TRANSCENDING THE NINE HEAVENS

BOOK 04

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Transcending the Nine Heavens

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Synopsis

Chu Yang, the Ninth Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword, sacrificed almost everything he had for the sake of improving his martial arts, including the love of his life. After spending three years locating the fifth fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword, he was ambushed by all sides at that very place. Mortally injured with no means of escape, Chu Yang executed a sacrificial technique by plunging the Nine Tribulations Sword into his very own heart. “With the blood of my heart, ten thousand tribulations will collapse!”

After witnessing the death of all his ambushers, Chu Yang’s vision began to darken. At a distance, moments before his death, he saw the mastermind who had plotted his downfall — Mo Tian Ji. With that, his eyes finally closed.

However, with a start, Chu Yang once again awoke to find that he had returned to when he was sixteen years of age! Furthermore, the Sword Spirit of the Nine Tribulations Sword now resided within his Dantian, the energy center of his body! From that very moment, Chu Yang would then begin to right all of his past regrets, and carve his very own legend by fulfilling his destiny as the final Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword, and defeating the Heavenly Devils beyond the realm of the Nine Heavens Continent.

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Chapter 301: This Heart Has Already Frozen!

Mo Xing Chen had no alternative but to force a smile on his face as he said, "Dear Nephew Dong, this saber seems to be a divine weapon." He grabbed the saber, and tried to hold it in his hands. However, his hands were being pulled down towards the ground by its weight. He exerted all his strength to hold the saber as he didn't wish to humiliate himself in front of everyone.

[What's with this saber? How is it so heavy?]

A high-pitched 'clank' sound was heard as he drew the saber out. Suddenly, a cold and black aura started to radiate in all directions as the saber's murderous energy spread throughout Mo Clan's residence. The temperature inside the residence instantly dropped by more than ten degrees as a result.

The body of the saber was plain and simple. However, its edge was sharp enough to cut through mountains, and turn them into shambles. Anyone could tell that this was a fatal weapon.

Such a saber could easily slice a sledgehammer into two parts.

"This saber has the capacity to cut through iron like mud. Its sharpness is no less than that of the saber that my Big Brother gave to Xiao Wu – the 'Dreaming of a Gentle Dance' Saber..." Dong Wu Shang concealed his hint in his words.

"'Dreaming of a Gentle Dance' Saber..." Mo Xing Chen was dumbfounded. He seemed to believe every word spoken by Dong Wu Shang.

He was aware of the name given to that saber.

"This is a magnificent saber..." Mo Xing Chen couldn't resist the temptation to keep on holding that saber in his hands. But, he had to put it down reluctantly in the end. [Ah, even a King level expert of our clan might not be capable enough to wield this weapon. A

blade such as this can be used to its full extent only by the members of the Black Saber Clan.]

[This is too heavy, ah!]

Dong Wu Shang took the saber back with a smile on his face. "This saber was given to me by my Big Brother as a present."

Mo Xing Chen was taken aback once again. His mind was overcome with speculations about this mysterious Big Brother's capabilities, ['Dreaming of a Gentle Dance' Saber is such an exceptional weapon...]

[What kind of an extraordinary inheritance would allow a person to give away such an earthshaking divine weapon as a present... and that too not just one, but two of them?]

"Dreaming of a Gentle Dance Saber... Its name contains 'Qing Wu' which is derived from Miss Xiao Wu's name," Dong Wu Shang said in a heavy tone. "Uncle Mo, I request you to refrain from betraying the name of the saber."

Mo Xing Chen was barely able to smile as he was unable to interpret the feelings inside his heart.

"Oh! I have to go and see Xiao Wu now. Big Brother has sent me to deliver some gifts to her," Dong Wu Shang smiled in a mischievous manner. "These things are mostly to amuse little children... Uncle Mo, you must be busy, right? I'll be leaving soon. So, please ignore me if I don't bid you farewell."

Mo Xing Chen raised his head and nodded; he was looking a bit disconcerted.

[If Dong Wu Shang informs his Big Brother about Xiao Wu's bitter life in the Clan...]

Dong Wu Shang advanced towards Mo Qing Wu's courtyard to have a conversation with her. Mo Qing Wu was naïve; she stared at Dong Wu Shang with puzzled eyes as he whispered into her ear, "You mustn't describe Brother Chu Yang's appearance to anyone

here. You mustn't disclose any information about him either; irrespective of who enquires. Alright?"

"But... why?" Mo Qing Wu blinked her big eyes.

"...because your Brother Chu Yang might get into a grave danger if you tell them... He might even die," Dong Wu Shang replied.

"He might die?!" These words frightened Mo Qing Wu to the core.

"Then, I won't say anything to anyone," the little girl nodded her head fiercely. The bowknot she wore made a humming sound as she nodded.

Dong Wu Shang soon left.

A plethora of thoughts and doubts continued to trouble Mo Xing Chen. So, he eventually decided to ask his daughter about the entire situation.

"Xiao Wu, the person who had saved you that day... how did he look?" Mo Xing Chen sat down beside Mo Qing Wu, and asked warmly, "It was very kind of that person to save you. So, it's our duty to repay him for saving your life."

"I... I forgot," Mo Qing Wu replied whilst blinking her eyes.

"You forgot?" Mo Xing Chen was surprised.

"Yes," Mo Qing Wu nodded with all her strength. "I completely forgot."

Mo Xing Chen wanted to ask her again, but he saw a hint of fear and hatred in his daughter's eyes... He was left shivering with a weakness which seemed to be spreading throughout his body.

He could clearly make out that he was the reason behind the fear and hatred in his daughter's eyes.

[How can she look at her own father with an animosity as intense as that for a mortal enemy?]

[She is just a child; a little girl who hasn't even turned ten!]

[Why is she enduring so much pain?]

Mo Xing Chen softened as he looked at his trembling daughter. He extended his hand to gently caress her. However, Mo Qing Wu began to tremble even more vigorously. Her body cowered back as she tried to avoid the touch of his hand, while her eyes remained glued to his face.

Mo Xing Chen's hand stopped in midair as his soul got filled with pain.

He gently pulled his hand away, and sighed sadly.

[Why wasn't I able to see it? My treatment towards Mo Qing Wu has drastically changed during the recent days. Such a cold treatment can make her immature mind traumatized for life.]

Suddenly, Mo Xing Chen realized that Mo Qing Wu would never be able to forget the events that had taken place over these past few days. He could sense that she may never be able to rid her heart of this pain; no matter how much she changed over the course of the future.

However, he had no other choice. He was the Lord of the Mo Clan.

He felt obligated towards his duty as the Clan Lord of the Mo Clan. His work was meant to be for the benefit and survival of the Mo Clan. So, he had no time to be a father to her.

He would never be able to enjoy the affection of a family as long as he served in this position.

However, Mo Xing Chen hadn't realized that Mo Qing Wu was still secretly hoping to be caressed by her father; she longed for his warm embrace.

She had started to feel even worse as she had had some bitter experiences with her father. Therefore, she had subconsciously

acted like any little girl with a temper would. However, she would've jumped into her father's arms while bursting into tears of joy if her father was to extend his hand towards her one more time.

She had been hoping to cry in her father's embrace for a long time... She had even dreamt about being hugged by him.

However, her tiny heart went into a state of complete despair the moment she saw her father's hand drawing back.

[Is he not even willing to... hug me now?]

She had felt that Ji Mo, Luo Ke Di, and Dong Wu Shang had come to visit her out of affection even though they were outsiders. Therefore, she had started to feel even more alienated from her father.

Mo Qing Wu's big and beautiful eyes had turned gloomy... Her beautiful red lips had become pale... as if there wasn't any blood left in them.

She recalled Dong Wu Shang's words.

[Your Brother Chu Yang might even die if you tell them about him.]

[It's like what Brother Wu Shang had said. Father didn't come here to see me. He just came in to gather information about Brother Chu Yang... so that he can kill him.]

Mo Qing Wu felt her heart turning cold.

She hatefully looked at the man who was supposed to be the closest person to her in this entire world. Her mind yelled out, [Why? Why are you being so unfair to me? There are only a few people in this world who are good to me. And, you want to hurt Brother Chu Yang now? Why?]

[Will you be satisfied only when nobody in this world is being good to me?]

Mo Qing Wu lowered her head in despair.

"Xiao Wu, please stay inside the room. It's very cold outside," Mo Xing Chen lowered his head, and heaved a deep sigh. He then said, "Don't run around carelessly all the time... It's time for you to learn needlework and handcrafts from your mother."

This was perhaps the longest sentence that he had spoken to his daughter in a long time. He had spoken these words out of deep concern for his daughter.

He finally gave-up on questioning her. He wanted some good memories of him to remain in his daughter's heart. As for the matters of the future... they were matters for the future.

However, her father's last sentence had broken her heart. [Learn needlework...]

"I know," Mo Qing Wu said in a low voice. She then lowered her head. After that, she turned to walk towards her room without raising her head. She turned around to look at her father one more time.

Tears started to drop onto the stone steps as she walked towards her room. She then entered her room, and gently shut the doors behind her.

It seemed to her that not one but two doors had closed. She had locked herself away from her clan, and from the rest of the world.

She had sealed her tiny heart from this moment onwards.

Mo Xing Chen clearly understood one thing as he stood outside and stared at the closed door – he had lost his own daughter.

It seemed like his daughter had locked her heart up, and was never going to open it in her life again.

A bitter smile spread across his face, [That's not possible. After all, she's just a kid... a little girl who has recently turned ten.]

He turned around, and walked away.

[Mo Qing Wu's Saber –'Dreaming of a Gentle Dance' is a gift from a personage with a great backing. I must immediately discuss this matter with the Clan Elders. We can't afford to make a powerful enemy.]

[We must come-up with a foolproof plan. This great person may come to visit our Mo Clan. So, we need to find a way to retain that saber. Moreover, we need to build a powerful alliance with his clan by making full use of his relationship with our Mo Qing Wu.]

[This is the best way to use my daughter for the prosperity of our Clan.]

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Mo Xing Chen went up to the Elders Pavilion, and explained the purpose behind the meeting.

The Great Elder smiled as he started to relate Dong Wu Shang's words. The Great Elder then stated with slanting eyes, "Is the one-sided story told by the Second Young Master of the Dong Clan enough to shake the Mo Clan Lord?"

"I think that this... this shouldn't be false," Mo Xing Chen said. "I had always known that Xiao Wu had been saved by some great expert. After all, that saber can't be a gift from an ordinary person."

"That may or may not be true," Mo Wu Xin contemplated. "But, this matter can't be neglected either. We'll quietly observe her from the sidelines, and act according to the changes in the situation. It'll be wonderful if this so-called highly-skilled person visits her and ends-up matching-up to his abilities. We may even find a way to use him for our benefits."

"Alright. But, what should we do about Qing Wu's saber?" Mo Xing Chen couldn't resist the temptation to ask.

"You've started to think about handing an extremely precious saber over to a cripple who has no future in the clan... just because

the Second Young Master of the Dong Clan has said so? What if it's the Dong Clan's plot to snatch the saber away from us?"

Mo Wu Xin's eyelids dropped down as he argued, "You do know what the consequences will be if something like that happens, right? The Dong Clan is also known as the Black Saber Clan. All of you people should know that. They're the real experts of the 'saber arts'."

"The Great Elder is correct." Mo Xing Chen remained silent for a long time. Then, he bowed and said.

Chapter 302: If I Don't Assume The Responsibility For My Brother's Actions, Then Who Will?

Rui Bu Tong wasn't alone when he arrived at the Mo Clan's residence; he had come with his two masters.

The members of the Mo Clan attached a great deal of importance to Rui Bu Tong's arrival; unlike the arrival of the other young masters.

The young masters who had visited earlier belonged to influential clans. And, they were acting as representatives of their respective clans. So, it was impossible to extract benefits from them. However, the same wasn't true in Rui Bu Tong's case since he and his masters were free birds.

They didn't belong to any clan.

People with such an enormous strength and influence were often treated as subjects of solicitation by the major clans of the Middle Three Heavens. Moreover, it was important to keep good relations with people like the Stealing God or the Thieving Ghost even if solicitation didn't work on them as it could prevent loss of wealth in the future.

Therefore, Rui Bu Tong and his masters were welcomed enthusiastically by the members of the Mo Clan.

The Clan Lord personally came out along with several of the clan elders to welcome their guests, and achieve a cordial connection with him.

However, everyone was left dumbstruck once they heard that Rui Bu Tong had come to visit Mo Qing Wu.

[What the hell is this? Why is an endless stream of people coming to visit Mo Qing Wu?]

The members of the Mo Clan were astonished by this. In fact, even Rui Bu Tong's two masters were very curious to see Mo Qing Wu. [We've never seen our disciple setting his heart on a girl. So, why has he come to see the Mo Clan's young miss?]

[Can it be that our Little Rui has taken a fancy to this clan's daughter?]

It could be said that these two old men had arrived in hopes of meeting their daughter-in-law... A large group of people marched towards Mo Qing Wu's small courtyard.

Rui Bu Tong jumped towards Mo Qing Wu as soon as she showed-up. He was beaming with joy as he started to chat with her.

This didn't surprise the Mo Clan. However, the Stealing God and the Thieving Ghost – the two infamous bandits capable of inflicting havoc upon the entire Middle Three Heavens – were stunned.

The two notorious bandits glanced at each other. They noticed each other's crooked noses. It was clear that they were annoyed.

They had come with the expectation to meet a Heavenly beauty... a fairy bestowed with divine fragrance. However, they couldn't have expected to see a young Lolita; she was so young that even her development hadn't begun yet.

They understood that there was no scope for a 'man-woman' relationship once they saw her. The two old men were visibly disappointed as they had been waiting a while for the day they would get to hug their grandson.

The Stealing God and the Thieving Ghost were sitting on the side with several elders of the Mo Clan. They were watching Mo Qing Wu as she chatted playfully with Rui Bu Tong. This made Mo Qing Wu feel awkward. So, she drew Rui Bo Tong into her room.

A burst of red flashes accompanied by the brilliance of starlight exuded from her head as soon as she stood-up.

Mo Wu Xin quivered with excitement. He stared at the bowknot on her head with rapt attention... He was left startled.

[I certainly wasn't wrong. This beautifully designed bowknot is indeed made-up of Red Cloud Steel and Star Iron. Even the 'Dreaming of a Gentle Dance' Saber is made-up of the same materials.]

[It takes an Emperor-level expert to even chop a chunk of the Red Cloud Steel. Who would be extravagant enough to make a bowknot out of it?]

[It's as delicate as a cicada's wing, and as light as a feather... It would've taken divine craftsmanship to carve such exquisite details.]

[I'm afraid that even a Monarch-level expert wouldn't have been able to achieve a feat such as this.]

Mo Wu Xin went over, and called Mo Qing Wu after Rui Bu Tong and his masters had left. "Little Wu, the bowknot in your hair... who gave you that?"

"Brother Ji Mo gave it to me," Mo Qing Wu blinked as she replied in an indifferent tone.

"What utter nonsense!" Mo Wu Xin got furious, [Ji Mo? Ji Mo of the Ji Clan? I can't possibly be in the dark with regard to our in-laws' wealth and influence.]

[You want to me to believe that the Ji Clan can make such a bowknot? Is this some kind of a joke?]

"It truly was him. He gave it to me when he came to visit," Mo Qing Wu tried to explain as she secretly whispered in her heart. [It was Brother Ji Mo who had brought it to me. But, I'm not going to tell you who had sent it to me...]

"It seems that you don't wish to tell the truth to this old man, do you?" Mo Wu Xin asked in an angry manner.

"Really! I'm telling the truth... "

"Humph!" Mo Wu Xin brushed his sleeve, and left. [Forcing a piece of information out of a little girl doesn't suit my status. But, I'm sure that Ji Mo didn't gift her this bowknot.]

[Each and every member of the Mo Clan can affirm this.]

[The Ji Clan would've rushed to the Upper Three Heavens if they had such an expert.]

"Make sure to tighten the watch on this courtyard. You're not to allow the Young Miss to go out as she wishes. Got it? If anyone comes in, then you must report it to the clan immediately," Mo Wu Xin issued a strict order. He then swaggered away.

Mo Qing Wu bit her lips as she stood motionless in her courtyard. Tears started to well up in her eyes. However, she held them back, [Humph! You people will treat me like a prisoner now?]

[Brother Chu Yang, take me away! You must hurry-up, and pick me. I don't wish to stay here for even a moment.]

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Gu Du Xing had to confront the mourning face of his foster father – Gu Yun Lan – as soon as he returned to his clan. His foster father used to have lush black hair earlier. But, half of it had turned white by now, and the remaining had turned frosty.

This middle-aged man had lost both his biological sons at the same time. This was indeed an unbearable blow to the Gu Clan's Lord.

"Foster Father! What happened to you?" Gu Du Xing cried out in alarm.

"Oh, Du Xing, you came back... Thank God you're back," Gu Yun Lan heaved a long sigh, and opened his arms to pull Gu Du Xing in his embrace. He then said, "I had gotten so worried when you ran away. I sent a group of people to find you, but they could bring no

news related to you. Where have you been all this time?"

"I went to Iron Cloud. I've been staying there since," Gu Du Xing lowered his head as he replied with hesitation.

"I know... I know that you've been suffering. But..." Gu Yun Lan's soul-less eyes looked at the trees on both sides as he said, "Your Sister Xiao Miao's matter has damaged our clan's interests. The consequences were very serious. You must understand."

"I understand... I'll rush to the Sword Emperor's level very soon. Then, I'll save Sister Xiao Miao," Gu Du Xing declared firmly.

"Sword Emperor?!" Gu Yun Lan's body shook as he turned his head, and looked at Gu Du Xing. He carefully observed his adopted son whom he regarded as extremely important. He couldn't help but be surprised, "You, you... have you become a swordsman?"

Gu Du Xing's body was exuding a cold and acute sharpness; it was similar to the clanging sound of a sword being unsheathed. In fact, it was impossible for an ordinary person to stand before him, and endure this acute sharpness.

This was a unique feature of a swordsman.

"Yes, Foster Father," Gu Du Xing replied in a calm voice.

"What's your current grade as a Sword Great Master?" Gu Yun Lan hurriedly asked.

"I'm not a Sword Great Master anymore, Foster Father," Gu Du Xing replied. "I'm now a Fourth Grade Revered Sword Artist... at the peak! I should be breaking through to the Fifth Grade Revered Sword Artist within half-a-month."

"Ss***!" Gu Yun Lan sucked in a breath of cold air.

[It has been less than a year since Gu Du Xing left home.]

[He was only a fifth or sixth grade Sword Great Master when he left, wasn't he? So, he has leapt through ten grades in a matter of a few months!]

[This... how is this possible?]

"You... how did you manage to do that? Which Heavenly treasure did you consume?" Gu Yun Lan asked. [There is no explanation for this... other than a fateful coincidence involving him procuring some kind of 'World Spiritual Item'... His cultivation must've rushed to the peak in one fell swoop after he digested its medicinal efficacy.]

[But, such fateful encounters only exist in legends. Could it truly have happened to Gu Du Xing?]

"I haven't consumed any Heavenly treasure. Instead, I met an exceptionally talented person, and trained under him. This is the reason why my cultivation has been progressing by leaps and bounds," Gu Du Xing replied insipidly.

"So, it was by your own talent and hard work... But, enhancing one's cultivation by ten grades in just a few months... is simply beyond anyone's expectations," Gu Yun Lan exclaimed in excitement as he looked at Gu Du Xing. A bitter yet gratified smile appeared on his face as he said, "It seems that the Heaven has decided to shower mercy on my pitiful self. My Gu Clan will not perish after all."

"Du Xing, you must look after the clan. The clan will be counting on your support from now on." Gu Yun Lan continued, "The funerals of your brothers have only ended a few days ago... "

Gu Du Xing hesitated for a while. He then stated in a resolute manner, "Foster Father, actually... I already know about Gu Yan Yang and Gu Yan Yue's deaths."

"You know about... Gu Yan Yang and Gu Yan Yue's deaths," Gu Yun Lan whispered to himself unconsciously; he kept on repeating the same sentence over and over again. It seemed as if he couldn't believe his own ears. He finally turned his head as his hawk-like gaze landed on Gu Du Xing, "You already know about their deaths?"

"Yes," Gu Du Xing replied in a heavy tone.

"How come you know about that?" Gu Yun Lan's voice had turned icy-cold.

"I obtained the news shortly after they had been killed," Gu Du Xing found it difficult to reply.

"So, you weren't the one to kill them, correct?" Gu Yun Lan let out a breath of relief. "It's fine as long as it wasn't you... "

"The fact that I didn't kill them... doesn't detach me from their deaths... as it was my brother who killed them," Gu Du Xing said in one breath. "He killed them for me. I didn't know anything about it until after it had happened. But, I still didn't wish to keep Foster Father in the dark."

"Your brother?!" Gu Yun Lan's voice seemed to have an intense desire to kill. "I had a thought when they brought your brothers' corpses — Xie Clan's Xie Dan Qiong wasn't famous, but he was still a rising star. So, how could he have dared to kill your brothers? Things shouldn't have escalated enough to cause such a tragedy even if they'd had disputes in the past. But, I see now... The truth is entirely different from my speculation."

"Who is your brother?" Gu Yun Lan asked in a deep voice.

"I can't tell you," Gu Du Xing's facial expression remained firm as he said. "I'm willing to shoulder all the responsibilities; no matter what he has done. Foster Father can kill me right here and right now if he feels wronged in his heart. I would rather choose to die than to betray my brother."

"Good! I admire your sense of loyalty," Gu Yun Lan let out a cold laughter. "Du Xing, do you think that you're all grown-up and ready to spread your wings? Do you think that you've nothing to fear because your brothers are out of the picture, and you're the only one left to inherit the Clan Lord's position?"

"Foster Father, please believe me. I could never have such

thoughts," Gu Du Xing lowered his head and said. But then, he looked-up, and added fearlessly, "I've always believed that a real man always bears the responsibility of his actions. Things done can't be undone. It doesn't matter what they are. There's no scope for regret later on. Therefore, I'll undertake all the responsibilities.

"A person must always be upright in their conduct. There's no bending involved in the way of my sword... That has always been my code of conduct. You would've never found out if I had intended to hide the truth from you. There is no evidence to prove what happened. In fact, even Xie Dan Qiong wouldn't have been able to find evidence of his innocence.

"But, I must say that I chose to be honest with you because I didn't wish to deceive you," Gu Du Xing declared. "Who will assume the responsibility for my brother's actions... if I don't?

"I'll have no complaints; regardless of your decision. But, I would happily choose to die over selling my brother out."

Gu Du Xing's forceful voice was backed by a firm and resolute look in his eyes.

Chapter 303: Gu Miao Ling

Gu Yun Lan remained silent for a long time as he gazed at Gu Du Xing.

He then let out a long sigh.

"What's done is done. I just hope you and your brother can explain your actions in the future." Gu Yun Lan seemed to be at a loss. "How would I have not known... that those two weren't capable enough... They would've destroyed the Gu Clan in no time if it had fallen into their hands... But, they shouldn't have died over this..."

Gu Du Xing remained silent.

"Gu Clan... Gu Clan... haha... Thousands of people wouldn't have been eyeing us like this if the Gu Clan didn't have such a strong ancestral base... Gu Du Xing, I would've killed you right away with my hands."

"Foster Father, please calm down."

The wrinkles on Gu Yun Lan's face deepened as he snorted coldly.

"I shall need some time to consider this matter." Gu Yun Lan sighed deeply, and walked away without saying any other word. Suddenly, he stopped after walking for some distance. He then said in a soft voice, "No one should find out about this matter." He hadn't even bothered to turn back.

"Yes, Foster Father." Gu Du Xing watched his foster father's figure disappearing into the distance. He couldn't help but feel a sour tinge in his heart.

[Was I mistaken about this matter? Perhaps, yes.]

Gu Yun Lan believed that he had always treated Gu Du Xing with kindness, and had raised him to be worthy of something. However, Gu Du Xing had ended-up killing both his foster-brothers – Gu Yun

Lan's true born sons.

Gu Du Xing didn't feel any regret even though he had admitted to his mistakes.

[I'm definitely guilty. But, Chu Yang did this for my own good.]

Gu Du Xing had anticipated that he'd have to go to war with Gu Yan Yang and Gu Yan Yue after his foster father's demise. [Either I would've died at their hands or they would've died at mine.]

[We were doomed to be mortal enemies.]

[However, those were the events of the future.]

[At least Foster Father would've been spared from witnessing the results.]

[Now, the situation will be very difficult for the Old Man to bear...]

[An outsider will feel that Brother Chu Yang has killed the Gu Brothers in order to rescue the Gu Clan since it was likely to decline if it ever fell into their hands.]

[But, killing them is still not justified.]

The conflicting views started to hurt Gu Du Xing's mind.

However, he still didn't blame Chu Yang.

[Chu Yang had put himself in great danger by killing my brothers. Moreover, he had also risked breaking our bond.]

[I'm your brother. So, I'd seek to help you even if you blame me.]

[You'll be at war with them sooner or later. And, you'll kill them when the time comes. After that, your guilty conscience will disturb your mind endlessly. It'll probably prevent you from progressing any further. So, I ended the reason behind your guilt before it could torment you. Consequently, it'll not be a problem anymore.]

[I'd do it all over again even if you blame me. I'd do it even if I

had to break my relation with you. I'd do it... ah... even if we ended-up becoming enemies.]

[Moreover, it's better that I do it sooner rather than later.]

[I only wish for my brother's safety.]

[I don't mind carrying the burden of this sin on my shoulders till the end of time.]

Chu Yang hadn't spoken these words. In fact, he hadn't said anything.

However, Gu Du Xing still knew it. So, he had taken the accusations for his brother's actions. [I would've shouldered the accusations even if I didn't know this. And, that's because I know that my brother would do the same for me.]

[I'll bear the burden till the very end.]

There was stillness in the Gu Clan for the next three days. And, that's because Gu Yun Lan had disappeared. Gu Clan's army had already been put in order, and was ready to proceed towards the Cang Lan battlefront. They were only waiting for the Clan Lord to issue the orders.

Gu Yun Lan finally showed-up on the third day. His body was upright. However, his hair had turned completely white.

"Gu Du Xing, follow me," Gu Yun Lan said.

"You'll lead the men to the Cang Lan battlefront," Gu Yun Lan said in a deep voice. He raised his head and ordered, "I want you to lead the Gu Clan into the battle with an awe-inspiring authority. I want you to lead the Gu Clan towards glory; so that our Clan can rush into the Upper Three Heavens one day... Can you do that?"

"Yes, I can!" Gu Du Xing roared like a thunderclap.

"Then, go!"

"Foster Father, I want to see Sister Xiao Miao." Gu Du Xing knew that this wasn't the right time for this request. However, he

couldn't help but blurt it out.

Her memories had been tormenting him for a long time; he was almost on the point of breaking down.

He had been longing for her since the moment he had left the Clan. This was his only desire now that he had returned to his Clan.

To see Gu Miao Ling again!

It was his sole desire!

Gu Yun Lan stared at Gu Du Xing for a while. "You can meet her. But, you must return quickly."

"Thank you so much, Foster Father."

Gu Du Xing rejoiced in his heart.

Then, he darted away.

Gu Yun Lang kept staring at his disappearing figure for a while. Then, he muttered to himself, "It feels that it genuinely wasn't Gu Du Xing's doing... So, it would've been better if Gu Du Xing hadn't told me the truth. After all, I would've chosen to go to battle with the Xie Clan in all this confusion. Du Xing, you should've known this..."

He walked towards his Clan's troops. The Clan's banner fluttered above his head as he stepped onto a tall platform, and raised his hands.

This was followed by a thunder of cheers.

"Clan Lord! Clan Lord!"

"Silence!" Gu Yun Lan clasped his hands behind his back, and stood upright beneath the banner. He spoke loudly with a look of arrogance in his eyes, "I'm here to make an extremely important announcement. So, I request everyone to listen carefully."

There was an immediate silence.

"Gu Du Xing is the sole heir of the Gu Clan from today onwards. Gu Du Xing will have absolute authority over the Gu Clan's army at the Cang Lan Battlefront."

"Yes, my Lord!" everyone responded.

"Discontent and detrimental talks against our Young Clan Lord is banned — even in private! Anyone who's found to be involved in such activities will be beheaded along with his entire family. Does everyone understand?" Gu Yun Lan's voice was extremely stern.

"We understand!"

"We shall follow the Young Clan Lord's orders from today onwards."

"Long live the Clan Lord!"

Gu Du Xing's prestige was far higher than Gu Yan Yang's or Gu Yan Yue's within the Gu Clan. Moreover, he had the capability to inspire them. In fact, he was known to be a genius.

Almost everyone was sure of Gu Du Xing's capability. So, they firmly believed that he had what it took to emerge victorious in the battle.

When it came to choosing between following a young genius Clan Lord and a young mediocre Clan Lord — the option for a brighter future was quite obvious.

In fact, everyone was cynical about Gu Yan Yang and Gu Yan Yue. They believed that the actions of those two would've eventually delivered the clan to its doom. However, no one spoke of it.

Therefore, only a few people were grieving over the untimely deaths of the two Gu Brothers. However, the majority of the people were relieved at the deaths of those two incompetent losers.

In fact, the deaths of the two brothers had instilled a lot of hope within the Clan. This was one of the main reasons behind the high

morale of the Clan's troops.

Gu Yun Lan waited for the cheers to subside. He then announced, "Everyone, wait a while for the Young Clan Lord's arrival. Then, you'll set-off on the journey."

"Yes!"

The response was even louder and clearer this time.

Gu Yun Lan's heart ached as he thought about how his own son – Gu Yan Yang – had never received such a response during his command.

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Gu Du Xing hurried through the gardens. He took several turns and bends before finally reaching at the back of the Gu Clan residence. The Dragon Prison Cave was located at that place.

The closer he reached to the prison, the slower he got.

In fact, he almost turned his tail and fled at one point.

He was visibly afraid.

Gu Du Xing wasn't easy to scare... He could even face a million people with a straight face.

Gu Du Xing's will was made of iron.

However, he got quite scared as he was about to see his beloved Gu Miao Ling.

[What if Sister Xiao Miao ignores me?]

[If Sister Xiao Miao...]

[Will Sister Xiao Miao...]

[What should I say when I see her?]

Gu Du Xing finally halted in front of a puddle which was at some distance from the prison-cave. It seemed that the snowfall from a few days ago had gathered in this puddle in the form of ice.

Gu Du Xing stood beside the puddle while facing the flat and smooth icy surface. He looked at himself as he tidied-up his clothes and fixed his hair. He then looked at his face. After that, he grabbed a chuck of ice, and wiped his face clean with it.

The piercing cold shook his mind awake.

[Why wouldn't I dare if I'm finally here...]

Gu Du Xing calmed his heart down, and started to take huge strides towards the cave.

"Stop!"

The guard warned in a loud voice.

"I'm Gu Du Xing. I'm here to see the Young Miss."

"Young Master Du Xing, may I ask if the Young Master Du Xing has the Clan Lord's written order?" The guard's attitude became respectful. Everyone knew that Gu Du Xing was to become the future Clan Lord since Gu Yan Yang and Gu Yan Yue were dead now.

"Yes, I do." Gu Du Xing drew out a medal from his bosom.

"Please wait here for a moment, Young Master Du Xing." The guard turned around, and walked inside in order to notify.

Traces of voices were heard from inside the cave after a while. Then, a magnificent wave of bone chilling air surged out from the entrance of the cave. It turned Gu Du Xing cold to his feet.

He saw the entrance path getting wrapped-up with thick frost as he stood in front of the cave.

This was the Dragon Prison cave... It was terrible to live here. The temperature inside the cave was too cold for any normal person to bear. It became colder as one went deeper inside the cave. In fact, most of the inner stones would often freeze, and turn into ice masses.

The cold air usually couldn't come out since the doors were

always closed. However, the opening of the doors had always made it seem as if they could freeze the entire Earth.

Fragmented sounds of footsteps could be heard from the entrance of the cave. It seemed as if something was moving inside the cave.

A young maiden wrapped in hoar frost came out from inside the cave after a long while; she was breathing heavily. She looked at Gu Du Xing and smiled. She then said, "Little Brother, why have you come here?"

Her smile was extraordinarily beautiful despite her condition.

The frost stuck in her beautiful crow-black hair made her look similar to a woman in her seventies. Her complexion had turned purple because her skin had seemingly frozen. Her hands and feet were rigid as well. However, her hair was neat and tidy even though it was frozen.

Her clothing had been methodically arranged over her body.

It was obvious that she had spent a good time inside the walls of the cave to groom herself into looking presentable.

This young lady had clearly put a lot of hard work into her present appearance.

Gu Du Xing stared at her for a long time without speaking a single word. He was visibly enchanted by her appearance.

"Little Brother... what happened? Hehe..." The young maiden lowered her head in confusion, and looked at herself. She then forced a smile as she asked, "Has Sister Xiao Miao become extremely ugly now?"

Chapter 304: Xiao Miao, I Want You To Be My Wife!

"Certainly not. I think Sister Xiao Miao is looking as beautiful as always. No one can look prettier than you," Gu Du Xing complimented in an excited tone.

"Don't talk such nonsense," Gu Miao Ling smiled as she replied. This young maiden had suffered all these years for Gu Du Xing's sake. However, her smile wasn't that of an abashed girl, but of an elder sister who was slightly annoyed with her little brother.

Her tender smile had seemingly dispersed the cold austerity which had frozen her body. Suddenly, the natural color of her cheeks began to give a sharp contrast to her frosty hair. This made her astonishingly beautiful to look at.

Gu Du Xing's mind was completely empty as he stared blankly at Gu Miao Ling while licking his lips. He said involuntarily, "Stunningly beautiful..."

"You little rascal!" Gu Miao Ling bashfully stomped her feet on the ground since she was unable to withstand the perverted look in Gu Du Xing's eyes. She then angrily looked at him. "I'm your elder sister. How can you say something like that about me?"

Gu Du Xing wiped the drool off his mouth, and dashed towards her.

However, his body collided with the protective fence. A loud banging sound was issued. He fell backwards on the ground, and sprawled flat on his back with a bloody nose and a swollen face. Gu Miao Ling couldn't help but burst into giggles; it seemed as if this funny scene had momentarily washed away the pain in her heart. "You fool. Wouldn't I have come out to beat you up for saying such a thing about your elder sister if it were that easy to leave this place? Humph!"

Gu Du Xing stood-up, and began to pound on the fence in a furious manner. He shouted, "Let me go inside. Otherwise, I'll smash this."

"But, Young Master..." The guard looked at Gu Du Xing in a helpless manner. He then turned his face to look at Gu Miao Ling in an awkward manner.

"Don't be so unruly," Gu Miao Ling spoke softly as she stared at Gu Du Xing. Then, she asked in a gentle tone, "Little Brother, how have you been this entire time?"

'Little Brother, how have you been this entire time?' Gu Du Xing came close to bursting into tears as he heard this question. His Sister Xiao Miao had been kept imprisoned in this Dragon Prison Cave for such a long time. However, she was still worried about his well-being.

"I'm doing fine," Gu Du Xing replied in a hoarse voice.

"Oh, well! You aren't young anymore. Is there someone you like? You can ask Father to act as a matchmaker." Gu Miao Ling looked at him. "It may be too late if you don't look for one soon... "

"There's one girl I really like. It's just that..." Gu Du Xing expressed his feelings painfully.

"What is it?" Gu Miao Ling's complexion turned pale, and her lips began to tremble. Tears began to well-up in her eyes. She hastily turned to one side. She then asked with a fake smile, "So, there's a girl my little brother likes, ah?"

"Well, I've always adored her."

"Who is it?" Gu Miao Ling bit her lips. She managed to put-up a sweet smile on her face as she said, "Tell your elder sister about it. I can certainly be of use when it comes to giving advice about love. It's a pity that I might not get a chance to drink at your marriage-feast."

"She... is very nice, and has always been kind to me. I don't know

how to repay her for all the things she has done for me. I've always thought that she was good to me, and I'm thankful for that. I've always respected her. But, I never realized that I loved her... that I would want her to be my wife..."

Gu Du Xing continued to speak with his head held low, "...until one day when she left... It was then that I finally realized that I've always liked her. I don't want to lose her. Sister Xiao Miao, I want her to be my wife."

Gu Miao Ling's body swayed. She nearly fell to the ground. A look of desperation flashed in her eyes as her lips curled into a jealous smile, [He likes her. No, he loves her... and wants her to be his wife.]

She pitied herself, [Gu Miao Ling, ah... you... you... you...]

She felt her heart breaking into pieces.

She had even started to hate herself; to the point where she was regretting coming out to see him. She had been imprisoned with no hint of hope left in her life. However, she still had her fantasies to hold on to. She would've continued to cherish those pleasant dreams if she hadn't come out. She would've continued to deceive herself. She would've used those lies to maintain her sanity in this place.

She would've cherished those wonderful dreams in her solitude even if she knew that her desires were completely detached from reality.

However, she hadn't been able to stop herself from jumping with joy when she had heard that Gu Du Xing had come to meet her. She had tried her best to dress-up properly. However, she could only manage to look slightly pleasing to the eye. Then, she had run outside like a storm even though she was aware that he might find her unattractive.

However, she had been caught off-guard by this piece of news. It

had struck her as unpredictably as a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

[He has a sweetheart! He has a sweetheart!]

The grieving smile on her face was an indication that her dream had been shattered.

She was still in a trance when she heard Gu Du Xing asking in an anxious manner, "Sister Xiao Miao, tell me... will she say 'yes'?" A trace of fear was clearly audible in his voice.

"Sister Xiao Miao, tell me... will she accept me or not?"

Gu Du Xing was still immersed in the memories of his past. He despised himself for being ignorant. [Why didn't I discover her true feelings for me sooner?]

[Why did I have to wait until she ended-up being imprisoned in the Dragon Prison Cave for my sake... until she suffered?]

[Her body is so delicate... how has she been able to bear this for so long?]

[Why did she have to endure this?]

[I'm so stupid!]

Gu Miao Ling bit her lower lip as she returned to her reality. She then said with a mournful smile on her face, "She'll certainly agree to marry you. My little brother is so amazing. He isn't only skilled, but also dashing. He's young, and has a promising future. It's impossible for anyone to refuse marrying you."

"Really?" Gu Du Xing was pleasantly surprised as he raised his head.

"That's right. Be brave. Go and tell her that you like her. Tell her that you wish to marry her. I'm so happy for you, Little Brother." Gu Miao Ling looked deathly pale. "You'll definitely succeed since you have your Sister Xiao Miao's heartfelt blessings."

[When you go... I'll certainly die in this cave.]

[I no longer have my dream... my dream is dead.]

Gu Miao Ling lowered her face. Two streams of tears quietly slid down her face. She tried her best to not burst into tears. She then said with an astringent smile on her face, "Du Xing, girls are always very reserved. They may like someone, but they won't let it appear on their faces. So, you must take the initiative if you really like someone. You should confess your feelings to her. Life is unpredictable. So, the best time to act is 'now'. You may not get another chance if you miss this opportunity. Those who fail to act at the right time are only left with regrets. You must strive, Little Brother. Now, go quickly, and relay your true feelings to her. Mark my words – you'll be successful. She will certainly say 'yes'!"

Her broken heart was singing a similar tune, [If only I hadn't been so reserved all this time... if only I had been open about my feelings towards him... if only I had confessed to him earlier. Perhaps, the outcome would've been different.]

[If I tell him now... he might...]

[Hey! What are you doing? You can't think along these lines. He wants a wife. And, I'm sentenced to life-time imprisonment. My life is already finished. I shouldn't bother him with my troubles and sadness.]

[I must bury these feelings in the depths of my heart.]

"Sister Xiao Miao, thank you so much for agreeing to my proposal," Gu Du Xing exclaimed. "I... I'm so happy right now that I might just faint."

"I agreed? What are you saying?" Gu Miao Ling could distinctly feel the pain of her bleeding heart. However, her mind flustered as she heard the weird words coming out of Gu Du Xing's mouth.

"You said 'yes'!" Gu Du Xing threw himself at the fence and shouted. "You said 'yes'!"

"What are you talking about? What did I agree to?" Gu Miao Ling

stared blankly as she asked.

"You promised to be my wife," Gu Du Xing blushed. He somersaulted out of excitement, and shouted, "You just agreed to be my wife!"

Gu Miao Ling was dumbstruck. She stared intently at him, and stuttered, "You, you... don't you... don't you already like a girl?"

"Yes! I like a girl," he replied joyfully. "But, the girl I like is none other than you. How could there be someone else in my life? You're the only one for me."

Then, he looked at Gu Miao Ling in a puzzled manner. [Why is she behaving like this? Does she really believe that I like someone else?]

[This is absurd!]

"You, you... like... me," Gu Miao Ling looked at him for a long time in amazement. She didn't say anything. In fact, she couldn't speak. Two streams of tears rolled down her face in response to his declaration.

Then, she squatted down on the ground, and burst into tears. The tragic sound of her wails spread in all directions. However, she continued to pour out her resentment. Her bitter tears fell on her clothes, and faded away into the air as mist; they were an outcome of the severe pain and suffering that she had been forced to endure. It seemed as if all those grievances had found an outlet.

The bitterness of her heart had seemingly melted away in her tears. But, she realized that her heart was even more bitter and dejected now.

She had finally realized her long-awaited dream; the feeling was indescribably beautiful. She had been longing to hear these words for such a long time. They gave strength to her spirit and her will to live-on.

Now, she would no longer feel cold and uncomfortable — even in

a place like this. Her heart would fill-up with love every time she would fantasize about this scene.

[I can't possibly have all this. I shouldn't be having all this. I don't deserve...]

She found herself stuck in a loop of regrets and self-deprecation.

A woman's heart is always filled with contradictions.

She had been unwilling to let go of her dream of love. However, she was ready to let her love go to the arms of another person... for his sake... even if she lost the meaning of her life in the process.

Gu Miao Ling had found what she had always wished for. However, her heart welled-up with regrets, [I'm going to stay here imprisoned for my entire life. Wouldn't Gu Du Xing's life be ruined if he dedicates it to me?]

[He's still young. He mustn't spend his life in solitude.]

"This won't do. This is simply out of the question." Gu Miao Ling frantically shook her head. She sobbed, and was choked with emotions. "My life is already done for. I can't get out of this prison. But, you have excellent future prospects, Little Brother. How can you waste your time and future on someone like me? This is simply out of question."

Chapter 305: This Love Will Be My Strength To Strive-on!

"But, I've never liked anybody else besides you," Gu Du Xing stated in an anxious manner. "I visited the Lower Three Heavens a while back. There were so many beautiful women there. But, none of them were as beautiful as Sister Xiao Miao. Ji Mo and Luo Ke Di couldn't take their eyes off those women. But, I didn't even look at them."

Gu Du Xing hadn't even blinked once before betraying his two brothers. He had conveniently ruined their impression in the process of expressing the extent of his love!

"But... this isn't right." Gu Miao Ling pushed herself, and wiped-off her tears. Gu Du Xing's words had turned her tears into a gentle laughter even though she was feeling miserable. "Little Brother, you must know that married couples always stay together. I'll remain imprisoned in this cave for my entire life. So, I request you to stop being so foolish."

She stopped Gu Du Xing from saying anything else. She then added in a sad tone, "Little Brother, Sister Xiao Miao is very grateful for the way you feel. You know what... I won't be afraid of this cave anymore. But, you mustn't continue to tread on this path in such a foolish manner.

"My dear Little Brother, you must look for a lovely young girl who'll always be beside you through the hardships of life; someone who'll grow old with you... That's how husband and wife should be.

"You must return quickly. Don't stay here for too long. Don't be so willful all the time; learn to be mature," Gu Miao Ling looked at Gu Du Xing affectionately. She gazed at him for a long time until tears started to flow from her eyes. Then, a satisfied smile appeared on her face. "Sister Xiao Miao will live a life that's going

to be sustained by your confession. So, this life will not be in vain."

"No!" Gu Du Xing exclaimed loudly. "I just have to become an Emperor level expert, right? Sister Xiao Miao, wait for me. I'll reach the Emperor level within two years. I take a vow. I vow on my ancestors' souls. I..."

"How dare you!" Gu Miao Ling retorted in a stern voice. "Don't dare to speak further. I'll die right here in front of you."

Gu Du Xing looked at Gu Miao Ling. He replied with a gentle smile on his face, "Sister Xiao Miao, if you really want to die here and now — then we can become husband and wife right now."

Gu Miao Ling's body trembled as she interpreted the meaning concealed in his words.

She threw herself at the railings as she shouted, "No, you mustn't. I forbid you. I forbid you from doing that."

Gu Du Xing extended his hands through the railings. Gu Miao Ling blushed. Her ice-cold body trembled as he embraced it.

"Sister Xiao Miao, I was just a Third Grade Sword Great Master when you were imprisoned here. But now, I'm a Fifth Grade Revered Sword Artist. I shall succeed in becoming a Sword King within six months. Do you believe me?" Gu Du Xing stated in a gloomy tone.

"Fifth Grade Revered Sword Artist? Really?" Gu Miao Ling looked at Gu Du Xing in amazement.

"Yes!" Gu Du Xing said proudly. "I didn't use any shortcuts to reach this level. I practiced each and every step with the utmost dedication," he said. Then, he leaned towards Gu Miao Ling. He brought his lips close to her ear and spoke softly, "I met an unusually talented person. He taught me to reach the higher grades faster... Nobody knows about this, okay?"

Gu Du Xing had made-up all this on the spot in order to reassure Gu Miao Ling.

"Really?" Gu Miao Ling looked at him with her big round eyes.

"Absolutely! Or else, I'll vow!" Gu Du Xing raised his hands to take a pledge.

"Don't!" Gu Miao Ling stopped him. She then said in a soft tone, "I believe you."

"Well then!" Gu Du Xing said with a satisfied smile. They felt extremely warm and happy even though they were separated by the unbreakable ice-cold railing.

"Oh! By the way, that talented person became my Big Brother later on. He has given me something for you." Gu Du Xing wanted to reach out to his bosom to take something out, but he didn't wish to let go of Gu Miao Ling. Therefore, he had to make an extremely weird posture to take the thing out of his clothes.

Then, he placed a small jade box in Gu Miao Ling's hands... as if it was a precious treasure. Then, he quickly hugged her again.

"What is this?" Gu Miao Ling bent her neck as she fiddled with the small jade box.

"Don't open it now. First go inside. Then, open it," Gu Du Xing explained in a low voice, "This is a tiny piece of fire essence."

"What?" Gu Miao Ling was dumbfounded. Fire essence was one of the most wonderful treasures. Even a fingernail-sized fire essence was enough to eliminate any degree of cold.

And, this was what Gu Miao Ling needed the most.

Chu Yang had almost gotten into a fight with the Sword Spirit to save this precious fire essence. After all, not even a fragment of it would've been saved if the Nine Tribulations Sword had absorbed it.

Fire essence was so rare that only a fist-sized chunk of it was found in the national treasury of the Great Zhao Nation even though their treasurers had been accumulating rare items for

hundreds of years.

And, Chu Yang had still given all of it to Gu Du Xing.

"This too..." Gu Du Xing reached into his bosom, and took out a jade bottle.

"What is this?" Gu Miao Ling was unable to find words to express her happiness.

"Vitality Spring Water," Gu Du Xing said. "My big brother also gave this for you. You'll drink this now, okay? This is a fine item. I've heard that drinking this will increase one's vitality and life force. In fact, even the scars of any injuries you may sustain won't remain after you've consumed this."

Gu Du Xing continued to explain things about the Vitality Spring Water. He looked quite delighted.

Gu Miao Ling already knew about the Vitality Spring Water since she was the daughter of the Gu Clan Lord. However, she didn't speak a single word. She simply gazed at Gu Du Xing; she wanted to listen to her beloved's explanation.

She had realized; [He looks so immersed in this... He must've worked really hard all this time. How many ordeals and sufferings has he gone through?]

[Only six months has passed.]

Gu Du Xing had progressed from the Third Grade Sword Great Master to Fifth Grade Revered Sword Artist. Most people would be shocked by his progress, and would only admire his talent. However, all Gu Miao Ling could think was this, [I wonder what sort of brutal training he must've gone through to level-up so fast.]

Gu Miao Ling couldn't help but feel her heart ache.

"You fool... you shouldn't be too hard on yourself." Gu Miao Ling looked at the box that contained the fire essence. Then, she rubbed it; it made a gentle sound. "But now, I should be able to wait here

for a few years since I've this with me now."

"No!" Gu Du Xing dissented. "It would be my sin to let you stay here even for an hour."

"Well, shouldn't you leave now?" Gu Miao Ling let go of him. "It seems like someone is coming over to ask you to leave."

Gu Du Xing turned around to see a Clan's elder walking towards him with long strides. He went pale, and gritted his teeth, "Ah, this bunch of old bastards."

"You mustn't speak like that." Gu Miao Ling shook her head. She then said, "All of us are from the same clan. Also... this is our home."

"Haa!" Gu Du Xing looked at the sky, and let out a deep sigh.

"I'm going inside now," Gu Miao Ling said in a gentle voice. She stared profoundly into his eyes, "You have to take good care of yourself... Little Brother."

"You're still calling me Little Brother?" Gu Du Xing asked in an anxious manner.

"What else should I call you... if not Little Brother?" Gu Miao Ling frowned. "I haven't agreed yet."

"Huh?" Gu Du Xing retorted, "Sister Xiao Miao, you mustn't go back on your words like that."

"I can't go back on the words I haven't said yet... can I?" Gu Miao Ling looked at him as she whispered gently, "Sister Xiao Miao can't escape this place. But, you're free. You shouldn't hold yourself back for Sister Xiao Miao's sake if you ever come to admire another girl. You must pursue her with all your might. We... I... even if I can come out of this cave someday... nobody knows how many months or years away that day is. Please don't let the prime years of your youth go to waste."

"I don't want anyone other than Sister Xiao Miao," Gu Du Xing's

voice shivered. "There may be many beautiful women in the Nine Heavens Continent. In fact, there may be hundreds and thousands of astonishing beauties. But, I won't choose anyone I find attractive."

Gu Miao Ling let out a giggle, "You fool! Wouldn't a girl have to like you back even if you like her?"

After that, she went back inside. Her beautiful eyes were still looking at him as she slowly faded away into the darkness.

The Elder exclaimed from a distance as he arrived, "Young Clan Lord! Everyone is waiting for you."

Even the guard who was hiding on the other end rolled his eyes in resentment when he heard this, [You old fogy! Are you rushing for your funeral? It was such a touching scene... Can't you see that even I'm crying?]

"Alright!" Gu Du Xing replied. Then, he turned his head to look towards the cave. But, Gu Miao Ling had already gone inside.

Gu Du Xing kept staring at the cave for a while. He then yelled out, "Sister Xiao Miao! Wait for me... I'll definitely come back for you. I'll marry you, and make you my wife."

Gu Miao Ling wailed as her face went pale, and her body turned limp inside the prison-cave, [This little sweetheart!]

She shivered as a burst of chilly air attacked her. She took out the small jade box, and opened it. Suddenly, her entire body was enveloped in the heat that came out of the box. And, she began to feel warm and comfortable as a result.

She brought the fire essence close to her body. She didn't feel even the slightest bit of cold anymore. She felt as if she was sitting in front of a stove in cold winter.

This gentle warmth protected an area of about three feet around her; everything else was still freezing as before.

This warmth contradicted the coldness she had been enduring until a while ago. The difference was of that between Heaven and earth.

It was obvious that one person could easily sustain their bodily warmth even under these harsh circumstances by using this fire essence.

Gu Miao Ling reached out, and gently caressed the fire essence. Her face revealed a bright and beautiful smile, [Du Xing, I'll wait for you. Even if you don't want... or need me... I'll still continue to wait.]

After that, she sat down quietly. Each day had passed like a year to her since the day she had been imprisoned. But now, her heart felt a ray of hope for the first time; she felt calm.

[There's a stubborn guy waiting for me out there; he's deeply in love with me. I mustn't break down; no matter what. I must strive-on under any circumstances.]

[Du Xing, I'll not let you down.]

Gu Miao Ling sat down cross-legged. Then, she began to circulate her martial energy, [Du Xing is working really hard. So, I too must strive to help him.]

Gu Du Xing turned around to face the guard. He bowed to him and said, "Brother, I request you to take good care of her." His sword-like eyebrows slanted upwards as he said, "I'll never treat you unjustly if you do this for me."

The guard was flattered. He waved his hands and said, "Young Clan Lord, why are you saying such words? Young Miss will never suffer any grievances here; I assure you."

"Thank you very much."

Gu Du Xing cupped his hands together. Suddenly, he shot-up like a sword; it seemed as if he had aimed to pierce through the blue dome of Heaven.

[For this love – I'll wait. I'll strive-on.]

He then arrived in front of his clan's troops after several leaps and landings. And, he had brought an imposing aura along with him.

Chapter 306: Whoa! Master!

"Listen, everyone! We're going to confront the Three Stars Divine Clan for the entire Middle Three Heavens' safety," Gu Du Xing came straight to the point, "We might die... or end-up going missing... or might get buried in the mouth of a spirit beast. But, I only have one thing to say in this regard... "

Around two-thousand soldiers stood below. Their gazes were fixed on him.

There was complete silence. No one spoke a single word.

Gu Du Xing stood under the flags of the Gu Clan. He drew out his sword, and clamored, "I want to say that... no matter what happens, we'll always have the support of our homeland... our parents... our loved ones... our family... and our children."

"So, let's leave now." He then jumped forward, and landed on a horse. After that, he turned around and bowed. He cupped his fists in a respectful salute, "Foster Father, please take care of yourself."

Gu Yun Lan waved his hands, and replied in a deep voice, "I only have a small request – come back alive."

"I will."

Gu Du Xing led the way under the fluttering banners. He was being followed by the majestic cavalry; they rode forward like a tornado. The ice and snow was broken into pieces as the iron hooves trampled over them. The entire atmosphere was overshadowed by the sound of 'clanging' metals.

Gu Yun Lan kept standing motionless for a long time. He watched as the Gu Clan's majestic troops slowly disappeared into the horizon.

"Clan Lord..." A person appeared next to him. This was the same elder who had gone to call Gu Du Xing earlier. "Is the Clan Lord still suspicious of Young Master Du Xing?"

"I'm not," Gu Yun Lan replied profoundly. "I haven't been suspicious of him ever since he has returned to us."

"Oh..." The Elder was surprised by his response.

"We all belong to the Gu Clan. We all have the same surname – Gu!" Gu Yun Lan said in a heavy tone, "I didn't want Gu Yan Yang and Gu Yan Yue to die since I'm their biological father. But, it seems that the majority of our clan members were looking forward to their early deaths... Isn't that right?"

The Elder lowered his head; he didn't dare to speak a single word.

"Those two... certainly weren't cut out to lead the clan," Gu Yun Lan heaved a deep sigh. He then said, "But, Gu Du Xing clearly is."

"Indeed," the Elder agreed with him.

"So, we must forget this matter for the sake of our Clan." Two drops of tears slipped down from the corners of Gu Yun Lan's eyes as he shut them tightly. He then added, "I just hope that our Gu Clan... continues to prosper forever and ever."

After that, he lowered his head.

He was the Lord of the Gu Clan. So, he had learnt to abandon things that needed to be abandoned. He had learnt to sacrifice things that needed to be sacrificed for the sake of the Clan. However, no one could truly understand the kind of pain and grief he must've undergone in order to uphold his position as the Clan Lord.

Nobody knew...

There were probably a few people who were grateful to him for doing so much for the Clan. But, no one ever spoke about it.

Not even a single person.

"Young Master Du Xing's speed of progress is extremely impressive. I'm certain that he'll break through to the Sword Emperor level before reaching the age of thirty. Moreover, all of us

are aware of the relationship he shares with Young Miss Miao Ling. So, they should get married when the time is right... Then, Young Master Du Xing will no longer be just your adopted son; he'll also become your son-in-law... It goes without saying that a son-in-law is no less than a half-son... "

The Elder stood by his side and continued, "Clan Lord, please don't worry about anything. The offspring may be your daughter's son, but he'll still be your own blood. After all, the Gu Clan's future heir will be your own grandson. His very existence would ensure that our future generations inherit the Gu Clan's bloodline. Clan Lord, isn't this good for all? It's an established fact that there's no such thing as perfection in this world... "

"Yes... that would be great," Gu Yun Lan seemed lost in his own thoughts. He murmured with a smile, "There's no such thing as perfection in this world... there's no such thing as perfection... there has never been... and will never be... "

Gu Yun Lan turned around, and walked inside the manor, "I'm going to see Miao Ling... That poor girl has suffered a lot recently... "

Then, his figure slowly disappeared.

The Elder sighed, and followed after him. He was secretly rejoicing in his heart, [The Gu Clan's 'crisis phase' is finally over...]

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Meng Chao Ran and Tan Tan had arrived in the Middle Three Heavens a long time ago. They were crossing a wilderness, and were heading towards the Cang Lan Battlefront.

Meng Chao Ran didn't wish to increase Chu Yang's troubles in the Lower Three Heavens. Moreover, he wanted to get away from the quarrels at that place. Therefore, he had brought along Tan Tan to seek shelter in the Middle Three Heavens.

They had been coming across unexpected scenarios ever since

they had arrived in the Middle Three Heavens.

Meng Chao Ran had discovered certain changes in his body. Moreover, the concentration of spirit energy was about three times more in the Middle Three Heavens.

Meng Chao Ran had realized that his own cultivation was progressing by leaps and bounds. This was under the stimulation of highly concentrated spirit energy; especially when coupled with the 'body tempering methods' taught by Chu Yang.

Meng Chao Ran could barely complete the set of movements taught to him by Chu Yang when he was still in the Lower Three Heavens. However, he had been able to complete the entire set of movements in the Middle Three Heavens. Moreover, he was now able to discharge the impurities from his body.

Things had completely gone out of hand after that. Meng Chao Ran had started to cherish this opportunity, and had made good use of it. He had started to practice those movements three times a day. Consequently, the impurities had been completely discharged from his body by the third day...

The rich concentration of spirit energy in the Middle Three Heavens was enhanced by the fact that they had Divine Chi Gathering Fish with them. This had led to a multi-fold increase in the accumulation of dense spirit energy.

Meng Chao Ran realized that his own cultivation had skyrocketed. In fact, he had been able to break through one grade within three days.

He had continued to have breakthroughs in the two months that had followed. And, he had already reached the peak of the Ninth Grade Revered Martial Artist by now. He was only one step away from becoming a King level expert now.

It seemed as if his body had adapted to the Middle Three Heavens' rich spirit energy. But, this had also slowed down his

cultivation speed as time had progressed. However, the progress of martial energy within his body was several times faster as compared to the Lower Three Heavens.

Tan Tan's progress had been even more exaggerated. He had gone crazy owing to the presence of the Divine Chi Gathering Fish by his side. He had started to practice martial arts to the extent of being considered a maniac... He had even stopped eating...

He had almost ended-up breaking his back when he had successfully completed the set of movements for the first time. However, the results had left him in utter joy...

He had been making a breakthrough every three to four days over the past two months. He had managed to step-up from the Sixth Grade Martial Artist to a Martial Master. They were a series of steady breakthroughs. It seemed as if he was leaping from one cloud to another as he was advancing forward. In fact, Tan Tan's cultivation had continued to progress by leaps and bounds even when Meng Chao Ran's progress-speed had returned to normal.

In fact, Tan Tan had reached the First Grade of Martial Great Master now.

Meng Chao Ran felt as if he was in a dream as he witnessed such an insane progressing speed. He examined Tan Tan's body thoroughly. He then came to realize that a strange change had occurred in his body; it was completely different from before.

This left him scratching his head like an idiot, [This strange change in Tan Tan's body... Was this hidden within his body all along? Or... has this happened after he arrived in the Middle Three Heavens?]

[If this is an inborn trait... why didn't I discover it earlier? If the change occurred after he arrived here, then...] Meng Chao Ran felt that this was getting too strange and perplexing. He had never heard of something like this happening to someone upon moving from the Lower Three Heavens to the Middle Three Heavens.

[Surprisingly, it has transformed his aptitude for the better...]

Tan Tan had already broken through to the level of the Martial Great Master. But, Meng Chao Ran had figured that things couldn't go on like this. [What Tan Tan really needs right now isn't the rapid progress, but real-life battle experience.]

Therefore, he had decided to take Tan Tan to the Cang Lan Battlefront. He had wanted him to gain real-battle experience on the way. However, he was unaware of the enormous changes which were taking place at the Cang Lan Battlefront at this time.

They had now arrived in front of the Ice Mirror Mountain.

This so-called 'Ice Mirror Mountain' was a huge precipice. It seemed as if it had been severed with a knife from top to bottom. It appeared like a big piece of flatland when looked from beneath. This flat mountain-wall got covered with ice to form a giant mirror in the winter season. Someone passing through this area would be able see their reflection in the mirror. In fact, they would feel as if they were inside the mirror. This was one of the most wondrous sites of the Middle Three Heavens.

The Cang Lan Battlefront was located on the other side of the Ice Mirror Mountain. In fact, it could be said that this mountain was a part of the Cang Lan Battlefront.

Meng Chao Ran almost collapsed as he saw this spectacle.

Even Tan Tan was baffled. His face turned pale as soon as he laid eyes on the mirror. He looked at the mountain-wall, and shouted, "Master, Master, this entire mountain is a mirror, ah... "

Meng Chao Ran gave a cold smile in response...

But then, something unexpected happened. Tan Tan's face revealed a shocked expression as he looked at his own reflection in the mirror. His eyes and mouth were wide open.

Meng Chao Ran felt that something was off. He turned around to look into the mirror. He saw Tan Tan's reflection; his eyes were

still wide open with shock. However, what was most shocking wasn't the bewildered look on Tan Tan's face, but his face itself. Surprisingly, the mirror made him look extremely handsome owing to the deformed and shocked expression on his face.

His eyebrows were on the same level in the reflection. The bridge of his nose no longer looked abrupt. His ears seemed to have sharpened enough to complement his face. This made him look like an adorable chocolate boy.

Meng Chao Ran was startled by this. So, he quickly turned his head to look at Tan Tan. But, he realized that it was true. Therefore, it became clear that Tan Tan looked extremely handsome whenever he was in utter shock or showed signs of bewilderment on his face.

Tan Tan became excited as he saw this. Therefore, the astonished look on his face faded-off, and his 'shocked' facial expression went back to normal.

"Master... did you see that? I looked particularly handsome, didn't I?" Tan Tan asked in a jubilant manner as he looked at Meng Chao Ran.

"Well, you certainly looked much better than before... I must say that you looked quite pleasing to the eyes." Meng Chao Ran was very happy since this boy was his own apprentice. [His appearance has always been quite... twisted...]

However, Meng Chao Ran was about to turn gloomy...

Tan Tan walked a few steps, and went closer to the mirror. After that, he turned his head from side-to-side a few times, and grinned at the mirror. He then walked a few steps away from the mirror. He turned around, and grinned once again. He started to try out different facial expressions.

He realized after several experiments, [I look the best only when I'm shocked.]

Thereafter, Meng Chao Ran's torture started...

"Whoa! Master!" Tan Tan appeared to be in 'shock' as he said, "Look, there's grass over there."

Meng Chao Ran laughed mildly in response.

"Whoa! Master!" Tan Tan continued to speak in a 'shocked' manner, "The grass is green."

Meng Chao Ran could only smile this time.

"Whoa! Master!" Tan Tan said in amazement, "Look how high the sky is."

Meng Chao Ran gave a hollow laugh this time.

"Whoa! Master!" Tan Tan was even more 'shocked' this time, "Look at the soil on the ground..."

Meng Chao Ran's smiling face turned stiff.

"Whoa! Master!" The 'shocked' Tan Tan said in an eager manner, "Look at me. Look at me."

Meng Chao Ran's mouth twitched.

"Whoa, Master!" Tan Tan maintained the 'shocked' expression on his face as he asked, "Don't I look handsome right now?"

Meng Chao Ran's body swayed.

"Whoa! Master!" Tan Tan moved closer to him. He then said, "I look more handsome now, don't I?"

Meng Chao Ran's cheeks were streamed with tears as he collapsed...

Was Meng Chao Ran a stoic man? The fact was that even Diwu Qing Rou wouldn't stand a chance against Meng Chao Ran if the basis of judgements was trimmed down to one's psychological composure and forbearance.

Meng Chao Ran wouldn't blink an eye if he were standing in the path of a massive landslide... or facing the turbulence of raging

seas. He would remain calm and composed even in life and death situations. He could even stay calm while submerged in a sea comprised of a million corpses.

It was unprecedented for someone to have such kind of forbearance. However, Meng Chao Ran had finally been defeated by his own disciple— a boy he had raised with his own hands.

This is how Tan Tan shattered his master's forbearance...

Chapter 307: Hero Saves The Beauty

Tan Tan kept speaking in amazement in the following few days. In fact, he wanted to retain the same 'shocked' expression on his face... regardless of whether he was walking or eating.

He would often gasp and yell out these two words, "Whoa! Master!"

Every time Meng Chao Ran heard these two words, 'Whoa, Master', he got struck by a splitting headache.

But, he was forced to endure this. He felt as if each day was as long as a year. Initially, he had heaved a sigh of relief after they had crossed the road stretching alongside the Ice Mirror Mountain. However, Tan Tan still continued to cause a ruckus. He kept shouting and wrangling all along.

Meng Chao Ran's misery was beyond description.

Even the Divine Chi Gathering Fish in Tan Tan's bosom flipped over inside the fish bowl, and revealed its white belly over the water surface; even the fish couldn't endure such non-stop barrage of narcissism and shamelessness...

They heard sounds of a battle taking place close-by just as they were walking out of the Ice Mirror Mountain. Meng Chao Ran was an experienced man. So, he put his hand on Tan Tan's mouth to shut him up. Then, they quietly moved towards the source of the sound.

They went around the mountain wall. Then, they saw that a young girl was fighting fiercely with a strange three-headed giant snake. The young woman held a long and gleaming sword in her right hand; she held a short translucent saber in her left hand. She was fighting rather fiercely. In fact, she even crashed head-on into the three-headed giant snake.

However, the fight was already nearing its end by the time Meng

Chao Ran and Tan Tan had arrived.

"A Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake!" Meng Chao Ran recognized the snake in just a glimpse. It was one of the different kinds of the spirit beast species found at the Cang Lan Battlefront. This snake was just a Third Grade Spirit Beast, but the 'essence cores' found inside its three heads were considered as a rare medicine.

The young maiden seemed to be very experienced if one were to judge by the way she was dealing with the Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake. After all, there were cuts and bruises all over its body.

Tan Tan was awe-struck upon watching the young woman fight. His mouth had unknowingly curved into the shape of the letter 'O'. He wasn't just pretending to be shocked this time... He was genuinely stunned. [This young lady looks almost my age, ah... How is she so powerful?]

Tan Tan was unaware that he too could handle this Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake without much difficulty at his present level; it certainly wouldn't endanger his life in any manner.

"Master, this girl is very beautiful!" Tan Tan turned around with an astonished expression on his face. He looked at his master and said, "I like how strong she is! And, just look at her big chest and that big round butt!"

Meng Chao Ran was left speechless upon hearing this...

Indeed, this young lady had nothing else to show off about her beauty apart from her big chest and buttocks. Even Meng Chao Ran felt that her looks were only average.

However, Tan Tan was right about one thing — she was very powerful. Even a sturdy warrior would find it difficult to implement her moves after watching her fight so dauntlessly... Moreover, she was doing it without blinking an eye!

The girl spoke while spitting as she fought with the beast, "...Evil

beast! Why haven't you knelt down in front of me yet? You should have voluntarily laid down your heads by now...you abominable beast...so vile and repulsive!"

"This beauty is quite violent!" Meng Chao Ran murmured to himself.

Meng Chao Ran turned around since he got no reply from his disciple. He then saw that Tan Tan was staring at this young woman blankly; even his mouth was wide open. In fact, Tan Tan seemed to be totally lost in his thoughts.

[Poor Tan Tan fell in love at the first sight...]

"Don't tell me...!" Meng Chao Ran was astonished.

This happened much faster than the time taken to describe – the Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake knew that it would be difficult for it to escape today. So, it hissed loudly and slapped its tail on the ground. This vicious whip was aimed at the young girl in the hope of taking her down in a suicidal attack.

"Ah!" The young maiden cried out in fear. She cursed out loud, "Damn it! You stinky snake! You Rascal! I tell you, you have successfully angered me now..."

Bam! The girl and the snake slammed against each other. Simultaneously, the Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake opened all its mouths wide in order to bite her.

"This is not good!" Meng Chao Ran couldn't finish the line; nor was he able to hold on to Tan Tan. Tan Tan had already leaped out by now. He was evidently burning with anxiety, "Beauty! I am coming to save you, haha..."

Tan Tan had once heard from Chu Yang about 'a hero saving a beauty', [The beauty gets touched by the hero's valor when he saves her. Then, they both start liking each other. The beauty devotes her life to him. And then... the story of their amiable love shall be spoken for all eternity!]

Tan Tan had always dreamt about living such a nice dream. Today, he had finally come across such an opportunity. Moreover, he had fallen in love with this maiden upon the very first sight; then how could he not rush forward to play a hero's role?

However, the young girl obviously had the means to deal with the snake. The short saber departed from her hand as the snake leaped towards her. The saber pierced one of the snake's throats. Simultaneously, her long sword gashed its way into the snake's second mouth, and continued to pierce deeper until the handle of the sword had gone inside. The snake's blood splashed out everywhere as a result...

She was about to take out a short saber hidden in her bosom to kill the last head of the snake. But, this is when she heard Tan Tan yell...

Tan Tan's voice was quite loud and terrifying; it sounded like the sound of a gong, mixed with a male duck's quack and a female wolf's howling! The young maiden got startled upon hearing his voice, and was thrown into disarray. She slowed down a bit, and was unable to pull out her short saber in time. Consequently, she ended up getting entangled by the snake's body.

"Where did this b*****d come from? And, why is he shouting?" the young girl shouted. She used her one 'available' hand to shield herself from the last head of the snake since it was about to attack her.

The Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake had received two fatal hits in a very short time. It could lose its life any time now. However, it got even more furious, and came hissing towards the young maiden in order to bite her. Its mouth had an awfully fishy smell.

And, Tan Tan arrived right at that moment!

'Saber Slash'!

'Shua'! He beheaded one of the snake's head with a slash of his

saber. The head then fell to the ground.

"Go for this head; not that one!" The young maiden spat out blood as she thought, [Is this guy a fool? Can't he see that this head is the most dangerous one right now?]

"Oh!" Tan Tan replied. He roared loudly, and slashed with his saber again.

Saber light shot out as smooth as white silk!

Yet another snake head was chopped down, and fell to the ground.

"What the f*ck!" the young maiden went mad, and ended up cursing him in a manly slur. Strings of saliva spat out of her clenched teeth as she cursed again, "This one! You pig!"

"Well, there should be a sequence for stuff like this!" Tan Tan retorted angrily. "What is your name?"

Tan Tan thought, [This woman can't differentiate between good and bad... This handsome brother has come here to save you... And, you're abusing him in return... You're even calling him a pig?] He nearly thought of giving up on rescuing her...

Tan Tan was seeing a Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake for the first time; so how would he know which of its heads were already dead? He had just seen that this young maiden was using one of her hands to block a snake head, while the remaining two heads seemed to be endangering her. Hence, he had decided to get rid of them first...

The young lady did all she could to support the remaining head of the snake. She heaved a sigh of relief. [This guy has chopped down the other two heads. So, he will chop down this last one too, right?]

However, she didn't see or hear any movements for quite some time. So, she turned her head angrily as she couldn't hold-on any longer. However, she saw that the boy was standing happily, and

watching from the side. Moreover, he cheered loudly when he saw the girl turn towards him, "Come on girl! You can do it!"

[Nothing in this world could be more annoying than this!]

"Ugh..." The young maiden couldn't hold-on any longer, and fell unconscious.

She thought before she fell unconscious, [I didn't die from the bite of the Three-Headed-Blackboned-Snake; nor was I poisoned. I am dying out of anger because of this abominable scoundrel who messes things up. He causes nothing but trouble...]

[My surname won't be Xie... if I don't torture him to death in my next life...]

The young maiden started to weaken owing to her dizziness. Her hand slipped, and the snake's head advanced towards her.

Tan Tan suddenly realized, [F*ck me! So she was referring to 'this' head earlier...]

"Ahwooh!" He leaped forward in a hurry.

'Shua!'

Tan Tan's saber chopped the last head of the snake, and it fell off. He took the opportunity to kick the head away.

"Just hurry up, and save her already!" Meng Chao Ran shouted.

"Oh...right...right..." Tan Tan replied repeatedly. He pulled her body out of the snake's entanglement. The snake's body was as thick as a thigh, which caused Tan Tan to drool all over. He even said, "Geez, so fat...!" while taking her out.

However, it was hard to say whom he was referring to as 'fat'—the snake or the girl.

The young maiden regained her senses as the cool breeze blew against her face, "I didn't die?"

"You most certainly didn't! I saved you," a strange voice stated.

The young maiden turned her head and saw a 'shocked' face staring at her.

[Eh? It seems like that guy with crooked eyebrow from a while ago is not here anymore.]

The young maiden asked as she got up, "Where is that scoundrel I saw earlier?"

Tan Tan asked in an 'astonished' manner, "What scoundrel?"

"The b*****d who killed this snake!" The young maiden stomped her feet in anger as she looked around for him.

"There's no b*****d here!" Tan Tan replied in a 'shocked' tone.

The young maiden asked, "Did he leave?"

"No!" a 'shocked' Tan Tan answered.

The young lady asked, "Then where is he?" She had started feeling amiss by now, [Why are you giving me such a 'shocked' look over a normal conversation?]

"He is here!" Tan Tan still had the 'shocked' expression on his face. He said, "It is me!"

"Huh..." a strange voice came out of her throat as she stared at his face.

"What are you looking at?" Tan Tan asked with a 'shocked' expression.

"It's clearly not you..." The young maiden frowned.

"It is me!" Tan Tan said with a 'shocked' expression, "Young lady, I saved you... It really was me!"

The young girl almost collapsed. She barely managed to ask, "Why are you in shock if you saved me...?"

Tan Tan said in his usual 'shocked' tone, "Young Lady, don't you think that I look incredibly handsome?"

"What about the snake? Where is it?" The girl felt defeated. So,

she changed the topic. In fact, she had even forgotten her rage owing to his puzzling facial expression.

"Over there!" Tan Tan said, "I helped you in venting your anger as well..."

"Ah, ah, ah..." The young woman finally saw the badly mutilated snake heads lying on the ground. They had been turned into minced meat. "You... you..."

"That's right... it's me!" Tan Tan mixed his 'shocked' expression with a complacent look. "This stinky snake dared to harm you... So, I smashed it! I smashed all three of its heads..."

"Oh God... heavens..." The girl stomped her feet in grief and anger. "Kill me... just kill me... What kind of a monster have I encountered today!"

"It's just a snake, Young Miss. You don't need to make so much fuss about it. It surely had three heads. But, it was just a snake. It's not like it was a dog," Tan Tan explained while still in 'shock'.

"I will kill you, ah..." The girl jumped at him with the ferocity of a tigress. She clutched his neck firmly with her hands, and shook him back and forth violently. She said, "You pig! You smashed the snake's heads... You smashed the snake's heads... after I spent all my strength into killing it?"

Tan Tan stuck his tongue out as he got choked. His 'shocked' expression instantly disappeared, "Gi... uh... ggg... ggg... uhh... gi... girl... I... I... I... what... wrong?"

Chapter 308: Strange Combination

"You b*****d!" The girl's anger exploded like a volcano, "I killed that snake for the Snake Cores in its heads! Ugh... This is infuriating. I'm really pissed right now..."

"Snake cores?" Tan Tan was at a loss. [The snakes here contain cores inside them... like apples or jujubes?]

Meng Chao Ran held his belly in order to contain his laughter while standing on the side. However, he finally came forward to mediate between those two. The girl let go of Tan Tan as she noticed a bystander's presence. She then ran over to examine the three snake heads. However, they had been turned into minced meat by Tan Tan...

Therefore, she found nothing after a thorough examination, and fell back dejectedly. It seemed as if she wished to cry, but was unable to find any tears to shed, "My Snake cores..."

"Hey Young Miss, what is your name?" Tan Tan touched his nose as he walked over. It seemed as if he had realized his mistake, "Cough, cough, Young Miss, I saved you just now. Then, won't this be considered as the scenario of a hero saving a beauty?"

"Hero saving a beauty?" The girl looked at him with teary eyes. She was unable to wrap her head around what he had just said. [You call this the scenario of a hero saving a beauty? Won't you call this showing off quite shamelessly? You are far from that scenario!]

"Yes," Tan Tan replied proudly. He completely forgot to maintain the 'shocked' expression on his face as he said, "My brother apprentice once said that a beauty devotes her life to the hero who saves her. Henceforth, she harbors deep affection towards him, and the two of them live happily ever after. They weave a charming story together, and their tales go on for all eternity..."

"To... devote my life to you?" The girl stuttered as she looked at the guy standing in front of her. She thought; [This guy is really insane. This scoundrel ruined my chances of obtaining the Snake cores by smashing them, and sent all my hard work down the drain. And, now he has the guts to shamelessly claim that I should devote my life to him. How can he be so thick-skinned?]

[From where does he borrow such shamelessness?]

"Correct! Devote your life to me!" Tan Tan stated in a 'matter-of-fact' manner, "I am a hero, and you are a beauty. Shouldn't you devote your life to me since I saved you? Moreover, my martial arts achievements are as big as your chest, and I'm as attractive as your exuberant and round buttocks. We make a perfect match, don't you think?"

Suddenly, Tan Tan came to realize something as he finished speaking. He hastily feigned to be mulling over something. Then, he said in a 'shocked' tone, "Whoa! Do you think that such a handsome and confident man like myself... isn't worthy of being with a beauty like yourself?"

"Blargh..." The girl rolled her eyes and fainted once again.

[I've really run into a disaster today...]

Meng Chao Ran's mediation calmed down both the sides eventually. So, both of them sat down peacefully while facing each other. But, Tan Tan was quite angry; [I am a hero who saved this beauty. Then, why doesn't she devote her life to me?]

The girl was also quite furious; [This guy is simply a mental case.]

Meng Chao Ran used his admirable conversation skills and profound wisdom to solve the matter. He inquired the girl who was unknowingly attracted by his amiable smile. So, she ended up providing all the information about herself...

Cough! It wasn't easy for Meng Chao Ran to fool the girl with whom his own disciple had fallen in love at first sight. However,

he didn't hesitate in using his charismatic persona to gain her personal information.

Xie Dan Feng was the younger sister of Xie Dan Qiong – the Young Clan Lord of Xie Clan. Moreover, she had received the key training from the Xie Clan. So, she was a talented person with great potential...

Xie Dan Feng wasn't extremely beautiful. However, she had everything an average woman should have. Moreover, her figure was quite curvaceous.

It could be said that she had just above average looks owing to her ordinary face. However, her fiery hot figure compensated for that flaw.

In fact, it was more than compensated!

Xie Dan Feng and Tan Tan didn't get along well. However, Meng Chao Ran had 10,000% confidence in his disciple's marvelous ability to annoy others.

Tan Tan was also incomparably shameless and narcissistic...

Therefore, Meng Chao Ran was confident that it wouldn't be difficult for his disciple to get this girl... [Well, the only trouble would be from this girl's clan... However, this is not the right time to worry about that since these two young birds must agree to be together first. I will let Chu Yang worry about the other concerned parties... when the time is right.]

It was obviously quite irresponsible on Meng Chao Ran's part to be thinking like that.

Everyone else had set out for Cang Lan Battlefront to participate in the war; but Xie Dan Feng had showed up here for an entirely different reason. She had run away from home in a fit of pique after getting scolded by her elder brother – Xie Dan Qiong...

[This is simply a heaven-sent opportunity.]

Meng Chao Ran was deliberately walking far ahead of them so that those two can hang out together in the back. This was a rare chance for creating a 'young couple'...

Tan Tan and Xie Dan Feng would indulge in fierce martial art battles several times a day ever since they had first met.

Tan Tan's cultivation had been progressing quickly these days, while Xie Dan Feng was a trained genius who had cultivated with the help of countless elixirs granted by her clan. However, her overall strength matched evenly with Tan Tan's. Tan Tan had been at a disadvantage in the beginning. Nonetheless, he managed to hold his own after a few rounds. He had even begun to defend himself and fight back. He finally gained an upper hand three days later... And, got hold of the winning end of the curve at last...

In fact, Tan Tan had reaped great benefits from these fights. Meng Chao Ran realized that he had underestimated his disciple after seeing his fighting capabilities and gradual progress over the past few days.

[This guy really does not believe in going easy on the fairer sex!]

Meng Chao Ran was a little worried about this since he was Tan Tan's master. However, he still admired his disciple for having such a decisive disposition.

Tan Tan could be seen roaring like a fierce dragon all along the way as he would overturn a fiery tigress like Xie Dan Feng. Then, he would suppress her under his body, and unleash his fierce punches on her. All the spots on her body were fair game in Tan Tan's eyes... except for her face.

He'd grab her chest... buttocks... thighs... whatever he could... whenever he could!

Bang... Bam... Thump... It was as satisfying and fulfilling as punching a sandbag to one's heart content!

Xie Dan Feng would continue to struggle furiously beneath him...

She would even curse loudly as she'd take the beating...

The most impressive thing about her was that she didn't cry even after taking all the beating! She would continue to retaliate with all her might while thinking of all possible ways to fight back! Moreover, she wasn't the type to give up before reaching her goal...

Such disposition was indeed quite extraordinary!

Thus, the same scene could be seen unfolding almost everywhere on the way!

Meng Chao Ran's motive – to train his disciple with the help of practical battles was half-fulfilled already; and they hadn't even entered the central parts of Cang Lan Battlefront yet. And, this was all thanks to Xie Dan Feng... even if it was based on her sufferings, grievances, and tears of blood...

Tan Tan and Xie Dan Feng would rush forward whenever they encountered a spirit beast; each competing to be the first.

This was because Xie Dan Feng was on an important mission of acquiring fur and 'inner cores' of spirit beasts. Meanwhile, Tan Tan intended to hone his martial arts skills. Moreover, he also wanted to use this opportunity to get rich.

They would keep the cores separately after seizing them, and would mind their own business. They also chose to stay out of each other's battles. And, Tan Tan would deliberately refrain from gifting her anything; [I have earned these items on my own... So, why would I give them to you; especially when you still haven't devoted yourself to me!]

Tan Tan's logic was kind of appropriate... in a way...

However, his approach was poles apart from how a man ought to pursue a woman...

Moreover, Xie Dan Feng would never accept Tan Tan's gifts; [These are your items; why would you give them to me? It's not

like you are my husband or anything!]

The two young individuals were adhering to their principles quite assertively even though they partly seemed like money-grubbers.

Meng Chao Ran's lips began to twitch as he continued to look at them. In fact, he didn't know whether to laugh or cry!

One thing led to another... And, it was hard to tell who raised this proposition, "Let's gamble! Let's begin the gambling fight!"

They would have to place their stakes every time they had a match. The loser would have to pay the winner in the end.

The gambling-stakes were usually one or a few spirit beast cores.

One could easily imagine what happened next— Tan Tan lost just a few times while Miss Xie continued to lose the entire way. Therefore, she was left with nothing in the end... except for grief and indignation. She had put so much time and effort into collecting those spirit beast cores, but she had still ended up losing them all in gambling. They all went inside Tan Tan's waist pouch and never came out again!

Miss Xie blew her top and went completely frantic... She devoted herself more and more into hunting as many spirit beasts as she could for the purpose of obtaining their cores. However, she'd come back and gamble with Tan Tan after accumulating enough of them. However, she would then lose them all in the end... Then, she'd go out for hunting once again... come back with stakes... gamble with Tan Tan... And, this cycle continued on and on...

Meng Chao Ran didn't know whether to laugh or cry in the company of these two young lunatics...

[Forget it! They will learn through experience anyway. I should allow them to do whatever they feel like...]

And, thus continued this strange and noisy bunch's venture into the Cang Lan Battlefront.

... ...

The Lower Three Heavens' Continent Center Citadel was enveloped in an aura of death and massacre owing to an imminent war while the Middle Three Heavens was in a chaos...

Diwu Qing Rou's purge was still ongoing.

Yet, Minister Chu was far away from the reach of all this mess at this moment. He was sitting in a small boat in Lotus Lake, and was busy fishing. He was leading this sort of simplistic life in a rather calm and easy-going manner.

The Lotus Lake wasn't extremely big, but it wasn't very small either. It had a perimeter of several hundred kilometers. It could be said that it was a fairly big lake in such an inland area.

The lands had started to unfreeze as the midwinter was coming to an end; one could see the small green grass shoots on the ground. The warm wind blowing against the willow trees was precisely hinting that...'that' period of the year... was approaching.

Lotus Lake was still in a withered state. Its semi-frozen surface was covered with lotus leaves, which floated like chunks of rag on the water. The magnificent 'summer-time' scenery of an endless bloom of lotuses that would paint the lake's surface in a tint of pink and green was nowhere to be seen...

Minister Chu was clad in a white robe; he was sitting comfortably in his small boat. He was holding a fishing rod. His small boat was floating around on the water surface, and was drifting at the whim of the ripples like duckweed.

It seemed as if a white cloud was floating atop the green water surface.

Suddenly, the wire attached to the fishing rod moved and tightened with a 'whizzing' sound. Then, it curled up before fluttering back and forth on the water surface...

It seemed like a fish had swallowed the bait. Moreover, the fish

didn't seem to be small...

However, Minister Chu didn't pull the fish out of the water. He just let it struggle wildly until it began to pull his small boat. And, this eventually caused his boat to drift forward...

"This is very satisfying!" Minister Chu said while holding the fishing rod tightly. He was thoroughly enjoying the pulling force of the big fish. He was completely relaxed and thrilled, "Fishing is so much fun! But, is the fun derived from the fish itself? Nope! Is the process of fishing enjoyable? Not at all! The actual fun begins after the fish swallows the bait. You feel your heart racing when that happens since you're thrilled with excitement and pleasure...

"I am going to continue savoring this thrilling sensation until I am satisfied..." Minister Chu looked up and heaved a deep sigh of pleasure, "This is awesome!"

"Puhaha..." Suddenly, a loud sound of someone's uncontrollable laughter resounded in the vicinity. Not far away from his small boat was another boat. This second boat was slightly bigger in size. There was a young lady in that boat, and she was clad in a brocaded robe. She was seemingly fishing as well. She held a fishing rod in one hand, while her chin rested against her other.

One could easily tell by her facial expression from a while ago that she was bored to death. However, she burst into laughter upon hearing Minister Chu's fallacy, "Hey! Mr. Bookworm, have you caught a fish yet?"

Minister Chu's complexion sank as he replied in a displeased tone, "The ancients have said that men and women shouldn't touch hands when they give or receive things! They have also said that daughters must strictly adhere to their womanly ethics, and mustn't reveal their teeth while smiling. The ancients have said that... a man and a woman mustn't speak randomly when they meet for the first time. The ancients have also said that... you should call me 'Young Master'... not bookworm..."

"Haha..." The young girl burst into laughter once again, and revealed her small yet sharp pair of canine teeth in the process. She then rubbed her belly as she replied, "Oh my, you really are a pedantic scholar... I am completely confused after listening to your 'the ancients have said this... the ancients have said that'..."

"Young Lady, your words are truly lacking!" Chu Yang shook his head as he put on the air of a rotten scholar. Then, he preached to her, "This student here isn't a scholar... So, you cannot call me a 'pedantic scholar'..."

Chapter 309: Genuinely Valiant Woman!

"You're not a scholar?" The young girl became even more cheerful: "Then you're... an imperial graduate?"

"Nope!"

"Palace graduate?"

"Incorrect!"

"Palace exam topper?"

"Absolutely incorrect!"

"What the hell are you then?"

"Right now, I'm deeply ashamed..." Minister Chu's face was painted a shade of shame, as if he was really embarrassed for some act of his.

"Wahaha..." The young maiden suddenly burst into laughter, almost falling into the water. Overjoyed, she then turned her head and called out: "Young Miss, this bookworm is so funny; he is killing me..."

"That person is teasing you; he is just playing around with you." That young woman replied in a soft voice from the inside of the cabin. Though her voice was quite magnetic, it still... contained formidable power!

Though her voice sounded like that of a man, it still had a feminine touch to it!

It was a neutral sounding voice... in a way.

Chu Yang had already taken note of this strange master-servant duo several days ago. The young lady had yet to show her face, whereas the young maid was seen rushing in and out of the cabin this entire time.

Chu Yang had been staying in this Lotus Lake for several days

and they too had been floating for some time now. In fact, they would see each other every single day, which had been making him feel somewhat strange.

[I'm here to find a fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword... but what exactly are the two of you doing here?]

He obviously wouldn't believe that they were here to enjoy the scenery since there were no plants or flowers on the lake's surface at this time of the year.

Chu Yang was here for two reasons: First, to comprehend the supple power of water. Secondly, to accomplish his most important goal, that of finding the Nine Tribulations Sword's third fragment, hidden in this Lotus Lake!

The clues hidden inside the 'house of exceptional beauties' weren't just to confuse Diwu Qing Rou, but also to assist him in accomplishing his main objective: obtaining the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword!

Because it was hidden in this Lotus Lake!

This entire time Chu Yang had been trying to pin-point its location.

He had been boating in this lake for quite some time now, wandering in all directions, in order to allow the sword's tip and sword's edge in his Dantian to sense the third fragment's location.

However, they hadn't felt its presence in the least bit despite searching continuously for several days.

In any case, Chu Yang's memory wouldn't fail him; but unable to locate it, he only had one explanation to console himself with: [the right time hasn't yet arrived!]

Pulling back the curtains, following that voice, a human figure emerged from the cabin. As that figure strode forward, the boat began to sway. The young maid cried out in alarm and almost fell into the water.

"Young master, would you be willing to join me on my boat?" said that voice which, apparently, belonged to that ‘young lady’ who had made an appearance just now.

However, she walked with a majestic gait on the boat, resembling the resolute walk of a dragon or the deadly stride of a tiger!

Chu Yang took a quick glance and couldn’t help but exclaim in his heart: [My goodness!]

Since the moment he had heard the maid call out ‘young lady’ earlier, he had been expecting to see a beautiful and graceful lady with the countenance of a flower and face like the moon. But the ‘young lady’ who had appeared in front of him just now...left him in a complete shock!

She was seven feet tall and had fierce eyebrows which resembled those of a leopard. She had sharp piercing eyes, broad shoulders, back of a tiger and waist of a bear. Overall, she had a robust built and good stature!

Simply put, she had this natural heroic aura of a genuine male tyrant, who was out to dominate the entire world! If only it was a man!

Chu Yang didn’t say anything in response and maintained a calm expression on his face; but it had begun to get acidic inside his stomach, while he was lost in contemplation. If he had not noticed the lack of a beard on her face, if he had not noticed that she didn’t have the Adam’s apple, if he had not noticed her plump bosom and bulging buttocks, if he had not noticed that she was wearing a skirt...

Then Chu Yang would have definitely mistaken her for a man!

Not just that, for a tall and strongly built man, to be precise!

"Young master, would you be willing to join me on my boat?" The young lady, sullen, repeated herself in a precise manner, yet there was no trace of anger in her tone.

"Very well then, I will take you up on that offer." Chu Yang agreed and flung the fishing rod to direct that big fish to tow his boat over there.

Just then Chu Yang had a premonition: [This woman is perhaps not an ordinary person.]

"If you are not rowing the boat...then, how is it moving on its own?" The young maid asked in an astonished tone, staring with her big round eyes.

"It’s being towed by a fish I caught earlier." Chu Yang winked at her and replied with a smile.

"What a braggart!" The young girl pursed her lips.

"Hey!" Chu Yang had already arrived in front of her, so he readily handed over his fishing rod to her and said: "Hold this and have fun..."

The young maid pouted, while her countenance betrayed distrust as she said: "Who would believe you...ah!"

She suddenly cried out in fear and, with a ‘plop’ sound, fell into the water. She had been caught off guard, and the big fish took advantage of that and pulled her down into the water.

However, she immediately floated back up to the water’s surface, wiped the water off her face, and began to shout and make noise: "So the boat was really being towed by a fish...and that too by such a big fish...hey, don’t run away...come back here!"

The last few words were said to that big fish.

Then that young girl used her hands and feet to climb back onto the boat, grasped the fishing rod tightly, and began to contend fiercely with that underwater fish.

Doubtful, Chu Yang raised his eyebrows: [This maid knows martial arts and also looks quite strong!]

"Young master, please come in and make yourself comfortable.

And kindly ignore this crazy girl," that tall and sturdy looking young lady said with a smile, and reached out with her hand in a welcoming gesture.

"Thank you very much." Chu Yang smiled and went into the cabin. There was a small table in the cabin, and a big teapot was kept upon it along with a big cup.

Quite boorish and straightforward!

"Excuse me young lady, may I know your name?" Chu Yang asked.

"My surname is Huyan." The young lady poured tea into the big teacup and offered it to Chu Yang as she took a seat across him and said with a smile: "My full name is Huyan Aobo."

"I see, so you're a young miss of Huyan Clan." Chu Yang's heart suddenly jumped: [she is a member of a clan from the Middle Three Heavens! Haven't the people of the Middle Three Heavens already gone back some time ago? Why didn't she return with them? Why is she still here?]

"Young master, what is your name?" Huyan Aobo asked with a faint smile on her face.

"My surname is Chu."

"So, you're Young master Chu." Huyan Aobo smiled gently: "May I ask where you are from? Are you from the Middle Three Heavens or the Upper Three Heavens?"

Asking that, she looked directly into his eyes and continued: "Young master Chu must not say that he is not a scholar or an intellectual, otherwise I would be left with no other choice but to look down upon you."

Chu Yang suddenly realized that this woman was really going to be hard to deal with!

Her so-called 'hard to deal with' characteristic was not derived

from the act of pestering endlessly, but from the kind of calm wisdom and farsightedness that she possessed! This was a type of profound wisdom which was hard to deal with!

In front of her, it would be very difficult to tell a lie, since she would be able to see through it quite easily.

"I am neither from the Middle Three Heavens, nor from the Upper Three Heavens." Chu Yang replied with a nonchalant laugh.

"Eh! Don't tell me you're King of Hell Chu?" Huyan Aobo raised her brilliant sharp eyes to gaze at him like a falcon!

[Such a pair of eyes would really better suit a rugged male face]. Chu Yang thought as he smiled and said: "Why would this young lady come to such an absurd conclusion all of a sudden? Calling me King of Hell...isn't that kind of ridiculous?"

"Oh really..." Huyan Aobo smiled calmly before saying: "Firstly, perhaps you haven't noticed, but you have been sitting alone in your boat, seemingly free and unfettered, but somehow managed to manipulate a big submarine fish with a fishing rod and the attached fishing line; can an ordinary person do something like that?"

"Perhaps you will explain by saying that the fishing line helped in towing the boat, but...the fishing line can only prevent the fish from escaping, it cannot control the direction in which it will swim."

"Oh?" Chu Yang got somewhat intrigued.

"Secondly, I have seen a lot of those brilliant young masters from the Middle Three Heavens, but none of them resemble you."

"Thirdly, I heard that some time ago two young masters of the Chu Clan had come from the Upper Three Heavens. After Diwu Qing Rou's investigation a lot of people went to apprehend them, only to discover that those two had silently disappeared without a trace..."

Huyan Aobo finally used the card she had up her sleeve as she said: "And in the Lower Three Heavens, if you had stayed within the borders of the Great Zhao, then a person of your stature would have already been captured by Diwu Qing Rou's subordinates. Even now as we speak, Great Zhao is going through such turbulent times, but you are not the least bit worried. This explains that you are not from Great Zhao."

She smiled: "There are too many of those Great Zhao scholars who are distressed to see such chaos and madness spreading throughout their homeland..."

"But this still cannot prove that I am King of Hell Chu...Young lady, don't you think that your conclusion is too farfetched?" Chu Yang said in a calm and composed manner.

"I cannot prove, but I can tell." The woman immediately said with a frank laugh: "I can tell, even if you're not King of Hell Chu, you are definitely one of those two Chu Young masters..."

"Furthermore, I firmly believe that you are King of Hell Chu... even if you say you are not ...I still feel that you are!"

[So overbearing!]

Chu Yang had rarely come across a woman of such temperament. Today, as he stood in front of her, he clearly saw her domineering demeanor being exposed in its entirety through her soft way of speaking!

"Well, in that case, I really may not have the means to prove otherwise." Chu Yang forced a smile. The opposite party said so much, what else could he do? This woman was really headstrong and cunning, not to mention she was also willful and seemed to possess some male-specific traits such as overwhelming aggressiveness and inherent boldness...

Continuing to deny would only turn it into a jest.

The best course of action would be to neither admit nor deny it

and just leave it ambiguous, and let it be like that.

Chu Yang's heart was telling him[: This woman didn't harbor the slightest hostility towards him; on the contrary, she admired him very much. Moreover...it was a sharp and incisive appreciation, which usually exists between two evenly matched opponents in a game of chess.]

"Young master Chu, do you know Gao Sheng?" Huyan Aobo asked with a placid smile on her face.

"Gao Sheng?" Even if Chu Yang didn't know him earlier, he certainly did now, after coming to Great Zhou.

He was the primary heir of the Gao Clan of Middle Three Heavens. No one knew why he had arrived in the Lower Three Heavens; but for some reason, he had been assisting Diwu Qing Rou for past 1-2 years. It was with his support that Diwu Qing Rou had managed to establish and spread his dominance!

Gao Sheng!

"Yes, Gao Sheng..." It appeared as if she was speaking of a stranger as she said indifferently: "Actually, I am his fiancée and the reason why he has arrived in the Middle Three Heavens, and has been idling around since then, is to escape from our arranged marriage..."

"He escaped from marriage...cough..." Chu Yang choked on the tea, and then nodded again and again: "Cough...I can understand..."

Huyan Aobo looked at him somewhat angrily as she asked: "What do you understand?"

"I can understand where you're coming from!" Chu Yang solemnly replied: "It must have been painful for you."

"Painful? No! It wasn't painful at all." Although Chu Yang clearly didn't mean what he said, Huyan Aobo failed to see through: "I already knew that he would run away from our marriage. It's just

that I was a little curious about him, so I came to see him."

"Huh? You only came to see him?" Chu Yang asked.

"Yes, just to see him." Huyan Aobo gave a complacent smile before saying further: "Although I am not good-looking, I still wanted to see this deserter who had run away from our marriage; I wanted to know what he looks like and whether he deserves to be my husband!"

"Eh?" Chu Yang was slightly puzzled.

"Gao Sheng must be so proud of himself to have finally succeeded in escaping from me." There was a trace of scorn in Huyan Aobo's eyes: "But he doesn't know that the fully bearded imperial bodyguard who stayed by his side until some time ago...was actually me. I followed him just to see him, and spent no less than four months with him! Until some time ago, he led his troops back to the Middle Three Heavens, but I stayed back."

Chapter 310: The Woman drinks ‘Red Wine’!

"Scary!" Chu Yang started to sweat. Suddenly, he started feeling bad for an enemy whom he had never met... [To be played by a woman like this can really be considered quite unique..].

"Do you want to know...I have actually learned so many things about Diwu Qing Rou, including...a lot of his secrets?" Huyan Aobo said while blinking her eyes.

"Diwu Qing Rou’s secrets?" Chu Yang asked as he looked at her inquisitively, and thought for a while before saying, "I guess I do..."

"So you finally admit that you are King of Hell Chu." Huyan Aobo smiled as she gazed at him.

"King of Hell is fine, and so is Diwu Qing Rou. In the end, we are just ordinary mortals." Chu Yang became quite philosophical, and said, "You and I have been here for a half month, both of us have observed each other since the beginning. So, in that respect, I presume that you have called me here not just to confirm my identity, right?"

"Certainly!" Huyan Aobo replied with a cold laugh.

"May I know what your true intentions are?"

"It's quite simple." Huyan Aobo lifted her head calmly as she said, "It is in fact true that Gao Sheng ran away to avoid our marriage; however, the fact that he is considered to be quite a famous rising star among the youngsters of the Middle Three heavens, cannot be denied.”

"At first, I was very curious, and thought it would be quite amusing to disguise as a man... thus, I blended in to infiltrate this man’s life in order to observe him.”

"After several months of observation, I came to one conclusion." Huyan Aobo smiled smugly: "Gao Sheng is very talented. He is wise and knows strategic methods. Moreover, he has immense hidden

potential for the fast progress of martial arts."

"That being the case, why are you doing this?"

“It’s just that... if Gao Sheng wouldn’t have ran away from our arranged marriage, then I would have already married him and things would have been perfect. After all, in comparison to successors like Ao Xie Yun, Gu Du Xing, Xie Dan Qiong, Mo Tian Yun or Mo Tian Ji, Ou Du Xia and Dong Wu Shang and several others, Gao Sheng is clearly outstanding! But obviously, I am not considering that he brought disgrace to me.”

“Falls short when compared to the ones above, but does much better when compared to the ones below. That is Gao Sheng.” Huyan Aobo quoted indifferently.

Chu Yang frowned as he felt slightly shocked in his heart[. Miss Huyan's tone is truly profound and domineering. Moreover, her insights are extremely accurate as well!]

[She casually made a statement which contained a large part of the information about those powerful young masters of the Middle Three Heavens. It seems like she is quite familiar with such matters! Moreover, some of the names she took aren’t that popular either, but it seems like she has already discovered the hidden potential of these people!]

[In fact, she only left out Tu Qian Hao’s name, while she took Mo Tian Yun’s name instead.]

[But then, one must keep in mind that if Mo Tian Yun doesn’t die at the hands of Mo Tian Ji and grows up, then who can say that in the future his achievements would be less than those of the others?]

"However, since he has already escaped from our marriage...then he must prepare himself to pay the price! Though to be honest, I no longer have any interest in him." Huyan Aobo said as her face was brimming with a masculine smile: "Thus, I will frankly say

that Gao Sheng does not deserve me anymore."

"If he wasn't happy with this marriage arrangement then he should have clearly said so; nobody was going to shamelessly tie him up against his will. Why did he have to secretly run away? If he cannot even take responsibility, then he should better stop calling himself a real man." Huyan Aobo said with signs of contempt in her voice.

"Young miss... in life, there are many things which do not go as you wish." Chu Yang explained in a calm manner, "Gao Sheng... does he really have a say in this matter? And as for you...if he had not run away from marriage, then would you be able to dissolve the wedding and that too with your current strength?"

"This matter involves the mutual benefits of two major clans! Then how can you possibly expect that there would be any scope left for personal opinions?" Even though Chu Yang did not know Gao Sheng in person and had never met him, not to mention that Gao Sheng belonged to the enemy faction as well, Chu Yang still put his own point of view forward quite frankly.

And that was because... he had already figured out that Huyan Aobo was the kind of woman who maintained a thorough distinction between love and hate. Moreover, her definitions of love and hate were quite extreme.

Today, she was willing to share all her secret information with Chu Yang; however, if she were to start regretting this decision of hers in the future, then... Chu Yang had a feeling that her means of dealing with Gao Sheng wouldn't be as effective as they were right now.

Therefore, Chu Yang's words weren't focused on solving the matter at hand, but rather to nail down the subject of the discussion completely and that too, in advance.

[Hence, whatever happens afterwards, you cannot blame me for that!]

Yes, that’s exactly what his intention was.

"Merely relying on my personal strength would not be enough, however, if I can dare to say it openly, then why can’t he?" Huyan Aobo looked profoundly at Chu Yang before she spoke with a soft smile on her face, “I never thought that Minister Chu would actually be thinking of Gao Sheng’s difficulties and plead on his behalf.”

"I am just taking precautions." Lying in front of such a clever and wise person would be equivalent to making a fool of oneself.

"Well, it’s good to take precautions." Huyan Aobo exclaimed in admiration as she said, "In that case, I guess you already know about my true intentions for meeting you today."

"Well, I would still love to hear them from you yourself." Chu Yang smiled as he was neither anxious nor impatient. [If you won't say it yourself, then I will just have to pretend as if I heard nothing.]

Huyan Aobo looked deeply at Chu Yang, and clapped her hands before saying with a smile, “King of Hell Chu...you really deserve to be called the King of Hell! Unlike all the other heroes of this world, only Minister Chu’s conduct has been able to make me so vigilant.”

"I'm flattered!"

Huyan Aobo mumbled irresolutely for a while before finally saying, “My goal is quite simple! Since Gao Sheng offended me, I will make him pay the price. Everything that he has always worked so hard to obtain by putting painstaking efforts, I will destroy it! It shall be a thorough destruction!”

“He has spent all his efforts in helping Diwu Qing Rou to succeed in his great cause, hehe, how can we let it go so smoothly, right?” Huyan Aobo sneered. “I wonder what it feels like when all your hard work goes down the drain in a thorough and merciless

annihilation…”

“He will know that soon …” Chu Yang smiled as he raised a toast to it, “I believe he will forever remember that feeling!”

“I believe so too.” Huyan Aobo smiled while she continued to stare at Chu Yang for some time before she burst into laughter.

“Not just here, even in the Middle Three Heavens… Gao Clan will pay the price.” Huyan Aobo chuckled as she looked at her own hands while gently rotating the teacup. There was a man-like murderous look in her eyes as she said, “This is all that I want.”

“I believe that you will definitely succeed. I think very highly of you,” Chu Yang encouraged her.

“Ha ha ha… I’m delighted!” Huyan Aobo laughed heartily as she lifted her head and her long hair flew up while her bright eyes shone like the full moon; suddenly she turned around and asked, “Do you drink wine?”

“You have wine?”

“I have fine wine!” Huyan Aobo laughed heartily as she reached out to her side and took out a huge wine pot, “This is a ‘50 years old Red Wine’… would you like to have some?”

“’50 years old Red wine’,…you’re quite an old fashioned woman, aren’t you? Well, as they say, a woman is just like her wine… I will certainly try it out.” Chu Yang licked his lips.

“A wine, like a woman, is a product of several years, a product of the human society and also a product of Jiang Hu, but definitely not a product for men like you!” Huyan Aobo said without any trace of politeness in her tone, “Men like you are just nothing!”

Chu Yang could only smile in response.

“Now that I’ve met you, after this, I’ll immediately return to the Middle Three Heavens! I remained in the Lower Three Heavens so that I could find you!” HuYan Aobo drank from her big bowl of

wine and without lifting her eyelids, said, “Fortunately, you didn’t let me down!”

“Stop talking to me carelessly in the typical grandmother’s tone, it’s really irritating to listen to.” Chu Yang also held his bowl of wine somewhat dissatisfied.

“Your dissatisfaction… is none of my goddamn business!”

[Valiant! This girl absolutely stands at the top of what it means to be valiant! She speaks fearlessly and that too in such a vulgar manner!]

“My dissatisfaction is none of your goddamn business, you say? Then why did you even bother to give me a reply?” Chu Yang replied in a similar manner, without any politeness in his tone either.

“Humph!” HuYan Aobo glared at him and said, “King of Hell Chu, even if you are known as King of Hell in the Lower Three Heavens, this lady is not scared of you! Just you wait, and see how I get you drunk until you pass out!”

“Alright, then let’s see who passes out first.” Chu Yang sneered, “But first let me clarify one thing. As the saying goes – shit happens under the influence of alcohol. Since right now it’s only you and me drinking alone like this, if something happens later on… I am not to be held responsible for that; I make that clear in advance.”

“Responsible my ass! You just want a beauty like me!” Huyan Aobo blushed hard as she continued to drink with her eyes wide open.

“F*ck that! I would rather not have this beauty.” Chu Yang had already gulped down 7-8 bowls of wine and thus no longer had any control on his big tongue, “Oh poor me! Feel sorry for this pretty boy… and spare my chastity…my chastity… my…”

“Get lost!” Huyan Aobo was driven beyond the limits of forbearance as she gave a loud shout.

“Take these.” Huyan Aobo took out a stack of paper from her bosom. “To make sure that I don’t forget later on, I have written everything clearly on paper.”

“Just these?” Chu Yang instantly came out of his drunken state, his hands and feet moved quite swiftly as he received the stack of paper and put it in his bosom. He didn’t even take a look and silently slipped them inside his Nine Tribulations Space.

Now, the secret information was completely safe and secure. Even if he were to get wasted, he wouldn’t lose them, no matter what.

“If you use the information I gave you properly, then… even if I won’t say that you will be able to defeat Diwu Qing Rou thoroughly, you will still be able to give him a profound blow.” Huyan Aobo looked at him for a while before she further said, “These papers not just include all the information that was obtained personally by Gao Sheng, but also contains my observations and speculations…this should be enough, I suppose.”

“Thank you very much.”

“I know you are not drunk, okay.” Huyan Aobo said as she looked at him with contempt, “You are pretending to be drunk so that you don’t have to drink anymore, correct? King of Hell Chu, you are not a real man!”

“Whether I am a man or not…is not worth verifying… neither is it worthwhile to have a dispute over” Chu Yang groaned as he said: “However, since you said something like that… young lady… get prepared to go back home totally wasted.”

“Fine! Come on then!”

The two of them raised their bowls of wine and roared as they drank up!

Lady Huyan surprisingly drank faster than Chu Yang! She would put the bowl to her mouth and its contents would disappear in one

gulp. Her lips didn't even get wet in the process.

Both of them had their hearts filled with thoughts. Huyan Aobo only had one thing on her mind: [I will take advantage of this intoxication to bid farewell to the past! From now onwards, I will have nothing to do with the ghost of my past.]

[In general, I would have never dared to get drunk like this, but today I did because I can tell that King of Hell Chu is a trustworthy person!]

[So there is no need to restrain myself anymore! Cheers!]

As Chu Yang finished the bowl of wine, his drunken eyes started to slant when suddenly he smirked and said, "Young miss Huyan, I suddenly remembered an antithetical phrase...would like to know your opinion of it."

"What phrase?" Huyan Aobo asked. Her eyes had already turned blurry.

"When a woman drinks Red Wine, the woman's face turns red like the red wine!" Chu Yang laughed heartily, "What do you think about it?" [1]

Huyan Aobo held her bowl of wine as she pondered for a long time, then finally slammed the bowl to the ground, and pointed at Chu Yang before cursing out loud, "Shameless words, shamelessly spoken by a shameless bastard!"

Thud! Chu Yang collapsed onto the ground as he cursed out loud: "...damn it!"

"Ha ha ha..." Huyan Aobo laughed heartily and suddenly threw herself down on the chair with a plop sound, and immediately went into deep slumber.

[1] The wine mentioned here is called 'Nu er Hong'. Nu er, means daughter (closely resembles woman/girl). Nu er 'Hong' refers to a yellow colored Chinese wedding wine, made out of rice. However, Hong, independently, means red. Traditionally, the 'Nu er Hong'

is a wine presented by a father at his daughter's wedding, and hence the name. ie. Nu er(daughter) Hong(red; traditionally in China, the women are dressed in red at their wedding). The author uses word-play to crack the joke, which required a slight modification in order to maintain the essence. The original text goes like this: Nu er drinks, Nu er Hong, Nu er's face becomes Hong. Thus, we had to change the exact translation a bit since the essence of the joke lay in its Chinese word-play, often used in poetry to create rhymes. In fact, we've made this modification throughout the chapter to maintain consistency.

Chapter 311: Tie Bu Tian's Resolve

A tinge of peace and tranquility was spread across the surface of the Lotus Lake's water; a boat was floating in the lake, swaying from side to side, with no one aboard.

At the moment, Chu Yang was underwater.

He stood on the slippery mud at the bottom of the lake! Opening his eyes wide, he slowly swung the sword he held in his hand.

Underwater Sword Practice!

Since he had been unable to find the third fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword until now, he had decided to comprehend the water's supple power instead. And even though the two nations were going through such chaotic times of turbulence, Chu Yang had actually managed to chance upon a rare moment of tranquility.

Huyan Aobo had already left a while ago, and the good deal of information that she had left behind was then being examined by Chu Yang, bit by bit.

It contained a great deal about Diwu Qing Rou's intelligence network, most of which was based out of Iron Cloud. It also included lists of several of the Iron Cloud's officials, and Generals' names.

Furthermore, Huyan Aobo had annotated each and every one of Diwu Qing Rou's strategic deployment and military allocation plan in her own handwriting, to relay precise information.

Chu Yang went through the particulars of the information, and smacked his lips in anticipation. [First things first, this piece of intelligence is capable of influencing this situation between these two great nations significantly, and hence I must immediately dispatch it to Tie Bu Tian.]

However, since he became idle afterwards, he started to focus on

his underwater practice.

His sword slashed underwater, and maneuvered around to make a side cut. Chu Yang stared with his eyes wide open, however his focus was not on the slash he just made, but on the turbulence produced in water as a result; he was trying to feel the water's supple resistance to his sword's blade.

This feeling of stagnation was very strange...

It would be inappropriate to say that the water had bound him, because it didn't do so deliberately. However, even when the water remained still, the sword inside moved... it was only the water's natural behavior to impede the sword's movement.

Chu Yang was suddenly startled, and started pondering over something...

He couldn't help but be lost in contemplation, and that too while he was still underwater.

A long while later, he felt as if his vitality had almost been used up. He immediately pedaled his feet to go up, and emerged from the shackles of the mud. Then, he suddenly rushed upwards and came to the water's surface, only to reduce his speed at the very last moment before gently exposing his head above the surface.

The fresh air suddenly burst into his lungs!

Chu Yang immediately felt his mind sobering up.

After having spent a long time being oppressed underwater, exposing his head above the water's surface made him feel as if he had been born once again! This feeling of being born again was quite wonderful.

Chu Yang suddenly felt: [If the domain underwater is considered a world in itself, then the one above its surface is another world as well!]

[Isn't this similar to the separate existences of the Lower Three

Heavens, and the Middle Three Heavens? If the underwater world is like the Lower Three Heavens, then the world above the water surface should be Middle Three Heavens.]

Chu Yang treaded the water to come ashore. And though his whole body was still drenched, he sat down on the ground and began to meditate.

[But... what does this actually mean? From which angle does it relate to martial arts study?]

Chu Yang suddenly felt his mind filling with insights, and not just one but several! Each and every one of them appeared to be fuzzily lingering inside his mind, making it difficult for him to concentrate on any particular one!

Chu Yang had a feeling that as long as he could grasp even one of those insights, he would be able to have a breakthrough from his current state! This was a rare opportunity!

Chu Yang tried his best to relax his mind while sitting quietly on the shore, his body completely hidden by the lush grass around. Just then, a thought suddenly cropped up in his mind: [Although the grass above is dry and withered, the grass below is still green and healthy...moreover, it's already palm-sized in length...]

[What does this contrast between withered and healthy trying to signify?]

[Perhaps... it has some other meaning altogether? Or is it...about the cycle of life and death?]

Chu Yang's heart was completely swarmed by all sorts of insights that were revolving inside his mind like flies.

Chu Yang was sitting cross-legged on the grass and it seemed he wasn't breathing at all. Moreover, it seemed as if he had already fallen into a deep level of comprehension...

On the other hand, inside the Nine Tribulations Sword Space, the Sword Spirit was in utter shock and dismay, because he had

already recognized the kind of realm Chu Yang was in right now!

This had already gone beyond the comprehension level of the second fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword. In fact, it could be said that... his comprehension had gone beyond the scope of Nine Tribulations Sword altogether... and had entered an entirely different realm.

This realm was a part of the 'World and Universe'... instead of the Nine Heavens!

The Sword Spirit had never thought that Chu Yang was capable of displaying such an outstanding comprehension ability... [he has clearly managed to surpass the previous owner of Nine Tribulations Sword with regards to the success of this time's epiphany. Not to mention that his future prospects and development potential will also be far higher than his predecessor!]

[Since no one has even been able to solve the biggest secrets of Nine Tribulations Sword(,)they have remained a mystery for tens of thousands of years beginning with its birth! Could it be that all these secrets... will finally be discovered by this youth?]

This was the first time Chu Yang had undergone underwater sword training and that too (,)to learn nothing less than the supple power of water. However, he never would have imagined that the supple power of water was something that fell under the demesne of 'World and Universe'! So much so that... it could be classified as one type of 'domain' within the universe!

The Water Domain!

And it was when Chu Yang could no longer sustain himself under the intense pressure of water due to running out of breath that the extreme desire to breathe suddenly had helped him in stumbling upon some of the secrets of Heaven and Earth!

If he had realized this at that time, then everything thus far

would have been for naught.

However, he immediately swam up and rushed out of the water, and that sudden awakening that he experienced was what actually gave him a feeling of ‘smashing the space to enter a new world’!

This was clearly a breakthrough on a whole new level!

Of course, if it was only about these two insights which he had obtained just now, then his accomplishment wouldn’t amount to much when taking the special guidance of the Sword Spirit into consideration. However, just this instant, he suddenly came to realize the profound meanings which lay behind the concepts of both withering and growth of living things!

And thus, it was Chu Yang’s realization of the mysteries of reincarnation as well as the secret principles of Heaven and Earth that allowed him to sink deeper into the profound mysteries of the primal chaos.

Motionless, Chu Yang calmly sat there for a long time, not breathing even once. Furthermore, slowly and gradually, he completely lost his body temperature… it was as if every sign of life had disappeared from his body without a trace…

Leaving behind a total silence!

Only the dense green grass remained as green and thriving as ever beneath his idle body, growing and prospering in this warm and friendly climate of the spring…

And with the setting in of spring… bugs, ants and moths began to appear gradually at this quiet lakeside.

Carefree, Chu Yang had already fallen into a deep slumber and knew nothing of what was going on around him.

Iron Cloud Citadel

Far away, Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian were sitting in the Imperial Study Room with the secret message already unsealed and

spread out in front of them. This secret intelligence had been delivered by an invisible falcon that was sent by Chu Yang all the way from the Great Zhao's royal courier service.

This message contained intelligence on a wide range of designs on manpower allocation, the identities of everyone involved in those plans and the associated command structure of all the military bases involved. Just to get one's hands on such classified information was simply mindboggling... enough to leave anyone gobsmacked!

However, more surprising was the fact that it also contained partial details on the secret military agreement between Diwu Qing Rou and the Wolf tribe of Northern Grassland!

And though it only contained bits and pieces of information interlinked together, but in the light of the recent unfortunate events that had occurred on both sides it could be said that this piece of secret information was undeniably true!

It was simply impeccable!

However, there would be a huge uproar if it was decided to punish all the involved suspects... and the ensuing commotion would simply be enormous!

Of course, if it did take place then it would definitely surpass the cleansing that had been orchestrated by King of Hell Chu earlier, whether it involved military personnel, government officials, businessmen, scholars, etc. And to make matters worse, all major cities would be brought within the target range...

After all, one simply couldn't ignore the fact that this was the result of Diwu Qing Rou's ten years worth of scheming and achievements!

"Your Majesty, what are you thinking?" Wu Qian Qian asked respectfully. She was clad in a black robe and one could easily tell that there was indifference in her voice. It was as if the

confidential information lying in front of her was nothing more than a pile of scrap paper to her.

It seemed as if she just simply didn't take into account at all that... if these influential figures were going to be eradicated, then it would perhaps implicate the lives of no less than 100,000 human beings!

"Minister Chu must have suffered untold hardships in his effort to get hold of this piece of intelligence. However, as far as our Iron Cloud is concerned, this information has dealt a serious blow to us; but, at the same time, it has actually presented us with a golden opportunity that comes only once in a millennium!" There was a sharp light issuing from Tie Bu Tian's eyes as he further said: "We must get it over and done with once and for all!"

"Yes." Wu Qian Qian replied in a deep voice.

"In any case, these people are not to be spared come what may!" Saying this Tie Bu Tian slowly stood up and crossed his hands behind his back. There was a frown on his face as he began pacing back and forth in his study before he suddenly spoke in a sinking voice: "I would rather kill the innocents, than let the guilty off!"

A shiver ran through Wu Qian Qian's entire body the moment she heard this!

[I would rather kill the innocents, than let the guilty off!]She had never really thought that one day she would hear Diwu Qing Rou's pet phrase from Tie Bu Tian's mouth.

"I only hope...Iron Cloud's internal turmoil would stop after that." Tie Bu Tian's slender finger skimmed through the lists of names, before he knocked the sheets of paper on the table with a loud pounding sound.

"Therefore, I won't hesitate to pay... any price!" And a ferocious look flashed in Tie Bu Tian's eyes as he continued speaking: "Not to mention that the lives of 100,000 people are simply nothing to me,

as a matter of fact, even if I have to sacrifice the lives of one million people...I would go ahead with it without batting an eyelid!"

"Yes." Wu Qian Qian shuddered as she gave thought to what Tie Bu Tian had said just now.

From this one declaration itself, she had clearly sensed Tie Bu Tian's murderous intentions like that of a monarch, who was out to destroy the entire world!

Ruthless!

"In addition to that, also keep in mind that there are some disobedient people who just don't know when to yield... make sure that you classify them as important targets during this purge!" Tie Bu Tian frowned painfully and though had finally managed to speak out loud, it was in a rather gloomy tone.

"Your majesty, this is... wrong." Wu Qian Qian said, startled. And she was certainly appropriate in her response because, after all, these so-called disobedient people weren't all necessarily spies or traitors; they used to be strong supporters of the previous Emperor...in fact, some of them still lent their support to the previous Emperor's authority... it was only the case that some of them were against the current authority of Tie Bu Tian!

"What's wrong with that?" Tie Bu Tian turned his back towards her, and without turning his head back sneered before speaking: "There's nothing wrong with that! You can mark my words, this world may lack chivalrous people, perhaps this world may also lack peak level experts or honest and incorruptible officials... but I can promise you that it will never be rid of pedantic scholars!"

"Even when the nation is going through a crisis, these people still advocate saintly methods; even when there are rivers of blood flowing everywhere, they still hold their moral banners high! Even when the entire nation and its people have no means to make a living... they still sing false praises for their own benefits! Even

when the officers and soldiers are getting martyred, unyielding, in battles for the sake of their nation, all they do is boast about their own moral integrity in such difficult times, but at the time of nation's demise... they are the first ones to sell their country out to curry favors from the enemy!"

Tie Bu Tian gave a cold laugh before he cursed: "These utterly rotten and pedantic scholars!"

"They will never understand what common people really want. They will never try to understand what the soldiers need! And they will never know about the so-called prerequisites of war... all they know and care about are their own morals, etiquettes and how to exercise their so-called forbearance..."

"They will sing praises even while enduring utmost humiliation for the sake of their petty goals and this results in the nation being filled with the so-called 'brave warriors' who have grown too used to enduring humiliation all the time, not to mention that it also leads to a drastic decline in the number of iron-blooded warriors, who are capable of bravely facing the chilling winds of battlefields!"

"They always talk about how the fall of a nation is followed by the rise of another, but they never actually care about the struggle that precedes the destruction of their own nation... Of course, when the nation finally perishes, they are the first ones to accept any sort of humiliation and willingly become the courtiers of the enemies... they even disguise their shameless acts with righteous words, such as... for the welfare and benefits of common masses!"

"These people must be kept around during the peaceful and prosperous times of a nation! Because they can be used well in governing a nation by employing their scheming methods and inherently jealousy-driven tricks for instigating rivalry among the members of the younger generation, and also to maintain an overall balance of power within the imperial court so that one faction doesn't end up growing too influential than the others...

these are some of the various advantages of having them around. However, when the nation is about to enter the crisis of war, these coward scholars cannot be allowed to stick around!"

Tie Bu Tian then turned around suddenly as his burning hot eyes gazed fiercely at Wu Qian Qian: "Kill them all! Not even a single one must remain alive! Our entire nation must come together and we must unite our hearts and souls to face the enemy; to give them a fight to the death as they desire! If we don’t perish, we will keep pressing on! And if we don’t perish, our nation shall not be exterminated!"

Chapter 312: Breakthrough to the Realm of Heavenly Law

“Yes!” Wu Qian Qian was in a state of shock. And the anguish that Tie Bu Tian’s words carried gave the impression as if he was caught in a life or death situation. The despair underlying his actions was such that even an illiterate person would be able to sense it very easily.

[He is getting ready for a war! He is ready to risk everything, even his life, to win this war!]

[Moreover, rather than drifting away from his throne and living a purposeless life, he would prefer to burn both jade and common stone instead.]

“There is nothing to worry about!” Apparently seeing through Wu Qian Qian’s anxiety, Tie Bu Tian said, “The Iron Cloud has got a rather large number of talented people... if we win this war, we will have enough time to clean up this mess slowly and gradually. Then we will slowly promote those talented people and help them grow stronger, and that is how we intend to recover our lost might... without worrying about anyone trying to come in our way. And in this life there is going to be enough time for us to achieve that.”

“However, if for some reason we were to lose... then it’s even more pointless for us to worry.” Laughing strangely, Tie Bu Tian said with a smile on his face, “This is precisely to give Diwu Qing Rou a headache.”

[So that’s how it is!]

Wu Qian Qian was terror-stricken on realizing this.

[Tie Bu Tian had already thought about the victory as well as the defeat.]

This nation is filled with people who follow blindly. However...

even if they're willing to follow blindly, they still require a man with sufficient status who can stand up, take command and appeal to all ... the brave soldiers, and the subjugated slaves of the vanquished nation, alike! Because in the end, they all need someone who can lead them to a brighter future...

To cite a simple example for everyone's better understanding: just as a political party member is able to establish a base of operation for his party, a traitor can also establish a fake government from the shadows.

The reason is that since ancient times, there had never been a generation without traitors regardless of the continent or era under consideration! There was no exception to this, plain and simple!

[Though Tie Bu Tian's move might appear to be quite vicious, it is still the most efficient way to crush any possibility of Diwu Qing Rou ruling the Iron Cloud Nation and that too (,)in the shortest time possible!]

[That's because once the top ranking traitors are out of the picture, then, at the most, only those on the level of village leaders would remain...]

A leaderless flock of dragons wouldn't be considered powerful!

On this basis, Tie Bu Tian's resolute and upright character could be seen by anyone.

"I understand." Wu Qian Qian said solemnly.

"It's good that you understand." Tie Bu Tian said, giving her a warm look. There was a gentle smile playing on his face as he said, "Minister Chu, you are granted complete authority to deal with this matter... and you further have the authority to mobilize all the forces that come under my command as well!"

[All the forces that come under our, the Emperor's command!]

"I will strive to live up to your expectations, Your Majesty!" A

shiver ran down from Wu Qian Qian's head to toe as she said this.

Tie Bu Tian nodded in response and said with a smile, "Diwu Qing Rou can't put his plans into action against us even if he wishes to because, right now, an all-encompassing civil unrest grips the Great Zhao Nation! We must, therefore, try to finish our own purge before they finish theirs in Great Zhao."

"And to achieve this goal you can use any aggressive methods whenever you feel the need...you have my permission for that," Tie Bu Tian said in a heavy tone.

"Understood!"

Tie Bu Tian's mind was feeling quite relaxed now. Although in the Bu Tian Pavilion he had spoken the same words to the other ministers, but they were completely different from this particular minister.

'You have my permission to use aggressive methods'! Tie Bu Tian would have never dared to say these words in front of Chu Yang. Chu Yang is already infamous for using far more aggressive methods! Extremely aggressive methods! Tie Bu Tian would never take the risk of telling Chu Yang to use aggressive methods because if he did... Chu Yang might just end up killing off the entire population...

However, saying it in front of Wu Qian Qian, on the other hand, was an entirely different matter.

"As for the spies hiding amongst the high ranking military officers... all we need to do is wait for the right time, then I would personally go to the frontlines, and with the help of Imperial Uncle, we shall wipe them out completely! And to be honest, Bu Tian Pavilion hasn't got sufficient strength at the moment to deal with those people."

"Yes!"

"Very well, Qian Qian..." Tie Bu Tian said in a gentle voice while

at the same time some rather unclear emotions flashed in his eyes. He sighed softly before speaking again, “You are not him, so there’s no need for you to pretend in front of me… you don’t need to assume his stance or imitate his voice either…”

“Your Majesty, please call me Minister Chu… or just Minister.” Wu Qian Qian carefully took a step back before saying in a cold tone, “I would be much obliged if Your Majesty would call me by my official title, and not by… my given name.”

Tie Bu Tian could not help laughing at this and said, “You… you… don’t tell me you are afraid that I will lay my hands on you?”

Wu Qian Qian further moved a step back while at the same time concealing her beautiful face behind the mask, as a result of which no one could see her facial expressions now. She bowed down respectfully and said: “Your Majesty, if you don’t have any other orders, this humble servant of yours would like to take her leave now. As soon as your humble servant departs from here, the purging of Iron Cloud shall formally commence.”

Tie Bu Tian remained silent for a while before he finally said in a low voice, “… good!”

Wu Qian Qian turned around and walked away quickly.

Tie Bu Tian looked at Wu Qian Qian’s back profile as she was leaving and couldn’t help himself saying with a forced smile, “This girl……”

However, very soon, frown replaced the smile on his face as he recalled things in his mind; e[ver since I have ascended the throne, the imperial ministers have been continuously trying to convince me to choose an imperial concubine or an Empress. If not for my firm refusal to entertain all such proposals, I’m afraid they would have already drafted many marriage proposals. However, I cannot avoid these things for far too long, and when the time finally comes… what should I do to deal with it?]

When a man proposes marriage to a woman, she is married off to him; this is an established custom that has remained unchanged since ancient times. Of course, not to have any offspring is the worst possible way in which one could be unfilial.

Thinking about all this, Tie Bu Tian sighed as if he had already gotten a headache. A contemplative expression could be clearly seen on his face.

Over the next few days, away from this, the entire Iron Cloud Nation stood face to face with the butcher knife of King of Hell Chu!

Unlike the purges in earlier times, purging operation this time was resolute and much quicker; it passed like a thunder and moved like the wind. It was simply on an unprecedented scale, and it was executed in a way that no one had ever seen before.

From the lists that Wu Qian Qian held in her hands, people's names were found out one by one and they were brutally interrogated. And not just that, in order to uproot the entire line of traitors, a team of specialists was assigned to investigate and follow the clues all the way!

This was immediately followed by their collective beheading!

None of them went through any trial, nor did they get any decree from the Emperor. To the contrary, all of them were massacred in no time.

People's bodies were drenched in blood from head to toe as their heads were sent rolling off the scaffold.

Even the executioners felt their hands go numb from the non-stop beheadings.

On an average, every executioner had to behead hundreds of people on a single day. Ah! These were the lives of real human beings, being squandered like nothing...

At the same time, sitting somewhere deep inside the palace, the

emperor appeared to be quite indifferent to what was happening outside. Moreover, when his ministers tried to bring his attention to what was going on, he said in a composed manner, “If you lot also want to experience the same dread of being on the execution platform, I can certainly make your wish come true, you know?”

And thus there was absolute silence!

Consequently, the massacre of people was further intensified at the command of King of Hell Chu.

It was reported that Minister Chu of the Bu Tian Pavilion kept giving ruthless commands to the executioners, “Too slow! Too soft! Too weak, haven’t the lot of you eaten anything today? Do you want me to put you in their place...”

“Continue with more force and brutality!”

“Use more force, again and again!”

“A detailed investigation report is what I want! Even if you end up dying due to exhaustion, keep investigating!”

On the other hand, Wu Qian Qian’s mind was occupied with only one thought: [The greater the chaos in Iron Cloud, the safer Chu Yang will be in the Great Zhao Nation!] And thus, Wu Qian Qian didn’t hesitate in the least while sending out her very first order to massacre people.

[If massacring all these people would send me to hell... then I would gladly go to hell.]

[However, you must remain safe there!]

... ...

Six days later, Chu Yang quietly woke up besides the Lotus Lake.

His eyes gently blinked as if he had slept for thousands of years before they suddenly opened up. At that very moment, the vitality from all the living things around him began to flow in one direction, before it suddenly started flooding his entire body all at

once.

Chu Yang did not sit up immediately and continued lying in his current posture while carefully sensing the world around himself!

It seemed as if the world around him had completely changed without him coming to know about it at all. The sound of the insects crawling beside him, the sound of birds chirping in the distance, and the sound of insects creeping underground... all these sounds entered his ears very distinctly.

To the extent that he could hear the sound of tiny grass growing bit by bit!

[This is the sound of life!]

[This is the realm of Heavenly Law!]

Chu Yang was overjoyed!

Chapter 313: Who is More Pretentious?!

[The reason why water resists the sword's movement is inherent in the fact that it happens only when the sword tries to break the harmony of water!]

[The reason why people always feel bound is inherent in the fact that they are always trying to break free from the fetters of this world, so the 'heavenly law' ensures that it binds them even more tightly!]

[When looking from a smaller perspective, it may seem like the sword is resisting the powerful current of water. However, if looked at from the broader perspective, it is nothing but a representation of 'the principles of the heavenly law'! The so-called unbreakable rules and regulations of the heavenly law!]

[When a person is unable to hold his breath anymore, he rushes to the water's surface; this is tantamount to breaking through the binding stream of heavenly laws!]

[But as long as you are living in this world, you have no choice but to remain shackled; as intended by the heavens!]

For a half month, Chu Yang continued to gain insights one after another. It was a rather quiet and peaceful process since it seemed as if he was totally unaware of fatigue, while continuing to go back and forth between the lake's water and the shore. And because he was totally unaware of fatigue, he unleashed his sword and continued to gain experience from 'underwater sword training' while at the same time comprehending the new ways of the sword...

Time flew by slowly.

And in the Nine Tribulations Space, the Sword Spirit heaved a deep sigh of relief. This was because he had personally observed Chu Yang falling into a moment of enlightenment before being

completely bound by the sudden surge of epiphany. And not just that, he had come very close to losing all his wisdom and consciousness in the process.

However, he had still managed to finally step into a brand-new realm!

The reason why the Sword Spirit considered it a brand-new realm was... because even he himself in his seemingly infinite lifetime had never seen such a realm before. He certainly hadn’t comprehended this realm before.

It was not necessarily a profound realm and nor was it like an insuperable peak, but for someone to achieve such a realm was certainly an unprecedented event in the history of mankind! Since ancient times, no one had ever been able to enter such a realm!

And though Chu Yang's martial energy hadn’t increased much, but his own ‘inner spiritual state’ had already broken through to a whole new level. Achieving such a feat would be almost impossible even for a powerhouse of Sword Emperor Level!

The Sword Spirit had a smile of gratification on his face since he could clearly tell that presently Chu Yang had already broken through the scope of Nine Tribulations Sword. Although he was still practicing the martial techniques of the Nine Tribulations Sword and was still continuing to remain on that path, he could actually opt to go beyond this route at any time...

So, to put it in other words, even the so-called mystical powers of the Nine Tribulations Sword might not be able to manipulate its current owner.

It had always been like that for Nine Tribulations Sword - it always preferred to stay ahead of its owner.

However, at present, Chu Yang had really ended up becoming the true owner of Nine Tribulations Sword! To be precise, he was now the Master of Nine Tribulations Sword!

These two concepts were entirely different from each other.

Nonetheless, Chu Yang continued his ‘underwater sword training’ and at times even had his meals at the bottom of the lake. He would simply catch a fish with ease and eat it up whenever he felt like. He simply remained tireless as he gradually got used to this new realm. He was slowly getting familiar with this new yet odd sensation!

Other experts could manage to stay only for half a day whenever they would fall into this kind of special spiritual state. However, Chu Yang, quite unlike them, had managed to retain this wonderful state for an entire month!

However, when Chu Yang stuck his head out of the surface of the water, he noticed that Lotus Lake had changed considerably.

The lake’s surface had turned lush green. The melodious sounds of whistles were resounding elegantly in the vicinity while the scenery was being complimented by some kind of rouge fragrance that was drifting along with the winds…

April was already here!

And ‘The Match of Three Masters’ would be held at Lotus Lake in June, which was only about a month and a fortnight away from now.

Chu Yang’s emotions were suddenly stirred as he clearly felt the sword’s tip and the sword’s edge throbbing intensely within his Dantian! Immediately, a wisp of sword intention emerged from the depths of Lotus Lake. It appeared to be in delight since it had manifested after a long period of separation.

Chu Yang’s eyes immediately lit up! [As expected, you finally made an appearance. I have been waiting for you for so long.]

Although the third fragment had already made an appearance, it still wasn’t the right time to obtain it! Chu Yang could sense that his own cultivation was insufficient, so he immediately turned

around and moved away from that spot. He had no choice but to get away from that extremely enticing spot!

[As soon as my break through is complete, I'll come for you! Just you wait!]

Lotus Lake had already become a center of attraction. People from various regions of the country had begun to arrive here and there simply was no end to the crowd of people heading this way, creating quite a nuisance in the surrounding region. This was an expected scene because all these people had come here to watch the most distinguished musical concert in the entire Nine Heavens Continent! It was truly going to be a marvelous event!

It was an assembly of countless literati, famous scholars and poets here.

However, Chu Yang right now was lurking three feet below the water surface, just like a giant fish, away from the crowd.

Still, a random discussion being held on a boat suddenly piqued his interest. This boat was quite far away from rest of the boats, making it easier for Chu Yang to stealthily approach the boat and conceal himself beneath it.

"... this time around, Prime Minister Diwu has really been quite ruthless in his approach... so many people have died violent deaths...," said a person who was aboard that boat.

"Indeed, it was as if the Great Zhao Nation was suddenly struck by a catastrophe... Moreover, the purge is not yet over..." Another person said with a sigh.

"If this misfortune continues to persist like this, I am afraid that... the Great Zhao Nation may not be able to recover its vigor in the coming three to five years..." Another person said in an anxious tone.

"That is not necessarily true..."

These people were obviously anxious to some extent. In fact, they

were talking amongst themselves in barely audible voices for fear that they might be overheard by others.

Chu Yang was immediately relieved after overhearing what they were talking about. [It seems like Diwu Qing Rou still hasn't fully settled down…]

Judging from the recent actions of Diwu Qing Rou, Chu Yang had been guessing in his heart for quite some time now. [Such a massive agitation, coupled with the chaos caused by the sword earlier; it should take at least half a year for Diwu Qing Rou to quell things down. In fact, there's no way he would be able to recover his strength in such a short period of time.]

[It might take even longer.]

[In other words, at least for six months now it should be absolutely safe!]

[Moreover, only three months have passed so far.]

