name 'Ugly Elephant' is really appropriate. Where the elephant is, there is no fear of lions and tigers. God Nation has 'Sick Tiger' Bei Shuisheng, our Newlight City has 'Ugly Elephant' An Chouchou!"

An Chouchou was terrified. "Elder flatters me, but this is part of my duty. How can I compare with Bei Shuisheng?"

Yuchi Ba burst into loud laughter. "Why can’t you compare? I say you are comparable to him and I mean it. With you in charge of Newlight City, I will not have to worry about the upkeep of this pagoda."

Jingle, Jingle.

The clashing sounds of the fine wind chimes were like a pleasant tide and the countless silver flashes from the pagoda were like the sun illuminating the waves.

The edge of the pagoda emitted traces of faint silvery light, which was the metal wind.

"The wind is blowing!"

Yu Jin whispered, her tone revealing inexplicable joy and excitement. Her knotted hair bun was still so eye-catching. Time did not leave traces on her face, but like an invisible grindstone, it polished the spirit of her whole body.

The passing years were kind to her due to her attainment of Masterhood.

Tong Gui, who stood beside her, lifted his head. Under the glittering bronze mask, his stern looking eyes became deep. He was just standing there, exuding steel and copper breaths which felt bereft of life.

The time difference between their promotions to the level of Master was only three days.

Tong Gui gazed at the tall pagoda. The edge of the pagoda was lit up with a faint aura of silver light forming a ring; that was the ring of metal wind. The metal wind synergised with the clashing sounds of the Windy Resonant Pagoda to exert a magical force which attracted the wind.

Both the wind and metal elemental energy were continuously converging.

In a short period of time, the metal elemental energy around the Windy Resonant Pagoda was so abundant that it surprised Tong Gui. He did a brief calculation in his mind and before the result came out, Yu Jin, who was beside him, exclaimed, "The metal elemental energy gathered at the pagoda is equivalent to nine large metal elemental energy pools."

The two of them had a tacit understanding, so without saying anything, Yu Jin already knew what was on his mind.

Tong Gui enthused, "What a spectacular sight!"

An Chouchou listened to everyone’s admiration with such happiness that his eyes narrowed into slits and filled with excitement.

He was under immense pressure.

Madam Ye’s dishonourable behaviour in Skyheart City was well known. As they had insider information and knew more, he was therefore under even greater pressure.

The people present were all beaming. They understood the importance of the Windy Resonant Pagoda to Newlight City.

Master Di suddenly asked, "I have a question and hope Elder Yuchi can help to clear the doubts."

Yuchi Ba said generously, "Master Di, please speak your mind."

Master Di looked puzzled and said, "This pagoda is effective and powerful. It can be described as a powerful weapon for Newlight City; however, it gathers extremely huge amounts of metal elemental energy and will easily attract dire beasts. Why not build it in town? In this way, there will be no loss even though the collected metal elemental energy will be slightly weakened. Having more security is worth the slight loss in elemental energy."

Yuchi Ba heard and nodded. "What Master Di said is pertinent, but there is still one thing that has not yet been pointed out to Master Di. As I will be stationed in this pagoda, I intend to make use of the power of this pagoda to become a Grandmaster."

Master Di was startled with the sudden realization. "Elder is really ambitious!"

His eyes showed a trace of admiration. Yuchi Ba had failed in trying to become a Grandmaster before, but had the courage to try again. This was an extremely rare quality and reminded him of Le Buleng.

Dai Gang had been a prominent figure even before he became a Grandmaster. There were only a handful of people who could defeat him and Le Buleng was one of them.

Le Buleng had continuously failed to become a Grandmaster, but he never gave up. He was also aloof, which attracted many criticisms, but his firm resolution was something that even his enemies could not deny.

The impact on those who failed to become a Grandmaster was devastating. From time to time, there would be Masters who failed while trying to become a Grandmaster. For those fortunate enough to survive, their skill would be substantially reduced and they would also suffer a huge mental blow. Most people would never be able to emerge from the shadow of failure.

Therefore, when Master Di heard Yuchi Ba proclaiming his intention to challenge the level of Grandmaster once again, he knew how tough it was and really admired him for his decision.

Yuchi Ba looked calm and said in a slow, steady, and thunderous tone, "I have seen too much injustice since my childhood and have decided to become the voice of the new citizens. Unfortunately, there is a limit to what I can do and this makes me feel guilty. Before the blood disaster, I often sighed for the difficulties faced by the new citizens trying to survive. After the blood disaster, the

situation of the new citizens became even more difficult. I knew then that we were too weak. Only regimented people can survive; we cannot count on aristocratic families and the Elders Guild."

Those listening to Elder Yuchi were touched.

"I brought all of you here to build Newlight City and hope that we, the new citizens, can have a place here in these turbulent times. I know I am obscure and untalented, but achieving this stage is already my limit."

Others tried to speak, but he waved his hand in a self-deprecating manner. "It is not a disgrace to know your own limits. Now, the situation in Newlight City has stabilized and the foundation is firm. My mission has been completed and I have no more worries. I do not know what the future will be like and there is only so much I can do; however, after seeing An Chouchou's Windy Resonant Pagoda, I found another possibility and that is to make the breakthrough to the level of Grandmaster."

His speech was steady and smooth, but his tone was a bit heated and his eyes were piercingly sharp.

"This pagoda built in the wilderness will indeed attract dire beasts, but this is also my aim. I will kill thousands of beasts to breakthrough to the Grandmaster level. Either I become a Grandmaster or I will die. There is no other way."

He glanced at everyone and smiled. "If I am lucky, I will become a Grandmaster and carry everyone forward. If not, I will have tried

my best and will die without any regrets."

All of a sudden, Yu Jin’s eyes turned red while Tong Gui’s breathing became heavy and his fists clenched tightly.

An Chouchou was stifled by panic, but he remained still.

He understood better than anyone else that only a Grandmaster could be their anchor. Without a Grandmaster, they would never be able to reach the top tier and have any chance of winning.

Without a Grandmaster, it would only be a matter of time until they were annexed.

He guessed that Madam Ye knew what they were doing and must be making preparations. Only, he could not figure out what Madam Ye would do. Did Madam Ye really think she could achieve victory with only a bunch of Masters?

Elder Yuchi was sacrificing himself to give the new residents a measure of hope for survival.

Although Elder Yuchi was inferior in ability, planning, and strategizing compared to Madam Ye, he was much more committed as the leader of the new citizens.

Master Di was filled with respect and admiration.

Yuchi Ba looked up and gazed at the Windy Resonant Pagoda, saying to himself, "Ten days from now, I will ascend the pagoda. If you have something to ask, please do it quickly."

An Chouchou came forward and sternly said, "I have something that requires Elder’s decision."

Tong Gui and Yu Jin glared at An Chouchou, thinking that this fella really knows when to pick the time to throw in the spanner.

Yuchi Ba did not mind and smiled. "Chouchou, please speak up."

An Chouchou said in low voice, "There was a battle in Clearwater City some days ago..."

After listening to An Chouchou mention the Clearwater City incident, he nodded. "I know Ai Hui. We tried to recruit him before, but were rejected. I did not expect him to progress so quickly, he is indeed very talented. By mentioning this incident, Chouchou must have a deeper intention."

An Chouchou sighed. Elder was indeed a good man, but his sensitivity and reaction to some matters were too slow.

He replied in a low voice, "Clearwater City has changed its name to Thunder City. Now there is the first ever Lightning Master. Elder, do you remember Karakorum Savant, the first ever swordmaster? Nowadays, most of the Sky Edge Division are swordsmen."

Yuchi Ba reacted. "Chouchou, are you saying that Ai Hu has the ability to form a combat division?"

All of them were stunned.

An Chouchou looked solemn. "Karakorum Savant is in the front and Ai Hui is at the back. With the Sky Edge Division in front, is there any reason why a lightning-type combat division cannot be at the back?"

Yuchi Ba was astonished. "Chouchou, what do you mean?"

"We must recruit him at any cost!" His round face took on a domineering look and he said firmly, "If he does not want to join us, we cannot let him ally with Skyheart City!"

Chapter 468: Hesitation

Translator: YH Editor: TYZ, KLKL

Time is like a river. A river will flow through the desolate, barren ravines, bug -infested swamps, and also the snow-capped mountain as it starts to melt, while the birds and flowers begin to appear in the valley.

The Central Pine Valley, located under the Blackfish Mouth Volcano, was exactly what people deemed a paradise.

The drifting jadesword bamboo leaves flew gracefully in the sky as if they were green butterflies swirling in the air. These fluttering bamboo leaves would tremble in the air every now and then, producing a slight booming noise. Just like a sword chime, it started to generate minute torrents and this was followed by invisible waves of energy ripples.

Wood elementalists were meditating in the bamboo forests and a faint green halo was seen revolving around their bodies.

Colourful flowers bloomed everywhere in the bamboo forest and were intertwined with the defensive vines arranged by Duanmu Huanghun. It was a magnificent sight.

For a teenager who had an obsessive compulsive disorder, this was one of the compulsory aspects which had to be considered while designing the defence.

The biggest credit for the massive changes in Central Pine Valley went to Wang Xiaoshan.

Wang Xiaoshan labelled the construction of Central Pine Valley as "Moulding the Mud". Although there were many earth elementalists in Central Pine Valley, he was the only one that was proficient in construction. Basically, all the hard work was completed by him alone. It might have been tiring for someone else, but Wang Xiaoshan garnered pleasure from doing it.

There was no other place which had such a vast number of buildings for him to construct. Being in charge of military logistics in the past, he used to silently construct the buildings, and thereafter demolished them.

Central Pine Valley not only had a vast number of buildings, but there were other aspects which had to be taken into consideration as well. The most important aspects were the elemental energy flow, how the buildings harmonized with the surrounding elemental energies, and how they could further strengthen the elemental energies.

This was a field which Wang Xiaoshan had yet to explore.

Large amounts of elemental traces were found inside the buildings. This was the most popular and advanced theoretical detail. With the exception of Ai Hui and Lou Lan, the others were totally clueless about these things.

Wang Xiaoshan was a little fearful, but looked forward to what

was going to happen.

He wholly participated in and witnessed Master Han's [treating the city as a piece of cloth], therefore he had deeper emotions in this aspect. After he'd served as a warehouse logistics person in-charge in the past, he once thought that if he had considered the issue of elemental nodes right from the start when he was building the city, would it be possible to produce an elemental energy needle that allowed the nodes to be activated and deactivated? During peacetime, these elemental energy needles could be concealed by buildings. They could then be activated when dangers arose. Or could he use the buildings to serve as the elemental energy needles?

It was just that he was distressed about not having anyone to impart these skills to. In the market, any information related to elemental traces was extremely costly.

Thank goodness for Ai Hui, as he was Teacher's Wang only student.

Hugging a pile of items which Ai Hui disposed of, Wang Xiaoshan felt that he'd gained the most precious treasures and was deeply indulged in them. The entire Central Pine Valley was handed over to him together with plentiful materials. With such ideal conditions, this was something Wang Xiaoshan could never imagine, even when he was a person in-charge.

Lately, the five elemental energy pools had been very stable. Moreover, with Ai Hui's relentless effort, the scale of the pools had expanded exactly double in size.

Everyone made rapid improvements with the presence of concentrated elemental energies.

In this chaotic world, even the dumbest person would know that being capable was the only way to survive. This included Fatty who trained daily at all costs. Lou Lan’s elemental soup was what kept him this energetic.

Lou Lan’s elemental soup had already become what everyone anticipated the most everyday. Even the laziest or most fanatic person at training would not give Lou Lan’s elemental soup a miss.

With the sale of the snow lava, Central Pine Valley did not encounter any financial concerns. Furthermore, the price of the dire-beast based materials had been falling drastically. This proved that the elementalists already had a firm foothold in the Wilderness and were gradually turning the situation around. With the abundance of dire-beast-based materials, Lou Lan now had more areas in which to utilize his talent. Different types of elemental soup were being prepared daily. With a combination of high-grade and low-grade soups, it helped to further enhance the results as well.

Mister Dou put his bowl down and wanted to express himself, but regretfully said," Never did I expect that I would be retiring and enjoying my time in this small valley for the rest of my life."

Yang Xiaodong, who was standing at the side kept quiet, but could not hide the satisfaction on his face.

Ai Hui finished the bowl without a single drop left and was full of arrogance, " That is Lou Lan’s elemental soup, the best in the whole world!"

Lou Lan smiled till his eyes formed two crescent moons and happily replied, " Thank you everyone, Lou Lan will continue to work hard!"

Everyone couldn’t help but smile. Lou Lan, who was always filled with vitality, was Central Pine Valley’s most well received person. If anyone were to badmouth Ai Hui, a group of people would be formed immediately and the others would chime in to gossip. On the other hand, if anyone were to badmouth Lou Lan, a group of people would unrestrainedly bash the party. Neither would they ask for the reason, nor hear any excuse.

Mister Dou asked Ai Hui, " Have you found a place which to plant the Northern Underworld King Tree?

Ai Hui pondered, "There is a place, but I’m not sure if it will work."

From the start, he had already been eyeing Mister Dou’s Northern Underworld King Tree.

Using the Northern Underworld King Tree to battle would enhance their weakness. Wouldn’t being unable to move equate to being a free target? No matter how strong one’s defence was, a free target would definitely be attacked.

Although it was not ideal for battles, it definitely was an effective defence for the city.

However in reality, the Northern Underworld King Tree needed to absorb light rays in order for it to expand. By planting the tree in the valley, it will cause the entire valley to fall into pitch darkness. Without any light rays, other vegetation in the valley would then gradually wither to death.

The fish-mouth-like opening of the Blackfish Mouth Volcano was also the volcanic crater of the Volcano.

Within sight, a red ocean of bubbling, bright red lava could be seen surging endlessly. From time to time, columns of flames and black smoke could been seen squirting out of the magma and a concentrated sulphur smell pervaded the atmosphere.

Mister Dou nodded his head, "So this is the place you mentioned."

Actually, he had thought of this place before. He now had a better understanding towards the Northern Underworld King Tree and was already certain that it was not suitable for being planted in the the valley.

"Flames are also a type of light which the Northern Underworld King Tree would be able to absorb." Mister Dou affirmed the feasibility of this suggestion and continued, "But, there would be other problems faced. You would have to consider this carefully. One problem would be if the tree only absorbs the flames. I am also

uncertain of what would happen, but according to my understanding, the fountainhead of the elemental energy pools in the valley is this volcano. If the Northern Underworld King Tree swallows all the flames of this volcano, what will happen to the valley?"

Ai Hui was stunned, "It is able to absorb the entire volcano?"

A look of aghast was shown on every other person’s face.

Mister Dou warned them: "That’s right! This is the Northern Underworld King Tree. It was already a treasure during the Cultivation Era. As long as light was present, it would never be destroyed. Let alone one volcano, it was even possible to swallow ten times the number.

Ai Hui felt that this was a little tricky.

The Blackfish Mouth Volcano was the source of elemental energy of the Central Pine Valley. Suppose the fire elemental energy in the Blackfish Mouth Volcano actually got swallowed up, Central Pine Valley would not be able to sustain itself.

Ai Hui felt a quick shudder internally. He knew that the Northern Underworld King Tree was difficult to deal with. However, he never expected that it would be this formidable. Even if the five elemental pools in the Central Pine Valley revolved, the fire elemental energy drawn from the Blackfish Mouth Volcano would only be insignificant for the Northern Underworld King Tree. Unexpectedly, such a small thing could actually devour the

entire volcano and this was intimidating. He somewhat believed that this tree was derived from the abyss.

But, to ignore such a valiant treasure, Ai Hui did not want to resign to his fate.

He thought repeatedly, "How long will it take to devour the entire Blackfish Mouth Volcano?""

Mister Dou sighed, "It will not exceed three years."

Ss, everyone exhaled a breath of cold air.

The amount of fire elemental energy the five elemental pools absorbed annually was not even significant as compared to the entire Blackfish Mouth Volcano. Let alone three years, even if it's thirty years, one percent of the energy might not even be consumed. Nowadays, the amount of fire elemental energy consumed by Central Pine Valley was about the size of two Hellfire Pagoda Cannons. But even so, the amount of fire elemental energy consumed was considered negligible to the entire Blackfish Mouth Volcano.

From such an analogy, everyone then understood that the Northern Underground King Tree was a terrifying existence.

Even a fussy person like Shi Xueman had a sudden urge to do something. Being able to absorb such a huge amount of fire elemental energy proved how strong the Northern Underworld

King Tree was.

After the Northern Underworld King Tree absorbed the entire Blackfish Mouth Volcano, to what extent would it grow to? To what extent would it strengthen to? Even with the simplest imagination, a normal master would definitely not be its match. Moreover, it was the Northern Underworld King Tree absorbing the fire elemental energy. It was already seen as a treasure in the Cultivation Era, so how mysterious could it be?

Everyone’s breathing started to get heavy.

Three years later, they would be able to harvest a treasure tree which could possibly counter a Grandmaster. Nobody could resist such a temptation.

On the contrary, Ai Hui started to calm down. "It is not easy to dominate such a powerful treasure. We should not fill its stomach now, as when the time comes it might backstab us. Then the joke will be on us."

The others came to a sudden realization and vigilantly looked at Mister Dou. As Mister Dou was still a captive, he was not able to acquire everyone’s trust. A few of the quick-witted fellows must have thought that this was one of blind Mister Dou’s plots.

Could this be a sugared pill with poison?

Mister Dou was just as calm and there was no change in his voice,

"Definitely. I know my own limits, and therefore I do not dare to pursue this. I am unsure of what changes will occur when the Northern Underground King Tree grows to that degree. But there is one point which I can guarantee. Since the Cultivation Era, these types of treasures have only recognized their owners.

Many people revealed their disappointment. Mister Dou's words were very logical, but their problem went back to square one.

Supposing he had the strength of a Grandmaster, why would he still require the Northern Underworld King Tree? There would be no value if the full grown Northern Underworld King Tree still required the control of a Grandmaster.

However, Ai Hui was not disappointed and his eyes flashed,"Is this a gradual process?"

Mister Dou nodded his head and replied,"Yes, but I need to warn you. You might not be able to suspend it from absorbing the fire. The tree's current strength is already enormous enough to wear myself out. If it starts to absorb fire, I can guarantee that I will be no match for it in the future. Hence, you will have to think really carefully. If there are any accidents, please do not rely on me. At this old age, I only wish to enjoy my retirement and teach these kids."

Ai Hui revealed a rare look of hesitation on his face.

Chapter 469: Go Left, Or Go Right?

Having returned to the valley, Ai Hui had yet to make a firm resolution.

Risk and opportunity coexisted. The risk was big, but so was the opportunity. It was simply too hard to make a choice. Ai Hui had to be more than cautious, especially since the strength of the Northern Underworld King Tree would affect the foundation of Central Pine Valley's survival.

It was very unlikely for them to find another land with all five elements.

Life always offered many choices and each choice was a fork in the road. Whether it was left or right, his heart harbored expectations, but the landscape ahead was a riddle.

Fortunately, it wasn't urgent so Ai Hui had sufficient time to think things through and discuss it with everybody.

Central Pine Valley faced more pressing issues at the moment.

Lemon Camping Ground.

Li Yuanliang looked at the gathered crowd within the camping ground. Some were joyful while others had a headache.

Ever since Lemon Camping Ground became the delivery ground for snow lava between Central Pine Valley and Thunder City, the number of visiting elementalists rose rapidly. The small camping ground was now twice its initial size, but still unable to accommodate everyone.

The increase in traffic brought about a huge boost in business. Everything in life was a business, but where there were many people, there were also many problems.

Initially, Li Yuanliang had wanted to control the situation, but the elementalists who came in an endless stream quickly had him guilelessly retreating. If not for the Central Pine Valley's elementalists suppressing the crowd, Lemon Camping Ground would've been overturned long ago.

Central Pine Valley was aware of this situation as well, so people had been dispatched to guard the camping ground.

On one hand, it was to ensure that the transaction went on smoothly, and on the other hand, it was to prevent the crowd from advancing toward Central Pine Valley.

Seeing Jiang Wei, Li Yuanliang promptly went over and said with a bitter face, "Boss Jiang, what exactly did those in the Central Pine Valley say? This can't go on. The camping ground is about to explode. If these people go crazy, they will tear this place down."

Jiang Wei gave an apologetic look. "We did not expect this many people either. Sorry for causing such an inconvenience. Master Ai

had specially instructed me to compensate you all. It’s just a small gesture, so I hope everyone will kindly accept."

The elementalists behind him had already prepared the gifts.

Joy flashed across Li Yuanliang’s face. Central Pine Valley was rich and imposing, yet amiable when handling matters. Really rare indeed, he thought to himself.

He hurriedly added, "No, no, we’re all neighbors, so it’s no trouble at all, but your valley should make a decision soon. There are too many people hanging around this area. If things drag on, people will get restless and any slight instigation might lead to a human disaster."

Jiang Wei cupped his hands together and bowed, his expression grave. "Thanks for the reminder, Brother Li. Don’t worry, Central Pine Valley will not allow its partner to lose out. Having considered this unusual situation and to ensure the safety of Lemon Camping Ground, Master Yang will personally oversee this place."

He moved to the side, revealing Yang Xiaodong.

Li Yuanliang was shocked. To him, Masters were an eminent and unapproachable existence. He hurriedly fell to his knees. "Li Yuanliang paying respects to Master Yang!"

With a hum, Yang Xiaodong said loftily, "Get up."

He was more than unwilling to keep watch since it meant that there wasn’t going to be any elemental soup for him!

It was exceedingly difficult for him to enter the next realm, but it was also impossible for him to drop in base level, so it could be said that he had no desires or wishes. Ever since he’d tried Lou Lan’s elemental energy soup, it became something he looked forward to daily.

What a stupid broken camping ground. Let them die!

Anger filled his stomach and seeing these noisy fellows worsened his mood.

"Hmph!"

His snort swept across the whole camping ground like a cold stream and silence overtook all previous clamor.

The elementalists’ hair stood on end, their faces pale and minds blank.

All elemental energy within the camping ground congealed, suffocating the area, as if there was a rope strangling their throats.

Master!

This word jumped into the minds of those elementalists who had regained their senses.

Yang Xiaodong was like a proud rooster, scanning his surroundings coldly and withdrawing his might.

A snort that could shake the whole place. This was a Master.

The elementalists kept quiet out of fear, but quickly, they started getting agitated.

Fellows familiar with each other saw the excitement in one another's eyes. They admired and were inspired by Masters. A powerful figure could give everyone a sense of security in this chaotic world.

Jiang Wei sighed a breath of relief. A Master was indeed useful.

Seeing a Master for himself stirred something deep within Jiang Wei's heart. He couldn't help but tighten his fist. If he could advance to a higher base level, he would have more potential to unleash.

People within Central Pine Valley had long been arguing over this issue since everyone had different opinions, and Ai Hui was having a hard time deciding.

Everyone in the Central Pine Valley understood that they had to make an extremely pressing and crucial choice.

It had already been four months since the Battle of Thunder City. As agreed, Central Pine Valley would sell four batches of snow lava in exchange for a huge volume of resources and materials.

The hot sales of snow lava wasn't completely smooth-sailing.

Initially, the trade association under Qiao Meiqi kept pushing sales to fire elementalists, but quickly realized that business wasn't as good as predicted.

There were simply too few fire elementalists and they were too poor.

The elementalists in Beyond Avalon were mostly metal and water elementalists. They took up about 80 percent of the population while wood elementalists took up 10 percent. Fire and earth elementalists made up the last 10 percent.

This was because Dai Gang did not stop wood elementalists from entering Beyond Avalon and because the fire and earth elementalists' base camps, Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner, had fallen into the possession of the God Nation. The local earth and fire elementalists there had practically all turned into blood elementalists.

Fire elementalists were the minority to begin with, but the situation was getting worse.

Five years had passed since the fall of Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner, so fire and earth elemental materials were rare on the market. With a deficiency in resources and lands with fire and earth elemental energy, most of these elementalists were practically at a standstill in terms of their realms.

This stagnation made their living environment harsher.

Their situation did not improve even after entering the Wilderness. It became worse in fact. Any powerful and resourceful aristocratic family would not waste a large quantity of resources on building a fire or earth elemental city.

The fire elemental areas in Beyond Avalon were made up of small scale towns, some established by groups of fire elementalists. These towns, lacking in resources and defense, were in imminent danger. Even more fire elementalists were struggling in some of the forward camps. They had no ability to purchase expensive high-grade fire liquid like snow lava.

As a rich merchant, Qiao Meiqi was clear headed. He did not reduce the price despite poor sales. Instead, he changed his target consumers from ordinary elementalists to weaponsmiths. Weaponsmiths were only consecrated because of their abilities and might. They had a high purchasing power.

Snow lava was an effective tool for tempering weapons, so the product immediately caused an uproar in that community.

The snow lava in Qiao Meiqi’s hands rapidly ran out.

However, this hot market brought about another effect.

Qiao Meiqi vigorously marketed the product, building up the reputation of snow lava. Fire elementalists who couldn't afford it knew that its production ground had to be in a fire elemental city. Only a place with abundant fire elemental energy and high achievements could refine and produce such an item.

For struggling fire elementalists, a city that could refine snow lava was like a wisp of hope in the cold winter.

Central Pine Valley was much stronger now, and Ai Hui and the gang had no intentions of concealing it. Its location was quickly figured out by other people.

Many fire elementalists followed Qiao Meiqi's caravans to Lemon Camping Ground. They thought of ways to enter Central Pine Valley, but luckily, there were guards stationed at the camping ground so they hurriedly went back to report the situation.

Central Pine Valley then sent out elementalists to maintain order in the camping ground.

The fire elementalists pleaded. They were willing to pay any price in exchange for a place to live in.

This sudden situation brought about mixed responses. Some thought that this was a good opportunity to expand the city since

they would need a lot of manpower in order to do so, and they couldn't keep relying on just the few hundreds of people within the valley. Others thought differently. They believed the news that the valley contained all five elements would leak out once they let these people in.

Central Pine Valley wasn't weak and moderately powerful forces wouldn't dare to invade. However, once the news of this precious land leaked, things might change.

To those peak forces, this was an irresistible temptation.

Many more were starting to go on punitive expeditions, and over the past four months, there had already been many battles between cities.

Everyone was in a difficult spot.

The situation quickly took a turn for the worse as metal elementalists started showing up in the camping ground in increasing numbers. Only after asking was it apparent that these metal elementalists arrived in hope of following the footsteps of the first ever Lightning Master.

It was just like how Karakorum Sword League's first master swordsman had attracted a huge volume of elementalists wanting to join them.

Ai Hui's current reputation also attracted a huge volume of metal

elementalists.

There were even more metal than fire elementalists in the camp. After all, there was a higher number of metal elementalists to begin with.

Everyone guessed that Master Ai might construct a lightning-type combat division, so it was a rare opportunity for many.

The sudden increase in elementalists really crammed up the camping ground. Even after two rounds of expansion, the camping ground wasn't big enough to accommodate everyone.

There were dangers in such rapid expansion so, to maintain security amid such severe circumstances, Yang Xiaodong had been sent to keep watch. Finally, the situation started to stabilize.

People in Central Pine Valley, however, had yet to make up their minds.

They stopped arguing since all opinions had been expressed. They were merely waiting for Ai Hui to make the final call.

To go left or right?

The situation outside was becoming more grim, and there wasn't much time for him to ponder and hesitate.

Two months ago, Ye Baiyi had completed all the preparation work to mobilize an army, and the troops had already set out.

The scale of the army was very large and mighty. Ye Baiyi had reached an unprecedented standard.

The atmosphere was extremely tense.

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The three central divisions kept control as Madam Ye represented the Elders Guild to read a speech the Great Elder had written before he passed and shared speeches by well-known people from the later generations.

"... This is a matter of life and death. There's no choice but to unite Beyond Avalon. Big cities, small cities, men, women, aristocrats, new citizens... Those who wish to live must fight bravely. Only then can our nation be protected and the women and children be saved! The three central divisions of the Avalon of Five Elements have had a long history. They have had outstanding military service and are extremely glorious. They are our role model, the sharpest blade around. Hereto, the Elders Guild has decided to prepare for war. Surveillance Division, take order. Do not disobey if assigned a mission. Do not pay lip service. Judgement Division will take over if there are dissidents! All battle teams at the front line must not fear battle and must not retreat. Those who withdraw will be dealt with by the Dread Division!"

Chapter 470: Ai Hui's Decision

The atmosphere in Central Pine Valley was rather tense.

It was the last day for Ai Hui to make his decision on whether or not to allow outsiders into Central Pine Valley. Everyone in Central Pine Valley was very concerned about this since it involved their future.

Ai Hui was ruthless and crafty, cold and uncompassionate, but direct and efficient when it came to decision-making. He was never sloppy about it. Ever since the establishment of Central Pine Valley, everyone had already gotten used to Ai Hui's sharp and clean method of addressing and solving problems.

The unending hesitation and doubts he currently faced were rarely seen.

Everyone sat neatly on the floor, their faces focused. Other than the increase in their strength, the long days of training were now done according to the rules of a combat division, so they acted in unison and were as good as one.

Mister Dou sat quietly in a corner, feeling inwardly apprehensive. Before he came, he'd heard about the Central Pine Faction, but was unconcerned. There were merely a few hundred members, so what was the big deal? He only got a shock after interacting with these youngsters.

These youngsters were diligent, assiduous, extremely disciplined,

intensely passionate, had complete trust in their partners, and trained hard despite criticism.

Mister Dou had traveled extensively and seen all kinds of people. He'd also seen many powerful figures, but none had left the same impression on him as these youngsters had.

Plus, they were so young.

Their abilities were changing almost everyday. Coupled with the Master-grade elemental soup that was provided daily, their intense devilish training was constantly improving and unleashing their potential.

Many youngsters had left a deep impression on him. Duanmu Huanghun, Jiang Wei, Fatty, Sang Zhijun, Wang Xiaoshan, and so on.

It was a blessing that the children from the hill village would be able to grow up in such an environment.

Ai Hui strode onto the stage with a stern expression. Without beating around the bush, he directly announced, "In 15 days, we will start accepting fire and metal elementalists from the outside. I have taken two main points into consideration. First, the situation outside is bad, a big war is imminent, and we might be conscripted. We need to expand our strength as soon as possible to prepare for battle. Perhaps some of you might wonder why we have to adhere to the conscription? Skyheart City is able to assert pressure on us under the name of righteousness and justice. We won't be able to

go against the three central divisions. Not only us, but any of the other settlements as well. Second, why are we all gathering in the first place? Revenge! We must not miss the opportunity to battle the God Nation!"

Those below sat upright and motionless, but upon hearing the word "revenge" they reflexively clenched their fists.

Ai Hui’s gaze was as cold as a light flickering and reflecting off a crystal. His delivery was clear. "Our train of thought is simple. First, we have to guard and strengthen ourselves from being regarded by Skyheart City as cannon fodder. Second, we have to destroy the Blood of God. These two goals can’t be achieved by the mere hundreds of us here. Building our own combat divisions is what we have to do."

Mister Dou was full of admiration and couldn’t help but see Ai Hui in a different light. A few words were all it took for him to analyze and explain the current situation. He’d thought that Ai Hui was crafty, sharp, and petty-minded, but now he understood that there was a reason why Shi Xueman and the others chose to follow him.

The others nodded. Even if they had differing opinions, they couldn’t deny the logic behind Ai Hui’s speech.

"But Central Pine Valley is our foundation. If it was exposed at this time, Skyheart City would most definitely have designs on us. They would then, in the name of righteousness, place pressure on us and we would eventually have to give it up. So, I’ve decided to construct another city atop the Blackfish Mouth Volcano. We only

have 50 days to do so. Are you confident, Xiaoshan?"

Ai Hui looked toward Wang Xiaoshan and others followed.

Wang Xiaoshan's face turned red, his heart palpitating. Ai Hui had asked him in private a few days back and he'd been losing sleep over this question. He only felt his body trembling uncontrollably when asked in public. It was as if there was a ball of flames igniting in his heart.

He'd never been tasked with such an important mission...

Wang Xiaoshan tried his best to calm his surging emotions, but as he was about to say what was on his mind, all that came out was, "I... I'll try my best!"

Ai Hui shook his head. "Do not try your best. You have to accomplish it."

Wang Xiaoshan took a deep breath, his muscles tightening. He clenched his teeth, shouting, "I can do it!"

With these four words, the fire in his chest thrived and his veins burned. Wang Xiaoshan was indescribably excited.

This was an unprecedented challenge!

"Alright, I'll leave that to Xiaoshan then," Ai Hui said firmly,

without the least bit of sloppiness. He directed his gaze to the rest. "We, too, have many things to attend to. There are many fire and metal elementalists in Lemon Camping Ground, so we have to select from them. We will establish two combat divisions. One of them, "Sword of Lightning" will be commanded by me. The other, "Spear of Heavy Cloud" will be commanded by Xueman. You guys will be the backbone. Be it fire or metal elementalists, you guys can do as you deem fit. Other than that, we are going to recruit a batch of fire elementalists to make up our reserves. There is plenty of fire elemental energy here, so we shouldn't waste it."

The audience was getting excited.

Team expansion meant that they would be able to lead troops. They were all youngsters who hoped to assume personal responsibilities.

Ai Hui continued in a deep voice, "As for how many we should take in and how we should conduct the selection process, you guys can discuss it with Xueman. Take note that all selection must be completed within 15 days! That leaves us with little time left."

Shi Xueman appeared cool, but her heart was pounding. With regard to Ye Baiyi's army pressing forward, she was most concerned about her father. Now that she could lead a battle team of her own and move to the front line to fight alongside her father, the desire for combat burned intensely.

She stood up and saluted. "Yes!"

Ai Hui turned his gaze toward Blind He. "Master He, is the sword finished?"

Blind He shook his head. "I need a few more days because there are some small issues, but it won't take more than 15 days."

"Good." Ai Hui addressed Zhao Boan directly, "Boan, we can release more snow lava to stock up on our resources."

Zhao Boan replied immediately, "Yes!"

Ai Hui looked around and added in a low voice, "The war is going to happen some time soon. From now until the day it starts, time is precious and essential. Please train hard and try your best to stay alive. Get to work!"

Everyone immediately dispersed and Central Pine Valley started bustling with activity.

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Ai Hui and Mister Dou arrived at Blackfish Mouth Volcano.

Mister Dou asked all of a sudden, "Are you sure about this?"

"Yes, I am." Ai Hui stood at the mouth of the volcano, watching the roiling lava. He added, "Time waits for no man. Let's discuss more when this is done and leave future affairs for the future."

With Ye Baiyi's army pressing forward, a major war was inevitable. It was a long awaited war, and if they lost, all of the Silver Mist Sea and Cloud Palette Village would fall into the Blood of God's domain.

Beyond Avalon would be directly exposed before the Blood of God. Doors would be opened, and they would be driven further into the Wilderness like stray dogs.

This was an unacceptable outcome in Ai Hui's eyes.

Yet, no matter what, their current situation was much better than before. In the past, they had no Masters at all, but now they had four, and everybody's abilities had improved drastically. Initially, he'd even thought of selling Central Pine Valley to fetch a good price, but the monthly sales of snow lava were bringing them a significant supply of resources.

As compared to the Blood of God, they were still very weak, but when it came to small scale, local battles, they weren't at all helpless.

Thinking about being able to wage war against the Blood of God, Ai Hui felt his blood race.

This was his and everyone's long cherished wish.

The fire elemental energy in the volcano could only sustain the

Northern Underworld Tree for three years? Who could care so much at this time? It was hard to say for sure that the valley would still be around at that time.

Mister Dou asked, "Where do we plant it?"

Ai Hui’s eyes flickered. "Wait a minute."

With his eyes closed he held onto the Wintry Jade Blade and sensed the surrounding elemental energy waves. The waves were like accumulated, disordered ripples, but Ai Hui remained exceptionally calm as he sieved through these chaotic signals.

Time passed and Ai Hui stood as still as a statue.

Mister Dou sized Ai Hui up out of interest. There were no elemental energy waves around Ai Hui, but from his perception they seemed to become indistinct.

Interesting.

Ai Hui opened his eyes suddenly, the light in them flickering. He flew upward in a swift motion and landed on a rock.

"Here!"

The rock was about the size of a millstone and had a protruding section that extended into the lava.

Mister Dou sensed the nearby rocks, but felt nothing special. He asked doubtfully, "You sure?"

Ai Hui answered certainly, "Here."

"All right then."

Without asking further, Mister Dou felt rather interested instead. Ai Hui was the only pupil of Wang Shouchuan. Could it be that there was a particular reason behind this choice?'

He strolled toward that rock.

Disregarding disabilities, as long as one rose to become a Master, solutions could be found. While Mister Dou had no regards for worldly things, his sense of awareness was as good as his sight. He could clearly assess the surrounding environment.

Mister Dou took a deep breath, his elemental energy surging. He had a grave expression on his face as he muttered to himself. Suddenly, the Northern Underworld King Tree in his hand was shrouded by a sheet of darkness.

He stuck the staff into the lava with a quick and sharp motion.

The staff shook as an invisible energy wave was released, as if there was an invisible palm flattening out the whole lava lake.The

surging and rolling lava became as level as a mirror as it emitted bright red light.

Oblique light pillars shot out from the flat lake surface, unceasingly gathering and collecting on the staff.

The light ray at the mouth of the mountain dimmed instantly before a sheet of black took over and illuminated the oblique light pillars.

Mister Dou's jaw dropped as he could feel changes occurring, but wasn't able to identify them. Even the familiar staff produced an unfamiliar energy.

He was in shock.

The red light enveloped the staff, causing its leaves to grow continuously. The surrounding darkness became more profound as well.

Ai Hui fixed his eyes on the ceaselessly sprouting Northern Underworld King Tree as it swallowed the flames nonstop like a huge whale.

Countless strands of fire elemental energy transformed into flames that were being swallowed up by the staff.

Although the future was unknown, there was no fear.

"Go," Ai Hui said, before rising up through of the darkness and out of the mouth of the volcano.

Chapter 471: Flames

A boiling cauldron of voices could be heard within Lemon Camping Ground, as if people were celebrating a festival.

Gu Xuan took in the surrounding environment and was rather shocked to see the excitement and joy in people's faces. He carried a sword, his hair worn up in a bun which was kept in place with a wooden hairpin. His sparse stubble was well trimmed and stiff, making him look more robust.

He'd already found a few swordsmen and even more metal elementalists. The place was bustling with activity.

Lemon Camping Ground was overcrowded, yet orderly, and no one caused any problems. There had been a few troublemakers two days back who were killed by Master Yang on the spot. Their corpses were thrown outside the camp.

Gu Xuan wasn't used to to this. The aura of a Master swept across the camping ground unceasingly, and every time this happened, the keen and perceptive Gu Xuan would automatically grab hold of his sword hilt.

The pressure a Master exerted was really terrifying.

Gu Xuan was full of anticipation.

He'd entered the Third Elemental Realm two years ago, but had

been unable to reach the doorstep of the level of Master. In order to seek out opportunities to become a Master, he went deep within the Wilderness and tried finding solutions through battling.

He gained more and more battle experience and his techniques underwent some tempering. However, he still had no clue in regards to his Path of Master.

He then came over here upon bumping into a group of elementalists who were headed for Central Pine Valley. Everyone was feeling very excited over the first ever Lightning Master, since they'd never seen the power of the lightning.

Different from other elementalists, Gu Xuan wasn't only curious about the lightning, but also about Ai Hui's swordsmanship. His curiosity stemmed from the battle with Han Li.

Gu Xuan had seen Han Li's admirable swordsmanship. In two years, Han Li emerged as the most talented and outstanding genius within Karakorum Sword League, leaving Gu Xuan feeling ashamed and inferior.

Yet, Han Li had been defeated by Ai Hui's sword.

Upon hearing this news, the whole audience was stunned. To have been able to defeat Han Li, how strong must've Ai Hui's swordsmanship and achievements been?

Having been unable to find his own path of swordsmanship, Gu

Xuan decided to visit Ai Hui in the Central Pine Valley, but was startled by the surging crowd upon reaching Lemon Camping Ground. He did not expect there to be this many people hoping to enter Central Pine Valley.

Since there was a Master keeping watch, Gu Xuan saw Central Pine Valley's potential in a new light.

Just before, Shi Xueman had brought a group of people to the camping ground, which caused a commotion. Many were excited as they'd guessed what was going on.

Indeed, Shi Xueman announced the valley's decision to recruit new members for her combat division.

"Spear of Heavy Cloud"?

No one cared about the name. They raised their heads and looked around, waiting for Shi Xueman to relay the details.

Shi Xueman had a high position in the valley. She was a Master and was born into an aristocratic family, so in terms of abilities and family history, she was being favored wholeheartedly. Even if those people weren't able to learn any lightning techniques, they would be more than glad to be able to follow Miss Shi.

Four earth elementalists stepped forward to repair the fire reservoir. Shi Xueman then poured in a whole bottle of snow lava.

Her act pained many in the audience. One bottle was really expensive!

The sale of snow lava was going very well and at a high price, facts known to all fire elementalists. This high-grade fire liquid was a valuable item that most fire elementalists couldn’t afford, so many people started to feel that Central Pine Valley was rich and imposing. In this chaotic world, that meant more resources, better equipment and a higher rate of survival.

Excitement was evident in people’s faces and some were already eager to give it a try.

Those fire elementalists with no roof over their heads were even more fired up. It was obvious that this fire reservoir was prepared specially for fire elementalists.

Sang Zijun, who was standing beside Shi Xueman, stood forward and announced, "Fire elementalists able to stay in the fire reservoir for an hour will pass the test."

The faces of many fire elementalists changed slightly. The fire elemental energy in the fire reservoir was exceptionally thick and no different from lava. It was a major challenge even for fire elementalists.

Gu Xuan was guessing to himself the meaning behind this test.

The congealed air surrounding Shi Xueman was sufficient to

shock Gu Xuan, who was observing from afar. He knew that she was already a Master, but had thought that she'd just been promoted. Experienced elementalists could testify that a new Master's realm needed time to stabilize.

Yet, Shi Xueman's breath was concentrated and fixed. It was steady and solid, not at all unstable.

There was no sign indicating that she'd just been promoted to the level of Master.

Gu Xuan's perception of the Central Pine Valley's abilities rose a notch once again. A new Masters' abilities and combat strength were unstable. They required time to settle down and adapt.

He did not know how Shi Xueman did it, but it was clear that her abilities far exceeded those of ordinary Masters.

The fire reservoir was huge and could accommodate fifty elementalists.

Fifty fire elementalists stayed in the fire reservoir, as if soaking in a bath. It was a strangely pleasing sight but no one laughed. The dense fire elemental energy abraded the elementalists' bodies, turning their faces bright red.

Weaker fire elementalists started to open their mouths to breathe. Their burning hot breaths were mixed with wisps of flames.

Gu Xuan thought about snow lava. Fire elemental energy must be abundant in the valley, to the point where they were able to use such aggressive methods to train. This was definitely a cruel practice, but it was also definitely effective and could increase one's abilities within a short period of time.

Many of the observing fire elementalists standing around the fire reservoir had the same realization and were getting very excited.

That's right, excited.

Fire elementalists did not mind if training was cruel. They were only concerned about its effectiveness in improving their abilities. They were without a home and had been at a standstill in terms of base level, so their yearning for proper training far exceeded that of other elementalists.

In this chaotic world, there was no time for you to train at your own pace. Those who weren't able to progress quickly enough would become the food of dire beasts or corpses lying on the battlefield.

What were cruel trainings methods compared to death?

They had stagnant base levels and abilities, and could only watch as other metal and water elementalists of similar abilities improved and left them behind. They had no chance to catch up at all.

It had been their unswerving determination that got them through five whole years of despair.

Now that a chance presented itself in front of them, who would mind, no matter how cruel?

Pain could be seen in the participating fire elementalists' faces but no one gave up. They knew that this was a rare opportunity and that no second chance would be given once they stepped out of the fire reservoir.

They did not want to fall back into that familiar despair.

Hu!

A wisp of flame rose from a fire elementalist's head and his hair was gone in an instant. His face was fierce looking, his veins bursting open. Each facial muscle was trembling as bean sized sweat beads surfaced and immediately evaporated, leaving only white salt. He opened his mouth wide but no howl or wailing could be heard.

He was afraid that making noise would mean disqualification.

Flames started igniting along his cheeks, his skin spreading open like butter and revealing fresh, red flesh. The flames extended down his neck and shoulders as the intense pain made his body shake violently, nibbling away at his bones.

No noise made.

He would rather turn into bones amid those flames than return to that despair.

The flames spread and gnawed at his shoulders, arms and fingertips. His body started to struggle less as that sinister, devilish face and those raging eyes gradually became hollow.

