

1901 Become My Student!

“Be careful, those are the Empyrean Flames!” Kong Shiyao shouted in horror.

The Empyrean Heavenly Flame was known to be able to burn down everything in the world. Given how it was able to burn down even the seal created by Kong Shi, the young man was courting death by attempting to touch it directly with his fingers!

But before Kong Shiyao could finish her piece, Zhang Xuan’s fingers had already fallen on the flames. The black flames twisted under the touch of his fingers, reminiscent of an embarrassed bride. It was almost as if the flames were meeting an old flame and trying to flirt with him.

Kong Shiyao’s cheeks twitched in incredulity at what she was seeing.

Why did it feel like anything that Zhang Xuan touched would somehow become warped and tainted?

Despite being a Celestial Master Teacher, a person of equal standing to her great ancestor, he had a brick that relentlessly struck one’s face and a spear that seemed to fancy tying everything in its path up. Furthermore, while he was fighting with the deity, he had no qualms striking the sensitive regions, be it the eyeballs, the neck, or even the crotch...

Anywhere an attack could slip through, one could expect no mercy from him. It was as if he knew nothing of common courtesy!

And the current situation only further confirmed her thoughts. Even the heavenly flames that everyone feared behaved in such a lewd manner under his touch...

What a frightening man this Zhang Xuan was!

Ignoring the shocked crowd, Zhang Xuan looked at the flames burning at his fingertips and asked, “Little Huohuo, did Daodao send you here?”

Seemingly comprehending Zhang Xuan's words, the black flames shook a little.

This etched a frown onto Zhang Xuan's forehead.

Based on the response from the Empyrean Heavenly Flames, it was clear that they had been dispatched by the heavens to destroy the Kunxu Domain.

If one viewed the Master Teacher Continent as a human's body, the heavens would be its immune system. Its role was to destroy all foreign objects and anomalies in order to ensure that everything followed its intended course. The presence of humans with exceptionally powerful constitutions in the Kunxu Domain could be viewed as a cancerous tumor, and to the heavens, it was something that had to be destroyed at all costs.

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before slipping out of the hole to return to the Master Teacher Continent. Up in the sky, ominous clouds were gathering a devastating combo of lightning and flames at a terrifying rate, as if swearing to never rest until the Kunxu Domain was utterly destroyed.

Under Zhang Xuan's protection, Ancient Sage Yan Qing also managed to pass through the hole as well to come to the Master Teacher Continent.

Zhang Xuan turned to the old man behind him and asked, "You mentioned earlier that the death of a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator can possibly deceive the heavens, right?"

"Un. That was the concept used for the formation that our predecessors set up back then!" Ancient Sage Yan Qing replied as he passed a jade token over.

Zhang Xuan took the jade token and swiftly browsed through its contents. Following which, with a flick of his wrist, a human silhouette materialized right in front of him.

"A deity? No, that's not right... You forged a deity into a Soulless Metal Humanoid?" Ancient Sage Yan Qing was nearly scared out of his wits.

The being that had just appeared in front of him was emanating an aura of ancient history. With just a glance, it was apparent that it had reached the Dimension Shatterer realm, boasting a strength that was on par with the deity whom they had fought with earlier!

To slay a deity from the Azure and forge him into a Soulless Metal Humanoid... This was almost blasphemy!

“Un!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Since things had progressed to this point, there was nothing for him to hide anymore. He drew his soul out from his body and slipped it into the Soulless Metal Humanoid.

With his means, he was still unable to enchant the Soulless Metal Humanoid. Thus, he could only drive it while his soul was within the Soulless Metal Humanoid.

This was a good opportunity for him to try his hand and see if it was really possible to imitate what Kong shi and his direct disciples had done back then to deceive the heavens.

Under Zhang Xuan’s refinement, he had already shaped the Soulless Metal Humanoid to have an extremely high compatibility with his soul. As such, the prerequisites to conduct the process should have already been met.

Hong long!

As soon as Zhang Xuan’s soul slipped into the Soulless Metal Humanoid, the ominous clouds immediately gathered around his body. Everyone’s eyes lit up in agitation as they clenched their fists tightly in excitement. It seemed like things were going to work out after all!

But a moment later, the ominous clouds abruptly dispersed from Zhang Xuan, as if having lost interest in him.

“What’s going on here?” Zhang Xuan was surprised to see that things were not proceeding in the direction that he had expected.

Based on what was stated on the jade token, the appearance of a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivators should have drawn the wrath of the heavens upon him. Then, through a carefully

designed ploy, he would put on a facade and substitute himself as the Kunxu Domain, and eventually, he would die in place of it.

But contrary to his expectations, the heavenly retribution was shunning him. This put him at a loss as to what to do.

“I think I get it...”

After recovering from a momentary daze, Ancient Sage Yan Qing’s eyes widened in realization. With a dismayed shake of his head, he explained, “The Soulless Metal Humanoid you have possessed is a deity from the Azure. It isn’t an indigenous being of this world, and the heavens are able to sense the difference...”

Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding in response.

Based on what he had seen so far, it seemed like the heavens had double standards. They did not hesitate to punish the indigenous population under their rule, but against foreign beings who exceeded their knowledge, it would hesitate to make a move.

The deity that he had forged into a Soulless Metal Humanoid originated from the Azure, making him an existence that was anomalous to the world. As such, the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent were hesitant to make a move on him.

It was also for this reason that the two deities did not come under the attack of the heavens despite having slipped through the dimension barrier. If it had been one of the indigenous cultivators of the Master Teacher Continent, there was no doubt that the heavens would have struck that person with everything they had to reduce them to ashes!

“Is there anything else we can do?” Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

In the end, even though the heavens were said to be impartial and unfeeling to all, the truth was that they were just a bully who feared the strong.

For example, even though Luo Ruoxin’s very presence posed a huge threat to the world, the heavens chose to only drive her

away forcefully, not daring to provoke her through heavenly flames or lightning bolts.

That question obviously stumped Ancient Sage Yan Qing. He was silent for a moment before he proposed, “Zhang shi, try leaving the Soulless Metal Humanoid for a moment!”

He had no idea what they could do either, so they could only give everything a try in hopes that something would work out.

Hearing the suggestion, Zhang Xuan quickly extracted his soul from the Soulless Metal Humanoid and began to return to his main body.

Perhaps due to the heavens sensing that the consciousness within the Soulless Metal Humanoid earlier had departed from it, the heavens began gathering around it once more.

“But this won’t work either...” Zhang Xuan scratched his hair in distress.

He had to be within the Soulless Metal Humanoid to drive it in order to facilitate the entire process of deceiving the heavens. Given that he was unable to control the Soulless Metal Humanoid remotely, this plan was a flop as well.

“If this doesn’t work, I could try to refine the other corpse of the deity that I have in my storage ring right now...”

But as Zhang Xuan spoke, his voice gradually faded into silence.

He did have another deity corpse in his storage ring that he had not refined yet. However, the corpse had to be first refined into a Soulless Metal Humanoid in order to catch the attention of the heavens, but the refinement process was not something that could be accomplished within a short period of time.

“We can’t refine the other Soulless Metal Humanoids in time, and there are no indigenous Dimension Shatterer realm experts. What else can we do?”

Watching the black flames assault the seal to the Kunxu Domain relentlessly, Zhang Xuan racked his brain at such a ferocious speed that it seemed as if sparks were going to fly from his head.

A thought flashed across Zhang Xuan's mind.

Right, the Library of Heaven's Path! The Library of Heaven's Path represents the will of the heavens... Given so, is it possible for me to use the golden page to bend the will of the heavens?

However, there was an issue with this course of action as well. He had used his only golden page to smash the deity summoned by Sovereign Chen Ling back then.

Furthermore, the requirements to produce a golden page were uncertain. So far, he only knew that he needed someone to acknowledge him as his teacher and be earnestly grateful to him for his impartation. Nevertheless, he had to give it a try.

Thus, he turned to Kong Shiyao and earnestly asked, "You... Are you willing to acknowledge me as your teacher?"

"What? No way!" Kong Shiyao replied without any hesitation. Little Flames Little Heavens

1902 Prophe

Awkward.

Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

The others who were present there, such as Ancient Sage Yan Qing, were beings who had lived for more than ten thousand years. It would be difficult to win them over in a moment's time, especially given the fact that they had once had a conflict with one another. The same went for Yan Xue. Thus, he deemed Kong Shiyao to be the one that he could most likely win over.

Of course, he did not expect that he would be rejected in an instant.

In truth, it was understandable why Kong Shiyao was reluctant to take Zhang Xuan as her teacher. The fact that she possessed Kong shi's bloodline and had inherited Kong shi's lineage meant that she was already standing on the shoulders of a giant. Not even Ancient Sage Yan Qing was qualified to be her teacher, let alone others!

It did not make a difference even if the person asking was a Celestial Master Teacher.

She admitted that her talent might be beneath that of Zhang Xuan, but she had at least this much of pride in herself.

"This matter concerns whether or not we will be able to resolve the crisis concerning the Kunxu Domain," Zhang Xuan insisted. "Furthermore, I have no plans of accepting you as my direct disciple. You just have to acknowledge me as your teacher!"

Based on his previous encounters, as long as the other party sincerely acknowledged him as his teacher and was grateful for his teachings, there was a chance that the golden page would form. It did not matter whether the other party was his direct disciple or not.

“How can me acknowledging you as my teacher resolve the current problem we are facing?” Kong Shiyao frowned.

If not for the fact that the young man had just slain a deity and saved the Hundred Schools of Philosophers from a huge crisis, she would have thought that he was a scammer!

“Why don’t we do this for now? I’ll give you some pointers on your cultivation, and as for whether you are willing to acknowledge me as your teacher or not, I’ll leave it up to you.”

Looking at the swiftly gathering ominous clouds above him, Zhang Xuan knew that the heavenly retribution was just moments away from descending. It was clear that time was not on his side, so he had no time to waste convincing Kong Shiyao.

Besides, putting aside the fact that he was not willing to reveal the existence of the Library of Heaven’s Path, if he had to make Kong Shiyao acknowledge him as her teacher using such a method, it was unlikely for her feelings to be truly sincere. If so, that could affect the chances of the formation of the golden page.

Thus, without waiting for Kong Shiyao’s response, he began speaking. “Flowing in your body is the purest bloodline of Kong shi in the past thousand years. You are able to master any battle technique and cultivation technique in the blink of an eye, and the rate of your cultivation far exceeds that of ordinary people as well. Furthermore, if I’m not mistaken, even though it has only been three years since your cultivation has reached Sempiternal realm consummation, you have already faced three Ancient Sage Ordeals thus far, but you chose to suppress your cultivation instead of pushing straight for a breakthrough!”

Kong Shiyao nodded as she waited patiently for Zhang Xuan to continue on with whatever he was going to say.

Nothing that Zhang Xuan had mentioned thus far could be considered a secret. Most of those who were close to her knew all of that. Considering Zhang Xuan’s means as a Celestial

Master Teacher, it should not have been too difficult for him to uncover such information.

“With each Ancient Sage Ordeal you faced, your cultivation did grow stronger, and it will play a vital role in determining whether you are able to struggle free from the restraints of the heavens and achieve a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm in the future. However, you probably noticed that a problem has arisen as a result of your multiple attempted breakthroughs,” Zhang Xuan said.

“The power of the Ancient Sage Ordeal has already melded into your core. Your body still contains traces of the energies from the multiple Ancient Sage Ordeals that you have been through, and this buildup of unassimilable energies eventually became a bottleneck to your cultivation. You challenged the Ancient Sage Ordeal three times within the short span of a year two years ago, but ever since then, you haven’t attempted anything at all. I think it’s worth questioning why you chose to delay the fourth Ancient Sage Ordeal for two whole years. Based on what I’m seeing, I would say that it’s not because you don’t want to do it but because you dare not to...”

As if Zhang Xuan had struck dead on, Kong Shiyao’s face turned frighteningly pale. She subconsciously took a step back as she stared at Zhang Xuan with eyes enlarged wide.

This matter had been the deepest secret in her heart, and she had not dared speak of it. She did not think that a young man whom she had just met would actually expose it in a few moments.

When she first reached the Sempiternal realm three years ago, she had dreamt of emulating her predecessor’s greatness and attempted three Ancient Sage Ordeals...

Her first three Ancient Sage Ordeals had been fraught with danger, but she had eventually managed to overcome them with her tenacity. But after the third Ancient Sage Ordeal, to her horror, she found that the energies from the Ancient Sage Ordeals had already seeped into her bones. No matter how she tried to cleanse her body, she was unable to get rid of them!

Her gut feeling told her that if she attempted another Ancient Sage Ordeal and allowed the energies scourging her body to continue building up, there was a good chance that her consciousness would be corroded by the energies, causing her to lose herself. In the worst-case scenario, she might even be assimilated to become a part of the heavenly tribulation itself.

It was this deep fear that had led to her to stop her breakthrough despite having overcome three Ancient Sage Ordeals within the short span of a year. Two years had passed since then, and she had not managed to find a suitable solution. However, her physical condition had been deteriorating as she began to lose control over the energies scourging her body.

She had browsed through countless books, hoping to find a solution to purge her of this trouble, but her efforts were to no avail. However, to hear Zhang Xuan pointing everything out spot-on at this moment... could it be possible that he had a solution to her woes?

As if he was able to read her mind, Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. "Since I can see through your problem, it goes without saying that I have a solution for it. You should be able to tell that I, like you, have overcome multiple Ancient Sage Ordeals, but I am not plagued by the issue that afflicts you!"

Kong Shiyao nodded vigorously as the same realization dawned upon her, and hope rekindled in the depths of her eyes.

Just like her, the young man standing before her was at the Sempiternal realm, but he was actually able to fight on equal footing with Dimension Shatterer realm cultivators.

Other than the fact that he was a Celestial Master Teacher, it was likely that he had faced multiple Ancient Sage Ordeals while suppressing his cultivation, or else there was no way he could have become so powerful.

"If I may... how can my affliction be resolved? If you are really able to solve my problem, I am more than willing to acknowledge you as my teacher!" Kong Shiyao exclaimed in agitation.

As long as her affliction was resolved, with her foundation of having overcome four Ancient Sage Ordeals, she was confident that she would be able to catch up with her ancestor and eventually reach the Dimension Shatterer realm!

With such strength, even if problems cropped up with the seal once more, she would have the strength to resolve them by herself.

Perhaps, she might even follow her predecessor's footsteps and enter a higher dimension, rising through the ranks!

"The problem is actually very simple. Unlike the cultivators on the Master Teacher Continent, the energy required to form the cultivation ordeals within the Kunxu Domain comes not from the heavens but the energy existent in the Kunxu Domain. As the Kunxu Domain was constructed by Kong shi, this world harnesses his energy within it. To any other cultivator, this fact wouldn't make a difference at all, but unfortunately, you share the same power origin as Kong shi, which resulted in your inability to expel the energies from the Ancient Sage Ordeal, as well as your gradual assimilation with it!" Zhang Xuan explained.

The Kunxu Domain had two major seals to prevent the heavens from peeking in, so it went without saying that the Ancient Sage Ordeals that Kong Shiyao had undergone did not come from the heavens.

From the looks of it, it was likely that Kong shi had implemented the system of cultivation ordeals within the Kunxu Domain as well.

It should have worked out fine for any other cultivator, but that was not the case for Kong Shiyao. While the energies of the Ancient Sage Ordeal came from the same origin, their violent nature rendered her unable to fully control them. At the same time, she was unable to fully remove them as they fused perfectly with her body, thus leading to their gradual buildup with every Ancient Sage Ordeal that she went through.

Over time, they formed a threat that she simply could not ignore anymore.

“What should I do?” Kong Shiyao asked worriedly.

The realization of the root of the problem made her realize how difficult it would be to cure her of her affliction, and she began to worry if she would be unable to resolve it for life.

“Well, the solution is rather simple and straightforward as well. All you have to do is challenge the Ancient Sage Ordeal on the Master Teacher Continent. Of course, given your current accumulation, I don’t deny that you face a huge danger in doing so. At this current juncture, you have two options ahead of you. If you choose not to push for a breakthrough, as your zhenqi further builds up, you will eventually lose your opportunity to make a breakthrough. On the other hand, if you do push for a breakthrough, considering that you have never come into contact with the lightning tribulation of the Master Teacher Continent before, even I am unable to fully predict what will happen as a result of that,” Zhang Xuan explained with a knowing smile.

“However, if you acknowledge me as your teacher, I’ll teach you a method that will allow you to overcome your Ancient Sage Ordeal with certainty!”

“This...” Seeing that there was no other way out of this, Kong Shiyao decisively kneeled down and kowtowed several times. “Alright, I’ll acknowledge you as my teacher. I hope that you will save me from my plight!”

Zhang Xuan took a look at the Library of Heaven’s Path and saw that no golden page had been produced yet. Knowing that Kong Shiyao’s feelings were not yet earnest, he sighed deeply and said, “Overcoming the Ancient Sage Ordeal on the Master Teacher Continent isn’t tough at all. The key lies in that you mustn’t think of it as a burden but a family member. You need to love it, care for it, consider its needs, feel its presence, give it your warmth and concern...”

“...” Kong Shiyao’s face twisted in incredulity, and at that very moment, she really wanted to bust the head of the fellow standing before her.

Somehow, she felt as if she had just been scammed.

1903 Kong Shiyao's Breakthrough 1

“Cough cough! Zhang shi, the main point!”

Even Ancient Sage Yan Qing could not bear looking on.

The Ancient Sage Ordeal was one of the greatest crises a cultivator would face. Even with ample Aeon of Ancient Sage, if one did not possess top-notch talent, it would be impossible to achieve a breakthrough.

The reason that Kong Shiyao was able to make a breakthrough was partly because she was allocated with a more generous portion of the resources in the Kunxu Domain due to her standing as a descendant of Kong shi. Even though the Aeon of Ancient Sage had already run out in the other clans, they were still able to preserve a hint of it for her.

Even so, every breakthrough that she had gone through was no different from walking on thin ice. One wrong step, and she would have plunged into the abyss of despair. Yet, that fellow was telling her to treat the cultivation ordeal like a family member and show care and concern for it...

Do you take me for a fool?

Do you really expect me to accept the nonsense you are spouting over here?

“It seems like you doubt my words.” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He turned to the ominous clouds in the sky and grabbed.

A lightning bolt was immediately torn away from the heavenly retribution.

Kacha! Kacha!

The lightning bolt struggled, wanting to escape from Zhang Xuan's grasp, but to no avail.

Zhang Xuan stroked the lightning bolt gently and said, “Good boy, good boy...”

His voice was tender, as if he was calming down an angry pet.

In the face of Zhang Xuan’s soothing strokes, the struggling lightning bolt hesitated for a moment before the tension gradually left its body. Slowly, it seeped through Zhang Xuan’s skin and entered his body.

Kong Shiyao and the others were stupefied by what they had just witnessed.

Was this really possible?

It had to be a joke, right?

“See, that’s how you do it. Love is the key to everything. Instead of resisting it, you have to embrace and allow it into you. That’s how you can win its trust and make it listen to you,” Zhang Xuan explained as he flicked his wrist, and the bolt of lightning appeared once more.

He stroked the lightning bolt lightly, as if coaxing a purring cat lying on his arms.

As unbelievable the sight before their eyes was, it raised a doubt in their minds.

Was it really possible to overcome the Ancient Sage Ordeal in such a manner?

If so, why had no one done so in the past tens of thousands of years?

“Considering how powerful the cultivation ordeal is, who would dare treat it as a pet? Trust me, nothing will go wrong! Later on, after you summon the Ancient Sage Ordeal, open up all of the acupoints in your body and absorb it fearlessly. You mustn’t show the slightest hint of rejection! Remember, you must use your heart to feel the other party,” Zhang Xuan explained. “As long as you are able to do all of this, I guarantee you that you won’t face any problem clearing your Ancient Sage Ordeal!”

Kong Shiyao was still a little worried.

No matter how she looked at it, the other party's words simply sounded like pure cow manure to her...

"Do you not trust me, or do you not have faith in yourself? If you don't believe that you are able to clear your fourth Ancient Sage Ordeal, you should just drop the idea right now and remain a Sempiternal realm cultivator for the rest of your life!" Zhang Xuan waved his hand in disappointment.

"I have always respected Kong Shi for the great man he was, and I thought that his descendant would be as valiant and fearless as him. I guess it was wrong of me to assume that his descendant would have inherited his courage..."

"Don't bother taunting me!" Kong Shiyao harrumphed. "Humph, the worst that can happen is death anyway. Let me tell you this—we of the Kong Clan have never feared anything before! Fine, tell me what I should do!"

Seeing that he had managed to goad Kong Shiyao into it, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. He swiftly provided Kong Shiyao with the exact instructions of what she should do after summoning the Ancient Sage Ordeal, though the crux of it was pretty similar to what he had said earlier.

After summoning the Ancient Sage Ordeal, she should not resist it. She needed to draw it into her acupoints and meridians and use her heart to feel it...

Hearing those words once more, Kong Shiyao cringed as her goosebumps rose up.

Even though it sounded like utter nonsense, she eventually decided to take a leap of faith and go along with. Gritting her teeth, she said, "I'll give it a try!"

Ignoring Ancient Sage Yan Qing's objection, she flew into the air in preparation for summoning the Ancient Sage Ordeal.

"Don't do it here! Let's find a remote location!"

Currently, they were right in the midst of the Tianxuan Kingdom, and if Kong Shiyao summoned the Ancient Sage Ordeal there, everything in the area could very well be annihilated. Thus, Zhang Xuan quickly stopped her and urged her elsewhere.

They quickly left the area, and a few breaths later, they were standing in the middle of an empty mountain range some distance away from the Tianxuan Kingdom.

Zhang Xuan and the others chose to stand at a distance of twenty li away to spectate the process.

Huhu!

Without any hesitation, Kong Shiyao drove the energy in her body to her limits and released the entirety of her aura at once, inducing the surroundings to rumble as if an earthquake was happening.

It took a mere instant for her to catch the attention of the heavens. Ominous clouds billowed as the lightning bolts and heavenly flames that had gathered around the entrance of the Kunxu Domain surrounded her, ready to tear her into shreds at any moment.

“What the...”

It was almost as if she was watching a beansprout growing insanely huge right before her eyes. Things were definitely not going the way she had expected!

Ancient Sage Yan Qing turned to Zhang Xuan and nervously asked, “Zhang shi, can she really tame and love such a powerful cultivation ordeal?”

“What nonsense are you spouting? Of course not!” Zhang Xuan turned to Ancient Sage Yan Qing and looked at him as if he was a fool.

“Of course not?”

Hearing such a response, the crowd nearly collapsed on the spot.

Weren’t you the one who was trying to convince us just a moment ago that the power of love is omnipotent?

How can you be so fickle as to change your mind the very next instant?

“The Ancient Sage Ordeal is the heavens’ punishment toward the cultivators,” Zhang Xuan replied. “A sinner trying to tame

an enforcer... how could that be possible? What using one's heart to feel the cultivation ordeal and shower it with love and concern? All of that was just something I spouted on a whim!"

"Words you spouted on a whim... B-but... Shiyao is facing the Ancient Sage Ordeal... She'll die like this!" Ancient Sage Yan Qing nearly exploded on the spot.

Even jokes should have a limit!

Kong Shiyao was the only one among Kong shi's descendants who had a bloodline purity of '8'. If he allowed her to die just like that, he would never be able to face his predecessors!

"Calm down, I have no intention of leaving Kong Shiyao to die. Just wait and see!" Zhang Xuan assured the nervous crowd with a confident smile.

At that moment, the power building up amid the dark clouds finally reached its tipping point, and ferocious lightning bolts and blazing heavenly flames rained down upon her.

Kacha!

The sheer amount of energy formed a devastating tower of flames and lightning that shrouded everything within a diameter of several hundred meters.

"Damn it! If that fellow is able to do it, why can't I do it too?" Kong Shiyao cursed under her breath as she felt her muscles tensing under the pressurizing might above her.

Her zhenqi instinctively bubbled within her body, ready to burst forth to fend off the devastating energy. However, at the very last moment, she forcefully suppressed every last bit of her strength.

Screw it all!

Just thinking about the smug knowing smile on his face made her boil with rage... If she really died, she will never let that b*stard off even as a ghost!

Boom boom boom!

As the pillar of terrifying energy engulfed Kong Shiyao, everyone in the area closed their eyes in trepidation, not daring

to see what was about to happen. They did not think that their hearts would be able to take it if they saw the young lady being torn to shreds under the cultivation ordeal!

However, as they waited and waited, there was no desperate cry of agony or anything of the sort. Perplexed, they looked over, and what they saw left them stunned.

At that very moment, the young lady was indeed engulfed by heavenly flames and lightning bolts. But instead of desperately trying to resist this destructive energy, her acupoints were wide open as she accepted the energy into her body without any hesitation.

Unlike what most had expected, the destructive energy did not cause any damage or explode within her body. It simply sat quietly in her meridians, almost as if it had been domesticated.

This... What in the world had happened?

Everyone looked at the young man before them with indescribable looks on their faces.

Did he not just say that it was all lies? If so, what was happening?

If Kong Shiyao was able to do it... should they give it a try as well?

At that moment, the Sempiternal realm consummation Yan Xue felt deeply tempted.

“Zhang shi...” With his curiosity getting the better of him, Ancient Sage Yan Qing asked, “Just what is going on here?”

1904 Kong Shiyao's Breakthrough 2

Instead of answering Ancient Sage Yan Qing's question, Zhang Xuan turned to Yan Xue and shattered his hopes. "You won't be able to do it. If you try to do the same, you'll be struck to death on the spot!"

"Why can't I do it?" Yan Xue frowned in indignance.

"It's not just you. Even I would be unable to emulate what Kong Shiyao has just done!" Zhang Xuan replied. "Kong Shiyao possesses Kong shi's bloodline, and she grew up in the Kunxu Domain. After the cultivation ordeals she has been through, it's no exaggeration to say that a part of the Kunxu Domain exists within her."

The crowd pondered for a moment before nodding.

It was mentioned earlier that after Kong Shiyao's three Ancient Sage Ordeals, her body was already suffused with the energies from the cultivation ordeals.

If she attempted a fourth breakthrough in the Kunxu Domain, it was likely that she would have been assimilated by the energies building up within her.

"And the very existence of the Kunxu Domain is something that is not permissible by the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent!" Zhang Xuan continued. "If she had attempted to resist the cultivation ordeal, she would have incurred the wrath of the heavens, and that would have only placed her in a worse position. The more she struggled, the worse the position she would have found herself in!"

"There's no denying that the heavens wanted to punish Kong Shiyao for attempting a breakthrough, but more than that, they were more desperate to destroy the trace of the Kunxu Domain that exists within her."