Although Chu Yang already knew that things wouldn't advance so quickly, but others' confirmation helped him in verifying his logic, and consequently he felt somewhat relieved. [There's still enough time to put my plan into action.]

[In fact, even when I come back to obtain the third fragment, there will still be plenty of time left after that.]

At this time, a wave of dream-like melody coming from a flute suddenly echoed and enveloped the entire Lotus Lake, which was already brimming with the colors of spring. Moreover, the flute's melody had added a touch of sorrow as well as melancholy to the existing atmosphere.

Someone suddenly shouted out loud: "Flute Master has arrived!"

"I never expected to see the Flute Master here so early! The competition is still about a fortnight away from now."

"The Flute Master is indeed a virtuoso at flute playing; he is really

outstanding! Just look how the melodious music of his flute has already silenced all other sounds around the Lotus Lake."

Everyone raised their heads to have a good look at this unexpected visitor.

A flat, long and narrow boat was slowly sailing on its way along the surface of Lotus Lake. It had a black sail as well as a black hull but had no other colors embellishing its image. The boat's black image was quite overwhelming and was in sharp contrast to the lush green color that was spread all across the lake's surface, making the boat appear even more towering and imposing than it actually was!

A man was sitting calmly upon the boat's prow; he was clad in a white robe. And while his snow-white robe fluttered in the wind a cold breeze kept gently caressing his face!

The mellifluous sound of his flute echoed everywhere. And although the flute's melody wasn't too loud, no other sound in the entire world could imitate its beauty...

People appeared to be enchanted as they continued listening to the flute's melody, and only when it finally came to an end that they regained their senses. It seemed as if they had been awakened from a dream. With a long sigh, they recited in their hearts: "In June, when the lotus blooms, the three masters will meet in the middle of the continent. Who will be extraordinary? Who will take the top position? 'Angelic transverse flute' is like vast waters, 'Saintly end-blown flute' is like a floating boat, and the sound of the 'Zither' is like the rustling sound of the heavens. One stroke of change can paint the spring. After twenty years of wind and rain, who shall keep on standing? After twenty years of hardships, who shall remain?"

"Even with just a semi-tune that he played just now, it can be said that his symphony has already surpassed all other symphonies in the entire world! He is truly worthy of the title of 'Flute Master'!"

The flute's sound had a pleasant lingering effect as it rose in spirals and echoed everywhere. Sitting atop his boat's prow, the Flute Master slowly drifted across the lake. And his white robe was fluttering in the wind as his figure slowly disappeared in the mist.

Everyone clearly saw that he was a middle-aged man in his thirties, sitting on the prow of his boat. His eyes appeared weary yet there was a ruthless look in them. One could also see helplessness in his countenance as if he was fed up of the worldly affairs, but he still had not given up the compassion in his heart to create soulful music. It was as if he didn't even hear the cheers and applause coming his way from the surroundings.

And then the boat slowly disappeared in the distance.

Just then Chu Yang popped out his head from behind the water plants to have a good look at the scene. He immediately gave a chuckle and shook his head before saying: "This Flute Master is really such a show off. But I must say that this motherf*ker's posture and the way he was sitting on his boat's prow makes him look so cool!"

However, though all could see that it was an outright pretentious performance, it was an important move in a larger stratagem. It was a music competition and one's popularity played a major role in deciding the winner. The mysterious appearance of the Flute Master, along with the stark contrast between his white robe and the black boat, had contributed a lot towards establishing his elegant image before everyone. He suddenly appeared out of nowhere, shocked everyone, and then drifted away like a bunch of wonderful thoughts which last only for a moment in one's head. Even the tone of his flute inspired sorrow and melancholy in people's hearts. There obviously were benefits of being the first person to show up and leave a deep impression on so many people, and that too in one fell swoop.

In particular, the sound of his flute was filled with melancholy and was also surrounded by a desolate aura which conformed well

to the people's mood. It could be said that his performance was perfectly in line with the chaos which was currently spread throughout Great Zhao as a result of the recent upheaval.

If nothing else, one would still have to acknowledge the fact that this was indeed a very clever method.

And when the Flute Master had already been gone for long people began to discuss amongst themselves quite enthusiastically. They never paid any attention to the fleet of boats anchored on one side.

These boats were no different from the rest of the boats in Lotus Lake, but Chu Yang had clearly noticed their drifting in, all the way from upstream. They were clearly the family vessels of the Flute Master.

On realizing this, Chu Yang chuckled and to come ashore sneaked his way through a rather secluded place. Afterward, he changed his clothes as well as his appearance and bought a small boat which looked just like the one he had earlier. Then, he boarded the boat and grasped a fishing pole.

His boat went on drifting on the lake's surface.

[Let's see who is more pretentious!] Chu Yang thought in his heart. He suddenly affixed the fishing pole to the boat, took off his robe and dived into the water with a 'plop' sound. He continued to dive deeper into the water and after a long time, he finally found a big fish that was no less than dozens of Jin heavy. He quickly and quite easily grabbed the fish and shoved a fishing hook into its mouth. After that he returned to the boat, put on his white robe back again and with a calm expression on his face grasped the fishing pole...

Of course, one must know that it was the same big fish from before...

As far as fishing was concerned... actually, Minister Chu was not good at fishing... but he was certainly good at catching fishes.

Therefore, Minister Chu continued to drift along with his boat but with a persistent look of indifference on his face throughout. He calmly raised his fishing pole, pulling the fishing line which made a swishing sound due to the applied tension... as his boat roved forward on the lake.

The scene really depicted him as one of the masters of Lotus Lake!

Suddenly, a lot of people discovered this pretentious looking prick aboard a small boat, which didn't have a mast, or sail, or even a paddle for rowing... it was just producing a swishing sound while pushing its way through the lake.

Immediately, everyone got curious and looked towards Chu Yang.

Suddenly, in front of the boat, from the direction in which the fishing pole was pointing in, a big fish's head popped out of the water with a 'plop' sound, and in the process it splashed out a large amount of water.

Everyone clearly saw that the end of the fishing line was stuck in the mouth of this big fish...

This fish was so big, it definitely weighed no less than 100 pounds.

After that, the big fish continued to tow the small boat all around, leaving behind only ripples on the water surface...

"Wow! That's so awesome!" A young maiden called out like a smitten fool. She began to hop about on her boat while clapping her hands at the same time. One could clearly see a look of longing in her eyes: "Using a big fish to pull a boat... this is amazing... simply incredible..."

Soon, more and more people found out about it.

Especially some women, their eyes were beaming with fascination and reverence as they stared at this pretentious prick

with rapt attention. [Someone who carries himself with such confidence and ease… can never be an ordinary person…]

So much so that… his eye-catching display was not a bit inferior to the flashy performance of the Flute Master a while ago!

Minister Chu’s face remained expressionless. There was a proud and aloof look on his face and he carried a lofty and unsullied air around himself. His small boat effortlessly maneuvered around to make its way through the small gaps which existed between the parked boats of all sizes. However, his facial expression still remained unchanged throughout this time.

This was a rather unusual scene.

Such elegance, such confidence, such ingenuity…

Everyone's attention was fixated on him. The sensation caused by the flute’s melody a while ago was nowhere to be seen…

"Get it for me too! I also want one for myself!" A girl of 10 or so years of age exclaimed with a brilliant shine in her eyes as she tugged at a middle-aged man’s lapel: "I also want a big fish; I too want it to tow my boat…"

Chapter 314: Young Master Yu

The middle-aged man smiled helplessly as he hugged his daughter. An average person like him couldn't possibly achieve such a feat.

Many young girls rushed over to the bow of their boats and bent over the edge, waiting to see this exceptional scene of a big fish towing a boat, and Lotus Lake became jubilant all of a sudden!

Under the watchful eyes of the crowd, Minister Chu continued to circle his way around the boats. Even that big fish was such a show-off; it jumped out of the water several times, revealing its exquisite golden-white and dazzling figure to the crowd before diving back into the water, while continuing to tow the boat forward the entire time...

"Once more! Once more!"

"Please jump again!"

"Wow, la la la..."

Suddenly, waves of cheers spread through the crowd of spectators, with each wave being louder than the previous one... in a series of unstoppable exhortations!

Especially, the loud screams of several naive young girls, resounding throughout the lake non-stop...

The people on the Flute Master's family vessels were also observing this flashy and eye-caching display from the sidelines as a burning sensation overwhelmed their nose. They were wishing for that pretentious brat to be torn to shreds: The Flute Master's breathtaking performance from a while ago had really become meaningless after such a flashy commotion caused by this brat, and as a result, the impact of the Flute Master's mellifluous music simply vanished into thin air!

Was it possible for the Flute Master to make yet another flashy

appearance in front of the crowd?

And if he were to do that, then would he not end up becoming a laughing stock?

The limelight, in its entirety, had been thoroughly monopolized by Chu Yang! There were no two ways about it!

In an ordinarily decorated pleasure boat, there was a middle-aged man sitting calmly inside the cabin. With a smile on his face, he suddenly asked in a soft voice: "Who is that person? He clearly wants to give trouble to the Flute Master... Although he isn't one of us, he has still managed to lift the pressure off our young lady's shoulders. I must say that he has certainly eliminated the influence of Flute Master's first impression... ha ha, this really isn't a bad thing for us, not bad at all."

"Could it be that he is someone from the Transverse Flute Master's faction?" another person asked.

"I don't think so; the Transverse Flute Master would not appear so early." The previous individual replied firmly.

"That is also true. Is the young lady arriving soon?"

"She should be here by day after tomorrow." The previous individual said with a sigh: "It's just that this year's event at Lotus Lake is really somewhat untimely..."

"Yes indeed! Presently, Great Zhao is in a complete turmoil... if some mishap were to occur here, then there's a possibility that Diwu Qing Rou might mobilize his forces to this place." The other individual said in an anxious tone.

"We must take one step at a time."

"Have you seen the clan members arriving?"

"Not yet."

On another boat, a young master was looking at Chu Yang's stunt with smiling eyes, and suddenly, he sighed in a gentle manner.

"Why are you sighing, Minister Yu?"

"I am sighing because the difficult problem, which was giving me a headache earlier, has been already solved by someone quite perfectly."

"Difficult problem? Solved?"

"Correct... Ah Lu's Zither skills have already reached the acme level, simply unmatched under the blue dome of heaven! However... she is not particularly fond of using vulgar claptrap to please the crowds... Therefore, she is bound to be in a disadvantageous position with respect to the other two masters in the beginning, but... the unexpected emergence of that guy... has re-established the equilibrium between the three masters!

"Are you talking about that flashy and pretentious guy?" The person asked in a somewhat skeptical tone: "Just look at him... he is so pretentious and full of himself that he seems to have already forgotten himself..."

"That's where you're wrong." Minister Yu stared profusely at the playfully delightful figure of Chu Yang and said: "You say so because you don't know who he really is! He is not that kind of a superficial person, but he still did it just for the sake of helping us. This is such an enormous favor!

"This is tantamount to gifting our Ah Lu the very title of 'Number one in the entire world'."

Then he emphatically said, "Move the boat forward and intercept him. I want to talk to him."

Chu Yang was almost prepared to end the show when a boat suddenly arrived in front of his smaller one. At that very instant, the fishing rod recoiled, causing the fishing line to snap. The big fish immediately escaped from his clutches and vanished without a trace.

The curtains on that boat suddenly rolled up. Chu Yang clearly

noticed that this curtain hadn't been touched by anyone; it had rolled up on its own.

[An expert!]

Chu Yang's pupils suddenly contracted as he felt a sense of alarm rising in his heart.

Once the curtains were fully drawn, Chu Yang's gaze fell upon a young master, clad in a black robe, sitting quietly in the cabin, looking intently at him.

As their eyes met, Chu Yang suddenly had an extremely wonderful feeling, as if those two eyes had seemingly existed since time immemorial, and had been staring at him for millions of years!

If Chu Yang's eyes were like two droplets of water, then the opposite party's eyes were like the endless sea. That person's gaze had completely overshadowed his.

Chu Yang was shaken in his heart and wanted to back off, but failed to do so! It seemed like his mind was being controlled by that man, as if he had simply been frozen to the spot!

Chu Yang was greatly startled in his heart!

[How can there be such a frightening personage in the Lower Three Heavens?]

At this time, the Sword Spirit snorted inside the Nine Tribulations Space and an enormous amount of spiritual energy suddenly rushed into Chu Yang's eyes.

Boom!

Surely, this loud explosion had occurred during the forced separation of Chu Yang's gaze from that man's!

This sound was so loud and clear that even that attendant behind the black-robed young master had been able to hear it distinctly!

There was an issuance of sound as a result of the mere separation

of gazes – this was an incredible event!

Chu Yang's heart was thumping loudly. In a mere instant, his clothes were completely soaked in cold sweat. [For this person, killing me would be as simple as crushing an ant... if he wanted to!]

No doubt, this person was enigmatic and simply unfathomable!

"Hmm?" The black-robed young master was also slightly startled. And a puzzled look flashed in his eyes as he suddenly said in an indifferent tone: "You may leave first, return on your own."

The attendant immediately complied with his command.

They were presently at the center of Lotus Lake, yet the attendant jumped out of the cabin without the slightest hesitation and plopped into the water. Then he immediately used his hands and feet to swim all the way to the shore.

Now, there remained only those two individuals sitting opposite to each other.

"Who are you?" Chu Yang calmed himself down and asked slowly.

"Please come in and have a seat." There appeared an amiable smile on the face of that black-robed young master as he insipidly said: "It seems you have forgotten, but we have met each other before, my friend."

"Oh?" Chu Yang looked at him skeptically, then immediately floated over to that boat's cabin.

While facing such a peerless expert, he knew that his resistance would be entirely in vain. In fact, even running away from there would be absolutely impossible. Therefore, he might as well just go in confidently and find out what this expert had to say.

In the cabin of that boat, there was a table made of white crystal. And there was a white crystal seat opposite the black-robed person as well. Chu Yang sat down unceremoniously, with no trace of

politeness in his conduct.

White crystal! In all of the Nine Heavens Continent, it was considered a treasured material, second only to Purple Jade when it came to its energy containing attribute. However, this black-robed person had crafted tables and chairs out of such a precious material!

It was quite obvious that this black-robed man was extravagant, as well as filthy rich!

Within his Dantian, the sword's tip gave out a sharp cry, full of desire, as if it was craving for something.

Chu Yang smiled bitterly. [This white crystal is certainly a valuable item, but your big brother cannot afford to provoke this person...]

"Would you like to drink wine or tea?" The black-robed young master smiled and asked genially.

"This guest shall follow your lead." Chu Yang smiled back in a similar genial manner: "Of course, I would prefer to try whichever's better!"

"Ha ha, you are really blunt, aren't you?" The black-robed young master grasped the teapot with one hand. Then he gently moved his other hand to beckon a small water jar, and its lid slowly opened on its own. Following which, an arrow of water soared up as if it was conscious, and slowly poured itself into the teapot. The black-robed man smiled at Chu Yang and said: "This is Ice Crystal Water from the Middle Three Heavens.

Chu Yang looked at it with great interest and replied in a praising tone: "It's pretty good."

However, he was quite shocked in his heart. [It's far from being just pretty good, okay? In this world, only an Ice Crystal can extract spirit energy from ice and contain the extracted energy within itself in frozen form. When the Ice Crystal melts, the spirit

energy contained within completely dissolves in water, forming Ice Crystal Water!]

Although the quality of spirit energy accumulated in an ice crystal was inferior in comparison to that accumulated in a Purple Jade or a White Crystal, it was the only one which could be consumed! Chu Yang had never thought that the person before him would be so exuberant that he would use such precious water for preparing tea!

The black-robed man laughed as he took out a small jade bucket, made out of Purple Jade, from his bosom and said: "Take a look at these tea leaves, I have grown them myself and they are still nameless. However, I believe that only my tea deserves to bear the title of ‘nameless’ in the entire world."

After saying that, he removed the lid of that Purple Jade bucket and poured out a few previous leaves directly into the teapot.

And then, as soon as he placed the teapot on his palm, he used some kind of martial skill, and within a moment a white fog suddenly rose from the teapot, making bubbling sounds endlessly.

Even the lake water had actually begun to boil at his command!

"Usually, boiling the tea leaves ruins the brewed tea’s taste, but boiling is necessary to bring out the true flavor and fragrance of my tea." The black-robed man explained.

Immediately after that, he flicked his finger and a stream of water suddenly shot out of the teapot and landed steadily in the cup in front of Chu Yang, filling it all the way to the brim, without spilling a single drop in the process.

A simple and elegant fragrance spread out in the vicinity, immediately refreshing their heart and soul.

"This tea’s fragrance isn’t strong, but it can spread to great distances from its source, though that is also quite troublesome." The black-robed man smiled and stroked his sleeves, and Chu Yang

suddenly felt the entire space stagnating around him.

Even the rising steam suddenly froze in midair.

[Domain Control!]

Chu Yang almost exclaimed out loud.

Domain Control was a type of wondrous technique, which could only be comprehended by the experts of Martial Emperor Level. The wondrous beauty of this technique was inherent in the fact that some of the Ninth Grade Emperor level experts failed to acquire their own domain, whereas some experts of First Grade Emperor Level might be having it!

It completely depended on an individual's comprehension ability, as well as their destiny!

It didn't actually determine the level of one's skill or competence, but that didn't alter the fact that only the experts of Emperor Level or above could possess it.

An Emperor level expert might not have his own domain. However, an expert who had a domain of his own could only be an Emperor level expert!

"May I ask who you are, sire?" Chu Yang asked slowly. [This person says that he knows me, but I don't have a single clue about his true identity. Don't tell me that this person is actually a divine being?]

"He he..." The black-robed man gave a soft chuckle.

Suddenly, Chu Yang felt this man looking somewhat familiar. Also, this familiarity wasn't related to that man's appearance, it was rather induced by a feeling of déjà vu.

Furthermore, this person's bearing, temperament and even his attitude was full of indifference. As if his heart was not entangled in worldly things!

In fact, it could be said that his bearing was 80% similar to that of

Meng Chao Ran’s!

"Neither do I have a surname, nor a given name." The young man smiled gently. His carefree and easygoing attitude was really quite contagious in a way: "However, everyone calls me ‘Young Master Yu’, and so can you."

"Young Master Yu!" Chu Yang was suddenly startled in his heart and almost lost control of his psyche.

[I see, so it’s actually him!]

[This mysterious personage has finally appeared.]

Chapter 315: I must know this!

[Young Master Yu!]

Chu Yang was startled in his heart. [I see, so it's really that person.]

This Young Master Yu could be considered as the number one mystical figure from the Middle Three Heavens. Not to mention that he was a peak level expert!

He was also Dark Bamboo organization's most competent expert. He had no name, no surname, and no past. Moreover, he was an elusive figure who would appear and disappear unpredictably, like seeing a divine dragon's head without being able to see its tail. Ever since his debut, no one knew about his origins or where he had come from, as if he had suddenly emerged in this world out of the blue. There simply were no records about his past. It seemed as if the world itself had suddenly given birth to such an outstanding expert one day.

No one, as a matter of fact, knew the true extent of his cultivation.

When dealing with a Martial Great Master, he could just prevail; against a Revered Martial Artist, he could barely obtain victory; similarly against a King level expert, he could only win by a little...

With such vagueness surrounding him, who could possibly figure out the bottom line of his martial arts? Just like handling a butcher's cleaver with ease, he had won each and every battle with utmost repose. Ever since he had abruptly appeared in this world, he had been through a myriad of battles, yet none ended in his defeat!

Among the dark forces of the Middle Three Heavens, Young Master Yu's name was akin to the name of a demon.

"Young Master Yu..." Chu Yang sucked in a breath of cold air and

prudently asked: "Are you a member of the Bamboo?"

A surprised look flashed in Young Master Yu's eyes as he said: "You know me?"

He had said before about meeting Chu Yang, but the truth was that he had only seen Chu Yang. On the contrary, Chu Yang had never seen him. However, judging from the way Chu Yang was speaking right now, as well as his demeanor, it seemed like Chu Yang already knew about him. Therefore, Young Master Yu could not help but be somewhat curious.

"How can I not know about an illustrious expert like you?" Chu Yang said with a smile.

"I see, so I guess it's because your brothers are those young masters of the Middle Three Heavens." Young Master Yu immediately thought of this.

"Back then in Jun Lu Lu's room, that person who hadn't shown himself from start to finish... that was you, right?" Chu Yang smiled as he raised his head. He couldn't help but recall the terrifying aura from that day.

"You are quite impressive, I must say!" Young Master Yu gave his sincere praise as he intensely stared at Chu Yang: "You were able to figure that out just from a sentence!"

"It was not difficult to guess at all." Chu Yang laughed as he picked up the teacup and sipped a mouthful. He immediately felt a burst of cold aura flushing down his throat as the spirit energy instantly diffused into his meridians, giving him a greatly refreshing feeling: "The reason why Young Master Yu has asked me to come here is not just to have a casual chat over the tea, I presume?"

He sighed and continued, "Although the tea is good, and the water is delicious too."

Young Master Yu's gaze remained fixed on him for a while before

he finally said: "Well, I think you deserve such fine tea."

This time, he sighed and continued: "I called you today not because you have helped Ah Lu a big time for this competition in Lotus Lake, nor is it because you helped Ah Lu in comprehending ‘tuning’ at the House of Exceptional Beauties back then..."

Chu Yang tilted his head to one side: "Oh?"

"It’s because I have found out that you’re quite a skilled person." Young Master Yun laughed and one could see the slight tinge of bashfulness that had come over his face, similar to one on a ten-year-old kid’s face who is nearing his teenage, yet with an extra hint of implicit charm in his demeanor: "You have this hidden skill into making people unknowingly obligated to you."

"Ha ha." Chu Yang laughed heartily.

"So I would like to ask you..." Young Master Yu suddenly stared intently at him, and asked in a serious tone: "Are you a member of the Ye Clan, or the You Clan?"

"I guess these family names you took just now...” Chu Yang quietly said, "are from the nine aristocratic families of the Upper Three Heavens, correct?"

"They are, indeed." Young Master Yu nodded.

"Let me be honest with you, but the fact is that I don’t know much about the Nine Heavens Continent..." Chu Yang replied: "In fact, I am hearing these names for the first time today!"

Young Master Yu shot a suspicious glance at him.

"Frankly speaking, my knowledge of the Nine Heavens Continent is limited to the facts and information I could gather from the official records." Chu Yang smiled: "As far as things like inside stories, secrets and legends are concerned...I am completely ignorant about all of that."

A puzzled look flashed in Young Master Yu’s eyes.

"Sometimes I think, since this continent is known by the name of Nine Heavens Continent, then what exactly is the significance of grouping the heavens as Upper Three Heavens, Middle Three Heavens, and Lower Three Heavens?" Chu Yang further asked: "This entire continent is clearly divided into three segments, then why is it called Nine Heavens?"

Young Master Yu was carefully observing each and every change in Chu Yang's facial expression. After a long time, he suddenly heaved a long sigh and, laughing at himself, said: "It seems like my guess was completely wrong..."

"What?" Chu Yang asked.

"So you really don't know anything!" Young Master Yu said in a heavy tone, it seemed he was extremely mad at himself for guessing incorrectly.

"They may seem like a bunch of simple stuff to you, but they are fairly complex for me." Chu Yang laughed: "I would like to think that you have already investigated about me, yet you are asking me a question like this. It appears to me that you suspect those investigation accounts about me."

"That's because you have been progressing too fast!" Young Master Yu exclaimed before heaving a sigh: "If I am not mistaken, you are presently at Revered Martial level. Moreover, you are a Revered Sword Artist, and that too of Second Grade?"

Chu Yang was startled in his heart; [I am already sparing no effort in concealing my cultivation, without allowing a single strand of my aura to be exposed, yet my cultivation has been thoroughly seen through by this man, that too in a glance.]

[Such visual prowess is amazing in itself, and yet exceedingly terrifying!]

"How long has it been since you took birth in this world... even if you are a peerless genius, and had a stockpile of endless elixirs at

your disposal... even if you had a first-grade teacher to give you proper guidance... even after all that, it is still impossible to attain such an incredible progress rate in the Lower Three Heavens." Young Master Yu gave a bitter laugh as he continued: "If you were me, someone who has seen it all... then you wouldn't ask why I suspected you."

Chu Yang's lips twitched a bit as he naturally knew about this point; [the rate of my progress would certainly seem as mythological to anyone, whosoever he might be.]

"Fine then, we have owed you twice anyway. Today, I will tell you secret details about the Nine Heavens Continent, which are known only to the insiders." Young Master Yu snorted twice before continuing further: "Only those who have reached a certain level can contemplate this matter. Considering your present cultivation, getting to know about this is certainly beyond your ability... in fact, I must say that something like this is happening for the first time ever in the history of the Nine Heavens Continent."

"Please, do enlighten me." Chu Yang smiled calmly at his own pace. In fact, he was quite anxious in his heart, because what he was missing right now was the true history of the Nine Heavens Continent, or one could say, that he was unaware of the true realm of experts which was hidden within the Nine Heavens Continent!

Pursuing strength with all of one's might, only to be puzzled by confusing legends and rumors... who would want to purse legends which might be far from truth?

"This matter is something that is very hard to explain to others." Young Master Yu thought for a while, then continued: "... in fact, it is so incredible, yet absurd at the same time, that ... I was not particularly willing to share it with you... but have to because I am enmeshed in a trap of one's own devising!"

He sighed: "Who would have thought that you will come up with such a request! The knowledge of this secret is like a symbol of

status, something that can only be obtained by those who have obtained a certain extent of power and wisdom... in fact, even most people in the Upper Three Heavens do not know about it... the secret of the Nine Heavens only belongs to the nine aristocratic families of the Upper Three Heavens... yeah!"

Chu Yang smiled. [This is exactly what I have been dying to know all this time.]

Therefore, as soon as he heard Young Master Yu speaking about the two debts he owed him, Chu Yang didn't beat around the bush and bluntly put forward his demand: "I don't understand the Nine Heavens!"

He must forcefully disperse the dense fog which had been clouding his mind for so long.

"And here I thought that... you may ask me to assassinate Diwu Qing Rou..." Young Master Yu said while gently rubbing his own temple.

Chu Yang maintained the same smiling expression on his face, while he waited patiently.

"Well then." Young Master Yu helplessly smiled as he said in a silky, breeze-like tone: "Even if they find out that this secret came out from my mouth, what can they possibly do... humph."

This sentence was brimming with loftiness!

Chu Yang's heart suddenly thumped as his vision shook slightly: [Don't tell me that this secret cannot be said casually? And if once said, will have serious consequences?]

[Why?]

"Nine Heavens Continent... was originally just a continent, and didn't have the Upper Three Heavens or Lower Three Heavens. In fact, there were no heavens to begin with in the first place. It used to be a single world at that time... ravaged with unceasing disputes. Humanity, Beast kin and several other races used to

flourish together on this one big continent.

Young Master Yu continued in an unhurried pace: "And at the time humanity was slowly nearing its end, there were nine great powerhouses in the world. Each of them belonged to one of the nine great races; and, furthermore, all of them had attained the supreme realm.”

Chapter 316: The origins of the Nine Tribulations Sword!

"The continent’s dispute had reached the point where, if it wasn’t curbed in time, then it could lead to a thorough destruction. Thus, the nine great powerhouses relinquished all hostility and friendship towards each other, and gathered together to have a discussion and eventually reached a solution for the situation at hand. And that solution was: the continent would be divided into nine big chunks, including both barren and fertile regions... in this context, the barren and fertile regions are referring to the regions with... low and high content of ‘World Vitality’ respectively! [1]

"They mutually agreed upon assigning one region to each of the nine races. Afterwards, they could only reside within their respective regions. If any of the races were to ever try and cross the border, then they would inevitably face a joint attack of the others.

"As for which race would reside in which slice of the continent, this decision was left in the hands of the nine great powerhouses; the nine great powerhouses carried out a ranking battle, with the race corresponding to the top ranking powerhouse getting to reside in the best region! And the same process continued until the end.

"At that time, the nine races consisted of the Sun race, Moon race and the Star race, amongst others; these three races however, are widely known as the Three Stars Divine Clan. They can neither be classified as humans, nor can they be classified as beasts; they belong to a fairly peculiar race. They have one thing in common, which is every time stars congeal in the sky, they can transform into humans, but their strength naturally remains enormous as ever!

"Furthermore, there was also the Beast race, which used to be the largest back then. Moreover, when their cultivation reached a

certain level, they could also transform into humans with no visible difference when compared to real humans. The other races were namely Bird race, Dragon race, Fairy race, Human race, Devil race and Spirit race. Each ethnic group had unique traits which couldn't be imitated by the others.

"Those were precisely the nine great races!" Young Master Yu's eyes revealed an unusual look, as if reminiscing about the distant past. Chu Yang certainly noticed this, but couldn't understand the meaning veiled behind the look in his eyes... in short, it was quite strange and baffling.

"Such being the case, since there used to be nine great races in this world; why have the other races disappeared?" Chu Yang asked: "And what became of the ranking battle between the nine great races?"

"Hehe, the nine great powerhouses continued to battle for half a year before the rankings were ultimately decided upon; this was also the continent's first ranking battle!" Young Master Yu shook his head and said with a smile: "The end result was... Human race was placed first and thereby occupied the best region, followed by Spirit race, Devil race, Fairy race, Dragon race, Bird race, Star race, Sun race and Moon race.

"And thus, the continent was finally divided. In those times, the continent was linked by flowing rivers. Using those very rivers as markers, the continent was divided amongst the races, with each having a section of the ocean... and a phase of mutual non-aggression persisted for many years thereafter...

"However, how could the low-ranked ethnic groups not harbor any wild ambitions? Who wouldn't want to occupy the best region... many years after the disappearance of the nine great powerhouses, the most formidable race, Humans, finally declined, and a dispute rose again on the continent. The Three Stars Divine Clan was the first race to leave its own residence, and was all set to seize the best region.

"When the Three Stars Divine Clan moved into action, the other races also responded accordingly; this ultimately threw the entire continent into turmoil once again. But this time, the nine great powerhouses weren't there to stop them... instead, there appeared a man with a sword!

"The Nine Tribulations Sword!" Young Master Yu said in a heavy tone.

Chu Yang was dumbstruck.

[How... did I get involved with this Nine Tribulations Sword?]

"The Nine Tribulations Sword?" Chu Yang crooked his mouth, looking askant with his eyes squinting, before he asked: "What relation does this have with the Nine Tribulations Sword?"

"...this matter was finally resolved by the master of the Nine Tribulations Sword!" Young Master appeared to be smiling before he gasped helplessly with admiration: "That person... was an ultimate scoundrel! He used an utterly preposterous method to settle this matter!"

Chu Yang appeared confused and disoriented as he asked: "How many years have passed since that happened?"

"This... is really hard to count and tell." Young Master Yu shook his head.

"At that time, the 'Nine Tribulations Sword Lord' suddenly appeared out of nowhere. He first found several strong experts of the Three Stars Divine Clan and without any demur, a fight of crackle and rattle began. The strong experts of the other great races were no exceptions either, and suffered attacks from the 'Nine Tribulations Sword Lord' as well. The most serious casualty was that of a Supreme expert of Human race. He wasn't ready to overlook the losses incurred on the part of his race, and retaliated. However, he was chased down by the 'Nine Tribulations Sword Lord' and was slapped all over the Nine Heavens; it is said that

each of those slaps shook the entire world. In fact, a slap on the face was said to have destroyed an entire mountain!

Young Master Yu's eyes were full of fascination.

"A slap on the face destroyed an entire mountain?" Chu Yang stared, and it seemed as if his eyeballs would pop out any time now. [How can a slap on the face be anyhow related to the destruction of a mountain?]

"Whenever a slap landed on the face of that supreme expert, he was instantly sent crashing into a mountain. And then, the mountain was gone." Young Master Yu raised his eyebrows: "As simple as that!"

Chu Yang almost fainted from the shock. [Is there really such a way to slap someone? Anyway, returning to the main topic: that Supreme expert's body was really quite tough...]

"Then the 'Nine Tribulations Sword Lord' forcefully summoned all the strong experts; it is said that the situation back then was quite shocking and the people gathered there weren't ready to agree with each other. Afterwards, the 'Nine Tribulations Sword Lord' said: 'such being the case, you might as well just live in your own respective spaces and that should end this farce once and for all'. Thereupon, the old man folded the entire continent..."

"The entire continent... was folded?" Chu Yang turned completely lifeless: "Folded?"

[That's f*king insane, the Nine Heavens Continent is not a piece of paper you know, how can it be folded just like that?]

"Yes, it was folded; and everyone realized that the continent had become smaller in size. Moreover, it had transformed into a nine layered pagoda. The 'Nine Tribulations Sword Lord' was very much satisfied with this result and said: from now on, this continent shall be called the 'Nine Heavens Continent'!"

Chu Yang smacked his lips repeatedly, [so that's how the name of

Nine Heavens Continent came into being...]

"In accordance with the requests of the Nine Tribulations Sword's master, the races moved into their own respective spaces. None dared to speak out their unwillingness..." Young Master Yu said.

Chu Yang shook his head again and again, [while facing such a person... who would possibly say no? Who would dare to show their unwillingness?]

"However, the Nine Tribulations Sword Lord's solution to the issue wasn't perfect! Moreover, it caused a catastrophe." Young Master Yu sighed and said: "Initially, his solution seemed alright, but the nine separated spaces he had hastily created, were very unstable. And after the matter was initially resolved, they suddenly collapsed..."

"Collapsed..." Chu Yang's forehead was riddled with beads of sweat, which slowly rolled down.

[The spaces collapsed...]

"At that time, the uppermost layer used to be occupied by the Human race, followed by the Three Stars Divine Clan and the other great races... they all came crashing down, one after another." Young Master Yu smiled wryly, and it seemed as if he was finding it difficult to speak about this: "The uppermost layer completely collapsed upon the layer below and that layer collapsed onto the layers below, one after another... thereupon annihilating some of the races that once used to contend for hegemony over this continent; namely Dragon race, Fairy race, Devil race, Spirit race ... these races ceased to exist."

"They were crushed to death?" Chu Yang was left alarmed and leaping.

"You tell me?" Young Master Yu blankly glanced at him: "When an entire continent comes crashing down... who can survive that?

Even a Supreme expert... would find it difficult to live through such a calamity!"

Chu Yang felt his hands and feet turning ice-cold.

"The ‘Nine Tribulations Sword Lord’ felt like he had lost face..." Chu Yang felt his brain being short-circuited by this sentence of the Young Master Yu’s: [That prick destroyed five great races... and felt as if he had lost face?]

Listening to this sentence was really equivalent to the feeling of getting one’s b*lls crushed.

"Therefore, he performed a bit of renovation. He merged the bottom two layers into one layer, then the middle two layer into one... as for the above five layers, they were all merged together! In this way, the nine heavens were transformed into three heavens. Afterwards, in order to commemorate the five great races, which were annihilated in the catastrophe... the continent was called the Nine Heavens!

"I see, so that’s how it is." Chu Yang finally understood the origins of the Nine Heavens Continent. However, just thinking about what he got to learn today, sent chills down his spine: [to think that someone was able to easily fold the continent? In addition... when the results were not up to his satisfaction, instead of unfolding the continent, he folded it once again?]

[Thinking of this ... just thinking of this makes me feel dizzy!]

"However, there still remained a hidden danger of the reoccurrence of such a calamity due to the presence of heavenly defects from the previous calamity." Young Master Yu said: "Thus, the ‘Nine Tribulations Sword Lord’ left his sword behind in this continent. In order to seal those defects, he divided his sword into nine fragments, and sealed the defects with the help of some secret method. Henceforth, the continent stabilized, and there has never been a reoccurrence of collapse ever since..."

"Afterward, the ‘Nine Tribulations Sword Lord’ disappeared without a trace... since then, no one saw him again!" Young Master Yu said in a deep tone: "That extraordinary personage left behind a passage before departing: The Nine Tribulations Sword would resurface once in every ten thousand years, lock the destiny of this continent, initiating the cycle of karma, thereby providing strong support to the Nine Heavens Continent..."

Chu Yang stared with his eye opened wide while sluggishly nodding his head.

[So that’s how it is!]

[This is the true origins of the Nine Tribulations Sword!]

"Since then, that strange sword came to be known as ‘Nine Tribulations Sword’! Everyone tried to guess why that extraordinary expert called this sword the ‘Nine Tribulations Sword’? Could it be that... this continent would have to go through nine great tribulations? But even after thinking it over and over, no one could figure out, and the topic was dropped at last.

"Ten thousand years later, someone really obtained the Nine Tribulations Sword. However this time around, the layout of the Nine Heavens Continent was completely changed again... after a tragic war, the last surviving of Bird race... were thoroughly wiped out..."

"After a certain period of time, a great conflict arose between the Human race and the Three Stars Divine Clan... but this time, the Nine Tribulations Sword fell into the hands of a human expert... and when his strength reached the peak level, the Three Stars Divine Clan was completely sealed by him!"

"Sealed..."

"Yes, sealed! This seal however, can be removed, but only when the Nine Tribulations Sword would resurface..."

"Cough Cough Cough..." After hearing that, Chu Yang felt as if he

would collapse any time now. Now, there was only one doubt in his heart: [Did all of this really happen? Has this inconceivable event really taken place?]

[Could it be that reason why the Nine Tribulations Sword unceasingly absorbs the essence of all sorts of stuff... is to garner enough strength to support the continent? If that is really so...then isn't this too... too ... too baffling?]

[Whenever the Nine Tribulations Sword emerges, it gives rise to a turbulent time and utter chaos, which shakes the entire world. Don't tell me that this happens in response to some kind of reaction owing to the emergence of those heavenly defects which cause the continent's support to lose its strength?]

"Another ten thousand years passed, and the Nine Tribulations Sword appeared again; it continued to emerge once in every ten thousand years, causing big catastrophes, and changing the layout of the Nine Heavens Continent every time... from the very beginning... ninety thousand years have already passed..."

Young Master Yu lifted his teacup and took a sip before saying: "At present, the Nine Tribulations Sword has already taken its re-birth... not including the time it appeared with its original owner, this emergence would be the ninth time!"

[The Ninth time!]

"Based on the records... the commotion caused by the appearance of the Nine Tribulations Sword this time, is entirely different from the previous times; it seems as if this time, things would be a lot more serious than before! Moreover... a legend has been in circulation ever since the first appearance of the Nine Tribulations Sword: Nine Tribulations, Nine Revelations, the earth will crack open and the sky will flip over... in other words, the whole of Nine Heavens Continent would be destroyed ... no one knows when such nonsensical legend began to spread..."

Chu Yang finally moved his eyeballs, rapidly, and said: "All this

sounds like a dream..."

TL’s notes:

1) World Vitality, means vital energy of the world. In context, it basically refers to the energy or Qi in a particular region.

Chapter 317: Explanation? What explanation?

"Forget about you listening... even as I speak on this topic, it feels like I am talking about fantasy stuff..." Young Master Yu smiled bitterly as he said: "But this... is actually the biggest secret of the Nine Heavens Continent!

“All origins find their roots in... the Nine Tribulations Sword!"

"Then wouldn’t it be right to say... that all the secrets lie within the Nine Tribulations Sword?" Chu Yang frowned as he asked. At this moment, he thought in his heart: [F*k, it’s merely a sword, that’s all! How can it actually be so... complicated?]

"Correct, Nine Tribulations Sword; it’s such a pity that you’re not the current Lord of Nine Tribulations Sword! Moreover, this generation’s Nine Tribulations Sword... has already taken birth. Now that it has come into being, it’s searching for an individual capable of accomplishing all this. You don’t stand a chance!" Young Master Yu replied slowly, certainly having misunderstood the meaning of Chu Yang’s words. In fact, there were traces of ridicule and helplessness contained in his explanation.

"Not a chance ah..." Chu Yang looked up, and said in a disappointed manner: "It’s a pity."

"It’s quite a pity indeed." Young Master Yu heaved a long sigh. The way he showed his pity appeared quite genuine, so much so that it made Chu Yang feel the crisis residing in his own Dantian.

If anyone found out that the Nine Tribulations Sword was present in his Dantian... Chu Yang would dare to make a bet: [Even if my progress speed gets a hundred times faster, even if I have a hundred lives... I would still die a miserable death and that too in a very short amount of time!]

Young Master Yu remained in a daze for a moment, then finally

snapped out of it and said: "This... was precisely all about the Nine Heavens Continent."

After saying this sentence, Young Master Yu gently moved his fingers. Suddenly, Chu Yang discovered that the tea's fragrance, originally stagnated in the air, had suddenly started flowing once again; slowly drifting outside...

[Does this mean that this conversation is over?]

The sound of the lake's flowing water, as well as the noise of the outside world suddenly sounded at this very moment. The blockade set up by Young Master Yu a while ago, had surprisingly sealed up the entire space surrounding them.

Those on the outside couldn't hear the sounds coming from the inside, and vice versa. What kind of magical power was this...

Chu Yang felt moved in his heart as he asked: "May I ask Young Master Yu about the martial rankings followed in this continent..."

"Martial rankings... it's the same as the ones you have been seeing all this time..." Young Master Yu lowered his head and smiled gently: "However... genuinely wonderful places aren't located here ah..."

[Places which are genuinely wonderful aren't located here? Is he referring to the Lower Three Heavens or the Nine Heavens Continent?]

"Oh? Then these so-called genuinely wonderful places you talk about... have you visited them before?" There was an abundance of implicit meaning in Chu Yang's question.

"Indeed, it was quite fun." Young Master Yu's eyelids drooped down as he said in a heavy voice: "Those places were full of dangers ... but also brimming with opportunities..."

Chu Yang pondered, and then suddenly smiled in his heart; his heart was telling him that, judging from the Young Master Yu's statement, it seemed like these so-called genuinely wonderful

places were located in the Upper Three Heavens.

"I have already prepared a position for you." Young Master Yu lifted his teacup and took a sip. Suddenly, the look in his eyes turned severe as he stretched out his hand and grasped the void. The misty fragrance of the tea which was drifting in the air was suddenly grasped by his hand, and clenched as if it was mud, thereby turning into a small ball. Afterward, he flicked his finger three times.

Three streaming jets of milky white mist flew out from that small ball, producing a loud whooshing sound. They instantly pierced through the cabin and flew out!

‘Plop’, from the outside, came three successive sounds of someone falling into the water.

The water surface was undulated, thereupon making the boat sway up and down in accordance with the fluctuating water surface...

"In this world, there shall always be too many... of these overreaching conceited..." Young Master Yu grinned toward Chu Yang and said in a low voice: "... ants!"

Then he stood up and revealed a smile before saying: "They make me feel so vexed." At this moment, his smile was suddenly filled with a desolate murderous aura as his snow-white teeth gently nipped his lower lip; the white light being reflected by his white teeth was similar to that of a sea shark that was about to swallow its food...

A shout filled with rage suddenly echoed on the outside: "Who is there in the boat? What kind of valiant hero doesn’t even bother to give a prior greeting and just goes on to launch sneak attacks!"

"These people must have come looking for you. You mounted a fish to stir up troubles, and that has brought to you your own doom..." Young Master Yu paid no attention to the calls coming

from outside. He just smiled at Chu Yang and said: "Do you wish to go, or do you want me to go instead?"

"I would like to, but since you have stood up already." Chu Yang smiled slyly: "I wouldn't wish to forcibly take away your inclination of doing what you want to do."

Young Master Yu stared blankly for a moment, then immediately burst into laughter: "Cunning!"

He stood up, then crossed his hands behind his back, and strolled out. The cabin was still sealed from all sides, yet Young Master Yu's figure had suddenly disappeared from there.

Chu Yang looked at his seat as a strange look flickered in his eyes. He finally stood up, opened the boat's curtains and went out.

Young Master Yu used bare hands to condense the air; the enemy was speared with just a snap of his fingers. From start to finish, he continued to play down without the slightest bit of smoke and fire resulting from his actions. Although Young Master Yu had revealed only a fraction of his martial skills, he could already be ranked at the 'top of the list' of the most formidable people Chu Yang had met. He was fully deserving of being held in such high esteem, without any reservations.

Chu Yang came out and saw that this boat had been completely surrounded. He did not even know when it actually happened.

About 5 or 6 boats were anchored all around them. On the prows of those boats, there stood several people. Three blue-clothed corpses were floating quietly on the surface of the water. In all likelihood, this was the result of Young Master Yu's skill from a moment ago. He had merely snapped his fingers thrice to achieve this result.

On the boat anchored right across them, there was a square-faced middle-aged man, with an angry look spread across his whole face. He was glaring at Young Master Yu as well as at Chu Yang, who

had come out just now. The look in his eyes was quite grave!

Chu Yang carefully looked at those boats and immediately recognized them: [These boats belong to the Flute Master's side. Presumably, they have come to take revenge since I have ruined the Flute Master's plan of gaining the upper hand by a show of strength.]

"You lot have surrounded my boat, what do you want?" Young Master Yu stood atop the bow of his boat with his hands crossed behind his back. His black robe was fluttering in the wind while his countenance was brimming with an elusive air of arrogance.

"Young Master, may I ask who is responsible... for the death of those three men?" That middle-aged man was unconsciously terrified by his imposing aura. Even though his tone was still as strong as before, it had unknowingly changed into an inquiring note.

"I am..." Young Master Yu didn't even look at him since his eyes were affectionately looking at the lake's green water. He sighed, and said with an unexpected sense of guilt in his voice: "I am sorry..."

"Since Young Master is apologizing... then..."

"I am sorry... that I made those three ugly corpses fall into your clear and pure water. It is my fault..." Young Master Yu's voice was brimming with regret as he apologized: "In order to properly express my apology, I will clean up this area."

That middle-aged man's face suddenly turned purple with rage. He was rendered completely speechless.

It turned out that Young Master Yu's apology was meant for the lake's water, and not for those people... and this had completely infuriated the middle-aged man, who had mistakenly misunderstood Young Master Yu's intentions!

[You first killed three of my people, and then you actually put

blame on their corpses for polluting the water? Could there really be anything more unreasonable in this entire world?]

"Are you from the Transverse-flute Master's faction?" The middle-aged man restrained his rage as he asked with his teeth clenched. One could see his temples throbbing with anger.

"You must be from the Flute Master's faction, correct?" Young Master Yu finally raised his head and cast a sidelong glance at him. There was a limpid look in his eyes as he asked gently. The pure look in his eyes made him seem like a wealthy young master, who had grown up in golden palaces and jade towers, and simply didn't know about the worries of this world.

However, when the middle-aged man looked into his eyes, he immediately felt a creepy chill rising from the depths of his heart.

"Yes! A while ago, this young master used a big fish to tow his boat and resorted to using a vulgar claptrap in order to please the crowd and cause sensation, destroying the public presence and image of my master. Therefore I must know what his true intention was?" The square faced middle-aged man directed his dignified gaze towards Chu Yang: "Sire, I think you need to give us an explanation."

He could tell that it wouldn't be easy to deal with this young master, so after acknowledging his own status, he immediately transferred his attention onto the main target and started accusing Chu Yang instead.

His words simultaneously gave an indication to Young Master Yu: [We want him, not you. If you are busy... then you can continue to do whatever you were doing earlier...]

By doing so, they had actually revealed their own weakness, exposing that they were basically begging for mercy.

"Explanation? What explanation?" Chu Yang didn't say anything; instead, Young Master Yu rolled his eyes and asked indifferently.

"Before the Match of the Three Masters, each of the masters gets to flaunt their own talent. This is the convention..." The middle-aged man replied.

"Convention? What convention?" Young Master Yu frowned as he asked in an awe-inspiring manner.

"Respectable Young Master, even if your martial skills are outstanding... you must keep in mind that it is difficult to deal four hands with just two fists. Always remember that this world possessed its own rules of existence." The middle-aged man said out loud while appearing quite fierce, yet cowardly at heart.

He didn't even know who the young man before him really was, but he was still already scared in his heart.

"It is difficult to deal four hands with just two fists, you say?" Young Master Yu uttered an 'oh' sound as he slowly raised his hand, pointing towards a boat on the left side of his own, and said: "Are you referring to these people?"

His voice sounded very light, and could also be described as quite gentle. However, as soon as he finished the sentence, that boat suddenly got crushed with a loud 'puff' sound!

The seven of eight people onboard had their bodies sent flying upward, and then simultaneously disintegrated in midair, leaving behind only fragments of their body, and mincemeat.

Without any pitiful screams, or any traces of energy in the air, with just a causal movement of his hand, a boat was broken to pieces along with the people onboard.

This was simply a demonic sorcery!

There were fragment of boat floating on the water's surface, and even the biggest among them did not surpass the size of a palm. An inexplicable smell of blood spread on the surface of the lake.

Young Master Yu inclined his face from side to side as he said in a painful voice: "It's all my fault... I have polluted this water..." Then

he turned his face to look at the middle-aged man with his pure and innocent eyes. He smiled affably and asked, "Are there any other hands?"

Then he lifted his hand while looking inquisitively at the middle-aged man. His finger was already pointed at another boat as he asked: "Or maybe..."

Before he could finish the sentence, there sounded loud sounds of people falling into the water. From the boat his finger was pointed at, a total of seven or eight people had jumped into the water. At present, they were desperately swimming away in all directions...

The middle-aged man's eyes were frozen with terror; his entire body was trembling while his upper and lower teeth were intensely clashing against each other. At this time, his legs appeared like a pipa(1). It seemed as if he would kneel down any time now.

"Do you still want an explanation?" Young Master Yu looked at him genially as he asked in great amusement: "I can give you an explanation, you know? Trust me; I can certainly give you one."

"No... No... I don't want to hear..." The square-faced middle-aged man's dignity had flown far away, and beyond the topmost layers of the clouds. With his hands shaking repeatedly, he stuttered awfully, in pure desperation.

"You don't want to hear?" Young Master Yu looked as if he was having a headache, and so he asked again: "Do you want an explanation or not? The way you're speaking right now is quite strenuous to listen to, you know..."

"Don't... please don't... don't want any explanations..." The middle-aged man was so scared that he started to cry. One could hear the desperate sobs in his changed tone.

"Good, quite obedient I must say. In the future, make sure you remember this important lesson you've learned today: not everyone can just ask for an explanation, understood?" Young

Master Yu laughed kindly: "Now go back and tell your master. If he wants to keep his small mouth intact to play that flute of his... he must learn to be more sincere and well-behaved? Got it?"

Pipa: Chinese musical instrument with four strings.

Chapter 318: How Can This Be Possible?

"Yes... yes, I would humbly follow young master's instructions..." the middle-aged man nodded in a manner which resembled the sight of a chick pecking rice grains, while each and every one of the people standing behind him had a deathly pale look spread across their faces; the look in their clearly reflected that they had been scared out of their wits.

"Very well, furthermore . . . whether we use a fish to tow a boat, or a bird to pull a cart . . . this is not something you . . . or your master can control; understood?" Young Master Yu said with a smile.

"Understood! Boom . . ." The middle-aged man complied repeatedly; but since he was extremely nervous, he ended up saying 'boom' instead of 'understood'. (1)

"Well, go then." Young Master Yu whisked his sleeves and a strong wind suddenly flew out. And the boat anchored on the opposite side immediately retreated like an arrow.

It retreated so fast that it caused the people to lose their balance one by one, even though they had been previously standing steadily atop the bows of their boats. As a result, they couldn't stop themselves from losing balance and falling into the water since they were already scared witless.

Those boats had quickly receded in a split second. They had simply vanished like a ghost and that too within the blink of an eye; perhaps this speed had already created a record in Lotus Lake.

They had come here to threaten, but fled away cowardly after losing their courage in its entirety.

Young Master Yu smiled as he turned around and looked towards Chu Yang while spreading out his hand, "See, that's how you settle a dispute."

Chu Yang shook his head as he heaved a sigh.

[This man's method of resolving an issue is very simple; . . . thoroughly bullying someone into subjugation! A slap on the face: ‘is that okay’? Yet another slap on the face: ‘is that okay now?’]

If someone gets beaten up again, and again, without being able to fight back . . . would they dare to retaliate?

"Your approach was quite fierce yet straightforward." Chu Yang replied in an unfeigned manner.

"Such people ought to be dealt in this way." Young Master Yu softly stated as he smiled insipidly, "Who has the time to deal with their nonsense? Do you want to reason with them? No? Then don’t waste time and just slap them in the face. If they still remain unconvinced, then slap them again! Remember, if you wait until there is a need to reason with someone . . . you will have already fallen into a disadvantageous position by then."

He crossed his hands behind his back as he continued with a smile, "You mustn’t indulge into reasoning with your opponents when their strength is more than your anticipation. These people can only be regarded as fools for trying to reason with me."

Chu Yang smiled as he said, "Indeed, you shouldn’t try to reason with a stronger opponent because that will only add to your bully’s pleasure."

"Ha ha . . . correct. That is absolutely correct." Young Master Yu laughed heartily without any restraint.

"If that is the case . . . wouldn’t it be right to say that there’s no need for ‘reasoning’ to exist in this world? After all . . . what’s the use of it anyway?" Chu Yang asked.

"This is the reason why I also think that it’s useless." Young Master Yu replied calmly, "In fact, I would say that reasoning is only applicable on ordinary people. After reaching a certain level of power and influence, you can simply disregard the very use of

reasoning and even trod upon it if you wish to. The reason why you currently think that ‘reasoning’ is so useful is probably inherent in the fact that you still haven’t gone beyond the scope of ordinary people . . . wait until you arrive in the Upper Three Heavens; you will automatically understand what I am talking about . . ."

A mocking smile surfaced on Young Master Yu’s face. He continued to smile like this for a moment, and then finally said, " . . . sometimes ‘reasoning’ . . . is considered even inferior to bullshit!

"Ha . . ." Young Master Yu’s body floated up-into the sky and suddenly blurred. Chu Yang had barely blinked, only to see him standing at the shore. A fine and delicate voice suddenly sounded right next to his ears; in fact, it sounded just like the buzzing sound of a flying mosquito, "We don’t owe you anymore. Come seek me if you need your own status. You will find me at that place."

By then, Young Master Yu had already disappeared from the shore, and was nowhere to be seen.

Chu Yang smiled wryly as he shook his head.

Only then Chu Yang realized that the opposite party no longer owed him; on the contrary, now he owed the opposite party. Chu Yang had heard the words spoken by Young Master Yu; but it had borne a completely different result on him, when compared others hearing the same words.

As the last sentence stated: 'In the Upper Three Heavens, reasoning is considered even inferior to bullshit' . . . this sentence immediately made him realize: [Strength is given supremacy in the Upper Three Heavens. It’s a world that runs on the law of the jungle where the strong prey on the weak.]

The tale of the Nine Heavens might seem like a fable to others; Chu Yang however, couldn’t help but harbor a special feeling about it!

He still hadn't recovered from the shock imparted by the legend of the Nine Tribulations Sword.

He shook his head once again, and then sat down on the boat as the Nine Tribulations Sword's tip came out in a surreptitious manner; causing a 'itching' sensation in Chu Yang's fingertips. Then, it abruptly jumped out and landed onto the white-crystal table since it didn't feel anyone's presence on the outside, besides Chu Yang's.

In an instant, the white-crystal table, as well as the chair, had turned into a pile of dust; even the teapot was gone . . .

Then, the Sword's tip went back inside Chu Yang's body with a whizzing sound. As soon as it had returned, the world's purest form of spirit energy suddenly rushed out of his Dantian. He instantly felt a warm and comfortable feeling spreading throughout his body; this feeling was similar to immersing oneself in a hot spring during winter season . . .

The spirit energy became even more nimble after a moment. The remnants of medicinal efficacies in Chu Yang's meridians, which had originally been suppressed by the Sword Spirit, were also enticed into circulation . . .

The medicinal efficacies and spirit energy together formed a mighty current which immediately circulated through his meridians before finally attacking the barrier of Revered Sword Level's second grade!

The barrier collapsed with a loud boom. Chu Yang felt as if his body had become light as a feather, and would fly-up any time now; his entire body was brimming with strength all of a sudden.

"Revered Sword Second Grade!" Chu Yang suddenly thought as he continued being seated motionlessly. However, at this time, a big hole suddenly appeared beneath him and the lake water began to flood inside the boat. Soon after, Chu Yang's body silently disappeared in the water . . .

Chu Yang appeared similar to a big fish as his figure darted several feet deep into the water; and downwards like an arrow.

Meanwhile, the Sword's tip and the Sword's edge were jumping with joy and excitement within his Dantian.

That urgent summoning call coming from underwater had also become quite distinct by now.

Chu Yang finally reached the bottom of the lake as he followed that wonderful feeling, but only to find a big hole in the ground. It was giving off a spooky feeling, and it was fairly hard to determine its real depth.

Chu Yang didn't hesitate in taking out a big chunk of black steel, weighing hundreds of Kgs, from the Nine Tribulations Space. He then hugged it close to his bosom, and dived in headlong.

Chu Yang had started becoming anxious that he might not be able to dive deeper into the lake; the underwater buoyancy had been increasing rapidly, and he was afraid that it may ultimately repel him upward. However, he wouldn't need to worry about it as long as he was holding on to a chunk of black steel.

It got really dark in front of his eyes after diving for a while. In fact, it was already so dark around him that he was unable to see his own hands.

The source of that wonderful feeling was also getting closer; both, the Sword's edge and the Sword's tip, were already protruding from his fingers, and were issuing sonorous cries similar to that of clanging metals.

Finally, Chu Yang felt like he had already dived 1000 feet below the lake's base. His feet finally stepped onto a stretch of slippery land, which was completely covered with mud. Meanwhile, a feeble light suddenly spread out and filled this underwater abyss with colors, thereby making it look extremely gorgeous. Yet, it still retained its strangeness.

Chu Yang opened his eyes wide and could clearly feel his heart beating wildly. He slowly walked towards the source of light. He felt as if he was walking on cotton while hugging that chunk of black steel close to his bosom; though he actually couldn't feel its weight at the moment.

The combined weight of him and that chunk of black steel was about 250-300 Kgs, which had already been offset by the buoyancy of water.

. . . The closer he got to that light; the denser it became . . .

Chu Yang was vigilant of his surroundings. He was advancing cautiously . . . one step at a time. [Who knows what's lurking in such a deep-underwater location which seem like it hasn't been visited by anyone in tens of thousands of years?]

Chu Yang wouldn't find it strange if someone were to tell him that a Sword Emperor had lost his life in this place after completely losing his mind!

This underwater world was really full of dangers . . .

He could already feel the glare falling upon his own face as he was slowly neared the source of the light. Suddenly, he felt something hard underneath his feet, as if he had stepped on a piece of stone.

[There is a silt deposition of dozens of feet right beside the stone. However, this stone seems to have remained untouched even after tens of thousands of years of passage. Shouldn't there be a deposition of silt upon it too?!]

Chu Yang composed himself, and then finally took a step forward to have a better look.

He finally saw the source of the light!

There was a stone wall in front of him with a fist-sized pearl embedded in the middle. This pearl was releasing a feeble and milky white light . . .

"This is a fine pearl!" Chu Yang exclaimed in admiration within his heart. [This pearl is certainly not ordinary! To be able to glow so brightly in this pitch-black underwater territory for such a long time . . . if it's not a treasured item . . . then what is it?]

The Nine Tribulations Sword's tip sent out a reply in response to the 'summoning' call that had sounded from behind this stone wall.

[Such clarity!]

Chu Yang took two steps forward, and was about to carefully examine the stone wall when he suddenly sensed something on his side. It seemed as if a small whirlpool had appeared next to him. He immediately took a step back, and then turned his head around to take a look.

He suddenly saw rays of dazzling light about 50-60 feet to the left side of his body; it was similar to looking at two big lanterns appearing at once!

The surroundings were instantly illuminated by this sudden burst of light.

Chu Yang turned his head to have a good look, only to find himself completely surrounded from all sides by a large group of densely packed . . .

Monster Snakes!

The size of these monster snakes could range from as thick as a bucket, to as thin as a finger. However, each of them had a grotesque looking triangular head with an unusual-looking horn sticking out of it.

Moreover, each and every one of them had fierce-looking eyes.

Chu Yang nearly choked on his own saliva as looked in the direction of that dazzling light again, only to find it moving slightly; he had finally gotten to see this light's true colors!

[They are the eyes of a monster snake in reality!]

These two eyes were as big as Chu Yang's head. The thickness of that snake's body . . . was comparable to that of a house! And it was almost . . . 200 feet long!

Chu Yang held his breath: [This . . . what kind of monster is this!]

That huge snake's body suddenly swaying from side to side, while Chu Yang was still observing that monster. Its huge body silently swam forward and coiled around that stone wall; masking the entire wall as well as the pearl. And now, its eyes were vigilantly looking towards Chu Yang.

"F*ck . . . " Chu Yang cursed in his heart as he prevented himself from almost getting knocked against the wall.

[Nine Tribulations Sword's third fragment is hidden behind this stone wall, but this huge snake is blocking my way. It is clearly guarding the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword! Moreover, this colossus monster also has millions of its offspring gathered here . . . how do I obtain the fragment?]

[I had never encountered such a monster back when I had visited this place to take the third fragment in my previous life. In fact, the fragment wasn't even hidden this deep underwater. What is going on?]

A lone person just stood motionlessly, while being surrounded by countless snakes.

A long while passed, and suddenly that huge snake shook its head in anger since Chu Yang still hadn't left yet. Immediately, countless monster snakes fluttered their tails to rush towards him at a lightning-fast speed.

Chu Yang was instantaneously pushed into a state of alarm. A long sword appeared in the water and was brandished almost instantly; thereby invoking a screen made out of sword, right in front of him!

A burst of blood-curdling screeches resounded, seemingly belonging to those snakes which had been killed by Chu Yang's sword. The water before Chu Yang's eyes immediately turned green after being dyed by the green blood of those snakes. This obviously hindered his line of sight completely!

This attack had been successful thanks to the experience he had gained from his underwater sword practice, or else it wouldn't have been this effective.

His sword had been brandished at a great speed, and countless monster snakes were chopped off as a result; but still, more and more rushed towards him at a faster speed.

The huge snake finally lost its cool, and suddenly roared fiercely. It swung its body once, then opened its big mouth; initiating a tyrannical suction all of a sudden!

懂(dǒng) means to understand; 咚(dōng) means boom (of a drum). These to variations are used in the raws to describe the man's precariously stunned mental state.

Chapter 319: Your Road is Already Different!

Chu Yang felt like he was getting pulled forward by that enormous suction force; in fact, he was almost unable to keep his feet steady. It seemed as if the chopped body parts of those monster snakes had run into a hurricane, and had rapidly rushed into that huge monster snake's mouth — vanishing instantly.

Chu Yang then felt that chunk of black steel he had been holding in his hands getting hauled away from him. The black steel suddenly became light, and immediately floated forward under the influence of that immense suction force. Momentarily, a loud 'splash' sound emanated as that chuck of steel entered the mouth of that huge monster snake!

Alarmed, Chu Yang immediately summoned the Nine Tribulations Sword's edge, as well as the Sword's tip. They appeared above the long sword that he held in his hand, and suddenly hacked down!

With a loud 'puff' sound, the Nine Tribulations Sword cut that monster snake's head in no time. Suddenly, the monster snake nearly fainted — seemingly from the immense pain — as his blood gushed out. It then suddenly raised its head upward, and began to roar. Chu Yang suddenly felt his mind getting dizzy, as if he was fluttering up. He discovered that he had already left that deep water zone by time he opened his eyes again. He was in the deep-blue-water zone now. He looked up, and saw the sky; faintly visible beyond the lake's surface!

[I have arrived at the water surface so quickly!]

A fear lingered in Chu Yang's heart because he could tell that this monster snake was simply too strong! He then submerged himself into his own consciousness, and realized that the Nine Tribulations Sword was still present in his Dantian. However, he had lost his

long sword in the water...

He came up to the water's surface with a 'pop' sound, and took a deep breath; he would've choked himself to death underwater if it wasn't for the Nine Tribulations Space.

[But what's going on? This place clearly didn't have a monster snake when I came here in my past life. Then why did it appear this time?]

[Furthermore... it seems to have appeared to obstruct me from obtaining the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword... it doesn't really hold much hostility towards me otherwise...]

[What does this mean?]

[Is it possible that simply hearing the third fragment's summoning call isn't enough of a prerequisite for obtaining it?]

Chu Yang smiled wryly — if that huge snake's elimination was essential, even a Sword King might not be able to get their hands on the third fragment!

The Nine Tribulations Sword's tip was moving restlessly within his Dantian.

"Wait until the time is ripe if you wish to obtain the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword, and you may be able to succeed without facing any dangers. In fact, at that time, there would be no chance of this Poisonous Flood Dragon's appearance. However, you're bound to attract this Poisonous Flood Dragon's attention if you rashly attempt to seize it any earlier... if you really desire to obtain the fragment at this time, then it is necessary to kill that beast!"

The 'schadenfreude' Sword Spirit stated leisurely within Chu Yang's consciousness.

"... " Chu Yang got furious, and burst into the Nine Tribulations Sword Space. He then retorted, "You bastard! Why didn't you say that earlier? What should I do now? A huge snake like that is

surely a seventh-grade spirit beast... I am only at Revered level right now... how will I kill it?”

"That is your problem," the Sword Spirit replied indifferently, "who told you to be so impatient?"

"... " Chu Yang faced upwards, and nearly spouted a mouthful of blood in anger.

"However, you have an important relation with the emergence of this spirit beast!" the Sword Spirit saw him getting anxious, and leisurely said, "In fact, it appeared because of you!"

"It’s related to me?" Chu Yang was bewildered. He scratched his head because he really couldn’t fathom why such a high-leveled mythical monster would bear any relationship with him.

"You’re telling me that I made it appear? That is absurd!" Chu Yang spat a mouthful of spittle; he could just scoff in response.

"Indeed. You’re the reason." the Sword Spirit slowly said, "You’ve embarked on an entirely different path — from the third fragment onwards — compared to the previous owners of the Nine Tribulations Sword. That Poisonous Flood Dragon emerged because... your road is already different.”

It paused for a second, and then continued, "Therefore, in order to obtain the fragment... you either defeat it; or kill it."

"Why is it different?" Chu Yang asked in a baffled tone, "I am still me, while Nine Tribulations Sword is still the same as well... where’s the difference?"

"Remember that sudden moment of ‘enlightenment’ from a few days ago... you had detached from the Nine Tribulations Sword at that time, and entered a different realm!" the Sword spirit didn’t know whether to sigh helplessly or be pleased while saying, "Thereon... you were destined to follow this new path, and become ‘unique’ in the future! Also, it will be more dangerous..."

"Realm..." Chu Yang suddenly recalled having that long epiphany

a few days ago…

"That's also fine… I guess?" Minister Chu opened his mouth like a boss.

"It should be…" the Sword Spirit stated, taking pity on him, "your strength… also needs to improve."

"You've been doing your best in keeping my strength suppressed!" King of Hell Chu raged violently. [This bastard tells me to enhance my strength, but still suppresses it so that I am unable to progress…]

[Doesn't this mean that he is playing me?]

"Or… you can just look for that personage from a while ago, and challenge him to a fight. Have a few bouts with him… if you can. That should be a good harvest…" The Sword Spirit finished this sentence and disappeared.

"That personage from a while ago?" Chu Yang scratched his head for a bit as he thought, but then immediately screamed, "Young Master Yu?"

"F*k… you bastard! Are you asking me to commit suicide?!" Chu Yang suddenly jumped up; he felt like crying, but had no tears to shed. [I have witnessed Young Master Yu's powers, but couldn't even make sense of what I was looking at. You want me to have a match with him… and that too, not one bout… but a few?]

[That guy can stretch out his hand, and turn me into a heap of ash… how am I supposed to challenge him?]

Chu Yang sighed helplessly, and climbed ashore. He sighed for a while, then dropped his head and walked away.

As a matter of fact, Young Master Yu was actually shocked when Chu Yang appeared in front of him, "You came looking for me so soon!"

Young Master Yu was flustered when he heard the purpose of

Chu Yang's visit. "You want to have a breakthrough? So you've come to challenge me? Are you really going to challenge me? Haha... you really want to challenge me?"

"How can I challenge you?" Chu Yang felt as if his heart would pop-out with rage; Young Master Yu's attitude was making him very uncomfortable.

"Haha... " Young Master Yu laughed heartily as he swayed to and fro, "I have never met... a challenger such as yourself!"

"Don't laugh!" Chu Yang replied angrily.

"Haha... Brother Chu, I am not looking down on you... but the fact remains that you still don't have the strength to challenge me!" Young Master Yu so hard that his eyeballs nearly rolled upwards, "I am not afraid of you. I shall state the ugly truth... even your master, Meng Chao Ran, isn't worthy of challenging me!"

"Draw your sword!" Chu Yang roared. Though he felt his blood run cold, his body was trembling with rage. Meanwhile, his body's sweat pores seemed to be on the verge of exploding due to the fury burning inside his heart!

Judging from Young Master Yu's words, he clearly looked down on Meng Chao Ran. Chu Yang was enraged — the contempt and disdain shrouded over his tone had left Chu Yang's blood boiling!

"I don't need to draw my sword to deal with you. You won't stand a chance even if I am empty-handed, and use only one-tenth of my total strength!" Young Master Yu looked at Chu Yang disdainfully from the corner of his eye. He further poured oil-to-the-fire by adding this sentence, "Of course, the same goes for Meng Chao Ran too!"

Chu Yang suddenly felt the blood throughout his body burning up! He completely lost his mind, and forgot himself owing to Young Master Yu's powerful provocation! He had even forgotten the purpose of his visit!

His eyes had already turned red!

He almost reacted instantly, and dashed forward. Without any demur, he fiercely unleashed his sword move —‘A single point of cold light illuminates ten thousand fathoms ’!

"This sword-play is splendid!" Young Master Yu’s gaze concentrated into a stare as he dodged to one side. He was carrying one of his hands behind his back, while he casually brandished the other, releasing a tyrannical force.

Clash…

The sound of consecutive clashes resounded. In fact, the blaring was similar to that of wind blowing against lotus leaves… or raindrops beating against banana leaves.

Young Master Yu made no attempt to dodge the next attack. In fact, he didn’t even bother to avoid that mesh comprised of hundreds-of-sword-strikes coming his way. Not just that, he didn’t even blink as dashed into that ‘sword net’; with just a snap of his fingers, Chu Yang’s sword was sent flying!

"The sword-play is pretty good… it’s such a pity that the swordsman is not capable enough." Young Master Yu comment calmly.

However, his heart already overwhelmed with shock.

[This sword-play is far from being just “pretty good”. In fact, this is the best form of sword-play I have seen my entire life — unconditionally and undisputedly! Moreover, it surpassed the second ranker by thousands of times!]

[What kind of sword-play is this?]

[If both of us were at the same level, then that attack would’ve already killed me ten times by now!]

Young Master Yu hadn’t suspected the presence of the Nine Tribulations Sword on Chu Yang’s body because… first — he

thought that the Nine Tribulations Sword Lord couldn't be this weak; secondly, and most importantly — the Nine Tribulations Sword hadn't appeared for ten thousand years!

No one was alive from the time it had previously appeared! Furthermore, if Young Master Yu was able to recognize it even though it hadn't appeared in the last ten thousand years... then one could really say: To hell with it!

Just then, Chu Yang leaped in the air with a loud whistling sound, while his long sword flashed brightly in the sky. He then unleashed his long sword even before he had started to descend. His body, which was beginning to drop, suddenly rose again. A rich murderous intention congealed in the air almost simultaneously!

A sword light suddenly descended from the sky, and 'arrogantly' pounded the ground like a meteor! This sword move was so ruthless that it destroyed everything in the surrounding area!

[The second move! What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world?]

The sword's power was majestic. Once unleashed, it would never fall back! This move was so fierce that it simply transcended the comprehension of common people! Just one move of this sword was capable of killing millions of ordinary people... with certainty!

Young Master Yu was regretting a decision for the first time in his life — he genuinely repented using only one-tenth of his total strength!

[This sword is highly enriched, as if thousands of swords have been joined together to make this fine sword. The true might of this sword is ten times higher than what Chu Yang is displaying!]

[I am bound to get injured by this sword sooner or later if I don't increase my martial energy!]

However, Young Master Yu still didn't remove the limiter from his power level! He had said that he would use one-tenth of his

strength... so he would use only that much!

One could easily see the air of extreme arrogance surrounding him!

He brazenly forged ahead to face the incoming attack! He straightened his back as he moved forward to face this perilous attack! He then waved his hands into a clap for the first time!

Bang!

Chu Yang let out a loud ‘crying’ sound as he spat out blood. Moreover, his body did a somersault in midair before falling down on the ground. His long sword disintegrated into several tiny pieces... all the way from its hilt! Then, it turned into a streamer of light in the sky, and vanished without a trace.

However, the sword’s tip had actually penetrated Young Master Yu’s left palm, and had gone half-way into his shoulder after passing through his right hand.

The tip might have actually pierced Young Master Yu’s heart if he hadn’t used both his hands to block the tip while simultaneously lifting it upward to avoid getting stabbed in his heart.

"Such a ruthless sword!" Young Master Yu crooked his mouth as a baffled look appeared in his eyes. The sword’s tip was shattered as he jolted his shoulder muscles. The wound in his palm also vanished mystically with no traces of blood to be seen anymore. He then shouted, flustered and exasperated, "I will kick your ass! I was just provoking you out of good intentions, and you... you... you acted so ruthlessly! I must say... I feel deeply hurt!”

Chapter 320: You're my Fourth Master?

Chu Yang rolled down from the top of the perimeter-wall like a loaf of flat bread, and landed on the ground with a 'thud'. He then bellowed viciously as he lay spread-eagled on the ground, "The blame is on you... your provocation was 'too' successful! Nobody can insult my master to my face, and not pay the price! The same goes for you too!"

He continued after spitting out a mouthful of bloody spittle, "Even if your intentions were good, the fact remains that you insulted my master!"

Young Master Wu remained dumbfounded for quite some time, before he eventually spoke, "... even though you look ordinary... you're actually quite exceptional!" (1)

Chu Yang grunted, "Young Master Yu, I'll pester you for a lifetime if you don't apologize for the words you've spoken today."

Young Master Yu merely shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I have done many despicable, cheap and contemptible things in my life. The only thing that I haven't... is apologized!"

"Good! Well you just wait!" Chu Yang spoke sitting cross-legged, and began using a healing technique. The Sword Spirit started transporting the medicinal efficacies into his meridians; the ones it had stored inside the Nine Tribulations Space.

Even the mild attacked from Young Master Yu had caused Chu Yang's five internal organs to displace. The injury could be considered extremely serious...

But for the Sword Spirit, it was a fine thing indeed! The Nine Tribulations Sword had absorbed many drugs, and they had hence been residing inside his body. Though they were capable of having a big impact on his practice, he was unable to disperse them.

The Sword Spirit had been suppressing the drugs. Though, it had

long been looking for such an opportunity to let out them out…

These medicines had been collected by the imperial palaces of the two super kingdoms — Iron cloud and Great Zhao — over decades… it wasn't hard to understand that their overall potency was tremendous.

Chu Yang had always been cautious. Therefore, he had hardly-ever sustained such serious injuries. It was easy to see why the Sword Spirit would urge Chu Yang to challenge a highly skilled expert like Young Master Yu — someone who held no hostility towards him!

Young Master Yu also sat down. Using just 10% of his strength against an unusual man like Chu Yang had proven very strenuous on his body.

The two were separated by more than a hundred feet; each racing against time to heal first.

An hour later, a dumbfounded Young Master Yu stared at Chu Yang. According to his estimate, Chu Yang should've taken at least half-a-day to recover half of his physical condition. However, Chu Yang suddenly stood up; bustling with energy as it seemed.

He stretched out his hand, and a mysterious sword appeared; it was exuding a cold light.

He leaped into the air with a roar, and somersaulted. His maneuver formed a perfectly round beam of light in midair. At this instance, he bellowed again, "You won't apologize?"

"If you have the guts, then first beat 10% of my strength! If not, then spare me your empty talk!" Young Master Wu spun on his toe, and leaped from the ground without waiting for Chu Yang to summon the full power of his sword.

The beam became even more resplendent up-in-the-sky; it appeared like a rainbow.

The figures of the two experts suddenly clashed — it looked as if

the sun and the moon had collided.

Following a loud ‘bang’, both of them fell backwards.

“Fighting here is inconvenient; if you dare, why not fight me outside the city?” Young Master Wu was utterly discomfited as he felt the tip of a sword touching his butt. He immediately turned around, and darted back to evade. By then however, his butt had already been poked seventy to eighty times by Chu Yang’s sword!

[If it weren’t for my cultivation, this ass of mine would’ve turned into a fishnet. And... my centrally-located point... would’ve been ruined!]

Young master Yu got furious, and readily accepted this ‘poking’ challenge.

"Are you afraid of being incapable?" Chu Yang snorted; this move had given him a big and unexpected upper-hand. He was obviously very delighted in his heart.

The two whizzed out of the city like shooting stars; one after the other.

While they were still in the middle of their flight, someone suddenly shouted, “Who is that? Stop for inspection!”

This person was clad in black clothes. He appeared very skinny owing to his slim figure. It was actually Yin Wu Tian — one of the four King level masters from the Golden Horse Riders Department!

He had received a report of a fight breaking between two high-level Revered Martial Artists! Yin Wu Tian felt inspired upon seeing someone else also doing what he loved. [I think I have arrived in time. I will simply arrest them to make up for the losses incurred by Golden Horse Riders Department of late...]

Therefore, he took two people with him, and rushed over. His heart was full of joy and expectations; no wonder he wasn’t being careful. After all... even if those two Revered Martial Artists were outstanding, could they ever pose a threat to a King level master?

Wouldn’t that be complete nonsense?

Therefore, the King Level Master Yin gleefully arrived at the fight’s location.

"Inspection?" Young Master Yu was surprised for a moment. Just when he was about to leave... Yin Wu Tian suddenly arrived in front of him, and blocked his way.

Yin Wu Tian could not help but smile with satisfaction on seeing this guy. [Look at this young fellow’s age... He has such an atypical appearance! Moreover, he seems to have been stabbed many times. No wonder his clothes have been shredded into looking like a net. He must be a rookie...]

[I — Fourth Master Yin — am an expert at handling rookies.]

“Of course, for inspection! Don’t tell me this entire fuss is for nothing?” Yin Wu Tian stated proudly, “Your crooked eyebrows and your cross-eyes are telling me that you’re not a good person! Hurry and surrender this very instant! This fourth master of yours will consider sparing you, and may even help you in finding a way out of this predicament.”

“Fourth master?” Young Master Yu said, bursting with rage.

[Chu Yang can be rowdy; his case is different since owe him. Moreover, I went easy on him out of kindness since I had promised to help in him growing stronger... so I certainly won’t haggle about that.]

[But I didn’t expect that helping someone would be so troublesome. Moreover, I never thought that using only one-tenth of my strength would be so vexing. And then suddenly, some Fourth Master pops-up and tries to threaten me!]

“Correct! I am the Fourth Master!” Yin Wu Tian replied; pompously sticking out his chest, “Why have you still not surrendered, huh?”

“I will surrender to your grandmother, you f*ker!” Young Master

Yu cursed loudly, and landed a ‘cracking’ slap on his face rather squarely.

The furious Yin Wu Tian tried to get up, only to see another slap appearing before his eyes. He hastily tried to block, but failed to do so. He ended up receiving a solid slap on the right side of his face.

And this one was extremely heavy!

He blacked out and fell face down on the ground. He was puzzled about what happened just now, and thought, [how the f*k is this guy attacking so fast? A King level expert getting slapped on the face by a Revered Martial Artist?! This simply unheard of! At this rate, I will end up dying…]

Just as he was thinking this, he suddenly felt something heavy upon his body. He realized that the guy had actually stepped on his belly; he then felt that man stomp.

Yin Wu Tian got angry, and tried to grasp his opponent’s ankle. However, his opponent lifted his foot and stomped on his hand instead.

Just as he tried to kick his opponent, he was thrown back with an explosion; the impact made a big hole in the ground.

Immediately after, he was grabbed by his collar and lifted up from the ground. Yet another slap landed on his face as a voice asked viciously, “You’re my Fourth Master?”

Yin Wu Tian retorted, “I am Fourth Master… ”

“Bam!”

He couldn’t even finish his sentence when he was slapped once again, and was asked the same question in the same flat (2) tone, “You are my Fourth Master?”

“I am your…” Yin Wu Tian was so furious that he felt his head would explode! His negligence had landed him in the hands of a young guy; resulting in such extreme humiliation.

“Bam!” With yet another loud sound of a slap hitting his face, that voice solemnly asked again, “You’re my Fourth Master?”

This slap was so weighty that a loud explosion occurred in his brain. This suddenly caused him to realize: [Am I really so unlucky that I unknowingly ended up messing with the wrong guy?]

He didn’t speak his thoughts out loud. His seemingly-impatient opponent kept slapping with one hand and then the other; over and over again. After dozens of slaps had already greeted his face — accompanied by a series of ‘crackle and rattle’ sounds… he heard the same question again, “You are my Fourth Master?”

Yin Wu Tian had been rendered completely immobile; so much so that he had only one hand free for blocking the incoming slaps. He again got slapped on the face, and his flesh-and-blood was sent flying.

Yin Wu Tian felt like he was being crushed by a mountain with his opponent’s foot pressing hard on his chest. He couldn’t move his lower body at all. He could only use one hand to defend his face from getting slapped on both sides.

This adversary was also strange; it seemed as if he knew no other move but to slap his face incessantly… before asking the same question: “You are my Fourth Master?”

…Yin Wu Tian felt anguished and angered.

It was shameful! Humiliating!

What made it worse was the fact that two of his subordinates were standing nearby; watching him getting subjected into such a compromised position. He had been thoroughly beaten, and was currently lying immobile on the ground. …this entire scene had happened in front of their eyes…

A dignified King level expert humiliated in such a manner?! This was unbelievable!

Yin Wu Tian angrily struggled to break free! He spat-out blood as

he launched a psychological attack on the enemy; but started feeling dizzy instead.

Yin Wu Tian gave a look of hatred as he spat out a mouthful of blood. He felt anger and rage flourishing in his heart... before suddenly falling unconscious!

However... the very next moment, Young Master Yu slapped Yin Wu Tian once again. A bundle of vital energy came out of his hand and entered Yin Wu Tian's body. The surging vital energy then pinched his chin, forcing his mouth open, and actually shoved a pill into it... This revitalized his body in an instant, and he abruptly woke up... feeling comfortable and completely well.

[Did someone save me just now?]

Yin Wu Tian opened his eyes, and was surprised to see that youth still coldly staring at him. The corners of that youngster curled into a strange smile as soon as he saw Yin Wu Tian wake up. He then grabbed Yin Wu Tian by his skull, and gave a slap across his face before asking, "You're my Fourth Master?"

Yin Wu Tian felt as if he was hovering between life and death! [This guy actually healed and woke me up... and that too because my death would've interfered with his interrogation... how can such a person exist in this world?]

"Who in the world are you?" Yin Wu Tian asked as he finally realized his stupidity. He had clearly realized that he wasn't capable enough to deal with this adversary.

As an answer to his question, he received yet another tight slap on the face... along with the same grim counter question, "You're my Fourth Master?"

He obviously hadn't understood that he was being beaten in order to make him retract his statement! In fact, he didn't even know that his statement had offended the opposite party...

Yin Wu Tian clenched his teeth without saying anything, and

just glared fiercely at his opponent with eyes like fuming volcanoes.

“Smack! Smack! Smack!” Young Master Yu seemed to have changed his tactics. This time... he gave three slaps in a row before asking, “You’re my Fourth Master?”

“You’re killing me dammit!” Yin Wu Tian shouted wildly with grief and indignation. However, a violent slap stormed his face again. Yes! He had actually received a response in the form of a slap... again. There seemed no scope for any other form of punishment... just a slap as usual.

Yin Wu Tian’s condition gradually started to worsen. Though the intensity of the slaps had become lighter, the impact had slowly begun to penetrate into his meridians. Moreover, the meridians around his ears had started to rupture and disintegrate...

“What do you want from me?” Yin Wu Tian struggled to ask since he could no longer feel his mouth. In fact, his whole head seemed to have gone numb.

Young Master Yu appeared somewhat intrigued while staring intently at him. Then a callous look flashed in his eyes as he said, “I know you are Yin Wu Tian of the Golden Horse Riders Department. I am also aware that you are a capable subordinate of Diwu Qing Rou. But I only have one question for you...”

"What?" Yin Wu Tian struggled to ask.

“Smack!” the ringing in his ear was accompanied by a momentary mental-stasis. Then Young Master Yu flung his arms around gently, and asked, “You’re my Fourth Master?”

Yin Wu Tian finally collapsed!

This opponent was a monster who just couldn’t be moved by force or persuasion! Moreover, his nefarious disposition had already reached the pinnacle of creation! He wasn’t long-winded at all. Instead he preferred using slaps to make his point clear.

Not to mention that he was so monotonously persistent… that he could force a person into having a mental breakdown.

The literal translation would be something like this: even if you don’t belong to the dragon race… you actually have inverted dragon scales.

Young Master Yu repeats the same sentence in ‘level and oblique tone’ which is a technical term for classical Chinese rhythmic poetry.

Chapter 321: King of Hell Chu receives presents!

Chu Yang simply crossed his hands behind his back, and observed from the sidelines while all this was going down.

He understood Young Master Yu's mentality better than the others. Ordinarily, Young Master Yu probably wouldn't get so angry. However, today he was really fuming.

But still... even though Young Master Yu seemed to be on the brink of exploding... he hadn't actually reached that stage yet.

Yin Wu Tian was unlucky in-the-fact that he had chosen this time to mess with Young Master Yu. It was difficult to predict whether Yin Wu Tian would live or die today; however, it was confirmed that his skin would get peeled away from all the slapping.

Even Chu Yang felt that Young Master Yu was sadistic. [Even if Yin Wu Tian had said 'I am not your Fourth Master'... I'm afraid that Young Master Yu would have still thrashed him with the back of his palm before asking, "Why not?"]

[In short, Yin Wu Tian will end up getting crippled unless Young Master Yu stops toying with him.]

Just then, a voice rang out, "Please hold on a minute... have mercy! Have mercy..." Jing Meng Hun — the first King Level Master of the Golden Horse Riders Department — had finally caught up with them.

King-Level-Master Jing Meng Hun took two steps forward. He came to a stop as his eyes locked with Young Master Yu's — who icily stared at him from the corner of his eye.

Jing Meng Hun suddenly felt as if the sky was collapsing as an unexpected feeling of dread engulfed him. He stopped in his tracks, and was unable to step forward again!

He was aghast, and couldn't help but think in his heart: [How did Fourth Brother provoke such a formidable character? Moreover, why does this person's cultivation seem so low?!]

[This can't be good!]

"Young Master...," Jing Meng Hun put up a smile and said, "This... this must be a misunderstanding."

"Smack!" Young Master Yu slapped Yin Wu Tian's already tattered face in front of Jing Meng Hun while putting his foot on the man's chest. Then he lightly asked, "You're my Fourth Master?"

The corner of Jing Meng Hun's eyes twitched, but he didn't dare to move. [This person is really strong. I would also be lying on the ground if I made any moves. ...It's no use!]

"Young Master, may I ask who you are?" Jing Meng Hun asked as he respectfully cupped his hands.

Young Master Yu turned his head and looked at Jing Meng Hun, only to find the man's smile artificial. Young Master Yu continued to look at him for a while. Then, the corners of his mouth curled to reveal a smiling expression as he asked, "You are Jing Meng Hun, correct?"

"Yes. May I ask who you... "

"Well, you can call me... 'Young Master Yu'." Young Master Yu replied with a faint smile and continued, "Is this your younger brother? He was saying that he is 'my' Fourth Master. You are his eldest brother. Does that make you... 'my' Eldest Master?"

"Young Master Yu!" King-Level Master Jing was startled, and started sweating nervously. All the nerves in his body... started to quiver! Being a Ninth-grade King Level Master, he used to travel between the Lower Three Heavens and the Middle Three Heavens; though not often. Young Master Yu was publicly known as the 'number one demonic fiend' of the Middle Three Heavens. How

could he not have known this guy?

Suddenly… he didn't know what to do. He could only feel himself going weak in the knees…

…especially after hearing Young Master say: 'Are you my Eldest Master?'

However, King-Level-Master Jing Meng Hun really wanted to pull Yin Wu Tian out of this predicament — while he was still alive.

[My dear younger brother, even if you had proclaimed yourself as Fourth Master in front of Prime Minister Diwu… you would be in a better condition! You have already gone down, and Young Master Yu has now involved me as well. In fact, he is calling me 'Eldest Master', but… can I really handle this situation?]

"No! Not at all, Young Master Yu! You are misunderstanding… " King-Level-Master Jing Meng Hun hastily added, "Yin Wu Tian is very courageous, but he would not dare to be so egotistical… "

Saying this, he fiercely winked at Yin Wu Tian.

King Level Master Jing didn't need to make that signal since Yin Wu Tian had already heard 'Young Master Yu'… these three words had immediately made him realize his foolhardiness. [Oh my mother; how did I end up provoking this demon? This guy is famous for being unreasonable…]

"So you are not my Eldest Master?" Young Master Yu tilted his head pensively.

"No. No… even if I were to have heavenly guts… I wouldn't dare… " Jing Meng Hun said over-and-over while keeping his hands cupped across his chest.

"Smack!"

Yin Wu Tian received another heavy slap on his face, "So you're my Fourth Master?"

Yin Wu Tian started crying.

“Young master Yu... I... I... am blind; or I would never dare to offend a great persona like your distinguished self! I should be damned... I won’t dare wrinkle my eyebrows even if Young Master Yu decides to punish me!” Yin Wu Tian seemed to have already learned his lesson. He knew that he would certainly lose his life if he didn’t give a proper reply. As it stood, he seemed to have lost 10% of his life already. And if this ‘slapping session’ continued, then it wouldn’t take too long to lose the remaining 90%...

“Smack!” Young Master Yu slapped him on the face again and said, “I only asked if you’re my Fourth Master! I did not ask you anything else!”

Sobbing between his tears, Yin Wu Tian spoke, “No! I am not! I am absolutely not!”

“Crack!” Young master Yu asked angrily, “You... why aren’t you my Fourth Master?”

Yin Wu Tian was dumbfounded, and stared at him with pitiful eyes; he was about to faint but controlled it.

[Why aren’t you my Fourth Master?]

Chu Yang couldn’t help but laugh on hearing this. He thought to himself, [I have a really amazing foresight...]

Jing Meng Hun suddenly noticed him as he laughed. He couldn’t dare to ignore Chu Yang, and hastily walked up to him. He then cupped his fist in greeting, and asked, “May I ask who this Young Master is... ”

“This isn’t my matter; you do not need to involve me in this.” Chu Yang had already changed his appearance. Therefore, he wasn’t worried of being seen through as he casually spoke, “But just moments ago, Young Master Yu and I were fighting... and he suffered a little loss. Luckily for him, he ran into Fourth Master Yin... and in a fit of rage he, ‘cough’... it will be all right once his

anger dies down. There's nothing to be worried about."

On hearing this Jing Meng Hun suddenly thought to himself, [this guy and Young Master Yu were fighting, and Young Master Yu actually suffered... a little loss? My goodness! Is he even fiercer than Young Master Yu?]

Young Master Yu couldn't help but roll his eyes: [I was convinced that I have the thickest skin in this world. I had never thought you would beat me to it... I was only using one-tenth of my strength, but you... actually had the nerve to say...]

To stop this chain of thoughts — as well as the resulting feeling of suffocation — Young Master Yu couldn't help but slap Yin Wu Tian on the face again. Then he cursed-out angrily, "This person has brought bad luck. Everything's going wrong ever-since I have met him... hey you... you haven't answered yet... tell me — why aren't you my Fourth Master?"

King-Level-Master Jing Meng Hun shuddered. He hastily took out a red-clothed package from within his robes upon realizing that he was incapable of aiding Yin Wu Tian. He then cordially walked over to King of Hell Chu, "This... this is a small gift Young Master... And I will pay you even more to urge you to listen to my request... my younger brother needs help... I would be extremely grateful if you can get us out of this predicament. I would never forget this act of kindness my whole life... "

Jing Meng Hun knew that begging that demon was pointless. However, he was desperate, and this was his last resort to save Yin Wu Tian.

Young master Yu's voice suddenly buzzed like a mosquito in Chu Yang's ear, "Don't tell me you're counting on me to eliminate a future opponent for you? If so, then let me clarify, for this matter needs to be settled — I cannot kill the king level masters from the Golden Horse Riders Department... you should take advantage of the situation to gain some benefits."

[Cannot kill?] Chu Yang was startled.

[Why are you repeatedly slapping him like that if you can't kill him? F*k, I should really start saving some energy for later...]

Young Master Yu rolled his eyeballs as he spoke in an awkward manner, "This... "

King-Level-Master Jing Meng Hun hastily bowed respectfully as he offered his gift once again, "Please, please... please, you must accept it. My intention is to pay a meager tribute... in reverence of your distinction."

"Hey... " Chu Yang helplessly sighed, [he is offering it with so much sincerity... if I don't accept it... then won't I feel regret later?] Therefore, he took the parcel and opened it.

Suddenly a purple light emitted out of it. In fact, it was so radiant that even Young Master Yu turned his head to have a look.

Surprisingly, it turned out to be a purple jade core! Moreover, it was the size of a baby's fist. The Nine Tribulations Sword somersaulted in Chu Yang's Dantian upon sensing its intense vitality...

Although purple jade core couldn't compare to purple jade essence, but it was still an extremely rare treasure! Moreover, such a huge piece was ample for his cultivation; needless to say that it was a priceless treasure...

"Well... " Chu Yang weighed the purple jade core. He then smacked his lips, took a deep breath, and said, "This is difficult. I guess you already know how hard it is to talk to that bastard... "

Jing Meng Hun thought, [he is still not satisfied even though I generously gave him a purple jade core?] He then hurriedly fished in his chest pocket, and took out a token as he eagerly said, "Young Master... this is a status command token; although you probably won't need it... but in case you run into trouble in Great Zhao... it will be somewhat useful to have this token in your possession;

please accept it.”

“Status command token?” Chu Yang’s eyes lit up.

This was a jackpot!

[If I have this token… it will have a higher practical significance than the purple jade core since I am in Great Zhao right now…]

“Well, since you’re offering it to me so earnestly… I have no option but to accept it.” Chu Yang said feigning reluctance, and sighed deeply as he put the token and the purple jade core inside his pocket.

“Thanks a lot.” Jing Meng Hun’s face lit up with delight.

Chu Yang smiled and nodded gracefully as he said, “Oh it’s nothing! I do not like taking advantage of others… you will soon see that you have not paid in vain.”

“Of course! Of course!” Jing Meng Hun nodded and said repeatedly. He then thought, [he does not like to take advantage of other people? Does he not know that the task I’ve asked him to do will be more than enough for the price I’ve paid? What more will he give me as payback?]

He almost laughed thinking of this. [It seems that this misfortune has really turned into a blessing…]

Jing Meng Hun had absolutely no idea that this incident would end up being ‘etched in his memory’. So much so, that he wouldn’t dare to forget it for a lifetime…

By sheer accident, the Head of the Golden Horse Riders Department met so dramatically with his arch enemy — King of Hell Chu — the boss of Bu Tian Pavilion. Not only that, this king level master had shamelessly given a purple jade core and a status command token to King of Hell Chu. On top of that, King of Hell Chu had initially made it seem as if he was unwilling to receive such precious gifts. He did accept them in the end, but only under the guise of giving a huge face to the opposite party.

“Old Yu... I think that’s enough. You have hit him numerous times... and also cursed him...” Chu Yang appeared complacent about his own age and wisdom, “Now you should let him go, ok? After all... he was just careless, and did it unintentionally.”

Young Master Yu gaped as he thought, [I have walked the land for so many years, and have come across many shameless youngsters. However, not one can match the thick-skin this guy’s got!]

Chapter 322: Divides the Booty

[Now that you have received the benefits so easily, you must be feeling quite pleased. On the other hand, I had to suffer all that annoyance. Moreover, I had to use-up my strength... all for nothing? Not only do I have to swallow my anger now, but I also have to release this man...? Although I had already decided to extricate him a while ago... but I hadn't planned on suffering so many losses in the process.]

"Let these men go!" Chu Yang shouted, "I'll stop being kind if you don't release them now!"

Young Master Yu felt a surge of energy rise from his Dantian. He then grunted angrily, for he didn't wish to look at this vile fellow's face anymore. His feet ascended upward in the air with a swishing sound as he angrily said, "Catch up with me later. I'm going to beat-you-up until your world is turned upside down."

Then, with a loud 'whooshing' sound, he vanished from there.

One could see that he had still been angry before he left.

But Jing Meng Hun saw this scene from a completely different point of view. [Young Master Yu is known in the Middle Three Heavens as a demonic character. Moreover, he is famous for being impatient and impolite. However, even such an unreasonable person didn't dare to talk-back to this guy; in fact, he actually released his prisoner before leaving?]

[Although he spoke some ruthless words before he left, but it's quite easy to guess the truth... he only took-off like this because he was no match for this other guy. Generally, when someone can't to beat a powerful opponent — they often say such provocative things before fleeing...]

[Such a flamboyant character!]

In that instant, King-Level-Master Jing Meng Hun looked

awestruck at Chu Yang, while the reverence he had for him in his heart had reached new heights!

The way he was looking at Chu Yang... if Jing Meng Hun was a woman, then it would've undoubtedly seemed like he had fallen in love with Chu Yang...

"King Level Master Jing, have you had a look at your younger brother?" Chu Yang beckoned him. A graceful and reserved expression surfaced on his face as he continued, "I must leave now; but I have a feeling that we are destined to meet again... "

At this moment, Yin Wu Tian also crawled up with difficulty, and muttered words of gratitude; repeatedly. However, Young master Yu had thrashed him so ruthlessly that Chu Yang could not make out what he was saying... but still, he kept thanking Chu Yang in an inarticulate manner.

Chu Yang nodded in approval, and gave a slight smile. In that moment, Minister Chu's body remained motionless. It appeared as if he hadn't moved from his spot... and was instead blown away by the wind. In just a flash, he had disappeared without a trace.

"He vanished in the blink of an eye! He really is a highly-skilled person." Jing Meng Hun murmured in fascination, and then muttered with a sigh, "Someday, I can also reach such a level... ah" He then looked at Yin Wu Tian, and shook his head as he thought, [this guy will remain hopeless his entire life...]

He was hoping to see the 'other guy' again, so that he could repay his favor... though he thought that being able to meet him again would be a blessing in its own.

"Fourth Brother, you are too reckless... who on earth even thinks about provoking someone like Young Master Yu?" Jing Meng Hun, who loved his brother dearly, scolded while checking Yin Wu Tian's injury. Simultaneously, he also shook his head in resentment of-the-fact that Yin Wu Tian had failed to meet his expectations.

“I… ” Yin Wu Tian had barely spoken a word when suddenly he started spurting blood from his mouth. He then took a step, but fell unconscious. Just now, this Fourth King Level Master had been humiliated to a whole new level… though he was finally safe, but he couldn’t help but feel embarrassed…

He had been subjugated into an utterly disgraceful situation… constantly screaming pitifully, and begging for mercy… right in front of First King Level Master… his sworn brother.

“No one else would find out about it.” Jing Meng Hun stood up fiercely, and looked at the two subordinates for a long time… sighing, “Forgive me for this… ”

As the eyes of both men filled with fear, Jing Meng Hun immediately shot his palms, which pounded heavily…

Suburbs

On a solitary small mountain;

“I am in no hurry to fight; first I will share the booty. Now, hand over the purple jade core!”

Minister Chu was shocked to see Young Master Yu stretching out his empty hand.

[As soon as I arrived here, Young Master Yu stretched out his hand to claim the purple jade core. Moreover, what’s up with his self-righteous demeanor? …he is being quite straightforward about this.]

“Why?” Minister Chu spoke matter-of-factly since he was clearly unwilling, “This is the fruit of my labor!”

He had obviously never seen such a treasure in the Lower Three Heavens. So why would he give it up after finally acquiring it?

Moreover, Young Master Yu was filthy rich. In fact, he even owned a tea-set made of white crystal. But at the moment, he was actually trying to snatch this purple jade core…

“How dare you say that it is the gain of your labor?” Young Master Yu retorted, “It is the result of my toil. You just happened to benefit from it! Anyway, since when have you turned into such a cheapskate?”

“Young Master Yu, does it suit a person of your status to ask for such a small item?” Chu Yang asked as he rolled his eyes.

“This is a purple jade core; if it was any ordinary purple jade, then I wouldn’t have bothered. But this is a purple jade core. It is impossible that I will just accept your decision if you refuse to hand it over!” Young Master Yu was very determined.

“Okay, fine.” Chu Yang seemed to have compromised very quickly.

At the same time, he used his thoughts to command the Nine Tribulations Sword’s tip: [quickly suck it in! Consume all of it, but leave the shell.]

Nine tribulations Sword’s tip had long been unable to control itself. The moment it heard the explicit instruction, it excitedly did a somersault. Then it swiftly rushed to his bosom, and landed on top of the purple jade core…

A ferocious suction began.

“Hurry up,” Young Master Yu urged.

Chu Yang put his hand into his chest-pocket, and sighed, “Okay, I dare not provoke you. The only option I have is to surrender to your might… But Young Master Yu, what do you plan to do with this item?”

Minister Chu Yang’s hand stretched out very slowly as he stalled for time. However, his actions could only be perceived as reluctant in general.

Young Master Yu answered with a self-satisfied smile, “This Young Master has carved a big chunk of purple jade to make a lotus throne. But it looks imperfect since it lacks a core. The shape and

size of this purple jade core is almost appropriate for that throne... ”

Chu Yang nodded as he thought, [you were the one who wanted to play. So don’t blame me for not being polite now.]

“Oh! If that is the case, then I would also like to see that Lotus Throne... ” said Chu Yang as he held out the palm of his hand, and revealed the purple jade core which was glittering with the same radiance as before, “Even though it breaks my heart... Nonetheless, considering your feelings, I will give it to you; you are in need of it... ”

“Haha... it still needs to be sculpted properly... ” Young Master Yu added as he took the parcel. “Eh?” He gasped all of a sudden. He remained startled for a while; unable to say anything. He then opened the red-clothed parcel, and raised the purple jade core against the sunlight to examine it.

“What happened... is there a problem?” Chu Yang asked worried, “Hey... what’s the matter?” Chu Yang’s vacant expression seemed to be mixed with doubt and curiosity... his acting was simply impeccable!

“What the hell is this?” Young Master Yu scratched his head in confusion. His eyes opened wider as he tossed the purple jade core again-and-again under the sunlight to examine it, and said, “This... this should not be... ”

“What are you trying to say?” Minister Chu also scratched his scalp while looking utterly confused, “This should not be? What should not be?”

“This is undoubtedly a purple jade core; but... how come it doesn’t have any energy inside it?” Young Master Yu conjectured as he looked at the purple jade core. He then smacked his lips, and said, “How can this be possible?”

“It doesn’t have energy in it?” Minister Chu had an even more

baffled expression on his face now. “How is this possible?”

“Indeed, how can this be possible?” Young Master Yu also thought bewildered, “This Young Master has come across many purple jade cores; but one this strange has never occurred before... under normal conditions, it should have already turned into powder if there was no energy inside it. But it is still intact... ”

As soon as his voice faded, the purple jade core crumbled into a pile of dust with a sudden noise; right in Young Master Yu’s palm...!

Young Master Yu was stunned!

His eyes almost popped out of his sockets as he looked at this handful of powder in his own palm.

“Oh, how did it collapse just like that?” Chu Yang asked in surprise, “Did you crush it into powder?”

Young Master Yu, “... ”

Already having extracted the spirit energy from the purple jade core, Chu Yang felt proud of himself for being so clever. He then said, “It’s such a pity,” He kept shaking his head repeatedly, and then sighed raising his eyebrows...

“Stop your nonsense!” Young Master Yu retorted, “Do you even know how to absorb the vital energy of this big piece of purple jade core?! Even a Monarch Level Martial Artist needs a day’s time? Moreover, this energy still needs to be transformed, and then assimilated further after it has entered the meridians. It... you, you, you think I am a Supreme Level Martial Artist!”

“Then what just happened? I had held it close to my heart for so long, and it was fine then. But the moment it landed up in your hands; it crumbled into dust!” Chu Yang stared intently as he said self-righteously, “Young Master Yu, you knew that I was going to give it up. But you still snatched it from my hand, and then turned it into an eternal mystery case? That is so evil of you... don’t tell

that I am some tacky fellow in your eyes?”

“It’s not like that… ” Young Master Yu seemed to be at a loss of words; unable to say anything, he just looked at this glib-tongued youngster.

“It’s ok. It doesn’t matter now; let’s fight.” Chu Yang said dejectedly, “This item that you took could have been a big contribution. However, I won’t say anything if you want. It’s not important… so don’t take it seriously.”

“You bastard!” Young Master Yu almost vomited blood.

“Please!” Chu Yang said revealing his sword, “Young Master Yu shouldn’t bother himself with such a trivial matter. I also don’t mind… I guess; please, please make a move.”

“How can I use such a lowly method to obtain this purple jade core?” Young Master Yu said as bristled with anger, “Chu Yang, you are thinking of me as some lowly being; aren’t you?”

“I have said no such thing… ” Chu Yang replied innocently, “Why are you getting so stirred up?”

Seeing his expression, Young Master Yu became even angrier, “There are plenty of these at my home! Why would I need to take one by force and deceit?”

“There must be plenty of these at your home… even though I cannot confirm with my own eyes… but I believe you!” Chu Yang said lightly, “You don’t need to explain yourself… really; it’s just one purple jade core, right? I feel reassured of it after taking a good look at your reddened and embarrassed face… ”

Young Master Yu really wanted to throw up blood. [This matter has escalated quickly. It is no more a matter of a mere chunk of purple jade core! It is related to my reputation now!]

“You wait. I will give you two purple jade cores when you arrive in Middle Three Heavens! Both bigger than this one!” Young Master Yu said loudly, “So as to stop you from thinking lowly of

me!”

“I do not want them. Two purple jade cores... are a lot.” Chu Yang frowned.

“You must take them!”

“I don’t want them!”

“I will murder your brothers if you don’t take them!” Young Master Yu said ferociously. It was clear from his tone that he had almost choked up with anger!

“Fine... I guess.” Facing such a threat, Minister Chu finally gave in. In fact, he seemed genuinely grieved and helpless. “You always use such conduct to make people yield to your whims; don’t you?”

“You have to!” Young Master Yu roared, “This Young Master Yu has never been looked down at in his entire life!”

“Alright then,” Chu Yang gave up...

Chapter 323: To the heart's content

"Come Fight!" Young Master Yu said as he gasped for breath. He felt as if his chest was about to explode. [Never have I been aggrieved like this!]

However, Young Master Yu was also quite baffled at the same, [how does a nice piece of purple jade core such-as-this not have any energy? Moreover, how did it crumble into pieces the moment I held it in my hand?]

In his heart, he suspected that Chu Yang had something to do with it. But then he took a look at Chu Yang and denied it. [It can't be this guy's work. It's not like I am looking down on him... but one has to cultivate for at least 500 years to layout this kind of a trap in such a short time...]

Chu Yang certainly wouldn't hold back. He pranced, and swished his hands using the move, [One Ray of Cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms!]

Young Master Yu stamped his foot, and bellowed as if venting his heart's anger. He then rushed forward with a loud whistling sound.

Bang!

It seemed as if fireworks had erupted in midair, while the ground began to tremble.

Chu Yang's body obliquely flew out like a shooting star. Since Young Master Yu was using only a-tenth of his strength, he also staggered 30-40 steps back; seemingly drunk.

Chu Yang felt that his move was filled with might. The power released this time was a lot higher than before. As a result, his spirit couldn't help but be aroused.

[This is really useful!]

He drew out his long-sword with a loud and clear hissing sound, and maneuvered it into a rolling motion. There appeared a beam of light which looked just like a rolling dragon; the long-sword's metal sparkled with a multi-colored radiation as it ferociously slashed down all-of-a-sudden.

Young Master Yu snorted melancholically. Fist! Palm! Kick!

Following a loud explosion, Young Master Yu's body was sent flying in the air. On the hand, Chu Yang was left spinning on the ground like a gyroscope, and kept rotating continuously until he touched a hundred revolutions. His spinning motion formed a pit that was hundreds of feet in depth.

Young Master Yu was about to drop from the sky when a bright light suddenly flashed from the pit. It was followed by the sharp-point of an intense sword-light, which suddenly projected towards him!

[Nine Tribulations Sword, Nine heavens Sword Technique-the third move: A Sharp Will Buried Deep Will Not Change.]

Young Master Yu was startled. He was airborne at the time when the opposite party had launched a menacing surprise attack. Having no alternative at hand, he was forced to bombard a series of several hundred palm attacks in the downward direction!

This method wasn't employed to injure the enemy; its main purpose was to use the shock-repulsion from the enemy's attack to propel Young Master Yu's body higher into the air!

In this expansive sky, one could see only a sword light chasing after a person's silhouette; just like a maggot in hot pursuit of one's heel — reluctant to let go, the sword light had actually risen hundreds of feet in the air!

There could've been no action as swift as this!

The bodies of both the men were in the sky now!

Chu Yang's eyes flashed brightly. He raised his long-sword above

his head, and started rotating it in a circular motion. Suddenly, the sword's blade released bright rays of light as it filled the quiet sky with a 'humming' sound!

It seemed as if this brief moment had given rise to a violent hurricane!

Immediately after that, a magnificent crown appeared in the air all of a sudden. Its splendid dazzling was clearly visible from moment it appeared! In fact, it almost seemed as if an ancient regent of life-and-death had suddenly transpired!

It seemed that clouds had gathered-in from thousands of miles for the singular purpose of destruction! They appeared to have gathered here like the heaven's mighty troops; dignified, solemn and respectful!

Nine Tribulations Sword, Nine Heavens Technique-the fourth move: Gather Wind and Cloud to Rule over All!

At this instant, Chu Yang fiercely shouted, "One who gathers the wind and cloud; becomes the emperor!"

Young Master Yu was suddenly caught in the throes of a powerful fear.

Although the true might of this move hadn't yet been issued, but he already knew that it was going to be massive. One-tenth of his strength wouldn't even remotely be enough to counter this move!

He uttered a long and loud cry since he lacked of a better option; suddenly, an aura wildly erupted out of his body.

He had doubled the strength of his body now!

Young Master Yu felt very helpless. He had never thought that this trivial Second Grade Revered Sword Artist could show such mystical swordsmanship; or could possibly use his skills to ten-fold his actual martial strength!

The sword light rained down in the most majestic and awe-

inspiring manner. It almost looked like an imperial trial!

Chopping down for execution!

Chi...

Young Master Yu felt a stinging sensation in more than 30 spots on his body; Chu Yang had stabbed him so many times in a split second.

He felt a sharp stinging pain in his throat, while he felt a stabbing pain in his heart at the same time... and in his back as well. The two dazzling rays suddenly appeared before his eyes as he felt a sharp pain in his eyelids...

“Damn!” Young Master Yu was shocked as he called out in alarm. He immediately shifted to offensive; seemingly having the power to topple the mountains and overturn the seas.

Bang! Bang!

The sword light and the vital energy incessantly clashed in the sky before they finally exploded!

Chu Yang’s body fell from the sky like a kite-with-a-broken-string, and soared-out far away. In fact, he was sent flying no less 1000 feet away. His body finally pounded heavily against the ground, and rolled 20-30 times before coming to a halt. He lay sprawled on the ground; covered in dirt. Moreover, he was bleeding from the corners of his mouth.

Young Master Yu tried to dodge to the side at the last minute; however, he was caught by the repulsive-force of the explosion. Moments later, he had already entered the huge pit that Chu Yang’s attack had opened just now. The explosion had sent the dust to rise up more than 100 feet in the air...

Several drops of water splashed into the air. Young Master Yu came out from the pit. A sneer appeared on his face as he looked at the pit which had already turned into a puddle by now...

[Unexpectedly, water has appeared in this pit which was made simply from a person's attack crashing into the ground!]

[This indeed is a hilly region!]

As soon as he came out of the pit, Young Master Yu quickly flew towards Chu Yang. [I attacked him with 20% of his strength. However, it was a frantic attack, and I must say that I didn't hold back either. I just hope I haven't ended up killing this young fellow...]

He rushed to the spot where Chu Yang had fallen, and saw him twitching; whilst being sprawled out on his back...

Young Master Yu was startled, [it seems my attack was too intense... this guy's face looks like 'paper gold'(1) now. I am afraid his internal organs were shaken during the fall. So I guess he is done for...]

He couldn't help but sigh.

As he sighed, he saw Chu Yang twitching again. And in that instant, unexpectedly... Chu Yang tried to sit up with the support of his own hands...

"Do not move... you are injured very badly... ok?" Young Master Yu stared at him as his eyes widened. Chu Yang instantly sat up, and then immediately started healing himself...

After sometime... his paper-gold like complexion turned to deathly pale...

[So pale... even if it's an ugly complexion... at least he isn't dead. But... how is he recovering so quickly?]

Whilst feeling strange... he saw Chu Yang's face turn ash-grey, which was soon followed by a trace of scarlet-flush appearing on it...

"This... what speed of recovery is this?" Young Master Yu was confused.

[The body slowly recovers after suffering such extents of injury… even if one rests for several days… it would still take about a fortnight to recover completely.]

[But this guy has actually recovered so much in such a short span?]

At the time when Chu Yang had closed his eyes to start the healing process, the sword spirit also got busy. Moreover, the sword's tip set to as well…

The power absorbed from the purple jade core finally emerged inside his Dantian. The accumulated medicinal efficacies — previously under the Sword Spirit's suppression — were also released into his meridians, and were immediately transformed into purest form of elemental energy.

Though Chu Yang's injuries weren't minor, but the efficacies derived from such a large amount of elixirs had restored him very quickly! Moreover, he had just used four moves of the Nine Tribulations Sword to face Young Master Yu. In fact, Chu Yang had gained several insights under the pressure of defeating an invincible and powerful enemy like Young Master Yu. As a result, his understanding of the sword-play was getting more-and-more transparent.

The barriers which were originally invisible had gradually weakened…

Chu Yang could feel his own martial power advancing by leaps and bounds now. Young Master Yu's pressure was like that of a mountain; one that no ordinary master could bear.

Although he had used only 20% of his strength, but his spiritual pressure and his expert's aura hadn't been contained during the fight!

Chu Yang continued to utilize this massive pressure to compress the vital energy within his body, which lead to unceasing

eruptions... unceasing progress; unceasingly... taking him all the way towards breakthrough... and realization!

This was a once in a lifetime opportunity for Chu Yang!

Young Master Yu had also closed his eyes and-was-since indulged in controlling his breathing. However, after half a day's time, he sensed something strange in front of him. He opened his eyes, and saw Chu Yang standing upright. His tall figure looked glorious under the setting sun; just like a long-sword standing tall and straight!

In his hand was a long-sword, which twinkled as the sunlight fell on it!

Chu Yang seemed to be at the top of the blue sky from Young Master Yu's point of view; his feet appeared to be stepping on the setting sun... his sleeves were floating-about, while his hair was flying upward in the air.

Young Master Yu suddenly felt that there was something different about Chu Yang now.

[This is a marvelous feeling! Chu Yang seems to have made a breakthrough to some domain!]

A complex luster appeared in Young Master Yu's eyes as he looked at Chu Yang.

[His talent is unparalleled; very difficult to come across! He is the so-called "genius" who is not only coveted, but is also looked-disdainfully-upon by the whole world. However, today he has proven the existence of a 'true genius' in this world.]

[Moreover, this genius's strength is undergoing a meteoric rise at the moment! And this process is being facilitated by none other than his own hands.]

[If what I witnessed just now... is the birth of a future legend of the Nine Heavens Continent... then, I — Young Master Yu — must rise to be a part of it!]

[Simply because I've witnessed the growth of this talent!]

"Let's fight!" Chu Yang said as he pulled out a long-sword. The shiny tip of his weapon was sparkling while being aimed at Young Master Yu.

"I would also like to see how you can have a breakthrough in such a short time!" Young Master Yu spoke coldly. His body floated up from the ground, and then withdrew an inch; however, he quickly rushed forward at the same time.

In that moment, Chu Yang felt as if the entire space had distorted. He couldn't help but bellow coldly in his heart as Young Master Yu appeared in front of him, ['what harm is there in slaughtering the entire world'! Directly shot!]

This time, the fight between these two continued for a little longer.

The first four moves of Nine Tribulations Sword were used six times by Chu Yang; over-and-over with each move having different comprehensions and attainments; every single time!

Chu Yang decided to fight without any restraints. He laughed, and then shouted, "Pay attention!"

"Bring it on!" Young Master Yu shouted loudly; appearing to be in high spirits.

"A sword's edge famous for all eternity!" Chu Yang recited, and soon the tip of his long-sword suddenly disappeared. However, the sword's edge seemed to radiate an intense light which dazzled in the sky; just like the sun!

The first four moves belonged to the Nine Tribulations Sword's tip. However, this sword move belonged to the sword's edge!

[Nine Tribulations Sword, Nine Heavens Sword Technique, fifth move!]

The sword energy howled. Even though the sun was set behind

the mountain top, but the light emitting from the sword could be easily compared to the scorching midday sun!

Young Master Yu shouted lightly, “You come out quite well!” He moved sideways to dodge. Then, he rushed forward resolutely.

Screech... the sword energy whistled as the sword light moved-about unhindered!

Young Master Yu’s black clothing of was tattered all-over with a loud tearing sound; but he fought with even more excitement. He madly roared and went all-out; making no attempts to defend himself!

Chu Yang’s body was carried high-into-the-sky by the sword energy as he calmly said: "Wind and Cloud move unhindered from East to West!"

Notes:

Paper gold – it’s actually a banking term... it means that you have a piece of paper which is substituting the actual gold.

Chapter 324: Respective Breakthroughs!

The situation kept changing constantly. Chu Yang's attack separated into two mighty torrents, just like streams of two different rivers. His attacks then rushed towards Young Master Yu, and pounded down abruptly.

Nine tribulations Sword, Nine Heavens Sword Technique-the sixth move!

Young Master Yu was just about to meet the enemy head-on when he suddenly discovered that something about these two powerful streams — one was hot, and the other was cold! One was Yin, while the other was Yang! The two streams intertwined with each other, and formed a tornado which rolled down violently!

[Such a sword-play also exists in this world!]

Young Master Yu exclaimed in admiration in his heart, and concentrated his martial power so as to not show any weakness as he moved forward to meet Chu Yang's attack.

The sizzling-hot sword-wind threw itself at Young Master Yu. Young Master Yu felt as if his body was being roasted in fire. He forcefully burst out of the flames, but immediately came in contact with the cold wind. In fact, this wind was so cold that it could freeze the bones.

Bellowing loudly, Young Master Yu launched a counterattack with all his might!

At the time he had used his attack, Chu Yang had clearly felt that his own martial power was falling short! So much so that it was nearly impossible for him to employ this move to its full extent!

[My martial power is not enough! My cultivation is also insufficient ah...]

After this clash had concluded, Young Master Yu's clothes were left tattered and looked like the attire of a beggar. Only a few strips

of cloth remained hanging from his body, putting him in an extremely embarrassing situation.

Even traces of blood could be seen dripping from the corners of his mouth. 20% of Young Master Yu's strength should have been near-invincible in the Lower Three Heavens. However, he had sustained injuries counterattacking Chu Yang's sword energy.

Of course, the situation would've been entirely different if Young Master Yu had used a killing move. But the issue was... he could not!

"Really fierce!" Young Master Yu sat down cross-legged. He could see that Chu Yang was laying some distance away, and wasn't making any movements. However, Young Master Yu wasn't worried. Young Master Yu had full faith in this youngster: [This fellow won't die until his head has been cut-off!]

As expected, Chu Yang, whose body lay motionless on the ground suddenly twitched; and then twitched again...

"F*k!" Young Master Yu closed his eyes since watching his foe would only be bothersome for his mind. [Full on healing.]

Prior to this, he would never have anticipated that a battle with a Revered Sword Artist would reach this stage; this was truly surprising...

However, this fight had been immensely inspirational for Young Master Yu as well!

Especially that wonderful sword-play of Chu Yang's...

In fact, Young Master Yu even hoped, [His sword-play is so much better!] Chu Yang was drawing support from him to practice martial arts. However, was he not doing the same by utilizing Chu Yang's oppression to comprehend his own bottleneck?

In fact, Young Master Yu had always yearned for such unusual skills.

Lanterns were lit as the early hours of evening approached. Chu Yang suddenly jumped up, and stood face-to-face with Young Master Yu. He was bursting with energy and vigor.

“Let’s fight again!”

“Come on!”

Both of them felt hungry after finishing the match. Hence, they both entered the city walking shoulder to shoulder; smiles on their faces. Young Master Yu first looked for a change of clothes. Then they went to a small bistro to eat and drink to their heart’s content since they both were tired and hungry. As they ate and drank, the other people continuously raised their eyebrows to cast sidelong glances at them!

In just a moment, piles of meat bones had stacked on the table in front of the two. The waiters hurriedly cleaned it up when they heard those two starving ghost-like guys hooting at them, “Come back with another pot!”

Following the shout, Chu Yang slapped a gold ingot on the table. The waiters’ eyes beamed with joy as they hastily went back to make preparations.

“You even pay a bill for eating?” Young Master Yu said gulping wine from one hand, and gnawing at the meat bone from the other. He then squinted as he said, “I just use a slap on the face to pay the bill!”

“You think everyone is an evil bully like you?” Chu Yang replied smiling bitterly.

He recalled the scene of Young Master Yu going to buy clothes. Unexpectedly, he had entered a ready-made clothes store almost stark naked. He had stripped even before he took out some clothes from the rack.

He put on the clothes, and actually started walking out. He didn’t even greet the shopkeeper.

That fat boss came out to block his way, but got a slap on his face as a clearance of dues. The man was obviously left to bleed from the mouth and nose.

[He is such a villain,] Chu Yang grumbled.

After they finished their meals, they got up with great difficulty feeling their perfectly round bellies, and staggered to go out. They obviously left a lot of people whispering about them.

“I guess these two guys are beggars. It seems like they haven’t eaten their full in a lifetime… just look at their table manners.”

“That can’t be right. If they had been begging for food, where did the gold come from?”

“They must’ve begged for food. However, today they must’ve picked up a gold ingot from somewhere. Hence, they must’ve come here to eat. Didn’t you see that they ate a lifetime’s worth of food today… ”

“Right; curse those two bastards. They probably left to prevent their intestines from breaking apart… ”

The waiters looked at the table full of meat bones. The corners of their mouths twitched as they thought, [even a group of hungry wolves wouldn’t have been able to eat so much…]

By this time, another fight had begun on the outskirts of the city…

They fought for ten consecutive days. The two were almost inseparable during the battles.

Chu Yang repeatedly used the first six moves until Young Master Yu was driven beyond the limits of forbearance. “Again? You still don’t feel annoyed by it?! Ah!”

Chu Yang had learned these moves by heart by now. Hence, he probed further to try out the seventh move: [The sun and the moon thunder at my will!]

There was a burst of aura after several days of battle, and Chu Yang made a breakthrough. This was his second breakthrough during these ten days of fighting!

Fourth Grade Revered Sword Artist!

After several days of thorough and rigorous fighting, Chu Yang finally succeeded in using the eighth move: [Chopping Mountains and Breaking Peaks under Blood Red Sky!]

These days, they were fighting a dozen times a day. The Sword Spirit had been frantically consuming the remaining medicinal efficacies. The Sword Point and Sword Edge had been sullenly swaying back and forth inside his Dantian the entire time...

Eventually, the power of the medicinal efficacies was almost squandered. Chu Yang's breakthrough had also been achieved... Owing to Young Master Yu's oppression over these past few days, his inner state had been stabilized completely.

Metaphorically, Chu Yang resembled a block of steel-and-iron whereas Young Master Yu was the sledgehammer. Days of incessant strikes had tempered him into his present state.

He was only short by one step, and then he would be capable to acquire the third fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword!

However, he needed to proceed in an orderly way for this step. As it is said, if the pressure is too huge, even a precious jade could stand to be destroyed. At this point, the Sword Spirit acted very accurately by proposing to stop promptly.

Only a very small amount of medicinal efficacies were remaining in Chu Yang's meridians. The Sword Spirit wasn't prepared to use them since they were to remain untouched... until needed to save someone's life.

On the tenth day, after the last battle had already been settled, Young Master Yu suddenly felt a gush of dense aura. He suddenly raised his hand, and burst into laughter as the hollow of his palm

sent out a formidable attractive force!

The clouds suddenly began to frantically surge over from all directions...

It seemed as if marshals had gathered to summon a mighty army — with thousands of men and horses rushing over from all directions!

He broke through!

Young Master Yu also broke through!

Young Master Yu's breakthrough had been no easier than Chu Yang's. Nobody knew that he had been stuck in this bottleneck for three years!

He had been worried to a point where his hair had started to turn white.

He had never thought that he would attain a stage realization in the middle of a fight with a Revered Sword Artist, and make his breakthrough as a result!

Young Master Yu exhaled a long breath after the breakthrough. Suddenly, he became very quiet. He crossed his hands behind his back, and looked at the sky. An earnest expression surfaced in his eyes as the white clouds slowly scattered.

"Congratulations on your breakthrough." Chu Yang extended his greetings smile.

"Yes ah, I have waited three years for this day," Young Master Yu said as he smiled gently. "I should thank you. If it weren't for you, I'm afraid this bottleneck would have continued for a long time."

"But you should also be grateful to me," Young Master Yu said as he turned around and saw Chu Yang smiling. "Although I do not know why you were so crazy about breaking through in such a short time, I am sure you had your reasons."

"Right," Chu Yang said, smiling faintly. "Anyway, becoming a

little stronger is not a bad thing after all."

"Haha... " Young Master Yu gave a hearty laugh. He asked Chu Yang candidly, "Can I take the liberty to ask the name of the person who taught you this marvelous sword-play? From where did you learn it?"

As he said this, Young Master Yu stared intently at Chu Yang's face.

"This is nothing to be regarded as taking liberty," Chu Yang said with a chuckle. "In the past I bumped into an old man when I was in Beyond the Heavens Sect. At that time, I was preparing a barbecue. Ah, I forgot to tell you earlier that I am really good at roasting hunted wild animals... "

Chu Yang's eyes revealed the color of obvious recollection, "The old man was probably very hungry. We ate roasted meat together. Then before leaving, he passed on eight moves of this swords play to me. He also said a few words-if you can grow up, these moves of the sword technique will let you move unhindered in the Nine Heavens."

The affair that he spoke about was naturally a true experience but hadn't occurred in Beyond the Heavens Sect. It had happened in his previous life. In his previous birth, he had accidentally met an old man in the Middle Three Heavens. He had met the old man in the Cang Lan Battlefront. That person had not taught him the Nine Heavens Sword Technique but a marvelous core technique.

Young Master Yu looked at Chu Yang's eyes filled with deep recollection and finally concluded that it was not a lie. Such a genuine expression is impossible to fabricate.

"Far more than being able to move unhindered in Nine Heavens... " Young Master Yu sighed. "If you can go on to a higher level, you will be able to rule over the Nine Heavens."

He looked enviously at Chu Yang and said, "Chu Yang, this is

your greatest blessing!”

“Yes, it is,” Chu Yang nodded and asked, “Young Master Yu, can I ask… what realm are you in right now?”

“Me?” Young Master Yu’s smile gently spread on his whole face. “My cultivation level… when you can see it, you will naturally know at once… “

Chu Yang nodded, with a pensive look on his face.

He knew that Young Master Yu did not want to tell him. It was as if he knew that telling would do him no good. If Chu Yang found out that the opponent he had been fighting with for half a month and had been evenly matched with, was actually on a level that was simply beyond his imagination… It would’ve been a huge blow to Chu Yang.

Chu Yang had asked the question to exorcise his own inner demons. Young Master Yu did not answer to maintain Chu Yang’s clear state of mind. It could be said that these questions and answers seemed like idle talk. They were seemingly nonsense. However at this moment, Chu Yang’s inner state became rock solid.

This was a wonderful situation; one that could only be sensed and not conveyed in words.

“I smell the sweet fragrance of Lotus,” Young Master Yu said, crossing his hands behind his back. “Ah Lu should arrive soon,” on saying her name this time, Chu Yang clearly saw a conflict in Young Master Yu’s eyes.

“This time, becoming number one under the heavens should not be a problem for Young Miss Ah Lu,” Chu Yang said in a soft voice.

“I have never cared about this ‘First Under the Heavens’ thing… ” Young Master Yu said smiling. “But this girl… must have something to do. Otherwise, won’t she be very lonely?”

“Let’s go take a look,” Chu Yang proposed.

Young Master Yu grunted, took a step and said, “Chu Yang, when your business in the Lower Three Heavens is finished, you must come quickly to the Middle Three Heavens! The Middle Three Heavens... along with the Upper Three Heavens is bustling with excitement.”

"Excitement?"

“The Three Stars Divine Clan has appeared,” Young Master Yu said in a heavy tone. If you get an opportunity to fight with them, you will find that it will be completely different from your experiences in The Nine Heavens...”

Not only the Middle Three Heavens but the Upper Three Heavens have also suffered more intensely from the attack of the Three Stars Divine Clan. All personnel have already gone back,” Young Master Yu said. “This is a fierce battle! The course of events can also eliminate the Nine Heavens once again.”

He said in a deep voice, “Chu Yang, participate in it as early as possible.”

Chapter 325: At just the right time

The Lotus lakeside was already bustling with a sea of people. They were mostly Confucian scholars; their robes' sleeves were fluttering in the wind. It was hard to tell whether they were calm and carefree, or simply elegant.

In such an environment, one would probably pretend and put-on such appearance even if one was not an elegant scholar or a poet. While on the one hand these young men assumed an air of elegant gentlemen, on the other hand, they were casting glances on young maidens' faces, bodies, chests, waists and other places... all at the same time.

Even then they pretended to be men of honor — tall and straight. They were under the impression that those beautiful women would consider them reliable, and might develop a liking for them. In fact, they believed that the women might just give their hearts to them as a result.

However, they didn't know that it was hopeless... Those women hated such rogues. They were even less fond of fakes who brought up boring conversation to hit on them. But even if you were upright and didn't hit on them, your chances would still be less than the hoodlums...

Three big camps were indistinctly taking shape in the Lotus Lake's center.

There was a faction of people wearing purple clothes, another one wearing white clothes, while the third one wore black clothes. Though Chu Yang looked from afar, he immediately figured things out, [Perhaps the ones in black clothes belong to Jun Lu Lu's camp. They really are worthy of being called 'Dark Bamboo'. They are brimming with the aura of some crime syndicate... even in a musical competition...

Big ships had gathered in the center of Lotus Lake, and had

jointly formed an ultra-large stage. Standing high and erect, those multicolored streamers drifted slightly in the wind. The sound of melodious musical instruments floated out in all directions.

The competition hadn't yet started, but the factions were already in frenzy.

Several merchants and peddlers had grasped this opportunity, and had dug into this once-in-a thousand-year opportunity to make some money. This was an excellent opportunity; so much so that even the misers would not bargain. Hence, the merchants could easily cheat their customers as much as they liked!

Chu Yang, dressed in black, was walking slowly on the shore by a group of willow trees. He was lost in a train of thoughts, and seemed to be wandering aimlessly.

His heart was in a state of turmoil.

Young Master Yu had already left. He had gone aboard Jun Lu Lu's big boat. However, the few words he had said before leaving, had uncovered a maze of doubts in Chu Yang's mind. It had also roused a sudden chaos in his heart.

He finally understood why the blue-clothed person had suddenly vanished. It seemed as if the man had been recalled by his family. However, Chu Yang didn't know how to react after hearing this news so suddenly.

That blue-clothed person had been trying to take Chu Yang back with him. Moreover, the man was willing to use any means necessary. In fact, he had also tried to take out the jade pendant in order to confirm his identity. However, Chu Yang had also employed any means necessary to escaped.

Actually, Chu Yang had no desire to unravel the riddles of his own past. Simply put... he was quite terrified in his heart.

Yes, terrified; Chu Yang, had already understood life and death thoroughly after leading two lives. In his heart, he held only the

trace of obsession to correct his past mistakes. However, this matter terrified him.

Although Chu Yang tried to ignore it, but he could faintly sense that there was a 50% chance... that he was the baby whom the Chu family had abandoned all those years ago.

In his heart, he had hope and expectation. However, there was also resistance, and fear.

Such was Chu Yang's precarious dilemma regarding his own past.

He would feel at ease if he had been heartlessly abandoned. He would cut off this section from his life, and henceforth have no worries. He would then be able to roam around the world carefree. There was no scope for disappointments where there are no expectations. Even if he hated them, he wouldn't possibly kill them...

However, now he knew that he was probably lost as a child... Naturally, he had many complex feelings about this.

Chu Yang sighed gently as he leaned against the willow tree. He faced upwards, and saw the lush green branches swaying back and forth. At this time, it seemed as if all the sounds from the Lotus Lake had been blocked altogether!

A Transverse Flute started playing gently; the tune turned out to be "Immortal visits from the Heaven". The entire atmosphere suddenly turned jubilant. Everyone who heard it couldn't help but reveal a happy expression on their faces.

At the same time, a boat pulled up slowly to the shore. Six people dressed neatly in white clothes got down from the ship, and started to move in Chu Yang's direction. Chu Yang looked at the six expressionless people whilst leaning against the tree.

"Are you the young master whose boat was being towed by a big fish that day?" The six people in white clothes approached. They

were headed by a man who respectfully stepped forward, and sincerely asked.

[The young master whose boat was being towed by a big fish…] Chu Yang was somewhat speechless. [What sort of way was this to address someone?] However, he smiled bitterly in his heart as he thought, [the opposite party basically doesn't know how to address me. So their greeting was understandable and well-meant.]

"What do you want?"

"My Young Miss heard the about your extraordinary performance from the other day and is very grateful. She wants to invite you onto her boat." This man bore a very cautious and solemn attitude. Moreover, he was very respectful.

"Your Young Miss… " Chu Yang's eyes flashed. "Transverse Flute Master?"

"Indeed." the man unconsciously bloated his chest with pride as he replied.

Chu Yang finally understood. He had thought that the tune "Immortal visits from the Heaven" was to welcome Diwu Qing Rou. He hadn't imagined that it was meant to welcome him…

However, Diwu Qing Rou thought that this song was played to welcome him upon his arrival… which must have flattered him. It could be said to have achieved success in one way or another…

However, if Transverse Flute Master knew that her tune had simultaneously welcomed Diwu Qing Rou and King of Hell Chu — two mortal enemies… In all likelihood, the look on her face would've been incredible.

"Inform your Young Miss that I will board the boat; but not now." Chu Yang replied with a smile. From the corner of his eye, he saw Golden Horse Riders Department's First King Level Master, Jing Meng Hun, walking towards him with a look of pleasant surprise on his face. Therefore, he had no other choice but to turn

down this person's invitation.

Jing Meng Hun quickly rushed over, then cupped his hands in greeting and said, "Young Master is here at just the right moment. No wonder the air below this willow tree is so fresh and makes a person feel refreshed."

Those people in white clothes didn't even spare him a glance. In fact, they were about to lose their temper when they suddenly realized that this person was among the ones walking behind Diwu Qing Rou a moment ago. They were immediately startled. They saluted to Chu Yang and retreated hastily.

Chu Yang smiled naughtily and irresolutely said, "King Level Master Jing talks as if this Young Master were to live in Prime Minister Diwu's residence, and enable him to spend each and every day feeling carefree and relaxed."

Jing Meng Hun laughed loudly as he faced upward and said, "This is exactly what Prime Minister Diwu earnestly wishes for."

Chu Yang chucked and said in his heart, [Diwu Qing Rou better not be looking for that. If I really were living at his headquarters, he would have vomited three liters of blood by now.]

"Young Master, if you do not have any matters to attend to, will you get on the boat for a chat?" Jing Meng Hun asked warmly.

"Forget about it; I am used to staying idle. I am like a Cloud Wild crane that is not fond of worldly affairs." Chu Yang refused. No doubt he had already changed his appearance, and had managed to hide the truth from Jing Meng Hun. However, he was not sure if he would be able to conceal it from Diwu Qing Rou!

He thought about the time he had gone to the Heaven Reaching Tower in preparation, and still hadn't been able dispel Diwu Qing Rou's suspicion. Diwu Qing Rou's strong spiritual awareness had left a fear lingering in Chu Yang's heart.

It would be bad if he was able to see through Chu Yang again.

“It’s no harm; no worries at all. No matter when Young Master decides to come, I will welcome him whole-heartedly.” Jing Meng Hun didn’t feel even slightly disobeyed. He was still smiling from ear-to-ear.

“Ah, King Level Master Jing is not carrying on with Prime Minister at the moment… Where exactly are you headed to?” Chu Yang asked curiously. Judging from the looks of it, Jing Meng Hun appeared to be going somewhere.

“Ah, it’s just a trivial matter. Prime Minister has asked me deal with it. I must go back and get something while it is convenient,” Jing Meng Hun said.

[Go back and get something?] Chu Yang’s brain started flexing up immediately.

“What a coincidence, I am also going in that direction to buy some raw materials for medicines. We might as well walk together,” Chu Yang’s attitude suddenly warmed up.

“Well… ” Jing Meng Hun was overjoyed. [This mystical master is willing to walk together with me. It shows that our relations are deepening.]

They started walking side-by-side, taking quick steps.

“May I ask what sort of medicinal raw materials does the Young Master need?” Jing Meng Hun asked in a probing manner.

“Aah, I am helpless.” Chu Yang said. “I was fighting with Young Master Yu the day before yesterday, and I sustained some injuries. I was looking for a few elixirs to recover. But where will I find such medicines in the Lower Three Heavens? Moreover… my sword was also destroyed by that guy. So I also need some good quality steel and iron… ”

Chu Yang shook his head helplessly and then continued, “These things can be obtained in the Upper Three Heavens with the slightest effort. But here… haha never mind.”

[Upper Three Heavens? Slightest Effort?] Jing Meng Hun's immediately brightened up.

"If Young Master has not given up yet... I actually have some high quality materials... " Jing Meng Hun gathered himself up to say, "They are the best quality items in my eyes... perhaps they will be trash in the eyes of the Young Master... however, that is also better than nothing..."