Silence filled the camping ground.

The metal elementalists were overwhelmed with shock and the fire elementalists' cheeks were streaming with tears.

Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun were moved. They, too, had been shocked, but the person who the most affected was Fatty.

Fatty stared blankly at the fire reservoir as a third of those fire elementalists were already smoking. It had only been half an hour, so according to their agreement these elementalists had failed.

It was impossible for them to last an hour.

Even if they did persevere, they would ultimately turn into scattered ashes and smoke. They simply wouldn't survive.

Yet, no one moved.

Rib bones of the fire elementalist, who was in the worst situation, could be seen burning amid the flames. He was barely conscious and his eyes started to slacken and roll up.

"Take him out and give him immediate treatment."

Shi Xueman’s voice broke the silence. She took a deep breath, calming the agitation within her heart. The unfolding scene had a huge impact on her.

The elementalists beside her hurriedly pulled this elementalist out and extinguished the flames on his body. Lou Lan quickly went forward to treat him.

The fire elementalist lay motionless, his eyes unfocused.

Shi Xueman declared seriously, "You’re recruited."

The pupils in his empty eyes moved slightly, his breath pausing for a moment before regaining stability.

Lou Lan said quickly, "He passed out."

"Curable?"

"Yes, Xueman."

A reservoir full of fire elementalists, a reservoir full of flames. They were flames that rose from the despairing abyss, over high mountains and toward the horizon, waiting for the sun to rise.

They were flames of vitality. Flames that yearned for dignity.

No one noticed Ai Hui standing atop a newly constructed tower in another corner of the camping ground. He was observing the situation from afar.

After a long while he jumped down and continued working, all without speaking a word.

Till now, his Sword of Lightning was still an empty shell. He was the only member and the division leader.

It could be inferred from its name that this combat division had two unique features, lightning and swordsman. Jiang Wei and gang were very strong and had high tactic accomplishments. It would be much easier for Ai Hui to form a combat division with their help.

After careful deliberations, Ai Hui decided to start from ground zero because he had a bold idea.

Influenced by Karakorum Sword League to continue improving themselves, swordsmen had generally grown stronger. Nevertheless, the majority of good swordsmen had joined Sky Edge

Division.

Till now, the new Sky Edge Division had yet to prove their abilities. In other words, the swordsmen had yet to prove their value.

Ai Hui found it hard to recruit capable and outstanding swordsmen. He had to nurture them from scratch.

That meant that he was very short on time.

Producing a combat division with significant combat strength within such a short period of time was a challenging task.

Ai Hui had some ideas, which he would have to test in order to assess their accuracy.

He was in a camp Wang Xiaoshan had built when they first arrived at Lemon Camping Ground. The surrounding walls blocked off the sunlight from outside so no one knew that there were towers, with grass swords inserted, sitting within those walls. The number of towers was increasing too.

The towers were built in picturesque disorder, suggesting a pattern. Ai Hui's quiet figure shuttled back and forth, within the walls, without stopping.

Chapter 472: Guest

Before Ai Hui could finish his sword tower, an emissary from the Gong Residence appeared at Lemon Camping Ground.

He was about fifty years old and had kind brows. He was always smiling and his skin was well maintained. It was obvious that he had been living like a prince for a long time as there was a natural air of nobleness surrounding him.

The housekeeper, Mister Wang, spoke very slowly and in a harmonious tone. It was pleasant listening to him.

"... My master heard about this and the family was rejoicing over it. Old Madam cried a lot too and was traumatized by it. She said that luckily Master Ai was around, or else it would have been too late to regret if a serious mistake was made. Master Ai's kindness will not be forgotten. Master Ai's chosen his path and my residence is too late in congratulating him. It's a great disrespect, but things had been delayed over that side. Master and Madam are still brooding over the incident and unable to justify it. Now the things with that side have been settled, Master Ai can get an explanation and the residence will be able to return his kindness..."

A whole load team of gifts followed. There were many of them and they weighed a lot. Those present were left speechless.

Just the list alone was a long scroll.

Ai Hui glanced over the list and was flabbergasted. The majority

of the items on that list were resources related to battling or materials that could be used in the workshop. It seemed that the Gong Residence had been watching them and knew what resources they needed.

He kept the gift list, a smile appearing on his face. "How kind of your residence! Please send my greetings to Master and Madam Gong!"

Housekeeper Wang sighed a breath of relief upon seeing Ai Hui's straightforward acceptance of the gifts, his smile widening. "Do not worry about the Assembly of Patriarchs. Everything has been taken care of cleanly."

Ai Hui then realized that "that side" referred to the Assembly of Patriarchs. He asked out of curiosity, "Oh, how did you guys do it?"

Housekeeper Wang replied smilingly, "The Assembly of Patriarchs lost two Patriarchs and one is heavily injured. Five divisions were torn down so they had to get someone to relay a message and mediate."

Ai Hui shivered inwardly. The Gong Residence was really powerful. He asked, "But what about the two Patriarchs from before?"

Housekeeper Wang shook his head. "No, I heard that the two of them had been severely injured by you. The mayor wanted the other party to hand them over, but the Assembly of Patriarchs hoped to use other means to compensate. Sensing their sincerity

the mayor agreed, albeit reluctantly."

Ai Hui felt an indescribable sense of relief knowing that they weren't the two Patriarchs from before. Although he'd only interacted with Jiu Gui once, he truly did not wish to hear news of his death.

Seeing Jiu Gui reminded him of the deceased Hua Kui.

Ai Hui did not ask what the Assembly of Patriarchs's sincerity meant, but he figured they must have offered a sufficient price, or the Gong Residence would never agree to a settlement.

This was also Ai Hui's first time experiencing what the deep foundation of an aristocratic family signified.

Having been inside, Ai Hui knew how influential the Assembly of Patriarchs was. It was a power not to be trifled with currently. If not for the fact that the Assembly of Patriarchs was after his snow lava, Ai Hui would not provoke them. But for the Assembly of Patriarchs to be tamed by the Gong Residence, the latter must be even more imposing.

Ai Hui was beyond glad that there were no conflicting interests between the Gong Residence and himself.

The Gong Residence probably thought the same, hence the generous gifts.

Housekeeper Wang's attitude validated his guess. Especially upon hearing that Shi Xueman was going to establish her own combat division, he offered a batch of additional resources on the spot. From this, it could be inferred that Housekeeper Wang had significant power of speech back in the residence, since he was able to make decisions on his own.

Ai Hui asked casually, "How's the situation in the Shi family? It's been a long time since Xueman went back."

He felt it slightly strange that the Gong Residence sent supplies immediately upon hearing that Shi Xueman was going to start a combat division, when Iron Lady's own family, also an influential family, appeared unconcerned about her ever since she'd joined Central Pine Faction.

Housekeeper Wang stopped himself before any word escaped his lips.

Ai Hui sensed the change in his expression and pressed, "What's the problem?"

Housekeeper Wang looked to the sides before saying in a lowered voice, "Please tell Miss Xueman not to go home, no matter what, for the time being."

Ai Hui was jolted. It seemed that something bad really happened to Iron Lady's family. He asked softly, "What's the matter?"

Housekeeper Wang only shook his head.

Seeing that, Ai Hui did not press him for an answer but kept that in mind. He would get someone to investigate as soon as possible. Ai Hui wasn’t too worried, since Iron Lady was now a Master who had power of speech no matter where she went. Not many could force her into doing things against her will.

Plus, the gang had her back.

Housekeeper Wang was very knowledgeable and tactful. Money and power helped in any occupation. He spoke wittily, making people feel refreshed and not the least bit tired. More importantly, he was very generous and said the line many a times, "Oh, my residence has a solution. We’ll send it over in a few days’ time."

Might cannot be bent. Riches and honor must be feared.

Ai Hui loved chatting with these rich people. Time is precious? Not at all! No time? Time was like water in a sponge, definitely there when squeezed!

Come, come. Come chat with me. Hit me with your money!

Both host and guest were joyful and started calling each other brother in the blink of an eye.

Ai Hui had wanted to gain more tangible benefits from Housekeeper Wang, but soon realized that he had fast and

abundant channels for obtaining news. No matter what he said, Housekeeper Wang could provide insights he wasn’t already aware of.

For example, the front line was having a confrontation, Sky Edge and Infantry Divisions were already waiting to take action and that they were going to assist North Sea Division on the front line. Also, resources everywhere had risen over seventy percent in price, and the three central divisions had many different ideas.

Ai Hui listened with keen interest. These insider pieces of news were things he wouldn’t be able to get elsewhere.

Housekeeper Wang asked suddenly, "My boy, when do you think the big war will start?"

Ai Hui wrinkled his brows, the smile on his face fading. His mind became exceptionally calm as he answered, "When Master An Muda dies."

Ai Hui realized what he’d said only after he said it.

Housekeeper Wang was shaken. No matter how he tried to conceal it, he wasn’t able to hide that sudden change in his emotions.

.....

Assembly of Patriarchs.

Autumn Water lay on the bed unconscious. Her face was pale and bloodless, her bare skin withered and cracked. She was like a dried up water bed that had been exposed to the Sun for a long period of time. Her former charm and beauty was no longer visible.

"Still not awake?"

The man who spoke was about twenty-five or twenty-six years old. He was handsome looking and had a small cinnabar on his forehead. It was exceptionally beautiful. His face was flawless and even fairer than a lady's skin. His nose bridge was tall and straight, his gaze deep and blurred. His delicate and fine eyebrows would knit once in awhile, subconsciously revealing his state of distress.

He had a very strange name – Hong Rongyan.

[Hong Rongyan - literally meaning 'Red complexion'.]

Even within the Assembly of Patriarchs, few had heard of this name. He seldom showed himself, but Jiu Gui dared not show any disrespect before him.

The Assembly of Patriarchs's second Patriarch, Hong Rongyan.

Worry flashed across Jiu Gui's face. "No, her body is about to stop operating. I had to feed her fusion elixir to keep her breathing till now."

Fusion elixir was a life sustaining elixir that was troublesome and expensive to refine so only the Assembly of Patriarchs would produce and allocate it. It required all five types of elemental energy and the refining work process was extremely complex. Any negligence would waste all previous efforts.

Fusion elixir contained pure fusion elemental energy. For everyone in the Assembly of Patriarchs, their lives could continue as long as they still had their last breath.

If not for the desperate situation Autumn Water had fallen into, Jiu Gui wouldn’t have been able to part with his fusion elixir.

Worry was still evident in Hong Rongyan’s face. His voice sounded pleasant, carrying an irresistible charm and faint grief. "The might of lightning really is domineering. This is also the predestined fate of Autumn Water. It’s too dangerous to entrust the mental state to foreign objects. Any slight incautiousness and you’ll be devoured."

"Yeah." Jiu Gui sighed. "But it’s her path."

Every Master had a different path. Some had grand, mainstream paths while others had a more lateral and unorthodox path. The latter group was unable to envy the former.

Everyone was different. So were their paths.

Jiu Gui’s [Sky Palace Possession Technique] was also extremely

dangerous. The moment he lost control, the beast within the alcohol would turn against its master and take over, causing him to lose all awareness and reason, and become a beast in the form of a human.

Hong Rongyan sighed. There was no answer to this question. He asked, changing the topic, "Did Mister Shao agree?"

"No!" Jiu Gui seemed slightly angry. "That old fellow is stubborn and refuses to agree. If not for his frail body I would've dealt with him!"

Of course Jiu Gui was furious. With Autumn Water being in this state, they needed to remake a human puppet. It was said that Mister Shao was an outstanding earth elementalist and was an expert at refining sand puppets. Jiu Gui requested for his help, but did not expect to get rejected so directly.

He'd even conducted special investigations. It was unknown when Mister Shao had entered the Assembly of Patriarchs, but he'd never been seen refining a sand puppet. If he wasn't reading, he would be sitting around. He'd never made any contributions to the Assembly of Patriarchs.

What was more strange was the fact that there were guards watching over such an idler, although no one bothered him.

Jiu Gui was very clear that the Assembly of Patriarchs treated people who made no contributions heartlessly. Those unable to display their worth would live terribly within the Assembly of

Patriarchs. As for respecting the wise and so on, these were things that did not apply there.

There had been arrogant craftsmen who were quickly put in order and made docile, contributing whatever they could.

This old man, however, lived a good life so Jiu Gui found it strange.

Hong Rongyan shook his head. "Don’t be disrespectful."

Although his tone was mild, Jiu Gui was apprehensive. "Could it be that this Mister Shao is a big figure?"

Hong Rongyan shook his head without answering. "Just relay the orders."

Jiu Gui felt somewhat relieved. Seeing that the fellow was old and weak, he had not attacked Mister Shao. Something was weird, definitely. He hurriedly answered, "Yes."

"I’ll go visit him."

With that, Hong Rongyan turned around and left.

Chapter 473: Waiting

The warm sunlight was sprinkled over the garden.

The old man lay on the rattan chair, basking in the sun. There was a small tea table at the side and on it was a teapot and a teacup. With his eyes closed, the old man could hear footsteps approaching. "I've already said that I don't know how to make a human puppet. If it's a sand puppet I can make do. You're finding the wrong person."

Hong Rongyan stopped in his tracks as a respectful look filled his handsome face. "Master Shao!"

It was as if the old man had not heard him.

Hong Rongyan shook his head. "No, it should be Emperor Shao. How can there be Beast Venom Temple if the God Puppet Palace is still around? The Nangong Wulian would still have to address you as Teacher."

The old man replied dully, "I don't know what you're talking about."

"There had been little news about God Puppet Palace. Much time has passed but we still managed to track your identity." Hong Rongyan responded faintly, mild distress evident in his eyes. He added sincerely, "Although we used to be enemies, this is no longer the case now, since you left Blood of God a long time ago. You've came to us not just to bask in the sun I suppose."

He stood beside the old man like an enveloping shadow that blocked off the sunlight.

The old man then opened his eyes. "I want you guys to find a person for me."

"Related to Blood of God?"

"No. To you guys."

Hong Rongyan was rather surprised but quickly regained his composure. "We will find the person."

Master Shao was calm too. "Bring that little lady over."

Hong Rongyan knew he was talking about Autumn Water.

Autumn Water was quickly sent over and Jiu Gui looked at the old man strangely. He did not know how Sir Hong Rongyan was able to convince this stubborn old fellow. He was full of curiosity toward the old man. In the Assembly of Patriarchs, less than five members were able to receive such respectful treatment from Sir Hong Rongyan.

The old man looked at the withered girl and shook his head. "She’s strayed from the path."

Hong Rongyan said, "Please elaborate, Master Shao."

Master Shao? It was the first time Jiu Gui had heard of the old man’s surname. He thought it over but no familiar names came to mind. There wasn’t any Shao among the reputable Masters.

Master Shao did not reveal much, but looked at Jiu Gui instead. "Go dig some soil."

Jiu Gui was stunned, but since master Hong was just beside him, he dared not act up. Well-behaved, he asked, "What kind?"

"Any."

Jiu Gui fell into a daze. Any? He was burning with rage. This old man did not take human lives seriously!

"Go."

Hong Rongyan’s one word fell onto Jiu Gui’s ears like a bucket of ice cold water onto his head, cooling him down immediately.

With master Hong Rongyan around, it wasn’t his turn to unleash his temper.

Since Master Hong said so, Jiu Gui immediately suppressed all thoughts, went over to a corner outside the garden and started digging a pot of soil guilelessly before returning.

The old man picked up the teapot on the table and poured its contents onto the soil.

Master Shao grabbed a lump of wet soil and pinched it for a little while. A rough, human-shaped mud puppet appeared in his hands.

Jiu Gui was engrossed in it all. He wanted to see how this old man would save Autumn Water. When he saw the human-shaped mud puppet, he still felt somewhat appalled. It was the ugliest and crudest figure he'd ever seen. He could only make out its head, torso and limbs. There was no face, no palms and no other details.

Master Shao drew across Autumn Water's forehead with his fingernail and dark red, fresh blood oozed out from her already cracked and dried up skin.

He then placed the palm sized, human-shaped mud puppet on her forehead.

The dark red, fresh blood seeped into the mini mud puppet, giving it a thread of vitality and a liveliness.

Removing his palm, Master Shao told them, "She won't die."

Hong Rongyan had a serious expression on his face. "We will find the person you need."

Master Shao did not look happy at all. Instead, he appeared more lonely and desolate. Only a faint glimmer lit up deep within his eyes like a ray of light emerging from the horizon at dawn.

.....

The boundary line between Yellow Sand Corner and Silver Mist Sea.

The sun hung high above the sand dunes, casting a deep shadow from the back. Ye Baiyi made his way toward the dunes, leaving footprints on the ground.

He was alone as the guards were being left at the bottom of the hill. He wasn't moving quickly and did not utilize any power. He was just like an ordinary person, effortfully trying to climb his way up. He even used his hands at times.

Seen from afar, he was as tiny as an ant.

The guards at the foot of the mountain were like a bunch of quiet statues. Their expressions were solemn and motionless.

Ye Baiyi stepped on the soft, yellow sand while sighing inwardly. The earth elemental energy in the sand was much weaker than before. There was even a huge production of earth elemental materials over here. These earth elemental materials were sold to Jadeite Forest in exchange for resources God Nation required.

But even the amount of produce was decreasing now.

The only thing that hadn't changed was the landscape of Yellow Sand Corner. Sandstorms, hiding the sky and covering the earth, blew all year round. This was something Blood of God's regime did not change.

The number of organisms in Yellow Sand Corner were very small, so there was little chance for the blood poison to unleash its power.

This was also why God Nation was lusting over Silver Mist Sea and Cloud Palette Village.

As compared to the barren lands of Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner, Silver Mist Sea and Cloud Palette Village had much lusher vegetation, extremely suitable for growing blood trees.

Jade fruits had become the most important produce of God Nation, but they were only produced once every four years. God Nation needed much more jade fruits and a vaster, more fertile expanse of soil in order to grow more blood trees.

But Elders Guild had no intention on giving up Silver Mist Sea and Cloud Palette Village this easily.

He finally reached the top of the sand dune. The sunlight falling into his eyes made him lose focus for a bit.

He used all his limbs to stabilize himself at the top.

He stood in his white clothes amid the loud sound of wind. He looked upward, allowing the sunlight to shine down on his whole body. At this moment, he wasn't the fearsome and awe-inspiring White-robed War God, but a young and inexperienced, youth in white clothes.

The white-clothed youth who'd went on a military campaign in the past was now here, gazing into the distance and looking forward to the future where he'd be fulfilling his noble aspirations.

Looking at the magnificent mountain range of Silver Mist Sea at the edge of the desert, he saw the slipping away of time.

Five God-subduing Peaks were arranged in a series above the mountain range. They formed a majestic, motionless chain.

The sun's afterglow added a golden halo to the God-subduing Peaks' defense circle, making it flicker and shine in the sky.

The undulating mountain range beneath the God-subduing Peaks had all kinds of defensive structures, like densely packed dog teeth that followed the topography of the mountains.

Above the God-subduing Peaks was a big sheet of clouds. It was North Sea Division's most notable defensive structure, "Cloud Castle", and the combat division's elementalists were stationed within.

God-subduing Peaks made the core. With Cloud Castle in the sky and the concentrated defensive structure on the ground, they formed an impenetrable wall, the Wall of North Sea, that stretched horizontally across 16 kilometers.

Ever since the North Sea Division started entering battles, it became extremely difficult for God Nation to attack. The defensive line that was initially deep within Silver Mist Sea had been forcibly pushed back to the boundary line.

Relying on the mountain's topography and borrowing the formidable combat force of God-subduing Peaks and the powerful defensive force of Cloud Castle, North Sea Division constructed its famous Wall of North Sea. Ever since it was built, countless blood elementalists had had their heads smashed and broken.

And North Sea Division continued fortifying and strengthening this wall. God Nation even believed that it was indestructible.

Ye Baiyi knew what kind of opponent he was facing.

Shi Beihai used to be preposterous when he was young, but underwent a huge temperament change later on. He was strongly determined to succeed and quickly became the division leader of North Sea Division. As compared to Ye Baiyi's record of being the youngest division leader, Shi Beihai assumed his post much later in life.

Shi Beihai was the enemy Ye Baiyi least wanted to meet. Shi

Beihai was extremely tenacious and tricky to deal with.

The Holy Emperor saw this too and was prepared to get rid of him at all costs.

Wouldn’t there be any reinforcement?

Ye Beiyi found it unlikely. As long as Madam Ye was still rational, she wouldn’t destroy the wall. Plus, Ye Baiyi had already received the news that Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division had assembled and were getting ready to provide Shi Beihai with support.

Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division were under Madam Ye’s personal command so it was evident that she regarded Shi Beihai as very important.

Ye Baiyi figured that there might be news he was unaware of.

But no matter what, he couldn’t go against the Holy Emperor’s orders. Since the Holy Emperor said to do it at all costs, he would do it at all costs.

Opposite him, above the God-subduing Peaks, someone was observing Ye Baiyi from afar as well.

"What a pity."

Shi Beihai shook his head while sighing. His shoulders were broad, his build tall and sturdy. His general facial features were similar to those of Shi Xueman, except that time had given him experience and stability. Shi Xueman, on the other hand, had a more heroic spirit, just as how a newborn calf was unafraid of the tiger.

Vice division leader, Lu Manman, stood beside Shi Beihai. As opposed to his name, he spoke very quickly, like beans crackling and rattling. "It’s not a pity. Ye Baiyi is rich now, unlike us. We’re miserable and wretched. Look, this army is magnificent and we’re hiding far behind in the Wilderness. At this critical time, instead of sending the three central divisions to assist us, they sent us two rookie combat divisions. I would think it’s better for us to go over to Blood of God. It’s better than allowing that sissy Ye Baiyi to treat us this way..."

He was a head taller than Shi Beihai, but his whole body was thin and weak like a bamboo. He had high cheekbones and a pair of deep set eyes. His eyeballs moved constantly as he spoke, making him seem eccentric and quick-witted.

"Enough, Manman. Will you die if you speak less?" Qi Xiuyuan asked in frustration.

Unlike other combat divisions, there were two vice division leader positions within North Sea Division. One seat was taken by Helian Fei’er while the other was taken in turns by Lu Manman and Qi Xiuyuan. This

Qi Xiuyuan looked like a frail scholar without the strength to

even truss a chicken, but those who underestimated him often found themselves on the losing end.

"Yes I'll die!" Lu Manman spoke confidently. "I'll feel more stupid and cowardly for dying from holding in my words as compared to dying in Ye Baiyi's hands. We're all going to die soon anyway. Look at their army. It's much bigger than ours! Since death is imminent, we must die brave and heroic so future generations can say that Lu Manman and Qi Xiuyuan died from..."

Qi Xiuyuan rolled his eyes. "Die alone if you want to, don't drag me down."

Shi Beihai turned around to interrupt them. "You guys done with work?"

"Almost."

"No."

With an "Oh", Shi Beihai added, "Double the volume."

"No, Boss. We're dying! Ye Baiyi's army is pressing in and you want us to double the workload, we will die."

"Get lost, why are you pulling me again? Please don't be like this, Boss..."

Shi Beihai asked coldly, "Could it be that you guys have other means of survival?"

Both answered in unison, "Yes!"

Shi Beihai was rather astonished. "Oh, what is it?"

"Surrendering!"

"Retreating!"

Shi Beihai's cheeks twitched. "You guys can die."

Both had already fled the scene.

Having seen it, Helian Fei'er walked over while laughing involuntarily. Reaching Shi Beihai's side she said, "Don't be too impatient, Boss. Reports say that they're currently building in preparation for the prolonged war."

Shi Beihai's expression was grave as he shook his head. "No, they're waiting for the right time to start a war."

"Right time?"

"They're waiting for Grandmaster An Muda to die."

The murderousness blew off along with the wind, as if a bugle horn was heard from far away.

Chapter 474: Sword Pagodas

Even the slowest reacting person would be able to smell the faint burning smoke in the air. The atmosphere became increasingly tense as market prices for all kinds of resources shot up like unreined wild horses.

The remote and distantly located Lemon Camping Ground had, too, become exceptionally restless.

A few days back, everyone had been shocked by Spear of Heavy Cloud's recruitment of new members. Elementalists who'd seen it felt like their hearts were burning and were unable to keep calm. Watching the positions being filled up made unselected elementalists inevitably impatient.

Everyone was waiting for Sword of Lightning. Why wasn't there any news?

Could it be fake?

People crowded outside the wall daily.

It was said that this area used to be the camp where Ai Hui and his gang had stayed when passing by Lemon Camping Ground on their way to building their city. Everyone called it the inner camp. They looked at the inner camp, waiting laboriously. Clanking sounds could be heard all the time but no one knew what was going on. Some elementalists wanted to fly overhead to see inside.

But when they approached the inner camp a terrifying power locked onto them, its murderous spirit like that of an earth-shattering tsunami, causing them to faint on the spot.

After that, no one dared to try anything funny.

Creak. The main gate of the inner camp opened slowly.

The waiting elementalists, who were bored to death, fell into a daze before snapping out of it. Was it starting? Shadows could be seen shooting by as some people wanted to inform their companions as soon as possible.

Lemon Camping Ground wasn't big to begin with, so everyone received the news quickly.

The door was opening!

Just then, Shi Xueman and the gang appeared, which gave rise to an even bigger commotion. Everyone was more or less certain that it was about to start.

Shi Xueman and the rest rushed over and into the inner camp. They were very curious about the things Ai Hui had prepared. From what they knew about Ai Hui, he only did things he had confidence in.

And this fellow often left people dumbstruck.

Ai Hui saw the results of his hard work and felt deeply moved. He'd been rushing work for a few consecutive days so that even the iron body, which he so often bragged about, felt uncomfortable.

He was doing something that no one else had ever done, so it required a high level of concentration.

He only allowed himself to relax during short breaks. When he was resting, strange thoughts would flash across his mind. For example, he would wonder what Grandmaster An Muda was doing or whether Ye Baiyi would feel awkward if he met Shi Beihai face to face.

With a laugh he threw his attention back onto the construction of his sword pagodas.

He'd been highly focused for a long period of time, so when it all ended, weariness finally swept over him like a tide.

The excitement he felt upon completion surpassed his tiredness. He placed both hands on his waist and looked at his finished product in satisfaction. Shi Xueman, Jiang Wei and the rest came upon hearing the news, so they were all looking at Ai Hui's product, sizing it up in curiosity.

The seven randomly arranged sword pagodas were of different heights. Shorter ones had three layers whereas taller ones had

nine. Grass swords were inserted all over the pagodas' bodies, making them looked like hedgehogs. Each sword pagoda emitted a biting cold and dense vital energy, which surged and collided within the inner camp.

Shi Xueman immediately noticed the intricacies of the sword pagodas' positions. She asked, somewhat astonished, "Big Dipper?"

Ai Hui cried out, "Iron Lady's still the most insightful!"

Shi Xueman was already immune to the nickname Ai Hui gave her. She surveyed each sword pagoda slowly. As a Master, she had a much deeper understanding of elemental energy than the others.

She could sense something profound about every sword pagoda. Each sword pagoda possessed a faint, cryptic aura of its own that correlated well with the others. They gave her the illusion that the seven sword pagodas were one.

The rest had their eyes on Ai Hui, waiting for his explanation.

Instead of commenting on his creation he inhaled a deep breath. "Let's start."

Gu Xuan entered the inner camp with the first batch of elementalists. He did not participate in the recruitment test for Spear of Heavy Cloud since he was more interested in joining Sword of Lightning. After witnessing the fire pond test he immediately waited outside the inner camp.

As an outstanding swordsman, patience and the ability to bear difficult situations were necessary qualities.

Swordsmen today no longer had that mighty and influential existence that they enjoyed during the Cultivation Era. Seeking survival within the crevassess was the realest portrayal of a modern swordsman's life.

The teams were already queuing in long lines, looking enviously at those, Gu Xuan included, entering the inner camp.

The hair on Gu Xuan's back stood on end the moment he walked in.

A palpable murderousness enveloped his whole body, as if he was standing among thousands of sword clusters, bright as snow and dense as a forest. Even the wind in the camp felt like cruising, flexible swords that were extremely sharp and erratic.

Sweat covered his back in an instant.

Sitting in a corner, Ai Hui let out a soft cry of surprise as his gaze fell upon Gu Xuan. His eyes lit up.

Walking into the camp was like entering the radius of Big Dipper Sword Pagodas. Swordsmen with high attainments were more sensitive to the aura emitted by these pagodas and hence they would feel a greater threat.

A decent swordsman!

Ai Hui's eyes grew brighter, as if he'd found a terrific treasure. Already discovering a good seedling from the first round of assessment was a good sign!

Gu Xuan was unaware that he was already being watched. He resisted the omnipresent danger and forged ahead.

The test was simple. Test subjects had to walk through the sword pagodas one by one and the more they passed the better their results.

Gu Xuan took a deep breath, and following the crowd he walked toward the first sword pagoda.

The first sword pagoda had only three storeys, the second four and so on.

Other than the differences in number of layers, all seven sword pagodas had the same shape.

The first examinee entered the first pagoda with fear and trepidation as an intense, bone-chilling sound of sword blades rubbing against each other rang from within. Because the sword pagoda was made with many grass swords, each tremble of the swords made the sword pagoda appear to be trembling as well.

It was as if a huge hedgehog was chewing with all its might, which made its body shiver.

Puff! A round shadow flew out from the pagoda door. It was the examinee, who had just passed out.

"Fail!"

The uncompassionate verdict echoed throughout the field.

Gu Xuan swallowed his saliva automatically as a fear he rarely experienced surfaced from within his heart. The sight of that unconscious examinee flying out was remarkably alike to seeing a huge hedgehog take up a piece of flesh and chew it over and over again, but to no avail, before disdainfully spitting it out.

This... is a little embarrassing.

Puff, "Fail!"

Puff, "Fail!"

The failure of three consecutive examinees caused an uproar among the onlookers. They looked at each other in dismay, their faces distorted and ugly. They'd not expected the test to be easy, but this was simply too difficult.

Three consecutive examinees had been thoroughly defeated

without any exception.

Gu Xuan was the fourth contender, and by now his heart was drumming. He took a deep breath in an attempt to calm his nervous heart, which worked as his eyes regained their firmness. Wasn't he here to seek a Path of Master of his own?

These sword pagodas were unusual!

With his head high he stepped into the sword pagoda and the door shut behind him.

.....

Gong Residence.

Housekeeper Wang was reporting to his master and young master. As Family Head Gong was getting on in years, affairs within the residence were gradually being handed over to the oldest son, Gong Chengxiu. Since young, he'd been regarded as the next family head and was nurtured accordingly in the household. He did not let his father down too. He had a vast circle of friends, was shrewd and adaptable.

The Gong Residence's style of handling issues had been undergoing changes, from its former days of concealing strengths to its gradual reveal in recent years and the transferring of power.

"... I've taken a look at Miss Shi Xueman's combat division.

There’s nothing for me to say. She’s similar to her father, having command of troops, none of which were unwilling. In the past, Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun were all good seedlings from their respective combat divisions. And now, only a few days after their building expansion, they are already considered out of the ordinary and will definitely become elites in future!"

Family Head Gong and Gong Chengxiu nodded their heads without the least bit of doubt.

Shi Xueman was born into a reputable family and had clearly performed exceptionally in North Sea Division, or else the Elders Guild wouldn’t have regarded her as their number one successor. Sang Zhijun and Jiang Wei were also relatively outstanding.

Every city was busy forming their combat divisions. Elementalists who’d ever assumed any post within the Thirteen Divisions were in great demand.

Because of this, Central Pine Faction was also a main point of focus for many people.

The majority of its members had experience in different combat divisions. Such elementalists were scarce and they were regarded as the backbone of Spear of Heavy Cloud. Having Shi Xueman as the division leader made people feel confident in their future.

"As for Ai Hui’s Sword of Lightning, I can’t seem to grasp its concept. Its name suggests a swordsmen combat division, so could it be like Sky Edge Division? But Sky Edge Division did not start

from zero. No one in Sword of Lightning knows the ropes, which is worrisome. We're not yet close so I spared the conversation. I attended to his needs and even decided to offer him additional help, considering we might be able to build a rapport with Shi Xueman for future uses."

"Well done!" Family Head Gong praised. "Ai Hui became a Master at such a young age so it's normal that he's more ambitious. He'll realize, after hitting a wall, that in this world there are many things tougher than being a Master. Money and properties aren't worth the mention."

Gong Chengxiu was about forty years old. He was young and vigorous, his eyes flickering. He smiled. "He's a Lightning Master so perhaps he might produce astonishing results and accomplishments."

At that he burst into laughter and so did Housekeeper Wang.

No one thought highly of Ai Hui's Sword of Lightning.

Of course, Ai Hui's reputation as the first Lightning Master was unerasable, but he had no experience when it came to dealing with a combat division.

People naturally associated it with the current Sky Edge Division. Karakorum Polaris was very similar to Ai Hui's combat division in this aspect, but it wasn't a combat division built completely from scratch after all. There were many seasoned members who'd transferred in from the former Sky Edge Division. These key

players were of significant help to Karakorum Polaris and provided a certain level of guarantee in regards to its combat strength.

Yet, Ai Hui was starting from ground zero with no one to assist him.

Since when was handling a combat division so easy?

Housekeeper Wang added, "Remembering Young Master's order, I asked him, before leaving, when he thinks the war is going to start."

Gong Chengxiu was rather interested. "What did he say?"

Housekeeper Wang bent his head, answering, "'When Grandmaster An Muda dies,' he said."

Gong Chengxiu's body shook slightly, his eyes opening wide. Shortly after he commented softly, "He's pretty decent, to be able to have such foresight."

Family Head Gong looked pensively at them.

Chapter 475: Decision

Like the blossoming of a flower, countless sword gleams were sprinkled over his head, releasing countless shadows that swirled around his body. Hiss, hiss. As the sword gleams brushed past his scalp, a piercing chilliness invaded his mind.

The ice-cold aura kept pounding against Gu Xuan's mind like endless tidal waves.

Gu Xuan's face turned slightly white.

The sword gleams weren't an illusion.

The sword gleams that were sprinkled over his head contained a terrifying power. If he got slightly closer to them, his skull would be leveled.

Gu Xuan's mouth and tongue were dry and his body was tense. The sword in his hand was like a fire iron, practically useless. Yes, he did not have the courage to use his sword to ward off the sword gleams above his head. He was certain that the slightest contact with the sword gleams would detonate the terrifying power within them.

He was like livestock that was being thrown in a meat grinder and ground to smithereens instantly.

The time passed very slow. Every time the chilliness of the sword

gleams brushed past his scalp, his mind would trembled in fear.

He did not know how to survive this.

When the door at the other end of the sword pagoda opened and sunlight poured in, the sword gleams over his head disappeared.

Panting heavily, Gu Xuan realized his body was drenched in sweat and there was a puddle of sweat beneath his feet. His mind was blank and his body was limp and in pain, almost causing him to collapse to the ground.

After an unknown amount of time had passed, he finally returned to his senses.

Sunlight poured in from the door, illuminating the inside of the sword pagoda, which was empty. Gu Xuan subconsciously raised his head and saw numerous sword tips sticking out of the ceiling above him. They were densely-packed and were placed in a flower-shaped formation.

It wasn’t an illusion just now after all.

Gu Xuan, who was still haunted by the previous encounter, understood that he had passed the first trial. However, this wasn’t the reason why he was feeling happy. He suddenly realized that here was where he could find the answer that he had been painstakingly seeking .

He somewhat understood what the first trial was about. He was unsatisfied with his performance.

Gu Xuan felt that these trials could allow him to understand more about himself.

This was what made him happy.

He raised his head and stepped out of the door.

When he stepped out of the door, the elementalists that were lining up to enter the sword pagoda cheered for him. They were encouraged by Gu Xuan’s success.

Shi Xueman looked at Ai Hui without saying anything.

Ai Hui knew he would be beaten up if he did not reveal the secret behind the first sword pagoda. He cleared his throat and said, "The first sword pagoda tests one’s willpower and endurance. Only those who have strong willpower and endurance can pass the trial."

The rest were listening to him attentively.

Ai Hui continued, "The sword gleams will brush past their scalps and might even shave off their hair, giving them a feeling of extreme danger. Once they make a wrong move, they will be knocked out by the sword gleams and spat out by the sword pagoda."

"Are they really being spat out? Disgusting!" Sang Zhijun's face squirmed.

Ai Hui gave a soft cough once again and replied, "I'm just giving an analogy. I put this as the first trial because my combat division in the future must have strong endurance and willpower. Those who are mentally weak will not be able to drive the Sword of Lightning."

Shi Xueman sharply caught the meaning behind Ai Hui's words and asked, "Drive the Sword of Lightning?"

Ai Hui smiled but did not reply to her.

"What does the second sword pagoda test?" Jiang Wei asked.

"The ability to focus," Ai Hui did not keep them in suspense this time around and explained with a serious tone, "They have to stay extremely focused and make one hundred sword thrusts. In the process, they will face many disturbances. Therefore, I have used a lot of illusions in this trial. If they are not focused enough, they will not be able to pass the trial."

Sang Zhijun could not help but ask, "Ai Hui, are you really serious about choosing members for your division? Don't you feel that your trials are too difficult?"

"Are they very difficult?" Ai Hui asked back and continued, "This

man will definitely pass all the trials."

"Why?"

"He is an outstanding swordsman and he will be very focused," Ai Hui explained.

"Eh? Outstanding swordsman? How do you know that?" Jiang Wei was slightly surprised.

"That’s because I’m a swordsman as well," Ai Hui replied with confidence.

"Ai Hui, are you really a swordsman? Did you make a mistake?"

"Precisely, focus on becoming an outstanding lightning elementalist and don’t mess around!"

In the blink of an eye, everyone broke into a lively discussion.

Suddenly, Shi Xueman said, "I will give them a try later."

"No!" Ai Hui was scared out of his skin.

Shi Xueman raised her eyebrows and her gaze became slightly gentle as she asked, "Are you afraid that I might get injured?"

"I’m afraid that the sword pagodas might be destroyed," Ai Hui replied firmly.

Shi Xueman touched the Cirrus on her back and said plainly, "Ever since we have become Masters, we haven’t had a fight yet. Come on, let’s have a good fight today."

Ai Hui put on a serious look and chided her, "You’re already a division leader and you still talk about fighting all day long. Sigh, are you really serious about a fight..."

.....

Skyheart City, the encampment for Dread.

The three division leaders had gathered together and their faces were grave.

Sitting on a meditation mat, Ximen Caijue looked at Wan Shenwei and asked with a child-like tone, "How’s Senior An Muda’s health?"

Wan Shenwei shooked his head and replied, "Senior An Muda did not meet me. The defense system for Pearblossom Pavilion has already been activated. I can still sense the aura of Senior An Muda, but no matter how hard I tried to call him out, he still did not give me a reply."

A silence swept across the room.

An Muda's health was an extremely important factor that could affect the entire world.

This was the might of a Grandmaster. A Grandmaster could single-handedly control the direction that the entire world was moving in!

Those who were strong were waiting for the fall of the Grandmaster, while those who were weak were struggling with all their might to prepare for the harsh winter coming after the Grandmaster had fallen.

Farsighted individuals understood that the fall of Grandmaster An Muda would become the fuse for the immense changes that the world would undergo.

Everyone was filled with fear and hopelessness towards the future. All of them wanted to know what Grandmaster An Muda had prepared for the future.

At this point of time, the sagacity and farsightedness of a Grandmaster would be a beacon of light for everyone.

In the past, Wan Shenwei had a rather good relationship with An Muda. As such, he was sent to Pearblossom Pavilion in the hope of gaining some guidance from An Muda. However, he hadn't expected for An Muda to not want to meet him.

Ximen Caijue could not help but say, "Senior An Muda is too much. How can he still act so indifferent at this critical moment?"

Wan Shenwei was depressed.

Nian Tingfeng remained calm as usual and said, "I have already said that we can only save ourselves. Both of you might think that I have become Ye Lin’s lackey, but tell me who is more capable than her now?"

"Capable! She killed her own people as if they were chickens. Of course she is capable!" Ximen Caijue sneered with sarcasm.

"You are just feeling sorry for the loss of a few Masters, right? Very soon, both of you will realize why Ye Lin was capable of doing this." Nian Tingfeng retorted.

Upon hearing these words, Wan Shenwei raised his head and asked, "Is Master’s Glory going to end soon?"

"The first batch of Masters will be ready soon," Nian Tingfeng cast a glance at both of them and muttered, "While we are still of some worth, we have to display our capabilities. In the future, we may not even have the opportunity to do so."

Wan Shenwei looked at Nian Tingfeng and said, "Tell us more about it."

Nian Tingfeng shook his head and replied, "I can’t say much

about it. All I can tell you is that Master's Glory is more powerful than what we expected. No one can stop Ye Lin. Not me, and not the both of you."

Ximen Caijue's apple-shaped face turned ice-cold. With an indifferent tone, she said, "Ximen family will never join hands with the Ye family."

"She can't replace Elders Guild," Wan Shenwei shook his head.

Nian Tingfeng calmly stood up and sneered, "That's true, but both of you still have to listen to her commands, right? I am a weapon that she uses to kill people. Both of you are weapons that she uses to scare people. Each of us has our own functions, ha!"

After finishing his sentence, Nian Tingfeng walked off.

After walking out of Dread's encampment, the sneer on Nian Tingfeng's face disappeared. His facial expression looked unusually calm.

He did not bother to conceal his tracks. Under the protection of his guards, he headed straight for the mayor's residence.

Along the way, the guards and maidservants of the mayor's residence bowed to him. With a lively smile on his face, he returned their greetings every now and then. When these maidservants saw the smart and handsome Lord Nian Tingfeng, an infatuated look appeared on their faces involuntarily. After he

walked past them, they gathered at one corner and talked about Nian Tingfeng with excitement.

"He’s so handsome!"

"That’s so true!"

"Sir is so amiable, he’s not arrogant at all!"

Nian Tingfeng stood outside the room and waited for Madam Ye to summon him. Even though Madam Ye had told him more than once that he could enter the room without being summoned, he still cared about following the rules of etiquette and not stepping over the line.

Upon knowing Nian Tingfeng was waiting outside, Madam Ye quickly summoned him.

When Madam Ye saw him, she grumbled, "I have told you not to treat me as an outsider, you really have too much etiquette. My son and I have to depend on you in the future."

"Madam, you have flattered me too much. Subordinate does not deserve your praise," Nian Tingfeng replied respectfully.

He reported everything about his meeting with Ximen Caijue and Wan Shenwei without missing a single word.

From the start to the finish of the report, Madam Ye merely smiled. After Nian Tingfeng had finished speaking, Madam Ye said unhurriedly, "There's no need to panic. Time will tell the answer to the decision a man has made. A man has countless decisions to make in his life. Some decisions, if made correctly, will lead to glory. Some decisions, if made wrongly, will lead to eternal doom. Don't you agree?"

"What Madam has said are truly words of wisdom." Nian Tingfeng was all smiles.

"Tell me about other things. Last time around, I told you to give me a scouting report on Lightning Blade. How is it coming along?"

"I was just about to report this to Madam," Nian Tingfeng replied respectfully.

He reported everything that happened in Central Pine Valley during this recent period of time. If Ai Hui was to hear Nian Tingfeng's report, he would be shocked. Everything they did had been observed by Nian Tingfeng.

"You haven't infiltrated Central Pine Valley yet?" Madam Ye muttered.

Nian Tianfeng shook his head and replied, "We haven't. Only members of Central Pine Faction can enter Central Pine Valley. The rest of the people merely gather at Lemon Camping Ground. I'm afraid of alerting them inadvertently and hence I don't dare to act brashly. After all, they have a few Masters on their side. Do we

need to resort to tougher tactics?"

Madam Ye thought for a while before shaking her head and replied, "For the time being, we don’t need to do so. There’s no need for us to fuss over a small valley. Furthermore, they have rejected Newlight City’s offer. We won’t resort to anything drastic so as to avoid pushing them to Newlight City."

"Yes," Nian Tingfeng replied.

"However, I want you to keep a close eye on Spear of Heavy Cloud. Shi Xueman is the daughter of Shi Beihai. She has Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun to assist her. We can’t let them become too powerful. Back in the day, I still wanted to bring these people into Master’s Glory. It is such a pity. Most of them have good potential."

Her tone contained a tinge of regret.

"Yes! How about Ai Hui?" Nian Tingfeng asked.

"Let him form his combat division slowly. What is it called again?" Madam Ye laughed.

"Sword of Lightning."

"The name is rather nice. It’s a pity that the war will have ended by the time he forms his division." Madam Ye ridiculed.

Upon hearing these words, Nian Tingfeng laughed as well, "Subordinate will definitely not disturb him."