“Trying to push off the cultivation ordeal would be equivalent to hindering the heavens’ enforcement of the natural laws, and that would have placed her in a worse position. The heavens would surely have struck her again and again until she was finally destroyed!

“However, by opening her acupoints and allowing the lightning bolts and heavenly flames in instead, it’s equivalent to allowing the enforcers in to do what they needed to do. This has reduced her sins significantly, thus reducing the heavenly retribution falling upon on her. On top of that, she can make use of this opportunity to clear away the energies accumulated within her body, thus killing two birds with one stone!”

“This...”

Everyone’s teeth clattered in shock.

From how the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent were so determined to destroy the Kunxu Domain, it was apparent that the two of them were at odds with one another.

Yet, Zhang Xuan was able to sharply discern this and use it to his advantage, thus wearing the heavenly retribution down through such a method.

This was an extremely risky gamble. If anything had gone wrong, everything would have swiftly descended into a tragedy.

While Ancient Sage Yan Qing was amazed by the feat, he could not help but harbor some reservations toward this risky plan. “In a sense, this is similar to countering poison with poison... But if the two energies weren’t enough to nullify one another, wouldn’t Shiyao be placed in a terrible position?”

It was one of those things that were simple in theory but hard to execute.

There was a fixed amount of accumulated energies within Kong Shiyao’s body. If she had absorbed too little of the heavenly retribution, she would not be able to clear the energies away entirely. But if she absorbed too much, it could lead to her death.

“That’s why I told her to feel with her heart, didn’t I?” Zhang Xuan said. “As Kong shi’s descendant, the number one genius of the Kunxu Domain, if she isn’t even capable of carrying out such basic estimations and controlling how much of the heavenly retribution she has taken in, I will really have nothing to say! If that’s all she has, even if she survives this ordeal, I must say that she won’t be able to go too far in the future!”

It was not out of boredom that Zhang Xuan had spun up an old wives’ tale to deceive Kong Shiyao. If he had revealed the truth to her at the start, her mind would have been preoccupied with other things, and that might have caused her to lose focus on her own body. That would have led to an adverse effect instead.

“This...” Coming to understand the entire situation, the crowd could not help but direct impressed looks at the young man.

His grasp over states of mind, the nature of the heavenly tribulation, and the capabilities of those involved... Everything was in his field of calculation, and he had managed to pull it off impeccably.

As expected of a Celestial Master Teacher! His abilities far surpassed even those of the Ancient Sages!

...

While everyone else was awestruck after hearing the young man’s explanation, up in the sky, Kong Shiyao, who had experienced everything firsthand, was fully convinced of the young man’s capabilities. Even though this Celestial Master Teacher seemed to be even younger than her, there was no doubt that he was the real deal.

Even though she had not heard the explanation, she already vaguely understood the intentions behind the young man’s actions.

As the lightning bolts and heavenly flames from the Ancient Sage Ordeal washed through her body, all of the energies that she had built up back in the Kunxu Domain were slowly being neutralized and destroyed!

Even though two forces were colliding with one another within her body, her body remained perfectly fine. Not only so, through examining the powers within her body, she was able to further deepen her understanding of the world.

Time slowly ticked by, and soon enough, the energies from the past Ancient Sage Ordeals accumulated within her body had finally been eradicated. Kong Shiyao knew that this was the moment for her to stop, so she decisively sealed all of her acupoints and ignited her bloodline.

“Dissipate!” she commanded.

Word of Law!

At that moment, the Ancient Sage Ordeal that she had summoned weakened significantly, such that it was no longer a match for her. At her command, an entire half of the ominous clouds in the sky dissipated, and the rest were gradually following suit.

Hong long long!

With the departure of the ominous clouds, the young lady released all of her suppressed powers. She crushed all of the bottlenecks in her cultivation and reached Ancient Sage in a breath.

Furthermore, due to the deep accumulation of her cultivation, she did not stop right after her breakthrough. Instead, her cultivation continued charging forth.

Bloodline Continuance realm primary stage!

Bloodline Continuance realm intermediate stage!

...

In a few moments, she had already reached Ancient Sage 1-dan Bloodline Continuance realm consummation!

And after which...

Great Philosopher realm primary stage!

Great Philosopher realm intermediate stage!

...

Great Philosopher realm consummation!

In less than a minute, her cultivation soared to Great Philosopher realm consummation stage before gradually receding.

“Incredible,” Ancient Sage Yan Qing muttered in admiration.

For most of their breakthroughs to Ancient Sage, they would usually stop right at Bloodline Continuance primary stage. Even the most talented of them all only managed to push up to intermediate stage before losing the drive.

However, Kong Shiyao had actually leaped two realms up in a single breath, reaching Great Philosopher realm consummation.

Such a feat had never been achieved in the past tens of thousands of years in the Kunxu Domain!

It’s all due to this young man that Shiyao was able to make such a huge leap in her cultivation, Ancient Sage Yan Qing thought in wonderment as he turned to look at Zhang Xuan.

But at that moment, Zhang Xuan was looking at the young lady in the sky with a dissatisfied look on his face. “Continue to push on. With your accumulation, you should be able to push for a breakthrough to the Blood Reincarnation realm!”

“Blood Reincarnation realm?” Kong Shiyao was stunned. She quickly shook her head and replied, “I have already reached my limits. I don’t have enough energy in me to push for another breakthrough anymore...”

Even though she had made great accumulation by suppressing her cultivation through four Ancient Sage Ordeals, she knew that she had already struck her limit by pushing to Ancient Sage 2-dan consummation in a single sitting. She did not think that she would be able to push any further than that.

“Limits? Those are mental constructs that you impose on yourself!” Zhang Xuan remarked as he flicked a droplet of blood toward Kong Shiyao. “Swallow it!”

“Yes!”

By that point, Kong Shiyao was completely trusting of Zhang Xuan. Without any hesitation, she swallowed the droplet of blood.

As soon as the droplet of blood slid down her throat, she immediately felt a burning heat inside of her threatening to combust her from the inside.

“Is this the blood of the deity?” Kong Shiyao widened her eyes.

She had absorbed quite a few blood essences of Blood Reincarnation realm cultivators over the years, and it was for that reason that she was able to make such incredible accomplishments despite her young age. However, the blood essence that the young man had just given her was much more potent than anything she had swallowed before. In terms of power, it was at least ten times greater than the Blood Reincarnation realm blood essences that she had swallowed!

There was only one possibility for this... It was the blood of a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator!

To think that the young man would willingly give something so invaluable to her...

Kong Shiyao's face reddened in a mixture of agitation and gratitude, but she knew that this was not the time for her thoughts to be wondering. She quickly drove her zhenqi to assimilate the energy from the blood essence.

An hour later, she shattered her bottleneck once more and successfully advanced to the Blood Reincarnation realm. Her cultivation eventually came to a halt at the intermediate stage.

Feeling the energy pulsating through her body, Kong Shiyao swiftly flew over to Zhang Xuan and knelt down before him.

“Teacher!”

This time, her feelings of gratitude and respect were truly earnest.

Weng!

Zhang Xuan's head jolted as a golden page appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

1905 Little Junior

The main reason Zhang Xuan wanted to accept Kong Shiyao as his direct disciple was to form the golden page, and his goal had finally been achieved.

“Get up!” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief as he helped the young lady up.

With this, he should be able to resolve the crisis surrounding the Kunxu Domain.

“Teacher!”

“Is that our Little Junior?”

Zhang Xuan turned his head around and saw Zhao Ya and his other direct disciples looking at him in agitation.

Kong Shiyao’s Ancient Sage Ordeal had caused such a massive phenomenon to occur, shaking the entire Tianxuan Kingdom. As Ancient Sage cultivators, there was no way Zhao Ya and the others would not be alarmed by the happenings.

“Little Junior?” Kong Shiyao was a little conflicted to hear that term.

She was the number one genius of the Kunxu Domain, a descendant of Kong shi... To call a bunch of youths younger than her ‘senior’, she really could not bring herself to do it.

Just as Kong Shiyao was at a loss as to what to do, Zhang shi suddenly spoke up. “She can’t be considered your junior yet. She isn’t my direct disciple but a normal student that I have accepted.”

“A normal student that you have accepted...” Kong Shiyao’s body trembled at those words.

It was just a moment ago that she had thought that it would be incredibly awkward being their Little Junior, but Zhang Xuan spoke as if she did not even have the rights to be their Little Junior...

She turned to glare at Zhang Xuan with gritted teeth, wanting to protest against that clear insult, only to have Zhang Shi turn to her and ask, "Do you think that I am humiliating you?"

Knowing that it would be improper for her to challenge her teacher publicly, she swallowed her indignation and lowered her head. "I wouldn't dare!"

Nevertheless, the clenched fists by her side fully expressed her true feelings. As the phoenix of the Kunxu Domain, she felt that it was ridiculous that she did not even have the right to become the Little Junior of a bunch of youths.

"It's fine, there's no need to hold back before me. I know your thoughts. Why don't we do this then? Zhao Ya is my direct disciple, and in terms of age, she's much younger than you," Zhang Xuan said as he gestured toward Zhao Ya. "Without any weapons in hand, the two of you will just fight with your raw strength. If you are able to win against her, I'll accept you as my direct disciple and allow you to become their senior!"

"Very well!" Caught up in the moment, Kong Shiyao looked at Zhao Ya with fighting will burning in her eyes.

The other party appeared to be eighteen or so, which made the other party much younger than her. If she could not even defeat such an opponent, what right did she have to be Kong Shi's descendant?

After receiving Kong Shiyao's approval, Zhang Xuan turned to look at Zhao Ya and said, "Just do what you usually do, and it will be enough."

"Yes!" Zhao Ya replied with a nod before moving toward the empty clearing ahead. With a polite gesture, she invited Kong Shiyao forward. "Please!"

Kong Shiyao also quickly walked over.

There was no exchange of words or taunting before the battle started, but with their dignity on their line, a tense and competitive atmosphere could be felt between the two.

Kong Shiyao did not use her bloodline ability, but as a top-notch genius and a Blood Reincarnation realm cultivator, she executed innumerable battle techniques one after another

impeccably, making her movements appear like an elegant dance.

On the other hand, Zhao Ya activated her unique constitution, causing a cold aura to grip the entire area. Beautiful snowflakes fell from the sky as a result of her ability.

Her cultivation had reached Ancient Sage 2-dan Great Philosopher realm primary stage after the attempted assassination on the newly inaugurated Sovereign Chen Yong a month back.

However, over the past month, she had received her teacher's direct pointers and an ample supply of Blood Reincarnation realm Ancient Sage blood, which had allowed her to reinforce her foundations to their limits and eventually reach Great Philosopher realm consummation. While she had not made too many breakthroughs within this period of time, it would be foolish if one simply assessed her by her cultivation.

It was true that there was a fatal rift between her and Kong Shiyao's cultivation, but through her strong foundations and her deep understanding of battle, she was actually able to stand her ground against Kong Shiyao's pressing offense.

The intense battle proceeded, and gradually, one could see anxiety seeping into Kong Shiyao's eyes.

There should have been an absolute gap in their strength, given her higher cultivation realm and her prowess as Kong Shi's descendant. Yet, in a fair battle where both of them were wielding no weapons, she was actually unable to claim the upper hand.

How in the world did Zhang Xuan's eighteen-year-old or something direct disciple become so powerful?

This won't do. At this rate, even if I win, my honor will be sullied...

She wanted to prove that her talents were far beyond any of Zhang Xuan's direct disciples, but if it was so difficult for her to defeat Zhao Ya despite her higher cultivation, it would actually be no different from suffering a defeat.

Clenching her teeth tightly, she abruptly changed her movement technique, and in an instant, many afterimages of her appeared on the battlefield.

This was the battle technique that Kong Shi had specially created for his descendants, as well as the strongest skill that she had at the moment... Massacre of the Eight Arms!

Deng deng deng!

Innumerable attacks flew forth from the seemingly omnipresent Kong Shiyao at a rapid pace. It was not long before Zhao Ya was cornered, and she was forced to retreat again and again.

While Kong Shiyao had just achieved a breakthrough, there was no questioning that she was someone who had been through four Ancient Sage Ordeals, making her an exceptionally powerful existence even among Blood Reincarnation realm cultivators. If not for Zhao Ya's superior combat experience, she would have already lost.

"Don't panic. You are only lacking in absolute strength at the moment... Since that's the case, all you have to do is achieve a breakthrough!"

With a flick of his finger, Zhang Xuan sent a droplet of the blood essence of the deity over to Zhao Ya.

Hu!

Swallowing the blood droplet, Zhao Ya's cultivation immediately began surging.

Hong long!

In less than twenty breaths, she had already overcome her current bottleneck to reach the Blood Reincarnation realm.

With the tremendous surge in her strength as a result of her breakthrough, she released a burst of cold energy that swiftly sent Kong Shiyao flying into the distance before crashing onto the ground.

"I have lost," Kong Shiyao muttered with a pale face.

She still had many more moves that she had not used, and she knew that she definitely would have been able to win if she had used her bloodline ability. However, this was not a life-and-death match, and she could not bring herself to use it at this moment.

While the other party's battle techniques were not as profound as hers, every single one of her movements carried a deep conception behind it, making it hard to fathom her movements. On top of that, the other party seemed to be able to see through her flaws, intentionally striking at places where she could hardly defend. As a result, she was being slowly cornered.

She could still rely on her superior cultivation to bridge the gap in their skills earlier on, but after Zhao Ya's cultivation reached the Blood Reincarnation realm, it had become a completely one-sided battle.

It was truly laughable how she had looked down on this group of youths prior to the battle. In terms of talent, they were in no way beneath her!

"How is it? Are you still indignant at being called their Little Junior?"

Seeing how the proud genius of the Kunxu Domain was still having trouble coming to terms with her defeat, Zhang Xuan suggested, "If you feel that it's unfair because Zhao Ya is the strongest of them all, you can feel free to challenge the others. However, I'll have to ask you to suppress your cultivation in order to ensure fairness."

"This..." Kong Shiyao turned to look at the rest of Zhang Xuan's direct disciples.

Zheng Yang, Yuan Tao, Wei Ruyan, and the others were looking at her with excited gleams in their eyes. It seemed like they were dying to challenge and bully her so as to put her in place.

"It's fine. I'm willing to accept my position as the Little Junior..." Kong Shiyao lowered her head and bowed down.

Since they had all been groomed by the same teacher, it was likely that they would be similar in terms of strength. She had

thought that she could suppress Zhao Ya with her superior cultivation, but that did not work in the end. She did not think that she would be able to best the rest of Zhang Xuan's students.

Since she was not confident in her strength, there was no need for her to go through with that and humiliate herself. It would be best for her to just acknowledge it.

"That would be for the best," Zhang Xuan said. "Zhao Ya, Zheng Yang, and the rest of you, from today on, Kong Shiyao will be your Little Junior, as well as my ninth direct disciple. You must take care of one another, got it?"

"Yes, we'll listen to your teachings!"

The others clasped their fists and replied resoundingly.

Seeing that even a descendant of Kong shi had ended up acknowledging Zhang Xuan as her teacher, Ancient Sage Yan Qing found himself rendered speechless. It was not until a long time later that he finally found his voice once more.

"Since Shiyao has achieved a breakthrough to Ancient Sage and reached the Blood Reincarnation realm, she is qualified to become the new leader of the Kunxu Domain and the Hundred Schools of Philosophers!"

Since the Kunxu Domain had been left behind by Kong shi himself, it went without saying that it should be managed by his descendants.

In the past few years, he had just been taking care of the Kunxu Domain and the Hundred Schools of Philosophers in her place. Since Kong Shiyao had grown and matured, it was time for him to pass the baton back to her.

1906 Where Did Teacher Go?

The Hundred Schools of Philosophers had always held Kong shi as its central figure, so there was no one who would voice any objections with Kong Shiyao becoming their leader after her breakthrough to Ancient Sage.

With this, it meant that Zhang Xuan and his nine direct disciples had mankind, the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, and even the Hundred Schools of Philosophers under their control.

Knowing that she carried heavy responsibility on her shoulders, Kong Shiyao turned to her teacher and asked, “Teacher, how should we deal with the matter concerning the Kunxu Domain’s seal?”

Her teacher had said that he would be able to resolve everything as long as she acknowledged him as her teacher.

“Let me give it a try.”

Zhang Xuan walked up to the seal, and with a thought, he took a golden page from his glabella.

Hu!

The golden page flew over to the seal of the Kunxu Domain and swiftly fused together with it. Following which, the seal quickly morphed into a massive, majestic gate.

As soon as this massive majestic gate appeared, the roaring lightning and crackling flames in the sky, as if having met their nemesis, quickly dissipated.

“What the... the crisis has been resolved just like that?”

Everyone was stupefied.

They had been wondering where they could find Dimension Shatterer realm experts to save them from their plight, but who could have known that everything would be resolved so easily with a single golden page?

If everything was that easy, why did Zhang Xuan not take it out earlier?

Disregarding the looks of discontentment directed at him, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. "It seems like everything worked out as I thought..."

In truth, he had been rather uncertain about the limits of the Library of Heaven's Path's abilities.

At the very start, the first limitation that he had found was that the Library of Heaven's Path was unable to see through the flaws of Ancient Sages. Perhaps it was because Ancient Sages were existences on par with the heavens, and that was its bottleneck.

However, when Luo Ruoxin fused the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn with his Library of Heaven's Path prior to her departure, this bottleneck had been removed.

Back then, he had wondered if the Library of Heaven's Path tier had already exceeded the 'heavens' of the Master Teacher Continent, and from the earlier result that he had seen, that seemed to be the case.

The heavens would not dare punish a higher existence than them, and the Library of Heaven's Path and the golden pages happened to be such existences.

With a seal formed by a golden page viewed to be a higher existence than the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent, the result was clear. There was no way the heavens would dare pass their judgement upon the Kunxu Domain anymore.

As long as the seal formed by the golden page existed, the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent would dare not barge their way in. In fact, it didn't matter whether the Kunxu Domain remained hidden or not anymore.

Satisfied with the results, Zhang Xuan glanced at Kong Shiyao and said, "I would like to pay a visit to the ancestral residence of the Kong Clan!"

Kong Shiyao quickly walked forward and led the way back to the Kunxu Domain.

The ancestral residence of the Kong Clan was located in the vicinity of the Great Phrontistery of Confucianism. Zhang Xuan strolled casually around it.

The Kong Clan had inherited Kong shi's heritage, and it aimed to push forward his ideals and cultivation techniques. There was a strong scholarly atmosphere drifting in the residence, and with every step that Zhang Xuan took, he could vaguely feel Kong shi's spirit and philosophy.

After taking a look around the Kong Clan, Zhang Xuan left the Kunxu Domain. This time, he did not take his direct disciples with him, wanting to take a walk around.

Kong shi had once toured around the entire Master Teacher Continent, and it had given him a much deeper comprehension of life. It was the spark that had led him to create the overpowered treasure known as the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn.

Zhang Xuan wanted to see the Master Teacher Continent as it was for himself as well, and through doing so, he hoped to rediscover who he was.

Every city that he went to, he would stop for a period of time to experience the local culture.

With the threat of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe resolved, the world was in a rare state of peace. The Master Teacher Pavilion had also been reorganized according to Yang shi's plans, destroying the previous aggregation of power through factions. At this moment, it had become an organization dedicated to imparting wisdom to the world.

Under Zhang Xuan's instructions, his direct disciples had scattered around the world to spread his teachings. Many of his past students from the Hongyuan Master Teacher Academy had traveled around the world to lecture as well.

Often, those who heard Zhang Xuan's teaching through these indirect sources stumbled upon sudden bouts of enlightenment in the midst of the lectures, inducing a huge leap in their fighting prowess. As a result, their skills tended to surpass

their peers. More often than not, those people would then become advocates of the ‘Zhang School of Thought’.

In a short period of time, Zhang Xuan’s reputation as the number one master teacher of the world grew greater and greater, such that the significance of his name was almost becoming synonymous with that of Kong shi’s.

There was no one in this world who did not dream of hearing a lesson directly from Zhang shi himself, but it was as if the person in question had evaporated from the face of the world. No one knew where he was or where he had gone.

It was not just the Master Teacher Pavilion who did not know of his whereabouts—even his direct disciples had no clue as to where their teacher had gone. No matter how they tried to contact him, there was simply no response.

“Just where has teacher gone?” Zheng Yang sighed deeply.

He had flown to the southernmost hemisphere of the Master Teacher Continent, but there was no one who had seen his teacher at all.

Zhao Ya had flown to the extreme north, but her search had ended in futility.

Zhang Xuan’s nine direct disciples had searched for four months, and they had scoured nearly every nook and cranny of the Master Teacher Continent, but their teacher remained nowhere to be seen.

“It’s likely that our teacher is trying to find his own route and doesn’t want to be disturbed right now. He should be fine, so there’s no need for us to worry excessively about him,” Wang Ying consoled.

“Wang Ying is right,” Lu Chong said. “What we should do right now is not search for our teacher but follow his instructions and impart his wisdom to all parts of the world. Furthermore, we must make sure to keep up with our cultivation. We should aim to reach Blood Reincarnation realm consummation as soon as possible so that we can share some of his burden!”

“That’s right!”

The others nodded in agreement.

With their teacher's current strength, there was no one on the Master Teacher Continent who could possibly pose a threat to him anymore. As such, there was indeed no need for them to worry.

Their time would be better used on accomplishing the mission that he had entrusted to them and raising their cultivation. At the very least, when the time came, they would not be mere baggage to their teacher anymore.

...

While the world was searching for his whereabouts, Zhang Xuan was strolling leisurely in a remote town on the Master Teacher Continent.

It had been almost half a year since he left the Hundred Schools of Philosophers, which also meant that it had been two years since he had come to this world.

Over the past half a year, he had seen countless joys and sorrows, reunions and separations. The laughter of happiness, the cries of misery, the warmth of an embrace, the coldness of a rejection...

Taking in the emotions and experiences of those around him, Zhang Xuan felt as if he was living many different lives at once.

Today marked the third day since he had arrived in this little town, and going by his previous routine, it was about time for him to leave.

Taking one last look at the small, peaceful town around him, Zhang Xuan was just about to leave through the gates when a commotion suddenly broke out along the streets. Many people were rushing toward a common destination in agitation.

"Hurry up, hurry up! A master teacher is here to spread his teaching!"

"It's said that the master teacher is here to impart Zhang Shi's wisdom. We have to make sure to record it well! As long as

we listen carefully and learn well, we might get a chance to obtain Greensprout Wheat!”

“Waa, that would really be great! Greensprout Wheat is only cultivated only by the Hundred School of Philosophers, and it can’t be grown on the Master Teacher Continent, right? Do you know that blacksmith in the other village? Just the other day, he ate a single stalk of Greensprout Wheat and immediately achieved a breakthrough to the Zongshi realm!”

“That lucky b*stard! If I could achieve a breakthrough to the Zongshi realm, I’d be laughing even in my sleep!”

...

Such discussions could be heard here and there.

“A lecture?” Zhang Xuan noted before shaking his head with a smile.

He had seen too many of such scenes in his journey over the past half a year, so he had completely lost interest listening to such stuff.

There were many master teachers who used his name to bulk up their reputation. Some of their lectures were highly profound and induced deeper thoughts in the listener whereas others were riddled with flaws.

However, Zhang Xuan never stood up to intervene in any of those.

He had chosen to take the role of a bystander in the world in order to witness the different aspects of the world with an open mind, so he had resolved himself to put aside his pride, beliefs, and even identity.

I should move on to the next town, Zhang Xuan thought as he walked out of the city gates.

However, what he caught sight of with a quick glance caused him to stop in his tracks.

“It’s her?” Zhang Xuan murmured as a beautiful profile came into his line of sight.

Her demure silhouette remained unchanged even after the passing of two years, attracting eyes whenever she passed.

However, she was no longer an ordinary teacher in a humble academy. She had become a true master teacher, and a 3-star one at that.

“Pleased to meet you. I am Shen Bi Ru, a 3-star master teacher!”

Standing on the stage, the young lady faced the agitated audience before her and revealed a charismatic smile.

1907 Ancient Sage! I Shall Become the World's Teacher 1

Shen Bi Ru was the beautiful teacher working at the Hongtian Academy whom Zhang Xuan had met after he transcended over to this world. When he left the Tianxuan Kingdom, it had felt like their paths had begun to diverge from one another, and they would never intersect ever again.

Half a year earlier, when he returned to the Tianxuan Kingdom, he had only met Lu Xun. He honestly did not think that he would meet Shen Bi Ru here, and he did not expect her to have become a 3-star master teacher so swiftly.

Her presence made Zhang Xuan halt in his footsteps as he turned around to look at the young lady on the stage. The young lady raised her hand and waited for the commotion amid the crowd to die down before continuing on. “Zhang laoshi and I used to be colleagues.”

“Colleagues?”

“What? Is she saying that she knows Zhang shi?”

“She is bragging, isn’t she? All those who claim to spread Zhang shi’s teaching say that they know Zhang shi one way or another in an attempt to add credibility to their words!”

“Isn’t that so? I never would have thought that a lady as pretty as her would stoop to such a level!”

...

As Zhang Xuan’s reputation flourished, more and more people began passing themselves off as his students. Even a city as remote as this was not completely immune to this major trend.

On the other hand, seeing the beautiful teacher who had always maintained a transcendental attitude toward worldly

affairs talking about him in her first sentence, Zhang Xuan could not help but shake his head as a hint of disappointment surfaced in his eyes.

In his mind, she had always been a person who was driven by self-improvement and thought little of fame and glory. He did not think that she would use his name in order to elevate her own standing.

Heaving a deep sigh, Zhang Xuan was just about to leave when the young lady continued speaking. “He has already become the World’s Teacher, and his teachings have spread far and wide. Many take pride in receiving the knowledge that he preaches... but I don’t think that it’s something enviable or particularly noble.”

Those words made Zhang Xuan halt in his footsteps once more.

Most of the crowd, who had planned to leave after seeing that it was just another fraud using Zhang Shi’s name to her own advantage, quickly turned around with deep frowns on their foreheads.

Zhang Shi’s accomplishments and wisdom had struck a deep chord with everyone in the world, making him the next idol of faith since Kong Shi.

Yet, she dared say that his work was not ‘particularly noble’? What did she mean by that?

The atmosphere swiftly grew tense as displeased expressions appeared all over the crowd.

