

Chapter 74: Head Councilman Liu

Following the elder from The Orchid Covenant, the trio soon found themselves inside their organization's headquarters. As they ascended the stairs, the guards they passed all greeted their guide politely.

"Good day to you, Councilor Sheng."

They soon found themselves on the fifteenth floor of the building. There was a long corridor with various doors on both sides of the hallway, but one in particular appeared far more grand than the others.

It was made from an elegant type of wood that shone with power. Even the untrained eyes could tell it was special.

It was exactly this door that their guide, Councilor Sheng, had led them towards. He didn't hesitate to knock three times on the door and made his voice heard.

"This is Sheng Zhaoming. I am here with the three you wanted to see."

"Come on in," a deep voice replied.

To their surprise, when the trio entered, they found a normal room. It was furnished with expensive furniture, but it wasn't that out of the ordinary. The rest of the room appeared so plain that it contrasted with the doors.

Sitting behind the wooden desk with finely carved markings was the same old man with a head full of white hair. He was the same man they had just seen a moment ago during the closing ceremony of the tournament.

"Thank you, Zhaoming. You can leave us for now." Their guide nodded in response and swiftly took his leave. "Now then, please take a seat."

The old man gestured for them to take a seat and then proceeded to fetch a few cups from the tea set on his desk. He poured enough for everyone present and took a large sip from his own cup before letting out a satisfied sigh.

Seeing the scene, the three boys could only watch on in silence, waiting for the man to speak first before they dared to move. It resulted in them blankly staring at the old man as he continued to enjoy his tea.

The old man had reminded Li Lang of the old bureaucrats he sometimes had to greet whenever budget season came around. He was never good at anything besides doing his research, but even he learned a few things after dozens of years. He reflexively responded in the same old way he was used to. Acting relaxed, as if speaking to his own grandfather.

Li Lang fearlessly held up the cup of tea he was offered and took a sip. Almost immediately, he felt a warm energy coursing through his body. It made him feel stronger and more alert.

“Good tea, good tea. May I ask what kind of brew this is?”

The old man smiled at the question and placed his cup down. He then fetched out a small pouch from his desk and placed it before Li Lang.

“Here, take a look yourself.”

Li Lang carefully loosened the strings on the small bag, and when he did, a massive amount of Qi gushed out from within. All his hairs were on end and he felt a tingle run through his body.

Even his companions beside him were visibly shaken and no words needed to be said. The trio knew the tea before them was something of an exceptionally high class. They believed it was at least an Earth-grade heavenly resource, maybe even one grade higher, in the Saint-grade.

It took everything Li Lang had to restrain himself from commanding Ruby to instantly take a sample. He would've too if he thought he could get away with it. He knew better though, as there was a powerful cultivator before him who was staring intently at his way.

“This...is a Saint-grade tea? No wonder I felt energy coursing through me with just a sip,” Li Lang voiced with excitement.

“Correct. This here is called Cloudfall Sun tea. It is good to alleviate both physical and mental fatigue. Feel free to drink more. You young people are always in a rush, so it is easy to overwork yourself.”

At the man's words, Wei Ping and Long Yi finally moved to take their cup.

The man waited until they had a chance to enjoy their drinks before he continued.

“Now then. Where was I...? That's right, I haven't even introduced myself yet. I am Liu Haiping, the current Head Councilman of The Orchid Covenant.”

“Greetings, Head Council Liu. I am Li Lang.”

“Head council Liu, I am Long Yi.”

“P-pleasure to meet you, Head Council Liu.”

“Very good. From your bone age, the three of you aren't even fourteen yet and have already made such progress. I heard you've recently joined our Covenant, despite being from Yellow Qilin. Have you three gotten used to life here yet? I know it is quite different, especially with our organization being so different from the sects you are used to.”

The three paused for a brief moment at having their history so casually revealed. However, they had expected it as they had never kept it a secret since they arrived. It would be more surprising if the organization they joined didn't even bother to vet its members.

"We're doing well, Head Councilor. We are glad to have come here and been able to come into contact with so many wonderful techniques. Otherwise, I don't think me nor Wei Ping here would have been able to progress on the path of cultivation with our grade one aptitude."