Chapter 476: An Old Friend And Yuchuan Embroidery

Pearblossom Pavilion. There was a visitor in the octagonal pavilion.

An Muda looked radiant. His face was rosy, his ravine-like wrinkles had smoothened, and he looked as if his age had been reversed. He sat on a meditation mat while giving off an indescribable aura of might. The aura was as bright as the sun, causing one to being unable to directly look at An Muda. Visible energy undulations engulfed Pearblossom Pavilion, appearing as if they were about to crush this dimension to pieces.

A short and thin old man was seated opposite him. This old man resembled a weather-beaten farmer who worked the fields every day. Beside the old man, there was a block of ice that was twice the height of a normal person. There was a figure within the block of ice.

When the surging energy undulations from An Muda reached the vicinity of the old man, they disappeared into thin air.

The old man took a sip of tea and put down his cup. Then, he said, "Your situation has worsened."

An Muda smiled and said, "Actually, I’m still feeling all right. My elemental energy is resonating with Nature’s elemental energies. When they are in complete resonance, I will become one with Nature."

The old man nodded his head and replied, "So this is how a Grandmaster dies."

"You're still as unlikeable as last time," An Muda joked.

"I'm already so old. Why do I need to care whether or not people like me?" the old man replied.

An Muda shook his head and laughed. "You're better at talking now than last time. What's wrong with this kid anyway?"

This slight movement from An Muda released waves of energy that rippled through the air and caused the entire dimension to give off a deafening buzzing sound.

"Not good, so I came to look for you," the old man replied with a solemn look on his face.

An Muda's gaze was extremely sharp and intense, so much so that when it swept across the ice block, countless cracks appeared on its surface. The old man waved his arm and shot out a cloud of cold air. When the cloud of cold air landed upon the ice block, its surface thickened once more.

The old man knew that An Muda had not done this on purpose. It was just that An Muda could no longer control his powers.

"Your method is rather interesting." An Muda's tone contained a tinge of surprise.

The figure within the ice block was a fire-attributed youth. The old man's method was unique in the way that he used an ice of extreme cold to stimulate the last trace of fire elemental energy in the youth's body.

An Muda knew what the old man was thinking just by looking at his method.

Ever since the Fire Prairie was annexed by the Blood of God, fire elemental materials were scarce. The conventional training methods for fire elementalists no longer worked. However, Palette Cloud Village was still producing water elemental materials. Chilly ice was considered a type of water elemental material, and it could still be obtained if one put in some effort.

However, this was an unorthodox method that was unusually risky. A moment of carelessness could cause this last trace of fire elemental energy to extinguish. If the last trace of fire elemental energy extinguished, the youth would lose his life.

Being sealed in a block of ice for a long period of time was unimaginably excruciating for anyone. In this kind of extreme environment, one needed an immense amount of endurance and courage to keep the fire elemental energy trace alive and prevent it from extinguishing.

"Deprivation leads to changes, changes in turn lead to finding a

way out," the old man said plainly, "but now, there's no way out. His father placed him in my hand. Now that he doesn't have a home, I can't abandon him."

"Sigh, the Zu family was a powerful family. I didn't expect that even they could not avoid this calamity. If I'm not wrong, he is called Zu Yan?" An Muda sighed and asked.

"Yeah," the old man grunted a reply. With a calm face, he picked up the cup and took a sip of tea.

"I roughly understand what you're saying," An Muda replied with an imposing tone. "He has already been through the toughest stage. If he continues to be sealed in ice, his mind and body will be injured. Right now, he needs sufficient and vigorous fire elemental energy to strengthen his body first. Only by doing this can he survive."

"That's right. A type of A-grade fire liquid named Snow Lava has appeared on the market and it's related to your disciple. This is also why I came to find you. I need a lot of Snow Lava. A lot.

He spoke the last two words "a lot" with extra emphasis.

If it was other people, he would have taken the Snow Lava by force. However, since Shi Xueman was in Central Pine Valley, he had to find An Muda first. He clearly understood that even though An Muda seemed to be unconcerned about Shi Xueman, he actually cared a lot for her deep down.

He had known An Muda for decades and knew his character very well.

"Xueman isn’t the leader," An Muda said. "You have to find Ai Hui. As long as you’re willing to let your precious disciple work for him as a laborer for a few years, there shouldn’t be much of a problem."

"All right," the old man agreed.

"Since we have settled the youngsters’ issue, let’s talk about our issue," An Muda continued.

The old man cast a glance at An Muda and replied, "You’re going to die soon, so what’s there to talk about?"

"How can a Grandmaster die on a bed?" An Muda gave a faint smile that contained an indescribable aggression.

The old man froze. Then, he put down his cup and asked bluntly, "What are you going to do?"

An Muda looked at the old man and smiled, "You will know soon."

The old man shook his head and replied, "I’m not going to accompany you."

"You can help me by guarding this place." An Muda chuckled. "Dai Gang will come. Buleng, you have fought with him for your entire life. Aren't you sick of it?"

When the old man heard Dai Gang's name, his gaze suddenly became sharp and intense. At this point in time, he looked as if he had become a completely different person. His short and skinny body exuded might and dominance.

A powerful wave of energy swept across his body.

In the current tumultuous era, where a huge number of heroes were born, not many people remembered this short and skinny old man.

Le Buleng, who used to be the division leader of the Icy Flames Division, regarded Dai Gang as his lifelong arch-enemy.

Le Buleng regained his composure and replied, "You're going to die soon, yet you still scheme so much. Why don't you want to meet that youngster, Wan Shenwei?"

"Junior has passed away, so how can I bear to deal with his descendant? Be it the Avalon of Five Elements or Beyond Avalon, I have done my best as their guardian for so many years." A tinge of sadness appeared upon An Muda's face.

"Let them be."

Le Buleng filled up his cup and downed the tea in one gulp. He put down the cup on the table with a thump and walked to the edge of the pavilion.

"Ha, it turns out a Grandmaster is a human as well," Le Buleng said, before taking the huge block of ice with him and jumping down.

.....

Lemon Camping Ground.

A lot of people were very disappointed.

"Why does he test people on such weird topics?

"That’s right! What about aptitude? Elemental energy? Inheritances? Don’t these need to be tested? Is this a joke?"

"I think he is trying to hire laborers!"

"Now that you mention it, it kind of makes sense. Wasn’t Ai Hui a laborer last time? Is it possible that he is forming Sword of Lightning with laborers?"

"An army of laborers, that’s scary..."

The seven sword pagodas in the inner camp had become a nightmare for many people. A lot of elementalists who thought that they were gifted and good enough were being eliminated by these trials. When they saw that those who were less gifted than them were accepted, they felt that this world had gone mad.

No, Ai Hui was the one who had gone mad.

These people left the inner camp while shaking their heads in disappointment. They felt that the so-called Lightning Master was merely a lunatic. Ai Hui might be very formidable with his lightning techniques, but his current antics showed how inexperienced he was in building a combat division.

No one was stupid. In times of chaos, if one followed a good and powerful master, not only could he survive, but he might also be able to attain many achievements and build a solid foundation for his descendants.

Following a lunatic would only lead them to a tragic end.

They felt sorry for those elementalists who were accepted by Ai Hui. These people had followed the wrong master and were fated to fail.

The camping ground buzzed with such discussions, causing a lot of elementalists who had been accepted to feel worried and withdraw from the combat division. Ai Hui did not try to stop these people from leaving.

Ai Hui felt that nothing forced would succeed.

In the end, more than 400 men were all that remained in his division.

This number was far too little to make up a combat division. What could 400 men do? Placing an army of 400 on the battlefield was like releasing a drop of water into the sea. What impact could it have?

The Spear of Heavy Cloud had 3,000 men and an additional 2,000 as reserves.

In the face of the worries from Shi Xueman and the rest, Ai Hui sounded even more pessimistic. "I will be glad if half of these people can survive the training."

Everyone was stunned.

If 400 men was a drop of water, then what would 200 be?

Everyone looked at each other blankly.

"The situation on my side is terrible and all of you can see it for yourself. Whether or not we thrive in the future, it will have to depend on all of you. You must bring success to the Spear of Heavy Cloud. Everyone, you must not slack off," Ai Hui reminded them in a solemn tone.

Upon hearing these words, everyone felt weighed down. They could feel the immense pressure on them. All of them silently made a firm resolution to work and practice harder.

Shi Xueman glanced at Ai Hui.

Even though this fellow had a solemn look on his face, she felt that he had a trick up his sleeve for some reason.

.....

Jadeite City. The dawn had yet to arrive.

The Mingxiu Embroidery Workshop was brightly lit.

Nowadays, the Mingxiu Embroidery Workshop had the highest prestige out of all embroidery workshops in Jadeite City. Not only did it have a Master to oversee it, it also had the backing of the Lu family and a type of loom called the [Needle-Subduing Peak].

If it was another embroidery workshop that used this name for its loom, the workshop would definitely be raided by the authorities.

The shadow cast by the God-subduing Peak over the Jadeite Forest had yet to disappear. It certainly wasn’t a pleasant memory.

However, the Mingxiu Embroidery Workshop was becoming more prosperous. Other than the backing of the Lu family, Lu Mingxiu's performance for the past two years was exceptionally impressive, so much so that it shocked the entire Jadeite Forest.

Not only had Lu Mingxiu inherited the legacy of her master, Master Han Yuqin, but she also surpassed her master and founded her own embroidery school of thought, the Mingxiu Style.

Her textile products had a special name, [Yuchuan Embroidery].

This name was thought up by Lu Mingxiu herself. The word "Yuchuan" was to commemorate her master, Han Yuqin, and her master-uncle, Wang Shouchuan.

Any piece of [Yuchuan Embroidery] was considered a rare treasure on the market.

The embroidery workshop was bustling and hectic. Everyone continued loading things onto a convoy of load basin beasts.

Lu Mingxiu inspected the convoy to and fro. "Has everything been loaded up onto the load basin beasts?"

A maid stepped out and replied, "Miss, everything has been loaded up."

She had been Mingxiu's maid when Mingxiu was still young and called Tao Su. When Mingxiu followed Han Yuqin to learn about

embroidery, the two of them separated. Two years ago, Mingxiu returned to Jadeite City and requested for Tao Su to assist her in her embroidery workshop.

Tao Su was extremely capable. Even though she knew nothing about embroidery, she was able to keep everything else in good order.

"Did we miss out on anything?" Lu Mingxiu was slightly worried.

"Miss, I have already checked for the third time," Tao Su replied hastily.

At this moment, a figure descended from the sky and landed in the embroidery workshop. This person was over 40 years old and looked boorish and ugly. His eyes were always squinting, as if he was perpetually examining something closely. The most eye-catching part of his body were his legs. There was absolutely nothing beneath his knees.

"Thank you for your trouble this time around, Master Mu!" Mingxiu bowed and thanked him.

"I will set off once you are ready," Master Mu replied plainly.

Lu Mingxiu took out a wooden box and passed it to Master Mu, "This was entrusted to me by the Duanmu family. Master Mu, please pass it Duanmu Huanghun."

Master Mu took over the wooden box and replied, "All right, I will get going now."

After Master Mu finished his sentence, he floated to the back of a load basin beast, sat down, and closed his eyes to take a rest.

The convoy began to set off. The melodious sound of bells ringing broke the silence of dawn.

Standing at a high position, Lu Mingxiu looked at the distant convoy. She seemed to be lost in thought. The entire convoy was filled with textile products that she had prepared and resources that could only be found in the Jadeite Forest. All of them were for Ai Hui.

Master Mu was her elder brother's friend. Had she not pleaded with her elder brother, she probably would not have been able to find anyone to transport so many things to the distant Central Pine Valley. She hoped that these things could help her junior.

Looking at the gorgeous red clouds at dawn, Lu Mingxiu, who had been busy making preparations for the entire night, was filled with hope.

The convoy disappeared into the horizon and Lu Mingxiu turned around to leave. At this moment, she caught a glimpse of a figure.

Her body froze as a mysterious sense of familiarity arose in her heart.

She turned her head to search for that figure, but she could only see a street that was sparsely filled with people.

She broke into laughter and turned around to leave.

Chapter 477: Deal!

"Alkaid! Someone is injured!"

Pfff. The sword pagoda that was named Alkaid spat out an unconscious elementalist.

"Lou Lan is coming!"

Lou Lan, who was standing on one side waiting for action, immediately ran over and provided medical treatment to the injured elementalist.

...

"Chalawan! Someone has fainted!"

"Lou Lan is coming!"

...

Within two hours, more than 34 people had fainted. Lou Lan was running all over the place.

"End of training!"

Ai Hui’s unfeeling voice rang across everyone’s ears like a

heavenly melody. One by one, wobbly figures tottered out of the sword pagoda. Their bodies were drenched in sweat and gave off surging steam, resembling steamed dumplings had just been taken out of a steamer basket.

Ai Hui flew out of the Megrez Sword Pagoda and swept his gaze across everyone. With a deep voice, he said, "Rest for one hour and prepare for the next training session."

Thud, thud. Everyone sat paralyzed on the ground, trying to make the most out of their time to rest. No one was howling in grief or whining. Ai Hui was extremely cold-blooded. He had a zealous attitude toward training.

One by one, over 100 people had left his combat division because they were unable to endure his high-intensity training. Exactly 300 people were left in his combat division.

The long-prepared bowls of elemental soup were quickly served to these elementalists. Without sufficient nourishment, such high-intensity training would hurt their bodies.

The sound of the elemental soup being ravenously devoured rang across the camping ground as a look of happiness appeared upon everyone’s face. Sword pagoda training was a hell with complete darkness to them. Lou Lan and his elemental soup were the beacons of light in their hell.

Gu Xuan was an ardent supporter of Lou Lan. To him, a magical sand puppet like Lou Lan was the most beautiful entity in this

world. Other than his master, Lou Lan had no weakness at all.

Gu Xuan felt indignant. How was a bastard like Ai Hui fit to be Lou Lan's master?

Nowadays, he did not have any respect for Ai Hui. A few days ago, he was still thinking about following the Lightning Blade to find his own path in swordsmanship. Now that he thought about it, he felt that he was as stupid as a pig then!

This bastard was actually vying with them over the elemental soup!

How was this bastard fit to be their leader! If not for the fact that he was more powerful than them, they would have killed him in the middle of the night.

After placing down the bowl that had been licked clean, Gu Xuan was still enjoying the aftertaste. However, he soon realized he did not have the time to do so. He had to seize the moment to do Circulatory Cycle Revolutions and absorb the elemental energy from the elemental energy soup that he had just consumed. Only by doing so could he endure the next training session.

Everyone had been through the preliminary selection and had already tried training in all of the seven sword pagodas. As said by Ai Hui, every tulip to its own hole. Everyone had to find a "hole" that suited them.

The aura of within every sword pagoda was completely different.

Yes, it's aura, the sword aura.

Some were sharp, some were piercing cold, some were scorching hot, and some were thick and heavy. There were various types of sword aura. Everyone had to learn and produce every type of sword aura to find out which one suited them the best.

Gu Xuan understood the theories of swordsmanship. Any training program would require one to find a suitable path for himself or herself. This was common sense. However, the current training program was so crude and simple-looking that it raised their hackles. There was no sense of beauty to it at all.

Painstakingly, he had repeated the training program so many times that his consciousness was becoming fuzzy.

Repeating the training program seven times made Gu Xuan want to puke.

This was swordsmanship? What about those exquisite swordplay variations? Weren't swordsmen known for their exquisite swordplay variations? How could swordsmanship be so crude and simple-looking?

Gu Xuan was assigned to the Merak Sword Pagoda and was the pagoda master. At the beginning, Gu Xuan was overjoyed. After all, who did not like being valued? Very soon, however, he realized

this was completely different from what he had expected.

Merak Sword Pagoda had eight levels and it was preceded only by Ai Hui's Megrez Sword Pagoda. In each level of the Merak Sword Pagoda, there were six elementalists. Including Gu Xuan, there were a total of 48 elementalists in the Merak Sword Pagoda and all of them were only learning one sword move.

Given Gu Xuan's swordsmanship level, he could perform the sword move skilfully and effortlessly.

However, that did not mean anything here.

In order to pass, the 48 elementalists had to perform the sword move together without a single person failing. Failure by any one of the 48 elementalists would result in total failure.

Out of the 48 elementalists, only six of them knew the basics of swordsmanship.

All of the training sessions were appalling. If they could succeed three times out of 100 training sessions, they could count themselves lucky.

The thing that disappointed him was he couldn't see any significance to this type of training program at all.

The simple sword move did not require much skill to execute. It did not have any exquisite variations and there was nothing

formidable about it. Gu Xuan felt that he was here to pursue the path of swordsmanship, not to waste his time on such a boring training program.

"Boring?"

Ai Hui took a glance at Gu Xuan.

Gu Xuan’s hair stood on end. When Ai Hui became serious, he looked as if he had turned into another person, giving off a terrifying aura.

Ai Hui noticed everyone else was looking at him. After thinking for awhile, he said, "All right, I will show all of you a thing or two."

Members of Central Pine Valley had fought alongside Ai Hui before and had deep level of trust in him. No matter what decision or command he made, everyone would execute it without any hesitation.

The newly recruited elementalists did not have such a level of trust in him. As such, it was normal for them to doubt him.

Ai Hui failed to take this factor into account, a result of his lack of experience.

Ai Hui, who was self-reflecting, did not have any emotion on his face. He chose 17 rather strong elementalists to enter the Alkaid Sword Pagoda with him.

Alkaid Sword Pagoda was the shortest sword pagoda with only three levels. In each level, there were six men.

The rest of the Sword of Lighning’s members widened their eyes with excitement. Actually, everyone had felt doubtful all this time. Why were they training every day? What were the uses of this training?

"Get ready," Ai Hui’s deep and low voice echoed in the Alkaid Sword Pagoda.

Everyone in the sword pagoda became energized. Holding a sword in their hands, they stood at their assigned positions and braced themselves.

"Raise your swords!"

A deep roar exploded in everyone’s ears.

Everyone’s sword lit up at the same time. Buzz. A mysterious vibrating buzz resounded throughout the Alkaid Sword Pagoda. They could feel that the sword pagoda was trembling slightly. However, at this point in time, they could not focus on anything else. Subconsciously, they raised the swords in their hands and flicked them upward. Each of their swords released a streak of sword gleam.

18 streaks of sword gleam stacked upon each other and gathered

at the apex of the sword pagoda!

This moment was a brand-new experience for Ai Hui. From the point when he came up with the idea of the sword pagodas to the point when the construction of the sword pagodas was completed, everything was near perfect. However, this was the first time that the practicality of the sword pagodas would be tested. At this instant, his sensory perception suddenly became unusually sharp. It was as if the range of his sensory perception had extended to a faraway place.

His mind became more and more focused. Suddenly, he sensed that a figure was spying on them from the depths of the sky.

Who was this person?

Suddenly, a brilliance erupted in his eyes. I have caught you!

He flicked the sword in his hand lightly.

Shiiiiiing!

A melodious sword chime rang across the air, sounding like the ringing of great bells in a Buddhist temple.

The sudden sword chime alarmed everyone in Lemon Camping Ground. All of them raised their heads skyward.

A thick and dazzling sword gleam shot out from the apex of the sword pagoda and ripped through the air. With a clear and crisp sword chime, it flew toward the depths of the sky.

"What's that?"

"It looks like a streak of sword gleam."

"Is it possible that another master swordsman has been born?"

Everyone exclaimed in surprise as their faces were filled with shock.

The body of Shi Xueman, who was supervising the training of her own combat division, trembled. She quickly raised her head to see what was going on. Her beautiful eyes lit up and her lips curled into a faint smile.

Jiang Wei and Sang Zhijun had their mouths agape with surprise as they looked at the streak of brilliant sword gleam in the sky.

The dazzling sword gleam had a very long tail, resembling a shooting star flying toward the sky.

In the depths of the sky.

Le Buleng was slightly surprised. Ai Hui indeed lived up to his reputation.

Previously, Le Buleng felt weird when An Muda allowed his precious disciple to follow somebody else. Now, he realized that this lad named Ai Hui was rather skillful.

The altitude that Le Buleng was flying at surpassed the level of an ordinary elementalists. He was in the depths of the sky. It was very dangerous to fly at such a high altitude. Dire beasts that lived at these altitudes were powerful creatures like the humpback cloud whales.

The depths of the sky might seem very quiet and peaceful, but it was actually filled with extremely intense metal winds. These metal winds were so powerful that they formed a special zone that would shred any ordinary individual to smithereens in a split second if he or she were to stay here.

A speckle of dazzling light expanded in his vision at a terrifying speed.

Le Buleng let out a snort.

The sunlight over his head seemed to gather at his back. Suddenly, wisps of golden flames rose behind his back, resembling gold wings.

He reached out his finger and pointed it at the incoming sword gleam.

A wisp of golden flame shot out from his fingertip.

The sword gleam collided squarely with the wisp of golden flame.

Boom!

A thunderous explosion rang across the air. The sky looked as if it was trembling. Surging currents swept across the air and created distorted rippling energy waves through the sky.

The power of the sword gleam was three times more powerful than what he had expected.

At his current base level, he was extremely accurate with his judgement of one's strength. Very seldomly would such an inaccuracy occur.

His interest was piqued.

He noticed there were a few pagodas on the ground and that the attack was launched by the shortest one. This was the first time he saw a sword gleam launched by a pagoda. Interesting, very interesting!

The deafening explosion in the sky caused Shi Xueman's facial expression to change drastically.

Before she could react, a golden fireball suddenly appeared before

her. A skinny old man holding an ice block that was a few times bigger than his body hovered 10 meters away from her.

"Young girl, do you still remember me?"

She Xueman was filled with shock. The speed of the old man was so fast!

Upon taking a closer look at the old man, Shi Xueman’s facial expression froze. After a while, she asked with uncertainty, "Uncle Le?"

The news of Le Buleng appearing in Lemon Camping Ground swept across the entire camping ground like a hurricane.

Who was Le Buleng?

Youngsters might find this name unfamiliar, but when older elementalists heard of this name, a look of respect and reverence appeared on their faces. To them, this was a legendary name.

The terrifying sword gleam that was shot out from the inner camp shocked the entire Lemon Camping Ground. At this point in time, the faces of those elementalists who withdrew from the Sword of Lightning were filled with regret.

In the inner camp.

Ai Hui’s glaring eyes looked as if they were going to pop out at any moment. With an unfriendly tone, he said, "Snow lava? At least 100 liters? Senior Le, I respect you as a senior. If you want snow lava, I can gift one or two liters to you as a form of respect, but now you want at least 100 liters? At least?"

Le Buleng dropped the gigantic block of ice onto the ground and said bluntly, "If you provide enough snow lava, he will become a Master and work for you for 10 years. Tell me now, deal or no deal?"

Ai Hui widened his eyes and sneered. With a lofty attitude, he replied, "Deal!"

In the blink of an eye, the ice-cold look on Ai Hui’s face defrosted as he broke into a wide smile. With an amiable tone, he said, "Senior, is he your only disciple? Do you still have other disciples? Come, come, I have enough snow lava. Where else can you find so much A-grade fire liquid? I will give you a 50 percent discount, five years of labor for your second disciple!"

Le Buleng, "..."

Chapter 478: Shock

Duanmu Huanghun restrained the anger within him.

Being a prideful individual, when he saw that he was being surpassed by Ai Hui and Shi Xueman, he did not feel good at all. He was alright with Shi Xueman surpassing him. After all, he grew up under the shadow of Iron Lady and did not think much about surpassing her.

However, he just couldn't accept the fact that Ai Hui had surpassed him.

Duanmu Huanghun felt as unbearable as if he had swallowed a fly. When they were at Central Pine Academy, he had come a cropper in Ai Hui's hands countless times. If Ai Hui was an exceptional genius, he wouldn't have felt so indignant. However, be it talents or family background, Ai Hui paled in comparison to him, yet Ai Hui was still able to surpass him.

Unbearable.

Was Duanmu Huanghun an individual who could bear seeing someone better than him? No.

Duanmu Huanghun threw all the distracting thoughts to the back of his head. He had even rejected Iron Lady's invitation to join the Spear of Heavy Cloud. Right now, he was only thinking about one thing: Master.

He had to become a Master!

Being surpassed by Ai Hui had already brought him so much shame. If he still could not catch up to Ai Hui, it wouldn't be just a matter of shame anymore.

Previously, Duanmu Huanghun had not thought about the issue of becoming a Master. All he cared about at that time was learning various inheritances, and he had been immeasurably satisfied with his terrifying intelligence.

It was only now that he realized more did not necessarily mean better.

What was his Path of Master?

Other than his [Viridescent Flower], he had studied numerous other absolute arts as well. Other than the absolute arts that the Duanmu family and his master, Dai Gang, kept, he also studied the ones that Shi Xueman brought from her family.

There were very few people that could surpass him in this aspect.

Currently, however, this advantage had become an impediment to his progress.

Every absolute art was profound, deep, and contained

extraordinary knowledge and rich experience. Glistening and dazzling, they were like gemstones scattered in the elemental energy system.

In the face of so many absolute arts, he was at a loss.

Which path should he choose?

He sat under the defensive ancient tree and knitted his eyebrows in vexation.

.....

Lemon Camping Ground.

Shi Xueman brought Le Buleng to her division’s camp and said, "Zu Yan can stay in the fire reservoir first. The fire elemental energy in the fire reservoir isn’t too strong, and he can endure it without damaging his body."

Seven fire reservoirs were spread out in a line in front of Le Buleng. Some were packed with people while some were sparsely filled.

Ai Hui followed behind them as well. He was filled with interest toward Zu Yan. He had completely forgotten that he previously defeated Zu Yan in a training hall.

Shi Xueman glanced at Ai Hui. What was this fellow up to again? She understood Ai Hui very well. Having respect for a senior was a characteristic that could never be found in Ai Hui.

Everything he did, he did it with a purpose!

When Shi Xueman saw that this fellow was willing to put aside his training to follow Le Buleng, she was certain that he was up to something.

Le Buleng's gaze swept across the fire reservoirs and noticed something. "The fire elemental energy in these fire reservoirs are at different concentration levels?"

"Yes." Shi Xueman nodded her head. "We have split the fire reservoirs into seven levels, from the lowest concentration level to the highest. We discovered that higher the concentration levels of fire elemental energy were not necessarily better for a fire elementalist. For low-level elementalists, only by absorbing fire elemental energy that is at a suitable concentration level can allow them improve faster."

Le Buleng nodded his head. He definitely knew about this as it was common sense. However, the people in a combat division seldomly conducted everything so meticulously like Shi Xueman.

Shi Beihai had given birth to a capable daughter!

Le Buleng's gaze landed upon the fire reservoir that had the

highest concentration of fire elemental energy. This fire reservoir was very small and could only fit two to three people. Currently, there was only a fatty sitting it.

Le Buleng was slightly surprised. This fatty must be quite strong to be able to withstand such concentrated fire elemental energy.

Before he could say anything, an elementalist holding a basket walked up to this fire reservoir, took out a bottle from the basket, and opened its lid. Concentrated and pure fire elemental energy undulations were released from the bottle, lighting up Le Buleng's eyes. It was snow lava.

It truly lived to its reputation as an A-grade fire liquid!

Right now, the market price for snow lava kept on rising. The main issue was they could not be bought in bulk. Otherwise, he wouldn't have looked for An Muda.

The elementalist started to pour the snow lava into the fire reservoir that the fatty was in. The crystal-clear snow lava gave off wisps of transparent flames.

In the blink of an eye, the bottle of snow lava was emptied into the fire reservoir. The fire elemental energy of the fire reservoir significantly increased in concentration level.

Le Buleng furrowed his eyebrows as he felt it was a waste to use the snow lava like this. Was there really a need to use a precious A-

grade fire liquid like the snow lava to increase the concentration level of the fire elemental energy by that little bit?

He felt that Shi Xueman was still young and did not know how valuable and expensive the snow lava was.

At this moment, the elementalist took out a second bottle and emptied its content into the fire reservoir.

With a blank look on his face, Le Buleng watched as this elementalist emptied five bottles of snow lava into the fire reservoir. He was not finished yet. He emptied bottles of snow lava into the seven fire reservoirs one by one.

A total of 12 bottles of snow lava had been used!

He suddenly turned around and asked Ai Hui, "Isn’t snow lava very valuable?"

"They are indeed very valuable," Ai Hui replied nonchalantly.

Le Buleng turned around again and asked Shi Xueman, "How many bottles of snow lava do you use every day?"

"Around 50 bottles," Shi Xueman, who was very familiar with logistics, answered immediately.

"How many liters of snow lava is that?"

"Five liters."

Le Buleng's face turned very ugly. 100 liters of snow lava were used in 20 days. However... Zu Yan was required to work for Ai Hui for 10 years!

20 days of snow lava in exchange for 10 years of labor!

When Ai Hui saw Le Buleng's ashen face, he panicked. Iron Lady was too honest.

With a solemn look on his face, Ai Hui coughed softly and said, "The Spear of Heavy Cloud is our core combat division. From the beginning, we had already decided to spare no expense in assembling it! This is for the sake of allowing everyone to improve their strength rapidly and to survive in the battlefield. Therefore, we do not hesitate to provide as much snow lava as possible. Everyone knows the value of snow lava... but!"

Ai Hui suddenly raised his voice as his facial expression became more solemn. "We feel that everyone's lives cannot be measured with money. Yes, wars are indeed unavoidable. However, since everyone has joined the Spear of Heavy Cloud, all of us belong to one big family. Our main target is to have as many people survive as possible. To do so, we are willing to spend more money. I also hope that everyone will not let Division Leader Shi down and will train hard to improve your strength!"

Ai Hui's words were powerful and resonant.

All of the elementalists in the fire reservoirs were extremely emotional. They had been through dark times when fire elemental materials were scarce and progress could only be made with great difficulty. They knew the current moment of bliss was hard to come by.

Ai Hui's words had touched their hearts deeply. If not for the fact that they were enduring the heat of the fire reservoirs at this moment, they would make a vow to follow Ai Hui for eternity.

Shi Xueman cast a glance at Ai Hui. After Central Pine Valley's production of snow lava increased, they could not sell it because they feared crashing the market. As such, their stocks of snow lava piled up more and more, and they had to use them for their training...

Le Buleng's facial expression softened as he felt that what Ai Hui said made sense. It was not that they did not know the value of snow lava, but rather, they were willing to use them in bulk.

"That one then." Le Buleng pointed at the fire pool that Fatty was in.

Deep down, Ai Hui was wiping off the cold sweat on his forehead. Luckily, he had followed them over here.

"We are moving to another location in a few days' time. Uncle Le, do you mind waiting for a few days?" Shi Xueman asked.

"Moving to another location?" Le Buleng was slightly puzzled.

"We have a newly-built city. The fire elemental energy there is much more vigorous and concentrated," Shi Xueman explained.

"A newly-built city?" Le Buleng was shocked.

Youngsters nowadays were becoming more and more formidable. They could casually build a city just like that?

"That's right, we have a capable earth elementalist who is specialized in building structures," Shi Xueman said. "It will take some time to travel over there. I'm not sure whether or not it will affect Zu Yan's condition."

Upon hearing these words, Le Buleng said, "We will start when we arrive at the new city then. Prepare enough snow lava by then. Once Zu Yan begins to absorb the fire elemental energy, the process can't be stopped halfway."

"All right, we will put up less snow lava for sale and make sure Zu Yan has enough snow lava to use," Ai Hui quickly said.

A satisfied look appeared on Le Buleng's face.

Shi Xueman could not help but look at Ai Hui. This fellow... was indeed an evil businessman!

Ai Hui seized the opportunity and asked, "Senior, can you teach us a thing or two? Do you mind giving us some pointers?"

Le Buleng, who was feeling rather pleased now, said, "Xueman doesn't need me to give her any pointers. She will have a bright future if she continues on her path. As for you..."

Le Buleng examined Ai Hui for a while and furrowed his eyebrows and said, "Your condition is much more complicated."

Everyone, including Shi Xueman, was shocked as nervous looks appeared on their faces. On the contrary, Ai Hui was calm. He was even in the mood to laugh. "Luckily, it's complicated and not terrible."

Le Buleng could see the facial expressions on everyone's face. He was surprised at the importance of Ai Hui in everyone's heart and by how calm Ai Hui was.

This lad was indeed interesting.

Le Buleng nodded his head and said, "That's right, your condition is complicated, but not terrible. Is something forming at your earth palace?"

"How does Senior know?" A look of surprise finally appeared on Ai Hui's face.

When he was making the breakthrough to Master, he had already sensed that something was developing in his earth palace. However, even now, there was nothing in his earth palace. This feeling had been bugging him all this time.

Therefore, when Le Buleng analyzed his body, he was startled.

"When your elemental energy flows past your earth palace, there is a very slight hesitation in its flow." Le Buleng looked as if he was recalling something and continued, "I have once encountered something like this, however, it did not happen to my earth palace. It happened more than 20 years ago. Hmm, what did I practice at that time? I can't really remember."

"Can't really remember..." Ai Hui was stunned.

How could someone not remember what he was practicing?

The rest were stunned as well. They thought they heard Le Buleng wrongly.

"I have tried to make the breakthrough to the level of Grandmaster eight times and failed every time. Every time I failed, I had to change my Path of Master and forget everything about my previous Path of Master. Therefore, how can I clearly remember what I used to practice?"

Le Buleng's tone sounded as if he had downplayed his experience. On the contrary, everyone was appalled by his experience. Even

Shi Xueman was overwhelmed with shock.

Whenever one failed to make the breakthrough to the level of Grandmaster, his mind and body would be severely traumatized and his base level would drastically fall. He would doubt his Path of Master as well. Many people could not walk out of the shadow of failing to become a Grandmaster for the rest of their lives.

Even Yuchi Ba, who had failed breaking through to the level of Grandmaster in the past, only now had the courage to try again. Everyone was filled with admiration toward him.

Whenever people talked about Le Buleng, they would sigh with sorrow. In many people's eyes, he was merely a backdrop who was used to amplify Dai Gang's glory.

However, this man, who was treated like a backdrop by everyone, had tried to make the breakthrough to the level of Grandmaster eight times without anyone knowing!

He had endured a life-transforming, once-in-a-lifetime agony eight times.

Ai Hui was utterly shocked.

Chapter 479: Madman Le Buleng

The Spear of Heavy Cloud's camp was silent. Only Le Buleng's voice could be heard.

"I don't know what pointers I can give you. I never practiced the power of lightning before, and I don't really understand it. I can only give a rough account of how I train. I hope this can be of some help to you."

Le Buleng looked as if he was recalling something. However, most of time, he looked indifferent, as if he was chit-chatting about ordinary daily life. At this point in time, his tone became much more gentle. "I can't really remember much about my past. The last time I failed, it was five years ago, around the time when the blood catastrophe broke out. The last time I failed, the outcome wasn't really that bad. Only my Path of Master was destroyed."

Path of Master destroyed... the result wasn't really that bad...

Ai Hui couldn't help but ask, "Is there an outcome that is worse than this?"

"Yes." Le Buleng nodded his head. "There was a time where I was severely injured and in a desert. Six of my palaces were destroyed, so I couldn't move at all. My elemental energy was completely depleted as well. I laid in the desert for five days without encountering anyone. Subsequently, I was discovered by a colony of white ants and half of my left arm was bitten off. Luckily, my bones were intact. At that moment, I still thought I was going to

die. Haha. Fortunately, a huge sand storm arrived and saved my life. I was buried under a sand dune for... four or six months? I have forgotten about it. However, at that time, I managed to come up with the [Cold Embers] and [Earth Elemental Inverse Flames] techniques. Ultimately, I made a gain."

When Le Buleng talked about training, he seemed to have become an entirely different person. His skinny and dried face loosened up and looked as if it was giving off radiance. His aged eyes became sharp and bright.

"At that moment, I was actually going to lose consciousness, but I wanted to survive. Suddenly, I thought of how embers could sustain for a long period of time without being extinguished. I didn't think too much at that time. All I wanted to do was to buy more time for myself. I didn't expect my idea to be so useful. After another two months, I finally regained some of my elemental energy. With my surroundings covered in sand, I could not absorb any fire elemental energy. Therefore, I had to think of another idea. Finally, I was able to come up with [Earth Elemental Inverse Flames]. It took me another few more months to recover."

Ai Hui looked blankly at Le Buleng. He could not imagine himself being severely injured with his arm bitten off by white ants while buried under a sand dune for several months.

Ai Hui was considered an individual that had been through hardship. He had built up his endurance through the time he spent in the Wilderness. This had given him an extremely huge advantage. His training intensity had always been very high. The elementalists in Sword of Lightning were tortured by him to the

point that they were going to collapse.

However, he still paled in comparison to Senior Le Buleng.

Le Buleng became very talkative when he talked about training. He was completely different from the cold and reticent old fogey from before. He did not even need other people to liven the conversation.

"Subsequently, I found a Path of Master through [Cold Embers] and [Earth Elemental Inverse Flames]. However, that Path of Master was not good enough and I failed in making a breakthrough to the level of Grandmaster." Le Buleng shook his head, looking as if he had come to a dead end. Then, he continued, "Oh, oh, oh, we were talking about five years ago just now. Five years ago, when I failed, I quickly began to think of an idea. However, before I could come up with an idea, the Elders Guild was incompetent and lost the Fire Prairie. By that point, I knew it would be troublesome to obtain fire elemental materials in the future. Ordinary methods definitely would not work. Then, I thought of a new method."

Everyone was listening to Le Buleng attentively. A chance to hear an exceptional elite like Senior Le Buleng talk about his training path was hard to come by.

Sitting in the fire reservoir, Faty could not help but ask, "What method?"

Fatty’s form of respect and admiration toward Le Buleng was different from the others. He also felt that the old fogey was rather

formidable, but treated him like a storyteller as well. When he heard the story reached a critical junction, he could not restrain himself.

Le Buleng was not annoyed by Fatty's question. Instead, he asked Fatty cheekily, "You're also a fire elementalist. Can you guess what the method was?"

Fatty did not expect the old fogey to throw the ball back at him. However, when he saw the cheeky look on the old fogey's face, he was annoyed. Fatty snorted, "Without the Fire Prairie, you can't use the ordinary methods. Five years ago, the Wilderness Expansion Order had not been announced yet, so it has nothing to do with the Wilderness. Just now you mentioned that your base level had collapsed and you had to re-cultivate your elemental energy. At that time, the only source that could produce an endless amount of fire elemental energy was..."

Fatty muttered to himself for a while. Suddenly, his eyes lit up and he said, "I know! The sun!"

Le Buleng was stunned. He had not expected Fatty to be able to come up with the answer. He could not help but examine Fatty closely. Fatty's aptitude was rather good, but his strength still paled in comparison to Zu Yan.

When Fatty saw the facial expression of Le Buleng, he knew he had guessed correctly. Feeling immensely proud of himself, he said, "How hard can such an easy question be?"

At this moment, everyone suddenly realized what was going on. Fatty was right. The sun was able to produce an endless amount of fire elemental energy.

"But isn't the fire elemental energy from the sun weak?" Shi Xueman felt puzzled.

People had tried using the fire elemental energy from the sun to train a long time ago, but the fire elemental energy from the sun was extremely weak, making it very difficult for one train with it. By comparison, the fire elemental energy from lava in volcanoes was easier to absorb and use.

"The fire elemental energy from the sun is indeed very weak. Ordinary methods definitely will not work," Le Buleng replied. "However, I know where the fire elemental energy from the sun would be very strong."

"Where?" Fatty asked.

"The depths of the sky."

Hiss. Everyone drew in a breath of cold air.

The depths of the sky was an extremely dangerous place. A moment of carelessness would cause one to be shredded to smithereens. Even with Ai Hui and Shi Xueman's current strength, they could not survive long in the depths of the sky.

"I thought Senior's base level had collapsed? With the strength of a Master, how could you ascend to the depths of the sky?" Sang Zhijun interrupted.

"I am familiar with that place. That place might seem dangerous, but once you get used to it, it's not that dangerous. Of course, it was rather painful at the beginning. Subsequently, it got better."

At this point in time, everyone was filled with immense admiration for Le Buleng. Le Buleng's perseverance and zealotry far exceeded their expectations. If one went to the depths of the sky without attaining the level of Master first, he or she would most likely die. Shi Xueman, who had been to the depths of the sky under the protection of her master, clearly knew that the danger of that place had been downplayed by Le Buleng.

Even if one had rich experience, the amount of pain that his or her body had to withstand remained the same.

"This time around, the Path of Master that I came up with was the [Grandmaster Obliteration Flames]." Le Buleng's eyes flickered, looking as if there were flames burning within them. "At that time, I felt that I had a high chance of becoming a Grandmaster. Before me, no one was able to utilize the sun to such a level. My [Grandmaster Obliteration Flames] technique is unique."

Le Buleng's tone was proud and domineering, but everyone was filled with admiration toward him.

The name "Grandmaster Obliteration Flames" could cause one's

heart to palpitate in fear. Flames that could obliterate a Grandmaster!

Le Buleng suddenly shifted his gaze to Ai Hui and said with a deep voice, "Your lightning is also very unique. I have seen your sword pagodas, and they are very interesting. However, coming up with sword pagodas is not enough. You have to reach your full potential! Right now, you're like a sissy. Look at your training programs. What kind of bullsh*t are they?"

Le Buleng's ruthless words suddenly pelted Ai Hui in his face, stunning everyone.

At the next moment, everyone's facial expression changed. Ai Hui might appear cheeky all the time, but his temperament was actually absolutely terrible. He was someone that was amenable to coaxing, but not coercion!

However, the thing that caused them to become dumbstruck was when Ai Hui bowed respectfully and said, "Senior, thank you for your pointers!"

Le Buleng did not smile just because Ai Hui treated him with respect. Instead, he knitted his eyebrows and said, "I have already given you the pointers that you need. It will have to depend on you, yourself, to determine what to do next. Your path is different from others. No one can teach you anything."

When Le Buleng recalled that his disciple still had to work under Ai Hui, he stopped in his tracks, glanced at Ai Hui, and said, "I feel

that you're like me: someone who has desire. My desire is to become a Grandmaster and defeat Dai Gang. I don't know what your desire is and whether it is easier or harder to achieve than mine, but if you have a desire, you have to be hard on yourself. Mediocrity is not enough to make your desire come true."

Ai Hui's body trembled.

"I will leave Zu Yan here. I need to go and train now," Le Buleng turned around and told Shi Xueman.

After Le Buleng finished his sentence, he flew up and disappeared into the sky.

Everyone was at a loss. Le Buleng's words gave them a huge shock. No one expected Le Buleng, who had been regarded by many as a loser, to be so tenacious.

Yes, he was tenacious.

Even now, Le Buleng had not become a Grandmaster, and he was still a loser who had yet to succeed. In the future, after many years had passed, everyone would still remember Dai Gang, but no one would remember that Le Buleng failed eight times to break through to the Grandmaster level.

Yet, his failure to become a Grandmaster did not stop the crowd from respecting and revering him at all.

Ai Hui was still at a loss. His mind was filled with the words that Le Buleng had just said.

When the others saw Ai Hui's facial expression, a look of pity appeared on their faces. In their eyes, Ai Hui was already very hard on himself. He trained without knowing what fatigue felt like. He was perfect in the diligence department. No ordinary individual could train crazily and recklessly like Le Buleng.

Le Buleng was a madman!

Jiang Wei and the rest were about to console Ai Hui, but were stopped by Shi Xueman. They looked at Shi Xueman, and she shook her head at them.

Ai Hui stood there with a blank look on his face.

.....

On the ridge of the Blackfish Mouth Volcano, there was a huge quagmire that had a diameter of a few miles.

The exhausted Wang Xiaoshan laid in a pool of mud with half of his face submerged. He was panting heavily, and his mind was blank. He looked at the sky with emptiness in his eyes.

Every now and then, the black volcanic plume from the Blackfish Mouth Volcano would drift past the azure sky in his eyes.

His elemental energy and physical strength were completely depleted.

He was single-handedly building a city. Wang Xiao’s face twitched with bitter agony.

He had overestimated himself.

Everyone had relied on him.

With his physical strength completely depleted, his mind drifted like the volcanic plume in the sky. Suddenly, he thought of the day in the Garden of Life when Ai Hui led them to avoid the blood fiends.

"Who is an earth elementalist?"

He would never forget the question that Ai Hui asked on that day for the rest of his life. That moment was the turning point of his life. They hid under the rocks and soil, waiting for their reinforcements to arrive in the darkness. No one knew Wang Xiaoshan was feeling more touched than fearful. That was the first time he had realized that he was capable of helping other people.

Fast forward to the present day, he was very glad that he could be together with everyone.

Countless times, he would think about how lucky it was for a useless man like him to survive the blood catastrophe.

Patter.