“The world is a diverse place. Take this little town that you live in for example. While we need people standing above the clouds, we also need those whose feet are planted on the ground. The master teachers who spread their teachings and bring wisdom to the world are worthy of respect, but so are the butchers who slaughter pigs, the vendors who barter their vegetables, and the merchants who ship goods from one place to another. Every occupation in the world has its own reason for existence. There’s no need to classify them by honor or prestige. What truly makes the difference is whether we are

willing to put our blood and sweat into what we do and whether we truly love what we do as well.

“Zhang shi loves the master teacher occupation with a passion. He finds purpose in bringing wisdom to others, and he enjoys uncovering the secrets of the world. His diligence and passion paid off, allowing him to reach the peak of the master teacher occupation.

“I am just an ordinary person. I have neither the talents nor capabilities that he possesses. However, that doesn’t mean that I am a lesser being than him. I do what I can do to impart knowledge to my students and pass down the correct values to them. Unlike him, my lectures aren’t great enough to reach every corner of the world. However, I can ensure that my own teachings will not lead my students down the wrong path, and whatever knowledge I pass down has been personally verified by myself... and I think that’s enough!

“Living in this world, we must be cognizant of our own limits and walk down a path that is suited for us. Over the past two years, I have toured around the world and met many people. A lot of them take pride in living in the same era as the World’s Teacher, Zhang Xuan. Just like Kong shi’s era, they believe that this era will usher mankind to greater prosperity than before and that we are blessed to be living in such times. I don’t disagree with what they said, but while we are living in the era of hopes and dreams, does it necessarily mean that we stand a chance of rising to the top and becoming a powerful expert of the world?

“Bleak. It is a hopelessly bleak notion. Regardless of which era one lives in, only a small handful of people have the capacity to rise to the very top!”

“This...” The infuriated crowd slowly fell silent at those words.

It was sad but cruel truth. Regardless of which era one was in, it was impossible for everyone to become an expert.

Kong shi dreamt of a world where all humans were powerful, but this vision was bound to remain nothing more than a dream. It was something that could never be realized.

There were simply too many limitations in the world that prevented it from happening. The scarce resources, the aptitude one was born with, the intense competition among cultivators...

It was because power was always held in the hands of the minority that becoming an expert was something that so many desired.

I never thought that she would come to such a realization... Zhang Xuan was stunned as well.

He had thought that Shen Bi Ru was using his reputation to elevate her standing, but who could have known that she would be using this to tell a powerful story to the crowd?

What was scary was not a lack in talent but the failure to realize one's limitations.

If a person who only had the ability of an ordinary soldier forced their way to become a commander, they would be hurting not just themselves.

"Stop listening to her bullsh*t! I have heard that there are those who aren't too talented among Zhang Shi's students, but all of them eventually became powerful experts!"

"Indeed! As long as we find a good teacher, we'll be able to rise to greater heights!"

"Do you expect us to believe that you are Zhang Shi's colleague just because you said so? All of the figures whom Zhang Shi is associated with are people far beyond our league. How could a mere 3-star master teacher like you possibly know him?"

...

After the brief moment of astonished silence came a massive uproar.

Shen Bi Ru's words had pricked the self-esteem of the crowd. They could not accept what she was saying.

Failure could always be attributed to timing and luck.

An author could always say that their work was meant to go down in history as the greatest work ever made, but due to the editors' lack of foresight, their talent ended up being buried, resulting in them being unable to receive even a contract.

Having expected such an uproar from the crowd, Shen Bi Ru raised her hand and continued calmly. "I know that my words have hurt many of you, but touch your heart. Do you believe that my words are all empty? I know that I can't begin to compare to Zhang shi, the respected World's Teacher... but how many of you believe that he is truly happy with his life?

"The greater one's strength, the greater one's responsibility. Over the past year, he has changed the rules of the Master Teacher Continent, quelled the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, and subordinated the Hundred Schools of Philosophers... But which of these accomplishments didn't require him to risk his life? If you were in his position, and all you wanted was to enjoy the luxuries of power, would you really have braved through danger to achieve all of that?"

Most of those who had spoken up against Shen Bi Ru earlier were struck speechless once more.

Indeed. If they enjoyed Zhang shi's standing and talent, would they really have been willing to charge into the midst of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe to quell them or confront the legendary Hundred Schools of Philosophers?

"You might think that Zhang shi is a lofty figure far beyond any of you, but back when I was working in the same academy as him, he was a teacher who was despised and looked down by others. He scored a zero for his Teacher Qualification Examination, so he was nearly expelled from the school. Yet, despite these challenges, he never gave up nor shied away. A step at a time, he eventually rose to his current prominence. If you were in his place, would you have been able to overcome the odds?" Shen Bi Ru asked.

Zhang Xuan's life had already been compiled into books and spread across the entire world.

His life had been fraught with danger, but none of the challenges that he had faced had ever convinced him to give

up. If they had been in his place, would they really have been able to do the same?

Most of those amid the crowd pondered the question, but they eventually shook their heads in response.

For those who were weak-minded, the scorn that Zhang Xuan had received at Hongtian Academy would have been more than enough for them to give up and drown their sorrows with alcohol. For those who were a little more strong-willed, the Tianwu Kingdom would probably have been where their journey ended.

They would never have been able to overcome all of those obstacles that Zhang Xuan had faced to live the brilliant life that he did.

It was easy to envy others, but the experiences that others had gone through might have been something that they would not have been able to survive.

Your own life, your own decisions. You have to recognize who you truly are in order to make the decisions that will make your life a meaningful one! Zhang Xuan thought.

Shen Bi Ru's words had truly left a mark in him. It was as if someone had ignited all of the experiences that he had been through over the past half a year, causing a raging flame to burn within him.

Be it famed mountains or beautiful lakes, the warmth and callousness of human emotions, everything that he had witnessed and been involved in had become a part of his memories. Those memories strung together to form a complete him. They drifted into the sky of the Master Teacher Continent and overlooked the world, as if a transcendent being.

In an instant, Zhang Xuan seemed to enter a deep state of concentration. A lot of the confusion in his heart vanished, and the cultivation that had remained stagnant over the past half a year abruptly surged forth like water charging through a collapsed dam.

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2

The reason Zhang Xuan had chosen to cast himself aside and tour the world was due to the confusion in his heart. He had found himself lost, and he needed some directions.

He had looked at Kong shi's records, but their lives had been vastly different. As two completely different people, he could not hope to experience the same things as Kong shi even if he forced himself to retrace Kong shi's footsteps.

He knew that becoming the World's Teacher was the way for him to become an Ancient Sage, but how could he do it? The world was such a huge place, and it was governed by its own laws. It was not as if his words could reach the heavens, so how could he become the World's Teacher?

Unable to make sense out of this, he had found himself falling into a stalemate. No matter how he struggled, he had been unable to advance any further at all.

Of course, he knew that this confusion was something that all cultivators had to eventually face in their lifetime, but this was a hurdle that he had no idea where he could begin to work on.

All along, he had been reliant on the Library of Heaven's Path for his cultivation. He would collect books and compile them together, and if required, he would edit them accordingly. All in all, none of what he had practiced so far could be said to be his own creation. While he had been able to advance swiftly through this manner, it had also become his limitation.

He was able to modify any cultivation technique until he had ensured that it was completely flawless, but the reliance on this ability had made him unable to cultivate without any cultivation technique to refer to.

This was his greatest flaw, and he was suffering as a result of it.

Even the heavens were flawed, so there was nothing in this world that came without compromise.

Thus, he had set out on his journey to see the world. He did not know how long it would take, and it did not know where it would lead him to, but it was all he could do.

This journey had been an eye-opener. It had allowed him to understand many aspects of the world that he had never noticed before. However, when he heard Shen Bi Ru's words, it made him realize something.

The answer that he had been searching for over the past half a year was not something that he could find anywhere else in the world. It existed only in himself.

All he had to do was be the best him. Why should he be so bothered with the experiences of others?

Everyone in the world had their own path to tread on, so there was no need for him to conform to others. What he had to do was stay loyal to his own heart and continue paving his path forward. That would be enough.

Even if there was no perfect cultivation technique for him to cultivate and he could not truly become the World's Teacher, he would just have to ensure that he remained the perfect him, and that was enough!

"Thank you, Shen Bi Ru!"

Feeling the changes in his body, Zhang Xuan smiled. He had found his own answer, and he was finally ready to achieve a breakthrough to Ancient Sage.

The surroundings fell silent.

Zhang Xuan's words were not particularly loud, but they attracted the attention of the crowd in an instant.

Hearing that voice, Shen Bi Ru turned her gaze over, and her eyes widened in astonishment. "Zhang laoshi! What are you doing here?"

If Zhang Xuan did not want others to recognize him, not even his closest students would see through his disguise.

But out of gratitude for Shen Bi Ru, he did not want to conceal his identity to her. As such, the young lady was able to tell that he was the despised and scorned teacher who had been on the verge of being expelled from Hongtian Academy two years ago, Zhang Xuan!

His appearance did not seem to have changed by too much over the past two years, other than his taller profile, his smoother skin, and his deeper eyes.

“It has been a very long time since we last met,” Zhang Xuan replied with a warm smile as he slowly made his way up to the stage.

“Yes, it has been a long time...” Shen Bi Ru nodded as her body trembled in agitation.

She had thought that with the difference in their standings, there was no way that they would ever meet again. Who could have known that their reunion would come so abruptly?

The young man was just the same as ever. His posture was without airs, and his smile was still so innocent.

“Zhang shi?”

“She mentioned earlier that she was colleagues with Zhang shi, and now, she’s acting so shocked all of a sudden... Is she trying to say that the fellow over there is the World’s Teacher, Zhang shi?”

“It’s one thing for her to feed us with so much cr*p earlier, but to make such a bold claim... is she trying to insult our intelligence?”

“She really is trying to grind our tolerance down to the very last bit, isn’t she? If he really is Zhang shi, I am the head of the Master Teacher Pavilion!”

“How could a lofty figure like Zhang shi possibly come to a remote town like ours? This woman might be pretty, but she sure has a devious heart...”

...

The two of them did not try to conceal their words, and their exchange caused the crowd below to explode as if someone had thrown gunpowder in the midst of burning flames.

While Zhang shi was a figure whom all of them respected, they also understood that the other party was a figure extremely far away from them. It had never crossed their minds that they would ever be able to meet Zhang shi in person.

Yet, that young lady had actually called out ‘Zhang laoshi’ so abruptly after making such a speech... Was she trying to say that this humble-looking fellow was actually Zhang Xuan?

You must be trying to make a monkey out of us!

We can accept your bragging, but to sully Zhang shi’s honor... Unforgivable!

“Don’t you know that passing yourself off as Zhang shi is a taboo of the Master Teacher Pavilion? You must be punished for your insolence, or else how can the Master Teacher Pavilion establish its credibility in the world?” a master teacher amid the crowd cried out in fury.

“Indeed! Catch those two despicable scoundrels! Catch them and skin...” another person amid the crowd shouted.

But before he could finish his words, a quivering voice suddenly echoed in the air. “Shut up! What’s going on over there...”

The infuriated crowd looked at the stage, and what they saw nearly blew their minds.

The young man passing off as ‘Zhang shi’, with a gentle smile on his face, was slowly rising into the air.

It was a common fact that flight was an ability exclusive to cultivators who had reached the Saint realm. Could the impostor before them actually be a Saint expert?

But before they could figure out what was going on, a loud rumbling echoed in the air as countless ominous clouds gushed over.

The span of the ominous clouds was massive. It swiftly covered the entire town, but it still continued to grow relentlessly into the distance. It did not take long for it to extend all the way to the horizon, plunging everywhere into darkness.

“This is... a cultivation ordeal?”

“How could there be such a massive cultivation ordeal?”

“It’s rumored that even the most formidable Ancient Sage Ordeal only covers up to a hundred thousand mu[1], but this is at least a million mu, right?”

The crowd below was completely stunned.

“To be able to summon such a huge cultivation ordeal... Could that young man really be Zhang shi?”

As this doubt was raised, the crowd swiftly fell silent.

Indeed. Other than Zhang shi, who could cause such a spectacular uproar in the world?

...

At the Glacier Plain Court...

“Mother, rest assured. I’ll take care of my body, and I’ll make sure not to act recklessly!” a young lady with features reminiscent of a delicate ice sculpture reassured a middle-aged lady with a gentle smile.

She was the court chief of the Glacier Plain Court, Zhao Ya.

The middle-aged lady before her was the Holy Maiden of the previous generation, her mother.

Back then, after the conflict between her teacher and the other major powers was resolved in Empire Alliance City, she had quickly returned to the Glacier Plain Court to release her mother. She had brought her mother back to the Tianxuan Kingdom to reunite with her father for a while before taking them all to the Glacier Plain Court.

“You keep going into seclusion to cultivate, neither eating nor drinking...” A middle-aged man walked over as he shook his

head disapprovingly. “Your mother and I are afraid that you are pushing yourself too much!”

He was Zhao Ya’s father, the lord of Tianxuan Kingdom’s Baiyu City, Zhao Feng!

After Zhang shi disappeared, their daughter had gone around the world searching for him desperately. When she was unable to find him even after some time, she had finally decided to return to the Glacier Plain Court.

But as soon as she returned, she had devoted her time to cultivating, neglecting to sleep and everything else... It pained his heart to see his daughter living in such a manner.

While their daughter had reached a level far beyond what they could imagine, their daughter’s attitude of recklessly plunging into any danger as long as it could raise her cultivation was a cause for concern. They felt that she would eventually come to harm as a result of this.

“I’m fine. I just wish to be able to stand before my teacher proudly when he finally returns so that he won’t be disappointed in me,” Zhao Ya replied with a smile.

The memories that she shared with her teacher flashed through her head and filled her with strength once more. She was just about to placate her parents before returning to her cultivation when her eyebrows suddenly shot up.

She hurriedly raised her head, only to see that the distant sky had already been covered by large swathes of ominous clouds, and it was swiftly creeping toward the Glacier Plain Court.

[1] One mu = 666.6m²

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“This is...”

Zhao Ya immediately shot to her feet in shock.

This was because she realized that even with her current cultivation... she was unable to see the entire span of the ominous clouds!

Due to her hard work over the past half a year, her cultivation had already reached Blood Reincarnation realm consummation. Of course, she was still nowhere close to pushing for a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm, but there was no doubt that her strength was more than enough to put her at the top of the world.

Despite that, she was actually unable to see the end of the ominous clouds...

Did this not mean that the ominous clouds extend over several hundred thousand li?

“What in the world is this? How could there be such a huge congregation of dark clouds here?”

Zhao Feng and his wife also swiftly noticed that something was amiss, and they were horrified by what they were seeing.

“It seems to be a cultivation ordeal... Teacher! That’s right, my teacher must be back!” Zhao Ya’s eyes lit up in excitement.

Not in the mood to cultivate anymore, she quickly rushed in the direction of where the ominous clouds had come from.

Other than her teacher, there was no one in the world who was able to summon such a huge congregation of clouds! He was the one and only one in the world!

...

“A teacher seeks to impart knowledge and clarify doubts. While our Combat Master Hall does not have the capacity to impart wisdom, we can still demystify combat techniques and fighting skills. This is aligned with the responsibilities of a teacher, and that’s also why we are a subsidiary of the Master Teacher Pavilion instead of a separate organization!”

Standing in front of an army of ten thousand, Zheng Yang looked at the newly recruited combat masters sternly as he spoke.

Over the past half a year, the Combat Master Hall had grown significantly stronger, especially after Zheng Yang passed down the knowledge that he had received from Zhang Xuan.

The members of the Combat Master Hall were stronger than ever, each of them wielding the strength to fend off hundreds of cultivators simultaneously.

“We understand!”

The crowd nodded in agitation.

All of them had heard of the incredible deeds of the hall master and his teacher, and they looked forward to becoming a part of the legend they were creating. It was their dearest wish to follow behind this esteemed young man, and their wish was coming true!

Seeing that everyone was pumped up, Zheng Yang stopped his speech right there. “Alright, we shall start the training for today!”

He was just about to gesture for the instructors to begin when he suddenly raised his head and saw darkness creeping in from afar.

“Those dark clouds... Is it a cultivation ordeal?” Zheng Yang was stunned for a moment before realization struck him. “It’s my teacher! He’s going to achieve a breakthrough to Ancient Sage!”

With a slight push against the ground, he vanished right from the spot.

...

In the capital of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, Liu Yang was seated upon a high throne, looking down upon his subjects. With a cold voice carrying unquestionable authority, he commanded, "I have mentioned this far too many times, and it bores me to repeat myself time and time again. All Otherworldly Demons are to maintain friendly relations with the humans, and conflicts are to be avoided at all costs. Anyone who infringes on this will be killed without fail! Do I still have to teach you what to do?"

The Otherworldly Demons quickly kneeled on the ground fearfully and replied, "Yes, Your Majesty! We'll carry out your will!"

Shortly after his inauguration, the new Sovereign Chen Yong had implemented a series of swift but severe reforms. Under his efforts, the Otherworldly Demons were starting to accept their coexistence with the humans, and the initial tension between the two races was starting to calm down. Of course, a feud that had lasted over tens of thousands of years could not be halted so easily, but at the very least, the battles had stopped for the time being.

Eventually, time would wash away the hostility between the two races, ushering in an era of stability and harmony.

Not to mention, coexistence with the humans was not without benefits for the Otherworldly Demons either. The Otherworldly Demons gained access to the precious resources traded on the Master Teacher Continent, and they were also able to develop their industries through implementing the technologies of the humans.

Having experienced the benefits of coexistence, there were some factions among the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe who were starting to openly support the new Sovereign Chen Yong's policies.

More importantly, Sovereign Chen Yong had started pushing out a new set of cultivation techniques that allowed Otherworldly Demons to cultivate swiftly even if they did not devour the flesh and souls of master teachers and humans.

With the mutual benefits of the two races aligned, the friction between them lessened significantly.

“Alright, we shall end the court here. You are dismissed!”

With a wave of his hand, Liu Yang stood up to walk away. As a sign of respect, the subjects were only allowed to leave after the emperor had left the royal court.

However, at that moment, ominous clouds suddenly swarmed over from afar, covering the sky in a flash.

“Teacher...” Liu Yang’s eyes reddened in agitation at this sight.

Without any hesitation, he flicked his wrist and tore open a spatial passageway. He walked into the spatial passageway and disappeared from the astonished eyes of his subjects.

After his hard work over the past half a year, the situation in the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had finally stabilized. He finally had the rights to pursue his teacher once more.

...

The same situation was occurring in the Hundred Schools of Philosophers’ Kunxu Domain.

Kong Shiyao looked at the gloomy sky as her body trembled in excitement.

Was her teacher finally appearing once more after his long absence?

“I’ll leave the Kunxu Domain to you for the time being. I’m heading out to take a look!”

Without waiting for the other party to respond, Kong Shiyao rushed toward the Master Teacher Continent.

...

After spending six months in anonymity, Zhang Xuan finally caused a huge uproar in the world with his breakthrough!

“It’s him... It really is him!”

“There’s no doubt, there’s no one other than Zhang shi who could pull something like this off. To think that we wouldn’t

be able to recognize him when he was right before our eyes, and we even attempted to capture him...”

“My gosh, I actually got a chance to see Zhang shi’s splendor with my own eyes! Now, I can die with no regrets!”

...

As the truth dawned upon those in the little town, countless silhouettes gathered around the stage stiffened in shock.

Previously, when Shen Bi Ru mentioned that she was Zhang shi’s colleague, there had not been a single person among the crowd who believed her. When she said that the young man standing before them was actually Zhang shi, they had scoffed at her words, thinking that they were utter nonsense.

All of it turned out to be real!

The incredible figure who had won the world’s respect and admiration was really standing right before them in the flesh!

“He’s just the same as ever. He’s always the brightest one in the crowd,” Shen Bi Ru remarked with a helpless smile.

For as long as she had known this young man, he had always caught everyone’s gaze. She had thought that he would tone down after coming this far, but the other party turned out to be the same as ever. It was as if he did not know the concepts of humility and low profile.

...

Zhang Xuan was oblivious to the uproar among the crowd.

He was carefully ruminating over his new enlightenment, and it felt as if the rays of the dawn sun had pierced through the darkness in his mind, showing him a new route.

This feeling was so strong that it touched even the depths of his soul.

“So, this is what I’ve been pursuing all this while,” Zhang Xuan muttered with a faint smile as he looked at the endless dark clouds and lightning bolts gathering around him.

It was apparent that the cultivation ordeal that he was going to go through this time would be highly destructive, commanding

a might far beyond what he had ever experienced before.

Si la!

Lightning bolts and heavenly flames condensed together to form innumerable massive weapons, and each of these weapons darted right toward Zhang Xuan.

Just from the sheer momentum, it felt like not even Dimension Shatterer realm experts would stand a chance against this fearsome might.

In fact, it felt like it had far exceeded everything in the world.

It was a transcendental force that was bound to bring destruction upon its target, and not even the newly enlightened Zhang Xuan would stand a chance against it.

But...

Since he did not stand a chance against it, why should he bother fighting against it?

Without the slightest change in his expression, Zhang Xuan parted his lips.

“Dissipate.”

His voice pierced through the void, echoing into the high heavens.

Huala!

As if they had encountered their greatest nemeses, the weapons made of lightning bolts and heavenly flames swiftly disintegrated into nothing.

At the same time, under his command, the ominous clouds slowly scattered, returning a clear sky to the world.

Previously, he would still have had to utilize all kinds of techniques in order to overcome his cultivation ordeal, but with his current ability, he was actually able to resolve it with a single word.

It was as if the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent had submitted to him. He had become the ruler of the world, and his words dictated the future course of the world.

This was the ability of the Word of Law!

A breakthrough to Ancient Sage meant surpassing the world in a certain law, but the current Zhang Xuan had gone far beyond that. His entire existence had surpassed the limitations of the world, making him a being who stood above the heavens.

He had become a transcendental being that existed beyond the three realms[1], unrecognized by the Five Elements.

As the Ancient Sage Ordeal vanished, overwhelming energy gushed out from his body and pierced into the heavens, suppressing everything in the area.

Boom!

Unable to suppress his zhenqi any longer, Zhang Xuan's aura began surging forth. In an instant, from Sempiternal realm consummation, he had already reached Ancient Sage.

Ancient Sage 1-dan Bloodline Continuance realm!

Ancient Sage 2-dan Great Philosopher realm!

Ancient Sage 3-dan Blood Reincarnation realm!

All of the accumulation prior to his breakthrough was showing its effects now.

In less than ten breaths, he had already pushed through three realms, rising all the way to Blood Reincarnation realm consummation!

In a sense, his achievement was even more fearsome than Kong Shiyao's. In fact, not even Kong shi's breakthrough had been so swift!

Feeling vigorous energy coursing through his body, a smile slowly etched itself onto Zhang Xuan's lips as he gazed down upon the world as if an immortal of the heavens. At that moment, his profile looked ever so inviolable and authoritative.

A long silence lingered in the world as the sky cleared up completely. Following which, a majestic voice boomed across the world.

"From this day onward, I am the World's Teacher!"

[1] The three realms are namely the heavens, earth, and hell.

1910 Zhao Ya's Unique Nature

From the moment he achieved a breakthrough to Ancient Sage, Zhang Xuan realized that he was already an existence that towered above the Master Teacher Continent's heavens, becoming the World's Teacher in reality.

Every word and action from him could influence the will of the heavens and even correct them.

This was the same ability that Kong shi's descendants wielded, Word of Law.

He had thought that he had finally diverged from Kong shi's path and was no longer affected by the latter, but who could have known that he was still walking on the latter's footsteps? It was as if every step that he took brought him closer to becoming the next Kong shi.

Kong shi must have reached such a realm in the ancient era for him to bestow upon his descendants the ability to warp the laws of the world through their words.

Zhang Xuan sighed deeply before shaking the matter out of his mind.

It should not matter whether he was tracing Kong shi's footsteps or not. As long as he was giving his all in everything that he did, what was the point in frustrating over such matters?

With clenched fists, Zhang Xuan began to carefully sense the changes in his body.

Even though he had only reached the Blood Reincarnation realm thus far, with his current strength, he was confident that he could crush the deity that had appeared previously in the Kunxu Domain with a single finger.

It seemed like the many times that he had suppressed his cultivation had not been in vain. The strength that he had

acquired as soon as he made the breakthrough was really beyond imagination.

Kacha!

The painting that Zhang Xuan was holding tightly in his hand suddenly disintegrated into ashes.

In order to fuel his previous breakthrough, not only did he use up all of the Aeon of Ancient Sage contained in the painting, he also devoured all of the Ancient Sage blood that he had acquired from the two deities that he had killed. At that very moment, he felt like he had reverted to his usual poor self.

Wealth sure was transient!

“Farewell!”

With a tap of his finger, he imparted a modified cultivation technique into the head of the young lady before turning around and vanishing from sight.

“Farewell... Zhang Xuan!” Shen Bi Ru’s eyes reddened as her body shook nonstop.

She knew that this parting truly represented the divergence of their pathways. They would never meet one another ever again.

Meanwhile, after confirming the identity of the young man in the sky, the crowd in the town swiftly got to their knees and kneeled down.

“Paying respects to Zhang shi!”

As expected of the World’s Teacher, every action that he did was a legend in itself!

...

Flying to a private location where ordinary cultivators could no longer see him, Zhang Xuan halted his flight and cast a cursory glance around him. With a smile on his lips, he said, “Come out!”

“Teacher!”

Zhao Ya, Wang Ying, Liu Yang, Zheng Yang, Yuan Tao, Lu Chong, Wei Ruyan, Zhang Jiuxiao, and Kong Shiyao... His nine direct disciples swiftly appeared from the shadows and bowed down to him.

Over the past two years, he had accepted all nine of them as his direct disciples. Each of them had eventually climbed to the top of the Master Teacher Continent, becoming figures that stood at the very peak of the pyramid.

“Come at me all at once. I want to see how much you have grown,” Zhang Xuan said with his hands behind his back.

The nine direct disciples were stunned for a moment before they nodded simultaneously.

Huhuhu!

The nine of them immediately encircled Zhang Xuan before charging at him from all directions.

Over the past half a year, all nine of them had made significant advances in their cultivation. Even the one with the lowest cultivation in the past, Yuan Tao, had successfully reached Great Philosopher realm intermediate stage after his two Ancient Sage Ordeals. As for the others, such as Zhao Ya, Kong Shiyao, Zheng Yang, and Liu Yang, they had all reached the Blood Reincarnation realm.

With their combined prowess, they wielded the power to seal even spacetime itself. Had the deity from before come under their collaborative offense, he would have found it hard to stand his ground.

But when the target was Zhang Xuan, their seemingly devastating attacks were easily kept at bay by the mere protective layer of zhenqi shrouding his body.

In fact, as long as Zhang Xuan willed it, he could move at a speed so quick that even they would be unable to perceive his movements.