Li Lang kept up a straight face as he told his side of the story. He alluded to practicing demonic techniques, but never said it outright. Seeing how Head Council Liu hadn't reacted or asked any questions, he continued.

"As for Long Yi, here. He's doing fine for now as well, but I believe it may be hard for him to find techniques suitable for the orthodox path in the future. Do you have any advice?"

"While, as a member of The Orchid Covenant, I will have to tell you to solve your own matters pertaining to your cultivation techniques. However, as an elder, I can tell you that it shouldn't be difficult to make transactions with the people from the Peerless Gate as long as you have something of equal value to trade. Just your quota to enter The Great Trial of Water Crest realm should be able to get you any technique that you want from them."

Seeing how Long Yi was too nervous to respond, Li Lang continued to chat as the representative of his group.

"Senior, you jest. There must be better ways to gather funding than that."

"You're right. But that is for you young people to explore. Only those who can gather their own resources will make it far in this world. However...I can tell you that the pocket realm you will be entering is known to contain numerous lost techniques. You will need to pass the trials inside to obtain them, but it should be definitely something you should aim for."

"...Thank you for your advice. Anyway, was there something we could do for you today?"

"Young people," Head Council Liu smiled and shook his head. "Do not worry, I have only called you over to see what our new rising stars are like. It's not every day we have such young children join who aren't under the tutelage of anyone. I also wanted to tell you to prepare for your stay inside the pocket realm."

"Oh, are there any special preparations we need to make?"

"Yes. The Great Trial of Water Crest realm is a place that only opens every ten years. At the same time, those who get to enter will stay inside for a year at the minimum. Those who have passed sufficient trials will be able to stay longer. From what we know of, the person who had spent the most time inside had stayed for over five years."

"Five years...!? Are you telling us to prepare five years' worth of food and water?"

“Correct. You’ll want either a large quantity of Nourishment Pills or a handful that are Earth-grade or higher.”

The old man then went on about other details they should take into account when inside the pocket realm and what to expect. He spoke slowly and in detail, which took up a lot of time, but no one dared to complain. The trio knew the mighty leader of their organization was doing them a favor by giving them free information.

It would help them take advantage of this opportunity of theirs.

By the time they returned to their inn, the sky had already darkened.

They had a feast for dinner, to celebrate their victory and all the winnings they made from placing the bets. It was only after retiring to their room that they began to digest everything that had happened over the course of the day.

“How long do you guys think we’ll be able to last inside the pocket realm?” Long Yi muttered as they sat down.

“They s-say many people b-break through their major bottlenecks d-during their time inside. Many r-reach other late stages of Energy Gathering o-or even Foundation Establishment.”

“That’s only common for people who enter into the realm at the peak of Energy Gathering already. Plus, we’ll need Foundation Pills or the breakthrough will be too risky. I don’t think we have hundreds of Qi stones to spare for a pill, do we?”

“There’s no point in worrying about it now, you two,” Li Lang interjected. “We just need to prepare as best we can. I’ll be mainly crafting Nourishment Pills from henceforth. We’ll be taking a hit on our income for the foreseeable future. You two should also practice a craft.”

“What? Why?” Long Yi complained.

“Didn’t y-you hear? The p-pocket realm has c-crafting-related trials as well. It’d be a w-waste to not p-partake.”

“Exactly, which is why I am going to be learning Brushweaving starting from tomorrow. You two should pick one of the remaining three crafts, so we can hopefully gather a bunch of techniques from the pocket realm. Then we can teach each other.”

“I won’t l-let you d-down, boss!” Wei Ping immediately responded.

“...I’ll see if any of them interest me,” Long Yi sighed. “I can’t handle spending my time doing something I don’t like.”

Li Lang and Wei Ping shared a quick glance before shaking their heads. They quickly ignored Long Yi and turned in for the night. While Li Lang had his eyes closed beneath the sheets, he was doing everything he could to contain his excitement.

Finally, it is time for me to embark on a new craft!