"Ah?" Chu Yang turned his head to look at him. He then smiled and said, "Forget about it. It must have been difficult for you to collect these materials in the Lower Three Heavens... I am just looking for two chunks of fine quality iron."

Jing Meng Hun immediately spoke-up in an anxious tone, "Young Master, I sincerely want to tell you that although these materials are precious, they have no importance in comparison to a friend!"

"Ah... " Chu Yang stared at him, and then to mutter to himself irresolutely, "If that's the case... "

"I will promptly take you along." Jing Meng Hun was very happy.

"Fine, I owe you again," Chu Yang sighed. In his heart he said, [better not blame me for this because you're keen on exposing the secrets of Golden Horse Riders Department...]

Jing Meng Hun's entire body immediately became light as a feather. He almost laughed several times to divulge his heart's excitement, "Young Master, please come."

"I still haven't asked... Young Master, what is your surname?" King level Master Jing asked gently, yet cautiously.

"My surname... " Chu Yang he looked at him with a superfluous smile on his face. Then he gently said, "My surname is Ye; Ye Wan of Ye."

"So it turned out to be Young Master Ye," Jing Meng Hun

staggered and almost fell down. His heart was now in a perilous situation. [No wonder he could compel Young Master Yu to give in. He turned out to be a person from the Ye Clan. They are ranked first among the nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens!]

Chapter 326: This Wound is Very Strange Ah？

The temporary headquarters of the Golden Horse Riders Department. Yin Wu Fa’s room.

Yin Wu Tian was sitting on a small backless stool and was completely covered in bandages. He was carrying a pot of water in his hands to wash the feet of his elder brother. The water was steaming hot.

He carefully washed him and neatly wiped him with a clean towel. Then he held Yin Wu Fa’s feet in his hands and placed them gently on the bed. Then he started massaging the lower half of Yin Wu Fa’s body.

“You don’t need to strain yourself too much,” Yin Wu Fa said in a dejected voice, with his eyes closed. “A cripple is a cripple. Although I can feel my external muscles which do not seem to be any different, the inside of my meridians has already started to have necrosis…”

Yin Wu Tian did not answer. He only kept applying martial energy to unblock the blood vessels of his elder brother.

“Our people get injured… and we can’t even afford to offend?” Yin Wu Fa asked, opening his eyes suddenly to look at Yin Wu Tian’s gloomy face.

Yin Wu Tian did not utter a single word. Yin Wu Fa sighed and muttered, “I wonder if Second Brother Kong can see us?”

“He sees us,” Yin Wu Tian breathed in and said in a hoarse voice. “Second Brother should be at ease now. He must be very happy.”

“Haha… ” Yin Wu Fa gave a bitter laugh and said in a pensive tone, “Kong Shang Xin, that bastard! Contrary to what we expect, he must be very relaxed right now. Well, he has closed his eyes anyway, haha… ”

He stared at the wall that was not too far from him for a long time, and was lost in a chain of thoughts. He said in a gloomy voice, “From the next life onwards, I must look for him and have a good fight with him. He fought valiantly and put his life at stake to rescue me only for me to be disabled. Ha-ha, his last few words unexpectedly were…”

He stopped talking and was lost in thought again. Kong Shang Xin’s tragic roar seemed to be echoing near his ears, “Do not let me die with remaining grievances!”

It was as if he saw Kong Shan Xin in a magnificent army with thousands of men and horses, doing his utmost to fight as he dashed about left and right.

“Do not let me die with remaining grievances!” Yin Wu Fa finally muttered in a dazed tone. “Yin Wu Tian, when that day comes in the future, you must not let me die with regrets.”

“Elder brother… ” Yin Wu Tian suddenly raised his head and said, “What rubbish are you talking about?”

“Originally, we two brothers used to walk unhindered in the Lower Three heavens. We used to murder for money, and we did it confidence and ease! We used to receive silver money after taking a person’s severed head. In a mighty army, negligence comes and goes as well. One strike was enough to dispose of people; with their blood sent flying and their lives lost… until later we rescued Second Brother Kong. Then, we three brothers began to wander the Jiang Hu proudly. Even though the common people called us fiends, those were still the merriest days of our lives.

Yin Wu Fa smiled profoundly. His eyes revealed a hue of recollection of memories. “… Afterwards, Prime Minister Diwu founded us. He founded the Golden Horse Riders Department. He gave us high official posts and a generous pay. The high position and great wealth at last broke us away from the forests and mountains. I did not want a high post or a generous pay, nor did I

want to bring honor to my ancestors. I have been thinking... shouldn't our later generations also be allowed to have the same ordinary life in the wilderness that we did?

With eyes full of sorrow he said, "We say that we are King Level Masters, but God knows what all things we don't know? In order to learn to read, we had caught an old fogy and forced him to teach us. When other people speak and don't explain properly, we are unable to make sense of what we are hearing. We can't even make out if they are abusing us... don't tell me that our future generations would also turn out like this? Therefore I responded to Prime Minister Diwu's invitation."

"I did not join for this outstanding position, ah," Yin Wu Fa said with a miserable smile. "Ever since we arrived in the Continent Center Citadel, the Golden Horse Riders Department is getting bigger and bigger. Every task is carried out successfully. Under the strategic plans of Prime Minister Diwu, we have become almost invincible, and he has become the king of the dark world in the Lower Three Heavens. "

"But we are not happy now! The three of us used to eat and drink every day together. Ever since we have accepted this extravagant lifestyle, the three of us have gathered to have a drink together only a few times!"

"Last year, Second Brother Kong unexpectedly died in battle," Yin Wu Fa drew a long breath. His voice was turning more and more hoarse, "The way we used to sit together on a table to drink... a day like that will never come again."

Yin Wu Tian did not speak and kept silently massaging Yin Wu Fa, but his countenance became more and more gloomy.

"There will no longer be such a day in our lives again," Yin Wu Fa said, smiling unconsciously. Suddenly two drops of hot tears fell down his face as he said, "However, all this is because I initially agreed to the decision of joining the Golden Horse Riders

Department. It was me who asked Second Brother Kong to join the Golden Horse Riders Department, and it was for me that Second Brother Kong ultimately died in battle!”

Suddenly, there was dead silence inside the room. The two brothers could be just heard breathing loudly.

Yin Wu Fa stared into the emptiness for some time and then suddenly said in a soft voice, “Little brother, I want to drink wine.”

Yin Wu Tian did not respond. He did not go to fetch the wine, and instead thought out loud, “Elder brother, you know what? When that man had stepped on my chest and was slapping me again and again... I thought that the arteries in my heart would snap and I would die.”

“But in the end, I did not die... I did not dare to,” Yin Wu Tian closed his eyes and tears started to roll down, “I do not fear death, but I fear humiliation. That kind of humiliation... if... if your body was in good condition, I would already have died from just half of the humiliation I had to go through that day.”

“But I thought... Second Brother is already dead. If I died too, then what would happen to your health?” Yin Wu Tian said in a hoarse voice. “Prime Minister Diwu would not support you for a lifetime.”

Yin Wu Fa’s complexion was gloomy but a ray of hope suddenly flickered in his eyes as he said, “Little Brother, wait for Iron Cloud Nation to be defeated and King of Hell Chu to be killed. We could then bring Second Brother’s ashes back to the mountains. We will go back to the place where we came from and not leave it for a lifetime, okay?”

“Go back to the place where we came from... not leave it for a lifetime,” Yin Wu Tian repeated the words. His eyes shone brightly as he said, “Good!”

The two brothers stopped talking. One lay down while the other

remained seated. They stopped all movements and became lost in thought. Their originally gloomy and cruel faces faintly revealed traces of expectations. It was as if they were already imagining the life ahead.

The atmosphere within the room was dense, as if shrouded in a mist.

Suddenly, the sound of footsteps came from outside.

Yin Wu Tian looked out of the window and saw Jing Meng Hun arriving. He was walking quickly, with his face flushed with excitement. Following him was a youngster who strolled with his hands crossed behind his back. It was as if he had come for sightseeing in the temporary headquarters of the Golden Horse Riders Department.

Yin Wu Tian suddenly felt that he looked familiar. He waited for him to draw nearer. Upon looking at him again, he became startled.

Yin Wu Fa noticed that something was wrong with his countenance, and could not help but ask, “What happened?”

“Yes... Big Brother Jing has come back,” Yin Wu Tian said as he swallowed a mouthful of saliva.

“Fourth Younger Brother! Fourth Younger Brother!” Jing Meng Hun burst into the room and said, “Fourth Younger Brother, you have to accompany Young Master Ye to have a look at my private collection. If Young Master Ye wants anything, let him take it.”

“Your... private collection?” Yin Wu Tian was just about to say, [Which private collection do you have? We only have a collective hidden treasury and nothing more.] However, he then saw that Jing Meng Hun was continuously signaling towards him with his eyes. His seemed to be anxious.

“Ok!” Yin Wu Tian recovered immediately and readily agreed.

“Um, you spare no effort in taking care of Young Master Ye. If

there is anything you need, no need to ask me," Jing Meng Hun said boldly waving his hands. "I have to go back with that item immediately. Prime Minister is still waiting for me."

When he said this, Chu Yang casually walked in.

Yin Wu Tian's face turned red on recalling his disgraced appearance from the other day. In a somewhat sullen manner, he proceeded to greet him, "So, it's the savior."

"Fourth King Level Master Yin, no need to be so formal," Chu Yang smiled as he looked at him and thought, [It seems like he thinks of me as a friend.] Then he said in a comforting manner, "Victory or defeat is common in the routine of a military commander. Fourth King Level Master, the one who is ready to adapt to the situation is indeed a real hero!"

Yin Wu Tian nodded and his eyes revealed a grateful look.

At this time, Jing Meng Hun hurriedly greeted Chu Yang before he could get anxious. He then turned towards Yin Wu Tian and gave ten thousand careful instructions to assist the honorable guest. He told him to not disappoint the noble guest, and then hurriedly walked away.

Yin Wu Fa tried hard to sit up straight in the bed. He looked at Chu Yang with a dubious look in his eyes.

He saw Chu Yang and had a feeling of déjà vu, convinced that he had met him before, [But I really haven't seen this face before.]

Yin Wu Fa was still thinking hard in his heart. Chu Yang turned to look at him, and then knit his eyebrows and asked gently, "This is?"

"This is my elder brother, my blood-related sibling Yin Wu Fa," Yin Wu Tian introduced, and his heart suddenly moved. A fervent color appeared in his eyes, and he went a step forward and said, "Young Master Ye, if I may be so bold as to ask a favor... My elder brother has been injured. He cannot feel his lower body. He is

paralyzed and confined to his bed. Since Young Master Ye possesses such remarkable abilities, may I dare to ask... is there any way to treat him?"

"Injured?" Minister Chu looked seemingly puzzled as he asked, "What kind of injury can be this grave?"

"All the doctors of Continent Center Citadel have been unable to figure out the injury... " Yin Wu Tian's face revealed an angry color. "They only know that the meridians in the lower part of his body have suddenly had necrosis."

Chu Yang frowned and said, "Oh... let me take a look."

He naturally knew why; it was because Yin Wu Fa had sustained injuries when he was around. He could be said to be one of the main culprits! Now they were making him diagnose him. Of course, he was more skilled than those so-called mystical doctors.

Putting on an act, he stretched out his two fingers and placed them on Yin Wu Fa's wrist arteries. He closed his eyes slightly, as if to examine and contemplate.

Yin Wu Fa and Yin Wu Tian looked at him hopefully. They were counting on the all-resourceful Young Master Ye to find a cure.

"From the waist down, the meridians are broken up to the thigh. As for the meridians below the thighs, they are safe and sound. But since they have lost the source, they are behaving like roots without water... they are already useless now," Chu Yang pretended to sigh and continued. "This person's intention was really ruthless, ah."

Yin Wu Fa and Yin Wu Tian's hearts trembled as they asked, "Please elaborate."

"It is... invisible sword energy (1)!" Chu Yang looked serious as he said, "This sword energy was vicious. It completely destroyed the waist meridians. This injury cannot be healed by any medicine."

"Invisible sword energy? Cannot be healed by any medicine?"

Both of them became dazed, and doubt remained in their hearts, [When actually was he…. affected by the invisible sword energy?]

“Moreover this invisible sword energy is activated only in the absence of preparedness, when the guard is down,” Chu Yang’s face continued to show signs of being perplexed, despite giving it a lot of thought, “King Level Master Yin, your cultivation level is that of a King Level Master. How could you have not perceived it? Only when there is no resistance can the situation have such a complete collapse, but the strangest thing is that you don’t even know who actually underhanded you!”

There was a big change in the countenances of both Yin Wu Fa and Yin Wu Tian at the same time! They looked at each other and saw suspicion and resentment in each other’s eyes.

[If that is the case, this injury has not occurred from engaging in warfare!]

[Only one person could have had the opportunity to pull this off, and that person is-Cheng Yun He!]

The term used could be altered for Sword qi, which means Sword energy.

Chapter 327: Made a fortune! So refreshing!

In fact, Yin Wu Fa had actually been befuddled by the condition of his own injury from the beginning. He recalled rushing out of the heavy encirclement. However, at that time, he had clearly used both his legs to run back after being rescued by Kong Shan Xin.

He was sure that he had definitely not been subjected to an attack like this.

However, this kind of attack had obviously been made with a malicious intention to harm him.

Then he had fallen into a coma for about a month. After he woke up, he found out that the lower half of his body had become paralyzed. During this one month, only Chen Yun He had been by his side to guard him.

Herein lay a problem, [Cheng Yun He clearly could not use martial arts. Then from where did he bring the invisible sword energy?]

However, if it hadn't been him, others would definitely not have had such an opportunity. Could it be that Cheng Yun He had arranged for someone to do it? The two brothers glanced at each other, their suspicions arising.

Little did they know that Chu Yang was even more surprised.

When Cheng Yun He had carried Yin Wu Fa during his return trip, Chu Yang and Gu Du Xing had seen Yin Wu Fa's 'corpse' with their own eyes. Moreover, it had frozen into a chunk of ice.

How was he still alive here?

If it hadn't been for Chu Yang's nerves of steel, which had been tempered from his experiences from two lifetimes, he would have turned deathly pale with fright.

[Fantasy! It's sheer fantasy! So this bastard actually didn't die

back then.] Chu Yang thought in his mind.

“Fantasy! It’s sheer fantasy… ” Yin Wu Tian kept repeating these lines. “What in the world is going on?” The complexion of the two brothers was quite ugly. However, in front of a stranger like Chu Yang, they found it inconvenient to speak up.

“Little brother, you accompany Young Master Ye and assist in managing his business properly,” Yin Wu Fa urged. He needed time to calm down and think about it properly.

“Yes,” Yin Wu Tian immediately complied. Then he turned and said, “Young Master Ye, please come.”

The moment Chu Yang went out of the door, Yin Wu Fa, who was lying on the bed, suddenly asked in a soft voice, “Young Master Ye… Are you from the Upper Three Heavens? A person of the Ye clan?”

Chu Yang’s footsteps slightly paused. He didn’t turn around and just said in a pensive manner, “King Level Master Yin… you also know about the Ye Clan?”

After he had said thus, he did not speak further and moved forward to leave.

After he had left, Yin Wu Fa’s face swiftly showed traces of relief. [He really is from the Ye clan. No wonder Big Brother respects him so much. Since he is from the Ye clan, perhaps that familiar feeling in my heart… is just an illusion?]

[After staying lain down in bed for so long, even the illusions have started to appear.] Yin Wu Fa’s gloomy face looked scary as he mumbled, “Cheng, Yun, He… ”

Crunch. He placed his right hand on the bedside and unconsciously grabbed it. The wood of the bedside was actually crushed in the process.

“Young Master Ye, please come. This is the location of our Golden Horse. I mean, our Big Brother Jing Meng Hun’s personal

collection," Yin Wu Tian led Chu Yang and took many rounds before leaving the temporary headquarters. They arrived at the backyard of a house. After saying a few words, the big guards quietly concealed themselves on either side.

Yin Wu Tian put out his hand and pressed it on a tree. With a faint clicking sound, suddenly the tree's trunk that had been holding the lush green branches and leaves of the tree, drifted on either side to reveal a giant flagstone. He moved the flagstone aside to reveal a passage going downwards.

"This is Prime Minister Diwu's backyard," Yin Wu Tian said lightly. "It's the safest place in the entire Continent Centre City."

"Diwu Qing Rou's backyard?" Chu Yang' expression changed as he softly repeated the sentence.

[This is indeed unexpected. This turned out to be Diwu Qing Rou's backyard! Then does that mean Diwu Qing Rou's secret treasure... is also here?]

While walking all the way down, he noticed that that there were three consecutive rock gates along the way, and afterwards there were three gates that were made entirely of fine steel. Each one was several feet thick.

Chu Yang secretly smacked his lips.

[This level of security is simply unimaginable! So what kind of precious treasure is hidden here?]

Finally, the space on the front widened and slowly came to an end. At the end, there stood two fine quality steel gates side by side. They were perhaps already more than 300 feet under the ground - around 100 meters. However, it was surprisingly dry there and was not the least bit moist. Moreover, the air was as fresh as it was on the ground.

Just by looking at this hidden treasury, one could tell how much had been spent on manpower and resources to build it.

“On this side, we have ingredients for medicines and on this side, we have precious items,” Yin Wu Tian explained, “What does Young Master Ye need?”

“I need essential medicinal ingredients. I was in a battle against Young Master Yu for several days and several nights and got a minor injury. I need to treat it,” Chu Yang said in a deemphasizing manner. “Moreover, my sword was smashed by Young Master Yu. I also require essential materials to forge a new one.”

“Eh… ” Yin Wu Tian was in instant admiration. [He has fought for several days and nights with Young Master Yu, and only received a minor injury. Moreover, Young Master Yu was actually able to smash this Young Master Ye’s sword.]

[Does that mean that the Young Master of the number one aristocratic clan of the Upper three Heavens uses swords made of ordinary materials?]

“Then how about we first look at the medicinal ingredients?” Yin Wu Tan said in an even more respectful manner and added in a deeply concerned tone, “An injury must not be allowed to drag on, ah.”

“That’s fine,” Chu yang nodded with a smile and said, “Fourth King Level Master sure is as careful as if he is concerned about his own injury.”

Yin Wu Tian could not help but feel extremely flattered as he said repeatedly, “I should be, should be.” Saying this, he took out a strange looking magnet that Jing Meng Hun had left behind. He inserted it into a groove on the wall and then inserted a key. He then turned the key once and stomped his foot on the ground. With this, the steel door silently slid open to one side.

“This is the Three Heavenly Secrets lock. If there is any error while opening the gate, then one will immediately face 81 machine operated attacks at once. Moreover, one will receive the warning only after that,” Yin Wu Tian said with a smile.

“Such a tight security!” Chu Yang said. He thought in his heart, [So that means I can come here just this once? And wouldn’t coming here again in secret be difficult as well? If that is so and I don’t plunder from here wantonly, then how will I be worthy of being myself? How would I be able to repay for the sincerity shown by these King level experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department]

The door opened and Chu Yang took a broad look to survey it, only to see another long, impressive passage. On either side of the passage was a Black Ice Jade Cabinet which was stacked completely. This was the best way to preserve the medicinal efficacy (1) of the spirit medicines, without allowing it to scatter.

No matter which medicine it was, as long as it was stored in such a cabinet, it would remain safe and in good condition.

He saw two big rows of tall cabinets, each more than a hundred feet in height.

“These cabinets are divided into 4 layers,” Yin Wu Tian proudly exclaimed. “There is a push button in the cabinet door. Press it and it will open at once. The label above shows the category’s name. Some of the collections of Prime Minister Diwu are also here.”

Chu Yang looked at the numerous tiny labels, which had been densely packed in each cabinet. In the middle of each cabinet, the medicinal property, application as well as the name of each medicine was neatly written in a detailed manner. Even the source of the origin, the year of origin etc, was written in the description.

[Hit the jackpot!] Chu Yang said somewhat excitedly in his thoughts.

[Diwu Qing Rou’s collection is also here? Wow haha... this is really making me excited.]

[By the looks of it, I’m afraid this collection is comparable to those of the imperial palaces of the Great Zhao and the Iron Cloud

Nation. Moreover, I am certain that the quality is also better.]

While Chu Yang was still busy thinking, the Nine Tribulations Sword's Sword Spirit helplessly sighed, [I... ah! I had finally used up the efficacies of those medicines with so much difficulty. Then how did this fellow find such a place so quickly? If all these efficacies are to be absorbed, then even if there are a thousand Chu Yangs... won't they all just explode as well?]

"What medicines does Young Master Ye need?' Yin Wu Tian asked with a smile.

"There's no hurry, I will look carefully," Chu Yang said with a gentle and well cultured smile. "This place is indeed beyond my expectation."

He reached in front of the first cabinet. He pressed the button and the drawer opened up. Immediately a unique fragrance of ginseng rushed into his nose. After opening, it became clear that it was a ginseng with 3 stumps. It already had a nose, eyes, arms and legs. It appeared to have a human form.

"The row of 8 cabinets contains ginsengs. From the start, they are the ordinary wild ginseng, red jade ginseng, snow ginseng, blood ginseng, white ginseng, purple jade ginseng, grass ginseng and so on. Each of them is over 500 years old," Yin Wu Tian smiled as he explained pointing with his finger.

Chu Yang aspirated as he closed the cabinet, and then opened the one adjacent to it. Only his right hand was tightly pressed against the outer flank of the cabinet he had closed just now. It seemed as if he was unconsciously holding on to it.

Then he pulled one open and closed it. Then pulled open another cabinet after closing the previous one, but every time his right hand remained pressed against the cabinet that he had previously closed.

In the blink of an eye, Chu Yang had examined more than ten

cabinets. He then stood up looking helpless. He looked somewhat disappointed and shook his head, “These medicines are not bad. It’s a pity that only the number of years is insufficient. I will take a look at these.”

“Number of years… ” Yin Wu Tian seemed to have been blown away to the cloud covered mountains. He blushed with shame. [In my opinion, no matter which cabinet is taken into consideration, all of our medicines are priceless treasures. But Young Master Ye has already looked at 12 cabinets and not settled on even one.]

[This Young Master from a super clan of the Upper Three Heavens is really out of the ordinary! This knowledge, this insight, this experience… this is the difference between our realms ah…]

Young Master Ye opened a cabinet, glanced at it and closed it again. Then he opened another one.

Nine Tribulations Sword Point was excited beyond insanity.

Happy! Too Happy!

Whenever Chu Yang opened a cabinet and closed it again, Nine Tribulations Sword’s Sword Point would stealthily come out of his right hand’s fingertips. It would sneak inside the already closed cabinet and start gorging itself with food.

The speed ah!

Nine Tribulations Sword’s Sword Point also seemed to know that time was pressing .For this reason it did not hesitate to reach an agreement with the Sword Edge. Cooperation and equal division! Therefore the absorption rate was amazingly quick.

It would go in and touch. Shua! The item would cease to exist. The ginseng it had absorbed previously turned into a small dry radish. Not to mention there was no efficacy left in it.

The Sword Point absorbed, and the Sword Edge transported. With more and more mutual understanding, the speed of the two little ones became more and more rapid. After having absorbed

several cabinets, the Sword Spirit finally joined in unwillingly.

Having no other option, the Nine Tribulations Sword's Sword Spirit began to absorb the essence. Even the residues could be precious medicinal efficacies. All of these piled up in Chu Yang's meridians rapidly to the bursting point.

Therefore the Sword Point stole, the Sword Edge transported and the Sword Spirit was in charge of extraction from his meridians and transferring to the Nine Tribulations Space. Everyone divided up the work to cooperate. Isn't that a joy?

Minister Chu's speed of switching from one cabinet to another was getting faster and faster.

Snap! Open!

Snap! Close!

Snap! Open once again!

.....

Notes:

Medicinal efficacy = Medicinal Power or Medicinal Potency

Chapter 328: Only this group — no other

This secret chamber had almost all the loots that the Golden Horse Riders Department had plundered in the last few years. They had extorted and robbed these elixirs (1).

A large part of these valuables had been collected by confiscating them from rich and powerful men, after raiding their houses. Post these raids, these valuables had been kept here. This was one of the reasons why the Golden Horse Riders Department was recognized as a specialized accrediting organization.

All high level individuals had been put to work in accumulating these resources. Almost all of the nation's peak level forces had been simultaneously incorporated under the operation. Moreover, all sorts of means, whether fair or foul, had been used to gather these items. Then how many items were present here?

This place had also hoarded Diwu Qing Rou's collections over the past years. They were even more extraordinary. Most of them had been sent to Diwu Qing Rou by the sects that guarded the Great Zhao nation. These big sects were considered as capable in undertaking a task and finishing it. Hence, the items sent by them couldn't possibly be of low quality.

However, now, this place had turned into a complete tragedy!

King of Hell Chu was like a bandit passing through this country's territory. He had started to carry out the 'Three Alls policy' - Steal, Take, Snatch. Meanwhile, he was still able to maintain an innocent reputation with the bearing of someone from the number one super clan of the Upper Three Heavens.

Come to think of it, this was very difficult to pull off; to go to the extremes of villainy and still manage to keep the façade of a saint...

Minister Chu nearly swept everything out, but his face still showed a look of disapproval. He shook his head from time to time

and sighed.

“This one... what a pity, if only the given year was over 300 years.”

“This... this is actually good; it’s well-preserved. It’s a pity that only its color has not turned pure. It’s still short of some essential properties.”

“This... this is not good.”

“This... unfortunately, this strain of blood lotus flower ah. If only it had bloomed after a few years. It only missed by a few years ah... What a pity.”

“This... hey, this was dug up in an unprofessional manner. So many roots are broken. What use could this be of now?”

“Ah... What a pity.”

“I am speechless... ”

“This red leaf... it’s a pity.”

“You people have wasted these natural resources recklessly ah... you say what good this is!”

On one side, he was complaining and belittling everything, while on the other, he was stealing wantonly right in front of his eyes. However, whatever rubbish was slipping out of his mouth... was hitting the target.

Fourth King Level Master Yin, who had been complacently bragging up until now, had started to blush with shame. In fact, he had been rendered speechless.

This was extremely embarrassing. He had regarded these items as treasures, but the other party was actually looking down on them. The feeling was indeed hard to describe.

Chu Yang did not take long to check the big row on the left, and afterwards moved to the right. He was still opening and shutting to steal via a coordinated process that he had created.

However, how long could he keep this act going? He couldn't possibly continue until there was nothing left to take. The risk involved in that was too high!

Therefore...

"This... I will just take this one," He took out the smallest root from a bundle of ten.

"Young Master Ye, you should take some more," Yin Wu Tian said politely.

"These items that you have here... they are not abundant. Although they are not very good in quality, they are still hard to come by in the Lower Three Heavens," Chu Yang said virtuously in a sanctimonious manner, "If I take more... that would be inappropriate."

Saying this, Minister Chu felt himself blushing in his heart, [If I took more, that would be inappropriate? This place is already empty... what can I say now ah.]

Yin Wu Tian sighed, [Indeed, Young Master Ye has the demeanor of someone from an influential clan. Only people of this level can put themselves in others' shoes and think about other people's interest. This is a man worth respecting.]

In no more than two hours, Chu Yang had swept all the cabinets clean. Even then, he had wished to continue.

He held 4 or 5 herbs in his hand. He turned his head in Yin Wu Tian's direction and said, "These are barely enough." Then as if he noticed Yin Wu Tian's doubtful expression, he added with a smile, "King Level Master Yin, you must be unaware of Ye Clan's extraordinary core law. The healing therapy that I am going to use is something out of the ordinary. Therefore, if a treasure such as the Nine Great Herbal Medicines was here, then I wouldn't need to use these inferior ones."

Chu Yang was quite baffled, [The quality as well as the quantity

of medicinal ingredients present here is very good; almost all of these are rare to find. However, the legendary Nine Great Herbal Medicines are nowhere to be seen.]

[As a matter of fact, it ought to be present here ah.]

[Previously I had consumed a piece of Spirit Jade Ginseng. Where did it go?]

"So that's how it is," Yin Wu Tian felt relieved. His face immediately showed an expression of awkwardness, "The Nine Great Herbal Medicines... I remember that the Prime Minister has it in his possession. After all, it is a lifesaving item, and so he generally carries it along with him. I don't know where it is now. Moreover, the Prime Minister is not present here at the moment. He is in Lotus Lake right now. How about Young Master Ye waits for the Prime Minister to return? I'm certain that he would be willing to provide you some."

"I see, so that's how it is," Chu Yang smiled generously and said, "No harm, these are also sufficient. No need to trouble Prime Minister Diwu."

He had a guilty conscience. In addition to it, his identity was also highly susceptible. How could he dare to face Diwu Qing Rou?

"First, let us go take a look at the good sword materials," Chu Yang said peacefully with a laugh. "I hope to make a harvest," he urged, so as to avoid the guy from inspecting the interior of the treasury or any such thing.

"Right. Please come this way, Young Master Ye," Yin Wu Tian clapped his palms happily and said in a genuinely happy mood. "The materials on this side are highly unlikely to disappoint Young Master Ye."

"I hope so," Chu Yang smiled indifferently. In his heart he said, [Actually, I was not even disappointed by this side's efficacies. In fact I was extremely satisfied. I wonder if Diwu Qing Rou would

cry later-on once he finds out.]

They came out and then Yin Wu Tian carefully began to set the locking mechanism back in place; he remained busy for a while.

At this time, Chu Yang was standing on the side and waiting with a smiling expression. He wanted to say, [You need not make so many efforts. This place doesn't have anything inside it now. Even if you open this big gate for everyone to see, you still need not be worried about anything.]

Following this, Yin Wu Tian opened the gate on the other side and said, "Young Master Ye, please come inside."

Chu Yang took a look inside and suddenly sucked in a cold breath.

This side was bigger than the other. A long passage extended into several rooms. Inside these rooms, there were heaps of various kinds of materials and ores.

Meteoric iron, Star steel, Golden Dragon Jade, Black steel, Red stone, White Crystal and Heavenly Soul Jade. As soon as the gate opened, all kinds of brilliant rays of light shone together. Chu Yang had a dazzled look in his eyes.

"The materials are indeed quite a lot!" Chu Yang smacked his lips and sighed.

Yin Wu Tian was happy at first, but then he wondered, [If there are a lot of materials, why did you sigh?]

Little did he realize that Chu Yang's sigh was actually that of the depression of finding so many treasures within his reach, but not being able to do anything about it. There were definitely many eye catching materials stored here. However, how could he steal these materials when he was being constantly followed by an unwanted third guest (2)?

Thus, Minister Chu was left to sigh incessantly.

This was the first time that he had found himself at the end of his wits.

[It seems like I can only select a few pieces.]

This was indeed the height of greed! He had already stolen so many ingredients for medicines. That alone could be considered as a ‘super return from a journey with a full load of rewards’. Moreover, even if these ores were rare and precious, he would have plenty of opportunities in the Middle Three Heavens and Upper Three Heavens to obtain them later on; more so than here.

However, after he had seen the overflowing bright lights, he could not help but drool. He couldn’t just walk away from it. It really was a depressing matter.

Chu Yang took a step inside, and was followed by Yin Wu Tian. This time, Minister Chu had to come up with a new strategy; he had to make a careful choice.

“This one,” Chu Yang said, pointing towards the Golden Dragon Jade. “I would be troubling King Level Master Yin to take it out for me.”

“Sure,” Yin Wu Tian went without demur to bring over the big piece of the Golden Dragon Jade to the gate.

The Golden Dragon Jade was fabled to have some kind of a strange power. Generally, this type of jade was found deep underground, and was hard to come by.

Chu Yang thought inevitably in his heart, [Could it be that this strange power is actually from the dragon race that existed several thousand years ago? It is just not possible to confirm this theory.]

“This is also pretty good,” Chu Yang said pointing towards the Heavenly Soul jade, which was the size of a fist.

“No problem,” King Level Master Yin replied. He was very happy. [It seems that his eyes have taken a liking to many materials here.]

“This one,” Chu Yang said pointing at a large chunk of Purple Jade, which was almost half the size of a pig’s buttocks.

“Alright,” Yin Wu Tian moved diligently.

“Also, this one,” Chu Yang held back his inner excitement with great difficulty. At present, he had arrived at the innermost part of the small room. His eyes settled on a piece of the Red Cloud steel. Surprisingly, it was the size of a human’s head.

This indeed was a pleasant surprise!

“Also?” Yin Wu Tian asked. (3)

“These are enough to forge the handle of the sword,” Chu Yang smiled as he patted his forehead and said, “I forgot I still need materials to make the main body. I will take this Star iron bar.”

Since King Level Master Yin appeared to wish him to continue further. It seemed like he had not reached the boiling point yet. Chu Yang thought that he had to take advantage of this since it meant that he could take a few more treasures without losing face. [An opportunity such as this may not arise later.]

“These!” Minister Chu said clapping his hands.

“No problem. I will help you in taking them out,” In his heart he thought, [This Young Master Ye was being reserved after all. He actually wanted to select so many materials. They are already sufficient to forge quite a few swords. But who would dislike such good materials ah…]

[I must try to put my whole might in moving these chunks out.]

“I am taking so many items… my payback must be many in numbers,” Chu Yang said smiling elegantly, “I must compensate for these things in the future. I have always adhered to one principle - I never take advantage of other people.”

“So that’s how it is!” Yin Wu Tian suddenly realized something and said with admiration, “Now that is how morals should be in

this world. People like Young Master Ye are really too few... ”

Chu Yang nodded and smiled. In his heart he thought, [In the entire Nine Heavens Continent, I will steal only from this group — no other.]

Yin Wu Tian puffed hard since he was carrying several chunks of ore. Under no condition would he have allowed Chu Yang to give him a hand. He played the host’s role all along until they reached the Temporary Headquarters. There, Chu Yang bid him farewell outside the Temporary Headquarters, and they parted ways.

Chu Yang was resolute about leaving, while Yin Wu Tian was desperately trying to make him stay. He just could not let go of this honored guest. He personally undertook the task to find a carriage to send off ‘Young Master Ye’ to forge a sword.

Chu Yang climbed into the carriage and sat down. The carriage driver popped the whip and the carriage slowly started.

Yin Wu Tian stood at the entrance of the headquarters as he waved reluctantly, yet with etiquette. Minister Chu gratefully waved back and bade him farewell, [Indeed a good man.]

As soon as the carriage took a section of the road, the ore chunks vanished and entered the Nine Tribulations Space with a whooshing sound.

Ahead of them, the sound of men shouting and the neighing of horses could be heard. A team of troops was meandering to arrive — Prime Minister Diwu had returned.

“You need not care about them. We are going out of the city,” Chu Yang groaned as he instructed the carriage driver.

Thereafter, the carriage moved out of the way, and to the side of the road. It waited for Diwu Qing Rou’s fleet to pass. Afterwards, the horses were spurred to go out of the city as fast as possible.

Elixir is the term used for ‘spirit medicines’ which contain medicinal efficacy or medicinal power. Chu Yang can absorb the

medicinal efficacies out of the elixirs and store them in his meridians for future use.

Unwanted third guest is a slang to denote that someone is a nuisance.

Yin Wu Tian is confused because the way Chu Yang says ‘Also’, it seems as if he is done picking stuff and doesn’t need more. So, Chu Yang confirms in the next paragraph by saying that he is only done selecting materials for the handle.

Chapter 329: For Gentleman a Word, For Swift Horse a Whip!

After Minister Chu had gotten out of the city, he immediately changed his appearance. He went in the direction of the Jun Lu Lu's fleet, which had been planning to win the position of the top musicians for a long time.

The trip to Great Zhao was also finally coming to an end.

The Lotus Lake was in sight.

Chu Yang's figure resembled lightning as he swiftly passed through the willow forest on the shore. Suddenly, a gentle laughter was heard. Then, a loud voice said, "The Young Master whose boat was towed by a big fish? You came back?"

Chu Yang was startled. He turned his head to see a beautiful girl clad in white clothes. She was leaning against the same willow tree which he had barked upon before leaving. She had delicate features, and her eyes seemed to indicate that she was quick-witted.

This little girl looked like an adorable fairy.

"Eh? Young Miss, it seems like we have not met before. Why were you looking for me?" Chu Yang said as he moved. He continued to approach her until he was about 40 feet away.

"Humph! I invited you to come to my boat earlier, but you didn't come. So I had no other option but to come looking for you," the tender girl in white said foolishly. She then wrinkled her nose, "Besides... I am the Transverse Flute Master. Say, you did not know?"

"En, Transverse Flute. I have known your name for a long time!" Chu Yang said, nodding calmly. "It is hard to imagine that the renowned Transverse Flute Master is someone like this. Her looks make people want to spank her little butt right away."

“How dare you?” the girl pouted playfully. She even went as far as to hold up her fair fist, shaking it in protest.

“What do you want to say to me? Say it,” Chu Yang asked hurriedly, seeming somewhat impatient, [It is shocking to think that the Transverse Flute Master, who has the capacity to shake the whole world, is really a little girl. Even if it is her, how can she be this naïve?]

This girl seemed to be adorable, but actually was somewhat artificial.

Perhaps these acting skills could deal with most people of the Lower Three Heavens, including the Jiang Hu people. She had gotten by very smoothly until now. Chu Yang, however, was not only wise but also had a strong insight. Moreover, he was also a Fourth Grade Revered Sword Artist. Hence, this kind of ploy seemed somewhat childish to him.

“Hee Hee,” the girl laughed and tilted her head to look at him and said, “Actually I just wish to ask you… Whose side are you on?”

“Well, whose side I am not on?” Chu Yang asked indifferently.

“Oh, then why did you go asking for trouble with the Flute Master?” the girl asked, as she tilted her head and her eyes flashed at him. She seemed very curious.

“Why do you care?” Chu Yang said rudely, “I will not say a word if you use these childish and cheap tricks on me.” [This is just a little girl. I did not expect her to know these flattery techniques.]

The girl was startled as she fixated her eyes on him. Her naïve appearance gradually began to fade away… little by little. At the same time, her expression became calmer and sharper.

However, her face did not change at all. She still looked like the girl of one’s dreams, but one could clearly see that she seemed entirely different now. It felt as if the sheep had shed its own skin and had turned into a wolf.

“You have met me for the first time. How could you see through me?” the girl asked.

Chu Yang curled his lips and said, “You are behaving like a little girl. However, you are about 20 years old. Yet, you surprisingly still behave like a naïve, simple-minded and adorable girl. These traits should vanish soon. Otherwise, you will come across as a lunatic. Tell me, Transverse flute master, are you a lunatic?”

The girl was stunned.

“State your true motive.” Chu Yang said somewhat impatiently. If he had not bumped into her, even a union between the two other factions would not have been able to deal with her.

“Of course I will tell you. But first I must find out, and be certain whether or not you are on the Zither Master’s side,” The girl’s face became serious, only to expose a distressed expression. However, this expression disappeared within the blink of an eye, “The Zither Master has arrived with 56 people. I have information on everyone here.”

She looked at Chu Yang with determination and said, “You are not included among them. Also, you had arrived here ten days before the Zither Master. Therefore, I consider that even though you had disrupted the Flute Master’s performance, you wouldn’t necessarily be on the Zither Master’s side, right?”

“You are very clever. I am certainly not on the Zither Master’s side,” Chu Yang said bluntly.

“That is good,” The Transverse Flute Master’s expression was cold. “Moreover, your cultivation level is very high. I had sent people to catch that big fish. The hook that was found in the mouth of the big fish had traces on it. There was only one possibility — the fish had been caught under water, and a hook was shoved into its mouth.

“But the fish’s scales were not injured in the least bit. This only

proves that your agility and technique is better than average people. I have no one aboard who is as deft and shrewd like yourself. Hence, I reached out to you," the girl said with a cunning smile.

"What do you want to say? Come straight to the point."

"It's very simple... I will give you hundred thousand taels of silver. In return, you have to do something for me," the girl said as she smiled, and started walking gracefully towards him. Her perfect figure arrived in front of Chu Yang, and she said in a soft voice, "Can you?"

"No," Chu Yang bluntly declined. "I have no interest."

"100 thousand taels of silver are a lot... how about I add a sword to the offer?" the girl said unyieldingly. "This divine sword is ranked ninth in the whole continent. It has been handed down for more than 1000 years. It is called Limpid Autumn Waters."

"I am not even interested in the spring waters, let alone in the Limpid Autumn Waters." Why would Chu Yang care about a sword now? He could cut one using the Nine Tribulations Sword from the iron essence he held. In fact, could easily carve as many sharp swords as he pleased. And they would all easily be comparable to these so-called famous swords.

"If... " the girl said gracefully as she faced him. Her beautiful eyes were like 'limpid autumn waters'. She softly bit her lips and asked shyly, "What if I add... even myself?"

Chu Yang was finally paying attention. He carefully glanced at the girl and said, "You want to pay such a big price? What do you want to do?"

"Do you agree to give your word?" The girl asked.

"I give my word," Chu Yang replied without any hesitation, "with such a beautiful woman in front of me, how can I not be tempted?"

"For Gentleman a word?" The girl stretched out her jade-like

hand.

“For Swift Horse a whip!” Chu Yang said in a righteous manner, “For a person of the Jiang Hu, this promise is the most important! You ought to know!”(1)

“Good!”

“Snap!”

The two people struck their hands together.

The girl smiled with relief. For a person of Jiang Hu, this promise was the ultimate faith. The man who broke this promise was held in contempt. Naturally, she had no reason to doubt him. She neared Chu Yang’s ear, and said inclining, “Since I am paying such a huge price... I want you to steal a zither for me... how about that?”

“Steal a zither?” Chu Yang frowned and thought, [In my previous life, Jun Lu Lu clan’s precious zither had abruptly vanished during the ‘Match of the Masters’. The Jun Lu Lu clan would have won if their precious zither suddenly hadn’t been lost. In fact, that sudden disappearance had led to their brutal defeat.]

After that event, the Transverse Flute Master and the Flute Master’s clans were also crushed by the Dark Bamboo people! Entire families, the old and the young, were wiped out. No one had been left alive.

Surprisingly, it turned out that this beautiful little girl was the main culprit. Moreover, this shady matter had all come to fall on his shoulders after his rebirth.

“Zither Master’s zither?” Chu Yang asked to ascertain.

“Zither Master’s zither!” The Transverse Flute Master girl nodded emphatically.

“Why? Is it because you don’t have confidence?” Chu Yang asked, somewhat baffled in his heart. [This ‘Match of the Three

Masters' is to see who is greater. So why has this person suddenly come down to this type of cheap trickery?]

"I had previously gone to Iron Cloud to listen to the Zither Master's zither," the girl groaned and said, "I … I am not as good as her. Though, I am actually better than the Flute Master!"

"So you will steal your rival's Zither? Even if you win in this manner, what meaning would it have?" Chu Yang said as he gave her a cold shoulder.

"Why do you ask so many things? Anyways, you have already promised," Transverse Flute Master laughed complacently. "So long as I am number one under the heavens, I do not care about other things."

"I find it very odd. Since this sort of a matter ought to be a secret, why did you look for an outsider like me?" Chu Yang was bewildered, [this capable individual is truly odd. Isn't she worried that I may leak her secret?]

" …because the Zither Master's people… know mine! Moreover, our clans are heavily guarded. So going over there is not easy. But you are different. You sabotaged the Flute Master's performance; this was the most advantageous thing for the Zither Master. Therefore, as soon as you will make an appearance again, the Zither Master's people will automatically try to look for you. Moreover, it's possible that they will try to get close to you. You're the outsider with the biggest chance of finishing this task of stealing the zither."

The girl turned around, and started to play with her fingers. Then she sneered, "The Zither Master thinks of herself as high and pure, but likes to take unfair advantage of others. That lowly slave girl is also very happy in doing so."

"Your real purpose is only to gain false reputation like this?" Chu Yang said squinting. [Motherf**k. So it turns out that my catching a big fish, and using it to tow my boat has drawn me to this?]

“Number-one under the Heavens!” The Transverse Flute Master said in genuine hate, “Even if it is a false title, I want it!”

“Number-one Master under the Heavens? You think you deserve it?” Chu Yang said as he despicably spat saliva. If the Jun Lu Lu clan had not insisted on playing fair and square, Chu Yang would have choked this reckless girl to death.

“Did you just scold me?” The girl glared at him in confused. Then, she fumingly said, “Tell me, did you just scold me?”

“Scold you? Not just scold you, I will even hit you. Damn it! I really want to kill you!” Saying this, Chu Yang even proceeded to wave his hand in a gesture to slap her face. He showed no mercy to the opposite sex, and the girl was left startled for some time.

“You! But you promised!” the girl said as her face covered in grief. She angrily shouted as she looked at this man, “As a man, and as a person of Jiang Hu, is your oath of such little value?”

“Promise? Oath?” Chu Yang sneered, “What promise, and what oath?”

“You!” The girl said with grief and indignation. She hadn’t even dreamt that something like this would happen, “You just said a moment ago that ‘For gentleman a word, for swift horse a whip’... ”

“You... what are you saying? Your ‘fast horse whip’ thing is gone now. Can’t you understand?” Minister Chu stared at her and shouted, “So what if I don’t abide by the promise? Do you even know who I am? You can go and tell everyone about this; I don’t give a f*ck... ”

Shaking his head, Chu Yang turned around to leave. As he spat a mouthful of saliva at a distance, his voice could be heard, “So it turns out that men aren’t the only ones to be foolish; women can be foolish too. And this stupid c*nt is also brainless... motherf*ck. She has fried eggs in place of a brain. She was really odd... ”

The girl was naturally annoyed, and almost threw up when she realized that she hadn't even asked his name. In fact, she had even dismissed her own bodyguards for this secret matter. Else that hoodlum would have not been able to behave like that.

That young girl shook uncontrollably for a long time, and then said fiercely, "Don't let me find out who you are! Otherwise your life will be worse than your death... boohoo... " she squatted on the ground crying.

Chu Yang took several turns, and after ensuring that nobody was trailing him from behind, he quickly disguised himself again. Then he secretly slipped into Jun Lu Lu's boat.

Just as he was about to go in, a man's shadow appeared before his eyes in a flash. Afterwards, that person's voice sounded, "It's you? Why were you arriving so sneakily? I was about to toss you down."

It was Young Master Yu.

The idiom "For gentleman a word, for swift horse a whip" means that: If a gentleman says it, it shall be done as if spurring a swift horse to gallop with a single strike of the whip. This means that if a gentleman gives his word consider it done immediately.

In short: A gentleman's word is as good as gold.

Chapter 330: Diwu Qing Rou's fury!

"Your zither is going to be stolen, and you're concerned with me?" Chu Yang snorted, "Am I that important?"

"Zither? Someone intends to steal the zither?" Young Master Yu's complexion changed, and a murderous intention filled the air.

"Now it is unlikely because this person found me, and wanted me to steal the zither." Chu Yang said with an incredible smile, "Quite a coincidence. Isn't it?"

Chu Yang had always despised people who — appeared nice on the surface but spoke ill of others and used contemptible means to defeat their enemies. Now that he had come across one such person, it was unlikely that he'd assist the same.

"Why didn't you just kill them?" Young Master Yu frowned.

"Why don't you? Why don't you just slaughter the Flute Master and the Transverse Flute Master's entire clan? If they are all dead, there would be no one left to compete for the title of 'number one under the heavens'. " Chu Yang said rolling his eyes, "Tell me, is that useful?"

"Humph!" Young Master Yu grunted and said, "Come with me."

Judging by Young Master Yu's complexion, it seemed that even he didn't miss the idea that Chu Yang spoke of just now.

"Young Master Chu!" Jun Lu Lu wore a white muslin mask. However, one could actually make out her happiness from the expression in her eyes, "You have finally arrived."

"It's not me, but you, who have finally arrived," Chu Yang said with a smile. "I came here four months ago."

"Indeed. You were here very early," Jun Lu Lu said as she smiled with her lips pursed.

"I just stopped for a while so I could ask Minister Chu for

guidance on ‘tuning’,” Jun Lu Lu said with a smile. “‘Match of The Three Masters’ is going to start tomorrow. I must say that I am somewhat nervous.”

“Leave it. At present, any guidance will only put you in an even more confused state of mind. You just need to bring out your best, and you will be fine,” Chu Yang said smiling lightly.

“What you say is also true. Minister, please have a look; this is the identity we have prepared for you… ” Jun Lu Lu smiled and said, “From now on I will call you… Jun Qing Yang.”

“Jun Qing Yang? This name is pretty good! Haha… ” Chu Yang laughed heartily.

While Chu Yang and others were having a happy time, Diwu Qing Rou’s residence was in a difficult situation.

Actually, Jing Meng Hun had gone back to look for Yin Wu Tian. He wanted to ask about the things that had happened during his absence. Yin Wu Tian told him that the person had already left. Jing Meng Hun was very disappointed, and asked if he had taken anything.

As soon as Yin Wu Tian told him, Jing Meng Hun immediately felt that something was off. Yin Wu Tian had told him that he only took a White Grass Ginseng, a Blood Lotus Leaf, an Unworried Grass, an Everlasting Spring Ivy and an Open Withered Flower.

Yin Wu Tian did not understand the properties of these medicinal ingredients, but Jing Meng Hun was a great expert in medicine. Otherwise, he couldn’t have made such life-saving medicinal potions.

“These do not match at all, ah… ” Jing Meng Hun muttered to himself. “Moreover, these are used for increasing the cultivation. There are countless far-better medicines in the store-house that are excellent to treat his internal injuries, ah.”

“Maybe Young Master Ye’s clan has a different type of core law.”

Yin Wu Tian said, “But Young Master Ye said that… these many were enough, as he did not want to owe us a favor… ”

“This is contrary to what I believe… ” Jing Meng Hun said frowning, and immediately added, “No matter what, the Ye Clan of the Upper Three Heavens has always been an immense force. Later on, if we ever went to the Upper Three Heavens, we could rely on this person… ”

“What Big Brother says is true,” Yin Wu Tian said while nodding.

At this moment, Diwu Qing Rou had sent his men to call these two King Level Masters since he wished to discuss official business.

Originally, when Diwu Qing Rou had heard of this matter, he felt that something was fishy. [The Ye Clan of the Upper Three Heavens?] The others might not know of this, but Diwu Qing Rou was aware that a war with the Three Stars Divine Clan had broken out in the Upper Three Heavens. And that almost everyone had returned. Moreover, this entire battle was being coordinated by the Ye Clan. [At such a time, why would an important member of the Ye Clan would show up in the Lower Three Heavens?]

On hearing Jing Meng Hun’s account, Diwu Qing Rou felt anything but reassured.

Therefore, he led Jing Meng Hun and the others to the hidden treasury. There were a lot of medicinal ingredients inside it. In addition to this, Diwu Qing Rou had collected and set aside a few for himself, in case there was an emergency. It would be considered a huge loss if something happened to those.

“That person only took away a little bit,” At last, they were outside the gate of the store-room where the medicinal ingredients were kept. Yin Wu Tian was explaining. Could it be that what he saw with his own eyes was actually false?

Fourth King Level Master Yin felt that he was under suspicion. He felt somewhat uneasy in his heart.

The door opened and everyone walked inside in a queue.

“Snap!”

A cabinet was opened, and everyone simultaneously looked inside it.

On seeing what was inside, they all were stunned!

Inside it, instead of millennium old ginsengs, there only remained a few shriveled radish-like roots. To make matter worse, even they didn’t have the least bit of medicinal efficacy left inside them.

A few other cabinets were opened, and were found to be in the same condition.

“Oh!” Yin Wu Tian cried, looking pale, “How could this be?”

Diwu Qing Rou’s complexion immediately turned ugly, “Open all the cabinets!”

Bang! With a burst of noise, all the cabinets were opened wide.

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian nearly fainted on the spot.

Only the residues remained in the cabinets. Whichever cabinet they opened, it was unexceptionally the same.

The treasure that The Golden Horse Riders Department had acquired over the years — by plundering and using any possible means — was gone. In addition to that, Diwu Qing Rou’s valuable collection of medicines was also thrown-in… as a bonus.

“This is ruthless! 1300 different types of elixirs were here, and not even a little remained!” Diwu Qing Rou thought out loud as he clenched his teeth. Then he suddenly turned around and grabbed Yin Wu Tian, “Only took away a little, a little?” Diwu Qing Rou asked as he gritted his teeth.

Yin Wu Tian’s eyes were devoid of expression; he was completely dumbfounded.

He was so shocked that his brain stopped thinking.

“Jing Meng Hun, is this the kind of friends you make? You pay them in exchange of help? Huh?” Diwu Qing Rou’s expression was very dark and gloomy, but his tone seemed awfully light.

“I… this subordinate is guilty,” Jing Meng Hun opened his mouth to speak but was unable to speak more than a few words. He was so annoyed that he wished that he could slap his own face; ruthlessly at that.

“To lead a thief right into our inner circle… you’re very good ah. You first draw in this individual, then let him out respectfully. You welcome him, then take turns to flatter him… you are very good.” Diwu Qing Rou spoke slowly, and in a cold voice, “I do not understand… even if he really belonged to the Ye Clan of the Upper Three Heavens, what relationship do you have with him? Why would you go so far as to fawn over him? Don’t tell me that you think… that you would be able to gain fame in the Upper Three Heavens because of this?”

The red-faced Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian hung their heads low in shame. The Prime Minister was speaking in a very serious manner.

“Investigate! Do not hesitate! Find this man at all costs!” Diwu Qing Rou said as he pulled up his sleeves in anger. He then walked away. This time he was really mad. This was the first time that Diwu Qing Rou had been angered to such an extent.

Stored here were so many medicines which were… for his own secret usage. Moreover, it was estimated they were soon to come in use.

However, at this crucial juncture, the entire preparation had turned into a complete waste.

For Diwu Qing Rou, this attack was even more impactful than the subjugation of Great Zhao. This place had stored Diwu Qing Rou’s

dream. Moreover, it was also related to a major event. Something that was going to have ultra-high stakes!

And ‘that’ matter was Diwu Qing Rou’s lifetime goal, for which he had tried so hard.

Now, his dream had been shattered! That major event, due to the lack of medicinal ingredients... would definitely get postponed for at least a few decades.

Fortunately, Diwu Qing Rou’s forbearance was far beyond the scope of ordinary person’s; otherwise this shock could’ve driven him mad.

Diwu Qing Rou didn’t even have the least bit suspicion on King of Hell Chu since Jing Meng Hun had very clearly stated that ‘Young Master Ye’ was evenly matched with ‘Young Master Yu’, the demon of the Middle Three Heavens. Moreover, not only was he matched evenly with Young Master Yu, but his strength was even a notch higher than the fiend’s.

How could King of Hell Chu have such strength?

Moreover, the medicinal ingredients were not stolen. They had their efficacies extracted! This was an odd phenomenon in Diwu Qing Rou’s experience. He could not arrive at a conclusion, but had a faint impression in his heart, [it seems like the Three Stars Divine Clan’s ‘Spirit Absorption Method’ has a similar effect as this...]

However, the Three Stars Divine clan had vanished thousands of years ago, and had re-appeared only recently. There was very little information available about them... Diwu Qing Rou didn’t know much either.

[Since this incident could be related to the Three Stars Divine clan, it wouldn’t have any association with King of Hell Chu. Even a fool would figure out such a thing.]

“Prepare my carriage! I am going to meet with Young Master Yu

tonight itself!”

Diwu Qing Rou shouted angrily.

[Young Master Yu knows the identity of this person! I can find him as long as I know who it is. Perhaps, I can even turn this bad deed into a good one… since he has already extracted the efficacies, I won’t need to extract them again…]

Diwu Qing Rou left in a hurry.

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian hung their heads low as they went outside. They glanced at each other, only to see a face that seemed on the verge of tears… but could not even cry. Diwu Qing Rou had only scolded them this time; he hadn’t said anything else. However, these two talented individuals knew: Diwu Qing Rou showered the two of them with rebukes only when there was a way to redeem the situation. Yet this time, he didn’t say anything in that regard… this meant that his dissatisfaction must have reached the pinnacle…

[How would we clean up this mess?]

Jing Meng Hun immediately ordered to have a portrait of ‘Young Master Ye’ painted by recalling the image from his own memory. Then, he immediately asked the painter to duplicate the portrait; several times at that. He then ordered the entire force of Golden Horse Riders Department to act immediately.

This was the first all-round three-dimensional attack since the establishment of Golden Horse Riders Department.

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian were really anxious. [F*k… if this mistake isn’t corrected soon… everyone’s future will be in dark.]

The water from the rain was continuously draining into the room. Jing Meng Hun had just issued the order for his men to go all-out. A while later, someone came back with another ‘super’ bad news.

All family members of Du Shi Qing had disappeared.

Du Shi Qing's wife, son and daughter-in-law had disappeared.

Jing Meng Hun became frantic.

After Du Shi Qing had gone missing in Iron Cloud, his family had become an object of monitoring for Diwu Qing Rou. As per Diwu Qing Rou's guess, King of Hell Chu would inevitably make a move again. He had been waiting for King of Hell Chu to make contact with them. In fact, he had been planning to launch an attack when this happened.

Moreover, Du Shi Qing's son and daughter-in-law were members of the Golden Horse Riders Department; they were extremely loyal and devoted to Golden Horse Riders Department. Therefore, their safety needed to be ensured.

It would be a fatal blow to King of Hell Chu if he dared to come here. However, almost the entire Continent Centre Citadel was in chaos at present. Hence, Diwu Qing Rou could not attend to such trivial matters. Moreover, Jing Meng Hun had been slacking off in regard to this matter since he hadn't expected that they would disappear after so many efforts had been made in their safety.

"When did they disappear?" Jing Meng Hun said as he swatted the desk in anger. In fact, he almost strangled the person who reported this matter with a round of abuse, "I will f*ck your mother! Are you monitoring people or eating shit?"

Chapter 331: Who Says That This Life is Without Regrets?

“Disappeared… it must have been… a fortnight… since they vanished,” the man said trembling, “Even the people who were monitoring them have… also… also disappeared… ”

“Bastard!” Jing Meng suddenly stood up, and kicked the table with his foot. He then stomped his foot in rage and cursed, “A bunch of useless people! A bunch of… ”

He walked back and forth in the room, roaring anxiously. He was like a tiger shut inside a cage; his face fierce, and body trembling with rage.

He turned around to discover that those people were still present in front of him. He couldn’t help but get furious. He flung his hand into a slap, and shouted, “Aren’t you aware that looking at you is making me angry? Get lost!"

As his tone faded away, that person’s head went rolling into the air. The cavity of his neck was oozing blood. In his rage, Jing Meng hadn’t put any restraint on his strength; just with a slap of his, that man’s head was sent flying…

“… ” Jing Meng Hun dashed out like a furious dragon. He kept cursing incessantly in rage, “Investigate for me! Search fiercely! You must find the culprit, and bring him to me even if you have to dig 3000 feet below the surface of the Great Zhao!”

Everyone was left trembling with fear on seeing the crazed appearance of this First King Level Master; none of them could say a word. They didn’t even dare to heave a single breath in front of him.

“Investigate… ” Jing Men Hun was invariably struck with grief and indignation. He looked up towards the sky and bellowed, “You… damn it… who the hell are you… ”

He had concentrated almost all of his body's elemental force in saying this. It went far and out, spreading in each and every direction.

One could tell that he was extremely grieved and depressed; so much so that he felt like vomiting blood. The people who heard his voice couldn't help but sigh. [What in the world forced this guy to let out such a sound?] His voice sounded similar to a situation where the troops are drawn into a war horses' stable, and are then made to strip. Afterwards, according to the duty roster, they take a thousand turns to feed aphrodisiac to the war horses... that being said, even then the resulting grief and indignation couldn't reach to such an extent, right?

Chu Yang faced the mirror, and carefully applied a thin coat of make-up. Jun Lu Lu and Young Master Yu stood on his sides, and saw his appearance change little-by-little into a different person's. Moreover, there wasn't any flaw whatsoever; not just his facial features, but also in his mannerisms. They couldn't help but express admiration.

He looked like a 40 year old man. The whitened hair on his eyebrows and temples showed that he had been through the hardships and torments of life. His eyes revealed his intelligence, as if he had seen the vicissitudes of life and knew the ways of the world. They were effusing sadness, as if looking back at the years that had passed, and revealing a faint yet wistful sense of loss...

If Jun Lu Lu was to see him with prior knowledge of his identity, even she would think that this was 'Jun Qing Yang' himself.

Chu Yang finished dressing up after completely altering his appearance. He then put on a thick dragon beard. As for the real Jun Qing Yang, he immediately went down the boat, and disappeared into the vast sea of people.

His only mission was to expose his face in public. Then, he could return to the Middle Three Heavens. Now in the Lower Three

Heavens, there would only be one Jun Qing Yang; whether he was genuine or fake... he would be regarded as the real one here!

The three of them sat in a circle around a table, and took out some wine to celebrate.

“Qing Yang, I didn’t expect you to have this skill!” Young Master Yu said as he used his hands to hold up his wine cup. He faintly smiled, and said as he squinted at Chu Yang, “These eyes of yours show that you have seen the vicissitudes of life! Teach me how you can fake that.”

“That is very simple... ” Chu Yang took a sip from his wine cup. Then, with a bitter smile, he said, “When your loved ones die one after another... your beloved dies in your arms... and your most trusted brother betrays you... then your life feels like death, and you curse the heavens. But, then you suddenly take a rebirth with all your past memories intact; only to live the same life again... I assure you that your eyes would have a sense of vicissitudes even if you were reborn as a child... ”

“Haha... ” Young Master Yu laughed till there were tears in his eyes. He rocked back and forth laughing, “Die once and then live the same life again? Haha... You are really funny. I am f**king dying with laughter. I did not think that you could joke like this.”

“But this really can make you experience the flavor of life,” Chu Yang said with a serious expression. This caused Young Master Yu to burst into laughter again since it was unlikely that anyone would believe this.

For example... one day you and I standing in front of a friend, and he suddenly says, “Hey, Brothers! I have taken a rebirth! I remember, you used to beg for food in your past life... ” Don’t know about you, but I know how I would respond. I will straightaway look for a hardcopy of ‘Transcending the Nine Heavens’, and start smacking him with it. I will keep on hitting him until I can no longer... you think you are Chu Yang, ah... (1)

“Yu, this matter is actually feasible.” Jun Lu Lu smiled sweetly, and gave a fluid glance to Young Master Yu. She then spoke pensively, “Only I don’t know… if someone really died in your arms… who it was?”

“Cough… ” Young Master Yu coughed as he was put in a difficult situation. He stood up and said, “Oh shoot! I must go and bring more wine…”

Jun Lu Lu’s eyes showed a trace of hidden resentment.

Young Master Yu took a pot of wine, and came back after a while. He bumped into Chu Yang, who at the time was giving him a meaningful look. Young Master Yu couldn’t help but blush due to shame, and asked as he laughed, “Why are you looking at me like this? Did I do something?”

“Brother Yu, I want to ask you a question,” Chu Yang casually asked, “Taking your cultivation into consideration, how long can you live?”

Young Master Yu was unable to control his laughter and said, “This young fellow has asked my deepest secret.” He held the wine cup and muttered to himself irresolutely for a while. He then said, “If I do not die from a fatal injury… I should live for several hundred years, or maybe thousand years, I guess?”

The tone of voice he used was full of uncertainty.

Chu Yang smiled, and said as he got up, “If you have regrets at the time of your death… and you have the opportunity to live your life once more, will you make up for your mistakes?”

“… ” Young Master Yu looked at him and suddenly turned silent. He heaved a long sigh as he muttered to himself, “How is one to know of the next life’s matters?”

“Right,” Chu Yang also sighed softly as he gulped an entire cup of wine down his throat. His fingers gently patted his thigh as he said softly, “How is one to know of the next life’s matters? When did a

beautiful woman's youth ever stay such? Just as a flower blooms and then withers in the deep valley... who says that this life is without regrets?"

Young Master Yu's whole body trembled. The wine cup he was lifting suddenly stopped mid-way. The wine inside suddenly splashed out and dropped onto the table cloth, thereby making a patch of stain on it.

"This sheet has been stained with wine... slowly the smell of wine will also fade away. However, a mark will always remain. Even a thousand years later, this table cloth wouldn't be able to deny that it was once stained by wine. This mark will only vanish when the cloth does." Chu Yang said with a sigh, "Humans are also like this!"

Young Master Yu lowered his head in silence; and did not say anything. It seemed as if he was making a difficult choice in his heart. After a long time, he raised his head, but his hand still remained on the wine cup. He ensured that not even a drop of wine remained as he inverted the cup and carefully gulped the wine down his throat. He then said in a heavy tone, "I have drunk a lot of fine wine in my life... even if I have wasted a lot... In my life... there would be no regrets."

Chu Yang laughed heartily. He raised the wine pot and started to pour wine in his glass. Then he drained it all in one gulp and said, "Such fine wine... it would be regrettable even if a drop of it is wasted... "

Young Master Yu giggled and said, "Won't be wasted again. Ah Lu, what do you say?" he spoke to Jun Lu Lu with a drool over his face.

Jun Lu Lu's beautiful face turned red as she felt helpless. This generation's Zither Master was just like a young girl at the moment; all shy and bashful. After being put in a difficult situation, she angrily said, "I definitely don't understand what you

are saying... two grown men getting drunk and talking nonsense... don't have any shame... "

"Hm, I admit that I got drunk... and what I just said was nonsense." Chu Yang smiled, "Brother Yu, I will offer you another cup. This wine is tasty."

"Of course, of course." Young Master Yu said with a smile, "This is my wine! Isn't it obvious that it is tasty?"

"Haha... " They pressed their cups together in celebration. They continued to drink while chatting and laughing. The atmosphere around them seemed quite lively.

Jun Lu Lu eventually couldn't stand the two guys' exceedingly explicit talks. She pouted playfully, and grunted in protest as she stood up while covering up her face. She looked both shy and delighted at the same time. She scolded in a flustered manner, "I really can't stand you two... humph!"

Her slender waist turned around and she left; leaving behind a burst of fragrant smell.

"That's strange... we are drinking properly, why did she suddenly get embarrassed?" Chu Yang asked with a smile.

"Haha... she is afraid that I will steal her 'wine' tonight... " Young Master Yu said as he burst into a loud laughter. Suddenly, a shoe came flying out from the other side of the curtain with a 'whiz', and hit him on his head. This was followed by a faint groaning sound of a playful protest.

The two people were very happy.

The sound of zither resounded. Unlike in the past, this time its sound was unrealistic. Almost as if it was wrapped around in soft touching emotions... as if it contained a harmony of emotions between a man and a woman in love; it revealed a shy girl's happiness and satisfaction. Furthermore, it had a little bit of hope... and jubilation.

Chu Yang laughed heartily and pushed his cup aside as he stood up and said, “Hey! You have the wine to drink, and I do not; so I am going back to sleep.”

Young Master Yu pointed a finger at him and scolded happily, “You are so talkative; don’t know when you will change. It is important to hold your wine; do not spill it… ”

“My wine will not spill.” Chu Yang smiled and turned around to go back.

The zither’s sound changed; it became melodious with a sense of deep gratitude. Chu Yang listened with rapt attention. The song was actually “Thanks to the Gracious Monarch”.

The corners of his mouth curled up to reveal a meaningful smile. He laughed and said, “I am not a real Emperor… still you thank me like this… ”

He then winked at Young Master Yu, “You owe me once again. After sometime, I will come to Middle Three Heavens to seek my dues.”

Young Master Yu raised his eyebrows and said, “If you bring good quality wine… I won’t be stingy.”

“Certainly. Certainly.” Chu Yang laughed as he shook his head, and started to leave. This time he went back to sleep.

Young Master Yu was calmly sitting at the table. He kept smiling and muttered, “If you have regrets at the time of your death… and you have the opportunity to live your life once more, will you make up for your mistakes?”

He suddenly shook his head, and recited in a sing-song voice, “How is one to know of the next life’s matters? When did a beautiful woman’s youth ever stay such? Just as a flower blooms and then withers in the deep valley… who says that this life is without regrets?”

Once he finished talking, he stood up and said in a low voice,

“The wine in this cup is finished, but how would I not want to drink more seeing that empty cup?” He frowned and took two steps. Then he said, “I am not drunk yet; must drink more to get drunk!”

He dashed inside at once.

At this moment, a voice gently echoed, “Is Young Master Yu in there? Diwu Qing Rou seeks an audience!”

Young Master Yu stopped in his tracks and stared blankly. He bitterly spat a mouthful of saliva and cursed out loud, “This bastard has really come at a bad time. I was just thinking of drinking some more... just when I started feeling uncomfortable from holding back, he came... ”

Pop! A pillow came flying from the inside, and hit his face. Jun Lu Lu’s embarrassed voice was heard, “People have come to meet you. Why don’t you go?”

Young Master Yu sighed and turned around to go outside. He secretly made a fierce resolve, “Diwu Qing Rou, you better give me a good reason. Otherwise, do not blame me for being rude!”

He took one step after another as he left.

Notes:

That’s the author; I swear.

Chapter 332: Who Would Dare Stop Me If I Were to Murder You?

The dim-lit night had started getting darker.

Diwu Qing Rou stood beneath the shadow of a willow tree. His hands were crossed behind his back.

Young Master Yu's proud figure came out of the waning light. He suddenly jumped up, and flew out like a frightening dragon. He flipped midair once, and landed in front of Diwu Qing Rou.

Diwu Qing Rou was motionless; his eyes sparkled in the dim light of night.

"What's the matter?" Young Master Yu asked, "You come here whenever you like... do you think this place is a hotel?"

"This Great Zhao; this is my – Diwu Qing Rou's territory!" Diwu Qing Rou replied in a heavy tone, "Brother Yu, I have always treated your Dark Bamboo Clan with respect, and I've always helped you. However, I need you to do the same in return."

"Help you?" Young Master Yu snorted, "Who do you think you are?"

"I am Diwu Qing Rou," Diwu Qing Rou didn't seem indignant; nor did he lose his cool. He simply spoke in calm and piercing voice, "Brother Yu, we know each other. There's no need to behave like this."

Young master Yu was silent for a moment. Then, he said, "What's the matter; say it."

"Wouldn't Brother Yu invite me to come aboard the boat?" Diwu Qing Rou coldly asked as an icy light flashed in his eyes. He intently watched Young Master Yu as he slowly added, "Or... Is there something aboard that may cause you inconvenience if I were to see it?"

“Very inconvenient,” Young Master Yu replied as he put his hands behind his back. He made no concessions as he looked at Diwu Qing Rou, and spoke indifferently, “You missed the time when you could’ve… but if you don’t stop demanding to go onboard — I will kill you!”

Young Master Yu’s countenance turned cold as he said those last four words, ‘I will kill you’, and a murderous intention flashed in his eyes.

Diwu Qing Rou was startled.

Young Master Yu was arrogant, dominating, cruel, untamed and lawless. However, he also knew the seriousness of the situation. Young Master Yu would’ve never said something like this in the past, but something was clearly unusual today.

Diwu Qing Rou knew the pros and cons of the situation. He was aware that he couldn’t go head-on against Young Master Yu. Therefore, he hesitantly muttered, “May I ask Brother Yu’s reason?”

“You do not need to know;” Young Master Yu said as he waved his hand fiercely “you only need to know one thing… go aboard and you will die! Just this one line is enough.”

He coldly laughed as he suddenly spread his hands while looking at the sky. He slowly turned half-a-circle as continued to laugh haughtily. “Diwu Qing Row! There live a billion citizens and millions of soldiers in Great Zhao. However, who would dare stop me if I were to murder you?!”

“You are insane,” Diwu Qing Rou commented in a muffled voice.

Diwu Qing Rou’s domineering mannerism had already faltered.

He knew that Young Master Yu wasn’t an easy man to deal with. Diwu Qing Rou was afraid that this fiend may not respond if he were to approach him about ‘that’ guy. Therefore, he had come here with an aggressive demeanor. He had transformed the grief

and indignation of his heart into an imposing conduct. The reason was simple: First, he wanted Young Master Yu to know that he wasn't in a good mood. Secondly, he wanted to boost support for himself so as to win even bigger profits; and thirdly, to ensure this visit's purpose to go-on even more smoothly.

However, he never thought that Young Master Yu would've eaten 'god knows' what kind of a medicine to be behaving like this... to go so far as to say — even if there were a billion citizens and millions of soldiers, he would kill him in front of them...

Diwu Qing Rou was extremely depressed by this.

However, he still did not dare to have the last word with Young Master Yu since he knew that Young Master Yu would actually get his word done. [If he says he would kill me, then he might actually kill me! Even if millions of soldiers available to protect me... that would not be enough to stop Young Master Yu!]

This was like reasoning with the troublemaker of the Jiang Hu, and even Diwu Qing Rou did not have the means to do so.

[You try to be reasonable with him, he will be a rogue with you; you try to be a hoodlum, he will be an even bigger hoodlum.]

"Young Master Yu... is worthy of being called number one in the nine heavens. And no one shall dare to provoke him," Diwu Qing Rou sighed softly.

"Others don't provoke me... that I know of... but right now, 'you' are... so do not dare," Young Master Yu snorted.

The confrontation between the two had come to an end. Diwu Qing Rou hadn't achieved his goal. Diwu Qing Rou would've continued trying out various probing methods... even if it was King of Hell Chu instead of Young Master Yu. However, facing Young Master Yu, he could not. Therefore, he decided to cut straight to the point.

This guy recognized a very rigid logic — because I have said so!

And this was the only logic that Young Master Yu followed. In fact, he spoke with everyone without the slightest bit of reasoning.

In the whole of nine heavens, only the mysterious Dark Bamboo of the Middle Three Heavens could force Young Master Yu to step back and concede. In fact, even if the nine major families of the Upper Three Heavens came together... Young Master Yu would still say: I wouldn't say anything!

He wouldn't waver... even if it meant his doom.

[This bastard doesn't have any apprehensions.]

"I have been meaning to ask Brother Yu about a matter," Diwu Qing Rou took a long breath. His chest seemingly bulged-up along with his rising tone.

"Say it," Young Master Yu said curtly.

"Who was the man you were fighting the other day?" Diwu Qing Rou slowly asked, and then added without waiting for Young Master Yu to reply, "Brother Yu, do not say that he is a member of the Ye Clan. You know that I won't believe it."

"Who was I fighting with? Why should I tell you?" Young Master Yu asked as he laughed strangely, "Don't tell me that I have to register my fights with you? That's a joke. Diwu Qing Rou, people can be arrogant and egotistical... but must not see themselves as extraordinary."

Diwu Qing Rou snorted when his question went unanswered. He then heavily added, "He stole from my treasury!"

Young Master Yu was shocked.

Diwu Qing Rou continued, "Even the medicinal ingredients from the storehouse!"

Young Master Yu gaped.

Diwu Qing Rou sighed and said, "Not even a little has remained for me."

Young Master Yu's expression turned strange.

Diwu Qing Rou uttered the last sentence, "I had been accumulating them for 'The Great Festival of Ten Thousand Medicines'!"

"F*... " Young Master Yu was dumbstruck. This news had shaken him, and had left him feeling dizzy.

He knew Diwu Qing Rou's real identity, and also knew how important his medicine storehouse was. He was even more aware of how extensive the implications of this matter would be.

He hadn't expected Chu Yang to have such guts... that he would directly rob Diwu Qing Rou. Moreover, not even the underpants were left behind...

He acknowledged the fact that Chu Yang was incredible. However, he had never imagined that Chu Yang would be so amazing.

[This... is truly unimaginable...]

[I am afraid that this news will shake the Upper Three heavens. 'The Great Festival of Ten Thousand Medicines' is really important, and has been related to those super clans for all eternity.]

Young Master Yu was at a loss for words for a long time. Then he abruptly started laughing in a strange manner. His laughter got louder, and he was forced to hold his own belly, "Wow, haha... this really is motherf*king hilarious! This is great news! This Young Master is really happy in your misery! Ha ha... you... you got what you deserved! F**k! This is too funny Ha Ha Ha... "

"Brother Yu!" Diwu Qing Rou's face showed colors of furiousness as he shouted forcefully. It sounded similar to the manner in which one shouts on pedestrians to clear the way.

"Haha, sorry... haha... I just can't help it," Young Master Yu wiped his tears. He continued to laugh as he said, "This matter is

so exciting ah!”

“I just want to know that person’s identity,” Diwu Qing Rou gritted his teeth angrily. He wished in his heart that he could dismember the body of this ‘gloating guy’ into a million pieces for rejoicing in his misfortune.

“That person… he he… ” Young Master Yu said stroking his nose as he smiled bitterly, “I don’t know how I should tell you… ”

“Why?” Diwu Qing Rou’s entire body shook. He stepped out of the willow tree’s shadow. Suddenly, Diwu Qing Rou’s whole body revealed his domineering aura. It seemed that this one step of his’ had trodden upon the entire night scene, and had broken it into pieces.

“So, it turns out you’ve been pushed to such an extent!” Young Master Yu was startled. He stared at Diwu Qing Rou, while his own eyes revealed a blazing desire for battle.

However, the look in Diwu Qing Rou’s eyes revealed a sense of urgency, “I just want to know that person’s identity!”

Young Master Yu’s mind started working at an electric-fast speed; he knew that his reply was extremely significant to this moment! One careless move could bring about the total destruction of the Dark Bamboo!

[Diwu Qing Rou himself is not someone to be afraid of… but he has a huge force behind him.]

[Moreover, the medicinal storehouse was raided. This is equivalent to stealing from the lion’s den! It could be well imagined how furious the lion would be.]

[It wouldn’t matter if it was just me. But the brothers and sisters of Dark Bamboo are behind me… it is improbable that they would be able escape. The strength of the Middle Three Heavens is simply not enough to confront the super clans of the Upper Three Heavens; that too… more than one!]

[Facing even one of those super clans would be insane. They would destroy everything!]

[Should I tell on Chu Yang?]

At that moment, the clank of two metal strings echoed. Pure and limpid, it penetrated the empty night-sky; following which, the sound of the zither resounded melodiously. The song that played was ‘A Faithful Friend is hard to find’.

Young Master Yu turned around. His face looked somewhat mysterious as he stood in the shade of the tree sketched by the moonlight. He was obviously contemplating. His gaze continued to flicker for a long time. At last he looked resolute.

[That person has recently done me a huge favor. He removed the knot in my heart and averted a possible tragedy. How can I just turn around and betray him?]

Diwu Qing Rou had been watching Young Master Yu attentively. He became somewhat pale as he saw that Young Master Yu had turned around with an expression of contemplation on his face. Diwu Qing Rou couldn’t help but hurriedly speak in a cold and gloomy voice, “Brother Yu?”

Young Master Yu turned his head and exhaled a breath. His face shone under the moonlight as he said, “I really don’t want to say it… and it is just my guess… ”

“Oh?” Diwu Qing Rou uttered.

“I do not know his real identity,” Young Master Yu suddenly thought of a brilliant idea. [There is only one person who is truly mysterious; so much so that no one knows about his real identity…]

“These words of yours… I am skeptical about them.” Diwu Qing Rou lightly said, “There are not many matters that Brother Yu doesn’t know about.”

“I really don’t know,” Young Master Yu replied as he glared

angrily. “Are you implying that I am deceiving you?!”

Diwu Qing Rou felt a chill, and hence did not say a word.

“I met this powerful man, and couldn’t help but feel like fighting him.” Young Master Yu said, “Therefore, we fought in the suburbs for ten days and ten nights!”

“Ten days and ten nights?” Diwu Qing Rou murmured to himself. His eyes revealed colors of contemplation; [he fought for ten days with Young Master Yu. It is obvious that this person is a force to be reckoned with.]

“However, I actually could not recognize his martial art techniques over these ten days and ten nights. I couldn’t even recognize his sword-play, or his agility skills… ” Young Master Yu sighed.

Diwu Qing Rou’s countenance changed; he looked frightened.

Chapter 333: A freak combination of circumstances

[Even Young Master Yu couldn't recognize his agility skill, martial techniques and sword-play… what kind of martial arts was he using?] Diwu Qing Rou couldn't dare to imagine. However, judging by Young Master Yu's expression, he felt that the man was actually telling the truth.

Diwu Qing Rou was puzzled. [Could it be that… is this really true? But how is it possible?]

Young Master Yu was certainly telling the truth. After all, was deceiving Diwu Qing Rou an easy matter? In fact, Young Master Yu had actually recalled the day of the fight to get the inspiration for saying this.

"His martial power was far inferior to mine. But he relied on fantastic martial arts to balance the scales, and put me in a position of slight disadvantage," Young Master Yu said in a heavy tone.

Diwu Qing Rou frowned.

"And then he went away," Young Master Yu concluded.

Diwu Qing Rou glared at him thinking, [why didn't he elaborate?]

"I asked him about his identity, but he just smiled and did not say anything." Young Master Yu said, "But I think that he was neither from the Middle Three Heavens, nor the Upper Three Heavens!"

This statement was indeed true.

Diwu Qing Rou nodded and thought, [This makes sense. Young Master Yu, and I, would've surely known about him if he was from the Middle Three Heavens or the Upper Three Heavens.]

"I have always had this guess; but I don't know whether I am allowed to say it," Young Master Yu's countenance was serious as

he lowered his voice. Diwu Qing Rou immediately tensed up.

“What?”

“This person… could he be the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword?” Young Master Yu frowned and looked at Diwu Qing Rou.

Diwu Qing Rou’s complexion suddenly changed.

He suddenly felt that this theory… was near-perfect.

[This person has no history, and his martial techniques are non-recognizable. He managed to match up with Young Master Yu even when he had a much lower cultivation…]

[Perhaps there is no such person… besides the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword. Finding this individual might be very challenging ah.]

[But… this matter may become somewhat troublesome if he actually turns out to be the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword.]

[An ancient legend said that the Nine Tribulations Sword shall emerge to replace the nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens. But the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword must suppress the older generation of the nine super clans to build new great super clan.]

[If this is the case, then wouldn’t the plundering of my medicine storehouse be regarded as the beginning of my clan’s downfall?]

Diwu Qing Rou frowned, and started pacing back and forth. He lifted his head to look towards the sky. His face had colors of deep thought as he murmured, “If it really is the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword… and he robbed the medicine storehouse… ah… this seems a little odd.”

“Eh?” Young Master Yu was astonished, and said, “You also think that this guy is the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword?” In his mind he thought, [this can't be, right? Did you just believe what I

said?]

“According to your description… he should be.” Diwu Qing Rou thought deeply and said “His sword-play, martial technique and agility skill were not recognizable. He was able to pin down a peak level expert despite having a low cultivation and martial power… and his first objective is to target the nine super clans.”

Diwu Qing Rou sighed and said, “Brother Yu, if this guy is actually the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword… the trouble might be very big!”

He exhaled a long breath and said, “The entire Upper Three Heavens… will see a period of interregnum. Can you imagine how big a disturbance that would cause?”

Young Master Yu blinked and said, “I know the Nine Tribulations Sword’s master comes to change the existing pattern. But let’s not forget that the previous Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword established these nine super clans, and they have ten thousand years of accumulation; that should be more than enough to deal with the subversion the current Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword may cause. As far as the overthrowing rule is concerned… it seemed that he isn’t capable of that yet.”

“The world has already shaken twice since the Nine Tribulations Sword has emerged. Only twice!” Diwu Qing Rou’s point of view on the Nine Tribulations Sword was completely different, “He has only obtained two fragments, and can still fight on equal terms with you… Brother Yu, the Nine Tribulations Sword’s master has at least 7 more chances of growth… ”

“That is really out of the ordinary.” Young Master Yu said, “However, I am just guessing; not ruling out the possibility that this guy may not be the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword. If you find the wrong guy… don’t blame me!”

He thought inwardly, [you… go and find the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword. Go at once, ok? It has nothing to do with me…

you two can fight and die together for all I care!] Young Master Yu was very proud and thought, [Chu Yang, I f*king didn't let you down this time, right? You better not say that I am not loyal...]

Little did this guy know that the mountain of lies he had made up would actually turn out to be the true background of Minister Chu...

Diwu Qing Rou nodded and said, "I know you are just taking a guess, but it has still alarmed me! This matter... must not be ignored."

Diwu Qing Rou was no longer angry once he realized that his culprit could possibly be the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword. On the contrary, he was somewhat terrified and anxious.

His first reaction was to go back and get to the heart of this matter without any delay.

"Brother Yu, thank you so much for today," Diwu Qing Rou said. Diwu Qing Rou realized that he had made a huge mistake. He had only considered King of Hell Chu and Tie Bu Tian as his biggest opponents in the past. He was just realizing that his vision was really very narrow.

[What is unifying the Lower Three Heavens compared to commanding the entire of Nine Heavens Continent?]

[My real opponent should be the Nine Tribulations Sword's master who has appeared after ten thousand years.]

At this moment, Diwu Qing Rou felt as if he had achieved instant enlightenment.

No matter how this Lower Three Heavens' dynasties would struggle for power and hegemony, his next step would be to remain aloof from that. He would want to prepare for a final showdown with the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword.

Of course, he must first become the overlord of the Lower Three Heavens. After all, that was also his desire. This was to be done

before the main battle with the Nine Tribulations Sword's master.

"En, you're welcome," Young Master Yu felt very strange. [I've no idea why this guy is thanking me? I obviously haven't said anything worthy, right?]

Diwu Qing Rou was about to leave, but stopped to ask, "Brother Yu, I was on the boat as I listened to the immortal song during the day. So why aren't you allowing me to get on the boat during the night? This is still puzzling me."

Young Master Yu sneered and said, "It is your fault for coming at such a weird timing!" He recalled that miserable incident from a while ago, and said gnashing his teeth, "My heart has not been clean lately. But I figured out a way to fix that. I was preparing to drink the 'wine' when you arrived at the worst possible timing. You ruined my mood; you still want to get on the boat? Dream on!"

"Ruined your drinking mood?" Diwu Qing Rou scratched his head like a foolish monk and said, "Are you saying that I can't drink a cup of wine with you?"

"... " Young Master Yu got uncontrollably furious, "I meant a woman like wine, got it?"

Diwu Qing Rou immediately understood and his face became uncontrollably heated. He coughed twice and said, "Such being the case... Brother Yu, you taste your wine properly... I will take my leave now... "

He felt very relieved inwardly, [it turns out that this guy was about to enter the port when I interrupted him. That's why he came out as if something very important had been interrupted. No wonder he looked like a pervert on... aphrodisiac.]

Young Master Yu snorted and squinted towards the sky. He completely ignored Diwu Qing Rou.

Diwu Qing Rou turned around and left.

On seeing Diwu Qing Rou walk away, Young Master Yu grunted

as if he had finally freed himself. He then flew up like an eagle and landed on the boat. Afterwards, he stealthily arrived in front of the door and coughed. After that, he composed himself and gently knocked on the door.

With a squeak, the door opened.

Young Master Yu grinned with pleasure, and immediately tried to step inside.

Suddenly a beautiful and icy face came in front of him, and blocked his way, “What are you doing?”

Young Master Yu was startled. He stammered, “I... I have... drink... yet to drink that wine!”

“What wine?!” Jun Lu Lu asked angrily.

“This... ” Young Master Yu was somewhat disoriented. [What is going on? Why has the soft-spoken and gentle Jun Lu Lu suddenly changed her demeanor?]

He blinked and said, “Then... why not I just come in and tell?”

Saying this he walked towards the inside.

Bang!

The door ferociously closed. It almost hit him in the nose when he hurriedly dodged aside to avoid the disaster.

He heard Jun Lu Lu speaking bitterly from the inside, “Wine? You want to drink wine? You better not think that it will be this cheap! Humph! Smelly man! There’s not one good thing about you!”

Young Master Yu stood helplessly in front of the door, staring blankly.

“Ah ha ha ha...” Chu Yang, who was secretly watching this whole time, could not help but laugh uncontrollably. He squatted on the deck and laughed till his stomach started to ache.

“Why are you laughing?” Young Master Yu and asked angrily out of shame. The tent of his crotch had unknowingly subsided.

“I am laughing at you… you are really too… ” Chu Yang laughed as his whole body trembled, “ …too … cute!”

Young Master Yu cleared his throat and angrily said, “I came here to get a drink; what are you making of it?”

“I see. You came here to get a drink… sure enough. But you still couldn’t drink!” Chu Yang said and started laughing again, “There’s no point of your masculinity… you can’t even drink the wine.”

Young Master Yu said angrily, “How will I get to drink if I can’t go inside?”

Chu Yang laughed heartily. Then, he took a few steps and said as he patted Young Master Yu’s shoulder, “You are no good at this. Come, I will teach you a few moves to handle women… ”

Young Master Yu had made a blunder.

He was very wrong. He thought Jun Lu Lu was his property. Hence, he was feeling very sure… ordinarily, if a man takes a woman for granted… she would make him suffer a little no matter how willing she is!

If a woman summons a man, a man will brand her as cheap at once, won’t he?

Jun Lu Lu had passionately devoted herself to Young Master Yu for the past several years; how could he not know that? Earlier, he felt that he wasn’t prepared to take up this responsibility.

Furthermore, Young Master Yu had apprehensions that he could live a thousand years because his cultivation level… but Jun Lu Lu… was only a little stronger than an ordinary female. Her life span would come to an end at hundred or two hundred years…

What would he do at that time?

How would he tread the remaining road alone?

That was his biggest concern.

However, Chu Yang relieved him from his biggest concern, and woke him up. [You could live a thousand years, but what about her? Her life is very short; won't you give her the happiness that she longs for in this little time?]

[Aren't you crueler than time itself?]

[Life is bitterly short. Why do you hold back?]

Since Young Master Yu realized this, he wanted to make up for it. So, he decided to… drink a large amount of 'wine'. He thought that this would give him confidence, and would make things easier for him. But… he was unable to drink any of it.

The two guys sat in Chu Yang's room. They held their wine cups as they chatted. The two would mischievously laugh like wolves and from time to time; their laughter was enough creep people out.

This carried on until Young Master Yu complacently told how he had played Diwu Qing Rou. He narrated how he mentioned the Nine Tribulations Sword's master to deceive Diwu Qing Rou. From the triumphant look on Young Master Yu's face, one could tell that he was immensely proud of himself.

Chu Yang was dumbstruck.

F*k…

Chapter 334: Because She Cannot Stand Such Opponents!

“How was my idea, brilliant right?” Young Master Yu had long forgotten his dejection. He had blocked those thought, and was proudly laughing now.

“Clever! It is very clever…” Chu Yang replied. It seemed like he was crying and laughing at the same time.

[You should be glad that I am no match for you at present! Had I been capable of beating you… I would’ve granted you a death by a thousand cuts…]

“Relax; this matter of the phoney Nine Tribulations Sword’s Master is easily discernible. You need not worry about it.” Young Master Yu said as he patted Chu Yang’s shoulder. “Moreover, the Nine Tribulations Sword’s Master and the nine super clans are going to start a bloody battle sooner or later. So it really won’t matter if it happens a little early.”

“The plan is certainly ingenious,” Chu Yang secretly gritted his teeth. Then, he suddenly asked in an astonished tone, “Why will the Nine Tribulations Sword Master and the nine super clans start a bloody war one day? These words… I cannot understand.”

“Nine Tribulations overturn the heavens,” Young Master Yu broke into laughter. “The nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens are the main target of the Nine Tribulations Sword Master. Only by overthrowing the original nine super clans will he establish the new order. This is the destiny of the Nine Tribulations Sword Master.”

“Destiny?” Chu Yang murmured, "What destiny?"

“The match is tomorrow,” Young Master Yu said, “so we shall depart this place about three days later. Will you accompany us, or… ”

[Do I want to go together with you? Unfortunately I haven't attained my main objective here.]

Chu Yang smiled bitterly, “I still have some matters to attend to here. So I will stay for some time.”

“That's fine,” Young Master Yu said deeply. “Geniuses are likely to die in their prime; you must be careful.”

Chu Yang's head was full of sinister thoughts.

The morning sun took its place in the sky.

The golden sunlight sprinkled on the clear lake's surface, while the breeze formed faint ripples on it. This made the Lake’s surface flicker, creating a strange sense of tranquillity.

It felt as if the water-birds on the shore had sensed this tranquillity, and did not dare to emit a sound for the fear of ruining it.

Suddenly, a ‘drumming’ sound overthrew this reign of silence.

“Thump!”

The sound seemed similar to a person’s heartbeat. It echoed as it pervaded everywhere and resounded through the skies. Suddenly, it seemed as if the entire world was filled with the intense drumbeats.

These monotonous yet intense drumbeats were capable of arousing people's most primitive thoughts of bravery. Suddenly, the blood in their veins began to surge, as if boiling with anger.

The clouds would act as banners and the noisily wailing wind as trombone; the sky would be regarded as a battlefield and the sun would serve as a lantern. The Gods and the Devils would be the soldiers to fight in this battlefield.

Today, a legend would be born!

Today, one would witness the birth of a legend from this generation!

A nine feet tall husky fellow stood in the middle of the stage. His whole body was clad in a red robe. He looked just like a deity with those drum-sticks in his hands as he pounded on both sides of an enormous drum.

One moment the drumbeats were enthusiastic. And in the next... restrained like the stagnant water in a deep pool; as if standing firmly like the peak of a high mountain.

The drumbeats continued for a while. Then suddenly, a wisp of a transverse flute's sound cut through the sky; just like an Eagle that had suddenly come out of seclusion, and had soared into the sky. The flute's sound was sharp yet melodious.

"Hurray..." those who were supporting the Transverse Flute Master suddenly went crazy and burst into cheers.

The mournful sound of a flute spread across the sky just as the thousands of audiences cheered for the Transverse Flute Master's victory. The melody sounded as if the soldiers' widows were weeping with their mouths covered. Though the sound of the cheers was loud, it still could not suppress such sorrowful sound. This sound was distressful enough to penetrate down to the bone of the listener...

A tide of people cheered along with the rise and fall in the music. The flute-sound and the sound of the transverse flute entwined with each other on the Ninth Firmament; neither willing to back-down. One was clearly intense, while the other was like a muffled sob. Nevertheless, both were at par with each other.

The crowd was surging with excitement when —

'Clang!'

The zither sounded. It was as if ice and snow were falling from the Ninth Heaven. However, it didn't sound ominous!

The vast crowd's mood was unexpectedly suppressed by this zither's sound, and was suddenly stagnated.

'Clang!'

The zither resounded again; it sounded just like ice falling on jade.

The cheers gradually faded. People shut their mouth and opened their ears.

'Clang!'

The sound of the zither grew louder and louder. It seemed as if an immortal from the Ninth Heaven had descended to the human world. ...and his rainbow-feathered clothes fluttered as he flew high into the sky; it seemed as if he had completely discarded his desire to go return to the heavens.

The entire Lotus Lake fell silent.

Only the sound of the zither, the flute and the transverse flute rippled in the vast sky.

The three sounds seemed to have melted together. But on listening carefully, they were actually different.

The flute-sound and the transverse-flute-sound were competing fiercely against each other. Moreover, they were also launching an offensive attack on the zither's sound.

However, the zither's sound was indifferent. It had a sense of aloofness from reality... as if looking disdainfully upon all living things.

The zither’s sound was disdainful in the sense that it didn’t wish to compete with anyone. It felt as if it was an independently erected flag. It seemed similar to the bright moon calmly hanging in the sky and looking down on the earth. It was angelic, soft, graceful and motionless; it had a multitude of deportment.

The sound of the zither was only heard for a moment, and then faded away.

Only the sound of the flute and transverse flute remained in the

atmosphere.

Jun Lu Lu faintly sighed in her cabin.

Young Master Yu stooped outside the thin veil. He crossed his hands behind his back and asked, "What happened?"

Chu Yang stood alone on the other side; his figure appeared desolate. [It seems like a violent storm is about to rise in this lively atmosphere. It will fling the current atmosphere inharmonious. Everyone appears to have been intoxicated... I alone am sober.]

Chu Yang couldn't help but laugh on hearing Jun Lu Lu sigh in response to Young Master Yu's inquiry. He then replied in place of Jun Lu Lu, " ...because she cannot stand such opponents."

Jun Lu Lu smiled calmly and said, "Qing Yang is right." She leisurely placed the zither in front of her and looked at the clear and sparkling lake through the veil. There was a meaningful look in her eyes as she said, "Perhaps I would've been evenly matched with them if my skill was at the level it was before I met Minister Chu in Iron Cloud.

"I may have come out victorious by a fluke if I had played the zither earlier.

"However, my present tuning needs to be cultivated properly. Participating in this level of a contest has really profaned my zither's sound," Jun Lu Lu said as she smiled bitterly. She then gently shook her fragile head. However, her posture was sprinkling out a sense of pride.

"Not necessarily... it is hard to predict the outcome of a match." Young Master Yu nodded and said, "You saw that? The First King Level Master of Golden Horse Riders Department, Jing Meng Hun has entered the boat of the Flute Master; and Diwu Qing Rou is actually on Transverse Flute Master's boat."

"So what?"

"Nothing. Diwu Qing Rou has the power to rally supporters in

Great Zhao. He is powerful enough that he can even extinguish the sun, and he seems to have chosen his favourite candidate." A cold intention flashed in Young Master Yu's eyes as he continued, "He is on Transverse Flute Master's boat which means that he has secretly amassed support for the same."

"He might as well; I anyway am not in the mood." Jun Lu Lu smiled indifferently. "My interest in the victory and defeat of this contest has suddenly faded away. I don't wish to participate anymore."

"I am already worthy of having Master's cultivation!" Jun Lu Lu said.

"There's no harm in backing out while you still have time." Chu Yang smiled and said, "It would be blasphemous to the zither's sound if things gets dragged and you end up getting the second place after fighting in a one-side battle. The zither's soul won't forgive you then!"

Jun Lu Lu's eyes lit up.

The tall platform bore witness to the people from aristocratic families. They were preparing to announce the commencement of the 'Match of Three Masters' with solemn and respectful faces. ... when suddenly —

A wisp of the zither's sound suddenly sprang, and started to rise. It seemed as if a ray of sunlight had sprung up at the horizon on dawn, only to blossom into ten thousand multi-coloured rays of sunlight.

Their faces could not help but be stunned.

[What is the matter? The competition hasn't yet begun... then why is the Zither Master showcasing their talent so early? This has never happened in the past nine competitions!]

[What is the Zither Master trying to do?]

The sound of the zither resounded at a moderate pace. It seemed

as if a king had calmly stepped out, and was steadily walking towards the throne for his coronation — his chest stuck-out and his head held high.

The vast crowd was silent.

Diwu Qing Rou had been chatting with the Transverse Flute Master. He couldn't help but stop the discussion. He started to listen attentively and calmly.

The zither's resolute notes advanced, and everyone closed their eyes. It was as if they were visualizing that King's footsteps on the blue dome of heaven and earth; his anger seemed to be swallowing rivers and mountains as he advanced forward.

He arrived in front of the imperial throne finally.

The sound of the zither was suddenly impassioned. With a clang of metal, it said — I alone hold supremacy over the world.

It seemed as if the king had slowly turned around to face the common people. The expression in his eyes was gentle, yet he seemed to be looking disdainfully from the corners of his eyes. Then he proceeded to sit down... slowly.

He went ahead and sat on the throne.

The zither's sound fiercely built up. It sounded splendid, solemn and respectful... as if all the wars in the four seas had quietened down!

The King was overlooking the whole world.

Was it possible that the king of the world had appeared?

The dust had settled.

The sound of the zither sank.

The blue sky was silent.

The hundreds of thousands of people at the Lotus Lake made little sound for a long time.

The level of the zither's music had exceeded every person's imagination.

Apparently, they had seen the king staging an uprising along with the zither's sound. He commanded the soldiers forward to fight throughout whole world and fine horses ran unhindered in the battlefield. He laughed as he unified the four seas(1) and his eyes rose to gaze at the world.

I shall reign over the six directions, and the eight wastelands. (2)

King!

This was the real king!

Diwu Qing Rou gently sighed. His eyes revealed colours of fascination. It may have not been that important for other people, but Diwu Qing Rou had wanted to sweep the Universe and unify all under the skies his whole life. His heart couldn't help but sway on hearing that zither's sound. He let out a long sigh and muttered, "Apparently I see a road that is full of killing. I finally see that it's full of killings and massacres... but that is the successful journey of a King!"

The transverse flute was horizontally positioned near its master's lips. However, her eyes showed colours of intense envy; it was a kind of emotion that was between anger and admiration which had seemingly engulfed her thoughts.

"She is stronger than you," Diwu Qing Rou calmly said as he looked at the Transverse Flute Master. "And stronger than him."

He said 'him'. This naturally meant that he was referring to the Flute Master!

The jade flute sorrowfully fell from her hands. She powerlessly turned her head towards Diwu Qing Rou. Her cherry lips quivered with a sense of loss, "What does the Prime Minister wish to know?"

Diwu Qing Rou faintly smiled. He then pulled out a portrait and

asked in a soft voice, “May I ask Young Miss if she has seen this person?”

The Transverse Flute Master’s body shook as her eyes showed simultaneous emotions of shame and resentment. She gritted her teeth as she maliciously said, “I would still recognize this bastard’s bones even if he turns into ashes!”

It was the same man who had used a big fish to pull his boat.

Diwu Qing Rou’s eyes revealed a happy expression.

On the Zither Master’s boat, Young Master Yu straightened his back to stand up with a feeling of heroism that had suddenly appeared in his heart. He felt as if his entire spirit was brimming with a sense of pride.

...the source of this zither sound was none other than his lover.

Suddenly, Young Master Yu faced towards the sky and laughed. Then he whistled towards the sky.

The vast sky’s weather became turbulent with the sound of his whistle!

His whistling sound surged forward. It rushed forth uninhibited, and directly ripped through the white clouds in the sky. It cleared the clouds away and revealed the resplendent clear sky.

“I am so happy!” Young Master Yu howled loudly. He then shouted, “I am the revered monarch of the entire world. I have covered a long and difficult road full of trials and tribulations! Who dares to defy me?!”

His voice spread far and wide, vibrating between the heaven and earth. It contained the wrath of a fanatical tyrant who would overturn rivers and mountains!

Notes:

There are four seas in china.

There are eight wastelands in china.

Chapter 335: The Demonic-sounding King Level Master Jun Qing Yang

People came out of their trance only to discover that Zither Master's boat had quietly retreated. It had left behind a big vacant space.

"This... Miss Jun! Miss Jun!" They gazed at her foolishly as they shouted. It seemed as if they were going to pursue her, and bring her back.

Jun Lu Lu spoke in a somewhat tranquil yet indifferent tone from the boat's prow, "Pardon me. Zither Master is withdrawing from this time's 'Match of the Three Masters'."

People were left dumbstruck as the huge boat leisurely departed.

[Withdrawing... is she quitting?]

"What's the point of continuing anyway?" Diwu Qing Rou snorted and said, "Who won and who lost... is quite obvious! Who needs the testimony of these aristocratic families?! It is unbearably vulgar of these hundred thousand commoners to gather here to see the three masters. How is this any different from the competition between top courtesans in a brothel?"

The people of the aristocratic clans were left speechless after witnessing this; even Great Zhao's top ranked influential people didn't dare to reply.

"She is just pretending to be noble; aloof from politics and materialistic desires — that's all," Transverse Flute Master coldly snorted.

"Oh? Could it be that you consider yourself superior to her?" Diwu Qing Rou said in a somewhat resentful manner. He could faintly understand the mentality of the Zither Master, [She finds it beneath herself to participate in this class of a battle!]

[That's the reason she left.]

[The opposition has left already, and you are still chirping like a trivial insect. It seems like you don't have enough self-awareness. Are you still not convinced that you are not at her level?]

"I wouldn't dare to think like that. She is truly better than me," the Transverse Flute Master said in a matter-of-fact tone. "It's just that this type of high and mighty attitude is not good."

"You will also become like that if you ever reach this height," Diwu Qing Rou sighed softly. "This is an entirely different domain... it's quite lonely at the top."

"The 'Match of the Three Masters' will die without a sickness since the Zither Master has left already!" The Transverse Flute Master said while biting her lips.

"She is not a worldly person — unlike you!" Diwu Qing Rou lightly said, "You should be happy."

Transverse Flute Master sighed and said, "Prime Minister, you have arrived here at this time. Is there any command for me?" She had obviously understood the meaning behind Diwu Qing Rou's words. [It is better to finish it like this rather than doing it in front of ten thousand audiences. One can at least show a bright face on the outside... as if you have not been defeated. However, no one will be able to swallow the pain of defeat on the inside.]

"I want to know about this man," Diwu Qing Rou pointed to the portrait lying on the table. "Tell me all that you know about him... Speak about the whole matter — with all the details regardless of their relevance."

His voice revealed a command that could not be defied.

"This person... I know very little about him. I found out about him for the first time when he ruined the Flute Master's performance. I began to find more about him from then on. I discovered that he had been staying in this Lotus Lake for quite

some time," the Transverse Flute Master said as she slowly recalled.

"Had been staying in the Lotus Lake for quite some time... " Diwu Qing Rou said rubbing his temples. The expression in his eyes was as deep as the sea.

The Transverse Flute Master continued to speak slowly.

Meanwhile, Diwu Qing Rou constantly calculated and speculated in his heart... then rejected his speculation... only to do it all over again...

About ten possible individuals who matched the profile would crop up in his mind. He would then eliminate them one by one.

Diwu Qing Rou had already managed to come up with two frames of thought in his mind by the time the Transverse Flute Master finished speaking.

First frame: [If this person is the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword, then... what is his objective to come here? Why did he stay in Lotus Lake for so long?]

[This person showed up at Lotus Lake. He later fought with Young Master Yu, only to return here again... There must be a reason...]

[Could it be that there is something in this Lotus Lake... which has attracted him to this place?]

Second frame: [Who is likely to do so if not the Nine Tribulations Sword Master? Who could it be? Could it be... the King of Hell Chu or his people?]

[But no matter which possibility it is; this Lotus Lake is definitely the key point...]

Diwu Qing Rou's heart was reflecting intensely. However, there was tranquility on his face.

Transverse Flute Master had been looking anxiously at Diwu

Qing Rou ever since she had finished talking. She didn't dare to utter a word out of the fear of disturbing Diwu Qing Rou's chain of thoughts.

Diwu Qing Rou appeared like a majestic mountain that she was unable to climb at present. He could crush her to death with just one move.

"That's all?" Diwu Qing Rou opened his eyes and asked, "Is there anything else?"

"That is all," the Transverse Flute Master said lowering her head. She had said everything. She had even spoken about her own attempt to steal the zither. She had not expected to speak about this humiliating matter initially. However, she found herself incapable of hiding anything under Diwu Qing Rou's firm gaze.

She had no choice but to tell everything.

"En... I wish to give you a few words of advice since you have been honest." Diwu Qing Rou said slowly, "If you want to save your life... conceal your identity, and leave the Continent Centre as soon as possible. The farther you go... the better it would be... the more remote... the better."

"Why?" The Transverse Flute Master's face was deathly pale, and her mind was a complete blank. She was simply a girl from an influential family of musicians who had been fortunate enough to participate in the 'Match of the Three Masters'. She had decided to use any means possible in order to become famous in a stroke.

She wanted to become famous so that she could stay in the Continent Centre. Moreover, she could have the opportunity to form associations with influential elites after becoming famous. This would gain her fame and achievements throughout her life.

She just wanted a lot of public attention.

The price she had paid as a woman, in addition to her own efforts, to achieve this was too high.

Hiding her identity and leaving the Continent Centre... wouldn't it be wasting a lifetime worth of efforts?

"Why not?" Diwu Qing Rou said calmly, "You must bear the burden of the disaster you have brought upon yourself! Your safety won't be guaranteed if you don't leave. In fact, it is difficult to say whether you'll be able to save your life even if you go right now!"

He stood up to leave after he finished speaking.

"Please! I beg you, Prime Minister! Show me the right path!" Transverse Flute Master said falling on her knees.

"There are some people you just can't offend!" Diwu Qing Rou said, "Even if the thought has not been implemented... it is a crime in the eyes of some people. They would certainly kill you!"

"It appears that Prime Minister is talking about... the matter of stealing the zither?" the Transverse Flute Master asked looking deathly pale.

"Correct... " Diwu Qing Rou said slowly, "There are some people you just can't offend! The most important thing while walking the Jiang Hu is — do not provoke a person that shouldn't be provoked... or it would not end well."

Then, Diwu Qing Rou disembarked the boat and left.

Transverse Flute Master was dazed. She staggered back two steps and fell on a chair. Her body felt powerless. She felt as if she could not stand anymore. She had never thought that the Zither Master actually held an influence which was simply beyond her imagination; despite being one of the three Masters like herself.

Could there be such a big disparity between two people?

Diwu Qing Rou had just gotten off the boat when he saw Young Master Yu coming in his direction. He sighed in his heart. Then, he moved forward and said in a welcoming tone, "Brother Yu, what a surprise! You haven't left yet!"

“I still have some matter to attend to.” Young Master Yu said lightly, “It has nothing to do with you.”

“Something has happened, hasn’t it?” Diwu Qing Rou said indifferently.

“She must be punished for her intentions!” Young Master Yu stopped in his footsteps, and turned silent. Then, he asked, “Do you wish to protect her?”

"No.” Diwu Qing Rou said, “I was just asking her for something. It can be considered that this task will be done in order to assist me. However, I won’t stop you if you wish to make a move.”

Lives of people like the Transverse Flute Master were of no consequence in the eyes of these two individuals. It wouldn’t matter to them even if a thousand such lives were lost.

Young Master Yu snorted and said, “Diwu Qing Rou, I won’t kill her since she is the only person who plays the transverse flute. I guess we might as well just give you credit for this one. However, we Bamboo people will be staying here for some time.”

“You mean you want me to look after you?” Diwu Qing Rou smiled, “The Bamboo people want me to look after them?”

Young Master Yu laughed and said, “This Great Zhao is yours… it is Diwu Qing Rou’s domain. These were the words said by you.”

Diwu Qing Rou also gave a cold laugh.

A person arrived before them as they laughed.

“His name is Jun Qing Yang.” Young Master Yu said in a relaxed manner, “Brother Diwu, it’s ok; be relieved. Haha…”

Diwu Qing Rou also laughed. He saw that Jun Qing Yang was about forty years old. His hair was somewhat frosty with hardships. The look in his eyes, as well as his skin color, showed that this person had been a part of some stories.

And… some of them must have been painful.

The turbidity in his eyes could raise a person's appreciation towards life.

[This person's status in the Dark Bamboo Clan mustn't be low.] Diwu Qing Rou's heart raised this notion and he nodded politely. However, he also had a strange feeling in his heart, [This person seems awfully familiar...]

"Brother Jun... have we met before?" Diwu Qing Rou asked cautiously.

"Prime Minister Diwu, I can recall that this is the first time that I've come to the Lower Three Heavens," Jun Qing Yang's voice was awfully strange. It sounded as if metals were rubbing against each other.

"No wonder... so it's King Level Master Jun," Diwu Qing Rou was relieved.

Jun Qing Yang was an important member of the Bamboo Clan; he was a King level expert. This man had been severely injured when he was young. His throat had been slit, but luckily he didn't die. However, his vocal chords were entirely destroyed. His voice began to sound strange after his injury got better. People who heard his were absolutely terrified.

He was known as the 'Demon-Voiced King Level Master' in the Middle Three Heavens' underworld.

Diwu Qing Rou knew about this person, but had never come across him. He recognized him after hearing his voice, [It is impossible to find a similar voice anywhere under the heavens!]

"Prime Minister can call me Demonic-Voiced." Jun Qing Yang smiled and said, "Anyways, people have been abusing me by calling me by 'this' name for several decades... "

"Haha... " Diwu Qing Rou laughed. The doubts in his heart disappeared as he said, "King Level Master Jun has arrived in person. It seems that he needs something to be taken care of!"

“He was recently injured. His cultivation is somewhat damaged because of that... ” Young Master Yu said frowning. “Therefore... Brother Diwu...”

“Brother Yu, don’t worry.” Diwu Qing Rou said in a refreshing tone, “Others cannot dare to boast about it. But... it would be laughable... if Diwu Qing Rou’s guest is hurt in this Great Zhao...”

Young Master Yu gave a meaningful laughter and said, “I believe these words.”

Jun Qing Yan also laughed with a meaningful look in his eyes and said, “Then I would be troubling Prime Minister a little. I’ve stopped at Lotus Lake to try my luck... I’ve tried to find Nine Joints Lotus Root before, but I’ve failed. I will immediately leave Continent Center if I cannot find it here, and will go elsewhere to find it... ”

Diwu Qing Rou understood completely. All the people in the world knew about the characteristics of the Nine Joint Lotus root — it was used to treat vocal injuries. The Demonic-sounding King Level Master wouldn’t say it from his mouth, but he was very much concerned about his voice.

“No problem! I will send a group of people to provide assistance!” Diwu Qing Rou smiled.

These three people smiled at each other. However, only their hearts knew what was hidden behind each of their smiles...

Chapter 336: Breakthrough — Once Again!

Young Master Yu felt very relieved as he walked away. He was convinced that Diwu Qing Rou was likely to turn a blind eye even if Jun Qing Yang committed an offense. Diwu Qing Rou was likely to put up with it owing to Young Master Yu's introduction of Jun Qing Yang; …as long as he didn't expose his true identity.

All the matters could only be accomplished by Chu Yang! Even Young Master Yu did not know what kind of idea was cooking in his belly.

However, Young Master Yu was very confident in his heart. It could be said that he and Chu Yang had been pretty good to each other from the beginning. They had done each other a favor, and had already settled the favors by this date. They did not owe each other anything now.

[Chu Yang would possibly come to Middle Three Heavens or Upper Three Heavens sooner or later… if he could stay alive and defeat Diwu Qing Rou. Whether he would be an enemy or a friend by that time… totally depends on the changing circumstances.]

[If he turns out to be an enemy… it would be interesting to have such an opponent. If he turns out to be a friend… he ought to be a good one.]

[But he would certainly be killed by Diwu Qing Rou if he can't defeat him. As far as a deceased person is concerned… I certainly do not worry about anything!]

Young Master Yu walked in a relaxed and confident manner.

Diwu Qing Rou returned and kept insisting for Jun Qing Yang to stay at his palace. But Jun Qing Yang kept declining persistently. Diwu Qing Rou arranged for Jing Meng Hun and other people to attend to him for the lack of other options. Furthermore, many fishermen were ordered to help look for the Nine Joints Lotus

Root...

The crowd at the Lotus Lake gradually dispersed. The Transverse Flute Master's people narrowly escaped death by quickly running.

However, many people were left behind amidst the shadows.

Almost all the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department were gathered here. Diwu Qing Rou had given strict orders, "Focus on this Lotus Lake! Be sure to keep a close watch after the crowd has dispersed!"

Therefore, Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian were taking care of this situation.

Hence, Minister Chu met his two 'dear friends' once again... after having emptied their headquarters only a day ago. However, Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian did not know that they had already met Jun Qing Yang.

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian were in low spirits that day. They greeted Chu Yang. However, they saw that he was not in a good mood either. All three people were lost in their own thoughts.

Jing Meng Hun was thinking, [How to find Young Master Ye? How to make up for the loss? The wives and children of Du Shi Qing are also missing. I couldn't dare to say all this to Diwu Qing Rou. How should I deal with this mess?]

Yin Wu Tian had one repetitive thought in his heart, [Is it really Chen Yun He who caused my brother's disability?]

[Did he really do it? If he really did... what should I do?]

[And how should I find evidence?]

And Chu Yang was thinking, [Motherf**king Diwu Qing Rou's people have sealed off this Lotus Lake. I must combat that flood dragon if I go down to find the third fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword. The water surface will inevitably be afflicted

by sounds of turbulence. What to do now?]

[How will I escape even if I find it?]

[I would most likely be exposed when all my goals are completed. I would have to go away to Iron Cloud when that moment comes. Iron Cloud is thousands of miles away. How far away will I have to go to be safe?]

[Diwu Qing Rou must be planning to dispatch the troops soon. How would I move forward when this war finally begins?]

Chu Yang's mind was in tremendous confusion. He tried to find a secluded place. He rested the back of his head on his hands and lay down in a thick patch of grass. He kept on rolling about in the grass with a green grass straw in his mouth. There was a thoughtful expression in his eyes while he was gazing at the starry sky.

He stayed like that for a long time.

He had felt his bottleneck loosening up a bit just this afternoon. The summoning calls of Nine Tribulations Sword's fragment coming from the center of the lake had also become clearer and clearer...

The credit for all this went to one man, and one woman.

Young Master Yu and Jun Lu Lu.

Jun Lu Lu had played that song very proudly before she left. This had made Chu Yang feel a realm. He felt as if his body was lingering at an extremely high altitude; he was all alone at the top.

That is another type of realm where the master is all alone.

Other people had imagined a king's splendid coronation and ascension to the throne while hearing the zither music. However, Chu Yang heard the music and imagined a king who had already swept past the nation. He had looked all around, but felt loneliness inside his heart since he was unrivalled.

He had no choice but to helplessly stuff all his weapons into the storehouse and release the horses into the mountains.

He had pacified a nation and became its regent — all to be a part of war.

Jun Lu Lu might not be able to reach the apex of martial arts in this life, but her tuning had already reached its pinnacle. As a master, she ascended to the top really fast. She had displayed that kind of marvelous ability in a split second; it was truly moving.

Chu Yang had allowed her to fly, which was her cherished desire.

Young Master Yu had untied her heart's knot.

Therefore, she had become a phoenix overnight and attained enlightenment; the cocoon had transformed into a butterfly.

This was a breakthrough! This was an ultimate breakthrough!

Chu Yang had vaguely grasped the frame of mind which was usually associated with this kind of breakthrough at that time.

Furthermore, he felt something about the words said by Young Master Yu towards the end.

"I am the revered monarch of the entire world. I have covered a long and difficult road full of trials and tribulations! Who would dare to defy me?"

There was a heroic aggressiveness in these words that fascinated Chu Yang. Yes... this aggression had moved Chu Yang's heart. He felt as if he could achieve anything.

An ordinary individual studying martial arts was unlikely to have a good temperament; especially a Jiang Hu person.

It went without saying that things would have been much harder for an expert in comparison to an ordinary person. The investment must've been very high on their part to have such achievements. A martial artist's whole life's sweat would be sufficient to bathe many people at the same time — if it were to be accumulated.

[I am stronger since I invested so much. You are weaker since you have not paid the price. Then why on earth should I tolerate you? Just because of the reason that you haven't tried hard enough? What is the argument here?]

Moreover, one must have acute determination in order to study a 'core law' which was considered as the basis of martial arts in the Nine Heavens Continent.

In other words, a martial artist could not back down in the face of any difficulty; no matter what.

These words were just meant to inspire the frame of mind. However, there was an overwhelming majority of people whose daily lives were similar to this. Therefore, the so-called capable individuals of Jiang Hu strived for supremacy and contended fiercely amongst themselves; this was not without reason.

However, there was one quality which could never be lacking in a martial artist; especially a high level martial artist — aggressiveness. The ultimate self-confidence!

And Young Master Yu had stressed on this very point.

[I will destroy the spirit of any world hero who appears in front of me with just my fist.] This made Chu Yang quiver incessantly with reverence! This was the air of an unrivaled powerhouse!

Suddenly, Chu Yang's heart trembled as his mental state shook. He unconsciously felt his energy welling up like a tidal wave throughout his body; a wave that simply could not be contained.

The Sword Spirit released a tremendous burst of medicinal efficacies within the space of his consciousness. It surged up turbulently while rushing forth to escape.

Chu Yang's body stretched out slowly as he lay on the ground. His posture did not change. However, others would certainly be envious of his comfort if they saw him right now.

It seemed as if his body didn't have any weight, and was floating.

It emitted a strong spirit energy that resided in living beings. The grass below his body straightened up to support his body. His whole body seemed to float above the tender grass. Surprisingly, the grass did not get pressed-down under his weight.

The efficacies inside his meridians entered his dantian like a massive whale. The Nine Tribulations Sword absorbed the efficacies in his dantian and released pure power. Then it issued a peculiar spiraling power which rushed forward like the mighty Yangtze River to impact upon the bottleneck.

Boom!

Boom!

Chu Yang's body shook slightly due continuous impacts. However, he could not feel it at that moment. His entire mind was focused on his spiritual consciousness. He was completely oblivious to what was happening to his body on the outside.

The spirit energy gathered in an invisible form in the sky above the Lotus Lake. Then it dashed downwards violently. It took the shape of a small tornado and entered his body hurriedly through his mouth and nose.

The dim-lit night was still quiet and lonely.

... ...

Yin Wu Tian and Jing Meng Hun sighed. A worried frown appeared on their faces. They wanted to find Young Master Ye. [Finding Young Master Ye is as difficult as ascending to the heaven.]

[Besides, what can we possibly do even if we find him out? He was capable of rivaling Young Master Yu's divine power. But what will we possibly achieve even if the two of us were to use all our abilities...?]

They might be able to kill Young Master Ye if he was somehow unable to escape the surroundings... if all the masters of the

Golden Horse Riders Department teamed up without caring about their lives and death... if they risked their lives to join forces... and if they used overwhelming superiority of numbers.

However, even if they killed him after doing all this... they couldn't afford to pay such a huge price. In addition, Golden Horse Riders Department's had no matching strength to cope up with this super expert.

After all, Golden Horse Riders Department was merely a way to provide assistance to the king's influence. They could cope with a general army and destroy them. But they were not strong enough... to handle a super-expert like that!

Both of them sat silently on the city wall; taken over by worries. Suddenly, Jing Meng Hun raised his eyebrow and said, "What was that sound? How can there be such a strong energy field?"

Yin Wu Tian's ears twitched slightly as he said in a dismissing tone, "It's just King Level Master Jun practicing martial arts. It's nothing more. Moreover, he is close to a breakthrough."

Jing Meng Hun leant his ear to one side. He stopped for a moment to observe the density of the spirit energy in the tornado that had just appeared in the sky. He continued to perceive for a long time. Then he broke into laughter and said, "Is the so-called King level expert of the Middle Three Heavens such a mediocre?"

"He is just ordinary and nothing more," Yin Wu Tian snorted disdainfully.

They had believed that King Level Master Jun had such fame and power since he was a high-ranking King level expert. However, they realized that he was nothing more than a low level King level expert. So they felt quite indifferent about it.

However, they did not know that the real cultivation level of Chu Yang was just Fourth Grade Revered Sword Artist. Contrary to their belief that he was a low level King level expert, he was

actually several grades below it!

They would probably not have been disdainful, and would have been rather shocked if they knew that Chu Yang had the cultivation of a preliminary Revered Sword Artist; that he had exercised a special martial technique to draw out king level fluctuations.

The space seemed to tremble with a slight fluctuation as invisible ripples spread out.

“He broke through,” Yin Wu Tian’s ears fluttered again. He said this in a way which indicated that he was overcome with boredom.

“I didn’t know that this guy who was trapped in this bottleneck for many years… would surprisingly make a breakthrough at this time, and happen to demonstrate it to us,” Jing Meng Hun said as the corners of his lips curled up. “But he didn’t think that his demonstration would reveal his real shitty level, did he?”

“Ha ha… ” Yin Wu Tian gave a hollow laugh as a reaction to Jing Meng Hun’s joke since it didn’t seem much like one.

“It seems like you are worried about something since the past few days?” Jing Meng Hun frowned and looked at his sworn younger brother. It was clear from his demeanor that something was wrong.

“It’s nothing,” Yin Wu Tian said while pondering for a long time. Suddenly, he said in a low voice, “Big Brother, say… what will be the consequences… if I kill Cheng Yu He?”

“What?” Jing Meng Hun was shocked. He looked around hurriedly and scolded him in a low voice, “What nonsense are you saying? Have you gone mad?”

Chapter 337: Diwu Qing Rou in action

“I have been wishing to do this for a long time.” Yin Wu Tian groaned. He looked extremely desolate, “This thing... is what I want to do!”

“Shut up!” Jing Meng Hun strictly said, “You are not to kill someone! Do you know who Cheng Yun is? Kill him? How can you even say that!”

“My elder brother’s legs were paralyzed by Cheng Yun He. That deceitful man cannot get away with this!” Yin Wu Tian said as he ferociously gritted his teeth.

“You are insane! Young Master Ye was a crafty guy!” Jing Meng Hun said angrily, “He said these words and you believed him?”

“Young Master Ye was obviously not a good person; but that does not mean that his knowledge and experience were also bogus.” Yin Wu Tian grunted. “We’ve already studied about it extensively, and have finally formed a unanimous opinion that this is a peculiar type of martial art that directly harms the meridians; that too... acutely.”

“But Young Master Ye took a quick look at it, and said that it was the invisible sword energy!” Yin Wu Tian said, “That is absolutely not a lie!”

“Even if it’s not a lie... what relation does Cheng Yun He have with it? He is just a weak scholar!” Jing Meng Hun was flustered. If he could not get Yin Wu Tian to dispel this thought, and if Yin Wu Tian really were to kill Cheng Yun He...

Then he would certainly be done for!

Diwu Qing Rou regarded Cheng Yun He as an important confidante. How would he tolerate it if Yin Wu Tian killed Cheng Yun He?

“Only he had the opportunity to pull this off!” Yin Wu Tian said

indifferently, “He inevitably knows the facts even if he did not do it.” His eyes radiated with hatred, “Don’t tell me that my elder brother’s legs were disabled in vain… I won’t accept that!”

“Fourth brother!” Jing Meng Hun strictly shouted in gloomy manner. He then said in a low voice, “This matter has rotten your heart… ”

When he said these words, Yin Wu Tian immediately realized that Jing Meng Hun also seemed to have the same suspicion.

“Rotten my heart… ” Yin Wu Tian laughed bitterly. His eyes flashed coldly as he said in an inaudible voice, “Obviously it has… he is my blood brother… my brother and I, are the children of the same mother… we share the same blood and are connected by it… ”

Jing Meng Hun was silent for a while. He stared blankly at Yin Wu Tian. They couldn’t say anything further and only looked at each other in daze. Suddenly, there was a deathly stillness in the tent.

… …

Diwu Qing Rou returned to his palace, and the first thing he did after returning was write a letter. Then he clapped his hands and the wall behind him started distorting… as if it was a living thing…

A strange shadow separated from the wall and came out after sometime. It was similar to the shadow of an illusory bird.

Diwu Qing Rou rolled up that letter. He rubbed his hands together, and changed it into a small ball. Then, he stuffed it into that illusory bird’s mouth.

Then, that illusory bird began its retreat into the wall. And when it touched the wall – it suddenly began distorting again with a fit of ripples, and slowly returned to normal.

That strange bird had disappeared into the wall in an instant; it was nowhere to be seen.

Diwu Qing Rou sat calmly on a chair. His eyes flickered with sharp rays of light. It was hard to know what he was thinking. A long time passed. He clapped his hands and said, “Summon Han Bu Chu, Cheng Yun He, as well as the generals of the eight big war-zones and the high-ranking officials of the Ministry of Arms, the Ministry of Revenue and the Ministry of Appointments, etc. All personnel must hurry to me before tomorrow afternoon!”

There was a resolve to cement every idea in Diwu Qing Rou’s voice! It was callous and cold!

“Yes.” the people outside the study room responded.

Diwu Qing Rou rubbed his temples as he slowly paced back and forth. A long time passed. He suddenly decided something. He stood in front of the window as he thought aloud, “This is the day when I will overturn the world!”

He turned around and flicked his fingers. A big map dropped with a swishing sound, and opened-up on the opposite wall.

This map was about thirty feet wide, and ten feet long.

The terrain drawn on it was very thorough and detailed.

In the middle of the map were two words in red... written by Diwu Qing Rou: Iron Cloud!

This was the map of Iron Cloud Nation.

“Crafty plots, schemes and trickery are merely the means to achieve a goal; though useful, but their usefulness is not very much. The real decisive power is displayed on the battlefield!” Diwu Qing Rou muttered, “If nine ways to attack... ”

His gaze fell on the border of Iron Cloud and Great Zhao. Both the parties had been fighting here for hundreds of years; in that very region!

It was merely the thickness of a finger on the map, and its span was no longer than an arm’s length. However, the lives of millions

of excellent soldiers had been lost in this region over the past several hundreds of years.

These two countries had been fighting bravely and endlessly. They followed the simply principle of — you attack and I will retaliate.

Here was a battlefield. It comprised of dozens of high mountains, several hundred cities and canyons; a large-scale battlefield. Moreover, the area was vast and the span was awfully long. It was so vast that even when people screamed... the voice could not travel to the mountains nearby.

As the areas separated, it was obvious that the voices became more and more inaudible.

The war had been fought using the same military tactic over the past few years — deploy the troops on this side to mislead the enemy, and then attack from the other side. The other party would reach a stalemate after meeting the enemy troops head-on. Then both sides would call for reinforcements...

This region wasn't small. Moreover, it far exceeded the category of an ordinary battlefield. It would be capable of holding million if a large-scale battle were to occur. But, bluntly speaking, the famous generals of the past had already put their brains into utilizing this terrain.

Every mountain-top had some exceptionally good strategic spots that were obviously remembered by both sides.

But even so... there were always people who prepared ambush in these spots, and there were always some who got killed or injured...

This place had become the 'battleground of the fighting spirits' for the two nations of Iron Cloud and Great Zhao.

Millions of soldiers' bones were buried in this place. If it won't be called this... what better a-name would it have?

“King of Hell Chu, the plots and schemes are merely a bypath. Let’s contend in the battlefield for supremacy, and see each other’s true capabilities!” Diwu Qing Rou muttered, “King of Hell Chu, Tie Bu Tian, Tie Long Cheng! Let us decide here — who will rule the world!

… …

Chu Yang had already completed his evolution to ‘Fifth Grade Revered Sword Artist’! He was still lying on the thick patch of grass, and was still looking at the starry sky.

[It is almost daybreak now. I’m afraid the sound of tossing and turning will be heard during broad daylight if I dive into the water now.]

[That kind of sound will certainly be very loud.]

He wanted to ensure that the fight took place in the evening. Therefore, he needed to go into the water in the afternoon. And he would need to get close to finding the third fragment while the evening approached. An underwater-fight like that would be reflected on the water surface… and would also take time…

[It will happen at night!]

[I have a whole day of free time.]

Chu Yang was unconsciously thinking; [don’t know how things are with Master and Tan Tan in the Middle Three Heavens? Would Qing Wu be happy on receiving those presents that I sent? Will she smile?]

[I wonder what my brothers are up to. Has Gu Du Xing already given that present to Gu Miao Ling? Is he still troubled because I killed those two?]

[Ji Mo and Luo Ke Di must have reached Cang Lang Battlefront… they won’t be in danger right?]

A person’s image suddenly appeared in his mind while he lost in

his thoughts — Wu Qian Qian! A pair of resentful eyes was looking at him. Chu Yang had a scare, and hastily shook his head; but this time the person staring at him was... Tie Bu Tian!

The Emperor of Iron Cloud was looking at him. Although the gaze was gentle... it had deep expectations.

Then Diwu Qing Rou's face appeared.

Chu Yang closed his eyes and laughed bitterly. Things had been very colourful since his rebirth. He was constantly busy; it had been such a long time since he had rested for even half-a-day...

He had personal matters to deal with, besides public affairs... After that, he'd spend a great amount of time practicing martial arts in order to make his own body break through several thresholds...

Some time had passed in the morning. Chu Yang, Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian were sitting together harmoniously, and were having breakfast. Everyone talked and laughed together happily.

However, Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian's faces looked very tired. It was obvious by their appearance that they hadn't slept well in the past few days. But Minister Chu was full of vigor.

Yin Wu Tian tried to look for several fishermen at noon, and made them go underwater in order to bring several lotus roots — which they did. But none of them had more than seven joints.

Chu Yang sighed as he watched.

Jing Meng Hun received a summon in the afternoon. He hurriedly returned to Prime Minister's palace once they were done eating and drinking.

Yin Wu Tian got drunk; he dizzily went to find someone to take his place and proceed with the job, but came back empty-handed.

Minister Chu shook his head and sighed.

Yin Wu Tian seemed as if he couldn't bear the anger, and was

fuming with rage; though, he didn't say it. It went without saying that the Fourth King Level Master was having a bad time these past few days. And to make things worse... he had to look after this King Level Master Jun Qing Yang who had simply flushed all his expectations down the drain. As a result, he simply could not hold the anger in his stomach anymore. It felt like his stomach was about to explode...

"Great Zhao... Great Zhao has the reputation of being the wealthiest in the whole world. But it is actually mediocre!" King level Master Jun Qing Yang cynical remarked in his demonic voice. Yin Wu Tian covered up his face. He wanted to run away and hide.

"Moreover, this is Continent Centre is the richest place in Great Zhao... " Jun Qing Yang's voice was so monstrous and painstakingly mystical that it could make a man shiver.

"It had a reputation of having illustrious heroes... " King Level Master Jun Qing Yang clicked his tongue and continued, " ... surprisingly can't even find a nine joints lotus root... "

Yin Wu Tian's face turned black; it almost resembled an iron slab while he stood stupefied.

"It seems that this vast Lotus Lake can only breed fish... " King Level Master Jun Qing Yang sighed melodiously.

"Wrong. It's not like our Great Zhao isn't 'great' because it does not have what you seek... and lotus root is only a means to save life." Yin Wu Tian retorted. He was unable to restrain his anger, and spoke in a muffled voice, "You haven't paid attention to our martial arts properly... "

"Tch tch... don't tell me you will make this King Level Master go down in person?" Jun Qing Yang said as he squinting at him.

[If not for Prime Minister Diwu's order... I would have kicked this bastard into the lake!] A trace of cold flashed in Yin Wu Tian's eyes as he said, "I can't dare to stop King Level Master Jun if he has

such a graceful attitude."

"Hey... it seems like I don't have a better option. I guess I'll personally have to go into the water." King Level Master Jun Qing Yang stretched his legs. He exercised his waist, and began to take off his clothes.

"I pray that he goes inside the water and drown to death. I hope that the weeds entangle him, and suffocate him to death. I beseech that his body lies at the bottom, and rots there!" Yin Wu Tian maliciously prayed to the Gods in the secrecy of his heart. However, he appeared to be deeply concerned on the surface. He said, "Brother Jun, don't tell me you are really going to go down?"

"Brother Jun? Ha ha ha... " Jun Qing Yang waved his bare arms monstrously. He exhibited the eye-catching scar that stretched all the way from his chest to his belly, and then wound around him like a giant centipede. He said with an odd smile, "Fourth King Level Master, "Brother Jun" are the two words that you cannot say. Although my status is quite humble... but hey, have you heard of Dark Bamboo?"

Yin Wu Tian was barely restrained himself from fainting.

Chapter 338: Clouds of War Linger

Yin Wu Tian unflinchingly looked at that grim scar on King Level Master Jun's belly. He gritted his teeth as he frantically cursed in his heart, [why did your opponent's have to be negligent back then. He would've ripped-open your chest if he had used a bit more of his strength, ah. He has left a disaster like you alive... that guy really infuriates me...]

"Please do as you wish!" Yin Wu Tian turned around and said. He clenched his teeth as he restrained himself by saying just these few words.

"Naturally, I will do as I please. Don't tell me that I need your orders; now do I?" Jun Qing Yang laughed heartily. With a splash, he dived into the water like a big fish.

The sky was already somewhat dark.

Yin Wu Tian bellowed as he looked up at the sky. He somehow suppressed his chest from exploding with anger, and settled down a bit.

"Go away!" Yin Wu Tian ordered in an angry voice.

"But... Sir... the sky is already dark. This Lotus Lake has sludge under the water; it is dangerous. That gentleman who went down... we should wait for him." a fisherman suggested timidly.

"He can go to hell!" Yin Wu Tian said furiously, "He can drown to death for all I care! Go! Go! Go! You all go away from here!" He took out several silver ingots and tossed them towards that group of fisherman in order to drive them away.

Then, he furiously returned to his tent. He lifted a jug of wine, and drank half of it in one ago. Then he roared, "No one is allowed to go to the lakeside! If you hear any sound... pretend as if you did not hear anything! Is it clear?!"

The subordinates around him were confused. But this King level

expert was in a fit of rage... who would dare to provoke him? It was a wiser option to let it go. Even the sentry was also withdrawn from the dark lakeside.

This Lotus Lake was still in-control, and no big disorder could be produced in it. In fact, many people were puzzled as to why so many of them had been asked to monitor it.

King Level Master Jun Qing Yang came out of the lake's surface a little while later. He was accompanied by a thunderous noise. He then roared in a hoarse voice, "A few people should come with me!"

Yin Wu Tian heard this and sneered. He whispered, "Go away; I cannot hear you! I am not paying any attention to you!"

King Level Master Jun again shouted, "is everyone dead?"

Still no sound.

"Where is everyone? Where are the fishermen?" King Level Master Jun furiously raised his voice; Yin Wu Tian kept ignoring him.

King Level Master Jun dived into the water once again.

Yin Wu Tian triumphantly laughed. He was immensely pleased with himself. He ordered again: hide a little further.

Again after a while, King Level Master Jun appeared on the surface and said, "Several people had come here, ah. You all... where have you all gone to die?"

He clamoured again, but no one paid any attention to him. He angrily rained curses for a while, and then immersed back into the lake with a crashing sound.

Diwu Qing Rou was convening his life's most important military conference while Chu Yang was diving down the Lotus Lake.

The security was tight in the Prime Minister's palace. There was a policeman's beat at every three steps, and there was a sentry at

every five.

In the middle of a big hall

Valiant generals had gathered like clouds, and advisors like rain. They had all gathered under one roof.

All the key figures of the Great Zhao had gathered here.

Matters had been unceasingly arising in the Great Zhao these past days. High-ranking generals had been called back by Diwu Qing Rou... besides the big regiments that were carrying out the suppression of Limitless Nation.

The people had a clear feeling of premonition, [Prime Minister has gathered all the power to form a fist again! But this fist will determine the fate of the world when it strikes!]

Therefore, they immediately rushed back like a cat that had smelled a fish when they got Diwu Qing Rou's summons. They arrived early, and the first thing they did after returning was to rush to the Prime Minister's palace. They had all been pacing back and forth outside the entrance for more than an hour ever since...

The ones who were farther away... immediately spurred their horses the same night and made a return trip. Some even tired two horses to death, only to discover that they were a bit early.

They eagerly waited for Diwu Qing Rou to speak once they saw solemn expression on his face.

"Everyone has been gathered to discuss a matter," Diwu Qing Rou said as he knocked on the table top. "Sit down. Don't just keep standing foolishly!"