At this point, the Zhang Clan's bloodline was completely useless to him. Time Acceleration had become an ability that he could activate with a mere thought.

The group fought for a while, and it did not take long for Zhang Xuan to ascertain how powerful he and each of his direct disciples were. Feeling that there was no point in prolonging the fight any longer, he raised his forefinger and tapped it lightly in front of him. "Break!"

Huala!

All nine of them were sent retreating simultaneously with pale faces.

It was no exaggeration to say that they were the most powerful team of cultivators on the Master Teacher Continent at the moment, but to think that they would not be able to withstand a single strike from their teacher's finger...

"Zhao Ya and Zheng Yang, you have worked hard. I can tell that you have improved a lot over the past half a year. The rest of you too. Well done. However, Shiyao, you will have to work a little harder. Even though you aren't the weakest at the moment, your advancement is sorely lagging behind," Zhang Xuan pointed out.

He could tell that his students had been working extremely hard based on their improvements. In contrast, the one who had been growing the slowest turned out to be the last direct disciple that he had accepted, Kong Shiyao.

He had not really given her any pointers prior to his departure, resulting in the latter's cultivation advancing only from Blood Reincarnation realm intermediate stage to advanced stage despite having half a year to herself. As one of Zhang Xuan's direct disciples, such a rate of progress could be said to be abysmal.

"I..." Kong Shiyao was rendered speechless.

She was painfully aware of the fact that she was the one who had made the least progress over the past half a year.

Previously, she had thought that, with her Kong Clan bloodline, even if she was no match for Zhao Ya, Zheng Yang, and the others at the moment, she should be able to catch up with them in no time. Yet, the others were pulling further away from her instead.

This made her realize that the incredible gifts that the Kong Clan's bloodline had bestowed upon her would only get her so far. It was sheer naivety for her to think that her talent would be enough to offset the effort put in by her seniors who were desperately climbing forward with everything they had.

If she did not desperately claw forward with everything she had, she would only end up being cast behind the others.

Not to mention that her teacher was the World's Teacher! There was no way the disciples of the World's Teacher would be bound by the mere limitations of talent!

"Alright, this is what I have comprehended over the past half a year. I'll impart everything to you now. As for how much you are able to comprehend, it's entirely up to you!" With a tap of his finger, Zhang Xuan imparted the insights that he had received during his breakthrough to Ancient Sage into the minds of the others.

At their level of cultivation, there was no longer a need to bring them around step by step anymore as if they were amateurs. Rather, all he had to do was grant them the resources and allow them to reach enlightenment on their own.

One's cultivation lay with oneself. As a teacher, his role was just to bring them through the doorsill and point out plausible paths to them.

As for how far they could go, that was down to them. It was also for this reason that Zhang Xuan had previously encouraged them to seek out their own paths.

If not, they would not have accrued precious experiences that would allow them to grow and mature as people.

The nine direct disciples swiftly scanned through Zhang Xuan's impartation, and excited gleams sparkled in their eyes.

With his insights, they would be able to quicken their rate of cultivation and reinforce the foundations of their cultivation further.

Zhang Xuan knew that it would take some time for his direct disciples to assimilate what they had just received, but he did not have much time to waste. Thus, he spoke up. "I'm

intending to head to the formation in the Kunxu Domain. The rest of you should come along with me!”

The nine of them quickly nodded in response.

Thus, they made their way over to the Kunxu Domain, and within ten minutes, they were already on the elevated platform beneath the formation leading to the Azure.

After Zhang Xuan had repaired the formation, all of the rifts that had appeared previously had been completely mended, making this place seem almost no different from any other. The mercury-like energy that had seeped through previously had also diffused into the surroundings to harmless concentration levels.

From the looks of it, it seemed like the formation was doing its job well. Through the personnel guarding the formation, he confirmed that no deities had been able to slip through the formation in the past half a year, and he heaved a sigh of relief.

“On the other side of the formation above is the Azure, and it is filled with an extremely heavy spiritual energy. It’s highly dangerous, but I believe that it’s the key to achieving a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm. Would you like to try and see if you are able to absorb it?”

Zhang Xuan tapped his finger lightly as he spoke, and a small black hole appeared in the formation. A gush of heavy energy poured down, causing the elevated platform to creak under the weight.

Since he had achieved a breakthrough to Ancient Sage, it was about time for him to leave the Master Teacher Continent and take a look at the higher dimensions.

Otherwise, he would never be able to find Luo Ruoxin, and their fate would be severed thereon.

However, in order to enter the Azure, he would have to first grow accustomed to the mercury-like spiritual energy. The reason he had brought his direct disciples there as well was because he wanted them to get a taste of the mercury-like spiritual energy so that they would be wary of it.

Tzzzzz!

Hearing Zhang Xuan's words, the nine direct disciples each took in a small bit of the mercury-like spiritual energy, and the next moment, they felt as if their meridians were going to collapse under the weight. They hurriedly drove their zhenqi to reinforce the resilience of their meridians.

This spiritual energy was simply too fearsome. Even though they had all reached Ancient Sage, it was still beyond their means to deal with.

“Teacher, I think... I am able to absorb this spiritual energy!”

Just as Zhang Xuan was sighing in disappointment, a voice suddenly sounded. He quickly turned his head over and saw Zhao Ya looking at him with a confused expression.

The mercury-like spiritual energy was slowly flowing into her body, but her body was not showing any signs of rejection.

1911 Zhao Ya's Breakthrough

“Continue cultivating, don’t stop!” Zhang Xuan urged as he activated his Eye of Insight to take a closer look at the young lady.

As the mercury-like spiritual energy flowed through her body, it refined her zhenqi, inducing her cultivation to grow at a visible rate. Within a short ten minutes, she was making advancements equivalent to an entire day of cultivation!

“This is... It’s the altered meridians!” Zhang Xuan came to a realization.

Previously, Zhao Ya’s meridians had been completely destroyed while trying to save him, so Zhang Xuan had used the vines of the Dongxu Gourd to construct a new meridian network for her.

This mercury-like spiritual energy should have been enough to crush the meridians of any cultivator with ease, but somehow, this problem did not exist for Zhao Ya.

It was a wonder what the vines truly were. They were actually able to absorb such heavy spiritual energy without causing a strain on Zhao Ya’s body at all by nullifying the damage it would have usually caused on normal cultivators through their sheer resilience!

A few moments later, Zhao Ya halted her cultivation before turning to look at her teacher with agitation in her eyes.

“Teacher, I think that I should be able to easily achieve a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm as long as I continue absorbing the heavy spiritual energy!”

Her cultivation had already reached Blood Reincarnation realm consummation due to her hard work over the past half a year, but all of a sudden, she had found that she could not scale any higher than that. It was as if she had already reached

the highest peak of the Master Teacher Continent, and there was no path leading to higher grounds for her to take anymore.

It was the world's bottleneck.

Yet, when she absorbed this spiritual energy, she actually felt an impetus to make a breakthrough, and it filled her with disbelief.

"I see," Zhang Xuan remarked with a nod.

He did not say too much in response to Zhao Ya's situation, but he had already roughly figured out what was going on.

The spiritual energy of the Master Teacher Continent differed far too much from the Azure in terms of density and quality. The bottleneck preventing cultivators from reaching the Dimension Shatterer realm was like a pair of resilient steel gates that an ordinary stream could never push open. It required powerful currents and devastating waves striking on the steel gates in order to break them apart.

"It's as I thought. The key to achieving a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm is to absorb this mercury-like energy!" Zhang Xuan nodded affirmatively, more certain than ever of his conjecture.

This might also have been the reason for the vast difference in the strength between those on the Master Teacher Continent and the deities descending from the Azure. They had been constantly nourished by the mercury-like spiritual energy, so achieving a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm was not too difficult a feat for them anymore.

It was for this reason that the Hundred Schools of Philosophers had devoted their efforts to developing the Greensprout Wheat to improve the constitution of ordinary civilians. Once their constitution reached a level suited for them to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy, mankind would take a qualitative step forward in its level of existence.

"Continue absorbing the spiritual energy. Try to achieve a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm if possible!" Zhang Xuan instructed.

Zhao Ya nodded. She quickly drove her zhenqi to its limits as she devoured the mercury-like spiritual energy greedily.

On the other hand, the other eight direct disciples tried to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy once more, but they were unable to absorb it like their First Senior. Thus, they could only sigh deeply and look at their First Senior in envy.

Knowing that cultivation was not something that could be rushed, Zhang Xuan did not rush Zhao Ya. Instead, using both the Eye of Insight and the Library of Heaven's Path, he made sure to take note of Zhao Ya's current condition carefully, fearing that something would happen to her.

Fortunately, due to Zhao Ya's diligence and patience, the foundations of her cultivation were extremely firm. Her cultivation grew without any problems, and within half a day, she was already knocking on the bottleneck keeping her from the Dimension Shatterer realm.

“Break!”

Once the young lady had built up sufficient momentum, her eyebrows shot up as she released a furious cry. In an instant, her zhenqi gushed through her meridians and tore down the bottleneck limiting her, causing her cultivation to rise to the much-desired level of the Dimension Shatterer realm!

The Ordeal of Lightning Armament swiftly descended upon Zhao Ya as the heavens desperately tried to claw her apart. However, with her current strength and Zhang Xuan's pointers, she managed to overcome the crisis safely. Nevertheless, the cultivation ordeal still left many wounds on her that would take some time to recover from.

“Is this the level that you reached back then?” Zhang Xuan asked.

Vicious had reached the Dimension Shatterer realm before, which had resulted in his widespread fame in the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe as an Immortal's Envoy. It was with such strength that he had been able to force Kong shi into a corner multiple times.

“Un!” Vicious nodded. “Through absorbing the heavy energy coming from the Azure, I was able to push my cultivation past the Dimension Shatterer realm, but I was only able to push to primary stage. Anything beyond that is practically impossible. Based on my research back then, one has to enter the Azure and tap into the natural energies in that world to alter one’s fundamental constitution in order to advance one’s cultivation any further than that. Otherwise, one will be doomed to be trapped at that realm till one’s death!”

“You were unable to advance any further than that?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He quickly turned to Zhao Ya and asked her the same question.

Zhao Ya closed her eyes to sense her current physical condition before shaking her head and replying, “Teacher, it seems like reaching Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage is really my limit. If I wish to cultivate any further than this, while the rejection of the heavens does play a part as well, more importantly, it seems like my body has reached the limits of its capacity. I am unable to accept any more heavy spiritual energy!”

It was similar to the idea of how a pond could only store a limited amount of water depending on its size. If someone attempted to pour more water into an already full pond, the excess would just flow into the surroundings.

If one wanted the pond to reserve a greater amount of water, the only way was to expand the pond. As the size of the pond increased, the amount of water that it could store would naturally increase as well.

The dimension one lives in does affect one’s constitution too, Zhang Xuan thought.

He had thought that as long as he had an ample supply of the mercury-like spiritual energy, he would be able to continuously absorb it and advance his cultivation swiftly. However, it seemed like his thoughts were too naive.

If it was that easy, Kong shi would not have had to leave the Master Teacher Continent.

Zhang Xuan clenched his fists and thought, Let me give it a try again and see if I'm able to absorb it!

Previously, when he tried to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy, he had not achieved a breakthrough to Ancient Sage, and the resilience of his body had still been sorely lacking. However, after his breakthrough, he wielded strength that far surpassed that of even Zhao Ya. Could his body possibly be able to adapt to this mercury-like spiritual energy and allow him to absorb it too?

After all, he had altered his meridian network, and it was even more profound than Zhao Ya's!

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan quickly sat on the ground and closed his eyes.

1912 The Importance of Meridians

Tzzzzzzzz!

The mercury-like spiritual energy swiftly poured into Zhang Xuan's meridians through his acupoints.

Kacha! Kacha!

But as if someone had injected lead into his body, his meridians immediately began cracking as he felt an incredible weight trying to pull him down from within. He hurriedly drove his Heaven's Path zhenqi to repair the cracks and reinforce his meridians to withstand the mercury-like spiritual energy. Nevertheless, his face continued to redden, and a moment later, fresh blood spurted out of his mouth.

"It doesn't work..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

He had thought that he would be able to absorb the mercury-like energy with the recent advancement in his cultivation, but his expectations had been dashed.

If he attempted to force his way through, it could be foreseen that his meridians would be shattered, and his dantian would collapse. Putting aside trying to assimilate the mercury-like spiritual energy into his zhenqi, his body would first be destroyed by the massive burden!

"It's a pity that I don't have the vine anymore." Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

If he still had the vines of the Dongxu Gourd, he would have been able to use it to further alter his meridians and allow him to slowly adapt to the mercury-like spiritual energy, but that was clearly out of the question now.

Just as Zhang Xuan was wondering if he should seek another method, a thought suddenly arose in his head.

Wait a moment, that shouldn't be. Those two Otherworldly Demons were able to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy, and even Vicious succeeded...

Ancient Sage Yan Qing had once experimented with the mercury-like spiritual energy, and of the initial ten subjects, two Otherworldly Demons had eventually survived the crushing pressure from the mercury-like spiritual energy. Vicious definitely did not have the vine of the Dongxu Gourd, but he had succeeded as well.

Considering that his meridian network was even more perfect than the Otherworldly Demons, it did not make sense for him to fail. There had to be something else that they had that he did not that resulted in such a massive difference in results.

Could it be the Zhenqi of Slaughter? If I alter the attribute of my zhenqi to that, will I be able to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy more smoothly? Zhang Xuan wondered.

It was not as if there was anyone whom he could consult, so he decided to immediately try it out. He swiftly altered the attribute of his Heaven's Path zhenqi to simulate the Zhenqi of Slaughter, and in an instant, it was as if he had become a lofty Otherworldly Demon Emperor.

After altering the attribute of his zhenqi, he opened up his acupoints once more and carefully took in the mercury-like spiritual energy.

Tzzzz!

This time, when the same mercury-like spiritual energy entered his body, it surprisingly did not feel as heavy as before. Instead, it felt warm and soothing, as if gulping down a bowl of warm chicken soup.

"It's working!" Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly in exhilaration.

As the current Sovereign Chen Yong, Liu Yang possessed the ability to freely alter his zhenqi to that of the Zhenqi of Slaughter as well, but his meridians had never been changed before. It was likely that this was why he was unable to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy.

However, it was different for Zhang Xuan. Back when he was stripped down to his bones during his fight with the deity in the capital of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, he had used the unique aura that the deity gifted to Sovereign Chen Ling in order to recover, and he had made sure to alter his meridian network to one that was more aligned with the world.

With those changes, he was actually able to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy smoothly without any problems.

After absorbing for some time, he finally felt the bottleneck that was preventing him from reaching the Dimension Shatterer realm.

“Shatter!”

At that moment, Zhang Xuan’s consciousness was within the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn in the Library of Heaven’s Path, which resulted in a tenfold acceleration for the time of his consciousness. Mercury-like energy poured out of the Azure in bulk, but every single bit of it was swiftly swept into a vortex that led straight into Zhang Xuan’s body.

Zhao Ya, Kong Shiyao, and the others were astonished, and they swiftly retreated several steps away from the elevated platform.

They had noticed that their teacher was able to absorb the heavy spiritual energy ever since his aura transformed into one similar to an Otherworldly Demon, but they did not think that he would actually be able to cultivate so quickly!

Under the relentless downpour of such a huge quantity of the mercury-like energy, the elevated platform was crushed under the pressure.

Due to the effects of the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn, Zhang Xuan was able to cultivate at an unbelievable speed. Nevertheless, it took him nearly an entire day before he was able to push his cultivation up to the very brim, where he was unable to accumulate any more energy.

Hong long!

It was around half a day later before he finally released the energy and took the final step into the Dimension Shatterer

realm, just like Zhao Ya. Surprisingly though, perhaps because he had become the World's Teacher, the heavens did not call an Ordeal of Lightning Armament upon him as a result of his breakthrough.

After reaching this realm, he swiftly noticed that he was facing the same problem as Vicious and Zhao Ya. No matter how much he tried to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy, he was unable to advance his cultivation in the slightest. It was as if his dantian and meridians had reached a sated state, preventing him from absorbing any more energy.

“What a pity!” Zhang Xuan remarked with a shake of his head as he halted his cultivation and rose to his feet.

The advancement in his cultivation had given him a deeper understanding of what the mercury-like spiritual energy truly was.

Simply put, it was spiritual energy condensed to the extremities, resulting in its unbelievable weight. As the meridians of ordinary humans were simply too weak, it was impossible for them to adapt to it.

On the other hand, the Otherworldly Demons possessed a superior constitution, and their meridian network was much more logical than that of normal human cultivators. As such, there was a chance that they could adapt to the mercury-like spiritual energy and enjoy a significant boost in their cultivation.

As for why the Zhenqi of Slaughter was required to cultivate the mercury-like spiritual energy, Zhang Xuan did not have a clear answer yet, but he did notice that the two energies shared similar attributes to one another. Perhaps, the Zhenqi of Slaughter facilitated the absorption and flow of the mercury-like spiritual energy, and the similar attributes also meant that it was less likely that one's body would reject the mercury-like spiritual energy.

Seeing that both Zhao Ya and their teacher had achieved a breakthrough to the Dimension Shatterer realm one after another, Zheng Yang, Kong Shiyao, and the others could

hardly contain their agitation. “Teacher, is it possible for us to cultivate the heavy spiritual energy too?”

If the two of them were able to absorb the heavy spiritual energy, would they be able to do it in the near future?

Zhang Xuan shook his head grimly. “For the time being, it’s impossible for the rest of you.”

Altering the meridians of an individual was no laughing matter. Even with Zhang Xuan’s current means, he did not dare take the matter lightly.

The reason Zhao Ya had been able to succeed was because her meridians had been replaced with the extraordinary vines of the Dongxu Gourd, but even so, luck played a huge part as well. Many complications could easily have occurred, such as her succumbing to the pain or her body rejecting the vines of the Dongxu Gourds.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan had only managed to alter his meridians because he was already reduced to a skeleton, and he had the ‘recovery energy’ from the deity that had allowed him to swiftly heal his body. Otherwise, just trying to recover would have been a pain in his backside, let alone making use of this opportunity to alter his meridians.

Without such fortuitous encounters, it would be hard for the rest of his direct disciples to succeed as well.

Hearing those words, the crowd could not help but lower their heads in disappointment.

“It’s indeed impossible for ordinary humans to absorb this energy. The Hundred Schools of Philosophers have tried many times, but not even the most talented geniuses were able to adapt to it!” Kong Shiyao added with a bitter smile.

There was no one on the Master Teacher Continent who knew more about the mercury-like spiritual energy than the Hundred Schools of Philosophers.

For many generations, they had guarded this seal, and within this period of time, they had already fully familiarized themselves with the nature of the mercury-like spiritual energy.

With so many talented individuals failing in the past, it did not seem likely that they would all be able to overcome this limitation any time soon.

“Even though you might not have succeeded thus far, with time, your body should gradually get used to the mercury-like spiritual energy,” Zhang Xuan said.

“Based on the records from tens of thousands of years ago, the population then couldn’t even survive three seconds in the face of the heavy spiritual energy before their meridians ruptured completely. However, the current population, including those who have yet to cultivate, can last for at least ten minutes in the face of the mercury-like spiritual energy as long as they don’t absorb it into their body!” Kong Shiyao nodded in agreement.

“Hmm?” Those words brought a frown to Zhang Xuan’s face. “Why would that be? Allow me to take a look!”

By right, the situation for ordinary humans should not change by too much. Even if the Greensprout Wheat altered the constitution of ordinary humans, a Fighter 8-dan cultivator should still be as powerless in the face of the mercury-like spiritual energy as a Fighter 1-dan cultivator, but there was actually such a huge difference over time. Could it be that the Greensprout Wheat had altered something else?

Zhang Xuan swiftly spread his Spiritual Perception across the entire Great Phrontistery of Confucianism, and he swiftly located some of the ordinary citizens.

“The Greensprout Wheat has not only enhanced their constitution; it seems like their meridian network has also developed in a much different manner compared to the cultivators of the Master Teacher Continent.” Zhang Xuan was shocked.

He did know that the Greensprout Wheat had strengthened the bodies of those living in the Kunxu Domain, granting them the strength of Zongshi realm at maturity, but he had never thought of checking their meridians.

Over many years of development, the meridian network of the local population was starting to show some similarities to that of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe! This explained the significant increase in the duration that they were able to withstand the mercury-like energy.

“Perhaps this is the path that mankind is destined to walk on in order to advance further...” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

Initially, Zhang Xuan had intended to find a different way for Zheng Yang and the others to adapt to the mercury-like spiritual energy, but the sight that he had just seen changed his mind altogether.

It felt like the only way to truly adapt to the mercury-like spiritual energy was through altering one’s meridians, and if Zheng Yang and the others were to go around it the normal way, it would be impossible for them to succeed in their lifetime.

However...

In order for them to alter their meridians, they would have to first destroy their meridian networks, but the Aeon of Ancient Sage that they would require to make a full recovery was so massive that it was not an amount that he could procure.

Furthermore, what if they were unable to reform their meridians after shattering them?

Zhang Xuan pondered deeply for a moment before asking, “Shiyao, where are Ancient Sage Yan Qing and the others?”

1913 Up to the Azure

The battle with the deity had reduced Ancient Sage Yan Qing and the others to mere skeletal racks. With all of them on the verge reaching the limits of their lifespan, it would simply be a waste of resources for them to recover anymore. Nevertheless, before Zhang Xuan left on his self-discovery journey, he saw Kong Shiyao sealing them in ice to preserve their conditions. Half a year had passed since then, but it should be likely that they were still alive.

Kong Shiyao also nodded in response, “They are currently in hibernation.”

“Bring me to them. I just might have a way to save them!”

Zhang Xuan instructed as he gathered a bundle of the mercury-like spiritual energy in his hands.

Those words made Kong Shiyao widen her eyes in excitement. Knowing the conditions that Ancient Sage Yan Qing and the others were in, all she could really do was to delay the inevitable. She thought that it was really the end of these great men who had devoted their lives to protecting the Hundred Schools of Philosophers, but Zhang Xuan’s words sparked a glimmer of hope in her eyes.

She immediately led the way forward, and they soon arrived in a sealed room. In the room, the bodies of Ancient Sage Yan Qing and several other Ancient Sages were placed side by side along a round elevated platform. Beneath the platform were various artifacts that constantly supplied the Ancient Sages with the vitality required to sustain their lives as long as possible.

Such a method couldn’t increase their lifespan, but at the very least, it was able to delay their deaths as much as possible. This was also the method they had used in order to last the past ten thousand years.

Zhang Xuan walked right up to Ancient Sage Yan Qing’s skeletal rack, and with a snap of his finger, he released the seal

cast around him. The skeletal rack slowly roused to consciousness.

“Zhang shi!” the skeletal rack swiftly rose up and bowed deeply.

“I have found a way that could potentially save you. However, as I have never tested it before, I can’t guarantee its success. If it works out, your lifespan will be extended, and you will enjoy a huge leap in your cultivation. However, if it fails, you’ll lose your life right away. Are you interested in taking this gamble?” Knowing that the other party’s time was limited, Zhang Xuan got straight to the point.

“I want to give it a try!” Ancient Sage Yan Qing replied decisively.

Since he was doomed anyway, there was no reason for him to clutch onto this straw of hope, even if the chances were slim.

“Good. I have a zhenqi circulation method over here that I need you to practice right now. Furthermore, while you are reforming your physical body, I want you to create your meridians according to this map I have over here!”

Zhang Xuan tapped his finger and imparted the reverse method of the simplified Heaven’s Path Divine Art and the meridian network mapping he had drawn a while ago into Ancient Sage Yan Qing’s head.

It took Ancient Sage Yan Qing ten minutes to fully comprehend the meridian network and the zhenqi circulation method. He wasn’t too sure what Zhang Xuan was exactly up to, but he was confident that the latter wouldn’t harm him. Thus, he took in a deep breath before driving his zhenqi in accordance to the zhenqi circulation method.

Tzzzzz!

With a snap of his fingers, Zhang Xuan released the mercury-like energy he had gathered previously, causing it to swiftly suffuse the surroundings.

The presence of this energy caused Ancient Sage Yan Qing to tense up in anxiety. Nevertheless, he gritted his teeth and resolved himself to push it through.

He began absorbing the surrounding mercury-like energy using the zhenqi circulation method Zhang Xuan had provided, expecting to feel a crushing pressure any time soon. But as some time passed, an uncomprehending look appeared on his face instead.

When he absorbed the mercury-like spiritual energy based on the zhenqi circulation method provided by Zhang Xuan, he felt that the mercury-like spiritual energy was nourishing his body instead of crushing it. Delighted, he continued absorbing the energy excitedly, and within four hours, his physical body was already fully restored!

Due to the changes in his meridian network, his body was emanating an overpowering killing intent, making him seem like an Otherworldly Demons from afar.

Seeing that the first phase of his plan had worked, Zhang Xuan's eyes glowed in delight. He quickly issued the next set of instructions, "Good. Now, try to push for a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm!"

Ancient Sage Yan Qing nodded as he continued absorbing the mercury-like spiritual energy.

As his accumulation over the past ten thousand years was far greater than Zhao Ya, it took him only two hours to reach Ancient Sage 4-dan. As a result of his breakthrough, his lifespan increased as well.

With this, he was no longer at risk of dying at any moment anymore.

"Thank you, Zhang shi!"

Words could hardly describe Ancient Sage Yan Qing's feelings as he felt the torrent of energy coursing through his body. He quickly knelt onto the floor to express his gratitude to Zhang Xuan.

He was already prepared to face death after his overexertion while trying to repair the formation, but who could have thought that the other party would bring him back using such an unusual method? Not only so, he even achieved a

breakthrough in his cultivation and reached a level that he thought he would never reach.

“The mercury-like spiritual energy sure is incredible. Not only does it hasten one’s rate of cultivation, it also recovers one’s body at a rate faster than the Aeon of Ancient Sage...” Seeing that his guess was on the mark, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Under normal circumstances, given the limited amount of vitality that Ancient Sage Yan Qing had left inside his body, he wouldn’t have been able to fully recover his physical body even in an environment rich in the Aeon of Ancient Sage. However, it was a completely different matter if he were to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy instead.

This type of condensed spiritual energy harnessed an incredible amount of power within it. As long as one was able to absorb it, it could heal any severe wounds swiftly.

After confirming the feasibility of the method, Zhang Xuan unhesitatingly brought the remaining Ancient Sages to the elevated platform before waking them up. He warned them of the risks involved first before imparting them with the same zhenqi circulation method and meridian network mapping he had given to Ancient Sage Yan Qing. All of them decided immediately to go along with Zhang Xuan’s plan, especially after seeing the method had worked on Ancient Sage Yan Qing.