A drop of pea-sized rain fell on his face. Extreme pain spread over his face.

More and more raindrops fell on his face. Soon, torrents of rain fell from the sky. He could not even open his eyes.

It was painful...

Suddenly, the image of Ai Hui kneeling before the graves of Han Yuqin and Wang Shouchuan amid the torrential rain in Central Pine City appeared in his mind.

It must be very painful...

The grief and shame from that day gushed into his mind. He remembered he had told himself that day, Wang Xiaoshan, you must be able to help everyone in the future.

Raindrops fell on his face with a scorching sensation.

From an unknown source, a surge of strength gushed through Wang Xiaoshan’s body. He struggled to pick himself up and build his city amid the rain.

Chapter 480: The Secret Mission of The Three Central Divisions

"Le Buleng?"

Madam Ye knitted her eyebrows. Nowadays, her authority was absolute. A slight movement in her eyebrows caused the atmosphere of the meeting room to instantly dim. Guards and servants around her were scared out of their wits and lowered their heads.

Even Nian Tingfeng was vexed by her action. With a low voice, he reported, "Yes. Le Buleng has a disciple named Zu Yan. He is a member of the fire elemental Zu family. Reportedly, Le Buleng is there for Zu Yan. As for snow lava, it is a rare A-grade fire liquid from Central Pine Valley. I don’t know what deal have they made, but Le Buleng does not seem like he is leaving anytime soon. Meanwhile, Ai Hui’s Sword of Lighting is becoming rather powerful. We can’t underestimate its combat power."

"Oh, what do you mean by we can’t underestimate its combat power?" Madam Ye asked calmly.

Nian Tingfeng recounted the scouting report clearly to Madam Ye.

Madam Ye’s facial expression tensed. She came from a family of swordsmen and knew how powerful the sword gleam was from its description. However, when she heard that Sword of Lightning only had 300 people, her facial expression loosened up. "They have

too few people. I heard that Ai Hui is an extremely stingy individual. He isn't even willing to hire more elementalists for his combat division?"

"I think he wanted to hire more, but was unable to do so." Nian Tingfeng explained, "Nowadays, most of the swordsmen come from Karakorum. Other than those desperate fire elementalists, no one is willing to go to such an isolated place. Furthermore, no one dares to pursue a fellow who keeps talking about lightning."

300 men were far too few for a combat division, unless they were the Dread Division.

Even with the assets of the entire Avalon of Five Elements, only one Dread Division was formed. However, even the Dread Division had 500 men, not 300. How could Central Pine Valley's strength be compared to the entire Avalon of Five Elements? Even if these 300 men were hand-picked elites, the division wouldn't be very powerful.

If the elementalists weren't powerful and they were so small in number, what fighting capabilities would the combat division have then?

Madam Ye did not take Ai Hui seriously.

The three central divisions were built by the Elders Guild with all its might. A countless amount of resources and money were spent, and generations of research were conducted. Even when the Avalon of Five Elements was at its peak, it couldn't build a fourth

central division. Right now, Beyond Avalon could only depend on its leftover assets to survive. Even Beyond Avalon couldn’t build another powerful combat division, let alone Ai Hui, who had zero assets.

However, Le Buleng was a troublesome individual.

Madam Ye and Nian Tingfeng clearly knew how troublesome Le Buleng was. This fellow’s strength was the highest among all Masters in the Avalon of Five Elements. Other than Grandmaster Dai, no one dared to say they were confident in defeating Le Buleng.

Furthermore, this fellow was reckless and never listened to orders. Otherwise, he would not have left his position as the division leader of the Icy Flames Division.

Le Buleng was bad-tempered and unreasonable.

Everyone thought this madman had died after not hearing about him for so many years. They had not expected him to appear out of nowhere and spoil their plans.

After thinking for a while, Madam Ye said, "Ask your men to retreat first. We won’t provoke this madman for the time being. As long as we don’t provoke him, he won’t go crazy. When Father-in-law was still alive, he said that even though Le Buleng is carefree, he has a deep sentimental attachment for the Avalon of Five Elements. It is no coincidence that Le Buleng appeared at this point in time."

"What does Madam mean?" Nian Tingfeng was slightly surprised.

Suddenly, Madam Ye revealed a confident smile and said, "Who do you think Le Buleng's target is?"

As the division leader of Surveillance, Nian Tingfeng knew a lot more insider stories than the other people. After thinking for a while, he understood what was going on and replied with excitement, "Dai Gang!"

Those who were slightly older clearly knew about the grudges between Le Buleng and Dai Gang.

"If I'm not wrong, Le Buleng is Grandmaster An Muda's backup plan to stop Dai Gang from annexing Beyond Avalon. Now, he is conveniently taking care of Shi Xueman." Madam Ye laughed.

"What about us?" Nian Tingfeng's eyes lit up.

"We shouldn't disturb them. Even if Le Buleng can't stop Dai Gang, he can significantly exhaust Dai Gang's strength. As for Central Pine Valley, Shi Xueman is the daughter of Shi Beihai. How could she bear to ignore the perilous situation her father is in? If Ai Hui agrees to help her father out, then all of them will head toward the battlefield. Ha, but what can 300 people do? If Ai Hui disagrees, Central Pine Valley will face bitter dissension."

"Madam is wise!" Nian Tingfeng exclaimed with sincerity.

Madam Ye withdrew her smile and said with a solemn tone, "This period of time is very important to us. We definitely can’t make any mistakes. What are Ximen Caijue’s and Wan Shenwei’s stances?"

"This subordinate is useless!" A shameful look appeared on Nian Tingfeng’s face.

A cold glint flashed across Madam Ye’s eyes. With an indifferent tone, she said, "This is not your fault. Each man has his own aspirations. We can’t force them to do something they don’t like. However, they have been well cared for by the Elders Guilds for generations and should at least show me some sincerity. I heard that the three central divisions have methods that are specially designed to deal with Grandmasters?"

Overwhelmed with shock, Nian Tingfeng’s facial expression changed drastically. He had not expected for Madam Ye to know about such a top-level secret!

A jittery look appeared on Nian Tingfeng’s face. Madam Ye merely smiled and did not hurry him for an answer.

Nian Tingfeng regained his composure. With a determined look on his face, he lowered his head and replied, "Yes, the three central divisions do have such strategies."

A Grandmaster was a supreme being with extraordinary status.

In reality, the ruler of the Avalon of Five Elements was the Elders Guild. The Elders Guild benefited from the existence of a Grandmaster, but they were simultaneously filled with fear toward him as well. The Elders Guild had always wanted to devise strategies to deal with a Grandmaster. Other than some additional special reasons, the three central divisions were stationed in the isolated Old Territory to develop strategies that allowed them to deal with Grandmasters. This was also one of their most important missions.

The Elders Guild hoped that they would have the capabilities to retaliate if they were one day at odds with a Grandmaster.

Developing strategies to deal with Grandmasters was one of the most top secret missions of the three central divisions.

Very few people knew about this mission. Usually, only the Great Elder would know about it. A Great Elder would pass this secret on to the next Great Elder before he died.

Any Great Elder understood that if this secret was leaked out, the Grandmasters would definitely not tolerate the existence of the three central divisions.

"Since this is their responsibility, tell them to properly make the necessary preparations," Madam Ye said plainly.

"Subordinate will pass down the order." Nian Tingfeng’s chest tightened.

.....

When Le Buleng was finally informed that they would be heading to the new city, he heaved a sigh of relief.

However, he quickly became slightly suspicious and asked, "Ai Hui and the rest are not coming?"

Shi Xueman shook her head and replied, "They are staying here to train since the sword pagodas are difficult to bring over to the new city. We will go over first."

Le Buleng understood and did not ask any more questions.

The movements of the members of the Spear of Heavy Cloud were sharp and precise. Even though they had not trained together for very long, they acted somewhat like a legitimate combat division. Their formations were neat and orderly, and they behaved with utmost propriety.

"Like father, like daughter!" Le Buleng praised Shi Xueman.

He was the previous division leader of the Icy Flames Division. Even though he was uninterested in becoming a division leader and was obsessed with training, he was still an expert in assembling and managing a combat division. Right now, the strength of the Spear of Heavy Cloud had already surpassed that of an ordinary combat division. All they needed now was time and

combat experience. Once the Spear of Heavy Cloud entered the battlefield, they would be polished into an elite unit.

Its foundation and structure were indeed outstanding!

He could not help but glance at the Sword of Lightning within the inner camp and feel pity for them. The Sword of Lightning was rather interesting with rather strong fighting capabilities. It was a pity that its numbers were too small.

The Sword of Lightning seemed to be practicing a kind of sword formation.

Le Buleng was not at all unfamiliar with sword formations. After all, he was a training fanatic who had changed his Path of Master eight times. he had delved into almost every field before.

Sword formations were neither complicated nor simple. The main logic behind a sword formation was that it gathered everyone's strength and combined them into one single attack.

The number of people involved had a direct effect on the might of the sword formation. The strength of more than 10 people might look impressive, but it was insignificant when placed on the battlefield.

Le Buleng had a rough gauge of the sword pagodas' strength after withstanding an attack from the Alkaid Sword Pagoda.

Given The Sword of Lightning's current strength, Le Buleng felt that they were still not ready to enter the battlefield.

A combat division should have at least a few thousand men. The strength of the elementalists in The Sword of Lightning wasn't really impressive, there weren't any Masters other than Ai Hui, and their numbers were extremely few. How could they enter the battlefield and fight?

However, Le Buleng could tell that Ai Hui was an opinionated individual. Furthermore, there were many marvellous, yet mysterious principles in these sword pagodas. The important thing was, what did all of this have to do with him?

With Le Buleng clearing the path ahead of the Spear of Heavy Cloud, the danger-ridden route had become a safe road.

Shi Xueman and the rest witnessed Le Buleng's formidable strength with their own eyes. In the face of Le Buleng, those powerful dire beasts were like sheep waiting to be slaughtered.

When everyone recalled that Le Buleng trained in the depths of the sky, they could not help but feel relieved.

If he could train effortlessly in the depths of the sky, the dire beasts on the ground would be as weak as chickens to him.

The entire journey was like a marathon. Le Buleng kept on clearing the path and pushing forward at the front while Shi

Xueman and her division ran frantically to catch up with him. Throughout the journey, they were constantly being mocked by Le Buleng.

"Are you a division of tortoises? Even a tortoise crawls faster than all of you!"

"A short journey like this and all of you are already tired? How can you fight on the battlefield with your pathetic stamina?"

"All of you are too slow! I'm bored waiting for you. I will go and survey the vicinity within 20 kilometers of us now. If you still can't catch up by then, I will find some place to train first."

...

Le Buleng kept on saying such words. Even a clay figurine could be melted with flames, let alone the youngsters in the Spear of Heavy Cloud. Everyone restrained themselves from erupting.

Run! Charge!

The journey was initially seven days long, but through sheer effort, they managed to reach their destination on the afternoon of the third day.

When Le Buleng saw the Blackfish Mouth Volcano, his eyes lit up. "You found a good place! Where is the new city?"

"Once we pass the mountain ridge ahead, we will arrive at our destination," Shi Xueman replied.

She had mentally prepared everyone that the living conditions of the new city would be bad. Everyone had this mental preparation. No one dared to be too hopeful that Wang Xiaoshan could build a city single-handedly in 15 days.

Having a prototype of the city would be good enough. The most important thing was to have the training facilities finished. No one here was a spoiled and pampered brat after all.

On the contrary, Le Buleng wasn't anxious at this moment. He followed beside Shi Xueman, looking rather excited. He could sense the abundance of fire elemental energy contained within the Blackfish Mouth Volcano. However, he felt puzzled. Even though there was an abundance of fire elemental energy, the base level of the fire elemental energy wasn't really that high. How could they produce an A-grade fire liquid like the snow lava?

He was filled with curiosity toward Ai Hui and his counterparts.

After they passed the mountain ridge, the wind in the air became stronger.

A brand-new empty city was built along the mountain ridge, making the latter look as if it was decorated with jewels. Amid the strong wind, the new city glistened in the afterglow of the setting sun.

The wind blowing in their direction contained the earthly scent of fresh soil.

Le Buleng was stunned. He abruptly turned his head around and asked, "This city was built by one person?"

Chapter 481: Getting Rid of The Internal Conflict

The size of the new city was rather large. The original design had a capacity for 10,000 people. Rather than a city that could fit 10,000 people, it looked like an expansive army camp that could fit 10,000 people.

The Spear of Heavy Cloud, along with its reserves, had a total of 8,000 men. The size of the army camp was more than enough for them.

When everyone walked into this brand-new army camp, they could not help but click their tongues in amazement.

"It’s amazing... I heard that it was built by one person?"

"If I didn’t see it for myself, I wouldn’t have believed it."

"Yes, this place is so huge..."

...

Every now and then, people would let a gasp of surprise. The roads were neat and straight, and the perimeter walls were orderly and upright. There were buildings with various functions, dazzling everyone’s eyes.

Le Buleng's interest was piqued. He squatted down and touched the solid floor. Whether it was the floor or the perimeter walls, he could not see any bricks being used. Everything was entirely made out of soil and then solidified using elemental energy. Le Buleng felt the floor with his hand and noticed that it was very sturdy and hard. Furthermore, it was unusually smooth and level as well. Clearly, it was built by an earth elementalist all in one go.

Formidable!

He exclaimed in admiration in his heart. Small details like these showed a lot about an elementalist's strength.

Everything fit seamlessly. No wrinkles could be found on the street roads or the perimeter walls. These unremarkable details displayed the impressive strength of the builder.

Of course, those slightly rich families would not use such a method to build their cities. They felt that this method would result in crude and ugly cities. They would only use this method when they needed to set up outdoor camps in the wild when they were travelling.

An outdoor camp was completely different from an army camp that could fit 10,000 people.

There would be a difference in quality between a city that was built by a group of people and a city that was built single-handedly by one person.

Le Buleng was slightly surprised. Even though he had not spent a long time with the Central Pine Faction, he had a feeling that it was packed with talents. Even before Le Buleng met the earth elementalist who single-handedly built the city, he could not help but give him an extremely high rating.

An earth elementalist who was very likely to become a Master!

Fortification Master?

This profession might not have existed in the past, but Le Buleng wasn't someone that rigidly adhered to conventions. Instead, he thought highly of this profession. If a fort appeared out of thin air on the battlefield within a night, it would create a huge sensation throughout the world.

Given Shi Xueman's capabilities, she could definitely take advantage of this new profession.

The Spear of Heavy Cloud had a bright future!

He felt at ease when he thought of this. With Zu Yan following Shi Xueman, he no longer needed to worry about him in the future. He could set his mind at ease and focus on dealing with Dai Gang.

When Le Buleng thought of Dai Gang, a battle fervor gushed through his body in an instant.

Shi Xueman and the rest quickly found Wang Xiaoshan, who was sleeping soundly. The entire body of Wang Xiaoshan was covered in mud, making him looked like a homeless man. A respectful gaze appeared on everyone’s faces as they subconsciously lightened their footsteps.

Wang Xiaoshan deserved to be respected for building a complete city like this single-handedly. Even Le Buleng was speechless.

When Shi Xueman saw Wang Xiaoshan sleeping soundly on the ground, she felt touched. She could tell that Wang Xiaoshan was extremely fatigued.

Actually, Wang Xiaoshan did not have much of a presence in the team. He was mild mannered, gentle, amiable, and easygoing. No matter how much work he was given, he would earnestly complete it.

Wang Xiaoshan woke up feeling groggy and rubbed his eyes. When he saw that he was surrounded by so many people, he was scared out of his skin. He only heaved a sigh of relief when he saw familiar faces like Shi Xueman and Jiang Wei.

Looking as if he blamed himself, he quickly responded, "Ah, Xueman, all of you are here already? I... I haven’t completed the city yet... The defense system isn’t up yet..."

"It is all right. The city is close to being perfect. Thank you, Xiaoshan!" Shi Xueman sincerely thanked him.

"But..." Wang Xiaoshan replied with a worrying tone.

Jiang Wei patted Wang Xiaoshan’s shoulder and smiled, "There are so many of us here. If we still have to worry about our safety, then we aren’t fit to enter the battlefield."

Wang Xiaoshan finally relaxed himself when he heard Jiang Wei’s words. Immediately, his eyes became drowsy and he yawned. "Then I shall have a good sleep first. Don’t wake me up, I’m going to sleep until the end of time!"

He was very tired. but satisfied at the same time.

.....

After Shi Xueman and Spear of Heavy Cloud had left, Lemon Camping Ground became cold and cheerless.

When Sword of Lightning announced that it wouldn’t be recruiting new members, everyone left Lemon Camping Ground one by one. Lemon Camping Ground was simply too small to support so many people.

As such, Lemon Camping Ground returned to its previous desolate state. The occasional yells from the inner camp managed to create some liveliness.

Since everyone’s attitude toward training changed, the training efficiency increased sharply.

Even though the training was boring, they weren't hard to execute. When Ai Hui chose the members for his division, he purposely chose those who could endure long and boring training sessions and could maintain focus for a long period of time.

The considerations that Ai Hui had taken prior to the formation of the Sword of Lightning began to now display their effects.

Gu Xuan, who had the right attitude toward training, quickly entered into a zone. The Merak Sword Pagoda where he was stationed was second only to Ai Hui's Megrez Sword Pagoda. The Merak Sword Pagoda was the second tallest sword pagoda with eight levels in total.

Every level, there were six men. The entire sword pagoda held up to 48 men.

In reality, Gu Xuan had never commanded more than five men before. He aspired to become a swordsman. What was a swordsman? A swordsman was a lone wolf who used his sword to slice through every problem.

Gu Xuan finally found acceptance when he regarded the sword pagoda as a sword formation. Even though he had never seen a sword formation like this, he was absolutely sure it was a sword formation when he saw the sword gleam from the Alkaid Sword Pagoda. It was a very powerful and pure sword formation.

It was definitely not easy for 48 people to unleash the same sword

move at the same time, but everyone still managed to do it after putting in effort. When 48 streaks of sword gleam were gathered together, the dense sword aura that shot through the sky excited him.

He was the pagoda master and every sword gleam in the sword pagoda would gather at his position. As such, only a capable swordsman could take up the position of the pagoda master. Only a capable swordsman could make minute adjustments amid so many sword gleams.

In Sword of Lightning, Gu Xuan's swordsmanship was second only to Ai Hui's. However, even so, the number of minute adjustments he was able to make was very few. There were a lot of times when he needed to depend on the coordination among his teammates.

However, being a pagoda master had its benefits too.

Since every sword gleam in the sword pagoda would gather at his position, the sword aura that he experienced would be concentrated and powerful. The first time he successfully unleashed an attack from the sword pagoda, his mind went blank.

To outsiders, this might not have any value, but to a swordsman, this was the best form of tempering his swordsmanship.

Gu Xuan was pleasantly surprised. He had never given up on the sword path.

Currently, the biggest problem that swordsmen faced in training was that there weren't any swordsmen left from the Cultivation Era.

No one had a direct understanding of swordsmanship. Karakorum Sword League's sword formations were for beginners to gain a first direct impression of swordsmanship. What was a sword? What did a sword gleam look like?

However, when a swordsman progressed to a higher level of swordsmanship, he or she would be at a loss again.

What did a high-level sword gleam look like? No one had seen it before, so there was nothing to reference.

The current sword pagodas were able to directly show Gu Xuan how a sword gleam looked when it became stronger. This chance was extremely hard to come by. A dense and concentrated sword aura was able to help Gu Xuan understand swordsmanship as well.

One could imagine the joy Gu Xuan felt.

Similarly, inside the Alkaid Sword Pagoda, Ai Hui immersed himself in the dense aura of sword gleams.

The words Le Buleng said that day had a huge impact on him.

Before that day, Ai Hui had always been hesitating. Le Buleng was able to carry out those crazy training programs because of his

character and personality. Le Buleng could afford to be reckless and place himself in dire situations.

Ai Hui couldn't do that. He wasn't a loner and still had a bunch of comrades depending on him.

Ai Hui was different from Le Buleng in the sense that he had more responsibilities.

Everyone was different. Each person had his or her own path to walk.

Subconsciously, Ai Hui would tell himself these words and restrain himself from doing anything reckless.

Today, however, Ai Hui suddenly realized how wrong he was.

Yes, he was the leader of the Central Pine Faction. Was making sure everyone survived his only responsibility? No. If that was his only goal, then all he needed to do was to lead them to the depths of Wilderness and stay in a corner.

What was the point of doing that? Who would agree to that?

Making sure everyone survived was not his only responsibility. He still had to lead them to seek revenge and obtain victory. In an era where Grandmasters reigned supreme, they would eventually fail if they did not have any Grandmasters.

In the face of a Grandmaster, they did not have any chance of winning. Not only must he make sure everyone survived, but he had to aim to become a Grandmaster as well.

If he did not, who else would?

Either he died on the way to becoming a Grandmaster or he died at the hands of a Grandmaster.

One option was to fight for his life, while the other was to wait for his impending doom. It was obvious which option he was going to choose.

After getting rid of his internal conflict, Ai Hui felt an indescribable relief. For a very long period of time, he felt like he was walking on thin ice and trembling with fear. He was afraid that if he made one wrong move, everyone would be consigned to eternal damnation.

Ai Hui was filled with admiration toward Le Buleng.

Le Buleng was widely known to be a stubborn, intolerant, and crazy individual. Most people ignored his wisdom and composure. Whether it was the [Cold Embers], [Earth Elemental Inverse Flame], or [Grandmaster Obliteration Flames] technique, all of them displayed the creativity of a genius.

Le Buleng might appear to be crazy, but in reality, he was

actually extremely calm.

This was the scariest part about Le Buleng.

An individual that was stubborn, determined, crazy, and intelligent was a formidable freak. Even so, Le Buleng was still suppressed by Dai Gang throughout his life.

Ai Hui could not imagine how powerful Dai Gang actually was.

Was a Grandmaster really that powerful?

Ai Hui took in a deep breath of air and threw all the distracting thoughts out of his head. He then focused on his restless earth palace.

With Le Buleng's reminder, Ai Hui paid a lot of attention to any abnormal movements in his earth palace. While training with the sword pagoda, Ai Hui discovered that every time the sword gleams gathered, his earth palace would somewhat react.

It was sensitive the the aura of a sword gleam.

Ai Hui's mind jolted as he suddenly thought about the sword embryo he used to have.

He quickly discovered that even though the most powerful sword aura currently produced could make his earth palace restless, that

was all it could do. It seemed that the sword aura was not powerful enough.

Perhaps, he should consider other methods?

Le Buleng complained that Ai Hui's sword pagodas were not powerful enough, that they were useless on a battlefield. In reality, Ai Hui had already prepared for this problem. All along, he had not planned to use the seven pagodas on the battlefield. He had a plan: Big Dipper Seven Swords, Combining the Seven Swords Into One!

Chapter 482: Get Ready! Raise Your Swords!

Mu Lei was lost in thought. They had not encountered many obstacles along the way.

The Lu Residence's old butler, Uncle She, followed along on this trip as well. This showed how much the Lu Residence valued this trip. With Uncle She's presence, the mayors of cities along the way presented them with gifts and favors. Some even sent their men to escort them for some distance. No one dared to offend the Lu Residence at this point in time.

An Muda would not live for much longer. It was still unknown whether or not Madam Ye could withstand Dai Gang. If one day Dai Gang was to annex Beyond Avalon, those who offended the Lu Residence would definitely not come to a good.

As for those petty bandits, the moment Mu Lei released his aura, they were scared witless and ran away.

If not for Lu Chen's request, Mu Lei wouldn't have wanted to travel so far just to escort some goods. Lu Chen had saved his life before , hence there was no way he could reject this request.

He squinted his eyes as he sat in the bone basin on the load basin beast's back. His body was covered by a glossy brown, silk-like hide that swayed along at the load basin beast's pace.

As sunlight sprinkled over Mu Lei's brown hide, it gave off layers of gorgeous luster. Mu Lei's body did not give off the slightest bit

of death aura. At this moment, he resembled a lazy cat.

The rest of the convoy tried their best not to make any noise. Mu Lei was not in a good mood.

After a while, a scout returned and reported to Uncle She in a whisper. After Uncle She finished listening to the report, he went to Mu Lei and said, "Master Mu, Lemon Camping Ground is right in front."

"Oh." Mu Lei slowly opened his eyes, sat up straight, and gazed into the distance.

A simple and crude camp appeared on the distant horizon. All he could see was a vague silhouette that looked like a scar on the horizon. If one didn’t have a sharp eyesight or look closely, he or she would not have discovered the camping ground.

Such a simple and crude camp.

He was slightly disappointed.

Along the way, they had heard a lot of news about Lemon Camping Ground. Most of the news came from elementalists who were returning from Lemon Camping Ground. Uncle She paid a lot of attention to this news. He spared no expense and obtained a lot of information.

What they heard the most were praises for the Spear of Heavy

Cloud. Every elementalist that they encountered returning from Lemon Camping Ground praised this division to high heaven. They did not even feel sad for not being chosen to join the combat division.

However, the evaluations of the Sword of Lightning were of two extremes. Some felt that Ai Hui truly lived up to the name of Lightning Blade for coming up with something that people had never seen before. However, more people felt that the Sword of Lightning was merely mystifying things on purpose.

Due to the fact that the Sword of Lightning only had 300 men, almost everyone showed disdain for it.

No one, however, dared to mock Ai Hui.

No matter what, Ai Hui was the first Lightning Master, and his status was legitimate. Le Buleng could mock and criticize Ai Hui, but not others. What made them think that they were qualified to do so?

Le Buleng's sudden appearance had sparked off heated discussions as well. After being missing for so many years, everyone thought he had died, and no one expected for him to still be alive. In the past, a lot of people had not understood why the family head of the Zu family would place Zu Yan in the hands of Le Buleng.

Now, they could see how wise the family head of the Zu family had been in making this decision. As the sole surviving heir of the

Zu family, Le Buleng would never abandon Zu Yan no matter what difficulties he faced.

In the eyes of ordinary individuals, Le Buleng's strength was so-so, but he was definitely a good master who valued relationships more than anything else.

Only someone like Mu Lei, who had been a reputable Master for so many years, knew how formidable and ruthless Le Buleng was. As such, when he heard that Le Buleng was in Lemon Camping Ground, he involuntarily became energized. He finally relaxed after he heard that Le Buleng had left along with the Spear of Heavy Cloud.

Among the current generation of Masters, Le Buleng was one of the few that everyone feared and did not want to face.

Everyone knew that Le Buleng desired to defeat Dai Gang. Initially, all of them mocked him for overestimating his own capabilities, but eventually, no one dared to ridicule him anymore. In the face of Dai Gang, Mu Lei did not even dare to think about going up against him. Le Buleng, however, did not fear Dai Gang or give up on going up against him.

Everyone understood that Le Buleng might not be Dai Gang's match, but his strength was the closest to Dai Gang's out of everyone in the world.

"We shall go over then. Everyone, ready up," Mu Lei said plainly.

Actually, even without Mu Lei’s reminder, the rest of the convoy had already readied up. Everyone had travelled a long distance for this journey, and all of them were exhausted. As such, now that they were about to reach their destination, they were very excited. However, when they saw the simple and crude camp in the distance, their hearts sank.

The Lu Residence was almighty in the Jadeite Forest, so their servants experienced luxurious lives. They were extremely disappointed to have come to a dilapidated camp after travelling such a long distance.

Uncle She knew what was going on. With a cold look on his face, he reprimanded the servants, "All of you better prepare yourselves and be well-behaved later. Everyone should know of the Lu Residence's rules. Those who create trouble for me will not be going back."

A cold shiver went down everyone’s spine as they withdrew the irreverent look on their faces.

Uncle She’s position in the Lu Residence was extremely high. He was one of few that the family head trusted deeply.

This time around, for the sake of safety, he had handpicked the guards. More than 10 of the guards were from the Lu Residence, while the rest were from the Lu Residence’s vassal enterprise. He knew all of their profiles clearly. Before they set off on this trip, they had been reminded that those who did not obey Uncle She’s commands would be severely punished.

Given Uncle She's status and age, he shouldn't have traveled on this long and arduous journey.

However, he volunteered himself for it since he was very grateful to Ai Hui. If not for Ai Hui, Mingxiu would have met with mishap while making her breakthrough to Master. Furthermore, Ai Hui had become the first ever Lightning Master. This achievement put him on par with Karakorum Polaris.

Ai Hui had already become a Master, and his strength would keep on improving as time passed.

To ordinary individuals, a Master was an eminent entity and a goal that everyone worked hard toward for their entire lives. However, to those aristocratic families, a Master was merely the starting point of an expert's journey.

Becoming a Master was merely the beginning of the path of an expert.

Only by first becoming a Master could one strive to become a Grandmaster. This was a long and bitter war. In every era, there were countless geniuses, but only a small handful of them could become Grandmasters.

Ai Hui deserved to be valued by the Lu Residence.

At this moment, Mu Lei suddenly let out a yelp as a startled look

appeared on his face.

He was not the only one. Uncle She and the rest of the convoy were overwhelmed with shock.

The atmosphere within Lemon Camping Ground's inner camp was tense.

They were going to try to combine seven swords into one for the first time. This was also the first time they were practicing this kind of technique.

It was only yesterday that Gu Xuan and the rest learned that the sword gleams from the seven sword pagodas could combine together!

Everyone in the Sword of Lightning felt an indescribable excitement.

The sword gleams from the Megrez Sword Pagoda and the Merak Sword Pagoda were already far more powerful than they had expected. If they combined the seven sword gleams into one, how powerful would that be?!

If they could execute it, the result would be overwhelming!

However, the difficulty of combining seven sword gleams into one was extremely high and similarly overwhelming.

The shortest sword pagoda was three levels high, while the tallest sword pagoda was nine levels high. The seven sword pagodas had 42 levels and there were six men per level, adding up to 252 men in total. Previously, everyone was laughing at the fact that 252 was two more than 250. This was such an "auspicious" number.

(In Chinese, a stupid person is known as 252 while "2" means stupid. Therefore, they are laughing at the fact that they are more stupid than a stupid person.)

The 252 men needed to be united in action and unleash their swords at the same time. One could imagine the difficulty of achieving this feat.

"Get ready!"

Ai Hui’s voice wasn’t loud, but it exploded in everyone’s ears like a sudden clap of thunder. Everyone braced themselves and concentrated their attention. The repetitive training had made them unusually proficient.

"Raise your swords."

Upon hearing Ai Hui’s command, all the elementalists raised their swords at the same time.

Five sword pagodas lit up with a faint glow, but there were two

sword pagodas that had not reacted at all. Eventually, the five sword pagodas rapidly dimmed as well.

Failure!

Even though all of them were mentally prepared for failure, they still did not feel good when they failed.

The pagoda masters who led the two sword pagodas that had not lit up had their faces darken. They had to restrain themselves from cursing roundly.

"We will try again after taking a break."

Ai Hui’s voice was like a basin of cold water that splashed over their heads, dousing the frustration they felt.

.....

Phew.

Mu Lei subconsciously heaved a sigh of relief. Just now, the crude and dilapidated Lemon Camping Ground had suddenly become a horrifying monster that woke up for a split second.

How long had it been since he had experienced such fear and trepidation?

A similar sigh of relief rang across Mu Lei’s ears, and he awoke with a start. When he turned around and realized it was Uncle She, his tense mind loosened up as he regained his composure. To his astonishment, he realized that a layer of cold sweat had formed on his back.

With a pale face, Uncle She asked with bewilderment, "Master Mu, what was that just now?"

Mu Lei dared not be disrespectful to this old butler. The servants of a powerful family were as mighty as their family head. An old butler like Uncle She held a very high position in the Lu Residence. Furthermore, Uncle She had been very respectful to him throughout the whole trip.

Mu Lei shook his head and replied, "I’m not sure. I have never encountered such an aura before. Look at the clouds in the sky."

Uncle She followed Mu Lei’s finger and looked at the sky. When he discovered that there was a hole in the layer of clouds above Lemon Camping Ground, he was shocked. "Don’t tell me it was caused by that aura?"

"That’s right." Mu Lei had a solemn look on his face. "It was caused by that aura. I have never seen such a cold and dangerous aura. I wonder who it is from?"

"Master Mu, what do you think we should do next?" Uncle She looked at Mu Lei and asked.

Mu Lei was a combat elementalist and the only Master in the convoy. For anything that had to do with combat, Uncle She would let Mu Lei take charge. This was why the both of them had been so amiable throughout the whole journey.

"Is it possible that Le Buleng hasn’t left yet? We should go and take a look first. No matter who it is, it’s unlikely he or she will be hostile toward us," Mu Lei replied with a deep voice.

From his perspective, the only person who could unleash such a powerful aura was Le Buleng. However, whether or not it was Le Buleng, no one would dare to be hostile toward them.

Uncle She felt that what Mu Lei said made sense and regained his composure. He replied, "Let’s go and take a look then."

They spent a lot of time and energy to make the convoy move again. Many load basin beasts were alarmed by what had just occurred. As such, the guards had to exert much effort to pacify the beasts before the convoy could move forward again.

.....

After taking a break, everyone in the Sword of Lightning had relaxed and their frustration had significantly lessened.

The more you hurry, the less progress you’re likely to make. This was what Ai Hui had learned from the past few days. Whenever everyone felt frustrated, giving them a break could yield better

results.

"Get ready."

Ai Hui’s voice quieted down the seven sword pagodas. Everyone held their breath in deep concentration.

"Raise your swords!"

Two sword pagodas failed to light up.

Failure.

.....

The convoy that travelled toward Lemon Camping Ground was still traumatized by the previous incident. The guards whispered and discussed the terrifying aura.

Suddenly, the same aura appeared once again without warning.

The pacified load basin beasts neighed in fear and fled in disarray, causing the entire convoy to descend into chaos.

Mu Lei’s heart tightened. However, when he discovered that nothing approached them, he regained a bit of composure.

Uncle She’s face blanched. He quickly ordered his henchmen, "Pull them back. Quickly pull them back... There is still one more load basin beast there."

After a while, the convoy regrouped. Uncle She looked at Mu Lei.

"Continue forward," Mu Lei ordered through clenched teeth.

The seven sword pagodas.

"Get ready!"

"Raise your swords!"

...

The convoy descended into chaos.

...

"Get ready!"

"Raise your swords!"

...

The front legs of the load basin beasts gave way, collapsing onto the ground.

…

Mu Lei’s face turned ashen.

Chapter 483: Seven Swords As One

Mu Lei almost thought that someone was playing tricks on them.

That journey of a few meters was practically a nightmare. They walked, stopped, and repeated this over and over again.

"Could it be that Senior Le Buleng was testing some moves? Why else would such a strange scene appear?" he muttered to himself.

It was not until they got closer to Lemon Camping Ground that they noticed the crowd outside and gasped in surprise. These people from the inner camp who'd been frightened by the ripples produced during Sword of Lightning's training and had ran out of the camping ground.

After a short while, they started adapting, but remained far away, waiting for the training within the inner camp to end.

Mu Lei had a sharp sense of hearing and was attracted by the conversation between some men.

"This Sword of Lightning is actually quite powerful. I'm scared witless. These energy waves... the waves are too violent."

"Yeah, it's simply life-threatening. I feel as if my life span was shortened by a few years because of this."

"What to do? It’s the Sword of Lightning."

"Aye, how can they even stay in such a lousy camping ground? It doesn’t do justice to their identity, does it?"

"Will they continue training like this for the whole day?"

"Will they keep training like this in the future?

The two looked at each other, their faces turning ugly as they figured out the answer. Just thinking about how they were going to have to live amid this horrifying atmosphere made them both put their hands behind their heads.

"Oh no!"

"Oh god!"

...

Mu Lei heard their conversation and fell into a daze. Sword of Lightning? So the Sword of Lightning was training? Could it be Ai Hui? He was startled. Had Ai Hui already reached such a level?

On second thought, things seemed off. The aura and elemental energy waves weren’t things a newly ascended Master could produce. This was also the reason why he’d guessed that the disturbance was due to Le Buleng. Only someone as strong as him

could stir up such astonishing elemental energy waves.

There was only one remaining possibility. There must be something related to sword formations going on inside.

After all, Mu Lei was a powerful combatant who'd seen the world. His guesses were often correct. Sword of Lightning... one could tell from its name the characteristics of this combat division.

But... Sword of Lightning's production of such intense disturbances and terrifying aura meant that Mu Lei would need to reevaluate the abilities of this combat division.

He dared not to confirm the combat division's combat strength, but had a feeling that it was more powerful than rumored.

Uncle Yu's face was pale. He was old and had less strength. The pressure he had to endure was huge in the face of such might.

Ai Hui was Miss's junior and had even saved her life. He was as good as family.

It was a pity that Shi Xueman was by his side, or else Ai Hui would also be a good candidate for the family's son-in-law.

He still felt worried over everyone's disapproval of Sword of Lightning. While Ai Hui was a Master, he was indeed a new hand when it came to handling a combat division.

By now, his worried heart had calmed. Although the aura from the camping ground made him feel quite burdened, to the point where his face was white, he couldn’t help but smile.

By his side, the guards from the Lu Residence had the same terrified look on their faces.

As they approached the camping ground the mighty aura became more terrifying. When they neared the camping ground, they felt something entirely different.

Uncle Yu turned around and looked at the guards, noticing that one was sprawled on the ground, gasping with his face in the grass and his body trembling nonstop.

"Zheng Xiao! Stand up! Look at you, wouldn’t all of us be dead if we depend on you when we encounter bandits?" Uncle Yu chided jokingly.

Zheng Xiao had been recommended by a vassal enterprise. He was delicate, righteous-looking, and had decent abilities. The enterprise had begun to emphasize nurturing, so they recommended him, but they had not expected him to be this timid.

Uncle Yu reproached him, but was in reality very encouraging. He had always been more tolerant toward youths. Courage had to be trained, and it wasn’t a big deal for youths to be more fearful.

Hearing Uncle Yu's words, the other guards turned around. They burst into laughter upon seeing Zheng Xiao on the ground. While they were all afraid, they weren't in as sorry of a state as Zheng Xiao.

Laughter diluted the tensed atmosphere, and Zheng Xiao seemed more relaxed by now since his body shook less violently.

Suddenly, everyone noticed that the surrounding sounds had all disappeared and were replaced by dead silence.

Before they could react, a sword chime pierced through their brains like cranes flying through the clouds. Like an awl drilling into their minds, the chime caused the hair on their napes to stand upright.

Buzzz. Their minds went blank. If they could see their own expressions, they would realize that there was neither fear nor dread, only emptiness.

Mu Lei was the only one present who managed to stay clear-headed. Fear was solely evident on his face.

Might. Terrorizing might that was exponentially stronger than any might from earlier. Yet... the surrounding elemental energy waves weren't surging. They were much smaller than those from earlier.

What in the world was this kind of sword formation?

He was overwhelmed with shock.

The shock within his heart far exceeded the previous occurrences because he knew how difficult it was to produce such a strong contrast. He also knew what kind of force such a huge contrast signified.

This might represented the alarming power of accumulated elemental energy. Elemental energy that lacked fluctuations meant that it was extremely compressed and contained, which signified absolute control. In theory, it was a perfect attack!

Boom!

Mu Lei snapped out of his shock and regained his senses shortly. Eh? He felt something was amiss. While he didn't understand what had happened, the explosion of the elemental energy waves and the sword chime produced incompatible sounds.

What happened?

With rapt attention, he looked over and saw a huge dust cloud rising from Lemon Camping Ground. What followed was a noisy clamor.

Lemon Camping Ground was in chaos.

The rising dust enveloped the whole inner camp as the people inside cried out in alarm.

"What’s going on?"

"Is anybody hurt?"

"Cough, cough..."

...

Gu Xuan reacted the fastest by gathering his remaining elemental energy and releasing it with a wave of his sleeves. Whoosh! A gale emerged from within the camp, dispersing the dust.

Everyone was dumbstruck.

None of the seven sword pagodas inside the inner camp were in one piece. Ruined pieces were everywhere.

What... what happened?

Someone cried out, "Where’s Boss?"

Everybody looked around in search of Ai Hui’s silhouette, but to no avail. They quivered and looked at one another, a premonition rising within their chests.

Dashing over, Lou Lan pointed to the ruins of the Megrez Sword Pagoda and shouted, "Over there!"

During the attack of the sword pagodas, Lou Lan had to stand far away or he would've been injured by the sword rays. Before that, he'd been guarding inside the inner camp and waiting to treat people when Ai Hui and the others returned to rest. Since this was an attempt to combine seven swords into one, Ai Hui had Lou Lan stand somewhere in the distance in consideration of his safety.

Everyone dashed over to the ruins of the Megrez Pagoda and started frantically digging.

Although they'd only been in Sword of Lightning for a short while, everyone was still impressed by Ai Hui. Ai Hui never acted haughtily in front of them and always led the training.

Ai Hui trained the most out of all of them.

Previously, everybody was still worried about the future of Sword of Lightning but this wisp of concern vanished in a puff of smoke along with the attack of the sword pagodas.

In a combat division with a bright future, the leader worked closely with his soldiers, sharing the joy and hardship. What was there to be unhappy about? Why wouldn't one pledge allegiance to such a leader?

Shortly, they found Ai Hui amid a pile of rubble

"He’s here!"

"Boss’s still alive!"

…

Everyone shouted at once and prepared to pull Ai Hui out. However, they let out a miserable shriek the moment they touched his clothes.

Since a few pair of hands had grabbed ahold of him at once, mournful instantly cries filled the place.

"My hand!"

"There are knives on his body!"

…

In response, the others quickly stopped themselves. Shortly, those who cried out got back to their feet, only to see that their hands were completely unharmed. They were shocked. The acute pain they’d felt made them think that their hands had been stabbed by sharp blades.

Gu Xuan, who was presently the most skilled, hurriedly explained, "It might be the sword aura. Please avoid touching Boss's clothes, everybody. Let's get the surrounding debris out of the way first."

The crushed rocks were quickly cleared away. It was then that everybody noticed the position their boss was in. He maintained a standing posture while holding onto his sword.

However... only the hilt of the Wintry Jade Blade remained in his hands.

Bzzt! A silver electric flash throbbed between Ai Hui's palms and the sword hilt, effectively frightening the audience around him.

While Ai Hui bore the reputation as a Lightning Master, he displayed more swordsmanship than lightning techniques within the camp. In Gu Xuan's eyes, Ai Hui was more of a pure swordsman rather than a Lightning Master.

This wasn't the first time people had seen Ai Hui's lightning.

Since the start, the red glow in Lou Lan's eyes had been intensely flickering. Once his eyes stopped flashing, Lou Lan said happily, "Ai Hui's not injured."

Everyone let out a breath of relief and started talking all at once.

"Enlightenment?"

"How impressive."

Whether Ai Hui had a moment of enlightenment or not, they couldn’t be sure. Ai Hui stood motionless like a statue with his eyes shut, looking perfectly unharmed.

People continued their lively discussion.

"Why did the sword pagodas collapse?"

"Probably because they weren’t able to endure the unification of the seven swords."

"I think so, too. The unification is simply too mighty."

"What’s going to happen in future?"

"Ask Boss."

"I’m at a loss. The sword pagodas are great, but how are we supposed to use them in battles? Carry them?"

"I’m not against the idea, but... won’t we look a little stupid carrying them?

"Just a little, you think?"

Everybody was engaging in the heated discussion. They had many doubts, but weren't impatient. They'd only been in Sword of Lightning for a short period of time, after all. They would simply leave these matters for their boss to fret over.

Suddenly, footsteps sounded from outside.

Gu Xuan jumped up. "Who is it?"

Mu Lei floated over in midair, his loftiness caused the faces of those around to change. A Master!

Mu Lei's gaze fell upon Ai Hui, who still stood motionless with his eyes shut.

A silhouette obstructed his view. It was Lou Lan, who stood before Ai Hui.

Sand puppet?

Mu Lei was rather surprised, but did not mind much. He looked over Lou Lan and focused his gaze on Ai Hui once again.

All of a sudden his pupils shrank.

Chapter 484: New Sword Embryo

When the seven swords became one, the intense sword breath seemed to fill his body with a mysterious force.

It was as if something was beginning to stir within his heart, something like desire was breaking out of its cocoon within his body.

What was it?

He rummaged through his memories, which were like multicolored murals. They flashed past quickly and switched around like those lanterns with a carousel of paper horses.

With the passing of time, these murals started to peel off, losing their colors and luster. The lines were damaged and torn. They were beyond recognition yet unchangeably familiar, like calls from a faraway valley.

Some time passed and only two images were left within his mind.

In mid air, with his last breath, Teacher was saying, "Kill me."

He could still remember that calmness, free from grief. He was like an unrelated observer who’d made his decision and hadn’t regretted it.

He still did not regret it.