Everyone sat down one after the other upon being mocked.

Han Bu Chu was sitting near the front wall, which was located opposite to everyone. He pulled a huge map. The map dropped with a swishing sound and opened up. There were two words in the middle of the map — Iron Cloud. The eyes of these battle

trained generals immediately lit-up as a chill ran down their bodies.

Diwu Qing Rou's blue robe fluttered as he came in front of the map. He looked at each of them, one by one, with a deep meaningful look in his eyes. He then lightly said, "Gentlemen, today you have been summoned here... because you all must do something as if your life depends on it!"

Everyone's breathing was obstructed, while their eyes couldn't help but involuntarily blaze-up.

"Gentlemen! Raise our heads and look around. The day you were looking forward to — has arrived!" Diwu Qing Rou suddenly turned back and pointed to the map of Iron Cloud Nation's countless rivers and mountains. He then shouted, "Gentlemen, who amongst you wants to be the first to storm Iron Cloud's interior regions?"

The atmosphere of the entire hall was set ablaze.

No one made any movements. However, the hall was boiling with a desire for war; in fact, this desire was so fervent that it was enough to set the world on fire.

"Gentlemen, who wants to be the first to put my Great Zhao imperial flag on top of Iron Cloud Citadel?" Diwu Qing Rou spoke in a profound voice.

"Who can bring me the severed head of Tie Long Cheng?"

"Who can behead King of hell Chu, and bring me his head?"

"Who can bring me Tie Bu Tian with his hands tied?"

Diwu Qing Rou came up with a series of questions. He practically expedited an uncontrollable battle urge inside these valiant generals until they couldn't contain such raw urge. They clenched their fists and started gasping.

Their eyes radiated a vicious and bloody blood-lust!

“This war will decide the fate of the entire Nine Heavens Continent!” Diwu Qing Rou sounded solemn and dignified, “This war will be recorded in the history of Nine Heavens for eternity. It would be immortal even after ten thousand years!”

“The names of all who take part in it will be handed down forever in the Nine Heavens Continent. Their glorious achievements would become a legend!”

“This war will be aimed to seize the throne of the world!”

“This war will decide the ruler of world under the blue dome of heaven. It will decide who shall govern the ways of this world — who shall control the fate of people!”

Diwu Qing Rou’s voice was insipid, yet it went straight to a person’s heart; through and through. It awoke their deep-seated ‘warmongering militant’ blood. They felt as if they were under a spell.

“Prime Minister! Please give us your command!” a general with dragon whiskers clamoured.

“Prime Minister, please command us!” The crowd’s emotions were boiling fiercely. Everyone stood up and started to clamour.

“Very well then!” Diwu Qing Rou looked at them disdainfully from the corners of his eyes as he declared, “I will go in person to the battlefield this time. I will be in charge of the three armed services!”

Boom!

This declaration appeared like an explosion, and everyone was stirred up by it. [Prime Minister will personally go to war?]

The scene of following Diwu Qing Rou, and the attack without any exception to victory streaked before everyone’s eyes. This generation’s legendary military counsellor and unrivalled-famed general had personally undertaken the task.

“Do not move the troops and the horses yet; rations and fodder will take precedence.” Diwu Qing Rou then shouted, “Sir Liang!”

“Your humble subordinate is here!” A forty-fifty year old official stood up.

“Transfer each and every province’s government repositories, and stock them. Transport army provisions to the Northwest! The more the better; there must not be any mistake!”

“Understood!”

“And fodder for the warhorses; I do not need to say I presume?”

“Yes! Everything is already prepared for use.”

“Good!” Diwu Qing Rou said in a dense tone, “This war is extremely important. Entire Great Zhao would be consigned to eternal damnation if even one link goes wrong! No one will be forgiven if there is even the slightest negligence on their part. They will be immediately beheaded!”

“Yes!”

“All warhorses in Great Zhao’s nine great horse fields have already been tamed. Tell all the cavalry soldiers to set out with their warhorses and towards the north in the next few days! Remember, what I said… all!”

“Yes!”

“Sir Jin!” Diwu Qing Rou turned towards another person.

“The subordinate is at your service!”

“Take out all the weaponry from the reserve. Spare no effort and make it your priority to enrich the northwest battlefront using the best weapons.”

“Yes!”

“Sir Ye!”

“The subordinate is here!”

“Enlist all the doctors of Great Zhao in the army with immediate effect. Let them devote their lives to the cause! Anyone who defies the command or refuses to follow it — kill them without mercy! Wipe out his nine generations!”

“Yes!” Sir Ye’s face was immediately covered in cold sweat.

“Is there a problem?” Diwu Qing Rou looked at him sternly.

“No! No problem!” Sir Ye quivered as felt a pair of evil eyes looking at him. He felt as if he had been ruthlessly surrounded by wolves and tigers; he almost pissed himself.

“Sir Wu!”

“The subordinate is here!”

“Open up the reserves of all regions; Department of Land Tax, as well as the national treasury and the silver treasury!”

“Yes!”

“It is impossible for this war to end overnight. It is quite possible that it would be long drawn out; pass my order to all — starting today, the entire Great Zhao’s taxes will be raised to double! They will be used for the war! They may be exempted from paying taxes for three years after the war ends!”

"Yes!"

“Newcomers must hurry up and train. The follow-up units must prepare to set-out at any time!”

Diwu Qing Rou continuously issued orders. All the instructions regarding the preparatory work were spoken from his mouth — they were thorough and detailed regardless of how insignificant.

They need to follow Diwu Qing Rou’s orders. It was necessary to accomplish each of these small tasks appropriately; they were all necessary in order to prepare for this war.

“Fighting a war is the same as fighting a shortage of money!” Diwu Qing Rou said, “Each of these things is the same as money!

The war cannot be fought without money! So… the money reserve must be sufficient! King Level Master Jing Meng Hun, take out the entire stock reserved by Golden Horse Riders Department!”

Jing Meng Hun hurriedly replied, “Yes!”

“The ‘behind the frontline’ coordination and planning will be totally handed over to Han Bu Chu and Cheng Yun He!” Diwu Qing Rou pulled out a jade card and held it up in his hand, “This jade card is my personal faith token! Think of this jade as me! If anyone dares to agree in public, but opposes in secret — you two shall spare no effort in dealing with such crafty individuals. You may kill them at any time! There is no need to report it to me either!”

“Yes!” Han Bu Chu and Cheng Hun Ye both stood up and stepped forward. They respectfully took this jade card. It was currently representing the highest authority in Great Zhao.

“Bu Chu, Yu He; keep in mind… that the rear stability is a must to help us in prevailing over the enemy!” Diwu Qing Rou said prudently in a solemn voice, “Therefore… the back-end cannot have any disorder! Understood?”

“Prime Minister should rest assured! The two of us will sacrifice our lives, but will never dare to let down your trust!”

“Very good. Bu Chu and senior generals will stay behind, while all others can immediately leave for preparations!” Diwu Qing Rou said as he waved his hand.

“Yes!” Everyone knew that they were going to discuss the real secrets now! Even the smallest leak was enough to affect the outcome of the battle. No one had any unnecessary curiosity regarding this sort of matter.

The lesser one knew the better!

“Jing Meng Hun!”

“At your service!”

“Inform Li Jin Song of ‘Beyond the Heavens’ sect to move into action!”

“Yes!”

Jing Meng Hun immediately agreed.

“Li Jin Song won’t be able to make a big impact now, but he can disrupt Tie Bu Tian’s line of sight to some extent.” Diwu Qing Rou said faintly, “Furthermore, send out a letter in my name, and gather Great Zhao’s guardian sects for the war!”

"Yes!"

“Du Shi Qing’s family members must also play a role when the time comes,” Diwu Qing Rou insipidly said.

“Eh?” The matter that Jing Meng Hun had been afraid of... had finally happened. His face immediately turned face pale.

Chapter 339: This is Diwu Qing Rou!

"Command them to issue a circular in Du Shi Qing's name. Get in touch with the aristocratic clan sects which used to favor Du Shi Qing! Keep in mind the things we have agreed upon; you have to say exactly the same to them!"

Diwu Qing Rou spoke with confidence, "This will not decide the outcome of war. However, we will obtain a lot of manpower. That will greatly strengthen us!"

"Also, spread this rumor — Du Shi Qing has gone missing... Do you know how?" Diwu Qing Rou was talking idly about important matters as he organized the plans.

He contemplated and realized that it would be very difficult to win this war even if his wisdom, and Great Zhao's manpower and resources were put to use.

[I must win... no matter what.]

He was engrossed in his little smug moment. Suddenly, he noticed that Jing Meng Hun's complexion had turned pale. His body was also shivering slightly, while his forehead was covered in cold sweat.

"Seems like something's up. What is it?" He couldn't help but inquire.

Jing Meng Hun was sweating profusely. This First King level expert could no longer stand steadily. He spoke in a stammering voice, "Prime Minister, there... there is a little... a little problem..."

"Hmm?" Diwu Qing Rou's complexion turned pale.

He was feeling a pang of sadness in his heart.

[What time is it now? — The time to boost morale! And you are stammering and looking all flustered... Isn't that an indication of something inauspicious? Moreover, would it not give rise to bad

thoughts in everyone's mind if a man of your stature behaves in such a way?]

"What is the problem, King Level Master Jing?" Diwu Qing Rou's looked at him keenly. It seemed as if a hawk was looking at its prey.

"Prime Minister, I have something to report..." Jing Meng Hun knew that he could not drag it any longer. He fell to his knees and said, "This subordinate is guilty... Du Shi Qing's family members mysteriously disappeared a few days ago... I sent many groups to investigate, but didn't find anything..."

Diwu Qing Rou's hand had been stroking his beard; suddenly, it stopped moving.

This was a very strange feeling.

Diwu Qing Rou's painstaking efforts to create the atmosphere of decisive battle... the sense of urgency... the feeling of sure-shot victory... the confident war planning — all this was suddenly destroyed beyond repair.

This situation could be compared to that of a person who has diarrhea and is squatting to flood the latrine pit... However, just when it was about to happen... that person suddenly had constipation... His rear got choked and nothing came out...

Diwu Qing Rou had an impulse to kick Jing Meng Hun to death as he saw him kneel. Jing Meng Hun had knelt only twice in front of Diwu Qing Rou.

The first time was when he had joined Diwu Qing Rou. Now was the second time. Diwu Qing Rou usually didn't allow Jing Meng Hun to kneel since he held the authority of the First King Level Master of Golden Horse Riders Department.

However, Jing Meng Hun was on his knees since he was aware of the affects of this incident... and the sort of reaction it would provoke out of Diwu Qing Rou...

This is why he didn't hide the incident, and told about it.

He could have waited to explain later if it was an ordinary situation. After all, it was too much to blurt out on such an occasion. However, Diwu Qing Rou had included Du Shi Qing's family members in his plans.

Jing Meng Hun was familiar with Diwu Qing Rou's character and working methods — Diwu Qing Rou always advanced step-by-step; while fortifying each step! He arranged each and every matter with his own hands. Even an insignificant matter could turn into a big-bad thing that could ruin the entire nation when pushed forward by Diwu Qing Rou. Even a small conflict could turn so significant that it could topple high-ranking imperial officials from their position of power under Diwu Qing Rou's supervision.

Du Shi Qing's matter was raised at such an advanced stage of discussion... after waiting for so long... What did it represent? It represented the importance of Du Shi Qing's strong backing to supplement their war potential. Moreover, it was related to their war plans. Diwu Qing Rou would've deployed dozens of war generals to exploit the matter of 'the disappearance of a saintly doctor' as a tool for victory if Jing Meng Hun had executed the plan properly.

These high-ranking generals would leave the capital once the meeting came to an end. They would rush to the places where their respective troops were stationed the same night. Afterwards, they would exhaust themselves into making preparations as per Diwu Qing Rou's war plans.

In other words, Du Shi Qing's matter would be treated as a military mission.

But, what would he do when the time of Du Shi Qing's family emergence would come...?

This could shake the morale of the Three Armies, and might have serious repercussion.

Therefore, Jing Meng Hun didn’t dare to hide it. Moreover, he could only say it on the spot! Otherwise, Diwu Qing Rou would’ve made unpredictable changes in his plans, and the consequences could’ve been serious and beyond redemption.

“Disappeared..." Diwu Qing Rou’s eyes flashed. He gently put his hand down. He exhaled a long breath and said, "Gone missing... I see... they have gone missing..."

Then, he chuckled and said, "It's not a big deal. It was just supposed to be an icing on the cake. There will be no loss even if it’s not a part of the plan. King Level Master Jing shouldn’t take it very seriously."

Diwu Qing Rou’s forbearance was exceptional. His facial expression turned calm in the blink of an eye even after hearing such news. The fluctuations in his facial expressions were unnoticeable if not looked carefully.

[This thing has already happened. Scolding or punishing Jing Meng Hun in everyone’s presence would only make it worse. This might also affect the morale of the troops because these military general might start to feel that ‘everything has gone out of Prime Minister Diwu’s control'. That would really be awful.]

Therefore, Diwu Qing Rou displayed calmness... as if this matter was not worth mentioning.

However, Jing Meng Hun knew that he was going to be miserable soon.

It was estimated that he would be dealt with in the most horrible of ways as soon as this conference ended.

"We will proceed with the meeting now," Diwu Qing Rou smiled. He turned towards everyone and was about to speak when he realized that he could no longer use the speech he had prepared. ... he was unable to continue for a moment.

This sudden bad-news had made a fool out of him.

"Ah..." Suddenly, an idea came to his mind. He sighed and said, "I had been planning to make use of this matter for a long time. It was not really important. However, it could help reduce the casualties of our officers and soldiers if the war broke out."

Diwu Qing Rou's eyes were full of pain and sorrow. He looked at the generals and said, "This matter is inadequate now. I am very disappointed even though this matter is insignificant." His voice sounded extremely honest and sincere.

"Prime Minister, please do not worry about it. Even if this is inadequate now, you still have us. We will never disappoint you. Prime Minster, we will always be by your side," Han Bu Chu spoke like a typical sidekick. He had hastily stood up as he saw that the atmosphere had become depressing.

He knew that Diwu Qing Rou needed someone to interrupt and comfort him. Of course, Diwu Qing Rou did not need to be comforted. However, he definitely needed such a pretext.

"Right! I feel lively again... all thanks to you!" Diwu Qing Rou looked at him appreciatively. Then he continued, "How do you to fight in a war? With swords? With weapons? No! It's the people who fight in a war!

"Our soldiers are going on the expedition to unite the lands under the heaven! Each and every one of these men has a mother and a father who have raised them as their flesh and blood. They have a loving wife, children, and respectable parents waiting for them back home! However, they abandon everything and enlist in the army to go to the battlefield during the war... but for what?

"They do this for the Great Zhao! For our dream of uniting the world! For their homeland! To protect their nation!" Diwu Qing Rou said as his eyes turned red. His voice was full of pain as he said, "Countless capable soldiers have laid down their lives in that ice-cold battlefield ever since I — Diwu Qing Rou — assumed command of the army. ...those valiant men have turned into a pile

of bones. But their heroic souls still fly above our military flag...

"I cherish them!" Diwu Qing Rou looked towards the generals with eyes full of emotions, "I, Diwu Qing Rou, cherish them! For my officers, for my brothers, for my fellow soldiers, for my ministers! I, Diwu Qing Rou, am willing to use all sorts of crafty plots and schemes... just in order to attain a safe living space where they all can live in peace.

"I, Diwu Qing Rou, am willing to bear an evil reputation for them. I am more than willing to use any means beyond the battlefield... even if it is despicable and dirty. I will gladly bear all these charges... And that is because each of my arrangements and conspiracies can save many of my soldiers from dying.

"And I can do anything to achieve this goal!" Diwu Qing Rou said in a sorrowful tone, "I shall conspire even if I have to use my own blood to fuel it. It will be worthwhile if it can save even one soldier from dying.

"Therefore, I am very disappointed by King Level Master Jing's mistake..." Diwu Qing Rou raised his head and closed his eyes. He continued, "... because this will get hundreds or perhaps thousands of my brothers killed in the battlefield. I... am unwilling to let that happen!

"I am unwilling to let that happen! I am unwilling to let go, ah..." Diwu Qing Rou caressed his chest and heaved a long sigh. His voice was hoarse. It seemed as if it had come straight from the depths of his heart.

"Prime Minister!" More than 30 high-ranking officers and generals of the Great Zhao stood up, and knelt down before Diwu Qing Rou; a neat clamor echoed in the hall.

Everyone's eyes were filled with glistening tears since their emotions had been stirred up.

Diwu Qing Rou's speech didn't come off as an argument or an

excuse. However, it did a splendid job of eliminating the doubts from everyone's minds.

Only a good commander empathizes with his soldiers and cares about the life of each and every one of his subordinates.

Soldiers go thousands of miles away from their homeland to break through the enemy lines. They get thirsty, covered in blood, stranded, and sleep in their saddles. There's no guarantee of them living tomorrow even if they are alive now! But what do they do this for?

Their monthly pay cannot even buy them a 'cup of the tea' the nobles drink. However, they still put their lives on the line. For what?

Sometimes, a letter from the hometown can make the entire camp wail at the same time. Sometimes a proclamation letter of breaking off the engagement can depress the entire battalion. Sometimes, such iron-blooded men die together at the hands of the enemy...

...these soldiers hadn't even succeeded in obtaining rank, fame or fortune. Their future and fate could betray them at any time. What they really needed was recognition. They wanted someone to understand and acknowledge their sacrifice. Only that could support these soldiers in persevering the thousands of miles of that border region.

And Diwu Qing Rou's speech had been like the highest form of recognition and praise.

All the great generals felt sour inside their noses as a warm feeling nestled in their hearts. If this speech would be relayed to the troops... then it would be enough to make every soldier of the Great Zhao to charge forward and break through the enemy lines for Diwu Qing Rou. They wouldn't bat an eye even if they were to die!

They would die with a smile on the faces if they came to know that they would be putting their lives-on-the-line for such a commander.

This speech was more effective than any pre-war mobilization speech!

Chapter 340: Poisonous Flood Dragon!

“Don’t worry, Prime Minister. We will sweep the world down for you… even if we die horrible deaths doing it!” the crowd bellowed in unison.

“Gentlemen, I request you take care of yourselves — for me, for Great Zhao, and even more so… for your own family and elders!” Diwu Qing Rou’s expression was solemn as he respectfully cupped his fists.

“Prime Minister… ” some people couldn’t help but choke with emotion. They felt that they would have no regrets even if they were to drop dead for the sake of Prime Minister…

“If you haven’t understood my request clearly — I need you to give it all you have.” Diwu Qing Rou spoke in a heavy voice, “Do you have confidence in me? Are you prepared for it?”

“Prime Minister! We have confidence in you! We are prepared!” everyone roared in unison, “As soldiers, we are already prepared to lay down our lives on the battlefield! In the army, a real man is the one who gives his life on the battlefield! Only he has lived the best life! That is the best destination for a true soldier!”

“Good!” Diwu Qing Rou’s profound and dignified gaze had an intense reluctance to abandon them; almost as if it was a deep and unknown emotion which could not be explained in words. He looked at everyone’s faces one-by-one. His look was that of attentiveness. It seemed full of emotion but also had an air of a strange yet strong determination to it.

Everyone could feel the same thing… it was as if their old father was standing at their house’s door the first time they were about the go-out to the battlefield… and he was staring at them… with an affectionate gaze which was unwilling to let go of them…

They could vaguely remember the cold breeze which had blown

past the willow tree... and the sandstorms on the precepts of the antiquity...

The cold breeze was still the same. The willow tree still danced. Sand still flew on the precepts of antiquity... it would often float into the eyes of people, and would turn into painful tears...

But that white-haired old father... where had he gone off to...?

The deepest emotion buried within everyone's hearts had been stirred up Diwu Qing Rou's gaze. These people had welled-up with the softest of emotions... just as does for their closest relatives. They all looked at Diwu Qing Rou's static gaze, and their hearts were suddenly moved. They were filled with aching, yet bittersweet warmth.

The hall where these generals had gathered was suddenly filled with warmth.

Diwu Qing Rou slowly ran his eyes all around, and noticed that there was no hesitation on their faces. Rather, everyone felt: [Prime Minister... it seems as if he has wedged our faces deep within his heart...]

[He'd never forget us his entire life!]

The eyes of everyone who thought so... turned red. They felt as if their hearts had been oppressed. And a tremendous force had risen within their boiling blood. ...it would be difficult to contain if it wasn't allowed to erupt.

"Next, I will announce the combat plan. Each major regiment is required to station at their assigned positions and coordinate with the others. They must set focus to their respective combat missions within two months... " Diwu Qing Rou's voice was very gentle. However, there was a pin-drop silence in the hall, and everyone could hear him clearly.

The darkness was profound in this dim-lit night. Diwu Qing Rou stood at the doorway of the hall.

The officers and soldiers who would soon set off to battle walked past him one after the other.

Each and every general would arrive in front of him. Then, they would salute him in a dignified and solemn manner with an upright body. Diwu Qing Rou also stood in the same manner no matter who passed him. He would pat them on the shoulder, and would say a few words.

“Heizi(1), do you remember the last time I saw you? You only led fifty men… and ran way. Now you are the commander-in-chief of a battalion of hundred thousand men… do not disappoint me.”

“Young Eagle(2)! I remember I gave you this nickname; ha ha, you were on the hilltop, and you were training an eagle back then. You were a young and intelligent guy…”

“Iron Rod(3)! This man! To this date your body seems like an iron rod…”

Diwu Qing Rou eyes were brimming with emotion as he looked at each and every of these generals. He was familiar with all of them. He called them by their childhood names so thoughtlessly that it seemed as if their appearance and information were engraved in his heart.

Every person whose shoulder was patted by his gentle palm was suddenly infused with an indescribable strength. They felt their hearts tremble fiercely, [Prime Minister still remembers me! Prime Minister did not forget me! He still remembers my childhood name! He remembers what I did for him! … he remembers…!]

[Prime Minister would pat on my shoulder every time I was ordered to go to war! Today — he is doing it once again!]

[I have never failed in my mission whenever Prime Minister has patted my shoulder! It will be the same now!]

[I won’t fail!]

[We are unrivalled!]

“Whinny…” the warhorses neighed as their front hooves rose up in the air.

One of the generals was sitting upright on the back of that horse. He had just used his legs to control the horse. His body rose high along with horse’s body. He cupped his hands with a solemn look on his face, and spoke loudly, “Prime Minister! I leave today. But I will be waiting for you at the end of the Northern Border. I will be there when you take the field yourself! We will bring the blood of countless Iron Cloud soldiers, and serve it along with your wine when the time comes!”

“Good!"

Diwu Qing Rou’s voice hadn’t yet faded when the horse’s hooves fell to the ground as it turned around with perfection. The horse’s hooves raced as if they were like arrows that had left the bow and had flown-out with a whooshing sound.

The tall and majestic figure on the horse’s back appeared motionless and upright. He never turned back as his silhouette vanished in the darkness of the night.

He was immediately followed by the second person.

“Prime Minister! I will say goodbye until the final stage!”

“Prime Minister! The Northern border’s winds and clouds shall hold a welcoming reception for you!”

“Prime Minister! I will personally behead Tie Long Cheng after the victory and request you to join me in the celebration!”

"Prime Minister… ”

The neighing and rising sounds of the galloping horses were endless.

Diwu Qing Rou stood in front of the door with his hands crossed behind his back. He was looking into the distance. His tall and straight figure appeared solemn. He resembled a senior general

stationed under the army flag. He seemed certain of victory. He had faith in his eyes as he gazed at his loyal troops.

The situation changed after they said their goodbyes. The world had suddenly turned upside down.

The hoof beats gradually disappeared as the officers went further away.

Diwu Qing Rou's hands were still crossed behind his back, and he still had the same solemn look on his face. But, he was flaming inside. He muttered, "King of Hell Chu... how can cheap your tricks substitute the manpower and military strength that Diwu has accumulated?"

Suddenly, he turned around and entered the palace in big strides. He then shouted, "Jing Meng Hun! Come here!"

... ...

Chu Yang dived-in like a big fish, and swam underwater in silence. He went to the deepest part of the lake.

Yin Wu Tian had already been tormented by him to the point of collapse. Moreover, he had also withdrawn his people from the shore. Therefore, Chu Yang had finally submerged underwater after calling six consecutive times for support.

In fact, he would no longer float-up to the surface.

An intense summoning call was issued from the underwater region as he swam from the shallow areas to the deeper parts.

His Dantian throbbed; Nine Tribulations Sword's Sword Point and Sword Edge suddenly came out of his chest in silence. His body was suddenly illuminated with brilliant rays, and they started to radiate in all directions.

Chu Yang didn't hesitate. He arrived before a peculiar cave's mouth with just ten successive movements.

Suddenly, a big stone appeared in his bosom and his entire body

darted down towards the bottom like an arrow.

This dive obviously felt much easier than the previous one. He had completely understood the water's supple strength, buoyancy and water pressure. Moreover, his cultivation level had also advanced.

He was four times faster than before.

Chu Yang had entered the water like a droplet blending in the sea. His body felt comfortable. This made him feel that this was his own home...

He was free and unconstrained... just the way he would be at home.

His eyes remained wide open throughout the way as he continued to sink. He could vaguely see many huge fishes not far from him. They were gracefully swimming in the water, and were floating away slowly.

Occasionally a school of small fishes would come barging over.

Soon, the water started to get darker and darker.

And finally, there was no more light. The muscles throughout Chu Yang's body felt thoroughly relaxed. He squinted slightly. He had finally arrived.

Suddenly, a weak light flashed from below.

Chu Yang's spirit was lifted.

The rays of light gradually brightened as he sank another-few dozen feet.

Chu Yang's thought in his heart, and a sword appeared in his hand. He had built it very carefully over the past few days.

Whether one would consider its hardness or sharpness — this sword was two or threefold better than the one he had previously built.

Nine Tribulations Sword Point let out a tender and delicate cry, and sneakily moved along his wrist to probe that sword. Then it turned into silver-light and slowly crept all the way to that sword's tip. Then, it merged into the tip of the sword and could no longer be seen.

Sword Edge suddenly rushed out, and attached itself to the edge of that sword.

The next summoning call was realizably more intense; it seemed as if a young girl was earnestly longing for a toy. She was dancing with joy. She was calling out... as if looking forward to a friend's arrival...

The air of a pleasant surprised was evident in that call.

Suddenly, a burst of sharp piercing sounds emanated underwater. Chu Yan frowned as he saw that several monster snakes had already taken a form similar to that of a sharp sword. They rushed towards him like a wave of white smoke.

Each and every one of them had dense venomous fangs inside their mouths. They were ferocious enough to terrify anyone.

He had never thought that he would be attacked before he'd even get a chance to set foot on the lakebed.

Chu Yang coldly snorted and brandished his sword into a slash.

Chu Yang swung his sword and launched a silvery criss-cross attack with a slamming sound.

The rays of sword light scattered like the rays of a shiny crystal.

Seven snakes were cut into pieces at the same time. They issued several strange blood-curdling screams.

Poisonous flood dragon!

Chu Yang knew that these creatures were extremely poisonous since the Sword Spirit had already explained it. He wasn't afraid of the poison. However, he didn't wish for them to be near his body.

More and more poisonous flood dragons appeared in the water. Suddenly, he found himself surrounded by numerous of them.

But they still couldn't approach Chu Yang's body.

Nine Tribulations Sword Point angrily screamed and suddenly spurted an extremely cold stream from the sword's tip.

It was the 'Seven Shades Cold Energy' technique that he had obtained from Beyond the Heavens Sect.

The overwhelmingly cold energy spread in a radius of hundreds of feet around him, and congealed into a giant chunk of ice. Those poisonous flood dragons were frozen inside that chunk of ice, and remained motionless like statues thereafter.

Chu Yang used the Sword Point, and fiercely struck dozens of times in succession. This action shot cross-shaped stars right below his feet.

The bodies of thousands of poisonous flood dragons were dismembered into countless pieces below his feet. A series of blood-curdling screams were obviously issued in the process. Then, Chu Yang finally set foot on the stone floor.

He raised his head, and saw that strange wall with an unusual pearl embedded in it. It wasn't far away from him. He stood quietly for a long time. He grunted and an invisible energy was issued-out from his arms.

Overhead, the chunk of ice began to melt.

The bodies of the poisonous flood dragons which had been frozen inside the ice finally collapsed and sank to the bottom. God knows where the undercurrent would take their corpses. In reality, that cold energy had almost instantly killed these poisonous flood dragons.

The undercurrent shook severely as a seemingly angry roar sounded. A few million thin and poisonous flood dragons had emerged this time. A huge and incomparable figure had also

emerged among them; it appeared quite furious.

Poisonous Flood Dragon!

Chu Yang's pupils contracted as he secretly thought: [you finally came! This time, I'm the one who has been waiting for you!]

Notes:

Heizi is the nickname of this general; it means black son, or dark son.

His name would be Xiao Ying in Pin Yin.

His name would be Tie Gun in Pin Yin.

Chapter 341: Slaughtering the Flood Dragon!

Chu Yang flicked his wrist and a bunch of sharp sword energies flew out as swiftly as flowers. They spread out as he started to walk forward.

He hadn't even taken two steps when a massive current of water swiveled fiercely. The small and weak poisonous flood dragons were swept far away. In fact, many of them were even crushed to death.

However, Chu Yang didn't even bat an eyelid.

Chu Yang had been analyzing the water's supple power for a long time. He would really be unworthy of obtaining the third fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword if he couldn't even put through this small occurrence.

His attention was fixed on the gigantic poisonous flood dragon that had emerged before his eyes.

Its eyes appeared to be fist-sized when seen from afar. But they looked no smaller than a big rice bowl as it came nearer. They were quite fierce and were emitting an ominous glint. This flood dragon's body was several hundred feet long. Chu Yang was surprised because a portion of its body was floating slightly outside the water surface.

Chu Yang was motionless.

The poisonous flood dragon raised its head in anger and let out a roar.

A powerful current of water was released. It shook the surroundings violently.

However, Chu Yang smiled and took a step forward.

The poisonous flood dragon noticed that its antagonist didn't

acknowledge its superiority. Suddenly, it raised its head and opened its mouth to emit a ball of misty energy. It looked at Chu Yang with cruel intentions in its eyes.

Roar!

The sudden turn of events was far from reassuring!

Chu Yang moved hastily and dodged out of its way. Then the poisonous flood dragon shot something looking like a bubble out of its mouth. It exploded with a ‘pop’ sound and changed into criss-cross shaped water blades. These water blades rushed towards Chu Yang.

They cut through the deepwater and created a vacuum zone. The resulting friction created white smoke which eventually filled the vacuum zone. This clearly demonstrated the speed and strength of the water blades.

Chu Yang jumped to avoid a blade that was about to hit him in the abdomen. Then, he hurriedly swam towards the surface. Meanwhile, he kept swinging his sword to block the incoming attacks.

The ‘ringing’ sound was sharp and clear... even though it was underwater; so much so that even the echoes were audible. Chu Yang withdrew ten feet each time the sound echoed. Chu Yang had already retreated more than three hundred feet by the time a dozen echoes had been issued.

The water blade that had failed to hit Chu Yang didn’t dissipate after flying past him. It had gone-on to chop the small poisonous flood dragons. Surprisingly, this wave of attack had chopped open their bodies.

It had killed no less than ten thousand flood dragons.

Their miserable green blood was floating around. This gave rise to an unpleasant smell.

Chu Yang felt his wrist going slightly numb and sore. The flood

dragon's roaring attacks were ferocious and difficult to deal with.

[This flood dragon is too abnormal. It is emitting hoards of blades from its mouth. It is really very powerful.]

Suddenly, it seemed as if the poisonous flood dragon had been infuriated further. It moved its tail like a pendulum, and its huge body flew towards Chu Yang.

It opened its mouth... Chu Yang felt as if the whole world had suddenly gone dark.

[Such a big mouth...] Chu Yang recalled that the biggest animal that he had seen so far was a rhinoceros. However, it seemed that this flood dragon could easily swallow a rhinoceros without a burp.

The dragon's mouth would be sufficient to accommodate three warhorses striding proudly... at the same time.

"Holy Mother!" Chu Yang's hands trembled as he said in his heart, "One ray of cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms!"

The Nine Tribulations Sword frantically exploited the water's supple power, and went 'all-out' in the water.

This move was still not finished when Chu Yang invoked the next one. "What's the harm in slaughtering the entire world?"

His body flipped over. Then, he proceeded to display the next two moves in one breath. [A sharp will buried deep will not change. The one who gathers wind and cloud becomes the emperor.]

Four moves issued one after another!

The sword light moved in all directions. The poisonous flood dragon screamed loudly. It was apparently in extreme pain. However, it moved forward fiercely to face the shining sword light, and bit it.

Chu Yang was shocked. He had clearly seen that the acute sword light released from Nine Tribulations Sword Edge had hit the beast's mouth. Blood had begun to drip as big chunks of flesh and

meat fell off its mouth. However, the ferocious teeth in its mouth were unusually strong. Even a full power strike of his sword had only been able to chip off its teeth, and a fine powder had been scattered in the water.

Chu Yang leapt back, and fled like an arrow.

The poisonous flood dragon chief's ominous instincts were aroused by this. It began to pursue him closely. It was unwilling to let go.

The Nine Tribulations Sword was very small for such a huge poisonous flood dragon; despite being incisive. It couldn't even be regarded as a toothpick in front of it. And it certainly couldn't cause great damage. The flood dragon's internal organs wouldn't have been injured even if the sword was stabbed right up to the hilt.

Fortunately, Chu Yang had already comprehended the water's supple power. In fact, he would have ended-up inside the stomach of this beast if he wasn't capable of being pragmatic at all times.

[Inside its stomach...]

Suddenly, he came up with an idea and his eyes lit up. [This beast's outer skin is too sturdy. It would require great effort on my part to stick the Nine Tribulations Sword into it. The only opportunity I get to inflict any damage is when it opens its mouth to attack... Else, the results seem to be minimal.]

[This beast may not be able to catch me if I continue to strike like this. But, I will be so bored of this unending cycle that I might actually die.]

[But, there won't be any hard scales inside its stomach, right?]

Chu Yang started to size-up the mouth of that beast and frowned, [It looks like this beast doesn't pay attention to hygiene; his mouth has a strange odor that can even be smelled in the water...]

[Ready!] The minister was ready to sacrifice his own hygiene.

Chu Yang had already withdrawn by several hundred feet, and the poisonous flood dragon's body was also completely unfolded, and was floating in the water. [My goodness! It is no less than five hundred feet long.]

Chu Yang had already made several hundred cuts with his sword on its body. This had thoroughly enraged it. It opened its mouth as its ominous eyes shone viciously. It was wishing for a chance to bite Chu Yang, and then chew him into pieces...

This was the first time it had received such heavy injuries over its rather prolonged life. This filled its heart with rage. It couldn't accept that a tiny human had pushed it to such an extent.

Moreover, there hadn't been any effect on Chu Yang even after a dozen of its attacks. It had started to understand that these simple attacks would cause no harm to this human. Its own body was very huge ...and not at all nimble, whereas its opponent was very sly and agile. Consequently, it cleverly changed its tactics.

It finally used its innate skill since it could not keep up with the chase — suction!

A fierce current of water caused an obstruction; following which, a violent suction force came towards Chu Yang, and engulfed him.

Its plan was to suck in this small fellow into its mouth, and then bite him to death.

This was an indiscriminate attack; it simply didn't differentiate between friend and foe.

The tiny poisonous flood dragons in the surroundings were just like moths drawn to the flame. They all were sucked inside its mouth. That beast didn't seem to mind making a meal out its own off springs. In fact, it seemed rather accustomed to it. It was simply unconcerned about eating its own children. Its eyes were only focused on Chu Yang.

Chu Yang's body had been dashing about in water. It suddenly

stopped, and rushed backwards towards the beast.

The poisonous flood dragon was extremely delighted in its heart. It opened its mouth and didn't hesitate as it issued an even bigger suction force.

[Closer! Even closer!]

[He will soon enter my mouth and turn into my food!]

The poisonous flood dragon's eyes issued a cruel radiance.

It had lived underwater its whole life, and had never gone up. It had never eaten such unusual food. This had filled its heart with anticipation, and it happily looked forward to the upcoming meal.

The food finally arrived at its mouth.

The poisonous flood dragon issued a 'roar' in excitement since it felt that this guy would finally turn into its 'food' upon entering its mouth. It almost couldn't wait anymore, and suddenly shut the top and bottom rows of its teeth to bite him.

Something wasn't right...

Actually... Chu Yang was incomparably cooperative when its mouth was closing, and had willingly charged inside. He rushed all the way into his stomach from its mouth in the blink of an eye.

Kaboom!

The poisonous flood dragon faced upwards and roared.

The upper and lower rows of its teeth did come together to shut the mouth close, but could not bite; instead, dozens of those teeth were chopped off by the Nine Tribulations Sword, and their chunks collapsed.

[Too much grief and indignation!]

[This repulsive creature!]

The poisonous flood dragon hatefully thought, [it doesn't matter what happened... he was eventually eaten by me. I just need to

wait till the day after tomorrow... or perhaps don't even have to wait till the day after tomorrow... this guy will turn into my feces and come out...]

[Finally this troublesome guy is finished!] The Poisonous flood dragon lord was content with himself. He gracefully turned to leave when it was suddenly struck by a strange pain in its stomach...

Then, the pain got more and more acute, and later it became almost unbearable. It didn't even get enough time to be excited, and celebrate its own 'victory'. It had already sunk into a sorrowful realm of immense pain...

Chu Yang had let go of the control over his own body when the suction was at its strongest. He had taken advantage of the violent suction, and had flown into the poisonous flood dragon's mouth at a very fast speed.

This was obviously very easy to accomplish.

This poisonous flood dragon's mouth was simply too big. As mentioned earlier, once opened, it could easily hold three warhorses. In fact, they could easily prance into its mouth unhindered.

Chu Yang's body... when compared to three steeds... was way too small.

Chu Yang immediately scuttled downwards after he went in. He felt as if he had entered a slimy and slippery place. Yet, he did not have the slightest amount of hesitation. He drew his sword and he went all-out as he advanced downwards. He launched all the moves of Nine Tribulations Sword's sword-play within that beast's stomach.

[One ray of cold light piercing ten thousand fathoms!]

[What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world!]

[A sharp will buried deep will not change!]

[One who gathers wind and cloud, becomes the emperor!]

[A sword's edge famous for all eternity!]

[Wind and cloud move unhindered from east to west!]

[The sun and moon thunder at my will!]

[Chopping mountains and breaking peaks under the blood-red sky!]

Chu Yang had never considered using the eight moves of the Nine Tribulations sword-play to their maximum capacity; that too all at once. This action was tantamount to insanity.

However, Chu Yang still suspected that he wasn't being insane enough.

His body continued to slip down for a while after he had used a chain attack of the eight moves of Nine Tribulations sword-play. But he continued to wave his sword. Then, he exhausted all his strength and displayed the eight moves of Nine Tribulations sword-play once again.

After that, he stopped! He was totally exhausted...

However, the formidable power contained in the eight moves of the sword-play he had used the first time frantically condensed within the poisonous flood dragon's stomach, and exploded.

Nine Tribulations sword, Nine Heavens Sword Technique! Even a low-level Revered Sword Artist's strength was capable of leveling scores with Young Master Yu using this marvelous sword-play.

However, the chain of eight moves... even Young Master Yu had not tasted the flavor of that. But, this poisonous flood dragon thoroughly enjoyed this serving.

Bang! The sword light exploded like a bomb and the poisonous flood dragon's weak inner body ruptured from the inside. Several thousand rays of sword light exploded at once, and ruptured the flesh inside its body. In fact, it turned it into minced-meat.

Its body exploded from inside from two places with a loud ‘Bang’.

The poisonous flood dragon’s internal organs spanned over its hundreds of feet long body. However, they were all destroyed in an instant. But its outer scales were actually very sturdy. They didn’t fall off its body still. Yet, its body was actually turned into a pool of blood on the inside.

Chu Yang felt as if he would ‘drown’ in this pool of blood. He held his breath and hastily rushed up to expose his head out. He then suddenly felt his head banging against something hard.

“F*ck me!” Chu Yang had never anticipated that he would receive a surprise attack in this beast’s stomach. He took a look. It turned out to be a round pearl. But it was slipping away. This pearl didn’t seem ordinary to him. It had the appearance of an ordinary pearl, but such a huge pearl only existed in oceans... it was issuing a gentle white light.

Chu Yang grabbed it with his hand, and suddenly felt that it contained a massive amount of pure spirit energy.

[Nice item!]

Chapter 342: Nine Tribulations Sword — the Third Fragment!

“Is this… is this the inner core of this beast? But… a Spirit Beast’s core is always inside its head, right? Then how’s it inside its stomach?” Chu Yang thought. Suddenly, he became dizzy and his body trembled violently. Apparently, the poisonous flood dragon was tumbling to flee…

This poisonous flood dragon had never thought that swallowing this unknown living creature would cause continuous explosions inside its stomach.

These chain-explosions had blown-up most of its internal flesh and blood. This had left behind a vacant space on its inside. However, it still hadn’t died even after receiving such a fatal injury. It was disarrayed. It frantically scurried about in the water, and rapidly tumbled-around.

It had spiralled numerous times underwater in an instant; he had made a mess in this underwater world.

And then, its five hundred feet long body ascended; as if a hidden dragon scuttling to the heaven.

The minced meat and blood effused-out of its mouth as it frantically struggled to flee for its life… Its two pearl-like eyes had already given-up hope and appeared bleak… yet it still rushed upwards. It hadn’t even gone two hundred feet when it suddenly lost its life.

Its rise halted just when its gigantic body was on the verge of appearing out of the water surface. It started to sink down with a ‘whooshing’ sound; its two round eyes opened wide.

However, its great strength and body still spurred up a current. This current caused a turbulence which surged straight upwards…

Yin Wu Tian had been sulking for half the night.

He had heard King Level Master Jun's demonic howls for a while earlier. However, there had been no sound of activity thereafter.

Yin Wu Tian had figured that something was fishy. [Has this guy gone off to find the Nine Joints Lotus Root this late in the night? Is this some kind of a joke?]

[There is no one to lend him a hand. He can't possibly do this on his own!]

He looked like a helpless little white chicken soaked in water; he didn't know what to do since it was the middle of the night.

Even a little sound of activity hadn't been heard since the last time he had heard the King Level Master Jun's yells. The water surface was extremely serene. Yin Wu Tian was somewhat worried in his heart...

Yin Wu Tian couldn't breathe underwater. He could only stay in the water for less than half an hour even with his King Level cultivation. This wasn't largely related to the depths of one's martial skill — a human being must breathe.

However, King Level Master Jun had been under water for an hour.

Yin Wu Tian had started to panic.

[Motherf*ck! What if this boastful guy has drowned himself to death?]

...A King Level Master's death in such serene waters would tantamount to a big joke; in fact, it was impossible. However, Yin Wu Tian had no choice but to think along those lines now.

It was impossible for King Level Master Jun to be alive since he hadn't surfaced for an hour... unless he had turned into a fish.

Therefore, Yin Wu Tian hurried to his find him, [Prime Minister Diwu Qing Rou had made it strictly clear to be hospitable, and guard King Level Master Jun. This can have an effect on our

relations with the Middle Three Heavens' bamboo people!]

[I find him repulsive. However, no one will hold a grudge against me if I give him a cold shoulder. But if I let him die... who knows how grave the consequences could be?]

Yin Wu Tian waited for a while. But then he anxiously shouted and called his men when he didn't hear any activity. They all arrived at the lakeside to look for him.

They looked around every water plant; searched everywhere. But they didn't find him.

Yin Wu Tian was searching around foolishly. [Many people have been waiting on the shore, but they haven't seen this Master come out. But... how can a big, grown person dive into a lake and disappear?]

Yin Wu Tian wanted to cry, but no tears came out; he burned with anxiety. He moved several boats and everyone climbed the boats. They were asked to look everywhere on the water surface. Moreover, he issued an order, [Pay attention! If there's a corpse floating on the lake's surface... you must pull over and take a look...]

As far as Fourth Master Yin was concerned, [This King Level Master Jun has certainly drowned and turned into a water-ghost...]

Then, someone suddenly shouted, "King Level Master, something is happening in the lake's centre!"

He needn't have said it since Yin Wu Tian also saw it because this activity wasn't a minor one. — The serene water surface suddenly churned up. The water surged outwards like a huge fountain with a 'whooshing' sound, and went almost ten feet higher than the water's surface.

Yin Wu Tian used his feet and martial elemental energy to pedal the small boat forward. His boat almost rocketed forward to catch

up with that fountain.

But the water surface suddenly subsided by the time he caught up with it. Yin Wu Tian had no other option but to harness the small boat and linger around that area. Soon, another fountain rose nearby. Yin Wu Tian rushed to catch up with it, but it subsided again...

Yin Wu Tian felt like it was a huge struggle after going all around several times.

[This... what's going on here?]

Yin Wu Tian was becoming more and more confused. However, he suddenly felt the water surface under his foot rising frantically. This spiralling water current had an unimaginable force. He couldn't help but turn pale with fright; it was too late to hide it his fear.

A massive and powerful water-current suddenly dashed upward like a furious underwater dragon.

Yin Wu Tian was caught off-guard, and the boat carrying him and his men was bumped — it went rocketing upwards. The boat rose up in the sky and ruptured with an explosion. Then, the water current directly hit Yin Wu Tian's butt and he let out a strange cry. He lay flat on that wave of water as it went 300 feet into the sky...

And then, that water fountain suddenly subsided. The Fourth Master Yin halted mid-air... only to remain stagnated there for a short while... and then fell down the very next instant.

Fourth Master Yin shouted in a strange manner since he had practically been numbed after getting hit by this water current. In fact, he couldn't even move. However, he was still conscious. He looked down at his own reflection in the water surface. His face looked like large flat bread and kept growing bigger and bigger until he fell face down into the water.

Splash!

The water droplets were sent flying.

Fourth Master Yin fell on the water surface and was badly battered. He broke his nose, and it started to bleed. He ingested a lot of water with a 'gurgling' sound. But his body's ability to move was finally reinstated a bit. He somehow came to the water-surface and shouted in a miserable tone, "Help ah… "

Everyone was petrified…

Soon, they got hold of Yin Wu Tian and rescued him back to the boat. They encircled him to inspect, [what just happened?]

Someone discovered something unusual just as they started to inspect the surroundings and cried out in alarm, "Look! What is this thing?"

They saw the grotesque carcass of a small snake on the water's surface… everyone looked at each other in dismay.

These people had had generations of experience, but no one had ever seen an odd snake.

"Pick a few good swimmers and go into the water to investigate." Yin Wu Tian said as he rubbed his stomach. He continuously threw-up water as he issued his command.

Meanwhile, Chu Yang was examining his harvest underwater.

The poisonous flood dragon wouldn't have exhausted itself to death if it hadn't used-up its remaining strength as it had rushed to the surface. It had already lost its life force, and was sinking down to the depths of the region. Its gigantic body was spread horizontally underwater; it was a magnificent sight.

Chu Yang's entire body was covered in blood. He used the sword as support as he crawled to the poisonous flood dragon's mouth and finally climbed out. He couldn't help but heave a cold sigh as he looked at its massive body.

[Extremely… huge!]

[5000 kg… perhaps even heavier!]

It had been alive for countless years. This ferocious beast's body was covered with treasures. Would Chu Yang have shown any kindness?

First he spun his long-sword with no trace of politeness, and dug-out its pearl-shaped eyeballs.

He wiped the bloodstains off the external surface, and revealed the two enormous snow-white pearls. They issued milky-white radiance. They were perfectly round, and big like a large bowl.

[Such a big pearl!] Chu Yang made a bet [perhaps there are only these two in the entire Nine Heavens Continent.]

"Poisonous dragon's eyes…" Sword Spirit sighed and said, "Surprisingly, they turn out to be the yin and yang dragon eyes of the poisonous flood dragon. They are indeed priceless treasures."

"En? What benefits do these dragon eyes of the poisonous flood dragon have?" Chu Yang modestly asked.

"The benefits aren't much. However, these yin and yang poisonous flood dragon eyes can be considered as priceless pearls! Furthermore, there is an advantage… due to the fact that these poisonous flood dragon's eyes complement each other… So long as they gather together… they can make an antidote for a large number of poisons. The poison would be changed into a non-toxic solution!" the Sword Spirit insipidly said.

"Changed into non-toxic solution?" Chu Yang's eyes gleamed.

"It has many more uses, but you need to go about slowly. I can only say that this item is an absolute treasure; so don't misuse it!" the Sword Spirit said.

"Of course," Chu Yang took one pearl, and put it in the Nine Tribulations Space. He kept the other one on the poisonous flood dragon's body in order to illuminate it. He spat on his own hands and lifted his sword. It fiercely fell on the poisonous flood dragon's

head.

The poisonous flood dragon's outer skin was supposed to be sturdy in Chu Yang's knowledge. Therefore, he had used his full strength since he feared that his sword might fail to slice through its head.

Who could have imagined that the sword would slice through its head with a swishing sound, and would divide it into two parts?! Chu Yang had exerted himself too fiercely physically. And so, his body staggered.

"Hey, how's it so soft? Why isn't it as sturdy as earlier?" Chu Yang cried out in surprise.

"It has already lost its life-force; obviously it would be soft. You thought that it is still invulnerable?" the Sword Spirit spoke in disdain. He couldn't understand why Chu Yang was making a fuss about nothing, "Like for example... the skin is tight for the time one is alive. But their skin loosens up once they turn into a corpse since it has already lost its life-force. Then why can't the same happen to an aquatic animal?"

"F*ck! You call this as analogy?!" Chu Yang was silent for a while; a little depressed too. He had planned to make good use of this poisonous flood dragon's huge body. Moreover, its scales were very sturdy. He could take many pieces for himself, and still make armours for his brothers. It could've certainly provided some extra assurance on their lives...

Chu Yang had started to plan this ever since the Nine Tribulations Sword attack had failed to break its scales. He hadn't anticipated that his wish would go in vain...

There was a fist-sized shiny crystal inside the poisonous flood dragon's head. It was triangular in shape. Its three corners were very sharp, and there was an oval in the centre.

"This is the inner core of the poisonous flood dragon." Sword

Spirit said, “This kind of inner core can’t even be found in the Upper Three Heavens. Moreover, it can assist in practising martial arts... specially the supple property of water. If someone were to find out about this inner core... they would perhaps smash your head to snatch it. Preserve it carefully. Don’t allow the Nine Tribulations Swords to gobble it. I have a premonition that this poisonous flood dragon’s inner core will give you an advantage that you can’t even imagine by the time you reach the Upper Three heavens.”

The Sword Spirit smiled in a mysterious manner.

“En? This is the inner-core? Then what is this?” Chu Yang asked as he took out the pearl he had banged his head against inside the poisonous flood dragon’s stomach.

“This... is a priceless treasure!” Sword Spirit sighed, “It’s a pity that your present cultivation level is very low. You can’t use it yet.” He said in a somewhat envious tone, “This... has the concentration of the pure world essence.”

“So that’s how it is.” Chu Yang was already baffled as to why he felt a massive amount of spirit energy from it, but couldn’t even absorb a little bit of it.

Chu Yang then travelled, and arrived in front of that short wall. That rare pearl was still embedded in it.

“Night pearl! A pure night pearl!” The Sword Spirit said in one breath, “If this pearl is auctioned in the Upper Three Heavens — one can possibly buy a city in the Lower Three Heavens with that money!”

He gave a mischievous laughter, “As for the Middle Three Heavens and Lower Three Heavens... no one can afford it.”

Contrary to what one might expect — Chu Yang didn’t even take a good look at the treasure that could fetch him a serious amount wealth. He just took it down, and tossed it into the Nine

Tribulations Space. He was just about to cross the wall. Suddenly, the wall ruptured and disappeared among the bubbles and foam with a ‘bang’.

A burst of dazzling white light appeared where the wall had been. A burst of demonic energy surged up violently... as if pleasantly surprised to reunite after a long time.

A shiny sword fragment emerged in an awe-inspiring manner!

Chapter 343: Sword Spine's Homecoming!

The Sword Point and Sword Edge clamored-up inside Chu Yang's Dantian. They furtively tried to get out of the Dantian in order to a catch a glimpse of the third fragment. They were somersaulting within his Dantian; their excitement clearly overflowing in their actions.

Chu Yang gently walked towards the sword fragment and reached out with his hand.

The sword fragment automatically jumped as he extended his hand, and landed on his palm. Two brilliant rays flashed from it, as if to greet Chu Yang. It appeared to be blinking happily.

After that it faded away.

It disappeared into Chu Yang's palm inexplicably. It was as if a snowflake had melted upon coming in touch with high-temperature.

The inside of Chu Yang's Dantian was already a colossal mess.

This newly arrived fragment had reunited with Sword Point and Sword Edge after a long time. Chu Yang could also feel that delight.

The third fragment slowly merged with the Sword Point and Sword Edge after it had tossed about crazily for some time, and made a whole body.

There was a burst of gentle white light within Chu Yang's Dantian. Then, this light slowly weakened and faded away. The three fragments had already become one by the time it had completely vanished; they were completely merged with no visible cracks.

Sword Spine of the Nine Tribulations Sword!

The various parts of the sword joined together to make a single

body.

The front half was the Sword Point and the latter half was the Sword Spine.

The Sword Point, the Sword Edge and the Sword Spine were mainly used for killing. When these three came together — the wounding power of these three most lethal fragments would combine to become a whole.

“The Sword Spine constitutes the latter half of the sword’s blade. It is relatively on the frailest spot; a spot that can easily break off. The mode of attack used is — to cut, hook, lift and lock, and horizontal slash... The technique is the most important; the strength is just complementary... ”

Sword Spirit pensively recited within Chu Yang’s consciousness.

Even if Chu Yang seemed to have understood something... it appeared that he actually hadn’t since his brain was suddenly perplexed. His brain seemed heavy and there suddenly appeared a sharp stabbing pain in it; this pain lasted for a long time. Chu Yang’s felt as if his head would split open. He couldn’t help but hold his head. He faced upwards and released a ‘hissing’ sound.

The stream of air issued from his mouth sent-out violent ripples in the water.

“This pain... must be tolerated! The Nine Tribulations Sword recognizes its master in their most challenging moments. It is difficult because the first three fragments you’ve found are the main killer fragments. There will be incessant murders in the entire Nine Heavens starting from today.”

The Sword Spirit pensively said, “The Nine Tribulations Sword will traverse the world, and will wreak a reign of terror. The souls killed by your sword will never be reincarnated. It is unlikely that a drop of blood will effuse from the sword again.

“In other words... the Nine Tribulations Sword will increase its

utility from today onwards. It will amend its methods for its benefits. That is... to engulf the people's very life force!

"This is the power of the demon! It also ends the world's cycle of reincarnation..."

The Sword Spirit's speech finally came to an end. And Chu Yang finally understood the origin of this barrage of pain. He clenched his teeth tightly and then coldly grunted as he spoke, "Could this world birth a pain that I, Chu Yang cannot bear? That's a joke!"

He faced upwards as he said this, and roared fiercely, "Come on! Take a look! You hurt me, but I will still conquer you! Ha ha ha..."

The waves of pain continued to appear inside his brain. It was incessant like wave of the sea; each wave higher than the other. He felt as if his body had been cut all over. His meridians felt like they had been staved-in. The sensation in his sensory nerves had been artificially magnified hundredfold.

Such pain was crueler than any punishment. It was intolerable.

But Chu Yang hadn't made the slightest sound after he had roared that sentence. He was enduring it with stubbornness. The veins on his forehead and his temples were practically ready to jump out, while his eyes seemed to be popping out. The skin around the corner of his eyes had ripped apart slowly, and a small blood drop dripped out...

Chu Yang tightly clenched his fist; in fact, he clenched it so hard that his nails dug into his flesh. He was shuddering from head to toe; regardless, he didn't shout.

[Even if it hurts a lot... I am Chu Yang!!] His heart screamed in disdain.

[Death... I've had to experience death! Nine Tribulations Sword, what do you think you are?! You might be a flamboyant bastard, but you are still just a sword! You have no other choice but to acknowledge me as your master. You have no other choice but to

admit that I'm more important! Can I lose to you? What a joke!]

Chu Yang roared wildly in his heart.

The pain was getting more and more intense. However, Chu Yang was actually suppressing it. He could've fainted to tolerate it, or perhaps screamed to ease it a little since this point wasn't specified. But Chu Yang was very determined; [I must stay awake and endure it!]

[Death must come when one is awake!]

He came on the brink of collapse several times, and almost fainted. However, Chu Yang would only roar in his heart, [Chu Yang! Stand firm! Qing Wu is waiting for you!]

[Qing Wu had said that she was more beautiful than a sword!]

[She is far more beautiful than any sword! She is far more beautiful than the Nine Tribulations Sword!]

He recalled from his previous life... that figure of hers in those red clothes that fluttered about... a sense of hidden bitterness on her beautiful face. Chu Yang suddenly felt an immense pain in his heart. This pain inside his heart had suddenly surpassed the one invoked during the possession test of the Nine Tribulations Sword.

He recalled her young, immature and delicate red silhouette from this life. [I don't know the torment she is suffering right now], Chu Yang's heart somehow endured this sadness.

[So long as I go through this test! I can save her! I have to save her!]

[Qing Wu... just you wait for me!]

That violent pain lasted for a quarter of an hour. Chu Yang's entire body was sore and sweaty. Later, he was a raw-red color from the pain.

Then, that acute pain suddenly stopped.

It seemed like a landslide had cracked the earth open, but had

paused in its stead at the time of going down. For a moment there was a mountainous call and a tsunami had come down... but the very next moment the entire sea-surface had condensed into ice.

The seabed was frozen.

Chu Yang hadn't returned to normal when he felt a sharp lightning wedging its way into his mind. A dense white fog suddenly appeared in his consciousness, and began to whistle and spiral. 28 large blood-red characters moved unhindered with hostility and an endless murderous intention. It was as if lightning had suddenly burst-out of the clouds and mist, and flashed out of dense white fog.

The twenty eight characters emerged in his mind, and slowly turned around. A dazzling blood-red in color — each character seemed as if it was made-up of the blood from the 'sea of blood' found in hell. It appeared like the eyes of the devil — flashing and flickering.

"This Spine has existed in this world since eternity

"One must go through the nine hidden hells on this journey;

"Cut off the traveler's attachments with worldly affairs,

"The sharp edge will reach everywhere and put everything to rest!"

These four sentences were actually sword secrets, and they set-off murderous aura which soared-up. Chu Yang closed his eyes and became aware of his injuries. He then exhaled a long breath.

The Sword Spirit started to use huge amounts of powerful elixirs to mend his injured body. He too sighed sadly in his heart as he repaired Chu Yang's injuries.

[How many years have passed since I have experienced this exact event... some Nine Tribulations Sword Masters fainted, and some twisted in the pain. Some screamed and some even lost their sanity from the pain. Some even bit-off their own fingers.]

[But I've never seen a person who is able to face it like this! He was always in his senses, and didn't even utter a word... how can so much resolve burn in his eyes?]

[Moreover, the intensity of the pain had exceeded several times as compared to the last eight times!]

[This guy can be very ruthless! Not just to his enemies... he is even more ruthless to himself!]

Chu Yang realized that his ability to move had been restored after some time. He closed his fingers slowly with a loud cackling sound. There was a hidden ice-cold killing intention in his eyes as he shouted, "Come out!"

A long-sword spontaneously appeared in his hands as he issued the order. The sword's hilt and other parts were illusory, but the sword's point, the sword's edge, and the sword's spine were solid.

A dense murderous aura came out. It was ostentatiously wild, and had no qualms about wreaking havoc.

The fish, shrimps and small snakes that were still there in the surroundings scattered and fled in distress as this murderous aura came out.

This murderous aura surprisingly seemed alive. It seemed completely deterrent towards other life forms.

The Nine Tribulations Sword's body leaked out a chilling silver-white energy. The lightly wielded silver-white light flashed through. Chu Yang observed carefully, and saw that the water current in front of him had been divided into two.

It separated at first, and then came back to normal.

Chu Yang's heart shook since he hadn't caused this. He hadn't wielded the sword, or used any strength. But it was clear that neat cuts as if cuts made to a piece of paper... had been made in water... and these cuts had severed it. This was an incision.

This was simply incredible!

Draw a sword to part the water… this was a legend to describe a sword's sharpness.

Using martial technique to divide the water into two halves could be achieved by any master. But to achieve such an outcome without the use of any physical effort could only exist in legends.

It was only a fable… at least in the Nine Heavens Continent's written accounts… There wasn't a single concrete evidence of this having happened in the past.

However, such supernatural object had appeared in his hands now.

The Nine Tribulations Sword!

Chu Yang sighed with disappointment as he looked at the wondrous Nine Tribulations Sword. [This is the true Nine Tribulations Sword! So… what had I obtained in the previous life?]

[Was I really the Master of Nine Tribulations Sword in my past life? …Or perhaps the Slave of the Nine Tribulations Sword? … perhaps I wasn't even a slave… is that why I couldn't achieve such power in the past life?]

Chu Yang heaved a deep sigh. His gaze was fixed on the Nine Tribulations Sword's body.

The sword blade still shone with that chilling silver-white luster. However, the silvery bright light gradually became gentler as Chu Yang's concentrated stare fell on it. Gradually, the arrogant and murderous aura also seemed to vanish from it.

It was as if an invincible demon had run into the master of its destiny. Such was the nature of obedience emanating from the sword's body.

Chu Yang didn't blink since he felt that the Nine Tribulations Sword was cautiously 'looking at him'. In fact, it appeared to be

crying. The sword's blade was trembling slightly as well. It seemed as if a little kid was miserably looking at his guardian to get the fruits of his labor.

Then, the Sword Point cautiously and respectfully slipped-out and gently caressed Chu Yang's hand. Then, it hastily withdrew. It continued to be respectful, and continued to flatter him.

Chu Yang was indifferent.

Sword Point curved a few times. It clearly revealed that it felt that Chu Yang had been wronged...

Sword Edge also slid-down in a similar respectful manner, and then carefully touched his hand. Then, it withdrew as well.

Chu Yang was still as motionless as before.

Following this, the Sword Spine came out after a good while, and sluggishly proceeded to caress Chu Yang's hand.

The cold look in Chu Yang's eyes became more and more acute as he faintly revealed his vicious thoughts, "I would rather not have a Sword Spine if you won't obey me properly!"

"It's no big deal!" Chu Yang's announced very dully, but very resolutely.

"You will be discarded if you don't accept my dominance!"

[Even if it is an ancient treasure... if I said I will give it up... then I will give it up! Just like discarding a worn-out shoe!]

Sword Point and Sword Edge angrily shouted. They were apparently facing the Sword Spine, and yelling at it — scolding and accusing it! Finally, the Sword Spine unfolded in Chu Yang's hand, and snuggled in order to flatter him.

Chu Yang's expression turned slightly gentle.

Chapter 344: The Stars Change their Positions and the Blue Dome of Heaven is Dyed Blood-Red!

The Sword Spine touched his hand gently, yet cautiously. Then, it retracted. It seemed like a mischievous child who had just got a shock, and hadn't been able to regain his composure.

Chu Yang finally laughed.

The Sword Spine relaxed as it saw him laugh. It hurriedly made its way back. It merged with the other two fragments, and congealed a sword. The sword then issued a joyful sword-cry.

The entire blade of the sword was covered in a layer of gentle white-light. It seemed as if a layer of silver mercury was flowing on the sword's blade. Suddenly, the blade issued a trace of a pinkish-bloody light. It flashed for an instant, and then disappeared.

The sword's blade went silent.

Chu Yang realized that the three sword fragments had integrated. Moreover, they had surrendered to him.

"You must be obedient if you wish for me to use you.

"I will abandon you if you're not."

This was Chu Yang's principle.

It was indeed very overbearing. Fortunately, he achieved his goal.

The Sword Spirit gently smiled in the space of his consciousness. He thought scornfully, [You thought that he would be orderly like the former sword owners? That he would obediently followed your orders...? He's different... ah...]

Then, it composed itself and took a human form inside the space of Chu Yang's consciousness. He was clad in a green robe and had a

sword in his hand. He slowly began to practice the four moves of Nine Tribulations Sword's third fragment.

This Spine has existed in this world since eternity;

One must go through the nine hidden hells on this journey;

Cut off the traveler's attachments with worldly affairs;

The sharp edge will reach everywhere and put everything to rest.

Chu Yang closed his eyes, and wholeheartedly immersed himself into space of his consciousness. He didn't wish to miss any part of the sword dance that was being performed by the Sword Spirit. However, he deeply pondered about the 'ideal outcome' of these four moves... [1]

A pure, colorless and traceless energy silently rushed-out from the center of the lake once the Nine Tribulations Sword's Sword Spine had returned home. It carried the power of thunder, but nobody could perceive it. It brazenly rushed to the sky. Then, it began to wreak havoc in the clouds like a crazed dragon.

A loud 'bang' was heard as an enormous aura scattered in the sky.

The clouds in the sky were instantly swept away, and a clear blue sky emerged. The bright Moon was inclined in the west, while the night sky was filled with stars. The stars appeared so close that it seemed as if one could just reach out and grab them.

It seemed similar to a cloudless 'summer's night sky'. However, the winds and the thunders had begun to roll. Suddenly, a purple lightning went whistling-up into the sky. It was incredibly swift and fierce.

This was really a rare and wondrous sight, and it appeared only once in ten thousand years.

Several people heard that sound and stepped out from their houses. They looked up at the night sky and were left astonished.

Inside Prime Minister’s Palace

Diwu Qing Rou had been sitting calmly, and was drinking some tea before he detected this strange event. He had been reading as he waited for Yin Wu Tian to come back some news. However, his face instantly revealed a startled expression as the clouds disappeared. Then, he silently went to the courtyard.

It would seem as if he had been standing in this courtyard forever, and had never moved from that spot.

If the people familiar with Diwu Qing Rou were to witness this scene — they would be terrified to the point of falling chin-first to the ground. They would think... [isn’t he supposed to be unfamiliar with martial arts? Then how come... how come he has such profound cultivation?]

However, perhaps no one in the entire world would dare to be impudent in front of him — not after seeing his current facial expression.

Diwu Qing Rou was staring at the starry sky. His twisted face was trembling slightly. His mouth was half open. There was look of disbelief in his eyes.

He clenched his fists tightly. The muscles in his body cemented to stone. In fact, Diwu Qing Rou didn’t breathe for close to half-an-hour.

"How is this...? How is this possible?" Diwu Qing Rou finally exhaled a long breath. His eyes seemed somewhat powerless as they listlessly gazed at the stars.

"The Emperor Star has vanished, and the other stars have shifted around. It seems like the stars have changed their positions. There are sounds of thunderstorm in a cloudless sky... this clearly shows that the world itself is warnings about the impending calamity. Lightning in the starry sky... the glittering moon... they indicate the beginning of chaos. The sky is bathed in starlight... but it is

still red. It seems as if the blue dome of heaven has been dyed red in blood.”

There was a painful look in Diwu Qing Rou’s eyes as he muttered, "Is this the so-called indication of the Nine Tribulations Sword’s third fragment’s birth? Has that caused a thorough reversal in the laws of the heaven? If so... then what is the significance of my decades-long planning?"

His voice sounded very low and gloomy. It was filled with a deep unwillingness, and the trace of a deep-rooted madness.

However, his complexion was rather calm and collected.

Yet, there was plenty of fighting spirit in his eyes; he was brimming with a bloody murderous aura.

"So what?" The trace of a sneer appeared in the corners of Diwu Qing Rou’s mouth. He crossed his hands behind his back and profoundly looked at the starry sky again. He sneered indifferently as he declared, "Even though it’s a big omen... what can it possible change? Even though this omen has already taken place and the sky has changed its form... but that doesn’t change anything!"

"I, Diwu Qing Rou, take a vow — I shall use my intelligence and resources to fight till the bitter end! I may meet the wrath of the Heaven, but I won’t fall short! I will decide my fate. How can the heavens decide it for me?"

He stood in the courtyard for a long time. His countenance turned calmer and calmer. Yet, the look in his eyes became more and more resolute, decisive, and persistent.

"I will never give up!" he gently clenched his fists as he muttered. His hands were still crossed behind his back.

Then, he turned around and walked back to his room. He walked in a very relaxed manner. One couldn’t sense any confusion in his gait.

Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian had been discussing things in the

camp when such great changes occurred in the sky. The Iron Cloud Citadel had been thoroughly purged by then.

Chu Yang had provided them a list of Diwu Qing Rou's spies. This list of names had enabled them to fish-out those spies; they were then eliminated. In fact, the spies had been killed-off in a very short period of time.

Some were still at large; but they were being arrest one by one, and were then being brought to trial.

The purge could've been sped up by one-third if not for the joint interrogations held by the top ministers of the Iron Cloud. The intention of some of the ministers weren't clear. It was unclear whether they wished to show kindness towards the person... or whether they wanted to thwart these trials.

Tie Bu Tian's butcher-knife would naturally fall upon the traitors in the military once the enemy spies had been caught and eliminated.

However, the military was passing through a delicate phase. The Great Zhao's army was constantly trying to push through the border. It was the occasion for someone to take charge and manage the personnel properly in order to resolve the situation. Tie Long Cheng had been overseeing the frontlines. And he didn't dare to leave regardless of anything. He didn't even abandon his post to return for the former Emperor Tie Shi Cheng's funeral. This was an irrefutable proof of his determination.

He wasn't showing disloyalty in his actions; nor was he being unfilial. He was simply guarding the border with all his might. There would've been no assurance of keeping the Great Zhao's army at bay if he didn't constantly draw-out strategic plans to battle them.

It was like Tie Long Cheng was walking on a tightrope that hung from a ten-thousand-feet tall cliff. He had to be extremely careful. He had to rack his brains before he took each and every step since

it needed the utmost care. He had been using all his strength to fight a war of wits with Great Zhao, and he couldn't dare to relax even the least bit.

The names of the people mentioned in the intelligence report would most likely cause serious trouble later on. Moreover, Tie Long Cheng heavily relied upon several of them. Tie Long Cheng would have his suspicions about any replacements that were sent; no matter who the replacement was. And in case the enemy was inadvertently alerted about it — the consequences could be disastrous.

Therefore, Tie Bu Tian's only option was to lead his imperial troops to the frontlines. The imperial power and the military power would successfully merge into one. It would form the greatest force as long as he arrived with his force.

In accordance with the suggestion in Chu Yang's letter — Tie Bu Tian had recruited new soldiers to form a great force before his departure. He had summoned waves of mighty army units from all directions to fight for him at the frontlines.

There was a sense of urgency in Tie Bu Tian's heart. In fact, it was almost like a premonition... [It feels like a decisive battle is about to begin.]

[Or perhaps my destiny will be fixed for a lifetime as the newly appointed Emperor of Iron Cloud. It might even pass into eternity. It is also possible to get my hands on the exploits which last for a thousand years...]

Tie Bu Tian had been pondering within his heart. He had been thinking of a possible way to talk to Tie Long Cheng... and what means he should take to arrest all the traitors within the military ranks once he had been convinced... and too without spreading a panic among soldiers...

He had been thinking about this problem for a long time.

And King of Hell Chu was in another carriage… en, Wu Qian Qian was also thinking about something. She was thinking that she hadn't seen Chu Yang for a long time… She had dreamt about him several times over these days; she had been meeting him in her dreams.

However, she would find her pillow wet with her own tears every time she's wake up.

She worried whether Chu Yang was okay or not? Whether he was safe or not?

She wasn't bothered over the matters that Tie Bu Tian was. That was because Tie Bu Tian had personally come to deal with it. [He should be able to make necessary arrangements]. Wu Qian Qian didn't feel the need to unnecessarily worry about it.

However, there was something she had been worrying about… Tie Bu Tian was accompanied by several experts for these expeditions. The experts from Beyond the Heavens Sect had formed a team on the inside of the formation to serve as friendly guards.

However, there was a person among them who wasn't letting her be at ease. And that was her Second Martial Uncle… Li Jin Song!

Wu Qian Qian even blamed her father, Wu Yun Liang. [You knew that he isn't a good person. Then why did you bring him along? Even if you needed a proper justification to eradicate him… you did not need to choose this time for that…]

[This… isn't this contributing to the mess?]

Wu Qian Qian was confused and upset. She had been silent throughout the way. The imperial guards around the carriage would feel a dense gloomy aura emanating from the carriage. It made their blood run cold with terror. They would march very cautiously since they didn't wish to provoke the infamous King of Hell Chu…

The Emperor was going on an inspection tour. So the stance naturally won't be small. Tie Bu Tian had ordered to keep it simple in the beginning. However, it could be dangerous for the Emperor to go to the frontlines during such an unusual phase.

Therefore, he was accompanied by the imperial army, the former imperial guards, and the garrison armed forces. A total of 50,000 people were part of this expedition. This number didn't include the experts from Bu Tian Pavilion and other major sects...

It was the dead of the night, and Tie Bu Tian's mind was in utter chaos; perhaps a hundred times more than Wu Qian Qian's. The two coincidentally stepped-out of their tents in order to breathe some fresh cold air, and discovered each other.

"Thinking of him?" Tie Bu Tian asked as he smiled in a mischievous manner. He was disconsolate. However, he somehow felt better to see that someone was similarly depressed, and had come to a secluded place in the dark... just like him...

"There's no use in thinking about him," Wu Qian Qian said in a gloomy tone as she made no attempts to hide it. Tie Bu Tian had come looking for her a number of times after gaining power. And it was getting more frequent. Moreover, sometimes he'd go to her to rely on her and wouldn't leave. Wu Qian Qian was somewhat scared because of this. Hence, she took advantage of the subject of this conversation, and spoke about this matter.

"There is someone in his heart; someone who is very deeply ingrained!" Wu Qian Qian said in a sad voice, "I can clearly sense this. He has already found the person of his dreams. So, his heart cannot accommodate anyone else."

"But... who is this person?" Tie Bu Tian timidly said as he crossed his hands behind his back. He stood upright as he pondered. His heart couldn't help but heave a deep sigh after hearing Wu Qian Qian's words. Wu Qian Qian wasn't alone to feel this way. Tie Bu Tian also had a similar feeling in his heart.

One could clearly see Chu Yang thirsting for someone's company whenever he was alone. That deep look of loneliness in his eyes clearly showed that he felt lonely, and was longing for someone; all of these things illustrated this one point.

But it was a pity that they hadn't been able to find the slightest about the person Chu Yang liked... no matter how much they tried. This was really an extremely strange matter.

Notes:

There are several other probable translations for the term used here; 'Perfect outcome' or 'Ideal outcome' or 'artistic conception' or 'creative concept'. It refers to the final form of a sword move in this context. This basically means the outcome of using that particular sword move. For example, Chu Yang uses a sword move that gathers clouds in the sky; that gathering of clouds could be described as the ideal outcome of that particular sword move.

Chapter 345: Complete Chaos

The people who knew Chu Yang well would tell that his past life's experiences weren't complicated. In fact, they were very simple. Hence, the person Chu Yang liked should definitely be from Beyond the Heavens Sect!

Wu Qian Qian had investigated everyone Chu Yang had come in contact after turning 10. However, the outcome left her at a loss.

[There's no such a person ah!]

[He wouldn't have developed such deep-rooted feelings of love at the age of 8 or 9, would he? That would be a joke... but... then it seems that such a person hasn't appeared in his life yet!]

[But Chu Yang's demeanor, and the look in his eyes, clearly reveals that he has a lonely heart; a heart that longs for his beloved!]

[This is strange!]

Tie Bu Tian was also thinking about this issue.

A strange look appeared on his face after he had thought about it for a while. He smiled and said, "You say... can it be that he likes..."

"What?" Wu Qian Qian turned her head around, and asked.

" ...a man?" Tie Bu Tian knitted his eyebrows as he said with a chuckle.

"You must like men!!" Wu Qian Qian's reaction was very intense. She had refuted the Emperor of a nation. It was equivalent to cursing at normal people...

Yet, Tie Bu Tian wasn't one bit angry. He just laughed as his shoulders shrugged.

Wu Qian Qian was worried. [I scolded him, but he didn't take offense. It seems like he really... fancies me! How should I deal with this?! What should I do...]

In fact, Wu Qian Qian was so worried that she couldn't breathe.

Suddenly, they saw everything turning bright before their eyes.

[It is already late at night; then how can it be so bright?] They looked up towards the sky in bewilderment. And they saw a marvelous spectacle that appeared once in ages.

Lightning flashes and thunders were rolling in the sky. However, it was extremely strange since there were no clouds in the sky for hundreds of kilometers. The stars appeared to be jittering and shivering... as if the universe was no longer the same...

Tie Bu Tian was gazing at the sky; he appeared to be in trance. He continued to gaze at the sky until its color returned to normal. He then remained motionless for some time; his was lowered. Then a sharp radiance flashed in his eyes as he murmured, "Changing... sky..."

Wu Qian Qian didn't understand what just happened. She turned around to ask, but Tie Bu Tian had already turned back to walk towards his tent. Afterwards, an order was issued: Set out immediately! Be sure to travel at double speed in this starry night. We must reach Commander Tie Long Cheng's barracks in the shortest possible time!

A military command must be strictly obeyed!

These people were elites among the elites. They immediately set out as soon as the order was issued. They billowed towards the southern border. Tie Bu Tian's facial expression looked very strange along the way. It was a mix of excitement, fear, and doubt...

The major clans were collaborating to encircle and annihilate the enemy in the Middle Three Heavens for quite some time. In fact, it had been like a plentiful harvest for them.

The seal had loosened-up after the birth of Nine Tribulations Sword; thereby releasing more and more spirit beasts. However,

their grade wasn't very high. Even the strength of the occasionally-emerging members of Three Stars Divine Clan wasn't outstanding; unlike the way it was described in the legends.

Therefore, the big clans were somewhat surprised.

This was supposed to a war for survival. However, it had somehow turned into a place to compete over the spoils of war.

These major clans were in urgent need of items like fur, bones and the inner cores of spirit beasts. The younger generation of these clans would grow faster with the help of these items.

These items would ultimately point them towards purple jade.

Purple jade was a treasure that appeared in the Upper Three Heavens on occasions. However, the clans in the Middle Three Heavens would suffer untold hardships to obtain elixirs, rare stone and several other valuable items. They would then save them. Then, they would send an expert to the Upper Three Heavens to exchange these items for purple jades.

Every piece of purple jade was extremely valuable.

They wouldn't have to bear with so many difficulties if they could get their hands on several spirit beast cores. Moreover, the strength of their clan juniors would also develop by relying on the spiritual power contained in those cores; then why wouldn't they go for it?

Therefore, they basically started competing-over killing the spirit beasts.

The so-called major clans had fought shoulder to shoulder in the beginning. However, even they had started to compete with each other a time progressed. The conflict broke out among them; no less than hundreds of times.

Most experts died not because they were killed by spirit beasts — they died after getting ambushed by their companions!

One would have to agree that this was a tragedy.

They had already driven the spirit beasts into the deeper regions of the Cang Lan Battlefront. However, the situation between the major clans had become increasingly unstable. Then suddenly, that strange and chaotic event took place one night.

The seal in the Cang Lan Battlefront suddenly erupted into intense rays of light after such tremendous changes had occurred; bursts of glares appeared at more than one place.

Everyone was amazed by this inexplicable occurrence.

The members of the big clans suddenly found themselves running into more and more formidable enemies after the disappearance of that blinding glare... these enemies were far more difficult to deal with. Moreover, the experts of Three Stars Divine Clan re-emerged. These new ones were significantly stronger than the ones that had appeared before.

The members of major clans didn't get enough time to adjust their mentality as the counterattack of the spirit beasts started.

The living environment of these spirit beasts, i.e. the Cang Lan Battlefront, was a wild and uninhabited desolate place; how could they allow it be occupied by mankind?

Less than one-tenth of it had fallen into the hands of human experts at present. However, it had given rise to a huge turmoil.

The human-side had suddenly fallen into a disadvantageous situation along with the counterattack of spirit beasts as well as the re-emergence of far-more-tyrannical experts of Three Stars Divine Clan. The casualties had also increased big-time.

The major clans had to once again form an alliance after they failed to hold their own individually.

The battle was no longer as chaotic as after the formation of the alliance. However... the quality of the cores improved as the strength of the spirit beasts enhanced.

Therefore, everyone again got caught-up in a tangled warfare to obtain these resources for themselves…

Yet, there were a few clans which were behaving rather strangely in this regard.

These were Gu Clan, Ji Clan, Luo Clan, Dong Clan… and so on.

Of course, the strangest-of-all was the Mo Clan. The Mo Clan would sometimes turn against other clans and would start to fight with them. And sometimes, it would get intimate with some clans and would start to coordinate with them…

This stunned everyone!

Whether the Gu Clan would surround one or several spirit beasts — the Luo Clan always stood by on the sidelines. Not to mention that most of these spirit beasts were of the rarer kind. Considering the extent of harmony between the Gu Clan and the Luo Clan — everyone guessed that the Luo Clan would soon plunder the Gu Clan's loots. Yet to everyone's surprise, the Luo Clan just stood guard on the sidelines and alerted the Gu Clan whenever necessary.

The people of the Luo Clan would only leave the scene once the Gu Clan's people were done collecting the spoils of war. The Luo Clan would immediately join hands with the Gu Clan if other clans tried to rob the Gu Clan. Then, they would invade the territory of the perpetrators together, and would give them a taste of their own medicine.

The people of the Ji Clan and the Dong Clan would never negotiate over fighting the spirit beasts whenever they discovered a group at the same time. Both clans would voluntary withdraw. If the spirit beast was extremely tyrannical and one clan had to engage it… then, the other clan would lend a helping hand; free of charge…

This phenomenon was rarely seen in the Cang Lan Battlefront.

As for the Mo Clan... there was nothing good to say. Mo Tian Yun was leading one team, while Mo Tian Ji was leading another. Unlucky people would run into Mo Tian Yun. That was because he would rob anything he discovered. [Killing spirit beasts is one hell of a laborious job; might as well wait on the sidelines and plunder from the others].

One time — Mo Tian Yun found the Luo Clan's team. They had just beheaded a spirit beast. So, he ordered his men to plunder. However, his team was soon swarmed by the troops of the Gu Clan and the Dong Clan. Moreover, the Luo Clan immediately counterattacked as well. Mo Tian Yun had to suffer a huge loss in the end.

Mo Tian Yun was fuming with rage as he gritted his teeth.

[There used to be so much friction among these guys in the past. How come they've become so friendly? How are they acting in collusion after returning from the Lower Three Heavens?]

[In addition... I heard that these people went to visit little sister. This shows that they don't hold any malicious intentions toward the Mo Clan. Then why are they acting like this towards me?]

[What is going on? Did Mo Tian Ji take the opportunity, and won these guys over in the Lower Three Heavens? But at present... he shouldn't have such a reputation, right?]

However, he was unable speak-out his grievances in this Cang Lan Battlefront of the Middle Three Heavens. He could only bite the bullet and swallow his pride.

While the Middle Three Heavens was in chaos — the Upper Three Heavens was bearing the brunt!

Moreover, there was no buffer point like the Cang Lan Battlefront in the Upper Three Heavens; there was nothing to keep the enemies away from common masses. Therefore, the so-called nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens were forced to move

into action.

They understood the meaning behind such mysterious changes in the world.

The Nine Tribulations Sword's third fragment had taken birth.

Moreover, the commotion was extraordinary this time. The nine super clans had turned very vigilant. They weren't worried by the attack of the Three Stars Divine Clan or the riot of the spirit beasts. They were instead worried about the Nine Tribulations Sword.

According to records — The Nine Tribulations Sword had taken birth several times in the past. Its fragments appeared once in several years. There could even be a gap of three decades between the births of two subsequent fragments.

However, it had happened after half-a-year this time around.

This was very unusual.

The first fragment had taken birth during last year's summer. The wind and cloud became turbulent as a result. The second fragment took birth in the winter, and the weather changed again. The nine super clans had thought that the situation wasn't yet alarming then. After all, they would have a buffer period of at least two or three decades before the appearance of the next fragment…

Anything could happen during this period of twenty to thirty years.

The Nine Tribulations Sword's master would purge the Nine Heavens — this was a fact. He would also purge the nine super clans — this was a fact as well. However… the nine super clans had managed to be on good terms with the Nine Tribulations Sword's master several times in the past. Thus, they had managed to retain themselves.

There was no way these nine super clans wouldn't be able to retain themselves like their predecessors had.

Therefore, they weren't in any hurry. However, the sudden birth of the third fragment left them panicking.

The universe turned upside down, the heaven and earth overturned, the stars were out of order, and the sky dyed blood-red. These signs indicated that the current Master of Nine Tribulations Sword was a 'calamity star' (1)!

The nine super clans would inevitably meet their doom if he was allowed to grow.

The Nine Tribulations Sword's current master had managed to obtain three fragments in merely a year's time. Such a growth rate was simply unimaginable.

[If he were to move at this speed... wouldn't he obtain the nine fragments within three years, and then dominate the Nine Heavens?]

Therefore, the nine super clans immediately reacted.

Not just them — The Upper Three Heavens was a vast territory. It was home to countless middle-sized and small clans besides the nine supers. There were several smart people among them who knew what was going on.

These people felt that this strange event was an opportunity... for their own clans to leap forward like a dragon, and jump-up the ranks in one fell swoop.

Everyone was excited since this was a chance that appeared only once in ten thousand years.

The Lower Three Heavens was in turmoil since the war for the 'unification of land' could break out any time. The Middle Three Heavens was in chaos since everyone was involved in battle... and a storm was brewing in the Upper Three Heavens. In short — the entire Nine Heavens Continent was in a state of complete chaos...

Notes:

Calamity Star: A star that brings calamity. (A concept from Astrology)

Chapter 346: Tan Tan's Predestined Love

These were chaotic times. However, Meng Chao Ran, Tan Tan, and Miss Xie Dan Feng had arrived at the Cang Lan Battlefront.

This journey with Tan Tan and Xie Dan Feng had been tough for Meng Chao Ran. The noise and commotion caused by his two companions had been very irksome. In fact, he had started harboring thoughts of committing suicide despite his high tolerance.

Xie Dan Feng seemed familiar with the Cang Lan Battlefront. Well, she was familiar with the outer region. She was able to act as their guide without facing any major problems.

It was hard to tell this young maiden's thoughts as she led this master-disciple-duo. It seemed that very few people ventured on this desolate route. They met a few people in the beginning. However, they ran into a sandstorm later on. Afterwards, they set foot in a desert which was home to a thick growth of shrubs...

How could an experienced man like Meng Chao Ran not notice this change in her? In fact, he understood it clearly; more or less.

[Miss Xie must've had a big fight with her family. This young girl has a bad temper; she must've acted like a spoiled brat, and must've run away. She should've returned to her family after 2-3 days on her own...]

However, she had bumped into Tan Tan.

This high-and-mighty maiden had been blown-away after meeting this freak.

The two of them had been fooling around since the start. They were boisterous, noisy, and kept fighting. Afterwards, they began to fight side-by-side, and started to confront the enemy together. And Tan Tan put on airs of a top-tier macho-man. He thought, [You mustn't admit defeat when fighting with a girl who has a

grudge against you!] As soon as there was a moment that endangered their lives, "Woman! You are in the way! Step aside!" he would immediately clamor.

Tan Tan firmly believed — the woman should hide behind the man in the face of danger; as long as he isn't dead!

Tan Tan's reasoning was undoubtedly rude and impolite. However... even a 'female T. Rex' like Miss Xie Dan Feng happened to like it for some reason.

Miss Xie Dan Feng had always acted valiantly; even in her childhood. She would often beat the boys her age; in fact, she would beat them black and blue. She had always carried a 'big sister' like presence.

No one had ever treated her like a girl. In fact, even her parents would often sigh and say — we are blessed with two sons.

Consequently, Xie Dan Feng grew up as such.

However, it is an undeniable fact that... girls desire to be cherished. They want to be taken care of. Even a valiant girl requires the warmth of her loved ones.

This warmth was easily accessible to other girls. However, she had never enjoyed such warmth in her life.

She herself was to blame for that... She would laugh wildly as she would kick and punch the people who tried to be gentle with her... And no one looks forward to getting their butts kicked in exchange for showing tenderness to a girl...

Miss Xie would sometimes envy other girls as she grew up. Yet, her character had already taken shape by that time. Moreover, the impression she had left on the others was still going strong.

For example — If Xie Dan Feng and a boy of same age were to get injured, and someone came forward to lend comfort... they would only comfort the boy. Anyone who tried to comfort her would usually be warned by their companions — Wait; what on earth are

you doing? Can't you see that's Xie Dan Feng...

As a result, even the-said person would walk away...

No one knew that Xie Dan Feng actually needed someone to comfort her then...

However, she suddenly encountered a freak like Tan Tan after waiting for so long. And she just couldn't afford to let go of this rarity.

She had clearly seen that Tan Tan liked her. However, he was the type of guy who wouldn't willingly lose in order to please her. Moreover, he would never give her what she desired. Yet, she didn't care.

After all... girls crave the very feeling of being pursued. Generally, a girl is ready to be a mother by the time she grows up to the age of 16-17 years. Then, she gets engaged... but no one had dared to ask for Xie Dan Feng's hand in marriage.

Not because she was unattractive — but because no one dared to!

The legs of young men would turn limp due to fear after they heard her name.

It is said that a young master was asked by his parents to seek for her hand in marriage. However, he refused. They beat their son up. However, he still refused. He then tied a rope to the ceiling of the hall and solemnly requested his parents — any other girl from the Xie Clan will do. Any girl from any other clan will do. I don't even care if she's ugly... But I will hang myself if you ask me to marry Xie Dan Feng.

Xie Dan Feng's fighting prowess and reputation was evident...

However, she was enjoying being pursued by Tan Tan. It made her feel somewhat satisfied and pleased with herself. She couldn't help her desire to enjoy more. [This guy doesn't know how to pursue a woman properly. He looks quite ugly too... but... one should be satisfied with what one's got.]

[Isn’t it great that someone is pursuing me?]

She continued to participate in betting matches with Tan Tan along the way. And she kept losing until she was broke. Meanwhile, Tan Tan’s pockets kept inflating proudly.

However, Xie Dan Feng wasn’t willing to give up on the stuff she had lost; she naturally wanted to win them back.

Afterwards, the fighting strength of the beasts increased. Tan Tan dashed-on bravely to fight with them; he showed no concern for personal safety. He simply wouldn’t allow her to engage those scary beasts. He desperately struggled on his own, and came close to his death dozens of times. Even Meng Chao Ran was somewhat scared for his safety. How could this not give rise to some feelings in Xie Dan Fang’s heart?

So, Miss Xie was left with thoughts such as… [This guy isn’t elegant, and doesn’t understand amorous feelings. However, considering my temperament… I don’t even need a man who does…]

[He looks somewhat ugly, but… his ‘shocked’ appearance is worth a sight. Well, at least he looks like a beautiful boy when he is shocked.]

These thoughts continuously revolved in her heart.

She would sometimes blush; very suddenly at that. Her brother, Xie Dan Qiong, would certainly be shocked to death if he were to see her like this.

Xie Dan Feng knew that Tan Tan and Meng Chao Ran didn’t belong to any influential clan. They were just two worthless wanders. How could her family allow her… to be with such a person?

It might not be pleasant to hear, but Tan Tan wouldn’t even be allowed to marry the pigs and dogs of such a prestigious clan. They would never allow this guy to marry Xie Dan Feng.

And Miss Xie was well aware of this.

Hence, she didn't wish for them to come across the Xie Clan's people. Therefore, she was consciously leading the two of them farther and farther... more and more into the remoteness...

Meng Chao Ran understood her thought-process clearly. Therefore, he didn't say anything. Anyways, practical battle experience was important for Tan Tan's martial practice. If his disciple was able to get unceasing practical battle experience and a chance to find a wife at the same time... wasn't this like getting the best of both worlds?

Therefore, Meng Chao Ran neither agreed nor opposed; he simply allowed things to take their natural course.

Those two had just started the latest competition. The stake was the inner core of a Fourth Grade Spirit Beast that Xie Dan Feng had just killed.

However, the fight was still one-sided. Tan Tan had been progressing by leap and bounds every day... whether it was his agility skills, his saber technique, his sword-play or his spiritual power. Therefore, Xie Dan Feng had fallen into a comprehensive disadvantageous position.

Less than a quarter of an hour had passed since they had started fighting, and Tan Tan had already defeated Xie Dan Feng. He put her on the ground. He twisted her arms behind her back. He then mounted himself on her back. Then, he joyously shouted, "Say you give up?"

For some reason her body suddenly turned soft as he sat on her buttocks this time around. Her upper body had been struggling until now. But it suddenly pounded on the ground with a 'pop' sound. She then said in a soft voice, "You first let go of me."

Tan Tan didn't notice the abrupt change in her tone. He was panting; he seemed no different from a fiend. He viciously looked

at her and said, "Say you give up?"

"First let me get up!" Xie Dan Feng said somewhat anxiously. Her body was turning softer and softer on being ridden like that. A tide of joy and lust seemed to have appeared in her heart. That spot in her lower abdomen seemed to be losing strength...

"I won't!" Tan Tan replied angrily, "You want to be shameless, huh? You'll have to say it first. Did you lost this inner core or not?"

Xie Dan Feng was struggling to get up. She suddenly felt that intense rubbing on her butt; and a strong male odor. Only god knows why she was being so sensitive today. Her vision turned hazy as she moaned, "You just keep chanting 'say this, say that'... you, you... you vile man... let me stand up now..."

She had said this in a very coquettish manner.

She herself couldn't believe the voice that had come out of her mouth, [this... why am I speaking like this? This is really disgusting...]

But, Tan Tan didn't hear it that way. He continued to act as if he was the boss to this servant. He ordered like a strict elder brother with an iron-heart, "No! You will first admit defeat! Are you refusing to acknowledge that you have lost? Humph..."

He raised his eyebrows. He then lifted his hand, and smacked her round buttocks twice. This sent ripples through her buttocks; they fluctuated like the ripples on water surface. Then, he triumphantly said, "You better not think that I won't 'dare' to hit you, humph..." he said as he had gently spanked her to prove that he had the 'daring'. It was indeed very daring!

Cough it is a well-known fact that some girls' bodies are quite sensitive... cough it was Miss Xie Dan Feng's inexorable fate that she had bumped into a demon like Tan Tan.

These two spanks had induced dozens of intense reactions in her body.

Suddenly, Xie Dan Feng felt a wonderful feeling surging within her. It seemed like something mystical yet irresistible was welling-up inside her body... and was about to pour out... her body trembled uncontrollably once; then it trembled a few more times... and then violently trembled one last time. Then, she suddenly lost her strength. She lay-down on the ground softly. She hid her face prevent other from seeing the anger and shame. Unexpectedly, she began to cry...

Tan Tan suddenly panicked.

He hastily let-go of her hand, and got down from her body. He rubbed his hands nervously as he slowly asked, "You, you, you... why are you crying... you ... you don't cry... you... hey, hey... really, ah..."

Xie Dan Feng felt even more shameful. She simply lay down on the ground, and began to bawl loudly.

"What, what is this? What is..." Tan Tan felt helpless. [I don't know what's happening to this high-and-mighty Miss? She wasn't like this, right? We fought just the way we did a couple of days ago... how come she is crying today...]

Xie Dan Feng was at a loss to see him staring blanking like a bird at her. She continued to cry since he didn't approach to comfort her.

Finally, Tan Tan slowly walked towards her and bent down...

Xie Dan Feng finally felt a bit relaxed, [this bastard, at last he came over. Humph.]

She felt that Tan Tan would help her up. However, he suddenly drew closer and began to sniff. He sniffed here and there, then near her... He seemed to have picked up a strange smell. He doubtfully scratched his head and said, "This smell... what kind of a strange smell is this..."

Xie Dan Feng gawked for a second. She then suddenly blushed;

she was very embarrassed. A surge of vigor had appeared within her when she saw him sniffing and approaching her ‘critical’ spot. She fiercely jumped-up, and mercilessly kicked him in the belly.

The power contained in this kick was enormous.

Tan Tan was caught off-guard and issued a weird cry. The kick sent him flying…

Chapter 347: Chance Encounter

Tan Tan grimaced in pain as he stood up. Then, he furiously roared, "You, you, you crazy woman! Why did you do that?"

Xie Dan Feng covered her face; she was still crying. She turned around and hastily went behind a boulder as Tan Tan foolishly watched. He was just about to go after her when he heard her shout. Her voice seemed ashamed and furious, "Don't come here! I am changing clothes..."

Tan Tan was startled and somewhat confused. He said to himself, [why would you change clothes at this time? Why change clothes for no reason? You are thinking of ways to refuse accepting that you lost the match...]

He was about to follow her when Meng Chao Ran caught up from behind. He pat on Tan Tan's shoulder to stop him, and asked: "What is going on?" Meng Chao Rang also felt very strange. [Everything was going so smoothly between the two so far; what did Tan Tan do to make her cry?]

[Considering Miss Xie's temperament... it really isn't an easy thing for Tan Tan to make her cry like this...!]

"I don't know ah..." Tan Tan scratched his head and replied with a puzzled look on his face, "This woman suddenly started crying..."

Meng Chao Ran turned over and rolled his eyes. He suddenly had an urge to spank this guy to death. [You made someone cry, and then you tell me that you don't even know the reason?]

However, Tan Tan really couldn't tell the reason, and Meng Chao Ran could only scowl at him.

Xie Dan Feng coyly walked out from behind that boulder after a long time. She was clad in a water-green skirt. Her walking posture was quite strange. Her face was bright red, and she was biting her lips. It was hard to tell why she was blushing so hard...

She turned over to look at Tan Tan. Then, she lowered her head bashfully. She actually looked like a shy little girl!

Meng Chao Ran's eyes almost popped out when he saw this.

He couldn't tell whether this girl was the same Miss 'High and Mighty' Xie — the one with the impregnably thick skin. She was taking small steps and would often blush. She was a soft-spoken and fine young girl... was this really the same female T. Rex from a while ago?

"Suddenly, you've changed your clothes?" Tan Tan frowned as he stared at her and asked, "Why did you change your clothes?"

Xie Dan Feng bit her lips. Then, she turned away with a 'humph'.

Tan Tan got agitated. He spoke furiously, "Don't give me that 'humph', okay? You do realize that you have lost, right? Quickly hand over the inner core!"

Xie Dan Feng felt a strange pain within her, [this extremely insensitive guy really has nothing else to say.] She grabbed the inner core and maliciously threw it towards him. She bit her lips and said in a scolding manner, "Inner core; inner core! The inner core is all you care about!"

Tan Tan beamed with joy as he received the inner core. He waved his hand and spoke as he held his head high and puffed his chest out, "Come on! Let's go ahead!"

Xie Dan Feng bit her lip and stared at him. She had been rendered speechless; the grief and indignation was visible on her face. [This guy won't even ask why I cried?]

She was still lost in her thoughts when she heard Tan Tan say, "Moreover, why on earth would suddenly start crying when I got on top of you? Anyways, I won't haggle over it with you. However, you're not allowed to do something like this later on; got it?"

Xie Dan Feng just stared; her brain had gone blank.

"You threw a tantrum; but things like that don’t work on me!" Tan Tan complacently declared, "Therefore, you should stop thinking about using such cheap tricks again. I will obtain the stuff I win; no matter what."

Xie Dan Feng gawked for a while. She then stomped forward without uttering a single word. She had clearly come to understood that it was her fault to have expected this shitty guy to be gentle and considerate... it was nothing but a dream; a daydream to be specific.

This guy had a strong and unmatched ability — the ability to destroy one’s mood as well as the pleasant atmosphere. In this regard, he was the first under the heaven.

Xie Dan Feng puffed-out her cheeks. There was an irreconcilable look in her eyes. She looked at the ground; immersed in hate and indignation.

Tan Tan closely followed, and arrived beside her. They didn’t quarrel for quite some time; this was very unusual. Then, Tan Tan coughed twice and asked, "You still haven’t told me? Why did you change clothes?"

"I will gladly tell you! But why don’t you first learn to take care of a girl?" Xie Dan Feng’s body stopped abruptly. She put her hands on her hip. Her eyes were spitting fire. She had raised her head and stuck out her chest as she had shouted.

Her voice echoed like a thunderclap.

Tan Tan was scared as he looked at his sweetheart’s cold and stern complexion. He muttered to himself in a very low voice, "Geez, Don’t tell me if you don’t want to..."

Xie Dan Feng had roared fiercely, and now felt a lot less troubled in her heart. Then, she saw the scared appearance of Tan Tan, and somehow felt pleased with herself. She snorted twice and then turned around and walked away.

Tan Tan continued to follow after her, but a question was constantly revolving in his heart; it was really bothering him. He tried to ask her several times, but couldn't bring himself to do that. He finally mustered his courage and took a few steps to catch up with Xie Dan Feng. Then, he secretively whispered, "Well, you see... there's something I want to ask..."

"What? What bullshit do you have to say this time?" Xie Dan Feng's countenance was cold and intimidating. Her tender face had already regained its initial valiance.

"That strange smell I sniffed back then... what was it?" these few words of Tan Tan successfully suppressed her valiant disposition, and instantly pulled out a bewildered look on her face. Her eyes lust-filled were now staring at Tan Tan.

"What, did, you, say?!" Xie Dan Feng gritted her teeth and asked. Her body dangerously approached Tan Tan's as she asked this question. An ominous look was flashing in her eyes.

"I... I mean was that not... was that not..." Tan Tan diligently went backward. He seemed distressed, and seemed to be avoiding the other party's oppression as he said this in a distraught voice.

"What was it?! It was nothing!" Xie Dan Feng roared like a thunder and turned away. On this topic... the best way was to not say anything.

However, it was too late.

Tan Tan thought that she was asking him to say what it was. Therefore, it suddenly came out of his mouth even though he didn't have the courage to say it earlier, "Wasn't it urine?"

Xie Dan Feng's tender body trembled. She blushed and her ears turned hot-red. She slowly turned her head and glared at Tan Tan.

"What I am saying is... you peed in your pants, didn't you?" Tan Tan got somewhat panicky as he said this and immediately stepped backed. It seemed as if he was seeking truth from facts, "I had

sniffed the crotch area of your pant, and it smelled funny... moreover, you went to change clothes immediately-after..."

He then tilted his head to one side. A pondering look appeared on his face as if he was recollecting his memories from back then. It seemed as if he was trying to figure out something. Then, he said in an uncertain manner, "But the problem is that... it didn't actually smell like urine... it was a rather strange smell. Let me think again..."

"Ah... ah..." Xie Dan Feng held her head in her hands, and yelled out loudly; loud enough to the point of exhaustion, "Tan Tan! I will kill you! I will definitely kill you! This saber shall end your life; you heinous criminal, you stinky bastard, you infuriating scum. You're nothing but an extremely shameless and obscene pervert..."

Then, her eyes turned red. Her whole face flushed red. Even her neck and ears had turned red. She clenched her fists and rushed towards Tan Tan. It seemed as if her martial strength had suddenly increased several times. She seized Tan Tan and started punching him like a sandbag. She fiercely kicked and punched him over and over again...

Tan Tan screamed and staggered along; he tumbled all over the place. He was simply left with no strength to fight back since he had recalled Chu Yang's teaching, "When you face an enemy you are unable to guard against... when you realize that you're not their opponent and unable to escape from them... you just need to do one thing... cover your head and hold yours balls... then endure... you will be alright as long as these two parts are okay!"

A wonderful idea suddenly flashed in Tan Tan's mind. He gave up all resistance, and curled his body into a ball. He fiercely inserted his head into his bottom area and then used his hands to guard his crotch...

[Hit me now!]

[A dead pig isn't afraid of the boiling water!]

This violent beating lasted for a quarter of an hour. Then, Xie Dan Feng started panting and threw a kick at Tan Tan who was still lying ‘all curled up’ on the ground. He was sent rolling forward to a steep slope like a rubber ball. He went rolling up the steep slope till he reached half the slope’s height, and then lost his momentum. He then retraced the same path by rolling in the reverse direction, and came back to the initial spot.

Xie Dan Feng had been raging inside. However, this kind of a phenomenon made her burst into giggles...

[This bastard! He really leaves you between laughter and tears.]

Meng Chao Ran caught up soon after; he was as confused. He asked with his eyes wide open, "What happened... what is going on here?"

"What happened?" Xie Dan Feng impatiently replied in an angry tone: "Ask your ‘good’ disciple!"

She then turned around and sped away without turning back. Suddenly, Tan Tan screamed, "Teacher... Father... save me..."

Meng Chao Ran had a tough time suppressing his desire to slap Tan Tan after he had heard the whole story. [It’s pretty obvious... but how can you be so stupid... things were going perfectly, but you spoiled the fun. What was this bastard thinking?]

Tan Tan was plaintive and still groaning...

This matter finally came to an end. Miss Xie Dan Feng didn’t realize that she had already deviated from her original route in her enraged state of mind. She was now leading them towards the central region of the Cang Lan Battlefront...

She was born with a hot temper, and it could last for long intervals. However, they had already bumped into people by the time she woke up to her senses.

And quite coincidentally — the people of the Xie Clan!

Xie Dan Feng was shocked. She got nervous. She couldn’t bear to stand there any longer, and moved to the corner.

Meng Chao Ran and Tan Tan changed their positions a bit as they saw that a fierce battle was taking place about a thousand feet away.

Several hundred people clad in black clothes were stationed on one side, and a large group of Iron-Clad Lion spirit beasts was on the other side. There were 5-6 individuals in the middle of these Iron-Clad Lion spirit beasts. These men were clad in weird attires.

A thunderous noise sounded within Meng Chao Ran's bosom. He had exchanged places with Tan Tan to look after the Divine Chi Gathering Fish. The fish began to flip over in the fish tank for some inexplicable reason, and started to gurgle out bubbles.

"Three Stars Divine Clan?" Meng Chao Ran and Tan Tan were stunned.

"These are the people of Three Stars Divine Clan?" Xie Dan Feng was relieved to see that her elder brother and the other clansmen weren’t in any immediate danger. She curiously looked at the Three Stars Divine Clan’s weirdly dressed people. She then said in a surprised tone, "Tan Tan, they are uglier than you!"

Tan Tan asked in a ‘shocked’ manner, "Now?"

Xie Dan Feng burst into laughter and said, "Now you look very handsome."

Tan Tan maintained his ‘shocked’ expression and asked, "Do you know these people?"

Xie Dan Feng carefully looked at him for a while instead of making fun of his ‘shocked’ look. She then nodded her head and said, "Ah, so pleasing to the eye. Let me tell you something. That commander in the middle — the man who not only has the elegant demeanor of a senior general, but also looks very dashing — is my elder brother. His name is Xie Dan Qiong!"

Tan Tan was actually shocked this time. His facial features instantly changed. He released a hissing sound as if he was sucking in cold air. He then spoke in shocked tone, "So, that is my brother-in-law!"

Xie Dan Feng turned bashful and kicked him, "Get lost!"

A large military force was waiting on one sideline as the battle between these two sides continued to rage. They seemed to be taking pleasure in others' misfortunes as they looked at the battle between the Xie Clan and Iron-Clad Lion beasts; they were obviously waiting to profit at others' expense.

A snow-white lotus was drawn on a flag that was erected high-up. The word "Luo" was present in the center of the lotus. The flag was fluttering in the wind. The two young men stood side-by-side under the flag. They both looked sturdy, and were none other than Luo Ke Wu and Luo Ke Di.

"Ahwooh... this is so cool..." Luo Ke Di laughed. He seemed to have hidden intentions, "Motherf*k, Xie Dan Qion is always so arrogant. I will teach this guy a lesson this time! Motherf*k! Such a nice opportunity appears once in hundreds of years."

Chapter 348: Luo Ke Di and Tan Tan Meet for the First Time

"Honestly! Calm down! Taking advantage of Xie Dan Qiong won't be easy," Luo Ke Wu grunted as he examined the battle's situation. He didn't miss any spot of fighting and was carefully looking for hidden traces that might lead to a sudden change battle's situation, "Haven't you seen? These spirit beasts are formidable, but Xie Dan Qiong is managing his troops well. His battle formation is tight. The Xie Clan's won't suffer many loses. But it won't be very difficult for us to profit at their expense when the time comes. You just don't get so full of yourself, okay. We don't want Xie Dan Qiong to draw-in those spirit beasts towards us. It will be Xie Dan Qiong who would profit at our expense if that happens..."

"That's won't be an issue!" Luo Ke Di smiled mischievously and said, "I am an expert now..."

"Bah!" Luo Ke Wu spat disdainfully. He then and stepped a distance away from his side.

Xie Dan Qiong was depressed and felt like vomiting blood. His younger sister was missing. He had been killing spirit beasts while searching for her. He had ended up separating from other aristocratic clans, and had deviated from the scheduled track.

However, here he had actually run into the Three Stars Divine Clan's people. He wouldn't have been scared if he had to deal with these people only. However, they had brought a large number of Iron-Clad Lion beasts along. There were hundreds of these beasts, and each one of them was a fifth level low-grade spirit beast.

These Iron-Clad Lion beasts were a pride of 'big' lions. However, these big lions were different from the ordinary ones. Their skin was made of toughened iron. An ordinary sword would break if used to cut their skin. Moreover, these Iron-Clad Lion beasts were extremely agile. They could move as swiftly as the wind. They'd

use their four iron hooves to attack, and the biting-strength of their jaws was phenomenal. It was extremely difficult to guard against such inanely capable beasts.

There was an iron pouch in the throat of these Iron-Clad Lion beasts. It was their inner core. A lion beast would spout its inner core to inflict injuries to its enemy whenever it was faced with a life and death situation. Moreover, a fifth level Iron-Clad Lion beast was powerful enough to severely injure a top-tier king level expert.

And Xie Dan Qiong had run into hundreds of them at once. How was this not bad luck?

What was even worse was the fact that... he might not be able to wipe them out if his team had to deal with them alone. However, he could at least gain an upper-hand in time. He might even derive some profits by the end of it. However, the two Luo brothers had shamelessly emerged from behind, and had outflanked him. They were obviously waiting for the Xie Clan to exhaust their military strength in this protracted battle. They would then profit at the others' expense and collect the spoils of war.

This was driving Xie Dan Qiong crazy.

He adopted some tricks to lead those spirit beasts towards the Luo Clan's troops a few times. However, the Luo brothers were very slick. They would always steer clear in advance, and would keep away from the ongoing battle. They would then stand and watch from a distance. There was no relief for him in this entire scenario.

Xie Dan Qiong felt that he would die of excessive anger...

[Does this mean that I won't be able to stop the Luo Clan from taking advantage of me?] Xie Dan Qiong thought to himself.

[This isn't the kind of issue that I can simply compromise with; this concerns my clan's reputation]

Xie Dan Qiong didn’t wish to make any compromises. He had failed even when he was competing for the Sunlight Saber and Moonlight Sword. It didn’t matter whether they were real of fake — what mattered was that he had failed to snatch them.

Xie Dan Qiong wouldn’t allow himself to be defeated this time. Therefore, his calmed his mind down at the fastest possible speed after an initial fit of anxiety. He was no longer thinking about the Luo brothers now. He was fully focused on the battle before his eyes.

Then, he mind suddenly rose above the battle-situation. He seemed to have occupied a commanding position; he was above all others. His callous gaze looked down from above as he commanded this war.

"Xie Dan Qiong has suddenly entered the Icy Heart Realm!" Luo Ke Wu said; an icy look flashed in his eyes.

"Icy Heart Realm!" Luo Ke Di’s heart jumped as he heard this. [Is this similar to the Empty Mirror Realm which Big Brother Chu Yang taught? This Xie Dan Qiong has actually entered such a realm?]

Their shock only lasted for a while. Then, they regained their original schadenfreude mindset.

Xie Dan Qiong was also shocked big-time.

That was because... he saw a figure dash-over as swiftly as the wind from the immediate surroundings. This person was holding a whip in their hands. That figure bellowed, "You trivial Iron-Clad Lion beasts! How dare you run wild in front of this great aunt!"

Xie Dan Qiong was stupefied. His vest soaked in his cold sweat, and he sat down on the ground. His Icy Heart Realm had been shattered in a heart-beat. In fact, he was so overwhelmed that he felt a slight pain within himself.

[My great aunt...] Xie Dan Qiong wanted to cry but had no tears

to shed. [I was looking for you, but couldn't find you. But you appeared faster than anyone else when I least expected you to! You're not my younger sister... you really are my great aunt...]

He then saw a scene which was even more shocking. He saw a strange looking guy next to his sister's slim figure. This guy looked as ugly as those people from Three Stars Divine Clan. He was roaring in a strange manner as he took big strides, and entered the battle formation. He then charged towards the Iron-Clad Lion beasts. He then howled; one would never be able to forget his howl, "Ouu... these broken iron lions actually dare to besiege this great uncle's elder-brother-in-law! Come. Come. Come. Come. I'm coming to teach you all a lesson..."

Xie Dan Qiong was stunned. He couldn't bear this final blow, and spat out blood. He pointed his trembling finger at his younger sister and that freak. He then spoke in a trembling voice, "You, you... you, you... you... you two... wa..."

Xie Dan Qiong collapsed...

[She's barely been gone for a few days... and she's actually brought back my brother-in-law? Moreover... such a weird... brother-in-law?]

"Young Lord!" The guarding experts rushed over. Xie Dan Qiong had stood up by now. He dramatically wiped the blood off the corners of his mouth. Then, he callously commanded with a cold look in his eyes, "Protect the Young Miss!"

"Yes!"

Xie Dan Qiong didn't say it clearly, but it was obvious to everyone. [He only ordered to 'protect the Young Miss!'. But he didn't order us to protect her companion. Basically... we don't need to act even if that person is in danger...]

Xie Dan Qiong's body floated upwards and landed on the horseback. He was holding the Xie Clan's flag in his hand. It was

continuously waving in the wind; the Xie Clan’s battle formation quickly rotated.

Xie Dan Feng and Tan Tan charged into that pride of Iron-Clad Lion beasts like a tornado. They had been fighting together for a long time. Hence, they were already familiar with each other’s fighting style, and were very much in sync. [Your whip and my sword — one for long range attack and the other for close. Flawless coordination!]

“I have said earlier... but why would a big girl like you run away from her home? This isn’t good, you know?” Tan Tan kept running his mouth as he engaged an Iron-Clad Lion beast.

Tan Tan’s body was jolted into the air like a ball after several banging sounds.

The Xie Clan's people suddenly surrounded Xie Dan Feng. They basically crowded around her in order to protect her.

"He’s inside their pride, whereas I am outside. Why are you protecting me... and not him?" Xie Dan Feng got furious, "Are you all fools?"

The Xie Clan's experts didn’t utter a single word, and just kept looking at her.

"Let me go!" Xie Dan Feng got extremely mad. [Tan Tan appears to be in a critical situation. I didn’t give any prior notice, and just rushed into battle. And Tan Tan charged-in to accompany me. How will I forgive myself if he were to get hurt because of me...?]

"Xie Dan Qiong! I, your ‘old mother’, will never forgive you if Tan Tan gets injured!" Xie Dan Feng clamored in desperation when the people surrounding her didn’t move.

Xie Dan Qiong’s complexion darkened.

His younger sister had referred to herself as his ‘old mother’? Having such a valiant younger sister really made him feel helpless at times...

Luo Ke Di had been standing idly at a distant place. He had been grinning from ear to ear, and was taking pleasure in others' misfortunes. Then, he was suddenly met with a shock, and his jaw dropped. [I... I didn't mishear it, did I? Isn't Tan Tan Big Brother Chu's fellow-junior disciple?]

Suddenly, a mysterious warm feeling filled his heart. He howled like a wolf. He then unsheathed a long sword with a 'clang', and raised it in the air. It transformed into a shocking lightning sword. He crossed a distance of a thousand feet without thinking or notifying his elder brother, and then jumped over the Xie Clan's formation.

"Ahwooh Ahwooh... I'm coming!" Luo Ke Di's shadow flickered in the air.

"Second Brother!" Luo Ke Wu didn't get a chance to stop Luo Ke Di. He was greatly exasperated and couldn't help but curse out loud, "Luo Ke Di! You lowly bastard! Just you see how I beat you to a pulp later..."

However, he didn't forget to command his troops. He angrily stomped his foot and bellowed, "What are you lot looking at? Didn't you see your second young master charging out? And you're standing here like a flock of dumb birds?! Hurry up... charge after him!"

The Luo Clan's people rushed forth.

Luo Ke Di arrived in the middle of Iron-Clad Lion beasts. He landed on Tan Tan's right side. He brandished his sword, and chopped an Iron-Clad Lion beast into two. His long sword's sharpness could leave anyone in a daze.

Luo Ke Di continued to fight as he tilted his head to one side and asked while blinking his eyes, "Are you Tan Tan?"

"Oh, uh?" Tan Tan replied in a strange tone. Then, he pointed to his nose and asked, "Have you heard of my dashing name?"

This voice sounded like the mixture of a dragon’s cry, a tiger’s roar, and a wolf’s howl. Luo Ke Di felt his soul tremble, and a chill ran down his spine. He staggered a bit after hearing those words.

[No doubt about it!]

[He has such a 'unique' voice. He also has a very narcissistic attitude... even in such a fierce battle. He has got to be that annoying junior disciple of Big Brother Chu’s. It is really hard to find someone else like him in the entire Nine Heavens...]

"Ahwooh... why don’t the two of us fight together?" Luo Ke Di offered as he laughed mischievously.

"That is fine, but you look very ugly. Standing in the same place as you will put great pressure on me," Tan Tan frowned as he took a jab at him. In fact, he seemed somewhat reluctant.

Luo Ke Di felt like vomiting blood, "Ahwooh... what nonsense is this? I’m more handsome than you are!"

"Only the people who feel inferior about their appearance talk like that." Tan Tan squinted his eyes. He appeared somewhat annoyed, "Why do you keep saying ‘Ahwooh’? You think you’re a wolf or something?”

Luo Ke Di was left speechless; he couldn’t speak a single word in response.

This was their first meeting, and Luo Ke Di had been thoroughly defeated.

He finally understood why Chu Yang had once said: [when you’ll meet my fellow-junior disciple Tan Tan — he will certainly subdue in the very first moments!]

Tears began to stream down his cheeks as he remembered these words. [Big Brother, I wasn’t just subdued. It felt like I was standing under a barrage of thunderbolts that were falling down from the sky... such an annoying character doesn’t even appear once in 100,000 years! And he happens to be your fellow-junior

disciple...]

[He is a spitting image of what you had described. In fact, I must say that you were too modest in giving the description back then...]

"Xie Dan Qiong!" Luo Ke Di raised his sword in the air and roared, "For the sake of this younger brother of mine — I propose that our clans cooperate to eliminate these lion beasts? You can rest assured that each clan can keep its own profits after everything is over. We won't lay our hands on your winnings! Today is your lucky day!"

Xie Dan Qiong was surprised by this sudden turn of events; it was as if the heavens had suddenly decided to take his side. How could he not agree to this proposition? He hurriedly replied, "Luo Ke Di, do you really mean that?"

"Of course!" Luo Ke Di arrogantly raised his head.

Xie Dan Qiong couldn't help but gawk. [Who exactly is this ugly guy? And how can he have such a big reputation? Even the Second Young Master of the Luo Clan is willing to make a compromise for his sake?]

Chapter 349: Surname ‘Tan’ — Given Name ‘Tan’

Suddenly, there was a monstrous shout from Three Stars Divine Clan’s side. The remaining eighty or so Iron-Clad Lion beasts retreated like a tide.

Three individuals among those people from the Three Stars Divine Clan had a solemn look on their faces. Their gazes were focused on Tan Tan’s body. They seemed to be sizing-up his ‘out of the ordinary’ appearance; especially his eyebrows since they seemed like they could pierce the sky and stab the earth. There was a baffled look in their eyes…

Those three maintained a ‘nonchalant’ attitude while Tan Tan spoke; almost as if they weren’t paying attention. However, their ears were secretly erect and were earnestly listening to Tan Tan’s voice…

The person-in-the-middle suddenly waved his hand after some time. He then issued a sharp sound from his mouth. The loud and rumbling sound echoed and those three individuals retreated; along with that large group of Iron-Clad Lion beasts. They had simply vanished like a retreating tide.

Meng Chao Ran had stayed hidden; he had been standing guard. However, he was concerned by the manner in which those three individuals kept turning their gazes towards Tan Tan’s face. It seemed as if they were gazing at a peak level expert. They had finally noticed that Tan Tan had a cultivation of Martial Great Master!

[What is this?]

Meng Chao Ran wrinkled his eyebrows, and began to ponder over it. He suddenly felt an inexplicable sense of crisis originating from the bottom of his heart.

He had a strange feeling that something was about to happen. Therefore, he immediately decided: [I must take Tan Tan and leave this place! We must leave as soon as possible; no matter what!]

[And without any delay!]

"Huh? They're running away?" Luo Ke Di's eyes widened.

[This is the first time a situation like this has occurred since the beginning of this war between the aristocratic clans and the Three Stars Divine Clan. They retreated instead of fighting... what's going on? This doesn't conform to their usually aggressive style ah...]

"Xie Dan Feng! Come here!" Xie Dan Qiong was relieved at first, but the anger welled-up in his voice soon-after.

"Who are you shouting at?" Xie Dan Feng initially had a guilty conscience. But the manner in which her elder brother had shouted at her instantly gave rise to a feeling of resentment in her heart. Therefore, she had reacted angrily; without showing any sign of weakness.

"Is that your elder brother?" Tan Tan narrowed his eyes and looked at the man standing beside her.

"Yes." Xie Dan Feng snorted as she nodded.

"I must say..." Tan Tan clicked his tongue and said, "...your brother is prettier than you..."

"Tan Tan!" Xie Dan Feng suddenly got furious.

One other person was driven mad by this — Xie Dan Qiong!

'Pretty'... this word could be used to describe a female. But if used to describe a man... that would be somewhat... cough cough cough. Xie Dan Qiong had been supercilious his entire life. But he hated it when someone called him 'as pretty as a woman'. His eyes turned blue with anger when he heard the same words from Tan Tan's mouth.

Xie Dan Feng slowly and gently walked towards Xie Dan Qiong, and started talking to him; she would point her finger at Tan Tan from time to time. She was telling him about how she first met Tan Tan... how he took care of her... and protected her on the journey...

Xie Dan Feng herself didn't know how she felt about him. Either way, she didn't hesitate in exaggerating things ten-folds while talking about Tan Tan.

However, Xie Dan Qiong's facial expression became more and more conflicted as she continued to tell more and more about Tan Tan...

"Hey bro..." Xie Dan Qiong cupped his hands in greeting towards Tan Tan. He then said in a friendly manner, "May I ask your surname and given name?"

"My surname is Tan, and given name is Tan." Tan Tan answered in a proud and upright manner. Then, he immediately thought of putting on a 'shocked' expression so as to leave a good impression on his future brother-in-law. Therefore, he promptly did that as he added in a 'shocked' tone, "My name 'Tan' is derived from Tanhua(1). What do you think? Don't you think that I'm incomparably elegant and dashing like a Tanhua?"

"Cough cough cough..." Xie Dan Qiong had been put in a difficult situation. He coughed a few times and then rubbed his temple. He was suddenly at a loss for words. He had prepared a bellyful of words, but he suddenly felt his whole body exploding with anger after he heard this ugly guy call himself 'as elegant and dashing like Tanhua'. In fact, he seemed to have forgotten what he was about to say.

Luo Ke Di was watching from the side; he smiled, and his mouth became crooked.

"So, it's Brother Tan." Xie Dan Qiong rubbed his nose as if he had a burning sensation in it, "Brother Tan... mind if I ask... your

origin?"

"My origin?" Tan Tan hurriedly smiled. He believed that this guy was going to be his own brother-in-law. Therefore, he couldn't possibly dare to neglect this question. He hastily put on a confident look and a genuinely 'shocked' smile on his face as he said, "I'm from the Lower Three Heavens..."

Xie Dan Qiong scratched his head in confusion. It seemed as if he had got a splitting headache.

His action was very similar to that of a naive kid. He hadn't done something like this since he was seven or eight years old. However, he scratched his hair to the point of turning it into a chicken-nest...

[So he is from the Lower Three Heavens ... humph.] Xie Dan Qiong immediately concluded, [this guy doesn't deserve my sister's family background!] He then looked at Tan Tan who was still maintaining that exaggerated look of 'shock' on his face. He seriously didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

[There's a normal small-talk going on between us... why do you look so shocked? It's making me feel as if my appearance is making you shocked. I feel like looking for a mirror to check... whether I look handsome or not?]

Xie Dan Qiong felt a little awkward. However, he still managed to say, "Brother Tan, I thank you for being so brave and chivalrous. You've saved my younger sister. My Xie Clan will surely give you a generous reward for this kindness!"

The meaning of his words was quite simply... [You don't expect anything else! I will give you compensation for what you did for my younger sister.]

"What would I do with your generous reward?" Tan Tan scratched his head and said, "I like Xie Dan Feng; so I saved her. I want her to be my wife ah."

Xie Dan Qiong's complexion suddenly turned black like the bottom of a frying pan. He looked to his side and saw his valiant sister — her head was lowered and blushing. He couldn't help but be dumbstruck by this. He somehow suppressed the rage within his heart and said, "Bro, you're joking, right?"

Shifting from 'Brother Tan' to 'Bro' was an attempt to create distance.

However, this plan of Xie Dan Qiong's didn't work on Tan Tan. He simply didn't notice the hidden intricacy in the difference between 'Brother Tan' and 'Bro'.[2]

"Why would I joke about it?" Tan Tan stared at him. He then shouted, "This is an important matter about my marriage. It is related to my life and my son. How can I joke about it?"

Xie Dan Feng blushed in embarrassment. She stamped her feet as she rebuked, "Who would want to have your son? You're shameless! Humph!"

"You ah..." Tan Tan replied in a matter of fact way, "You'll be my wife. Then, how can you not give birth to my son?"

"You bastard!" Xie Dan Feng seethed with anger as she glared at him; she indeed looked very angry from her appearance...

Xie Dan Qiong was stupefied. [I haven't said anything about it, and these two have already started flirting in front of me. In fact, they've reached all the way to talk about having a son together...]

He stayed confused and disoriented for a while. He then shouted angrily, "Shut up! Xie Dan Feng. You are getting more and more daring, aren't you?! Marriage... how can you make this decision on your own? This is something only our Clan Lord can decide. It is absurd for the young daughter of a prestigious clan to be saying such words!"

"What's absurd about it?!" Luo Ke Di exclaimed in an eccentric tone, "I think the very thought of Brother Tan Tan not deserving

your younger sister's family background is a 'typical snobbish bullshit'..."

"Luo Ke Di! Stay out of this! This is none of your business!" Xie Dan Qiong coldly shouted. He suddenly felt a demonic fire gushing-about in his belly.

"How's this 'none of my business'?" Luo Ke Di bravely stepped forward, "This is my brother! What's up with your Xie Clan? Have you started to regard yourselves as a prominent and large clan? It's weird to see how you keep looking down on this-and-that... I spit on you! You're already married. You embrace your wife daily, and live your life happily! But do you plan to keep your sister unmarried, huh?"

Luo Ke Di spoke with contempt, "You're a 'fully satisfied' man who doesn't know what it means to be hungry. It's all very well to stand here and talk big... but getting things done is another matter... because who doesn't know that your sister has... what kind of... crap, ahwooh..."

He was basically going to say... [You should be glad that someone is willing to marry your sister even though she has that kind of temperament.] However, he stopped midway and didn't let those words slip from his tongue since he felt that they might offend Tan Tan.

Xie Dan Qiong seethed with rage and pointed his halberd at him as he shouted, "Luo Ke Di! If you want to die this badly — I will gladly fulfill your wish!" He had been overwhelmed and pushed back by an army of spirit beasts. Then, he got saved from being taken advantage of. But then, he was scared to the point of anxiety by his own young sister. Xie Dan Qiong had been suppressing a lot of frustration within himself — but it had finally erupted.

"Ahwooh..." Luo Ke Di puffed-out his chest and took a step forward. He frivolous waved his hands back and forth as he challenged him, "Rightly said. This young master really wants to

die. He f**king wants to die! Come on, Xie Dan Qiong! You motherf*ker! The one to die today won't be me; but you... 'Rabbit Lord'!"

"You!" 'Rabbit Lord' these two words aroused Xie Dan Qiong's killing intention. He roared, and was suddenly surrounded by a burst of chill. Two thin pieces of flowers made up of jasper (3) appeared, and started to revolve around him. Such a wondrous spectacle had appeared at the spot where the killing intention had appeared a moment ago; in fact, it seemed like an illusion.

His killing intention had condensed to gain mass and shape in the air!

"Clang!" Luo Ke Di unsheathed his long sword and gave out a loud howl, "Ahwooh..."

Talk Tan was on the side. He scratched his head and appeared somewhat puzzled, [looks like he is speaking on my behalf... speaking is fine... but why is he willing to go so far?]

He didn't know why Luo Ke Di was helping him — it was a mystery to him. However, Tan Tan couldn't help but develop a favorable impression of Luo Ke Di when he saw him prepared to fight for his sake...

"Stop!"

"Stop!"

Two shouts resounded in unintended unison.

One was violent — the other was gentle and refined.

Luo Ke Wu and Meng Chao Ran had arrived.

"Dan Qiong, I will surely accompany you if you wish to fight!" Luo Ke Wu snorted, "However, don't give others a chance to say that 'Xie Dan Qiong is a bully who only picks on the weak. He didn't even spare his own younger sister', ah."

Xie Dan Qiong gritted his teeth. He was unable to control himself

no matter how profound his self-restraint was.

"Hold on a minute," Meng Chao Ran stepped forward and looked at Xie Dan Qiong with a profound look in his eyes. He could feel that this youngster was extraordinary. He then said, "Are you the Xie Clan's Young Master?"

"You are?" Xie Dan Qiong's attention turned towards Meng Chao Ran. He didn't think Meng Chao Ran to be a formidable person at first-sight. However, he had rarely seen someone with such a calm, tranquil and elegant temperament.

Xie Dan Qiong noticed that half of his hostility had disappeared in thin air upon seeing this man's warm and gentle smile.

"I am Tan Tan's master." Meng Chao Ran insipidly said, "I have something to say to Young Master Xie. Would he be interested in listening?"

"Please say." Xie Dan Qiong slowly gained control over his own temper, and that illusion of the two jasper flowers suddenly disappeared.

Meng Chao Ran fixed his gaze at him. There was a profound tranquility in his eyes. He continued to look at Xie Dan Qiong for a long time. However, Xie Dan Qiong felt that his mood was changing along with that gaze. His anger slowly subsided, and he slowly regained his calm-and-composure.

In fact, he could accept all matters in his current mentality.

"A marriage demands the two families to be well-matched in terms of social status." Meng Chao Ran crossed his hands behind his back and continued, "This fact has existed since ancient times. If they're not well-matched... the chance of a tragedy is more likely to happen..."

Xie Dan Qiong pondered deeply and couldn't help but nod. He felt that the words Meng Chao Ran had said contained a strong sense of realism; in fact, he felt as if it had happened to him

before...

Tanhua = It's a beautiful flower that is called 'queen of the night'. It's actually a night blood orchid cactus. It is often used as symbolism to describe someone who has an impressive but very brief moment of glory because this flower might bloom only once a year over a few days.

'Brother' is a term of formal and respectful address. 'Bro' is slang; often considered disrespectful in some cultures.

Jasper: The literal translation for Jasper is 'Qiong' which is derived from Xie Dan Qiong's name itself.

Chapter 350: Strange Three Stars Divine Clan

"However... it will lead to a tragedy if you put too much attention on finding a perfect match," Meng Chao Ran said very slowly. He put stress on each and every sentence to express it clearly. Thus, it gave rise to a feeling of approval in Xie Dan Qiong's heart.

"Indeed," Xie Dan Qiong exhaled a long breath.

"The marriage of children is a fairly difficult task in big and respectable clans. To find a proper match for these children, and that too someone who is also to their liking, is often as difficult as ascending to the heaven. Common people simply can't see the pain and suffering of the children of these big families. They only see the glamorous lives, but they never realize that their entire generation has to pay the price for the sake of continuing their envious existence..."

Meng Chao Ran's voice was quite heavy. It seemed as if he was very disappointed and frustrated.

Xie Dan Qiong sighed deeply. Indeed, these words had really come from Meng Chao Ran's heart.

"But... that also depends on the situation. If a clan had a capable heir who is at the height of power... then this sacrifice of their children's happiness will no longer be necessary..." Meng Chao Ran lightly smiled, "Young Master Xie, your self-confidence meets the requirements."

Xie Dan Qiong raised his handsome and outstanding eyebrows. These words had certainly made him feel good about himself, but they also had a hidden meaning behind them. How could he not understand?

"Moreover...judging someone solely based on their appearance, Young Master Xie..." Meng Chao Ran's eyes suddenly issued an

extremely sharp cold light. He seemed to be brimming with confidence as he looked at Xie Dan Qiong disdainfully," ... everything in life is cyclical; so one mustn't bully poor youngsters, ah."

He always had a genial look on his face, but the sudden appearance of such a sharp look was extremely surprising. Moreover, it seemed like he was giving a warning in advance.

"Regarding this matter involving your younger sister and Tan Tan... you might let it go for now, and consider it later on..." Meng Chao Ran insipidly said, "Your Xie Clan may change its mind in the future. The wise Jianghu people and the youngsters think very differently... it's not necessary that they will do whatever you tell them to. Therefore, it's necessary to leave one's options open. What do you think, Young Master Xie?"

Xie Dan Qiong was silent for a long time. He then spoke: "What you say is correct, Mister."

He knew he wouldn't be able to convince his younger sister at present; but the same couldn't be said for the future once these two would go separate ways and return to their respective homes. Considering how his younger sister's temperament had changed this time... there was a possibility that she might forget this in 2-3 days.

He was unaware that Meng Chao Ran's motive was also to part ways with these people. He wanted to take Tan Tan away from this place as soon as possible.

Meng Chao Ran could sense that a big problem was about to be drawn to Tan Tan. If they were to remain around these people, perhaps... this could become a major event.

"Then, we master-and-disciple will take our leave now," Meng Chao Ran smiled and cupped his hands. Then, he turned around to depart without wasting any time.

"Slow down..." Luo Ke Di hurriedly called-out to stop them.

"You... are Chu Yang's sworn brother?" Meng Chao Ran warmly looked at Luo Ke Di.

"Yes... nice to meet you, senior." Luo Ke Di knew that this person was his Big Brother Chu Yang's master.Therefore, he hastily greeted the man since he couldn't possibly dare to neglect him.

"So you're my fellow brother's brother... no wonder..." Tan Tan said excitedly.

"En, we will come to find you once Chu Yang arrives in the Middle Three Heavens," Meng Chao Ran hastily said. His voice made it evident that he was in a hurry, "However, I have an important matter to attend to... so we'll be leaving for the time being."

"Yes senior; please do as you wish," Luo Ke Di scratched his head; he seemed a bit puzzled. He didn't know why Meng Chao Ran seemed so distant. But he still piled a smiling expression on his face.

"Let's go, Tan Tan!" Meng Chao Ran pulled Tan Tan and left quickly.

"Master... this..." Tan Tan was somewhat reluctant.

"Run quickly!" Meng Chao Ran shouted coldly as he sped-up. They didn't take the main road. Instead, they dashed into a forest of dwarf-trees like a meteor, and then disappeared.

Xie Dan Feng blankly stared in the direction of Tan Tan's departure. Suddenly, tears started to well-up in her eyes. A deep sense of loss had spontaneously risen in her heart.

[He... left just like that?]

[Won't he say goodbye?]

"Little sister..." Xie Dan Qiong came to her side and spoke in a gentle voice.

"Xie Dan Qiong, I tell you! I’m not finished with you!" Xie Dan Feng angrily looked at her elder brother, "How dare you interfere into my personal matter? Just you wait! Humph!"

She turned her head and grumpily walked away.

Xie Dan Qiong’s complexion darkened...

The Luo Brothers and Xie Dan Qiong were in the midst of saying their goodbyes shortly after Meng Chao Ran’s departure. ‘Boom.’ Suddenly, a loud thunder sounded from afar. It was similar to the sound of ten thousand stampeding horses; in fact, it seemed as if this noise was coming towards them from all directions...

"This is bad!" Xie Dan Qiong, Luo Ke Wu and Luo Ke Di exclaimed in unison.

They turned around to inspect, and couldn’t help but suck in a cold breath.

They saw a ‘mighty current’ flooding towards them from the three frontal directions. It was a massive crowd of densely packed spirit beasts of the first, second, third, fourth and fifth level... they were being led by dozens of spirit beasts. These lead-beasts were most probably of the sixth level.

An overwhelming number of spirit beasts were charging towards them; they were thousands in number.

"Finished!"

Xie Dan Qiong and Luo Ke Wu revealed a look of despair on their faces.

The combined strength of the two clans would add up to 1300 people. They didn’t have enough strength to have a face-to-face confrontation with so many spirit beasts. Moreover, most of these beasts were high-level. The humans would be torn to shreds and gobbled-up in a matter of moments once the other side launched the attack.

The despair was clearly visible on the faces of the two clans' experts.

Even if there were several King level experts among them...their faces would still be in distress.

Even an Emperor level expert would run for their life when faced with such a massive mob of spirit beasts — let alone a King level expert.

"My god, ah... Xie Dan Qiong, you motherf*cker. Have you dug-open their ancestral graves? Or violated their Empress? Damn it! We brothers never thought that an association with you would implicate us like this..." Luo Ke Di glared at him as his complexion turned pale.

"Shut your nonsense!" Xie Dan Qiong snapped and said, "I think it must've been you who's done all that!"

"Shut up; both of you! Get yourself together, and get ready to kill these beasts," Luo Ke Wu shouted in a sinking tone. His eyes brimmed with a sense of unwillingness. [Will I... Luo Ke Wu... die in the mouths of these spirit beasts?]

Those spirit beasts had almost arrived upon them. An unspeakable bloody aura shot-up in the sky. There was a ferocious look in the eyes of those beasts, while their sharp-white teeth looked very sinister...

Everyone unsheathed their swords, and waited for the order to start the battle.

A loud roar was heard, and the incoming mob of spirit beasts suddenly raised their front hooves in the air. The hooves then fell down on the same spot, and they all came to a stop. There only remained a distance of less than three feet between them and the human experts.