Eventually, most of them managed to take the final step and successfully reached Dimension Shatterer realm, but there were accidents as well. Two Ancient Sages made a mistake in their cultivation and ended up having their skeletal racks crushed by the heavy spiritual energy, causing them to die on the spot.

Nevertheless, all of this showed that this was a feasible course of action to take. Thus, Zhang Xuan called his direct disciples over and asked, “Are you willing to go through any danger in order to reach Dimension Shatterer realm?”

The eight of them nodded their heads in agreement.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan waved his hand, and all eight of them immediately spurted blood simultaneously. That single strike had shattered all of the meridians in their bodies.

“Cultivate in accordance with this, and be warned that you mustn’t make even the slightest mistake. Don’t blame me for not warning you if you were to die in the end!” Zhang Xuan said as he imparted them with the two manuals as well.

Zheng Yang and the others had watched Ancient Sage Yan Qing’s rebirth with their own eyes, so they were well aware as to what they should do. Furthermore, as they had cultivated the simplified version of the Heaven’s Path Divine Art, they were extremely familiar with it. While they had never tried cultivating it in reverse before, it didn’t take them long to get used to it.

In the end, Kong Shiyao was the first one to fully recover and reach Dimension Shatterer realm.

Trailing behind her were Zheng Yang, Wei Ruyan, Lu Chong, and Wang Ying...

And five days later, even the weakest of them, Zhang Jiuxiao, had reached Dimension Shatterer realm too!

With this, all nine of Zhang Xuan’s direct disciples had become Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm experts!

“Teacher!”

Seeing that they had succeeded, all nine of them cheered in delight.

Their teacher had actually accomplished a feat that even Kong shi failed to back then!

Seeing that his final job here was done, Zhang Xuan quickly gathered all of them together and revealed his intent to them, “I’m intending to open up the seal and enter the Azure. The circumstances up there are still unknown for the time being, and it’s likely that untold dangers lurk beyond. Thus, I want all of you to stay put here for the time being and guard the Master Teacher Continent in my stead. Wait for my news, alright?”

Over the past five days which his direct disciples had spent cultivating to Dimension Shatterer realm, he had been pondering over his next move, and he found that his conviction still remained the same.

He wanted to head to the Azure and find Luo Ruoxin. He did think of whether he should bring his students along, but he eventually decided against it, especially given the dangers he involved.

“Teacher, we wish to come along with you!” Zhao Ya stepped forward and declared.

“No matter what kind of danger lies in the path ahead, we’ll follow wherever you go. There is nothing that can make us stand down!” Zheng Yang nodded in agreement.

While the others didn’t say a word, the look of resolution on their faces clearly indicated their stance as well.

It was due to their teacher that they were able to achieve their current accomplishments. If their teacher was going to undergo untold dangers, there was no way they would be able to remain here with a peace of mind!

“I appreciate your sentiments, but we can’t just leave the Master Teacher Continent as it is at the moment. With the massive rebalancing in the power distribution of the Master Teacher Continent, there’s no saying what would happen in the future if all of you were to disappear at once. Rest assured, once I have confirmed the situation in the Azure, I’ll try to inform you all through Liu Yang’s rituals!” Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

The Azure was bound to be filled with innumerable top-notch experts, and even if he was no match for them, he was at least confident of escaping from them if he were alone. However, if he had to bring all of his students with him, he was not confident that he would be able to ensure their safety.

Besides, unlike him, his students had their own responsibilities on the Master Teacher Continent, and they couldn’t afford to simply leave on a whim.

Take Liu Yang for example, he was the highest leader of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe. It hadn't been long since the situation over at the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe had been stabilized, and if he were to disappear at this juncture, there was no saying that others would exploit this opportunity to launch a coup d'état against his rule. If so, mankind could potentially be in danger once more.

"Then... teacher, you must take care of yourself!"

Knowing that their teacher had already made up his mind and no one would be able to sway his decision, the nine of them lowered their heads in disappointment.

"Zheng Yang, I have tempered the Dragonbone Divine Spear with the heavy spiritual energy, and it has already achieved a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm. I shall now bestow it upon you. I don't know whether other deities would try to descend to the Master Teacher Continent after my departure, so I'll be counting on you to protect mankind from such external threats!" Zhang Xuan said as he passed the Dragonbone Divine Spear over.

Due to the dimension barrier, it was impossible for him to bring any items, including his storage rings, along with him up to the Azure. Furthermore, given his current level of cultivation, the Dragonbone Divine Spear was indeed not of much use to him anymore.

"Wang Ying, you specialize in spirit enchantment, but spirit enchantment takes time. I'll bestow the Golden Origin Cauldron to you. It'll safeguard your safety!" Zhang Xuan said as he brought out the Golden Origin Cauldron from the Myriad Anthive Nest.

Over the past five days, while this brick-like fellow hadn't managed to achieve a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm from the nourishment of the mercury-like spiritual energy, it was already very close to doing so. Since he was unable to bring the other party with him, it would be best for him to entrust it to his students.

He took out the treasures he had on him one after another and distributed them equally to his students before heaving a sigh

of relief.

With the current cultivation realm of his students and the treasures they had in their possession, even if a group of deities descended at this moment, they would be able to deal with them calmly without fluster.

As for Vicious, he was sealed within the Book of Heaven's Path, which could be deposited into the Library of Heaven's Path. Considering this fellow was a figure who was able to stand on equal grounds with Kong shi back then, it might spell a calamity in the future if he were to leave this fellow on the Master Teacher Continent. Despite all they had gone through together, he found that he was still unable to fully trust Vicious, so he felt that it would be best to keep the latter close with him.

As for the Dongxu Gourd, it was hiding in his dantian, so there shouldn't be any trouble bringing it across the dimension barrier.

As for his clone, he found that while the other party was unable to enter the Library of Heaven's Path, the other party was still able to enter the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn. Given that the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn formed an independent space separate from the Library of Heaven's Path, and that the clone shared the same soul with Zhang Xuan, it didn't come as a surprise that his clone was able to enter the space too.

With this, he should be able to bring his clone with him too.

With everything in place, Zhang Xuan looked at the formation above of him, and with a wave of his hand, he opened up a rift in it. After which, with a powerful leap, he dashed right toward the rift.

Previously, the downpour of mercury-like spiritual energy would cause a huge burden to both his physical body and his soul, but with his cultivation reaching Dimension Shatterer realm, he no longer felt any discomfort from it anymore. On the contrary, he felt like a traveler stumbling upon an oasis in the desert. It was invigorating.

Kacha! Kacha!

Beyond the formation, he saw innumerable black patches of void. The shattered space between the two dimensions formed powerful spatial turbulence that tugged at him from all directions.

“It’s fortunate that I have reached Dimension Shatterer realm, or else this spatial turbulence would have torn me to shreds...” Zhang Xuan thought grimly as he trudged his way through the spatial turbulence with difficulty.

This spatial turbulence was truly far more powerful than whatever he had experienced in the past.

Putting aside Blood Reincarnation realm cultivators, even ordinary Dimension Shatterer realm cultivators could succumb to the spatial turbulence and end up being torn to shreds in a moment of carelessness.

If not for his incredible accumulation and superior strength, even he would have difficulty trying to get past this.

Nevertheless, the spatial turbulence still inflicted many glaring lacerations on his body, causing blood to flow endlessly from his body.

There was no road in this passageway, and the entire passageway consisted of nothing but collapsed space. It was only through the Library of Heaven’s Path that he could discern a safe passageway, or else he could have easily lost his way in this desolate space.

Hong long long!

Just like that, he traveled for nearly half a month. Gauging by the distance he had traveled so far, he figured that he should be reaching his destination very soon.

But at this moment, a massive bolt of lightning suddenly appeared before him, sealing his pathway forward.

Just as Zhang Xuan was wondering how he could overcome this obstacle, another flash of lightning bolted down and struck Zhang Xuan before he could react, causing him to black out.

1914 Just the Thought of It Excites Me So

With a splitting headache, Zhang Xuan gradually regained consciousness.

The first thing that came into his line of sight was a white ceiling. Swiftly scanning his surroundings, he found that he was lying on a bed in a relatively spacious room.

My strength...

Slowly sitting up, Zhang Xuan winced from the excruciating pain with every inch he moved. He took a look at his own body and found that it was wrapped tightly in bandages. He tried to drive his own zhenqi, but he realized that the zhenqi that remained in his body had become pathetically low.

Why is my zhenqi so heavy?

Taking a closer look, he noticed that his zhenqi had become incredibly heavy. Even slightly driving it created a huge strain on him.

It swiftly dawned on him that it was not that he was low on zhenqi but that the vast amount of zhenqi that he had previously stored in his body had been condensed into mercury-like zhenqi.

It was true that such a heavily condensed zhenqi would grant him greater burst power, but the problem was that he could not even drive it, let alone use it to recover from his injuries.

He quickly tried to recall what had happened prior to this.

I entered the passageway leading to the Azure, but I ended up getting blocked by a bolt of lightning. I was going to find a way to circumvent it when I was struck by another bolt of lightning and ended up blacking out...

Seeing the mess that his body was in and recalling his memories prior to the accident, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes

in astonishment.

Could it be that... I am already in the Azure?

Since he had blacked out in the passageway, he had thought that he would wake up drifting aimlessly in there, but before he knew it, he was already lying in a room with his body fully bandaged. Could it be that he had somehow managed to bypass the lightning region and successfully arrived at the Azure?

This notion prompted Zhang Xuan to swiftly scan his surroundings. Thus, he attempted to release his Spiritual Perception into the surroundings, only to end up with his mouth twitching uncontrollably.

In the past, his Spiritual Perception could easily cover millions of li, but at that moment, it was firmly stuck within his body, refusing to come out at all no matter how he pushed!

What incredible spatial pressure this is!

At this point, it was already certain that he was in the Azure. Not only was he unable to deploy his Spiritual Perception, but even his flight ability had been restricted. In fact, even his usual movements had been curbed significantly due to the immense spatial pressure.

Gugugugu!

Suddenly, a rumbling sound echoed from Zhang Xuan's abdomen. He was hungry.

Ever since he had cultivated to Transcendent Mortal, he had been able to sustain his bodily needs through absorbing spiritual energy and cultivating. It did not matter whether he ate or not. This was the first time in a long time that he had felt so starved. It felt almost as if his body was completely empty.

Sighing deeply, he closed his eyes, and through his senses, he could feel that the surroundings were filled with an abundance of mercury-like spiritual energy. In terms of concentration, it was at least ten times higher than what had descended back at the elevated platform of the Kunxu Domain.

He tried absorbing the mercury-like spiritual energy there to refine it into his own zhenqi to recover his injuries, but the next moment, his face reddened, and a mouthful of fresh blood spurted from his lips.

There was a series of violent coughing, and Zhang Xuan had to strike his chest several times before the stifling sensation finally lessened.

Back when he was uninjured, he could still use the sheer resilience of his body to endure the backlash caused by the absorption of the mercury-like spiritual energy. However, with his current tattered body and cracked meridians, just trying to absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy made him feel like his body was going to collapse, let alone trying to assimilate it.

It looks like I can only give it a try after my injuries recover a little... Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

He knew that impatience would get him nowhere, so he decided to simply let things run their course.

Nevertheless, the fact that he was unable to drive his zhenqi at all and the sheer extent of the damage that his body had suffered meant that he was almost no different from an ordinary human. He would have to tread carefully until he finally recovered his strength.

“First and foremost, I should start by finding myself some food,” Zhang Xuan muttered as another series of hunger pangs struck him.

Struggling to his feet, he rubbed his stomach as he trudged out of the room.

Huhuhu!

Pushing the door open, he heard a series of sharp wind currents slicing in the air. Turning his gaze over, he saw a young man holding a steel sword in hand executing a sword art. While his movements were not fanciful, they carried a peculiar grace to them that made them extremely pleasing to the eye.

One thing that quickly caught Zhang Xuan’s eye was that the young man’s left leg was as stiff as a block of wood. Zhang

Xuan could not tell whether he had suffered an injury or that was the original state of his body, but it was clearly impeding his movements.

His foundations are still okay, but his sword art is severely lacking... Zhang Xuan frowned.

Grab any 3-star master teacher from the Master Teacher Continent, and the sword art that the other party executed would be even more profound than the young man before him. However, considering the difficulties in the young man's movements, it could barely be considered acceptable.

Zhang Xuan heaved a slight sigh, and it immediately caught the young man's attention. He halted his sword practice and turned his head over. Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, a look of delight crept onto his face as he said, "You're awake!"

Taking a closer look at the young man, the other party seemed to be in his late teens. He was not too tall, roughly a head shorter than Zhang Xuan. Using the measurement system from his previous world, the young man would not even be at 1.6 meters. There was a glaring scarlet birthmark roughly half a cheek wide imprinted on his left cheek, and it concealed part of his face.

In terms of appearances, the young man could not be associated with the word 'handsome' at all. In fact, he might be considered hideous even.

"Thank you for saving my life." Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

"It's nothing much. I saw you by accident, so I brought you back... I thought that you would die given the severity of your wounds, but you somehow managed to recover on your own..." The young man scratched his head awkwardly as he spoke.

His words were a little awkward, hinting that he was not too good with social interaction.

"Third Young Master..."

At this moment, an elder walked into the courtyard. Upon seeing Zhang Xuan, he was stunned for a moment before

calmly bowing to greet him. “Sir, it seems like you are finally awake!”

Zhang Xuan returned the gesture with a simple nod.

He assessed the elder before him closely and noticed that the latter’s clothes were stained with oil marks. The corners of his lips were a little torn, and there was a hint of fresh blood. His cheeks were also bruised. It was apparent that he had just been beaten up by someone else.

The crippled young man known as Third Young Master turned his gaze over as well, and as soon as he saw the current state of the elder, his face warped in astonishment. He hurriedly rushed over and worriedly asked, “Elder Yi, what happened?”

“Third Young Master, it’s nothing,” Elder Yi replied awkwardly.

However, the young man continued staring at Elder Yi intently, clearly unconvinced by the latter’s words. Eventually, under the persistent stare of the young man, Elder Yi relented and said, “The Second Young Mistress of the City Lord Manor is here!”

“Xue Qin is here?”

This news caused the eyes of the crippled young man to glow in excitement.

“That’s right...” Seeing the response of the young man, Elder Yi’s face grew even redder. It was as if there was something that he wanted to say to the young man, but he had no idea how he should broach the subject.

The crippled young man also swiftly noticed that there was something amiss about Elder Yi’s expression. The smile faded from his face as he asked, “Does her arrival have anything to do with your injuries?”

“Isn’t the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion coming to our town to accept menial disciples three days from now?” Elder Yi was conflicted for a moment before continuing. “Through tapping into the connections of the City Lord Manor, Second Young Mistress Xue Qin managed to acquire a slot in advance...”

“She managed to obtain a slot in advance?” The crippled young man’s face lit up in joy. “Isn’t that good news?”

But barely after he said those words, the young man lowered his head to look at his crippled left leg, and his face swiftly sunk. “I guess that I don’t stand a chance at all...”

“Having acquired the slot, there’s no doubt that she will be leaving with those from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion three days from now. Did she come here to bid me farewell?” The crippled young man shook his head and sighed deeply.

“She... She...” Elder Yi hesitated for a long while before finally confessing the truth. “She’s here to withdraw from the marriage agreement with you!”

“She wishes to withdraw from the marriage agreement?”

The young man’s face turned ghastly pale. His body staggered a little, and he nearly fell to the ground. “She’s going to withdraw from the marriage agreement with me just because she has become a menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?”

No matter where one was, being rejected by one’s fiancée was something incredibly humiliating.

Hearing the conversation between the young man and the elder, Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

A talented young lady scorning her fiancé and proposing a withdrawal from the marriage agreement. An injured and insulted young man deciding to buck up and return the favor. Thirty years the river’s east, and thirty years the river’s west?

To think that he would encounter such a matter as soon as he arrived at the Azure.

How exciting life was! This is an idiom used to refer to the cycle of the rise and decline of all powers in the world. It’s famously used in the Battle Through the Heavens by the protagonist back when he was weaker to convey that the tables would turn one day.

1915 Dan Xiaotian

“Forget it!” After pondering over the matter for a moment, the crippled young man shook his head sorrowfully. “I am indeed unworthy of her. It was only a matter of time before our marriage agreement fell through...”

As their grandfathers were close with one another, they had heartily decided to betroth the grandchildren to one another. However, with the death of his grandfather, his clan had begun to decline. Following which, the young man himself had ended up sustaining severe injuries that had destroyed his inner breath, rendering him unable to cultivate anymore. At the same time, his left leg had ended up crippled, and no matter how many physicians he found, none of them were able to cure it.

Facing such a hopeless situation, he had eventually become very pessimistic.

Furthermore, he had always suffered from low self-esteem due to his appearance. Considering the difference between the two of them, he did not feel that he was worthy of her.

Their difference in standing made the collapse of their marriage agreement an inevitability.

Sighing deeply, the young man walked into the room and grabbed a jade box. He entrusted the jade box to the elder.

“This is the marriage agreement that sealed our relations together. Give it to her and tell her that we’ll be strangers from this day forth. I hope that she’ll be able to find someone better suited to her in the near future,” the young man said.

“Third Young Master...” Elder Yi’s face reddened. He understood the significance of this action, and he was just about to say something when he eventually halted himself and nodded instead. “Alright then!”

He’s going to chicken out just like that? Zhang Xuan blinked blankly.

He had thought that the young man would lose his temper, thus triggering some kind of incredible drive that pushed the young man to accomplish something extraordinary, but contrary to his expectations, the young man actually delivered the marriage agreement back just like that. This was no different from the young man putting his face out there for others to stomp on.

Even as an onlooker, Zhang Xuan could hardly bear to watch.

However, he had always maintained a low profile, and it had not been long since he arrived in the Azure. Thus, he eventually decided against speaking recklessly.

After obtaining the marriage agreement, Elder Yi turned around and left.

In the silent courtyard, the Third Young Master abruptly raised his sword and hacked it down furiously on a nearby boulder, inflicting a deep cut on it. It seemed like he was not completely unaffected by the matter, just that he had chosen to hide his emotions from Elder Yi in order not to worry him.

Through the strength that he had exerted, Zhang Xuan could tell that the young man was at Saint 6-dan.

If it was on the Master Teacher Continent, it would have been an incredible feat for a person to reach Saint 6-dan by sixteen or seventeen. However, judging from the earlier conversation, it seemed such a feat was below average in the Azure.

Having vented his rage, the crippled young man seemed to finally calm down a little. It was only at this moment that he recalled that the person whom he had saved was standing nearby, and his face blushed in embarrassment.

“My apologies. I have shown you an embarrassing side of myself. Right, I haven’t asked you for your name yet.”

“I am Yao... Pui! I mean, I am Zhang Xuan!” Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

“So, it’s Brother Zhang!” the crippled young man said. “I am Dan Xiaotian, the Third Young Master of Baiye City’s Dan Clan.”

“Brother Dan.” Zhang Xuan returned the greeting with a nod. “I heard you speaking about the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion earlier, Brother Dan. I’m just asking out of curiosity, but is it a sect?”

The exceedingly obvious question seemed to have surprised Dan Xiaotian as he asked, “Brother Zhang, do you not know about the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?”

Seeing the confused look on Zhang Xuan’s face, he widened his eyes in realization and remarked, “Ah, I nearly forgot! Brother Zhang, you aren’t a cultivator, so it’s no wonder you have never heard of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! The world that we live in is known as the Forsaken Continent.

“According to legend, the world that we live in used to be a part of the world of gods, but it was severed from it and cast away. There are six major sects in the Forsaken Continent, and the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is one of them. Entering any of these six major sects is viewed as a great honor. Countless desire to join the ranks of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Even if one enters as a menial disciple, the clan behind that disciple will be able to rise through the ranks.”

Back when he saved Brother Zhang, he could not feel the slightest pulsation of zhenqi within the latter’s body. From that, he had deduced that the latter was an ordinary human, not a cultivator.

The Six Sects were existences that no cultivator on the Forsaken Continent could overlook, but to ordinary humans, such existences were too far away from them to bother about. Considering that Zhang Xuan was not a cultivator, it was not too surprising that that he had not heard of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“Six major sects... Is there no Master Teacher Pavilion here?” Zhang Xuan asked in confusion.

“Master Teacher Pavilion? What’s that?” Dan Xiaotian shook his head doubtfully.

“Ah, it was just an inside joke...” Judging from Dan Xiaotian’s tone, it seemed like there was really no Master Teacher Pavilion on the Forsaken Continent. He pondered for a moment before continuing. “So, the Six Sects are the de facto leaders of the Forsaken Continent?”

“Exactly. Aside from the Six Sects, there’s also a formidable power known as Ethereal Hall. It suddenly appeared on the Forsaken Continent several thousand years ago when a powerful expert founded the organization. They manage the distribution of the Ethereal Token, a resource that all cultivators on the continent require in order to trade for valuable cultivation resources and become true experts!”

“Ethereal Hall?”

“Un. The Ethereal Token is sold in practically all cities on the Forsaken Continent. By coming into contact with the token, one’s consciousness will be brought into the Ethereal Hall. In there, as long as one is able to pay the price, one will be able to learn cultivation techniques, purchase medicinal herbs, raise one’s cultivation, or even hire killers. It has pretty much everything that you can think of. Even those of the Six Sects use it!”

“The Ethereal Token brings one’s consciousness into the Ethereal Hall?” Zhang Xuan was rather curious about this peculiar artifact. “Brother Dan, may I know if you have that artifact here?”

“My cultivation is weak, and my talent is severely lacking too. Even my fiancée has chosen to withdraw from our marriage agreement. How could I possibly be qualified to possess something like that?” Dan Xiaotian said with a deep sigh.

“I apologize. It seems like I was too tactless with my words.” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

Following which, he moved on to other topics and asked a few other questions to gain a deeper understanding of the Forsaken Continent.

While Dan Xiaotian was a little awkward in expressing himself and suffered from low self-esteem, Zhang Xuan could

tell that the other party was actually very kind. Upon seeing the severely injured him, the other party had actually brought him back and bandaged him. From this, he felt like Dan Xiaotian was a person whom he could trust.

Through Dan Xiaotian, Zhang Xuan learned that three days had passed since Dan Xiaotian had spotted him and brought him back.

Strength was highly regarded on the Forsaken Continent. The Dan Clan that Dan Xiaotian came from had its era of glory twenty years ago too. It had been viewed as an equal to the City Lord Residence, or to be more exact, even the City Lord Residence had to tread carefully around the Dan Clan. Unfortunately, the accident ten years ago had caused nearly all of the experts of the Dan Clan to pass away, and his two elder brothers had lost their lives in that incident.

Even his foundation had ended up being wounded, resulting in his current state.

With the decline of his clan, previous allies swiftly turned against them, and their enemies capitalized on the situation to get back at them. This resulted in the powerhouse swiftly falling to ruins. Currently, other than him and the old servant Dan Yi (Elder Yi), there was practically nothing left.

What was left of a residence that had once covered over a thousand mu was just this inner courtyard and an outer courtyard. The Dan Clan had truly become a shadow of its former self.

If not for the marriage agreement between him and the City Lord Residence, it was likely that they would not even have had this much left.

However, with the Second Young Mistress backing out on the marriage agreement, even the final restraint stopping the enemies of the Dan Clan from making a move on him would vanish. Then, everything would really be over.

“I see...” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

Strength was the foundation of prosperity. Without sufficient strength to protect itself, a power, no matter how prosperous,

would eventually fall into decline.

“Brother Zhang, I think that you should have also gotten a rough idea of my current situation. I was hoping that I could tap into the opportunity in three days, when the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion recruits new menial disciples, to possibly allow the Dan Clan to make a comeback, but it seems like the situation is completely hopeless now. Furthermore, with Xue Qin backing out of the marriage proposal... I’m afraid that this place won’t remain safe for too long,” Dan Xiaotian said with a bitter smile.

As the saying goes, ‘a child from a poor family matures early’. The many difficulties that Dan Xiaotian had gone through together with Elder Yi over the years had taught him the callousness of the world. It was truly a miracle that he had preserved his kind soul after all he had been through.

“Brother Zhang, since you are already able to move, I think you should leave as soon as possible. I wouldn’t want you to be implicated in my affairs...”

As he spoke, Dan Xiaotian took out two specially crafted golden coins from his pockets and placed them into Zhang Xuan’s hands. “These are Ethereal Coins, a currency accepted by the Ethereal Hall. While this isn’t too much, it should cover a few meals...”

“You are too kind.”

Seeing how Dan Xiaotian was still worried about him despite his difficult plight, a wry smile crept onto Zhang Xuan’s lips. He looked at Dan Xiaotian intently for a moment before saying, “Brother Dan, can you execute your swordsmanship for me once more so that I can have a look?”

1916 Humiliation

“You want me to show you my swordsmanship?” Dan Xiaotian was slightly bewildered by Zhang Xuan’s abrupt request.

“To be honest, Brother Dan, I examined your swordsmanship earlier, and I realized that your ability to summon your strength and the momentum of your strikes are a little lacking. So, I was wondering if I could take a look. I might be able to find a solution to those problems. If you are able to advance your swordsmanship over the next three days, it might be possible for you to be accepted into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as its disciple!” Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

With his eye of discernment, he was able to discern the flaws in Dan Xiaotian’s swordsmanship and come up with solutions to resolve them. The reason he wanted Dan Xiaotian to display his swordsmanship once more was to test if he could use the Library of Heaven’s Path there.

“Brother Zhang, do you understand swordsmanship?” Dan Xiaotian asked with a frown.

“I know a thing or two!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

“That’s amazing! Well, I have already given up hope on becoming a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so there’s no need for you console me.” Dan Xiaotian glanced at his crippled left thigh. “Nevertheless, if you are knowledgeable in the field of swordsmanship, Brother Zhang, I would be more than happy to exchange some insights with you. Ever since I have become unable to cultivate, I had to figure my way out bit by bit, so my progress has been rather limited...”

Dan Xiaotian’s low esteem had been exacerbated by his sudden inability to cultivate. As a result, even though he had devoted himself to learning swordsmanship, he did not dare display it before others, let alone find a sparring partner to test his skills on.

Perhaps it was because he viewed Zhang Xuan as an ordinary human, he did not feel that much lesser than him. Thus, he had no qualms exchanging insights with the latter.

Hu!

With a flick of his wrist, Dan Xiaotian's sword sliced through the air and pierced forward.

Weng!