Upon seeing this image in the deepest part of his memory, he wasn't at all surprised. He was amazed by another image.

Swordsman Training Hall. The sun was sprinkled over the courtyard. He leisurely mopped the floor, trained with the wooden stand and sorted out the swordplay manuals before relishing in the manuals and their exaggerated descriptions and occasional legends that hid between the lines.

Seeing the image of that frail youngster made him focus his gaze toward the front. Ai Hui was stunned.

So it's like this…

He muttered to himself.

To him, lightning was revenge and the sword…was hope.

His pale and dim childhood, and his unrealistic longings and delusions toward swordsmen were tiny and blurry wisps of hope. They were the glimmers of sunlight that fell on his tender and small palm, while the world casted a shadow that enveloped him like a colossal monster.

They were like a sword.

He suddenly recalled the reason why he'd chosen the sword, and he also understood why he'd never loosened his grip on his sword.

Ai Hui couldn't help but tighten his grip, as he usually did.

The world was still that colossal monster, but he was no longer that weak and cowardly youngster.

The faint glimmer of sunlight that shone down on his palm had become the sword in his hands. The surging elemental energy, the criss-crossing sword breath and the winding lightning bolts filled him with courage and erased his fear. He was going to take revenge and battle it out.

Ai Hui was highly emotional.

Inside his earth palace, lightning flashed and thunder roared. The thick lightning extended out from the emptiness and gathered from all directions like solid vines, which wound around a silver sword of lightning.

The winding lightning bolts flickered unsteadily and only the vague silhouette of a sword could be seen.

It was a sword embryo. A real sword embryo.

Ai Hui spaced out in that moment. He'd not expected a revival of his sword embryo. Its shape was entirely different, and the location in which it was born was completely different as well.

In that badly damaged swordplay manual, he'd read that a sword embryo was made from the essence, breath and spirit, so it would condense in his sky palace.

But the earth palace...

Ai Hui quickly noticed that the potent lightning serum rolling within his body had become extremely docile.

The lightning poured into the sword hilt in his hands in time with the fluttering of his heart.

Buzz.

An lightning bolt cut open the pitch black sky overhead, like a curtain.

Another lightning bolt streaked across Mu Lei's pitch black pupils.

The sharp, sword-like silvery light illuminated the ruins and the people around it, drowning the shock in their faces. It stretched their silhouettes into long and sharp shadows.

A beam of lightning shot out from the sword hilt. It looked like a zigzagging sword, changing irregularly.

Sword of Lightning...

These three words surfaced in the minds of the majority of people there.

The lightning bolt was like snow and the audience was like puppets, silent and motionless. Only the crackling thunder could be heard.

Ai Hui opened his eyes slowly. It was as if his eyes were shrouded by a layer of fine, electric light, their sharpness heart-piercing.

At that point his heart was overwhelmed with the joy and satisfaction of experiencing a breakthrough.

The new sword embryo was thoroughly different. The previous one was born from the essence, breath, and spirit, but the new sword embryo was born from lightning. In other words, the sword embryo in the sky palace was an extension of the essence, breath, and spirit and the sword embryo in the earth palace was a condensation of lightning.

Both were complete opposites, yet each was marvelous in its own ways.

The sky palace's sword embryo could significantly sharpen Ai Hui's perception, while the earth palace's sword embryo could offer him much better control and power over the lightning within his body.

The former could reach far,whereas the latter was contained within.

Strictly speaking, this wasn't really a sword embryo, it was just a name Ai Hui had chosen to give it.

He loosened the grip on what was left of Wintry Jade Blade. With a plop, the sword hilt landed on the ground and the lightning sword blade vanished.

As if awakened from a dream, everybody got ready to start talking.

Ai Hui waved his finger across the sky like a sword. Psst, an electric light appeared and wound around his fingertip. It was like a sword blade that flickered unsteadily, sharp and glaring.

This...

The audience was stunned while Gu Xuan and a few others were shocked.

They were very sensitive to the sword aura and could feel the sword consciousness contained within this wisp of electric light. It was exceptionally domineering and sharp, and was emanating a destructive aura. It was completely different from the sword aura that Ai Hui used to use.

It seemed… to have become more terrifying!

Ai Hui put his finger down, his movement rhythmic and aesthetic, as if he was putting his sword in its sheath. The electric light around his fingertip was swiftly extinguished.

Ai Hui had become stronger indeed.

Gu Xuan was becoming increasingly certain.

He had a high and profound level of swordsmanship. While he hadn’t reached Ai Hui’s base level, he had definitely surpassed the average swordsman. Fanciful sword moves that were delightful to look at weren’t necessary powerful, but powerful sword moves were definitely a pleasing sight, because they were more balanced, well-coordinated and ultimately perfect.

The waving of Ai Hui’s finger back and forth was a very casual, yet indescribably elegant motion.

Mu Lei noticed this graceful movement as well.

He was humbled. Capable individuals always gained respect, no matter where.

Before, even though Ai Hui had his reputation as a Lightning Master, Mu Lei only saw him as a newly promoted Master.

He no longer thought that way. A smile appeared on his face. "Congratulations, Master Ai!"

Ai Hui'd been taking notice of Mu Lei since the start. Mu Lei's qi was reserved, a clear sign that he too was a Master. He accepted the greeting very politely. "Thank you so much, Sir. You are?"

Uncle Yu stood up hurriedly and said respectfully, "This is Master Mu Lei."

Ai Hui was pleasantly surprised by Uncle Yu's appearance. "Uncle Yu! Is Senior here too?"

Uncle Yu reported, "Miss isn't here but she got me to prepare you a batch of woven materials. I wonder if you'll be able to use them? Master Mu is Young Master's friend. If it wasn't for him, we might not have made it here."

Ai Hui quickly brought his hands together in thanks. "Thank you for the hard work, Master Mu!"

Mu Lei shook his head and smiled. "Why so formal? We're all friends."

Reuniting with an old friend was always pleasant. Ai Hui asked about Senior, so Uncle Yu shared how Mingxiu returned to Jadeite City, how she started her embroidery workshop and how she created Yuchuan Embroidery.

Ai Hui listened with full attention, a happy smile occasionally appearing on the corner of his mouth.

After chatting for a bit, Ai Hui suddenly noticed the weariness in Uncle Yu's face. He was already so old and had just been on a long and arduous trek, so he must be exhausted. Ai Hui then quickly got him to rest.

But Ai Hui did not allow the goods on the load basin beasts to be taken down.

The sword pagodas in Lemon Camping Ground had been destroyed so there wasn't any point in staying here. Ai Hui had decided to bring everyone to the newly constructed Fishback City.

The new city that Wang Xiaoshan had built atop Blackfish Mouth Volcano's mountain range looked like the arch of a fish's back and so everybody decided to call it Fishback City.

With Ai Hui's poor naming ability, everybody chose not to give him a chance.

After resting for half a day, Uncle Yu had recovered his energy more or less and was in full approval when he heard that Ai Hui wanted them to move to the new city. He'd come personally in the hope of assessing the development and progress of Ai Hui and Central Pine Faction.

He was extremely shocked to find out that they'd managed to

build a new city, and furthermore, it had been done by only one elementalist.

This piqued even Mu Lei's interest.

Currently, earth elementalists were living very poorly. The occupation of Yellow Sand Corner had led earth elementalists into a state no different from fire elementalists. Construction-related work, which used to be seen as worthless by slightly more capable earth elementalists, wasnow in high demand with strong competition.

Nevertheless, it seemed unimaginable that a single person could construct one whole city.

Sword of Lightning's members had wanted to leave this worn-out camping ground for the longest time. If they weren't able to return to Central Pine Valley, Fishback City was a decent alternative. Everyone felt more curious as to how Boss was going to solve the broken pagoda issue.

Ai Hui's increase in abilities boosted the team's morale greatly, especially those in Sword of Lightning. Following a capable boss meant a brighter future for them.

The gang's departure was filled with enthusiastic farewells bidden by the citizens of Lemon Camping Ground.

The horrifying atmosphere had almost caused the citizens to wet

their pants. If Sword of Lightning was going to train like this everyday, they would all start considering a relocation.

That explosion from earlier had their souls flying out of their bodies.

Hearing that Ai Hui and gang were leaving, they sent them off like how they would a plague.

With both Master Ai and Master Mu Lei around, safety wasn't an issue at all. The problem was that the load basin beasts were moving slowly, affecting the team's speed. Ai Hui wasn't impatient, however. Instead, he got the gang to train along the way.

No sword pagodas? No problem.

The birth of the sword embryo meant that Ai Hui did not require the help of the sword pagodas in order to diffuse any conflicts between everyone.

Members who failed consecutively would be transferred into the reserve and their positions would be filled by the best performing members from the reserve.

There were three hundred members in Sword of Lightning, but only two hundred and fifty-two positions in the seven sword pagodas, leaving forty eight members in the reserves.

Members in the reserve received the exact same training as everybody else.

Being drawn into this competitive mechanism, the atmosphere instantly changed. No one wanted to be transferred into the reserve and those already in that team worked diligently for the opportunity to move out.

The members' passion left Uncle Yu shocked. People from outside did not think highly of Sword of Lightning, but having seen it for himself Uncle Yu felt that AI Hui was much more capable than rumored.

The way he worked wasn't like that of a new hand.

When they reached Fishback City, a look of disbelief was on all of their faces.

"Was this really built by one person?" Mu Lei couldn't help but ask again.

As compared to the many other cities he'd seen, Fishback City wasn't at all grand. It wasn't big and couldn't accommodate a lot of people. Nevertheless, the fact that it was built by only one pair of hands was simply unbelievable.

They'd just entered the city when Shi Xueman, who'd received the news, arrived with a piece of good news of her own.

Chapter 485: An Unforeseen Event

"Xiaoshan is in seclusion. Seems like he’s about to break through." Shi Xueman announced joyfully.

Ai Hui genuinely felt happy for Wang Xiaoshan. "That’s great! He’s been working hard recently."

Everyone nodded in unison. Building a whole city all by oneself was unheard of. The difficulty and workload he’d taken on was astonishing even to laymen.

Having accomplished such an unimaginable feat, it wasn’t surprising that he was undergoing a breakthrough.

Le Buleng shot Ai Hui a glance. "You’re pretty lucky aye, became significantly stronger."

He couldn’t help but give him two more looks as he was still rather surprised.

Wang Xiaoshan’s seclusion made him realize the huge potential of Central Pine Faction. Furthermore, these fellows were all so diligent. He had much confidence in the future of this faction.

But Ai Hui’s progress had him overwhelmed with shock.

How many days had it been?

Reasonably, a newly promoted Master would enter a process of steadily ascending improvement. Becoming a Master was like having completed an outline of a piece of art and all that was left was to carve and refine it to perfection.

A newly promoted Master seldom displayed such a huge increase in abilities.

Ai Hui was an exception.

Before, Ai Hui's energy was extroverted. Now, it was exceptionally well-controlled, except that there was a ring of an aura circling his body, its origin unclear. Was it the sword's qi? Le Buleng's eyes glowed slightly, his battlelust stirring endlessly.

The first master swordsman had just been born and he had yet to spar with her.

This foreign force made him eager to give it a try.

He was extremely interested in all kinds of new and unseen forces.

"Junior Mu Lei is here to greet Senior!"

Mu Lei bowed to Le Buleng respectfully with his waist bent and head lowered.

Having his thoughts disrupted, Le Buleng pulled a face and asked, "You are?"

For someone whose only goal was to defeat Dai Gang, having an unknown Master stand before him was no different from having an ignorant cow or sheep do the same.

To slaughter or not to slaughter?

Mu Lei's heart jumped, his mouth drying up. "Fei Yuan is my teacher."

Le Buleng's expression relaxed a little as a reminiscent look appeared on his face. His tone warmed up instantly. "You're a student of Fei Yuan? How's your teacher doing?"

A trace of grief flashed across his eyes. "He died eight years ago."

Le Buleng sighed. "He didn't make it after all. But death is just death. It's also a delight. He would feel vexed seeing how things have turned out."

Mu Lei knew his teacher's personality and agreed with Senior Le Buleng. He said in a low voice, "You're right."

Le Buleng treated Mu Lei in a friendlier manner, but remained as hostile as ever toward Lu residence's Uncle Yu. He snorted most of

the time and couldn’t be bothered to socialize with him.

Lu Chen was the first disciple of Dai Gang, so it was only natural for Le Buleng to feel this way. If it had been a decently strong disciple from the Lu residence or Lu Chen in Uncle Yu’s spot, Le Buleng might have even wanted to start trouble with him. But since Uncle Yu was weak, he did not deign to make a move.

Uncle Yu smiled bitterly. He was knowledgeable and tactful, and knew better than to provoke this old, terrorizing fellow.

Ai Hui was helpless too. The appearance of this old man made people nervous. He asked quietly, "How’s Zu Yan?"

Shi Xueman nodded her head, saying, "Not bad. He’s absorbing the fire elemental energy speedily but isn’t awake yet."

In response to the change in topic, Le Buleng waved his hand, adding, "He’ll wake up once he absorbs sufficient fire elemental energy and becomes a Master."

Ai Hui asked out of curiosity, "What if he doesn’t?"

Le Buleng snorted, "Then he won’t ever."

Ai Hui clicked his tongue and felt much sympathy for Zu Yan. He also felt that Le Buleng’s answer really fitted his personality. That fellow was so cold and heartless.

Ai Hui reminded Le Buleng, "Don’t you need to train, Senior?"

Le Buleng glared at him. "Are you chasing me away, boy?"

"Your time is yours to allocate, Senior." Ai Hui continued in all seriousness, "I believe Mister Dai Gang is feeling very bored right now since he has no opponents."

Despite being aware of Ai Hui’s motive, Le Buleng couldn’t help but let out a groan. "Bullshit!"

Before his words fell, he was already in the air.

With Le Buleng gone, the atmosphere immediately lightened up. Even Mu Lei let out a breath of relief. He recalled something and retrieved a small wooden case from his sleeves. Handing it over to Ai Hui, he explained, "This is for Duanmu Huanghun. Sent by his family."

Ai Hui took it and casually passed it to Iron Lady. "Where’s Bangwan? Why isn’t he around?"

Shi Xueman grabbed hold of it and answered, somewhat worriedly, "He’s in the valley. He’s too anxious."

Ai Hui knew what Duanmu Huanghun was worrying about, but was unable to counsel him since he usually did not listen well to

advice to begin with.

Proud and arrogant, Duanmu Huanghun must be feeling very anxious right now.

But to become a Master, one mustn’t rush because the more impatient one was, the more easily problems would arise.

By now, Uncle Yu had already ordered the guards to unload the goods on the beasts. Ai Hui threw the matter to the back of his head and commented excitedly, "Seems like Senior’s sent some good stuff over."

The guards opened the wooden trunks and a layer of faint light filled the hall immediately.

Even Uncle Yu’s eyes were wide open in shock. The trunks had been packed personally by Mingxiu, so he wasn’t unaware of the contents. Seeing how each trunk emitted elemental energy waves, he immediately figured that there must be a lot of good stuff inside.

Mu Lei couldn’t restrain his surprise. He knew how valuable Yuchuan Embroidery was.

He couldn’t help but feel a lingering fear. If outsiders knew how many Yuchuan Embroideries were in these trunks, someone might’ve taken the risk and looted them out of desperation. Even he himself thought he might be unable to resist the urge.

The number of Yuchuan Embroideries available on the market was pathetically low. People thought that Yuchuan Embroideries weren't produced easily and that was why they were so rare. That wasn't actually the case. The real reason was that Lu Mingxiu couldn't bear to sell them as she wanted to give them to her junior.

Lu Mingxiu pampered her junior way too much.

But just the thought of Han Yuqin and Wang Shouchuan was enough for Mu Lei to feel grief and sigh.

Ai Hui wasn't aware of all these things of course. He only felt incomparably touched and cozy.

The most eye-catching item was an entire set of textiles.

Mixed with the shining silver silk, the azure wings, made from flowing cloud silk, looked like a reflection created by the sunlight shining onto clear water ripples. It was extremely beautiful and dazzling. The azure wings were joined to a soft, silver armor. There were intricate patterns stacked in layers on top of the wings. Ai Hui saw elemental traces like Rapt Attention, Drawing Element and Wedge-shaped Cloud Armor.

Rapt Attention allowed him to maintain focus and concentration.

Drawing Element could help him to draw some elemental energy from metal wind. While the amount it could absorb wasn't much,

he could replenish part of it. This was extremely useful for him when he had to fly long distances.

Wedge-shaped Cloud Armor was a type of water elemental defensive guard piece, often used on water elemental armors. Shi Xueman had it on hers too.

Ai Hui's eyes turned red. He'd thought of Master and Mistress.

His eyes were on the boots beneath the soft armor and he felt rather surprised. The boots had been woven from scratch and he couldn't recognize the materials used.

Ai Hui put them on immediately and they fitted very well. He jumped lightly.

He almost hit the ceiling. While he was shocked, his eyes quickly lit up. These ordinary looking boots were actually very useful. Ai Hui believed that channeling elemental energy into the boots would increase their effectiveness.

He suppressed the impulse within him and managed to stop himself from testing it out on the spot.

This seemingly unremarkable, yet life-saving trick should be kept private.

Other than the items she'd given Ai Hui, there were a few other quality goods, such as a cloak meant for Shi Xueman, a belt meant

for Fatty, a pouch meant for Duanmu Huanghun, a wristband meant for Jiang Wei, an arrow sack meant for Sang Zijun and a hat meant for Wang Xiaoshan. Lou Lan was given the most interesting item. It was an apron with an embroidered image of him holding a ladle in one hand and a wok in the other.

She'd prepared a gift for every single person that she could remember, so everybody was exceptionally moved.

Some emotional connections could only be made after going through an experience together.

Other than these personalised things, the rest of the items were mass produced, yet practical items, such as gloves. There were gloves that could increase strength and gloves that could improve one's control over elemental energy.

It was obvious that each item had been prepared with love and utmost care. The wooden elemental ingredients were also things they would need frequently, but were difficult to purchase outside of Jadeite Forest.

Ai Hui walked past each trunk and looked at each item. Senior did not leave any long messages, but each item had effectively expressed her care and concern.

He thought about how Mistress had instructed him to protect Senior Mingxiu before she left.

Ai Hui’s nose started to tingle a little as tears were about to fall down his cheeks.

"Ai Hui, Miss mentioned that this item..."

The guard spoke while taking out the items on the top. The goods seemed to be pressed at the bottom. Preoccupied with his thoughts and emotions, Ai Hui went over without much thought.

Uncle Yu saw the redness in Ai Hui’s eyes and felt sad, yet consoled. Those two were like siblings after all.

Suddenly he heard someone speaking. Wasn’t that guard Zheng Xiao? Could it be that Miss had something to warn him about? No. Zheng Xiao was a guard recommended by the enterprise below and not a guard of the embroidery workshop. If anything, Miss would’ve informed him and not Zheng Xiao.

Not good!

Uncle Yu’s face changed. "Be careful..."

Before he could complete his sentence, an unforeseen event took place.

Gathered before the trunk, Ai Hui heard a soft thud and withdrew quickly.

The trunk was enveloped by a faint, black smoke.

Ai Hui shouted, "Retreat, everybody!"

His face started to feel slightly numb. What a potent poison, he thought to himself.

Lou Lan cried out, "Ai Hui!"

The red glow in his eyes started to flicker. It flashed quicker and quicker, crazier and crazier.

The others dispersed and surrounded that guard. They looked ferocious and murderous.

"Hahaha! It’s useless! You’re dead meat, Ai Hui! It’s Night Moth Fruit! You’re incurable!"

Zheng Xiao’s voice became sharp. It was actually a woman.

Upon hearing those three words "Night Moth Fruit", Uncle Yu and Shi Xueman’s faces changed. The rapidly flickering red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes stopped abruptly.

Ai Hui’s heart sank. He could feel the poison spreading quickly.

Zheng Xiao unveiled the elemental energy mask on her face and

the unfamiliar face of a female was revealed. Only a frenzied madness was present in her face. "You killed so many of us. The day of redemption is here!"

Grass Bandits...

Uncle Yu recognized the lady and asked in a trembling voice, "You... you're Zheng Xiaoman?"

The lady laughed but her face started to stiffen up. It was an eerie sight. She replied, "Who would've thought that Uncle Yu would still be able to recognize me. Hahaha, Lightning Master? So what? Let's all die together..."

With her stiff and raised head she fell over, her breath extinguished.

Chapter 486: Night Moth Fruit

Night Moth Fruit?

Ai Hui had not heard of it, but he knew it was powerful.

The numbness was spreading at an alarming rate, and the elemental energy within his body was actually unable to resist it at all. He had come across many types of poison in the Wilderness, but none were comparable to this.

Highly toxic types that were effective against dire beasts were rare and correspondingly expensive. Even among the dire beasts that could produce elemental elixirs, he had never encounter one that possessed this grade of poison.

Ordinary poisons were basically useless against Masters.

I wonder how much they cost? Must be expensive...

A thought that even he found silly floated across his mind. Ai Hui's consciousness started to become indistinct as his field of vision started to blur. Zheng Xiaoman's scream sounded like an echo from a the valley, traveling further and further away.

"... Hahaha, Lightning Master, so what? Let's die together..."

His title had never been a big deal. Ai Hui never felt excited or

pleased over his status as a Lightning Master, so her words meant nothing to him. He was , however, bothered by the latter part of her sentence.

Let's die together...

He had no idea why, but an image of Master and Mistress leaving together emerged from within his head. If death was the conclusion, an ending like Master and Mistress's would be quite beautiful.

As for this lady whom he wasn't acquainted with...

Did she deserve that?

An indescribably fury rose from his chest and rushed straight to his brain. He didn't know why he got this angry, but he did. Coming out of nowhere and shouting about wanting to die with him?

Who did she think she was?

He felt enraged. It had been a long time since he had been this angry. This unreasonably angry. These three words were fine if Lou Lan had said them. If Iron Lady had said them. If Mingxiu had said them. If Fatty said them. It was even alright for Duanmu Huanghun to say them. Anyone from the Central Pine Faction could say them.

They were not something any random person had the right to say!

If he let such a moron get away with it, wouldn't that mean that he was the bigger moron?

The anger that was about to explode in his chest snapped Ai Hui out of his fuzzy consciousness and made him more clear-headed. The numbness had intensified, as if there were many hair-like worms drilling toward his elemental energy as well as into his five residences and eight palaces.

While he clear-headed, he quickly waved a finger of his still mobile right hand, as if thrusting his sword. Swoosh, an arc of electricity appeared on his fingertip.

He did not know what kind of poison the Night Moth Fruit was, but he knew that other than the elemental energy within his body, there was a huge volume of elemental energy being converted into lightning.

What kind of poison would be able to endure lightning!

Since you're here, don't ever think about leaving!

Ai Hui tossed all his apprehensions to the back of his mind, as a frenzy manifested in his eyes.

To the others, he was a cool-headed, almost cold person who

enjoyed taking advantage of others. He was somebody who acted only when he had a plan.

Not many remembered his wild side. The side that was hidden deep within the calm.

He jumped off the ground, his figure disappearing before the eyes of those present. A few holes appeared on the roof of a nearby house.

Shi Xueman was the first to react. She turned around, her ice cold face with bloodlust overflowing as she shouted, "Grab all of them!"

At this point, she couldn’t care less about the Lu Residence.

Mu Lei’s face warped and as he was about to speak up, Shi Xueman’s ice-cold, yet baleful gaze effectively shut him up. He knew it was self-deprecating to talk about a Master’s dignity at this point. If he made any unusual moves, Shi Xueman and the others wouldn’t hesitate to kill him on the spot.

He saw the determination in Shi Xueman’s eyes and stopped himself from resisting.

Uncle Yu raised his arm and called out, "Put down your weapons, everyone! No resisting!"

His mind was currently in a mess as doubts filled his heart. Howy

did Zheng Xiaoman blend into the team? The feud between the Grass Bandits and the Lu Residence ran deep because the former's destruction was directly caused by the latter. Master Lu was furious upon hearing that Mingxiu was almost killed by the Grass Bandits, so he made an all-out effort to wipe them out.

No matter how much hatred Ai Hui felt toward the Grass Bandits, could it surpass the amount felt by the Lu residence? Giving up on vengeance against the Lu residence, spending so much effort to sneak into the convoy, and coming all this way to seek revenge against Ai Hui?

A mole! There must be a mole!

Only those in the Lu residence who had decent ranks knew about Miss's plan to send gifts to Ai Hui.

Who could it be? Why?

Uncle Yu knew that the wisest thing to do now was to cooperate with Shi Xueman and her people's investigation. He must not resist. Once conflict occurred between both parties, they would fight to the death.

If anything happened to Ai Hui, Uncle Yu would really be too ashamed to face Miss.

It wasn't a big deal if he died. It was the aftermath that would be truly terrifying. The Central Pine Faction was much stronger than

imagined. Plus, they had the mighty Le Buleng who harbored enmity toward the Lu residence. By then, Miss would have no regard for the Lu residence either. Uncle Yu knew how important Ai Hui was to her.

Who was it?

Uncle Yu broke out in a cold sweat that drenched his back.

He hadn’t noticed that there was a guard behind him. The guard was thoroughly frightened and drew close to him for support.

"Stand properly! No one move!"

Hearing Jiang Wei’s order, not only did the guard behind Uncle Yu not stop, he increased his speed. Appearing right behind Uncle Yu in one big stride, his hand was about to smack Uncle Yu’s head.

Just as his strike was about to land, an unusual and zealous blush appeared on his face. In the next moment, Uncle Yu’s head would split open like a watermelon, its contents spilling out everywhere. His mission would then be completed.

The hatred between the Lu Residence and the Central Pine Faction would never be dissolved.

Uncle Yu was a trusted member of the Lu Residence, yet he was going to die within the Central Pine Faction’s territory. Additionally, Ai Hui, the leader of the Central Pine Faction, was

going to die from the Lu Residence's sneak attack.

This was a deadlock!

A deadlock that was about to be finished by his own hands. The excitement made his whole body tremble uncontrollably.

Thump!

The tactile sensation from his hands made his heart quiver, but an incoming, splashing ball of yellow sand took him by surprise in the next moment.

Lou Lan!

Lou Lan blocked his strike at this crucial moment.

The rest reacted very quickly. Shi Xueman swiftly appeared beside this guard. With her palm opened slightly, she aimed for the guard.

There was only despair in the guard's face. He did not even resist.

Not good, Shi Xueman thought to herself.

A black layer appeared on the guard's face. A poisonous pellet had long been placed inside his body, and he would die on the spot

when it took effect.

Shi Xueman looked at the corpse on the ground, her expression grave. Only the fearless would use such a method.

Uncle Yu's face was beyond pale. The assassin's intention was obvious. If he'd died, the enmity between the Lu residence and the Central Pine Faction would never be resolved unless one party was wiped out.

Who was it exactly?

He was simultaneously shocked, furious, and determined to seek the truth.

First the Grass Bandits and now the assassin. There must be a spy in the Lu Residence since both had infiltrated into the convoy.

Mu Lei, who stood beside Uncle Yu, had observed these events with a cool eye. He felt regretful for being part of this affair. The series of unforeseen events made it apparent that this was a meticulously planned conspiracy.

So, he decided that it was best to keep his mouth shut.

Uncle Yu gradually regained his composure. He'd been following his master his whole life and was used to seeing all kinds of incidents. After experiencing the initial shock and anger, he quickly calmed down. He was most worried about the Night Moth

Fruit in Ai Hui's body.

The Lu Residence was a wood elementalist Famly, so it was only natural for Uncle Yu to know about this poison.

There were 12 types of highly toxic poisons that could threaten even a Master's life. They were collectively known as the [12 Taboos].

The [12 Taboos] received much opposition from Masters and any information regarding their planting methods were sealed off. No matter how small, the moment news was heard regarding the Taboos, Masters would not hesitate to join forces to obtain them.

The Night Moth Fruit was fourth on the list. It was an existence that greatly influenced a Masters' behavior.

Instead of categorizing it as a poisonous object, it could instead be regarded as a peculiar dire beast. This was a point of debate among Masters. Under normal circumstances, the Night Moth Fruit had no vital signs. It was like a dead object. When it exploded, however, the black smoke it released was known as Night Moth Smoke. It would come alive the moment it touched flesh and become thread-like Night Moth Larvae.

Even the toughest of skin and bones that were able withstand a sword were helpless before the Night Moth Smoke since it disregarded elemental energy defenses. After coming to life and entering the flesh, the elemental energy in an elementalist's body would become nutrients for the larva.

These larva appeared in large quantities and could multiply at an alarming rate within an elementalist’s body. They would freely swim and permeate every corner of an elementalist’s five residences and eight palaces.

When they started to mature, they would assemble somewhere within a Master’s body and transform into a cocoon.

By then, the Master would already be in the final phase of life as his elemental energy had been completely sucked away. All that remained was his withering flesh. When a Night Moth King broke out from the cocoon, it would gnaw on the lifeless body until the corpse was bare bones.

The only person who could save Ai Hui was Dai Gang!

But Dai Gang was tens of thousands of miles away…

Uncle Yu felt absolutely bitter and pained.

No one paid them any attention. Shi Xueman waited for them to rush out as she looked toward the sky.

"Lou Lan…"

Shi Xueman looked at Lou Lan with hope and expectation.

Lou Lan said dispiritedly, "I’m unable to analyze it, Xueman."

After that Lou Lan started crying. It was his first time feeling this helpless. He was extremely upset and wondered if the grief he felt was the same as that felt by humans.

Lou Lan was really, really sad.

Shi Xueman’s eyes were red. She pursed her lips tightly and patted Lou Lan’s shoulders to console him.

He hadn’t noticed that his Midnight sand core was starting to destabilize.

Suddenly, a ball of dazzling silver light blossomed in the sky, its domineering breath enveloping all of Blackfish Mouth Mountain.

In unison, everyone looked skyward even though the silver light was exceptionally eye-piercing.

Lou Lan raised his head, the red glow in his eyes started to flicker nonstop.

Still no results?

The fact that the only thing he was unable to analyze was the very thing that had poisoned Ai Hui made him feel dejected and extremely anxious. He would definitely know what do now if he

was a real doctor like Mingxiu's brother.

Mingxiu's brother...

Lou Lan suddenly stopped. He crooked his head before breaking into a run.

Chapter 487: Frenzy

In the sky, Ai Hui's whole body was shrouded by lightning.

The lightning within his body was swimming all over. Even though his body had already been tempered with lightning and had a high tolerance for it, he was still injured as his flesh started to char and dry up.

Regaining clarity along with consciousness, the frenzy in his eyes became much milder.

He felt more at ease. Lightning was indeed the dire beasts' nemesis. Lightning had a certain level of control over the fine, black, hair-like smoke within his body.

There was a constant scattering and dispersing of the black smoke amid the lightning.

Damage to the flesh wasn't a big concern since there were ways to recover. He had to get rid of this strange black smoke first.

Ai Hui converted more elemental energy into lightning, hoping for an additional spurt of energy. However, he quickly realized that the situation wasn't good.

Half of the elemental energy within his body had already been changed into lightning, but the hair-like smoke had only been reduced by about 10 percent. Following this rate, he wouldn't be

able to extinguish the smoke even if he exhausted his elemental energy.

While he could feel that the black smoke was being suppressed, it would rapidly reproduce within his body the moment he slightly relaxed.

Ai Hui's brain spun quickly. Staying clear-headed was his priority right now.

Eh?

He suddenly noticed that there were almost no traces of smoke near his earth palace.

His heart jumped. Could it be that the sword embryo's aura was effective against the smoke?

With rapt attention, he curled his hand into a fist, extended his index and middle fingers, and activated the lightning within his body.

The unruly lightning immediately gathered in his fingers as an intense sword aura enveloped his surroundings. Ai Hui did not release it, but allowed the lightning swords within his body to swim around.

The black smoke that it came into contact with along the way instantly vanished. It was much more efficient.

Ai Hui's spirits rose. He only had one goal, which was to get rid of this dangerous black smoke. He had nothing to fear as long as his solution was effective. He constantly activated the lightning swords, allowing it to swim within his body and kill off the smoke.

Soon after, Ai Hui's face turned grave once again.

The hair-like black smoke was tougher than he'd thought. Knowing the power of the lightning swords they automatically dodged it when it approached. They were exceptionally crafty, very slippery, and nimbler than the lightning swords.

The lightning swords consumed a large amount of elemental energy, so Ai Hui was quickly running out.

What to do?

Somewhere high up in the sky, the whistling metal wind was a sharp blade that could wring and shatter everything.

Le Buleng reacted indifferently toward the metal wind. His posture was strange, with his face facing the ground and his limbs spread out. It appeared as if he was sprawled onto an invisible mattress.

Staying motionless for such a long time, it seemed as though he'd fallen asleep.

The sunlight gathered on his back and formed a faintly visible golden light pillar that enveloped his body.

A wisp of faint golden, almost transparent, flame burned noiselessly beneath the light pillar.

Strangely, his clothes weren't damaged.

Le Buleng opened his eyes suddenly as a wave traveled over from below. It carried an extremely sharp and overbearing aura of lightning.

That fellow, Ai Hui?

What was going on?

Such an intense wave fluctuation meant that Ai Hui was making an all out effort. Was there a powerful opponent around?

Le Buleng instantly grew interested and stopped what he was doing. The light pillar on his back rapidly dimmed as the faint golden flame entered his body. He shook his limbs then dove his body downward like a meteorite.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. The whistling metal wind around him formed metallic light traces.

The vast sea of clouds below magnified at a rapid rate.

The regions where ordinary elementalists conducted activities were mainly located amid the cloud layers. The metal wind here was gentle and generally harmless.

Only the really strong characters would prefer roaming high up in the sky, like the haughty and formidable humpback cloud whales.

Appearing like a stone that had fallen through a sea of clouds, Le Buleng first saw a sheet of white before quickly breaking through the clouds.

Whoosh.

A faint golden flame on his back transformed into wings that spread open, effectively halting his descending momentum.

Le Buleng quietly floated in midair as his gaze fell upon Ai Hui, causing his expression to turn serious.

Night Moth Fruit!

Different from people who had only heard about, Le Buleng had seen it with his own eyes and even participated in a bloody pursuit against organizations that used it. He knew how dangerous the fruit was.

He'd only left for a little while, yet Ai Hui was already poisoned?

He wrinkled his brows. The poison was incurable. Everything heralded misfortune.

What a pity.

He shook his head inwardly. Ai Hui was one of the few youngsters whom he thought would have a brighter future. Shortly after feeling regretful, he calmed down and returned to his apathetic disposition.

Le Buleng was very experienced and had seen countless geniuses. Among them were many fallen soldiers. There were many reasons for the death of a genius. Some died from complications arising from training, some were killed by strong enemies, some were assassinated by their family's foes, some died from overindulgence, while others simply lost their will to fight.

What were geniuses?

Only geniuses who could stay alive were strong fighters.

Which strong fighter did not have piles of corpses of other so-called geniuses beneath their feet?

Ai Hui was just seafoam, just another corpse among the corpses. It wasn't a big deal. This world wasn't going to stop spinning because of his fall.

Eh? Surprise filled his face as the Night Moth Fruit's aura within Ai Hui's body weakened.

He could actually suppress it?

This immediately evoked Le Buleng's curiosity. He'd underestimated Ai Hui.

It was his first time seeing someone suppressing the Night Moth Fruit.

How did he do it?

It was as if someone was scratching within his heart, itching to slice open Ai Hui's body to find out what was going on inside.

Soon, the surprise left his face because the Night Moth Fruit's aura had started to rally. He shook his head uncontrollably. Ai Hui wasn't going to make it after all. At this rate, Ai Hui was going to become the fruit's nutrients very soon.

Just then, Ai Hui moved. He flew toward the cloud layer.

Le Buleng observed Ai Hui's movements without moving. He wasn't able to cure Ai Hui, so it was meaningless for him to approach.

He believed that Ai Hui probably knew that the situation was irreversible and did not wish to die in front of his friends and comrades.

This fellow was pretty prideful!

A tinge of admiration flashed across his eyes as he saw Ai Hui threading his way into the clouds.

Eh?

Le Buleng noticed that Ai Hui had stopped amid the clouds and felt somewhat puzzled. What was he trying to do?

Floating amid the cloud layer, Ai Hui was surrounded and even blinded by a sheet of white. The wisps of mist soothed his scorched throat and provided his dry body with some moisture.

Puuu. He spat out a breath of air, feeling the frantically counterattacking black smoke within his body. He forced an electric arc out from the corner of his mouth. It was a wild, determined, and mocking arc.

He activated his remaining elemental energy and wisps of electricity swam within his body.

Like throwing a spark into a deep fryer, the thick sea of clouds started to undergo changes.

Located underneath the cloud layer, Le Buleng became excited and emotionally moved.

The calm layer of clouds overhead started to stir restlessly and faint lightning bolts could be seen among them. Quickly, the number of illuminated areas increased. Boom! An oppressive thunder resounded from deep within the clouds.

Flashing lightning and rolling thunder.

Bzzt. A solid, zigzagging bolt of lightning zapped across the cloud layer, illuminating a faintly discernible figure.

The fellow was really crazy!

The admiration in Le Buleng's eyes grew thicker. He thought about the time when he was young.

What a pity.

It was the second time Le Buleng felt regretful. He felt it was a pity that Ai Hui had found a teacher at an early age. He was more satisfied with Zu Yan's performance in all other aspects, but when it came to being brave and wild, Zu Yan simply didn't make the cut and was unlike Ai Hui. What was the use of being so obedient and well-behaved?

Suddenly, he wished for Ai Hui to not die like this.

Wouldn’t the world turn duller if this crazy fellow were to leave just like that?

Like a wild cow, Lou Lan rushed to Central Pine Valley.

Blind He, who was doing some refining work, happily asked upon hearing Lou Lan’s footsteps, "Lou Lan? Come, let me consult you. The sword is almost taking shape, but can this thing really fly…?"

Turning a deaf ear, Lou Lan whizzed past like a gust of wind.

Blind He was stunned. He muttered to himself, "What happened? Why’s he in such a rush?"

He shook his head before lowering it and getting back to work. An eccentric object like this sword was beyond his knowledge, so there were many challenging areas that he had to deal with. Yet, this novelty was precisely what he was attracted to. He was engrossed in it and unable to free himself from it.

Lou Lan found Duanmu Huanghun in the bamboo forest.

He shouted from afar, "Bangwan!"

Duanmu Huanghun opened his eyes and was taken aback by Lou Lan’s hasty appearance. "What is it?"

It was his first time seeing Lou Lan in such a panicked state. Lou Lan was always so carefree, jolly, and lively.

Something must have happened.

Lou Lan asked urgently, "Do you know about the Night Moth Fruit?"

Duanmu Huanghun’s face changed and jolted up. "Who’s infected?"

Lou Lan, who was now in front of Duanmu Huanghun, cried, "Ai Hui!"

As if struck by lightning, Duanmu Huanghun was stupefied. With a pale face he asked, "How… how did it happen?"

It was incurable.

Not caring about anything else, Lou Lan said anxiously, "I can’t find any information and am unable to analyze it. What do you know about it? The more details the better!"

Lou Lan looked at Duanmu Huanghun in anticipation. He had thought of it when Mingxiu’s brother, Lu Chen, came to mind. Bangwan was Lu Chen’s junior and from an aristocratic family of wood elementalists. He must know a lot about the fruit.

If he could gather more detailed information, it would be much easier for him to analyze the fruit, and the likelihood of finding a cure would greatly increase.

Upon hearing Lou Lan’s words, Duanmu Huanghun calmed down and blood returned to his face. He nodded quickly while answering, "You’re right. I’ve read quite a lot about it. There are only 17 articles. I’ll recall them now."

The red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes started flickering.

With a serious look on his face, Duanmu Huanghun started reciting all content related to the Night Moth Fruit that he kept in his brain. He spoke at his usual speed when reciting the first article, but when he reached the second, his speed increased significantly and he finished without even taking a breath.

He completed reciting all 17 articles in a single breath without missing a word.

He continued, "There are a few other articles that talked about it. One article can be found in Master Chang Yu’s work, "Hall Cleansing Records". There’s a section on page 82 that goes like this..."

Duanmu Huanghun spoke speedily as Lou Lan’s eyes flickered rapidly as well.

Overhead, black clouds pressed down on them as lightning flashed and thunder rolled.

Chapter 488: A Giant's Afterglow

Ai Hui was still somewhat alert at the beginning, but after a few consecutive lightning strikes he lost consciousness.

Before the might of Nature, even Masters were as negligible as dust.

Ai Hui's whole body was charred, as if he was a big piece of charcoal that had just been fished out from the stove. Lightning struck his body continuously, and his body twitched with each blow.

By now, even Le Buleng did not dare to drag him out from within the cloud layer.

Lightning constantly filled the sky and illuminated the earth.

No one was in the mood to train. They abandoned what they were doing and looked toward the dark clouds hanging in the sky as well as the exploding lightning amid those clouds. Shock and worry filled their faces.

The lightning only stopped after an hour.

A coal-colored figure descended from the sky.

Shi Xueman was the first to dash over with a ball of mist in her

hands. It rolled out and wrapped itself around Ai Hui.

Lou Lan also sprinted forward, the red glow in his eyes flickering.

Shortly after, he shouted happily, "He’s breathing!"

.....

Dread Division Encampment.

Three people gathered. The atmosphere was very grave.

Nian Tingfeng said expressionlessly, "This is what Madam wants. You two do as you deem fit. No one can force you."

Wan Shenwei and Ximen Caijue remained silent.

After a while, Ximen Caijue spoke up. "What about Le Buleng? Don’t you find his sudden appearance too coincidental?"

Nian Tingfeng answered faintly, "Who knows? What does he have to do with us?"

Wan Shenwei nodded and added in a low voice, "Whether Le Buleng has come for Dai Gang or not, it has nothing to do with us. The three central divisions exist to keep the Grandmasters in check and prevent the Avalon of Five Elements from falling into their

control..."

Ximen Caijue interrupted coldly, "What is left of the Avalon of Five Elements?"

Wan Shenwei nodded. What was left of the Avalon of Five Elements?

Ximen Caijue turned around and kept her gaze on Nian Tingfeng. "What are your plans?"

Nian Tingfeng replied straightforwardly, "I’m going to obey Madam’s orders of course. Since things have come to this, we have to make an effort or else how are we going to benefit at all?"

Ximen Caijue commented disdainfully, "How righteous."

Nian Tingfeng remained unmoved. "I’m me and you’re you. Who’s going to force you if you don’t want to listen?"

Ximen Caijue did not refute, keeping her mouth shut instead as her powdery, egg-shaped face fumed. It was a cute sight, but the two men did not find it delightful at all. They were aware of how she could kill without even blinking.

Wan Shenwei broke the silence. "The Dread Division will get ready for a death match."

A look of unswerving determination emerged from his frosty face.

Ximen Caijue said mockingly, "We're digging our own graves. That woman's already taken into account that we have no choice but to agree. Terrific. Every generation of the Ye family is terrific."

Nian Tingfeng said suddenly, "You can choose not to go."

A smile appeared on Ximen Caijue's tender face. "How can I not go? We are all expendable slaves who exist to deal with Grandmasters. We live to sacrifice, and that's why we're so strong. If we reject this, the three central divisions will not exist in the future. Rather than having that happen, I'm willing to die at the hands of a Grandmaster."

Nian Tingfeng laughed. "That's for the best. I'll report this good news to Madam."

He stood up and walked out of the door without the slightest smile on his face.

The sky outside was dark, no sunlight could be seen, and it felt a little cold. He tightened his grip on his clothes and departed in large strides.

.....

Pearblossom Pavilion.

An Muda knew it was his time to leave.

The bubbling of the elemental energy within his body had become increasingly intense. If this carried on, the Pearblossom Pavilion would be torn apart. He wanted to leave it for his students.

It was the last thing he could save for that little fellow.

He got up from the mat little by little. His movement was very slow, even slower than that of a snail, as if he was moving in slow motion. Yet, no matter how slowly he moved, the energy waves felt by the Pearblossom Pavilion caused it to tremble violently. It was in imminent danger, as if it could crumble into pieces at any time.

He took two whole hours to get up on his feet.

His face was rosy and lively, but lacked the least bit of impatience. Instead, he looked at ease. Focus, to him, was as simple as eating and drinking. It was instinctive.

He was a Grandmaster.

In this world, there were muddleheaded, but lucky fellows who managed to rise to become Masters. However, they weren't fortunate enough to become a Grandmaster. Grandmasters were supreme. Each was born from a combination of incomparable

talent, diligence, and a stroke of luck.

Just as his feet left the praying mat, it shattered into countless grass bits and then to fine powder.