There were more than a dozen people of the Three Stars Divine Clan behind that tide of spirit beasts. They leisurely walked over

with their hands crossed behind their backs.

These people were dressed in neat and tidy human clothing. They seemed to have the demeanor of human experts. In fact, anybody would take them for human experts — if not for that glittering ‘starlight’ mark on their forehead.

"Is that person here?" the person in the middle swept his vision across Xie Dan Qiong and the others in an instant, and then asked slowly.

[Which person is here?] Luo Ke Di and Xie Dan Qiong were stunned.

"He was certainly here a while ago... with these people. Senior Minister, I swear I saw him," aThree Stars Divine Clansman clad in grotesque looking attire suddenly emerged from the side and said. He was the same person who had fought with Xie Dan Qiong and his men a little while ago.

"Was there a strange looking guy with you people a while ago?" The man in the middle looked at Xie Dan Qiong. He then slowly asked, "Where did he go?"

As soon as he asked this — everyone knew that he was referring to Tan Tan.

"Why are you looking for him?" Xie Dan Feng had already started to walk away. But, she immediately turned around and bravely came forward as she heard them enquire about Tan Tan.

"Who are you?" The man in the middle gently turned his eyes. He looked at Xie Dan Feng sharply, and lightly asked, "Why don’t you wait for your turn to speak?"

Xie Dan Feng got furious, "I’m his wife! You’re asking about my husband and I can’t even speak?"

The complexions of several people simultaneously turned strange as soon as these words came out of her mouth. They looked at each other in utter dismay for a while. There was complete silence for a

moment.

"You're his wife?" The man who appeared like their leader looked strangely at Xie Dan Feng. His mouth became crooked in bafflement, "Wife?"

"Of course!"Xie Dan Feng's blushed, but she still spoke in a rough voice,"You think I'm lying?"

"Good... good... good..." that person said 'good' three times in a prolonged voice as he sized-up Xie Dan Feng from top to bottom. The other people also looked at her from all angles...

Xie Dan Feng felt uncomfortable since her entire body was being looked-at in this manner. She was about to lose her temper...

"Where did he go?" the leader asked in a gentle voice.

"He has left, and I won't tell you where he has gone to," Xie Dan Feng put her hands on her hips and replied. "Why are you looking for him? Tell me, and we may reach an agreement!"

He looked at Xie Dan Feng with a strange splendor in his eyes. He then nodded and spoke, "Good... good... good...good..."

"Stop with this 'good' crap! Can't you say something besides repeating 'good' again and again?" Xie Dan Feng suddenly became furious and cursed. She didn't seem to care even though her side was at a disadvantage.

"Good... good... better... really good!" That man didn't find her rude. Instead, he faced upwards and laughed heartily. Then, he glanced at Xie Dan Feng again and said, "This really is good."

Xie Dan Feng was speechless.

The man then turned his head gently. It seemed as if he wanted to say something. He then said to Xie Dan Feng, "We will go looking for him since he isn't here."

"What are you going to do to him?" Xie Dan Feng anxiously stepped forward and asked.

"I'll give you a gift," the man gave a warm smile. His figure suddenly turned into a lighting flash and arrived near Xie Dan Feng. He gently patted on her shoulder and then drew back in a flash.

Xie Dan Qiong became furious, "What are you doing? Stay away from my sister!" He then suddenly flew forward.

However, that man had already retreated by then. He nodded, then waved his hand and said, "Such being the case...I will spare these people. Let's go."

Suddenly, his body started to float in the air. He waved his hands, and his body flew forward with a 'whooshing' sound; his speed was no less than that of a meteor.

Myriads of spirits beasts roared in unison. They then turned around and rushed away... they followed after that man, and left the battlefield.

A dead calm spread everywhere. Not a single spirit beast could be seen in the vicinity.

Xie Dan Qiong, Luo Ke Wu and the others felt like they had been dreaming. What just happened was... simply inexplicable. They all seemed baffled. They blinked as they looked at each other dumbstruck.

[The enemy appeared with such massive might... but left just like that?]

[Why?]

Chapter 351: Making The First Move Is An Advantage

Everyone's gaze turned towards Xie Dan Feng... However, she herself was very confused. She waved her hands and said, "Don’t look at me; I don’t know what happened."

Xie Dan Qiong nodded as he looked at his younger sister... there was a complex look in his eyes; as if he was thinking about something. [That ugly guy turned out to be a great man.]

[Even Three Stars Divine Clan seemed to be showing due respect to him. This isn’t something an average person can achieve.]

Xie Dan Qiong could feel that he might have made a mistake — a big mistake!

However, Xie Dan Qiong didn’t regret his decision. [Dan Feng is my little sister. I don’t plan to use her marriage as a tool to gain something. I must find a good-looking husband for her. I’m her elder brother; we share the same blood. I cannot watch her marry an ugly monster... can I?]

Luo Ke Wu and Luo Ke Di nodded as they gazed into the distance... Luo Ke Di snorted as he spoke in a cynical tone, "You look down on someone... and that person saves your clansmen... humph, you’ve lost face today ah."

Xie Dan Qiong’s face reddened.

"You were saved... lucky bastard..." Luo Ke Di grunted and said, "Let's go!"

The Luo clan retreated like a whirlwind. These two brothers had a lingering fear in their hearts after this incident. Therefore, they immediately headed back to the direction where the large armed forces were stationed.

Xie Dan Qiong also issued an order, and led the Xie Clan’s people

to retreat. He would die, but he wouldn't come to this place again.

However, Xie Dan Feng... remained there for a long time. She was muttering to herself, [that old liar! He said he would give me a gift. But he just patted me on my shoulder and left! Where's the gift?]

She went back and took a bath, but still didn't see anything...

[I have made several bets with that 'scoundrel' Tan Tan, and I've suffered great losses. I'm completely broke now. I was hoping to make-up for those losses when this old bastard said something nice... and then he walked away?]

[This is too infuriating!]

There were frequent encounters with Three Stars Divine Clan and the spirit beasts after that incident... the fierceness and brutality of the battles could be imagined. Even King level experts could perish in such battles... yet Xie Dan Feng ran amuck groups of spirit beasts despite the cultivation of Martial Great Master — not a single beast was able to touch her.

Xie Dan Feng seemed like some giant persona in the eyes of those spirit beasts... They would try to hide from her as soon as they saw her. If that didn't work... they would wag their tails and run away...

There was this one incident — various major clans had discovered a 'Fiery Sea Snow Lotus' herb. It was a precious medicinal herb. However, it was guarded by three spirit beasts of the seventh level. Moreover, there were many spirit beasts under their command... those towering beasts were in confrontation with three major clans... and these clans had no means to deal with those beasts.

But then, Xie Dan Feng dashed-in like an arrow. The outcome was quite shocking since the three spirit beasts of seventh level suddenly fell asleep for some reason. However, the fact was that...

those three big beasts had closed their eyes, and had pretended to be asleep when they saw ‘Xie Dan Feng’…!

Therefore, Xie Dan Feng thought that she was in no danger of being attacked, and dug-out the ‘Fiery Sea Snow Lotus’ which those three beasts had encircled. In fact… the ‘Big Sister’ Xie even clutched the tail of a nearby spirit beast. This ferocious seventh level spirit beast was then yanked upwards. Its body was turned half-a-circle in midair, and was then sent flying by her… very conveniently at that…

Yet, that spirit beast had remained motionless, and had continued to pretend being asleep…

The onlookers from major clans opened their eyes wide in confusion. They were completely dumbstruck by this.

The ‘Fiery Sea Snow Lotus’ vanished… Xie Dan Feng went her way. Then, the three seventh level spirit beasts finally stood up… ‘Achoo’ ‘Achoo’, they sneezed a few times. They made it seem as if they had just woken up. They then sluggishly walked away…

This matter had become a mysterious riddle in the Cang Lan Battlefront… some even suspected… [Could the eldest daughter of the Xie Clan have the blood bloodline of the spirit beasts?]

Xie Dan Qiong’s violent rage soared into the sky when such a suspicion arose. He decided to use the means of ‘thunderclap’[1] to kill the rumor, and several enemies. His ‘Jasper Flowers’ danced in the sky… the chopped-up limbs flew randomly throughout the sky. Afterwards, the name of ‘Jasper Flower’ gradually spread in the Cang Lan Battlefront…

Chu Yang slowly rose from the bottom of the lake.

The massive corpse of Poisonous Flood Dragon was quietly lying below. It was appearing smaller and smaller since was he moving away from it.

Poisonous Flood Dragon’s skin was useless. Its internal organs

had been destroyed by the Nine Tribulations Sword. Chu Yang had searched through its corpse… he had cut-out a few chunks of meat, and had tossed them into the Nine Tribulations Space.

Chu Yang had assumed, [this beast is known as Poisonous Flood Dragon. There's the word 'dragon' in its name… its meat should be very delicious, right?]

However, the green color of the meat shattered his fantasy. The Poisonous Flood Dragon's meat was certainly tasty… but it was also the most toxic in the entire world. No other antidote besides the Yin-Yang Poisonous Dragon Eyes could neutralize it.

Chu Yang had spent a longtime thinking. Then he finally decided to cut-out a few chunks of its meat even though it was extremely toxic. [I cannot eat it… but that doesn't mean others cannot, right?]

[If I find someone unpleasing to my eye… I'll invite them on dinner… and treat them to Poisonous Flood Dragon's meat!]

[Anyways… there's more than 500kg of meat in my stock…]

Chu Yang's eyes slowly brightened. His cultivation had broken-through to the peak of the 'Seventh Grade Revered Sword Artist' after acquiring the third segment of Nine Tribulations.

[One step further and I'll reach the Eighth Grade! Then I'll become a Sword King after the Ninth Grade!]

Chu Yang felt that such cultivation pace was impeccable.

[It has only been a year since my reincarnation.]

He approached the water surface. The world got brighter before his eyes. Suddenly, Chu Yang's spirit was aroused by something… he was about to pop-out of the water-surface when he suddenly saw shadows of people peeking down from their boats. These boats were constantly scurrying back and forth.

[It seems like many people are looking for something on the

water surface...]

Chu Yang frowned. [I knew that Yin Wu Tian would come looking for me. After all... I had suddenly vanished underwater for a few hours... that were somewhat an unimaginable feat for him...]

Chu Yang suddenly got an idea. He remained underwater as he stealthily swam towards an isle that was located in the middle of Lotus Lake.

He silently stepped onto the isle. He then used his martial skill to dry his clothes. Then, he lay down on the grass. He fell asleep, and started snoring... loudly.

Yin Wu Tian hadn't been able to find King Level Expert Jun. The delay was causing more and more panic to him... the range of search had also grown bigger and bigger. Beads of sweat had been seeping-out on his forehead.

[Prime Minister Diwu would be extremely furious if that guy has drowned in the lake!]

Gradually... they approached the center of the lake.

Suddenly, someone people heard something and a suspicious look flashed on their faces. [What is this sound?]

"En?" Yin Wu Tian was startled. He immediately concentrated his martial power to sense more closely...

"Snore... Snore... Snore..."

"It seems like someone is snoring..." A Martial Great Master laughed, "This guy's snores can shake the world..."

Yin Wu Tian's face was cold like the water. He listened very carefully, and suddenly stood up... and pointed his finger towards that isle, "Go over there and search."

"Snore, snore..."

Yin Wu Tian jumped-up and flew forward when the boat was about 70-80 feet away. He followed along the direction from which

that ‘snoring’ sound was coming.

"Snore... Snore..."

He realized that the ‘snoring’ sound was coming incessantly... from the central region of the isle. He focused his eyesight and looked towards a thick patch of grass.

This hadn’t seemed important initially... but Yin Wu Tian suddenly felt as if his lungs would explode with rage.

He felt his scalp going numb with anger, and his hair fiercely stood erect on his head.

His subordinate also looked carefully... and saw King Level Expert Jun... the man who had been missing for quite some time, and was speculated to have drowned to death. He was lying on the thick patch of grass... flat on his back. There was a tranquil expression on his face. His eyes shut tightly, and he was breathing quite rhythmically...

"Snore... Snore..." he would issue an odd ‘snoring’ sound from his mouth whenever he would breathe out.

Yin Wu Tian gritted his teeth, clenched his fists and strode forward.

"Snore... Snore... Squeak... Creak." Everyone looked blankly at each other in dismay. They didn’t know whether to laugh or cry. [This King Level Expert Jun doesn’t just snore while sleeping... he also grinds his teeth. That is a very creepy sound...]

Yin Wu Tian stood in front of the King Level Expert Jun’s body. He couldn’t help but sigh.

[I looked for this guy everywhere. I was so anxious when I couldn’t find him. And this guy had just decided to sleep-off in this secluded place without informing us...]

[Who is to blame... for this matter?]

He sighed and slowly squatted down. He was about to wake the

man up.

However, the King Level Expert Jun suddenly muttered something in that state of drowsiness. No one understood what he spoke... he then turned over and slept on his sides. His buttocks were now facing Yin Wu Tian's face.

Yin Wu Tian stretched his hand to push him.

But at this time...

"Boom!"

"F*k! Yin Wu Tian quickly bounced back like a ball... and leapt far away as he tightly covered his nose.

[This guy farted just now...]

The complexions of the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department who were standing on the side turned strange in unison. They wanted to laugh, but didn't dare to... However, they had a tough time holding back their laughter.

The first glimmer of sunlight had already appeared in the sky. Therefore, everyone had seen very it clearly — King Level Expert Yin squatted... then there came a loud... boom... from the butt of King Level Expert Jun... which then echoed.

Everyone had clearly seen how the hair on King Level Expert Yin's forehead had been blown by the sudden release of gas. In fact, his hair had even fluttered a little... this had been a spectacular sight.

Everyone had serious look on their face. But their bodies would subtly quiver from time to time. They were trying their best to restrain themselves from bursting into laughter.

"Bastard!" Yin Wu Tian roared. He had really lost his face 'big-time'.

"Was that thunder?" King Level Expert Jun suddenly asked as he lazily sat up on the thick patch of grass. He slowly looked on his

left, then right, with his sleepy eyes. And then, he slowly crawled up. He then asked in a puzzled tone, "Why are you guys gathered around me in this manner?"

Everyone felt depressed... [Why have we gathered around you? Do you think we wanted to gather around you?]

Yin Wu Tian took big strides to walk over. There was a furious look spread across his whole face.

He was about to rain curses.

However, he didn't get enough to display his anger's true extent. That was because... King Level Expert Jun suddenly stood up angrily before Yin Wu Tian could open his mouth... and then he started to rage like a thunder!

King Level Expert Jun had ferociously jumped-up and had started to curse-out loud, "Yin Wu Tian, I will hack you to pieces... you lazy son of a bitch; you neglected your duty! I told you I would need people yesterday night ... you f*king didn't reply. And now... you've brought so many people to idle your time away under the sunshine?"

King Level Expert Jun's saliva splattered everywhere. He seemed to be getting angrier and angrier. He stomped his feet and bellowed, "Yin Wu Tian, I demand an explanation. Otherwise, I'll go to Diwu Qing Rou... the bamboo people have never received such a cold reception... and even that was done so half-heartedly! You, you, you... you're too foolhardy! You're a downright brainless man! You're disgraceful... in fact, add eight levels to disgraceful! That's what you are!"

It should've been Yin Wu Tian's chance to display his wrath... but he didn't even get a chance to speak.

"You, you..." Yin Wu Tian discharged smoke from his head... but he stammered and was unable to speak a single word. He felt that his lungs and heart were about to explode, while his veins seemed

to be on verge of bursting with anger.

Notes:

Thunderclap. It often refers to a tactic when someone creates a bigger distraction in order to cover-up the previous one.

Chapter 352: Spirit Control Method

"Who do you think you are? You're in the wrong... that's why you're unable to speak; aren't you?" King Level Expert Jun coldly stared at Yin Wu Tian. He was step-by-step closing-in on the man, "If you felt sorry then why haven't you say it already? Can't you feel that you won't be able to explain this to Diwu Qing Rou?"

He saw that Yin Wu Tian was about to open his mouth to say something in reply. He then suddenly roared like a thunder, "Saying anything to you is useless! Yin Wu Tian, you are guilty. You deserve to be punished!"

[Deserve to be punished for what...] Yin Wu Tian was utterly confused, [what am I guilty of? Why won't I be able to explain this? It was you who went missing, okay? But you're making it seem as if it's my fault?]

[Besides, who do you think you are? You wish for me to listen and obey your commands?]

[Why is it that only you're speaking... whether good or bad words...]

"Mr. Jun! You're going too far!" Yin Wu Tian was crying tears of blood in his heart. He then shouted in his heart out of sheer frustration.

"I'm going too far, you say? Humph! Yin Wu Tian; you come with me. I'll go see Diwu Qing Rou. I wish to ask him why he arranged someone like you to accompany me! And you have the guts to say 'I'm going too far'? A f*ker like you should know his place; you don't even know the difference between right and wrong. I must say — you're probably 'number one under the heaven' when it comes to the Art of confusing between right and wrong!" King Level Expert Jun stated furiously.

Yin Wu Tian felt a burst of dizziness in his brain; it was due to

extreme anger. His body swayed and he nearly fell to the ground.

He stayed like that for a long time; then, he slowly regained his calm. He sobered-up and murmured, "I feel like vomiting blood ah. I will f*king vomit blood at this rate..." Then he suddenly asked, "Where is he?"

King Level Expert Jun had disappeared by then.

"En, that King Level Expert Jun angrily walked away while our respectable King level expert was lost in contemplation. He said that he is going to see Prime Minister Diwu," a person cautiously related. He had been standing nearby all-along.

He wanted to say 'while you were muddled in anger'... but didn't dare to.

"That fiend 'actually' said that!" Yin Wu Tian coughed and spat out blood. [This bastard plans to bring this matter to Prime Minister Diwu's notice? How can someone be so unreasonably unforgiving? He's a very thick-skinned guy...]

Chu Yang came ashore and saw Jing Meng Hun hastily coming from the front. He seemed to be in a rush. In fact, it seemed as if someone had set his butt on fire.

"King Level Master Jing! Your King Level Expert Yin is extremely arrogant and unreasonable!" Chu Yang followed the principle of 'striking first to gain the upper hand'. He jabbered on-and-on as kept complaining relentlessly.

Jing Meng Hun had come here for an urgent matter, but had no choice in this regard. He kept a smiling face as he patiently listened to Chu Yang's unending blabber. He also apologized again and again...

"I'm extremely embarrassed over this, Brother Jun. I'm sorry for inconveniencing you, but Prime Minister is in the middle of making his preparation to go into the war. I've come here to put together some manpower for the same..." Jing Meng Hun fidgeted

anxiously as he practically begged for forgiveness.

"Going into war?" Chu Yang suddenly gawked, "With whom are you going to war?"

"The Iron Cloud!" Jing Meng Hun replied, "The Prime Minister is personally taking part in this expedition. The Iron Cloud Nation will surely be crushed to pieces this time!"

Chu Yang was shocked!

[Diwu Qing Rou is going to war so soon?]

[What's going on? How can this be so different from what happened in my previous life? It had happened three years later then!]

He was still in shock. Jing Meng Hun took the opportunity, and quickly slipped-by his side. Yin Wu Tian and the others were still on that isle. King Level Master Jing shouted towards them, "Come back! Come back quickly! There's an emergency military situation!"

Chu Yang shook his head to jerk-away his own unrealistic fantasies. He bitterly smiled in his heart and thought; [it seems like they aren't going on a military expedition to just deceive King of Hell Chu... instead it's a real war expedition this time!]

[This means that Diwu Qing Rou has changed his mind!]

Chu Yang didn't know why Diwu Qing Rou had done this. But he knew that he didn't have much time to waste. This was an urgent situation, and he couldn't tarry.

He needed to return to Iron Cloud immediately!

Diwu Qing Rou's attack would rage like the angry seas. Chu Yang would need to be present alongside Tie Bu Tian to face it. It was necessary to continue to struggle and fight when faced with an absolutely adverse situation... even when there's a very slim chance of survival ahead.

However, he would need to deal with two matters before he could return to Iron Cloud.

The first matter related to Du Shi Qing. The second matter concerned to the military plans for Diwu Qing Rou's expedition this time! Planning preemptive countermeasures would become easier if he were to get his hands on it.

Chu Yang shook his head. He no longer pestered with Jing Meng Hun and the others. His figure vanished from the shore.

Chu Yang had already disappeared by the time Jing Meng Hun and the others came to shore; there was no trace of him.

"Where did he go? Wasn't he looking for Nine Joints Lotus Root in this lake?" Jing Meng Hun was somewhat puzzled.

"Big Brother, has he really gone to see... Prime Minister Diwu?" Yin Wu Tian nervously asked.

"Let it be. We must hurry back," Jing Meng Hun immediately made a decision.

Jing Meng Hun had been scolded by Diwu Qing Rou only half-a-day ago. Hence, he was stuck in a dilemma. One could clearly see the tangled expression on his face.

[Diwu Qing Rou would explode with anger if King Level Expert Jun opened his mouth. He is already very dissatisfied with the Golden Horse Riders Department... this might become a matter of life and death for us...]

Thereupon, Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian pieced together their remaining 'short' lives and went back...

Chu Yang appeared like a shooting star as he rushed into the Continent Center Citadel. He took two or three turns, and then he finally arrived at a worn-out small courtyard. He looked around to confirm that nobody was watching him. Then, he gently knocked on the door once, and then paused for a second. He again knocked twice on the door; then paused again in a similar manner. Then, he

knocked five times on the door once again.

1... 2... 5.

This was the password.

The door made a ‘creaking’ sound as it opened. An old man stuck out his head and asked, "Who is it?"

"It’s me," Chu Yang replied in a ‘not too overly polite’ tone. Then, his figure flashed and went inside the house.

This was the most secretive Imperial Foothold of the Iron Cloud Nation. It was a top secret place. The old man who opened the door was locally born and bred in Great Zhao. His family tree had already extended up to three generations.

Only the highest hierarchs of Iron Cloud knew of his existence! If not as a last resort — Chu Yang wouldn’t have used this option. Iron Clouds sources of intelligence inside Great Zhao had been degraded very seriously in this generation. In fact, there would be nothing but a ‘dead-end’ awaiting the Iron Cloud’s intelligence network if this source was exposed as well...

A distressed looking old man was sitting in the room. He first determined Chu Yang’s identity, and then asked, "What should we do?"

This miserable-looking old man was Du Shi Qing; in disguise.

"It’s fine. Leave everything to me." Chu Yang smiled, "Relax your heart and calm down. I want to ask you — do you have any plans?"

"Plans?" Du Shi Qing sighed and replied, "What plans could I possibly have?"

Chu Yang pondered for a moment, and then said, "Mr. Du, I have two propositions for you. First, you and your family may continue to live here after I’m done with my work. Diwu Qing Rou is about to set out on a war. You should be safe here as long as he is not in the Continent Center."

"What's the second?" Du Shi Qing raised his head and asked.

"Second... fight the war with us. The casualties will be heavy. Mr. Du can enter the Iron Cloud's military and tend to the sick and wounded. However, I warn you that this one is more difficult. You must pass through 5000km to cross the border. And that would be quite dangerous," Chu Yang insipidly said.

"I choose the second one," Du Shi Qing resolutely said. He heaved a long sigh, "I, Du Shi Qing, owe a lot to Iron Cloud. If I get a chance to make-up even a little... I will surely try my best."

"... good, that's good," Chu Yang pondered for a long time, and finally nodded his head.

Then, Chu Yang entered the bedroom. He opened a secret door, and went downstairs. Two young people lay unconscious in the basement. A nearly 40-year-old woman was looking after them.

This woman was Du Shi Qing's wife. Her name was An Shi.

"Things will be okay now. A Minister has arrived. He has come to deal with this matter. So you don't have to worry anymore," Du Shi Qing had also followed him down.

"Divine Doctor Du and Madam... you two please go outside. Leave me here for the time being," Chu Yang said in a serious tone.

"Yes... but I don't know how you plan to deal with this matter..." Du Shi Qing turned around and asked in a curious tone. He wanted some reassurance.

"I will make them forget a part of their memories. But remember that they'll forget a major chunk of their memories... so when they will wake up... Mr. Du must have great courage. Not much of their past memories will remain... "Chu Yang turned his head to look at Du Shi Qing. He then asked, "Mr. Du, what do you think?"

"Make them forget their memories..." Du Shi Qing stood still. He palpitated with fear. [This is certainly a good method. My son and daughter-in-law have been very thoroughly brainwashed by the

Golden Horse Rider Department. The tyrannical and imperialistic ideology of Diwu Qing Rou is deeply ingrained in their minds...]

[If they woke up with their memories intact... they might even be prepared to punish their own family members if justice demands it.]

A loss of memories was certainly the best course of action. However, Du Shi Qing was also a doctor... how could he not know the dangers involved in this method...? A little carelessness might turn his son and daughter-in-law into dumb-witted idiots...

"Are you confident that this will work out fine?" Du Shi Qing nervously asked.

"I will use... the Soul Control Method!" Chu Yang gently replied. [1]

"En... that is good; that is indeed good!" Du Shi Qing was lost in thoughts. [Soul Control Method is an extremely strange technique. It can make a person completely unconscious. Then, the depths of their mind can be opened-up and manipulated by the user freely.]

[This method is easy to learn, but hard to master. It is usually used by high-level detectives to interrogate criminals. But, this method would have no effect on someone whose spiritual power surpasses that of ordinary people.]

However, Du Shi Qing was one of the best Divine Doctors out there. Therefore, he knew that this method is very hard to implement. Speaking proficiently in its name itself... the main function of the ‘Soul Control’ Method was: Control!

One could unknowingly control a person's mind once this technique was cultivated to a profound level. This would turn a completely independent person into a puppet.

The high-level warriors of Jiang Hu often used this method to murder people or steal treasures. The victims would lose their ability to resist the commands...

This method also had the function to clean memory. However, its only flaw was that... it could not perform selective cleaning. It was only capable of cleaning the entire brain!

Therefore... Chu Yang had said in the beginning itself — they would have to start over from the scratch.

Chu Yang got busy with the preparations as soon as Du Shi Qing went out. He placed several oil lamps in the room. He then lit them. Then, he placed a large mirror on the wall-opposite, and sat down cross-legged. He breathed deeply for a moment, and closed his eyes...

The atmosphere of the room slowly became strange. The smoke slowly got denser and Chu Yang's body became steaming hot; it was as if his body had been set on fire.

The reflective-surface of the mirror became hazy.

Chu Yang suddenly opened his eyes wide and patted that young man's head with his palm...

The door of the secret room opened after some time. Chu Yang emerged wiping his sweat. Du Shi Qing immediately went forward to meet-up with him. Suddenly, a burst of fragrant smoke came rolling out of the room.

"How was it?"

"It was successful." Chu Yang smiled and said, "Good fortune prevented me from failing in my mission."

Notes:

Soul Control Method: The literal translation would be 'Seizing Soul Great Method'. But have tweaked it a little to make it easy to remember for the readers.

Chapter 353: He Must Do It

"Thanks a lot! Thanks a lot!" Du Shi Qing was moved. He nearly shed tears of joy. He had devoted his entire life to raise his only son. And it hadn't been easy. However, he was also the reason why his only son had been caught by Diwu Qing Rou. His son was then trained as a tool to be used against him...

It was very terrible and heartbreaking for him as a father. His only son had been brainwashed into picking a knife and killing his own father if justice demands it.

However, his son had lost his memories, and would have to start over from scratch. But, it wouldn't be a problem since he had a good physical foundation. Moreover, he would be accompanied by his wife since the Soul Control Method had also been used on her. So, there was nothing to worry about...

"I must say that the procedure was quite dangerous. They have a good cultivation. Their spiritual power is also very high. I was almost unable to exercise control over their souls," Chu Yang spoke as he wiped the sweat off his forehead.

The Soul Control Method was fairly simple in normal cases. However, Chu Yang had almost reached his limit in order to eliminate the deep-rooted imperialistic ideology of Diwu Qing Rou. His only option had been to reset their memories in their entirety.

However, he was left covered in cold sweat afterwards.

He spent some time to discuss the escape route with Du Shi Qing. Then, they finalized all the details... including a meeting place, the signal, and so on...

Then, Chu Yang silently departed from there.

[There's only one last step remaining — I need to get my hands on Diwu Qing Rou's military intelligence.]

Chu Yang had been apprehensive about Diwu Qing Rou since his

rebirth. He didn't wish to come face-to-face with the man unless it was absolutely necessary.

He felt a sense of crisis even though he had met Diwu Qing Rou twice since he came to Great Zhao. Diwu Qing Rou's insightful eyes could see through anything. Chu Yang felt as if Diwu Qing Rou could see through him anytime and anywhere.

Chu Yang had believed that Diwu Qing Rou didn't know martial arts. However, he couldn't believe it anymore.

No one had been able to touch upon Diwu Qing Rou's background as yet. It could be said that this man had been successful in deceiving the whole world.

Chu Yang would rather break into the Imperial Palace alone than visit Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace.

However, this time — he must do it.

The Iron Cloud's side wasn't prepared. They had only assembled a military force of one million soldiers. The Great Zhao could dispatch four million personnel at any given time on the other hand.

And their soldiers were well-trained. Moreover, Diwu Qing Rou had been training the second echelon for some time now. And the number of soldiers in the second echelon was bound to be in millions. Moreover, Diwu Qing Rou was still recruiting new soldiers.

The Iron Cloud would have to take up the challenge in haste if the war was to start with such a huge disparity in the military strength. Moreover, they preparations on Iron Cloud's side were insufficient. Who would be defeated in such a scenario... was quite evident.

The war would become one-sided from the beginning itself.

Therefore, it was very important for Chu Yang to plan the strategic distribution of troops. A fair advantage could be taken out

of military intelligence in order to face millions of soldiers.

This was the only solution.

Chu Yang would even break into a dragon lair in such a situation; let alone Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace.

This was his duty as a 'man'. Of course, he could refrain from doing it. But, he must do it.

One more day passed.

Dark clouds were scattered in the night sky. The gale had been stronger and stronger. Big raindrops started to fall down from the sky soon. The intensity of the rain started to increase. Slowly, a curtain of heavy rain had been formed.

Chu Yang prayed to the heavens for help. Then, he suddenly jumped up from his secret spot, and vanished into the curtain of rain.

*** ***

Diwu Qing Rou had slept for only three hours. He sat alone in his study room. He had strictly ordered that no one should disturb him.

A sandalwood chair was placed in front of the map that hung on the wall. Diwu Qing Rou's chin rested on his hand as he looked at the map.

The entire map was already ingrained in his mind – with all its mountains and rivers.

He sat motionless. A tragic war of attack and defense had already started inside his mind. He was thinking about every city... every place... every mountain... every river... each and every of his squadrons and its respective commanders... and the possible allocation of the enemy troops and generals; even the character, disposition and military strategies of the generals on both sides.

Diwu Qing Rou's brain was like an extremely complex and high-

end ‘computer’.

In fact, some of the military-grade ‘computers’ might not be able to calculate so proficiently...

Diwu Qing Rou wanted to simulate the war in his mind and see the conclusion before going to the war – this was his ability. To be able to calculate such a foolproof battle plan – none other than Diwu Qing Rou had ever been able to achieve this.

Diwu Qing Rou slowly closed his eyes as he sat motionless. It seemed that the heavy rain wreaking havoc outside was providing him with endless inspiration.

He didn’t move for a long time.

The tea on the table had long become cold.

"Oh..." Diwu Qing Rou continued to consider the situation again and again; as if in a loop. Then, he finally sighed.

The outcome of the war was always the same — regardless of any possibility that he considered. The Great Zhao could not be defeated. However, Diwu Qing Rou felt that his plan couldn’t be considered as perfect.

"When the time comes... Tie Bu Tian may lead his troops into the battlefield. But, it shouldn’t be a problem to deal with him. As far as Tie Long Cheng is concerned... I am quite familiar with his strategies since he has been my enemy for many years. And he is certainly a tough enemy. But, I will at-most need to pay some price in order to deal with him; so it’s not an issue. Now, the only anomaly is King of Hell Chu... What stance will he take once he appears on the battlefield?” Diwu Qing Rou muttered to himself.

He had been secretly fighting with King of Hell Chu for a long time. However, he still didn’t dare to underestimate this opponent; not even in the slightest.

This person had great military and civil skills. One couldn’t imagine the extent of Ruth of his decisive nature. He would start a

plan without any hesitation... and would then abandon it without the slightest delay if required.

He wasn't just good at conspiracy, but also excelled at the use of crafty schemes. Diwu Qing Rou wouldn't believe if one stated that such a person didn't know the art of war.

There was a possibility that King of Hell Chu would arrive at the battlefield along with the people of Bu Tian Pavilion who would perform activities related to intelligence, assassination and so on. However, Diwu Qing Rou wouldn't worry about such a scenario.

This situation would be difficult to deal with. But it couldn't have much impact on the overall situation of war.

He was worried about the possibility of King of Hell Chu personally going to the war and taking command. This would put pressure on Diwu Qing Rou's side.

Diwu Qing Rou was confident that he could suppress Tie Long Cheng and Tie Bu Tian. However, he felt that he may not be able to deal with an opponent like King of Hell Chu.

His several years of research would go to waste if he were to deal with an elusive and invisible entity like King of Hell Chu instead of Tie Long Cheng and Tie Bu Tian.

There were several mighty generals on their side. They were all highly experienced war-veterans who had illustrious military service records. But, they fell short of Tie Long Cheng and Tie Bu Tian.

Diwu Qing Rou was quite optimistic about the outcome of this war. However, he knew that he would need to pay a heavy price for victory.

Tie Long Cheng was an invincible god of war... Tie Bu Tian was a master-strategist as well as the Emperor... and King of Hell Chu was a peerless trickster; there was no end to his strange tricks and schemes...

It was no joke to deal with the combination of these three.

Diwu Qing Rou felt that the most ideal time to attack was two years from now. His preparations would've been completed by then. He would also have made an agreement with the Wolf tribe of the Northern Grassland by then; their cultivation ability would play the greatest role.

However, there had been heavy losses in his contacts inside the Iron Cloud. This had left him in a chaotic situation. This was coupled with the sudden emergence of several major incidents in the Continent Center Citadel. That had resulted in his conflict with the royal clan; this had been very unexpected.

Then, there was a major drop in the morale of Great Zhao since chaos had broken out in the Continent Center Citadel. After all, Continent Center was the national capital region of Great Zhao.

After that, the most critical thing happened... Diwu Qing Rou had known about the obscured top-secret since the birth of the first fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword. However, the secret kept changing appearances and became even vaguer.

The blue dome of sky had been dyed blood-red last night. This had given rise to a sense of urgency in Diwu Qing Rou's heart.

Such changes in the sky might have seemed like an illusion to most people. However, Diwu Qing Rou knew what it really meant... thanks to his vast knowledge.

Therefore, he knew that things would go out of his hand if he didn't act immediately.

The Nine Tribulations Sword was capable of bringing about massive changes in the world. Hence, it was difficult to say that it wouldn't affect the ongoing situation in the continent.

However, Diwu Qing Rou discovered one single variable that stood in his way every time he drew his strategic plans. That variable was King of Hell Chu.

King of Hell Chu's very existence was like a pricking thorn in his heart. King of Hell Chu always got stuck in his throat like a fishbone; irrespective of the plans he made. This caused him unbearable pain.

Diwu Qing Rou took a look outside and noticed that the sky had already turned dark. He had unconsciously sat in his room the entire afternoon. He sighed and stood up. He had a headache resulting from an entire afternoon spent in thinking. He rubbed his temples as he walked out.

"Prime Minister, Mr. Jing has been waiting for a long time," an attendant reported.

"Oh, let him in," Diwu Qing Rou said.

*** ***

"King Level Master Jun has disappeared?" Diwu Qing Rou frowned. He then said, "Wasn’t he looking for Nine Joints Lotus Root?"

Yin Wu Tian and Jing Meng Hun looked at each other in dismay.

Diwu Qing Rou wondered, [He obviously came here to find the Nine Joints Lotus Root. Then, why would he suddenly leave? Did he succeed in finding it? Probably not, ah... According to Yin Wu Tian's report... he shouldn’t have found it, right?]

"You said that the water had gushed forth and your boat was sent flying, correct? When did it happen... at what time exactly?" Diwu Qing Rou asked.

"Should be..." Yin Wu Tian pondered for a moment. Then, he replied with caution, "... a moment after the sky’s appearance had turned strange. Lightning flashes and rolling thunders had appeared in the clear skies..."

Suddenly, Diwu Qing Rou’s complexion turned ugly. Then, it further turned pale. His eyes opened wide as he mumbled, "You were sent flying by a wave of water... when the appearance of the

sky changed... and lightning flashes and rolling thunder appeared in the clear skies... And then, the King Level Expert Jun disappeared without finding the Nine Joints Lotus Root..." (1)

"Nine Joints Lotus Root... Nine Joints... Nine..." Suddenly, Diwu Qing Rou's entire body trembled. He jumped up from the chair. His forehead was covered with large beads of sweat, and his complexion had turned green.

"Prime Minister, what's wrong?" Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian were frightened to see this.

Diwu Qing Rou focused his eyes and sat back in his chair. His complexion was still ugly. He was breathing heavily from his mouth. Suddenly, he said in a furious manner, "Nine Joints Lotus Root... Nine Joints Lotus Root... just a Nine Joints Lotus Root, huh! Young Master Yu... Young Master Yu... you tricked me well... you tricked me well..."

Diwu Qing Rou pounded his palm on a small purple jade tea table kept on his side. 'Bang!' The entire table suddenly crumbled into a pile of shiny dust. This shiny dust was made of shattered jade fragments.

Pure jade fragments had been reduced to a state even finer than dust!

九劫 (Jiu Jie) = Nine Tribulations

九节 (Jiu Jie) = Nine Joints

The two have same pronunciation. Diwu Qing Rou has finally noticed the pun.

Chapter 354: Bitterly Tricked

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian suddenly opened their eyes wide. They sucked in a mouthful of cold breath. They looked at that pile of jade fragments utterly bewildered. Their bodies were drenched in cold sweat.

[This... was this done by Prime Minister?]

[Wasn't he supposed be lacking in martial arts?]

[This... how could this be?]

[This is purple jade ah! Its hardness is ten times that of granite!]

Jing Meng Hun was a Ninth Grade King Level Expert. His palm attack would surely break the table to pieces is he were to attempt the same. But achieving Diwu Qing Rou's level of disintegration was impossible.

In fact, the difference was too big to compare.

[Is the Prime Minister... a peerless expert? Maybe an Emperor level expert?]

However, Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian didn't dare to utter a single word when they looked at Diwu Qing Rou's angered face. They just stood there with their heads lowered. In fact, they didn't even dare to breathe in such an atmosphere.

"Humph!" Diwu Qing Rou coldly snorted. He stretched his body. Then, he suddenly started to laugh furiously. He then said in a thunderous voice, "To think that I — Diwu Qing Rou — was played for a fool! And that too so thoroughly! Young Master Yu, you really are the number one trickster in the world!"

He was panting heavily. There seemed to be purple electricity strafing back and forth his eyes. It seemed to be bombarding through in his eyes. It had an extremely intense piercing power. Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian felt as if their flesh would be cut-

open by this sharp gaze.

A long while passed. Diwu Qing Rou finally restrained his imposing aura and slowly sat down.

"Prime Minister... are you... are you all right?" Jing Meng Hun gently and cautiously asked.

"I am fine," Diwu Qing Rou replied in a dull voice. He immediately faced upwards and heaved a deep sigh as he said, "A golden opportunity that rarely appears even once in ten thousand years... I let it slip from my hands so easily... what a pity! What a pity ah!

"A golden opportunity that rarely appears even once in ten thousand years?"

"That King Level Expert Jun... wasn't the real King Level Expert Jun..." He grabbed the chair's handle so tightly that blue veins bulged-out in his hands. He coldly snorted as he continued, "It was the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master!"

"Ah?" Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian suddenly felt as if they had heard the ear-splitting sound of a thunderclap near their ears. Their complexions changed in confusion. Even their bodies began to sway.

"Nine... Nine... Nine Tribulations Sword's Master..." Yin Wu Tian said stuttering. The mere thought of it had made him dizzy.

[Good gracious! Have I actually been escorting the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master all this time? Moreover, he scolded me as well...]

The anger built-up inside his heart had disappeared. In fact, he felt a sense of honor and glory deep in his heart. [Nine Tribulations Sword's Master, ah, holy m*ther. So that was the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master ah...]

[That extremely mysterious master of the Nine Tribulations Sword... who is said to someday dominate the entire Nine Heavens

Continent... wow...]

"He wasn't looking for Nine Joints Lotus Root! He was looking for Nine Tribulations Sword! The third fragment!" Diwu Qing Rou almost spurted out his saliva on Yin Wu Tian, "He managed to take away the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword from right-under-your-nose. And a fool like you didn't even notice!"

Diwu Qing Rou's self-control had reached the pinnacle. So it wasn't easy to make him lose control like this. However, he had turned sinister at this moment.

The cause wasn't Yin Wu Tian!

It was the Nine Tribulations Sword! It was the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master!

The destiny of the nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens was related to the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master.

He had appeared in front of Diwu Qing Rou out of nowhere, and had then vanished. Moreover, he had also taken away the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword.

"It seems that the person you brought to the treasury that day... the so-called Young Master of the Ye Clan... was undoubtedly the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master!" Diwu Qing Rou was rapidly pacing inside the room, "This was radically planned by Young Master Yu and Nine Tribulations Sword's Master!"

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian looked at each other in dismay.

"Or... Prime Minister, there's a way... if you would like to consider it. You can go to the Middle Three Heavens to look for Young Master Yu. You can then ask him to give an explanation..." Jing Meng Hun mustered his courage and cautiously gave a suggestion.

"What sort of an impudent remark was that? Nine Tribulations Sword's birth foretells that there will be a great change in the dominion from the current to the new one in the Upper Three

Heavens. Young Master Yu has been looking forward to the quick downfall of the nine super clans. He wants that other clans such as his own... to obtain the top ranks. Why would he ever tell me? Moreover... Young Master Yu has already become a lapdog of Nine Tribulations Sword's Master. Young Master Yu will sooner or later succeed in obtaining top seat as long as Nine Tribulations Sword's Master doesn't die. Do you think he ever disclose any information to me? Aren't you basically telling me to go to a person who has slapped me on my left cheek? You want me to give him a chance to slap me on the right as well? Wouldn't that be making the same mistake twice?"

Diwu Qing Rou thundered in rage.

Jing Meng Hun lowered his head and didn't say anything. However, his heart was pounding loudly. He had been shocked by a certain piece of information that had been revealed by Diwu Qing Rou's words. [My m*ther, Prime Minister is from one of the nine strongest clans of the Upper Three Heavens...]

This revelation made him feel more reverence towards Diwu Qing Rou.

Soon time lapsed in silence. Diwu Qing Rou's mood had turned completely calm. He said, "Well it's in the past now... what's happened has happened..."

Then Diwu Qing Rou raised his head and glanced somewhat powerlessly at Jing Meng Hun. He then said, "You go outside and wait for a while."

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian quickly nodded and went out.

Diwu Qing Rou closed his eyes and tried hard to pacify the great waves of his innermost feelings. Then, he picked up a pen. He wrote a letter and then sent it out.

He remained quiet for a while. Then, he stood up and said, "You two can come in now." The usual elegance and calm had been

restored in his voice.

This matter about Nine Tribulations Sword's Master had left a great impact on Diwu Qing Rou. However, the strength of his determination and his forbearance couldn't be underestimated. His mental state had returned to normal in a very short period of time.

However, Diwu Qing Rou didn't know that there was one little error in his conjecture.

Others might not know who King Level Expert Jun really was. But Young Master Yu knew that it was Chu Yang! King of Hell Chu!

However, Young Master didn't know that Chu Yang was the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master.

No one was aware of this fact. The only person to figure out that Nine Tribulations Sword's Master had appeared was Diwu Qing Rou. However, he ended-up harboring a wonderful misunderstanding that the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master was friends with Young Master Yu...

Chu Yang's identity would be exposed if this matter were to be pursued. If not exposed... it would no longer remain a secret to Young Master Yu at least.

This secret should've been exposed by this freakish combination of strange coincidences. However, it still hadn't come to light... Moreover, it could possibly stay concealed since Diwu Qing Rou now harbored extreme animosity towards Young Master Yu. This had certainly ensured that this secret would remain as such for a time...

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian quickly entered the study. Diwu Qing Rou prudently said, "Your Golden Horse Riders Department is going to play a major role in the upcoming war. The two of you must be prepared, so that..."

The heavy rain had covered-up the entire sky by now. Chu Yang

was stealthily approaching Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace in its cover.

Chu Yang was clad in black clothes, and was floating westward under the curtain of rain. His figure seemed like a non-tangible ghostly apparition in such a heavy downpour. His body didn't seem to have the least bit of weight.

The wall, the trees, every falling leaf... every drop of rain had become his cover.

He was secretly sneaking into Diwu Qing Rou's territory, but he knew that Prime Minister's Palace's security would be tight. There were experts stationed everywhere in the radius of several thousand feet surrounding the Prime Minister's Palace. And they were keeping a close watch in every direction.

Each person in the close proximity of Prime Minister's Palace was their 'monitoring object'.

There were experts stationed at every hundred feet! Moreover, there was one defense perimeter after another. They were set-up in a scattered, yet organized manner. The experts in each defense perimeter would keep a watch on the area which fell in the 'blind-spot' region of the previous one.

From top to bottom — from outside to inside — it was an all-round monitoring.

If not for this sudden heavy rain — it would've been impossible for Chu Yang to sneak his way into Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace without anyone taking note of it.

This heavy rain had turned this 'impossible matter' into a 'possible' one.

Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace was a very safe place. Not a single incident had occurred here. Who would be willing to get drenched in such a heavy rain to pull something off?

Therefore...

Chu Yang carefully avoided the obstacles in his way. His ghostly figure floated forward until he finally arrived near the perimeter wall of the Prime Minister's Palace. The Sword Spirit had been constantly reminding him about the most important factors.

Several people had neglected their duties. However, there were more who adhered to them faithfully.

"How shall I go up?" Chu Yang anxiously looked at that 50 feet tall wall.

He could obviously jump over the perimeter wall using his martial power. However, the problem lied in the fact that... this wall was being watched by many experts. Therefore, it was fairly easy to get noticed.

"You have no other choice but to take risk," Sword Spirit sympathetically replied.

"..." Chu Yang cursed in his heart. There was no other means. He had to take a risk out of desperation.

His body appeared like a thin poster as he attached it to the wall. Chu Yang’s body seemed almost motionless as it silently crawled up the wall in the curtain of rain.

The raindrops issued ‘popping’ sounds as they pounded on the ground and his body. Chu Yang’s head had already appeared at the wall’s top. Yet, he ‘pasted’ his head close to the wall’s peak.

His body ascended onto the wall’s top bit-by-bit as he remained ‘pasted’ to the wall.

It seemed as if his body didn’t have any bones in it. His body wriggled on to the wall’s top like a snake, and then lay down on top of the wall.

He hadn’t made the slightest sound until now.

There came a rustling sound from nearby. It seemed as if some people were walking towards him.

Chu Yang’s body instantly loosened up. He even held his breath as he turned deathly quiet.

"Who will dare to come on such a rainy night? Can’t we take a short break? " a person suddenly muttered in an apprehensive tone.

"We should be more vigilant because the weather is like this. The wind is stealth; the moon is not. The rain can drain — the snow cannot! (1) This rain is the best opportunity for an intruder to roam about. He will remain unseen in the night!" The other person said in a scolding tone, "If you and I neglect our duties... it may turn into a big deal... and even if we have ten thousand heads — they still wouldn’t be enough to keep us from getting beheaded."

"Yes, yes... Third Brother Ning. This little brother of yours complies with your reasoning," the other person replied in an ‘unconvinced’ tone. The two kept on walking side-by-side, and kept a vigilant watch on the surroundings. They walked past Chu Yang... unaware that their intruder was lying down on the wall.

Chu Yang was motionless. He was listening to the sound of those two people walking away amidst the sound of the beating raindrops. He then quietly raised his head and looked at a house located not far away. [I will have infiltrated the Prime Minister’s Palace as long as I can get on that roof over there.]

[There is only this wall in my way.]

The author is basically trying to convey that it’s easier to disappear like the wind; but the moon remains permanent in the sky. The rain can wash away the traces but snow retains footmarks.

Chapter 355: Infiltrates!

Chu Yang took a deep breath. The rain water suddenly crazily poured into his opened mouth, but he endured. The muscles in his lower back suddenly contracted. Then the muscles in his buttocks and thighs also contracted. Then they fiercely bulged-up at the same time.

Chu Yang's body had been lying down, but it suddenly floated up now. His body looked like a floating black cloud in the curtain of rain as he slowly drifted towards that roof.

This distance to cover was no less than 50 feet.

Chu Yang used this ‘super’ difficult method to advance. But he had no choice in such a desperate situation. He couldn’t afford to move a muscle. He had to cover 50 feet... as he floated in that manner.

Chu Yang had floated up to a majority of the distance. He then suddenly heard those two men who had passed by a moment ago. They were hurriedly coming back.

Chu Yang sullenly shouted in his heart. This turn of events was certainly not very encouraging, [why did these two bastards come back? I’m floating in the air, but the goal is not yet at hand. I will be discovered the moment they look up.]

[If I got spotted... forget about stealing intelligence... even escaping from this place in one piece will be like hoping for something extravagant...]

[However, there’s no other way right now. My only option is to resign myself to my fate for now. I can’t even speed up if I want to...]

"Something’s fishy. I tell you something’s fishy here..." One of them jumped up to inspect the top of the wall. He had precisely arrived at the spot where Chu Yang had been firmly lying down

moments ago.

Chu Yang closed his eyes. This person’s action had nearly scared him to the point of falling down. [How did he figure out that something was wrong?]

"What's the matter?" The other man asked in a skeptical tone.

"I’ve been thinking since the time we passed this spot. The raindrops have been making ‘pop’ sounds ever since we’ve been patrolling along the wall. However, it had changed to ‘putt’ sounds when we crossed this spot. That is certainly not the sound of raindrops hitting the wall..." The man carefully looked at the wall and frowned.

Chu Yang secretly shouted in his heart at this terrible situation. However, his body had finally drifted over to the roof’s ridge. Then, he quietly descended behind the roof’s eaves.

His heart calmed down. He relaxed, but felt powerless throughout his body heart. He had understood that one must have an intrepid psychological prowess to be a thief. The incident a moment ago had nearly scared to death...

"It’s strange... I still hear the ‘putt’ sound..." that tall person standing under the wall said. He still hadn’t raised his head. There was a look of contemplation on his face.

"What ‘pop’ sound or 'putt' sound are you talking about... I can hear the ‘putt’ sound coming from your body!" Another person said in an annoyed tone.

"Are you telling me that the sound I had heard was coming from your body?" The tall person skeptically asked. He suddenly realized something and said, "Yes, I got it. The raindrops make this ‘putt’ sound when they fall on the clothes of a person. It seems like I mistook you for a spy, ha ha..."

The other person snorted and cursed, "You self-centered show-off! You are the spy..."

These two people walked away chit-chatting.

Chu Yang's body was covered in cold sweat. [Indeed, there's a difference in the sound produced by the raindrops hitting the clothes, and the roof tiles. The surface of roof tiles is hard whereas the clothes are soft and smooth. The sounds produced are bound to be very different. If those old geezers of Jianghu were to hear... they would easily tell the difference...]

[I would've been surrounded by now if I were on top of Diwu Qing Rou's study!]

[But how do I solve this problem?]

Chu Yang lay on his back, and grinded his teeth. He then softly and quietly untied his clothes. The only piece of cloth that remained on his body was a calf length shorts once was he was done stripping.

The sound of thick raindrops beating against his body and that of them beating against the tiles' surface was now consistent.

King of Hell Chu looked at his own naked appearance and couldn't help but sigh; [Motherf*ker; now I have to run naked to obtain intelligence...]

[Besides, my skin is also too white... it's far more conspicuous than the black clothes ah.]

[However, there's no other way. I'm still in the periphery. I would've been caught before I reached the interior areas if I had kept my clothes on.]

[Well, even though my white body will attract attention... I should be alright as long as I'm vigilant.]

Then, Minister Chu cautiously moved into action with his arms and hairy legs were fully exposed. He stealthily advanced through Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace...

He soon crossed two roofs... but he suddenly felt his grip

loosening on the cloth wrapped around his waist and hips. Moreover, it was making a ‘putt’ sound in the rain. King of Hell Chu considered for a while, but then decided against taking it off. However, he tore out and threw away a large piece out of that cloth.

Chu Yang felt that things should be in order now. [The only remaining strip of cloth is as thick as a finger. It shall cover my behind. The vital parts on the front are ‘naturally’ covered. However, wouldn’t it be awkward if I have to lie down on my tummy…?]

[The raindrops hitting on my buttocks are making a ‘pop’ sound… just as tiles.]

This is too unsightly. Minister Chu smacked his lips in disappointment. He had never thought that an elegant person like him would have to assume such an unsightly form. Anyways, no one was going to see him in this dark night hoisted with such a heavy rain and strong winds…

The security of the inner quarters was tighter. Chu Yang was moving cautiously. However, he was carefully listening to the movements behind him as well. He also kept a close watch in the surrounding area.

He had already determined — [the security of Prime Minister’s Palace was strict. However, two places have the strictest security. These defensive arrangements seemed set-up in order to serve those two places!]

According to Chu Yang’s guess, these two places should be — the bedroom and study of the Prime Minister.

The wind was issuing a sad and shrill noise. The heavy rain hadn’t eased one notch, but was instead getting more and more intense. It seemed like a massive curtain of water was crashing down from above. Chu Yang grimaced in pain. His misery was simply beyond description.

He could even feel the raindrops hitting his butts. The raindrops contained a strong impact-force. Each drop would hammer the meat on his buttocks to form a concave depression, and then bounced back.

"Is this f*king rain or hail!" Chu Yang fiercely cursed in his heart.

However, this heavy rain was playing the role of an excellent ‘cover’ in this mission.

He managed to daringly burst into the most tightly secured place without facing any problems.

This place below him was one of the two most tightly secured places...

He lay quietly and still on his tummy at the rooftop. In fact, Chu Yang was very cautious, and had ceased all movements. He couldn’t sense the slightest movement or sound below the roof. He couldn’t help but sigh in his heart, [it seems that my luck is somewhat bad today. Diwu Qing Rou isn’t present inside...]

Chu Yang plaintively sighed, and then moved to another place...

This time, Chu Yang was even more cautious.

The Sword Spirit was felt strained because Chu Yang had transferred a massive amount of spiritual power over the span of this mission; a time as short as less than an hour.

In fact, Chu Yang wouldn’t have been able to arrive here this ‘leisurely’ if the Sword Spirit hadn’t stored so much of the spiritual power and medicinal efficacies in Chu Yang’s consciousness space.

This task radically surpassed anyone’s estimation.

The Sword Spirit was crazily changing the medicinal efficacies into power, and was then transporting it to the Nine Tribulations Sword. It changed into pure spiritual power after its digestion in the Nine Tribulations Sword. It would then be imported into his Dantian. It then spread throughout his meridians and helped in

supporting his stealthy movements.

Maintaining this stealth-form had put a major strain on his mind. However, he was unaware that he had unknowingly completed the most important practice in his life in the process of being a spy…

It could be considered as a fool's luck…

Chu Yang silently landed on the rooftop of Diwu Qing Rou's study. He seemed like a thin piece of paper. Then, he immediately lay down on his tummy.

He was luckier this time. There was always an expert stationed on the rooftop of Diwu Qing Rou's study under normal circumstances. However, this expert had gotten drenched in this unprecedented and exceptionally big rainstorm, and had left.

Moreover, the rainstorm was getting bigger and stronger. Therefore, Diwu Qing Rou had personally ordered that expert to get down and take rest. That expert had gone back to his room. He was very grateful to Prime Minister Diwu for being so considerate. However, he didn't know that his position had been seized by an intruder…

Chu Yang was still lay on his tummy. He then mobilized the maximum possible martial power that he could without making any sounds, and then attentively listened to the conversation taking place in the study.

Diwu Qing Rou was sitting with Jing Meng Hun. They were discussing matters concerning the war.

Han Bu Chu was present on the side, and was recording everything. The more he heard Diwu Qing Rou's strategic plans — the more admiration he felt in his heart for Diwu Qing Rou.

Diwu Qing Rou's strategic plan included using the soldiers to form ring-like arrangements. These arrangements would be interlocked with each other; without any gap. This linkage would

ensure that back-up units would quickly arrive in-place of any unit if it were to meet with an accident. This was a method of using ‘one’s own bad news as a trap against the enemy’…

Moreover, the allocation of the generals in this arrangement was in-line with their temperaments.

In fact, Diwu Qing Rou’s plans had accounted-in the Iron Cloud’s senior generals as well. He had calculated which General would go against whom, and who had the most surety of dealing with whom… It was necessary to pay attention to weaknesses in order to deal with the Generals of such stature since they could be used against them. He had mentioned these details in full.

It seemed like Diwu Qing Rou’s eyes could see the mountains and rivers in real-time. He was pointing out the role of every mountain and river in the war, and how they could be used against the enemy to put them in disadvantageous situation…

Each vital spot had at least three sets of strategic plans. The flexible adjustment of these plans was possible based on the arrangement of enemy forces. This would ensure that the main army always retained the advantageous position during the battle.

Diwu Qing Rou explained these tactics… and so on…

Not only Han Bu Chu admired him… even the intruder on the rooftop was full of admiration for the Prime Minister.

[I’ve never seen a person use their brain like this. Not only does he enjoy perfect command over his people… he also has an understanding of the enemy. And then he has a comprehensive knowledge of the terrain of the continent. And this knowledge is entirely installed in his mind…]

[He even knows… how much a mountain’s height has increased in these years, and how this information can be used to his advantage…] Diwu Qing Rou had incorporated such fine details in his tentative plan…

[This is insane ah!]

King of Hell Chu exclaimed in his heart. But, he then resumed concentrating on listening and remembering the details by heart once again. He knew that he would get this chance only once.

Diwu Qing Rou was pondering and speaking casually at the same time. Meanwhile, Han Bu Chu was recording everything that was being said. Diwu Qing Rou was in clear understanding of a profound truth — it is always best to write down something important... than to rely on just your memory.

Diwu Qing Rou's mind was calm; his mind was in an excellent state. That is why he was being unconstrained in his imagination, and was able to think several out-of-the-box strategies. He was aware that he might forget them since the 'inspiration is fleeting'. And it would be a huge loss if he were to forget them. Hence, he was having them recorded.

Diwu Qing Rou had confidence in his memory, and knew that it wasn't inferior to anyone. However, he wouldn't dare to claim that he could remember everything.

After all, these ideas were just the fruit of the 'right' inspirational circumstances.

Chapter 356: Insidious!

Diwu Qing Rou would deduce all possible scenarios before he'd go to war. This was a habit of the Prime Minister's — he would deduce how the war would unfold... how to attack... how to advance... how to use the battle of wits and bravery to his advantage ...what's to be done if the enemy does this? ...how should we deal with it if the enemy does that?

It was a proven-fact that Diwu Qing Rou's simulations were based on the projections and calculation. And these simulations went in accordance with the dispositions and habits of the enemy generals. He would deduce everything prior to a war. And after the war would end — one would find that whether it was the beginning, the course of war, or the final outcome of it — things usually went in accordance to his simulation; baring minor differences.

This was Diwu Qing Rou's unique and unmatched ability.

The sentences coming out of his mouth might seem messy and incoherent prior to the war. They might seem out of order, or even illogical. But this was because he would speak-out his thoughts in an unorganized manner. A slight reorganization and a little 'finishing touch' would be required once the recording would be completed. But, this messy record would then turn into a comprehensive war textbook.

Then, Diwu Qing Rou would carry the finished record and personally visit the battlefield. There's often a lack-of-time to choose the best of course of action on-the-spot when a critical moment arrives unexpectedly. The mind tends to get chaotic in such situations... However, he would just refer to this textbook. That would help him in reorganizing his ideas; which in-turn would allow him to find a solution. Then, he would rearrange his train of thoughts, and lead his troops on the right path.

This was another one of Diwu Qing Rou's unique abilities.

Diwu Qing Rou's wonderful yet clever ideas had gradually reached the end. Han Bu Chu was also done with recording then; in fact, his wrist had turned sore.

Minister Chu was in an even worse state atop the roof.

He felt that the skin on his body had turned numb after the constant beat-up he had received from the raindrops. Moreover, he was constantly racking his brains in an attempt to remember every word coming out of Diwu Qing Rou's mouth. He was making as many mental notes as possible. However, he felt as if his brain had been fried after hearing so many diplomatic talks on domestic and foreign affairs. His mind had reached its limit...

"Jing Meng Hun, how much military strength can your Golden Horse Riders Department dispatch?" Diwu Qing Rou asked. The layout for the military forces was complete. His focus was now on the dispatch of this secret force since it was his hidden trump.

Chu Yang erected his ears to listen closely.

Jing Meng Hun pondered for a moment. Then, he said, "Golden Horse Riders Department has been repeatedly attacked these past days. Thus, the high-level military strength has dropped to some extent. However, the overall framework is intact. All troops can be dispatched at once if the Prime Minister desires so..."

He paused for a second. He then added, "The main military force of Golden Horse Riders Department can dispatch 15000 people. However, 10,000 Golden Horse Riders among these there are under the leadership of 20 'Command Horse Riders'. And a total of 1900 'Killer Black Horse' Riders can also be dispatched. And then there are 1000 Iron Horse Riders. They can be included as well. If Mysterious Horse Riders (1) were allowed to set-off... a total of 300 of them can be available."

The Golden Horse Riders comprised the main battle force,

whereas the Command Horse Riders were the high-level commanders. The Killer Black Horse Riders were the assassins, whereas the Iron Horse Riders were the scouts and were tasked with obtaining intelligence. The Mysterious Horse Riders advocated punishment. The Silver Horse Riders weren't necessarily a part of the military force. They governed wealth and were responsible for making money. This division comprised of extremely shrewd business minds.

Jing Meng Hun paused for another moment. Then, he continued, "As for the power of Silver Horse Riders... They can provide up to 1 billion silvers to Prime Minister for military expenditure in the upcoming war!"

Diwu Qing Rou nodded in satisfaction and said, "Its wartime; dispatch all troops. No need to retain any. Yin Wu Tian will stay behind with 100 people under his command. They shall look after Yin Wu Fa. His most important task would be the suppression of the Continent Center. We cannot have anyone causing trouble in our absence. If there's any mishap — get rid of the cause immediately. You may kill the innocent, but you can't let the guilty off!"

"Understood," Jing Meng Hun replied.

"In other words... the Golden Horse Riders Department can dispatch... about 18,000 soldiers, correct?

"Yes."

"Hm... King Level Expert Jing, you shall personally lead the troops into the battle. Break up the 20 Command Horse Riders in this manner..." Diwu Qing Rou spoke slowly while he paced back and forth, "There will probably be three major battlefields. You branch out three brigades from the 18,000. Each brigade will consist of 2500 elite soldiers. These three brigades will be led by 6 Command Horse Riders; 2 Commands shall be assigned to each brigade. These brigades will move into action in the critical

moments during the battle. They will use the power of Heaven and Earth to chisel through the enemy's battle formation in one fell swoop!

"Yes." Jing Meng Hun's eyes issued a crazy battle intention.

"The remaining 10,000 people shall be personally led by you and the remaining 14 Command Horse Riders. This will be our final military force. It shall be used as our trump card to decide the outcome of the war in the most decisive moment!" Diwu Qing Rou slowly said. A glorious look flashed in his eyes.

"Yes," Jing Meng Hun quickly agreed. He repeated the instructions in his heart to remember it firmly.

"Prime Minister, why are you dividing the force like that?" Han Bu Chu was puzzled. [If there are 18000 people... wouldn't the battle efficiency be higher if they're divided into three brigades of 6000 people each? Each brigade will have abundant prowess. But the military strength of merely 2500 people is far too less in an army expedition of millions of soldiers...]

"The existence of the Golden Horse Riders Department is not a secret. Iron Cloud knows a lot of things about Golden Horse Riders Department. They are scared of Golden Horse Riders Department. Therefore, they keep trying to get their hands on any 'intel' on the Golden Horse Riders Department... However, no one knows how many people are working under Golden Horse Riders Department; this is a top secret! No one except for King Level Expert Jing knows the specific number of people working in the Golden Horse Riders Department. To be honest, even I didn't. This is the outcome that I've intentionally created..."

Diwu Qing Rou softly smiled and said, "This in accordance with Tie Long Cheng's nature. He's bound to have trained a group of elites who shall specifically deal with our Golden Horse Riders Department. The combined military strength of our three brigades is about 8000. Tie Long Cheng will find out as soon as they make

an appearance. Not to mention that the horrifying battle prowess of the Golden Horse Riders Department will leave him dumbfounded...

"Since it's like that... then why not...

"Tie Long Cheng will be startled; scared too. However, he will feel relieved because the Golden Horse Rider's Department will no longer be a secret once it has revealed its prowess. Therefore, the vigilance in Tie Long Cheng's heart towards Golden Horse Riders Department will be weakened. It might even disappear altogether. Therefore, they will use their elite forces to destroy those three brigades; they won't spare any costs! Those three brigades will attract the attention of almost every elite personnel in their ranks! However, they won't be able to swallow-down these three brigades easily; no matter how much they try. They will erode the three brigades of Golden Horse Riders Department slowly and gradually... and will be very much at ease after they've succeeded..."

Diwu Qing Rou slowly said.

"Then he may find the courage to fight the imminent decisive battle," Diwu Qing Rou said in a somewhat mocking tone.

"However, he won't be aware of the fact that I've saved the actual elite force of the Golden Horse Riders Department. And it will comprise of 10,000 elites. They shall then deal with him. I wonder what he would do then..." Diwu Qing Rou chuckled.

"So that's how it is! These 10,000 are the 'real' secret weapon of the Prime Minster's!" Han Bu Chu suddenly realized.

"Yes, this is the force that will decide the outcome of the whole war. Moreover, it will be the most striking force, and will simply catch them off-guard!" A cold light flashed in Diwu Qing Rou's eyes, "These 10,000 people will be the ones who will seize their flag and crush Tie Long Cheng' main army! And if my estimation is correct... the task to capture Tie Long Cheng and Tie Bu Tian alive

will also lay upon the shoulders of these people."

"The Prime Minister is brilliant!" Han Bu Chu was full of admiration.

Intentionally or unintentionally... this secret of Golden Horse Riders Department... was no longer a secret. The top ranking person on both the sides was well aware of it now.

Diwu Qing Rou was playing the 'numbers' game. He was going to conceal his most mighty force in the dark. It would then come out from the dark to eradicate the enemy forces once its decoy had received a heavy blow from the enemy. The very idea of hiding one's strongest force... and then bringing-it-out from the hiding so suddenly... had made it the most profound killer move.

A concealed checkmate has a higher chance of landing the final blow.

Chu Yang's entire body was covered in cold sweat.

[Had I suddenly encountered those three brigades on the battlefield... I would never have been suspicious of it if I hadn't overheard this conversation.]

[And I would've fallen into Diwu Qing Rou's trap!]

[I would've been caught off-guard by the sudden attack of the enemy's 'real' force of 10,000 elites. That situation would've been beyond redemption...]

[This Diwu Qing Rou is too insidious. He is willing to sacrifice a total of 8,000 top elites to achieve the final victory!]

"Well, I forgot to mention." Jing Meng Hun said, "Prime Minister... I've nearly collected the amount of poison you had asked me to collect the last time."

"How much is it now?" Diwu Qing Rou asked.

"A total of 650kg of water-soluble poison has been refined. And we have about 2000kg of Enchanting Tobacco and Chaotic Soul

Grass as well." Jing Meng Hun emphatically said in a heavy tone, "It's very effective!"

Diwu Qing Rou nodded slowly and said, "The water-soluble poison is too less. Hurry up and extract more. The quantity of Enchanting Tobacco is more or less enough... but you must continue to collect more and more of these items; the more the better!"

"Yes," Jing Meng Hun respectfully replied.

"Those poisonous pharmacists... investigate them again. If there is even a small but questionable point... kill them without amnesty!" Diwu Qing Rou slowly walked two steps.

"Yes."

"The most important thing is... to check the direction of the wind to see which way the water will flow. Moreover... make sure that you inform the troops in advance before you throw the poison into the water. And ensure that the necessary preparations are made ahead of time!" Diwu Qing Rou alerted him again.

"Well, I've already brought these matters to your attentions and explained properly.

"And I've explained it once again!" Diwu Qing Rou's tone was very strict, "This matter is of great importance. It is a very serious matter and even the least bit of negligence will not be tolerated!"

"Understood!"

Chu Yang's heart thumped once again. This shock was too big to bear. His entire body was covered in cold sweat; so much so that he could no longer feel the impact of rainwater on his body...

Poison!

650kg of water-soluble poison was too less?! Chu Yang clearly knew the role of this water-soluble poison. If the water source of the army were to be poisoned... how big would the losses be?

As for the Enchanting Tobacco and Chaotic Soul Grass... they were even more deadly. If a decisive battle was going on between the two armies and Diwu Qing Rou ignited Enchanting Tobacco in the tailwind...

That would be an effortless victory for Diwu Qing Rou. He would win the war without sending a single soldier into the battlefield...

Chu Yang was even willing to make a bet — Diwu Qing Rou would lead the troops into the war, but wouldn't allow them to stand against the wind. He would be giving-up on a golden opportunity to win this war effortlessly if he did that...

His heart thumped again. He knew that this was bad news.

Two people in the room below were at a higher cultivation level than his. Thanks to the Sword Spirit who had restrained his entire vitality — he had been able to hide here for so long. However, the sudden thumping of his heart would've alerted them.

Suddenly, there was complete silence in the room below him!

The enemy had discovered his presence!

Mysterious Horse Riders: Its alternate translation can be 'Black Horse Riders'. But it will get confusing because the same term already exists for the assassins. So, we have decided to use 'mysterious' instead of 'black'.

Chapter 357: Kill Chu Yang Today; Start Conquering the Land Tomorrow!

Chu Yang suddenly jumped-up without any hesitation. He didn't waste a single second. He took out the Nine Tribulations Sword in that curtain of rain. It transformed into a brilliant light and combined with his body. He summoned the entire extent of his strength and flew-out like a meteor.

The spot where he had been lying down was struck by an unparalleled force the very moment he jumped off. A big hole appeared in its place.

A loud shout resounded, "Where did he go?"

A power as massive as a mountain congealed out of nowhere and came flying towards him. This mass of energy seemed to have broken through the sky. It issued a sharp whistling sound, and was brimming with vigor. It opened a vacuum; it had vaporized the water in its path despite the heavy rain. The steam loudly exploded as it spread everywhere.

Chu Yang had arrived at the top of the perimeter wall. It was located about 300 feet away from the study room. However, he still felt like he had been pounded by a 500kg-heavy hammer. There was a tumbling sensation in his chest. He felt as if his five internal organs had been ruptured to pieces. His vision turned fuzzy. He could tell that he had been severely injured by this attack.

His legs turned limp. His could barely retain his position on the wall, and almost fell down. Sharp whistles sounded as a barrage of densely packed arrows shrouded the sky. They looked like black clouds flying towards Chu Yang; these arrows had been released from all directions. This rain of arrows had covered the entire sky, and had miraculously displaced the curtain of heavy rain in the process.

Chu Yang stubbornly clenched his teeth as he mustered his entire strength. He took two quick steps on the wall, and fiercely brandished the Nine Tribulations Sword. He then used the second move of Sword Spine ‘One must go through the nine hidden hells on this journey’. This move wasn’t just good at defense, but also granted indomitable power to advance courageously for a kill. The sword light enveloped his body as soon as this move was cast out. It transformed it into a fuzzy white shadow with the power of this move. Then, his body shot forward like an arrow.

He spouted blood from his mouth in midflight. The intensive use of sword light had backfired, and had stirred-up his body internally. The blood he had spouted contained pieces of his internal organs.

The sword light darted-away unhindered; just like a shooting star.

The wall had been riddled with arrows. It had transformed into the back of a huge hedgehog.

The curtain of heavy rain that had been hindered for an instant finally crashed-down to the earth with a loud and thunderous noise.

Babel of voices had resounded, and the entire Prime Ministerial Palace had turned chaotic all of a sudden.

Several martial art experts sprung-up out of nowhere, and chased after Chu Yang in the heavy rain.

Diwu Qing Rou slowly retracted his right palm. He had used it to attack the wall of his palace. There was a fierce look in his eyes. It seemed like his sharp eyes had captured Chu Yang’s image... even in this curtain of heavy rain.

"Who was it?" Jing Meng Hun’s heart palpitated with fear. He had used his agility martial skill to approach the scene. However, the intruder had then escaped after being struck by a palm attack.

"It was King of Hell Chu!" Diwu Qing Rou replied with a dignified look on his face.

He had glimpsed at Chu Yang; that too from behind. Chu Yang wasn't wearing any clothes. However, the impression of 'Young Master Chu' had been deeply edged in Diwu Qing Rou's memories. How could he not remember that one instance when he had come face to face with Chu Yang and had then been put in a miserable situation? The very instant Diwu Qing Rou saw that 'back'... he knew that it was King of Hell Chu.

"Humph. To consider that he would come naked on such a rainy night to steal intelligence..." Diwu Qing Rou coldly snorted and said, "King of Hell Chu sure is a cautious fellow, but extremely reckless as well!"

Jing Meng Hun and Yin Wu Tian were dumbfounded.

They had been inexplicably shocked by the sudden revelation of Diwu Qing Rou martial powers. And now they had come to find that King of Hell Chu had intruded this tightly secured Prime Ministerial Palace.

Diwu Qing Rou had used a heaven startling move which had dazzled and stunned them. The saw Diwu Qing Rou's hand raised in the air by the time they managed to step out of the study. Then, a sharp whistling sound had resounded. And soon a sword light had vanished like a shooting star.

An emotion of endless revere appeared in their hearts as they glimpsed at Diwu Qing Rou's graceful figure. [What level of cultivation would one need in order to issue such a palm attack?]

The wall was about 300 feet away. Was Diwu Qing Rou confident-enough that his palm attack could reach so far and hit the target?

"Spare no efforts in hunting him down!" A mysterious light flashed in Diwu Qing Rou's eyes as he said, "He has been struck by my 'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart Palm'. His five internal

organs should've sustained serious damages. In fact... they must've been crushed. He shouldn't be able to run far. This time — I want him dead. I want to see his corpse!"

"Yes!" Jing Meng Hun replied as he thought; [What is this Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart Palm technique? Which clan does it belong to?]

Jing Meng Hun had heard the name of this technique for the first time. The name contained just five words, but was brimming with cruelty and reeked of blood. One's heart would start pounding from fear by merely listening to its name.

"'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart' Palm doesn't inflict any external injuries. However, it ruptures the internal organs. This palm technique aims at the internal organs only." Diwu Qing Rou explained, "Moreover, the target's internal organs begin to exude a strong fragrance if it survives for more than 2 hours; that scent is very similar to the aroma of orchids. It is very easy to track this fragrance. And this orchid fragrance can't be dispelled until the body dies..."

"This 'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart' Palm technique changes forms to become the 'Orchid Heart Chasing Soul' technique. It is possible to track this sweet fragrance of orchids from five thousand km away!" Diwu Qing Rou's sharp gaze fell at Jing Meng Hun, "Did you understand?"

"I understand!" Jing Meng Hun's spirit were greatly roused. [I might as well consider hanging myself to death if I fail to capture King of Hell Chu despite such a clear means of tracking him...]

"Seal the Continent Center and nearby cities! Expand the prohibition to 50km if you can't find him in one day; expand the prohibition to 250km if you can't find him in three days. And seal the entire border area between Great Zhao and Iron Cloud!"

Diwu Qing Rou resolutely and decisively ordered.

"Yes!"

"You may kill the innocent, but you must not let-off the guilty. If you find a corpse but cannot determine its identity — send it to me. You may lift the seal and stop the manhunt after I've personally verified the corpse's identity! "

"Yes!"

"Kill Chu Yang today — and we can start conquering the land tomorrow!" Diwu Qing Rou's eyes issued a burning hot radiance as he commanded, "Go all-out!" He paused, and then said, "Do your best!"

He again paused for a second, and then said, "Execute the nine generations of anyone who lets him slip-by! If someone isn't giving their best in the manhunt — execute their nine generations! If someone tries to cover up the truth — execute their nine generations! If someone is helping him out — execute their nine generations! I hereby command — King of Hell must die. Keep searching until you find him!"

"Yes!"

"Go! Take your Command Horse Riders as well. Use the entire forces of the Golden Horse Riders Department in this operation! I'll soon release the prohibition order. Then, the government officials of all ranks shall cooperate with you as well!"

"Yes!"

"Pay attention to orchid's fragrance if you can't find him within two hours. Now go."

"Yes! Please excuse us!"

The Prime Minister's Palace silenced down once all personnel were gone. However, the entire Continent Center was wrapped in chaos soon after.

"King of Hell Chu, it would take a miracle for you to escape after

getting hit by my ‘Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart’ Palm attack at such a close range. I’m not willing to believe that your luck is so great that the providence itself favors you!"

Diwu Qing Rou thought, [if Chu Yang can live through this… there can be no other explanation besides taking into consideration that he has the blessing of gods.]

Diwu Qing Rou went back to his study. He thought for a while, and then looked at the hole in the roof. The rain was still pouring-in. His eyes suddenly flashed. He didn’t seem to be at ease. In fact, he appeared restless.

[This is of great significance. King of Hell Chu was on my study-room’s rooftop when the secret war-planning was taking place. It can be assume that he has a clear insight into our overall plan. It would be terrible if he was allowed to escape.]

[The safest way is to turn King of Hell Chu into a dead man!]

[This is indeed a great opportunity; it comes once in ten thousand years! ‘Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart’ Palm can exude orchid fragrance up to 5000km! This is the first-time-ever that King of Hell Chu’s life and death are in my hands!]

[I can easily trample Tie Long Cheng and Tie Bu Tian as long as King of Hell Chu is dead.]

Diwu Qing Rou’s body turned around and disappeared in a flash. ‘Shua’ His robe fell on the chair…

A shadow suddenly lased-out from the study room, and leapt to the rooftop. It landed on the exact spot where Chu Yang had been eavesdropping from. Then, it seemed as this figure had started to imitate Chu Yang’s actions. It suddenly jumped and the sword in his hand transformed into a ball of sword light. It soared high into the sky on such a rainy night, and flew towards the wall. The two legs gently landed on the wall-top. Then, the sword issued a cold light and that person’s figure disappeared.

These actions were the exact imitation of Chu Yang's. There was no difference whatsoever!

It was a dark night. That fuzzy figure left behind a few vague words, "Considering that he had to stop midway, and land on the wall-top to borrow support ...his cultivation hasn't reached the King Level... ah, he hasn't even arrived at King Level... but even a Ninth Grade King Level Expert should've been killed by that palm attack... let alone a petty Revered Martial Artist..."

Diwu Qing Rou had always maintained the appearance of a scholar. However, he had finally moved into action himself to kill King of Hell Chu.

Chu Yang was desperately bolting away. He could feel that his five internal organs had been ruptured. This was not a trivial matter. The Sword Spirit was doing everything he could to use the medicinal efficacies to heal his injuries... but to no avail...

"You must stop and find a place to heal... I'm afraid you'll end-up becoming the first Master of Nine Tribulations Sword to die so young if you keep on using your agility skill to move at maximum speed!" Sword Spirit telepathically said.

"You still have the face to say that..." Chu Yang angrily said. His voice was full of grief and indignation.

Chu Yang's cultivation hadn't reached the stage where he could conceal his entire bodily vital functions. He certainly couldn't stop his own heartbeats. This was being handled entirely by the Sword Spirit.

The Sword Spirit had temporarily stopped Chu Yang's vital body functions when he had successfully taken positions upon Diwu Qing Rou's study. Even an Emperor level expert would've found it difficult to detect Chu Yang's existence.

However, he had been fiercely impacted by a piece of intelligence. This had jolted his heart and had restored his

heartbeats in the process.

The restoration of heartbeats should've been unimportant under normal circumstances. However, it had thrown him into a bottomless abyss in that moment.

"I had no choice..." The Sword Spirit felt guilty and said, "Your cultivation is at Revered Sword artist. Your heartbeats can be stopped for half an hour at the most. This wouldn't have happened if it hadn't exceeded that time limit... I had another means to stop it at that time. There would need to be a sword intention wrapped around your vital organs... It would've been possible to allow your heart to beat inside the sword intention... and nothing would have happened. However, I didn't know that your heart would suddenly thump as soon as I withdrew my power to prepare for the transfer of the sword intention..."

Even the Sword Spirit was quite depressed about this matter...

Chapter 358: Orchid Heart Chasing Soul — The Fragrance That Floats For Five Thousand Kilometer!

The accident was... coincidental. It was supposed to be a foolproof plan. However, it ended up becoming a matter of life and death owing to a little negligence.

Chu Yang spat a mouthful of blood as he listened to chaotic sounds of the manhunt. They were coming from all directions. It seemed as if the entire Continent Center had been mobilized to find him. He felt helpless and said, "Where can I go in such a situation?"

The Sword Spirit also sighed.

There was no place to hide. Moreover, this was the Capital City of the Great Zhao. He couldn't 'casually' find a place to hide since there would be a risk of being sold out to Diwu Qing Rou. As far as his own people were concerned — he couldn't risk their lives along with his own; they wouldn't get a second chance like he had...

However, was the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master going to die like this... with such serious injuries?

The dark night had provided a good cover. However, the sun would rise in about half-an-hour. He would have nowhere to hide after the break of dawn. Moreover, the voices of the people on the manhunt were getting closer and closer.

Chu Yang felt his own speed slowing down. He felt as if his legs weighed 500kgs. He somehow jumped across a short wall. His body limped over as it leant against a pile of wood lying in the corner; not the slightest bit of strength was left in his body.

His gaze fell upon the pile of firewood as he opened his eyes. He couldn't help but curse-out-loud in his mind, [I never thought that

sneaking into someone’s residence would bring me to this alley... where I would be lying in such a conspicuous position — next to a pile of firewood...]

"The proverb holds true... when bad luck strikes... even a fart can dislocate your hip joints!" Chu Yang whispered in his heart. He didn’t even have the strength to move his fingers. He had no option but to resign to fate.

It was getting noisier in the vicinity. People were clamoring unceasingly, and were moving about in a hurry. Some people even walked past the edge of the alley that led to that pile of firewood.

The rumbling sound of hoof-beats suddenly got louder; it then slowly faded away as they passed by.

More than a dozen people had gone past that spot in a short period of time. In fact, some people even stopped near the edge of the pile of firewood for a conversation; most had expressed their personal views on the matter of hunting down the King of Hell Chu...

Chu Yang shouted in his mind, [Well... whatever! The situation has gone out of hand anyways. It can’t get any worse; and the worst case scenario would be to get caught. That would end it all.]

[I’ve already experienced death once. You think that I’ll be scared of death? I’ve got this life because I cheated!]

Suddenly, he calmed down. He no longer paid attention to the nearby commotion. He submerged into his own consciousness to start the healing process.

"Sword Spirit, what’s the condition of my injuries?" Chu Yang asked in a calm manner.

"Extremely serious!" the Sword Spirit replied with a sigh.

"En?"

"The arteries and veins of your heart have received grave

injuries; they were ruptured by being jolted. Your liver has been split open. Your kidneys are shattered. Your lungs have been broken into five lumps; the smallest lump had spouted-out of your mouth with some blood a while ago. Your heart is on the verge of stopping..." The Sword Spirit said in a heavy tone, "If I hadn't used the sword energy to protect your internal organs... you'd be dead!"

He paused for a second, and then said, "If I let loose the sword intention... you'll die!"

"It's that serious..." Chu Yang smiled bitterly in his heart. He then said, "Can we heal the injuries?"

"We can't!" the Sword Spirit replied plainly. He further said, "It's possible only if we have a 'completed' version of the Nine Tribulations Pill. In your current situation... we won't be able to heal your injuries even if we use all the medicinal efficacies in our possession..."

"Oh..." Chu Yang smiled. He didn't speak further.

The Sword Spirit was rather surprised, "How come you haven't asked for the next step?"

"I hate the way you look while you keep me in suspense." Chu Yang snorted and said, "I, Chu Yang, am on the verge of dying. And the last thing I want to see is someone joking around. If you know something... then why don't you just come out with it? Whether I ask or not... will it make any difference?"

Sword Spirit smiled in an embarrassing manner. He had no choice but to continue, "There is only one way — it's to continue the usage of the sword intention to wrap your internal organs; then slowly heal your injuries with the medicinal efficacies. But you'll first be required to consume the incomplete Nine Tribulations Pill... so that you can move 'barely enough'. But, give-up on the idea of a 'complete' recovery."

"What do you mean by move 'barely enough'?" Chu Yang

frowned and asked, "I have to escape from the Continent Center Citadel as soon as possible."

Sword Spirit calculated for a moment. He then said, "'Barely enough' movement is a must for ordinary people in such a condition. But, it's impossible to go all-out... At most... you can use half of your strength; that too at the cost of damaging your body each time you push yourself."

"That's fine!" Chu Yang didn't pursue this topic any further and readily agreed.

[This situation can't get any worse. As long as I can make some recovery and resume my ability to move around... it would be better than sitting and waiting for death.]

[Only a quarter of an hour has passed since I came out. I shouldn't be too far from the Prime Minister's Palace.]

"Oh... by the way... I forgot to give you a bad news." Sword Spirit said helplessly, "You must brace yourself."

"What can be worse than the present situation?" Chu Yang frowned.

"You must escape from the Continent Center within half-an-hour." Sword Spirit smiled wryly and said, "That palm attack was very strange. If you don't die within two hours from the time you were struck... your internal organs will start exuding the fragrance of orchid. Even I can't prevent this fragrance from spreading."

Chu Yang was startled. "Are you trying to tell me... that no matter how much I try to escape... it would be pointless? Doesn't that mean that they can easily track me down as long as they have a dog...?"

Chu Yang had planned that he would disguise himself and move out of the city gate as soon as he had recovered enough. Then, he would've travelled thousands of kilometers with the help of his peerless technique to change appearances, and would've return to

Iron Cloud.

However, he gave up hope when he heard this news.

[I can only use less than half of my strength. But I'll have to cover a distance of 6,500km... and that too while fighting along the way?]

Chu Yang smiled wryly as he thought; [isn't this like thinking 'way too' highly of myself?]

"This is the fact." Sword Spirit said, "You're time is running out."

"What sort of a palm attack was that? Even the Nine Tribulations Sword can't do anything about it...?" Chu Yang muttered. Then, he took the Nine Tribulations Pill nine heavy Dan. He paid attention to each second once the healing process started.

Just as the Sword Spirit had said — his time was running out. The so-called Master of Nine Tribulations Sword a.k.a King of Hell Chu would lose his life in the Continent Center Citadel if he didn't get out within half an hour...

Diwu Qing Rou was clad in black attire; his attire was adorned with a black armband. He was wearing a mask, and had rushed out of the Prime Minister's Palace like a whirlwind. He was headed in the direction of Chu Yang's escape. He had been following Chu Yang's trail.

Chu Yang's eyeballs would've popped-out if he were witnessing this...

Diwu Qing Rou's tracking trajectory was perfectly in-line with Chu Yang's escape route; there was no error. One mustn't lose their cool in a chaotic situation. And they shouldn't choose any 'available' escape route without thinking it through. One must always prepare an escape route in advance.

How else could one possibly get rid of so many pursuers?

Taking 7 or 8 turns along the way wasn't enough. One must aim

to change the direction of escape at-least a hundred times...

"Hm..." Diwu Qing Rou suddenly stopped and landed in a corner. His gaze fell upon a dark-brown patch of bloodstain. He frowned and muttered to himself, "This should be the result of my palm attack... but how can a Revered Martial Artist come this far? Even a Ninth Grade King Level Expert shouldn't have been able to withstand my attack... so how did he escape this far? Did my attack not have much effect on him...? Perhaps he had some precious heavenly treasure to aid him?"

His eyes swept across and spotted something peculiar in the bloodstain. He used his hand and carefully flipped-it-over. He realized that it was a small piece of an internal organ.

He gently turned it with the help of his fingers as he took a good look at it, "This is a lung fragment. It seems like my palm attack worked. King of Hell Chu has been badly injured. Since he had vomited-it-out here... that mean he mustn't have been able to suppress it any longer... so he shouldn't have gone far from here."

He stood up as his hawk-like eyes looked around. He carefully looked around for a while. His figure moved and searched the radial area within 400-500 feet of that bloodstain.

"No... wonder!" Diwu Qing Rou had been 'going with the flow' in his pursuit. However, he had felt something mysterious after he had stopped here. He raised his head and gazed in the direction of the Prime Minister's Palace. Then, his feet took him in the opposite direction.

The direction had been correct.

However, he moved at a slower pace for some reason. Diwu Qing Rou had assumed that Chu Yang must've gradually been rendered incapable of suppressing the effects of his injuries. This could be the only reason why he had found a fragment of Chu Yang's internal organs at that spot. Therefore, Diwu Qing Rou had decided to move at a very slow speed; he was trying to imitate the

movement-pattern of a fatally wounded person…

He was unaware that Chu Yang's speed hadn't yet slowed down at that stage during his escape… despite the fact that he hadn't been able to suppress his injuries.

The blood and fragments of Chu Yang's internal organ had been spouted-out of his mouth when he had jumped-over the perimeter wall. However, they had been wrapped-up in the sword light. They had then been brought here at a stretch before they had finally fell-off…

Diwu Qing Rou was using the most rational method to track Chu Yang. However, he had made a small error…

Time wasn't a luxury for Chu Yang. He woke up from rest, and felt that strength had returned to his body. However, he couldn't feel his chest, belly and internal organs. He felt as if they were made of wood.

But he didn't care since he knew that the Sword Spirit was using the sword intention to protect his internal organs from falling apart. He hid behind the pile of firewood, and looked towards the opening of the alley.

He could hear people come-and-go at an interval of every two breaths. Suddenly, he saw a troop of men pass through on horses.

Chu Yang held his breath and watched those people as they turned round-the-corner. He formulated a plan in his mind; as soon as these people would leave — he would go-out and attach himself to their rear flank…

"Attention; you're butt-naked," the Sword Spirit reminded him.

"En…" Chu Yang suddenly came to realize; [concealing myself among them would've been utter bullcr*p if I had gone out stark-naked… but where should I go to put on clothes? I can't possibly do that on the main road… out in the open…]

[There are many clothes in the Nine Tribulations Space, but I'll

still need to put them on ah...]

Chu Yang suddenly had a ‘great’ idea, "Sword Spirit, can I go inside the Nine Tribulations Space?" He thought; [Who could possibly find me if I can enter that space...?]

"Why don’t you answer it... can you enter your own body? Why don’t you try to dig a hole in your arm and see if you can go inside it?" Sword Spirit replied in a despising tone. "How can you ask such a foolish question?"

Chu Yang turned around and rolled his eyes.

Chapter 359: Watch How I Ride-Away With Your Mighty Force!

"But... you can come in..." Suddenly, Sword Spirit changed his tone of speech.

Chu Yang was overjoyed. But then, the Sword Spirit said, "You can come in... as soon as you've obtained the eighth fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword."

Chu Yang couldn't speak; a sudden burst of anger had choked his voice. [I will be choked to death if this vile Sword Spirit continues to speak.]

The patrol team had finally gone past them.

Chu Yang came out of the pile of firewood in a flash. He had made sure that no sound was issued. He then put on a black attire. He obviously didn't have any time to put on an underwear.

Chu Yang had entered this pile of firewood in a moment of desperation. It was a good place to hide. Ironically, this place was less noticeable because it was such an obvious place to hide. Everyone's attention had been focused on the dark corners instead...

The black clothes that Chu Yang now wore were similar to the uniform of the small search squad. He imitated their haughty demeanor and started to look around. Then, he went behind the squad and asked, "How are things here? Did you guys find anything?"

"Found my as*!" the leader of the squad replied in a depressed tone. He was a huge man. He further added, "We're searching madly; we want to grab him as fast as possible..."

"We too." Chu Yang sighed and said, "My squad leader made me go down into a place full of latrine..."

"Ha ha ha..." those six people burst into laughter. They seemed to find Chu Yang funny.

Suddenly, someone landed on the ground with a ‘whooshing’ sound. "Did you find any clues?"

It was Jing Meng Hun.

The squad leader replied, "Not yet, King Level Expert."

Jing Meng Hun said in an angry tone, "Useless people! Look for him again!" Then, his body soared into the sky and moved forward.

Chu Yang noticed that Jing Meng Hun had gone in the direction of the short-cut that lead to the West Gate. "You guys continue with the search. I will return to my squad." Those six people waved their hands. "Sure. Go back."

Chu Yang smiled. He went in the direction that was opposite to where Jing Meng Hun had gone.

Suddenly, the squad leader turned around. He scratched his head as he said, “What was a youngster like him doing here alone?"

The other five people looked at each other in dismay. One of them finally said, "This guy has bad luck. He had to jump into a latrine pit... He must’ve gone to change his clothes. He must be going back to join his squad..."

Everyone burst out laughing. The squad leader’s suspicion disappeared. He said, "Come on, we must be careful... We are looking for King of Hell Chu. It’s a great task to catch him... Make sure you don’t end up dying at his hands... or you will turn into dead heroes."

Everyone nodded and walked away.

The squad leader’s reaction was justified. He would’ve certainly become more vigilant if he had pursued his original chain of thoughts. Everyone had been divided into squads for this search. But Chu Yang had appeared alone. So, what was a lone guy

supposed to be doing there?

However, what his subordinate spoke in reply had offered a perfect explanation behind Chu Yang's emergence... It was too perfect... There was no way to deny it.

Chu Yang hadn't gone far when he heard the explanation of that subordinate. He couldn't help but laugh in his heart.

Chu Yang encountered several search squads as he moved towards east. So, he turned north. He thought, [There's no need to take a detour. I might as well go straight to the North Gate.]

Iron Cloud was located to the north of Continent Center.

He again encountered several search squads on his way. However, he didn't try to evade them. In fact, he greeted them gracefully and inquired about the ongoing situation. He continued to use the excuse of 'falling into the latrine pit and going back to change clothes' to dodge any suspicion.

The North Gate was in sight soon.

Chu Yang sucked in a lump of cold air when he saw it from afar.

Several black-attired men were gathered near the gate. The gate was shut tightly. The number of soldiers stationed to guard this city gate was five times more than any other place. The swords of these soldiers issued a cold light; they were drawn from of their sheaths.

[How should I cross this tightly secured gate?]

[I can use my excuse to dodge past the squads inside the city. But, I can't use it to go out of the city. I am afraid I will be sent back as soon as I try to get close to the gate.]

[Also... my body will start to issue the fragrance of orchid in less than quarter of an hour. What should I do?]

"I can help you this once," Sword Spirit said in a muffled voice. He had discovered that Chu Yang was in a precarious situation.

"How will you help me?" Chu Yang asked quickly.

"I can use my spiritual power to help you change your appearance. You can completely change your appearance into someone else's and get out of the city." Sword Spirit said reluctantly.

Sword Spirit was reluctant because only 10% of his spiritual power had been recovered. His spiritual power would drop down by half in case he were to help Chu Yang. However, Chu Yang would most likely die if he didn't help him. He wouldn't dissipate if Chu Yang were to die... but the Nine Tribulations Sword would once again split into fragments. Moreover, he would once again get buried underground for 10,000 years along with the Sword Point...

Sword Spirit wasn't willing to accept such an outcome.

"Alright!" Chu Yang made a prompt decision, "You change my appearance into that of Jing Meng Hun."

"Jing Meng Hun?" Sword Spirit was surprised. [I didn't expect this guy to be this bold and reckless.]

"Yes! Hurry up." Chu Yang's gaze turned towards the gate. He stared at the black-attired men. They were more than a hundred in number. Suddenly, a killing motive emerged in his eyes. The Sword Spirit had come up with a strategy inside his consciousness.

"Excellent!"

Sword Spirit got to work. He knew that the current situation demanded immediate action.

Suddenly, Chu Yang felt an intense pain in his face. He felt as if his facial features were deviating from their original positions, and were getting rearranged. A weaker person would've squealed if he had experienced such deep pain.

However, Chu Yang didn't dare to make a single sound since this was a crucial moment of life and death.

The sound of beating horse-hooves resounded as a squadron of men came riding over to his side.

"Well, I've forcefully changed your appearance. I ended-up using half of my spiritual power. If I do this again... then I will fall into deep sleep. I will then lie dormant henceforth... Now, pay attention. Your changed appearance will last for only three hours..." Sword Spirit reminded him.

Chu Yang grabbed a cloak from the Nine Tribulations Space and draped it over his body as he heard Sword Spirit's explanation. Then, he brazenly jumped forward. He stopped in the middle of the road and blocked the path of the incoming squad. He put on the 'air' as if this was an urgent matter and bellowed, "Stop!"

The squad leader was startled when he saw Jing Meng Hun. [It's First King Level Expert Jing of the Golden Horse Riders Department. What's he doing here?] He hastily rode over to Chu Yang's side and jumped-down from his horse, "King Level Expert?"

Chu Yang sensed the passing of time. He was getting anxious and wasn't interested in wasting any time. He readily shouted, "Step aside. I am going to use your horse!

"Yes, as you wish." The officer followed the command and hurriedly moved to the side. He knew that First King Level Expert of Golden Horse Riders Department usually killed someone whenever he flew into a rage. So, he couldn't possible dare to defy his order.

Chu Yang leapt onto the horse and shook its reins. He then shouted, "You all, come with me!"

He kicked the horse's belly. Suddenly, the fine horse dashed towards the city gate like an arrow shot from a bow.

Hundreds of cavalrymen clamored and followed after King Level Expert Jing.

The sky had already turned bright by then.

Chu Yang covered a distance of 300 meters in a brief time. He then shouted, "Open the city gate!" After that, he brandished his hand. A jade token flew out in the air. It was the status command token that Jing Meng Hun had given him before.

This jade token was the status symbol of Jing Meng Hun.

Time was running out. Chu Yang had no choice but to use the status command token of Jing Meng Hun. However, this act was quite dishonorable. Even Jing Meng Hun wouldn't have resorted to this method...

It could be said that Chu Yang's hourglass was on the verge of getting empty. He would've gone and spoken to the guards. But then, the fragrance of orchid would have emanated out of his body before the city gates were opened.

Therefore, Chu Yang had to 'risk it all' in this one shot.

An expert of Golden Horse Riders Department stood at the edge of the city gate. He heard a loud shout, and then saw a blue light flying towards him. He caught it to take a look. He turned pale with fright when he saw it.

[This is the command token of King Level Expert Jing!]

Then, he saw King Level Expert Jing on a horse leading a large cavalry unit towards the city gate. It was obvious that he wanted to cross the city gate without any delay. The expert immediately raised his hand and shouted, "King Level Expert wants to go out of the city. Quickly open the gate."

The guards of the city gate hastily followed the order. The city gate slowly began to open with a creaking sound. Soon, the gate was entirely open.

Chu Yang's horse arrived near the gate and stopped. He imitated Jing Meng Hun's voice and shouted, "I want all of you to hop on the backs of these horses and follow me out of the city. We're going to catch King of Hell Chu! Hurry up! Quick! Quick!"

Then, Chu Yang moved out of the city gate.

[King Level Expert Jing is going out of the city. How can he possibly not bring an entourage with him? He is going out of the city to catch King of Hell Chu. So, he would certainly need his men. He can’t go out alone, can he?]

Therefore, Chu Yang had issued this order.

This move obviously couldn’t hide the truth for long. However, at least he would be able to drag on this façade for the longest possible time. Moreover, the news about this incident would spread slower if there would be no experts left at the gate.

Each second was as precious as gold for Chu Yang.

A Command Horse Rider of Golden Horse Riders Department present among those experts clamored. He waved his hand and ordered in a stern voice, "Everyone, get on the horses and scramble. We’re going out with the King Level Expert."

The strict discipline of the Golden Horse Riders Department could be seen in its entirety as the experts jumped in the air without a moment’s delay. They kicked away the cavalrymen from the top of the galloping horses and mounted themselves on the horses’ backs. Their legs clamped on either sides of the horses. The horses were still in motion when all this had happened. But their speed didn’t diminish. The experts who were supposed to guard the North Gate had got on the horsebacks and had rushed outside the city gate amidst their shouts and the neighing of the horses.

More than 200 cavalry soldiers had jumped down from their horses, and had rolled out the way. The ones who had been kicked-down were still rolling on the ground in pain. Then, a hundred horse riders surged-up violently from behind and rushed out of the North Gate.

The sound of hoof-beats suddenly rose and eventually faded away. Everyone regained their senses as the crowd of horse riders

vanished into the distance. It seemed as if everyone had woken up from a dream...

"Golden Horse Riders Department is so tyrannical, ah..." a guard couldn't help but utter these words as he saw the condition of these cavalrymen; almost everyone was groaning in pain.

The cavalrymen who were alive after being forcefully dismounted from their horses were covered in bruises. Several of them had their bones broken. More than twenty of them had fainted because of pain...

Such tyranny was bound to invoke dread in one's heart.

Then, a faint fragrance of orchid began to emanate from the direction in which that group of horse riders had gone-off to...

Chapter 360: Even the Death Will Not Be In Vain

Chu Yang continued to kick his horse as he went past the city gate. He urged his horse to go faster. Clouds of dust blew behind him as he swiftly flitted across the fields. He would turn around every now and then and roar loudly, "Keep following! Hurry up! Catch up with me!"

He wasn’t willing to give up even though his hips had turned numb by riding the horse for too long.

The Command Horse Rider was riding behind him. Chu Yang urged his horse to go faster as he wanted to give the Command Horse Rider an impression that they needed to hurry-up due the seriousness of the matter. [King Level Expert must’ve obtained some important information. That is why he is pushing the horses beyond their limits.]

The Command Horse Rider had finally understood the reason behind the King Level Expert’s demeanor. He couldn’t help but rush himself, "Faster! Faster! Even faster! This is a matter of urgency. Those who delay will lose their heads..."

There were more than a hundred riders along with a few spare horses. They rode forward at the maximum speed as they heard this.

The entire team was riding north...

A big mountain appeared in front of them after an hour. They had reached the dense forest at the foot of that mountain. The horses were so tired that they started to spout foam from their mouths.

Suddenly, Chu Yang shouted and pulled the reins of his horse. The sturdy horse slowly came to a halt.

The Command Horse Rider who was behind Chu Yang ended up

surpassing him like a whirlwind.

He then stopped and turned around, "King Level Expert, what happened?"

"We'll rest here for a bit. After that... we shall begin the operation!" 'Jing Meng Hun' replied in an extremely heavy voice. His tone revealed an incomparable seriousness.

"Has King of Hell Chu... fled all the way up till here?" The Command Horse Rider asked in an astonished tone. [If that is really the case... then the speed of this King of Hell Chu is incredible...]

"That's right! King of Hell Chu has hidden somewhere in these mountains!" 'Jing Meng Hun' said, "This is going to be a tough battle. We must regain our vigor so that we can succeed in one fell swoop."

"Indeed. The subordinate wants to thank King Level Expert for guiding us here!" A fiery light flashed in the Command Horse Rider's eyes. [Catching King of Hell Chu is a great service, ah. My luck is good today!]

[It's all thanks to my luck that I was stationed to guard the North Gate. Moreover, the King Level Expert obtained sudden information and didn't have time to gather troops. So, he asked me to back him up.]

The Command Horse Rider had found Chu Yang's excuse rather adequate.

However, this was the expected outcome as Chu Yang had completely immersed himself into playing the role of Jing Meng Hun. He had completely transformed into him. If the Command Horse Rider was still to bear a suspicion in his heart... then there would have been only one explanation – this guy was a rebel.

"You men stay here and harmonize your breathing. I'll go in to take a look and find something to eat," Chu Yang said coldly.

"Alright." The Command Horse Rider wanted to say that it would be better if a subordinate went-in instead. However, he didn't dare to say this since he had seen the fierce look on King Level Expert's face.

King Level Expert Jing's black robe fluttered as he entered the forest under the watchful gazes of several experts.

The experts were still watching when the Command Horse Rider said in a furious manner, "You haven't yet started to harmonize your breathing to recover your martial powers? King Level Expert has personally gone in to find something to eat... you bunch of bastards!"

Everyone complied as they sat down cross-legged. Then, they started to concentrate in order to harmonize their breathing.

Pitiful screams of a wild boar were heard from inside the forest some time later.

Then, King Level Expert Jing came out of the forest with a rustling sound. He walked quickly as blood dripped out of the two big chunks of fresh meat that he carried on his shoulders. He threw the meat on the ground with a 'bang' sound. The net weight of these meat chunks would have been around 40-45 kilograms.

"Hurry up! Roast this meat and eat it quickly!" King Level Expert Jing said in a commanding voice, "I've removed the internal organs and bones. You'll be able to barbecue it, right?"

"Yes, we can... many thanks to the King Level Expert. You're very compassionate towards your subordinates. But, how can we dare to enjoy the food for which you had to work..." the Command Horse Rider started to speak in a flattering manner.

"What nonsense! I'm giving you a quarter of an hour. Roast it well and be done with the eating too!" King Level Expert Jing said in an angry tone as he looked fiercely at him...

"Yes... as you command..." The Command Horse Rider's face was

covered in cold sweat. He said in his heart, [I am very stupid. King Level Expert is clearly in a hurry because of this urgent matter. Why would he care about flattery?]

He turned around and issued several commands, "You, you and you… quickly go into the forest and fetch dry wood. You, you, you, you and you… use your swords to set up a rack for barbeque. Hurry up! We must prepare roasted meat within a quarter of an hour and finish eating as well. You and you… go cut the meat… hurry up! Line up the horses on one side and put up a wall of spears to barricade them. You Motherf**ker, why are moving so slow… like a turtle?"

Everyone started to work in full swing after the commands had been issued.

These people were experts. Even the weakest among them was a high-level Revered Martial Artist. So, their speed of getting things done was extremely fast. The two large chunks of meat were chopped down into a total of 103 slices in the blink of an eye. There was a single slice for every person; including one for Chu Yang. All slices except Chu Yang's were similar. They had been fairly cut into equal sizes without any discrepancy.

More than thirty barbecue racks had been firmly fixed on the ground.

Some people came running out of the forest. They carried dried-up branches on their shoulders. They quickly put those dried-up branches on the barbeque racks. Then, another group of people rushed out of the forest like a gust of wind.

'Crackle' 'Crackle'… There were faint sounds of burning wood. Thick smoke rose up into the sky as the sound of meat being barbecued resounded. Soon the fragrance of roasted meat started to spread.

Several people found this meat to be extremely delicate and exquisite. Moreover, the fragrance it exuded while getting roasted

made it seem even more delicious. It certainly didn't look like the meat of a wild boar. However, everyone felt a chill running through their bodies when they saw the sinister look on the face of the King Level Expert who was sitting alone on the side. [Who would dare to incite his anger?]

[We are getting to eat such fine meat. Isn't it enough?]

[Why would we let go of such a delicious meat?]

If someone had gone up to him out of curiosity and asked, ["King Level Expert, this doesn't seem like a wild boar's meat"].... then there were 80% chances that the King Level Expert would've jumped and rained curses, ["If you want to eat... then eat! If you don't want to eat... then get the hell out of here!"]

After that, he might have issued an order, ["If you're not hungry and don't wish to eat... Let's start the search operation immediately."]

Everyone would've felt like crying if that were to happen... but they wouldn't have had any tears to shed.

Everyone was back from the forest soon. There was so much firewood that it could be used three times if needed. These soldiers were some of the wisest people of Jianghu. They divided themselves into groups of threes and sat down around the barbecue racks without even receiving any orders. Some of the experts were even using their elemental power to stimulate the flames. As a result, the flames were roaring and flourishing...

Only a quarter of an hour had been allotted to them. If their time limit came to an end... then the King Level Expert wouldn't wait even for the meat to get properly cooked. He would perhaps rub the meat to check whether it was roasted or not. And if not... then he would throw it away and order everyone to set out on search...

Everyone knew that the King Level Expert was very hot-tempered, and was capable of doing such a thing.

Therefore, everyone worked obediently and kept their mouths shut.

Even the Command Horse Rider kept his head lowered and continued to look at the barbecue. He didn't even dare to let out a fart.

Chu Yang observed the proceedings like an outsider. There was a cold look in his eyes and a grim look on his face. It seemed as if he'd kill someone any time now. He had been watching the entire barbecue process — poison flood dragon's meat getting cut into small slices and then getting roasted in fire. The meat issued a captivating fragrance and several slices had turned golden yellow. The fat slowly flowed out of the meat and dripped into the fire. This incited the flames even further and issued a stronger aroma...

[The poison flood dragon's meat is the deadliest poison in the entire world. It has no antidote. Moreover, no one can detect it... F**k, this is truly a treasure...]

[Unfortunately, I have lost 50 kilograms of meat this time...]

A dark and gloomy expression spread on Chu Yang's face as he pondered. He would ferociously sweep a glance towards the crowd from time to time. Each of his glances sent a chill down their spines... making them appear even more humble and submissive...

"Isn't it roasted yet?" King Level Expert Jing asked in a fierce tone.

"Right away!" The Command Horse Rider trembled in fear. He almost burnt his hand in a hurry to reply.

"Hurry up!" King Level Expert Jing replied in a cold voice.

"Yes..." The Command Horse Rider bowed his head. He put his best effort to use his elemental power to accelerate the ripening of the meat... However, he couldn't stop the cold sweat from appearing on his forehead and dripping down.

He was quite worried, [King Level Expert Jing would've come up

to me, and ripped me apart if I had said a word extra.]

[King Level Expert Jing's appearance is too terrifying; it can truly scare a person.]

[But... hey! No wonder... he looks like that. King Level Expert Yin had received seriously injuries and had been crippled at the time of King Level Expert Kong's death.... Since then, the entire responsibility and burden of the Golden Horse Riders Department has fallen on the shoulders of King Level Expert Jing. And King Level Expert Jing always seems to be in a bad mood ever since. He has become extremely hot-tempered and gets easily irritated...]

[But, this is excusable. If I were in his place... I would've been even more hot-tempered and violent than he is...]

[It's insane that his younger brother's killer is so close... and yet he is able to maintain his calm...]

Suddenly, he realized that the two barbecues before him were issuing a strong exotic fragrance. He was pleasantly surprised. He cried out loud, "Meat is ready. It's fully roasted..."

[Good heavens!] The Command Horse Rider had never been this excited over a piece of roasted meat in his entire life.

"It's ready!"

"Our meat is roasted too."

Suddenly, everyone was excited. Many of them swallowed their saliva as they looked greedily at the small slice of roasted meat in their hands. The meat looked so delicious that just the look of it had incited their appetites. However, it was a pity that the quantity of meat was barely enough to fill half of their stomachs...

"King Level Expert... this is your slice of meat." The Command Horse Rider politely took the best slice of meat for Chu Yang to taste. This slice of meat was very well roasted. It was crispy from outside and tender from inside. The yellow-colored grease flowing on the surface of the meat exuded a mouthwatering aroma...

"Put it down," the voice of King Level Expert Jing sounded gentle this time. The Command Horse Rider secretly rejoiced in his heart. However, King Level Expert Jing roared once again, "What are you people looking at? Why haven’t you started eating? You want me to request you to eat, huh?"

Everyone grabbed the roasted meat lying in front of them and started to eat as soon as they heard these words; they seemed to be seeking pardon. Many of them cursed in their hearts, [F**k this! Who would dare to eat without your permission? I was standing here waiting for you to eat first... and that became an offense...]

This disgraceful act had ruined their mood.

The Command Horse Rider also grabbed a slice and bit it ferociously. Suddenly, he felt a burst of indescribable flavor spreading inside his mouth and going down his throat. He felt a sense of comfort spreading through his body. His eyes lit up as he quickly chewed more of it and swallowed it. He put the last piece in his mouth and slowly chewed it. He wasn’t willing to swallow it at once. He heaved a sigh and said, "It’s such a delicious roasted-meat. I can keep on eating this for a lifetime. Even if I were to die now... it wouldn’t be in vain... Many thanks to the King Level Expert..."

The King Level Expert looked at him with a faint smile and asked, "Really? Even if you were to die now... it wouldn’t be in vain?"

Chapter 361: You Are a Spy

The Command Horse Rider exerted his entire strength to nod in reply. He swallowed the last piece of the meat and a flattering look appeared on his face. He then earnestly said, "King Level Expert, this is the most delicious roasted meat I've eaten in my life! No... even considering every cuisine... this is the most delicious food I've eaten in my life!"

His voice sounded genuine. He obviously hadn't spoken these words in flattery. These were his true feelings.

Then, he saw a strange smile appearing on the face of King Level Expert Jing as the man spoke, "I am very pleased if that's so."

And then that Command Horse Rider suddenly felt as if everything before his eyes had started to blur. He felt like visualizing a dream. His mind was in a daze. He had a warm sensation in his heart; as if he had returned home. He felt warm and extremely comfortable. He then slowly fell down with a satisfied smile spread across his face.

The bodies of those hundred experts softly fell down in the background. There was a comfortable smile on everyone's face...

Chu Yang quietly watched as those people slowly fell to the ground. There was an ice-cold look in his eyes as he looked at the bodies that lay on the ground.

[Do I feel regret? Do I have sympathy for them? Not really.]

[The news about me has already spread. These very people would be the ones chasing after me if I had exceeded the time limit of this disguise! And they would've carried great hatred and animosity in their hearts. They would've wanted to kill me as soon as possible!]

"There's no such thing as right and wrong in this world. It's only a matter of perspective. It depends on which side one takes. It just-so happens that our positions were different... Your road was

different than mine. You were my enemies, and I could choose either life or death," Chu Yang's hands had directed this scene in which the ground had been riddled with corpses. However, he insipidly said with the same icy-cold look in his eyes, "This is your way; but is my way as well. We were doomed to die when we chose to follow the way of the Jianghu. That's our ultimate destination. Today it may be you. Perhaps tomorrow it will be me. So... I won't say sorry."

He went silent for a while. Then, he arrived at the side of that Command Horse Rider, and took out Jing Meng Hun's Status Command Token from his bosom. He then stood still for a time equivalent to two breaths, and then turned around.

'Slice'. Chu Yang cut open his own wrist. A strange fragrance of orchid exuded from his blood. He must've been inflicted by an unbearable pain since his flesh had been ripped-open. However, there was a look of tranquility in his eyes, and indifference on his face. He had managed to maintain his composure. He then carefully applied his blood on the bodies of the horses; one drop per horse. Then, he picked-up a long whip.

He strongly lashed his whip. A loud 'lashing' sound was heard as those 300 or so horses fled in different directions. They galloped-away at the fastest possible speed, and the orchid's fragrance spread-out. Soon it got milder and milder...

Chu Yang's complexion was cold and solemn. He pulled the extra warhorse that he had retained for himself. He jumped onto its back, and clamped his legs on either side. The loss of a large amount of blood had brought a sense of dizziness, but he tried to suppress it with his entire might. He then sped-away towards the north.

He left the corpses scattered on the ground behind him.

He didn't look back, and rode away. The hoof-beats continued to sound like thunderclaps.

[The goal is pretty clear. I'm heading north! Diwu Qing Rou, come and stop me if you have the ability! I, Chu Yang, shall not take a detour because of you.]

[My time is running out.]

[Diwu Qing Rou might move into action if I were to take a detour for my escape. I'm afraid the war will break-out in Iron Cloud before I can make a return. And, Diwu Qing Rou will spare no effort in taking advantage of my absence... he'll use every means possible to expand his victories.]

Chu Yang couldn't afford to have such an aftermath.

He had been wounded so seriously that he could drop dead any moment. He was aware that this journey of 6000km would nothing but a narrow escape at best. Perhaps, he'd die anytime and anywhere in that deadly wilderness. However, he needed to choose the shortest route to his destination, and travel at the fastest possible speed.

Chu Yang knew that Diwu Qing Rou was aware of his plan.

Therefore, he knew that this long journey across mountains and rivers would decide his life and death since it was Diwu Qing Rou's best opportunity to kill him.

However, he had no choice.

The sound of hoof-beats faded into the distance.

Jing Meng Hun's black robe fluttered as he crazily shuttled back-and-forth the entire Continent Center Citadel's sky. He knew that there would be serious consequences if King of Hell Chu managed to escape this time. However, he also knew that this was an extremely rare and golden opportunity, and could decide the victor of the upcoming war in advance. Therefore, he used his martial power to its utmost while carefully he searched every nook-and-corner of the city.

However, he hadn't discovered anything so far.

King of Hell Chu had escaped from the Prime Minister's Palace, and the search for him was like looking for a pearl in an ocean. There had been no movements or sound of activity ever since. 250,000 soldiers of the Golden Horse Riders Department had been mobilized in a 'networked-investigation' fashion to comb through the entire Continent Center. However, they had found nothing.

He had been unable to find his target after a long and thorough search. Hence, Jing Meng Hun eventually had to sorrowfully concede: [two hours have passed.]

Every flower-shop in the citadel had been destroyed. In fact, the orchids present in every household of the citadel had been destroyed. This was to ensure that there remained no fragrance of orchids in Continent Center Citadel.

As long as the fragrance of orchid was to appear — it would lead to King of Hell Chu!

However...

The orchid's fragrance never appeared.

Jing Meng Hun arrived at the North Gate after he had made a few laps of the citadel. He took a look and suddenly got furious, "What's going on? Who opened the City Gate?"

A strange reaction appeared on the City Gate's guard's face when he saw Jing Meng Hun. He opened his mouth and eyes wide in utter shock. It seemed as if he had seen a ghost.

Jing Meng Hun angrily asked, "What's the matter? Why are you looking at me like that?"

"King Level Expert... Jing... King Level Expert Jing, you you you... didn't you go out of the city?" the guard stuttered as he looked at Jing Meng Hun and scratched his head in confusion.

[King Level Expert Jing went-out with his men in pursuit of King of Hell Chu. So how can he appear here all alone? Could this guy possible be a... spy?]

The guarding officer recalled the majestic scene of ‘King Level Expert Jing’ moving out with his men on horses. His overbearing grandeur that could swallow the rivers and mountains... His tyranny could dominate anyone. His roar had reeked of confidence... the more he thought — the more excited he became. Then, he looked at the man standing before him. There was a mixed expression of anger and worry on that man’s face. [Humph, why do you look so worried? Why do you look so angry? It’s because you are a spy!]

[You are worried because you have guilty conscience!]

The more he thought... the more this made sense. The more he thought, the more suspicious the man in front become to his eyes. The more he thought... the more he felt that this was his ‘big chance’. He suddenly became vigilant, and went two steps back. Then, he raised his hand and shouted, "Everyone! Be on your guard! Archers, prepare to shoot!"

‘Shua’ Sabers, swords and spears were drawn-out in great numbers. Hundreds of iron arrows were nocked on big bows in unison. The bowstrings were pulled back with a squeaky sound, and the shining arrows had been aimed at Jing Meng Hun.

Jing Meng Hun went wild with rage and roared, "What are you men doing? Is this a rebellion?"

The officer standing on the wall was overlooking from above. He gave a condescending look to Jing Meng Hun. The corners of his mouth revealed a trace of sneer as he said in a mocking tone, "Rebellion? He he... this counterfeit King Level Expert Jing is surely a madman... Capture him!"

The last few words had been spoken in a stern voice.

The officer's eyes revealed a fanatical look. [This counterfeit King Level Expert Jing... is probably that King of Hell Chu! If the King of Hell were to be captured by me... wa ha ha, that would be a wonderful thing.]

[I'll get promoted; I'll make a fortune. I might even receive the status of a noble...] the officer's body trembled with excitement as he thought of his future prospects. This high-tide of happiness nearly made him unconscious...

The arrows flew-out like the rain as soon as the order was issued. The gate started to close as the guarding officers rushed towards Jing Meng Hun in a big-arrow-like formation. A team of infantries under the command of a senior official, followed by a cavalry unit, dispersed in the vicinity and outflanked Jing Meng Hun.

The sound of the bugle horn resounded, and a large crowd of soldiers surrounded him; they were like turbulent ocean waves surging at him from every direction.

The infantry, cavalry and archers had formed the most effective battle formation to entrap Jing Meng Hun; that too in the shortest possible time.

The aggressiveness and efficiency of these elite soldiers of Great Zhao's Army had been demonstrated in its entirety.

However, these elites had chosen the wrong target.

Jing Meng Hun was furious.

He had never thought that his search for King of Hell Chu would lead him into such a critical situation at the North Gate. Yet... he had unexpectedly encountered these circumstances.

But this was absurd.

There was a loud 'whistling' sound. His black robe flickered as he flew high-in-the-air. The barrage of arrows crashed into his body, but issued a 'pop' sound and bounced back. A Ninth-Grade King Level Expert's skin was as tough as steel. It was impervious to such weapons.

He stretched-out his hands and used them to 'grab and throw' human bodies everywhere. He was utterly furious, but he knew that this was a misunderstanding; nothing else. But, it was a very

critical misunderstanding.

Therefore, he held back and only tossed the people out of his way; without causing any casualties.

He seemed like a whirlwind as he pranced relentlessly to make his way forward through the barrage of swords and spears coming at him from every direction. And he kept dashing forward. His body flew-up and landed on the city wall with a loud ‘whistling’ sound. He then shot his palm at the battlement and used the reaction force to jump-up. He landed right in front of that officer. Then his pliers-like big hand advanced to grab the officer.

The officer was shocked. He was about to dodge but got caught by Jing Meng Hun.

Half of the quarter of an hour passed, and Jing Meng Hun had learned what had happened from that officer’s mouth; a mouth which had obviously become a mass of blood.

"I’m very angry!" Jing Meng Hun was furious. The burst of anger had caused his hair to stand. He roared angrily, and raised that guy. He then fiercely hurled him upside-down from the city wall.

‘Puff’ the officer’s body spattered before the city gate, and formed a bright pattern of blood.

Jing Meng Hun didn’t hesitate for a single second and blew a whistle. It was the unique contact signal of the Golden Horse Riders Department. Then, his body seemingly turned into mass of black smoke and swept-down from the city wall, and rushed out.

However, he didn’t notice that a person’s silhouette had already flashed while he was getting angry, and had vanished outside the city.

Jing Meng Hun rushed towards the north and followed along that trail of horse hooves. Meanwhile, he continued to whistle. The experts of Golden Horse Riders Department were gathering at the North Gate. Then, they were riding-out of the city at a

lightning speed.

The men were roaring, and the horses were neighing. It was utterly chaotic, but surprisingly seemed very systematic. No one spoke a single word throughout this entire process.

Everyone was silent, and was doing everything in their power to rush in the north direction. They were obediently following after the sound of their commander's whistle...

Chapter 362: Life or Death — One Must Be Courageous!

Jing Meng Hun continued to chase for half an hour. Eventually a great mountain appeared in his sight. A section of forest spanned across the mountain. Suddenly, his entire body shook. His eyes turned lifeless as he witnessed the scene unfold before him, and his mind went completely blank.

The corpses of the Golden Horse Riders Department experts who he had ordered to guard the North Gate were scattered over the ground.

All 103 people were lying dead on the ground.

It was critical to guard the North Gate to prevent King of Hell Chu from escaping. So, King Level Expert Jing had selected his best men for the task. These men were elites among elites. They were his most-trusted subordinates too. But now they were dead; all of them.

A black figure stood with his hands crossed behind his back besides the corpses.

"Who are you?" Jing Meng Hun felt as if his heart had been fried in oil. He gave out a loud shout and rushed forward.

That black figure slowly turned around and his cold gaze fell upon Jing Meng Hun’s face. He then coldly snorted and insipidly said, "It’s me!"

Jing Meng Hun’s body suddenly halted as he exclaimed in surprise, "Prime Minister?"

It was Diwu Qing Rou.

"The culprit has already left; more than an hour ago," Diwu Qing Rou stated in a low voice.

"Left... that... they..." Jing Meng Hun looked at the corpses of his

subordinates and his face contorted. His facial muscles began to convulse due to sheer anger.

"They're all dead. They died very serenely." Diwu Qing Rou's seemed intrigued from his voice. It was hard to tell whether he was feeling sorry for them... or just mocking them. Then he added, "It seems like they died happily. They must've willingly eaten King of Hell Chu's poison. It seemingly brought incomparable satisfaction to them as they died. There are no traces of any fight or struggle."

"This... how is this possible?" Jing Meng Hun was dumbfounded.

He looked stupefied as he took a good look at the faces of those corpses. He noticed that there was faint smile on every face. Their facial expressions revealed tranquility and utter satisfaction. Judging from their facial expression — it could be assumed that they must've been very happy and satisfied in their last moments.

However, they had still lost their lives in the midst of such bliss!

Jing Meng Hun trembled as he felt a chill running down his spine. He just couldn't imagine how King of Hell Chu managed to pull-off something like this. [These were more than 100 experts of the Revered Martial Artist rank or above... not a flock of 100 pigs you know!]

[Though that King of Hell Chu was disguised as me... how can his disguise be so flawless? And even if there were no flaws in his disguise... but how did he single-handedly feed poison to more than 100 experts and caused their deaths... and that too with so much serenity?]

Jing Meng Hun's entire body shivered as he looked at the frozen smiling expressions on the faces of the corpses.

And then he smelled a faint fragrance of orchids; it was seemingly drifting-in from every direction...

"It should've been some bizarre poison." Diwu Qing Rou indifferently stated, "A strange meat." Diwu Qing Rou's voice

contained an inexplicable flavor; it seemed as if he was lost in deep contemplation.

He had never seen such a poison in his entire life. He couldn't stop his heart from trembling at the realization that even he may not have been able detect this poison... but what if he ended up consuming it someday?

Jing Meng Hun nodded. His mind hadn't recovered from the shock yet.

"King of Hell Chu has traced his own blood on the bodies of hundreds of horses and has made them run in different directions. We cannot track him now that we're surrounded by the fragrance of orchid." Diwu Qing Rou's squinted at Jing Meng Hun and said, "You don't need me to tell you what needs to be done next, right?"

Jing Meng Hun was frightened for a moment. He then recovered his composure and said, "Yes!"

Diwu Qing Rou coldly snorted and said, "Blockade the entire northern border! Jing Meng Hun, if you fail to catch King of Hell Chu this time — I will ensure that your head rests in your hands!"

"Yes," Jing Meng Hun's heart sank. It was obvious from Diwu Qing Rou's tone that he was very much dissatisfied with his subordinate.

"That King of Hell Chu is worthy of being called 'cruel and ruthless'! He can even give 'me' a competition in this regard," Diwu Qing Rou slowly took two steps and raised his head-up to sniff the orchid's fragrance. Then he shook his head and said with a sneer, "To think that he was capable of seeing through the function of 'Orchid Heart Chasing Soul'... that is hidden in my 'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart' palm technique... is very surprising. He should be seriously injured, but he has still inflicted self-harm and spent so much blood in order to smudge it over-on hundreds of horses before he scattered them in different directions... I must say that he's really brave.

"So brave that he’s putting his own life in danger for his trusted comrades," Diwu Qing Rou smiled faintly. He then looked towards the mountain forest and was lost in his thoughts. After a while, he smiled again.

"King of Hell Chu was seriously injured, but he still went for self-mutilation. He’s lost a lot of blood. It seems like he wants to tread the road to disaster." Jing Meng Hun was extremely mad at Chu Yang. He felt that Chu Yang was the reason why he had landed in such predicament, and was going through such an embarrassing situation. Naturally, there was no trace of politeness in his tone.

"Place somebody on a field of death and they will fight to live... (1)" Diwu Qing Rou sighed softly. His intonation was long and leisurely; as if he was recalling something. Then, he slowly said, "To conduct oneself in the society — one needs to put oneself in a deadly situation. An unbelievable ability may emerge within oneself after that. It will either cause one’s demise or help one soar ...

"If you don’t compel yourself to take command of your own death — then someone else will force death upon you! But there will be a way out if it’s ‘you’ who forces yourself. However, you’ll beyond saving if others forced you into it..."

Diwu Qing Rou looked at the nimbus clouds floating above the mountain forest with a complex look in his eyes. He spoke in a very depressed tone. There was a strong sense of regret in his voice. He gave a somewhat muddled laugh after a while, and stated in a low voice, "So, before others can force you to death... you do it yourself in advance... then they won’t be able to force you... they just cannot...

"The worst-case scenario would be death. However, you’ll be relaxed to know that at least you can die on your accord... than at the hands of others..." Diwu Qing Rou heaved a sigh softly. Then, he suddenly turned his head and looked at Jing Meng Hun. His tone turned mild, and even had some traces of regret, "Meng

Hun... you force yourself too much in not making the requisite effort... Otherwise, considering your achievements... why did you stop at the Ninth-Grade of King Level?"

Jing Meng Hun was standing in a daze. But he felt as if he had heard five thunderclaps at once as soon as he heard these words.

[That's right. I've been afraid to enter the Middle Three Heaven even though I'm a Ninth-Grade King Level Expert! That's because I know that there are countless King Level Experts over there. An insignificant Ninth-Grade King Level Expert like me may not stand a chance there. I may be called a 'king' in the Lower Three Heavens... but I can at-most become someone's sacrificial pawn in the Middle Three Heavens. A few incorrectly said words could offend some major force. And that would cost no less than my life!]

[So, I thought that it would be better-off to stay in the Lower Three Heavens and enjoy the sumptuous lifestyle of worldly desires. But as for taking a step further... I wouldn't dare to do it!]

[It's not like I cannot break through from the Ninth-Grade of King Level... but I don't want to! I'm too scared of the unknown-world that awaits me ahead!]

[I've been maintaining my cultivation constant for past 10 years with this mentality; there's been no growth! I require the spirit energy derived from the spirit beasts in order to make a breakthrough from the King Level into the Emperor Level. For that I must need to go the Cang Lan Battlefield. But I cannot even bring myself to do that. Therefore, I cannot make any progress... I'm stuck in an endless loop which has led to this embarrassing situation. And it has, in fact, originated from my own cowardice!]

[Where have I thrown away that 'fearless and indomitable' spirit I used to possess before I stepped into the King Level?]

[Why have I grown so cowardly? Did I turn timid upon my breakthrough?]

Jing Meng Hun couldn't help but sweat profusely at the thought of this. He had realized that he was very scared to enter the Middle Three Heavens. If he were asked to throw away everything he had built here, and enter the Middle Three Heavens... he would refuse.

It was easier said than done.

It is true that the vast sky is only a step away. But it is also true that that-very-step is... as vast as the sky...

The mentality of 'risking it all' is fantastic. And it is very difficult to understand. Just like in the modern era... some people in the business world have nothing in the beginning. They work hard and do their utmost to raise their own property. Now they only need to be courageous-enough to dive into the market, open their own company, and aim for steady development to make it bigger and bigger. However, most people cower back at this critical juncture. They don't dare to take that 'one' step. In fact, one-in-a-thousand individuals have the courage to take this step.

That's because they think: [I've obtained success and recognition. Why should I take such a big risk? I'll go back to being poor with no hope of reprieve if I fail...]

Only a few who take the step achieve success. The winners smile proudly in the clouds, whereas the losers return to being extremely poor. Even those who worry about gains and losses for a long time before taking this step find it very difficult to succeed.

That is the fault of their mentality. If one worries about gains and losses, and lacks the determination to take the risk — one cannot forge towards success.

That is why there are only a few strong people irrespective of time and space. Whether it's martial arts or business; it's the same. It has been like this since forever; and will never change.

Diwu Qing Rou had been carefully observing Jing Meng Hun's demeanor. He finally heaved a deep sigh and said, "King of Hell

Chu is King of Hell Chu... and not because he is very wise. It's because he has kept his life on-the-line since the day he has made his debut. That is how he is able to make miracles happen...

"These miracles don't originate from his powers. They originate from his ability to compel himself to keep treading on the road to disaster! His ability to come-out alive from hopeless situations is his true talent. As they say, time and events create a hero... Meng Hun, you've really disappointed me!"

His last few words were so light that they were almost inaudible. Diwu Qing Rou sighed profoundly, and then his body floated-away like the wind and disappeared into the horizon.

The thundering sound of horse hooves could be heard at a distance. The experts of Golden Horse Riders Department were rushing-over like a swarm of bees.

Jing Meng Hun continued to stand there in a daze. He stood motionlessly for a long time.

Diwu Qing Rou had left.

As far Jing Meng Hun was concerned — Diwu Qing Rou had always harbored high hopes for him. Jing Meng Hun had a deep understanding of martial arts. He was proficient in pharmacology. He was relatively young age-wise considering his achievements. He could be regarded as a rare talent in the entire Nine Heavens Continent.

In fact, his achievements were somewhat higher than the youngsters of the Upper Three Heavens. However... one must know that Upper Three Heavens must never be compared with the Lower Three Heavens.

Jing Meng Hun had been able to attain such achievements in a barren place like the Lower Three Heavens. It was worth being proud about. In fact, no one would dare to disregard his achievements even if he had attained them in the Upper Three

Heavens.

Therefore, Diwu Qing Rou had looked forward to Jing Meng Hun's future, and had waited for the time when Jing Meng Hun would rid his heart of his inner demons.

Diwu Qing Rou would depart from the Lower Three Heavens after the end of this war; regardless of victory or defeat. Diwu Qing Rou had planned to take Jing Meng Hun along if he were to eliminate his inner demons by then. Diwu Qing Rou had estimated that Jing Meng Hun would become an Emperor Level Expert in the shortest possible time... once given a chance to have vast future prospects.

However, Diwu Qing Rou had felt disappointed now since he had determined what Jing Meng Hun's inner demon was...

He was talented, lucky, perseverant, and also had an opportunity...

However, he was scared to succeed.

Notes:

Place somebody on a field of death and he will fight to live (idiom based on Sunzi's 'The Art of War'. It basically means 'to fight desperately when confronting mortal danger' or 'to find a way out of an impasse'

Chapter 363: Brazenly towards the First Mountain Pass!

Diwu Qing Rou had been waiting for Jing Meng Hun to breakthrough his escapist mindset; to attain this breakthrough with his self-determination was an entirely different matter than doing it under someone else's influence. After all, this concerned Jing Meng Hun's future success.

However, Jing Meng Hun could never make this breakthrough. Diwu Qing Rou felt that Chu Yang was always ready to put his life on the line. He struggled to trick death, and survived to create miracles. This point was evident in Diwu Qing Rou's words.

However, Jing Meng Hun was hesitant to make a move even after he had realized the problem. Therefore, Diwu Qing Rou was disappointed with him.

[Jing Meng Hun will be nothing more than a walking corpse if I take him to the Upper Three Heavens by force.]

Diwu Qing Rou's judgment about Chu Yang was accurate as well. He was superior to Chu Yang when it came to making plans and resourceful stratagems. And, Chu Yang was nowhere close to his level when it came to playing political games and making elaborate conspiracies.

However, there was one point on which Diwu Qing Rou was inferior to Chu Yang.

Chu Yang didn't have an escape route. Therefore, he had no other choice but to move forward and succeed. Even a single failure on his part could make his situation beyond redemption. So, Chu Yang had to be extremely persistent. His perseverance to move towards success was ten-thousand times stronger than Diwu Qing Rou's.

Moreover, Chu Yang had gambled away his life. He was walking a

tightrope; even a small misstep could consign him to eternal damnation.

Chu Yang could get through these difficult situations since he possessed two deadly tools — the experience from his previous life, and the Nine Tribulations Sword. Diwu Qing Rou was a genius, but he was nowhere near Chu Yang's level in this regard.

Diwu Qing Rou's situation was entirely different.

He had always had more than one escape route.

Therefore, the disparity between Diwu Qing Rou and Chu Yang was in their mentalities. Just like Jing Meng Hun couldn't break through his cowardly mindset — Diwu Qing Rou couldn't attain the same mindset as Chu Yang.

Diwu Qing Rou had chased after Chu Yang. But, did he strive hard for the same? He had left the matters in the hands of Jing Meng Hun and Golden Horse Riders Department. The reasons behind this move... there was a plethora of things which needed to be taken care of. And these things were inseparable from him. Therefore, he had gone back to the Prime Ministerial Palace to preside over the overall situation as he prepared for the war.

The situation would've been entirely different if Chu Yang was dealing with it. Chu Yang would've chased down Diwu Qing Rou for five-thousand kilometers — if he had to — in order to kill him.

This was because Chu Yang knew that the entire world would someday fall into Diwu Qing Rou's hands if he didn't die. However, Diwu Qing Rou didn't have any such knowledge regarding Chu Yang.

Moreover, Diwu Qing Rou was confident that the situation was under his control and the entire world would soon be in his grip.

He would've desperately chased down Chu Yang if he were to find-out-in-advance that his lifetime-worth of painstaking efforts would eventually be destroyed by Chu Yang and lead to naught.

But, the problem was... he didn't know.

*** ***

Jing Meng Hun quickly got over his chaotic state of mind. Then, he began to issue orders one after another.

However, he still hadn't realized that he had made an enormous mistake. He had found out that someone had pretended to be him and had fled from the North Gate. But, he had gotten so angry that he had slapped the guard to death and chased-out after the imposter.

Therefore, he never got to know about the involvement of his personal jade token in this incident.

This matter had become impossible to unravel. In fact, Jing Meng Hun was confused as to whom he had given his jade token to.

Diwu Qing Rou suspected that it could be the Master of Nine Tribulations Sword. However, it was only a possibility; nothing more.

Therefore, it was obvious that he wouldn't connect King of Hell Chu to the jade token... He couldn't be judged harshly for overlooking this fact owing to his negligence.

A large network of Golden Horse Riders Department was emerging from the Continent Center Citadel and heading north. It was spreading everywhere along the way.

Jing Meng Hun had planned to cover the region within the radius of seven hundred kilometers north of the Continent Center; this region was covered with dense mountain-forests. Moreover, this was the only route that could be taken to reach Iron Cloud. This route couldn't be avoided; no matter where one came from. Therefore, 400,000 soldiers of Great Zhao Army were stationed here at all times.

King of Hell Chu would have nowhere to hide even though there

was a continuous stretch of mountain-forest across this territory. The invisible falcons had already been sent to pass on the message to the 400,000 soldiers to get into action. Therefore, these soldiers had blockaded the entire section of the mountain-forest.