At the same time, a book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

After flipping open the book and browsing through its contents, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

Fortunately, it seemed like the Library of Heaven's Path could be used in the Azure. Previously, when Luo Ruoxin placed the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn into the Library of Heaven's Path, the latter had gone through a major upgrade. Most likely, it was this upgrade that allowed the Library of Heaven's Path to peer into the heavens of the Azure without much trouble.

"How ludicrous. Dan Xiaotian, you are practicing your swordsmanship? Do you still think that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion will take someone like you as its disciple?"

While Zhang Xuan was still deep in thought, a cold sneer sounded from the outside. Following which, two figures walked in with widened strides.

The first figure was a young lady who seemed to be around fifteen or sixteen, roughly the same age as Dan Xiaotian. She was dressed in a light-yellow dress, and her eyes were filled with pride and smugness. Her chin was slightly tilted up in a condescending manner, reminiscent of a self-important noble standing before a bunch of peasants. She was the one who had spoken earlier.

Behind her was a middle-aged man in his forties. He was dressed in a simple buttoned shirt, and he had a sword tied around his waist. As he approached, one could feel overwhelmingly sharp sword qi emanating from his presence.

“Third Young Master...” Elder Yi quickly rushed in behind those two figures, and with a look of indignation and guilt on his face, he lowered his head and spoke in desolation. “I’m sorry. I couldn’t stop them...”

Dan Xiaotian swiftly halted his swordsmanship before turning to look at the young lady before him. At that moment, he was so agitated that he stumbled on his own words. “Xu-Xue Qin?”

“Enough!” Looking at Dan Xiaotian with disgust in her eyes, the young lady waved her hands impatiently and said, “You know why I have come here, but instead of coming out to welcome me personally, you dispatched a lowly servant to send the marriage agreement over. Did you think that this matter can be resolved that easily?”

“You want to back out of our marriage agreement, so I had Elder Yi give it to you. What more do you want from me?” Dan Xiaotian’s face reddened in anger.

“What I want from you isn’t much. I just need you to announce to the entire city that you were the one who chose to back out of the marriage agreement of your own accord because you feel that you aren’t worthy of me. It was after a period of careful deliberation before my father finally decided to respect your opinion and end the marriage agreement. By giving me this mere sheet of paper, are you expecting me to tell everyone that I, Xue Qin, refused to marry you? How could I allow the noble City Lord Manor to have such a stain on its reputation?” Xue Qing harrumphed coldly.

If others heard that she had broken off her engagement with Dan Xiaotian because she had successfully become a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it would surely stir up a huge controversy. This would be detrimental for her in building up her reputation. However, if she could get Dan Xiaotian to back out of the marriage agreement instead, she would not have to sustain the slightest smudge to her reputation.

Seeing everything from the sight, Zhang Xuan could not help but shake his head in disapproval.

She sure is vicious...

It was one thing for this Xue Qing to back out of the marriage agreement, but to think that she would even want Dan Xiaotian to announce it to the entire city. While backing out of the marriage agreement, she still wanted Dan Xiaotian to become the bad guy!

How incredibly cheap she was!

With a ghastly pale face, Dan Xiaotian clenched his fists as he glared at Xue Qin coldly.

It went without saying that Dan Xiaotian had also figured out what Xue Qi was up to. Overwhelming indignation seeped in through his entire body.

This was utter humiliation!

It was as if the other party was preparing to smack his face while asking him to hold up his face for her.

But the problem was that... there was nothing he could do about the situation! He was completely helpless!

"Dan Xiaotian, the Second Young Mistress and I didn't come down here to negotiate with you. We are here to pass down an order to you," the middle-aged man who had come with Xue Qing said impassively. "Within three days, you are to make this announcement to the entire city, or else... be prepared to pay the price!"

"Who are you?" Dan Xiaotian asked as he glared at the middle-aged man coldly.

"I am the swordsmanship teacher of the Second Young Mistress, Xue Chen!" the middle-aged man replied proudly.

"Xue Chen? I know you!" Seemingly having heard this name before, Dan Xiaotian's eyes widened in astonishment before he shook his head in self-mockery. "I sure am honored to have the head instructor of the City Lord Manor pay a visit to me personally. May I know what the price I will have to pay if I refuse to abide by your command is?"

As the head instructor of the City Lord Manor, Xue Chen's strength was not to be underestimated. He was, in fact, an

Ancient Sage 3-dan expert!

“Well, it’s very simple!” Xue Chen waved his hand nonchalantly, completely unaffected by Dan Xiaotian’s provocation. “Over these years, the Dan Clan has offended quite a few people, isn’t that so? You should also know that if not for your engagement with Xue Qing, you would have already died many times over!”

Those words were hurtful, but Dan Xiaotian knew that they were the truth.

Given his weak cultivation, if not for the marriage agreement, there was no way the enemies of the Dan Clan would have allowed him to live so long!

“Well, if these men make a move against you, do you think that you and that old man over there will be able to stop them?” Xue Chen shrugged coolly.

Realizing the hidden intention behind Xue Chen’s words, Dan Xiaotian’s eyes widened in disbelief. “Are you going to silence us? Aren’t you afraid of the possible repercussions my sudden death would have on the City Lord Manor’s reputation?”

“How would your death affect the City Lord Manor’s reputation?” Xue Chen remarked calmly. “Let me see. Our city lord would be enraged to learn of your demise, and he would dispatch men to exact vengeance for you. As for our Second Young Mistress, she would mourn for a long time, and eventually, she would decide to depart from this land of grief and head to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

Geji! Geji!

Those words made Dan Xiaotian’s heart beat faster and faster as he realized how wretched his situation was.

If they really acted out this play, not only would the reputation of the City Lord Manor not be marred, it would even be praised for its compassion. At the same time, Xue Qin would also be more respected in the city for her loyalty to her fiancé.

They would say that even though Xue Qin had become the menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, she

had still held steadfast to her promise to marry him, but alas, as fate would have it, they were not meant to be.

“You... Fine! I’ll agree to it!”

Dan Xiaotian’s hands were clenched so tightly that his fingernails were digging into his flesh, and his joints had become all white. However, despite his indignation, he knew that the current him was completely powerless.

Law of the jungle, survival of the fittest. Weaklings like him were bound to be preyed on by the strong.

“That is more like it!” Xue Qin nodded in satisfaction. She raised her hand, and Xue Chen immediately took out a document and passed it over to Dan Xiaotian. “This is the document for the annulment of our engagement. All you have to do is seal your name on it, and we’ll handle the rest. Rest assured, we’ll announce the matter to the entire city by today!”

Dan Xiaotian hesitantly reached out to grab the document before reading through it carefully.

It was an official notice supposedly written by him to announce his intention to annul the engagement, and his reason behind the action was stated as well.

The reason was extremely simple. He was injured, and not only was he unable to cultivate, he was unable to fulfill the role of a man, making him a true cripple through and through. In order not to stall his fiancée’s future, he decided to willfully annul the engagement, and he sought her forgiveness for this. The City Lord Manor, in view of its past relations with the Dan Clan, had rejected his proposed annulment of the engagement time and time again, so he had no choice but to officially announce the annulment of their engagement using such a crude method. He sought the understanding of the City Lord Manor for his abrupt actions.

Xue Qin was actually going to the extent of claiming that he was crippled as a man!

The overwhelming humiliation that Dan Xiaotian felt made his blood surge to his head, and he nearly exploded on the spot.

1917 Dan Xiaotian's Confusion

If this notice was released, his dignity would be completely crushed, and he would never be able to raise his head in public ever again. He would become the talk of the entire town, and this shame would effectively destroy the prestige that the Dan Clan had built up over several centuries.

It would be thorough social suicide.

“Sign the document,” Xue Qin said with a cold and pressurizing voice.

“Third Young Master, you mustn’t sign the document! Once you do, the reputation of our Dan Clan will be in shambles!” Elder Yi had also read the document from behind Dan Xiaotian, and he immediately kneeled down and cried in protest.

Even death was not as fearsome as seeing the clan that he had devoted his life to serving humiliated in such a manner!

“I...” Dan Xiaotian was at a loss.

He knew very well what would happen if he signed the document, but if he did not, the other party would still back out of the marriage agreement, and the outcome... would likely be much worse than this.

He was already backed to a corner. There was nothing else he could do.

At that moment, even suicide had become an option for him. He had never desired so much to end his life and let all of this come to an end. However, when all seemed lost, a voice suddenly echoed in the air.

“If you don’t wish to sign the document, don’t sign it.”

Everyone immediately turned around, only to see a young man wrapped like a mummy leaning against the doorframe. He was

looking at them with a smile on his lips.

This young man did not seem to possess any cultivation at all, but his eyes were completely devoid of fear despite standing before an expert of Xue Chen's caliber. It was as if everything that was happening before him was nothing more than a small scuffle.

"Who are you? If this matter doesn't concern you, you will do well to keep your mouth zipped. Haven't you heard of the saying that disaster originates from the mouth?" Xue Chen glared at Zhang Xuan threateningly.

If possible, they wanted to resolve the matter with Dan Xiaotian without resorting to violence, or else there was a risk that word could get out. Thus, Xue Chen had no choice but to hold himself back from making a move.

With an unfazed smile, Zhang Xuan said, "I am just an insignificant figure whom Brother Dan has saved. I didn't want to interfere in your business, but I was afraid that Brother Dan would regret his decision if he signed that document, so I couldn't help but advise him so."

"Brother Zhang..." Dan Xiaotian's eyes could not help but light up in gratitude.

Even if Zhang Xuan did not know of Xue Qin and Xue Chen's true identity and the tremendous power that they wielded, it should be apparent that those two were figures that could not be trifled with from their conversation.

Yet, despite the risk of possibly bringing trouble upon himself, the other party still chose to speak up. Such sentiments left him feeling slightly touched.

"Regret? Hahaha! What kind of regret could he possibly have? Does this brat still think that it's possible for him to get together with the Second Young Mistress?" Xue Chen scoffed. "Snap out of your daydream! Why don't you take a good look at yourself first? A toad like you actually dares to lust for the flesh of a swan? Learn your place!"

"I'm glad to see that there's at least one thing the both of us can agree on. The two of them indeed shouldn't get together."

Zhang Xuan nodded calmly in response to the other party's insults. "It's apparent that this Second Young Mistress of yours isn't worthy of Brother Dan! There couldn't be a worse insult to him than if he married someone like her!"

"What did you say?"

Xue Chen had been nodding gleefully when Zhang Xuan spoke the first part of his piece. However, by the time Zhang Xuan finished his words, Xue Chen's eyes were already dripping with murderous intent.

"You don't believe me?" Zhang Xuan looked at Xue Chen with an incredulous expression, as if he was unable to believe that the latter could not understand something so obvious. "I guess you really have to see with your own eyes in order to tell the obvious, huh? Very well, come back in three days, and we'll see the results!"

"After all that was said and done, it seems like you are just trying to stall for time. Futile!" Xue Chen sneered coldly. "As long as Dan Xiaotian doesn't sign this document, I can assure you that what he will lose isn't just his dignity but his life as well!"

Zhang Xuan shrugged nonchalantly and said, "If it's gone, so be it... Someone like Brother Dan wouldn't care about something as trivial as that!"

"Huh?" Somehow, Dan Xiaotian felt that there was something very wrong with the words that had just been spoken.

It seems like Brother Zhang is a person with extremely strong opinions... But what do you mean by 'if it's gone, so be it'? This isn't a trivial matter at all... My life is on the line here!

Turning his gaze away from Zhang Xuan, Xue Chen looked at Dan Xiaotian with a look so cold that it seemed like it could freeze hell over. "Is that your decision?"

Dan Xiaotian shuddered a little under Xue Chen's glare, but he gritted his teeth and replied, "Brother Zhang's words reflect my intention!"

He had no idea why Brother Zhang would put so much hope in him, but it was clear that he had no path of retreat anymore.

If he had to weigh the dignity of the Dan Clan against his own life, he would indubitably choose the dignity of the Dan Clan. The Dan Clan did not belong to him only; it had been built up with the effort of his predecessors, including his deceased grandfather, father, and brothers. He could not trample on their efforts just so he could live!

Besides, once the marriage agreement was annulled, he would be as good as dead anyway. With this, the decision that he had to make could not be any clearer.

“You do have some backbone, don’t you? Let’s see where your decision brings you, shall we?” Hearing Dan Xiaotian’s final decision, Xue Chen flung his sleeves furiously. He turned to the young lady beside him and said, “Second Young Mistress, let’s go!”

On the other hand, Xue Qin looked at Dan Xiaotian disdainfully and spat, “Humph! I hope that you won’t come begging for your life when the time comes!”

Following which, she turned around and walked away. Throughout this entire period, she did not even spare a glance at Zhang Xuan, as if it would sully her eyes to look at an ordinary human.

As soon as the two of them were out of the courtyard...

“Teacher...” Xue Qin looked at Xue Chen worriedly.

Xue Chen quickly scanned his surroundings to confirm that there was no one around before reassuring the young lady. “Don’t worry. We won’t even require three days to resolve this problem. The Dan Clan is nothing at all. Let’s see if they can even survive tonight!”

Those words made Xue Qin heave a sigh of relief. “I had a good impression of him initially, but who could have known that he would turn out to be such an arrogant brat? Let him die then! A person like him doesn’t deserve to live in this world!”

The two of them got into a carriage, and it did not take them long to disappear into the distance.

...

Shortly after Xue Qin and Xue Chen left the residence, there was a brief moment of silence before Elder Yi spoke up worriedly.

“Third Young Master, this won’t do. We can’t just blindly wait here for our deaths... Let’s leave the city!”

He knew that the City Lord Manor was not as gracious and magnanimous as it seemed on the surface. In fact, he suspected that the massacre and eventual downfall of the Dan Clan had been orchestrated by the City Lord Manor.

Since they were willing to go that far, it was likely that they would have no qualms dispatching assassins against Dan Xiaotian, especially after his decisive rejection earlier.

Furthermore, with the means of the City Lord Manor, it was likely that they would be able to erase all traces of their involvement.

Since that was the case, the best thing they could do was run as far away as they could.

“Run away? Do you think that it’s still possible for us to run away?” Dan Xiaotian shook his head bitterly.

The fact that the Second Young Mistress had come personally to reject the marriage showed their determination in ensuring that this matter was resolved without a hiccup. As such, there was no way the City Lord Manor would allow them to escape.

If they could not cancel the marriage agreement, would the Second Young Mistress not have to spend her entire life in loneliness, waiting for him to come back?

“Brother Zhang...” Dan Xiaotian turned to Zhang Xuan, hoping to ask the latter for some guidance as to what he should do in this situation.

Since the other party had made huge promises such as ‘come back in three days, and we’ll see the results’, perhaps the other party already had an idea in mind.

“I’d like to confirm your intentions one last time. Were you willing to sign that earlier document?”

“Of course not!” Dan Xiaotian shook his head. “If I signed that darned paper, how could I face my predecessors even after my death?”

If he sullied the Dan Clan’s reputation like that, even his death would not be enough to atone for his sins!

“Are you afraid of pain?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Even death is no longer that frightening to me, so what does a little pain matter?” Dan Xiaotian had no idea what Zhang Xuan was getting at, but he still answered the question honestly.

“Do you wish to exact vengeance for the humiliation you have suffered today?”

“Of course! It isn’t just today’s humiliation. If I could, I would exact vengeance for all of the insults I have suffered ever since my parents’ death, but...” Dan Xiaotian looked at his own leg with a crestfallen look.

How could he possibly feel nothing when being insulted in such a manner?

But with his leg in such state and his inability to cultivate, such intentions would only remain intentions in his head. They would never come to fruition.

If he had still been that talented youth, he would not have to live his life so subserviently...

“Good! Since you have made up your mind... the last thing you have to do now is acknowledge me as your teacher!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Acknowledge you as my teacher?”

Did Brother Zhang’s head bump on something that resulted in a concussion?

What am I supposed to learn from an ordinary human?

Could it be that your promise of ‘come back in three days’... referred to this?

Dan Xiaotian’s lips twitched as he suddenly felt as if he had been bamboozled.

1918 Gu

Dan Xiaotian wasn't the only one who was bewildered by Zhang Xuan's proposal. Even Elder Yi was taken aback. With twitching lips, Elder Yi said, "Master Zhang, this is a very serious matter here. Pardon me, but I'll have to ask you not to mess around!"

Their lives were at stake, but the other party was still in the mood to make jokes. If he had known that this fellow was so unreliable, he never would have allowed the Third Young Master to save him and bring him back!

Looking at the expressions on their faces, Zhang Xuan could tell that they doubted his abilities. Thus, he placed his hands behind his back with the intention of displaying the disposition of a true expert, but his movements only ended up tugging on his wounds, causing his lips to twitch hideously as a result.

He had to wheeze a little before he managed to suppress the pain and proceed with his expert disguise. "You injured your meridians back when you were younger, causing your body to be unable to drive zhenqi. At the same time, your dantian was also damaged, so you are unable to store any energy. As a result, you are unable to cultivate at all. Is my analysis right?"

Dan Xiaotian nodded in response.

He had been six when that incident happened to the Dan Clan, shattering his dantian and meridians. He had been unable to recover his dantian and meridians since then, so even though he spent every single passing day practicing his swordsmanship, he was unable to infuse zhenqi into his swordsmanship. In other words, his moves carried only the form but not the true essence behind them.

He had consulted many physicians regarding his condition, but none of them had been able to cure him. In the end, he had given up and resigned himself to it.

“Then, do you know what the cause of the injury to your dantian and meridians is?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Some kind of powerful zhenqi has slipped into my body, inflicting devastating damage all around. It’s already a blessing that I’m still alive now,” Dan Xiaotian replied.

This was the diagnosis given to him by most of the physicians that he had had met.

“Zhenqi?” Zhang Xuan shook his head. “If it was the result of another cultivator’s zhenqi lingering in your body, considering how diligently you cultivate each day in hopes of improving your own condition, do you think that it’s possible for you not to show the slightest improvement after so many years?”

That question left Dan Xiaotian stumped.

That was also what had left him bewildered too.

For ten years, he had met all kinds of famous physicians, and he had tried many different types of treatment, be it medicinal essence, pills, acupuncture, medicinal baths... None of them had worked. His body was like a tattered gunny sack. Any spiritual energy that he absorbed would eventually dissipate, making him unable to advance his cultivation.

Many famed physicians had told him that it was the result of hostile zhenqi lingering within his body, undoing all of his efforts. They had assured him that their treatment would work, but none of them had been effective.

With time, those physicians had eventually deemed him to be incurable and given up on him.

Dan Xiaotian pondered for a moment before asking Zhang Xuan, “If it’s not the result of hostile lingering zhenqi in my body, what else could possibly be destroying my meridians and dantian and yet not cause my death?”

What was truly bizarre about his condition was that, aside from his inability to cultivate, it did not affect any other aspect of his life. Xue Qin claimed that he was unable to carry out the responsibilities of a husband, but that could not have been more incorrect. He knew better than anyone that he would

wake up with a majestic pillar that rose high into the heavens every morning.

“It’s a gu,” Zhang Xuan stated. “Someone has planted a gu in you, which has resulted in all sorts of treatments being ineffective on you!”

“Gu?” Dan Xiaotian was stunned. “Are you saying that... there’s a worm living in my body?”

“It isn’t just living; it has been absorbing all of the energy you have cultivated over the years, so it has already become extremely powerful!” Zhang Xuan added.

Through the Library of Heaven’s Path, he was able to locate the core of Dan Xiaotian’s problem in an instant.

The reason his dantian and his meridians had been refusing to recover over the years despite his efforts was because someone had planted a gu in him. This gu would relentlessly devour all of the energy that he cultivated, and this was the source of his cultivation failing to inch forward at all over the past ten years.

“A living worm actually exists inside of me...”

Dan Xiaotian turned to look at Elder Yi with a deep frown, and the latter contemplated deeply for a brief moment before shaking his head.

What they had just heard was simply so unbelievable that they could hardly swallow it.

If there was really a gu in his body, and it had been in his body for the past ten years, how could the many physicians that they had consulted previously possibly be oblivious to it? And how could the young man tell?

“I can sense some reservations from you two, and I can understand why. However, I do have a way to prove the matter though.” Zhang Xuan could tell from the expressions of those two that they did not believe what he was saying, but it was not a problem to him. “Do you have a silver needle or the like here?”

Elder Yi nodded. He walked into the room, and it did not take long for him to return with a box of silver needles. “Here you

go!”

As the saying goes, ‘those who are constantly plagued by afflictions eventually become doctors themselves’. They had tried out all sorts of remedies over the past ten years, such that most fundamental medicinal equipment could be found in their residence.

“Un. Have a good look. I’ll catch it out right now!”

With a light chuckle, Zhang Xuan grabbed the silver needles and flicked them forward.

Ding ling!

All of the needles fell onto the floor three meters away from him.

“Cough cough. I don’t really have too much strength right now, so I need you to come closer to me,” Zhang Xuan said awkwardly.

He was so used to flicking needles from a distance that he had forgotten that he was still unable to use his zhenqi, which severely limited what he could do.

“Alright...”

While Dan Xiaotian felt that Zhang Xuan was not really a reliable person, after a moment of hesitation, he still made his way over.

Since the situation was already like that, he might as well go along with it. There was nothing to be lost.

Taking out a couple of silver needles once more, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath as he invoked the Library of Heaven’s Path once more. After which, he pierced the silver needles according to the positions stated in Dan Xiaotian’s book.

Ding!

Another unexpected hiccup happened that caused Zhang Xuan’s face to redden.

In his current weak state, he was actually unable to pierce the silver needle through Dan Xiaotian’s skin.

While Dan Xiaotian was unable to cultivate anymore, his cultivation was still at Saint 6-dan. Furthermore, his constitution had been nourished by the mercury-like spiritual energy over the years, making his physical body even tougher than steel.

While Zhang Xuan was able to move his body around, he was still feeble from the damage that he had sustained. He could not even gather enough strength from his body to pierce through Dan Xiaotian's skin.

"Help me with this!" Zhang Xuan looked at Elder Yi and beckoned him over.

Elder Yi quickly walked over. With a tap of his finger, a surge of zhenqi flowed through the silver needle, and the silver needle straightened once more.

Sou!

The tip went right into Dan Xiaotian's body.

Peng!

Zhang Xuan was just about to control the silver needle when the silver needle suddenly flew out at an even faster speed, piercing right into the wall.

Dan Xiaotian and Elder Yi widened their eyes incredulously, especially the former.

As the person receiving the acupuncture, he knew that he did not exert any force, but the silver needles still flew out at such a swift speed. Could it be that there was really some other being existing in his body?

"You should have felt it. It was the gu in your body that pushed it out," Zhang Xuan explained.

To be honest, he did not have the means to kill the gu in his current state. Nevertheless, by bringing Dan Xiaotian's attention to the existence of the gu, he should be able to win the young man's trust. With sufficient time, he was confident that he would be able to resolve this problem once he recovered his strength.

“There really is a gu in my body?” Dan Xiaotian could not speak another word.

A moment ago, he had been confident that there was no way such a vile thing would be in his body, but what he had just witnessed had caused his confidence to waver.

Putting aside the fact that he had not exerted any force, even if he did, he did not have the ability to jolt the needle right into the wall.

“While the earlier needle did not harm the gu at all, it showed that we are aware of its current location. So, it’s likely that the gu will move to another location before settling down. While it’s moving, you will be able to drive your zhenqi, and your crippled left leg will recover for a brief period of time,” Zhang Xuan said.

“However, this recovery is temporary. Once it settles down, everything will go back to as it was. The only way you can resolve this situation once and for all is to kill it!”

“Is that so?” Dan Xiaotian was still a little dazed by the happenings.

A few moments passed, and his eyes suddenly widened in disbelief.

Just as Zhang Xuan had said earlier, he could feel zhenqi flowing through his body once more. Not only so, feeling had returned to his numb left leg as well!

He tried taking a few steps, and his movements were no different from those of an ordinary person. There was not the slightest difficulty!

However, the feeling in his left leg only remained for ten breaths before turning as numb as a block of wood.

Knowing that there was nothing wrong with his diagnosis, Zhang Xuan said with a light chuckle, “You should be able to trust me now, right?”

“Disciple Dan Xiaotian pays respect to teacher!”

Knowing that this was an invaluable opportunity for him to break out of his current state, he immediately got onto the

ground and bowed down.

Many renowned physicians had taken a look at his condition, but none of the treatments that they provided had made a difference to his condition at all. However, with just a glance from afar, Zhang Xuan was already able to identify the root of his problem and even demonstrate it to him. From this alone, it could be seen that the other party was a person of great capabilities, no matter how he might seem on the exterior.

“Rise!”

After Dan Xiaotian carried out a formal greeting to acknowledge Zhang Xuan as his teacher, Zhang Xuan quickly walked forward to help him up.

To be honest, he had initially planned to steer clear from the affairs of the Azure as much as possible, focusing his efforts on finding Luo Ruoxin. However, Dan Xiaotian had saved him, so he wanted to return the favor.

Having acknowledged Zhang Xuan as his teacher, Dan Xiaotian looked at the young man before him expectantly and asked, “Teacher, may I know how I can get rid of the gu in my body?”

Just the thought of there being a worm crawling in his flesh and leeching off his body was more than enough to raise goosebumps on his arms. He had not been too affected by it in the past because he had not been aware of it, but at this rate, he would not even be able to sleep well at night as long as the gu remained.

“I am able to remove the gu in your body, but I am too weak at the moment. I’ll have to recover from my injuries before I can do anything about it,” Zhang Xuan replied.

If not for his severe wounds, just a blast of his Heaven’s Path zhenqi would decimate whatever gu was crawling in Dan Xiaotian’s body in a breath. However, in his current state, he could not even exert his zhenqi. As such, while he was able to identify where the gu was, he could not do a thing about it.

More importantly, the gu even gleefully pushed his silver needle out, as if taunting his weakness. This was really testing

the limits of his patience.

“Recover from your injuries?” Dan Xiaotian echoed when he suddenly widened his eyes in realization. “Ah, I nearly forgot! I have a couple of valuable recovery medicine here, and I was planning to feed you some of them so that you could recover from your injuries. However, you’ve been in a coma for the past three days, and I didn’t dare use them recklessly. Since you’re already awake, allow me to bring those pills to you right now. Once the medicinal energy diffuses throughout your body, it shouldn’t take too long for you to recover to your full strength!”

Most high-tier recovery medicine were incredibly potent, such that it required one to facilitate the assimilation of the medicinal energy using one’s zhenqi. If one recklessly fed it to an unconscious patient, there was a good chance that the powerful medicinal energy would end up harming the patient.

As such, they had put off the matter till now.

A few moments later, Elder Yi walked into the room with a jade bottle in hand. He uncorked the jade bottle, and the fragrant scent of herbs immediately drifted across the room.