Standing upright, An Muda was as lofty as a mountain. He gazed into the distance, a smile appearing at the corner of his mouth.

How could a Grandmaster die while lying in bed?

He slowly raised his right leg. Very slowly.

It took him eight hours.

His expression remained the same throughout, the faint smile on his face still calm. He walked, step by step, toward the edge of the Pearblossom Pavilion.

No one knew, but Grandmaster An Muda took three days to advance nine steps.

He completed each step in eight hours, his expression never changing. There was confidence, reservation, and tranquility between his brows, as if nothing in the world could shake him.

Indeed, there was nothing left that could stir him up.

Reaching the edge of the Pearblossom Pavilion, he looked far into the empty sky, and the corner of his mouth once again curved up. He was like a playful child who had thought of an interesting idea.

He raised his leg, but not at a snail's pace.

He did it at a normal speed.

A sudden clap of thunder exploded somewhere high in the sky, where the metal wind was bitingly cold. The metal wind, which had been blowing in another direction at a high speed, suddenly became like a disordered shoal of fish.

The next moment, however, they halted as if a spell had been casted on them.

High up in the sky, the metal wind that spanned a radius of about three miles stopped moving all of a sudden, as if it was a frozen brick of air.

An Muda took a step.

One step was equivalent to a few miles.

His dark blue cloth shoes landed on air.

Boom!

A dull thunderclap rolled from far away.

The frozen metal wind within a several mile radius shattered in an instant as an astonishing force sprinted toward them. The dazzling rays were like waterfalls of light that poured down in torrents, pierced through the metal wind below, and penetrated through the cloud layers before finally landing on an uninhabited mountain peak.

The precipitous mountain peak flattened like a piece of dough, losing half of its height. The initially pointed mountain peak vanished, and all that remained was a giant footprint that stretched over one and a half miles.

Boom, boom, boom!

It was as if a giant was trudging overhead.

Such a huge movement shook the whole world.

.....

Dai Gang shut his eyes, relishing in the abundant wood elemental energy and listening to Hai Qing's report.

"Mingxiu feels differently toward Ai Hui. She'd practically sent over all of her savings to him. These siblings are something different. That Needle-Subduing Peak loom was made by Ai Hui. I sneaked in to carefully study it. It's really not simple. Ai Hui is

indeed in possession of Wang Shouchuan’s teachings, and Wang Shouchuan had found a good student. If we could popularize the Needle-Subduing Peak, it would be very beneficial for us."

Dai Gang opened his eyes and broke into a smile. "Don’t be rash. I’m only left with one disciple. Mingqiu is strongly against my views and refuses to come back, while Huanghun is mingling with those from the Central Pine Faction."

Although Hai Qing could call himself a student in front of Dai Gang, he was only an attendant and not a proper disciple. Quan Minglong was a disciple in name. hence not comparable to Luchen and the other two.

Qing Hai smiled. "I know the severity of the situation. Mingxiu’s affairs concern Brother Lu Chen and the whole of Lu family, so it’s of great importance. Right, Brother Lu Chen has found a Master named Mu Lei, a student of Fei Yuan."

A nostalgic look appeared on Dai Gang’s face. "Fei Yuan was a decent guy, but he was too soft-hearted. I haven’t heard of Mu Lei. He probably lags far behind his teacher."

Hai Qing nodded. "That’s right. Uncle Yu from the Lu residence went over, too. The Lu Residence thinks highly of Ai Hui. Mingxiu might have secretly contacted the Duanmu family since they requested for Mu Lei to hand a wooden case over to Huanghun. I’m not sure what was inside."

Dai Gang waved his hand. "You don’t have to be so thorough.

Whether it’s the Duanmu or the Lu family, they clearly know that I’m the only one who has what they need. It’s a one for all, all for one situation between them and me."

Qing Hai responded respectfully, "Yes."

He added, "There’s one more piece of news. Le Buleng has showed himself. He’s with Ai Hui’s faction."

Dang Gang smiled. "Must be an opponent arranged by that old fellow An Muda. It has been so many years, old friend. I wonder how much he has progressed. Hope he doesn’t let me down."

Qing Hai wanted to remind his master to take note of Ai Hui since Ai Hui was involved in many affairs. He’d always felt that Ai Hui was very dangerous, but realizing that his master might have other opinions, Qing Hai kept mum.

He had lived with his master for way too long and was quite familiar with his temper.

Recalling something, Dai Gang asked in a low voice, "How’s our combat division doing? Can it endure a battle? Lu Feng is the division leader of the new Deathgrass Division. How is he?"

Qing Hai replied, "Above average talent and passion, but very meticulous and diligent at work. The Deathgrass Division is no longer like it was in the past, but still better than before. They are worth nurturing."

Dai Gang asked, "Is he the Lu Residence’s adopted son?"

"Yes."

Dai Gang nodded. "Since he’s worth nurturing and is a foster brother to Chen’er, we have to train his guts. Currently, I’m supporting the top, but they can’t embarrass me either. They can’t expect me to wipe the a** of any random fellow that they bring to me."

Dai Gang was half mocking and half joking, but Qing Hai inwardly shuddered nevertheless. He said in a low voice, "I’ll get to it now."

"We must train not just him, but also the backbone below him. Master’s Glory isn’t a bad program. Promoting Masters and not Grandmasters. We can learn from that. Lu Feng is Chen’er’s foster brother, so I shall accept him as a disciple in name..."

Dai Gang stopped suddenly.

Seeing that his master had been quiet for quite some time, Qing Hai quickly looked toward him.

Dai Gang sat motionlessly like a clay figurine, the expression on his face strange. He appeared to be laughing, but also grieving, sentimental, and lonely.

"An Muda is dying."

Chapter 489: Chapter 489 - Glorious Footprints

An Muda stopped in his tracks and stood high up in the sky for a long time.

The empty, ice-cold deep space covered his body as elemental energy from all directions approached and gathered. All five types of elemental energy had formed a complete cycle around his body. They coiled and switched around, growing and multiplying without end. Many clockwise and counterclockwise circulations intertwined and surged like waves.

The perfectly curved horizon in the distance and the endlessly deep void behind were coated by a halo. It was the afterglow of the setting sun.

The sun set behind him. If he turned his head, he would see a round, bright red fireball parallel to him.

An Muda did not turn around. Like the sun behind him, he was only left with the afterglow.

The sun would rise and set on schedule tomorrow, just like today, and the afterglow was its way of bidding farewell to mother earth. An Muda's afterglow was his final longing for this earth, which he'd been guarding and defending his whole life.

Even the metal wind was unable to dissolve the grief he felt.

When he'd just become a Grandmaster, he also stood where he was now, proudly overlooking the vast field beneath his feet. Who would've known that it would one day fall into such desolation. If there was anything that grieved him even more, it was probably the fact that he'd lived to witness the dilapidation of the Silver Mist Sea.

Elementalists retreated into the Wilderness like the tide, exchanging whatever area they could draw vitality from in order to buy more time for themselves.

The Silver Mist Sea, which had been regarded throughout the years as one of the biggest monuments of the Avalon of Five Elements, was merely a barren valley where not even a single blade of grass grew. There was no dazzling mist, the mud at the bottom of the valley had been turned over, and there were pits everywhere like many festering wounds.

Before the Elder Guild's departure, they had wiped out all of the accumulated artifact remnants and left only the useless slit that piled up and dried in this empty valley, waiting to be eroded by time.

Perhaps one day a rainstorm and deluge would turn this valley, which was once labeled as the sacred land of metal elementalists, back into a lake.

Wild grass grew on the wide and dry riverbed of the Silver Mist River, which occasionally attracted little birds to peck at them.

The place was packed with holes three feet long, appearing like a long scar that stretched across the river.

Looking down from the sky, the holes were eye-catching and ugly.

An Muda suddenly recalled Le Buleng's words.

So Grandmasters were humans too.

An Muda mocked himself, his eyes regaining their usual cheer. Once again, he took a step.

He wanted to leave a last footprint.

The faraway sky seemed to tremble as the afterglow sprinkled down from time to time like shooting stars.

Skyheart City was filled with a solemn atmosphere as all the elementalists walked out of their houses and stood on the street for a long time, gazing soullessly in the direction of the Silver Mist Sea.

Worry was evident on their faces, their expressions gloomy.

Rumors had long since spread around the street stalls. Everyone was somewhat mentally prepared, but now that the rumors were turning into reality before their very eyes, they were panic-

stricken.

They understood that they could never return to the past.

The early evenings when the lanterns were first lit, the humble abodes of successive generations, and the days they thought dull were now gone, along with the sounds of footsteps and the glorious track from the distant sky.

The giant turned its body and a generation came to an end.

Where did their future lie? Was it within the lush Wilderness where thistles, thorns, and rampaging dire beasts lived? Or was it on the battlefield with the Blood of God? Could they win against the Blood of God? Would they be swallowed up by the Jadeite Forest? Dai Gang was born from the Avalon of Five Elements after all, so he wouldn’t be too harsh on them right?

Sounds made when calling for birds were heard from an unknown corner and quickly spread.

A trace of bewilderment and fear appeared on Madam Ye’s face, but she quickly regained her senses and usual calm.

Nian Tingfeng appeared by her side like an apparition.

Madam Ye asked, "What do they think?"

Nian Tingfeng responded respectfully, "They’re willing to fight for you!"

Madam Ye smiled in disbelief, but did not question his words. Instead, she ordered, "Then get them to prepare. Dai Gang will not wait for long."

"Yes!"

Nian Tingfeng agreed, but did not immediately withdraw. He looked, somewhat absent-mindedly, at the glorious tracks left behind.

That person had done what they were supposed to do.

.....

Newlight City.

Above the Windy Resonant Pagoda that made all sorts of noises, Yuchi Ba gazed in the direction of the Silver Mist Sea. The occasionally trembling sky, the rumbling thunder, and the glorious tracks that led to the territory of the Blood of God.

Senior An Muda...

Shame rose within his heart as he mumbled to himself, "... Sorry Senior. What to do? We no longer want to endure this. We must

split. So be it. Everyone minds their own business. The new citizens are living decent lives. We might not win, but are at least fighting for ourselves. We no longer want to be cannon fodder..."

As he spoke, the bewilderment in his eyes cleared up and was replaced by zeal.

He looked toward the enormous and glorious tracks in the far sky and cried, "After so many years of being cannon fodder, we've all had enough!"

Even while knowing that Senior An Muda couldn't hear him, he still wanted to vent the anger and resentment in his heart.

But why were tears forcing their way out?

.....

The mountain ridge of Blackfish Mouth Mountain was packed with people who stood still like statues.

In the horizon, there was no giant, but dazzling footprints, treading and shattering the clouds as they moved forward.

Shi Xueman held onto Cirrus tightly, her face a deathly white. Tears blurred her vision, but she pursed her lips firmly to prevent them from falling.

Her teacher was dying, Ai Hui was severely injured and unconscious, and her father was waiting for assistance at the front line.

In that instant, an unprecedented grief and feebleness wounded her heart. She wanted to cry so badly.

But she did not. She'd known since young that crying was useless.

She wiped her tears. While the glistening teardrops were still visible, there was no more distress and grief, only tough determination. She quietly sorted out her emotions.

There were many things left to do. She had to manage the Spear of Heavy Cloud's training and cure Ai Hui. While waiting for a cure for Ai Hui, the Sword of Lightning's training had to continue.

Many, many things.

"When a Grandmaster is alive, he defeats all heroes under the sky. When he dies, he stirs all clouds under the sky. Look, the sun and moon lose their splendor and the stars dim. The sky is so high, the earth is so vast. All living things gather to grieve. How heroic! How delightful! Living a life without being a Grandmaster is unsatisfying!" Le Buleng muttered, his voice initially low, but becoming impassioned and resounding as excitement emerged from his grave and skinny face, turning it red.

Suddenly, he shouted with all his might into the distant sky, "An Muda, don’t let that Holy Emperor look down on you!"

Golden flames rose in his eyes along with a burning sensation in his chest. He turned to Shi Xueman and said, "Little girl, I’ll hand my rubbish disciple over to you. Hahaha, I’m coming, Grandmaster! If I can’t be one, I’ll become the enemy of one!"

After that, he transformed into a flame, flew toward the other side of the sky, disappeared in the blink of an eye.

Shi Xueman turned around and looked longingly at the glorious tracks left in the sky.

She must not let his effort go to waste.

She retracted her gaze and said in a low voice, "Start training."

.....

The boundary line between the Silver Mist Sea and Yellow Sand Corner was in an uproar.

Rumbling, rolling.

It was as if there was a monster crushing its way through from the faraway horizon.

Shi Beihai and a few others couldn’t help but walk out of the campground. They raised their heads and looked at the sky behind them. Enormous and illuminated steps appeared in the sky and stayed on the ground, turning into long giant footprints.

Only those with the sharpest eyesight, Shi Beihai and a few others included, could vaguely catch sight of a silhouette high up in the sky.

Shi Beihai’s face changed tremendously. "Senior An Muda!"

The faces of a few other observers changed as well when they quickly understood what was going to happen next.

In private, everyone had been extensively discussing about who An Muda was leaving his final attack for. There could only be two possibilities. One was Dai Gang, and the other was the Holy Emperor of the Blood of God. Everyone believed that the latter was more probable.

They’d been enthusiastic when in discussion, but now that the time had really come, there was only an inexpressible grief shrouding their hearts.

Boom!

A giant footprint stretching across a mile appeared in Ye Baiyi’s army camp.

The footprint sank a few meters deep. Densely packed tents once filled the area, but with that hit, over a thousand soldiers turned into blood clay before they could even make any sound.

This scene was too shocking, causing everyone that saw it to freeze in fear.

When everyone snapped out of their daze, their faces were all as white as a sheet, be it the North Sea Division or Ye Baiyi's army.

"Is this a Grandmaster? Is this the strength of a Grandmaster?"

These exact thoughts surfaced in the minds of many.

Fear, instinctive fear. No matter how brave a soldier was, he could only shudder uncontrollably in the face of such an invincible and inhumane force.

Ye Baiyi shivered slightly as despair overcame his face. On more than one occasion, he had thought about how to deal with a Grandmaster, but it was only at this moment, when he was really facing one, that he realized all his thoughts had been silly and ridiculous.

Another two footprints landed.

There was no sign and no sound. There were no blood-curdling screeches or bone crushing cracks, only booms that rang as the enormous footprints took away thousands of lives.

The blood elementalists under Ye Baiyi were all elites who dared to participate in such a direct and cruel battle. Yet, in front of this one-sided massacre, they simply had no courage to gather.

Not good!

Ye Baiyi was anxious. These three hits happened too quickly, and he had had no time at all to react and adapt.

There were signs that the army was about to collapse.

Just then, an imposing voice rang from overhead.

"I’m your opponent, An Muda."

These words shook the whole sky and caused it to buzz.

The army that was just about to crumble started cheering excitedly after two seconds of silence.

Not a single voice could be heard from the North Sea Division.

Shi Beihai and others were ashen-faced. Although people were convinced that the Holy Emperor’s abilities were comparable to that of a Grandmaster, they held a slight glimmer of hope since they’d not seen it for themselves.

Now, that wisp of hope was completely crushed.

This was bad news.

Everyone tried hard to search for the Holy Emperor’s silhouette, but to no avail.

An Muda’s glorious footprints did not halt. He continued advancing toward the Blood of God’s interior.

"I really did not expect you to govern the Blood of God so well."

An Muda’s surprised voice echoed throughout the entirety of the Blood of God, but no one could catch sight of his person.

"An Muda, if you really pity the people of Beyond Avalon, let them surrender as soon as possible. A meaningless battle is only going to take more innocent lives away."

A faint yet mighty voice reverberated through Blood of God and many blood elementalists started to kneel down.

An Muda stopped in his tracks.

Because he’d seen the Holy Emperor.

Grandmaster to Grandmaster.

Chapter 490: Grandmaster to Grandmaster

An Muda's silhouette was blurry as an alarming amount of elemental energy stacked, layer upon layer, around his body like the surging of a deep sea.

The Holy Emperor's eyes, as sharp as swords, pierced through the layers of elemental energy and saw him very clearly.

He sighed softly. It sounded like the melodious chiming of a clock and it resounded through the Blood of God.

Amid the deep sea of elemental energy, a dazzling brilliance rose around his body, the multicolored splendor appearing like cold flames. His skin was starting to melt into elemental energy and rise into the air like vapor.

Free from the shackles that trapped every other living being, Grandmasters were the most perfect entities in this world. Even their deaths were absolutely beautiful.

The Holy Emperor was rather angry. He snorted, "What's your worth, An Muda? Do you live for those fools? Open your eyes, An Muda. What kind of trash are you defending? If things were left to me, none of them would live!"

The Holy Emperor despised An Muda.

To him, the failure of the Avalon of Five Elements was directly

caused by An Muda's nonfeasance. If it had been him, he never would've allowed the dog crap Elders Guild to gain power. If anyone disobeyed him, he would purge him or her without hesitation and mercy. In his eyes, whatever aristocratic families and new citizens were all no different from ants.

Who else is a Grandmaster but me!

His will was the Blood of God.

But today, the Holy Emperor had more respect for An Muda. While he was mediocre, soft-hearted, and blinded by camaraderie, he wasn't without valor and responsibility.

People who were admiring the final afterglow of the Grandmaster were unaware of the suffering An Muda endured. Plus, although Grandmasters couldn't escape death either, there was a way around it, as the Holy Emperor had recently come to realize. This was the Grandmaster's last chance, the biggest gift presented to him after he'd attained the grandmaster level.

An Muda had been a Grandmaster for a longer time than Dai Gang, so it was impossible for him to be unaware of this fact.

An Muda had given up his final chance in order to help those fools.

The Holy Emperor was half sympathetic and half respectful, but also extremely angry. An Muda was a stately Grandmaster who

chose to sacrifice his final chance in order to save useless mud.

Exceedingly foolish!

The silhouette amid the deep sea of elemental energy and splendor stood motionlessly, but An Muda’s candid laughter was heard. He sounded like a 20 year old young man. "Only smart minds do smart things. I’m not smart so I only do what I like."

With a mocking look on his face, the Holy Emperor replied in a sharp tone, "Like? Hahaha, what a joke! Why did you become a Grandmaster? Isn’t a Grandmaster, who has achieved his status by being the strongest, most gifted, diligent and fortunate, seeking the ability to control this world?

An Muda’s tone was very calm as he answered without the slightest irritation, "My world is already in my hands."

The Holy Emperor couldn’t be bothered to drag the conversation on. "Come on, An Muda, you don’t have much time left. You can’t even attempt your final struggle. How heart wrenching. I’m also very curious about what having a match with a Grandmaster feels like."

"I’m afraid that you’re going to be disappointed."

An Muda’s voice carried a tinge of joy.

The Holy Emperor was stunned.

Clap. A tender shattering sound, like that made from broken glass, fell onto the ears of the Holy Emperor. His face changed and a blazing ray of light swallowed him up in the next moment.

The deep sea of elemental energy that was wrapped around An Muda exploded.

A ripple appeared above the Blood of God and slowly spread outward.

The blood elementalists below stared blankly at the sky. Shock only appeared on their faces after quite some time.

Elemental energy. Entirely elemental energy.

The Holy Emperor's silhouette emerged from hundreds of miles away, his face ashen. He opened his palms and colorful patches were visible. It was a terrifying sight.

His face was gloomy, but there was rage in his eyes. Anger targeted at himself.

He had been blindsided!

Huge elemental energy waves rose and rippled like a tsunami at the spot where An Muda had been standing.

An Muda had not intended to use his last strike against the Holy Emperor, but against the Blood of God.

Just now, he recalled that the elemental energy around An Muda had simply been too thick.

Why would there have been such a rich elemental energy?

The colored patches on his hand were about the size of copper coins. They looked like flowing dye, their luster alluring.

The Holy Emperor could feel that these patches were sucking in the surrounding elemental energy nonstop and continuously expanding. His eyes lit up. It was interesting that An Myda chose to borrow the infectious nature of the blood poison.

He was indeed the oldest Grandmaster.

The colored patches were wounds caused by the corrosion of elemental energy. The elemental energy released by An Muda was of a very complicated and peculiar composition. It was a type of five elemental energy ring that contained all five differing attributes. Its structure was extremely exquisite.

This type of five elemental rings circulated continuously like a river. Each ring was like a whirlpool, sucking in all five types of elemental energy.

It would continue to grow and expand.

The Holy Emperor was a wise person to begin with, so he immediately figured out where the elemental energy around An Muda came from.

Where An Muda had passed, all the elemental energy had been collected by him. Cloud Palette Village and the Silver Mist Sea were probably like the Old Territory by now.

He'd underestimated An Muda!

The fury in the Holy Emperor's eyes had reduced significantly, but the gloom remained on his face. He admired An Muda a bit more. To target the Fire Prairie and Yellow Sand Corner instead of himself was a thinking a step ahead of the opponent. Exhausting all elemental energy from Cloud Palette Village and the Silver Mist Sea... that was more like it. A ruthless Grandmaster.

The smile on the Holy Emperor's face grew wider. An Muda hadn't been idle all these years. This type of five elemental energy ring was something he'd prepared in order to deal with the Blood of God.

This was because it could withstand the corrosion of the blood spiritual force.

By now, the Holy Emperor could already predict what kind of disaster the elemental energy tsunami would bring to the Blood of God. This elemental energy rainstorm swept across the whole of the Yellow Sand Corner.

An Muda's five element ring would swallow all the surrounding elemental energy to strengthen itself.

The earth elemental energy in the Yellow Sand Corner wasn't as strong as before, but was still abundant. The same situation applied to the fire elemental energy in the Fire Prairie. These earth and fire elemental energies would become food for the five element ring.

An Muda had really seen through the weakness of the blood poison.

The more singular an elemental energy was, the easier it was infected by blood poison. The more types of elemental energy there were, the more difficult it became for the blood poison to infect. Blood poison would become ineffective against a dire beast that possessed all five types of elemental energy. This was also why the blood poison was unable to spread within the Wilderness. The majority of the dire beasts and plants in the WIlderness contained many types of elemental energy.

A thorough transformation of elemental energy in the Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie by An Muda's five element ring was, to the blood elementalists, no less than an exceptionally destructive catastrophe.

Without the replenishment of a single elemental energy, blood trees would wither and cause a shortage in the jade fruits. To God Nation, this deficiency would destabilize their foundation. The

blood beasts would starve and die off, and there would be no blood crystals. Without jade fruits and blood crystals, blood elementalists wouldn't be able to undergo even the most basic of training.

A pity, An Muda. You've miscalculated.

Why would you think I'm unfamiliar with the five elemental energies?

A faint shadow floated across his eyes, then became clear in an instant. A cold smile appeared at the corner of his mouth.

Not only was he familiar with the five elemental energies, he was aware of the blood poison's weakness. As such, he'd never given up on improving the blood poison.

That was right. An Muda's five element ring was beyond the Holy Emperor's understanding of the five elemental energies. It was more elaborate and complex, but the Holy Emperor did not doubt that he could break it. His study and understanding of the five elemental energies exceeded those of ordinary people, so he was highly confident in this aspect.

The Holy Emperor did not care about the spreading five element ring rainstorm. Even if the Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie quickly became the haven of the five element ring and the blood elementalists were inhibited, this situation was only going to be temporary. The moment he broke the ring, the Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie would be restored.

An Muda's five element ring was the most perfect ring he'd seen so far. If he could break it...

He suddenly felt excitement because he realized that he would reap a benefit that far exceeded his imagination if he managed to break it.

Afterward, he would be able to embrace, without restriction, areas of the Wilderness that he was unable to in the past.

If he could enhance the blood poison from An Muda's five element ring and enter the Wilderness, there would only be withered grass and rotten wood extending lifelessly into every corner of the Wilderness. The boundless Wilderness and inexhaustible dire beasts would all fall into his grasp.

His heart surged. The territory belonging to the Cultivation Era was about to be restored by his hands.

No, he was going to force the Wilderness somewhere further.

The Holy Emperor burst into a long peal of laughter. "Hahahaha..."

An Muda had not let him down!

How could he, as a Grandmaster?

Amid his wild laughter, the distant elemental energy tsunami surged over with a shockingly powerful momentum.

He believed that An Muda knew this too. He knew how dangerous things would become the moment this type of five element ring was revealed. Nevertheless, he used it just to buy that trash a bit more time.

The Holy Emperor was baffled by this meaningless sacrifice. So what if there was a bit more time? What was going to change? Nothing would change. Did he think that the Elders Guild could use this small amount of time to claim victory?

There was probably no way out.

It was really ridiculous for a Grandmaster to feel helpless.

He, the Holy Emperor, would not be that foolish. He would take this gamble! He would certainly break An Muda's five element ring in the quickest time possible. He was the most powerful person in this era.

No. Not just this era!

He was going to surpass all the legendary cultivators, becoming the strongest and mightiest person to exist in history!

There was only emptiness in the eye of the spreading elemental energy rainstorm. The Grandmaster was no more.

In high spirits, the Holy Emperor felt extremely smug about his success. He smiled, "Thanks for your present, An Muda. You'll soon find out that your sacrifice was meaningless and that they're trashier than you think."

He swiftly disappeared and reappeared above Ye Baiyi's army camp.

"An Muda is dead. Official Ye, attack."

The Holy Emperor looked at the North Sea defensive line with cold eyes, his disdain and contempt flickering. There was also a trace of pity!

Beneath his feet, tens of thousands of soldiers kowtowed.

I'm the real Grandmaster!

The Holy Emperor looked down from high up in the sky, his expression cold and detached. Like ripples, his silhouette slowly disappeared into the horizon.

The faraway elemental energy rainstorm raged and whistled.

Chapter 491: Us, North Sea

Cloud Castle was concealed by thick layers of cloud. The deep clouds were not only used as a cover, but also provided an outstanding defense.

The 32-kilometer-long North Sea Wall was the final defensive line against the Blood of God, but now, fragmentary nicks had already appeared on its surface.

Each castle possessed countless cloud mirrors, through which one could clearly observe the situation outside. Above the mirrors, densely crowded enemies rushed over from all directions.

What followed the blood elementalists was a concentrated azure arrow rain which would occasionally strike them.

The water elemental arrows that missed would explode into balls of cold, bone-piercing ice shards.

Blood elementalists swept by the cold air would temporarily turn rigid, after which a heavy, sturdy azure javelin would shoot out from within the cloud wall. Like a ray of lightning, it would strike the blood elementalists and leave a bowl-sized bloody hole in their bodies.

Yet, it was the attacks launched by the God-subduing Peaks that the blood elementalists feared most.

The God-subduing Peaks could use the five elements interchangeably, so their attacks could not be guarded against.

At times, an enormous silver sickle of light would sweep across the whole battlefield, and where it passed, blood elementalists would be severed in half at their waists. Fresh blood poured like rain and the mournful cries that filled the field left people's hair standing on end.

From time to time, a few red, basket-sized fireballs would drop and explode mid-journey, scorching a radius of about thirty meters, leaving no survivors.

Countless sand puppets would also leap from the ground and cling tightly to the blood elementalists, pushing them toward the arrow rain.

Wood elementalists made fewer moves, fearing that the vines and plants would be infected by the blood poison.

Under the North Sea wall lay piles of skeletons.

Lu Manman blurted, "Is Ye Baiyi crazy?"

The atmosphere within Cloud Castle was extremely grave. In the evening, on the day the Holy Emperor ordered an attack, Ye Baiyi had launched an all-out attack. Enemies closed in like the tide, pressuring them immensely.

They were very experienced when it came to battling against the Blood of God, but this was completely different from past battles. The blood elementalists throwing themselves over were in a frenzied state. It was a fear-evoking sight.

The first wave of attacks lasted from that evening until the next daybreak.

The azure light ray produced by the water elemental energy and the red blood ray released by the blood elementalists lit the deep, despair-filled night as bright as daytime. It was eerily horrifying, as even the stars in the sky dimmed and lost their color.

The North Sea Division had never met with such a frantic attack.

When day broke, the morning light faintly lit up the horizon. The sun had yet to rise and the cold blue sky was blackened by smoke. The closely packed enemies retreated like the tide, leaving behind only corpses.

The wounded were lying amidst blood pools, wailing in anguish, yet none took pity on them.

Occasionally, the cloud wall would shoot fragmentary blue water elemental arrows, putting an end to their suffering.

Giving them a proper ending and sparing them from pain was the best kindness they could be served.

The captives and wounded were an intolerable burden to the North Sea Division. There was no one to manage the captives or treat the injured blood elementalists.

The anguished wails gradually faded and the battlefield regained its deathly stillness.

The sun rose, its sunlight unable to provide these fallen corpses with any warmth. The clouds floating in the blue sky were reflected on their lusterless and motionless eyes.

Afraid that the corpses would lead to an epidemic and that their fresh blood would be drawn by more blood elementalists, the God-subduing Peaks set them ablaze, burning them to ashes.

Wave after wave of attacks struck over three consecutive days.

Even with the North Sea Wall, everyone felt that they would be unable to continue to endure. Every day, the wall would have more nicks and the enemies once almost drilled their way through. Lu Manman had had to lead his team to personally kill off those blood elementalists.

Everyone rejoiced.

The division leader had requested that they strengthen the defensive structures and they dared not goof off. At that point, many had been incredulous at the order.

Structures built on the scale of the North Sea wall, in all of the Avalon of Five Elements's history, could be counted on one's fingers. Alright, actually there were none in the Avalon of Five Elements. It was uncertain if the North Sea Wall could be considered as a part of the history of the Avalon of Five Elements.

Now, however, everyone felt that the division leader stood tall and had foresight, had been wise and brilliant.

Even the North Sea Wall, built on an unprecedented scale, had almost been broken through by the enemies. If it had been the flimsy structure it once was, they might not have even been able to resist for three whole days.

Qi Xiuyuan's expression was grave. "Ye Baiyi is throwing lives away, but other than this, there's no other way out."

Helian Feier wrinkled her brows. "How many have died here?"

Three days of attacks had resulted in over three thousand deaths.

Such a severe loss was unimaginable for all of the North Sea Division. The bloody battle against the Blood of God had been ongoing for such a long time that it was obvious only their elites had come forward this time; they were far more capable than the soldiers from the previous battles.

As compared to the three thousand elites from the Blood of God, the North Sea Division was practically destroyed. They had no

combat strength left. A combat division’s defeat was considered a heavy loss even in the former Avalon of Five Elements, but Ye Baiyi did not care.

"They have a lot of people," Shi Beihai stated calmly, his gaze sweeping across everyone present. In a low voice, he added, "We’d previously discussed how an all-out battle would start following Senior An Muda’s fall. This is an all-out battle that will only end when one party thoroughly loses, so throw away all unrealistic thoughts. This battle is going to be tougher than we can imagine."

The few others were silent. They knew that their leader was right.

Ignoring them, Shi Beihai continued, "Ye Baiyi is not a fool. He chose to do this, so he must have his own plans. What we have to do now is figure out what those plans are."

Helian Feier muttered, "Such disregard for casualties is so unlike Ye Baiyi. He takes very good care of his soldiers. I think he might have been pressured by the Holy Emperor into executing such extreme measures."

With bright and shiny eyes, Qi Xiuyuan added, "Can we think from their perspective? Ye Baiyi needs to break through the North Sea Wall. What would we do if we were in his position? It’s meaningless to launch a mild, probing attack. It could escalate easily, which is disadvantageous. High intensity attacks would mean high casualties. Our team damage is small, but take note that our essence elemental bean consumption is very large."

Helian Feier’s face changed slightly.

Shi Beihai turned around and asked Helian Feier, "Go find out how many essence elemental beans we have left."

At that, Helian Feier dashed out.

The expressions on people’s faces weren’t too great.

God-subduing Peaks did not require essence elemental beans because they possessed abundant amounts of elemental energy to begin with, but the recovery of the soldiers’ elemental energy and the North Sea Wall’s repairs required a high volume of essence elemental beans. Without elemental beans, the soldiers would need at least twenty hours to replenish their elemental energy.

If there weren’t enough essence elemental beans, then aside from the God-subduing Peaks which could continue operating indefinitely, the remaining elementalists’ combat strength would be greatly reduced.

For the past three days, they’d been hounded by their enemies, leaving them breathless. In such a highly tense state of affairs, no one had thought about essence elemental bean consumption.

Helian Feier returned a short while later, her face pale. "There’s only half of the reserve left. If the battle continues at this intensity, we won’t be able to withstand for much longer."

Cloud Castle fell into a complete silence.

Shi Beihai remained calm and collected. He turned to Qi Xiuyan and asked, "Are the mirage bean pods ready?"

Qi Xiuyuan was clueless as to why Boss decided to ask him about them now, but nodded nevertheless. "Done."

"Previously, I had you get in touch with the news villages. How did it go?"

"Yes. I contacted some of the biggest names."

Lightly drumming his fingers on the table, Shi Beihai said, "Take these mirage bean pods to them. Remember, tell them at the end that we're in urgent need of essence elemental beans."

Qi Xiuyuan's eyes lit up. "Yes!"

Lu Manman couldn't help but ask, "Boss, are you worried that Skyheart City..."

Shi Beihai nodded without answering directly. Instead he explained, "Assistance has yet to arrive, so we're still a lone army putting up this fight. Although I don't know what the Elders Guild has in mind, it seems like they do not care if we're able to withstand the attacks or not."

Everyone’s faces changed altogether.

"With the severing of ties between the aristocratic families and the new citizens, Ye Lin’s authority in the Elders Guild has become an issue. I understand that the three central divisions are dealing with Dai Gang, but what about Sky Edge and Infantry? Why aren’t they here yet?"

Shi Beihai appeared calm, but his words were cutting.

"It’s apparent from Madam Ye’s earlier speech that her people are all just cannon fodder." Shi Beihai shook his head. "Still plotting against her own people even at this point. How heart-wrenching."

Qi Xiuyuan looked at Shi Beihai as he spoke. "Then we..."

Shi Beihai shook his head. "I’m telling you guys all this not to rock your faith; I just want you all to know that this battle is going to be much tougher than you’d imagined."

Lu Manman said anxiously, "Sir, if they’re so heartless, why must we..."

Shi Beihai looked down, unable to continue. There wasn’t anger in his eyes, only tranquility. Yet, it was this calmness that rendered him unable to continue.

What no one had expected was for the usually conscientious leader to break into a smile. "Are we fighting for Ye Lin? No. We're fighting for our families and relatives. Is the North Sea Division the Elders Guild's North Sea Division? No. We defend and protect those behind us. Be it new citizens or aristocratic families, regardless of where they come from, this is our mission. The North Sea Division's mission. Do not forget, soldiers."

At that, the smile on his face disappeared and was replaced by seriousness.

Those present could feel a gush of hot air rising straight to the top of their heads. They stood up and fervently made their salutations. "Yes!"

Shi Beihai surveyed his audience, light flickering in his narrowed eyes. He spoke quickly, with an imposing voice, "Order! Other than the usual operations of the God-subduing Peaks, all elementalists shall increase the demarcation of the front line from one hundred and fifty meters to four hundred and fifty meters."

"Yes!"

"Order! All elementalists shall split into three teams. Helian Feier, Lu Manman, and I will lead each team separately to battle and rest in batches!"

"Yes!"

"Order! Qi Xiuyuan, command all craftsmen to work on defensive structures and defensive lines from now onward. Confer power to conscript the locals and mobilize all local elementalists and craftsmen."

"Yes!"

Shi Beihai took a deep breath and said solemnly, "Everyone, this battle will persist for a very long time. Do not place hopes on others. Do not be discouraged by the enemy’s power. Do not lose spirit at temporary losses. Us, North Sea, shall never lose the will to fight."

"We, North Sea, shall never lose the will to fight!"

Chapter 492: Dawn of Hope

Ai Hui slowly woke up.

"Ai Hui’s waking up!"

Before he’d opened his eyes, he could hear Lou Lan’s cheer followed by a series of hurried footsteps.

His blurry vision gradually became clear as familiar and concerned looking faces took shape.

"How is it? Are you feeling better?"

"You’re finally awake, Ai Hui. We were so frightened!"

"No knowledge of Night Moth Fruit. How weak."

…

Everyone greeted Ai Hui messily, but concern was evident in all of their faces. Warmth filled Ai Hui’s heart. He was moved. He wanted to say something, but nothing came out of his mouth. He realized he was completely paralyzed and unable to lift even a finger.

"Aye, he can’t seem to talk."

"Seems like it. He can’t move yet."

"He’s blinking his eyes. He’s alive."

"That’s good enough. Let him be. As long as he’s breathing, he’ll be up and jumping in no time."

It was obvious that this joyfully satisfied voice came from Fatty.

"Is that right?"

"That’s great!"

"I’m relieved!"

"I think you’re right, Fatty!"

Everyone shouted in unison. In the blink of an eye, only Lou Lan was left in the room. Everyone knew very well that Ai Hui had a tenacious vitality. Knowing that he was alive was sufficient to calm their worried hearts and send them back to their own tasks.

Having just witnessed the fall of An Muda, everyone was aware that the battle was about to start. Never had there been such an intense pressure. People knew that the front line battle could explode at any time and that they could soon be conscripted.

With regard to battling against the Blood of God, every single member of the Central Pine Faction felt enthusiastic.

It was a nightmare that had taken away countless lives and even the survivors had mostly lost the will to fight; yet, some would never forget the pain, grief, and despair that it had caused them.

The seed of hatred had long been planted. It had since sprouted and grown significantly.

Regardless of the reason for it or what the future held, hatred was hatred and always carried blood.

People feared battle mainly because they feared death and despair, but these avengers, they had already lost everything and experienced absolute despair. As long as they lived, they would be unable to forget the bloodshed that had taken place in Central Pine City. They wouldn't forget their classmates, teachers, and the familiar faces which had lay amidst blood pools, being swallowed up by blood fiends one by one.

All along, living had been worse than being dead.

Ai Hui had recovered significantly by the second day, proving that their impression of his tenacity was correct. On the third day, Ai Hui could already sit up.

Seeing himself in this state, Ai Hui could only laugh bitterly. His

whole body was wrapped in the bandage. He looked like a living mummy. His bare skin was charred and cracked wounds could be seen all over. Although they had started to scab, it was still a shocking sight.

"Don’t worry, Ai Hui. Bangwan’s gotten a lot of materials and I’ve already found some methods to deal with it. The fruit within your body was damaged by lightning so it’s returned to its dormant state. This phenomenon is not relevant to the materials Bangwan’s provided, but I’ve already separated out some laws of its behavior. I’ll treat you for sure, Ai Hui!"

Lou Lan supported Ai Hui up while encouraging him.

Ai Hui smiled, but his face was wrapped in the bandage so only his eyes were exposed.

Lou Lan caught it, however, and responded happily, "Lucky there was the bandage to help Ai Hui isolate the lightning strikes, otherwise, you would’ve sustained more injuries."

Since the start, the bandage had saved Ai Hui countless times.

He thought about Master and Mistress before his mind drifted to Mingxiu and Uncle Yu. There must be a problem, he just knew it. He knew for a fact that Mingxiu would never hurt him. There was no doubt about it.

But he would have to deal with this matter after his recovery.

Lou Lan carefully placed Ai Hui under the sunlight.

Basking in the sun, his whole body felt warm and indescribably comfortable.

Lou Lan sat by Ai Hui's side, narrating the events that had unfolded. Ai Hui listened with keen interest, but upon hearing about An Muda's death and the glorious tracks he'd left, Ai Hui fell into a daze.

Subconsciously, his gaze fell upon Shi Xueman, who stood not far away and supervised everybody's training while holding Cirrus.

Iron Lady must be feeling very upset.

Ai Hui felt that Iron Lady was really strong. The pain he'd felt when Master and Mistress passed was unforgettable. Ai Hui thought about what An Muda's death meant for the front line and Iron Lady's father, Shi Beihai. The situation must be rather tough right now.

Her teacher had passed and her father was in danger, yet she was unable to help. Such pain was simply too harsh.

Spear of Heavy Cloud's training was very structured. What Ai Hui had not expected was for Sword of Lightning's training to go on as usual. He'd thought that training would have ceased when he'd fallen into a coma.

He only realized it when he saw Shi Xueman asking Gu Xuan about how effective Sword of Lightning's training was.

Only one thought ran through his head. He must recover as soon as possible!

Seeing how Iron Lady assumed even more heavy responsibilities despite her sorrows and worries, Ai Hui only felt greater respect for her.

He felt that he, himself, might not have been able to do it.

Iron Lady looked as calm as always, but right now, this calmness only made Ai Hui feel her unyielding attitude and the powerful force contained in her delicate body.

Wait. Delicate body… Something is amiss, thought Ai Hui.

Alright, time to think about how to quickly recover.

Seeing how everyone was dripping with sweat and working diligently, Ai Hui felt ashamed as he was practically wasting precious time.

Ai Hui only became aware of just how terrible the condition of his body was when he started checking.

Almost all of his residences and palaces had been destroyed. The lightning gathered in the cloud layer was simply too intense and had far exceeded what his body could endure. As Lou Lan had said, without the bandage, he would have had close to zero chances of surviving.

To an elementalist, having his residences and palaces destroyed was no worse than drowning and being reduced to a handicapped person.

He'd only recently been promoted to a Master and was then suddenly struck by such a destructive force. If he had been any other elementalist, he might never have been able to recover from this setback. His recently gained immense power had vanished. What did it mean to be a Master and what did it mean to lose his status as a Master?

It was all the more painful since he'd lost something he'd just recently gained. It probably felt equivalent to a fall from heaven into hell.

Ai Hui did not feel pain and disappointment. Instead, he felt extremely glad and renewed.

At that time, it had been his only way out.

At least he was still alive and could think of solutions while basking in the sun.

Ai Hui was tenacious. The situation before him was horrible, but he understood that there was no time to feel dispirited and in despair. Senior Le Buleng had failed to have a breakthrough eight times and had been more wretched than he was right now; yet, he never stopped trying to get stronger.

There's hope where there's life.

Judging from the holes in his residences and palaces, Ai Hui could imagine how the sky full of lightning had gathered in his body to destroy the vigor within. He did not just injure his residences and palaces, but also the foundation of his vitality.

Over eighty percent of his flesh was severely wrecked and might not even recover.

Heaven never completely barred one's way. Ai Hui noticed something.

There was a wisp of silver mist floating quietly within his utterly damaged earth palace. This ball of mist was extremely weak and would have been difficult to detect if not for his attention to detail.

The silver mist flickered like the mist above the Silver Mist Sea.

When Ai Hui consciously tried to approach this ball of mist, a thick aura of lightning shook him up.

He felt rather disappointed. The elemental energy within his

body had been exhausted, so of what use was the lightning? Injuries to the five residences and eight palaces were, to elementalists, extremely burdensome, albeit curable. If the five residences and eight palaces were completely destroyed, there was simply no way to reverse it.

In other words, he would be unable to train his elemental energy from now on.

Lightning wasn't of much use to him.

But why was there a remaining wisp of lightning within his body? He was somewhat suspicious, but on second thought, felt it was natural. Having had his body cleansed by so many lightning strikes, it shouldn't be surprising that some remained within.

Wait!

Ai Hui suddenly realized what was amiss. Finding remnant lightning in his body wasn't the strange part; why would that remaining wisp be a silver mist?

Then it hit him.

That's right, remnant lightning would never become silver mist!

His mind kept going back to the silver mist. He felt thankful that he'd once cultivated the sword embryo and Skyheart Flaming Lotus Lamp in his sky palace, as they had strengthened his mind

significantly. His body was severely injured, but his mind was working decently well.

He submerged himself into the silver mist and was wrapped by a familiar sensation.

Sword aura!

Ai Hui felt indescribably agitated and his mind became unstable. He shortly broke away from the mist, but was unable to hold back the ecstasy within his heart. He knew what that silver mist was!

It was the sword embryo in his earth palace. The remnant pieces left by the lightning.

With the shattering of the sword embryo and the exceptionally dense lightning aura, this peculiar type of silver mist had been formed.

Ai Hui's mind spun quickly. He was like an agile and avaricious hunter seeking whatever opportunities he could make use of.

The bandage, wrapped around his whole body, revealed its eyes. They glowed and flickered within the shadow cast by the sunlight.

After much thought, he still did not know much. Perhaps it was two hours or four hours later when his mind returned to the silver mist.

This time, his state of mind was exceptionally calm and he wasn't irritable or stirred.

He slowly and carefully felt this wisp of extremely frail silver mist. He moved very slowly and cautiously.

Soon he was certain that his thought was correct. This extremely weak silver mist was a remnant shattered piece of sword embryo left by the lightning, but there was a subtle difference within.

The sword embryo in his earth palace had been a sword of lightning that in itself contained very strong lightning attributes.