In fact, this stretch of mountain-forest had become the most difficult moat for Chu Yang to pass. Chu Yang wasn't positive about this escape even though he had chosen this escape route himself. However, he was continued to advance towards this life-and-death situation.

It was a miserable situation since no one in Iron Cloud knew that King of Hell Chu was going through such a crisis. Therefore, Chu Yang was isolated and cut-off from any help. His only option was to struggle on his own and use his power to deal with a million enemies.

Moreover, he was fatally injured...

Chu Yang started to move towards the closest mountain pass; as fast as possible.

Less-than-an-hour remained of the time he could retain his disguise.

This was the first mountain pass in the northern region of the Continent Center. Chu Yang was required to cross this pass in order to rush into the continuous stretch of mountain-forest.

Moreover, Chu Yang needed to enter the mountain-forest since he was seriously injured and needed to supplement the medicinal ingredients. He couldn't continue for a long time by relying on the 'reserve' medicinal efficacies maintained by the Sword Spirit. He would need to consume the medicines sooner or later.

Chu Yang could collapse any time due to his severe injuries. But he didn't wish to wait and heal himself since the Golden Horse Riders Department would set-about in full force by then.

Therefore, he needed to cross the mountain pass in less than an

hour since he could assume Jing Meng Hun's identity over this time frame.

It was necessary to take this risk irrespective of whether Jing Meng Hun was aware of this or not.

Chu Yang's horse rushed-out of the mountain forest like an angry dragon. Chu Yang rode like a whirlwind of dust until he arrived at the mountain pass. His black robe fluttered in the wind. There was a strict and ruthless look on his face. He had arrived like a raging tide and carried the grandeur of the First King Level Expert of the Golden Horse Riders Department.

"Open the gate!" these words contained the supreme authority which couldn't be questioned by anyone.

A guarding officer stood atop the wall of the mountain pass. He was about to say something when someone next to him suddenly exclaimed, "King Level Expert Jing?"

"Humph!" Chu Yang snorted coldly. Then, he raised the horsewhip and lashed it. This action produced a sonic boom that sent shock waves for several miles. Chu Yang didn't say anything. However, he glared at the expert of the Golden Horse Riders Department with cold eyes.

"Hurry up and open the gate!" the Revered Martial Artist hastily ordered the guarding officer. The guarding officer was perplexed. But, he couldn't offend the person standing next to him. So, he quickly opened the gate; the suspension bridge was slowly lowered down.

Chu Yang coldly waved his hand; as if beckoning that expert to get down.

Then, he kicked his black horse and rushed into the mountain pass. His black robe fluttered in the wind. It seemed as if a mass of black cloud was floating towards the pass.

He dismounted from his horse after going-in. Then, he pulled out

the whip and angrily looked at the face of a young officer who stood at the gate, "What are you looking at? Hurry up! Lead this horse and feed it, got it?"

The young officer seemed to be in utter shock. There was a trace of fear, shock and anger in his eyes, [Isn't this person way too overbearing? Who do you think you are f**ker? You think you are the King Level Expert of the Golden Horse Riders Department or something, huh?]

Suddenly, a person landed in front of him like a meteor. He called out, "King Level Expert... King Level Expert Jing... what brings you here?"

[This person is the King Level Expert of the Golden Horse Riders Department?] The young officer was baffled. He then obediently led the horse to feed it. The young-male-horse looked aged since it had shed every strand of its power as it had galloped non-stop for five hundred kilometers.

"If I don't come... will you be able to block King of Hell Chu on your own?" Chu Yang snorted. He walked forward with huge strides as he said in a brief manner, "I want Golden Horse Riders Department experts assembled here within the time frame of ten breaths. Those who fail to arrive in-time shall be executed!"

"Yes!" The Revered Martial Artist's entire body was covered in cold sweat. The experts of Golden Horse Riders Department who had assembled behind him were scared out of their wits. They began to issue strange shouts as they scattered to notify their comrades.

Chu Yang continued to take large steps. He then coldly said, "You've received the news, right?"

"We have... but..."

"I don't want to hear your 'buts'!" Chu Yang shouted, "Catch King of Hell Chu at any cost. Those who fail to catch him won't be able

to escape from the punishment — including myself. Then your ‘but’ won’t save you! Understood?"

"Yes! I will pay heed to your instructions, King Level Expert." The Revered Martial Artist bowed his head respectfully as he tried his best to match his pace with King of Hell Chu’s big steps. Then, he said in stammering manner, "But… King Level Expert, you …"

‘Smack!’ Chu Yang turned sideways and mercilessly slapped on his face. He then grabbed the expert’s collar and coldly looked into his eyes as he asked in a callous tone, "But what? You will keep your mouth shut from now on. All you will do is listen to my commands!"

"Yes!" The Revered Sword Artist’s face was burning. But, he didn’t dare to touch it. He kept his stature upright. His cold sweat had seeped into his vest.

[The kind of temperament King Level Expert has today… is rarely seen.]

"You may blame me for being grumpy and short tempered… but this is a matter of great concern!" Chu Yang’s voice turned gentle as he continued to walk. He then said, "Prime Minister is furious about this matter. The entire Golden Horse Riders Department under my command is undergoing heavy punishment. You people aren’t involved in the implication since you’re stationed outside… You’re not aware of your good fortune. I won’t mind helping you out this time to save your skin!"

"Yes!" The Revered Martial Artist trembled with fear. [So, that’s the matter…]

They could see the senior guard of the gate as they talked. The chubby guard had just arrived to greet the visitor. He had almost pissed in his pants in terror. He was about to arrive in front of the gate when he heard an extremely loud and grim voice, "Stop right there! Get lost!"

The chubby guard looked-up to see the cold and callous expressions of the honorable black-robed man who was walking with huge strides. The black-robed man's sharp eyes were fixed on his body as a goshawk eyes a fat rabbit.

"I have no interest in exchanging formal greetings with you. Don't say a word and get lost!" Chu Yang's eyebrows were raised. He looked extremely impatient as he shouted in an irritated manner.

His confidence and domineering demeanor reeked of tyranny. Only a person who could control the fate of another could issue such a roar.

"Yes... Yes." The chubby senior guard almost pissed his pants. His entire body trembled with fear. He didn't stay there for a single second. He hurriedly turned around to run. However, the center of gravity of his fat body didn't allow him to turn around as he had intended. His body twisted and his posture became extremely weird. It was like the exquisite rotation of a dancer; but a failed one. He fell down as his two fat legs twisted together in the shape of a 'fried dough twist'. (1)

A slim person wouldn't have looked unusual if they had twisted their waist like this. However, this was a fat person whose weight was more than 125 kilograms... and was probably approaching 150 kilograms. So, when a fat man like him twisted his waist like that... it made him appear like a 'fried dough twist'...

It was really amazing.

Just wow.....

Fried Dough Twist: It's a type of doughnut which is also called Mahua. You can search it on the internet to see its shape.

Chapter 364: Disappearing into the Mountain-Forest to Search for Elixirs

"Useless man! The sight of you fills my eyes with filth," Chu Yang cursed-out in a disgusted manner as he kicked the fat guard in his buttocks. The pot-bellied guard was sent flying like a rubber ball with a loud ‘whooshing’ sound. He screamed in a horrified voice as his rotating body flew across the wall in a weird posture. He crashed down on the ground with a loud thunderous noise; he seemed to have broken several bones.

Meanwhile, numerous shadows of people rushed-over from every direction. The experts of Golden Horse Riders Department had arrived at the fastest possible speed; it seemed as if their buttocks had been set on fire. They looked at the Revered Martial Artist as he raised his hand and gestured. Then, he winked at them to relay a signal. They stood in attention as they understood it. They didn’t even dare to pant; they stood motionless... with confusion in their hearts.

‘Whoosh’ everyone was in attendance.

"Is everyone in attendance?" Chu Yang turned around abruptly. Then, he gazed at each of them one-by-one. He glanced past everyone in a quick manner. However, the ruthless intention to kill that brimmed in his eyes sent chills down everyone’s spines.

"King Level Expert, everyone has arrived," the Revered Martial Artist straightened his back and replied.

"Good!" Chu Yang took two steps forward. "Now, here’s your assignment."

Everyone assumed the ‘attention’ position. Then, they fixed their burning gazes at Chu Yang.

"Be ready to make any sacrifices this time. Don’t even hesitate to sacrifice your own lives. King of Hell Chu must be found and killed

at any cost," Chu Yang said as he slowly paced back and forth. His bright eyes looked like the eyes of a hawk as they swept over everyone's face, "Now, all of you move towards the center and come closer to me."

Everyone was perplexed. However, they moved forward a few steps and encircled him.

Chu Yang secretly incited his martial power. His blood began to boil which gave rise to the fragrance of orchid. Everyone's noses twitched as they smelled the simple yet exquisite fragrance.

Chu Yang swept his eyes over them and asked heavily, "Did you smell something?"

Everyone nodded in unison.

"King of Hell Chu has been struck by a palm attack called 'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart' Palm. Due to the impact of this unique palm attack... his body will continue to exude this peculiar orchid fragrance as long as he doesn't die. Understood?" Chu Yang said in a dignified manner.

"Understood," everyone stuck-out their chests.

"Very well!" A strange smile appeared on the face of 'Jing Meng Hun'. He continued in a dark tone, "Now, you people will accompany me to the Main North Gate to apprehend King of Hell Chu." He stopped for a second then continued in an eerie tone, "You people ought to understand the unprecedented significance of this mission. If there's even a small mistake on your part... humph... then there shall be no hope for mercy or forgiveness."

"Yes!" Dozens of experts replied as their faces brimmed with eagerness.

"Now, let's set off!" Chu Yang waved his hand and commanded, "Get your horses!"

'Shua' Everyone mounted their horses and prepared to leave. Suddenly, a faint sound of fluttering wings came from the sky. An

invisible falcon’s figure appeared in the sky and landed on the head of the Revered Martial Artist.

"What’s that? Bring it over here," Chu Yang’s sharp eyes swept over it as he shouted.

He knew that the letter contained latest information on him.

"Yes!" The Revered Martial Artist didn’t doubt him even a little. He held the invisible falcon and removed the letter. Then, he held it in his hands in a respectful manner and presented it to Chu Yang.

He would never have imagined, even in his wildest dreams, that this awe-inspiring ‘King level Expert Jing’ was in fact the primary target of Golden Horse Riders Department – King of Hell Chu!

Chu Yang rolled open the letter and took a look at it. Then, he said in an expressionless manner, "The latest news is that King of Hell Chu has entered the Qilang Mountain. We must leave for the place... as the first military action team. Understood?"

"Understood!" Everyone got excited.

[We’re being sent as the first military action team to arrest King of Hell Chu? The opportunity to perform such a great service has fallen onto our shoulders?]

"Good!" Chu Yang strode over and mounted his horse. Then, he whipped it and pointed his finger towards the mountainous landscape in the distance. It seemed as if the imaginary ‘King of Hell Chu’ was already there; waiting for them to catch him. He shouted in a confident manner, "Gentlemen! It’s time to perform our duty and accomplish our goal. Let’s go!"

He clamped his legs on either side of the horse as it dashed forward like an arrow.

"We shall accomplish our goal. Rush forward!" several dozen experts clamored in unison and spurred their horses to dash forward. They followed the ‘King Level Expert Jing’ in an excited

manner and rushed out.

Fifty or sixty horses formed a tyrannical whirlwind as they rushed-out of the mountain pass and towards the Main North Gate.

Chu Yang's horse leapt-out of the suspension bridge with a thunderous sound. He looked at the lush green mountain-forest in the distance. His eyes seemed eager as he waved his hand and said, "The one who comes last in the race shall be killed without pardon."

"Awooo..." everyone issued a loud cry and rushed forward to save their lives...

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Jing Meng Hun arrived like a whirlwind with a large brigade of people after an hour of Chu Yang's departure. He roared as he learnt about this incident and nearly knocked down a horse to death.

[The enemy is using the same strategy over-and-over again to make his escape. He is pretending to be me!] This thought drove Jing Meng Hun crazy...

He roared for a while. Then, he issued a series of orders. After that, he led his men to chase after the enemy. Several invisible falcons flew-out after their departure. The falcons flapped their wings to notify every the checkpoint ahead to join forces in order to surround and capture King of Hell Chu.

Jing Meng Hun gritted his teeth as he pledged in his heart, [Your tricks won't work again. King of Hell Chu... you've made a blunder by entering this mountain-forest. I take a vow that if I don't kill you this time... I shan't consider myself a man!]

... ...

Chu Yang was alone now. He walked in the forest with his entire body dyed green.

He had lost more than 20kgs of poisonous flood dragon meat a while ago. But in exchange, corpses of 56 experts of Golden Horse Riders Department lay quietly in the forest. It had been an effortless victory...

More than 160 experts of Golden Horse Riders Department had died at Chu Yang's hands from the time he had come out of the Continent Center Citadel. It would've been difficult from him to deal with even a dozen of them if he had confronted them head-on. However, he hadn't even need to move a finger in order to get rid of them. He had merely used the identity of Jing Meng Hun to trick them into consuming poison.

Chu Yang was very happy about this.

However, the getup provided by the Sword Spirit had reached its time-limit of three hours. Therefore, Chu Yang's facial features had been restored to their true appearance. He advanced through the dense green trees in a stealth manner; like a leopard.

The Sword Point of the Nine Tribulations Sword poked its tip out of his right hand's middle finger. Chu Yang was changing directions as per its instructions.

The Sword Point was helping him look for elixirs.

His discussion with Sword Spirit from a moment ago had been greatly motivating.

"There are a lot of spirit medicines of the heaven and earth in the mountain-forest.

"The mountain-forest is very dangerous... but there won't be any need to conceal your identity since you can easily hide there. These mountains, rivers, flowers, plants and trees will become your cover. It's said that one's eyes can be obscured by a single leaf. Yet, this is the great mountain forest. And you're just one person.

"There are a lot of elixirs of Heaven and Earth rank in this world. But, they usually grow in the most inaccessible places – majority of

them grow in mountain-forests and the remaining occupy the underwater regions. Most of them grow for thousands of years and then silently dissipate into the heaven and earth... Then, the dissipated spirit energy gathers together and takes rebirth in the form of another treasure of Heaven and Earth rank...

"Your wounds can't be cured by the medicinal efficacies of Nine Tribulations Sword. But, that doesn't mean that they can't be cured by the heaven and earth either. There is no wound or sickness that can't be cured by the heaven and earth... The heaven and earth are eternal.

"Everything depends upon your luck. Moreover... you shouldn't be lacking good-luck since you're the Master of Nine Tribulations Sword."

Chu Yang chuckled in his heart, [How would have I obtained Nine Tribulations Sword if I lacked good luck?]

Chu Yang's right hand's finger was placed on the ground as his side leant against a pine tree. The Nine Tribulations Sword's Sword point was in contact with an emerald-green plant-stem. This plant-stem was withering at a speed which was visible to the naked eye.

"This mountain-forest is filled with treasures." Chu Yang sighed and thought, [It hasn't even been a quarter-of-an-hour since I entered the forest... and I already have three 100-year-old weeds and a red spirit mushroom.]

The Sword Point didn't gobble any medicinal efficacy for itself. It transported them to the Nine Tribulations Space and handed it over to the Sword Spirit. Then, the Sword Spirit transformed the medicinal efficacies into pure energy and delivered them into Chu Yang's meridians...

The Sword Point flickered and pointed in the other direction. Chu Yang's heart was set in motion as his body floated in that direction. He was advancing at a flying speed...

He stopped after a long time to take a look around. He smiled joyfully as he saw a vast stretch of lush grass-thicket growing up to his waist. A palm-sized green grass plant was hidden in the grass thicket. Three small green fruits grew from the branches of the green grass plant.

[‘Grass Cushion Fruit’ is an extremely rare elixir. It’s extremely difficult to find even though it has three years of ripeness. Many prescriptions require this herb. However, its unavailability gets it replaced by other herbs with similar functions.]

[This grass cushion fruit is green in color. So, it’s camouflaged well-within this lush green thicket of grass spreading in an area of about thirty meters. It’s difficult to spot it even when it’s close at hand. Even I wouldn’t have been able to spot it if not for the Nine Tribulations Sword. I would be long gone from here without noticing it…]

[Who will be patient enough to search through a pile of weeds?]

The three fruits disappeared as the Sword Point snuggled close to them. The green grass plant also withered and disappeared without a trace…

Chu Yang rushed forward. He felt a vibrant power in his meridians. He felt full of vitality for the first time as his five internal organs – still wrapped in Sword Spirit’s power – began to heal.

Chu Yang couldn’t help but feel strange in his heart. [This grass cushion fruit is rare… but it’s not a ‘heaven and earth treasure’. So, how did it begin to heal my internal organs as soon as it entered them?]

"Healing injuries or treating illnesses are by no means the tasks of only the ‘heaven and earth treasures’ or precious elixirs. Even an ordinary herb can be used to treat an illness as long as its functions are symptomatic and suit the condition of the illness. In that case… an ordinary herb can be more useful than some ‘heaven and earth

treasures'." Sword Spirit voice's resounded, "You can't be unaware of this fact."

"So that's how it is." Chu Yang tried to fathom Sword Spirit's words. But he felt that the aftertaste of this fact was seemingly endless. He found this fact wonderful even when he was using his mind-frame of a martial artist.

Chapter 365: Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng!

[That's pretty good. Treating a condition or healing injuries doesn't always need 'heaven and earth treasures'. One can simply go for symptomatic solutions. The same logic can be used to deal with an enemy. One can find their flaws, and then target them instead of using super-powerful moves to beat them in one fell swoop. In this way... even an ordinary move can produce wonderful results.]

Chu Yang felt that his knowledge of martial arts had deepened to an extent. He kept jumping from tree-to-tree; like a whirlwind.

The Nine Tribulations Sword's Sword Point poked its head out of his index finger as it probed the surroundings.

Sword Point didn't dare to be negligent since it knew that its master was undergoing a life-and-death crisis. Therefore, it led Chu Yang towards any medicinal herb that it discovered. It's said that beggars can't be choosers. Therefore, Chu Yang absorbed every medicinal herb that he came across; without any exception.

The usefulness or futility of these herbs was decided on the basis of whether they were poisonous or not. Chu Yang even absorbed ordinary herbs like the Solomon's Seal plant, the Dahurian Angelica herb, the Female Ginseng herb and so on; he didn't even spare ginsengs, spirit mushrooms, fleece flower roots and others...

Chu Yang felt as if the Sword Point was grieving and harboring resentment every time it absorbed an ordinary medicinal herb.

[The Nine Tribulations Sword has never been forced into consuming 'just anything' in a thousand years because of the urgency of the situation. So it isn't interested in herbs which aren't precious... It's like a person who has the habit of eating exotic delicacies is being forced to eat vegetables and tofu everyday...]

[No wonder it feels cheated.]

A rustling sound came from far behind him. Then, some indistinct shouts and roars were heard. This indicated that the pursuers weren't far away.

Chu Yang frowned. He then grabbed and uprooted some green grass. The grass had been turned into a big green ball in Chu Yang's hands by the time he had stridden for a distance of 1.5 kilometers.

Chu Yang squeezed the round bundle of grass. Then, he started to knead it in order to crush it into a smaller ball. This caused the grass-juice to drip down drop-by-drop. Chu Yang collected the juice in his palms and applied it on his face and upper body...

He then proceeded to dye his clothes with it.

He repeated this action over-and-over. He would collect some grass and squeeze-out its juice to store it in the Nine Tribulations Sword. He continued to do that until he had collected a bucket of grass juice which was enough to be used a dozen times; if required.

This was rightly taken into account since Chu Yang was escaping through a forest. And it's a known fact that a human body's smell is very different from the fresh and clean smell of the mountain-forest. Moreover, Chu Yang was leaving behind his scent as he fiercely ran through the forest... In addition, his blood was exuding the deadly orchid fragrance...

The scent of green-grass is the most natural smell in the world; even the scent of the juice of trees or the herbal smell of the medicinal ingredients isn't as natural and strong. Moreover, the smell of green grass could camouflage every other scent.

Suddenly, the Sword Point burst with excitement. It began to shake violently, and nearly broke-out of his finger to point in a certain direction.

Chu Yang looked around and saw a canyon at a distance of about

hundred feet. He couldn’t help but smile. He then said, "Little guy, our pursers are right behind us. We won’t be able to escape even if there’s a good component down there since we’ll first have to go down and then come back up."

The Sword Point ignored him and kept pointing in that direction; it seemed impervious to excuses.

Chu Yang was confused, but had no other choice. He was forced to change his route. Therefore, he rushed towards that canyon. He was shocked when he finally arrived there. It turned out that it wasn’t a canyon. It was a steep cliff. It was filled with clouds and mist. Therefore, it was hard to tell how deep it was.

He heard the rustling sound coming from nearby. Suddenly, he heard a voice, "Who’s that? Stop right there!" Then, a number of human figures rushed over. Their silhouettes hadn’t yet approached, but a few cold lights had been swept-out towards Chu Yang.

[It’s evident from their strength that they are the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department.]

Chu Yang snorted and bounced back. Two ‘pop’ sounds were heard as two short knives came flying-in and dug into the spot where Chu Yang stood a moment ago. Chu Yang jumped-up as a cold light flashed in his eyes. Suddenly, the sword light burst into thousands of rays of cold light with a ‘whooshing’ sound.

Nine Tribulations Sword... Nine Heavens Sword Play... the first move – one ray of cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms!

The three approaching experts issued pitiful screams as they were chopped into six parts; their blood spattered in all directions.

These three experts were quite unlucky. The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department had scattered throughout the Qilang Mountain. But, these three experts had rushed to the forefront as they were eager to render meritorious services.

Therefore, they had ended-up becoming the first ones to discover Chu Yang's traces. But, they also became the first ones to lose their lives...

However, their screams alerted the nearby experts.

Someone shouted from a distance, "Over there!" Then, people came rushing from every direction with a 'whooshing' sound.

Chu Yang rushed to the edge of the cliff and jumped down without any hesitation. He had heard a whistling sound coming from the top. The Sword Point trembled on his finger as he struggled to stabilize his falling body. He had dropped for 200-300 feet when he inserted his right hand into the cliff's face. He slid for 10 feet before he came to a halt mid-air.

He hadn't yet gone down to the level of the clouds and mist. However, he had a damp feeling in his entire body. He looked down, but couldn't see anything. [The Sword Point is still pointing downwards. It seems that the component is somewhere down below...]

Then, he loosened his grip and started to fall again.

He looked down to determine his position. But, the clouds and mist blocked his vision.

He descended another 100 feet in a flash. The Sword Point had calmed down. Chu Yang gathered some courage and began to fall down again. He felt that he was falling faster-and-faster.

Suddenly, the Sword Point trembled; as if to remind him of something.

Chu Yang stretched-out his right hand and inserted the Nine Tribulations Sword into the cliff's wall.

Nine Tribulations Sword's edge cut through the rock wall with a 'chi-chi' sound; as if it was butter. He slid down for several hundred feet before coming to a halt mid-air.

Chu Yang looked down. There were no more clouds and mist in the air. So, he could clearly see a vast meadow below. He was just 50 feet above the ground...

Chu Yang broke out into a cold sweat.

[I would've plunged to my death if there had been any delay in stopping my fall.]

He scolded the Sword Point in his heart, "Are you trying to kill me? Why didn't you warn me earlier?"

The Sword Point trembled with excitement as it pointed towards a spot on the ground.

Chu Yang knew that the Sword Point was so excited about the elixir that it didn't even hear the scolding. So, he swallowed his anger and slid all the way down.

He was greeted by a strong fragrance even before he touched the ground. Chu Yang's spirit shook as his feet landed on the ground.

The Sword Point quivered with excitement, and nearly pulled Chu Yang to the side of a small pool. Chu Yang saw a big and withered pine tree; it stood in the middle of an open area. Three snow-white plants stood in its vicinity.

"Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng?" Chu Yang exclaimed in a surprised tone.

[Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng isn't one of the Nine Great Herbal Medicines... but it's a top-tier 'heaven and earth treasure'. Moreover, three of these have appeared together. It's hard to guess the number of years these must've been growing under this cliff...]

Chu Yang sighed as he looked at the surroundings, [This land is barren. Not a single blade of grass can be seen in the surrounding area of a few thousand feet. The grass growing outside this range seems to have lost its vitality; it looks weak and pathetic. In fact, the trees under this cliff look devoid of life-force as well. They seem thin and frail despite years of growth.]

[These Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs are the only plants in this area which seem full of vitality; their trunks are thick enough to wrap one's arms around them. But, the pine tree has withered and its trunk seems as if it's about to collapse...]

[The 'heaven and earth tier' elixirs plunder the vitality of every other living thing in order to boost their own growth – this saying is indeed true.]

The Sword Point was bursting with excitement at his fingertip. It expanded and contracted in a constant manner since it couldn't control its impatience.

Chu Yang snorted as he narrowed his eyes and looked at the Sword Point. He was about to extent his hand to grab the herbs when he heard the Sword Spirit's voice in his mind, "Don't absorb them!"

"Why?" Chu Yang retracted his hand. Sword Point began to expand and contract in his hand to show its dissatisfaction. Its condition was similar to a child who had seen something delicious but was barred from eating it. It had assumed an unruly appearance. It was trying to make a ruckus to get what it wanted.

"These three Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs haven't yet reached the required age-limit. They aren't fully ripe yet." Sword Spirit said, "Put them in the Nine Tribulations Space and let me accelerate their ripening."

"Eh?" Chu Yang was stunned. [Not yet matured? How many years have they been growing for?]

"Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng can be divided into different age-limits on the basis of their appearance. The ones that have surpassed 500 years of age attain milky-white appearance. The ones between 1000 years and 3000 years of age are considered mature. They have a silvery-white appearance. Their appearance becomes pure-white when they reach their maximum age-limit of 9000 years. If they aren't used once they attain maturity... then

they scatter away into fine twinkling stars and their ‘heaven and earth’ spirit energy fades away..."

Sword Spirit further said, "As you can see... these three Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs have already attained a pure-white appearance. They’re about a decade away from arriving at their maximum age-limit. A fully matured Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng can compete with the Nine Great Herbal Medicines. It can also be used as an ingredient in the preparation of Nine Tribulations Pill. Only a single Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng is needed to prepare a pill. You would’ve wasted a valuable product of nature if you had absorbed it carelessly."

"So, that’s how it is. In that case... how long will it take for them to fully mature if you accelerate their ripening?"

"It should take about ten days," Sword Spirit pondered and then said. It seemed that it had detected what Chu Yang was thinking. So, it added, "But, don’t get the idea that I can accelerate the ripening of any herbal medicine. And don’t even think that I’ll work on useless stuff. The medicine should be as relevant as the Nine Great Herbal Medicines... and should be close to reaching its maturity. Otherwise, it’s out of the question. If it’s one of the Nine Great Herbal Medicines... then you’ll need to find the fifth fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword so that I can use my ability of ‘accelerated ripening’ in a continued manner."

"Eh... I knew it would be something like this." Chu Yang had intended to collect some elixirs and use ‘accelerated ripening’ on them. However, he dispelled this idea after hearing Sword Spirit’s words. "Will this medicine assist my recovery when it’s fully matured?"

"Your recovery will be difficult since you need to be nursed back to health. It will take a long time. But, more than half of your injuries can be cured by a single Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng. It will be useless to consume more than one since it won’t have much extra effect. Your injuries merely need to be healed-enough to free

your life from danger. After that, we can take our time to find a way to help you make a full recovery," the Sword Spirit said. It was clear that it was relieved. The three Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs seemed to have given it great confidence.

[There shall be a way for the Master of Nine Tribulations Sword to recover as long as he isn't dead and his soul isn't annihilated. Recovery of more than half of the injuries is as good as a complete recovery.]

"These Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs can be used to synthesize a Nine Tribulations Pill?" Chu Yang was anxious. [Qing Wu awaits a Nine Tribulations Pill. So, how can I not exploit this opportunity to collect its ingredients?]

Chapter 366: The only way out!

"We cannot... but the quality of the Nine Tribulations Pill concocted will be much better if we use the Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs. The Nine Great Herbal Medicines are considered the most precious medicines because they independently hold the rank of best ‘heaven and earth treasures’, and they have the properties which can rival any other herb... this Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng belongs to the rank of ‘heaven and earth treasure’. However, its medicinal property is lacking. Therefore, its intrinsic functions are lacking and cannot rival those of the Nine Great Herbal Medicines even though it is a wonderful herbal medicine!"

"So that’s how it is," Chu Yang thoughtfully commented. His left hand shrouded the three Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs. And then, he said silently in his heart, “received,” the next moment. The three Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs had entered the Nine Tribulations Space.

The Nine Tribulations Sword’s Sword Point was suddenly unwilling to do anything.

It rushed-out from Chu Yang’s finger and madly displayed grievance. Apparently, it felt terribly wronged. It was basically trying to say that since it discovered the item and guided him here... then why didn’t it get its share...?

Chu Yang had no other choice but to try and comfort it. He telepathically tried to show it the analysis and poured bucketloads of explanations regarding the pros and cons of his decision. But, he eventually had to promise to give it one ginseng once the process of accelerated ripening was over. This dispelled the Sword Point’s grievance and it became exhilarated in anticipation.

Chu Yang chucked in his heart, [this little guy wants to enjoy the Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng? To think that he’s being so unwilling to let go... doesn’t he wish for me to form a Nine Tribulations Pill?]

Jing Meng Hun was standing at the cliff. He was looking at the tragic plight of the three miserable-looking corpses that lay before him. There was a dark look on his face.

Over a hundred people were gathered around him, while more and more were rushing-over in succession. They would look at those three corpses, and would feel their blood run cold from terror.

Jing Meng Hun had informed them that the target had sustained serious injuries. These three were Revered Martial Artists. They had called-out to alert everyone. However, they had died a violent death within the short timeframe everyone had arrived on the scene.

[A severely injured person has such an attack power? He single-handedly killed three Revered Martial Artists at once? Isn't this... too outrageous?]

"The enemy seems to have a divine weapon that can cut-through iron as if it were mud! Everyone needs to be on their guard while they confront him," Jing Meng Hun stood up and spoke in an indifferent tone.

"Yes."

"Judging from the trail — there should no more than two paths which he could've taken. We came from the right... so he couldn't have gone that way. Therefore, the first path that he could've taken would've been to jump-off this cliff. The second path would've been to go left. He couldn't have gone back because our great army forces are stationed there." Jing Meng Hun spoke as he calmly analyzed, "Taking the left path would come with a big risk since it goes straight north. But jumping down from the cliff is the safest path since it's the easiest way to break away from our line of sight..."

He said this and then tried to look for the trail on the cliff. Then, he said, "You people must be aware that one can use their martial

power to survive a fall from a cliff... irrespective of its height as long as one has the cultivation level of Revered Martial Artist. They wouldn't fall to their death... but you'd need to draw leverage from the cliff's face from time to time in order to get down safely."

He pondered for a while. Then he added, "If my guess isn't wrong... King of Hell Chu has jumped down from the cliff! What do you people think?"

Everyone looked at each other in dismay but didn't speak a word. This was the so-called 'decision-making time'. They must choose which direction to chase in. If any of them gave a suggestion and chose the wrong direction... bad luck would befall everyone since King Level Expert Jing wouldn't take that mistake lightly and may explode with anger.

"One squad of men and horses shall go left. I'll lead the other team down the cliff!" Jing Meng Hun's eyes revealed an angry look as he commanded, "Inform General Wang and General Lee to bring their hunting dogs as soon as possible!"

"Yes."

"Everyone, begin!" Jing Meng Hun issued the command and then led the people to rush to the edge of the cliff. Everyone peered down and couldn't help but suck in a mouthful of cold air.

Clouds and mist were present everywhere in the air; it seemed as if they were locking the cliff's mouth. They couldn't see anything even when they peered down to have a look.

Everyone was experienced and knowledgeable. They knew that such a phenomenon near the cliff's mouth could only mean one thing — the cliff was so high... that it was unobservable. They had initially thought that it wasn't that tall a cliff, and that they wouldn't plunge to their deaths if they jumped down.

However, they wouldn't dare to boast that anymore.

The clouds and mist had blocked their vision entirely. They could see nothing from above. This gave rise to a fear since they didn't know what was down there. Even a Ninth Grade Revered Martial Artist might fall to their death if they were to bump into a protruding branch and lose their balance.

In fact, it wouldn't be strange if a Ninth Grade Revered Martial Artist were to lose their life in the process of getting down this cliff since they didn't have the probing abilities that were granted by the Divine Senses of a King Level Expert.

They had been feeling strange ever since they had started the mission of encircling and killing King of Hell Chu. In fact, they had been feeling as if they were in a dream or something. King Level Expert Jing had said that the target was seriously wounded, and was on the verge of dying. But the target obvious seemed vigorous and lively.

King Level Expert Jing had said that the target would be emanating the fragrance of orchid. However, they hadn't smelled the orchid fragrance anywhere.

The strangest was the fact that every place which King of Hell Chu had passed-through on his journey was completely clean. Everyone had even begun to suspect, [is it possible that this guy doesn't need to eat food? Is it possible that he doesn't need to urinate and defecate?]

They hadn't found any traces of food that King of Hell Chu might've eaten on the way… nor did they find the slightest trace of his excreted faeces.

[Has he been… restraining himself and holding in his urine and sh*t this entire time?]

King Level Expert Jing had just said that King of Hell Chu must've jumped down the cliff… yet everyone was speculating in their hearts, [how big was the credibility of this sentence? Only a little perhaps…?]

[We might as well just get down without worrying much if the cliff's height was nsormal. However, this cliff is so terrifying... f*k, what if I fell to my death?] Some thought... [My parents, wife and children are waiting in the Continent Center Citadel. I cannot afford to go for a suicide jump.] While there were others... [I've recently married a concubine and I haven't even gotten a chance to enter the bridal chamber... how can I jump-off this cliff like a madman?]

"Everyone follow me; pay attention to your footing," Jing Meng Hun had seen everyone's faces. How could he not know what these guys were thinking? His complexion sank as he acted decisively. He took out the Meng Hun sword and jumped down. He inserted the Meng Hun sword into the rocky cliff after he had descended 70-80 feet and simultaneously pounded his left hand into the wall. The stone fragments fluttered about as a hole was opened in the cliff wall. This hole was big enough to accommodate the foot of a falling person.

Then, he continued to make similar footing-spaces as he descended the cliff. It was as if he was creating a ladder in the cliff.

The others followed after him one by one. Everyone was overjoyed. There wouldn't be any issue as long as they observed the footholds carefully. This descent had become safe under the guidance of the King Level Expert. Hence, everyone carefully and cautiously trailed downward.

Chu Yang had found and received a spirit mushroom by now. That was when he suddenly heard a 'bang'. He didn't hear it clearly because this sound had come from far.

However, Chu Yang was vigilant in his heart. [I've come down here... so who else can make this sound if not the enemy pursuers...?]

That was followed by another 'bang'... and soon another...

Chu Yang quickly figured it out. [It seems that someone is

punching the wall to create a ladder! They wish to come down!]

Chu Yang didn't bother to think any further. He turned around and fled at the fastest possible speed. It seemed as if he was flying-away. As for ambushing the enemy... he thought of no such plans. [I can display only half of my strength, while the enemy has someone who can use punches to create a ladder down the cliff. It is definitely a King Level Expert! Perhaps Jing Meng Hun is personally leading a team of soldiers to catch me. Preparing an ambush for them will be equivalent to courting death...]

Chu Yang dashed without even turning his head back to look.

Jing Meng Hun and his squad carefully traced their way down the cliff, and began to search. But Chu Yang had already fled. In fact, he was more 5km ahead of them in the north direction.

This cliff-descent had created a buffer, and had given Chu Yang the valuable time for a head-start. The time Chu Yang had wasted in search of elixirs while dashing towards the mountain pass had been made-up by the slow cliff-descent of Jing Meng Hun and his squad.

However, Chu Yang's good fortunes soon came to an end. The fragrance of orchid that had stayed suppressed had begun to exude from his blood and had started to drift around...

This orchid fragrance was like a maggot crawling inside Chu Yang's tarsal bone; it was his biggest crisis.

And... then appeared a canyon up-ahead. There were towering mountain peaks on both sides of the canyon. These peaks reached into the clouds. The canyon was about 100 feet wide and a large squad of the Great Zhao's soldiers was slowly advancing from the opposite side in a circular formation.

The entire canyon was filled with troops, and there was no gap in their defense.

Chu Yang hid on top of a big tree and frowned. [I must kill my

way through this army if I wish to pass. There are towering mountain peaks on both sides, and half of them are hidden in the clouds. I can't even see the summit. I'm afraid it will take at least two days to cross if I were to take a detour by climbing them...]

[Moreover, I can't even tell how many traps the enemy might prepare during these two days.]

[Even if it were to require only half a day's effort... I cannot afford that much delay. I might never be able to return to Iron Cloud in this lifetime if I were to slow down for even an hour!]

Chu Yang understood this point well.

[The Golden Horse Riders Department has been leading me by my nose. They've stuck to pursue me from behind. They could've rushed to the front to intercept me, but it would've been 100 times more dangerous than pursuing from behind! But it is evident that this army of 10,000 soldiers has been stationed here to block my path.]

[Jing Meng Hun is a fool... but not foolish-enough to send ordinary soldiers to capture me! I see... so that's why I didn't find any soldiers while making my way through the mountain-forest.]

[The main reason why this army has arrived is to trap me here!]

Chu Yang had understood the enemy's strategy.

A bugle horn sounded and enemy soldiers stopped in their footstep, and began to pitch the camps. It was evident that they were going to set-up their barracks in this canyon.

Chu Yang watched attentively, and couldn't help but have a cold feeling in his heart. [This is an army unit of well-trained elite soldiers. They seem to have expertise in war tactics! Their commander has to be a famous general!]

[This is the only way of return and an elite army blocks my path. I'm afraid the final outcome will always be... me falling into the hands of the Golden Horse Riders Department — no matter what I

do!]

[Even if I charge forward... how could I deal with 10,000 elite soldiers alone? Should I take the roundabout route...?] Chu Yang could guarantee that he'd end-up bumping into the main force of the Golden Horse Riders Department even if he were to take a roundabout route.

He was completely surrounded, and the enemy wasn't far away. Jing Meng Hun would catch-up with him from behind if he continued to stay motionless and didn't act. He wouldn't have a way out in that were to happen.

His only way out of this predicament was to take advantage of the enemy who were busy setting-up their barracks, and crash his way through their ranks.

Suddenly, a sharp look appeared in Chu Yang's eyes.

[Since I've made up my mind — I will not change it! I just need to be prepared for the task ahead!]

"Sword Spirit!" Chu Yang called-out in his mind.

"What happened?" The Sword Spirit appeared.

"Will you be able to support me if I were to crash my way through the enemy forces... at the cost of several times the consumption on your part," Chu Yang's eyes dodged to the other side as he asked in a heavy tone.

Chapter 367: What Harm is there in Slaughtering the Entire World?

The Sword Spirit didn’t say anything and seemed to be lost in observation for a long time. It then said, "It’s too risky!"

"Risky? That’s fine!" Chu Yang thought in his heart. [The Sword Spirit didn’t say that it cannot support me. He just said that it’s too risky. This means that there’s a hope of success in taking this risk!]

Chu Yang was willing to press his luck at this juncture. He was prepared to take any kind of a risk as long as there was even 1% hope of success. Not to mention that the Sword Spirit had personally said that it was too risky but possible; [then why not give it a try?]

Chu Yang took a deep breath and slowly stretched-out his right hand. A sword appeared in his hand with a ‘clanging’ sound.

He’d be able to escape from his current predicament if he managed to make a getaway from here. If he failed... then this would be his last fight in this life.

It was a fight to win or die, and he had no choice but to fight. So, he might as well go all-out and fight whole-heartedly without caring about life and death.

Chu Yang’s wasn’t thinking about Mo Qing Wu in his heart. He wasn’t thinking about Meng Chao Ran, Tan Tan or his sword brothers. Even more so... he wasn’t thinking about his own fuzzy life-experiences...

There was only one thought in his mind — kill and escape!

Kill and escape!

Kill! Escape!

"One ray of cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms... What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world?" Chu Yang slowly recited

in a low voice. His eyes gazed at the shining sword as he continued to mutter and repeat the same chant over and over, "What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world?"

Chanting the names of the Nine Tribulations Sword's techniques aloud had suddenly boosted the heroic spirit in his heart.

The most crucial part in this mnemonic chant of the Nine Tribulations Sword was that 'question mark' at the end of the sentence. This question mark gave a choice. This choice is for the person who practices the Nine Heavens Sword Play; it lets him choose between two different paths.

One is for hesitance; the other is for decisiveness.

[Why not?]

[What harm is there?]

[What's wrong in doing this?]

"Let me slaughter everyone today..." Chu Yang felt a burst of energy stirring up his chest. A raging energy violently rushed forth from the bottom of his heart and went to the tip of his raised eyebrows. His cold vision swept across the trees and landed on the soldiers who were pitching the camps. Then, he said in a cold and callous tone: "...well what harm is there? What's wrong in doing this?"

The sword blade began to shine. It seemed to be responding to the murderous aura of its master. The cold and chilling sword-light sprang-up with a 'clanging' sound, and began to dance on the sword's body. The Sword Point's extremely sharp tip climbed-up the sword blade and attached itself at the top.

The tip of the sword suddenly issued a harsh flash of dazzling light. This light was even brighter than the sunlight.

Clang!

Sword Edge silently rushed-out of the Dantian, and moved

upstream along the meridians to arrive into his arm. It then rushed-up his palm and entered the long sword. Chu Yang felt a burst of heat flowing and surging within his body. The long sword in his hand issued bursts of bright white light along with abrupt scarlet flashes.

Then, the Sword Spine suddenly rushed-up with a loud explosion.

Boom!

Suddenly, the murderous aura filled the entire sky and the steam disseminated everywhere. Chu Yang's background had transformed into hell in a split second; it was brimming of a cold and gloomy aura — just like the hellish underworld. The birds on the trees and the insects underground sensed this terrifying murderous intention. They panicked upon sensing the danger, and began to flee in disarray.

The Nine Tribulations Sword's three fragments charged forward to break-through the enemy lines. The ominous spine was crazily aching to massacre the enemy. This was the first time it was cooperating with the other fragments after a separation of 10,000 years. Therefore, its murderous spirit was the largest among the three fragments that had joined together to form this sword.

The Nine Tribulations Sword had appeared eight times in this world over the past 80,000 years. The order of appearance of the fragments was different each time. However, the Sword Point, the Sword Edge and the Sword Spine had never been the first three fragments to appear in a sequence.

However, these three killer fragments had taken birth in the beginning this time. And this had only happened during Chu Yang's turn. Considering their appearance in such desperate times... when the entire world was in chaos... seemed to foretell something...

Was this was the Will of Heaven?

Chu Yang suddenly felt a storm of murderous aura raging within his heart as he held the long sword in his hand. It was a very hostile aura; the only one of its kind that existed between heaven and earth.

It was hard to tell how many souls had been released from their suffering by the Sword Point, the Sword Edge and the Sword Spine in the last 80,000 years. The Nine Tribulations Sword had always been the 'divine purging artifact' of Nine Heavens. It was capable of wreaking havoc in the Upper Three Heavens. Therefore, it could be imagined that those who had been killed by it weren't ordinary people.

To put it bluntly... a King Level Expert was a high level expert in Chu Yang's eyes at the moment. However, a King Level Expert... perhaps wouldn't make it to the bottommost level of 'experts' in comparison to the souls of the people that had been slayed by the Nine Tribulation Sword in the past.

It was needless to say that countless experts of the Emperor Level, the Monarch Level and even the Saint Level had been slaughtered by the Nine Tribulations Sword.

As for the Supreme Level Experts... no one would dare to say that there was none in that list.

Chu Yang had come in contact with these three killer artifacts, and had gathered them at one place. The outbreak of such a hostile aura had nearly destroyed Chu Yang's mind.

Luckily there were two things which saved his life. One was his own incredible mental strength which had resulted from his two lifetimes of experiences; and the other was the suppression force of Sword Spirit. That's how the hostile aura of the Nine Tribulations Sword was successfully brought under control.

However, Chu Yang's present appearance was no different than that of the fiendish-devils mentioned in the legends. Anyone who'd see him in this avatar wouldn't pay attention to his face;

they'd look at the solidified hostile aura that had taken shape on his body.

Chu Yang had leaked it out; though, only a little. He had gained a new power now that he had obtained the third fragment of Nine Tribulations Sword — the power to assimilate people's lives.

Chu Yang closed his eyes. Then, he took two deep breaths. He then opened his eyes; as if with a flash of understanding. His body silently floated-out. He went along the hidden corners as he took cover behind the big trees. He sometimes stuck close to the ground and moved through the bushes.

He left ripples in the green grass as he brushed forward; just like a boat that leaves-behind ripples on the water-surface as it passes-by. These ripples were divided on his either sides, and gave rise to a chain reaction of more ripples in the grass...

The commanding officer of this army unit was a famous general of the Great Zhao — Wang Teng Long. He had received an order from Diwu Qing Rou to assemble an army of 200,000 soldiers in the shortest possible time and head north to the Iron Cloud battlefield. He had hence led his own private army and had left the Continent Center. However, he had never anticipated that he'd be intercepted by an invisible falcon after covering only halfway of the journey. He had received the command to turn around and assist in capturing and killing King of Hell Chu.

Wang Teng Long had no time to summon troops from elsewhere under the sudden pressure of such an exceptionally urgent matter. Hence, he had only brought his private army due to lack of a better option; it only consisted of 10,000 elite soldiers.

However, he had full confidence in his men. [My 10,000 soldiers are elites. They can be called veterans in the arts of war. This elite army unit of 10,000 can confront 100,000 soldiers. They can push 100,000 soldiers to a disadvantageous situation without the slightest effort! In fact, they might even win the battle and

annihilate the enemy!]

[They should be enough to surround and capture King of Hell Chu!]

Wang Teng Long wasn't contemptuous about the legends of King of Hell Chu. He merely thought that 10,000 soldiers and horses 'should be enough' to surround and capture King of Hell Chu. In fact, it would be like 'killing the chicken with an ox-axe'; a total overkill.

Wang Teng Long was a famous general of the Great Zhao. He was always accompanied by more than 10,000 soldiers and horses. He was ranked 13th in the ranking list of top generals in the continent. He was valiant, had a tough character and a raging inferno-like disposition. He wasn't a general one would like a deal with.

A deputy general was allowed to have a few hundred soldiers. A low-ranking general's private army couldn't have more than 1000 soldiers. The intermediate and senior ranking generals couldn't have more than 3000 soldiers. Only the so-called 'famous generals' were qualified to have 10,000 soldiers.

This showed how dreadful a persona Wang Teng Long really was.

Moreover, these 10,000 soldiers were part of Wang Teng Long's private army, and each of them was elite among elites.

Wang Teng Long had seen the topography of this canyon, and had issued the command: [make the fan-shaped formation and march forward. Reach the narrowest region of the canyon and pitch the camps there! This place looks like a giant throat!]

[Even a fly won't be able to pass by as long as we can strangle the throat!]

Wang Teng Long was 100% sure — [as long as my soldiers can set up the barracks in the narrowest part of this canyon... we should be able to persist for an entire month and hold our own even if the enemy had a million soldiers; so long as we have sufficient military

provisions!]

They had arrived at the narrowest place. His vice general was overseeing the pitching of barracks, while Wang Teng Long rode his horse to the top of a small soil-slope and gazed into the distance. It seemed as if he was trying to track the activity in the mountain-forest.

[This boundless mountain-forest is like one giant bottle gourd, and this canyon is like its neck. If someone is to come out of this mountain-forest... they cannot escape our surveillance!]

Wang Teng Long had taken a roundabout route to arrive here to outflank the enemy. He had was very confident; [even a mouse can't get past me!]

[King of Hell Chu can't take this route to return to the Iron Cloud. The other two options for him are to remain hidden in Great Zhao... or go to Limitless Nation. However, it's highly unlikely that he has opted for those options. He wouldn't have entered this mountain-forest otherwise!]

[As long as he is still here... as long as he dares to come out... He will surely and certainly fall into my lap!]

"Reporting to Great General; your military order has been completed," The deputy general turned around and came running to his side. He stood at attention with his back perfectly straight like a rod and reported to him.

Wang Teng Long's had an established rule; a rule even his own deputy general wasn't allowed to violate despite the fact that he was very close to his immediate-subordinate. Anyone who'd disregard it would be punished according to the military law.

He believed that an army must uphold its code of conduct. Even if there were fathers, brothers and sons in the army... they must uphold the appearance of army officers. You are my father, but I hold a higher rank than yours in the army. Hence, you stand at

attention and salute whenever you see me. Moreover, you can only call me by my designation. You're not allowed to call me by any other name. I'll hit you right there-and-then if you call me son in front of the others.

If Wang Teng Long's own son were the Commanding General and he himself were the deputy general — he'd bow down and kowtow when greeting his son.

This was the military law.

Once upon a time... his own younger brother had come to see him in his tent, and had involuntarily called him 'Big Brother'. Wang Teng Long had ordered his subordinates to punish his young brother by severely hitting him forty times with an army stick.

He would stand next to the bed of his unconscious young brother at night and shed tears of pain and regret... but when he was a commander-in-chief on duty... he was strictly impartial towards the army's code of conduct. Even Diwu Qing Rou addressed him by his military designation while he was on duty.

This was Wang Teng Long.

Wang Teng Long put on a serious face, and replied as he looked indifferently at his troops busy at work, "Ok! Got it!" He paused for a second, then said, "Fuhu, what do you think about this?"

Deputy Sun Fuhu had been his partner for more than ten years. There was a tacit understanding between these two, and that too to such an extent that they didn't need to speak in detail to get their point across. He knew what Wang Teng Long was talking about after just a mouthful of words...

Sun Fuhu carefully looked at the mountain-forest and then at the army. He then solemnly said, "Great General, this subordinate thinks that King of Hell Chu won't be able to escape as long as you are stationed here!"

"Not necessarily!" Wang Teng Long smiled and slowly shook his

head. He insipidly said while he gazed at the mountain-forest: "You don’t understand King of Hell Chu, do you? He won’t be that infamous King of Hell Chu if he got caught so easily."

"En? Can it be that Great General is worried?" Sun Fuhu was somewhat surprised to see Wang Teng Long acting in this manner. An army of 10,000 soldiers lying in wait at the throat of this canyon was enough to capture King of Hell Chu in his opinion. In fact, it was a bit too excessive to gather such a large force to apprehend just one guy. However, he had never imagined that his Great General would turn-out to have this kind of attitude in this regard.

Chapter 368: A Sword Charges at Ten Thousand Soldiers!

"Ah?" Sun Fuhu was stunned.

"King of Hell Chu is seriously wounded; his five internal organs have been ruptured... But, have you seen this with your own eyes?" Wang Teng Long asked as the coldness in his eyes became intense.

"The subordinate... the subordinate hasn't seen..." Sun Fuhu stuck out his chest as he replied loudly.

"You haven't seen it yourself... then how can you say that he's seriously injured?" Wang Teng Long looked at him seriously.

"This..." Sun Fuhu was speechless. [This information has come straight from the sources of the Golden Horse Riders Department; it has even undergone the approval of Prime Minister Diwu. Can't it be considered as authentic?]

"Don't believe such news until you've seen it for yourself." Wang Teng Long said in a strict manner, "We are soldiers and generals. So, we must pay great attention to evidence. If we haven't seen something with our own eyes... then we must confirm it even if the entire world believes it to be the truth. Otherwise... our gullible nature will bring-about our doom.

"The people of Jianghu can escape if they get defeated. They can come back ten years later to take revenge; it still won't be too late. The politicians can forebear if they're defeated. They can wait, keep a low profile and conceal their strengths to make a comeback later on. But, military soldiers turn into a mountain of bones or a sea of blood when they are defeated. For us... a crushing defeat is beyond redemption."

Wang Teng Long said fiercely, "Several of our brothers will get buried in the battlefield if we get defeated. Our dead brothers will never come back even if we get an opportunity to turn that defeat

into victory later.

"We can’t let our brothers die in vain. Understood?" Wang Teng Long shouted coldly.

"Yes." Sun Fuhu stood straight. He felt that his back had been covered in cold sweat.

"If you still think the same as before... then I will never leave the reins of the army in your hands," Wang Teng Long said insipidly.

"Yes... your humble subordinate will never dare to think like that," Sun Fuhu sweated profusely as he said.

"Relay this order to everyone – pitch the camps quicker. Then, bury the pots in the ground to cook rice. This must be done at the fastest possible speed. The camps must be pitched and the iron cooking pots must be set-up to cook food within a quarter of an hour. The soldiers must be done with eating food within half an hour." Wang Teng Long tilted his head to one side as he looked at the chaotic troops. He frowned as he said, "I’m giving them only half-an-hour. They must eat within the allocated time... even if they have to eat uncooked rice."

Wang Teng Long was slightly worried as he looked at the mountain-forest on the opposite side. He muttered, "If we are to meet with a mishap and King of Hell Chu is to escape from here... then his only chance to do that is... now. The consequences would be disastrous if he were to escape getting captured here."

"Yes!" Sun Fuhu didn’t agree with this decision. However, he didn’t dare to say anything and went down to relay the order.

[Everyone must finish eating within half-an-hour... the allocated time is not that short. But, the army has been marching at a fast pace, and has arrived here moments ago. The soldiers and horses are worn-out. They haven’t had enough time to rest. It will take time to set up the barracks... even if everyone works together. Afterwards, a pot must be buried in the ground in accordance with

the location of each camp.]

[Light a fire... add water... cook rice... and then eat one's fill within the given timeframe...]

[Half-an-hour isn't enough. One can only eat half of one's fill even if everyone works in the fastest possible manner. It seems that the army will have to eat half-cooked food this time.]

Sun Fuhu sighed. He then marched down at double his speed to relay the order to the troops. He didn't understand why the army had to go through so much torment for this King of Hell Chu... Going so far for just one guy...?

Sun Fuhu was discontented, while Wang Teng Long was anxious and impatient.

He tried his best not to blink as he looked at the mountain-forest on the opposite side. The sense of crisis in his heart was getting heavier. [This is the only opportunity for King of Hell Chu to break through my defense since everyone is busy for the time being.]

Wang Teng Long was sure that King of Hell Chu wouldn't be able to pass this check-point if he missed this opportunity; he wouldn't be able to pass even if he were a God.

He was getting impatient. He was worried about whether or not King of Hell Chu would seize this opportunity.

The best scenario for Wang Teng Long would be, [... when everyone's done with setting up the camps... and the entire army has eaten their fill to preserve and nurture their strength for the big push.]

He was impatiently waiting for the time to fly by.

He had never been this nervous since the time he had joined the army. He knew the importance of capturing King of Hell Chu. The overall situation of the war depended upon this.

The smoke started to rise from the barracks. The soldiers had

received the orders. They knew that this was a time of urgency. Therefore, they had gone into action without any delay.

These people were old army-ruffians. They seemed to be lazy and out-of-shape. They seemed to lack strength, and looked as if they could fall anytime as they walked. However, they would pull themselves out of their usual lazy-selves, and get to work with everything they had when their endurance was put to test at the time of an emergency.

These people had become indifferent since they had got used to life-and-death situations. This indifference resulted in their usual laziness.

However, their mental outlook changed as soon as they went into action.

"Maybe... there's still some time." Wang Teng Long was slightly relieved. He went to the forefront with his personal team of guards after he had issued the order.

He had only three hundred personal guards, but they were experts; every last one of them. The weakest among them was a Martial Master. There were a few Martial Great Masters and a Revered Martial Artists among them as well.

The strength of these experts seemed humble. However, one mustn't forget that this wasn't an ordinary army.

A commander must have an extraordinary charisma to employ these many experts in an army since it required them to willingly resign themselves to the rank of soldiers.

Wang Teng Long marched forward with his personal guards. They hadn't yet lined-up in formation. Suddenly, his complexion changed as he looked far into the distance towards the mountain. He waved his hand and cried out loud to alert everyone, "Enemy attack! The enemy is charging at our camp. All personnel to stay on guard!"

His face became flushed as he shouted at the top of his lungs. Then, he issued a burst of intense hoarse sounds. He almost spouted blood in this process. The well-trained troops responded immediately. Suddenly, the bugle horns sounded. Everyone stopped doing whatever they were doing, and grabbed their weapons.

Wang Teng Long had lost his mental-strength; he had become incapable of thinking in a straight manner.

He had seen the birds flying away from a hilltop. Then, he had heard some faint sounds of activity from the same spot. However, it was calm and tranquil when he had looked again carefully.

He had been thinking whether this was caused by a person or a wild beast when he saw a burst of undulating ripples in the thicket of grass that was located at a distance of about 1000 feet from the location of the troops.

It was after this that he had made a noise by shouting out loud.

However, a shadow rushed forward at a lightning speed before his voice got a chance to resound; it seemed as if the lightning carried a raging thunder-like murderous aura with itself. The shadow approached them with a loud ‘bang’ sound. Wang Teng Long saw the fuzzy figure of a person using a strange stance. Then, the figure crashed into the formation of ten thousand soldiers.

A deep voice resounded; it reeked of murderous spirit, "One ray of cold light pierces... ten thousand fathoms!"

A sword light equivalent to thousand waterfalls broke through the Milky Way’s impediment and flooded across five thousand kilometers.

Suddenly, a blood-curdling scream resounded through the clear sky.

It seemed as if the murderous aura had condensed and swept-across the entire canyon.

Wang Teng Long closed his eyes in pain. [The fragrance of cooked rice has started to spread. It's the most relaxed time for an army that has had a long and wearisome journey. They've set-up their camps, and wait to eat their meals. Some people hold their rice bowls by the cooking pots. They push and shove each other to be the first ones to get the serving. Some people must be cursing...]

[They're running out of time. So, they want to grab the first bowl of rice. This is going to decide who'd get to eat their fill and who wouldn't. Therefore, the entire army is in a chaotic mess.]

[Everyone in the army is vulnerable at this time; regardless of whether one is an 'elite' or not ...they can collapse at the very first blow.]

[How did King of Hell Chu grasp this moment of utmost vulnerability so precisely...? ...despite being separated by so much distance?] Wang Teng Long was puzzled by this fact. He remained perplexed despite having spared it some thought. However, he quickly took a correct decision, "This is my order – the rear troops must prepare to block the enemy."

The vanguard troops had been broken-through by the enemy. They could at-most block the enemy for a short while. But, they couldn't stop him for long; especially once one considers his speed. The only hope was to depend on the rear troops.

Wang Teng Long was deeply worried; he felt as if his chest was on fire.

[I only need a moment. No... I need a little time. I need some time to guide my troops into a response in this extremely chaotic situation... and to help them gain the required battle efficiency.]

[But... will King of Hell Chu give me the required time?]

[The answer is certainly... no.]

Chu Yang had been dormant until now. He had moved into action because of the fleeting of time. He had seen the smoke rising

from the barracks. Therefore, he had dashed-out five minutes later.

The fragrance of cooked rice had started to disseminate by that time.

The soldiers had camped after a long and tiresome journey. Therefore, they were tired and hungry.

The smell of rice had entered the noses of the hungry soldiers. This was the smell of heaven for them. Their minds were full of desire for food.

Their desire would become more ardent once the food was completely cooked.

Chu Yang had experienced this feeling countless times in his life. Therefore, he understood it well.

Hence, he had selected this particular moment to charge forward and break-through the defense-line of the famous general. The defense-line of the army hadn't yet taken form. So, Chu Yang would be taking an unfair advantage even if he managed to defeat the general. However, Chu Yang had no choice but to take advantage of someone else's difficulties.

He had quickly employed the Nine Tribulations Technique to conceal his appearance. Then, he had dashed-across one thousand feet. He had come out of the thicket of grass and had arrived before the army's formation. He had left a three hundred feet long trail in the thicket of grass; the strands of grass waved to and fro.

His speed was indeed shocking.

Even Chu Yang was baffled by his own speed.

He had never anticipated that the combined might of the three fragments of the Nine Tribulations Sword would be so massive.

'One ray of cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms! Unleashed!'

Dozens of people tried to dodge it, but it was too late. They

screamed as their bodies rotated in the air. Streams of blood gushed-out of their bodies, and went whirling in every direction. Their bodies had transformed into a sack of broken bones and meat within a split-second of Chu Yang's passing from their vicinity. Their bodies eventually fell apart.

Chu Yang didn't stop. He continued to advance like a whirlwind. There was a cold and cruel look on his face; there wasn't the slightest trace of mercy in his eyes.

The Sword Spirit revealed a faint smile in his consciousness and muttered, "This time's 'one ray of cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms'... looks a little bit like the original move..."

Chu Yang's sword killed several soldiers with each swing. He felt a slight vibration in his palms as strands of heat crept through them and entered his body. He felt as if his own spirit had been roused.

Chu Yang's heart thumped as he remembered the Sword Spirit's words from the day when he had obtained the third fragment of the Nine Tribulations Sword, "Starting today... the Nine Tribulations Sword will have a new function. It shall be aimed at the benefit of the Master of the Nine Tribulations Sword – devour the power of life!"

Chapter 369: Don’t Restrain the Blade when Beheading the Entire World!

Chu Yang sensed the heat break into his body. He felt as if his body was brimming with strength. He didn’t feel tired. Instead, he seemed quite happy as he thought, [Is this what it means to devour the power of life?]

Chu Yang hadn’t given any rest to his hands. But he continued to slashing his sword. The proud soldiers ferociously threw themselves at him from every direction. Chu Yang soared in the air to confront the soldiers and shouted, "What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world?!"

Suddenly, a round beam of light appeared as the power of the Nine Tribulations Sword was unleashed. It rushed through the ranks of soldiers like a scary-wild dragon as it blew a bright-colored ocean-spindrift of blood.

Enormous evil energy and murderous aura filled the entire battlefield.

A number of soldiers were sent flying into the sky as their chopped-off arms flung in the air; some of these hands still held shining swords.

In fact, one could see blue veins popping out of the fingers of one of the hands. However, it had been separated from its owner’s body.

Chu Yang continued to charge forward for six hundred feet. Then, he jumped into the sky and stepped on the corpses spread on the battlefield. His entire body was drenched in blood; it seemed as if he had showered in blood. However, he continued to charge forward.

The elite troops spread over the battlefield didn’t stand a chance against Chu Yang’s brutal killing moves. Whoever came in the

path of the sharp edge of the Nine Tribulations Sword didn't remain in one piece.

Chu Yang didn't utter a word. He killed ferociously as he rushed forward in a wild manner.

Suddenly, Chu Yang had a feeling, [As long as my legs don't get chopped off... I'll be able to rush like this and get out of here.]

[It's not a baseless assumption.]

[That's because... besides real energy... I have Sword Spirit which is supplementing my spirit energy. So, the amount of real energy within my Dantian is being maintained above the level of consumption at all times.]

[This internal-recycle loop is ensuring that I shouldn't worry about the energy consumption.]

[The weakest link lies outside this loop... and that's my physical strength. But, the Nine Tribulations Sword is unceasingly absorbing the life force of people who are getting slain and adding it to my body.]

[So, I'm not feeling any exhaustion.]

No one in the entire Nine Heavens Continent could be compared with Chu Yang because of these points. Chu Yang surged forward like a monstrous wave. So, one had to deal with this dreadful monstrous wave. One must be prepared to deal with the entire sea that's behind him in his support since it could launch the next wave of attack.

How can one stop such a person?

"This... this is King of Hell Chu?" Wang Teng Long stood aghast on the short slope. He sucked in a mouthful of cold air. He had felt that he had overestimated the dreaded reputation of King of Hell Chu. However, after seeing him in person... he had to admit that he had underestimated this person.

"He’s worthy of being called… the King of Hell!" Wang Teng Long looked at his subordinates as they got chopped down like vegetables. He felt as if his heart was being fried in oil; a lone person had pushed his mighty army into a miserable state.

Wang Teng Long’s anger could swallow ten thousand miles of area. The aggression in his eyes was frightening; it seemed as if he was looking down on the whole world.

Fortunately, his rear troops had got enough time to prepare for the battle. So, they were lined-up in a closely sealed battle formation. There was a serious look on their valiant faces. But they seemed very anxious and uncertain about whether or not they’d be able to block the King of Hell Chu.

"Cut-off his legs first!" Wang Teng Long snatched the bugle-horn from the hands of the soldier who stood beside him. Then, he whipped it on the ground and roared, "Relay this order – cut-off his legs first."

Wang Teng Long was an experienced war veteran. He had fought many battles. Therefore, he formulated the best possible strategy to deal with the situation.

Around thirty messengers stood in a row. They raised their heads and bellowed, "The Great General has commanded… cut-off his legs first… The Great General had commanded… cut-off his legs first…"

Their voice was getting louder and louder. The people in the battlefield who heard this… began to shout-along, "The Great General has commanded… cut-off his legs first… "

"Yes!" More than 4000 soldiers were stationed at a far distance. They yelled in unison as their pupils shrank. They stared at the devilish figure which rushed towards their battle formation at a fast speed. Their palms began to sweat as they got more and more worried.

The murderous aura within Chu Yang's heart rose as he continued to slaughter more men. His eyes turned red. The rise of murderous aura in Chu Yang's heart resulted in increasing his sword's prowess by 30%.

Three soldiers screamed and withdrew as he slashed his sword towards the left. Four soldiers were sent flying in the air as he slashed his sword towards the right. He left behind a trail of blood as he advanced across the distance of five hundred feet.

He took big strides and rushed forward; his feet seemed like a whirlwind. He was so fast that one could only see a mass of shadow advancing towards oneself. Blood could be seen splattering all-around whenever he stepped down on the ground.

His blade would spread like a forest when he was called upon.

The murderous aura within Chu Yang's heart got more and more concentrated. Suddenly, he let out a long cry as his body flew-up in the air with a loud 'whistling' sound. Then, it started to advance forward at a great speed. His trails had been covered in blood.

Suddenly, a long chant was heard in a voice that was full of murderous intention, "In my palm lies a pile of bones as tall as a mountain..."

The long sword revolved to draw a circular arc. This arc expanded in the outward direction at a fast speed. It knocked down several bodies to the ground. Chu Yang laughed heartily and said, "This sword's slash will give birth to a turbulent sea of blood..."

Then, a sharp sword cry was heard. Round lumps of sword light came out of the Nine Tribulations Sword and splashed all-around; it seemed as if the Nine Tribulations Sword was the representative of death. The sword light fluttered in the air. Then, it fell downwards like the rain. Chu Yang's body flew like a dragon and soared up 170 feet into the sky. He laughed like a furious devil and spoke, "The world of mortals originates from the path of ruthlessness..."

The Nine Tribulations Sword circled nine times inside the military formation. Chu Yang somersaulted mid-air in order to avoid a rain of arrows aimed at him. He then shouted, "...Don't restrain the blade when beheading the entire world"

Chu Yang laughed as he advanced forward; his body seemed to be surfing on the blood waves which surged through the army formation of ten thousand men and horses – like a hurricane.

Wang Teng Long seemed to have lost his entire strength as he saw this from a distance. He murmured, "In my palm lies a pile of bones as tall as a mountain... this sword's slash will give birth to a turbulent sea of blood... the world of mortals originates from the path of ruthlessness... and don't restrain the blade when beheading the entire world! Demon! He is not human... he is a demon!"

The blood continued to splatter over the field. Chu Yang continued to slaughter the soldiers as he rushed forward.

Chu Yang had experienced an incredible anger in his past life when he had massacred the big clan that had ambushed Mo Qing Wu. He hadn't enjoyed killing to his heart's content since then. Moreover, thousands of years of evil tendencies had accumulated inside the Nine Tribulations Sword; they had burst inside his mind. Therefore, Chu Yang was hardly aware that he was slaughtering people in a crazed manner.

Rush forward!

However, Chu Yang had gained self-insight even in such a crazy situation; he had comprehended four sword moves on his own...

Pretend to use sword as a saber!

Like saber... like sword!

In my palm lies a pile of bones as tall as a mountain,

This sword's slash will give birth to a turbulent sea of blood;

The world of mortals originates from the path of ruthlessness,

Don’t restrain the blade when beheading the entire world!

These sword moves didn’t belong to the sword-play of the Nine Tribulations Sword. However, they weren’t inferior to the four moves of the Nine Heavens Sword Play. These four moves were filled with ruthlessness and brutality... like the four original killer moves.

Chu Yang’s mind went blank after he issued the last move. The violence and ruthless intentions that filled his mind... vanished without a trace.

Chu Yang felt that his six senses had become more sensitive, his responses had become faster and more accurate, his movements had become smoother and more powerful, and his judgments had become prompter.

He was in the center as ten people besieged him from different directions. He quickly made judgments – nine blades seemed to be coming towards him; he could easily tell which one of these blades was the quickest, which one was the biggest threat, and which one seemed to be ferocious but wasn’t lethal.

Chu Yang could use his sword to block the incoming attacks if he’d allow himself to show-off one of his dazzling techniques... he’d rout them all at the same time.

This wasn’t an illusion.

But an absolute assurance!

[My five internal organs are sealed up by the Sword Spirit. So, it’s impossible for my own martial powers to increase. Then, the only possibility is that my spiritual sense has made a breakthrough.]

[It means that my cultivation level has had a breakthrough. I made a breakthrough in a terrible situation... when my life was at risk. How is such a strange coincidence even possible?]

Chu Yang didn't know that the groundwork for this breakthrough had started long time back.

The first sign occurred on the stormy night when Chu Yang had trespassed into Diwu Qing Rou's Prime Ministerial Palace. Chu Yang's martial power had then fused with his real energy that had originated from going through the different stages of stealth as he had advanced through the area.

Chu Yang had mentally experienced a high-degree of tension and stress during the time when he had become a fugitive; so much so that he didn't dare to relax even during his sleep-time… which was less than half an hour a day.

He felt relaxed every time he escaped. Every risk that he took was like a trial for him. Moreover, this was happening when his internal organs had been nearly destroyed; so much so that they were incapable of being restored under those circumstances.

However, his mind had been able to withstand this pressure without losing itself to confusion.

He had put-away his concerns and worries a while back. Then, he had rushed into the battlefield to fight wholeheartedly. So, his mental state and spirit had transformed from a mass of chaos to fine steel.

The three killer fragments of Nine Tribulations Sword had united to form an unpreceded murderous spirit. Their combined impact on Chu Yang had been unparalleled. This had allowed him to unknowingly enter into a berserk-mode of endless slaughter. However, he wouldn't have got a chance to vent-out his anger and aggression of two lives' if he hadn't entered into this 'berserk' mode.

Chu Yang had a flash of enlightenment because of the sudden amalgamation of his negative emotions with the murderous aura that had effused out. He had gradually submerged into a deep state of epiphany; it seemed as if he had achieved Buddhahood.

Chu Yang hadn't pondered over his new mental state after this sudden flash of enlightenment. He had felt comfortable in that mental state. He had felt like venting-out his anger and aggression to feel happy. So, he had unleashed the first sword move – In my palm lies a pile of bones as tall as a mountain!

However, he had felt that he wanted to express more. After all... this was a 'palm' attack. Chu Yang had subconsciously thought that he was using a sword since his consciousness was inside the flash of enlightenment.

Therefore, he had aggressively and brutally unleashed the next move – This sword's slash will give birth to a turbulent sea of blood!

These two moves were extreme bloody. So, they had brought back the feelings of regret, [The world of the mortals is ruthless; the Heaven is merciless. My mission in this lifetime is to reverse the very ways of the Heaven.]

Chu Yang could only remember the main mission of his life in that empty state of mind, [I must go against the heaven's will and change the fate to save Qing Wu.]

He was bound with endless resentment. Therefore, he had brandished the third move – The world of mortals originates from the path of ruthlessness!

This move was loaded with the grief and indignation which had pent-up over Chu Yang's two lifetimes. His emotions were bleak; they were filled with hatred and resentment. Such was his accusation to the heavens... his desire to resist the heavenly law.

Chapter 370: A Man, a Sword and Easy Work

Chu Yang created his fourth move under extremely bizarre conditions due to the stimulation of boundless hatred. This move was the most powerful. It contained a magnificent charm since it was the final move – [don't restrain the blade when beheading the entire world!]

This move represented Chu Yang's mental state, [My goal won't be achieved... even if I kill the entire world. So, I won't put my sword into the sheath.]

[I won't give up!]

[I won't restrain the blade!]

Therefore, it had become the most serious and perfect move of Chu Yang's. Moreover, Chu Yang had an endless desire to display the magnificent charm of this move. It could be said that it was destined to become a classic in the future.

This move was one step ahead of the second move of the Nine Tribulations Sword – [What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world?!]

This move symbolized that Chu Yang's mental state had made a breakthrough. Chu Yang's road to martial arts had been separated from the category of the Nine Tribulations Sword since then. So, he had a unique comprehension of his own.

[A tool will be a tool. A divine tool is a tool; nothing more.]

[But... I'm a human.]

Chu Yang had sobered-up from that state of mind. Then, he had felt that the three fragments of the Nine Tribulations Sword had integrated into one under the pressure of his power. Moreover, they had merged with his body.

This was the so-called ‘Nine Tribulations Sword’s thorough submission to its Master’.

The Sword Spirit heaved a deep sigh inside Chu Yang’s consciousness, [Chu Yang has jumped-out of the vicious reincarnation cycle of the Nine Tribulations Sword. I don’t know what kind of a disturbance he will cause… in the Nine Heavens.]

[The mere thought that he could make such a bizarre breakthrough in such a time and place…]

Chu Yang let out a loud cry. The Nine Tribulations Sword’s cold light burst into the sky. He seemed to have stepped onto the void as he rushed ninety feet forward. There seemed to be a forest of weapons – like swords and spears – under his feet. A rain of arrows seemed to be coming from the front. However, Chu Yang turned a blind eye to everything. He continued to push forward with the support of his bizarre psychological state.

He stepped on people’s heads as he tiptoed his way forward. The heads got ruptured in a weird manner. Chu Yang continued to move forward. He stepped on the bloodied bodies of the soldiers as he left behind a trail of corpses.

The commander’s flag was hoisted on the steep slope. The flag-carrier crazily waved the flag to relay the signal – Die… but don’t let him escape.

The front soldiers turned around. They rushed after Chu Yang in a crazy manner as they saw the corpses of their comrades getting stepped-on.

They didn’t follow any rules or methodologies. However, they put their lives at stake in order to attack him.

Ordinary soldiers like them could only deal with an expert like Chu Yang by sacrificing their own lives. Lives of hundreds or even thousands of men would be sacrificed in exchange for his life…

There was an open field in front of Chu Yang. The area of this

field was several feet in expanse. The soldiers were lined-up on the other side of this area. Their weapons were unsheathed, and their arrows were nocked. They seemed to be prepared...

Wang Teng Long stood upright on the steep slope. He had a cold expression on his face. His eyes closely watched Chu Yang as he rushed through the battle formation. Wang Teng Long constantly made hand gestures. The flag-carrier changed the signal-flags as soon as he saw these gestures. Therefore, the formation of the troops on the rear was constantly changing in order to block Chu Yang.

Wang Teng Long had put on a poker face as his sharp eyes tracked King of Hell Chu's movement. He had seen such spectacles many times. In fact, many famous generals had the ability to single-handedly attack an entire army.

Wang Teng Long was doing his best. [This line of defense is more than secure. The changes in the battle formation are more than rational. If King of Hell Chu dies here... it will be his fate.]

[If he manages to break out of this siege... that will be his fate as well. It won't be because my command isn't strong enough.]

[I'll do my job... that's all.]

Chu Yang didn't stop. He continued to push forward.

It turned dark before his eyes as several people's shadows rushed from every side. They ferociously bellowed as they forged ahead to face Chu Yang's sword edge. Clash!

Suddenly, countless other soldiers pounced-over.

This was their so-called 'crowd tactics'.

The soldiers did a flying tackle as they pounced on their enemy; they were doomed to die. However, their deaths wouldn't be in vain as they would create an enormous barrier to obstruct their enemy. The impact of the weight of more than one thousand kilograms of human bodies wouldn't be easy to deal with. They

were willing to throw away their lives since their commander had ordered them to block the enemy's escape.

An ordinary King Level Expert would've found it difficult to deal with such an attack.

However, Chu Yang was different.

Chu Yang's Nine Tribulations Sword had a function of devouring the power of life. These soldiers couldn't pose a threat to him. In fact, they had delivered endless power to him by pouncing at him.

They posed some obstruction, but it wasn't serious.

Dozens of people fell from the sky upon Chu Yang with a 'whistling' sound. They pressed his body beneath their weight. It seemed to be a formation of a meat-mountain. The soldiers who stood nearby bellowed with grief as they raised their weapons and rushed towards the meat-mountain to chop it down.

This was the only way to deal with such an expert – first entangle the enemy in a mountain of meat; then get your people to chop down the entire mountain and turn it into mincemeat along with the enemy.

It would be impossible to kill him if he were to get-out of the meat-mountain and roam freely on the battlefield... no matter how many soldiers lost their lives.

These soldiers had seen many situations such this; they weren't dealing with a powerhouse for the first time. Their hearts were filled with sorrow and indignation. However, they had to bear it since there was no other way.

This approach had proved to be effective in the past.

However, today... it might not.

Hundreds of broadswords slashed in unison to chop-down the meat-mountain. Suddenly, a burst of sword-light flashed. The meat-mountain disintegrated and vanished like ice under the sun.

Then, a radiant sword-light rushed-out with a loud and thunderous sound. No one seemed to understand the situation. Then, it became clear that the enclosure made-up of broadswords had been broken from the middle; the weapons had been shattered into pieces.

Chu Yang's entire body had been covered in blood. He issued a 'whistling' sound as he dashed-out like a flash of lightning.

Chu Yang hadn't lost his sense of direction despite the brutality of the battle. He continued to move north.

The flesh, blood, and limbs of the soldiers were sent flying as the sword-light dispersed outwards.

Chu Yang had used the first sword move – One ray of cold light pierces ten thousand fathoms!

He had discovered that this move was most-suited to deal with a group-attack. Therefore, he hadn't used the other sword moves ever since he had the sudden flash of enlightenment. Instead, he had only been using the first move.

He had become so skilled in the usage of this move that he didn't require to stop his advance as he used it.

It was hard to tell how many times he had used this move. Suddenly, he had felt his body turn light; he had come out of the tight encirclement. He had finally arrived in the large open area.

Chu Yang didn't hesitate for even a moment. He rushed forward in a zigzag trajectory.

A bugle horn resounded as soon as he came out of the tight encirclement. Suddenly, the entire sky turned pitch-black.

Chu Yang raised his head and looked straight ahead. He saw several soldiers on horses; they were at stand-still. Then, those soldiers raised their hands and threw countless spears in his direction; six waves of spears were thrown at him in quick succession.

Meanwhile, the archers had started to shoot arrows. More than a dozen cross-bolts were shot at the same time. It seemed as if it was a large-scale aerial-attack on a city.

The soldiers behind Chu Yang had stopped in their tracks, and had shot their spears in his direction.

The sky had been blotted-out by the sheer number of weapons.

Tens-of-thousands of these arrows along with thousands of spears carried the might to besiege an entire city. However, they had been aimed at one person.

"Be careful!" the Sword Spirit warned him.

Chu Yang bellowed loudly. His body tilted towards the right as he fled at the maximum speed. He stuck close to the ground and moved swiftly; it seemed as if he was flying out of there. The Nine Tribulations Sword transformed into a barrier of sword-light in front of him in order to shoot down the incoming arrows.

A deafening noise was heard as eight massive cross-bolts hit the spot where he stood a moment ago. These cross-bolts were capable of besieging an entire city. So, one could easily estimate the insane amount of force that had been imbued into those bolts. Chu Yang tumbled and rolled-out as he lost his balance.

‘Whoosh’ Chu Yang realized that he was in a crisis. He hastily leant his body to one side. Suddenly, he felt a fiery sensation in his left shoulder. It was followed by a burst of ice-cold feeling. Chu Yang realized that a long arrow had pierced his shoulder. Moreover, he could see a rain of arrows in front of him.

Chu Yang rolled like a ball as his body changed into a group of light and shadow. Then, two ‘whooshing’ sounds were heard. His thighs had been pierced by arrows. His muscles began to tremble.

Chu Yang snorted. He had sensed the approach of these arrows. He had tried to dodge them, but they had got his legs. Fortunately, the arrows had pierced through his muscles; his bones hadn’t been

hurt.

However, he felt an unbearable pain since he had received three arrow wounds.

Three people rode on fine horses inside the army formation stationed behind Chu Yang. Each of them held a big bow in their hands. Their bowstrings still buzzed. The three of them had a baffled look on their faces. They had never thought that they would fail to kill King of Hell Chu despite being the best archers in the nation's army.

This reaction was too terrifying.

The previous attacks had been planned to create an opening to kill the enemy with three arrows. These arrows contained the entire essence, energy and spirit of these three archers. Moreover, it should have been a surefire from such a close distance. (1)

The archers had been confident that the situation was under their control. They would've never imagined that the chance would slip away from their hands in this manner.

These elite archers had shot their best arrows. So, they couldn't shoot the arrows of the same intrinsic quality within such a short span of time. After all, the arrows had been imbued with their essence, energy and spirit. How could they shoot a number of them in quick succession?

Chu Yang assumed a 'spiraling' form to withdraw as his feet ceaselessly trod on the ground. He left behind a trail of sand and dust as he rushed-out of there.

Chu Yang dodged his way across the battlefield with a 'whistling' sound. The battlefield was soon pierced with arrows which had come from every direction.

Chu Yang finally breathed a sigh of relief. He waved the Nine Tribulations Sword behind his back, and cut-off all the exposed arrows which had pierced his body. He allowed the arrowheads to

stay in his body for the time being. Then, his body turned into a ball of light with a loud ‘whistling’ sound. Suddenly, he shot high-up into the sky with a long flaming tail trailing behind him; he seemed like a shooting star that was flashing across the sky.

"What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world?!" It was hard to say whether or not Chu Yang's voice was filled with anger. He swiftly crossed the remaining open space of two hundred feet in a flash. Then, he crashed into the battle formation of the army with a loud ‘whistling’ sound — like an unstoppable firecracker.

He burst into the formation with a large explosion. Nearly two dozen soldiers were sent flying so high into the sky that they didn’t land on the ground for a long time. Their limbs and body parts tossed around like bouncing balls.

Multiple waves of blood surged-out. Chu Yang and his sword appeared like a boat that was galloping on a river of blood.

"It’s over." Wang Teng Long looked at Chu Yang’s shadow as it rushed and killed its way through the formation of his men. He listened to the miserable screams of his subordinates. He sadly closed his eyes and thought, [I couldn’t stop him.]

Notes:

Jing Qi Shen (精氣神) are three Chinese terms commonly used in Daoism and related studies to refer to the processes that govern spiritual and physical health. Jing (精) means an essence, qi (氣) means ‘breath energy’ and shen (神) a divine or human spirit. They are often referred to as the “Three Treasures” or “Three Jewels”.

Jing: said to be the material basis for the physical body, is passed by the parents to their child at conception. It governs the growth and development processes in the body and is gradually burned up as the body ages. The loss of jing is hastened by stress, overwork, illness, poor nutrition, and substance abuse.

Qi: is the invisible life force and vitality energy of the body. Qi is

cosmic energy that circulates in channels, called meridians, through the body. When these channels are blocked, illness results.

Shen: equated with “spirit,” “psyche” or “mind,” is a manifestation of the higher nature of human beings. It is augmented and developed through the interaction of jing and qi energies. Shen presides over the emotions as an all-encompassing awareness or virtues, expressed as wisdom, love, compassion, kindness, generosity, acceptance, forgiveness and tolerance. A strong shen exists on the foundation of a sound jing and a strong qi; the three must be developed together. Well-cultivated shen brings peace of mind.

Chapter 371: Jing Meng Hun Arrives Late

[That open area was our only chance to kill King of Hell Chu!]

[Our only option is to draw support from the terrain and make use of the army's overwhelming numerical strength to pin him down. But we would lose our numerical superiority once we allowed him to enter the crowd.]

[The army may have a total of 10,000 soldiers... However, only a dozen or so soldiers can attack at the same time once the melee begins. How can a ordinary soldiers possibly deal with a King Level Expert like that?]

[Therefore, King of Hell Chu's entry into the crowd is similar to a dragon's return to the sea or a tiger entry into the deep of the mountains. We cannot let that happen!]

"Sway the signal flags - disband the formation! Everyone must chase down the enemy! Disregard all consequences and focus on the chase!" Wang Teng Long quickly adjusted his mentality. He knew he still had a chance... [chase and kill!]

[When thousands of people are chasing down one person... he'll eventually be caught and meet his end! He is ferocious and very difficult to deal with... But he's seriously injured... He can't possibly kill ten thousand elite soldiers on his own!]

[He may die of exhaustion as long as we continue to exhaust him little by little!]

"Yes!" His personal bodyguard left to relay the order.

"Leave behind a small number of people to make an inventory of casualties. The others shall participate in the chase. You mustn't make any mistakes!" Wang Teng Long looked the battlefield. It was a complete mess. He sighed sadly, but decisively issued his next order without any hesitation.

There was only one regret in Wang Teng Long's heart... [Those

bastards of the Golden Horse Riders Department were supposed to be the main force to capture King of Hell Chu. Where the hell are they?]

[We had reached an agreement that we'll merely assist with blocking. But now the ordinary soldiers under my command are being made to stop a King Level Expert... this is disgraceful!]

The valiance and prowess of King of Hell Chu made him appear like a King Level Expert in Wang Teng Long's eyes; and that too not a low-level King Level Expert.

Chu Yang's feet moved with incredible force as he rushed-out like a hurricane. His entire body was covered in blood. The wide-open land was spread before his eyes. However, the hasty sound of deployment of troops had started to resound from behind.

Chu Yang was aware that now was the time when his endurance would be put to test. [I can only be safe once I escape this round of chase.]

He leapt-up into the air. His body wrung like a black dragon, and then he fiercely kicked two cavalry soldiers off their warhorses. He mounted one of the warhorses with the very-next step. He clamped his legs on either sides of the warhorse and lifted the reins. The steed neighed and swung its hips as its body darted forward like an arrow.

"Release the arrows!" a loud shout came from behind. Chu Yang coldly snorted as he heard this. He leaned over on the horseback; it seemed as if he had completely ignored the attack.

Shua Shua Shua...

Chu Yang turned around and brandished his sword as soon as the sound of arrows resounded from behind. His sword released a group of shadows. Pop Pop Pop Pop, the arrows were neatly blocked, and fell down. Chu Yang conveniently grabbed an arrow in its flight. He then reached behind the back of the steed, and

fiercely inserted it into its butt.

The steed felt the acute pain, and began to run faster.

The noise of the soldiers' bellows and horses' neighs resounded from behind. This was followed by the rumbling sound of iron hooves trampling the ground. It seemed as if a giant formation of molten iron was rapidly flooding forward along the road like a mighty black torrent; it seemed to be maneuvering itself towards Chu Yang at a lightning speed.

Chu Yang was ahead of it. He continued to ride away at the fastest possible speed. But the mighty black torrent was less than 700-800 feet behind him.

The entire army had formed a few miles long formation as it sped forward. Their fluttering flags issued a mournful 'whizzing' sound in the early summer weather. Thousands of people had ferocious look on their faces. They were crazily kicking their horses to run faster. Their sinister aura had soared into the sky; it seemed as if it could blot-out this sunny and cloudless sky.

However, the distance between him and the pursuers increased little-by-little, and Chu Yang gradually calmed down. He endured the pain as he pulled out the three arrow shafts from his body and flung them out one by one.

The Sword Spirit quickly poured-in several medicinal efficacies to treat his wounds and help him endure the pain. The sound of the hooves suddenly got louder, and Chu Yang desperately increased his speed further. He had heaved a sigh of relief, but his heart was constantly cramped with fear nonetheless.

[I might not have been able to break out if it weren't for the Nine Tribulations Sword's ability to devour the power of life. The army that I encountered was undoubtedly an elite one! The degree of their valiance was beyond imagination.]

[If I hadn't come in time when they were setting-up the camps

and taken advantage of that opportunity... then I wouldn't have been able to shake-off this army! Had I somehow managed to escape... then it would've been at a very heavy price!]

To be able to face the enemy in a frenetic manner and still manage to display such a combat power... In fact, they had nearly succeeded in compelling the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master to stay here... forever. The terror of this army could only be imagined...

[Who's the commander of this army? But no matter who it is... he's not someone to be trifled with.]

[I must deal with him carefully if I were to face him again in the battlefield...]

... ...

Jing Meng Hun was still under the cliff; he was still searching around. He had found some traces that were left behind by Chu Yang when he had descended the cliff.

This had boosted his confidence; [King of Hell Chu was here!]

Therefore, he began to search more cautiously and meticulously after he got down.

In fact, he didn't even leave that small pool which was located under the cliff unexamined... he had dived into it. However, he soon realized that it wasn't a feasible place to hide. The black bears, wild wolves and several other species of animals who had taken-up residence under the cliff had been thrown into disarray. They fled into different directions under this sudden distress.

Everyone felt that victory was in sight. Each one of them was in high spirits. These people had descended the cliff to kill King of Hell Chu. They were part of a mission of paramount importance.

However, loud yells and shouts were heard from afar while the search was in full swing. These weren't the voices of two people... they were the clamors of thousands of people. This sound had

arrived from very far away, and had ventured deep into this mountain forest.

Jing Meng Hun was startled by this. He stood up and erected his ears to listen closely as he said, "What is that sound?"

They could hear the sound. However, they had no way to tell what the sounds were shouting since it was coming from too far away.

"It seems like Wang Teng Long's army has mutinied..." the Command Horse Rider who stood next to him frowned and spoke in a suspicious tone.

Jing Meng Hun remained silent after he heard this sentence. [The only army in the nearby areas is that of Wang Teng Long. Who else can it be? And as far as a mutiny is concerned...] Jing Meng Hun was itching to slap the hell out of the guy who had spoken these words.

Wang Teng Long was world-famous for the strict governance of his armed forces. Jing Meng Hun wouldn't be surprised if a mutiny were to occur in any other general's army. However, it could never happen in Wang Teng Long's army! Not to mention that these elite soldiers belonged to his personal army...

"Since it's not a mutiny... therefore, it can only be..." Jing Meng Hun's heart suddenly skipped, "Dammit! King of Hell Chu has rushed out! We must hurry!"

The Command Horse Rider was stunned, [when I said it's mutiny, the King Level Expert Jing said 'it's not mutiny'. Moreover, he used 'since' at the beginning of the sentence... then he said that the King of Hell Chu had run away?]

This sudden unevenness in the line of thought had baffled the Command Horse Rider. He was left in a daze. He pondered for a while with his eyes wide open, but couldn't understand the reason.

However, Jing Meng Hun had issued a command. So, everyone

took the shortest route to the opposite cliff and climbed-up. Then, they rushed in the direction from which the sound was sourced.

However, the war-cries went farther away by the time they reached half-the-distance.

It was too late by the time they arrived at the scene. The entire canyon had turned into a sea of blood. The early-summer season is the time when myriads of plants and vegetation are in their most luxuriant phase. However, even that lush green vegetation couldn’t conceal this bloody scene.

Less than 500 noncommissioned soldiers were silently and patiently searching for the body parts of their comrades in that pile of corpses. They would flip-over the corpses to find the chopped-off hands and feet. They would then strive to return them to their original bodies. The strong and howling wind was causing the severed heads to roll-down the pile of corpses while their long-disheveled hair fluttered in the air...

It seemed as if Jing Meng Hun had been struck by a lightning.

He took a big stride forward and grabbed a soldier. He then exclaimed loudly, "What’s going on? Where’s everyone?"

The soldier who was caught by his collar found it difficult to breathe. However, he titled his head as he disdainfully looked at Jing Meng Hun and slowly spoke, "I’m a human!" He paused for a second... then said, "These brothers that lay on the ground are human too!"

Jing Meng Hun turned speechless. He felt weak in his hands. So, he relinquished his grip and put him down as he asked again, "What’s going on here?"

The soldier looked indifferently at him. A faint look of grief and indignation gradually started to smolder in his eyes. He didn’t answer and replied with a question instead, "You’re the people of the Golden Horse Riders Department, right?"

"..." Jing Meng Hun's face was burning with anger, but one could clearly see the guilt of his conscious in his eyes. He replied, "Yes."

"Chasing and killing King of Hell Chu was your job," That soldier grinned in a miserable manner. It seemed as if he had tried to smile... but wasn't able to. He further added, "We were engaged in a battle with King of hell Chu. Countless of our brothers died brutal deaths, and you have the guts to ask... 'what's going on?'!"

He suddenly straightened his body and stretched-out his hand to point a finger at Jing Meng Hun's nose. Then, he shouted with the entirety of his might, "You tell me; what's going on?!"

Jing Meng Hun opened his eyes wide. He was in a daze and was unable to respond.

"When we were being mercilessly slaughtered and bathing in our own blood... where were you? When our brothers were brutally killed one-by-one by King of Hell Chu... who was supposed to be chased down you people... where were you?" The soldier laughed hysterically, "You arrive here... after the battle has ended?! And then you have the audacity to ask... 'what's going on?'!"

Jing Meng Hun heaved a deep sigh. He had nothing to say in reply.

The man before him was merely a young soldier. Bluntly speaking, Jing Meng Hun would only need a finger to crush ten like him. However, this Nine Grade King level Expert unexpectedly showed signs of a guilty conscience when faced with the reproaching questions and anger-filled gaze of this young soldier.

He heaved a long sigh. Then, he slowly asked with his head hanging-down, "What about the casualties?"

"What about the casualties, you ask? Don't you have eyes?" the soldier pointed his finger at him and roared. His chest was moving up and down; his voice had turned hoarse. His eyes had turned bloodshot after he heard the word 'casualties'.

"936 brothers died in battle! None injured!" that soldier replied in a low and deep voice as tears tickled down his face and dripped on the ground. "What are your thoughts about this figure?"

Jing Meng Hun only sighed in response.

Then, he turned towards the corpses that lay in the battlefield and solemnly gave a military salute. He then exclaimed loudly, "Brothers, I am Jing Meng Hun! Sorry! I am sorry! We've arrived late!"

He suddenly felt as if his heart was being fried in oil.

[936 soldiers died... but not a single was left just wounded! This alone is enough to answer a lot of questions!]

[These soldiers had arrived here knowing full-well what was happening... and what they were supposed to do. They knew the ins-and-outs of the entire story. Wang Teng Long never conceals anything from his troops... except for some major strategic decisions.]

[So, they grieve!]

[These soldiers didn't regret being killed by King of Hell Chu. That is because they were here to kill King of Hell Chu. Therefore, being killed by the enemy instead... is only natural.]

Chapter 372: Killing a Person is Fine; Committing Such an Outrageous Act is Out of Question!

They were faced with a lone enemy. However, it was related to the war between two countries.

The Golden Horse Riders Department should've been the main force to chase down the enemy. Yet, they had arrived after the battle was long over. Their late arrival was the biggest cause of this regiment's anger and resentment.

They wouldn't have had to sacrifice so many brothers if they had arrived earlier. In fact, the enemy may not have been able to get away. Therefore, their greatest resentment wasn't towards King of Hell Chu... but towards the Golden Horse Riders Department.

The over 400 soldiers who were collecting the corpses in the battlefield suddenly burst into tears after they heard Jing Meng Hun's apology. They had started to cry bitterly. [Brothers, you died; you've sacrificed your lives, but the party guilty for the loss of your lives has apologized...]

[Though it's only a small apology...]

Jing Meng Hun had a heavy heart. He felt that he didn't have the right to face this group of ordinary soldiers. He hurriedly led the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department, and rushed in the direction of the army's departure; he started to follow their trail at the maximum speed.

The several hundred experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department felt that they had lost face when that young soldier had lashed-out at them. How could they endure something like that? However... many people had died because of their fault... so there was bound to be some public-resentment towards them.

[We came late; who can we blame for that? We had come to an agreement that they'll step-up the barracks and prevent the enemy from making an escape. We would then deal with the task of the real fighting, and capture the enemy. However, their role had inverted since the battle had ended by the time we arrived…]

Chu Yang continued to push forward at the front. He frantically urged his horse and flitted across the flat ground like a shooting-star. The army was in hot pursuit behind him; it was getting closer and closer.

Unfortunately, this road was a wide expanse of flat land. It didn't have any forks in the road. In fact, it didn't have any crossroads. There were towering mountains on either side of the road, but there was no sign of forests.

Chu Yang felt the inner side of his thigh that was being rubbed against the saddle was causing damage to his skin…

Wang Teng Long's eyes were tenaciously tracking the rider they were chasing. He had been issuing orders incessantly. About a 1000 people had dismounted their horses midway. They had then charged forward on foot.

This wasn't to support the chase. This was rather a part of Wang Teng Long's plan. [The enemy is a lone man on a lone horse. The horse won't be able to run for long. We must conserve our horsepower; first vacate a thousand horses and choose a thousand elites to pursue him by using their own strength. The thousand troops at the front will inevitably experience a lack of horsepower over time. Their tired horses will then be replaced with these thousand without the slightest delay. Our chasing power would be more than doubled as compared to the enemy!]

This was the law of pursuit.

It was common sense that if several thousand men were chasing a lone person down… the said-person would run out of luck sooner or later.

Then, he would gradually be overtaken.

However, Wang Teng Long didn't dare say that he was sure of the outcome when he looked at the man they were chasing. King of Hell Chu was wise and well-versed in all sorts of trickeries. Who knew what bizarre method he would use next?

Therefore, Wang Teng Long didn't dare to be negligent. He continued to push forward as he persistently accelerated his speed. [I must capture King of Hell Chu on this straight mountainous road!]

[King of Hell Chu will have countless strategies to put to use for an escape once the terrain becomes complex... he could even go into hiding. Capturing him won't be easy then.]

Chu Yang was sweating profusely. It seemed like he was drenched in rains of sweat. The pursuers were less than 500 feet behind. His face showed that he was calm and composed. However, he was somewhat impatient. He was aware that he would eventually die at the hands of these ten thousand elite soldiers if the chase continued.

The horse had started to sweat profusely as well. It was panting heavily, and was emitting white vapours from its nose along with 'whistling' sounds. It was obvious that it wouldn't last for long.

Chu Yang coldly snorted in his heart. However, he didn't have any intention to give-up. [I expected nothing more than this. No more... and no less.]

Soon, the road curved and changed directions. Chu Yang suddenly saw a bright lush-green growth of plants not far from him. It unexpectedly seemed very lovely to his eyes. Chu Yang ferociously whipped the horse's back and leaned forward slightly; he seemed prepared to dash forward at any time...

Chu Yang could finally see some hope of getting away from this trouble. However, his heart was as calm as ice.

Chu Yang changed directions. The soldiers shouted as they saw the dense forest and the many continuous mountains up ahead.

“Release the arrows! Do not hesitate; shoot him down at all costs!”

Wang Teng Long hadn’t changed directions yet. However, he heard the shouts of his men and realized what had happened. He made a prompt decision and issued an order.

They had pursued him swiftly over the course of this entire chase. However, shooting arrows hadn’t been fruitful. The arrows-shot couldn’t reduce the speed of the enemy since he was out of their firing range. In fact, some of the arrows had ended-up injuring the men and horses on their own side instead. Moreover, they didn’t have many bows and arrows; therefore, they had to give-up for the lack of a better option.

However, they didn’t have the time to think about all this…

They released the arrows once again. They didn’t hope to kill King of Hell Chu on the spot. The mere addition of a few scars would be enough as per Wang Teng Long’s tentative plan. It would somewhat increase the certainty of him being captured once the Golden Horse Riders Department were to join the hunt.

The order was issued, and thousands of arrows were shot at once. Some of the officers even threw their weapons at Chu Yang.

A long and loud whistling sound was heard as Chu Yang’s body swiftly fled from the horseback, and soared into the air. He then transformed into a group of abstract shadow, and rushed-out like a lightning.

His body had left the steed’s saddle. However, the powerful recoil generated from his leaping-force had obstructed the speed of the steed. This had caused a considerable reduction in its speed. It was soon turned into a huge ‘iron hedgehog’ by the rain of arrows. It moved forward for a few feet, and then collapsed with a loud

‘bang’.

However, Chu Yang’s body had already borrowed strength from the recoil. He dashed into the dense forest like a meteor. One could only see the dense cover of leaves shake in his wake as his figure disappeared.

Then, a thunderous noise resounded unceasingly. About a dozen great trees on the periphery of this forest fell down. These trees had smashed-down on a squadron of mounted soldiers.

The men shouted and the horses neighed. Dozens of horses had anxiously tried to dodge the falling trees... but were too late. The horsemen frantically tried to escape. They tumbled down from the horsebacks and rolled on the ground several times. They somehow managed to avoid being crushed; but the horses weren’t as lucky. They were crushed by the falling trees, and their blood splashed everywhere.

These great trees were so thick that it would take 5-6 people to completely wrap their arms around the girth of one such tree. And dozens of them had suddenly collapsed. This had covered the entire entrance to the jungle. People could still go in through the blocked entrance. But riding-in on a horse was impossible.

Chu Yang heaved a sigh of relief. He had reached a critical situation where he would’ve completely exhausted himself like a dried up oil lamp... despite the fact that he had the Nine Tribulations Sword’s strong support.

[Perhaps it would’ve been difficult for me to escape this calamity if this forest hadn’t appeared.]

He pushed his exhausted body as he ventured into the deepest parts of the forest.

He took out a bottle of Vitality Spring Water as he ran, and raised his head to chug it down in one shot. The burning sensation in his throat gradually subsided after he had swallowed an entire bottle

of Vitality Spring Water.

Wang Teng Long waved his hand. The cavalry squads behind him stopped.

“Send a message and notify the army on the opposite side of the mountain. Ask them to take over the mission of capturing King of Hell Chu,” Wang Teng Long shouted in one long breath.

[The next step is a battle in the jungle. But if my ordinary soldiers go inside this primitive jungle where one can’t even see their own hand… won’t they end-up getting slaughtered?]

[Only the martial experts have the ability to capture this King of Hell Chu…]

“General, I have an idea… ” Deputy General Sun Fuhu’s breathing hadn’t settled yet. This journey had made him unbearably tired, but he tried to put forward a proposal nonetheless, “How about we set this entire mountain on fire?”

“Set fire to the mountain?” Wang Teng Long frowned. He raised his head to feel the whirring of the wind. It was a south-eastern wind. Then, he looked at the mountain range that extended into the distance for thousands of miles. He couldn’t help but sigh.

[These mountains are filled with many oil-trees such as Cyprus and Pine trees. If they were to catch fire — the raging fire would probably sweep across the entire forest and turn this lush greenery into ashes!]

Wang Teng Long hesitated for a moment, and slowly said, “It’s too malicious to burn down over 60 Km2 of forest area for one person.”

He sighed again. He was visibly in a very contradictory state of mind. He eventually spoke up after a long silence, “This mountain-forest is massive, and consists of thousands of mountains and rivers that stretch across 1500km to the north and 800km to the south.

“This mountain forests lies in the territory of Great Zhao… ” Wang Teng Long forced a bitter smile, “Great Zhao has at least thirty million people whose lives depend on this mountain forest for food and fuel. Lighting a fire to this forest is equivalent to burning the lives of 30 million citizens of the Great Zhao!

“It’s not like I don’t want to… but I honestly can’t!” Wang Teng Long said in a somewhat melancholic tone.

Sun Fu Hu lowered his head in shame.

“If a fire were spread in this forest — then our primary objective would’ve been to put out the fire… even if King of Hell Chu was inside. Therefore, we certainly shouldn’t be thinking of committing such arson!” Wang Teng Long further said, “This mountain forest has been here… for a period of ten thousand years. How can we destroy it for something so insignificant? Wouldn’t that turn us into eternal sinners?”

“The subordinate was being impulsive,” Sun Fu Hu was ashamed of himself.

“No; you’re not. I was tempted to do it as well!” Wang Teng Long said as he took a deep breath. “Setting the mountain on fire would get the job done. However, we can’t do such a thing. Therefore, I resorted to convincing you… in order to convince myself in the process.”

He took a deep breath. He then heaved a long sigh. He continued to do this for quite a while. Then, he powerlessly said, “Even if this mountain forest wasn’t located in Great Zhao… and instead was in Iron Cloud… we still couldn’t have burned it. This forest is very close to a human settlement… We’re soldiers. We can savagely kill people in the battlefield. But committing such an outrageous act is out of question!”

“Yes! I will solemnly follow the general’s instructions till the very end,” Sun Fu Hu accepted willingly.

Wang Teng Long commanded the men to wait. Jing Meng Hun and the other experts eventually arrived like a whirlwind.

“Has King of Hell Chu entered this mountain-forest?” Jing Meng Hun frowned, “Why didn’t you pursue him?”

The tone with which these words were said was very harsh. Therefore, Wang Teng Long frowned in retaliation to supress his rage.

“That’s your task!” Wang Teng Long spoke disdainfully as he casted a meaningful glance towards Jing Meng Hun, “King Level Master Jing, the Golden Horse Riders Department must give an explanation regarding the casualties of my subordinate brothers!”

He paused, and then slowly said, “Even Prime Minister Diwu would have to give me an explanation if he were at fault in this matter.”

Jing Meng Hun was suddenly stunned. This general was usually very calm and collected. However, Jing Meng Hun could sense Senior General Wang’s anger by listening to his words. He could tell that this General was on the verge of erupting; he could tell that such anger couldn’t be controlled.

Jing Meng Hun knew that he had fallen short. Therefore, he couldn’t yell even if he wanted to. So, he resigned to remaining speechless.

Wang Teng Long coldly snorted as he mounted his horse and straightened his back like a javelin. Then, he slowly spoke as a chilly look surfaced on his face, “I, Wang Teng Long, am not a person whom you King Level Master Jing can interrogate! Whether I pursue or not… it’s not something that you would get involved with!”

Then, Wang Teng Long waved his hand and ordered, “Withdraw!”

The army followed closely behind him. They passed by Jing

Meng Hun and his men as they evacuated the area. Their eyes shone with such flare that it seemed as if they'd eat Jing Meng Hun and his men alive.

"You!" a Revered Martial Artist shouted angrily from behind Jing Meng Hun. He then pointed his halberd at the General. He was about to rain curses at the General, but was held down by Jing Meng Hun. However, he suddenly realized that several hundred archers of the General's army had nocked their arrows in their bows. And those cold and eerie looking arrowhead were aimed at him.

Chapter 373: Wolves!

The army began to withdraw; this withdrawal had taken place because of the deterrence caused by the archers. The archers put away their bows and arrows once the army had fully retreated. Then, they spurred their unwilling steeds and left.

“This has happened because of our fault. We must make sure that this war doesn’t become a big problem for the Prime Minister,” Jing Meng Hun sighed. He was extremely angry because of King of Hell Chu’s escape. He ordered with clenched teeth, “Chase!

“Divide yourselves into twenty groups of thirty members each. Each group will take along a spirit mastiff and begin the pursuit into the forest. Use the secret signal of the Golden Horse Riders Department to keep in touch with each other. Search around the clock; catch King of Hell Chu. He had sustained some serious injuries. He must be exhausted since he was besieged and chased down by the army. We mustn’t fail again.”

Jing Meng Hun and others entered the jungle cautiously.

A distant howling of a wolf was heard…

Jing Meng Hun’s eyes lit up. Everyone looked at each other. [What if after going through so much difficulty… King of Hell Chu doesn’t have anything to eat and he happens to bump into a wild wolf? What if he wants to kill the wolf to eat its meat?]

[En… this is a possibility.]

Jing Meng Hun muttered to himself. He then waved his hand and said, “Two squads will go and take a look… Be careful of the wolf packs.” Sixty people split-up into two squads and dashed away with a ‘whooshing’ sound.

It was hard to tell how far Chu Yang had penetrated into the jungle.

The forest was lusher when Chu Yang had entered it. He would

jump onto a tree and then halt for a while. He needed to rest in order to recover. Moreover, he needed to keep an eye on the situation and make good use of his agility. There would be no hope of his survival if he were to run blindly in panic.

This mountain-forest was different from the previous one. That forest had many weeds; there weren't many lush trees. There weren't many pine and cypress trees either. However, the pine and cypress trees occupied nearly half of this forest's area. In fact, the other kinds were hardly visible...

Therefore, it was necessary to extract the juices from pine and cypress trees as their pungent smell would hide the orchid fragrance that emanated from his body.

This was difficult to bear...

But, Chu Yang had no other choice.

One could use green camouflage to hide in the previous forest. However, one needed to use a black or dark-green camouflage in this primitive mountain-forest.

Chu Yang tidied himself up; he felt that his physical strength had recovered quite a lot. He took out some dry rations to eat from the Nine Tribulations Space. He drank a bellyful of water after he had filled his stomach with the rations. Then, he continued his flight from danger.

He calculated the distance – Great Zhao was around 1000-2000 kilometres from here.

He had only walked for a few kilometres when a pair of lantern-like glowing eyes appeared in front of him from the midst of the lush green vegetation. Chu Yang became tense as he saw them. But then, he was overjoyed.

A wolf!

[If there's a wolf in a mountain-forest like this ... then there has to be wolf packs as well.]

The wild wolf was as tall as a calf. Its black body was healthy and vigorous. It was surprised when he saw a stranger. Then, it assumed an attacking posture; it didn't seem to be afraid.

Chu Yang noticed a row of shrivelled nipples as he glanced at the wolf's abdomen; it was a female wolf.

Chu Yang became even more confident. [A female wolf... that's even better.]

The she-wolf howled and pounced at him like lightning. They collided with each other. Chu Yang pounded a fierce punch on the she-wolf's stomach. It was sent flying several feet. It let out a painful cry as it bumped into a big tree.

Even the Sword Spirit couldn't understand what Chu Yang was trying to do.

[This is a terrible situation – you're running for your life and there is a shortage of time. Moreover, you could've easily dodged this wolf with your agility. Why are you provoking it? Don't you have anything better to do in your idle time, huh?]

However, Chu Yang continued to punch the she-wolf; no matter where and how it tried to escape. Chu Yang continued to pound his heavy punches on the most vulnerable part of its body; where the pain was most difficult for it to bear.

Finally, the she-wolf couldn't endure the pain any longer; it couldn't dodge his punches either. It issued a high-pitch howl as its mouth fell to the ground...

Chu Yang smiled as he moved sideways and broke the wolf's hind leg. Its howls grew more desperate after it was struck by such an unbearable pain...

Chu Yang raised his head upwards as the wolf's howls rose in intensity. He then let out a blood-curdling scream; it seemed as if he was in so much pain that he wished that he were dead... "Ah... Ah... "

The Sword Spirit trembled, [You aren't even wounded you old fool! So why are you screaming so miserably? In fact, you wouldn't have screamed so ridiculously even if it had bitten you... right? The injuries you suffered earlier were far more serious and painful... but I didn't even hear you groan...]

However, Chu Yang continued to scream miserably; so much so that his screams suppressed the wolf's howls...

His body shot-out like a meteor as he screamed. He then moved around in the surrounding area. He grabbed many hares and pheasants. Then, he tossed them into the air. After that, he unsheathed the Nine Tribulations Sword and unleashed a burst of light-balls into the sky. The captured animals got dismembered into pieces as these light balls exploded. Chu Yang stroked his sleeves and scattered the parts of the animal carcasses within a radius of a hundred feet.

The she-wolf lifted its head and screamed more miserably since it had gotten stimulated by inhaling the strong smell of blood...

Chu Yang turned a deaf ear to its cries. He tore a strip of cloth from the front of his jacket and tied the wolf's body to a tree. Then, he took out a barrel of juice that he had extracted from a pine tree. He raised the barrel and poured the juice over his body. After that, he climbed-up a big tree and jumped from one branch to another until he gradually vanished into the distance...

The wolf's howls continued to be heard in the distance. 'Rustle' 'Rustle' A number of wolves came leaping from all directions. The entire forest soon seemed to be crawling with undulating waves of wolf packs...

The unity of the wolf-race was being revealed in its entirely.

Chu Yang had travelled far in the opposite direction before the wolves had arrived. Moreover, he had gone to a higher altitude. So, there was no need to be scared since he was far away from danger...

A pleasantly surprised cry sounded from afar, “King of Hell Chu is over there… ”

The Sword Spirit finally understood Chu Yang’s intentions and smiled bitterly, “You’re insane.”

Chu Yang laughed loudly as he continued to advance forward…

This forest seemed as if it hadn’t been left unexplored for thousands of years. How many great wolves would reside in this primitive forest?

Chu Yang didn’t know the answer; he didn’t intend to seek it either. However, he was sure that Jing Meng Hun and his men would arrive at that scene soon; and they’d well count the number of wolves…

The two squads of the Golden Horse Riders Department that totalled to sixty people had heard the wolf’s howls. They had come to further examine the situation. Suddenly, they had heard the miserable screams of King of Hell Chu coming from afar. Everyone had got excited and rushed in the direction of the sound…

However, their hair had stood on their ends as they approached the place. The howling sounds had started to echo from all directions; their intensity could easily make a person’s head explode.

Rustle Rustle Rustle…

“This is bad! It’s a wolf pack!” One among them was quite perceptive. He shouted as soon as he understood the scenario. Everyone’s heads turned numb as they realized this. They quietly tiptoed their way forward and took a look.

[My heavens… my earth… my God… Wolves! So many wolves! There are so many wolves that we can’t even count them…]

[Boo hoo…]

A timid young guy sat down on the ground and nearly started to

cry, [Mommy, how did I end up in the wolves' lair?]

They saw gigantic wolves surging towards them like waves from all directions. The figures of greenish-black furred-wolves flickered in the forest. Numerous wolf packs had assembled within in a timeframe of one or two breaths. Moreover, an endless number of wolves were still rushing-over from distant places...

The first wolves to arrive had issued a long and loud howl after they had caught a sniff of the blood...

"Hurry! Let's withdraw quickly!" a Revered Martial Artist reminded everyone as his complexion turned deathly pale and his legs began to tremble.

The cultivation of people in these squads wasn't weak. Each one of them could deal with dozens... or even more than a hundred wolves without a problem... However, there were no odds of success for them inside this jungle since it was a residence to multiple packs of wolves...

Several thousand wolves had gathered before their eyes. In addition, more and more of them were endlessly rushing-over from distant places with each passing second.

The sixty people began to retreat. But, it was too late...

It needn't be mentioned what kind of smell the bodies of sixty people would release when they gather in a primitive forest. Moreover, wolves are famous for their impeccable sense of smell. Therefore, the smell of these strangers in an almost-untouched and primitive forest couldn't possibly be any more obvious...

Their smell was like a lighthouse that was spreading its rays in a dark abyss.

The squads had brought two spirit mastiffs with them. These mastiffs became frightened and started to wail once they were confronted by so many wolves. Their wails further gave away the location of the two squads.

Who would've thought that these outstanding people who had arrived to capture King of Hell Chu would end-up becoming the targets of these wolves?

Several pairs of green and lustrous eyes turned towards them. Then, loud howls were heard. After that, hundreds of shadows leapt-up in the sky and rushed towards them.

"Aowooo... " One mustn't misunderstand this genuine wolf-howl.

The wolves pounced upon these people like mighty waves.

The frightened screams, the sound of unsheathing weapons... and the sound of curses – resounded in unison.

This added to the wolves' frenzy...

More wolves came-over and crowded the place...

The howls of the wolves could be heard from the other direction as well. This was followed by noises of fierce fighting, screams, miserable cries for help, whimpers of the wolves and the blood-curdling screams of the people...

This meant that the other squads were also being attacked by the wolves.

Jing Meng Hun's rage-filled scream was heard; even a Ninth Grade King Level Expert couldn't avoid being discovered by the wolves. The smell of blood had diffused in the forest. This made the wolves even more intense. Moreover, countless wolves still rushed-over like wind from all parts of the forest to participate in the battle.

[It's necessary to annihilate these repulsive humans in order to clean our territory; these humans have barged into it. This is our realm.]

Wooo Wooo...

"King of Hell Chu! You despicable and vile fellow! You malicious

bastard! You… ”Jing Meng Hun cut-down the wolves as he rushed through them at a lightning speed. He was so angry that he felt that his abdomen was about to burst open; he felt everything turning dark before his eyes. In fact, he nearly succumbed to angina because of his rage.

[This bastard has attracted tens of thousands of wolves in order to escape.] Jing Meng Hun had gathered the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department with painstaking efforts. Now, he looked-on as these experts got submerged into the crowd of wolves. He felt like vomiting blood as he saw his men fighting a desperate battle of life and death with wild beasts.

[I didn’t gather these people to kill wolves…]

“King of Hell Chu, you will die a dog’s death!” Jing Meng Hun cursed; he was so furious that he started to feel dizzy and light-headed. He had been caught up in an arduous and deadly war with the wolves…

He must go after the enemy… But, that would mean leaving these men on their own to confront tens of thousands of hungry wolves… They would all die!

How could this not distress Jing Meng Hun?

Chapter 374: The Clouds of War Gather!

Iron Cloud military front...

Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian entered the army camp quietly. Then, they met Tie Long Cheng. The three of them started to eliminate the spies and traitors within the army.

Tie Long Cheng assisted in this matter with his both his hands and legs. He gnashed his teeth in hatred; he felt ashamed of the fact that there were traitors within their own ranks. He intended to weed them out. However, his intention was being carried out very smoothly.

Tie Bu Tian had never thought that he would get stuck at the military front. He and Wu Qian Qian had been using secretive methods to eliminate the enemy's spies in a silent manner. However, they had discovered that the two nations were already at war. In fact, they were in a situation of imminent peril.

Great Zhao had started to increase the number of their troops since the start of the year. Soldiers had arrived in Great Zhao from everywhere – in the same manner in which river-streams converge with the ocean.

Therefore, Iron Cloud's situation had started to become perilous.

Tie Bu Tian and Tie Long Cheng had felt that they had no other option but to deploy Iron Cloud's army against Great Zhao's aggression. Tie Bu Tian later discovered that about one-third of the troops had already been deployed at the frontline.

This was equivalent to a large-scale final battle.

Even the Emperor was at the military front, but he couldn't move a single step. In fact, there was no time to carry-out the Emperor's Expedition Ceremony.

However, Tie Bu Tian didn't care about these things.

But, this didn't mean that others wouldn't care either. The Emperor's Expedition Ceremony — the ceremony may be a waste of manpower and resources. However, it played an important role in boosting the army's morale.

Therefore, Tie Long Cheng ordered the high-ranking military officers to assemble at the frontline. Then, the Emperor's Expedition Ceremony was held; the Emperor took a vow in front of the troops. Tie Bu Tian made a high-profile appearance before the Iron Cloud army, and delivered an inspiring speech. This boosted the troops' morale – it almost reached the super-heated stage.

However, Tie Bu Tian realized that something was off.

He pledged before the troops, and then turned towards Tie Long Cheng. He then told him that there was a possibility of the war being shifted to an earlier date. Therefore, he decided to reassign the entire army of Iron Cloud, and made the soldiers rush to the frontline.

Tie Long Cheng was startled by this decision. However, he agreed once he had given it some thought. Therefore, the troops of the Iron Cloud army started to gather from every part of the nation.

This decision had been taken two days prior to Diwu Qing Rou's decision to prepare for the final battle; Great Zhao's national army had started to assemble at the frontline two days later. The storms of war had started to shroud the skies of the two nations.

Both the nations had started to prepare for the final battle at the same time. It seemed as if they had made a prior agreement. This odd coincidence made Tie Long Cheng 'feel ashamed of being inferior' for the first time. [This is the first time that I'm feeling inferior to my Imperial Nephew.]

[I must say that Tie Bu Tian's grasp over the state of affairs, as well as his sense of sniffing-out the danger, surpasses that of an average person. His decision-making skills aren't sloppy either.]

Tie Long Cheng had initially anticipated that this battle would start after a year. However, he had to admit that he was mistaken.

Tie Bu Tian's decision – to precede Diwu Qing Rou's date of battle by two days – had bought precious time for Iron Cloud Nation.

However, Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian were deeply worried.

The two of them had tried their best to hide this from others. However, it didn't mean that they could also hide it from their own selves. They were anxious because King of Hell Chu… was still in Great Zhao.

[The war can start any time. Why hasn't Chu Yang come back yet?]

The news of King of Hell Chu causing havoc in Great Zhao was heard almost every day. The two of them would heave a sigh of relief when they'd hear such news. However, they'd still be anxious about his safety.

Chu Yang had weakened the strength of the Great Zhao Nation; he had crippled their army's fighting strength. Moreover, he had acquired extremely valuable information. However, his safety was at stake.

The people of Bu Tian Pavilion felt that their lives were in danger; Minister Chu's temper was getting worse with each passing day. Initially, Wu Qian Qian's temperament was like a volcano. Now, it was like a volcano on top of an iceberg; Wu Qian Qian was having mood swings. This combination of fire and ice had increased everyone's misery by two folds. Wu Qian Qian would berate the people if she wasn't satisfied; so much so that they felt like taking their own lives.

Cheng Zi Ang and Chen Yu Tong were so cautious that they felt as if they were walking on thin ice. How was it possible for these two underlings to execute everything with perfection? How could they always get Minister Chu's regards? Therefore, it had become

common for the both of them to remain under pressure.

Minister Chu's mood became more and more irritable with each passing day. In fact, his patience started to leave him as the days passed...

It had been several days... but there had been no news of Chu Yang. Wu Qian Qian's emotions were no longer in her control; her thoughts were in a complete turmoil. Tie Bu Tian could remain calm and composed; Wu Qian Qian couldn't...

Four days later...

Sect Master Wu Yun Liang went to meet Minister Chu to discuss some matters. However, Minister Chu locked his doors and refused to see him.

Sect Master Wu was so angered that he nearly pulled-out his own beard...

...Present day...

Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian were clad in black robes; they sat in the main tent of the army camp in an upright manner. A map was placed on the ground before them; they were staring at it.

A high-ranking military advisor was also present. He was explaining the military situation with respect to the current deployment of Great Zhao's troops; he was marking their positions on the map for further analysis.

Tie Long Cheng paced inside the tent with a serious look on his face.

"The ten great generals of Great Zhao have been dispatched." Tie Long Cheng's expressions turned even gloomier as he took a look at the enemy's deployments on the map.

Wu Qian Qian remained motionless; it seemed as if she hadn't heard anything.

'Oh...' Tie Bu Tian was surprised. He then said, "What then?"

Tie Long Cheng frowned and said, “Great Zhao’s top ten generals are titled the ‘Tigers and Dragons of Great Zhao’; I’ve been dealing with two of them for a decade. The first one is ‘Heavenly Dragon’ General Yu Han; he’s said to have fought a hundred battles. The second one is ‘Battle Maniac Dragon’ General Li Yi Zhong. Yu Han has a cold disposition and boasts the nickname — ‘Viper’. He’s an extremely fierce man. He attains victory at all costs once he decides to launch an attack. Li Yi Zhong is forthright… but crude. He and Yu Han complement each other. Beside their temperaments… their strategies are complementary as well. These two have the best tacit understanding amongst the ‘Tigers and Dragons of Great Zhao’. They previously had only five-hundred-thousand men under their command. But then, they increased the number of their troops; their combined military strength has reached one million.”

Tie Bu Tian nodded; he silently made a mental note of the names ‘Yu Han’ and ‘Li Yi Zhong’. He also memorized their descriptions.

“’Iron-blooded ‘Battle Dragon’ General Xiao Tian Yin has been guarding the eastern front of Great Zhao. Currently, he’s rushing here with five hundred thousand troops and horses.

“Troops to the southeast are stationed with ‘Black Tiger’ General Qiao Rui. The troops to the southwest are stationed with ‘White Tiger’ General Bai Chang Tian. The troops to the west will be stationed with ‘Purple Dragon’ General Yu Zi Long. In the Northwest… they will be stationed with ‘Silver Tiger’ General Long Ao. ‘Golden Tiger’ General Jin Nan Kai and ‘Jade Tiger’ General Yu Cheng Long will be in the South to subdue the Limitless Nation. ‘Soaring Dragon’ General Wang Teng Long is responsible for the task of coordinating between all these generals and providing backup… whenever necessary. Currently, he’s at the headquarters… waiting with his forces to come North.

“The total military force that Great Zhao has mobilized till now… is 4.5 million! Moreover, they have a large number of troops coming over endlessly.”

Everyone sucked in a cold breath as Tie Long Cheng finished speaking.

Tie Bu Tian wrinkled his brows; he looked at the positions of the ten 'Dragon and Tiger' ranked Generals on the map. He felt as if his heart was swaying like a flag.

The ten generals were at different positions; they had been positioned in the shape of an arrowhead – pointing in the direction of Iron Cloud. Tie Long Cheng would've immediately arranged for 200,000 soldiers to stand guard if it weren't for the support provided by Wu Yun Liang's Beyond the Heavens Sect. Iron Cloud was braced by the enemy from three sides.

"An important news has just arrived – Diwu Qing Rou has mobilized the entire nation's army; he has departed from Continent Centre. He is leading an army of two-hundred-thousand troops; he's headed this way..." Tie Long Cheng sighed, "Diwu Qing Rou is coming to the battlefield in person."

The people inside the tent shivered. They felt a chill running down their spines as they heard the name 'Diwu Qing Rou'.

"It seems that Diwu Qing Rou is going to concentrate his might to seize Iron Cloud," Tie Bu Tian's finger pointed at the position of his own army. He said with a smile, "If he can't take it by skill... then he will seize it by force, huh?

"Only 1.2 million soldiers of our army have been stationed at the frontline. Our total military strength won't be more than three million soldiers... even if all our troops arrive. Our enemy has 4.5 million soldiers in reserve; nearly two million of them have already arrived. ...Add this number to the one million soldiers who were originally stationed here – this means that the enemy will have three million soldiers at the frontline... But, the total strength of their army is closer to six million; that's almost twice as much as ours..."

Tie Long Cheng crossed his hands behind his back. His face

turned dark as he said, “The odds in this war aren’t in our favour.”

He stood-up and looked outside. Then, he sighed and said, “It seems that these 1500 kilometres of the Great Plains will turn into a bloody graveyard filled with the minced flesh of soldiers… ”

He added, “There’s nothing we can do about this…”

The 1500 kilometres of the Great Plains was the battlefield; but it wasn’t a flat plain. The battlefield ranged from east to west; it spanned across hundreds of kilometres. There were several great mountains in the middle. But, this region was prone to large-scale battles; and these battles seemed to take place all the time. It wasn’t possible to avoid fire-attacks in these battles. These attacks would burn-down the mountain-forests, and would leave behind only bare mountains. But now, several trees could be seen. It was because the trees had grown-back since a decade had gone-by without a major war to tell of…

The terrain consisted of mountain fields, hill basins, canyon cliffs and swamps. The rivers and lakes had made it more complex. Therefore, none of the two parties had dared to set-up a camp there. In fact, they hadn’t even dared to build a city or a defensive line.

These Great Plains had been used as a battlefield for thousands of years. But who wishes to allow the enemy to go one step beyond oneself? The enemy always poses a threat even if they don’t stand in your path.

“But… Great Zhao is bustling with several ridiculous rumours of late…” Tie Long Cheng had a serious expression on his face. He recollected himself and said, “I’m not talking about the disturbances of the past. I’ve recently received a military report that Diwu Qing Rou has made an enormous mistake. The report states that his anger has soared to the heavens. Even the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department have been dispatched.”

“En?” Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian stood-up in unison.

“What’s the matter?”

Chapter 375: What to do!

“The Golden Horse Riders Department is going after King of Hell Chu with all their strength… hahaha…” Tie Long Cheng was delighted. He added, “Reportedly… Diwu Qing Rou’s treasury was plundered by King of Hell Chu. In fact, the losses were disastrous; Diwu Qing Rou was extremely angry. So, he dispatched the entire personnel of the Golden Horse Riders Department to find him. Apparently… he’s coordinating with all levels of army officials to capture King of Hell Chu… and bring him to justice.”

He let out a laugh. “Isn’t King of Hell Chu sitting here – safe and sound? Diwu Qing Rou has been tricked…”

Tie Bu Tian shuddered; his complexion changed as he heard these words.

Wu Qian Qian clenched her fists tightly.

However, the deputy generals and advisors burst out laughing – as if they had heard a joke; they were overjoyed.

It was evident that Wu Qian Qian had made a great deal of progress under Chu Yang’s influence. Whether it was politics, military strategies or conspiracies… Chu Yang had taught her everything; he had used practical examples to teach her. He had withdrawn his support once she had begun to progress. Then, he had left for Great Zhao.

He had left Wu Qian Qian to take care of all the matters on her own.

Wu Qian Qian had implemented Chu Yang’s policies in a perfect manner. Moreover, she had an additional advantage of her feminine nature; she used her gentle and reserved persona to perform tasks in a better and flawless manner.

Therefore, the people of Bu Tian Pavilion had started to admire Minister Chu even more. In fact, even Tie Bu Tian thought that

Wu Qian Qian wasn't inferior to Chu Yang in any respect.

Tie Bu Tian had been engaged in overseeing the plans and battle-situation since he had arrived at the southern border; Tie Long Cheng had been busy with the matters of the army. Therefore, all the work related to espionage and weeding-out the traitors had been taken care-of by the Bu Tian Pavilion – under the leadership of Wu Qian Qian. Tie Long Cheng and his squad of old veterans had been amazed by Wu Qian Qian's ideas, well-calculated plans and ruthless cleansing. They were forced to admit that King of Hell Chu was at the peak of his power.

No one had any doubt about her being the real King of Hell Chu.

Therefore, Tie Long Cheng couldn't help but roll around with laughter as he heard about Diwu Qing Rou's plan to organize a nationwide man-hunt for King of Hell Chu.

Tie Long Cheng was sure that Diwu Qing Rou had been tricked. After all, the real King of Hell Chu was sitting with him.

This was great news for Tie Long Cheng; his overtly delighted mood and ability to rejoice in other people's misfortune were indescribable...

[Who can deceive Diwu Qing Rou like that?]

"Minister Chu, what are your thoughts on this matter?" Tie Long Cheng smiled as he asked Wu Qian Qian.

"That... is hard to say." Wu Qian Qian's mental state had got blurred; she was worried about Chu Yang.

Tie Long Cheng had been trying to talk to her since the time she had arrived here; he had been threatening her to fulfil 'the promise'.

[God only knows what kind of a promise Chu Yang has made to him?]

Wu Qian Qian would always reply with 'humph' or 'haha'; she

answered in neither positive nor negative. However, the more half-heartedly she answered... the more exhilarated Tie Long Cheng would become. Then, one day she used an indirect approach, and found out that Chu Yang had promised to give him a heavenly weapon.

It was a fact that other people didn't know much about Chu Yang. But, how could Wu Qian Qian not know? Chu Yang never dealt with people in a careless manner. Therefore, Wu Qian Qian couldn't believe that Chu Yang had promised to give a heavenly weapon to Tie Long Cheng.

So, she had refused to fulfil his wish. Tie Long Cheng was furious, but he couldn't displease King of Hell Chu. In fact, he had been left dumbfounded by Wu Qian Qian's domineering stance. Therefore, he had no other option but to drink a lot of wine and rock the table.

But, Wu Qian Qian hadn't yielded.

Therefore, the two of them had become arch-enemies.

Wu Qian Qian was strong. However, she was invisible to the army's high-ranking officials. It was Tie Long Cheng... who had established a position of authority amongst them.

He was regarded as the top-most person in the Iron Cloud army. Even inside the entire Iron Cloud Nation — he was only second to the Emperor in terms of authority.

High-ranking officers and military generals didn't dare to argue with him. They were so afraid of him that they pissed their pants if he stared at them. Even Wu Kuang Yun – one of the top ten great generals of the continent – had been granted severe punishment when he was caught by Tie Long Cheng a couple of days back...

However, King of Hell Chu hadn't been at a disadvantage even though he was shrouded in mystery. His domineering aura had made him as powerful as Tie Long Cheng. Therefore, he had

managed to remain calm and composed when Tie Long Cheng had rocked the table in anger.

How could an ordinary person be capable of doing this?

“Why’s it hard to say?” Tie Long Cheng asked.

“That’s because you aren’t revealing the full details about the situation… such as… whether or not Diwu Qing Rou has captured this so-called King of Hell Chu? What’s the status of the troops of the Golden Horse Riders Department who had set-out to capture him? Has the Golden Horse Riders Department suffered these losses because of this King of Hell Chu?”

Wu Qian Qian snorted, “You didn’t divulge these details. Yet… you expect me to give my thoughts on this matter?”

Tie Bu Tian interposed in her favor, “Indeed! What’s going on, Second Uncle? You haven’t explained anything clearly. You are making things difficult for the man… you know?”

Tie Long Cheng felt that something was wrong. [Could it be that this matter isn’t actually funny? Why did these two not even smile?]

He coughed and started to recount the tale; Tie Bu Tian and Wu Qian Qian straightened-up their backs to listen intently. They started to ponder in their hearts…

Tie Bu Tian’s complexion turned pale as he heard that King of Hell Chu was fatally wounded, and was being pursued by the Golden Horse Riders Department while fleeing towards Iron Cloud. Wu Qian Qian trembled as she heard this. Her hands were tightly clenched inside her black robe.

Tie Bu Tian’s facial expressions usually conveyed an impression as if he was wearing a special iron mask. His face was usually expressionless. However, his complexion turned deathly pale as he heard Tie Long Cheng’s words; the fluctuations in his heart became obvious.

Tie Bu Tian couldn't sleep that night. He paced back-and-forth in his tent the entire night; his thoughts were in chaos.

The loud voice of an Imperial bodyguard was heard from outside the door, "Who is it? … Oh! It's the Minister…"

Wu Qian Qian stepped inside; she was wearing a black robe.

"Your Majesty, what do you intend to do about this matter?" Wu Qian Qian asked hurriedly. Previously, she had made-up her mind that she wouldn't go to Tie Bu Tian's tent on her own; no matter what. That was because she felt strangely threatened by Tie Bu Tian. Therefore, she had always been on her guard.

Initially, she had thought that Tie Bu Tian held improper ambitions regarding her; she was afraid that he might overstep the bounds. However, she had felt later… that Tie Bu Tian might rob her of something very precious…

This was an incredible feeling. Even Wu Qian Qian wasn't aware about the source and reason behind this feeling. In fact, she didn't know why that thought had crossed her mind… she didn't even know what she was afraid of losing…

However, her heart hadn't been at ease because of Chu Yang's present situation. Therefore, she had gone to look for Tie Bu Tian; this was very unlike-her. It was always Tie Bu Tian who'd come to look for her in the Bu Tian Pavilion.

"What can I do?" Tie Bu Tian snorted.

"En? What do you mean?" Wu Qian Qian retorted furiously, "Why can't you do anything? Tie Bu Tian, you're a scheming monarch… aren't you? You're cruel and filled with toxic filth. Chu Yang has done so much for you. He almost turned the world around for you. But, you aren't the least bit concerned when he's in danger?"

Wu Qian Qian was so angry that she had forgotten that she was standing before the Emperor. She asked out-rightly; without any

trace of politeness in her tone.

“Nonsense! Who says that I’ve given-up?” Tie Bu Tian was breathless. “You damned servant-girl! What have you been thinking in your rotten head?”

“Then you… ” Wu Qian Qian was stunned.

[Why is the sound of Tie Bu Tian’s words so intense? His tone is entirely different. This is the first time that I’ve seen him so flustered…]

“I was thinking of an appropriate way to bring back Minister Chu,” Tie Bu Tian sighed. He clenched his right palm into a fist, and fiercely hit his left palm with it. It was difficult for him to talk. He was losing his patience even though he was trying his best to control himself.

“Bring him back; we must take immediate action,” Wu Qian Qian’s eyes shone brightly.

“I wish it was that easy…” Tie Bu Tian sighed, “The distance from here to Continent Centre is 6500 kilometres. We are at the border of Iron Cloud. So, even after crossing 6500 kilometres… one will still be inside the territory of the enemy. Six million troops of Great Zhao have been positioned on the other side of the border. We can’t get through.

“But, if Chu Yang uses his strength to come all the way here… then we can rescue him in the last phase of his escape.” Tie Bu Tian sounded helpless.

[How will Chu Yang cover a distance of 6500 kilometres on his own? When will he arrive? He’ll have to play hide-and-seek with the entire nation of Great Zhao. Moreover, the enemy can easily block his path since they’re aware of his destination. How will he be able to go through such a perilous journey?]

[Even a Ninth Grade King Level Master won’t be able to crash his way through; he would certainly die.]

[Even an Emperor Level Expert would lose his life if he were to rush all the way here...]

Wu Qian Qian's body swayed in despair. She spoke hatefully, "You mean your plan is that we don't do anything? Just wait for him? Do you think this is a possibility? Tie Bu Tian... you're heartless! You have no intention to save him..."

"Shut your mouth!" Tie Bu Tian scolded. But then, he softened down.

Wu Qian Qian snorted, and took a seat. She didn't realize that she had sat down in Tie Bu Tian's seat. She didn't stand-up to leave either. Her intention was clear, [I won't leave until and unless you give me an answer...]

Tie Bu Tian was burning with impatience; he thought about every little detail related to the matter. He paced back-and-forth for a while, and then finally spoke-up, "If Minister Chu were to return... then he won't walk through towns and cities; he would certainly lose his life if he did. There's only one way for him to escape – by crossing the mountain-forest."

"Mountain-forest?" Wu Qian Qian's spirits seemed to have lifted.

"There's a shortcut to the Qilang Mountains through the mountain-forest. He must enter the 'thousand-layered forest' from there. This forest is spread across 1500 kilometres. After passing through this forest... he'll come across a mountain-pass which will take him to Sun City. From there... he can rush into the Heaven-Reaching forest through the Golden Star mountain-pass. Then, he'll arrive at the submerged marshland. He can enter the Great Mount Ba after crossing the marshland. After that, he can enter the continuous mountain-forests. From here... he will have to cross 4000 kilometres to make his way through the Snow-Capped Mountains and past the ice peaks... until he finally crosses the Jade Snow Mountain-Range. From there... he can enter the continuous mountain-range of Beyond the Heavens Sect. We can help him

there. But, we're helpless before that."

Tie Bu Tian had carefully considered and thought-over the details. He had stated the only feasible route through which Chu Yang could escape.