It was a grade-8 recovery pill.

Zhang Xuan took out a pill and swallowed it without any hesitation. However, a moment later, he sighed deeply and said, “I’m afraid that the medicine you have isn’t of much use to me...”

Despite Zhang Xuan’s current seemingly powerless state, his core was still a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator. While grade-8 recovery pills could be considered invaluable panacea for curing all sorts of wounds for a Saint 6-dan cultivator, it did not even cause the slightest ripple in Zhang Xuan’s body.

“It isn’t of much use to you?”

Dan Xiaotian quickly instructed Elder Yi to bring over the best recovery medicine that they had, but none of it turned out to be of use to Zhang Xuan.

“Are there any large markets in this town where I can buy recovery pills or medicinal herbs?” Zhang Xuan asked with a

deep frown.

“There is a market, but the medicinal herbs and pills sold aren’t too advanced. The pills that we have here are already the best on the market...” Dan Xiaotian scratched his head.

Considering how those pills were completely useless to the young man before him, it would be meaningless to buy more of them.

“Is there any way to acquire higher tier pills?” Zhang Xuan asked.

As long as he did not recover from his injuries, he would be unable to cure Dan Xiaotian. At this rate, they were simply too vulnerable. Putting aside surviving the third day, it was questionable whether they would be able to get through the night!

Dan Xiaotian pondered for a moment before replying. “Most cultivators purchase high-tier pills through the Ethereal Token. As long as the trade is successful, the items will be swiftly delivered.”

“Ethereal Token?” Hearing that familiar name, Zhang Xuan nodded. “Then, is there any way I can acquire an Ethereal Token?”

1919 Don't You Want to Return the Favor?

This was the second time that he had heard of this artifact after entering the Azure.

It seemed like the top echelon of the Azure revolved around this single artifact. Regardless of whether it was to acquire top-notch cultivation techniques or high-tier pills, one required an Ethereal Token. From the looks of it, they would not be able to get anywhere without an Ethereal Token.

All Zhang Xuan needed was a sufficiently high-tier pill to temporarily stabilize his wounds so that he could absorb the mercury-like spiritual energy from the surroundings and convert it into Heaven's Path zhenqi. Once that happened, all of the problems would swiftly be resolved. He would be able to remove the gu from Dan Xiaotian's body and teach him swordsmanship, thus saving the young man from his current plight.

"The city we live in is simply too small, so there's no Ethereal Hall here. As such, there are no vendors selling the Ethereal Token." Dan Xiaotian frowned.

"Is there no other way to acquire it?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"There is one way a person can get an Ethereal Token in our city," Dan Xiaotian said, "but it's simply so difficult that it's no exaggeration to say that it's completely impossible!"

"Back when the Hongyan Market was first established, in order to draw more customers into its premises, the owner inscribed ten difficult questions and created a list of prizes corresponding to each of the questions. As long as one is able to solve a question, one will be able to acquire the corresponding prize. It successfully drew huge crowds to the Hongyan Market, and nine of the questions have been solved thus far.

“The prize of the final question remaining is an Ethereal Token, and there are many people who are dying to lay their hands on it. However, due to the sheer difficulty of the question, it remains undeciphered to date!”

“Bring me there!” Zhang Xuan said.

Even if there was a vendor selling Ethereal Tokens there, it was not as if he had the money required to purchase it. Of course, with his means, he should be able to make money quickly, but that would be a great deal of trouble. Thus, it would be best if he could acquire the Ethereal Token like that.

Knowing that there was no other way around this matter, Dan Xiaotian nodded in agreement.

As Zhang Xuan’s injuries were simply too severe and even walking placed a huge strain on his body, they could only travel to the Hongyan Market in a carriage.

It took roughly two hours for them to finally arrive before a massive marketplace. Dan Xiaotian leaped out of the carriage before carefully supporting Zhang Xuan. Together, they headed to the wall where the ten questions were inscribed.

As a popular tourist attraction site, there was a huge crowd swarming in the vicinity.

The possibility of being able to obtain an Ethereal Token for free was too great a temptation, so it was understandable that people wanted to give it a try.

“Sigh, it’s wrong again...”

“You have been here ten times over the past two months, but you still haven’t succeeded. Why do you just keep coming back to embarrass yourself time and time again?”

“What’s wrong with that? It’s not as if I’m embarrassing you. Besides, you came here many more times than me!”

“If it’s that easy to solve this question, it wouldn’t have remained undeciphered even after all these years...”

...

The crowd gradually thinned as challengers failed one after another.

The system that verified the accuracy of the answer was rather similar to the Wall of Dilemma that he had encountered in the past. Basically, every answer provided would be evaluated on the spot to determine whether it was right or not. This was also why it attracted a huge crowd every day. Perhaps, one might just stumble upon the correct answer by luck.

On the way here, Zhang Xuan had learned from his conversation with Dan Xiaotian exactly how valuable the Ethereal Token was. Every single token was so precious that even Ancient Sage experts would have difficulty forking out the money for one.

Judging from Dan Xiaotian's depiction, it seemed like even if he could bring out everything in his storage ring and sell his possessions there, he still might not be able to afford one.

At the same time, he gained a deeper understanding of the Azure.

As those living in the Azure had lived their life amid the mercury-like spiritual energy, their constitutions were exceptionally resilient, surpassing even the Otherworldly Demons of the Master Teacher Continent.

Just like his previous self, most of them possessed the strength of a Saint 1-dan at birth, and that would increase all the way to Saint 9-dan when they finally matured as an adult.

Someone like Dan Xiaotian, who was only at Saint 6-dan despite already being on verge of adulthood, was deemed a weakling with no future ahead of him.

For example, despite being of similar age to one another, his fiancée, Xue Qin, was already at Great Sage 3-dan consummation, making her one of the strongest experts in the city.

The city they were in, Xuanjiang City, was not an extremely large city, such that Ancient Sages were the most powerful existences there. One thing of note was that it was under the jurisdiction of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, which

explained why it was recruiting disciples in the region. The lord of Xuanjiang City was Xue Qin's father, Xue Yao, and he was known to be the number one expert within the city. That being said, his cultivation was only on the same level as Zhang Xuan, Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage.

So, once Zhang Xuan recovered his strength, there would be no one else in the city who would be able to pose a threat to him anymore. As such, he had decided to make this his first priority.

Zhang Xuan placed all of those thoughts to the back of his mind and raised his head to take a closer look at the wall not too far away.

“Let me see what kind of question has put so many at a loss, such that it remains unsolved even after so many years. Even if a Nurturing Yang Pill is forged to the level of Perfection, the yang energy that it harnesses is still so violent that it can't be controlled by the cultivator consuming it...”

It did not take Zhang Xuan too long to finish looking through the question.

The question was not too complex. Basically, it was prompting others to solve one of the key problems surrounding the Nurturing Yang Pill via proposing feasible modifications to its forging process.

The Nurturing Yang Pill was one of the necessary cultivation resources for cultivators practicing yang cultivation techniques. It would fill them up with the vigor and drive required to further their cultivation.

The pill formula was the work of an ingenious apothecary, capitalizing on the synergistic properties of many medicinal herbs in order to amplify the eventual medicinal energy deposited within the Nurturing Yang Pill. However, the pill had a fatal flaw.

After consuming the Nurturing Yang Pill, due to the massive buildup of yang energy, cultivators would have to seek an avenue to vent their 'heat'. Once they vented their heat, it

would result in a huge loss of yang energy, which was extremely wasteful of the resource.

This was a problem that many apothecaries had sought to resolve, but it still remained an issue. Improving an already ingenious pill formula was simply no easy feat. It was for this reason that no one had succeeded even after so many years.

“Nurturing Yang Pill?”

After reading the question, Zhang Xuan tilted his head slightly in confusion.

The Master Teacher Continent had all kinds of pills, and he boasted an understanding of countless of them due to the incredible number of books he had read. Yet, he had never heard of the Nurturing Yang Pill before.

Fortunately, perhaps in consideration that the general public would not have too much of an understanding of this pill, the other party had left behind a detailed pill formula and its forging process.

Zhang Xuan took those into the Library of Heaven’s Path, compiling a book out of them.

“I see, I see...” Zhang Xuan nodded.

There were many differences between the medicinal herbs of the Master Teacher Continent and the Azure, so the pill formulas and forging processes varied greatly from one another. Luckily, the Library of Heaven’s Path was still working perfectly. With a glance, all of the flaws and errors in the combination of medicinal herbs and the forging processes became apparent to him.

Dan Xiaotian also noticed the smile on Zhang Xuan’s lips, and he could not help but ask out of curiosity, “Teacher... do you know of the solution to resolving this problem?”

He had also looked into this matter for quite a while, but it was to no avail. Could his teacher really have an answer to the problem with just a single glance?

“I do have an idea in mind.” Zhang Xuan confirmed Dan Xiaotian’s thoughts.

Dan Xiaotian widened his eyes in shock, and he hurriedly asked, "Then... how should the problem be resolved?"

"If we are just looking at this single issue, the solution isn't actually that complicated. In the pill formula of the Nurturing Yang Pill, there's a medicinal herb known as Inferno Grass Stem. The problem can be resolved by switching that medicinal herb with the Spirit Matriarch Grass!" Zhang Xuan explained with a lowered voice.

"Spirit Matriarch Grass... Isn't that a yin attribute medicinal herb? Will we really be able to forge the Nurturing Yang Pill if we add something like that?" Dan Xiaotian was a little surprised by the answer.

Due to his crippled condition, he had studied quite a lot regarding pills and medicine. The Inferno Grass Stem was not the most potent medicinal herb in the pill formula, but it played an indispensable role in forming the ultimate product. He did not think that a pill could be formed if one swapped it for the Spirit Matriarch Grass. On the contrary, the Spirit Matriarch Grass would neutralize the yang energy, thus causing all of the medicinal energy to be cancelled out.

"Yin and yang exist as complements to one another. While the Spirit Matriarch Grass is a yin attribute medicinal herb, it is able to serve as a medium to nourish and calm the medicinal properties of the key ingredient, Crimsonfire Flowerleaf. This will solve the problem without causing any depletion in the medicinal energy of the pill," Zhang Xuan explained.

The complementary properties of yin and yang were common knowledge on the Master Teacher Continent, and it was a concept often used in pill formulas. Yet, to think that no one in Xuanjiang City knew of this. From the looks of it, it seemed like despite the stronger average prowess of those in the Azure, in terms of the development of occupations, it was nowhere close to the Master Teacher Continent.

On the Master Teacher Continent, Kong shi's ideals had been propagated for tens of thousands of years, encouraging the open sharing of knowledge and furthering mankind's wisdom.

In comparison, it was obvious that the Azure was severely lacking.

“This...” Dan Xiaotian was perplexed.

He was just about to ask about the matter when he heard some chattering behind him. Following which, he saw the crowd around the wall opening up a pathway for a group of people.

“Who are they? They seem to be quite lofty?” a middle-aged man amid the crowd asked in displeasure.

“Shh! Don’t speak nonsense.” A knowledgeable soul hurriedly hushed that middle-aged man up. “Those are the experts from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who are here to recruit menial disciples. Do you see that man in the middle? It’s said that he has a deep understanding of pill forging...”

“They are the experts from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?” The face of the middle-aged man who had spoken earlier paled in fright.

He hurriedly backed off to the sides to allow the approaching group to pass through.

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion commanded great prestige in Xuanjiang City, and no one would dare challenge their authority there.

At the same time, Zhang Xuan turned to take a closer look.

The person standing at the forefront of the group was a cold-faced young man, probably in his mid-twenties. He was dressed in a gray robe, and there was a sword tied to his waist. His eyes flickered with a hint of rational coolness, giving the impression of a person who would never let his feelings get in the way of his decisiveness.

Despite his young age, the young man’s cultivation was impressive, reaching Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm.

There was no such expert on the Master Teacher Continent, but it felt like it was not too rare to see cultivators of such a level here at all... The Azure sure was a frightening place!

“She...”

While Zhang Xuan was assessing the young man, he could not help but notice that Dan Xiaotian's body had tensed up along with the arrival of the group. Glancing over, he saw that the latter's fists were tightly clenched. Tracing the latter's line of sight, he saw Xue Qin, the young lady who had dropped by the Dan Clan earlier to coerce Dan Xiaotian into backing out of the marriage agreement, walking right behind the gray-robed young man.

She wore a tight purple dress that shaped out her proud figure beautifully, and its low neckline revealed her fair-colored neck. Her head was tilted upward slightly, and she emanated an aura of pride and loftiness.

The fact that she was allowed to follow the experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion around was more than enough to show that she had already been confirmed as a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and for a small place like Xuanjiang City, it could indeed be considered an impressive feat.

"Such a problem actually stumped you all for so long?" the gray-robed young man remarked as he swiftly read through the problem on the wall. He gestured to the young man behind him and said, "Write down the answer for me. Change the Inferno Grass Stem to Spirit Matriarch Grass."

"Alright!"

The young man hurriedly walked over to the wall to write down the answer.

Not expecting the other party to see through the crux of the problem with a glance as well, even coming up with the same answer as his teacher, Dan Xiaotian widened his eyes in astonishment. He turned to his teacher and exclaimed, "But we were the ones who found the answer first!"

He had been doubting the accuracy of his teacher's answer when those from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion came over and gave the same answer. That meant that there was really no mistake with his teacher's answer.

However, if it was the group from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who gave the answer instead, it meant that the Ethereal Token would go to them instead.

Just as Dan Xiaotian was about to rush over, he felt someone grasp his wrist tightly. It was his teacher.

“Don’t bother, it’s too late now...”

Dan Xiaotian turned his head over and saw that the young man from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had already written down the answer on the wall before pressing his palm down on it lightly.

Weng!

A brilliant red light flashed from the surface of the wall.

“It’s the correct answer?”

“As expected of an expert from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! He was actually able to solve the problem with just a swift glance!”

“I have long heard that the experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were figures who stood at the peak of this world, and it seems like that’s truly the case. Their reputation is not unfounded at all...”

“The number of disciples accepted by the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion each time around is extremely limited. I wonder how many people from Xuanjiang City will be able to meet the mark this time around. It might just be a mere menial disciple, but it symbolizes the opportunity to rise to become an outer disciple, then an inner disciple, and finally a direct disciple...”

“My bet is that there will be just three people. It has always been like that!”

...

A huge commotion broke out amid the crowd.

Even a question that had stumped the whole of Xuanjiang City for more than a decade was solved so easily by the group from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Those from the

Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were truly extraordinary beings.

“Young master, I would like to congratulate you on solving the final problem of the Hongyan Market. This is the reward that we have prepared for you!”

Very soon, a slightly plump middle-aged man walked over with a fawning smile on his face. He was holding onto an opened wooden chest carefully with both of his hands, and sitting in the middle of the chest was a palm-sized token.

The token was densely inscribed, and one could feel slight pulsations of spiritual energy coming from it.

“Is that the Ethereal Token?”

“I heard that even a single one of those costs a hundred thousand Ethereal Coins?”

“Wow. I don’t think I can’t ever afford that in my entire life...”

...

They might all be cultivators who had grown up in the Azure, but the Ethereal Token was a commodity that only the upper echelons of the continent possessed. There were only a few of them in Xuanjiang City, so most of them had never seen one before.

The gray-robed man grabbed the Ethereal Token in between his two fingers and drove his zhenqi through it. After confirming that it was the real deal, he nodded in satisfaction before sliding it into Xue Qin’s hands. “I’ll give it to you.”

Xue Qin’s eyes widened in delight as she received the Ethereal Token, and even her breathing hastened from agitation.

It was not just the value of this gift that excited her. What was more important was the significance behind the gift.

It was already a huge blessing for her to be able to become a menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but to receive a gift directly from the young man before her... With this, she would become the envy of the entire town!

Holding onto the Ethereal Token tightly, Xue Qin bowed down and said, "Thank you, Senior!"

After giving her thanks, she suddenly noticed Dan Xiaotian amid the crowd, and a sharp glint flashed through her eyes. She immediately made her way over to the latter, and with a mocking smile on her lips, she said in a hushed voice, "You're here as well? Were you trying to obtain this Ethereal Token to turn your situation around? What a pity though, it's already mine! You really should learn your place. Do you think that a person like you is worthy of possessing an Ethereal Token? Naive!"

Previously, she had been afraid that the rejection of the marriage proposal would affect her reputation, but with a senior from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion taking such care of her, she had nothing to fear anymore!

What did Dan Xiaotian even count as? They were already in two different worlds, so what did she have to fear about him?

Of course, there was also the fact that the area was filled with men from the City Lord Manor, so no one would dare leak the news out. Not even the wandering cultivators who had dropped by to try their luck would dare speak a word of the matter as long as they valued their lives.

Besides, she was not speaking too loudly, so it would be hard to discern what she was saying.

"You..." Dan Xiaotian's body stiffened at being humiliated once more.

"Who is he?" the gray-robed young man suddenly asked.

"He's just a friend I have met in the past..." Xue Qin scoffed at Dan Xiaotian one last time before turning around to face the gray-robed young man, replacing her scorn with a sweet smile in the blink of an eye.

"Let's go!" the gray-robed young man said before walking away.

Xue Qin quickly rushed forward to keep up with him.

Dan Xiaotian trembled quietly with a lowered head for a moment before he turned to Zhang Xuan with an apologetic look on his face. "I'm sorry, Teacher..."

His teacher had already revealed the correct answer, but he had actually doubted his teacher. If not for his teacher spending some time to explain the matter to him, the Ethereal Token would already have been theirs.

"To receive such a valuable gift from her senior... It seems like that fiancée of yours didn't acquire her position as a menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion through proper avenues," Zhang Xuan remarked deeply before turning to look at Dan Xiaotian with a smile on his lips.

"Do you wish to return the favor?"

"Return the favor?" Dan Xiaotian was taken aback.

Xue Qin already had the experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion on her side, so how could they possibly exact vengeance on her?

1920 You're Wrong!

“Watch closely!”

Without explaining himself, Zhang Xuan walked forward and shouted, “That friend from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion over there, may I ask you to stop for a short moment?”

The gray-robed young man continued walking away without any hesitation, as if not having heard Zhang Xuan’s voice at all.

The edges of Zhang Xuan’s lips crept up as he continued. “Friend, the answer you provided is inaccurate. I don’t think that it’s very fair for you to leave with the Ethereal Token just like that!”

His voice was extremely loud, suppressing the surrounding voices in an instant. Everyone turned to look at him with stupefied looks on their faces.

The other party was an expert of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and to actually claim that he was wrong so publicly...

Are you tired of living?

The gray-robed young man halted in his tracks and turned around to look at Zhang Xuan with a deep frown etched on his forehead.

With an awful look on her face, Xue Qin coldly spat, “Dan Xiaotian. If you don’t want to die, you’d better keep your subordinate’s mouth in check!”

She recognized the mummy standing before her as none other than the person who had spoken up against them earlier at the Dan Clan. It was out of magnanimity that she did not pursue his insolence, but who could have known that he would dare to continue spout nonsense?

“H-he isn’t my subordinate. He’s my t-teacher!” In a moment of anxiety, Dan Xiaotian began stuttering once again.

“Teacher? No matter what, the Dan Clan was still once a formidable existence. When did you fall so far such that even weaklings like him are worthy of being your teacher?” Xue Qin remarked disdainfully.

“I don’t think it’s any business of yours who Dan Xiaotian acknowledges as his teacher. Unless... you are still dreaming of becoming his fiancée,” Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

“You...” Xue Qin’s body stiffened upon hearing those words.

Seeing Xue Qin’s response, a cold glint flashed through the eyes of the gray-robed young man. He gazed down at the mummy before him coldly and said, “You mentioned that my answer isn’t correct?”

“Indeed,” Zhang Xuan replied. “To show you that I’m not making things up, I am even willing to make a bet with you. The one who loses will be subjected to the other party’s command!”

“You are courageous to speak to me in such a manner,” the gray-robed man remarked as he assessed Zhang Xuan nonchalantly. “Tell me, what is your basis for determining that my answer is wrong.”

“There’s no need for that. There’s a much easier way to resolve this problem than with our mouths. All we need to do is find an apothecary to forge the Nurturing Yang Pill based on the answer you have provided and feed that pill to someone. You will understand once you see it,” Zhang Xuan said.

“You want to test the practicality of the solution I have provided?” The gray-robed young man frowned.

The first response that came to his mind was to reject Zhang Xuan’s request because he felt that it was too troublesome, but when his gaze swept across the crowd, he noticed doubtful looks on their faces.

So, after a brief moment of silence, he raised his hand and said, “Bring an apothecary over!”

The young man following behind him quickly left the group, and not long later, he returned with the plump middle-aged man who had brought the Ethereal Token over earlier, as well as two apothecaries.

The plump middle-aged man snapped his fingers, and a large army of attendants immediately rushed forward to set up a table of medicinal herbs and two cauldrons.

“I need the two of you to forge the Nurturing Yang Pill according to the formula over there!” the plump middle-aged man instructed the two apothecaries.

Nodding, the two apothecaries swiftly began forging the Nurturing Yang Pill. They followed the instructions written on the wall precisely, adding medicinal herbs one after another with impeccable timing. When it was finally time to add in the Inferno Grass Stem, they threw the Spirit Matriarch Grass in instead.

As soon as the Spirit Matriarch Grass was thrown in, the two cauldrons immediately began rattling nonstop. One of the apothecaries could not contain the billowing energies within the cauldron, and eventually, the entire cauldron exploded deafeningly on the spot.

It was fortunate that protective measures had been taken beforehand, so no one was hurt as a result of the accident.

Nevertheless, the explosion still intimidated many people amid the crowd. They hurriedly backed a distance away as they continued watching the pill forging process worriedly.

The remaining apothecary was clearly more skilled as he controlled the responses of the medicinal herbs adeptly. An hour later, a set of freshly baked Nurturing Yang Pills was finally delivered out of the cauldron. Its surface glistened beautifully with a natural shine.

It seemed that their luck was not too bad. Not only were the pills formed, they had even reached the level of Perfection.

“Good!” After seeing the pills, the gray-robed young man nodded in approval.

He quickly scanned the crowd before beckoning a young man over. “The cultivation technique you practice seems to be yang attribute in nature. I need you to help me test the medicinal properties of the pill!”

Perhaps due to his trust in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, the young man swallowed the pill without any hesitation. The pill swiftly melted in his mouth, and a tremendous amount of yang energy swiftly flowed into his meridians. It took only an instant for the young man’s face to turn scarlet.

The young man hurriedly sat down to drive his zhenqi, hoping to keep the influx of yang energy under control for his own assimilation, but the more he tried to control the yang energy, the greater the backlash he faced. Eventually, white smoke began rising from the top of his head.

It did not take too long for his eyes to start reddening as the heat started getting the better of him.

“Ahh, I can’t stand it any longer!”

Unable to take it any longer, the young man rushed up to one of the aunties watching the spectacle and reached out to rip her clothes.

Tzla!

The ripped clothes scattered all over the ground. Without any hesitation, the young man began to force himself on the auntie to carry out some indescribable act, but there was an abrupt sharp pain at the back of his neck before he collapsed onto the ground.

The gray-robed young man of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had stepped in at the vital moment to prevent a tragedy from occurring.

The fact that the young man had only gone berserk after eating the Nurturing Yang Pill showed that his pill formula was insufficient in resolving its problems. Not only so, the side effects seemed to have worsened. The young man who had consumed the pill could not control his impulses at all.

“The pill formula that I have come up with does have some problems...” With an awful look on his face, the gray-robed young man turned his head over to Zhang Xuan and asked, “However, how did you know about it? Do you, by any chance, know the correct answer?”

To be honest, he had heard of this problem prior to coming to Xuanjiang City, and he had conducted quite a bit of research before coming up with the correct answer. He definitely did not manage to solve the problem as easily as he had made it appear.

The main reason he wanted to put up such an act was to bulk up the reputation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion in Xuanjiang City.

Just that... who could have known that instead of bulking up the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s reputation, he would end up being humiliated instead?

As displeased as he was, he knew that it would be unwise for him to lose his temper. He would only embarrass himself further if he displayed a lack of graciousness.

“I do have an answer,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

He whispered into Dan Xiaotian’s ear, and the latter looked at him with a bizarre expression. After confirming that Zhang Xuan was not joking with him, he walked up to the wall and penned down an answer with a brush before handing it forward.

Just like before, a red light flashed from the wall.

The gray-robed young man frowned as he impatiently remarked, “The person checking the answer is right here, so why don’t you just read it out loud?”

What was the point of beating about the bush when the manager of the Hongyan Market was already standing among them? The young man could just read out the answer, and they would be able to discern whether it was right or not together.

Dan Xiaotian looked at his teacher, and after receiving a confirmatory nod, he began reading out the answer that he had

written out earlier with an awkward look on his face. “Change the Inferno Grass Stem to Spirit Matriarch Grass!”

The crowd was silent for a moment before a huge commotion broke out.

“Huh?”

“Was I hearing things?”

“Isn’t the answer the same as the one that the young man from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion came up with?”

The gray-robed young man also narrowed his eyes as a menacing aura flowed out from him. “Are you trying to mock me?”

The other party had confidently pointed out that he was wrong, but he had ended up giving the same answer. Just what the hell was the other party up to?

Dan Xiaotian himself was feeling a little giddy as well. He had completely no idea what his teacher was up to.

Don’t you know that trying to make fun of an expert like this is a huge taboo? You’ll lose your life!

“You are thinking too much,” Zhang Xuan replied calmly before shooting an exasperated glance at Dan Xiaotian. “What are you doing? There is still a label at the end, right? Read it out!”

“Ah, right...” Dan Xiaotian nodded as he hurriedly continued. “After the solution, there’s a bracket that states ‘not local’.”

“Not local? Wait a moment, what does that mean?”

Everyone was bewildered by the additional label. Even the gray-robed young man was unable to make sense of what was happening.

What did ‘not local’ refer to? Was there some kind of difference between the local Spirit Matriarch Grass and those not from the region?

“The Nurturing Yang Pill serves to reinforce the yang energy of a cultivator. In order to stabilize the effects of the pill, swapping the Inferno Grass Stem with the Spirit Matriarch

Grass is indeed the ideal solution. In fact, the solution you have proposed would have surely worked out if the pill forging was conducted anywhere else,” Zhang Xuan said as he slowly walked up to the cauldron and touched the medicinal sludge from the exploded cauldron earlier.

“However, the solution simply doesn’t work here! Xuanjiang City has its back facing the Xuan River, and that’s where its name originates from. This river originates from the sea, and what flows through it isn’t freshwater but saltwater!”

The crowd nodded in agreement.