The Nature's lightning that had penetrated his body had been powerful and aggressive, but had had similar properties to the sword embryo. Ai Hui could imagine how the lightning had been instantly absorbed by the sword embryo in his earth palace upon entering his body.

The huge volume of lightning that had gathered in the sword embryo had far exceeded its level of endurance, hence the sword embryo had been completely wrecked and transformed into mist.

At the same time, however, channeling a huge volume of lightning meant that the sword embryo had been thoroughly tempered once. No, many times. Even if it was destroyed, the lightning continued to flood his body and the sword embryo mist continued undergoing many rounds of 'tempering!'"

It was no wonder the lightning aura of the silver mist was so dense.

Bearing and surviving through so many sessions of tempering...

At this moment, Ai Hui's eyes were sparkling. He saw the dawn of hope.

Chapter 493: Black Cloud

Ai Hui's injury had a huge impact on Central Pine Faction.

All along, they were used to working under Ai Hui's leadership. They were used to handing over any tricky affairs to Ai Hui. Time and time again Ai Hui displayed miraculous problem solving abilities, proving himself worthy of their trust.

Ai Hui had always been the strongest, the calmest and the person with the most ideas.

Yet, at such a crucial period in time, their most reliable pillar was severely injured. People felt insecure.

Luckily, Ai Hui was recovering, so now everyone was significantly more relieved. Even if they had zero combat power, Ai Hui's intelligence gave them confidence.

Ai Hui was recovering well.

He'd progressed from being paralyzed to being able to move his fingers and finally being able to move on his own again, albeit forcefully. Every day was an improvement for him.

Everyone was feeling more cheerful because of this. They'd witnessed many miracles involving Ai Hui and had seen many impossible things happen, which was why they had complete faith in him.

No one noticed that the red glow in Lou Lan’s eyes had intensified.

Lou Lan’s elemental soup was of great help to Ai Hui.

Ai Hui was still fully wrapped in bandages. His flesh was recovering thanks to the excellent nourishment from the elemental soup. AI Hui was engrossed in self-exploration. He was already certain that the wisp of frail silver mist had been formed from the tempered sword embryo.

Ai Hui named it "sword cloud".

With just a bit of friction, sword cloud would produce small and fine lightning bolts. sword cloud could also change its shape marvelously along with the release of the sword aura, some of which were as thick and heavy as mountains, while others were cold and sharp. It was every mystical.

Ai Hui recalled the descriptions he’d previously read in some swordplay manuals. Some swordsmen lived to grow and temper a mouthful of sword breath. Such swordsmen were initially weak, but along with the purification and condensation of the sword breath, their abilities would advance by leaps and bounds. The manuals said that the human was the sword and so they tempered themselves.

It struck Ai Hui that he could use this as a reference.

Although there was only a small wisp of sword cloud, it was extremely pure.

The purer the force the more precious. This was common knowledge when it came to training. However, elementalists were careful not to let forces beyond their level, in terms of purity and grade, into their bodies.

Elemental energy that surpassed their level would definitely stimulate them more by providing a reference goal.

But such elemental energy was usually offensive in nature. Before they could be absorbed they were like indigestible food and could cause harm to elementalists.

From the look of it, the sword cloud would not harm Ai Hui's body. Of course, it also might have already harmed his body.

Ai Hui felt that the pressing question was this: If he was unable to find a method to nourish and temper it quickly, would it gradually disappear? Sharp treasure swords would rust easily when placed in water for a long time.

He couldn't find a solution at the moment, but gained something else – his body.

Other than the fact that his sword embryo had been cleansed and tempered by the lightning, his flesh had also been tempered, or

rather, ruined. Fortunately, under the protection of his bandage, his practically burnt flesh retained a wisp of life force.

His ever growing flesh was like the tender shoots that sprouted from the ashes left by the lightning.

His flesh contained a faint lightning aura. Ai Hui guessed that his flesh would better be able to endure the lightning from now onward.

Of course, be it the sword cloud or his body, these were mostly speculations. He would have to recover and conduct continuous tests to arrive at a legitimate conclusion.

Nevertheless, Ai Hui was already feeling glad that he was able to find hope under such circumstances.

Suddenly, there was a disturbance in the encampment.

"Come and look, quick! Today’s mirage bean pod!"

"It’s about the front line. Sir Shi Beihai!"

"Division Leader’s father!"

"Come and look, quick!"

Ai Hui's sense of hearing seemed to have sharpened as he'd managed to detect his subordinates' faraway voices well. The strange thing was that it wasn't a reflection of his elemental energy.

"Oh god!"

"How terrifying!"

Alarmed cries echoed continuously, but everyone quickly quietened down. Ai Hui could even hear that they were holding their breaths. He was very curious but slightly worried at the same time.

He only understood the reactions of those outside when Lou Lan sent the mirae bean pod over to him.

He looked at Iron Lady.

Her face was a little pale and she looked distracted.

It was his first time seeing such an absent-minded Shi Xueman. There was no focus in her ice-cold eyes.

She paced back and forth.

The commotion raised by that mirage bean pod spread to every city in the Wilderness. The bitter struggle had truthfully been

recorded. The frenzied god elementalists, the cruel grappling and a mountain-high pile of corpses that could extinguish a raging flame.

Three days of battle seemed to have happened right before his eyes with an intensity that far exceeded anyone's imagination. The magnificent Wall of North Sea had become a bloody Acheron that sent chills down people's spines.

And ultimately, when assistant division leader Helian Fei'er pleaded for essence elemental beans with a face covered in soot, people finally snapped out of it with a quiver.

Even the boldest person wouldn't be able to stop himself from shuddering.

Wall of North Sea was the final defensive line against Blood of God!

Seeing the continuous chain of tents, the frantic, tide-like surge of malevolent god elementalists and the corpses all accumulated beneath Wall of North Sea, everybody was finally certain that once the wall broke and North Sea Division lost...

No one could withstand Ye Baiyi's army!

Wall of North Sea had been constructed before the fall of Elders Guild. It was the final large-scale defensive structure of the whole of the Avalon of Five Elements!

How many cities had defensive structures on par with Wall of North Sea?

The cities would be razed to the ground and everyone would turn into god elementalists.

Madam Ye immediately called on the cities in the hope that everyone would unite and brave the crisis together. Six Masters would be engaged to travel and transport the first batch of essence elemental beans to North Sea Wall.

Newlight City also dispatched its Masters to ferry essence elemental beans.

Other cities responded one after another. With the mayor at the top and the citizens at the bottom, teams formed to assist North Sea Division with the preparation of essence elemental beans. In this life and death crisis, everyone casted whatever prejudices they had aside and came together as one.

Every single one of them was well aware that they were all finished once Ye Baiyi's army broke through North Sea Wall.

Looking down from the sky, Wall of North Sea was like a long, snow-white dragon lying along the boundary line between Silver Mist Sea and Yellow Sand Corner, except that the dragon was utterly crushed. Its extended and undulating body had many wounds.

God elementalists were glaring at each wound like tigers watching their prey.

They were like warlike hornets, occasionally circling and swooping down. At times they were like petals blown by the wind, and at other times like drifting rocks that gathered together from a few brooks.

Under the light of the God-subduing Peaks, each breach of North Sea Wall sunk into a never ending struggle between god elementalists and North Sea Division. From day one the battle had been extremely cruel.

Each place was like the ferocious mouth of an avaricious beast, swallowing flesh and life. Be it god elementalists or elementalists, they were all its food.

Both sides were shocked by the other's willpower and tenacity. They then racked their brains to come up with a more fatal blow to deal to their enemy.

With the nourishment of countless lives and flesh, each shockingly wide open, bloody mouth ripped apart noiselessly. It was as if there was a voice shouting for more flesh to fill its tummy.

The evening sunlight penetrated the cloud layer and dyed the sand dune behind the army a splendid golden color. People who'd been in Yellow Sand Corner knew that the breeze in the evenings was the most comfortable, unlike the blazing heat in the

afternoons and unlike the icy wind in the nights. The temperature was just right and it felt as though pieces of gauze were brushing across the field.

The rich, bloody smell filled the air, as if it'd been blown over by the slow setting sun behind the horizon. Inevitably the bright red sunset made people think about the brutality that was ongoing.

A wisp of black cloud rose up from the sand dunes. The vast sand dunes emitted scorching heat waves that resulted from a full day of sunshine, which made the remaining sunlight and black cloud fuzzy and indistinct.

The black cloud struggled free of the heat waves and gradually it became bigger and came nearer.

No one noticed this quiet wisp of black cloud initially.

It was only when the black cloud continued to increase in size and obstruct the afterglow of the sunset that it managed to capture the attention of soldiers from both sides. They notified their teammates, doubt emerging on their faces. In the blink of an eye their faces changed.

The black cloud was approaching at a much faster speed than they'd imagined. It was rapidly expanding within the army's field of vision. In actual fact, it was because its speed was simply too quick.

"Blood... blood fiends!"

Above North Sea Wall, the soldiers who'd just been trampling on their enemies' corpses had their morales smashed to the valley floor as their faces turned pale.

The sky had become a sky of blood fiends. They hid the sky and covered the earth in a grandiose manner, making it impossible to catch a glimpse of the horizon.

An earth shattering cheer sounded from Ye Baiyi's army camp as soldiers dashed out of their tents and waved their hands and arms in the sky. The continuous battle had them exhausted beyond imagination. The cruel combat was like an automated hacksaw, tormenting their mental state unceasingly.

How could they not get agitated upon seeing such a magnificent army of blood fiends arriving to provide reinforcement?

Inside the tent, Ye Baiyi was looking at the battle statistics over the past few days.

From the numbers it was apparent that their losses were severe but Ye Baiyi remained emotionless. Casualties were inevitable in all battles. It was only natural that the death toll was high since such a big scale defensive structure like North Sea Wall really was a tough nut to crack.

But these same numbers exposed North Sea Division's weariness.

Shi Beihai was one of the most powerful figures around and North Sea consisted of top elites. Yet, they were but one team.

The Holy Emperor's order flashed across his mind as he refocused on the battle report.

Since yesterday, North Sea Division's offense had regained some vigor. Ye Baiyi was certain that the first batch of essence elemental beans had arrived.

Ye Baiyi appeared indifferent. Shi Beihai wouldn't be Shi Beihai if he was easily defeatable.

Outside the tent, the sound of air torrents and the howls of blood fiends pervaded the sky.

Ye Baiyi raised his head. The big gift he'd prepared for Shi Beihai was here.

Chapter 494: Dialogue

"Beast Venom Temple is here," Shi Beihai mumbled.

He fixed his eyes on the incoming black, cloudlike blood fiends, which covered the sky. He appeared calm, with the smoke around his face seemingly solidifying into black rocks that became distinct under the sky and clouds.

Lu Manman and Helian Feier had an ugly expression on their faces. Ye Baiyi's army was too much for them to handle. If not for the Wall of North Sea and the God-subduing Peaks, they would've long been drowned by the tide-like inflow of enemies.

With an additional Beast Venom Temple, the situation was so terrible that it drove people into despair.

Bei Shuisheng's Cold Palace, Nangong Wulian's Beast Venom Temple, Ye Baiyi's War God Palace and Red Devil's Fairy Devil Palace were Blood of God's four great palaces.

Bei Shuisheng never miscalculated, had an incomparable internal government and was known as Sick Tiger of God Nation. Now that Blood of God was prospering, Bei Shuisheng claimed the most credit.

Nangong Wulian's Beast Venom Temple was just as powerful. The blood fiends kept by Blood of God all came from the Beast Venom Temple. Even the most popular load basin beasts in the Wilderness were creations of the Beast Venom Temple.

It was said that the newly risen strong player in God Nation, Red Devil, was also a masterpiece of Beast Venom Temple.

Needless to say Ye Baiyi was, in the eyes of Shi Beihai, one of the most intelligent division leaders around. His combat strength and strategies were the finest.

"Ye Baiyi..."

Shi Beihai turned around and said, "Get everyone to make full use of this time to restore the defensive line while others take the chance to recuperate. Tomorrow will be another bitter struggle. Supply them with essence elemental beans."

Lu Manman and Helian Feier jumped in shock before answering in unison, "Yes!"

Shi Beiha’s silhouette disappeared on the snow-white pathway made from the cloud layer.

The duo hurriedly relayed the order.

Lu Manman’s eyes were moving nimbly. At times he extended his neck and glanced at the enemy’s camping ground, snapping, "Ye Baiyi is amazing, eh? I used to think our boss was the greatest, but Ye Baiyi actually isn’t weak either."

Helian Feier was more knowledgeable. She shook her head in response. "It’s because you were ignorant and inexperienced. Ye Baiyi is indeed powerful, but not many people outside know about it. Great Elder settled on two successors previously, one of them being Ye Baiyi. There’s nothing to criticize about Ye Baiyi’s abilities. Great Elder admires him very much."

It was clearly Lu Manman’s first time hearing this. He couldn’t help but ask, "And what happened?"

Helian Feier shook her head. "Nothing."

With Eyes wide open Lu Manman asked, "Why?"

Helian Feier answered, "He’s a new citizen."

Lu Manman had a realization. "I see."

The Great Elder’s position had always been taken by members from aristocratic families only, not new citizens.

Helian Feier added, "Ye Baiyi is proud and aloof. He’s a new citizen, but isn’t on close terms with Yuchi Ba and other people from New Citizen Faction. As such, he couldn’t get their support."

"He’s so fierce!" Lu Manman exclaimed before asking, "If Ye Baiyi was one of the chosen ones, who was the other candidate?"

Helian Feier gave Lu Manman a foolish look. "Boss."

Lu Manman was frightened, but quickly regained his senses. "Boss? That's exactly what I was saying. Boss is so capable! If Ye Baiyi was chosen, why wouldn't Boss be chosen as well? Aye, then why didn't Boss agree? Sigh, wouldn't our lives be great if Boss became The Great Elder?"

"I happen to know something about this." Helian Feier said admiringly, "Boss mentioned that there is still estrangement between new citizens and aristocratic families and it is getting worse. The divergence has reached a dangerous point where they are no longer able to compromise. It is not something The Great Elder can solve, since he doesn't know how to either. Boss doesn't want to dip his gun into his own people's blood, be it the aristocratic families or new citizens."

Lu Manman fell into silence. The atmosphere in North Sea Division had always been good. Both Qi Xiuyuan and him were new citizens, but were able to become assistant division leaders. Helian Feier was an aristocrat, but they all got along fine.

Helian Feier sighed. "Actually, Great Elder liked Boss the most. Boss has a good family background, is powerful and morally praiseworthy. Both aristocratic families and new citizens would be in support of him taking over Great Elder's position. But it was said that Boss's firm rejection really angered Great Elder. Why did Miss Shi Xueman get Grandmaster An Muda to be her teacher? It was actually Great Elder's arrangement."

Lu Manman was stunned. These seemingly ordinary affairs

actually had stories behind them.

"You must've heard this before. Miss Shi Xueman had been regarded as the successor of The Great Elder."

Lu Manman nodded enthusiastically as how a chicken would peck at its food. "I've heard, I've heard."

Helian Feier looked at him. "Don't you wonder why it's her? Miss Shi Xueman is still so young and she wasn't even a Master at that point in time, so what qualifications did she have to become such a hot candidate?"

Lu Manman stared blankly into space. "You... you're right."

"Fool!" Helian Feier couldn't help but roll her eyes at him. "Who does Boss favor the most? Miss Shi Xueman! If she becomes Great Elder, would Boss just stand by if anything happened? And Grandmaster An Muda is her teacher, so wouldn't he come to the rescue if anything happened to her? Great Elder's plan is really brilliant!"

Lu Manman said, tongue twisted, "But... but..."

"But why Ye Lin?" Helian Feier asked before answering with yet another sigh, "Man proposes but God disposes. Great Elder did not expect such a violent a blood catastrophe to erupt. We lost Yellow Sand Corner and Fire Prairie in the blink of an eye. Lesser Avalon of Five Elements failed, resulting in the later Wilderness Expansion

Order. Have you not noticed that we have completely lost our rhythm and are being led by the nose thanks to Blood of God?"

Helian Feier's gaze carried a tinge of fear. "Boss said that Holy Emperor is an unmatched character in terms of ambition and ruthlessness and he's right. Great Elder's plan has thoroughly been trampled with. Such a dangerous situation is not something Miss Shi Xueman can bear. Plus..."

Her tone was slightly cheerful. "Our Miss has the same temper as her father. Hah, running to and Ai Hui and getting mixed up in his affairs. Look, isn't this reckless spirit of hers identical to her father's in his younger days? Great Elder was seething with anger at that news, but Boss was very happy. Plus, at that time, Grandmaster An Muda was no longer in good shape. Without his backing, Miss Shi Xueman won't gain a foothold in the Elders Guild."

At this point Lu Manman slowly regained his senses and mumbled to himself, "Boss is really something. It would still be better for him to take over Great Elder instead of Ye Lin. If Boss had assumed the position, the situation wouldn't be so chaotic now."

Helian Feier shook her head. "That's what I said previously, but Boss disagreed. He felt that Ye Lin was a more suitable candidate."

"What?" Lu Manman thought his ears were playing a trick on him and asked in disbelief, "Boss said that b*tch would be a better Great Elder than him?"

The whole of North Sea Division had nothing good to say about Ye Lin. Their request to withdraw from the front line in order to recuperate had been rejected countless times. They weren't provided with sufficient resources and had tried rushing for them but to no avail. The backup combat divisions had yet to arrive as well.

If not for Boss's idea to mass release mirageovie bean pods, their defensive line would've been destroyed due to an exhaustion of essence elemental beans. Yet, immediately after the release of the pods, Ye Lin was the first to stand up, calling for people to unite.

Everybody felt sick to their stomachs, as if they'd just swallowed a fly.

What Ye Lin had done at the rear disgusted them as well.

Guillotines on a snowy night, rivers of blood.

So one could only imagine how intense Lu Manman's reaction was in regard to Helian Feier's words. To him, Shi Beihai was unsurpassable.

"That's right. That's what Boss said." Helian Feier had a complicated expression on her face. After keeping silent for a short while she spoke up. "Boss said that the current Avalon of Five Elements is like a festering patient, wounds everywhere and flesh rotting, as if already on its last breath but there are wolves in front and tigers behind."

Lu Manman, too, became quiet.

Helian Feier added, "Boss said that he is soft-hearted and does not wish to touch his own people’s blood. Currently, the Avalon of Five Elements needs someone ruthless enough to eradicate the rotten flesh. Whatever wounds there are should be sewn up before anything else. This process is very bloody and many will die. Among the victims would be some whose crimes are impassable, some who are innocent and others who have different standings. This is something he’s unable to do so Ye Lin should do it."

Lu Manman spoke urgently, "But..."

Helian Feier ignored him and continued, "Boss also said that while Ye Lin’s method isn’t necessarily honest and that she isn’t the most open-minded person, she was ruthless and definitely unwilling to admit defeat. The rest might bow before the Holy Emperor in fear or give up in despair, but not Ye Lin. Her determination to stand off exceeds anyone in the Avalon of Five Elements. Se will never surrender."

Lu Manman fell into silence once more. Boss had known Ye Lin from young so he must know her better.

"Boss said he’s unsure if her authority is a good or bad thing. The Avalon of Five Elements might welcome a turn for the better in her hands, or it might crumble and turn to dust. He does not wish to become Ye Lin’s knife or turn into rotten flesh, so what he’s able to do is to guard the front line as best as he can. Boss also said that he

would quit if he survives this death match. His obligations would've been fulfilled, so his remaining time would be dedicated to protecting his daughter. If he dies, it will be in service of his duties so there won't be regrets."

A sparkling tear had unknowingly emerged from Helian Feier's eyes.

Lu Manman's eyes were red, but he laughed, "If I survive, I'll follow Boss and be the family head. It's still better to follow Boss!"

Helian Feier blinked. "Then I can only be the housekeeper."

Lu Manman became interested. "What about Xiuyuan? Should he watch the door?"

"That suits you more." Helian Feier stroked her chin. "Xiuyuan will do the accounts since he knows how to. Aye, Miss gotta earn some money. The two of us can only freeload and wait for death!"

"I'm only suited to doorwatching? What a joke! Do you know how rare a well-rounded leader like me is?"

"Yeah, yeah, extremely rare. You can do the groceries, cook and clean. Well-rounded indeed!"

"That's a servant! I'm the head of the household. Family head!"

"Hehe. Yes, yes, yes, you’re the head… Hope we can all live on."

"We will."

Chapter 495: Master Shao And Information

The old man was kneading mud in the courtyard.

In his aged and rough hands wet, ordinary looking yellow mud was being kneaded into the shape of a human puppet. The old man's facial expression was very focused, and he appeared to be lost in his own word.

Hong Rongyan did not say anything and stood silently behind the old man.

He wore a luxurious, ink-black silk robe, making him look as if he was engulfed in a dense shade of darkness. His robe was well-fitted, wrapping closely around his long and slim figure. The glistening, dark-red cinnabar dot in between his eyebrows added an indescribable tinge of charm to his devilishly handsome face.

When he appeared in the courtyard, all the rays of light seemed to focus on him.

The old man was very focused on kneading the mud and Hong Rongyan was also very focused on watching him doing so.

The sunlight shone into the courtyard and onto the old man's back, making the scene look like a painting.

The servant girl that followed Hong Rongyan did not dare to make any noise. The scene taking place now seemed to contain a

mysterious power that could make one quiet down.

The old man straightened his back and placed the mud puppet in his hands down. The humanoid puppet was crudely made, resembling the work of a naughty child. Its limbs were thick and short and it did not have any facial features. However, for some reason, it looked somewhat quick-witted.

"Such a fine piece of work."

Even though it was a word of praise, Hong Rongyan’s voice contained a faint tinge of grief.

When the old man heard his voice, he turned around and said casually, "If you like it, I can give it to you."

"Thank you, Master Shao."

Hong Rongyan gave a bow and carefully took over the mud puppet. The servant girl beside him acted with haste and hurriedly brought over an exquisite wooden box. Hong Rongyan cautiously placed the mud puppet into the wooden box and closed the box gently.

Throughout the whole process, he held his breath with a focused look on his face and his movements were extremely slow. It was as if he was holding a priceless treasure, not a mud puppet.

Master Shao looked at Rong Hongyan with interest and did not

make any noise to disturb him.

After closing the box, Hong Rongyan took a pure white handkerchief from the servant girl and wiped his hands clean before passing it back to her.

Following which, he shifted his gaze towards Master Shao and said with distress, "Master Shao, we have some information regarding the issue you mentioned last time around."

Master Shao’s body suddenly tensed up. However, the next moment, he heaved a breath and his body loosened up slowly. He looked at Hong Rongyan and asked, "Where is she now?"

"Your granddaughter indeed used to be in the Assembly of Patriarchs. However, at that time, since you had concealed your identity and we did not know that she was your granddaughter, we thought she was just an ordinary blood elementalist. If we knew your identity at that time, we definitely would have treated you with the highest form of respect."

Hong Rongyan looked sincere and his tone was laden with grief and regret.

"Then you imprison me? Torture me to extort confessions?" Master Shao replied with sarcasm.

Back in the day, he concealed his identity and left Blood of God with his granddaughter. After he evaded Blood of God’s pursuit, he

was attacked by the Assembly of Patriarchs unexpectedly. Subsequently, his granddaughter was captured by the Assembly of Patriarchs.

Hong Rongyan shook his head and replied, "You have too many prejudices against the Assembly of Patriarchs. Even though Blood of God and Assembly of Patriarchs have been arch-enemies for many years, our methods are still much more humane than Blood of God's.

"Where is she now?" Master Shao asked plainly.

After staying silent for a while, Hong Rongyan replied with a stronger apologetic tone, "Fifteen years ago, the headquarters of Assembly of Patriarchs came under a large-scale attack and we suffered heavy losses. Our three orphanages were also affected and your granddaughter was in one of them."

Master Shao froze as the luster in his eyes disappeared. After a while, he asked with a hoarse voice, "So she is dead?"

"I'm very sorry," Hong Rongyan bowed and expressed regret.

His voice sounded very sincere.

Master Shao stood there in a daze. His turbid pupils were emotionless.

"I am really very sorry! I will take my leave now," Hong Rongyan

sighed.

After giving a bow, Hong Rongyan left the courtyard with the servant girl.

After they left the courtyard, the servant girl could not help but ask, "Young Master, why are you so courteous towards him?"

Jing Tao’s voice was innocent and bright. Previously, she was being very well-behaved. At this moment there was no one else around so she became much more casual. She had served Young Master since she was very young. Both of them had a very deep relationship and her status was completely different from the other servant girls’.

"God Puppet Palace." Hong Rongyan looked as if he was reminiscing about something. "Back in the day, God Puppet Palace was glorious and mighty. The current master of Beast Venom Temple is his disciple. He is second to none in making puppets."

A doubtful look appeared on Jing Tao’s face. She didn't quite understand what was going on. In her eyes, no matter how formidable the old man was, he couldn’t be stronger than her young master. However, since her young master said so, she quickly nodded her head.

Hong Rongyan suddenly stopped in his tracks.

Jing Tao was shocked. She quickly stopped in her tracks too and

looked at her young master.

"The palace master of God Puppet Palace is a supreme individual. Why would he want to escape from Blood of God with his granddaughter? Who is trying to harm him? Who dares to harm him? That could only be the Holy Emperor. Is it possible that he has offended the Holy Emperor?"

Jing Tao remained speechless. She knew that if her young master's train of thought was disrupted now, he would be very angry.

Hong Rongyan still did not understand what was going on after pondering for quite some time. Master Shao was Holy Emperor's right-hand man. Even though Holy Emperor was cruel and ruthless, he respected those who were capable very much. He definitely would not have scared Master Shao away from Blood of God over some petty issue.

"Remember to get someone to investigate this issue," Hong Rongyan instructed.

"Yes," Jing Tao replied obediently.

She had been able to serve Young Master for many years because she knew the limits of decorum very well. Young Master could tolerate small tantrums from the servant girls. However, when it came to serious issues, her young master would be extremely serious. He would not be joking around at all.

Her interest was piqued by Hong Rongyan. If the old man was so formidable, why did he want to escape from Blood of God?

.....

Ai Hui woke up in the middle of the night. He could not sleep as his mind was filled with the image of Iron Lady's helpless look from that day.

In his eyes, Shi Xueman was not really smart or gentle at all. Her spearmanship was powerful and heavy. She had an iron willpower. She was always the one that led the charge. On the battlefield, she would always take on the most powerful enemy. She had never complained about hardships or blamed others for the circumstances she was in.

But that day was first time he'd seen such a helpless look from Iron Lady.

The worst thing was he was severely injured at this point of time.

Ai Hui could not fall asleep. He widened his eyes and looked at the stars above his head. After being in a daze for a while, he forcibly calmed himself down. Being in a daze was useless now.

He got rid of the distracting thoughts in his mind and pondered about the condition of his body.

As time passed, Ai Hui became drowsy, half-asleep.

After an unknown amount of time had passed, he was awakened by Lou Lan.

"Ai Hui, Ai Hui, wake up."

Ai Hui opened his drowsy eyes and Lou's masked face appeared in his line of sight. Subconsciously, he blurted out, "Lou Lan..."

"Ai Hui can talk!" Lou Lan's eyes lit up.

Lou Lan's cheer immediately created an uproar in the camp. Everyone swarmed over, as if they were looking at a rare animal.

"Look at how vigorous he is! He is stronger than a wild boar!"

"Wild boar? Don't insult Ai Hui! He is a cockroach!"

"He looks like he is going to recover soon. That's really good. Lou Lan can make more elemental soup for us now."

"Yes, yes! Lou Lan has to take good care of Ai Hui every day, so it means we have less elemental soup to drink."

"Lou Lan, what are we eating tomorrow?"

"Should we come up with a new dish? Lou Lan's cooking skills...

Argh, I’m so hungry!"

...

Everyone broke into a lively discussion. Initially, they were here to look at Ai Hui. Very soon, they were talking about elemental soup. The word "hunger" was written all over their faces. All of them were talking about what type of elemental soup Lou Lan would make tomorrow. They could not free themselves from the reverie they were lost in.

No one noticed that Lou Lan had already brought Ai Hui away silently.

Ai Hui’s sleepiness was scared away by those unbearable fellows’ repulsive-looking faces. At this moment, he was unusually wide awake.

"Lou Lan, where are we going?"

Carrying Ai Hui on his back, Lou Lan said cheerfully, "Ai Hui, we are going to Central Pine Valley. Master He has already completed his task and he wanted me to bring you there to take a look. He doesn’t know whether or not he did it right."

Ai Hui became energized, "Blind He is really efficient. He is able to finish the task so fast."

"Ai Hui, calling Master He ‘Blind He’ is really rude," Lou Lan said

with a solemn tone.

Immediately, Ai Hui reacted to him and chuckled, "Oops, oops. My bad, my bad, I am very respectful to Master He."

Lou Lan’s tone became cheerful once more as he said, "Yes. When Master He was forging it, he was very serious. Lou Lan has a lot to learn from him. When Lou Lan is free, Lou Lan is going to learn the art of smithing from Master He."

Central Pine Valley was not far away from Fishback City. Carrying Ai Hui on his back, Lou Lan reached Central Pine Valley very soon.

The first person Ai Hui saw was Duanmu Huanghun, who was meditating in the bamboo forest.

There was a small wooden box in front of Duanmu Haunghun. It was the wooden box that his family members had requested Mu Lei to bring to him.

Ai Hui did not disturb Duanmu Huanghun.

When Lou Lan brought Ai Hui to the Snow Cluster Flames, his gaze was immediately attracted by something.

He raised his head and looked at the huge metallic casting in front of him.

Its shape was very weird, resembling a metal ladle. It was very difficult for one to link it to a huge sword. The first impression that one had was of its huge size. It was so huge that it looked like an ice-cold, metallic monster. The body of the sword was thick and strong. It looked much more sturdy than Ai Hui's sword body. It looked boorish and ugly.

However, a huge part of its surface was extremely smooth and sleek, resembling a mirror. Countless, densely-packed elemental traces were carved all over it as well.

"According to your design, the sword is one hundred meters tall and has seven nodes. An iron framework is set up at every node. There will be three to nine levels. At each level of every pagoda framework, there are six positions for people to stand on. The elemental traces that you designed have already been carved onto it."

Blind He's voice came from behind Ai Hui. His voice contained an unconcealable weariness, along with a tinge of excitement and anticipation as well.

Ai Hui could not shift his gaze off of it. The huge, metallic ladle was an odd Big Dipper shape that pierced through seven pagodas. The seven pagodas did not have any bricks or tiles. They were just made up of thick and strong metallic frameworks.

Even though its shape was odd, ugly and crude, Ai Hui behaved as if he had seen a priceless treasure sword. His eyes were brightly lit.

Blind He’s indifferent voice came from behind Ai Hui.

"Inspect it and see if there’s anything that needs to be changed. If there’s nothing to be changed, then it is completed. Right now, I am very curious about how you are going to make this huge fellow fly."

Chapter 496: An All-out Attack, Metal Baskets, And Arrogant Words

Another day had passed. The sun rose from the horizon, shedding warmth and sunlight over the land.

However, the Wall of North Sea did not receive any.

At this point in time, the atmosphere at Wall of North Sea was wintry and bleak. Every defensive position was on high alert. Every soldier's body was tensed. They could not help but widen their eyes and look ahead with malevolence.

The Blood of God's camps were absolutely silent. The dark masses of blood fiends were standing still like stone statues. Their scarlet eyes were filled with a thirst to kill and indifference towards people's lives.

In the midst of the blood fiends, Beast Venom Temple's god priests' hands kept on releasing a red-colored, bloody glow.

The mist-like bloody glow looked unusually alluring under the cold and gloomy sunlight.

Speckles of the bloody glow entered the bodies of the blood fiends. Their scarlet eyes reduced in redness and became clearer. Their aggressiveness and high body temperatures disappeared along with the red glow in their eyes, as if their bestiality had been taken away by a mysterious force.

Their eyes were clear and flawless like extremely beautiful rubies.

Upon witnessing this scene, the North Sea soldiers on the Wall of North Sea went into an uproar.

"Everyone, take note! Do not look into the eyes of the blood fiends!" Helian Feier loudly reminded everyone with a solemn look on her face. She looked extremely calm. She was able to influence the soldiers with her calmness, causing the commotion to diminish gradually. No one noticed that her fingers drooping by the side of her body were actually trembling slightly.

The enemy was going to launch its main attack soon!

Unlike before, Ye Baiyi did not attack the Wall of North Sea wave by wave. Instead, he gathered all the blood fiends and launched an all-out attack.

The scale of this attack was unprecedented. The pressure on the defensive line was also unprecedented. The boundless sea of blood fiends caused Helian Feier to feel extreme despair. She could not see any hope of victory.

A thick and wide palm patted her shoulder lightly.

"Relax, do you still remember the plan?"

At first, her body froze. Then, when she heard the familiar voice, her body loosened up. Mysteriously, all the pressure and tension she felt disappeared as she began to regain her composure.

Without turning around, Helian Feier nodded her head and replied, "Yes, I remember!"

Shi Beihai patted her shoulder and left without saying anything else. He was patrolling along the defensive line. When the soldiers bowed and greeted him, he would calmly bow and greet them back. Every now and then, he would nod his head at the soldiers or ask, "Do you still remember the plan?"

Mysteriously, with this ordinary question and the slight nod of his head he was able to get rid of the fear and tension that everyone was feeling.

Generally speaking, everyone was willing to lay down their lives because they trusted this tall and imposing man.

In a camp on the Blood of God’s side, Ye Baiyi was looking at the Wall of North Sea that was obstructing the advance of his army. It was still standing tall and majestic. However, there were a lot of areas that were utterly damaged, allowing him to see the defensive positions of North Sea Division.

Shi Beihai had exposed these defensive positions on purpose. They looked as if they could be broken through at any moment easily, but in reality they were dangerous spots of death.

Ye Baiyi had long seen through Shi Beihai's plan. However, he still sent his soldiers to attack these defensive positions and observed them being crushed to smithereens.

If those exposed defensive positions were Shi Beihai's bait, then these suiciding soldiers were his bait.

Shi Beihai's goal was to buy more time for the Avalon of Five Elements, and Ye Baiyi's only goal was Shi Beihai!

This was an order from His Majesty.

Ye Baiyi had no choice but to admit that His Majesty was extremely sharp, but unusually decisive and ruthless as well. His Majesty did not care about how many men he lost at all. All he cared about was whether or not Shi Beihai died.

Ye Baiyi was able to accurately spot the morale boost in the soldiers defending the Wall of North Sea. Upon seeing this, he exclaimed in admiration.

Shi Beihai truly lived up to his name!

However, what was the point of boosting the soldiers' morales at this moment?

"Let's begin."

Ye Baiyi's voice was indifferent without any tinge of excitement, resembling the piercing cold air in the early morning.

A black-colored blood fiend rose high into the air. It acted as a signal and caused other blood fiends to ascend from the ground and rise into the air with it.

Like a gigantic black rug that had its four corners lifted up by invisible hands, the dark sea of blood fiends flew towards the sky.

The atmosphere at the Wall of North Sea suddenly became tense. However, this time around, no one was feeling as fearful as before.

Their facial expressions were determined and their gazes were resolute.

There were no newbies among them. For the past few years, they had battled Blood of God an unknown number of times. Their mentalities had become unusually tough.

Previously, they were stunned by the might of Blood of God. Now that they'd regained their composure, they naturally did not feel scared at all. All of them were used to seeing death and they knew the upcoming battle was unprecedentedly dangerous. Right now, all of their facial expressions were solemn.

The blood fiends covered the sky and hid the sun, causing the sky to darken.

"Prepare to withstand the charge!" Lu Manman yelled at the top of his lungs.

Just as he finished his sentence, the blood fiends in the sky began to swoop down.

The dark masses of blood fiends resembled torrential hailstones.

The cacophony of the sounds of their wings flapping and the hisses and roars of tens of thousands of blood fiends came crashing down at the Wall of North Sea like a colossal tsunami.

Even with the protection from the Wall of North Sea, the soldiers from North Sea Division felt their hair stand on end as a cold shiver went down their spines.

The weight of the mass of blood fiends was equivalent to a small mountain’s.

The tens of thousands of diving blood fiends were like meteorites crashing towards the Wall of North Sea.

If one looked down from the sky, he or she could see waves of a black-colored tsunami crashing against the snow-white Wall of North Sea. Colorful glows of elemental energies kept on flashing in the midst of the darkness.

The corpses of blood fiends kept on falling from the sky like dumplings. Their bodies piled up on the ground, forming heaps of

corpses everywhere. The blood fiends that were still alive were battering North Sea Division’s defensive line frantically, not feeling tired at all.

Cracks began to appear on the majestic Wall of North Sea.

.....

Fishback City.

Everyone surrounded the huge sword that Lou Lan had taken a lot of trouble to bring over. All of them exclaimed in astonishment.

"Isn’t it a bit ugly?"

"A bit ugly? Are you blind? It’s extremely ugly! It looks like a bent shoulder pole that carries seven metal baskets. Hey, those baskets are of different sizes!"

"Ai Hui’s sense of beauty is still as hopeless as before."

"I want to straighten it so badly, what should I do?"

...

All the members of Sword of Lightning had an embarrassed look on their faces. Discussions and mockery from the others had

revealed their own thoughts. At this moment, their faces had turned extremely red and they wished they could find a hole to hide in.

After hesitating for a long while, Gu Xuan could not help but walk to Ai Hui and whisper, "Boss, don't tell me we are going to train in those metal baskets in the future?"

"What metal baskets? They are sword pagodas! Metallic sword pagodas!" Ai Hui corrected him.

Gu Xuan took a second look at them, but still could not tell that they were sword pagodas. However, this was not the main issue. He whispered again, "Yes, yes. They are sword pagodas, they are sword pagodas. But my point is, are we really going to train in these 'Metal Basket Sword Pagodas' in the future?"

"In the future?" Ai Hui shook his head.

When Gu Xuan saw Ai Hui shake his head, a tinge of joy appeared on his face instantly. However, Ai Hui then continued, "We are training now!"

Gu Xuan was dumbstruck.

The rest of the members were dumbstruck as well.

From that moment onwards, watching Sword of Lightning members training became the favorite pastime of Spear of Heavy

Cloud's members. There were times where even Shi Xueman would smile when she saw Sword of Lightning training.

Ai Hui had yet to recover to the point where he was able to take part in the trainings. However, he would sit by one side and observe them.

Ai Hui's voice would ring across the air whenever someone lost focus or failed to keep up with the rest.

Very soon, the members did not care about their embarrassment anymore. Whoever was targeted by Ai Hui would be punished. Ai Hui could always think of various bizarre punishments to torture them. As compared to those torturous punishments, that tad bit of embarrassment was nothing.

When Uncle She saw the oddly shaped metallic colossus, he became curious as well.

He had never seen anything with such an odd shape and he could not guess its uses as well. However, the members in those metal baskets were training diligently and they did not seem to be fooling around.

On the contrary, the onlookers surrounding them were laughing and jesting, appearing as if they were watching a show.

When Uncle She's gaze landed upon Ai Hui, he felt utterly guilty. He did not know how to face his mistress when he returned. After

being detained for so many days, he did not feel any resentment at all. The Central Pine Faction was already being very reasonable for not killing him straight away.

"Master Ai," he said respectfully.

Ai Hui noticed Uncle She and quickly replied, "Uncle She, come and take a seat. Sorry for troubling Uncle She these few days."

Uncle She's eyes turned red instantly. Choking with sobs, he replied, "I deserve to die! I caused Master Ai to..."

"There is no more Master Ai," Ai Hui waved his bandage covered hand.

At this moment, Uncle She realized Ai Hui's body did not emit any elemental energy undulations. At first, he was in a daze. Following which, he broke down in tears. He had served the Lu residence for his entire life and he seldom made any mistakes. He didn't expect himself to commit such a grave mistake in his twilight years.

"Uncle She, you don't need to brood over it. It's alright if I lose my Path of Master. Where there's a will, there's a way. Didn't Le Buleng change his Path of Master eight times?"

Ai Hui's tone was relaxed. His eyes, which were the only part that his bandage-covered face revealed, were glittering, resembling the resplendent stars in the night sky.

Uncle She was stunned. Not only did Ai Hui not feel despair, he was filled with a fighting spirit.

He suddenly realized this lad would definitely become an extraordinary individual in the future.

At this point of time, he had such a strong feeling about this!

The last time Uncle She had had this feeling was when he followed the family head to visit Dai Gang. Every movement Dai Gang made was pure and magnificent, making him resemble a celestial being in the sky.

At that time, Dai Gang still did not possess the prestige and strength that he had now.

Uncle She was still very young at that time. Just by taking a glance, he had a strong feeling that Dai Gang might become an extraordinary individual someday.

He did not expect to encounter another person who could give him the same feeling in his twilight years.

Suddenly, Ai Hui's tone became solemn as he said, "I asked Uncle She over because I feel that Senior might be in extreme danger. Previously, the Grass Bandits tried to harm Senior. This time around, they managed to infiltrate your convoy. There is definitely a spy among you all. I suspect that the sneak attack on Senior

previously was not a coincidence. Someone in your residence is trying to harm Senior!"

Uncle She's facial expression turned solemn as well. Ai Hui's words were precisely what he had been pondering over the last few days.

"I hope Uncle She can go back earlier and remind Senior to take care of her own safety. Mingxiu is my senior and she definitely will not harm me. I don't want anything to happen to her," Ai Hui's tone and gaze turned ice-cold, "However, the Lu residence must give me an explanation for this incident. Who did it? Who wants to harm me! Who wants to harm Senior! Uncle She, what do you think about it?"

Uncle She shivered with cold. Then, he replied with a deep voice, "I will definitely report this to the family head! I believe the family head will definitely give Master Ai an explanation!"

Ai Hui nodded his head. Due to his face being fully covered by bandages, no one could see what Ai Hui was feeling now. Gazing into the distance, Ai Hui replied with a calm voice, "All of us are one big family. It's best if our relationships aren't hurt. I know what I'm going to say might sound arrogant, but I think it's better for me to say it now lest everyone gets unhappy in the future. If there's ever someone who tries to stop justice being served and let the culprit get away with it, I will personally go to the Lu residence and seek for an explanation."

A cold shiver went down Uncle She's spine. His rationality told him that what Ai Hui said was somewhat arrogant and funny, but

he couldn’t laugh at all for some unknown reason.

"I will remember it."

Chapter 497: A Burst of White Light and A Warm Breeze

Ye Baiyi stood on the half-destroyed Wall of North Sea.

The wind was very strong, causing his long black hair and snow-white robe to flutter in the air. He gazed in the direction of Silver Mist Sea with a calm look on his face, appearing as if he was unconcerned about his sensational victory.

The generals beside him were very cheerful. They had just trampled the last defensive line that was obstructing their great army from conquering the Avalon of Five Elements.

Less than half of the Wall of North Sea remained standing. Spiralling columns of white smoke rose in the air and dissipated into wisps of mist. Since the wall was made up of mist, and now that no more elemental energy was being channeled into it, it was gradually disintegrating. After a while, the debris from the Wall of North Sea had completely disappeared.

The scorched land that was covered with numerous craters in front of the Wall of North Sea was proof that an epic battle had taken place. Another proof was the countless piles of corpses, both blood fiends' and humans'. However, by spring of next year, wild grass and plants would grow all over this war-torn land. These traces of war would be flooded and concealed by the passing of time.

A warrior will eventually die on the battlefield and a beauty can't

avoid the ageing of time.

Ye Baiyi looked at Silver Mist Sea, which was completely depleted of elemental energy, and remained silent for a very long time. He did not expect himself to return to the familiar Silver Mist Sea in this manner.

He did not return as a victorious hero like what he'd fantasized about when he was young. Instead, he returned as an evil invader whom everyone loathed.

A person's destiny was like the clouds in the sky. A random gust of wind could easily blow it off its original track.

"Report! Subordinate is useless... I can't find Shi Beihai or the remnants of North Sea Division."

Ye Baiyi's subordinate was extremely ashamed, so much so that his face was almost touching the ground. The generals surrounding Ye Baiyi stopped smiling and all of them lowered their heads in unison with a nervous look on their faces.

Shi Beihai was their main target for this battle!

This was His Majesty's decree.

Even though they had taken down Wall of North Sea, they had lost their main target. They were penny-wise and pound-foolish.

When the Wall of North Sea collapsed, an immense number of blood fiends gushed in and caused the situation to turn extremely chaotic, completely out of anyone's control. At that point of time, the blood fiends were already filled with bloodlust. Even the god priests from Beast Venom Temple could not pacify them. The blood fiends would even attack a blood elementalist if he or she got too close to them. Therefore, they could only watch blankly as the blood fiends gushed into the Wall of North Sea and flooded the enemy soldiers like tidal waves.