He believed that Chu Yang would choose that route. In fact, Chu Yang had taken the exact-same route. He had been engaging the enemy across the 6500 kilometres as he fled towards them...

Chapter 376: Initiates Attack On His Own Accord!

Tie Bu Tian was calculating numbers. However, Wu Qian Qian had given-up hope.

“One can’t accomplish such a thing on his own!” Wu Qian Qian jumped-up in anger as she said, “Even a man of iron would perish if were to take such a route. And… Chu Yang is a human… made of flesh and blood. Moreover, he’s seriously injured. Also… the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department are constantly chasing him. Are you just going to watch with folded arms?”

“It may be impossible for a man of iron… but it isn’t impossible for Chu Yang,” Tie Bu Tian replied coldly.

Tie Bu Tian felt as if his heart was on fire. He was as worried as Wu Qian Qian. He wanted to grab Wu Qian Qian’s collar and scream, [I’m also worried about him. No one could wish for his safety more than me. Because… because…]

But, he couldn’t say this; he couldn’t scream either. He could only hide his feeling.

“Then, I must go to Beyond the Heavens Sect… and wait,” Wu Qian Qian got-up to leave; she seemed to have made a decision.

“You? What can you possibly gain by going there? It wouldn’t be of any use even if you go with 200,000 of our men. Moreover, you wouldn’t be able to coordinate with the army.” Tie Bu Tian snorted and said, “I must go!”

“You?” Wu Qian Qian was surprised. [The Emperor of the nation wants to leave the military front on the verge of the break-out of a war?]

“Don’t forget that the concerned road is a battlefield. 500,000 of Diwu Qing Rou’s men have set-out for that place.”

Tie Bu Tian continued in a heavy tone, “Second Imperial Uncle has been managing things for the last twenty years. As long as we have him here... our defence is impregnable. However, that location is favorable... We need someone to manage it for our strategic advantage. I and Second Imperial Uncle will part ways. I’ll go and defend that place. Second Imperial Uncle wouldn’t refuse. That’s because that place is safer than this place in his opinion.”

Wu Qian Qian was silent.

[Indeed... No wonder Diwu Qing Rou has deemed it as an essential target. It’s because the mountainous terrain is high and dangerous. Moreover, it’s easy to guard. Even ten-thousand men wouldn’t be able to open the mountain-pass if a single man stood guarding it.]

[Several million troops can simultaneously fight in the battlefield here... whereas less than 10,000 men can fight there at any given time.]

[And these 10,000 people will include soldiers from both the sides. Iron Cloud Citadel stands in the steepest and the most crucial area.]

[Diwu Qing Rou has allocated 500,000 soldiers for this attack; it’s on an unprecedented scale.]

“Fine... I’ll go with you.” Wu Qian Qian stood up as she spoke, “Let’s go together.”

“No, you can’t go.” There was a strange sparkle in Tie Bu Tian’s eyes, “Second Imperial Uncle is under a lot of pressure. Moreover, he’ll have no one to consult once I leave. So, he may take arbitrary decisions. It’ll be risky to confront Diwu Qing Rou in this manner. So, it’s necessary that you stay behind. It’ll be of great help; even if you only provide consultation as an advisor.”

Wu Qian Qian frowned. She then replied with a stubborn look on

her face, “That’s out of question! I have to go. My heart won’t be at ease until and unless I see him return… safe and sound.”

“You have to stay here!” Tie Bu Tian didn’t yield.

Tie Bu Tian didn’t want Wu Qian Qian to go. He knew that Wu Qian Qian would be extremely happy to meet Chu Yang after a long separation… once he returns safely. She would never forget this reunion.

However, he couldn’t allow Wu Qian Qian to accompany him; and his mind couldn’t be changed.

They argued for a long time. Finally, they reached an agreement – Wu Qian Qian was to be informed once Chu Yang was back. Moreover, Wu Qian Qian would get to meet Chu Yang as soon as she received this news.

However, Wu Qian Qian would leave to search for Chu Yang if he didn’t return within a month; no matter what.

They were both deeply worried. However, Tie Bu Tian had a feeling that he had won this inning. Wu Qian Qian bit her lip, but seemed completely unaware of this. She established the nobleman’s agreement with Tie Bu Tian in a reluctant manner.

Wu Qian Qian felt wronged. She couldn’t insist on going even though she wanted to…

She felt that Tie Bu Tian’s decision was rash and wilful. Moreover, she knew that it was dangerous for Tie Bu Tian to go there. But, she hoped that Tie Bu Tian would be quick to reach there… so that he could out-manoeuvre the invading troops and rout them in one fell swoop. Then, he could lead his army south to help Chu Yang.

Moreover, Tie Bu Tian had mentioned that the army wouldn’t obey her commands. Therefore, she would’ve been rendered helpless if she were to go instead of Tie Bu Tian.

This was the reason why Wu Qian Qian had made that

compromise.

Tie Bu Tian and Tie Long Cheng had a discussion the next day, wherein Tie Bu Tian expressed his desire go to Beyond the Heaven Sect. Tie Long Cheng had been worried about Tie Bu Tian's safety on the frontline. So, he agreed when he heard the proposal. In fact, he was extremely happy.

They would be facing an army of four million soldiers on the frontline here; even a small accident could end the life of the Emperor.

Emperor's safety couldn't be guaranteed on the frontline.

Therefore, Tie Long Cheng had been racking his brains to find a way to send His Majesty – the Emperor to a relatively safer place; the Emperor had given him what he wanted...

He sent-out a force of 100,000 elite soldiers and 40,000 palace guards — led by Wu Kuang Yun — to accompany Tie Bu Tian. Moreover, he arranged a few martial experts who would be disguised as ordinary soldiers to secretly escort Tie Bu Tian. The Emperor's flag was to be held high in the army camp... to reassure the Emperor presence.

Tie Long Cheng was finally at ease. He felt relaxed now. Firstly, Tie Bu Tian would be much safer over there. Secondly, both partitions had powerful commanding generals who would coordinate with each other from a distance – forming a perfect pair. Thirdly, it would form a great cushion. After all, this was the final battleground. Iron Cloud wouldn't perish as long as Tie Bu Tian was alive; even if they were to be defeated in the war.

Now, he could concentrate on fighting with his old enemy – Diwu Qing Rou; he would go all-out and fight to the death.

Tie Bu Tian left the camp the same night; he was leading multitudes of people. Wu Qian Qian and the people of Bu Tian Pavilion and Beyond the Heavens Sect stayed behind.

Tie Bu Tian had wanted to take Wu Yun Liang and the others along with him. After all, these local tyrants were familiar with the terrain. But, Wu Qian Qian had rejected this idea. Then, she had made Cheng Zi Ang, and the experts from Bu Tian Pavilion of Martial Great Master level and above, to follow Tie Bu Tian.

[The people of Beyond the Heavens Sect are familiar with the terrain. Moreover, their martial cultivation levels are quite high. But... there are several dangerous elements... such as Second Martial Uncle Li Jinsong...]

How could Wu Qian Qian leave them at Tie Bu Tian's side? Wu Yun Liang couldn't go as the remaining people would be in chaos if he left. Then, they would try to guess the reason behind his sudden departure. The following upheaval could leak the news...

Therefore, Wu Qian Qian had rejected these ideas in order to avoid any trouble.

Tie Long Cheng had suggested Tie Bu Tian to defend their position once he was there. But, he had warned him against any foolish act of bravery; he must strive to avoid any mistakes and give priority to his own safety.

Tie Bu Tian had promised to heed his advice before he departed.

It would've taken them four days to cover the distance even if the army had marched at full strength. But, Tie Bu Tian had urged the 200,000 soldiers to move as fast as the lightning. Therefore, they had reached their destination in just two-and-a-half days.

Two-and-a-half days later...

"Subordinate reporting to Supreme Commander – there are a few changes on the eastern front," the mounted scout reported to Tie Long Cheng. The scout was extremely tired; so much so that he was having cramps throughout his body. He had ridden back at the maximum possible speed; he was visibly a wreck. He was almost falling apart, but he remembered Tie Long Cheng's instructions to

persevere till the end. Therefore, he had somehow been able to make it back.

“What? There has been a change on the eastern front?” The people discussing military strategies with Tie long Cheng were alarmed. [Tie Bu Tian has just gone there. How can these changes occur out of the blue?] There wasn’t enough time to think. So, he hurriedly asked, “What’s going-on over there?”

“General Wu Kuang Yun turned General Li Fan Lan into his deputy general once he accepted the military leadership. Then, he reorganized the 200,000 soldiers,” the mounted scout said.

“Wu Kuang Yun is acting quickly.” Tie Long Cheng seemed satisfied as he stroked his beard. “This couldn’t be counted as a change. Even if it is… then it’s a good one.”

Tie Long Cheng was happy, [Wu Kuang Yun is worthy of being considered among the ten famous generals. He is a little reckless sometimes, but he wouldn’t be careless in the key moments. He seems wonderfully direct and efficient. His majesty has gone with him. I am so relieved…]

“Yes… but that’s not all,” the mounted scout wanted to say something. However, he was hesitant; he raised his head to look at the Supreme Commander’s face.

“What’s the matter?” Tie Long Cheng was in high spirits.

“After receiving the military leadership… General Wu Kuang Yun readjusted the army troops; three units were combined into one. In less than an hour… he took a vanguard unit of 50,000 soldiers… and crossed the slanting valley to march towards the river bridge…” the mounted scout gritted his teeth as he said.

“Ah… what!” Tie Long Cheng flicked his hand instinctively, and pulled-out a wisp of hair from his beard. However, he didn’t feel any pain. He turned his neck around with so much force that he almost twisted his neck and pulled a muscle. His eyes popped-out

of his head as he looked at the scout.

All the great generals in the army tent stood-up; it seemed as if they had been slapped. They all stood frozen at their places.

[Wu Kuang Yun? How could he have the guts to do that? This... this... Isn't this a disgraceful practice? The war hasn't even started at the frontline here. The whole nation is on alert... and is focused on defence under these dreadful circumstances. But this General Wu – who has recently become a commanding general – has launched an attack?]

[What's going on? Are we dreaming?]

The advisors pinched their thighs to see if they were dreaming; they grimaced in pain as they did that. However, they still couldn't believe this development.

"...General Wu Kuang Yun has ordered 300,000 soldiers in his leadership... to march forward as fast as the lightning and with an unstoppable force... to face 500,000 enemy troops led by 'White Tiger General' Bai Chang Tian of Great Zhao. The subordinate saw a distance of around 100 kilometres between the two armies before leaving," the scout was sweating profusely.

Tie Long Cheng was dumbstruck. His eyeballs rolled back; he nearly fainted.

[My God... ah. The Emperor's still in your army's unit... dammit! Wu Kuang Yun... you pig... you maverick pig...]

Chapter 377: The Misery of Bai Chang Tian!

The Supreme Commander remained calm for a long time. Suddenly, he stood-up furiously, and knocked-down the table in front of him. He bellowed, “Wu Kuang Yun! You pig! You’ve driven me to the end of my forbearance... I’ll whip your ass... I’ll skin you... I’ll pull-out your tendons and grill you alive... I’ll drink your blood... I’ll cut you into a million pieces. Then, I will execute your entire family... and wipe-out your nine generations...”

The army was within a range of 100 kilometres by the time the scout had departed. It had been two-and-a-half days since then. Therefore, the battle must have started already.

Tie Long Cheng was fuming with anger. He smashed all the items that he laid his eyes upon in the tent.

He gasped as he seethed with anger.

Tie Long Cheng had decided, [I won’t give Wu Kuang Yun a chance to explain if I see him again. I shall behead that ominous General. I shall offer that pig’s head as sacrifice to our flag...]

“Wu Kuang Yun, I must punish you under the military law!” Tie Long Cheng roared as he straightened his beard.

The people around him kept quiet out of fear...

However, no one was aware of Wu Kuang Yun’s circumstances; he was terribly depressed. He would’ve banged his head against something and died if he were to find-out that he had been wrongly accused... and Tie Long Cheng’s reaction.

[What other option do I have?]

[It’s true that I’m a Great General. But, I am merely a nominal General; nothing more.]

[His Majesty has deprived me of my real power. Everything is being commanded by His Majesty ... what does it have to do with

me? Does anyone know that my forehead is swollen from kowtowing in front of him? Does anyone know that I've been trying to persuade him; but to no avail?]

"Your Majesty, Your Majesty... this won't work... this is bad.... we can't advance recklessly," Wu Kuang Yun said with his face covered in tears. He felt like cutting-open his heart to demonstrate his sincere convictions.

"I've made-up my mind. Don't make me repeat myself." Tie Bu Tian's complexion was as cold as ice.

Wu Kuang Yun advised against this decision repeatedly, but Tie Bu Tian reprimanded him fiercely. He secretly relegated the Great General to the rank of a Nominal General. Therefore, this Nominal General had become the pseudo commander of the army...

Tie Bu Tian had his own consideration regarding this plan.

The dispatch of these troops could be termed as 'hasty' if a long-term strategy was taken into consideration. In fact, this decision would be too unfavourable and disadvantageous to be taken into consideration by any means.

Moreover, it was foolish to discard a natural stronghold and take the initiative to attack. The enemy could invade the hinterland of Iron Cloud nation if the soldiers were to get defeated, and the entire army were to collapse.

However, Tie Bu Tian had another consideration.

The plan – to rely on the natural defence of the terrain to defend against the enemy – could be considered later. It would – at the most – guarantee that they would never lose ground. However, they would also never win by following this strategy. This battle was related to the survival of the entire Iron Cloud Nation. How could they think of winning it by playing safe?

[Everyone thinks that I'll rely on the natural defence provided by this inaccessible terrain... and will obstinately cling to defence.

But, I must initiate the attack. This would catch them off-guard.]

[Bai Chang Tian's army is coming from afar. They still haven't arrived at their desired location. They won't get enough time to set-up a camp or take rest... before they face our attack. This battle would determine the winner.]

It was a risky gamble. However, they had no other option but to take this risk.

Moreover, an important person was supposed to be returning from this route – Minister Chu.

Bai Chang Tian and his troops would obstruct Chu Yang's escape route if they were to pitch their barracks at their desired location. In that case, Minister Chu would get surrounded by the enemy after undergoing a long and difficult journey of 6500 kilometres. He would fall into a death-trap – with enemy pursuers behind him and the enemy army to his front.

That must not be allowed to happen at any cost.

They must send-in their army right away; regardless of how they interpreted this matter. The sooner they took a step... the better.

"Wu Kuang Yun, you just need to fight. Fight for our victory!" Tie Bu Tian said coldly, "I don't care whether you are a Great General... or whoever else. You just need to obey my commands when the time comes.

"If you defy the Emperor's orders... then you shall be beheaded!"

Wu Kuang Yun wanted to cry, but found no tears to shed.

He was an old soldier – a veteran; he had spent half of his life on military expeditions. How could he not know that these troops would catch the enemy off-guard? They had 90% chances of winning. Bai Chang Tian was a famous general of this generation. However, he would never imagine that the garrison troops of Iron Cloud would discard the defence of their natural stronghold and come-out to fight.

After all, Iron Cloud had been clinging to this defence strategy – not just for the past few decades… but throughout the hundreds of years of history of war between Iron Cloud and Great Zhao. Great Zhao devised plans to attack, and Iron Cloud relied on the natural defence of the terrain to defend itself. The situation had always remained the same.

This had always been a part of the fixed mind-set of all Generals.

This was the first time that they might be able to defeat the famous 'White Tiger' General Bai of Great Zhao.

[Tie Bu Tian will not take any risk… even if there is 1% chance of defeat. After all, the Iron Cloud nation would collapse if something bad happens…]

'White Tiger' General Bai Chang Tian was also thinking about the same topic during his army's march. [The natural stronghold of the army is at the end of this road. They don't need many soldiers to defend it. In fact, they need less than a thousand people; even an army of 100,000 soldiers will be of no use against them.]

[Why did the Prime Minister change the course of my army midway? Why did he place 500,000 soldiers under my command to march all the way here? This shouldn't be needed. Whether one sees it from strategic point-of-view or from an overall standpoint… this decision shouldn't have been made…]

Bai Chang Tian thought, [Only 200,000 soldiers should've been enough to contain the enemy here. We'll get victory at the main warfront. After that… capturing the stronghold would be a piece of cake; the enemy will have no hope of winning once we take them by storm…]

[Is it really because of King of Hell Chu?]

[Humph… Chu Yung is just a man… even though he's called the King of Hell. It's impossible for him to cover a distance of 5000 kilometres on his own. Moreover, he'll be constantly pursued on

his way here.]

[After all, he's not a god.]

"General, we've marched for 150 kilometres. We are soon going to step into the Heaven Splitting Mountain pass. The brothers have had a long and difficult journey. Can the tired soldiers and their worn-out horses rest for a while?" the Deputy General asked secretly.

"Hmmm. We're almost there. Why do you want to take rest? Don't our soldiers have the least bit of will-power? Are they really my soldiers?" Bai Chang Tian scolded with a cold look on his face.

"Then... should we continue to march?" The Deputy General's face twitched a bit.

Bai Chang Tian gave a slow nod, "Inform the brothers to increase their marching speed. They can set-up a camp at the designated place if we reach there on time. Then... they can take as much rest as they want. They may take turns to sleep too."

The fact was that Bai Chang Tian was feeling uneasy in his heart.

His biggest talent as a soldier was to besiege the enemy territory, and expand the borders of his motherland. However, he had been sent to keep watch as the final battle was about to start... His 'planned-insufficient contribution' in the upcoming war had made him sullen.

Bai Chang Tian had nearly started to think that someone must have ruined his impression in Prime Minister's eyes.

That was why, he had been sent at a place where it was impossible to accomplish anything. It was an unrewarding task to attack the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. The terrain of this place was in enemy's favor. It seemed as if the overhanging cliffs had been cut by a sharp knife. Moreover, it looked as if the entire mountain pass had been artificially truncated through a mountain. There were thousand feet tall vertical cliffs on both sides.

Bai Chang Tian felt as if he was gazing at the concave-shaped interiors of a cave as he walked into the mountain pass. Since ancient times, there had been a single narrow road that went upwards. Moreover, it was a precipitous trail; it was so steep that it made people curse-out as they climbed-up. Even the people who were physically strong felt powerless as they climbed-up the trail. However, the enemy needed only a hundred people to defend this place. In fact, the enemy could remain unharmed, and kill all the climbing soldiers without any difficultly.

[Why even bother to attack?]

[This is disgraceful. The war is about to break-out... and I have been sent on a vacation here...]

However, Bai Chang Tian had been strict and demanding with his troops; just out of habit. He had been more vigilant and careful at previous times. But, he was more relaxed now.

They turned-over a winding mountain road. Then, the road became a little wider.

Bai Chang Tian's spirits rose as he saw this. He ordered his troops to speed-up and rush forward. Suddenly, he frowned as he felt that something was wrong.

He wrinkled his brows and got lost in contemplation...

Suddenly, he felt the ground trembling under his feet. Countless birds seemed to be frightened; they were shrieking endlessly. They were displaying a strange and eerie behaviour. The sky was filled with bird cries; they were flying everywhere in disarray. Moreover, the animals were in disarray in the nearby forest; they were running around in all directions.

A cloud of dust could be seen rising-up from a distant place; it seemed to have filled the entire sky.

"Enemy attack!" a sharp bugle sound emanated from the vanguard unit, and echoed with terrified screams.

Bai Chang Tiang's body got tensed. He said promptly, "Soldiers, halt where you are. Prepare to face the enemy."

However, his brain went numb as he understood the situation. [There are tall and insurmountable vertical cliffs on both sides. My soldiers are tired.... and my horses are worn-out; they've already walked into this narrow mountain-road. Now, there's no way to go back. An attempt to retreat is bound to make us collapse and crush each other.]

[We have no other choice but to keep moving forward.]

[But, the troops have lost their fighting spirit. The enemy must have conserved their strength for the big push. How should I fight this battle?]

The troops in the front stopped as they heard the command. However, the formation of the soldiers was very long as an army of 500,000 was marching ahead. Therefore, the soldiers who were far behind didn't hear the command even though the soldiers at the front had stopped. Moreover, several of the soldiers were sleep-deprived since they had been marching for a few days. Therefore, they had continued to walk in a sleepy manner. They kept drifting forward with the support of the formation, and didn't stop.

The front of the formation got congested as the soldiers in the back continued to move forward. Soon, the formation was crammed-up, and a lump was formed in the middle. The soldiers had got stuck together; they were extremely close to each other.

The soldiers were unaware of the situation. Therefore, loud screams and curses started to echo in all directions. The army was in complete disorder by the time all the soldiers had stopped walking. The soldiers continued to curse each other...

"F*ck! Are you blind? You stepped on your grandpa!"

"F*ck! Whose grandpa are you?"

"I'm your grandpa!"

“Smack!”

“How dare you hit me? Brothers, let’s teach him a lesson…”

“Let’s beat this son of a bi*ch to death! Let’s end this f*ker’s bloodline…”

Bai Chang Tiang looked at his officers as the chaos ensued; he had turned deathly pale. He felt powerless for the first time in his thirty years of service; he desperately wanted to reverse the situation.

He had been going freely with the flow until now; he had been blindly following hundreds of years of convention. He and the others had always known that the troops defending the Heaven Splitting Mountain pass never initiated the attack on their own… Moreover, he hadn’t spotted an enemy scout throughout his journey. This had suggested that the enemy was sticking to defend their position.

Therefore, he had become less vigilant. He could have never thought that the enemy would ambush him at such a terrible timing, and in such a manner.

His entire army was in chaos and panic. However, the sound of the hoof-beats kept approaching closer. The enemy hadn’t slowed down. Instead, they had increased their speed as they charged at them; their battle cries echoed throughout the sky.

The enemy seemed to be relying on their sharpness and rage to beat them in one fell swoop.

Suddenly, the huge army flag rolled-out amidst the loud battle cries. The flag danced in the wind as it rose high up in the air. One could see an image of a golden dragon soaring above the clouds on the surface of the flag.

“Wu Kuang Yun!” Bai Chang Tian cracked-up as a look of hatred appeared in his eyes.

Chapter 378: A Four-Thousand-Kilometres-Long-Road of Life and Death

Suddenly, a wild laughter resounded. The figure of a man could be seen riding a horse. It carried an eight-feet-long saber. He let out a loud shout which echoed like a burst of violent thunderclap. He and his men rode forward; like a group of gods who had descended from the heaven. Then, they broke into the vanguard forces of Bai Chang Tian's army.

"Bai Chang Tian! Your Grandpa Wu has arrived."

It was Wu Kuang Yun!

He beheaded countless people with a sweep of his saber; their blood was scattered in all directions. However, it was only a prelude to the upcoming massacre.

Wu Kuang Yun possessed an innate mysterious power. This power granted him incomparable might during chaotic fights.

He fought these kinds of battles with exceptional courage even though he wasn't a martial expert. He burst into the enemy ranks, and continued to swing his saber. He ripped open a gap in the enemy's formation by clearing out a dozen men. The soldiers of Iron Cloud clamored behind him, and rushed forward like wolves and tigers.

"Charge forward... and kill them all!" Tie Bu Tian's voice resounded, "You're forbidden to turn around. You may embrace death... but only after killing Bai Chang Tian and his men."

"Attack! Everyone follow me! Let's charge ahead..." Wu Kuang Yun gave a loud battle cry. He knew that the outcome of this battle would be decided in this stroke. He held his saber high, and nudged his horse with his legs. He killed his way into the enemy formation as he rushed forward.

Ten-thousand soldiers stormed frantically after him.

The vanguard unit – comprising of fifty-thousand soldiers – advanced like a giant unstoppable nail, and wedged into the enemy formation.

An army of three-hundred-thousand soldiers shouted “Long live the Emperor” as they came rushing like a tsunami.

Owing to the chaos, Bai Chang Tian’s command couldn’t be heard by his troops; he was despaired.

“General, let’s go!” The Deputy General’s face was flushed with blood.

“Go?” Bai Chang Tian smiled sadly, “Go where?”

He looked back, and saw his soldiers and horses crammed-up in the narrow area. It was so crowded that most of the men couldn’t even pull-out their weapons... The two-hundred-and-fifty-thousand soldiers at the rear hadn’t received any news of the latest developments. Therefore, they were still marching forward in a steady manner.

“It’s over!” Bai Chang Tian smiled bitterly, “It was hard to imagine that I – Bai Chang Tian – would get defeated in a place like this...”

He looked at Wu Kuang Yun. The man was soaked in blood; he was slaughtering his men. However, the army under his own command had lost its fighting spirit. His soldiers were screaming as if they were lambs for slaughter. They were trying to flee in all directions, but failed as they were stuck in the crowded place. They could only wait to get slaughtered.

[We’ve lost!]

[It’s a disastrous defeat. My entire army will get wiped-out...]

Bai Chang Tian started to laugh frantically. His laughter was full of despair. There was a ‘clang’ sound as he pulled-out his long sword with his right hand. Then, he muttered in voice that reeked of guilt, “It’s my fault.”

Bai Chang Tian's long sword beamed with light rays as he swung it. Then, it hit Bai Chang Tian in the stomach. He was one of the ten great 'Tiger and Dragon Generals' of Great Zhao, but this 'White Tiger' General had chosen to apologize for his mistake by taking his own life.

"Take no prisoners until this battle is over. Pierce through them as fast as possible." Tie Bu Tian hadn't anticipated that even the 'White Tiger' General – known for his wisdom – would end-up getting trapped on this narrow mountain-road. His army was crammed-up like a package of dumplings; without any option of advance or retreat.

This was a heaven-sent opportunity. Tie Bu Tian realized that this might be the first time that they'd see a glorious victory over Great Zhao.

Therefore, he took a prompt decision and issued the command.

[Don't take any prisoners...]

Their victory would be delayed if the army was to take prisoners. Moreover, the enemy was already crammed-up in a huddle, and had no hope to fight back.

It would be foolish to not grab such an opportunity to crush the enemy – once and for all.

The Iron Cloud army roared and trampled the enemy soldiers; like a massive road roller flattening the road surface. They wiped-out the entire army... leaving behind a vast stretch of narrow land.

The outcome of this battle had been determined by now.

Meanwhile, Chu Yang had fled to the Great Mount Ba.

This place was four-thousand kilometres away from the Continent Centre.

He had been overtaken by the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department several times throughout his journey. He had indulged

in fights with them, and had managed to escape every time. He had managed to reverse many hopeless situations despite sustaining countless injuries.

Chu Yang had been ferociously hit by Jing Meng Hun's palm on his back; it had left behind a deep mark.

Chu Yang would've been buried in the barren hills if it weren't for the Sword Spirit.

The number of scars on Chu Yang's body had increased by eighty-ninety; the sight of it was awful. Even the astonishing healing power of the 'Vitality Spring Water' couldn't heal his injuries immediately.

His old injuries hadn't even healed when the new ones had appeared. Even the power of life absorbed by the Nine Tribulations Sword had been nearly exhausted.

Jing Meng Hun's hatred for Chu Yang had surpassed all limits.

Chu Yang had drawn about a hundred-thousand-wolves in that primitive forest. Half of the six-hundred experts pursuing Chu Yang had lost their lives to the wolves.

Jing Meng Hun had used all his strategies to get out of that predicament. He had exhausted all his strength in getting the remaining three-hundred experts out of the forest. However, even the surviving experts had suffered many injuries. Even Jing Meng Hun didn't go unaffected; there were three or four wolf bites on his body.

King of Hell Chu had caused the death of more than six-hundred skilled experts since the time he had escaped from the Continent Centre.

These experts had belonged to the Martial Great Master level and above. They were among the people who had been carefully selected by Jing Meng Hun.

It was impossible to make-up for the loss of these men. The

multiple losses throughout the pursuit had made Jing Meng Hun's lungs to explode with rage.

He was so furious that he had disregarded his own safety while pursuing Chu Yang.

Chu Yang panted and enjoyed the calm as he leant against a tree. He had used his endless clever tricks to reach this place. He had finally managed to break away from Jing Meng Hun and the other pursuers.

He had taken a constant beating over the last few days. The methods that he had initially employed to cover his tracks hadn't been working of late. Moreover, there wasn't enough time for him to cover-up the orchid fragrance that was coming out of his body.

Jing Meng Hun was pursuing him without taking any rest or sleep.

He would rather die than allow Chu Yang to escape. His stance was clear – he would do anything to make things difficult for King of Hell Chu.

Three days ago, the Sword Spirit had reminded Chu Yang, "The accelerated ripening is complete. Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng has ripened. You can take it now." However, Chu Yang had been pushed to such an extent that he couldn't find time to take medication for three days and three nights.

The deposit of medicinal efficacies stored inside his body by the Sword Spirit was reducing at a rapid rate; so much so that it was almost empty.

It had been used-up to heal his injuries over and over again. Therefore, even a tough body like his' was on the verge of giving-up. Chu Yang was gasping for breath since he hadn't got enough time to even breathe properly during his escape.

He felt a sharp pain in his heart as he closed his eyes.

Suddenly, the lovely figure of Mo Qing Wu – dressed in red and

standing in white snow – appeared before his eyes. There was a trace of resentment in her gaze. She looked at him affectionately and asked, “Chu Yang, are you going to give-up?”

*** ***

Chu Yang woke-up with a shock. He started to suffocate as he took huge gasps of breath.

Little Mo Qing Wu was covered in red. Her eyes sparkled with tears. There was a piteous look in her eyes as she pursed her lips; she seemed to be on the verge of crying. “Brother Chu Yang, when you will come to meet me? Your Xiao Wu would be very happy… I miss you!”

Chu Yang was sweating profusely as he woke-up from another dream.

Chu Yang had lost all hopes. However, a strong will to live had exploded within him; so much so that even Jing Meng Hun was shocked. But, it made him even more determined to get rid of Chu Yang.

Chu Yang had gotten away from Jing Meg Hun. But, he had broken his arm in the process.

Chu Yang’s cultivation and strength had made a rapid progress. However, he couldn’t be compared to Jing Meng Hun, who was a Ninth Grade King Level Master. There was a huge gap in their strength.

Chu Yang couldn’t have defeated Jing Meng Hun even if he was the Nine Tribulations Sword’s Master. He – at the most – would’ve bypassed a rank or two and killed a First or Second Grade King Level Master. In fact, he could’ve used his tricks to injure a Third or Fourth Grade King Level Master. He would’ve sustained injuries, but he might have killed them.

However, he was helpless in front of a Ninth Grade King Level Master who was at his peak.

Death traps had been laid at every step throughout this four-thousand-kilometres-long route.

Therefore, time was extremely precious for him. However, he had decided to stop and rest for two hours.

Then, the Sword Spirit took out the Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng. Chu Yang was still panting. He closed his eyes, and stuffed it in his mouth; without waiting for his breath to become steady.

He felt a burst of ice-cold spirit rushing down to his stomach. Then, it burst into his meridians...

The Sword Spirit loosened his control on Chu Yang's five internal organs, and made an opening for the spirit energy to reach the insides his body.

Suddenly, the spirit energy started to pour into the opening.

Chu Yang wrinkled his brows as his body trembled. He bit on his black robe tightly; so much so that it was nearly gnawed into shreds.

The most important thing after consuming the Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng was to allow its medicinal efficacies to melt within the body. Chu Yang's five internal organs needed some time to get healed since they were severely damaged.

Two hours of time may or may not have been enough to start with. However, Chu Yang didn't have any other choice. He would've died if he hadn't consumed the Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng.

The Sword Spirit carefully guided the spirit energy. The spirit energy flowed like a gentle stream of river, and moistened his internal organs. Then, it began to repair them.

Finally, the protective layer of sword energy was completely released...

Even a little carelessness couldn't be allowed now.

The spirit energy was injected into his internal organs under the Sword Spirit's control. Slowly, the serious injuries inflicted on his internal organs began to heal...

Chu Yang's internal organs had been nearly restored soon-enough; only a finishing touch was required to attain complete recovery. Then, Chu Yang would become perfectly healthy again.

His meridians had become unobstructed since his blood vessels had been cleansed. A strong orchid fragrance had started to erupt-out of his body as his internal organs were being restored. This was due to the effect of Diwu Qing Rou's 'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart Palm' technique. The fragrance floated out of his body, and spread-out in all directions...

Chu Yang was unaware of all this since he was adjusting his breathing patterns. He was probably in some kind of deep meditative state; he seemed to be under the influence of hypnosis...

Half-an-hour passed...

Chu Yang was on the verge of a complete recovery when a rustling sound was heard. A spirit mastiff's low and gloomy howl resounded at first. Then, it started to get closer.

The branches and twigs in the jungle started to sway as people started to approach from all directions.

The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department had found Chu Yang's hideout with the help of the orchid fragrance.

Jing Meng Hun rushed-over like a whirlwind. His hair was dishevelled, and there was a fierce look on his face.

"Where's he?"

"Reporting to King Level Master – the orchid fragrance is coming from the valley."

"How many people have gone in? Don't alert the enemy... got

it?”

“Yes. The subordinate has taken it into consideration. But something seems off. There was nothing unusual as we approached the valley. The target hasn’t responded… I suspect that it’s only the orchid fragrance…”

“I’ll go and take a look.”

Jing Meng Hun’s body flew forward like a lightning bolt, and dropped into the valley where Chu Yang was hiding.

Chapter 379: I'll Stay Alive, and I'll Toy with You Till You Die; Believe Me or Not?!

Chu Yang had arrived at a critical juncture. It was the final moment.

Around fifty experts of Golden Horse Riders Department had arrived there. They moved towards Chu Yang, and surrounded him from all directions.

Chu Yang's eyes were closed; he was waiting for the Sword Spirit to heal the last traces of his injuries.

Just a little bit more...

A little bit more...

A little bit more...

Shua!

Jing Meng Hun fell into the valley like a shooting star. He had circled three times over the valley before finding Chu Yang hidden under some palm trees. He revealed a cruel smile as he saw him.

[King of Hell Chu!]

[Finally... I've found you.]

Chasing Chu Yang had been hectic for everyone. Even Jing Meng Hun was awfully tired. But, he was confident that Chu Yang would be completely exhausted.

However, he was shocked to see Chu Yang doing just fine since he was well aware of the injuries that Chu Yang had sustained.

[Firstly, Chu Yang was struck by Diwu Qing Rou's 'Destroying soul and breaking heart palm technique'. Then, he fled for five-hundred kilometres and faced an army of ten-thousand elite soldiers.... where he sustained three serious arrow wounds and several sword wounds. Moreover, his internal organs must've been

destroyed.]

[I myself led my men to fight multiple battles with him during the next four-thousand kilometres that he covered. This had added a minimum of ninety new scars to his body – each one of them being quite serious.]

[Even a Ninth Grade King Level Expert would've been died if he had sustained such serious injuries...]

[But... this King of Hell Chu is playing around, and isn't ready to die. But it seems that he couldn't bear the exhaustion anymore. So, he had arrived here and had started to heal himself...]

Jing Meng Hun couldn't help but shout-out loud as he recalled the entire journey – "Miraculous!"

[It doesn't matter if it was miraculous... King of Hell Chu is about to die. Finally... he has fallen into my hands. He owes piles of blood-debt in exchange for countless things that he has done so far... It's time for him to pay the price – with his life!]

Jing Meng Hun looked extremely ferocious as he laughed. 'Shua...' He flew high-up in the sky, and landed in front of Chu Yang. Then, he stretched-out his hand to grab him...

Suddenly, Chu Yang opened his eyes; his twinkling gaze was fixed on Jing Meng Hun's hand.

Meanwhile, the Sword Spirit accomplished its task – Chu Yang's internal organs had been completely healed.

The power of Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng had the good fortune of the Heaven and earth.

Jing Meng Hun was startled. Was this a trap set-up by the enemy? However, he gnashed his teeth, and tried to grab Chu Yang. He had figured it out in a short moment.

Chu Yang wouldn't dare to set-up a trap under such circumstances; he wouldn't do it at the cost of putting himself at

the risk of getting caught…

The only possibility was that Chu Yang was bluffing.

[I'm a wise man of the Jiang Hu. Did you really think that you could bluff me into retreating out of fear? What a joke!]

He was about to touch Chu Yang's body when a strong wind blew in his face, and made his hair flutter above his forehead.

Chu Yang looked at Jing Meng Hun's palm in a cold manner. Suddenly, he brought his right hand near his chest, and shot his palm outwards. His palm moved forward to tackle Jing Meng Hun's palm.

Jing Meng Hun felt overjoyed as he added a little strength to his palm attack. He thought, [You may be a gifted genius, and may know a little bit of martial arts… but you're far inferior to me. Moreover, you're exhausted. How can you be my match?]

[Now, you've rose your palm against mine; you've brought a death sentence upon yourself.]

It happened very quickly. There was a loud explosion as the two palms collided with each other.

The loud sound of explosion reverberated throughout the forest.

Chu Yang threw-up blood from his mouth as he somersaulted and flipped-over backwards. The internal organs that had just been restored were shaken. He felt an extreme pain throughout his body. However, he showed tolerance; he turned around and fled to a treetop…

But, it wasn't Chu Yang who was the most injured… It was Jing Meng Hun!

Jing Meng Hun had never imagined that he would face such an unexpected tragedy under such circumstances.

Jing Meng Hun had been displaying an image of strength and vigor before the two palms had collided. However, the outcome of

the collision was far from reassuring for him. Surprisingly, the palm of his enemy had turned into a sharp fragment of a long sword.

It had pierced into his palm in the same way as a hot knife cuts through butter; he was left in extreme shock and acute pain. He had immediately pulled back his hand. His body was fuming, and his right hand was drenched in blood.

Chu Yang's sword had stabbed into his palm through his arm bone. It had pierced all the way up to his elbow before he could finally withdraw his hand.

Half of his arm bone had got shattered into pieces with a loud crackling sound. Suddenly, Jing Meng Hun came to his senses, and issued a loud and painful scream.

"Ah..."

His entire body broke-out in a cold sweat. He was clutching his right hand with his other hand. He was in so much pain that he wanted to die.

He felt as if he had seen an illusion. How could his enemy's right hand turn into a long sword? Moreover, he was at the pinnacle of the Ninth Grade King Level. Therefore, his body was supposed to be impervious to swords and spears.

[It might've been able to injure me if it was a legendary heavenly weapon... But, it also depends on the level of its wielder. Considering Chu Yang's martial power status... he shouldn't have been able to injure me even if he was wielding a heavenly weapon.]

[But the reality is so bizarre... Chu Yang had himself got injured while wounding me.]

Jing Meng Hun retreated a few hundred feet as he felt that there was no vitality in the lower part of his arm.

His arm was dead; it no longer had any connection with his body.

Jing Meng Hun was so aggrieved that he wanted to die. However, he was also puzzled.

He was a proficient medical expert. Therefore, he knew that his arm could be joined back to his body by a skilled doctor even if it was chopped-off. He might not be able to use it with the same ease and strength, but at least he wouldn't become handicapped.

But how could a stab wound from the opponent's sword deprive his arm of its vitality?

"Grab him! Capture him! Pin him down! Wa ya ya ya...." Jing Meng Hun issued several commands in succession. He held his hand as he stomped and hopped about. He had a sinister look on his face. The blood in his heart had turned cold. His hair was dishevelled, and his usual elegant demeanour was gone.

The experts of Golden Horse Riders Department were petrified as they saw this crazy version of King Level Expert. How could... such an accident occur from out of the blue?

They woke up from their petrified state as they heard Jing Meng Hun's frantic yelling. Then, they bellowed loudly and proceeded to chase after Chu Yang.

They had carefully planned the whole situation beforehand – they would attack from all directions if King Level Expert were to make a slip. After all, they hadn't been able to find the exact location of Chu Yang's hideout before Jing Meng Hun's arrival.

However, everyone was full of admiration for the King Level Expert when he had found King of Hell Chu, [The King Level Expert is worthy of his title. He's an extraordinary person. This was a child's play for him.]

[He's so skilled that he can hang a thermos bottle on his buttocks]

They had started to sing praises for the King Level Expert as they had realized that King of Hell Chu was soon going to be captured. However, the situation had changed completely; the target that

was in their grasp… had escaped.

Everyone felt as if they were in a dream as they heard the King Level Expert screaming in pain. This thought was too incredible to believe…

Chu Yang's blood and qi were surging in his chest. He was in a lot of pain. He had used the Nine Tribulations Sword to catch Jing Meng Hun off-guard. It had done a serious damage to Jing Meng Hun; it had forced him to pull back a major part of the power in his palm attack. However, a considerable part of his power still remained in his palm attack; Chu Yang to face that attack's remaining might.

Blood was dripping from the corner of Chu Yang's mouth. His body was hanging in air; he almost fell down. He had fled for more than three-hundred feet when he was intercepted by the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department. They had come rushing from all directions; their sleeves fluttered in the wind with an incessant rustling sound.

Chu Yang frowned. His long sword flashed as he pulled it out. Bang! Bang! Bang! The three fragments of the Nine Tribulations Sword – the Sword Point, the Sword Edge and the Sword Spine took their positions in the sword with three low sounds.

Suddenly, a great murderous spirit started to flourish within Chu Yang.

He spun his body in the air. He roared violently as he landed on the ground, "One ray of cold light… pierces ten thousand fathoms!"

His sword rushed-up into the night sky with a loud bang, and bloomed like fireworks. Then, ten-thousand rays of sword light and sword energy rushed out of it.

The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department had been fighting with Chu Yang for a long time. Therefore, they knew that

this move was difficult to deal with. So, they started to dodge it one after another.

“What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world!” Suddenly, Chu Yang’s sword transformed into a resplendent ball. It was then shot towards the area where most of the experts were gathered.

The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department understood that something was off once the second move was issued.

The experts noticed that Chu Yang’s fighting style had grown more proficient since the time they had been engaged in battles with him. However, the number of injuries on his body had risen since that time. Therefore, his attacks should’ve become weaker, and his might should’ve reduced with the passage of time.

However, the might of these two moves proved that his martial power had increased greatly.

[Can it be that King of Hell Chu has been restored to his peak condition?]

[If that’s the case… then no one can match him apart from King Level Expert Jing.]

“Dripping Blood! Use Dripping Blood Military Tactics!” Jing Meng Hun shouted from afar.

Suddenly, someone advanced towards Chu Yang with a determined look on his face. He pounced at Chu Yang with his sword. This is a known fact that when no one takes the lead… the others don’t understand what to do. But when one person moves into action… a hundred people follow in his footsteps.

Meanwhile, Jing Meng Hun let out a wild cry as his sword slashed through his elbow, and chopped-off his lower right arm. The lower part of his arm fell to the ground. Surprisingly, very little blood flowed-out from his wound.

“King of Hell Chu! You used a vicious martial technique…” Jing Meng Hun’s body trembled with anger. He had chopped-off half of

his arm, and hadn't felt any pain. This proved that the lower half of his arm was already devoid of life.

Jing Meng Hun covered his arm in order to stop the bleeding. Then, he let out a shout and rushed towards Chu Yang with bloodshot eyes.

Chu Yang was still mid-air. Several experts were sent flying in all directions as he unleashed a move on them. Blood started to gush-out from the chests, shoulders, and thighs of three-to-four experts.

Chu Yang snorted. His face was as cold as ice. He sprang-up in air as he saw figures of experts rushing over from all directions. Then, he raised his long sword and roared like a dragon, "A sharp will buried deep will not change!"

His sword quivered as he shouted, "The one who gathers winds and clouds becomes the Emperor!"

He brandished his long sword as he dashed forward. Then, he invoked the last four moves of the Nine Tribulations Sword – 'A sword's edge famous for all eternity', 'Wind and cloud move unhindered from east to west', 'The sun and moon thunder at my will' and 'Chopping mountains and breaking peaks under the blood-red sky'. He had unleashed all the moves at the same time.

He then shouted, "Don't restrain the blade when beheading the entire world!"

Innumerable sword energies gathered in the air. They looked like the sun as they exploded violently. The deadly and cold sword energy permeated within the radius of hundred feet in the forest area.

"Dodge quickly!" Jing Meng Hun had just arrived at the scene. He shouted as he saw this.

Everyone dodged.

Chu Yang started to laugh heartily. He transformed into a sword light along with his sword. Then, he flew high up into the sky

while covering four-hundred feet in one go. After that, he drifted far into the mountain-forest. His savage laughter brimming with murderous intention could be heard from afar, “Jing Meng Hun! I’ll stay alive... and will keep toying with you... till your death! Believe it or not!”

Chapter 380: Supreme Commander, I'm Being Wronged...

Jing Meng Hun yelled, and tried to chase after him fiercely. However, he could only see the rustling of tree leaves. He merely saw a shadow 'whooshing' further away from them as it left-behind a strong orchid fragrance.

However, a wild laughter still echoed in the sky.

Jing Meng Hun roared, followed after Chu Yang, and entered the jungle with a whooshing sound.

The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department exchanged glances since they still had a lingering fear in their hearts. They left three people behind to wait for the others, who were still to arrive. Then, they followed him into the forest.

Another round of chase-fight had started.

However, this time, even Jing Meng Hun didn't dare say that they could win. It was impossible to guard against King of Hell Chu's rapidly changing strategies. He could appear and disappear mysteriously. He was merely a Revered Sword Artist, but his means were adequate-enough to kill a King Level Master.

He had crippled even Jing Meng Hun's hand; what could one say for other.

Therefore, Jing Meng Hun sent-out a message via an invisible falcon as he continued the pursuit.

Jing Meng Hun was becoming increasingly impatient. Unexpectedly, King of Hell Chu had already fled for 4000 kilometres! This had been a terrible journey. If someone had said to Jing Meng Hun that King of Hell Chu would flee beyond 4000 kilometres at the time they had left the Continent Centre — then Jing Meng Hun would've grabbed the said-individual by their skull and slapped them; [that's such a shameful prediction!]

However, Jing Meng Hun no longer thought so.

So much so, that his heart had started to harbour some admiration for King of Hell Chu; as well as fear. Jing Meng Hun was a Ninth Grade King Level Expert. But he knew that there was no way that he could've managed to pull this off if he would put himself in King of Hell Chu's shoes.

Throughout this whole journey, King of Hell Chu had framed people, tricked people, ambushed and attacked, taken advantage of the mountains and rivers, used wild animals, and had even exploited the will of the people. He had taken advantage of everything-and-everyone...

He could conjure a myriad of unusual and marvellous ideas that could amaze anyone.

Furthermore, King of Hell Chu had extreme forbearance and toughness — the likes of which Jing Meng Hun had barely seen in his entire life. He possessed this unique attitude of 'whatever works'; he was the type of man who would use his waistband to fasten his hair. Not to mention that his style had recently evolved to become more uninhibited and confident.

Jing Meng Hun had often though, [an enmity with a guy like this one... is the greatest tragedy of my life!]

The emergence of the countless attack-strategies of King of Hell Chu had made Jing Meng Hun wary in his heart. Therefore, this time, he had made a prompt decision to send out a message to the frontline. He had sent a message asking the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department within the army to intercept King of Hell Chu from the opposite side.

After all, he had successfully covered 4000km of the 6500km route. Therefore, he only had 2500 kilometres left to reach his destination.

This was an impassable distance for an average person. But, not-

necessarily-so for King of Hell Chu...

He had already rushed-through 4000 kilometres; so, couldn't he cover the remaining 2500 kilometres as well?

Initially, Jing Meng Hun had no plans to use the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department who were allocated to the army. However, he couldn't sit idly either. If King of Hell Chu and the army of Iron Cloud were allowed to unify — even Diwu Qing Rou wouldn't be able to withstand the consequences.

King of Hell Chu had over-heard too many military secrets. Moreover, the plan to use Enchanting Tobacco and other sorts of poisons was like a double-ended sword... If it could be used by them — it could be used by the enemy as well!

Countless experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department got to work after Jing Meng Hun issued the summoning order.

This would weaken the military might of Great Zhao Army, but it would put an enormous amount of pressure on Chu Yang.

[Let his return-trip become a living hell...]

Tie Bu Tian had triumphed over Bai Chang Tian, and his army of 500,000 was completely destroyed. Thousands of the men in Bai Chang Tian's army had died during the internal conflict. And, tens-of-thousands were killed on the spot. A real river of blood was flowing through the valley.

The remaining 300,000 soldiers surrendered, and were taken captive.

The extent of this victory's glory was seldom even if the two nations had been at war over the past decade and more. The casualties on Tie Bu Tian's side were less than 20,000. Considering the massive size of the enemy's army... to pay with such low number of casualties in order to obtain such a tremendous victory... was simply unique!

Tie Bu Tian took advantage of this victory and the remaining

might of his army, and advanced 250km past the defence line.

And then, he set his military camp outside the valley.

This army had become exceptionally proficient under Tie Bu Tian's command. They had set-up the barracks, and had become very cooperative. They even watched each other's back! They were in profit since Tie Bu Tian was a much better General than Wu Kuang Yun!

Moreover, Tie Bu Tian had secretly harboured a concern when he had joined the three army units into one. In fact, he had only done so after a lot of consideration. His concern was their rapport with each other. Yet, the way they had pitched camp together proved his concerns intangible. Even Wu Kuang Yun had started to admire him when he saw this happen.

Tie Bu Tian assigned Wu Kuang Yun the task of escorting the 300,000 war-prisoners to Tie Long Cheng after everything was settled. They couldn't keep these people here because they were likely to cause commotion if they stayed for too long.

Tie Long Cheng couldn't help but sigh when heard about Tie Bu Tian's glorious victory. Then, he laughed out loud; twice. But, he wasn't very sure of his true feelings regarding the matter...

His heart harboured conflicting feelings of joy and fear.

There was a smug look on Wu Kuang Yun's face as escorted the war-prisoners. He seemed immensely proud of himself as he had reported his great achievement. But, Tie Long Cheng felt a scathing hellfire seething inside his belly when he saw that smug look of complacency on the General's hairy face.

Wu Kuang Yun marched into the barracks arrogantly. It seemed as if he had made a great accomplishment. He made a virtuous face, and touched his belly as he waved at everyone. A flower-like smile bloomed on his face as he unconsciously strode forward with his feet splaying outwards. His ego had bloated quite a bit.

“Ah, good job Old Wu. 300,000 war-prisoners!” a General laughed as he commented with envy.

Wu Kuang Yun raised his head towards the sky. He evidently looked very pleased with himself, “This, this… it’s nothing… it’s really nothing, ha ha,” his mouth said it casually, but that didn’t hide his arrogance. He could no longer conceal his arrogance as he made these modest remarks, and finally started to laugh with complacence.

Everyone looked at him, and their mouths twitched at his pompous behaviour. They felt somewhat offended and stifled by it. Others had also notched great achievements, but not-enough to show such complacence… There were many great generals here, but who among them had ever brought-in 300,000 captives from battle?

Not a single!

“Ha ha… this is just a small token.” Wu Kuang Yun laughed as touched his belly. He laughed so much that his eyes disappeared behind his brows, “It’s spectacular, right? These 300,000 captives… are just a small, small token. Rest assured, there will be many more the next time… He he, the likes of which you guys have never seen … hey … dammit! You, I am talking to you… walk faster! Motherf*ker!”

He went so far that he rushed up to a prisoner who was passing by, kicked his butt, and started to curse, “You’re a captive; better act like one… you mother*ker… same goes for the rest of you!”

He raised his voice, “Everyone! My fellow comrades! How was it? Awesome right… wa ha ha… It was too easy, so easy, wa ha ha… ”

The other Generals’ facial muscles twitched. They wanted to surround this pompous guy, push him to the ground, and rain fists at him.

“Wu Kuang Yun, you’re so fierce and powerful. You’ve captured

300,000 men in such a short while! Not bad; not bad at all!" Tie Long Cheng calmly appeared in front of Wu Kuang Yun with his hands crossed behind his back.

"You flatter me... eh... Supreme Commander? Supreme commander, this is nothing... it's nothing." Wu Kuang Yun had just opened his mouth to speak, but he hastily stopped his bragging as soon as he saw Tie Long Cheng. But then, he thought that his accomplishment was so great that... it wouldn't be right if he didn't brag. So, he couldn't help but curl-up his tail again.

"Well, I've decided to reward you properly!" Tie Long Cheng's facial expression was awfully calm, and he sounded very prudent.

"En... if you insist, go ahead... wa ha ha... many thanks Supreme Commander," Wu Kuang Yun's happiness knew no bounds.

"Come on then!" Tie Long Cheng exclaimed loudly.

"This is so embarrassing." Wu Kuang Yun greedily rubbed his hands and slyly glanced towards Tie Long Cheng. Then, he continued with a virtuous smile, "Supreme Commander, a small token of appreciation will do for now... so the others don't get jealous. Although my contribution isn't small... but this... ahem, there must be unity within colleagues... how about you assign 1.8 million for military expenses... ahem... and apart from that... No matter what Supreme Commander rewards me... I will kindly accept it..."

"You don't worry. They won't be jealous of your 'reward'!" Tie Long Cheng solemnly replied.

Wu Kuang Yun still didn't sense the impending disaster, and continued with a lofty grin, "That's good, that's very good for everyone. I, Old Wu, am going to flourish today... "

"Gather everyone around! This General has a total disregard for law, initiates attacks without authorization, ignores military regulations, and disrespects his superior officer... Then, the

bastard chooses to bring captives to please me!" Tie Long Cheng's words shook Wu Kuang Yun. He felt as if he had been struck by a 'bolt from the clear blue sky'. His ears were ringing.

The officers on either side couldn't control their laughter.

"En? Enn... Supreme Commander! Supreme Commander!" Wu Kuang Yun had been completely entrapped in his foolish fantasy. It hadn't occurred to him that a self-proclaimed 'great war hero' like him would be rewarded like this...

"Seize him!" Tie Long Cheng ordered sternly, "Dare to resist and you shall be executed without mercy!"

Suddenly, a group of executioners arrived and quickly tied Great General Wu Kuang Yun's hands and feet together; he looked like a horse with its four hooves trussed together. Then, he was thrown to the ground like a dead pig.

"Hit him for me!" Tie Long Cheng angrily said as he pointed a finger at him, "Hit him! Hit him 60 times with army rods!"

"Supreme Commander... why... why are you doing this... " Wu Kuang Yun foolishly cried. The other generals gathered around him as if it were a 'monkey' show.

"Hey, isn't that Great General Wu?"

"Yes, it's him. Hasn't General Wu made some great accomplishment?"

"But why is he getting beaten up?"

"Yeah, I wonder why?"

"Ha ha ha... "

After that, everyone started to laugh in unison.

Tie Long Cheng picked up General Wu Kuang Yun as if he were a dead dog after he had been hit 60 times by the arms rods. He took big strides and circled around the main camp. Then, Tie Long Cheng threw him on the ground ruthlessly, "You're disgraceful!

There’s no one more disgraceful and shameless than you under the heavens!”

“Supreme Commander… I’m being wronged… ” Wu Kuang Yun groaned with a look of anguish on his face. He was a thick-skinned guy, but being beaten by sixty army rods wasn’t an easy thing to endure. However, he had been shown a little mercy; at least his life had been spared…

“You’re being wronged?” I ask you! What did I tell you when you started-off from here? Huh? I think it went-in through one ear and came out the other. You flatly disobeyed the military commands, and my words as if went past your ears altogether! And, you still brag about your victory and great accomplishment? Don’t you know that I would’ve sentenced you to death if you had failed?” Tie Long Cheng spoke angrily.

“I, I…” Wu Kuang Yun came to his senses at the mention of this topic. Then, he cried out, “Supreme Commander… speaking of this topic… I’ve been wronged even more…”

Chapter 381: Tie Bu Tian Waits

Tie Long Cheng was unable to restrain his anger. He raised his leg, and kicked Wu Kuang Yun; like he was kicking a rubber ball. Wu Kuang Yun flew-up from the ground, happened to land on his plump buttocks, and bounced twice.

"You've been wronged? My a*s! I saw how you were acting all 'self-satisfied and complacent' a while ago! Motherf*ker, I would've kicked you to the Ninth Heavens if it weren't for those two 'toys' dangling inside your underpants!" Tie Long Cheng's anger seemed authentic.

Wu Kuang Yun wanted to cry, but found no tears to shed. He recalled that Tie Long Cheng had been waiting for him when he arrived. Therefore, he had indeed violated the military law.

[But... what law did I break? His Majesty had personally made that decision...]

Wu Kuang Yun felt that he had been wrongly accused.

Did Tie Long Cheng not realize that he had accused him wrongly? Tie Bu Tian was there with him at the time. So, could Wu Kuang Yun dare to be in-charge? Could he make a decision on his own?

"Supreme Commander..." Wu Kuang Yun cried out in a whimpering tone.

"I'll extract your body fat and use it to light a sky-lantern(1) if you repeat this crime again!" Tie Long Cheng pulled-out his long sword, and suddenly slashed it. Wu Kuang Yu was crying and whimpering, but he suddenly stopped making those noises when the sword-light flashed.

The rope had been severed in a flash.

The shining sword's edge had hacked very close to Wu Kuang Yun's eyes, which were wide open at that moment since he was extremely frightened. Even his eyelashes were severed by the

sword’s edge to some extent. The ice-cold sensation made him feel as if he had just taken a lap around King of Hell’s palace. He couldn’t help but let-out a strange cry.

"Get lost!" Tie Long Cheng pointed outside, and bellowed like a thunderclap.

Wu Kuang Yun jumped-up nimbly, and rushed out of the commander’s tent; he held his head in his hands out of fright. He fled in a miserable state.

Not only did he not receive any reward for delivering the prisoners of war... he ended-up becoming an undeserved target of the Supreme Commander’s wrath. He was really... unlucky this time.

Tie Long Cheng thought for a long while. Then, he picked-up a pen and wrote a letter. He then ordered his a Deputy General to find a reliable person to deliver the letter to Tie Bu Tian.

The Deputy General was puzzled and asked, "General Wu went back a while ago. Why didn’t the Supreme Commander give it to him..."

"Nonsense! How can I trust that shameless bastard to deliver this confidential information?" Tie Long Cheng’s pent-up anger hadn’t disappeared yet.

The Deputy General shrank back in fear, and didn’t speak another word.

"Ask Minister Chu to come over. Tell him that Supreme Commander wants to have a chat with him," Tie Long Cheng spoke in a formal manner.

Tie Bu Tian was standing on top of a mountain peak. He was gazing into the distance. The sleeves of his robe were fluttering in the wind. His posture reflected confidence and ease. However, his facial expression was serious and somewhat melancholic.

[Who knows where Chu Yang is at this time...?]

[I wonder how he is. Is he still going strong?]

There had been no news on Chu Yang of late. Tie Bu Tian was very worried because of this. However, this had also made him somewhat relaxed.

'No news' was the 'best news' in the present situation. Diwu Qing Rou would never let go of a chance to crush Iron Cloud's morale if Chu Yang were to fall into his hands. He'd start an unstoppable propaganda.

Therefore, lack of any news was proof that Chu Yang was still struggling tenaciously. At the very least — he wasn't dead, or hadn't fallen into Diwu Qing Rou's hands.

Tie Bu Tian was burning with impatience, but couldn't show it to others. He was at his wits' end, and felt powerless. He couldn't do anything besides waiting here.

He couldn't tell why his mood had been off. To put it briefly... he had been very upset lately. He had lost appetite and found it difficult to swallow food and water. He would dream about Chu Yang every night. Chu Yang would be standing in front of his bed, and would be completely drenched in blood. Then, he'd wake up from the dream with a start.

Tie Bu Tian gently knitted his brows, and secretly asked himself, [what's going on? What's wrong with you?]

[No, no; Minister Chu is a hardworking minister of Iron Cloud. He's indispensible to us. Iron Cloud cannot afford to lose Minister Chu; that's all. I'm just worried about his safety. There's no other reason...]

[Absolutely no other reason! Yes, really, there's none.]

Tie Bu Tian was repeating it over and over in his heart. But then, another thought came-up in his heart, [what should I do if Chu Yang died during his escape in this route that exceed 5000 Km...?]

He suddenly felt a sharp pain in his heart as he thought of this.

His mind went vacant for a while; [it’s as if… I don’t have any confidence without Minister Chu…? What else is it?]

[No! Nothing!]

[Chu Yang is just a courtier! An unruly and rebellious courtier! It doesn’t matter… even if worse comes to worst…]

Tie Bu Tian comforted himself over and over again. However, the more he did… the more chaotic his mind became. He was clueless as to what was wrong with him…

He just stood quietly atop the mountain peak, with his hands crossed behind his back. He stood there motionless for a long time. The clouds drifted over the summit and passed by. Tie Bu Tian’s body appeared as elusive as the figure of an Immortal amidst the mist and clouds.

"Your Majesty, you should get down," two shadows appeared behind him and suggested in a whispering voice.

"Well, I'll stand here for a while and take rest." Tie Bu Tian replied with a smile, "Are there any new developments?"

"There’s none. Great Zhao’s army hasn’t made any move in the main battlefield since the destruction of that army unit of 500,000 soldiers. And, Diwu Qing Rou is yet to arrive. He should arrive at the frontline in a month. They’re waiting for him to arrive and make a decision," one of the shadows answered.

"I see; that means we can advance further from our present position," Tie Bu Tian spoke in a low voice.

"We mustn’t!" the two shadows objected in unison. "Marching up to here was a big risk as it is! If we advance further and come across a mishap — we’ll be rendered incapable of returning to our stronghold!"

"We’ll be rendered incapable of returning to our stronghold?" Tie Bu Tian conjured a strategic topographic map in his mid. He seemed immersed in deep thoughts for a while. He then said, "That

won’t happen! There are three passageways 50 kilometers back in this valley that circle around the mountains. We only need to set up our military camp in the middle position. Then, we can easily take a detour and go back if something forces us to retreat. Even an army of 10 million won’t be able to swallow us!

"We’re safe here!" Tie Bu Tian spoke casually, "You two shouldn’t worry!"

[We shouldn’t worry… well… the talk about terrain makes sense, but… how can we be at ease when we’re in the enemy’s territory?]

"Well, any other news apart from that?" Tie Bu Tian asked quietly.

"…There’s none." a shadow replied in a hesitating manner. He certainly knew what news Tie Bu Tian wanted to hear about. But, he had no news in that regard. The Golden Horse Riders Department had locked down all news channels very tightly. They simply weren’t disclosing anything. The latest news was from ten days ago.

Tie Bu Tian hesitated for quite a while. He opened his mouth to say something, but shut it again. Then, he opened his mouth again, and hesitantly asked in a feeble voice, "Say… isn’t there any news about Minister Chu?"

[Here we go again.]

The shadow sighed in his heart.

Tie Bu Tian would always intentionally or unintentionally ask this question every time they’d come to report the news. And then, he would turn silent. This had been the routine over the last few days.

Earlier, he used to ask about it very casually. However, he asked this question in a very feeble voice nowadays; it seemed as if his voice was swayed by worries.

"No," The shadow again sighed in his heart. These two brothers

were King Level Experts. In the opinion of these two brothers, [if we brothers joined hands with the clear-cut objective of escaping from Great Zhao — even we wouldn't have any hope of survival … especially if we were being pursued and attacked by the Golden Horse Riders Department… and were surrounded by whole of Great Zhao's army]

[That journey is full of extreme dangers! Wishing to come back safety is as difficult as trying to ascend to the heaven!]

[Chu Yang's corpse must be rotting at the foot of a mountain in some corner…]

"Oh…" Tie Bu Tian let-out a pensive 'oh'. Then, his gaze turned towards the mist and clouds that spread over that ravine. He then spoke in a muffled voice, "You get down. I'll stay here and look at the scenery."

[Look at the scenery…] the two shadows silently glanced at each other. Then, they silently disappeared.

"Well, I can advance for 50km more. But, that's the limit…" Spellbound, Tie Bu Tian looked at the continuous stretch of mountains. He was talking to himself in a feeble and inaudible voice, "But… these 250kms that I've covered is nothing in comparison to that 6500 Km escape-route that is filled with danger at each and every step… sigh…"

Tie Bu Tian heaved a soft sigh. His sadness and anxiety had deepened hundred-fold.

This was the first time that he had allowed his emotions to affect his decisions. Moreover, it happened at the worst timing since such a strenuous situation had built-up between two nations. He himself was shocked by the decisions he had made, and found them unthinkable since the outcome would eventually decide the rise and fall of nations.

However, he found no regrets in his heart when he asked himself

in all honesty. It seemed that he was willing to take any odd risk without batting an eyelid! In fact, he wished he could push forward for another 4000 Km to save Chu Yang...

He didn't seem to care that such a decision could lead to his own death...

"I've gone insane!" Tie Bu Tian murmured remorsefully.

A small team of men and horses had arrived at the foot of the mountain. It was Wu Kuang Yun. He had returned after delivering the war-prisoners. He had been all 'high and mighty' when he had left for the main military camp. However, he returned as fearful as a stray dog. He looked as homeless as a guy who had been sent into exile...

[He looks so distressed!]

Tie Bu Tian couldn't stop himself form bursting into laughter. He secretly said, "Second Imperial Uncle must be very angry at my reckless behavior, but... I specifically sent Wu Kuang Yun to help him vent his anger... But his wrath should've calmed down by now, right? It should have."

Tie Bu Tian had planned this all along.

If General Wu Kuang Yun were to find out that his task to deliver the war-prisoner was a means to deliver himself as a punching bag in order to absorb Tie Long Cheng's anger... he would vomit 3 liters of blood on the spot. He would've been depressed to death.

"Twenty-three days have passed since Chu Yang began his escape in Great Zhao... If I were to calculate the distance he could've travelled so far... " Tie Bu Tian looked at the colorful sky and continued, "... and considering that his legs aren't hurt, and he has advanced at a normal pace... he should've covered a distance of more than 5000 Km by now..."

"In fact, he should've covered a distance of more than 3500 Km even if he's injured — so long as he wasn't caught. So, the results

of the calculation fall between 4000 and 4500 Km if both scenarios are taken into account. In short, it can be assumed that he has yet to cover more than 2000 Km to reach this placed. Even if I advance another 250 Km... he'd still need to cover more than 1500 Km..."

Tie Bu Tian exhaled a long breath, "But this 1500km route lies close to the warzone. So, there are more chances of getting surrounded and attacked... that will be far more dangerous... Chu Yang, you'll have to stand strong..."

Tie Bu Tian tightly wrinkled his eyebrows after doing this calculation.

However, he was unaware that Chu Yang had sustained injuries. Despite that, the speed of his advance had been much faster than Tie Bu Tian's speculation. That was because Chu Yang had nearly followed a straight line throughout the journey. He had even thrust into the depths of the enemy's forces in order to move straight!

He hadn't taken any detours. If one would mark Chu Yang's escape-route on a map — they'd be surprised to find that his escape-route was a perfect straight-line from Continent Center to Iron Cloud!

Without any turns!

Even a first-class geographer would be amazed to see it!

At the moment, Chu Yang was struggling to approach the Beyond the Heavens Sect's location. However, he had run into the biggest life or death crisis since his escape from the Continent Center!

When Tie Bu Tian was standing on the mountain peak — Chu Yang had landed in a difficult situation. He was presently in the middle of breaking-out of it...

Notes:

Sky Lantern: Miniature hot-air balloon used during festivals

Chapter 382: Diwu Goes to War!

The situation was more dangerous than ever.

Chu Yang had rushed-through his escape-route by employing ambushes, tricks, ploys and strategies. He had been able to advance towards Beyond the Heavens Sect mountain range after he had fought several battles.

Beyond the Heavens Sect mountain range was an intersection that connected Great Zhao and Iron cloud. It was an extremely important location.

So, Chu Yang would be able to enter the Iron Cloud territory if he were to cross this mountain range. After that, he'd be out of his pursuers' reach; the Golden Horse Riders Department wouldn't be able to cause any harm to him.

Therefore, almost every available expert of the Golden Horse Riders Department was gathered here — more than a thousand of these experts were spread over the entire mountain range.

A few of them were hidden in secret spots, and had laid-out an ambush in advance. A few of them were waiting at key locations; and a few were keeping watch from a higher ground. Some of them were out in the open, while some were hidden in the dark. They would catch King of Hell Chu; no matter where he went.

Jing Meng Hun had been summoning the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department to catch King of Hell Chu throughout his journey; the mark of 'one-thousand people' had long been surpassed.

Chu Yang's entire body was covered in cuts and bruises. However, he rushed into the Beyond the Heavens Sect's 'Nine Peaks and One Garden'.

Chu Yang felt relaxed as he saw the familiar mountain range. Then, he gently retreated.

Fortunately, this place still hadn't fallen into ruins. However, this place was merely an empty shell of what it used to be; no one was present there.

This location was around two-hundred-and-fifty kilometres away from the place where Tie Bu Tian lay in wait.

But, these two-hundred-and-fifty kilometres had blocked every link between the two sides.

Chu Yang was under the impression that Tie Bu Tian was still in the capital. He had no idea that Tie Bu Tian had arrived at the war-front. On the other hand, Tie Bu Tian was under the impression that Chu Yang was more than five-hundred kilometres away from his location. He couldn't have imagined that Chu Yang was in such close proximity.

Tie Bu Tian would've sent an army of five-hundred-thousand soldiers to greet him if he knew that. He wouldn't have returned without Chu Yang even if he had to fight to his last soldier's life.

However, he didn't know.

Chu Yang's vision had turned blurry by the time he had entered Beyond the Heavens Sect; he was extremely exhausted...

Meanwhile, at a very distant location – on the main road of Great Zhao...

The flags were fluttering. They seemed to be everywhere; so much so that they were almost obstructing the sunlight.

Hundreds-of-thousands of troops were meandering forward. It seemed as if a giant dragon was slowly moving on the ground. A bright-yellow carriage could be seen in the middle of this procession. It looked like a luxurious carriage; it was brimming with riches and the aura of nobility. Plain curtains were hanging around it.

This carriage had caught the eye of every person who was present in the vicinity. It seemed to be moving slower than the other

carriages. However, it was brimming with serenity and elegance.

Diwu Qing Rou leant on the cushions inside his carriage. There was a warm and confident smile on his face. He was looking at the crowd on both sides of the road in an indifferent and cold manner.

The officials had gathered on either side of the main road to see-off Diwu Qing Rou to the war. Their hands were clasped in respect. The people had lined-up on the street to send-him-off; this had caused a great commotion. Therefore, the marching-pace of the army had become slower.

Diwu Qing Rou's facial expression was warm. However, he felt impatient in his heart. He wasn't pleased by the grand expedition ceremony in the Continent Centre. Moreover, he was fed-up of people crowding the streets to send-off the young soldiers to the war.

In addition, this place was only fifteen-hundred kilometres away from his destination. The officials were doing this in order to flatter him. They had called the masses to come and see him off. This had greatly annoyed Diwu Qing Rou.

But, he had no choice.

He knew that it was important for him to do this. It was a way of uniting millions of people together. The hidden power of this ceremony would be revealed in the near future when the news of victory would come, or the requirement of people's contribution to the war would arise.

It was indeed a monumental force.

He couldn't have denied the power of people's sentiment even if he was the ruler of the country.

Therefore, he could only oblige and accept the ceremony. Moreover, he was required to adopt the best stance in front of the masses.

The army continued to move slowly.

Diwu Qing Rou's carriage was ventilated from all sides. He looked elegant, and had a calm smile on his face. His far-sighted eyes complimented his confident smile. Therefore, he was being greatly admired by the people — most of whom were seeing their Prime Minister for the first time.

[Only such a person could defeat Iron Cloud. He can sweep the entire world... he can establish an unyielding foundation for Great Zhao.]

However, Diwu Qing Rou's mind had drifted far away.

He recalled the news about Jing Meng Hun and Wang Teng Long parting ways. He was resentful, as well as disappointed since both of them had failed to meet his expectations.

[Jing Meng Hun has the strength of a Ninth Grade King Level Expert. It can be said that it is the peak level of strength one can attain in the Lower Three Heavens. But, his head is stodgy and rigid. Nothing as grand as this incident has ever happened in the past... this incident has tested Jing Meng Hun's ability to handle things in a skilful manner. But, the matter of pursuing King of Hell Chu has reflected the limitations of his capabilities.]

[He thinks of himself as a man of the Jiang-Hu even though he's a Ninth Grade King Level Expert. He has never regarded himself as an Imperial Court Official. Moreover, he hasn't been able to blend into the administration system of Great Zhao.]

[He always dissociates himself from the system, and prefers to drift freely on the outside.]

[So, his highest achievement would always be limited to leading the Golden Horse Riders Department even though he's a Ninth Grade King Level Expert. Moreover, his inability to tackle too many problems at once has begun to unravel itself since the other three King Level Experts haven't been able to provide any assistance to him.]

[How could King of Hell Chu escape for hundreds of kilometres if Jing Meng Hun had invested the entirety of his efforts into this task? The entire nation's force was after a single individual… but he still managed to escape… isn't that a big joke?]

Diwu Qing Rou hadn't spoken anything about this.

He knew that it would be futile to say anything. No matter how good a scheme was… the person who was required to implement it must be competent. Jing Meng Hun was obviously incompetent. So, there was no point of saying anything to him.

[If he's able to catch King of Hell Chu… then it'll be good. But if he can't catch him… then I – Diwu Qing Rou – will defeat him on the battlefield.]

[As far as I'm concerned… it's an easy task for me.]

There was also the matter of Wang Teng Long.

He was one of the top ten 'Tiger and Dragon Generals' of Great Zhao. However, he had left Diwu Qing Rou dumbfounded. Diwu Qing Rou had heaved a deep sigh after seeing the military report sent by Wang Teng Long. He hadn't spoken for a long time thereafter.

Wang Teng Long's military report was awfully objective. It didn't complain about the Golden Horse Riders Department. Instead, it was a mere description of facts mixed with a little bit of anger. However, it was done thoughtlessly; it could be overlooked.

But, Diwu Qing Rou wasn't angry because of this. He had answered Wang Teng Long with a sealed letter. He had closed his eyes – not wanting to hear any other news regarding that matter.

"You bear a grudge in your heart after facing an unfavourable situation in the battle. It's understandable and alright. But, do the reasons behind your failure include only others? Not yourself as well? Jing Meng Hun arrived late… that's correct. But, weren't you at fault too? You and your army knew that he was coming. Then,

why did you relax and ignore the severity of situation? Couldn't an army of ten-thousand soldiers take turns to eat food? Was it really necessary to cook food for all the soldiers at the same time? You lost because of this reason; how regrettable it is! What can I say if you're a 'dumb old horse'...? It's your fault too. But, you're only blaming the other party involved. You will end up becoming a laughing stock if this goes-on."

[King of Hell Chu escaped. Does the blame lie on you or him? Jing Meng Hun arrived late... it's still pardonable. But, your stupidity is unforgivable. Does an army of ten-thousand soldiers need to have their meal at the same time? Both the parties erred at the same time... and become a laughing stock for all eternity. Fancy that... you still have the guts to complain before me!]

This was more or less written in the letter.

It was heard that Wang Teng Long was ashamed after reading this letter. He was so incited that he threw-up blood on the spot...

But, this couldn't be compared with Diwu Qing Rou's depressed heart, [It was a rare opportunity. At first... he was intercepted and pursued by them. From the beginning till the end... their strength was several hundred times more than that of King of Hell Chu; maybe a thousand times more than him. Moreover, they had encountered him face to face. Such a good opportunity to capture King of Hell Chu was wasted in such a manner.]

[Moreover, after wasting this golden opportunity... both the parties started to criticize each other...]

Diwu Qing Rou would've scolded them if it weren't for his self-control: [How dare you blame each other and shift responsibility... you mother*kers! You bastards, you both are the same... The disease called 'stupidity' runs in your blood! You chirp once again... and I'll lock you up in prison...]

However, Diwu Qing Rou's self-control would never allow him to say these words out loud. But, it didn't mean that these thoughts

didn’t cross his mind.

In fact, he wanted to catch these idiots and strangle them to death.

Diwu Qing Rou narrowed his eyes and thought.

The large army slowly advanced forward. Diwu Qing Rou pulled down the curtains. He closed his eyes to regain his composure. His train of thoughts had already gone thousands of kilometres away — to the battlefield.

[Tie Long Cheng, my old rival — Diwu Qing Rou is coming! But, I won’t play any games with you this time. I will destroy you in one in one stroke!]

[Tie Bu Tian — I shall pull you down from your emperor’s throne, and turn you into my captive, or perhaps a corpse! I’ll let you know that this world isn’t such a good place for someone in the position of an Emperor!]

[King of Hell Chu — Diwu Qing Rou looks forward to seeing you in the battlefield if you don’t die during your escape! I’ll let you experience my strategies, and make you realize that you’re far inferior to me; regardless of your wisdom and talent in martial arts!]

[This world shall tremble in my hands from today onwards! … Until I finally unite it!]

Diwu Qing Rou’s body swayed up and down with the carriage. A burst of dense aura was emitted from his forehead. It enveloped the whole carriage. It raised gusts of cold rustling wind even in this blistering hot summer…

Chu Yang burst into Beyond the Heavens Sect Mountains like a storm. His strong spiritual sense instantly became aware that this seemingly quiet and peaceful mountain forest was filled with a dangerous aura.

Chu Yang’s relaxed mind regained its vigilance and focus because

of this dangerous aura! He was tired to death, but he didn't dare to breathe-easy in that kind of deadly atmosphere.

The count of the wounds on Chu Yang's body had increased several folds during the chase. The most serious one was from the time was when he had nearly gotten his leg chopped. But, he had somehow dragged himself, and had escaped the tight encirclement. Moreover, he had done all he could to avoid sustaining any injuries in his internal organs. That was why his internal organs had gradually restored to normal...

The orchid fragrance had also started to weaken and dissipate.

There was still a faint lingering smell, but it was of little significance. Otherwise, this entire journey would've been more thrilling and deadly for him. Perhaps, he would've made a slip and gotten captured because of the orchid fragrance.

That intense chase-fight had also subsided after the weakening of the orchid fragrance. Jing Meng Hun was very perplexed by this.

[It was such an intensive pursuit initially. He wouldn't have had the time to breathe! So, how have his internal injuries recovered? It should be getting more and more serious, right...]

Chapter 383: The Enemy is Close

Chu Yang tried to adjust his breathing. He lay motionless on his stomach in a scrubby patch of grass. His body was concealed by a few trees.

Right now, he must do the exact opposite of what was expected.

He would have a slim chance of survival if he did something like... hiding in a bush; the least expected move. However, Chu Yang would be consigned to eternal damnation if he made even the slightest mistake.

The pursuers were continuously chasing him, and could find him at any moment. And, Chu Yang had chosen this patch of grass... where it was easy to be discovered.

The terrain was smooth and flat. So, it was easy to get spotted. But, the people of the Golden Horse Riders Department knew that King of Hell Chu was very crafty. Therefore, they were checking every dark corner of the mountain-forest – along with high peaks and boulders that were located in midst of lush trees...

But, no one paid any attention to ordinary places.

This is a basic flaw of the human psychology. And, it had given Chu Yang a chance to survive.

Heaven never seals-off all the exits. Therefore, one can use anything to one's own advantage as long as one is bold and careful. One must always try to find a way to survive even if one is certainly doomed to die.

But, how many people in the entire world are capable of accomplishing such a feat in a situation like this?

Chu Yang let out a sigh, and relaxed. His entire body felt sore. He had thirty unhealed wounds on his body; they were burning with pain. He strived hard to control his breathing, and used his spirit sense to block the pores in his body since he needed to stop the

fragrance emanating out of it. Meanwhile, the Sword Spirit hurriedly started to instil medicinal efficacies within his body.

The Sword Spirit had previously complained about Chu Yang accumulating too many medicinal efficacies. Absorbing too many medicinal efficacies would make him dependant on them; it wasn't good for his cultivation. But now, he was afraid that Chu Yang hadn't absorbed enough medicinal efficacies.

He had even started to complain, "The deposit of medicinal efficacies is very less; it isn't enough…"

Chu Yang felt that his strength was restored to some extent. His stiff body had regained some of its vitality. His heart – previously pounding like thunder – had also pacified. Now, he wanted to change his hiding place…

[This spot is temporarily safe. But, I can't be sure when someone would turn-up with squinted eyes… and possibly find me. The pursuers can easily catch a glimpse of the exposed flesh of my buttocks if they chase-over.]

[But… my body is in a terrible shape. My restored strength wouldn't allow me any physical activity. The fatigue has reached my spirit and is affecting my mind… especially after this rest.]

[I was thoroughly exhausted before I arrived here. But fortunately, this place is Beyond the Heavens Sect; it's like my maternal home. My pursuers are large in number, but who can catch me in the terrain I am so familiar with?]

Chu Yang comforted himself. Then, he rolled horizontally; like a cat. He propped his elbow against the ground, and horizontally rolled on the grass at a rapid speed.

He needed to do this lateral shift very carefully. He couldn't jump. Also, he couldn't move the grass – to avoid its rustling sound. His entire scheme would go to nought if his movements were heard. But, he couldn't hold his body too high from the

ground either. He would be discovered if he were any higher.

Therefore, he could only use his elbows to prop-up from the ground. Then, he continued to move laterally. He used the tips of his toes to gain support on the ground, and used his elbows to move. He did this dozens of times. His elbows had started to bleed since they were rubbing against sand and stones.

However, Chu Yang had succeeded in moving a hundred feet on his side; he had got closer to a grove of short pines.

The pine grove was short in height. However, it was much taller than the patch of shrubby grass. Moreover, it was dense. It would be difficult to discover Chu Yang as long as he stayed in the grove.

Chu Yang observed his surroundings. He became steadier as he got closer to his goal. He knew that people tend to relax after reaching near their goal, and then... they suffer. He had learnt this from the mistakes of other people. So, he didn't become complacent.

A black-attired man was hidden behind a dense branch on the upper left side of a pine tree. His vigilant eyes gazed attentively at every dark corner. He looked focused; like a hunting-dog hunting its prey.

However, he had overlooked a short pine tree that was located right below him.

[Well as they say... it's the darkest under the lamp. And... it seems that it's really dark under this lamp]. Chu Yang praised the spirit of the Golden Horse Riders Department's experts' professional commitment. His entire attention was fixed on spotting the enemy. Chu Yang took the advantage of his enemy looking in other direction. His body floated-up; it was riddled with bruises. However, he used the last bit of his strength, and hid behind the short pine tree. Then, he rapidly got down, and curled-up his body in the shadow of the short pine.

“What was that…?” The man heard a faint sound. He absentmindedly glanced below him, but didn’t find anything. So, he turned his head back up. He mumbled, “I feel paralyzed. Catching this King of Hell Chu is so painful and hectic… I’m extremely tired… I’ve been squatting on top of this stinky tree for three days and three nights. F*k me… it’s such a boring task. I’m just sitting here and going through this torture… Also, there are too many damn foxes, squirrels and hedgehogs in this mountain. The next time I see any… I will f*ck its grandmother!”

The man had mistaken the sound to be that of a passing squirrel or fox.

Chu Yang heaved a sigh of relief. He had never thought that this man would talk about f*cking the grandmother of a squirrel, fox or hedgehog; the mere image of it was extremely disturbing. He took out the juice of plants which he had accumulated in the Nine Tribulations Space. Then, he smeared the juice on his bleeding wounds. The pain was extremely difficult to endure. It wasn’t beneficial in healing the wounds either. But, it masked the smell of blood that was coming from his body.

Then, he began to treat his wounds – right under the nose of that Golden Horse Riders Department expert.

And then, he waited for the day to get dark.

He would have a higher probability of escaping in the dark.

The mountain winds got stronger with the passage of time; the whistling sound of the wind rang in every direction. A whirlwind would occasionally roll-over and hit the treetops with a whistling sound; it sounded like a ghost’s cry… or the sad and shrill howl of a spirit. This would inevitably provoke the man on the treetop to curse-out loud…

Suddenly, a man wearing a black robe appeared with a whooshing sound; one of his arms had been severed. The person on the treetop became alert. He turned his head and asked, “Who’s

it?”

“It’s me!”

“Oh… it’s the King Level Expert!”

Jing Meng Hun had arrived there to take the status report.

“Did you see anything?” Jing Meng Hun frowned; he had a sullen countenance. Jing Meng Hun had become more and more irritable in the past few days. He was almost on the verge of exploding.

“Nothing. King of Hell Chu hasn’t come here.”

“He hasn’t come here?” Jig Meng Hun knitted his eyebrows and said, “That’s impossible! I’ve been following the smell of blood; it disappeared somewhere around this place. How could he not have come here?”

The black-attired man on the treetop was startled, “The smell disappeared somewhere around here?”

Jing Meng Hun didn’t answer. He was sniffing and inspecting carefully. Suddenly, his expression changed as he walked-over to a darker spot and looked carefully.

It was clear that someone had lied on his stomach there. Someone had taken shelter there, but had left by now! This individual had left some traces behind. The spot wasn’t even fifty feet away from the man on the treetop.

Jing Meng Hun crouched and flipped through the patch of grass carefully. His fingers brushed against the grass blades. He raised his hand; there was a bright-red spot of blood on his fingers. He smelled a faint orchid fragrance as he brought his hand closer to his nose.

Jing Meng Hun’s facial expression turned ferocious. He stood-up and flung his arm without turning back. Smack! The man in black got slapped, and was sent flying in a circular manner. His head buzzed; blood spurted-out of his mouth and nose. However, the

stupid person still didn't understand what was going on, "King Level Master… you… you… what are you doing?"

"What am I doing?" Jing Meng Hun was extremely angry. He started to shower abuses, "I'll do your grandmother! King of Hell Chu was lying here on his stomach for a long time. He even bled here. He rested here to restore his physical strength… and then escaped. All this happened… but you were dreaming!"

"King… King of Hell Chu?" The man in black was petrified. [King of Hell Chu was right under my nose a while ago?]

"If it wasn't King of Hell Chu… then who was it? Your Grandpa?" Jing Meng Hun was furious. Chu Yang had been tightly surrounded for the first time. Jing Meng Hun was aware of the heavy price they would have to pay if he were to escape. [King of Hell Chu is so badly injured that even a three-year-old will be able to kill him if he's found.]

[But, this stupid man missed such a great opportunity. King of Hell Chu was lying on his side… bleeding… and on the verge of dying… for at least a quarter-of-an-hour. But, this man was dreaming… and didn't have the least bit of awareness of his surroundings…]

[This…how could he be so dumb? What level of stupidity is this? He should be chopped into pieces…]

Blood rushed to Jing Meng Hun's head as he looked at the patch of grass where King of Hell Chu had lay on his stomach. His remaining hand flung another hard slap on the black-attired man's face. He shuddered from head-to-toe in anger; his eyes had become bloodshot. He trembled as he said, "You see… it was so easy to spot him. There's nothing in the vicinity to hide behind. Even a rat could've been seen in just a glance… and you couldn't spot something as big as a living person… You… your eyes are nothing but a pair of anu*es…"

Jing Meng Hun felt that he was at a loss for words.

There weren't enough words to describe the degree of foolishness of the man who stood before him. So, he continued to stare at the expert. He huffed and puffed in anger; his brain had become blank with anxiety…

King Level Expert Jing looked at the man fiercely; it seemed as if he would swallow that man alive. The man in black shuddered; his face looked deathly pale…

[I'm finished… I'm so finished. King of Hell Chu… you've killed me…]

King of Hell Chu was still hiding on the side. His attention was entirely concentrated on healing himself. He might've laughed out loud if he had heard Jing Meng Hun flying into a rage… Then, King Level Master Jing would've hit the jackpot, and might've easily captured King of Hell Chu.

But suddenly, a few men arrived at the scene with a whooshing sound; they were panting. "King Level Expert, have you found anything?"

"Found anything?" Jing Meng Hun's nostrils released blasts of air as he pointed his finger at one of them, "Previously… there was only one moron here. But now… it's overflowing with stupid bastards… How shameful! Even if I had found anything… it would amount to nothing!"

Everyone was startled. They looked at the black-attired man with suspicion.

"What are you looking at? Get this guy the hell out of here. Looking at him reminds me of my dead mother and makes me want to cry… but I've no tears to shed…" Jing Meng Hun waved his hand, "King of Hell Chu couldn't have gone far. Hurry-up, and search this place!"

Chapter 384: Staggering at Every Step

Everyone scattered with whistling sounds.

Jing Meng Hun too walked away. He was burning with anxiety, [King of Hell Chu will get away if we're even a step late. There's no time to lose; this lost opportunity will never return...]

Everyone dispersed in all directions. They searched for Chu Yang with their eyes wide open. They overturned even the rat holes to find him. They looked everywhere except for the short pine shrub which was in close proximity. They didn't pay attention to it even though it was right under their noses. [King Level Expert Jing Meng Hun has been here for so long that even the rats have gone away... If King of Hell Chu were here... wouldn't he have been caught by the King Level Expert already?]

[This is a vast expanse of flat land. How can a man stay hidden here?]

More pursuers arrived with a whooshing sound. Then, they scattered in all directions as well. They even passed-by Chu Yang's hideout. Their eyes appeared like searchlights as they grazed past him from a distance of three feet...

Minister Chu lay curled-up in the shadow of the nearby pine shrub; he was motionless. [Tsk... tsk... you guys can't even find fifty kilograms of meat... You guy better be prepared to give your meat to me... sooner or later...]

The sun was slowly setting in the west.

The blistering hot day was about to end. People searching for him in the jungle became more and more impatient, [We've been looking for him for so long; we have practically turned this mountain upside down. There's still no trace of King of Hell Chu. Could it be that he has already escaped?]

"That's impossible!" Jing Meng Hun concluded. [King of Hell

Chu is seriously injured. It was a miracle that he managed to flee up till here. It's impossible for him to escape any further.]

Jing Meng Hun was convinced of his judgement as he had a deep understanding of medicine.

[King of Hell Chu is undoubtedly hidden in this mountain.]

"Continue to search every cave... under every tree... on top of every tree... and in every patch of grass. If he's in a snake-hole... then, turn it upside down and find him for me. Smash all the big rocks to bits. I can't accept that he isn't hiding in these mountains. King of Hell Chu can't fly away into the sky." Jing Meng Hun felt exhausted as he finished giving the order.

The experts got busy with search once again. A continuous rumbling noise could be heard in the mountains since the big rocks were destroyed. Everything that could hide a person behind it was smashed by the Golden Horse Riders Department.

The wolves, insects, panthers, tigers, foxes, squirrels, mice and even ants were having a difficult time on the mountain. They were fleeing in disarray since they had been rendered homeless. Moreover, they occasionally ran into some experts of Golden Horse Riders Department who would kill them to vent out their frustration...

Meanwhile, Chu Yang's spiritual power was being assisted by the Sword Spirit; it was sixty percent restored. However, the medicinal efficacies that had been accumulated with so much trouble were consumed-up; even a drop wasn't left.

Only two ripened Jade Snow Spirit Ginsengs were left. However, Chu Yang wasn't willing to use them. They were the only things that he could depend upon in case he encountered a life-or-death situation.

The medicines which had been collected by Diwu Qing Rou and Golden Horse Riders Department over the years, as well as the

massive amount of herbal medicines Chu Yang had stolen from the Imperial Palace of Great Zhao, had vanished into thin air – thanks to the valiant efforts of the Golden Horse Riders Department in chasing him all the way here.

It could be said that the medicines acquired from the Golden Horse Riders Department had been used to cure the injuries that they had inflicted on him.

It might be difficult to understand if it's put in this manner. So, let's assume – Chu Yang would've died as many as fifty times on this journey of sixty-five-hundred kilometres while fighting so many battles if he hadn't stored so many efficacies.

In short, he would be dead by now; without counting the severe injuries he had already sustained. It was clear that this tragic journey was way beyond anyone's imagination…

This could explain why Jing Meng Hun was so flustered and exasperated that he wanted to commit suicide. Anyone who has fought a battle and couldn't kill their opponent… could relate to King Level Master Jing Meng Hun. But, he couldn't anything except stomping around and cursing in anger until his liver hurt; he didn't have any other way to vent out his anger.

The sun finally disappeared behind the horizon, and the mountain started to cool down. The search-party became more impatient as the sky became dusky.

Chu Yang hadn't moved the entire time.

He had hidden the smell of his blood to a great extent. But, how could he hide from these denizens of the world? So, the wounds on his body had been filled with mosquitoes and ants. Moreover, the insects were also attracted by the juices of plants that he had smeared on his body.

The itching sensation was unbearable and overwhelming, but Chu Yang didn't even frown. He had frozen his body in this

posture; he didn't move an inch from morning to dusk.

He would touch a light branch of the pine shrub if he were to move even an eyebrow. And, that would issue a sound. The sound would be faint and his possibility of being discovered was little. However, he didn't take that risk either.

He wouldn't give himself away because of negligence; even if he was unbearably uncomfortable.

He had no choice but to remain motionless as he was surrounded by the enemies. Chu Yang would rather endure being cut to pieces, or suffer this unbearable torture until he was bitten to death over falling into the hands of the enemy and make them happy. [I'd rather die a silent death. They'll be scared as long as they don't find my corpse. They'll go through a lot of trouble to find me. And, Wu Qian Qian will be able to continue playing the role of King of Hell Chu in Iron Cloud.]

The sky was finally dark.

Chu Yang relaxed as the search voices became distant. He was still covered with insects; cicadas sang around him. He used his spiritual power to jolt his wounded muscles. This drove out the insects and ants from inside his flesh.

Several of his wounds had festered and had turned black.

The Sword Spirit tried to clean-up the wounds with his power, but it didn't yield any result. He was powerless without the power of elixir.

Even the Sword Spirit was baffled as he saw Chu Yang's perseverance. In his opinion, 'Chu Yang endurance despite so many torments' could be considered as one of the biggest miracles in the Nine Heavens.

Now, the sky was as black as ink.

Midnight was just around the corner.

Chu Yang finally moved his fingers. His body had become numb after remaining in the same posture for a long time. He moved all his fingers one-by-one until they became flexible enough to move freely. Then, he slowly moved his wrists – up and down in succession...

It was past midnight by the time he was through making subtle movements throughout his body to ensure that he could move without any stagnation.

He felt like he didn't have any bones in his body; like a serpent. He slid from the side of the short pine shrub, and silently slid onto the ground. Then, he slid close to the big pine tree; a man in black had been monitoring from its top. He went closer to the tree, and 'wrapped' his body around it.

He looked like a snake as he silently slithered-up.

It was clear why the black-attired man had chosen this tree to keep surveillance. It was the tallest tree within a radius of several hundred feet.

Chu Yang climbed onto the fork of the pine tree without touching any pine needle. Then, he continued to climb-up. He seemed to have loosened his movements.

He arrived on the top.

He was being very careful of the pine needles. He looked all around – near and far. He heard the faint sound of human activity coming from afar. Some areas were densely covered with trees. He occasionally saw flashes of cold light; it was the light getting reflected off the weapons...

Chu Yang started to memorize their locations.

Finally, the men stopped searching. They stayed motionless in their original spots. After all, they weren't made of iron. Moreover, they couldn't see properly at night. So, the correct approach was – to sit back and wait for the right opportunity. If

there was a movement — then it must be King of Hell Chu.

Chu Yang slowly climbed down the tree. His movement was brisk and agile. Then, he slowly walked on the ground inwards.

He didn't walk outwards. Instead, he chose to break into the encirclement of the experts. There were two reasons behind this. Firstly, these experts would stop guarding this interior area and go outwards to the peripheral area in search of him after the dawn-break. They wouldn't look for him in the area they had been guarding all night. Going to the peripheral area at that time would be more dangerous. Moreover, Chu Yang's leg was injured. So, he couldn't exert his full strength. He would be overtaken more easily in this way.

Secondly, Chu Yang remembered, [The main peak of Beyond the Heavens Sect used to have a herbal medicine garden. Even if the Sect has become an empty shell... they couldn't have cleaned up all the elixirs... could they?]

[There must be some leftovers. Even the herbal medicines of lowest level can be useful...]

What Chu Yang needed the most was medicinal efficacy; he needed it urgently. Given his condition, he would give even a potent poison to the Sword Spirit if he found it. He would make the Sword Spirit find a tiny bit of medicinal efficacy that could be extracted from it...

This was the only way if he wanted to go to the main peak.

Chu Yang also had an idea. He remembered that he had witnessed the Seven Shades of cold energy when he had obtained the Nine Tribulations Sword Point...

It clearly had a cold spring underneath. The Sword Point would obtain formidable power if it absorbed the cold energy of the cold spring even if it wasn't an elixir.

The cold spring didn't have any owner as the people of Beyond

the Heavens Sect had moved out. So, Chu Yang wouldn't feel any mental pressure while taking it.

It could be said that this entire journey was frightening at every step. He had had several plans at each step of this journey. However, he didn't have many plans now.

He must leave before dawn.

Chu Yang's eyes became dark.

He bypassed two men...

Then, three men...

Then, he bypassed more men... Chu Yang stopped as he realized that his destination wasn't far from his reach. Then, he hid his body by attaching it to a tree trunk.

There was complete silence.

Suddenly, a few people came out from the corners and started to search the pine tree on which Chu Yang had been hiding. Their eyes shone brightly as they turned around and walked away.

Chu Yang closed his eyes and counted their steps. He took three deep breaths. Then, he turned around and came out of hiding. He went in the centre of the encirclement; his back was covered in cold sweat.

It was extremely dangerous to be in the centre of the encirclement. Chu Yang restrained his breathing, and began to creep on the ground like a snake. He would creep forward a bit... then lay dormant. Then, he coiled his body like a snake...

Chu Yang wasn't assured as he observed his surroundings. The rocks in the entire region had been smashed to pieces. Even the turf had been levelled-off in certain places. There were only a few places where someone could hide.

Chu Yang went north towards a small pit. The dug out pieces of the turf were piled on top of it...

Chapter 385: Mysterious Ice Jade Paste; Nine Tribulations Pill Accomplished!

Chu Yang had remained in the thick patch of grass the entire day. This had given support to his body, and had helped him to relax. He felt comforted by this break since he had covered the entire route without any stoppage.

This current hiding spot was closest to his destination. Jing Meng Hun would order to continue the search operation as soon as the sky turned bright. Therefore, Chu Yang would have to set-out on the road leading to the main peak at the earliest.

This was his only chance.

The road to the main peak was perhaps even more difficult to traverse. However, Chu Yang must go there to replenish his stock of medicinal efficacies. That was necessary for his survival.

He had been hiding for almost half-an-hour when the sky began to brighten-up.

Jing Meng Hun’s voice resounded, "Has anyone discovered anything?" his voice reverberated in all directions. He had shouted-out loud because the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department were scattered everywhere.

"No."

"I didn’t find anything here."

"Nothing’s here either."

Jing Meng Hun’s complexion turned unsightly. An invisible falcon flew-off as he shook his hands. A sound of flapping wings was heard after a while; the invisible falcon had returned. It landed on Jing Meng Hun’s hand. A look of relief appeared on his face as he read the message brought by the falcon. “It says here – they haven’t found King of Hell Chu on the other side of the

intersection. This means that he's still hidden in this mountain. Continue to look for him."

"Yes!"

"If he's not found today..." Jing Meng Hun's countenance changed as he clenched his teeth. He then raised his head to look at the mountain and spoke bitterly, "... then we'll have no other choice but to set fire to the mountain."

[Set fire to the mountain!]

Everyone looked at each other in dismay; they looked hesitant. [This is one of the biggest taboos in the Nine Heavens Continent. Setting fire to a mountain is equivalent to burning the source of livelihood of hundreds-of-thousands of people. It's akin to indirectly killing thousands of innocent people.]

[Is King Level Expert Jing going to risk universal condemnation?]

"This person is our biggest enemy from Iron Cloud." Jing Meng Hun spoke heavily, "But, we're here to catch King of Hell Chu. And, we may even catch him today. We won't need to set fire to the mountain in that case."

Everyone remained silent.

"Start searching! Move quickly! Inform others as soon as you find any anomaly." Jing Meng Hun waved his hand as an indication for them to scatter.

Everyone moved and rushed out in all directions.

Suddenly, Chu Yang pranced-out of his hiding place. His body soared in the air along with the experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department. He became a part of the dispersing crowd, and advanced on the path to search for himself...

Someone noticed Chu Yang moving around. But, Chu Yang's timing was perfect. Moreover, the manner in which he moved and carried himself made him seem like 'one of them'. Anyway, only

one individual had seen him; that too his fuzzy back-profile. That individual hadn't felt concerned since everyone in the group was rushing in different directions. Therefore, no one suspected Chu Yang...

It was King of Hell Chu's plan to slip-away from right under their noses.

"Good Heavens! I seemed to have the protection of the Heavenly Blessings." Chu Yang exhaled a deep breath. He moved hurriedly. "You're treating me so well. I must've made you change your attitude in this life. You must've felt a twinge of guilt and remorse."

Chu Yang was indulging in flights of fancy in his heart. He turned around and started to move hurriedly. He stuck close to the ground as he fled several hundred feet. Then, he turned around a corner, and rushed far away from the vision of the group of experts. Finally, he slowed down his speed.

He couldn't go fast any longer. The saber-cut on his thigh was so deep that his bone was visible. Any movement caused him immense pain. Blood seeped out of his wound in a constant manner.

"I'm miserable," Chu Yang touched his thigh. He was extremely alert and observant of his surroundings even though he was moving slow. He was advancing towards the main peak. He hadn't taken the main road. Instead, he was moving along an inaccessible path that was filled with lush vegetation. An average person wouldn't know that such a shortcut even existed...

Only Chu Yang could've possessed such a detailed knowledge of Beyond the Heavens Sect since he was an 'ex-aboriginal inhabitant' of this place.

Chu Yang entered the main peak with ease since he was familiar with the route. Then, he approached the Elixir Garden.

The Sword Point began to jump excitedly.

"As expected... there are remnants here..." Chu Yang was overjoyed. But, he walked silently on tiptoes, "I don't know how much is left behind for me... Well, beggars can't be choosers. I shall accept the leftovers..."

A feeling of pain and bitterness appeared on his face as he walked up to a spot surrounded by big trees.

Wu Yun Liang was worthy of being considered as this generation's leader of the Sect – pertaining to his outstanding skills and grand vision. The Elixir Garden had been wiped clean before they had relocated from here; only a few ordinary herbal medicines were left behind...

"Bah! I shouldn't have come here... I had to take such a big risk to reach this place," Chu Yang sighed as he carefully approached the herbal medicines, and allowed the Sword Point to absorb their medicinal efficacies. He was about to leave when he realized that the Sword Point was still quivering unceasingly.

He followed the direction pointed by the Sword Point. Suddenly, his eyes lit-up, "So... that's how it is. They took everything growing above the ground... but some deep roots were left behind since they had moved in a hurry. Many rhizomes have been left behind here..."

Chu Yang found seven or eight rhizomes of elixirs with the help of the Sword Point. He had finally accumulated some medicinal efficacies. However, these rhizomes were few in numbers. Moreover, a rhizome was only a section of a full-grown plant.

The Sword Spirit kept saying in his consciousness that this had appeared as a timely help. Now, the healing process could finally be completed.

The Sword Spirit would've looked at such a small amount of medicinal efficacies with disdain and called it pathetic if they had

come across it earlier…

The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department had passed from this place a few times during the course of events. However, Chu Yang had managed to avoid them every time.

Then, he sneaked his way towards the main hall.

The main hall had been burned down; it had fallen into ruins. The experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department had already searched this place. They had smashed each and every stone, and had reduced the whole place to a pile of rubbles…

However, this didn't pose any difficulty to Chu Yang as he was familiar with the place. He carefully chose a spot. A flagstone and a big stone were revealed as he pushed aside the dust from the surface. A smile appeared on his face as he saw this.

This would be as difficult as ascending to the heavens for an average person. However, it had provided Chu Yang the best place to hide.

Chu Yang lifted the flagstone and jumped inside. The flagstone fell after him, and the opening was closed again. It stirred-up dust in the air. But, Chu Yang had disappeared by then…

This was a safe spot. The Golden Horse Riders Department wouldn't find him even if they turn the entire mountain upside down; they wouldn't be able to find Chu Yang if he didn't come out on his own.

Chu Yang swiftly went deeper underground; like a mole. He found the secret path going straight downwards without spending much time or effort. He felt the vigorous cold air growing abundant as he continued to move. He went all the way inside, and passed through the seven green jade doors. He smiled as he finally reached the innermost place.

This place looked the same as before.

However, the stones that he had dug out back then to fill the

opening had frozen under the influence of cold air. They had integrated into one another – forming an inseparable entity.

But, this didn't pose an obstacle in Chu Yang's way.

He pulled-out the long sword from the sheath. It was infused with the cold energy that he had collected from the 'Seven Shades Congregation Grounds'. Then, he inserted it into the frozen mass at a lightning speed. The long sword pierced the stone-mass like a hot knife cutting through butter. The entire body of the sword – except for the hilt – disappeared inside the mass.

"I wonder what treasures are hidden in the Seven Shades Congregation Grounds," Chu Yang muttered to himself. Then, he picked-up a square-shaped stone and kept it aside.

He dug out a big hole with his hands in the blink of an eye. Chu Yang noticed the Sword Point lying on the dug-up spot. It was in a pointed shape; it seemed to be pointing at something.

Chu Yang took a deep breath. He brandished his long sword in a circle, and inserted it into the core of the square-shaped stone with a flick of his wrist. Suddenly, Chu Yang felt as if something was different. He focused his attention to look. He was startled.

There was a strange and solid substance on the tip of the sword. It wasn't gold or jade; it wasn't a rock either. It was a piece of pure stone.

"Take it," the Sword Spirit said inside his mind. He sounded very impatient, "Rejoice, young fellow! You've found a wonderful treasure. It's something you've been desperately looking for."

Chu Yang laughed and asked, "What's this?"

"This is mysterious jade crystal." Sword Spirit replied, "You keep digging for one-hundred-and-fifty feet downward from here. Also, keep storing the dug-up material inside the Nine Tribulations Space. Young fellow, if you're lucky... then you've obtained one of the first-rate treasures found on the Nine Heavens Continent. This

treasure is one of the nine great herbal medicines."

"Nine great herbal medicines?" Chu Yang's body shivered as his face flushed red. His pupils dilated as he asked, "Really? Does it mean that we can make the Nine Tribulations Pill?"

"That's right!" the Sword Spirit answered in an excited tone," My spiritual sense was too weak the last time. So, I couldn't discover it. Who would've thought that such a top-notch 'heaven and earth' treasure will be found in such a barren place! This... is probably the mysterious ice jade paste."

"Mysterious ice jade paste? What's that?" Chu Yang asked while digging unceasingly. Meanwhile, the mysterious jade crystal kept piling-up inside the Nine Tribulations Space. Chu Yang was extremely excited, [Qing Wu, your injury will finally get cured.]

[I'll succeed in making the Nine Tribulation Pill soon. Qing Wu, just wait for me. I'll come to the Middle Three Heavens once this war is over. I'll finally change your fate.]

[Qing Wu!]

[Qing Wu! I did it!]

"You don't know about mysterious ice jade paste?" Sword Spirit asked in an angry tone, "Do you at least know what nine great herbal medicines are?"

"I don't know," Chu Yang shook his head as he replied.

Sword Spirit heaved a deep sigh.

"The so-called nine great herbal medicines are – in fact – the nine great heavenly treasures. But, you must remember that these nine great heavenly treasures may exist in the shape of ginseng... or spirit mushroom... or in form of flowing river... or a burning fire. But... at the root level... all the nine great heavenly treasures possess jade properties. These miraculous treasures are formed in a kind of miraculous moment when the spiritual jade – found between the Heaven and earth – gets combined with the elixir at its

side. Then, it absorbs the essence of the sun and the moon along with the spirit energy from the environment.

"So, the nine great herbal medicines can cure any injury. Even the so-called nine great elixirs with their enormous medicinal efficacies can’t achieve this feat. That’s because the nine great herbal medicines are the very embodiment of the spirit jade.

"The spirit jade in Diwu Qing Rou’s possession is in the form of a ginseng.

"Mysterious ice jade paste is usually located hundreds of feet below the ground... and stays like that for immemorial number of years. It also gives birth to rare mysterious jade crystal in its surroundings."

Chapter 386: Innate Body!

The Sword Spirit slowly spoke, “This situation is unique to the Nine Heavens Continent! People used to call it ‘Nine Heavens’ Nine jade’ thousands of years ago. Later, they thought it sounded somewhat awkward. So, they reversed the sequence and started to call it ‘Nine Jades of the Nine Heavens, understood?”

“So that’s how it is,” Chu Yang replied thoughtfully. Then, he suddenly had a thought, [Nine Heavens Continent, Nine Tribulations Sword, Nine Jade Nine Heavens… is it possible these three have some connection?]

“You’ve guessed it right. In fact, the ‘Nine Jades of the Nine Heavens’ were found in abundance in the Nine Heavens Continent at one time. They were compatible with the Nine Tribulations Sword. So, the Nine Tribulations Sword would make use of these nine types of spirit jade materials. Therefore, there’s indeed a connection between the Nine Jades of the Nine Heavens and the Nine Tribulations Sword. But since then, none of the ‘Nine Tribulations Sword Master’ has ever been able to gather all Nine Great Herbal Medicines. Even I don’t know what would happen if all of them were to be collected in one place…”

Sword Spirit said in a low and deep voice, “Do you understand now?”

“I understand… whoa, what’s that thing over there; it’s moving!” Chu Yang exclaimed. His eyes widened in shock as he stared at the bottom of the pit that he had dug.

There was a milky-white substance at the bottom of the pit; it was flowing like water. Yet, it was very viscous. It emitted sparkling and translucent rays of light; as if countless twinkling stars were hidden within it. It was the size of a palm. But, it seemed weightless. It was squirming slowly at present. It seemed as if it was waking up from a long dream. One moment it would

assume a linear shape... another moment it became circular... and then the very next moment... a polygon...

It also emitted bursts of a wonderful aromatic-mist along with its squirming motion. The temperature of this underground location was cold enough to freeze a living person. But, the temperature sharply fell further! The stones on the side froze with a 'creaking' sound in the blink of an eye. It seemed as if they would crack any time owing to such acute freezing...

"Hurry up! Grab it and put it inside!" the Sword Spirit shouted with a sense of urgency in his tone.

Chu Yang hastily did as instructed. He gave a mental command, and that bizarre and tiny lump entered the Nine Tribulations Space with a 'swoosh' sound.

"Is this the Mysterious Ice Jade Paste?" Chu Yang curiously peeked within the space of his consciousness and observed that bizarre lump.

"That's correct!" The Sword Spirit breathed a sigh of relief, and said somewhat excitedly, "It has never taken birth in 90,000 years. Nor has anyone found any Mysterious Ice Jade Paste until now!"

Chu Yang uttered 'oh' in surprise.

The Sword Spirit was clearly very excited. It took a deep breath, and spoke in a trembling voice, "This was indeed a good decision. We got such an amazing item ah!"

"Good stuff is good stuff... you ah ah ah what are you doing... " Chu Yang asked apprehensively, "I don't know what you're doing... but I think I have a rough idea..."

"What do you know huh? This stuff is beneficial for me, my mind and my soul!" The Sword Spirit spoke excitedly, "Only a tiny amount of it has gone inside the Nine Tribulations Space, but I can feel my spirits rise."

Chu Yang grunted.

He had seen that the Mysterious Ice Jade Paste had split into three pieces just as it entered the Nine Tribulations Space. Two pieces were small, and one was quite large. The Sword Spirit cherished this item very much. So, he had moved the largest piece to the Vitality Spring. The spring emitted one bubble as the largest piece vanished without a trace.

“Let’s make the Sword Point consume this small piece. And, you’ll consume the smallest one.” The Sword Spirit said cheerfully, “After that, I’ll extract it from your meridians, and change it into pure medicinal efficacy! We’re very fortunate to find it in this time of need! Ha ha, we don’t have to worry about the lack of efficacy anymore…”

Chu Yang flipped. He rolled his eyes, [I’ll consume it… and then you’ll extract it again…]

[Motherf*ker! Why do I suddenly feel unimportant? It’s as if you’re treating my body as a goddamn transit station?]

The Sword Point was very excited. It was pouncing up and down. It was issuing soft squeaking sound. The second piece of the Mysterious Ice Jade Paste was the size of a fingernail… but, it was relatively larger than the smallest piece. Yet, it vanished without a trace.

The Sword Point started to jump-about with joy; then, it started to scuttle here-and-there in excitement.

Chu Yang finally understood what the words - ‘let’s make the Sword Point consume’ meant. The extracted medicinal efficacy would always come back to Chu Yang every time the Sword Point consumed an elixir. However, this was the first time that the medicinal efficacy was gone forever… never to return.

He realized this while he waited to receive the medicinal efficacies. This had made Minister Chu a little sad… However, the appearance of three objects on the hilt of the Nine Tribulations Sword within his Dantian came as a comfort to him. These objects

were the size of soy-beans.

The Nine Tribulations Pills had taken shape! Moreover... three pills at once!

He had waited a long time. Chu Yang picked-up the smallest piece in his hand. He curiously looked at it for a moment, and then put it inside his mouth. [It's too small; it's the size of a corn grain at most...]

"You fool. The second piece was a little bigger, but you would've exploded into pieces if I had extracted the medicinal efficacies from it! You think this is Diwu Qing Rou's good-for-nothing Mysterious Jade Ginseng? This is a 90,000 years old Mysterious Ice Jade Paste. Diwu Qing Rou's is only 6000 years old; at most! Moreover, that's merely a deceptive number..."

The Sword Spirit relentlessly lashed-out at the greedy delusions of the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master.

Chu Yang was about to speak when he felt a stream of ice-cold air surging within his body. His mouth was immediately filled with a strong fragrance. This made his soul jubilant. He felt as if each and every hair on his body had broken into a dance...

Then, an abundant amount of vigorous power fiercely emerged from his Dantian, dashed upwards within his body, and spread throughout his meridians. It instantly destroyed the rotten parts within his meridians, and cleaned them all at once. After that, this power started to grow, and eventually dashed upwards to the back of his brain. Then, it dashed downwards like a turbulent waterfall, and made its way to the soles of his feet. Afterwards, it again rushed upwards, and passed into his Dantian. It emerged from his Dantian with a might of medicinal efficacies, and surged upwards...

This circulation took place three times. Chu Yang felt as if his entire body was bloating like a balloon. He felt as if his body would explode soon.

“Crap, why aren’t you helping me?!” Minister Chu was unbearably frightened. [How could a corn-grain-sized piece of Mysterious Ice Jade Paste have such formidable power?]

"Now you know how potent it is? And, you were complaining that it was too little? Well, even a little bit of it can explode you!” the Sword Spirit muttered sadistically. Then, it began to extract the residual medicinal efficacies from his meridians.

Suddenly, a shadow emerged from Chu Yang’s heart, and took the shape of a palm. After that, it suddenly left his body. It went up in the air, and transformed into a pure white orchid. It stayed there for a moment. Then, it turned into a sort of pure energy, and abruptly dissipated in the air.

Suddenly, a loud ‘rumbling’ sound was heard, and an orchid fragrance filled the entire stone chamber.

“Diwu Qing Rou’s ‘destroying soul and breaking heart palm technique’ has been uprooted!” It was a strange sight. But, Chu Yang would’ve understood it on his own even if the Sword Spirit hadn’t said these words.

However, he started to realize the ferocity and potency of the ‘destroying soul and breaking heart palm technique’! [I’m afraid my bones would’ve turned to ashes if it weren’t for the Sword Spirit, right?]

He couldn’t help but sweat profusely at the thought of this. He thought of the risk he had taken that evening. He felt traumatized as he recalled that incident. [He knows such an incredible martial art... I’m sure Diwu Qing Rou knows other world-shaking techniques as well...]

[The Sword Spirit of Nine Tribulations Sword drove-it-out such a long time ago... but it still left these levels of traces behind. So, saying I had only ‘almost’ recovered back then... wasn’t wrong...]

[No wonder it is called ‘Orchid heart chasing soul — the

fragrance that floats for 500km'. But, why would it stop at 500km? Such a palm technique should be capable of following a man for a lifetime!]

The Sword Spirit was absorbing the medicinal efficacies. But, he suddenly came to a halt, and the pores on Chu Yang's skin erupted.

A stinky substance — in the form of a straight and silky hair — was spurted-out from every pore on his body.

Chu Yang experienced immense pain as a result, and it came without any warning. His vision suddenly grew dark, and he nearly fainted as a result. He clenched his teeth. His face contorted as he released cold air from his mouth with hissing sounds.

Then, the Sword Spirit resumed absorbing the residual medicinal efficacies from his meridians as he asked, "Are you feeling ok?"

"You think I am fine...? Damn... I somehow feel fine..." Chu Yang was about to hurl a curse-word, but then realized that his body didn't hurt. Moreover, his body felt extremely fit and invigorated...

"All impurities have been expelled from your body." The Sword Spirit snorted and continued, "Now, your body has become what every man in the Nine Heavens yearns for... rejoice! You have an 'Innate body'!"

"'Innate body'? Holy crap!" Chu Yang was pleasantly surprised.

"Are you satisfied now? If not for the Mysterious Ice Jade Paste... inhabiting such a purified body would've only been possible after you had become a Ninth Grade Sword Emperor. Even so, it wouldn't necessarily be this pure..." Sword Spirit explained.

"Cool! That's really awesome!" Chu Yang looked at his own body with satisfaction — only to find himself stark naked. He hadn't realized that his clothes had been turned to ashes.

There were broken pieces of ice flakes under his feet.

“You needn’t wonder; those are your clothes. They had long frozen, and broke into pieces.” Sword Spirit explained.

“En… ” Chu Yang was somewhat speechless. Then, he shrugged and spoke with a laugh, “How is it? Big, right?”

“What’s big?” Sword Spirit was somewhat puzzled.

“I am talking about this,” Minister Chu shook the ‘thing’ between his legs. He swung his geni*als to-and-fro. (2)

“Ugh…” Sword Sprit was speechless, and his face turned black.

Chu Yang noticed the wrinkles on his body. He ran his fingers to feel his skin, and countless scars on his body turned to powder and fell down. He examined his thigh and realized that the fierce wound that had gone deep into his bone had also healed.

His ‘new’ body was practically comparable to an infant’s at birth; smooth and fair.

“You’ve grown taller too,” Sword Spirit reminded him.

“I know, I know.” Chu Yang was overjoyed as he looked at his arms and legs; practically drooling at the sight, “They’re so delicate…”

“Delicate? My fart.” Sword Spirit ruthlessly took a jab, “Wait till you go out. You’ll only need one fight, and your body will change into a damaged sack of blood and bones!”

“Hey, I was thinking… my martial power must’ve increased since I’ve consumed this outstanding heavenly treasure, right?” Chu Yang was immeasurably complacent, “What’s my current level?”

“It’s very good. You’re a peak level Ninth Grade Revered Sword Artist!” Sword Spirit said, “By the time you go out… you ought to have broken through to the King Level.”

“Eh… so few?” Chu Yang smacked his lips. He seemed somewhat dissatisfied.

“Outstanding heavenly treasure… isn’t for the purpose of

increasing martial power!" The Sword Spirit said angrily, "You rose by two grades in such a short time. Moreover, you have an innate body now! All the scars on your body have been dispelled, and the 'destroying soul and breaking heart palm technique' was also successfully expelled. How can you still be so wistful? Don't tell me you thought you could become a Supreme level Sword artist in a single step? I tell you, it won't happen even if you gather all of the nine great herbal medicines!"

Chu Yang realized that he had received plenty of benefits already. So, he let out a forced laugh, "I was just saying, you know…" Then, he thought of something and angrily said, "Why are you being so mean?"

The Sword Spirit turned silent. He turned his head away, and continued to absorb medicinal efficacies. He didn't pay any attention to his 'thing'…

Nine Jade: The nine great herbal medicines possess jade properties. They are made of spirit jades. However, they can be found in any form (this is explained in the previous chapter). Hence, they are alternately known as 'Nine Jade'.

Innate: The raw for this term is 'Xiantian'. It's a common term that appears in various novels. It has multiple translations. Its literal translation is 'First Heaven'. Meaning that someone who is Xiantian is closer to 'heaven'. They are also closer to dao and attaining immortality.

Chapter 387: King of Hell Chu's Influence

Diwu Qing Rou had travelled for almost two-thousand kilometres when he received an urgent military report. Surprisingly, he smiled as he read it.

"Bai Chang Tian and his army of five-hundred-thousand soldiers are completely annihilated." The expressions of all the generals – who were accompanying Diwu Qing Rou on the expedition – changed as they heard this. But, they were surprised to see Diwu Qing Rou smile.

"Speed-up the marching pace!" Diwu Qing Rou ordered insipidly. Then, he closed his eyes, and lay down partly-reclined in his carriage. He appeared to be meditating. So, no one dared to utter a single word. However, everyone was baffled, [This was such a major defeat. But... Lord Prime Minister doesn't seem to care at all.]

Diwu Qing Rou's eyes were closed, but thoughts were rapidly rolling inside his mind. He nodded with satisfaction as he recalled his entire plan once again.

"It seems like King of Hell Chu is indeed an important figure in Iron Cloud. Tie Bu Tian considers him awfully important," Diwu Qing Rou sighed.

"What does Lord Prime Minister mean by that..." Han Bu Chu – a member of the expedition – asked. He wasn't far off when Diwu Qing Rou uttered this in his carriage. So, he had been able to overhear it.

"Haha... " Diwu Qing Rou let out a relaxed laughter as he spoke, "Our victory is certain this time."

Han Bu Chu was even more puzzled by this reply.

He knew very little about this matter – Bai Chang Tian used to be in the Imperial Court of Great Zhao. In fact, he was the only

survivor of the staunch royalists. So, he was a supporter of the King who Diwu Qing Rou had kept under house-arrest. Five-hundred-thousand soldiers being laid to waste! So, Han Bu Chu was disturbed to some extent. But, Diwu Qing Rou had felt relieved. Could this have some other hidden meaning...? Han Bu Chu didn't know.

"Send a letter immediately. Notify Jing Meng Hun — he must set fire to the mountain without hesitating about anything... including famines... if King of Hell Chu is able to escape beyond fifty-five-hundred kilometres!" Diwu Qing Rou closed his eyes and spoke in an indifferent manner.

"Yes..." Han Bu Chu complied. But, he was confused.

"This plan will probably succeed. Or... perhaps this plan will come to a premature end. So, I didn't make it clear to everyone during the deployment. I can only wait and watch it progress step-by-step. I can only observe whether this plan will work or not. If the plan fails... then the war will continue in a normal way; as before. If this plan works... then the war will probably end six months ahead of time... or... or it will be over immediately. At present... it seems that this plan is already half completed."

Diwu Qing Rou smiled; the sunshine that was coming through the carriage-curtains casted a mottled shadow on his face.

"Plan..." Han Bu Chu wasn't a stupid man. However, he didn't have the least bit of an idea as to what Diwu Qing Rou was talking about.

"Bu Chu, you lack an overall grasp over the present situation." Diwu Qing Rou spoke with partially closed eyes, "Do you remember that I had made some arrangements when I was in the middle of making layouts for troop-deployment and military formations...?"

"Yes, the humble subordinate wouldn't dare to forget."

“Then, you must certainly remember that I had given some instructions regarding the matter-at-hand when King of Hell Chu had escaped from the Continent Centre – to make some minor adjustments to the routes being taken by the nine army units?” Diwu Qing Rou said.

“I remember.”

“So, do you know why I did that?” Diwu Qing Rou asked with a smile.

“That… ” Han Bu Chu racked his brains, but couldn’t think of a reason. He forced a smile and said, “The subordinate is ashamed.”

“You can’t think of a reason because you lack awareness. Well… it’s not very unexpected of you,” Diwu Qing Rou said with a smile. Han Bu Chu noticed that Diwu Qing Rou was extremely cheerful.

“I implore Lord Prime Minister to explain it clearly.”

“The most important person in this plan is King of Hell Chu,” Diwu Qing Rou stated softly. “The success or failure of this plan rests upon King of Hell Chu’s body. This plan will fail if King of Hell Chu isn’t able to escape. And, this plan will fail if King of Hell Chu doesn’t hold much important in Tie Bu Tian’s heart…”

“King of Hell Chu?” Han Bu Chu frowned, “What relation does this matter have with King of Hell Chu? What ability does this one man have to directly affect the course of war?”

“That’s where you’re wrong.” Diwu Qing Rou smiled, but his voice became serious, “King of Hell Chu has already affected the course of war. In fact, it was him who initiated it. It may seem like this war has been initiated by me – Diwu Qing Rou. But, it’s not so. It should be said that King of Hell Chu has single-handedly initiated this war.”

Han Bu Chu sucked in a cold breath.

[King of Hell Chu has single-handedly initiated the war between two nations?]

“At present, the war’s situation is the same as it was ten years ago — when I and Tie Long Cheng had waged a war. I think that I could’ve made him do anything with my strategies. He would’ve done everything according to my wishes even if he were sullen and aggrieved. Otherwise, it would’ve worsened the situation of the entire Iron Cloud Nation.”

Diwu Qing Rou sighed and said, “It’s a pity that King of Hell Chu holds the domineering position at present. And… the one who has to do everything according to the enemy is me – Diwu Qing Rou. This is the most shameful expedition in my entire life.”

Han Bu Chu was so shocked that he was rendered speechless.

[King of Hell Chu is extremely ferocious. One thing that must be acknowledged is that he’s exceptionally wise. He can also be classified as a dangerous person. He’s the biggest enemy that Lord Prime Minister Diwu has ever faced in his life. But… I never thought that King of Hell Chu was capable of scaring Diwu Qing Rou like this.]

[Moreover, he’s suffering losses like this! In fact, he seems sullen of suffering losses!]

“The time is moving fast… ” Diwu Qing Rou’s facial expression was hard to determine because of the shadow of the curtains on his face. He sighed and said, “The trend of events brings forth the hero… that’s the way it is! King of Hell Chu is taking advantage of my circumstances. I’ve been pressurized to come out like this by this genius. And… this pressure has forced me into passivity. This is what you say – ‘one can’t get what’s denied to him by destiny… no matter how hard he tries’…”

Diwu Qing Rou spoke softly. He continued to talk as they advanced on the long road.

It could be seen that Diwu Qing Rou had suppressed this matter for a long time. Now, it was finally the time when he could unburden himself; even if it was only in front of a single

audience…

“You ought to remember that I had formulated a plan against Iron Cloud long ago – the plan to subjugate Iron Cloud Nation. But… it was going to happen three years later. Yet… I had to prepone it by three years because of King of Hell Chu’s arrival.

“King of Hell Chu unexpectedly appeared in Iron Cloud, and started to mess with us. He pulled-out our roots from the Iron Cloud; one-by-one. I was forced to endure when that happened.

“He caught and killed my younger brother. I was heart-broken. I was left in extreme pain. But… standing before the present conditions of both nations… I was forced to endure it.

“After that, our Golden Horse Riders Department got trapped in Iron Cloud. One of our King Level Experts died, and another one was crippled. More than a hundred Revered Marital artists lost their lives. The Golden Horse Riders Department’s strength was weakened to one-third of its original strength. But, I forcefully endured it.

“And, because I continued to endure… King of Hell had no other choice but to cross thousands of kilometres in order to arrive in the Continent Centre. He hadn’t come to urge me to deploy my troops. Rather, he spared no effort in delaying our preparations to march to war.

“But… he made a mistake in this regard. He neither left me, nor himself, any room for manoeuvre. Or… perhaps it wasn’t his fault at all. He couldn’t have foreseen it; he couldn’t have controlled it either. It can be only said that the Heaven was playing a joke on us…”

Diwu Qing Rou looked-up at the vast sky as he spoke in a lamenting tone, “Now… the situation has come to this… I’m being forced to play a passive role. This is a surprising turn of events. King of Hell Chu has certainly taken the initiative… but it’s too late for regrets. This was beyond my expectations. I had no other

choice but to prepone the war. I was helpless when I did that... but I believe King of Hell Chu was even more helpless... and speechless too."

Han Bu Chu hadn't uttered a single word ever since Diwu Qing Rou had started to talk. He had been listening quietly. He knew that Diwu Qing Rou didn't need his opinion; he needed him to be a good listener.

Moreover, he would get to know what was going on. He would also show his acknowledgement once Diwu Qing Rou started to declare his strategies and plans.

"So, King of Hell Chu started to cause havoc in Continent Centre. He caused complete disturbance and chaos. We could've delayed marching into war by a year or two if the situation had remained like that. But, that wasn't enough for him. He further aimed for the treasures to be used for war... and directly infiltrated the Imperial palace. In addition, he destroyed the Imperial Palace."

Diwu Qing Rou's facial muscles twitched as he said, "He robbed the palace's hidden treasury once the palace was destroyed. And just like that... this man made everyone fretful and overwrought...! An insignificant man changed the entire history!"

Diwu Qing Rou sighed heavily. He wanted to curse-out 'mothf*cker' aloud, but he collected himself, "... It's hard to tell how... but something unusual happened in the Imperial Palace that night... A fake royal decree was passed against me... deeming me at fault.

"If I had gone back even a step in a situation like that... then, it would've looked like I had withdrawn. The entire Diwu faction would've vanished in a puff of smoke. So, I could only go forward. But, going forward meant confronting the Imperial Power since there was no way left to redeem myself. So, I had to topple the Imperial Authority because I had to go forward."

Han Bu Chu gave a bitter smile as he heard this.

“Finally, the Imperial power had been deposed… but the nation couldn’t go one day without a monarch. The entire country was in a racket. And, we couldn’t have gone to war for 8-10 years if a new emperor were to be assisted to occupy the throne… ”

Han Bu Chu sighed. He felt distressed by those words. [A change of sovereign brings a change of ministers. This never changes. If that had happened… then the transfer of the nation’s entire military to the north would’ve been impossible.]

“At that time… our compatriots must’ve wanted something-done about this mess. After all, the domestic circumstances were like that. And… our roots were getting fewer on the Iron Cloud’s side. We no longer had enough power in Iron Cloud. The roots we had placed inside the Iron Cloud’s military some time ago had been silenced without a sound… the circumstances were compelling…

“Moreover, Iron Cloud’s relations with wolf tribe of the Northern Grassland clan were getting better. They were clearly trying to interfere… and sever our interests there. Several of our large horse farms and arsenal industry had also faced different degrees of attacks… This explained that Iron Cloud had survived their domestic crisis… and were onto us.

“If we had given Iron Cloud three years… I’m afraid they would’ve been far more developed. Then… our scheme would certainly have gone to nought.” Diwu Qing Rou sighed, “So, considering both the internal and external mess we are in right now… going to war with Iron Cloud was the only option. On the contrary… Iron Cloud is currently dispersed. It is at its weakest! This is the most advantageous opportunity for us.

“You say… Bu Chu… this matter… and so many other matters like this – which of these are short of falling under King of Hell Chu’s influence?” Diwu Qing Rou sighed, “King of Hell Chu is a genius! His real intention was to maintain the status quo… and delay the war as much as possible. And I – Diwu Qing Rou – am not a person who devalues himself… I can be regarded as a resourceful

and wise scholar.

“Both of us had the same goal… but we’re enemies. Both of us are master strategists… yet none of us wished for the war to start so early. But, both of us ended-up working together to shift the war to such an early date.

“How can this not be regarded as a disastrous joke?”

Chapter 388: Accomplish the Whole Task at a Stroke?!

Han Bu Chu sighed deeply.

[This matter isn't just a joke... it's a gargantuan joke that involves the lives of two billion people across two nations. Moreover, this joke foretells the upcoming bloody events...]

Han Bu Chu pondered over the things Diwu Qing Rou had told him. He was terrified to realize, [From this point of view... Diwu Qing Rou hadn't sent the troops to frontline on his own will. He was forced to do so by King of Hell Chu.]

[And, King of Hell Chu didn't intend to force him. But surprisingly, his actions achieved such a remarkable consequence. It's worthy of being proud of...]

"King of Hell Chu used his tricks to lead the two nations to a point where the war was unavoidable. This war is a result of his actions. So, he should pay the price for it, correct?" Diwu Qing Rou said with a smile.

Han Bu Chu understood the meaning behind Diwu Qing Rou's words, "Prime Minister, are you talking about the five-thousand kilometers long pursuit of King of Hell Chu?"

"Yes...." Diwu Qing Rou nodded his head in acknowledgement, "King of Hell Chu was struck by my 'Destroying Soul and Breaking Heart Palm'. But, he was still able to flee for hundreds of kilometers within a single day. It was a terrible situation since he was likely to escape back to his nation.

"So, on one hand I continued the hunt for King of Hell Chu... while on the other hand, I started to make contingency plans... in case King of Hell Chu managed to escape.

"So, I ordered the nine army reinforcement units to chance directions... and deviated them by four-hundred kilometers from

their original routes.

"On the surface... it seems like their ultimate goal is to move towards the main battlefield. But in reality... I can issue an order as soon as the situation changes. Then, our three army divisions will immediately attack the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass.

"Of course, this must have a prerequisite. The prerequisite for this situation is the enemy General who is in-charge of guarding the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass... he must come out to fight," Diwu Qing Rou spoke slowly.

"I see... So, the Prime Minister had sent those five-hundred-thousand people to their deaths..." Han Bu Chu sucked in a mouthful of cold air.

"I never intended Bai Chang Tian and his five-hundred-thousand men to come back alive. It's the same... whether they die here... or in the battlefield," Diwu Qing Rou said in a heavy tone. He didn't seem to hide his notion from Han Bu Chu. "But, sending five-hundred-thousand soldiers isn't enough to make the enemy send their troops towards the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. It's necessary to establish another premise to make that happen... and that is that King of Hell Chu should hold importance in Tie Bu Tian's heart."

[King of Hell Chu should hold importance in Tie Bu Tian's heart?]

Han Bu Chu was startled. Diwu Qing Rou had spoken the same thing twice. But why?

"There are rumors that Tie Bu Tian has led his imperial expedition to the battlefront. And, he's at the frontline at present," Diwu Qing Rou said insipidly.

Han Bu Chu wanted to ask, [So what?] However, he didn't dare to ask.

"Tie Bu Tian's imperial expedition to the frontline will work in

favor of boosting the morale of his soldiers. But, this also has a huge drawback – Tie Bu Tian will be putting himself in danger. He'll become the center of the enemy's attacks. Moreover, it'll be easy for our army to attack him. So, the issue of his safety and security must've become a serious matter for Tie Long Chang. In fact, he must be extremely worried about it.

"There's only one way for Tie Long Cheng to ensure Tie Bu Tian's safety while ensuring that he stays around and boosts the morale of the troops... And that... is to send Tie Bu Tian to another frontline – the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass! Tie Bu Tian will be safe there. It's not possible to break past that mountain pass even if we were to send millions of troops. So, it would be useless to try and capture Tie Bu Tian once he's there."

Diwu Qing Rou's words carried a strong self-confidence.

"Indeed..." Han Bu Chu agreed.

"So... I came to the conclusion that Emperor Tie Bu Tian is already in Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass." Diwu Qing Rou narrowed his eyes as a sharp cold-light flashed through them.

Diwu Qing Rou had made a slight mistake in his calculations – Tie Long Cheng hadn't asked Tie Bu Tian to go to the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. Instead, Tie Bu Tian had himself demanded to go there. But, that didn't have any effect on Diwu Qing Rou's plan. It was akin to taking a different route to reach the same destination.

Han Bu Chu would've been worthless if he still hadn't understood the gist of the plan. He smiled and said, "Tie Bu Tian will surely send his troops to help King of Hell Chu if he holds an important place in Tie Bu Tian's heart. He only needs to find out that King of Hell Chu has fled to the vicinity of the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass."

"Yes..." Diwu Qing Rou nodded.

"But... Tie Bu Tian mustn't get anxious, and he mustn't get

swayed by personal feelings while making a decision. Therefore, he must need a good reason to send his troops for King of Hell Chu's rescue." Han Bu Chu said, "So, that's why Lord Prime Minister sent Bai Chang Tian and his men to their deaths! This would give Tie Bu Tian a good reason to dispatch his troops out of the mountain pass. Moreover, he'd decide to push forward after he had defeated them. No one will dare to say anything against him under the pretext of his glorious victory... In addition, there are no army units of ours in the neighborhood. "

"That's right," Diwu Qing Rou replied with a smile.

"The letter you sent to King Level Expert Jing contains the message to burn the mountain down... whenever necessary. So, it isn't only to burn King of Hell Chu to death... but also to disclose the information to Tie Bu Tian — who would be present nearby. He would realize that the Golden Horse Riders Department has come to chase King of Hell Chu."

"Yes."

"Therefore, Tie Bu Tian will arrive with his soldiers to save King of Hell Chu. But... he won't be able to disclose this information to anyone else since he'd be giving priority to King of Hell Chu's safety over that of the entire Iron Cloud Nation's. So, he'll have to come in-person to oversee the entire operation."

Han Bu Chu opened his mouth in shock, "So, the original plan of Lord Prime Minister is to lure Tie Bu Tian under the pretext of saving King of Hell Chu. Then, we can change the direction of our three military forces to interfere at any time – to deliver the frontal assault... or to sever Tie Bu Tian's escape route... or to pursue and attack Tie Bu Tian's forces. Then, it'll become possible to capture the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass in one fell swoop. In addition, King Level Expert Jing and his men would be present there since they were chasing King of Hell Chu. So, they may even kill Tie Bu Tian at a stroke. In that case, the result of the war will be decided in a day."

Han Bu Chu was shocked.

He could never have imagined that Diwu Qing Rou would lay out such a detailed plan in advance.

"Correct! Therefore, I had strictly ordered our three armies to stay within the range of seven-hundred-and-fifty kilometers. Tie Bu Tian will become vigilant if they go any closer. And... they won't be able to catch-up if they go any farther," Diwu Qing Rou said.

"I think seven-hundred-and-fifty kilometers is quite far. It'll take three days for the troops to reach there on foot. Isn't it too far?" Han Bu Chu asked in an anxious manner.

"It's not far. Jing Meng Hun will exert all his strength to block King of Hell Chu once the mountain is set ablaze. And, Tie Bu Tian will have to wait until he discovers King of Hell Chu's whereabouts. This entire process will take at least one night's time.

"We'll mobilize our cavalries during the night. Our main forces will follow closely on foot. These elite cavalry soldiers will be able to cover four-hundred kilometers during the night. By that time... Tie Bu Tian will have found King of Hell Chu... or his corpse... and will be retracing his steps. This will need time as it's impossible for an army to just lock, stock and barrel like a group of ducks. They can't make a round trip without any delay... this will give us a window of around two-to-three hours.

"The experts gathered by Jing Meng Hun will engage Tie Bu Tian's army. They may fail to assassinate Tie Bu Tian. But, they can at least bring about a delay of three hours. That should be enough.

"Meanwhile... our cavalry soldiers will arrive within the range of one-hundred-and-fifty kilometers.

"So, we must strive for the time that will be needed to cover the

distance of one-hundred-and-fifty kilometers." Diwu Qing Rou knocked his fingers against his thigh as he spoke, "Moreover, the three Generals who lead those three armies are gold, silver and jade ranked tiger-generals. I've especially chosen them for this task."

Han Bu Chu immediately guessed who they were.

These generals were Golden Tiger General Jin Nankai, Silver Tiger General Long Aoyu and Jade Tiger General Cheng Long. These three Generals were relatively young. The oldest among them was around forty-years-old. All three of them had origins in cavalry, and were particularly good at handling raids and ambush operations. They were daring and keen to take risks. Therefore, they'd even risk their lives to fulfill the mission.

Diwu Qing Rou had selected these three Generals to lead the armies since he had identified the drive in them.

Diwu Qing Rou would never use old and wise generals for this mission since they'd never take any steps without prior planning. However, this battle was going to be a lightning battle; even a blink of an eye could lead to the loss of an opportunity to succeed.

Therefore, if one continued to plan while an opportunity that needed prompt action stood right before one's eyes... failure would be ensured.

This mission required impulsive action.

The old and wise generals couldn't cover the crucial distance of one-hundred-and-fifty kilometers within the required timeframe; they couldn't reach there in time to fight. However, these three individuals would capture this opportunity even at the cost of the life of their cavalries.

Diwu Qing Rou had used his insights and speculations to come up with an elaborate plan to annex the Iron Cloud Nation at a single stroke.

Iron Cloud would perish in a single battle if these three Generals managed to seize this opportunity.

Suddenly, an invisible falcon arrived. Diwu Qing Rou smiled as he glanced at the new information. Then, he handed it over to Han Bu Chu.

Han Bu Chu took a look at it. Then, he patted his thigh and said, "Lord Prime Minister, your divine strategy is working... Things are happening as expected."

The information read – 'The Iron Cloud Army has advanced for three-hundred kilometers along the slanting valley after beating our five-hundred-thousand soldiers. At present, they are stationed outside the valley – close to Beyond the Heavens Sect Mountain Range.'

Diwu Qing Rou chuckled and said, "The key point lies in these two words 'slanting valley'. Its terrain is narrow and difficult to cross. The army must advance in a line in order to cross it. They will be congested, and won't be able to move a single step in case they are chased down or attacked. We'll be able to crush the entire army without making much effort."

Then, he raised his eyebrow and spoke in a sinister tone, "Tie Bu Tian, I sent five-hundred-thousand soldiers into the slanting valley... and made you defeat them. You ought to be feeling very elated, right? But, you mustn't take Diwu Qing Rou lightly. I deliberately sent my troops to lure you. You may have crushed my troops. But soon, my troops will chase you down and eliminate you – the Emperor of Iron Cloud Nation."

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The sky had turned dark.

Tie Bu Tian was taking a nap in the main tent. Suddenly, someone began to clamor outside, "Fire! Fire!"

Then, a soldier came inside, "Reporting to the Emperor – the

entire Beyond the Heavens Sect Mountain Range has caught fire."

"Beyond the Heavens Sect Mountain Range has caught fire?" Tie Bu Tian's heart started to beat fiercely. He sat up; his eyes revealed a dazzling radiance.

"Yes. Initially... only the main peak had caught fire. Thick smoke was rising from all directions. But, the strong winds spread the fire... and all the nine peaks got engulfed in a sea of flames. Moreover, the fire is flourishing; it is rapidly spreading in the surrounding regions," the scout reported respectfully.

"I see..." Tie Bu Tian's heart was beating wildly. He became dizzy as the blood rushed to his head.

[How did the Beyond the Heavens Sect Mountain Range catch fire all of a sudden? There's no doubt that someone has set it ablaze. But, why?]

Suddenly, Tie Bu Tian's body trembled, [Chu Yang is back!]

[This fire was surely started by the Golden Horse Riders Department. They must've come chasing Chu Yang... and would've lost track of him. But, they wouldn't have wanted him to escape. So, they must've set fire to the entire mountain in order to burn Chu Yang...]

[Even if they can't burn him to death... they can at least force him to come out. No one can stay hidden in a burning mountain.]

Suddenly, Tie Bu Tian stood up and started to walk away from the barracks. He couldn't wait any longer, and issued an order in a stern voice, "All men will come with me. Pass on my military order..."

Chapter 389: Rush... Rush... Rush... ah...

"I’m here!" Wu Kuang Yun came hopping with his hands on his buttocks. The beating with the army stick still hurt him. He had been lying low to avoid getting caught in a new operation of the Emperor’s. He didn’t wish to get implicated again... and punished thereafter.

"Consolidate the military forces and set-off immediately. Go and examine the mountains that are on fire," Tie Bu Tian made a prompt decision, and issued an order.

"This... this isn’t a good idea, Your Majesty... " Wu Kuang Yun was startled. He shouted as if his buttocks were on fire, "Your Majesty... Your Majesty... "

His buttocks stuck out as he followed after Tie Bu Tian. His hairy face was dripping with sweat, "Your Majesty... please consider this thrice... Your Majesty... Your Majesty... wait a minute! Your Majesty, we mustn’t do this... "

"Why?" Tie Bu Tian turned around and glared at him.

"It’s extremely difficult to manage things, Your Majesty. The slope of this slanting valley is extremely narrow and steep. Our army won’t be able to cover a distance of one-hundred-and-fifty kilometres in case the enemy attacks. Moreover, we’ll need to travel over two-hundred kilometres if we go to ‘Beyond the Heavens Sect’. It’ll become a matter of life and death if the enemy attacks during our return."

Wu Kuang Yun realized that foam was coming out of his mouth.

Tie Bu Tian was aware that his decision was extremely rash. However, he was thinking about Chu Yang... Chu Yang had crossed several mountains and rivers over a distance of five-thousand kilometres. He had survived hundreds of battles to arrive this far. Now, he was only two-hundred kilometres away ¬– trapped in a

burning mountain-forest. The thought of this made his heart ache. He wished to sprout wings and fly over to him.

[I might have to face a huge army of Great Zhao. I'm certain... there are many experts too. Moreover... I don't have enough manpower on my side. We don't stand a chance in a straightforward confrontation.]

However, he figured that Chu Yang would get roasted if he didn't reach him in time. His difficult escape of sixty-five-hundred kilometres would be useless. Tie Bu Tian felt as if his heart was being pierced with a knife as this thought crossed his mind.

Nothing was as important to him as Chu Yang.

[What's the use of this world if it doesn't have Chu Yang in it?]

Tie Bu Tian's heart was overwhelmed with grief. It was extremely difficult to bear.

[I don't want this land... I don't want the people of this land... I just want you to come back... safe and sound.]

"Don't talk unless you have to. Our army arrived here after covering a distance of eight-hundred kilometres. Our horses covered this distance in two days and two nights; this much time is enough. We just have to find someone and provide help. Then, we'll come back. Nothing bad is going to happen."

Tie Bu Tian urged, "General Wu, start moving."

"Rescue? Rescue whom?" Wu Kuang Yun stared in a daze.

"We'll provide some support..." Tie Bu Tian said in an angry manner, "Are you going to defy my orders?"

"I'll never defy your orders... even if you behead me," Wu Kuang Yun cried out. Tears started to roll out of his eyes, and he began to sweat profusely. "But... you are the head of our nation. We can't put your life in danger."

"Are you coming or not?" Tie Bu Tian asked in a furious tone.

"Your Majesty should wait here. I'll lead the troops." Wu Kuang Yun clenched his teeth as he puffed-out his chest.

"You'll go? Do you know whom you're supposed to rescue?" Tie Bu Tian squinted at him.

"I..." Wu Kuang Yun wanted to say, [How am I supposed to know if you don't tell me?] But he didn't dare to say anything.

"Then, transmit my orders quickly!"

"Your Majesty, you're killing me," Wu Kuang Yun spoke in a tragic tone.

"Do you think that I don't have the guts to kill you if I want to?" Tie Bu Tian kicked his foot and shouted, "Messenger, pass on my imperial decree. Wu Kuang Yun has defied my royal decree. He no longer holds his position of honor. He intended to plot a rebellion and wanted to capture me. His entire family will be captured and beheaded on our return to the capital. His nine generations will be wiped-out... his wives and concubines will be sent away to satisfy the army as a penal sentence..."

"Don't do this... please don't... Your Majesty... please don't implicate my wife in your decree. I... I..." Wu Kuang Yun was extremely frightened; so much so that he had goose bumps. He had been lying motionless – like a dead dog – and pleading until now. But now, his hands started to shake as he jumped-up. He had a worried expression on his face. He gnashed his teeth and stomped his feet, "I still can't do it... damn it! I still can't..."

[The imperial decree isn't something to toy with! The Emperor's words aren't retractable. If it's true... then all I can do is cry my heart out.]

"You haven't gone yet!" Tie Bu Tian said coldly. [The person who's closest to his heart... is his wife. His wife is his favourite. A threat of confiscating his family' possessions may not affect him much... but that may not be the case when his wife comes into the

picture...]

"Yes..." Wu Kuang Yun crawled and got-up. He rushed outside as fast as he could. Then, he started to pass-on the orders. He wanted to make the best possible use of time since he was bound to head-out. So... the sooner... the better.

"Wu Yi! You stay here. I'm leaving behind two-hundred-thousand soldiers with you. It's important to guard our strategic gateway as well... Defend the military camp properly," Wu Kuang Yun shouted at a square-faced big-eared tall general. This Deputy General's name was Wu Yi. He and Wu Kuang Yun had been working together for ten years. So, Wu Kuang Yun was confident that Wu Yi could handle things in his absence.

Wu Yi had a huge stature and a big head. But, his body didn't have an ounce of flesh. He was like a thin chicken that could be blown away by a gust of wind.

Wu Kuang Yun hadn't finished speaking yet... when Wu Yi grabbed his sleeve, "You... you... you... you're going to do... do... do what? You... you... you... must... stay... things... may... go... very urgent here..."

Wu Yi stuttered; so much so, that he couldn't even speak properly. His face had become red, and foam had started to come out of his mouth. He had tried to speak in a hurry. So, he had put a lot of pressure in his words, and had ended-up spraying spittle on Wu Kuang Yun's face.

"***!" Wu Kuang Yun wiped his face, "I've got to do something."

"Wu! Wu! Wu... Kuang Yun!" Wu Yi shouted out aloud. He glared at him in a severe manner. He pointed a finger at his nose, "I'll force you to tell me... his majesty looks... as if he's... is up to something... is up to something... something... something... if any... any mishap happens... will you take... take responsibility?"

"***! ...You'll die from stuttering too much... keep... keep... keep

your hand off me." Wu Kuang Yun held his hand and shoved it away. He was burning with anxiety and impatience. He had heard Wu Yi stutter so much... that he had himself started to stutter.

But, Wu Yi wouldn't let go; no matter what he said. His face was red and his lips were trembling. He was shaking his head persistently. He looked as if he wanted to say something. Even his stomach was bursting-out to say things. However, the more anxious he got... the more he stuttered. As a result, he couldn't speak a single word.

"Supreme Commander... the troops are ready to set-out," a messenger came and reported.

Meanwhile, Tie Bu Tian had dressed-up in his armor. He shouted, "Wu Kuang Yun... what are you doing?"

Wu Kuang Yun couldn't break-free from Wu Yi's grasp. Wu Yi was neither saying anything, nor releasing him. Suddenly, Wu Kuang Yun knelt down with a thump as he struggled, "Grandpa, please let me go. Have pity on my beautiful wife... she'll be made to serve the army as a punishment..."[1]

Wu Yi was startled. He scratched his head, and pulled his hand away, "Serve... serve... serve... what..." He titled his head and opened his mouth. Then, he rolled his eyes, "... the army?!"

Wu Kuang Yun felt relaxed as he threw-off his hand and broke-free from his grasp. Then, he broke into a run like a whirlwind. He leapt-up on his horse, and clamped his legs on either sides of it. After that, he dashed out while raining curses, "Serve... serve... serve... your wife..."

The nearby messenger heard this and announced loudly, "The Supreme Commander has issued an order – Rush... rush... rush... to his wife!"

The entire army bellowed in unison, "Rush... rush... rush... rush to his wife!" They were in high spirits.

Wu Kuang Yun’s face was covered in tears...

Wu Yi rolled his eyes in anger. Then, he titled his head with an open mouth; it was frothing. He couldn’t speak a word. He looked like a catfish which had kept its mouth open for too long. He finally managed to curse out loud, "Rush to... your wives... dammit!" Then, he spat out saliva with a ‘pooh’ sound.

However, the army had gone far away by then...

Wu Yi cursed in anger and began to sing loudly, "Wu Kuang Yun... you son of a bitch... I’ll kill you with a thousand swords. If you ever try to imitate me ever again... then I’ll kill you... I’ll kill you for sure..."

As the proverb goes... the cripple can dance and the stutterer can sing. This saying proved to be true as Wu Yi sang loudly without stuttering...

He would sing whenever he wanted to curse Wu Kuang Yun. This time was no exception...

The army rumbled forward with intensity. Tie Bu Tian spurred his horse to push forward as fast as he could. [I wish... to reach on time. Chu Yang... you must stand firm. I’m coming to get you.]

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Three army units were stationed in three different directions; about seven-hundred-and-fifty kilometres away. The same order was issued to these three armies with a loud bugle sound.

"All cavalry soldiers set-out. Our target is the mountain range of Beyond the Heavens Sect. Move at the fastest possible speed. We must hurry and reach our destination in a day-and-a-half... even if we die of exhaustion."

The soldiers shouted in agreement. The tens-of-thousands of cavalry soldiers were prepared to rush out on their armored horses. The flags fluttered at the front as their commander took the lead and dashed forward like an arrow.

"Quickly! Quickly... catch up!" the continuous shouts urged the soldiers to do their best. It seemed as if molten iron was flowing from three directions – giving rise to a storm of smoke and dust. It looked like an angry dragon was soaring into the black curtain of night.

"The foot-soldiers should move at the fastest possible speed... and try to keep up."

Hundreds and thousands of armed soldiers rushed out from three directions with a loud crash, and started to follow the footprints of the horses...

Chu Yang was underground in the cave. Suddenly, he felt the ground tremble. He thought, [Has the army arrived?]

He hurriedly started to dig his way out. It was night when he finally came out. Suddenly, a pungent smell blew into his face, and nearly choked him. He looked around, and noticed that the entire mountain-forest had been set on fire.

He was in the midst of a sea of fire...

He heard a faint sound of someone's roar, "Withdraw! Retreat to the mountain-pass. Iron Cloud has come to his rescue. We only need to guard the mountain-pass to stop King of Hell Chu from escaping. That is really important."

It was Jing Meng Hun's voice. The voice was coming from afar...

Chu Yang frowned, [This is especially said for me to hear. This means that they've come up with a plan. In fact, this is not even a plan; this is an open conspiracy.]

[They must've set an ambush for the team of soldiers who are coming to rescue me...]

Chu Yang was burning with anxiety even though he was aware of the enemy's plot.

[Why would they go so far as to set-up an ambush for a few

people?]

[There's certainly someone important from Iron Cloud in the rescue team. Who's it? Wu Qian Qian? That's impossible... Tie Long Cheng? It might be possible. Wu Kuang Yun? That's also possible...]

[But... no matter who this person is... this person isn't someone whom Iron Cloud can afford to lose. Moreover, they mustn't be lost for my sake.]

[In any case... I've recharged my strength and spirit. It's time to come out.]

Chu Yang made up his mind.

He sprang to his feet and leapt forward – like an arrow leaving the bow spring. He dashed forward and covered more than two-hundred feet with a 'swoosh' sound. The sound generated from his movements blended with the sound of the wind as he crashed into the sea of fire...

Note: There is a word play on the word 'chong'

• 冲: Chong: It means to dash or rush

• 充: Chong: which means to serve or satisfy

The words are used interchangeably causing a misunderstanding amongst characters.

Chapter 390: Burn the Mountain to Burn the Imminent Doom

Chu Yang's robe was as black as ink. The flames rolled with a flapping sound as he dashed out from the middle of the soaring fire with the whistling sound of the wind.

He appeared like an overwhelming wild dragon rolling about in the sea of fire. Surprisingly, the flames around him started to whirl and disperse. It seemed as if the fire had the intelligence to avoid making contact with his body.

Jing Meng Hun would've been extremely surprised to see this.

Chu Yang was radiating a strong cold energy since he had consumed the Seven Shades of cold energy derived from the Mysterious Ice Jade Paste. In fact, Chu Yang had even consumed the source of the Mysterious Ice Jade Paste.

It was so cold that it could freeze a stone... and frost-break it into tiny fragments. Then, how could a little fire affect it?

Chu Yang pranced and leapt towards the place where Jing Meng Hun's voice had come from. He rushed ahead like a hurricane.

The flames had turned blazing white; they were issuing hissing sounds.

Something unusual was happening — the color of the smoke arising from ahead was different.

The smoke soaring-up from the mountain was black and dense-yellow in color. However, the smoke ahead was greenish-blue; it was pale in color.

Chu Yang raised his eyebrows; his eyes revealed a grim look. Then, he advanced forward without any hesitation.

Suddenly, a burst of smoke assailed his nose .This smoke had a mysterious ability to captivate one's soul. However, Chu Yang kept

strutting forward without holding his breath.

The enchanting smoke didn't have any effect on him even though it had entered his nostrils.

In fact, Chu Yang had no fear of this mysterious smoke. It had entered his body, and had become a tonic for the Nine Tribulations Sword Point.

Chu Yang rushed down the main peak within a second. He burst into the sea of fire, and rushed to the Purple Bamboo Garden. Then, he started to advance towards the north. He jumped across the three canyons, which had been left to blaze like three seas of fire. After that, he leapt onto the road to the Iron Cloud – like a meteor.

There were mountains on either side of the road. The flames from these mountains were soaring high into the sky. Intense crackling sounds could be heard originating from the jungle.

Chu Yang came across a canyon as he advanced forward. It seemed to be an extremely dangerous place. However, its terrain had made it a strategic location. So, Chu Yang had no choice... except to dash across this place with all his might.

[Jing Meng Hun must be waiting for me there.]

[I don't know how many people I'm going to face... Is it a thousand? Two-thousand? Three-thousand? Or even more?]

Chu Yang's eyes were cold as ice. He didn't seem even faintly shaken. He tried and harmonized his breathing. Then, the Nine Tribulations Sword moved to-and-fro inside his arm, and released a cold murderous aura. It was waiting for the right moment to break out.

The closer he got... the calmer he became. Over a dozen scenarios of how the enemy would try to besiege him came-up in his mind. He pondered and chose an escape route for every scenario.

[Even if ten million people are standing in my way... then I must

rush against them.]

Jing Meng Hun was in a terrible shape.

He didn't feel any pressure in his mind since he had set fire to the mountain with Diwu Qing Rou's permission. He was going with the flow, and lighting the fire repeatedly. The mountain-forest that spread over the distance of twelve-hundred-and-fifty kilometres had been burnt down. The clear sky appeared to be leaning on the tip of a burning candle.

[King of Hell Chu, let's see where you hide now...]

Jing Meng Hun had arrived at a safe spot. He felt proud of himself as he waited for King of Hell Chu to appear. A cruel smile was spread across his face. An unbearable anger rose up in his heart as he looked at his severed right arm...

[There are thousands of overhanging steep cliffs on both the sides. King of Hell Chu, if you want pass... you'll have to pass over my dead body... that is... if you've the ability to pull that off.]

However, it was almost dawn and King of Hell Chu hadn't made the slightest sound. Moreover, the fire was spreading. It was gradually advancing towards the place of ambush.

Jing Meng Hun commanded his three-thousand experts to push-back the fire. They did that with great difficulty. Then, they moved several hundred feet away from their original spot. It didn't make any difference whether they advanced several hundred feet or went back as long they kept guard there. So, Jing Meng Hun didn't care much about that.

However, an accident occurred since he got reckless.

The mountain-forest located to the side was precipitous. It appeared red because it was burning. Suddenly, a sharp and shrill roar was heard from that direction. It was followed by an intense rumbling sound. Hundreds of house-sized rocks collapsed from the steep cliff, and smashed onto the ground; they were bathed in

sporadic flames.

Suddenly, there was an explosion in the middle of the cliff. The cliff crumbled from the middle, and the broken pieces started to rain down like a meteorite shower. Then, they started to pound towards Jing Meng Hun and the others.

"This is King of Hell Chu's doing for sure. Everyone be very careful. We mustn't let him escape. Withdraw for now..." the people retreated as Jing Meng Hun yelled out.

Bang! Bang! Bang! The rocks dropped with loud crashing sounds, and raised a hill of rocks.

Jing Meng Hun heaved a sigh of relief, [This was a narrow escape. It wasn't a landslide. The cliff collapsed from the middle. This hasn't happened on any other spot. But, this spot is a natural stronghold. And, a natural stronghold is a natural stronghold. ...It looks like King of Hell Chu isn't skilled to fly past here...]

[But... how did the cliff collapse from the middle? Isn't that unreasonable?]

Suddenly, Jing Meng Hun's face turned pale with fear as he heard a heart-curdling scream. [What was that?] A fishy stench proliferated with the wind. Jing Meng Hun started to feel dizzy as he inhaled this stench. He felt as if his stomach was on fire...

He opened his eyes to look closely. Suddenly, he was frightened to death. He felt a tingling sensation in his scalp; his back was covered in cold sweat.

[My mother... what in the world is that?]

He saw that around four to five experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department were suspended mid-air near his position.

However, they hadn't leapt-up on their own.

Jing Meng Hun saw two huge monsters opposite to them. They were gigantic snakes; they were as thick as a small house, and were

around three-hundred feet long. There was a shiny horn on their heads. Their eyes were the size of watermelons, and were reflecting the flames in the dark night. They gave a spooky feeling as they flashed from time-to-time.

Suddenly, one of them uncoiled its body. Its blood-red tongue extended from ten-to-twenty feet; it was issuing bizarre hissing sounds from its mouth.

The body of the other snake was coiled-up. It was rolled-up in four coils; one person was trapped in each one of them. The trapped people screamed and struggled to break free as the snake directed them towards its mouth.

The people trapped within the coils tried everything to break free. But, nothing worked. They used their swords to stab and cut the huge serpent's body. But, sparks flew as their weapon collided with its solid body. It was like a collision between metals. The snake's skin wasn't damaged; not even a little.

Everyone cried out in alarm as they saw this.

[Where have these two monsters dug their way out from?] Everyone stared blankly. They shivered from head-to-toe as they looked at the two huge monsters. They trembled and turned deathly pale as they saw one of their companions being swallowed by the snake. No one even dared to move.

Then, the huge snake started to swallow the second person. It rolled-up the person, and brought him towards its mouth. This person was holding a sharp sword. But, he got swallowed along with his weapon. A slight bulge became visible in the raised neck of the snake as the man went down its throat with a gulping sound. One could see the bulge travelling all the way down as the man slid down for more than a hundred feet... until he finally went into its stomach. Then, the bulge disappeared...

The same happened to the third and the fourth man...

Everyone looked with lifeless eyes. They were scared out of their wits.

These people were experts of the Jiang Hu, but they had never seen such a frightening phenomenon. Where could they find such frightening monsters?

[Is this... really a mother*king snake?]

"Attention everyone... these are spirit beasts!" Jing Meng Hun realized that it was too late for regrets. He understood that these two monster-snakes had come out because he had set the mountain on fire.

[It seems that their home was in the middle of the steep cliff. They don't come out often. But as their bodies gets bigger... they need bigger space for their caves. This large fire not only killed countless birds and animals... but it also made these two huge creatures suffer a lot of pain and discomfort in their caves.]

He realized that their cave must've had passages for ventilation. So, a large amount of the rising smoke must've gone into them. These two snakes had been living in comfort for several thousand years. So, how could they tolerate something like this?

[How did it catch fire?]

These ancient snakes had started to choke because their caves had been filled with smoke. Their skins had started to burn as the walls of the cave became hotter. They would've been burnt alive if they hadn't gone out; in fact, they would've been scorched to death by now.

So, the two snakes had dashed out in desperation. They couldn't rush to the side of the fire since they would've broken into the raging inferno. So, they came from the side of the steep cliff.

They had rushed out, and landed onto the ground with a loud rumbling sound. Their scales were extremely sturdy. However, they felt dizzy as they fell down. After all, the cliff was extremely

high. They had fallen down from several thousand feet with a great force. But, they hadn't turned into a ball of mud. It was a 'feat' to survive such a fall.

One of the snakes had unconsciously coiled itself around four people. [This food will work as a good supplement... ah.] It hadn't been willing to let go even though it was feeling a little dizzy. Then, it started to gorge the men once it had composed itself.

Jing Meng Hun felt like crying out loud, [How can this be?]

"Spirit beasts? What's the level of these spirit beasts?" someone asked anxiously, "This one's too big. Look at its appetite... it can eat all three-thousand people... and still won't feel half-full..."

"We have to take care of it before it eats us all. I can't let it eat me," someone else spoke-up while holding a steel saber in his hand; he was sweating profusely.

"At least the sixth level..." Jing Meng Hun conjectured as he stepped back. He appeared calm on the surface. But, he wanted to turn around and run away. [One won't come across such terrible beasts in the Middle Three Heavens... or even in the Upper Three Heavens.]

[These beasts exist at the top of the food chain. How did I run into them in the Lower Three Heavens?] Jing Meng Hun didn't know that the Middle Three Heavens and the Upper Three Heavens were in chaos because such beasts had become a common occurrence over there these days...

Everyone was shocked and scared to see one of the snakes straightening-up its body — it rose-up to more than a hundred feet. Then, it lowered its body to the ground with a squishing sound, and advanced towards them. Meanwhile, the other snake spread out on the ground. It then used its strength to slither towards them... with his head raised.

The snakes looked at Jing Meng Hun and the others with a desire

to devour them.

Then, they began to move their seemingly clumsy bodies. However, it turned out that they were ‘gliding’ forward rapidly. Jing Meng Hun and the others were scared out of their wits. They hastily began to retreat.

Chapter 391: A Treasure from Head-to-Toe

Suddenly, one of the snakes arched its body. It flung its head backwards, and leapt forward. Its tongue flew out with a ‘swoosh’ sound. It covered a distance of 140 to 150 feet in an instant, and coiled itself around a Martial Great Master. It then moved its head to-and-fro – as if observing its prey. The expert in its coils was extremely scared; he was screaming loudly. His feet rose from the ground as he was hoisted in the air by the snake.

Then, he fell into the snake’s mouth and got swallowed.

The other snake also flung its head backwards, and leapt-up ferociously. But, it had picked the wrong target. It was going towards Jing Meng Hun.

Jing Meng Hun bellowed as he leapt upwards, and pulled-out his shining long sword. Then, he slashed the sword with his entire strength.

There was a ‘swoosh’ sound. A fishy stench was issued as the dark-green blood got scattered everywhere. A part of the snake’s long tongue had been chopped down by Jing Meng Hun’s long sword. The snake’s severed tongue fell to the ground, and started to twist and tumble like a living creature. It got covered in dust in a blink of an eye.

The snake had suffered a severe blow. It opened its mouth and started to issue hisses of severe pain. Its huge body writhed back-and-forth in pain.

Suddenly, the other snake issued a strange hissing sound from its mouth. It opened its big mouth, and spurted-out a pink smoke into the other snake’s mouth. Surprisingly, the bleeding from that snake’s mouth stopped, and it ceased to writhe on the ground. It seemed to be a little sluggish. However, it had recovered significantly.

"This isn’t a snake. This is an ancient spirit beast – the lust dragon!" Jing Meng Hun exclaimed as he saw the pink smoke. He identified the two monsters as he observed the strange healing method and the silver horns on their heads. He immediately covered his nose, and dodged out of the pink smoke’s way at a lightning speed. He shouted, "Hurry up, move back. You mustn’t inhale the pink smoke at any cost."

No one dared to ignore this warning. The experts quickly retreated by several hundred feet.

"King Level Expert, what’s a lust dragon?" a Command Horse Rider asked.

"A lust dragon isn’t an ordinary beast. It’s a rather strange creature." Jing Meng Hun looked at it excitedly. He was relieved to realize that it was a lust dragon.

"The lust dragons appear scary. But, they aren’t difficult to deal with since they don’t have any special powers to attack with. They have no means to attack their prey except for swallowing and twisting. Moreover, they aren’t very fast. Their defences are intimidating because the scales on their bodies are harder than iron. But, pay attention to their weaknesses. One of its weak spots is located at the neck — right below the head. There’s a white spot there; it’s the size of a bowl. If that’s damaged... they’ll die. There’s a similar spot below the horn on their heads; that’s also fatal.

"An ordinary snake has only one vital spot; it’s seven-inches long. But, a lust dragon has two vital spots." Jing Meng Hun spoke hurriedly, "We can kill these two lust dragons as long as we’re careful. We can also make a lot of money out of them. After a lust dragon dies... its skin starts to rots. It isn’t valuable. But, their blood and the poison sac within their bodies are extremely valuable. Moreover, they have a lust sac, an inner core and a crystal stone. The lust dragon’s eyes are a kind of rare pearl, and its blood has many uses in medicine. It can be said that its entire

body is a treasure."

Jing Meng Hun's eyes shone as he spoke. It seemed as if he had already bagged the pair.

"That... that pink smoke... what is it?" one of the experts asked.

"These lust dragons are the world's most obscene creatures. The pink smoke is a secretion from the lust sac within its body. It has a very strong aphrodisiac-like effect. It leaves a person helpless even if a small quantity of the poison enters one's body."

Jing Meng Hun warned them, "Everyone, pay attention. The lust dragon's obscene poison works like this – if you can't find a female to copulate with within five hours after inhaling the smoke... then your entire body will fester... and you'll die. There's no other medicine for this condition besides copulation. Brothers, this is a desolated place. There are no villages ahead... and no inns behind. It's difficult to find a girl here. So, don't inhale the smoke at any cost..."

Everyone gasped and held their breaths. This was extremely overbearing.

"In fact, its blood can be used to make an aphrodisiac. It can also cure... the embarrassing illnesses of men. Well... if it doesn't rise or isn't hard enough — just a mouthful of its blood will have the desired effect." Jing Meng Hun didn't wish to say it very clearly, but he said it anyway. The eyes of several men lit-up as they heard this. Their faces turned red. Jing Meng Hun realized that probably... some of these men had the 'embarrassing' illnesses.

"Moreover, even if there's no problem... it'll become even more powerful and mighty after taking this medicine. 'It' can become at least twice or thrice more powerful. Just think about it... two huge snakes... how much blood would they have?" Jing Meng Hun spoke in an enchanting manner.

Everyone's eyes lit-up.

Men who had no hopes for themselves... wouldn't they wish to obtain these overwhelming powers?

"Its inner core, lust sac, crystal stone, poison sack... " Jing Meng Hun said, "... they all do the same thing but the effectiveness is different... Cough... cough... even its pearl eyes... when soaked in wine for an hour... that cup of wine will turn into a super-concentrated aphrodisiac..."

Everyone had a strange look in their eyes. [It seems like these two snakes... in fact these lust dragons... are entirely made-up of aphrodisiacs. These are two aphrodisiac storehouses. Apart from that... they don't have any other use.]

"You must be thinking if they have any other use? This is the biggest use." Jing Meng Hun said furiously, "In comparison to the growth of one's martial power... this kind of thing is more important to a man. It can be said that if you were to arrive in the Upper Three Heavens... then you'll be in great demand as long as you have one... even if you're physically weak. Think about it brothers. There are so many people in the Nine Heavens Continent. But on an average... one in hundred individuals possesses this kind of condition. This is similar to getting our hands on a mountain of gold..."

Jing Meng Hun looked at the people around him. No one knew the hidden meaning behind his smile. "For example, we are more than three-thousand men. There should be about seventy to eighty people among us who have such..."

Several men started to cast playful glances at their companions. Their eyes appeared to have an implied meaning which was... ahem... too mysterious to inquire about...

Several men's ears turned red. They cursed in their hearts angrily... [Even if you're a King Level Expert... there are things that you just can't say. How can you casually talk about this f*cking matter?]

"Brothers, you must know that these two dragons will leave if we go away. But King of Hell Chu may pass from here in our absence. Then, all our efforts would certainly go to waste. So, let's make some money first... and then wait for King of Hell Chu in the original spot. Then, we would've made another great accomplishment... and it'll be a quick one."

Jing Meng Hun waved his arms, "It's settled then... Get ready to slaughter these lust dragons!"

"Hell... yeah... waah..."

Suddenly, the two lust dragons rushed over with a hissing noise. These two beasts didn't seem to have eaten their fill. They had already swallowed five men. But, they were aware that these strange creatures called 'humans' were extremely easy to deal with. One of them had lost half of its tongue, but... it was a small injury. It would be restored in a few days.

Therefore, the two lust dragons scuttled towards them in a dominating manner.

They had never thought that these strange creatures – looking like a flock of sheep – would unleash an intensive attack on them.

Their bodies – made-up entirely of aphrodisiacs – faced several attacks in succession. They scurried about to dodge past the attacks. But, their efforts went in vain as the attacks continued to come from all sides. The lust dragons turned out to be far inferior to the experts even though they were quite agile.

They managed to swallow seven or eight people with great difficulty. Finally, one of the lust dragons received a fatal blow. Jing Meng Hun revolved his long sword with his king-level strength, and jabbed it into the white spot on its lower jaw.

The king-level power exploded in the vital spot of the lust dragon. Suddenly, a fountain of blood erupted and started to flow out of its wound.

The lust dragon let-out loud ‘hissing’ shrieks. It straightened its body upright in pain. It rose to more than a hundred feet, and came crashing down with a loud ‘bang’. Then, it started to roll about. It uprooted the burning trees wherever it went. The mountain rocks were randomly sent flying in all directions. It could be said that ‘rocks pierced the clouds just like the raging storm beats against the shore’.

The other lust dragon had lost interest in eating the people. It was solely preoccupied with moving up and down while guarding its own vital spots from being attacked; it was severely injured. But, its two vital spots were already drenched in blood…

Suddenly, the lust dragon that was on the verge of dying made a U-turn. It opened its mouth and started to issue ‘hissing’ sounds. Then, it started to tumble from side-to-side in order to escape. The other lust dragon also started to issue ‘hissing’ noises. The two beasts were trying to escape…

They escaped like the rushing wind.

Jing Meng Hun and the others had finally managed to nearly kill one of them with great difficulty. They were about to achieve the results. How could they have given-up? They moved quickly to pursue the beasts. They must take it down now – when it was at its weakest.

The injured lust dragon hissed angrily. It turned around to spurt a big mass of pink smoke. Jing Meng Hun and the other experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department held their breaths, and dodged back.

[You call that running]. Considering the speed of the two lust dragons… Jing Meng Hun was confident that they would fall into his pocket.

[You can’t run away.]

The lust dragons turned around, and rushed away with a

whizzing sound.

There was a patch of mountain-forest in front of them. It was burning with a strange cracking sound. The sounds of the ‘whistling’ flames and the ‘whooshing’ wind had covered the noises of their battle.

The lust dragons went straight into the blazing fire without any hesitation.

They were extremely afraid of fire. But, it was unlikely that they would die immediately-after they entered it. Moreover, they would be free from danger as long as they passed through the fire. Right now, they feared the strange small creatures more than the fire…

Minister Chu’s black figure came flying out as soon as the two lust dragons went into the fire. He forced open his way through the flames, and came out like a flash of lightning. He bumped straight into the incoming lust dragons. The three pair of eyes looked at each other.

The two lust dragons stared blankly at each other with their watermelon-sized eyes. They were baffled to see this strange creature emerge from the fire. Their brains went numb. They would’ve gasped in admiration if they could speak, [*** ah… doesn’t this odd creature fear fire?]

[The creature that has come out from the fire looks the same as the ones that are chasing us. Moreover, this one looks even more powerful…]

The two lust dragons didn’t get much time to think. They went flying towards Minister Chu who had appeared before them in a flash. It seemed as if he was going to crash into them. They felt desperate and helpless. So, they sprayed out a dense pink smoke at him for the lack of a better option.

Chapter 392: An Unexpected Disaster

The pink smoke was very dense; it was almost semi-solid.

The lust dragons had become extremely anxious. They did everything they could've in this state of desperation. So, they had sprayed-out nearly half of their lust sacs on Chu Yang...

[So despicable! So shameless! They sent someone to the front to intercept us... without even the fear of death that's waiting ahead? Do you people believe that we – the lust dragons – are already in your pocket?]

Chu Yang hadn't met the enemy on his way. But, he knew that the situation was extremely critical. So, he had been fiery and impatient throughout the journey. He had been soaring through the clusters of the raging fire at a fast speed.

Surprisingly, he had run into two huge snakes as he had sprung out of that sea of fire.

[How can there be snakes in this fire?]

Minister Chu was baffled. He couldn't understand the situation, and started to stare them wide-eyed. Suddenly, the infuriated snakes opened their mouths, and sprayed a mouthful of a pink smoke on him.

The lust dragons and Chu Yang had come extremely close to each other.

Minister Chu was startled. He held his breath. But, his entire body had been shrouded in the pink smoke.

This was an unexpected disaster. Chu Yang would've been able to take advantage of the chaos if he had arrived a moment earlier. Then, he would've rushed ahead and escaped. On the other hand, the lust dragons would've attracted the attention of the enemy if Chu Yang had arrived a moment later. Then, he would've got out of the place easily.

However, he had arrived neither later... nor earlier. He had arrived in a crucial moment – and right in the escape route of the two lust dragons. The lust dragons had mistaken him as a mortal enemy. So, they had sprayed-out the pink smoke in order to defend themselves; it was the lust poison...

Chu Yang didn't inhale the pink smoke, but his entire body had been shrouded in it. It wasn't very different than inhaling the smoke. In fact, it was even more serious...

The lust dragons had emptied half of their lust sacs on Chu Yang. They had gone all-out without being stingy. As a result, Chu Yang had run into a misfortune.

"Crap! What's this stuff?" Chu Yang shouted in his heart. He waved his big sleeves to disperse the pink smoke that lingered around him.

Suddenly, a lust dragon pounced on him from the other side. It opened its big mouth like a door, and swallowed Chu Yang. Chu Yang was enraged, [Goddammit... Did Jing Meng Hun raise these beasts?]

[They knew that I would come here. So, these snakes waited here to intercept me. They didn't even try to avoid the fire. They're too f*king loyal.]

Chu Yang was extremely angry. Suddenly, the Nine Tribulations Sword appeared in his hand with a 'clang' sound. And, he slashed-open the creature with it...

This supernatural and mighty sword of the highest quality could split the Heaven and Earth. It had existed since the creation itself. How could it be compared to an ordinary sword? It could cut through metal as if it was mud...

Moreover, Minister Chu was extremely angry. So, the seven shades cold energy had circulated in his body.

The sword cut-off the lower jaw of the lust dragon with a

‘swoosh’ sound. In fact, it had cut halfway through its neck. Chu Yang rushed out with a loud cry. His entire body had been covered in the blood that had splashed out of the lust dragon’s wound.

The sword light rose once again. Minister Chu wasn’t done as yet. He chopped down the other lust dragon’s chin with a ‘swoosh’ sound.

It wasn’t a fatal blow, but it would lead to a quick death.

The credit for this went to Jing Meng Hun and the other experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department. Jing Meng Hun and the three-thousand experts had repeatedly attacked these lust dragons, and had brought them to this state.

One of the dragons had suffered severe damage on one of its vital spots, while both vital spots of the other dragon had been wounded. The lust dragons’ defence had been greatly reduced. Moreover, the might of the Nine Tribulations Sword had been unparalleled since ancient times. So, it had also contributed in bringing these lust dragons to this state.

The lust dragons writhed violently. They seemed to be on the verge of death.

Their vital spots hadn’t been attacked; they had been entirely cut down. How could they not die after that? In fact, they would’ve died even if each one of them had two lives to live.

Suddenly, the Sword Spirit appeared in Chu Yang’s thoughts. It cried out, "What kind of beasts have you provoked this time? Didn’t you see how tyrannical they were?"

"Tyrannical?" Chu Yang hadn’t felt anything unusual about them. So, he couldn’t help but ask.

"Damn! These are lust dragons... ah! They’re full of treasures." The Sword Spirit said excitedly, but in a helpless manner, "Hurry up! Put them inside..."

Chu Yang complied. The lust dragons were still rolling about on

the ground, but they weren't alive. They vanished from their spots due to Chu Yang's efforts. Now, only the blazing inferno could be seen raging around.

"Don't forget that you're busy with your so-called escape. The matters outside this fire are yours to deal with," the Sword Spirit said, and disappeared without a trace.

Chu Yang laughed mischievously. Suddenly, he felt his blood heating-up. But, he didn't mind it. He took out his sword; its entire body got covered in the surging 'seven shades cold energy'. The intensity of the fire was stifled by the cold energy waves. Then, Chu Yang darted forward like a meteor.

Chu Yang had wanted to avoid this battle. But, it couldn't be avoided now. Moreover, he didn't have any plans to avoid it anymore. He was well-prepared. His sword flashed as he rushed out from the sea of fire. He saw Jing Meng Hun and the other experts rushing over from the front like a bunch of meteors.

Chu Yang laughed, "Jing Meng Hun, you haven't died yet? Come... let me send you on your way to hell." Suddenly, the sword light burst out; it dispersed ten-thousand rays of cold light. Chu Yang's cold voice resounded everywhere. It seemed to have the tonality of the hell itself.

"One ray of cold light... pierces ten thousand fathoms!"

Jing Meng Hun and the other experts were upset. They had chased after those big beasts to get their hands on the rare and wonderful treasures. They had faced a sea of fire for it... yet, they had moved forward without any hesitation in order to track those beasts.

Who knew that everything would change in a blink of an eye?

A part of the lust dragon's body had been visible outside the fire a moment earlier. So, Jing Meng Hun and the experts had thought that they would be able to catch it. But, who knew that it would

disappear in the raging fire within a moment?

[***! Did it melt in the fire? How else can it disappear like that?]

Jing Meng Hun hadn't been willing to accept that this rare and wonderful creature – that appeared once in a millennium – had disappeared like that. He couldn't wait. So, he had dashed forward into the sea of fire in order to inspect.

He didn't know that he would be greeted by a sword light after approaching closer to the fire. Then, the person who had been the target of their chase for the last five-thousand kilometres... appeared before him... It was King of Hell Chu!

King of Hell Chu looked lofty as he emerged out of the sea of fire. He didn't run on seeing Jing Meng Hun and the experts. Instead, he let out a roar and rushed towards them like a fierce dragon.

"King... King of Hell Chu?" Jing Meng Hun was infuriated. [Why did he have to appear now of all times? Why didn't he come out earlier... or may be later at night?]

[Why does this bastard always have to ruin my hard work? Why does he always have to stick a bar in someone's way? After chasing him for five-thousand kilometres... he still had to appear at this crucial moment. He just had to destroy my beautiful dreams.]

[I would've gone to the Upper Three Heavens if I had gotten my hands on a lust dragon. No matter what clan it is... which clan wouldn't wish to increase the probability of having babies and enhanced re-productivity? How would it not have made me popular amongst them?]

[My magnificent dream of going to the Upper Three Heavens... has been shattered by King of Hell Chu's appearance at this hour.]

[I must give-up on the search for the lust dragons since he has shown up. I'll have to do my best to deal with him. But... I was very close to catching those lust dragons. Should I give them up like this?]

[What else can I do… instead of giving up?]

The voices rose from the background – like a rumbling thunder. [The Iron Cloud reinforcements have arrived to rescue King of Hell Chu. It won't take them more than half-an-hour to get here from their current location.]

[The ordeal for capturing and killing King of Hell Chu has been going-on for almost a month now. The continuous journey of five-thousand kilometres during this arduous mission is coming to an end. We only have half-an-hour left.]

[I won't be able to stop King of Hell Chu from going back to Iron Cloud if I don't forth everything I've got… So, I must forget the matter of the lust dragons for now… Otherwise, Diwu Qing Rou will skin me with his own hands….]

Jing Meng Hun's fury transformed into grief and helplessness… Various kinds of emotions rose in his heart at the same time. He felt sweet, sour and bitter all at once.

The situation of the entire area being engulfed in the sea of fire, and King of Hell Chu leaping across the sky can be described in a poem – A thousand knots appear in the heart as the wind scissors through the sea of fire… As King of Hell's sword suddenly appears… the King Level Master is enraged.

"King of Hell Chu! You mother*ker! I'll take your life…" Jing Meng Hun roared loudly, "Don't hesitate. Kill this f*ker! The faster… the better!" Jing Meng Hun hadn't forgotten that their aim was to kill King of Hell Chu. He had bid goodbye to his pursuit of the lust dragons.

Jing Meng Hun gave a long cry. He wielded his sword in his left hand, and charged forward to counter Chu Yang's move – 'one cold ray pierces ten thousand fathoms'. Several Revered Sword Artists rushed towards Chu Yang in unison. They seemed to have ignored Chu Yang's formidable attack.

Chu Yang shouted, "What harm is there in slaughtering the entire world!"

Then, the sword energy started to resist numerous weapon attacks. Suddenly, Chu Yang unleashed a killer move. A ball of light appeared; it suppressed the nearby flames as it went high up in the sky. It seemed like an all-conquering power as it charged towards the incoming weapons of the countless enemies.

Chu Yang was calm; he had an ice-cold look in his eyes. His lips were slightly curved; his face revealed a cruel smile. His heart and sword had turned cold with a murderous intention.

Countless weapons – including Jing Meng Hun's sword – struck the round beam of sword-light that surrounded Chu Yang with a loud 'rumbling' sound.

The sword light was slightly scattered by the force of this collision. Chu Yang – who was mid-air – spat out blood. However, the sword light remained solid, and burst into the crowd of Golden Horse Riders Department. It looked like an iron plough as it ploughed its way through them, and turned them into a pool of blood and minced meat.

Then, King of Hell Chu passed through the place covered in the minced meat and blood.

However, he had used-up all his strength in this attack. So, he fell into a tight encirclement after rushing-out for 150 to 160 feet.

Chu Yang looked upwards and started to laugh. He had exposed his vicious nature at this critical juncture while fleeing for his life. He didn't know why it was happening. But, he had entirely disregarded the fact that he had just gotten injured. It was strange that he was unfazed even after he had sustained a strong blow from Jing Meng Hun.

Instead, he felt his blood boil. He felt that he hadn't yet used his entire strength. He could only think of slaughtering...

He wanted to start massacring the people…

He had never been through this kind of a situation since his rebirth. However, his sanity had been affected by the Nine Tribulations Sword when this had happened in his previous life. But, the desire to massacre that had appeared now… was clearly his own. That was because he was in control of the Nine Tribulations Sword now; it wasn't the other way round. But, how did this situation arise?

However, Chu Yang couldn't think about all this right now. He just wanted to kill… Kill them all in a frantic manner.

Chapter 393: An Unexpected Rescue from Danger

More than ten enemies had lost their lives to his sword's last blow. Then, the Nine Tribulations Sword had started to swallow their life force. Therefore, his body didn't feel tired.

Chu Yang roared. The hostility from his previous life had been aroused from the depths of his soul. In short, he now harbored a mad desire to massacre. He needed to kill to satisfy his bloodlust!

He moved from left to right within the crowd like a mad tiger. The Nine Tribulations Sword broke the weapons with a 'snapping' sound wherever it went.

The Nine Tribulations Sword Point glittered with an astonishingly bright light. The Sword Edge had turned crimson. The Sword Spine's entire body appeared like a demon who had bared its fangs to expose a grim smile. The blood wouldn't stick to it even after the slaughter had taken place. They were callous and devoid of any feelings... they were indifferently reaping lives; just like an executioner.

The crazy massacre had stirred-up the murderous nature of the three fragments of Nine Tribulations Sword!

These three fragments had existed as sections of a heavenly weapon since ancient times. They were precisely designed for the purpose of slaughter. That was the purpose of their existence. In other words, their significance was to come together as one in order to make the Nine Tribulations Sword a weapon of massacre!

Now, they had officially returned to their old ways.

The murderous aura got stronger and stronger. It got denser and denser.

Jing Meng Hun looked stunned as he saw Chu Yang's figure dashing-about; left to right. His heart was in a state of shock.

[This King of Hell Chu is very scary. His injuries have healed in the middle of such a cruel chase. The entirety of his strength also seems to have been restored. In fact, it seems like he has even made a breakthrough!]

[Furthermore, it's not limited to this alone! The most dreadful matter isn't that King of Hell Chu has made a breakthrough… rather he seems like a completely different person from the King of Hell I saw the last time!]

[King of Hell Chu would always fight back in our previous encounters. But, he'd flee when he was unable to!]

[However, he looks completely changed this time. King of Hell Chu is amidst besiege. But, he's attacking and killing crazily. He doesn't seem to care whether he suffers a knife or a sword injury. It seems like all he can think about is… slaughter!]

[As if… his goal is to slaughter people at any cost!]

Jing Meng Hun was alarmed. He sneered in his heart, [Your martial power has soared-up to the sky, but do you really think that you can kill three thousand experts on your own?]

He jumped-up and joined the fighting circle.

Over hundred corpses had already fallen within a radius of 300-400 feet around Chu Yang in just a quarter of an hour. Most of them had their bodies crushed by the Nine Tribulations Sword.

The pressure on Chu Yang became exceptionally great after Jing Meng Hun joined in. But, he did his best to carry on. He continued to struggle in desperation, and continued to dash outward.

Luckily, he was able to hold on since he had already fallen into a frenzied state. Yet, he still remembered his real intention, [I have to escape!]

[I have to rush out!]

Chu Yang and Jing Meng Hun's swords clashed with a loud

‘bang’. Jing Meng Hun held the sword in his left hand since he had been recently handicapped. But, he couldn’t display his full strength with his left hand. However, the strength of a peak Ninth Grade King Level Expert was no joke. His martial power was much higher than Chu Yang’s.

The difference in the strengths of the two men couldn’t be measured.

Suddenly, Chu Yang’s body shuddered and recoiled. His mouth and nose had started spurting-out blood. Two ‘slamming’ sounds were heard as he staggered. Two Revered Martial artists of the Golden Horse Riders Department had taken the opportunity to sneak behind him. So, he had gotten struck twice by their palms. A sharp and cold pain shot up in Chu Yang’s leg. A sword had obliquely cut his right leg. It had slashed a long and deep wound, and blood had started to spew-out of it.

Chu Yang yelled out with a sudden surge of fury. His sword trembled as it issued a ‘hissing’ sound. Suddenly, it moved in a semicircular motion, and the 12 moves of the three fragments of the Nine Tribulations Sword were issued at once!

There wasn’t the slightest pause in-between the moves!

There was no stopping him. Then, he rapidly issued his four self-made sword moves...

A volcano of sword energy erupted within a range of 300 feet around Chu Yang. Countless sword lights were unleashed in the form of strands and streamers. They spread out in abundance... and fiercely poured down as torrents...

They spread in all directions with their formidable power... as if to conquer everything.

It appeared as if countless devils had emerged in the vast sky. It seemed as if they were blinking their flaring eyes. This scene was very extremely scary. The murderous aura appeared to be soaring

to the heavens.

Then, there was the loud noise of an explosion.

Everyone wanted to take advantage of the situation since Chu Yang was injured. Several hundred people had surrounded him with an intense 'rumbling' sound. Everyone's sword had come down at him in unison. But, who could've thought that Chu Yang's entire body would unleash an outburst of sword energy all of a sudden...

Countless people had to bear the brunt of this attack. The ones who were nearer... didn't even get a chance to scream; nor did they get enough time to reveal the expression of panic on their faces. Their bodies were torn to pieces by the sword energy.

The attack had killed nearly two hundred people at once!

Jing Meng Hun's facial muscles twitched uncontrollably as he looked at the remains of their chopped-up limbs and body parts. The corner of his eye was also twitched.

[What kind of sword-play is this?]

[It's impossible to display this level of power... even for a Ninth Grade King Level Expert like me! Fortunately, I didn't move forward just then. Otherwise, I would've certainly sustained injuries... that is... if the attack hadn't killed me on the spot!]

Everyone had gone silent.

King of Hell Chu stood amidst a mess of flesh and blood. His clothes were completely drenched in blood. His body swayed a little, but he still stood proudly. His eyes were as ice-cold as before. He still looked cruel, and still carried the same murderous aura as earlier.

His sword was in his right hand; it flickered with cold brightness. Numerous thick blood-droplets dripped from King of Hell Chu's body, and onto the sword's blade. The blood then trickled down his sword, but left the sword's blade spotless and untainted. It still

glittered brightly with an icy luminesce.

The remaining people stared at King of Hell Chu in a daze as his bloodstained figure emerged from the place which had been littered with mangled and mutilated remains. Their eyes twitched as their hearts filled with dread.

Their enemy had sustained serious injuries. He was also swaying somewhat. It was clear that he would not live for long. But... still... no one dared to try and deal with this cornered beast.

Another 100-200 people would lose their lives in case such an explosion occurred again. No one wanted to be among those 100-200 people.

The sound of the approaching army was getting closer and closer in the background. The entire mountain forest seemed to shiver under the oppression of the iron hooves of the horses. Even the surrounding flames had gone into hiding... as if they were terrified of the domineering presence of stampeding horses...

[The Iron Cloud's reinforcements will be arriving soon! Perhaps, in the next quarter of an hour...!]

"Dripping blood military tactics!" Jing Meng Hun screamed madly.

Everyone secretly curled their lips. [King Level Master Jing has used these four words 'dripping blood military tactics' 7-8 times today. But, he hasn't rushed forth to use these tactics himself.]

Nearly six hundred people had died since Jing Meng Hun had first urged them to use 'dripping blood military tactics'. Six-hundred of the three-thousand men were already down... This was an extremely terrifying number!

Jing Meng Hun ferociously threw himself forward after he gave the order. He was aware that he must take the lead this time. After all, a frightening number of causalities had occurred by now. Not to mention that the Iron Cloud's reinforcements were very close.

Perhaps this attack was going to be their last chance...

Everyone rushed forth once again. This was the final attack!

Chu Yang was already exhausted. His vision had turned somewhat fuzzy. But, the blood within his body was still burning as fervently as before. He flew upwards, and it seemed as if his soul was on fire...

Chu Yang had already dashed-out about 700 feet since the moment he had rushed-out from within the sea of fire and had fallen into the encirclement of these three thousand people.

This was an unimaginable distance. Even Jing Meng Hun knew that it was impossible for him to achieve such a feat if he were in Chu Yang's place.

However, Chu Yang was completely exhausted. He had been rendered powerless by that sudden explosion from his sword. He would've probably reserved some of his power for later use if he had released this sword attack at an earlier time. However, he was in some strange state of mind at this time. In fact, his condition was such that he himself didn't know why this had happened. He was unaware as to why he had used up the entirety of his power in a single sword attack...

Jing Meng Hun grinned more and more fiendishly as he saw the swords and sabers getting closer and closer to Chu Yang. However, Chu Yang suddenly faced upwards and roared. And, the Nine Tribulations Sword Point suddenly summoned back the ice-cold energy!

Chu Yang's meridians instantly brimmed with a cold energy... as if surging with a desire to burst-out of him!

It was the Seven Shades Cold energy!

Chu Yang's terror-striking appearance had been reawakened. He readily brandished his sword, and a bizarre white-colored cold energy was suddenly scattered outwards. Everything frosted

wherever this cold energy traversed to. This chill had dominated the entire environment.

Jing Meng Hun and his experts found their bodies frozen-stiff!

The horses were rapidly rushing-over from far away. The horses went around a curve, and finally appeared at the scene. Then, a loud shout resounded. In fact, it nearly sounded like a thunderclap, "Stop!" the voice was sharp, a bit frightened and somewhat anxious. It sounded somewhat feminine as well.

Two shadows quickly jumped from their horses, and rushed forward like a flash of lightning. It looked as if they were flying in the air. They covered hundreds of feet with just one leap. And, they got even closer with another jump. It was fantastical to see these two shadows float in the air...

Jing Meng Hun had used the entirety of his martial power in the final attack. The countless experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department also launched their frenzied attacks in one final bombardment.

Chu Yang was at the center of these attacks. He shouted, and no longer held-back his strength. He transported the entirety of his power to his sword, and the 12 moves of the Nine Tribulations Sword erupted at one!

The storm rose once again!

However, it unleashed the kind of chill that could freeze everything in a radius of 500km this time. The effect of this attack was completely different than the previous one. Countless screams echoed in unison. Many experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department lost their lives to this attack. Their corpses had been frozen stiff. They had basically turned into chunks of frozen meat, and were still flying-about in the air.

Close to three hundred men had been killed by this explosion. The surroundings looked similar to the Asura hell. It was indeed

an appalling scene of destruction.

Jing Meng Hun screamed in a hoarse voice. The sword attack had hit his shoulder, thighs and chest. He had been drenched in blood. He quickly moved back, and flew-up into the sky as he bellowed, "That’s enough; withdraw!"

He hadn’t expected that he would receive such injuries in such an intensive besiege. Escape was the only option they had at this time. The two shadows that were rushing from the other side were clearly Tie Bu Tian’s royal bodyguards. He would lose his life on the spot if he were to get surrounded by those two...

Chu Yang groaned miserably. He had been the focus of this final desperate attack in which the enemy had completely gone all out. Chu Yang had received a kick from Jing Meng Hun after he had faced a barrage of swords and sabers. He felt his five internal organs crack when his body was flung high into the sky by the kick. Then, he came falling down. He had lost consciousness the moment he had been sent flying...

The two shadows arrived at a lightning speed, and made it just in time to catch the falling Chu Yang in their arms.

Then, Tie Bu Tian’s anger-filled voice reverberated in the vicinity, "Kill-off these scoundrels!"

Chapter 394: Guard the Icy Heart... for whom? For whom are these Jade Bones?

The Iron Cloud's army flooded the battlefield like a tide. The soldiers began to chase down and kill the remaining two-thousand experts of the Golden Horse Riders Department under the collaboration of the two shadow experts and Bu Tian Pavilion's people. However, those two-thousand experts weren't mediocre. All of them fled away and disappeared without a trace — except for around five-hundred who were killed, and around forty who were captured.

Jing Meng Hun was the first one to escape; he had already gone far away.

Chu Yang lay unconscious on the bosom of Tie Bu Tian. Tie Bu Tian noticed that Chu Yang's body was getting hotter with the passage of time. It was heating-up like a stove... even though he was still unconscious.

The two shadows came back. Their eyes flashed as they saw Chu Yang.

The return of the two shadow experts was similar to the arrival of saviors for Tie Bu Tian. He asked, "Uncles, take a look at him... how is he?"

The two shadows had already learnt about the happenings from a captive. It wasn't hard for them to understand Chu Yang's condition. One of the shadows sighed and said, "I'm afraid this person... can't be saved."

"Can't be saved?" Tie Bu Tian felt as if he had been struck by a thunderbolt. His body shook and his vision darkened. He asked, "But... he's still breathing. He also has a healthy and vigorous pulse. Why can't he be saved?"

"He was poisoned..." the shadow replied with a sigh, "... and this

poison doesn’t have an antidote."

"It doesn’t have an antidote..." Tie Bu Tian was on the verge of collapsing. Then, he asked in a weak voice, "What kind of a poison is this? How is it so vicious and overbearing... that it’s actually... actually..."

"This is the lust poison of a lust dragon. We’re in the middle of these barren mountains. There are no women in our army. And, finding a village girl will be even more difficult..." one of the shadows explained. Then, he became silent. His face was contorted with pain.

The other shadow had pinched him.

"Lust dragon? Lust poison?" Everything had become clear before Tie Bu Tian’s eyes. He thought for a moment and said, "If the poison isn’t detoxified within five hours... then his entire body will start to fester... and death will be inevitable. Are you talking about ‘that’ poison of a lust dragon?"

One of the shadows lowered his head, and the other one started to look around. They pretended as if they hadn’t heard anything.

"Yes or no?" Tie Bu Tian asked in an angry manner.

"Yes... that’s correct! But, nothing can be done about this..." one of the shadows stammered. Then, he added, "Anyways... there’s no need to do ‘that’ to save him even if this information is true. After all, you..."

He was once again interrupted by a pinch. Then, he took a step back and became silent.

Tie Bu Tian looked at the other shadow suspiciously, "What’s the matter?" His facial expression gradually sank.

"This... he has brought about this situation upon himself. This is his fate." The shadow weighed his words and spoke, "Besides, we already have a King of Hell Chu in the Iron Cloud... there’s no need to have two. Moreover... this person has always been rebellious

and out of control... also... considering that the war is close... it isn't appropriate to have him around..."

Tie Bu Tian's eyes seemed like water as he looked at Chu Yang's face. His facial expressions were fluctuating. One could sense a fierce struggle of emotions in his heart. He stayed like that for a long time. Then, he clenched his teeth as a hint to let the shadow know that he had overstepped his boundaries. He then said in hoarse voice, "Prepare a carriage... we're transporting him back..."

His voice sounded weak. It seemed that he could collapse any moment now.

The two shadows heaved a sigh of relief. They seemed to have been relieved from a burden. They looked at each other and went off to execute the orders.

Suddenly, Wu Kuang Yun strolled over. He stretched his neck to take a look at Chu Yang. Then, he shrugged his shoulders and spoke with a smile, "So, it's this little bastard! This guy owes me a big one."

Tie Bu Tian was looking at the deep night sky; he appeared to be in a daze. His face was expressionless. He stood motionless. It seemed as if this Iron Cloud's monarch had turned into a figurine carved from wood and clay.

The carriage arrived and Chu Yang was loaded onto it. Then, the army turned around to depart.

Tie Bu Tian remained next to the carriage the entire time. He didn't say a word; he appeared to be in pain. He had bit his lower lip until it had gotten ruptured...

The two shadows followed him closely. They seemed worried to see Tie Bu Tian in this condition.

"Your Majesty, there's a bad news." Wu Kuang Yun ran over to Tie Bu Tian. He was sweating profusely. He held a message that had been brought by a falcon, "Three enemy cavalry armies are

rushing towards us at a great speed. They are less than three-hundred-and-fifty kilometers away."

"How far do we need to cover until we reach our barracks?" Tie Bu Tian asked; he seemed stupefied.

"One-hundred-and-seventy-five kilometers." Wu Kuang Yun said, "But... we're mostly infantry troops... whereas the enemy has cavalry troops. Moreover, they are coming at the fastest possible speed. Even if we manage to reach the barracks before they reach us... we'll still need to organize the personnel to retreat..."

Tie Bu Tian understood the meaning behind Wu Kuang Yun's words – the situation wasn't in their favor.

"I'm leaving the army in your command. No matter what method you employ... you must meet up with our remaining troops before the enemy catches up. Return to the valley as fast as possible... And organize the personnel to retreat to the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass," Tie Bu Tian issued the order in a decisive manner.

"But... what about you, Your Majesty?" Wu Kuang Yun asked in a surprised tone.

"I'll be going back with the two shadow uncles," Tie Bu Tian replied as he stretched out his hand and pointed a finger at the shadows. "Also... leave behind this person and the carriage... You won't be able to move quickly with him."

"That won't do!" Wu Kuang Yun objected in a startled manner.

"Execute my order!" Tie Bu Tian glared at him, "If you dare say a word again... I'll put the charge of treason on you and execute you."

Then, he said in a comforting manner, "Rest assured... We'll be following right behind the army. I will keep up with you if I can. And, there will be no danger even if I can't. I have two Ninth Grade King Level Experts by my side."

He paused for a second and added, "I'll personally explain

everything to the Supreme Commander Tie; no matter what happens. There won't be any need for you to come forward."

Wu Kuang Yun wasn't willing to comply; no matter what Tie Bu Tian said. He wasn't willing to leave the Emperor in this burning wilderness.

"You won't go?" Tie Bu Tian's eyes turned sharp. He pulled out his sword from the sheath with a 'swoosh' sound, and put it on Wu Kuang Yun's neck, "I'll kill you right here if you don't go... I'll kill you right now..."

Wu Kuang Yun was sweating profusely. His eyes had lost their color...

"You still aren't gone?!" Tie Bu Tian shouted heavily. The sharp sword had already carved a trace of bloodstain on his neck.

Wu Kuang Yun cried out loud. His voice was full of grief, "Your Majesty, please take care of yourself. Old Wu is leaving." He jumped and mounted a horse. Then, he started to give orders like a madman. After that, the army changed its formation and charged forward. Wu Kuang Yun led the cavalry troops and dashed out like a hurricane.

[I must get back as soon as possible... and defend the mountain-pass. Then, I'll personally come to your aid, Your Majesty.]

[If... if... if I'm left with no other choice... this Wu Kuang Yun will put his life on the line for this mission...]

"Wu Kuang Yun, I'm handing over Iron Cloud Nation in your hands from this moment onwards. There will be hope so long as you manage to defend the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. If you fail in this mission... then this will be the first and the last time that I – the Iron Cloud's Monarch – will be paying such a huge price because of an impulsive decision," Tie Bu Tian muttered to himself.

He recalled that this impulsive decision was taken for 'that

person’ in the carriage… whose life hung from a thread. There was a strange poison running in his body. He got upset as this thought crossed his mind.

Tie Bu Tian moved with the carriage — closely behind the troops. [It was best to make Wu Kuang Yun rush back to the base under the present circumstances. I could’ve led the troops, but… what about Chu Yang? He can no longer withstand the bumps, and… he wouldn’t have been able to hold-on for such a long time…]

Tie Bu Tian bit his lips. He was still holding on to a glimmer of hope in his heart. He was constantly looking around, [Here… it’s too desolate… ah. Besides, we’ve just passed through the burning mountain. There shouldn’t be anyone around…]

[What should I do? What should I do?]

Time passed slowly. Tie Bu Tian had followed the troops, and had driven the carriage for dozens of kilometers. The troops were getting farther, and their sound was getting fainter with the passage of time…

Suddenly, Tie Bu Tian restrained the horse and jumped down from it. He squatted on the ground, and sat motionless. His shoulders shivered; he seemed to be… crying?

The two shadows looked at each other and sighed deeply.

Suddenly, a low and deep moan was issued from the carriage. It was filled with pain and misery. The three of them looked towards the carriage, and saw Chu Yang’s unconscious body twitch from head-to-toe. His face had turned deep-red…

"He’s in so much pain. How about… I give him pleasure to his heart’s content?" one of the shadows said, and turned to walk towards the carriage.

"Don’t you dare!" Tie Bu Tian shouted and jumped up. He stood in front of the wagon, and blocked his way. His eyes were bloodshot.

The two shadows looked at Tie Bu Tian; his eyes revealed a cold and imposing look of determination.

He kept his head lowered for a while. "Find a secluded place for me..." Tie Bu Tian's entire body shuddered as he spoke these words.

"You wouldn't..." the two shadows cried out in unison; they seemed to be in shock.

"This is the only way." Tie Bu Tian gave a distressed smile.

"But... what about the Icy Heart Jade Bone?" a shadow said anxiously, "If... if... if you did 'that'... your master will certainly kill you..."

"Icy Heart Jade Bone..." Tie Bu Tian smiled indifferently and spoke, "If he passes away... for whom will I guard my icy heart? All these jade bones of mine are for whom?"

He seemed to be at a loss. He smiled and said, "As for the master... do you think that I can become her apprentice again?"

The two shadows became silent.

Tie Bu Tian was the only offspring of Tie Shi Cheng. Now, he was the Emperor of Iron Cloud Nation. How could he also become... her apprentice?

"But... it's not worth it." One of the shadows spoke-up anxiously, "He doesn't even know your true identity... and..."

"What does this have to do with whether he knows or not?" Tie Bu Tian replied with a smile, "This has nothing to do with him."

"Don't tell me you..." The two shadows were dumbfounded.

"Do you think that I plan to spend a lifetime with him?" Tie Bu Tian smiled mournfully and replied, "I'll be spared of many entanglements because he doesn't know anything."

"This..." the shadow was speechless. This was impossible in the light of Tie Bu Tian's male identity.

"What’s the problem since things are this way...?" Tie Bu Tian said solemnly, "This is my matter. It’s neither his matter... nor yours... This is none of my master’s business either."

A determined look appeared on his face, "This is my matter... Mine alone..."

He turned around and looked sadly at the two shadows, "He’ll leave regardless of the outcome of this power struggle in the Lower Three Heavens. It’s possible that I’ll never get to see him once he leaves. Only a speck of his memories will remain in my life... alright?

The shadows remained silent and heaved a long sigh.

Chapter 395: Deliberate Misunderstanding!

Tie Bu Tian looked around. The flames were still ablaze in the surroundings. He said, "In my entire life... since infancy... I've never truly enjoyed myself. A heavy burden had come upon my shoulders after Imperial Father had sustained injuries. I never got a chance to get any joy. I've never had a friend or a lover. I was even more unlikely to fall in love with someone... I've never known the feeling of deep love; the feeling of having a lover.

"I've been lonely since my birth. Other girls can cherish the beauty of flowers and plants. They can be happy and sad whenever they wish. They can have as much fun as they want in their inner chambers. But, I can't even think about all this. I have the blood of the Tie Clan. I was destined to walk the ruthless path of the Emperor from the very beginning. This is my duty as the sole offspring of Imperial Father. I can't shirk my duty. But, who would've thought that the task of becoming the ruler of the world would fall into the hands of an ordinary girl... like me.

"I also have a dream. Other people's dreams have a chance of coming true. But, my dream will never come true. It could never come true. There's so much pressure on me. I also want to have a shoulder to rely on. I also want to burst into tears in someone's embrace. But, all I'm allowed to do is maintain this fearless stance. I must face all these cruelties and challenges with cold indifference. Yes, this is my responsibility. But..."

Suddenly, tears came streaming down Tie Bu Tian's face, "... but... all of this was imposed on me. A young girl like me was made to face such hardships. I've to keep this secret hidden... and there's no end to it. I'll have to keep this secret hidden forever; no matter what sort of hopeless situation I might face in the future. I have no choice but to keep my youthful beauty hidden under a mask... until I get old and wither away... Don't you think... it's too cruel?

"Don't you think that's way too cruel?!"

Tie Bu Tian spoke in a hissing tone.

The two shadows sighed, but remained silent.

"But, I want to save him today. I'm willing to pay any cost to save him. I'll do anything for him. I don't want any repayment for doing this. I'll consider it to be a short lived illusion. After all, an illusion doesn't leave any traces behind.

"I'm being willful this time... just this time!" Tie Bu Tian muttered to himself, "I only hope that you'll never tell him about this. He must never find out.

"This is my decision... and this has to be my matter alone."

Two drops of tears could be seen hanging from his face in the light of flames.

"It's such a pity that your Icy Heart Jade Bone Saintly Technique was about to move a step further..." A shadow looked-up to the sky and sighed deeply, "Your Master had said that... she'll come to take you away once that happens..."

"Hehe... by the time she comes..." Tie Bu Tian appeared to be in a daze as he looked at the burning forest in the dark night. He said, "... it'll already be gone..."

Then he laughed, "Don't you think that this burning mountain-forest is better than the world's most beautiful candlelight?" A trace of shyness flashed in his eyes along with a trace of sweet-happiness...

He was perhaps thinking of what he would never get in this life – a pair of red candles in the beautiful bridal chamber on the wedding night. His vision seemed blurry and full of agony. However, his eyes were full of a sweet fantasy...

*** ***

Chu Yang woke-up and realized that his entire body was aching. However, he felt an indescribable pleasure 'down there'. He

immediately sat-up.

He could only sit-up half-way even after he had exhausted his entire physical strength. Suddenly, he realized that his body was rocking. [It feels as if… I'm in a carriage…]

[Is this the carriage of Iron Cloud or Great Zhao?]

Chu Yang was puzzled. Then, he looked at the soft bedding under his body. It was covered with soft cotton-wadded quilts. He immediately understood, [I wouldn't be getting such nice treatment if Great Zhao had caught me.]

"You woke up?" a dignified and majestic voice sounded from outside.

The curtains rose and Tie Bu Tian floated-in.

An ordinary person would have to take a step to jump-up into the carriage. But, Tie Bu Tian had the martial arts foundation of an Emperor. So, he could use weight lightening technique to float-up.

[Why are you showing-off in front of me?] Chu Yang couldn't help but feel like laughing. Then, he asked in a feeble voice. "How are you here?"

Tie Bu Tian's complexion sank and turned pale. He looked extremely tired. He knitted his eyebrows. There was a trace of anguish on his forehead. But, he spoke in an indifferent tone, "Why I'm here is none of your business. I'm the one asking questions here. You've been sleeping for an entire day and night. How do you feel right now?"

Chu Yang was startled.

[What's up… with this aloof and detached tone? Moreover, there's such repelling indifference in his voice.] Chu Yang was perplexed. He raised his head to look straight at Tie Bu Tian, and asked in a surprised manner, "What's wrong with you?"

"There has been a great pressure on me in the recent times." Tie

Bu Tian and Chu Yang looked at each other for a while. There wasn’t a single trace of emotion in Tie Bu Tian’s eyes. He started to look in the other direction and said, "The flames of war have been lit. Great Zhao’s massive army has assembled at the border. Fortunately, you’ve returned in time. Now, I can share my worries and difficulties with you."

Chu Yang looked at Tie Bu Tian. He felt that there was something wrong with him.

[He seems to be deliberately putting distance between us.]

[What in the world happened when I wasn’t around?]

Chu Yang thought for a while, "I’m afraid I may not be of much use... considering my limited abilities. Moreover, I just had a narrow escape for the sake of Iron Cloud... and yet the Emperor of Iron cloud is being cold and indifferent towards me," Chu Yang spoke in a cold tone.

"Minister Chu..." Tie Bu Tian glanced at him, and then quickly looked away. He said, "But Minister Chu will help me nonetheless, right?"

Suddenly, Chu Yang started to feel oppressed and suffocated. He chuckled and said, "Of course... I will. When I promise something... I do it; no matter what."

Then, he closed his eyes as an indication that he didn’t wish to discuss this topic anymore.

Was there anything unusual about an Emperor acting high and mighty? Tie Bu Tian obviously couldn’t bow down before him. It was impossible.

Chu Yang's arrogance rarely surfaced. But, the pride rooted in his bones couldn’t be rivaled in this world. Tie Bu Tian’s cold and indifferent demeanor was an indication that he would never stick his hot face into people’s cold buttocks to please them.

"That's fine." Tie Bu Tian nodded and smiled. His vision swept

around and got fixed on Chu Yang's face. It seemed as if he wanted to say something, but didn't say it. He then stated in an indifferent manner, "You only focus on recuperating."

He couldn't stop himself from coughing several times. His eyebrows wrinkled tightly. The pained expression on his face became more and more obvious. He seemed to be enduring enormous pain.

However, Chu Yang didn't see it since his eyes were closed.

Suddenly, Tie Bu Tian jumped onto the carriage that was moving next to this one. There was a sound of curtains being raised as Tie Bu Tian went inside the other carriage.

There were two carriages.

Chu Yang snorted in his heart, [This Emperor – His Majesty's arrogance is getting bigger and bigger. I saw the mighty force that had arrived to rescue me. But, he was riding in his carriage even during such an emergency...]

[It must've been really comfortable... huh.]

[Sure enough... the temperament of a person changes after they become an Emperor. Is the diligent Prince Bu Tian gone forever?]

Chu Yang was overcome with boredom as this thought crossed his mind.

[I would've walked away from here if it wasn't to reverse the fate and save Qing Wu.]

[Once the war ends... and Diwu Qing Rou gets defeated... I – Chu Yang – won't stay here for a single day.]

The carriage was moving slowly. The road seemed to be getting harder to travel on. Chu Yang felt that the surroundings had quieted down a little. He could hear no other sound besides the sound of Tie Bu Tian's carriage beside his...

Chu Yang controlled his breathing and checked upon his injuries.

He recalled that world-shaking final attack. It had left him traumatized. He couldn't believe that... he had managed to come out alive from such an attack.

He called the Sword Spirit a few times. However, he got no response.

It was true that Chu Yang had unleashed an unprecedented power at the end, and had ended up killing nearly three-hundred people in one fell swoop. However, the enemy knew that this was going to be their last chance. Therefore, they had gone all-out in that final attempt. More than two-thousand people had surrounded him from all directions, and had bombarded him with multiple strong attacks in unison.

How could Chu Yang resist such an attack on his own? This was a head-on attack which demanded 'tackling force with force'. There was no room for leeway.

Chu Yang's body was on the verge of being turned into a mass of minced meat at the last moment. That was when the Sword Spirit was finally unable to control himself, and took over Chu Yang's body. He used-up all his spiritual power to shield Chu Yang's body from the fatal attacks.

However, the Sword Spirit had fallen into deep sleep since he had exhausted his power. But, Chu Yang had fallen unconscious by then. So, the Sword Spirit didn't get time to inform him about this.

The Sword Spirit knew that Chu Yang's body was in need of urgent treatment. He was secretly worried for Chu Yang. However, he was helpless. Moreover, he would've been of no help even if he were conscious...

Chu Yang and the Sword Spirit had lost consciousness at the same time. They could only resign themselves to fate.

Chu Yang examined his internal injuries. He found out that his

arteries and veins were completely damaged. He smiled bitterly, and summoned the Nine Tribulations Sword. Then, he took out an incomplete version of the Nine Tribulations Pill and popped it.

This pill didn’t have the same quality as the full version of Nine Tribulations Pill since that was made out of the Mysterious ice Jade Paste. However, it was a first-class healing medicine. Anyway, Chu Yang's injury was within the scope of treatment even though it looked serious.

Half-an-hour had passed since Chu Yang had taken the pill. He noticed that his strength was slowly recovering, and his internal injury was gradually healing.

An hour passed. Now, he could move freely. He sat-up straight and breathed a few times. He felt as if his entire body was at ease. In fact, he felt as if he could float about as he wished. He had a strong desire to fly. It felt as if the binding chains had suddenly snapped. This perplexed him.

He tried to raise his energy, and was startled. He opened his eyes wide in a stare, [When did my spiritual power break through the bottleneck? I’ve reached the first grade of King Level.]

[First Grade Sword King!]

[What… what’s going on? How can I make a breakthrough in an injured state?]

[Can it be that Tie Bu Tian gave me some kind of a Heavenly treasure?]

Chapter 396: Friends?

Chu Yang could no longer sit still. He raised the curtain to jump-off the carriage. However, he was surprised as he lifted the curtains. In fact, he couldn't believe his eyes.

[It's obvious that I'm still at Beyond the Heavens Sect Mountain Range. There's no doubt about it. But, where's the army?]

[I clearly saw the Iron Cloud's army rushing ahead like a raging tide last night. So, where have they all disappeared? Was it a dream?]

The surrounding mountain-forest was still burning and belching smoke. The flames seemed weak at some places.

There was a simple-looking carriage next to his carriage. The two carriages had two drivers. He was sitting in one carriage, while Tie Bu Tian was riding in the other.

So, there were only four people in total!

No one uttered a sound. One could only hear the sound of the wheels turning rapidly.

"What's going on?" Chu Yang couldn't help but ask out loud, "How come we are only ones here?"

The two drivers had a serious look on their faces. They didn't speak. They seemed to be minding their own business. It seemed as if they didn't even hear Chu Yang's words.

"I asked you something... you know," Chu Yang said in an angry manner.

"Shut up!" the driver retorted.

King of Hell Chu was stunned by the driver's reply. [How's this carriage driver so flamboyant?]

Suddenly, Chu Yang floated out and stood on top of the carriage. He occupied the high ground and looked around. This affirmed his

guess, [The army has indeed disappeared.]

He shrank his head backwards and stuck-out his tongue... as he saw the two drivers. [If I'm not mistaken... these must be Tie Bu Tian's two shadow experts. They are like Tie Bu Tian's inseparable shadows. Their duty is to stay by his side at all times... to protect him.]

[F**k! No wonder they are so intrepid!]

Chu Yang had seen the true appearance of these shadows for the first time. He felt as if they had been made by using molds. They were tall and skinny; they were clad in gray robes. They looked like bamboo poles covered with clothes. They had high cheekbones and deep eye-sockets. There was barely any trace of meat on their bodies.

They both seemed to be in their fifties or sixties.

Chu Yang didn't say anything else. However, the shadow didn't let him off for some reason and spoke, "How are you feeling now? I didn't expect to see you jumping around so early? It seems that you've recovered really fast. The luck is on your side... I suppose."

Chu Yang felt strange as he heard these words. He looked curious from his appearance. He couldn't help but ask, "What's going on?"

"What's going on... you ask?" The shadow couldn't control his anger and said, "His Majesty took an army of five-hundred-thousand soldiers, and came out of the mountain-pass to save you. Now, the mountain-pass is being targeted by the enemy's army unit... that army unit comprises of over a million soldiers. So, our troops had to rush back to provide support. We're the only ones who stayed back. Do you understand now?"

"What?" Chu Yang felt a jolt in his heart. [I could never imagine that Tie Bu Tian would take such a huge risk for my sake. This is almost like weighing the fate of the whole nation against mine on the scales. Moreover, my weight was obviously heavier.]

[This is a huge risk!]

He felt moved as this thought crossed his mind.

Chu Yang said in his heart, [No wonder Tie Bu Tian seemed so annoyed. So, that's how it is. He has put the entire Iron Cloud Nation in danger for my sake. Anyone would be in a bad mood because of that...]

The two shadows were surprised. [Chu Yang's lust poison has been detoxified. But, it should still be impossible for him to jump like that. He had fallen into a comatose state after sustaining serious internal injuries. He shouldn't be able to walk... let alone jump. But, he appears completely relaxed and at ease right now.]

[Isn't this kid's vitality way too strong?]

No sound could be heard from Tie Bu Tian's carriage. He seemed to have fallen asleep.

These three people didn't know that Tie Bu Tian was lying in the carriage. Her entire body was paining. She was covered in sweat, and her complexion was pale. Her clothes were drenched in her sweat.

Chu Yang's lust poison was extremely potent. Moreover, Tie Bu Tian didn't have any prior experience with it. How could she have been able to withstand such a high-intensity of brutal intimacy? She had been left breathless countless times during the detoxification process. She had suffered a lot throughout the process; she had even come close to being exhausted to death a few times...

Luckily, Chu Yang was unconscious and was moving only subconsciously. So, the magnitude of his movements wasn't high. Tie Bu Tian was the one taking the lead most of the time. Therefore, she hadn't lost her life...

Now, Tie Bu Tian felt as if her entire body was being ripped apart by severe pain. She somehow managed to hold herself when she

had gotten-up to have a look at Chu Yang and see if he was okay...

"Minister Chu, this old man is a lot older than you. But, he may not know if it would be proper to ask you this. But, may I ask you something?" a shadow asked.

"Please go ahead, Senior. You can ask anything," Chu Yang replied with a smile.

"Minister Chu wouldn't have a wife at this young age... correct?" the shadow had put it as a question, but it sounded more like a statement.

"I don't have a wife yet," Chu Yang answered frankly.

"Ah... So... if a woman falls in love with Minister Chu... and is sincerely willing to devote herself to him... would Minister Chu be moved by her dedication?" The shadow's voice revealed a vague sullenness as he spoke, "This old man will gladly act as a matchmaker..."

"Shadow!" Tie Bu Tian's angry voice sounded from the nearby carriage, "How can someone force marriage on Minister Chu?"

The shadow touched his beard in embarrassment. He didn't say anything further.

"I love someone," Chu Yang sounded grateful for the kindness of the offer. But, he neatly refused it, "I love her very much. I wish to treasure her all my life. I don't wish to have anyone else in my life."

The shadow had been stopped by Tie Bu Tian. So, he didn't wish to speak any further. However, Chu Yang's reply sent him into a rage. He couldn't suppress his temper any longer. He snapped, "Someone wants to devote herself to you, and you don't seem to care at all. How can you be so indifferent?"

"Someone wants to devote herself to me... but that doesn't mean that I should cease to be faithful... right?" Chu Yang looked at the old man jokingly. Then, he asked out of curiosity, "So... who

exactly is this ‘someone’ that the Senior is talking about?"

"Humph!" the shadow snorted angrily and turned his head away. He wasn’t paying attention to Chu Yang anymore.

Suddenly, Chu Yang had a spark in his mind. He had a realization as to who it could be. [This old man is probably talking about Wu Qian Qian. After all, she has been staying in the Iron cloud during my absence. She must’ve been in touch with these two old men. It seems like they want to play matchmaker between Wu Qian Qian and me.]

Chu Yang couldn’t help but sigh as he thought of Wu Qian Qian.

[How could I not know that Wu Qian Qian is passionately devoted to me? But, I’ve already devoted my whole life to Qing Wu. Mo Qing Wu is the only one for me. I just can’t be unfaithful to her. There can be no one else.]

Wu Qian Qian was a stunning beauty. And, she was extremely talented. She wasn’t just smart... she was extremely skilled as well. There couldn’t be a better choice than her. However, Chu Yang’s heart was already tied to Mo Qing Wu’s. The huge regret from his past life had left a knot in his heart.

No one in this world could untie this emotional knot besides Mo Qing Wu!

Chu Yang had never thought of Wu Qian Qian in that way. He had never even had such a thought about her.

It was even more improbable for other women.

Tie Bu Tian felt dejected in the other carriage. She heaved a sigh of self-pity in her heart. [As expected, Chu Yang likes someone. Such being the case... burying this matter here-and-now is the best choice, isn’t it?]

[Moreover, even if there was no one in Chu Yang’s heart... so what? I can’t marry him and be his wife while carrying the identity of the Emperor of my nation... can I?]

Tie Bu Tian seemed to have reached a conclusion; it relieved her of all her anxieties. However, two strings of tears trickled down from her eyes and soaked the pillow. She gently reached out to wipe-off the tears, but they kept pouring-out. But, she continued to wipe her tears...

[Let me cry this once.]

[While he's still beside me.]

[Even though he doesn't know...]

There was a strange silence. It made Chu Yang feel constrained. It was the kind of feeling where he didn't know what might happen the next moment.

Tie Bu Tian's weary voice came from the other carriage after a long time, "Minister Chu's body recovered really fast."

Chu Yang chuckled and said, "That's because I'm rough and tough."

Chu Yang was no longer cold towards Tie Bu Tian since the earlier misunderstanding had been cleared.

"Um... last night, I threw Minister Chu's black clothes into the fire and burned them." Tie Bu Tian slowly spoke, "But, I felt that something was wrong after they had burnt down. Minister Chu, was there some precious item hidden in your clothes? Maybe some important secret...?"

"Some precious item...? Important secret...?" Chu Yang stared blankly. It seemed if he was wracking his brains to find an answer, "What exactly do you mean by that, Your Majesty?"

"Haha, I feel relieved that there was none." Tie Bu Tian laughed and spoke, "That's because the smell of burning hair was rising from your clothes as they burned. So many hairs couldn't have fallen off from Minister Chu's body... Haha, I guess I was just overthinking."

Chu Yang smiled and said, "Your Majesty probably doesn't know, but my clothes had been contaminated with too much blood and fragments of enemy's flesh. So, burning those clothes would've naturally given-off that kind of smell."

Tie Bu Tian smiled and said, "Maybe you're right. It's not something I'm too familiar with." He was still somewhat puzzled in his heart since that smell wasn't the same as that of burning flesh or blood. However, he didn't pursue this topic any further.

"Minister Chu... you and I don't appear like the monarch and his minister... nor do we seem like colleagues..." Tie Bu Tian weighed his words carefully and said, "Minister Chu has a brilliant future waiting ahead. And, I'm sure that you won't be limited to this insignificant Lower Three Heavens. Then... let me ask you something. What status do I — Iron Cloud's Emperor — hold in Minister Chu's heart?"

Tie Bu Tian had spoken this slowly, but there was a vague sense of urgency in his tone.

"Haha..." Chu Yang smiled in an awkward manner as he touched his nose. He found it difficult to answer this question.

Tie Bu Tian didn't urge him to reply, and quietly waited on the other side.

"Your Majesty... and me. Well, I don't know what to say." Chu Yang calmly smiled, "We were doomed to be in a cooperative relationship from the beginning. Our common goal is to beat Diwu Qing Rou. That is the true foundation of our association."

"I admire Your Majesty's character. I've developed a very good impression of Your Majesty in our numerous recent collaborations. Thanks to those — we've connected at a deep level with each other..." Chu Yang gathered his thoughts and spoke, "Considering all that... I would say that we are like brothers. However, I wouldn't dare to raise myself to such a high level. I guess that saying that we are 'friends' is entirely possible."

"Friends... friends?" Tie Bu Tian's voice was very low. He seemed to be at a loss.

Chapter 397: She is Unique and Unmatched!

"Friends... friends?" Tie Bu Tian's voice was very low. He seemed to be at a loss. Then, he smiled lightly and spoke, "It's indeed great to have a friend like Minister Chu. I'll never forget this in my entire life. Who amongst the past Emperors had the fortunate of having a sincere lifelong-friend?"

"Your Majesty is right." Chu Yang laughed out loud, and spoke, "In fact, very few ordinary people are fortunate-enough to have a sincere friend for a lifetime — let alone an Emperor. Some people are unable to find even one friend who treats them sincerely their entire lives. And thus, they themselves don't treat anyone sincerely. Such people are even more pitiful than the Emperor."

"Haha..." Tie Bu Tian sincerely laughed out and said, "The Emperor's position seems like a very pitiful existence to Minister Chu..."

"Pitiful indeed." Chu Yang earnestly replied, "It's quite lonely at the top. That's exactly what an 'Emperor' has to experience while he sits at the most glorious and powerful seat. He's doomed to the life of solitude!"

Chu Yang's reply left Tie Bu Tian speechless. A long while passed. Then, the sound of a long sigh was heard from inside the carriage. Then, a low and inaudible voice whispered, "Emperor... solitude... solitude... friends... ha ha..."

The two shadows also heaved a sigh. It was hard to tell whether they sighed for themselves... or for someone else; the meaning that was hidden deep in their sighs was complex and difficult to understand.

Tie Bu Tian's lifeless eyes were staring at the roof of the carriage. He stared at the roof of the carriage for a long time. His eyes didn't move even once the entire time.

[Friends! Haha, just friends! …that's not so bad.]

[You suffered through hundreds of battle for my sake. You used your wisdom for my sake. You indulged in crazy slaughter for my sake. You put your life on the line for my sake… just because I am your friend!]

[I was deeply worried for you. I have such deep emotions for you. I was scared for you. I wouldn't hesitate to do anything for you. I even lost my 'purity' for you. For you… I will do anything in my power. I can sacrifice anything for you… even the entire country if I have to… so… it's all because we are… friends!]

Tie Bu Tian spoke these painful words in her heart since they were difficult to express. She had an impulse to start bawling as this thought crossed her mind. The innermost feelings of pain and bitterness had made her wish that she could draw-out her long sword, and commit suicide in front of Chu Yang's eyes.

However, she somehow controlled her emotions. She breathed deeply a few times to calm herself down. Tears quietly rolled down from her eyes… like beads from a broken string…

[Hey, why am I crying? Didn't I just say that I'll never cry? So, why am I crying again?]

[Tie Bu Tian, you're really useless ah…]

[Friends…]

[Just friends…]

Chu Yang's statement had firmly set the relationship-status that the two shared.

Finally, Tie Bu Tian smiled slightly, [being friends… is good too! How many friends did the ancient Emperors have? As Chu Yang said… how many sincere friends can ordinary people have?]

"Haha, we must wait till the war ends at the mountain pass. So, we'll have to wait for a long time before we can make our way back

to the mountain pass..." Tie Bu Tian smiled and spoke, "Minister Chu, why don't you tell me something about yourself to break the silence of this journey?"

"Journey?" Chu Yang didn't know whether to laugh or cry, "Your Majesty seems very relaxed for some reason. Is His Majesty not worried about this war? After all, the fates of the two nations depend on this war."

"Worry... will that be of any help?" Tie Bu Tian replied with a smile, "I can be anxious. That is fine. But, worrying won't do any good. I must do what I can. Then, I will accept the outcome... whatever it may be. So, why should I worry?"

"Your Majesty is very open-minded!" Chu Yang replied respectfully. It was truly commendable for an Emperor to have such mindset...

"Haha..." Tie Bu Tian laughed. He felt elated.

"What does Your Majesty wish to hear about?" Chu Yang asked.

"It doesn't sound appropriate when Minister Chu calls me 'Your Majesty'... since we are friends..." Tie Bu Tian smiled and said.

Tie Bu Tian and Chu Yang didn't notice that a strange expression would appear on the face of the two shadows each time they said the word 'friends'. That strange expression would be accompanied by a weird look in their eyes. It was rather difficult to explain.

"Your Majesty also continues to call me 'Minister' Chu." Chu Yang smiled back and replied, "How should we address each other since we're friends? What should I call Your Majesty?"

Tie Bu Tian was at a loss for words.

[That's right. What should I make him call me? Bu Tian? Brother Tie Bu Tian? Isn't that like 'rubbing salt' into my own wounds? Or should I make him call me by my 'special nickname'... the one that Imperial Father used to call me by when I was six years old — Little Sweetie? That's even more impossible...]

[What should I call him? ‘Brother’ Chu? Yang Yang? That’s going too far. He won’t agree. ‘Mister’ Chu? I would rather die than call him ‘that’.]

"Haha, it’s okay. Minister Chu was the one to say that we’re friends. So, why care about the titles." Tie Bu Tian revealed a frank smile, "I am very curious to know about that ‘special someone’ whom Minister Chu’s heart simply can’t forget. Perhaps, Minister Chu should talk about her..."

"Eh?" Chu Yang was dumbstruck.

"That woman... with whom Minister Chu has sincerely fallen in love. Tell me about the woman whom Minister Chu has chosen among the countless beauties one can find in this world. For whom... you wish to stay faithful and pure. For whom... you stay away from the other women... you don’t even try to flirt with other women. Nor do you intend to collect wives..." Tie Bu Tian’s voice sounded very strange. It was hard to tell what her words meant in reality, "You’re probably the only person who hides his handsome and youthful appearance behind a sinister mask.

"So, I’m very curious to know. Who is this amazing woman who has made Minister Chu fall head over heels?" Tie Bu Tian asked.

"She..." Chu Yang recalled Mo Qing Wu, and couldn’t help but day-dream about her. The corners of his mouth revealed a smile, but it was hard to tell whether it was a bitter one or a sweet one...

"It’s hard to say," Chu Yang gently replied.

"Just say it," Tie Bu Tian curiously urged him to continue. She had made-up her mind, [I would like to know what the difference between ‘her’ and me is... and where I fall short...]

"She’s a naive girl..." Chu Yang gathered his thoughts and finally spoke, "Moreover, she’s very innocent. She devotes herself to me when she is with me... she never complains. She never demands anything..."

"Oh..." The statement ‘she never demands anything’ had shaken Tie Bu Tian’s heart.

"I feel free and relaxed when I’m with her. I can do whatever I want... however I want... and without a worry about what she would think of it. And, she never interrupts me. She just silently supports and encourages me. I once fell sick... So, I made her leave. But, she didn’t say anything. She just stood in a corner... she quietly waited and watched over me..."

"How can such a naive woman exist...?" Tie Bu Tian couldn’t help but sigh in her heart.

"Her body isn’t in a good condition. She was injured in her childhood. She is doomed to a life that is devoid of success or achievements. So, she feels inferior whenever she’s with me..." Chu Yang subconsciously look inside his consciousness... he looked at the Nine Tribulations Pills that lay at the hilt of the Nine Tribulations Sword and spoke, "...and an ignorant guy like me didn’t know how to treasure her properly..."

"Then, one day... she left me... I finally got to know her true importance that day. My life turned bleak without her... I used to be obsessed with my sword back then. She had mustered the entirety of her courage to shove her grievances and resentment at me before she left me. She had told me... ‘Chu Yang, I’m more attractive than the sword!’"

Chu Yang felt an ache in his heart as he spoke this. He recalled that heart-wrenching afternoon when the setting sun had looked as red as blood. Mo Qing Wu’s red dress had been bathed in blood. She had lain in his arms, and her dying words had been 'Chu Yang, I was more attractive than the sword'. He recalled her last words... and suddenly, his heart convulsed and began to ache.

His heart would always get filled with different kinds of pain and emotion every time he recalled her last words. It seemed like her words gave-off different emotions every time he recalled them.

Tie Bu Tian sighed in her heart, and remained silent. Her heart seemed to be feeling an ache similar to that of Chu Yang's...

"Recently, I've found her again... I've pledged that I will be good to her this time! I will stay with her as much as I can, and I will do my utmost to make her the happiest woman in the entire Nine Heavens!" Chu Yang softly spoke.

"She's very lucky that she has met a resolute man like you..." Tie Bu Tian spoke in a soft voice. She still felt endless pain in her heart. She just couldn't help but be extremely jealous of this 'lucky woman' since she was getting all of Chu Yang's affection.

"I think that... meeting her was my good fortune... my greatest fortune!" Chu Yang smiled merrily. He imagined healing Qing Wu's injury, and spending a worry-free life with her... a happily ever-after scene.

"Ah... lucky indeed. What about... her looks? She must be very beautiful, right?" Tie Bu Tian asked.

"An outstanding beauty! ...With style so magnificent that it's unmatched in her generation! Her beauty can cause the downfall of a nation!" Chu Yang answered, "I've never seen a girl more beautiful than her!"

He thought, then said, "Her bearing, her grace, her temperament... her appearance, her figure, her personality, her... let's just say she's unrivaled in every aspect!"

Chu Yang took a deep breath, and said, "Her beauty transcends this world's imagination!"

Tie Bu Tian remained silent for a longer duration this time around.

Tie Bu Tian's somewhat weak-looking eyes looked down at the spot 'down there'. Her wounds seemed to have started bleeding again. However, this pain was far less than the one in her heart.

Chu Yang talked non-stop, and continued to praise his

sweetheart. He was unaware that Tie Bu Tian was on the brink of despair, and that her heart was breaking into pieces on the other side of the curtain...

There was smile on Chu Yang's face, while his heart was brimming with happiness. [The war has begun. I just need to beat Diwu Qing Rou. Then, I will go to the Middle Three Heavens, and reunite with Qing Wu.]

He suddenly felt something strange on his side. His vision turned sideways, and discovered that the two shadows — who had been driving the carriages — were angrily glaring at him. Their eyes had a shade of pure rage in them. It seemed as if their gazes would devour Chu Yang's entire body at a moment's notice...

"I've become even more curious after hearing all this..." Tie Bu Tian forced a smile, "When can Minister Chu bring her over... so I can personally take a look at this unique and otherworldly beauty..."

She smiled and said, "Qian Qian is a stunning beauty too. I really wish to see this beauty... someone who's even more beautiful than Qian Qian..."

"Cough cough cough..." This was Chu Yang's turn to run speechless. [Why did Tie Bu Tian suddenly bring up a comparison with Wu Qian Qian? Can such a thing... be compared?]

Tie Bu Tian's childhood nickname was 'Xiao Tian Tian'. 'Xiao' means small or little. The 'tian' in her name means 'Heaven'. But the 'tian' in her nickname means 'sweet'. So we can narrow her name's English translation down to 'Little Sweetie'.

Mister Chu: The pinyin for Mister is 'Lang' which also means 'Husband'. That is why calling Chu Yang 'Lang Chu' or 'Mister Chu' is embarrassing for Tie Bu Tian.

Chapter 398: A Failed Hero Often Sighs, and A Young Woman's Heart Often Experiences Twists and Turns

Chu Yang went for the wise choice of avoiding the issue altogether. He figured that he might end-up offending someone if he didn't avoid it.

Tie Bu Tian didn't speak for a long time. She merely continued to laugh gently. There was an unpredictable meaning hidden in her laughter. She spoke, "Minister Chu, Miss Qian Qian is passionately devoted to you... aren't you the least bit interested?"

Chu Yang pondered for a long time. Then, he smiled bitterly.

He then replied in a resolute manner, "Your Majesty, I don't wish to repeat myself on this issue. You and I are the same. We are men. A man can't shirk his responsibility. You have a responsibility to walk the road of an Emperor. And, I have the responsibility to walk the path of a young man!"

"Qian Qian is pretty. Her skills and insight are profound. She possesses an unmatched style and elegance. I would be an idiot if I said that I'm not tempted. It's impossible for a man to not get attracted to her. I won't deny this fact. But... just because I'm tempted doesn't mean that I should be unfaithful to the one who loves me, right?"

Chu Yang forced a smile and said, "I'll let the time erase everything."

He paused, and then continued, "Your Majesty, you're a man as well. You should understand my point of view."

Tie Bu Tian remained silent for a long while. Then, she smiled bitterly, and replied with a sigh, "I'm also a man ah..."

Chu Yang frowned; [I sense some emotions in Tie Bu Tian's

words. It's like a mixture of helplessness and melancholy. Does he also have an unrequited love for a girl?]

Suddenly, something clicked in Chu Yang's heart, and he understood who it might be. [It seems like Tie Bu Tian likes Wu Qian Qian, but Wu Qian Qian likes me… yes, yes, this has to be the case.]

The two shadows wanted to plug their ears. They no longer wanted to listen to Chu Yang's talks. They had listened to this guy say 'you're a man as well' followed by 'should understand me'… they had thought that it was quite funny, but also very sad.

[Yes, you're a man. And, being responsible is a good and virtuous thing. However… do you know how many people you've hurt? Do you even know that you've hurt a person just now? You don't know that the man you're sincerely confiding in… is actually a woman ah! Moreover, do you even know that it's a pitiful woman who is infatuated with you? Do you know that she has sacrificed everything for you… but, can't ask anything in return?]

[You may never find out until you die… that there has been such a woman in your life! The woman who lost her virginity for you, and sacrificed her future prospects in martial arts. She doesn't have much left in the world because of you. But, you only treat her as a 'brother'; as a 'friend'.]

[Isn't that cruel? But then, it can't be helped…]

"Let the time erase everything…" Tie Bu Tian lowered her head, and repeated this sentence. She deeply sighed in her heart, [time can erase everything. This saying is indeed correct. But, the one thing that even a long passage of time can't erase is… one's first temptation… the first love!]

[Moreover, a love like this demands sacrifice with no complaints and regrets!]

[Wu Qian Qian will be fine. But, as far as I'm concerned… will I

ever be able to forget what happened this time? Perhaps I won't forget about this even after a hundred years... when I'll be old with gray hair, and spots. It will be even more unlikely for me to forget this man who came in my life like a shooting star and brightened my world!]

[The person with whom I fell in love... but, am doomed to never get together with...!]

"The autumn breeze and the setting sun indicate the sky's desire for twilight. Many things have changed, and these changes-alone will remain from now on. A hero who fails to live up to the expectations can only sigh often. And, a girl's heart always experiences innumerable twists and turns!" Tie Bu Tian looked the Sun as it proceeded to set in the western sky. It was gradually lowering to meet the earth. It was about to get dusky outside. She couldn't help but sigh softly. She felt a bit emotional in this moment.

She couldn't help but heave low sighs once she was done reciting this. She was experiencing an infinite sense of loss.

Chu Yang assumed that Tie Bu Tian was talking about Wu Qian Qian. So, he went silent for a while. One could only hear the two shadows sighing again and again as they drove the carriages in this silence. Their sighs were filled with sorrow and helplessness. They felt sad for her misfortune, and were angry at her unwillingness to struggle.

These two had seen this poor little girl suffer since childhood. So, it was even more painful for them to watch her like this...

[Oh heaven...! Please open your eyes and give happiness to this poor girl. Even a little bit of happiness will do. A little bit of comfort is also fine! We don't ask for a lot. Only a little bit of comfort... can't she have even that much?]

[She has been burdened with so much weight all her life. She bears the noble blood, and is the only heir to the throne. But... she

has never obtained the slightest of happiness in her life! She has never smiled from the bottom of her heart...]

[Not even once...]

Tie Bu Tian curled-up in her carriage. She found it harder and harder to endure the pain in the wake of this sudden silence. She felt as if her lower abdomen was being ripped apart. She clenched her teeth to bear the pain. Her body trembled as she tried her best prevent herself from making any sounds. Beads of sweat oozed-out from her forehead, and rolled down...

The shadow driving her carriage sighed and said, "Minister Chu, your injury couldn't be called a fatal one, but it was certainly the type of injury which is very difficult to recover from. But, you were able to wake up in such a short time. And, that too in a recovered state of health...! You ought to have some elixirs with you, right?"

He didn't want to ask Chu Yang. But, the medicines the two shadows carried wouldn't be of much use in treating Tie Bu Tian's condition. He couldn't endure to watch Tie Bu Tian in so much pain. He had finally lost his patience, and so he had asked Chu Yang for help.

[Considering Chu Yang's recovery speed... there should be some elixirs in his possession.]

"Well, I do have some elixirs. Though, not many... But, their effects won't be very satisfactory." Chu Yang didn't know why he was asked this question. So, he replied cautiously.

"His Majesty has suffered a heavy injury while saving you. And, we've already used our medicines..." the shadow explained after a moment of silence.

Chu Yang heard that, and suddenly recalled Tie Bu Tian's unnatural posture as well as his pale complexion from before. He realized that Iron Cloud's Emperor had nearly given up his entire country in order to come to his rescue. How could this not touch

his heart?

He asked, "What kind of an injury has His Majesty suffered?"

"Internal injury," the shadow replied.

"So, it's an internal injury. That should be easy to deal with." Chu Yang nodded. [I only have the Nine Tribulations Pills on my body. I have no other medicines right now.] He thought for a while, and then took out an incomplete version of the Nine Tribulations Pill. He then said, "Your Majesty, why don't you try this medicine of mine?"

"Alright," Tie Bu Tian was in a lot of pain, and she couldn't do anything about it. So, she merely complied in a muffled voice, and took the medicine. She didn't even see its appearance as she straightaway gulped it down.

The 'Nine Tribulations Pill' was the world's best medicine. How could its effects be comparable to some average medicine? This pill was an incomplete version of the Nine Tribulations Pill. However, its medicinal efficacy was second only to the complete version of the Nine Tribulations Pill!

Tie Bu Tian took the pill, and the medicine entered her body. She felt as if a cool thread had slipped down her throat, and into her stomach. A cold sensation spread throughout her body through her meridians. And then, her entire body warmed up with a 'bang'.

An abundant amount of medicinal efficacies spread inside her body in a flash, and began to treat her injuries. The bleeding 'down there' stopped, and the pain completely vanished. Moreover, the wound also started to heal. Even her vitality was suddenly restored.

The surplus medicinal efficacies slowly melted into her meridians, and even nourished her body a little... the many years of accumulated wear-and-tear was also healed by this medicine. Moreover, this medicine didn't just affect her physical condition —

her mental state had climbed to the peak in the blink of an eye. And then, it was maintained at that level...

"What is this medicine? How's it so magical?" Tie Bu Tian was astonished. The effect of this wonder drug was truly dream-like.

Then, he sat up and inspected his entire body. But, he found nothing wrong anywhere. His entire body was very relaxed and at ease. He was pleasantly surprised by this.

"This medicine was given to me by some stranger. I don't know its name," Chu Yang replied in a soft voice. He thought, [Tie Bu Tian doesn't seem to be in a good health. Moreover, we are surrounded by the chaos of war. The experts of Diwu Qing Rou's Golden Horse Riders Department have arrived at the frontlines.]

[Tie Bu Tian is their main target. There can be an assassination attempt on him at any time. It will be very hard to prevent it if-and-when it happens. And, it would be extremely terrible if I weren't by his side when it happens....]

Therefore, he took out a piece of purple jade from the Nine Tribulations Space, and carved it with the help of the Nine Tribulations Sword to make a jade bottle. He hesitated for a moment... but then, he finally took out a complete Nine Tribulations Pill and put it into the jade bottle.

[There are a total of three complete versions of the Nine Tribulations Pill. I will be left with two after I give one to Tie Bu Tian. Two should be enough.] Chu Yang said in his heart, [I didn't have one at your Imperial Father's time. In fact, I probably wouldn't have taken it out even if I had one. So now, I'll give you one to make it up to you.]

Then, he raised his voice and said, "Your majesty, I have a gift for you. I'm coming over to give it you."

He didn't wait for Tie Bu Tian's reply, jumped-off his carriage, and climbed on Tie Bu Tian's carriage.

The two shadows didn’t stop Chu Yang either. They allowed him do whatever he wanted to. Their stand was very clear, [no matter what Chu Yang gives her as a gift — it is bound to make Tie Bu Tian happy. She will finally become happy after such a long time.]

[This gift is very important!]

Chu Yang didn’t know this though.

Tie Bu Tian was obviously startled by this. She stared at him for moment. Then, she spoke in a stammering manner, "What... what gift?"

Chu Yang smelled a strange sweet smell as soon as he entered the carriage. It was similar to the fragrance of orchid. He chucked in his heart, [this young Emperor is really juvenile ah... he has brought perfume with himself even in these circumstances...]

"It’s this," Chu Yang turned over his wrist and revealed a finger-size purple jade bottle. A bean-sized pill quietly lay inside it. The purple jade bottle was covered with a mysterious and dense light, and it seemed like the twinkling starlight. It seemed as if there was a universe inside that purple jade bottle.

"What’s this?" Tie Bu Tian was somewhat caught off-guard by it. But then, he stabilized his mind and asked.

Chu Yang lowered his voice and spoke in a serious tone, "This is a miraculous and precious medicine. It can save your life under any circumstances! It can instantly restore you back to normal if you’re injured as long as your body isn’t divided into parts... as long as there’s even a single breath remaining in your body!"

"Eh?" Tie Bu Tian’s jaw suddenly dropped.

"As long as there is warmth in your body — this precious medicine can make you live... even if there is no breath remaining in your body! In fact, it can prolong your life by 30 years even if you have reached the end of your lifespan!"

Chu Yang solemnly said, "It will keep Your Majesty safe. We are

friends. We treat each other with utmost sincerity. I’m afraid I must leave when the war is over. So, I want to leave this medicine with Your Majesty. I hope that Your Majesty may never have to use it. So, just treat it as a gift from a well-wisher."

Chapter 399: I'm a Sword King!

Tie Bu Tian looked at the mysterious medicine. She felt extremely happy. The sudden excitement left her to blush. Her blushing girly face would've been completely revealed if not for the marvelous effect of the appearance changing technique.

[Satisfied. I'm truly satisfied!]

[Even if this medicine isn't as amazing as Chu Yang has said... it really means a lot... even if Chu Yang doesn't know what he has done for me...]

[Because what's most important is... his intention.]

"No, I can't take it," Tie Bu Tian's eyes turned slightly red. He considered for a moment, and refused to accept the gift. He raised his head and looked at Chu Yang earnestly, "Minister Chu, I'm in the Lower Three Heavens. I'm going to lead a life full of extravagance and luxury. I may not come across any such difficulty in my life. But, you're going to the Middle Three Heavens. So, you'll be facing danger at every step. You may have disputes with treacherous people of Jiang-Hu. So, you need this kind of stuff more than I do."

Tie Bu Tian gazed at Chu Yang with determination and spoke, "It'll be more useful if it stays with you."

Chu Yang felt a warmth in his heart. He blinked and said, "I already have some more."

Tie Bu Tian stared at him for a while, and saw an earnest look in his eyes. Tie Bu Tian could tell that Chu Yang wasn't lying. So, he smiled and gently took the purple jade bottle from Chu Yang's palm. He grasped it in his fist, and clutched it firmly. He smiled and said, "Such being the case... I accept it."

"Well... that's great." Chu Yang smiled gently.

He didn't notice that Tie Bu Tian's body was shivering. It seemed

that she was deeply touched by this gesture, and was trembling in excitement...

Her facial expressions were calm. She had been clutching the purple jade bottle tightly in her hand since the moment she had received it. In fact, she had clutched it so hard that the joints of her fingers had turned white...

Chu Yang felt relieved. He spoke with a smile, "I'll take my leave then."

"Alright," Tie Bu Tian said. She found it extremely difficult to maintain her calm.

Chu Yang smiled. He then stood-up, raised the curtain and jumped out of the carriage.

Tie Bu Tian sat quietly with her head lowered. The corners of her mouth revealed a happy smile. [It's not like I didn't get anything... I finally got something...]

She continued to admire the purple jade bottle for a long time. Her eyes were full of tenderness. It seemed as if she would keep gazing at it, and would never get enough of it.

Then, she brought the purple jade bottle to her bosom; as if to make it feel her warmth. It stayed like that for a long time.

Chu Yang had carved an artwork on the purple jade bottle. It was extremely beautiful. However, Tie Bu Tian didn't cherish its beauty.

Tie Bu Tian put down the purple jade bottle after a long time. Then, his hands went around his neck, and untied a small thing from behind it. It was a strange jade tablet...

Then, Tie Bu Tian picked-up a small mirror.

There was a flash of dense light as soon as the jade tablet left her body. The previous youthful appearance of a boy was immediately replaced by a stunning beauty.

It wasn’t easy to achieve this camouflage. It was an effect of the jade tablet. It was hard to tell what it really was...

Tie Bu Tian looked in the mirror. She looked at her beautiful face... a face so beautiful that it could cause the downfall of a nation... She looked on silently for some time. She then smiled bitterly, and said in a low and thin voice, "Perhaps no one will get to see this face in this life... right?"

Then, she used a strong silk thread to wrap-up the purple jade bottle. She tied a knot, and hung it around her neck. She then untied her upper undergarment in order to place the purple jade bottle near her private parts. She wanted it to stick close to her soft and delicate flesh.

"Stay with me. You’ll stay with me throughout my life. I’ll take very good care of you," Tie Bu Tian spoke in a soft voice as she looked at the reflection of the purple bottle partly visible in her bosom.

A drop of tear fell down from her eyes. Tie Bu Tian’s hands trembled, but she wore the jade tablet again.

A dense light fluctuated, and her short-lived peerless beauty disappeared without a trace. It was replaced by straight eyebrows that slanted upwards, and sharp eyes with an arrogant look in them; as if they were looking down on the whole world. This was the appearance of an Emperor who held the entire world in his hands.

Emperor Tie Bu Tian!

The transformation effect of the jade tablet even changed the complexion of Tie Bu Tian’s skin... along with the appearance.

Receiving the Nine Tribulations Pill seemed to have untied the knot in Tie Bu Tian’s heart... or one could say... had tied a tight knot in her heart ...

[From now on... this matter will only stay in my memories. I’m

Tie Bu Tian – the current Emperor of Iron Cloud.]

[I'll certainly ascend great heights to get a broad view of all the four seas. I'll rule the entire world.]

The last ray of light fell past the horizon, and the boundless night swept across... as if to rule the earth.

Tie Bu Tian and Chu Yang started to worry about the situation of the war since they both had recovered from their injuries. The four of them sped-up their travel schedule, and abandoned the carriage. They resorted to use the 'body-weight lightening' technique, and took advantage of the starlight to rush forward on the road.

The two shadows, Tie Bu Tian, and Chu Yang dashed forward with a 'swoosh' sound as soon as they initiated the 'body-weight lightening' technique. Chu Yang was extremely agile. Moreover, he was quick and swift. He covered one-hundred-and-seventy feet in a single jump; he appeared like a fleeting wisp of green mist. His body didn't need any support to leverage him in the air for long intervals. He gently stuck his hand into a deep hole at a spot, and pulled out a fat hare with a 'swoosh' sound. He did this without a moment's pause.

Then, his eyes flashed. It seemed as if he had discovered something. Surprisingly, he didn't fall to the ground. Instead, he strangely circled behind a big boulder that lay on the roadside. There was a thick patch of grass behind the boulder. Two pheasants were hovering there with their wings spread wide. Both of them were single-handedly caught by Chu Yang.

Then, he floated down to the ground – as if he was as light as a feather.

The eyes of the two shadows popped-out as they looked at Chu Yang. There was a bewildered look in their eyes. It seemed as if their eyes were trying to say — "What the hell!"

"What's wrong?" Chu Yang was carrying a hare and two

pheasants. He spoke with a smile, "Oh these... I was worried that we may not find enough food to eat later on. Luckily, we got our rations here itself."

The two shadows didn't care about food and rations. They stared at him and asked, "Are you a king level expert now?"

Tie Bu Tian opened his eyes, and turned towards Chu Yang as soon as he heard these words.

[King level expert? When I first met Chu Yang a year ago... he was only seventeen years old... and a Fourth Grade Martial Pupil. But, he has become a king level expert within a year alone?]

[This is... just too unreal... right?]

"I'm ashamed to say this... but I'm only a First Grade King Level Expert... that's all," Chu Yang answered modestly.

The two shadows glanced at each other; they seemed to be dumbstruck.

[Ninth Grade Martial Pupil, Ninth Grade Martial Master, Nine Grade Martial Great Master, Ninth Grade Revered Martial Artist... and then King Level Expert. This bastard has crossed forty levels within one year... and still has the guts to act shy and say – 'I'm ashamed to say that I'm only a First Grade King Level Expert... that's all'...]

[That's all?!]

[That's all... my a*s. You're not ashamed.]

[You're trying to pick a fight or something...]

The two shadows seemed low-spirited. Their cultivations were at the Ninth Grade of King Level. However, they knew that this was the end limit of their cultivation. They were already sixty years old. It would be impossible for them to move even an inch forward in this life.

[Chu Yang is only eighteen years old... and he has already become

a King level expert. So, how massive would his development be in the future?]

[Emperor level? It would definitely be more than that.]

[Then… the Saint level? Very likely!]

The two shadows looked at Chu Yang as these thoughts crossed their minds. He stood in front of them. They couldn't help but admire him; very highly at that.

"You're a king level expert now?" Tie Bu Tian looked at Chu Yang and asked. There was a trace of pride in her eyes.

"Yes!" Chu Yang smiled, "Actually, it's not a big deal. It's a trivial matter in comparison to your intelligence and aptitude… It isn't even worth mentioning."

Tie Bu Tian also smiled and replied, "Not necessarily."

A shadow asked, "What type of a king are you?"

This question had no head or tail. But, Chu Yang understood the meaning behind this question. He replied with a smile, "I'm a Sword King."

[A Sword king!]

The two shadows were shocked.

[So, he isn't an ordinary king level expert… but the kind of a king which is most difficult to achieve – a Sword King.]

The 'sword' had become the most sacred weapon in the Nine Heavens since the day the Nine Tribulations Sword's Master first appeared in the Nine Heavens. This was the reason why the majority of warriors in the world were sword artists.

When a Sword Artist made a break through from King Level, he arrived at Emperor Level and became a Sword God rather than becoming a Sword Emperor!

The Nine Tribulations Sword's Master had decided this

nomenclature thousands of years ago. So, nobody dared to defy it. In fact, the ‘Sword God’ level had become the rank of supreme honor in sword cultivation.

It could be said that a Sword God could easily kill a Saber Emperor of the same grade.

So, the might of sword cultivation could easily be imagined.

"Such a young sword king..." The two shadows looked at each other; they were speechless. They had seen the meaning hidden in each other’s eyes, [How many sword kings of such a young age are there in the nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens?]

[Such a person doesn’t appear often in the Upper Three Heavens... forget the Lower Three Heavens. What does this represent? How much do the nine super clans of the Upper Three Heavens have to spend in order to cultivate such a person? It would be an unimaginable amount.]

[It would encompass a vast amount of elixirs and Heavenly treasures. An ordinary and small aristocratic clan would go bankrupt in the process...]

[... Is this a good thing?] The two shadows thought in unison.

"The Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass is... in which direction...?" Tie Bu Tian stood on a tall boulder and looked into the distance. She had an indifferent look on her face. However, one could see traces of worry and anxiety on her face.

"Don’t worry. Everything will be fine." Chu Yang comforted her and said, "Wu Kuang Yun is very clever at war. Moreover, he seems like a bold and straightforward person. He makes brave strategies... and takes quick decisions. We won’t give up that easily... he’ll continue to strive for victory. He has moved ahead of time. So, covering a few hundreds kilometers to get back shouldn’t be an issue. In addition, the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass is a natural stronghold. So, it certainly won’t meet with any mishap."

Chu Yang knew that Tie Bu Tian was worried about something. His words worked as a tonic to dispel all of Tie Bu Tian's worries.

[Yes... Five-hundred-thousand people would be crowded in a narrow pass. It's too late for all the troops to withdraw inside the mountain pass. Wu Kuang Yun must make sacrifices in order to ensure the safety of the large forces... and to ensure that the mountain pass doesn't fall into the hands of the enemy.]

[The most crucial point is to make sure to not give-up midway.]

They hadn't imagined that the offensive and defensive operations on the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass would be so tragic and earth-shattering.

Diwu Qing Rou's calculations were accurate. He was thousands of kilometers away. However, everything that he had speculated – down to every minute detail – had turned out to be correct. He would certainly be able to rout Tie Bu Tian's entire army in one fell swoop if everything worked according to his plan.

However, there was one point that he hadn't considered. This un-calculated point had led to a change in the course of the war.

When a Sword Artist breaks through from king level, he becomes Sword God (Sword Di). He doesn't become a Sword Emperor (Sword Huang).

Huang means Emperor.

Di means Emperor. But, in a more divine sense of the word. It's more similar to a God in this context.

So, a Sword Emperor (or Sword God) is higher ranked than others sorts of Emperors. We will be using 'Sword God' instead of 'Sword Emperor' to avoid confusion.

Chapter 400: Withdraw your Soldiers... Be Obedient and Withdraw your Soldiers

According to Diwu Qing Rou's tentative plan — Jing Meng Hun would've led his troops and killed King of Hell Chu at the last moment. Then, he would've created obstacles for Iron Cloud's army. He just needed to delay the enemy by one or two hours; that's all.

This was possible. In fact, the three-thousand experts were far more skilled than ordinary soldiers. They could easily set-up roadblocks to block the cavalry soldiers if all of them participated in their destruction. It was rather easy to pull this off in the mountain-forest. They could randomly cut down a few giant trees to achieve this goal. Moreover, Diwu Qing Rou had ordered them to burn down the entire mountain-forest. This could've worked towards creating an atmosphere of panic and menace.

It was possible to cause an even longer delay under these circumstances; let alone a delay of one or two hours. Jing Meng Hun should've easily achieve that. Moreover, Tie Bu Tian needed to find out King of Hell Chu's whereabouts. This required time and energy. Diwu Qing Rou had also taken this into consideration while he had drafted his plan.

Therefore, Tie Bu Tian's return-journey was supposed to be delayed by more than two hours; no matter what. In fact, it might even get delayed by four to eight hours.

However, Diwu Qing Rou needed only two hours. This request wasn't far-fetched. The delay of two hours wasn't a big deal; no matter who sketched-out the plans for the route as long as they kept the tasks that needed to be done during the course of the journey in view.

However, these two hours were going to be the most vital factor for the implementation of Diwu Qing Rou's plan since it involved

the soldiers who were one-hundred-and-fifty kilometers away.

The two hours of time might not seem very brief. However, even the elite cavalry troops would require more time to cover a distance of one-hundred-and-fifty kilometers; especially after having undergone a long and arduous journey. Yet, these two hours were enough to narrow down this distance to one-hundred-and-twenty-five kilometers... or even less.

This would surely create a disturbance as long as the enemy could see or feel the vibrations of the approaching cavalry. Diwu Qing Rou only needed this internal disturbance to take place. That was because it would be impossible for hundreds of thousands of soldiers to orderly pass through the slanting valley in the presence of the enemy at such a close distance. The internal chaos would make it even worse. The soldiers wouldn't be able to advance forward, and would end up getting squeezed together.

This is basic human nature. Everyone wants to live, and everyone wants to push forward to seek the way-out for oneself. Even the so-called 'military teachings of war' lose their meaning in such chaotic situations... and the trained soldiers end-up behaving like a bunch of motley crew.

Diwu Qing Rou had understood this aspect very clearly.

These two hours would decide who would unify the land under the Heavens. The end result of this war between millions of soldiers of the two nations would be decided within these two hours.

However, Diwu Qing Rou had never imagined that thousands of experts led by the Ninth Grade King Level Expert – Jing Meng Hun – wouldn't be able to play their roles in an efficient manner. They hadn't blocked the enemy, and had escaped without a trace.

Diwu Qing Rou hadn't anticipated this situation. According to his plan — King of Hell should've been taking his last breath by that time. He had never expected that King of Hell Chu's battle

efficiency would erupt at the last moment and become so terrifying... and that he would single-handedly slaughter more-than-a-thousand of the total three-thousand experts led by Jing Meng Hun during the besiege.

Even a Ninth Grade King Level Expert like Jing Meng Hun was seriously injured, and was compelled to escape in a distressed state. This scary variable had appeared out of nowhere. One could wrack one's brains, and still couldn't predetermine such a variable.

Moreover, Diwu Qing Rou hadn't thought that King of Hell Chu would arrive at the same time as Tie Bu Tian's army. They had arrived at the same time, and had met quite easily.

This had saved a lot of time which would've otherwise been wasted in Chu Yang's search and rescue. Tie Bu Tian had then made a prompt decision, and had ordered Wu Kuang Yun to lead the army and return. This had saved precious time once again.

These two factors had significantly cut-short the buffer time required for the timely arrival of Diwu Qing Rou's army.

Fortunately, each of the three generals selected by Diwu Qing Rou was a desperado and fully determined to move ahead. They continued to rush forward at a frightening speed even though they didn't get the buffer time of two hours. In fact, they even managed to curtail the time gap.

This had nearly brought the situation to a stalemate.

Meanwhile, Wu Kuang Yun retreated at the fastest possible speed in order to help out the friendly forces. He had already sent a message through a hawk. This order was meant for Wu Yi, who was waiting at the slanting valley — Return to the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass immediately.

He had clearly mentioned – You aren't allowed to come out to provide support if my army and the enemy's army arrive there at the same time... even if I – Wu Kuang Yun and my three-hundred-

thousand men — die in the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass.

Wu Yi understood the urgency of the situation as soon as he received this message. He immediately ordered his two-hundred-thousand soldiers to rush back in the starry night. They left behind an empty slanting valley in their wake. Wu Kuang Yun and his cavalry troops entered the slanting valley – like a thunder – after Wu Yi and his men had withdrawn behind the barricades. Then, they went all the way into the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass.

The three armies of Diwu Qing Rou arrived the moment Wu Kuang Yun's cavalry troops entered into the Heaven Splitting Mountain pass. They began to follow their enemy's troops in order to kill them. Around fifty-thousand soldiers at the rear of Wu Kuang Yun's army were overtaken outside the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. They had to turn around, and were forced to engage in a fatal battle with the enemy.

Not a single man survived among the fifty-thousand soldiers. Then, the enemy troops crossed the slanting valley, and stationed themselves in the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. They took advantage of the high morale from the battle they had just won, and launched the siege warfare without any delay.

The natural defenses of the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass played an important role at this point.

Several hundreds, or even a thousand people, were dying at any given moment. However, more and more people were rushing to join the battle. Therefore, both sides couldn't bring the battle to an end even though they wanted to.

Wu Kuang Yun wanted to stop, but he couldn't because he needed to defend the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. After that, he needed to rush to the rescue of His Majesty. So, he couldn't withdraw even an inch. He would continue to fight till death – by relying on the natural defenses of the terrain. But, he couldn't retreat.

Meanwhile, the three tiger generals of Great Zhao were in a dilemma. They had never thought that they would have to face such an awkward situation.

They had advanced triumphantly to kill the enemy. In fact, they had dashed into the slanting valley with irresistible force, and had rushed all the way to the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. But, after they reached there, [What is this f*king place... ah!]

It was a several hundred kilometers long slanting valley with towering cliffs on both sides. It was a big stretch of open space with a perimeter of hundreds of kilometers. Moreover, it gradually narrowed down like a huge bottle gourd.

It was very hard to get out after one had entered it.

The front part of their army had already entered into the stretch of the open area. But, the latter part was still sticking out in the slanting valley – like a long tail. The circumstances were extremely aggravating and uncomfortable.

The natural defenses of the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass come into play after one enters it. So, one couldn't withdraw even if one wanted to...

Moreover, the retreat was possible only to a certain extent. Wu Kuang Yu would certainly send his troops from the side of the mountain pass to chase down the retreating soldiers as soon as they would come out of the mountain pass and enter the slanting valley. Then, the troops would surely be annihilated since they'd be trapped in the narrow slanting valley.

That would be a great sacrifice.

However, the generals didn't give up this great opportunity even though they were highly reluctant. It was impossible for them to stop after they had covered half of the journey. Moreover, these generals were the Golden Tiger General Jin Nankai, Silver Tiger General Long Ao and Jade Tiger General Yu Chenglong. These

great generals were determined to advance towards victory.

In pleasant words – the three generals were brave and good warriors, and wanted to advance courageously; in unpleasant words – they were desperados.

The three desperados were determined to attain victory at any cost. Diwu Qing Rou had selected them to carry out this long-range raid mission only because of this quality.

However, Prime Minister Diwu Qing Rou had made an enormous mistake despite being a cautious man – he hadn't told them what to do if trapped in this kind of a situation.

That was because he couldn't have imagined that this kind of a situation would arise. He was sure that the enemy would be slaughtered, and the three generals would have a brilliant victory. There was no doubt about it.

However, this brilliant victory had turned into a miserable situation. They were trapped and couldn't back down. And, this was all because of an unpredictable variable like King of Hell Chu. Even the heavenly wisdom of Prime Minister Diwu Qing Rou hadn't anticipated this.

The three desperados issued an order to gather the corpses, rocks and trees together to set-up a fire in Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass even though they were trapped in a war situation where they couldn't back down.

Suddenly, an overwhelming stench spread in the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass. The smell was so pungent that it could make one feel nauseated.

This move was extremely brutal and inhumane.

This decision had made them feel a numbing sensation in their backs; regardless of whether it was meant for them or the enemy.

[Aren't there more than one-hundred-thousand corpses in the slanting valley? Moreover, there wasn't enough time to tidy-up the

corpses from the previous conflict. So, there are more than three-hundred-thousand corpses in total. These undoubtedly include several corpses of Iron Cloud soldiers. But, the majority of them belong to Great Zhao.]

[So, why are we accumulating and burning piles of corpses?]

[Shouldn't we have sympathy for our dead comrades? Is it because we are the soldiers of Great Zhao... and are out on an expedition to win the world for our nation... that we're supposed to devote our bodies to this cause? So... even our dead bodies would become a weapon against the enemy because we are the soldiers of Great Zhao...? Isn't that too brutal and inhumane?]

[Even the tallest of the trees eventually return to their roots through their leaves. But... our ashes can't go back home even after we die?]

[What if I'm the one who dies next... will my body be thrown into the fire as well? Will my body also get reduced to a pile of ashes?]

The fire was burning. Countless soldiers stood pondering under the wall; each one of them was consumed by his own worries. An unexpected silence had replaced the hustle-and-bustle of the battlefield.

The three Tiger general were also helpless, [What do you all want us to do... to not burn them? Do you really think that we want to burn them? But, we have no choice as this is the summer season.]

[The weather is burning-hot. This pile of corpses is more than we can handle. It'll cause an epidemic if it's not dealt with properly and in-time... And then, everyone will have to stay here and deal with the epidemic. The total number of bodies – including the living and the dead – will reach a million.]

[Digging these many graves is unrealistic. This is a mountain region with hard rocks. It's extremely hard to break these white stones with axes. You won't even be able to chip them. Trying to

bury hundreds of thousands of corpses… isn't something even our three armies can achieve together.]

However, the three generals' explanation didn't have much effect on the soldiers.

However, their commands were carried out to the letter. Whether the troops understood the gist of it or not was a different matter altogether. [Even if we're burning them down… can't we do it under the pretext of using them as a weapon?]

The war had reached a stalemate. They attacked every day to besiege the wall. However, the effect wasn't too serious. The three generals were helpless, and couldn't think of any other way. They could only suffer with each passing day.

Wu Kuang Yun was burning with impatience inside the Heaven Splitting Mountain Pass.

[You f*kers! You can't capture the wall. So, why don't you just withdraw? I guarantee that I won't chase you or attack you. You may leave. I'll even swing my hips in a dance to send you off. What's so great around here that all of you are even willing to throw your lives in vain in this nonsensical entanglement?]

[I still have to go save His Majesty!]

In fact, Wu Kuang Yun personally went to the top of the wall, and openly made an announcement, "Jin Nankai, Long Ao, Yu Chenglong – listen to your grandfather… you three sons of bitc*es. This is Wu Kuang Yun! You may quickly retreat… and I won't pursue. I give you my word… I ensure your safe departures… I pledge on my Grandfather's honor and fame… Hurry up, and retreat quickly. Your men are dying here every day. How tragic is that… ah. Quickly withdraw your soldiers. Be obedient and withdraw your soldiers…"

Table of Contents

- Transcending the Nine Heavens
  - Synopsis
  - Copyright
  - Chapter 301: This Heart Has Already Frozen!
  - Chapter 302: If I Don’t Assume The Responsibility For My Brother’s Actions, Then Who Will?
  - Chapter 303: Gu Miao Ling
  - Chapter 304: Xiao Miao, I Want You To Be My Wife!
  - Chapter 305: This Love Will Be My Strength To Strive-on!
  - Chapter 306: Whoa! Master!
  - Chapter 307: Hero Saves The Beauty
  - Chapter 308: Strange Combination
  - Chapter 309: Genuinely Valiant Woman!
  - Chapter 310: The Woman drinks ‘Red Wine’!
  - Chapter 311: Tie Bu Tian’s Resolve
  - Chapter 312: Breakthrough to the Realm of Heavenly Law
  - Chapter 313: Who is More Pretentious?!
  - Chapter 314: Young Master Yu
  - Chapter 315: I must know this!
  - Chapter 316: The origins of the Nine Tribulations Sword!
  - Chapter 317: Explanation? What explanation?
  - Chapter 318: How Can This Be Possible?
  - Chapter 319: Your Road is Already Different!
  - Chapter 320: You’re my Fourth Master?
  - Chapter 321: King of Hell Chu receives presents!
  - Chapter 322: Divides the Booty
  - Chapter 323: To the heart’s content
  - Chapter 324: Respective Breakthroughs!
  - Chapter 325: At just the right time
  - Chapter 326: This Wound is Very Strange Ah？
  - Chapter 327: Made a fortune! So refreshing!
  - Chapter 328: Only this group — no other
  - Chapter 329: For Gentleman a Word, For Swift Horse a Whip!
  - Chapter 330: Diwu Qing Rou’s fury!
  - Chapter 331: Who Says That This Life is Without Regrets?

Chapter 332: Who Would Dare Stop Me If I Were to Murder You?
Chapter 333: A freak combination of circumstances
Chapter 334: Because She Cannot Stand Such Opponents!
Chapter 335: The Demonic-sounding King Level Master Jun Qing Yang
Chapter 336: Breakthrough — Once Again!
Chapter 337: Diwu Qing Rou in action
Chapter 338: Clouds of War Linger
Chapter 339: This is Diwu Qing Rou!
Chapter 340: Poisonous Flood Dragon!
Chapter 341: Slaughtering the Flood Dragon!
Chapter 342: Nine Tribulations Sword — the Third Fragment!
Chapter 343: Sword Spine's Homecoming!
Chapter 344: The Stars Change their Positions and the Blue Dome of Heaven is Dyed Blood-Red!
Chapter 345: Complete Chaos
Chapter 346: Tan Tan's Predestined Love
Chapter 347: Chance Encounter
Chapter 348: Luo Ke Di and Tan Tan Meet for the First Time
Chapter 349: Surname 'Tan' — Given Name 'Tan'
Chapter 350: Strange Three Stars Divine Clan
Chapter 351: Making The First Move Is An Advantage
Chapter 352: Spirit Control Method
Chapter 353: He Must Do It
Chapter 354: Bitterly Tricked
Chapter 355: Infiltrates!
Chapter 356: Insidious!
Chapter 357: Kill Chu Yang Today; Start Conquering the Land Tomorrow!
Chapter 358: Orchid Heart Chasing Soul — The Fragrance That Floats For Five Thousand Kilometer!
Chapter 359: Watch How I Ride-Away With Your Mighty Force!
Chapter 360: Even the Death Will Not Be In Vain
Chapter 361: You Are a Spy
Chapter 362: Life or Death — One Must Be Courageous!
Chapter 363: Brazenly towards the First Mountain Pass!
Chapter 364: Disappearing into the Mountain-Forest to Search for Elixirs
Chapter 365: Jade Snow Spirit Ginseng!
Chapter 366: The only way out!
Chapter 367: What Harm is there in Slaughtering the Entire World?
Chapter 368: A Sword Charges at Ten Thousand Soldiers!

Chapter 369: Don’t Restrain the Blade when Beheading the Entire World!
Chapter 370: A Man, a Sword and Easy Work
Chapter 371: Jing Meng Hun Arrives Late
Chapter 372: Killing a Person is Fine; Committing Such an Outrageous Act is Out of Question!
Chapter 373: Wolves!
Chapter 374: The Clouds of War Gather!
Chapter 375: What to do!
Chapter 376: Initiates Attack On His Own Accord!
Chapter 377: The Misery of Bai Chang Tian!
Chapter 378: A Four-Thousand-Kilometres-Long-Road of Life and Death
Chapter 379: I’ll Stay Alive, and I’ll Toy with You Till You Die; Believe Me or Not?!
Chapter 380: Supreme Commander, I’m Being Wronged...
Chapter 381: Tie Bu Tian Waits
Chapter 382: Diwu Goes to War!
Chapter 383: The Enemy is Close
Chapter 384: Staggering at Every Step
Chapter 385: Mysterious Ice Jade Paste; Nine Tribulations Pill Accomplished!
Chapter 386: Innate Body!
Chapter 387: King of Hell Chu’s Influence
Chapter 388: Accomplish the Whole Task at a Stroke?!
Chapter 389: Rush… Rush… Rush… ah...
Chapter 390: Burn the Mountain to Burn the Imminent Doom
Chapter 391: A Treasure from Head-to-Toe
Chapter 392: An Unexpected Disaster
Chapter 393: An Unexpected Rescue from Danger
Chapter 394: Guard the Icy Heart… for whom? For whom are these Jade Bones?
Chapter 395: Deliberate Misunderstanding!
Chapter 396: Friends?
Chapter 397: She is Unique and Unmatched!
Chapter 398: A Failed Hero Often Sighs, and A Young Woman’s Heart Often Experiences Twists and Turns
Chapter 399: I’m a Sword King!
Chapter 400: Withdraw your Soldiers… Be Obedient and Withdraw your Soldiers