Ye Baiyi withdrew his gaze and replied with a calm tone, "This is my mistake. After all, a blood fiend is a beast that doesn't listen to commands. Initially, I'd still thought that the blood fiends wouldn't go crazy with the god priests from Beast Venom Temple around. I didn't expect the battle to be so intense, so much so that this accident happened. It's not your fault."

The generals around him heaved a sigh of relief. His Majesty was imposing and his punishments were torturous.

Ye Baiyi's military laws were strict and everyone feared his reputation as a "God of War", therefore, no one dared to oppose him. Subsequently, when everyone saw how ruthless and cruel Ye Baiyi's methods were and how he was indifferent to human lives, they became terrified of him. After he deployed the blood fiends from Beast Venom Temple to reinforce their side and reduce their casualties, everyone was filled with admiration towards him. Even when Ye Baiyi was fully responsible for this triumphant victory, he still took the initiative to bear the mistake himself. His magnanimity and charisma had won over all the generals.

"I will explain to His Majesty personally," Ye Baiyi scanned his surroundings and had a clear view of everyone's facial expressions. Then, he continued, "This victory has solidified the advantageous position of God Nation. From today onwards,the Avalon of Five Elements is history, like a beauty that has removed her clothes. Furthermore, we are able to seize three God-subduing Peaks. It's a triumphant victory! Everyone, you have worked hard. His Majesty will reward you accordingly. There will definitely be great rewards for achieving such a huge, meritorious service."

An overjoyed look appeared on everyone's faces. They bowed and said, "Thank you for your leadership, Sir!"

The reason why North Sea Division had withstood Blood of God for so long was that they had two powerful trump cards. The first one was the formidable defensive power of the Wall of North Sea and the second one was the terrifying offensive power of their five God-subduing Peaks.

If they had not received reinforcement from the blood fiends, they would have lost even more men in taking down the Wall of North Sea.

God Nation had been desiring God-subduing Peaks for a very long time. Even though they did not capture Shi Beihai, they still completed a great meritorious service by seizing three God-subduing Peaks!

The Wall of North Sea had five God-subduing Peaks. Two of them

were detonated by the Masters that were stationed there when Blood of God attempted to seize them, causing quite a huge number of deaths. However, Ye Baiyi was already satisfied with being able to seize three God-subduing Peaks.

Information regarding God-subduing Peaks had always been something that was highly sought after in God Nation. However, Elders Guild was able to keep the information a well-hidden secret. God Nation had sacrificed many spies and they still ended up empty-handed.

Now that they had seized three God-subduing Peaks, the God Nation could study them. They might even be able to create God Nation’s own God-subduing Peaks.

The God-subduing Peaks were a legitimate superweapon. Without the five God-subduing Peaks, the threat of the Wall of North Sea would be decreased by half.

If God Nation could forge its own God-subduing Peaks, its advantage over the Avalon of Five Elements would increase significantly. Even cities in the depths of the Wilderness would not be able to stop God Nation’s expansion when that day came.

"Speaking of which, we haven’t boarded the God-subduing Peak yet. Why don’t we all enter it and take a look?" Ye Baiyi chuckled.

"Sir, you’re right!"

"I would be honored to do so!"

"Finally there's a chance for me to do so, I have been curious for a very long time."

Everyone started talking at once.

The God-subduing Peaks had caused a lot of trouble for everyone. All of them were very curious about the interior of a God-subduing Peak.

The three God-subduing Peaks hovered silently in the sky. They were riddled with scars that were left behind by the intense battle between both sides. However, their main bodies weren't severely damaged. The god priests from Beast Venom Temple used some essence elemental beans they found to activate the God-subduing Peaks and make them hover in the air.

As they got closer, the pressurizing aura of the God-subduing Peaks became stronger. The shadow of the God-subduing Peaks over their heads caused them to feel suffocated.

"Elders Guild has one foot in the grave and their time is limited. Even so, they still managed to produce such a terrifying superweapon. They definitely have capable individuals working under them," said Ye Baiyi as he could not help but sigh with sorrow.

The generals nodded their heads. Some were keeping silent. All

of their facial expressions were very mixed. Other than the first batch of "seeds", most of the blood elementalists in Blood of God used to be elementalists in the past.

They had been blood elementalists for many years, but their memories as elementalists had yet to disappear.

The rise of Blood of God and the decline of Elders Guild reduced their guilt of switching sides. They even felt somewhat glad. However, now that they saw a masterpiece like the God-subduing Peak, they were shocked and their old memories flooded their minds.

One of the god priests who was busy cleaning up the God-subduing Peak saw Ye Baiyi and quickly descended to greet him, "Sir!"

"So? Did you learn anything?" Ye Baiyi asked with a gentle voice.

The god priests from Beast Venom Temple were all extremely knowledgeable. This batch of god priests was the core unit of Beast Venom Temple. Most of them had taken part in the project of imitating and creating a God-subduing Peak.

God-subduing Peaks had been a throbbing headache for Holy Emperor.

A God-subduing Peak that was overseen by a Master was like an impregnable fortress. It could attack, defend and move at will. If

not for the fact that Elders Guild's strength had decreased significantly and they did not have enough manpower and resources, they would have built more God-subduing Peaks.

Holy Emperor believed that a sufficient number of God-subduing Peaks could pose a threat to a Grandmaster.

One of the god priests was extremely excited. He praised the God-subduing Peaks to the high heavens, "Wonderful workmanship! A marvellous creation! Previously, we had some ideas about the theories behind it and they aren't all wrong after all. Sir, do you want to board it? The interior has been cleaned up..."

At this moment, an alarmed cry erupted from within the God-subduing Peak, "Who's there? Who is hiding inside?"

Suddenly, a powerful wave of elemental energy undulations erupted.

Everyone's facial expressions changed drastically.

"Protect Sir!"

A guard standing beside Ye Baiyi pushed him to the ground. A few other guards quickly stood in front of him and activated a bloody screen.

Time seemed to have frozen at this moment.

The noises around Ye Baiyi disappeared and his surroundings became unusually quiet. Over the shoulders of the guards protecting him, Ye Baiyi stare blankly at the few guards that were running towards him. These guards were his comrades from Icy Flames Division that joined Blood of God with him,

Their eyes were widened in anger and their mouths were gaped. They seemed to be screaming something but no sound came out of their mouths. Their movements were very slow as well.

Suddenly, their background became brighter and brighter. Blinded by the bright white light, Ye Baiyi could not see his comrades' faces clearly.

Like a mountain flash flood, the dazzling burst of white light devoured the few familiar figures.

Ye Baiyi was startled. Tears flowed silently out of his eyes, blurring his vision.

His back collapsed heavily onto the ground and he blacked out.

A dazzling burst of light engulfed everything.

In a valley, twenty-five kilometers away from Wall of North Sea, there was a roaring cascade that was seven meters tall.

Qi Xiuyuan looked nervously at the cascade.

Whoosh. A familiar, tall and sturdy figure walked out from the cascade.

"Sir!" Qi Xiuyuan was extremely agitated.

To Qi Xiuyuan’s astonishment, the one who walked out from the cascade was Shi Beihai. Shi Beihai’s entire body was covered in blood. His face was scooty, his beard was unkempt and his hair was disheveled. However, there was still a cold glint in his tiger-like eyes.

When Shi Beihai saw Qi Xiuyuan, he heaved a sigh of relief.

When Qi Xiuyuan saw Shi Beihai’s appearance, he was scared out of his skin. "Sir, are you injured?"

"I am alright," Shi Beihai shook his head and replied, "This blood belongs to the enemy."

This underground river had been opened up by Qi Xiuyuan when he was sent to build fortifications for North Sea Division. The underground river was linked directly to the interior of Wall of North Sea. The entrance to this underground river was very well-hidden. Initially, Shi Beihai just wanted an escape route to be built. He didn’t expect that it would be put to good use one day.

As familiar figures walked out of the cascade one by one, the

smile on Qi Xiuyuan’s face became wider and wider.

However, the process halted after the seventeenth person walked out from the cascade.

Qi Xiuyuan’s face turned deathly white.

"There’s no need for you to watch the cascade anymore. These are the only people that have survived," Shi Beihai said with a gloomy voice.

Even though he had made plans for retreat, the situation at that time was too chaotic. The surging blood fiends did not give them any time to make a retreat. Almost all of his men were drowned in the dark, surging sea of blood fiends.

Only those who were very powerful were barely able to flee for their lives under the attack of the blood fiends.

Suddenly, the ground shook.

Shi Beihai’s body trembled. The rest of the people raised their heads abruptly.

Shi Beihai dashed towards the hillside like a wild animal. Similarly, the rest dashed frantically towards the hillside.

After Shi Beihai climbed up the hillside, he looked in the

direction of the Wall of North Sea.

A monstrous and dazzling burst of white light had erupted and rose towards the sky.

Accompanied by heat and elemental energy undulations, the wind from the blast wave of the explosion dispersed the clouds of North Sea. It caused the forests to rustle and Shi Beihai's disheveled hair to flutter. The warm breeze from the Wall of North Sea held the bright and cheerful laughter of his comrades, recounted the solemn oath they'd made together in the past, and signified an everlasting farewell.

I have no regrets fighting side by side with all of you. It's time for a farewell. Goodbye, I'm leaving. Everyone, take care.

Shi Beihai stood in a daze as tears silently flowed down his scooty and bloodstained face.

Chapter 498: Back View

The fall of the North Sea Wall shocked all of Beyond Avalon.

The atmosphere in the meeting hall in Skyheart City was extremely tense.

Madam Ye’s facial expression was solemn. All the important personnel had grave looks on their faces.

Nian Tingfeng’s tone was deep and forceful as he reported the news to everyone, "By the time we obtained the news, North Sea Division, which was stationed at the North Sea Wall, had been completely wiped out. By using blood fiends to attack North Sea Division, Ye Baiyi caused the complete collapse of the North Sea Wall. Facing a sea of blood fiends, it was very hard for them to make a successful escape. Until now, we haven’t found any survivors. I’m afraid Shi Beihai has..."

He could not finish the rest of his sentence.

Most of the people there were very familiar with Shi Beihai and had a rather good impression of him. Before, they had discussed the issue and hoped that Shi Beihai could take over the position of Great Elder.

It was a pity that Shi Beihai was not interested in the position and rejected the offer tactfully.

Ye Baiyi was another person everyone was familiar with. Coincidentally, Ye Baiyi had also been a candidate to become Great Elder.

Ultimately, neither of the two candidates took over the position of Great Elder and both of them ended up fighting each other.

Fate played a joke on the two of them, and it was a cruel one.

Madam Ye's gaze swept across everyone as she began to talk with a solemn voice, "Now is not the time to grieve, we don't have much time left. Let's talk about what we should do next."

Nian Tingfeng gave Madam Ye a bow and continued, "Shi Beihai had arranged a back-up plan."

Madam Ye wasn't surprised at all as she understood Shi Beihai very well. She nodded and said, "Shi Beihai has always thought far ahead. Tell us about his back-up plan."

"Yes." Nian Tingfeng turned around and faced everyone. "Shi Beihai anticipated the North Sea Wall's collapse. He'd had his vice-division leader, Qi Xiuyuan, lead all the blacksmiths to the rear of the North Sea Wall and build a large number of fortifications. His original plan had been to use the North Sea Division and the layers of fortifications to stop the enemies if the North Sea Wall collapsed. It's a pity that he did not expect Ye Baiyi to use blood fiends to attack them. Most of these fortifications have been completed. Qi Xiuyuan, who was in charge of this project, has gone missing."

"So these fortifications have fallen into the hands of Blood of God?" Ximen Caijue asked coldly.

"Not yet." Nian Tingfeng saw the doubt in everyone's eyes and explained, "Shi Beihai hid an expert in each of the three God-subduing Peaks and purposely let Blood of God capture them. Subsequently, the three experts detonated the God-subduing Peaks and caused a colossal explosion. The scene was extremely spectacular. At that time, Ye Baiyi was aboard one of the God-subduing Peaks. He was caught in the explosion and is severely injured. He has been unconscious since then."

"Such a pity..."

"It's such a pity!"

"Such a pity, we almost got him. As long as Ye Baiyi dies, the enemy troops will collapse even if we don't attack them."

A lot of people felt it was a pity that Ye Baiyi had not died.

Rage engulfed Silver Soldier's eyes. Karakorum Polaris, who was standing beside him, grabbed his hand and shook her head. When Silver Soldier saw Karakorum Polaris's eyes, his rage subsided significantly.

Her soft palm tightly interlocked its fingers with Silver Soldier's. Beneath the light muslin veil on her face, her usual ice-cold eyes

were now tender like water.

When Silver Soldier sensed Karakorum Polaris's tenderness, he grabbed her hand tightly in return.

Wan Shenwei, who had not spoken all this time, suddenly opened his mouth to say, "We need to seize the moment."

Madam Ye shifted her gaze to Wan Shenwei while the rest of the people quieted down.

"Shi Beihai's plan is not bad," continued Wan Shenwei.

In the dim light of the night sky, Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division's encampments were brightly lit, bustling with life. Everyone was unusually busy as they made their last checks and preparations before setting off.

Four hours later, Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division would be rushing to the front line.

All the cities along the way had been ordered by Elders Guild to provide them with essence elemental beans, food, and lodgings. These were to allow them to reach the front line as soon as possible. They were now racing against time. Every second was extremely precious.

Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division had been rebuilt not too long ago and had many rookies. Even though they had undergone

plenty of training, they were still slightly flustered now that they were going to enter the battlefield for real.

From the balcony of the mayor’s residence, one could look down at the two camps that were situated right next to each other.

A man of around fifty to sixty-years-old was staring at the two camps without moving. His figure looked as if it had blended into the night scene. Madam Ye’s voice came from behind him.

"Are you worried about them?"

The man’s eyes regained their clarity. Without turning back, he replied plainly, "They will be fine after fighting a few battles. Why didn’t you send the three central divisions?"

The man’s stubby, grizzled beard and short silvery hair that was hard like iron wires made his craggy face look like the head on a robust statue. His eyes were like gems carved with the utmost care. They were solid-looking, well-defined, and striking. Every now and then, a cold glint would flash across his eyes, causing one to shiver with fear; however, if one took a closer look, those eyes would look like the depths of a night sky, filled with darkness.

His clothes were plain and unadorned. He wore a pair of the short pants usually worn by laborers and was bare-footed, contrasting greatly with the ravishing and luxurious mayor’s residence.

The man’s facial expression was indifferent, looking as if he did not sense the contrast at all.

"Dai Gang is coming." Madam Ye walked beside the man and stared at the encampment as she spoke with a soft voice. "I’m even more worried about her than you are."

"Then you shouldn’t let her be the division leader."

Madam Ye raised her eyebrows and sneered. "Don’t let her be the division leader? Then who will be the division leader? You? I am a woman and have to take over such a huge mess. Furthermore, I am isolated and helpless..."

As she spoke, she began to choke with emotions.

"You get what you seek," the man replied plainly.

Madam Ye wiped off her tears and said, "So are you saying that I sought this big mess myself? Then why did you ask your disciple to come over? Why did you agree to our daughter taking over Sky Edge Division? At the end of the day, you will help me, right?"

The man cast a glance at her. An indescribable glint flashed across his eyes in the darkness. This pair of eyes looked hurt, regretful, and sad at the same time. Soon after, they returned to normal.

"I’m very clear on what I have done."

Madam Ye stopped crying and her facial expression returned to normal. "Don’t tell me you’re only here to look at your daughter?"

"No, I am here to warn you not to interfere with Karakorum’s and Silver’s business." The man shook his head.

An unnatural look swept across Madam Ye’s face as she replied, "You are still so paranoid, why would I interfere with their business?"

"If you don’t repent, I will kill you," the man said.

Like a cat with its tail being stepped on, Madam Ye’s voice turned sharp. "Kill me? Kill me then! Didn’t you want to kill me back in the day? Heng Bingfeng!"

Heng Bingfeng looked as if he didn’t hear Madam Ye’s words and continued to stare at the two camps.

Madam Ye snorted. "It’s because of you that I gave that lad a chance and let him be Infantry Division’s division leader, but how can my daughter lead such a miserable life..."

Heng Bingfeng’s head suddenly turned around. His lightning-like gaze made Madam Ye stop talking at once.

"You and her are two completely different persons. Other than

your own life, you won’t value anything else as important," Heng Bingfeng said plainly.

Madam Ye looked straight at Heng Bingfeng and did not speak for a long time. Suddenly, like a blossoming flower, she broke into a smile. "We have not met for quite a long time, let’s not talk about these unhappy things and talk about some happy things. How about it? Do you want to help me deal with Dai Gang? I think your strength is right on par with Le Buleng’s."

"I admire Dai Gang and think he is more suitable than you for the position of Great Elder," Heng Bingfeng said.

"You’re such a petty individual." Madam Ye pouted her lips. "You don’t want to help me and you’ll still say such words to annoy me."

Heng Bingfeng shifted his gaze back to the two camps.

Karakorum Polaris had been brought up by Heng Bingfeng and they had a deep relationship.

"Do you want to visit Karakorum and your precious disciple?" Madam Ye suddenly asked.

Heng Bingfeng did not respond.

Just as Madam Ye thought that he was not going to speak, he suddenly said, "There’s no need for me to do that. In times of chaos, if I can’t protect them, the least I can do is not create

trouble for them."

"Are you going to look on helplessly as they go to the battlefield?"

Heng Bingfeng remained silent for a while before replying, "Silver has a brave and unyielding character. His heart is filled with wrath and hatred from the blood catastrophe. If I don’t let him go to the battlefield, he will not be happy. Karakorum can’t bear to part with him. No matter where he is, whether he lives or dies, she will be by his side."

"Because of these bullshit reasons?" An incredulous look appeared on Madam Ye’s face.

Without turning his head, Heng Bingfeng replied, "As long as she is happy, it’s fine with me. One gets what he or she seeks. In times of chaos, it’s best for one to live in the moment."

"Yes, in times of chaos, it’s best to live in the moment."

Madam Ye muttered as she gazed into the distance. She looked slightly distracted. The area outside of the city was pitch-black. Silver City’s bright and lively lights that resembled a vast sky full of stars could no longer be seen.

She returned to her senses and said coldly, "The Avalon of Five Elements can survive only if Dai Gang and Ye Baiyi are settled!"

.....

At this time, the Elders Guild, which was usually disorganized and inefficient, was unusually quick and efficient.

Sky Edge Division and Infantry Division travelled day and night towards the fortifications at the rear of the North Sea Wall.

At the same time, Skyheart City issued a conscription order in the name of the Elder's Guild. This was to allow them to conscript a large number of combat divisions. Any city that had a slightly reputable combat division was conscripted.

When the conscription order and the grievous news of Shi Beihai's death reached Fishback City, Shi Xueman was very calm.

She took over the conscription order, which read, "Conscription order: Spear of Heavy Cloud and Sword of Lightning are to report to the front line immediately."

Shi Xueman closed the conscription order and said, "Only Spear of Heavy Cloud will be going."

The envoy, who was an elementalist from the Surveillance Division which had sent the conscription order, was stunned. He hurriedly explained, "But..."

Cirrus's ice-cold tip was immediately placed on his neck. At that moment, the envoy's facial expression changed drastically as he responded, "Audacious! Shi Xueman, are you defying the order?

You have to think properly..."

"Only Spear of Heavy Cloud will be going."

Like the spearpoint at his neck, the frosty voice sent a cold shiver down the envoy's spine.

The envoy tried to argue, "This is Elders Guild's..."

"An envoy has the authority to act at his or her discretion," Shi Xueman interrupted.

The envoy was speechless. It was then that he remembered Shi Xueman was from a powerful aristocratic family and knew about these customs very clearly.

He tried to stay calm and said, "Miss Shi, you have to consider your actions carefully lest you humiliate your father's reputation."

At his neck, Cirrus trembled. After a while, Shi Xueman said softly, "What is the point of having a good reputation when he is already dead?"

The envoy's heart softened and he sighed, "It seems like the rumors are really true."

He retrieved the conscription order and crossed off the name "Sword of Lightning," following which, he stamped it with his seal

and passed it back to Shi Xueman.

With a solemn look on his face, the envoy said, "My comrades from the Surveillance Division have offered incense to your father."

"Thank you." Shi Xueman took over the conscription order and left with Cirrus in her hand. She did not turn back.

The envoy suddenly raised his head. All of a sudden, snowflakes began to drift down from the sky.

The back view of the figure in the drifting snow looked weak, yet austere.

Chapter 499: Heater In Snow, Heart of God

Heavy snow was drifting down from the sky. The heat-emitting Blackfish Mouth Volcano was like an enormous heater, providing warmth in this cold winter.

Two figures were sitting side by side on a protruding cliff that hung in the air on the volcano peak. Cirrus, which was stuck onto a rock behind the two figures, stayed motionless in the drifting snow, looking as if it did not want to disturb their peace.

Shi Xueman's hands were propped against the rocks on her two sides, while her legs were dangling in the air. Her head was swaying faintly, making her ponytail look like a swing. She looked at the distant mountain range that was adorned with white snow. The sea-like green forests had disappeared.

A smile would appear on her face whenever she turned around and looked at the mummy-like Ai Hui, whose body was completely covered with bandages. She felt that Ai Hui's appearance was a great contrast to the current scenery. Ai Hui had yet to recover from his injuries and more than half of his entire body was still rigid. Shi Xueman was the one who'd carried him up to the peak.

When Ai Hui saw Iron Lady like this, he felt as if his heart was being pricked by needles. He wanted to tell her not to feel sad, but he couldn't say it. How could she not be sad when this kind of thing had happened? Then he wanted to tell her that the future would be much better, but realized she was going to the battlefield soon and her life would be at risk. Saying these words would make him sound as if he was comforting her out of courtesy.

Deep down, he was panicking, but he did not want to show it. The distress he suffered from was nothing compared to what Iron Lady had gone through.

Iron Lady was smiling. Ai Hui knew the best thing he could do now was to smile back at her.

Luckily his face was covered with bandages.

Ai Hui tried his best to make his tone sound casual as he said, "Don’t die too early, at least not before I come and find you."

Shi Xueman turned around and looked at Ai Hui and replied, "Okay."

"Don’t listen to other people’s commands. Retreat immediately when you realize something is not right," Ai Hui continued.

"Okay," Shi Xueman nodded her head.

"Don’t fight inflexibly, be adaptable. You have seen how a wolf pack hunts before, right? Be like them," Ai Hui continued.

"Okay," Shi Xueman nodded her head once more.

Ai Hui opened his mouth but no words came out. He felt that he was being too naggy, saying all these superfluous words.

Mysteriously, a wisp of blazing rage arose in his heart. He was angry at himself for being useless.

Suddenly, a slim and snow-white hand extended towards him from his side and touched his face.

The wisp of rage in Ai Hui's heart disappeared without a trace instantly. Even with bandages covering his face, he could sense the warmth of the hand.

"Hey..." Ai Hui panicked.

The snow-white hand turned his head around. Ai Hui felt like he was a wooden puppet when he heard the sound of bones cracking in his neck.

After his head was turned around, Ai Hui saw Shi Xueman's face getting closer and closer to him.

Ai Hui was stunned. Shi Xueman closed her eyes as her long eyelashes fluttered lightly in the chilly wind. The shy blush on her face was as beautiful as the rose-red clouds in the sky during sunset.

Their lips touched.

Even though Ai Hui's lips were covered by a layer of bandages, he could still feel the tenderness and warmth of Shi Xueman's lips clearly. He was breathing erratically into the layer of bandages

that covered his face and his face was burning all of a sudden.

His entire body was frozen. He widened his eyes and looked at Shi Xueman's cute eyelashes that were flickering like water ripples.

She opened her eyes.

Their eyes met each other. Time seemed to stop at this moment.

Shi Xueman's limpid eyes contained a tinge of shyness and water-like gentleness that came along with a determination that made one feel sorry for her.

Their lips separated. Shi Xueman sat up straight. The blush on her face had yet to disappear, looking like a sunset glow that refused to leave the sky.

"You have to survive," Ai Hui blurted out.

Shi Xueman somehow became cheerful. Even the snowy weather looked adorable to her at this point of time. She gave Ai Hui a wink as her lips curled into a sly smile, "Of course I have to survive, someone still owes me eighty million yuan."

Ai Hui's mind, which had just regained its senses, was dealt a huge blow all of sudden. He was utterly shocked. He stuttered incoherently, "You, you, you... are Eighty Million Yuan..."

Shi Xueman stretched her back and loosened up her body. She propped her hands against the rocks to push herself up and pulled out her Cirrus from the rock behind her.

When she turned around and saw Ai Hui’s flabbergasted look, a naughty thought arose in her mind. She then did something extremely daring.

She squatted down beside Ai Hui and used her index finger to lift up his chin that was covered with bandages. She winked her eyes at Ai Hui’s stunned face and said, "I have kept this secret for a very long time."

After she finished her sentence, she stood up and straightened out her armor. Following which, she jumped down from cliff. Like a huge, nimble bird, she flew and disappeared into the drifting snow. A carefree voice resounded through the air from far away, "I am leaving."

All Ai Hui could see was drifting snow. He couldn’t see the beautiful figure of Shi Xueman at all.

He was stunned for quite a while before he could react.

An indescribable melancholy engulfed his heart. Then, he returned to his senses and cried, "Hey, hey, hey, how do I get down? How can you ditch me after you have your way with me? Ungrateful woman! Quickly, bring me down..."

Filled with uncertainty, Ai Hui thought he heard a chime-like laughter resounding through the drifting snow.

.....

The mountain ridge was covered entirely by snow.

Nangong Wulian stood on the flight of stairs with his head lowered. An authoritative voice came from above him.

"How is the progress of Heavenly God? If I remember, the project has been ongoing for nearly twenty years, right?"

Today was the first time Holy Emperor had shown himself since the day An Muda walked across the sky and created the elemental energy storm.

Being summoned by Holy Emperor at this point of time naturally made him feel worried. He had followed Holy Emperor for a very long time, even longer than Bei Shuisheng. However, he had never dared to exploit this fact in front of Holy Emperor before.

Even though Bei Shuisheng might appear arrogant and domineering to some, he was very loyal to Holy Emperor.

When Bei Shuisheng was a child, his life was saved by Holy Emperor. As his life was full of trouble and misfortunes, Holy

Emperor had always taken pity on him and took good care of him. Sometimes, Nangong Wulian felt that both of them were like father and son.

It was extremely rare to see Holy Emperor in such a relationship, as he was an individual that was completely devoid of all emotions.

When Nangong Wulian's superior, Master Shao, escaped from Blood of God, it was mainly due to Holy Emperor's support that allowed him to become the palace master of Beast Venom Temple. Nangong Wulian was fully aware that he wasn't really talented. He was chosen by His Majesty only because he was obedient.

After he took over the position of palace master, he did not dare to slack off and was always cautious and conscientious. Finally, he was able to get His Majesty's approval and even the name of the palace was changed to Beast Venom Temple.

No matter how arrogant and despotic he was, he would do anything that His Majesty instructed with prudence.

But ever since God Nation was established, His Majesty seldom summoned for him specifically.

Upon hearing Holy Emperor's words, Nangong Wulian heaved a sigh of relief in his heart. Without changing his facial expression, he bowed and reported with utter respect, "I was about to report this issue to Your Majesty. Before Master Shao left, he destroyed almost all the information about Heavenly God. Luckily, we were able to find some remnants of his experiment reports. According to

these remnant reports, God Puppet Palace was just starting on the project of Heavenly God. At that point of time, Master Shao had merely completed the design plan for Heavenly God and had yet to implement it..."

"I don't want to hear about these insignificant details. Let me ask you, how is the progress now?" Holy Emperor interrupted Nangong Wulian impatiently.

Nangong Wulian hurriedly replied, "There is progress, there is progress. Previously, I have been trying to restore the project, but the progress is very slow. It wasn't until the birth of Red Devil, and his feat of enduring through an unprecedented level of blood refinement, that things started to change for the better. I have recorded all the changes in the entire process and finally came up with the structure of Heart of God. Thanks to the great blessing from Your Majesty, the first Heart of God has been completed! I was about to present it to Your Majesty."

"Oh? I want to see it," Holy Emperor looked slightly interested.

Nangong Wulian hurriedly ordered one of the guards to bring it over. Very soon, a transparent ice coffin was brought in.

When the ice coffin was placed on the ground, the temperature of the palace hall suddenly decreased, making everyone feel as if winter had arrived. The ice coffin was filled with a transparent, red-colored liquid that resembled blood. Within the red liquid, there was a heart that was palpitating slowly. There were a lot of tentacles that were of different lengths growing out of the heart, making it look like a jellyfish swimming in a pool of blood.

Thump, thump, thump.

The faintly discernible sound of the heart beating echoed in everyone’s minds.

The facial expressions of all the guards present changed drastically. They stared at the ice coffin with a terrified look on their faces.

Holy Emperor let out a gasp of surprise, releasing a pressurizing aura throughout the palace hall. Everyone felt suffocated in that instant. Nangong Wulian felt the most pressure. He could not help but bend his back and bow down. His Majesty’s gaze pierced through him like a sharp sword.

"Not bad, this is an extraordinary object."

Holy Emperor’s voice expressed approval.

Nangong Wulian heaved a sigh of relief. Only a short amount of time had passed and his back was already drenched in sweat. Nowadays, Holy Emperor was authoritative and imposing. He was truly unpredictable.

"It’s all thanks to Your Majesty’s wisdom. Everyone in Beast Venom Temple and I will not dare to claim the credit for ourselves."

"What’s yours will be yours. Do you think I will deny you of your credit?" Holy Emperor seemed to be smiling. Clearly, he was in a good mood. Then, he continued, "All of your subordinates will be rewarded."

Nangong Wulian immediately kneeled down and thanked Holy Emperor, "Thank you, Your Majesty!"

"Who do you intend to use the first Heart of God on?" Holy Emperor changed the topic.

"Ordinary individuals will not be able to bear the might of Heart of God. Right now, I am looking for people who have an outstanding body constitution. Your Majesty, do you have any suggestions?" Nangong Wulian asked.

"Use it on Ye Baiyi then," Holy Emperor replied plainly.

Nangong Wulian was overwhelmed with shock.

He’d already anticipated that His Majesty had a candidate but he didn’t expect it to be Ye Baiyi. In God Nation, Ye Baiyi was of the same rank as him... Could it be that the situation on the front line had worsened?

His Majesty was unhappy with Ye Baiyi? However, if he was unhappy with Ye Baiyi, why would he use such an important object on him? Even so, it also did not seem like His Majesty was was rewarding Ye Baiyi. Heart of God was still in the development

stage. It had never been planted into a human body and its effects were unpredictable. Even Nangong Wulian, who was its creator, was unsure of its effects.

Nangong Wulian did not know what His Majesty's attitude towards Ye Baiyi was.

He did not dare to interrupt His Majesty.

Holy Emperor continued to speak, looking as if he was talking to himself, "Ye Bai is severely injured and his life is in danger. Reasonably speaking, he has done a meritorious service by taking down the Wall of North Sea. However, he has failed to seize Shi Beihai and the God-subduing Peaks. He himself is severely injured and our army has sustained heavy losses. I don't know whether I should reward him or punish him. It will have to depend on his fate then."

Nangong Wulian seemed to understand what the Holy Emperor meant and replied softly, "Understood."

"Do you still remember Master Shao?" Holy Emperor suddenly asked.

Nangong Wulian did not quite understand what was going on and replied, "I still remember him."

"That's right, you should remember him since you were his subordinate for over ten years. Even though you were not highly

valued by him, you worked for him the longest," Holy Emperor sounded as if he was reminiscing about the past. Suddenly, his voice turned cold, "Master Shao has re-appeared recently."

Nangong Wulian felt as if his mind was struck by a lightning bolt. He began to stammer incoherently, "Master... Master Shao appeared..."

"Do you want to guess where he has gone to?" Holy Emperor chuckled.

"Where has Master Shao gone to?" Nangong Wulian was at a loss.

"Haha, he has gone to the Assembly of Patriarchs," Holy Emperor replied with a sinister laugh.

His laughter was piercingly cold. However, this could not be compared to the shock Nangong Wulian received when he heard the three words "Assembly of Patriarchs". With a blank look on his face, he muttered, "Assembly of Patriarchs..."

Holy Emperor stopped laughing and he returned to his usual self. Then, he asked casually, "Are you thinking about the master-disciple relationship between you and him?"

"I don’t dare! Traitor Shao deserves to be punished and killed for betraying Your Majesty! Please let me take on the task of capturing this traitor!" Nangong Wulian was terrified.

"Capture him?" Holy Emperor chuckled and shook his head. Following which, his facial expression turned cold and he continued, "No, why should I capture him? I want to see what shady business Master Shao and the Assembly of Patriarchs are up to! I also want to know why Master Shao wants to betray me. I can swear that I have never mistreated him before!"

"Master Shao, Master Shao... Is it because you have something to tell me and that’s why you haven't died?" Holy Emperor muttered, looking as if he was smiling.

Nangong Wulian’s face turned pale-white as a cold shiver went down his spine.

Chapter 500: There's No need For You To Apologize

Nangong Wulian looked below him. His deep set eyes contained a tinge of curiosity.

The countless tents of Blood of God's army resembled a sea that was black and red in color.

There were a lot of faintly discernible, disjointed white lines in this red-and-black sea. These white lines were from the ruins of the Wall of North Sea.

The tallest of the broken walls was nine meters tall, while the shortest was only one meter high. They stood along the old defensive line. Looking at them from afar, they looked like an old hair comb with its teeth broken. They had endured through the harsh winter and made it to spring. The grass around them was covered with snow remnants from the winter. The dust that had gathered on them during the winter made them look dirty and scattered, resembling the defeated North Sea Division.

The glory of the Avalon of Five Elements declined inevitably and the grandiose plan to stop the invasion had failed. The traces left over by the greats could only be found in the distant legends.

How would people in the future remember this battle?

How would it be possible for them to visualize the magnificence

of the Wall of North Sea and the devastation of the battle, if all they could see was verdant grass covering everywhere?

As the palace master of Beast Venom Temple, Nangong Wulian's status was comparable to Ye Baiyi's. Furthermore, he was decreed by the Holy Emperor to come here. All the army generals were already out to welcome him.

When they saw Nangong Wulian, they stepped forward and greeted him with a bow.

Nangong Wulian's clothes were wrinkled and his hair was unkempt. His eyes were flickering with a demonic, yet fervent glint. When the generals made eye contact with Nangong Wulian, they immediately felt as if they were being burned by a piece of hot iron. Subconsciously, they quickly shifted their gazes elsewhere.

"Where's Ye Baiyi?" Nangong Wulian asked, smiling.

"Sir has yet to wake up."

Nangong Wulian gave a neurotic laugh and replied, "It's good that he hasn't woken up."

His surroundings became quiet. Everyone looked at each other, not knowing what Nangong Wulian meant by his words. Was it possible that His Majesty wanted to punish their master?

Everyone was feeling uneasy.

If their master was to be punished, what were the chances of them being spared?

Nangong Wulian noticed the fear on these people’s faces, but he did not want to explain anything to them. The smile on his face grew wider as he said, "Lead the way."

The generals returned to their senses and hurriedly led the way.

Beast Venom Temple was unusually mysterious and dangerous in everyone’s eyes.

Most of the generals in War God Palace used to be from the old Icy Flames Division. The rest of the generals were converted elementalists as well. Beast Venom Temple and Cold Palace were the cores of Blood of God. They existed before the blood catastrophe broke out. The history of Beast Venom Temple was longer than Cold Palace’s. As such, it was more mysterious in everyone’s eyes.

Nangong Wulian had a weird temperament. He was extremely unfathomable and unreasonable.

Ye Baiyi had warned them more than once not to provoke Beast Venom Temple. One could see that even Ye Baiyi feared Nangong Wulian.

Nangong Wulian walked into the tent and saw the unconscious

Ye Baiyi. When the god priest who was guarding Ye Baiyi saw Nangong Wulian, he hurriedly stepped forward to greet him and reported Ye Baiyi's condition.

As Nangong Wulian listened to his subordinate's report, he looked at Ye Baiyi.

The awe-inspiring War God of God Nation did not look like his usual self at this point in time. Ye Baiyi's face was pale-white and his life force was extremely weak, resembling a waning candle that was left in the wind.

Nangong Wulian's eyes lit up with a mysterious fervor. He placed his pale and dry palm on Ye Baiyi's chest. Suddenly, Ye Baiyi's clothes disintegrated into dust and disappeared. Nangong Wulian used his palm to caress Ye Baiyi's body. His gaze became increasingly hot while he let out a weird, high-pitched laugh every now and then.

"Such a fine body, such a fine body... His meat is white and tender... Ye Bai has such a good body..."

All the generals there were individuals who had been through countless battles and had experienced many life-and-death situations. Their eyes wouldn't even blink when someone attacked them head-on with a sword. However, the bizarre scene in front of them now was able to make their hairs stand on end.

Many people turned their heads as they did not dare to look at the scene.

On the contrary, the god priests from Beast Venom Temple had a completely different reaction. All of their eyes were lit up and they couldn’t wait to assist Nangong Wulian.

After caressing Ye Baiyi’s body for quite some time, Nangong Wulian withdrew his palm hesitantly. With an impatient tone, he said, "Anyone who isn’t from Beast Venom Temple get out of the tent now."

More than half of the generals left the tent.

Those generals who stayed had a hesitant look on their faces. Most of them were Ye Baiyi’s subordinates and were from the old Icy Flames Division. They were faithful and loyal to Ye Baiyi. As such, how could they be at ease when Ye Baiyi was in such a weak state? Furthermore, what Nangong Wulian had done just now made them very worried.

If Nangong Wulian was to do anything to Sir…

Furthermore, Sir was such a prideful individual…

Nangong Wulian cocked his head and smiled. His unkempt hair was like a bird’s nest. Following which, he said with a smile on his face, "If Ye Baiyi is no longer being treated now, he might be breathing his last breath today. All of you have to think carefully now."

The generals that stayed behind looked at each other. Suddenly, one of the generals clenched his teeth and yelled, "Everyone, go out now!"

The generals gushed out of the tent like a tidal wave.

Nangong Wulian stared at the unconscious Ye Baiyi with a zealous look on his face. He muttered, "Sir, Sir... It feels so good to know that you haven't died yet. The first Heavenly God is going to be born."

An ice coffin was placed behind him. A jellyfish-like heart was floating in the bright-red liquid within the ice coffin.

Nangong Wulian's long and skinny index finger slid across Ye Baiyi's chest. Like a sharp blade, his finger cut open Ye Baiyi's skin, revealing a beating heart within it.

Nangong Wulian clicked his tongue in admiration. After a while, he threw Ye Baiyi into the ice coffin.

When Ye Baiyi's body was fully submerged in the blood-red liquid within the transparent ice coffin, the jellyfish-like Heart of God suddenly moved.

All of its tentacles suddenly contracted. Like a streaking javelin, it shot through the blood-red liquid and entered Ye Baiyi's chest.

Nangong Wulian watched the entire process without taking his

eyes off of the scene before him. His face was filled with fervor as he muttered, "It’s perfect, it’s indeed perfect!"

Thump-thump, thump-thump, thump-thump.

The sounds of two heartbeats echoed throughout the tent. The faces of those god priests who were low in base level turned pale-white with agony. The mixing of the sounds of the two heartbeats caused their blood to boil.

As time passed, the interval between the beats of the two hearts reduced gradually.

The rhythm of the two heartbeats eventually merged into a single one. The new heartbeat sounded deep and forceful, resembling the sound of a drum being beaten slowly. Every time it beat, it caused the blood spiritual force within everyone’s body to undulate.

The ghastly cut on Ye Baiyi’s chest healed and closed up visibly.

Ye Baiyi, who was floating in the blood-red liquid, slowly sank to the bottom of the ice coffin.

He looked as if he was sleeping.

Nangong Wulian looked blankly at the ice coffin. His unkempt hair became motionless, the facial expression on his gaunt face froze, and his eyes turned red.

It had been nearly twenty years.

.....

In a makeshift camp outside of Jade Tree City.

The place was filled with the sound of people wolfing down their food. No one cared about their image. After flying for a day and a night without stopping, everyone was drained. They were hungry and cold. At the makeshift camp, food had already been prepared for them. When they landed, they were immediately served piping hot elemental soup.

Silver Soldier hadn’t eaten yet. When the mayor of Jade Tree City heard they had arrived, he quickly rushed over to welcome them. Out of courtesy, Silver Soldier had to entertain the mayor.

After entertaining the mayor, Silver Soldier returned to the camp and sat beside Karakorum Polaris.

Karakorum Polaris served Silver Soldier the elemental soup that she had long prepared. He did not even bother to be polite and gulped down the soup. He finally regained his energy after gulping down a few bowls of elemental soup one after the other. With a deep voice, he said, "The essence elemental beans have been prepared. There are enough to last us until we have reached the Rear of Wall."

"Rear of Wall" referred to the area twenty-five kilometers behind the Wall of North Sea where Qi Xiuyuan built all the fortifications.

"Silver, don’t be so anxious," Karakorum Polaris said softly.

Silver Soldier reached out his metallic palm and touched Karakorum Polaris’s hair, saying, "I used to have a good friend who was from North Sea Division. We stayed together in Central Pine City. He is much more interesting than me and he would often tell me stories about North Sea Division."

"What happened after that?" Karakorum Polaris asked curiously.

The metallic hand that was caressing Karakorum Polaris’s hair froze momentarily. He replied softly, "He brought the students of Central Pine Academy to the Garden of Life and the blood catastrophe happened to break out there. He did not survive in the end."

"I’m sorry, Silver," Karakorum Polaris said with an apologetic tone.

"It’s not Karakorum’s fault, you don’t need to apologize," came a gentle, yet apologetic voice from behind the slick, silvery mask of Silver Soldier, "I’m the one who’s supposed to apologize for dragging you into the battlefield."

"Don’t say such words, Silver. Karakorum needs some real combat experience to complete the swordplay encyclopedia."

Karakorum Polaris shook her head.

Silver Soldier did not retort Karakorum Polaris. All he did was caress Karakorum Polaris's long hair gently. After a while, he said, "If we could have set off earlier, Shi Beihai might not have died."

"Silver, don't blame Aunt Ye," Karakorum Polaris said softly.

There were a few times when Silver Soldier had volunteered himself to reinforce North Sea Division, but was rejected by Aunt Ye. Karakorum Polaris did not know why Aunt Ye would reject Silver Soldier. Everytime she talked to Aunt Ye about this, Aunt Ye would try to avoid the topic.

Silver Soldier hesitated slightly and shook his head. "I'm not blaming her. Honestly, I can't do whatever she can do. She definitely has her difficulties. I don't understand all these politics. All I want is to..."

He paused and gazed into the distance, appearing as if he was looking through the already dissipated smoke of war.

After a long while, he said softly, "All I want is to fight with everyone."

Suddenly, he laughed at himself, "Master used to say that I'm too stubborn, my hatred is too deep, and I have too much rage within me. He said that I have no hope of becoming a Grandmaster because of these factors. At that time, I disagreed with him.

However, now I know what Master said was right. Whenever I think of fighting, I am not able to restrain my emotions. I don't care whether or not I can become a Grandmaster. As long as I can fight against Blood of God with everyone, I am more than contented. Someone who is blinded by rage and hatred like me is fated to die on the battlefield."

Karakorum Polaris turned around and looked at Silver Soldier through her light, muslin veil. With a voice that was gentle like water, she said, "Karakorum will accompany you."

Silver Soldier was stunned as he looked at Karakorum.

He stared blankly at Karakorum Polaris's veil-covered face. Her beautiful, crystal-clear and determined gaze pierced his heart like a sword. An indescribable agony spread across his body.

"I'm sorry, Karakorum," Silver Soldier muttered.

Karakorum Polaris's heart skipped a beat, but her gaze remained crystal-clear. She imitated Silver Soldier's tone and replied, "It's not Silver's fault, there's no need for you to apologize."

Silver Soldier returned to his senses and broke into a laughter.

Karakorum Polaris's lips curled into a smile.

Silver Soldier's gaze regained its firmness as he replied with a deep voice, "Let's carry out Circulatory Cycle Revolution and

regain our energy so that we can set off as soon as possible. Once we reach the Rear of Wall, we won't find such a safe place anymore."

Karakorum Polaris acknowledged him and nodded her head in agreement.

Silver Soldier took out an essence elemental bean, sat cross-legged on the floor and closed his eyes, beginning his Circulatory Cycle Revolution.

Karakorum Polaris's crystal-clear eyes stared deeply at the silvery, glossy mask on Silver Soldier's face. Beneath her thin veil, her cherry lips moved slightly but no sound came out of her mouth.

"No matter where you go, Karakorum will accompany you."

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