While Xuanjiang City was not located near the sea, it was connected to it through the Xuan River. However, it was a pity that what flowed through the Xuan River was saltwater, making it unsuitable for drinking or commercial activities. As such, despite its decent location, it had still failed to develop into a major city. Among the territories of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it could only be considered a third-rate city.

Its economy was not doing too well at all.

“As a result, the farmlands in the area were irrigated with saltwater, and the plants growing in the region carry some salt content. At this point, I would like to invite everyone to take a closer look at this medicinal sludge. Do you notice anything peculiar about it?” Zhang Xuan asked as he showed his hands to the others.

The crowd leaned in to take a closer look. Amid the black mess on his finger, there was a layer of white powder. It was faint, but as Saint cultivators, they were able to easily tell what it was.

The gray-robed young man also walked up to the medicinal sludge to take a closer look before touching it slightly. White powder stained the tip of his finger. He brought it to his lips and licked it, and there was a slightly salty taste.

“It’s salt!” The gray-robed young man nodded.

Following which, Zhang Xuan continued his explanation.

“The Spirit Matriarch Grass lives in marshlands, thriving in

dark, damp locations. Its leaves should have carried a slight acidity, but this is neutralized by the salt content of the other medicinal herbs, and that ruins the yin attribute of the Spirit Matriarch Grass. As such, it is unable to serve as a medium to calm the medicinal energies contained in the other medicinal herbs, resulting in the yang energy becoming even more violent after losing the Inferno Grass Stem. That's also why the young man completely lost control of his rationality earlier after consuming the Nurturing Yang Pill. He was completely overwhelmed by heat!"

"This..."

"There's actually such a factor?"

Fervent discussions could be heard all around.

Had pill forging always been such a delicate process such that even a slight change in the environment would make a huge difference?

The gray-robed young man was slightly taken aback. Was this really why his pill formula had failed?

He swiftly examined the remaining medicinal herbs that had not been used for the pill forging. With a tap of his finger, he ignited one of the medicinal herbs, and upon closer examination, he noticed some salt amid the ashes too.

"Pill forging is a very delicate process. The difference in a single medicinal herb or a single process could easily result in failure. Countless medicinal herbs could be ruined just because of a slight difference. Naturally, an apothecary has to take note of the geographical location, the local climate, the state of the cauldron, one's state of mind, and the techniques utilized in the forging process. All of this has to be considered before one embarks on the pill forging. A mistake is a mistake... I know that someone from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion won't deny that, right?" Zhang Xuan asked with a gentle smile.

"My misjudgment has indeed resulted in a failed pill forging, I'll admit that much!" Knowing that he would only hurt his reputation if he argued his way out of this, the gray-robed

young man harrumphed coldly. “I’ll give the Ethereal Token to you then!”

Without any hesitation, he took the Ethereal Token from Xue Qin’s hands and tossed it over to Zhang Xuan.

“I...” Xue Qin’s face twitched as she felt a burning sensation on her face.

It was just a moment ago that she had obtained this invaluable treasure, but in less than two hours, it was already another man’s possession.

“I shall humbly accept the gift!” Zhang Xuan replied as he slipped the Ethereal Token into his pocket. Then, his eyebrows suddenly shot up as a realization seemed to have struck him.

“Oh right, I nearly forgot. I mentioned earlier that I wanted to have a bet with you and that the one who lost the bet would have to listen to the winner’s command... You didn’t agree to the bet explicitly, but neither did you reject it. Since that’s the case, should I take it that the bet is still effective?”

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was pushing the boundaries, the eyes of the gray-robed young man narrowed threateningly.

He had never thought that a person from this remote city would actually be able to corner him to such an extent!

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan seemed to be completely oblivious to the gray-robed young man’s rage as he pointed to Xue Yan nonchalantly and said, “Well, my command isn’t anything much. I just want you to give Xue Qin over here three crisp slaps in my stead!”

“What?” Xue Qin’s face warped in horror upon hearing those words.

1921 Virtual Reality?

If she really was slapped, what would become of her dignity?

With a trembling body, Xue Qin hurriedly turned to the gray-robed young man and pleaded, “Senior, you mustn’t listen to that fellow’s nonsense! He’s just spewing a load of cr*p! Until we really forge the Nurturing Yang Pill according to his instructions, we won’t know if what he’s saying is the right answer...”

But before she could finish her words, the gray-robed young man had also turned to face her, and with three swift strokes, he slapped her thrice.

Forehand, pah! Backhand, pah! Forehand, pah!

Every single strike echoed loudly into the surroundings. The young lady’s smooth and delicate skin immediately began swelling up.

“Is that enough for you?” The gray-robed young man gazed at Zhang Xuan coldly with his hands behind his back.

He was extremely adept at pill forging, and he had made sure to check all the details personally. Even without forging the Nurturing Yang Pill, he already knew that the young man was correct.

Since the answer was already clear, any obstinacy beyond this point would only sully the good reputation of not only him but the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion too!

“Ah... It was just a casual remark when I told you to slap her. She’s just a young lady, and it’s not as if she has a marriage agreement with me but went to the extent of coming over to my residence to coerce me to back out of our marriage agreement... But I guess what’s done is done, so let’s say we’re even with that. Please, feel free to be on your way!” Zhang Xuan bowed slightly as if to send the gray-robed young man away.

The gray-robed young man took one last chilling look at Zhang Xuan before turning around to leave. The others that had come with him quickly left along with him. As for the fainted young man, one of the members of the group picked him up and took him away.

They had planned to make use of this as an opportunity to display their prowess and earn the respect of those in the Xuanjiang City, but it had completely backfired on them.

A tremendous amount of rage was boiling in their blood.

After leaving the market, the gray-robed young man looked at the swollen-faced Xue Qin and asked with narrowed eyes, “Who was that?”

Xue Qin shuddered at the chilling voice of the gray-robed young man, and she quickly explained herself. “Senior, I really don’t know that person...”

“I was referring to that crippled young man!” the gray-robed young man interjected sharply.

“H-he...” Xue Qin’s face turned ghastly pale. “He... has a marriage agreement with me. It was decided by the elders of our clans... However, there’s really nothing between us. We haven’t even met more than a couple of times...”

“You should know why you were accepted as a menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!” the gray-robed young man remarked coldly. “In order for inner disciples to focus on their cultivation, they require servants to attend to their needs. It’s out of special consideration of your looks and the fact that you are still a maiden that I made an exception and allowed you to join us as a servant and a concubine!”

“I understand...” Xue Qin lowered her head subserviently.

“That had better be the case!” the gray-robed young man said with an impatient wave of his hand.

He walked over to the carriage not too far away and got onto it. Before the carriage set off, his nonchalant voice echoed from within. “I expect you to settle this matter prudently before it reaches the ears of the Sword Pavilion. Also, I want to know the identity and background of that bandaged fellow

by tonight. Elder Lu Yun will be here in three days, and I don't expect any complications as a result of this. Understood?"

"Understood..." Xue Qin bowed fearfully, not daring to even breathe loudly.

Da da da!

The carriage finally began moving away.

Only at this moment did Xue Qin realize that her back was drenched in sweat. She glanced back at the Hongyan Market with a murderous look on her face.

"Tell my teacher that we'll be making a move tonight!" she spat coldly.

"Yes, Second Young Mistress!" the young men following behind her replied.

...

"Thank you, Teacher!"

Seeing how Xue Qin, who had humiliated him time and time again, had been struck in public, Dan Xiaotian felt a little conflicted within. Nevertheless, he knew that his teacher was doing this for him, and he felt extremely grateful for that.

"Since you are my student, there's no way I'll allow you to be wronged," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. "Alright, I need you to bring me to a quiet room. I would like to test out the Ethereal Token!"

"Yes, Teacher!" Dan Xiaotian nodded.

He quickly approached the middle-aged man from earlier, and before long, they were brought to a silent chamber.

Upon entering the chamber, Zhang Xuan inspected its interior and found that the area had been secured by multiple layers of formations, ensuring its privacy. He nodded in satisfaction before taking the Ethereal Token out.

"Teacher, I heard that the Ethereal Token requires very specific instructions in order to activate it, and a complete activation requires one to pay quite a heavy price..."

But before Dan Xiaotian could finish his words, he saw his teacher tapping a few points on the Ethereal Token, and a resounding ‘weng’ echoed through the chamber. A brilliant light shone from the surface of the jade token.

It had been completely activated!

Following which, Zhang Xuan dripped a droplet of blood on the Ethereal Token, and the brilliant light immediately warped into intricate patterns before seeping into his glabella.

This sight left Dan Xiaotian stunned.

Based on what he knew, activating the Ethereal Token was a delicate process, so more often than not, one would have to spend a huge number of Ethereal Coins in order to engage the help of an expert for a complete activation. Who could have known that his teacher would be able to activate and tame the Ethereal Token so easily, as if he had done it many times before?

Paying no heed to Dan Xiaotian’s astonishment, Zhang Xuan carefully perceived the light seeping into his glabella, and only after confirming that it posed no danger to him did he heave a sigh of relief.

Hu!

The next moment, his consciousness escaped from his body to enter a unique dimension.

“This...”

Lowering his head, he found that his body had become something that was a mix of reality and illusion.

“Welcome to the Ethereal Hall!”

While Zhang Xuan was still making sense of his current situation, a voice suddenly sounded in the air.

“This voice...” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in astonishment.

This voice was surprisingly familiar to him. There was no mistake about it...

“Kong shi!”

It was Kong shi's voice!

He knew that Kong shi had definitely come to the Azure, but he did not think that the latter would be related to the strongest power of the Azure, the Ethereal Hall!

Or could it be that... the Ethereal Hall had been created by Kong shi?

"Dan Xiaotian mentioned that the Ethereal Hall was created several thousand years ago by a formidable expert... but judging by the timeline, Kong shi should have left the Master Teacher Continent tens of thousands of years ago..." Zhang Xuan's brain churned swiftly to draw links.

At this moment, a possibility suddenly arose in his mind, causing his eyebrows to leap up. "Could it be that... the flow of time in the Azure differs from that of the Master Teacher Continent?"

There had been a whole string of trouble ever since he awoke, so he had not had a chance to really examine the Azure. But now that he was looking at it carefully, there was indeed a difference in the flow of time in the Azure and on the Master Teacher Continent.

As he was making sense of all of this, the earlier voice continued speaking. "I established the Ethereal Hall to allow cultivators to interact with one another and trade safely. In here, you are able to alter your appearance and aura, so there's no need to worry about anyone noticing your true identity in the real world. As long as you are willing to pay the price, you will be able to learn the cultivation techniques you wish to learn!

"Within the Ethereal Hall, everyone is of the same cultivation realm. There's no segregation as a result of standing or power difference. Everyone will be able to interact with one another on equal terms.

"That's all I want to say to you. May you enjoy your time at the Ethereal Hall!"

The voice suddenly trailed off.

Those words made Zhang Xuan more certain than ever that Kong shi was the person behind the Ethereal Hall. After all, it was his vision to create a world where all humans were equally entitled to cultivate and learn.

He knew that he would be able to find traces of Kong shi in the Azure, but considering the time difference, he had thought that it would take a while before he finally heard anything about the latter. Yet, a single Ethereal Token had been able to provide him with so much information.

Suppressing his agitation, he swiftly went through Kong shi's words when a bizarre thought suddenly occurred to him.

“Assuming anonymous identities and interacting with one another as equals... Isn't this pretty much like online chat rooms?”

1922 Dueling Ring

Technology had been an integral part of life in his previous world. It brought great convenience to the world, allowing for communication or shopping to be done remotely. It allowed people to assume anonymous new identities and enjoy a life aside from the real world. Often, a person whom you addressed as your wife over the internet could very well end up being a nose-picking middle-aged man.

As formidable as the Ethereal Token was, it seemed to work on the same principles.

Upon entering the Ethereal Hall, one would be able to conceal one's identity, and the strength of all cultivators would be equalized. This meant that it would be impossible for a person to tell if the person whom they had been chatting with was a male or female, an expert or an ordinary cultivator.

“This is fine. The cultivators will be able to release the restraints they impose on themselves in consideration of their reputation and pursue what they truly want. It makes it easier for them to seek pointers from one another regarding their cultivation... This might be the motive behind why Kong shi created this system!”

Kong shi promoted education without discrimination, and he hoped to create a world where all humans could stand tall. However, cultivation resources were scarce, and one's birth, talent, and opportunities were bound to determine one's future accomplishments. His ultimate vision was simply not realistic.

In his time on the Master Teacher Continent, he had founded the Master Teacher Pavilion, but the system that he had put in place was marred by the ambitions of those who wished to climb up the hierarchy. He had created the Kunxu Domain shortly after, but it had likely made him realize that it was impossible to achieve true equality in the real world. Thus, he had founded the Ethereal Hall and created the Ethereal Tokens.

Here, one would have to cast aside one's previous identity and everything related to it. With an anonymous identity and equal strength, everyone would be on equal footing with one another.

With just a thought, Zhang Xuan's appearance immediately began changing, making him appear more ordinary. He tried clenching his fists and threw a punch out.

The strength that he could draw forth was roughly equivalent to a Saint 1-dan cultivator.

In other words, no matter how powerful a cultivator was, he could only exert the strength of a Saint 1-dan cultivator in here.

Zhang Xuan spent some time testing out his new body, but fortunately, it seemed like there was no fundamental difference between it and his real body. He began walking forward, and soon, a grand palace appeared before his eyes.

Ethereal Hall, Starlight City!

"Starlight City is a second-tier city, and Xuanjiang City happens to be under its jurisdiction," Zhang Xuan recalled based on Dan Xiaotian's explanation, and he shook his head with a smile. "It's even a regional network..."

To use the terminology from his previous world, there were only servers in the cities where the Ethereal Hall had branches. There was no branch in Xuanjiang City, so anyone trying to access the Ethereal Hall from there needed to connect to the higher Starlight City's server.

Zhang Xuan pushed the door open and walked into the palace. A huge crowd immediately appeared right in front of him.

Just like social networking games in his previous life, even though everyone had different appearances and figures, the strength that they wielded was the same as one another.

They might be far from one another geographically, but at that moment, they were seated alongside one another to trade insights regarding cultivation or even to negotiate important business deals.

Through sharing knowledge on a common platform, the rate at which information traveled would be greatly enhanced. Perhaps, this was the building block that would drive the Azure toward something similar to his previous world's digital age.

After a moment of curious observation, Zhang Xuan knew that the urgent matter at hand was to heal his injuries, so he headed to the front counter of the Ethereal Hall and called for an attendant.

“Do you have any recovery medicine here? I would like to purchase some.”

“May I ask what tier of medicine you are looking for?”

The attendant was a young man dressed in a uniform, and his appearance looked considerably dashing. Of course, it was unlikely that this was his original appearance. This was similar to how many people liked to use the photos of popular individuals, such as that author named Heng Sao Tian Yao, as their online profile pictures.

“I need something that can heal the injuries of a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator,” Zhang Xuan replied.

On his way there, he had verified the various cultivation realms in the Azure, and it seemed like there were four tiers of Ancient Sages, and the names of the realms were the same. As for what lay beyond Ancient Sage, it appeared that even Dan Xiaotian himself had no idea what it was, so he was unable to satisfy his curiosity.

“We do have the Whitewood Pill and Bluesun Pill here,” the young man said as he passed two jade bottles over.

Zhang Xuan took the two jade bottles, pried open their lids, and took a careful look at them. He could not help but marvel at just how detailed the world that Kong shi had created was.

He was well aware that he was in an illusory world, but the spiritual energy and medicinal energy harnessed within those two pills felt so tangible that he could not help but wonder if they were actually existent.

But I have never heard of these two pills before though, so I don't really know which one will be more useful to me...

In the end, the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent were two different worlds. While both worlds had apothecaries, their practices and techniques varied greatly from one another, so he was unable to accurately gauge the healing properties of those two pills. He was just about to ask the attendant for more information when an idea suddenly popped into his head.

He placed his finger on the Whitewood Pill lightly and muttered, "Flaws!"

Since he was able to use the Library of Heaven's Path with his soul, was it possible for him to use it here as well?

Weng!

There was a jolt in his head, and a book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

It works! Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in delight.

Even though the pills were fake, it seemed like the Library of Heaven's Path was still able to process the information in the Ethereal Hall to analyze its strengths and weaknesses before compiling that into a book.

"The Whitewood Pill uses the Whitewood Grass as its main ingredient, making it excellent for healing the soul injuries sustained by Dimension Shatterer realm cultivators..."

"The Bluesun Pill uses the blood of saint beasts as its key ingredient, and it has remarkable effects in healing one's physical wounds and recovering one's zhenqi..."

The bulk of my injuries lie in my physical body and my zhenqi, so I guess I should choose the Bluesun Pill!

Having made up his mind, Zhang Xuan relayed his intention to the attendant.

"The Bluesun Pill will cost 20,000 Ethereal Coins each. May I know how you wish to pay for the pill? Do you have an Ethereal Card?" the attendant asked with a sweet smile on his face.

“20,000 Ethereal Coins?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows leaped up.

He did not have a single Ethereal Coin with him, so 20,000 Ethereal Coins was clearly far out of his league! Besides, what in the freaking cow was an Ethereal Card?

So far, it had been roughly four hours since he had awoken, but he had already gotten a clear glimpse as to the purchasing power of the Ethereal Coin. If Dan Xiaotian sold the residence that he was living in, he would receive five thousand Ethereal Coins at most, which meant that the entire residence was only worth a quarter to this Bluesun Pill...

I guess it’s time for me to start earning some money once more... Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress.

He had finally climbed to the apex of the Master Teacher Continent, commanding greater clout than anyone else. He had thought that he had finally struggled out of poverty and would never have to worry about money again, but in the blink of an eye, he was reduced back to the penniless lad he used to be. It sure was exasperating!

He suddenly thought of the times when he had impersonated as Yang Shi to give others guidance so as to earn the money required to solve Zhao Ya’s affliction. Was he going to have to do the same in the Azure?

While it was convenient for him to assume an anonymous identity here, he was a humble and low-profile person at heart! There was nothing in this world that he detested more than showing off in such a manner!

Sighing helplessly, he raised his head to look at the attendant before him and asked, “May I ask what kind of ways there are to earn money quickly here?”

“Earn money?”

Those words made the attendant realize that the person standing before him did not have the means to purchase the Bluesun Pill. While he did not reveal anything on his face, the warmth in his eyes cooled a little.

He had thought that the other party was a big fish, asking for a 20,000 Ethereal Coins pill as soon as he walked up to the stall,

but as it turned out, the other party was poor!

“The easiest way to earn money is through fighting open duels in the city’s dueling ring,” the attendant replied nonchalantly.

“As long as you don’t leave the dueling ring, the amount of money you can earn will increase by twofold each round. In the first round, you can earn one hundred Ethereal Coins, and this will increase to two hundred Ethereal Coins in the second round, four hundred Ethereal Coins in the third round, and so on. All in all, as long as you don’t lose, you should be able to earn Ethereal Coins quickly!

“As long as you are able to win eight rounds consecutively, you will be able to rack up enough money to buy the Bluesun Pill.”

“I see...” Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

He had made a misjudgment earlier. It was true that limiting everyone’s cultivation to Saint 1-dan did reduce the power difference among everyone, but that did not mean that they were equally powerful.

Depending on one’s interpretation of cultivation, fighting style, and reflexes, there could be a vast difference in the fighting prowess of different individuals even if they did have the same zhenqi capacity. If anything, it would be even more testing on one’s skills and techniques.

Besides, just because everyone’s cultivation was suppressed to the same level, it would be naive to think that an ordinary Saint cultivator would be able to defeat an Ancient Sage cultivator. The precision of their control and battle experience would make a world of difference.

The Ethereal Hall could not erase all inequality among cultivators, or perhaps it was not its aim to do so. By reducing the power difference among cultivators, it would put the emphasis on techniques and skills, thus motivating cultivators to work on those as well.

“May I know where the dueling ring is? I’d like to register for the duels,” Zhang Xuan said.

“You can register for the duel here. However, I would like to remind you that your opponents get more and more difficult with each round that you win. While you are winning more rounds, the opponents you are paired with are doing the same,” the attendant said.

“I understand.” Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

This was basically the same as the ‘Ranked Matches’ in games from his previous world. If you were a Conqueror, the opponents you were paired with would be roughly around the same tier as you so that it would be a comparable match.

But over here, regardless of whether his opponent was a Diamond or a Conqueror, it made no difference at all. He would crush them all one after another!

In any case, he could use the Library of Heaven’s Path here, so there was no one who had an advantage over him.

“That’s good. You’ll have to pay the registration fee, five hundred Ethereal Coins,” the attendant said.

“Five hundred?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment. “Why is it so expensive?”

“The Ethereal Hall doesn’t just provide the location to conduct these duels; it records the video and provides a live feed of the battle to the other cultivators as well. All of this costs money, so naturally, there has to be a fee as well!” the attendant replied.

“But I don’t have five hundred Ethereal Coins. Is it possible for me to use my possessions as a deposit instead? Or else... could I borrow the money from you for the time being? I’ll return it twofold to you once I win the battles!” Zhang Xuan scratched his head in embarrassment.

Money was truly the greatest woe of a hero.

As a godlike figure worshipped by countless on the Master Teacher Continent, it was embarrassing how he could not even take out five hundred Ethereal Coins here. If word spread, it would really be a huge embarrassment!

“If you don’t have the money to pay the registration fee, I’d advise you not to participate at all.” The attendant finally reached the limits of his tolerance and snapped impatiently.

A person who could not even take out five hundred Ethereum Coins actually wanted to purchase a pill worth 20,000 Ethereum Coins. It was as if he thought that he could easily win the duels and earn a fortune for himself. Just where in this world did this naive lad come from?

Furthermore, how in the world could he trust the other party to return his money when they did not even know one another? Impossible!

“This...” Seeing through the attendant’s derision, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply and said, “My Ethereum Token should be worth more than five hundred Ethereum Coins. I should at least be able to use it as a deposit for the duel, right?”

Since the Ethereum Token was distributed by the Ethereum Hall, the system should be able to accept it as a deposit.

“I guess that works. However, I’d just like to offer you one last piece of advice. If you fail to repay your debt within three days, the Ethereum Token that you are using will be resealed, preventing you from using it ever again!” the attendant replied.

Since the Ethereum Hall was able to allow cultivators to connect to them via the Ethereum Token, naturally, they were able to terminate the connection as well.

“I understand.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan knew what he was getting into, the young man impatiently processed the request. Some time later, he passed a card over to Zhang Xuan.

“This is your Ethereum Card, and stored inside are the five hundred Ethereum Coins you have borrowed. As long as you sign up for the duel, the sum will automatically be deducted from your card. Similarly, the reward for your victory will automatically be stored within your card, so you need not worry!”

Seeing that the process was automated, Zhang Xuan was relieved to know that he would be spared from much trouble. He quickly put the card away before heading toward the dueling ring.

1923 My Name Is World's Edge

There was nothing that induced one's improvement faster than practical battle, and this was the same wherever one went.

However, practical battles came at a risk. There was a chance that one might get injured or even die, but these problems were not an issue in the Ethereal Hall. It was for this reason that the dueling ring was a popular location in the Ethereal Hall for cultivators to head to.

As Zhang Xuan was nearing his destination, he saw a lot of people gathered together before a crystal-like screen with agitated looks on their faces.

On the screen, there were two figures clashing intensely with one another.

Their cultivation might only have been at Saint 1-dan, but their battle was still exciting to veteran fighters. Their maneuvers were sharp and well-calculated, and the sheer precision of their movements was amazing. There were hardly any wasted movements at all, and the battle techniques that they executed often achieved unexpected effects in influencing the flow of the battle.

“Windherder has already won five rounds so far. He really is amazing!”

“Amazing is an understatement, alright! His grasp of his battle techniques is terrifying! Every single move he executes is measured to an extremely precise degree, such that it reveals no openings for his opponent to exploit at all!”

“I would be content if I could just reach his level of proficiency!”

“Watching his battles are a huge enjoyment in itself. Not only so, I am also able to learn quite a few combat techniques from him and enhance my own fighting style!”

...

Such discussions could be heard from the crowd.

It was not without reason that the Ethereal Token was so highly sought after by the cultivators in the Azure. It served not only as an online market but a perfect underground ring too. Not only did the fighters not need to fear getting injured, even the spectators could learn much from watching the battles.

To be careful, Zhang Xuan did not rush into registering for the duels but instead chose to spectate the duels of other cultivators for the time being so as to gauge the average strength of the cultivators there.

Due to the cultivation cap of Saint 1-dan, the battle techniques that the cultivators were able to execute were severely limited. Thus, what really determined the battle was their grasp of timing and precision of the execution of battle techniques. More often than not, it was the cultivator who was more decisive and had sharper moves who emerged victorious.

Having a deeper understanding of the dueling ring, Zhang Xuan walked over to the registration counter and passed his Ethereal Card over.

“What name do you wish to go by? It’s fine to use a nickname too!” the person at the counter, a young lady in her twenties, asked.

“Nickname?” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment.

Such dueling rings would require one to take on a nickname so that it would be easier to refer to them.

Since I am able to preserve my anonymity in here, I shouldn’t use my real name, Zhang Xuan thought.

Doing so would be just like the fools who used their real names on the internet in his previous life.

Let me see. Yang Xuan, Sun Qiang, Xuan Zhang, Luo Tianya... The identities Zhang Xuan had assumed in the past flashed through his head in an instant, and the next moment, he said, “Call me... World’s Edge[1]!”

“World’s Edge?” The young lady nodded as she jotted the name down on a book before her.

It did not take long for his match to be arranged.

“Next round, World’s Edge vs. Shadow Lurker!”

Amid roaring cheers, Zhang Xuan walked into the dueling ring.

The dueling ring was circular in shape, and the surroundings were sealed by a crystalline barrier. Through the screens around the dueling ring, spectators were able to see the details of the duel from outside.

The opponent that he was facing was a slim, middle-aged man. Even though their cultivation was both Saint 1-dan, he commanded an aura that pressurized his opponents.

“I’ve heard of Shadow Lurker before! Even though this is his first duel, he’s actually quite a formidable expert!”

“Indeed! I chatted with him earlier, and we even exchanged a few blows. His reflexes and movement speed are truly top-notch. At the very least, I gauge that his cultivation must be equivalent to Dimension Shatterer realm intermediate stage!”

“He’s actually so powerful? The Ethereal Hall really is filled with many experts!”

“It seems like that there will be something interesting to look out for in this match then! Just that... I wonder if World’s Edge will be able to put up a worthy fight!”

“Eyyy, his name sounds so childish. I doubt that he’s a formidable expert!”

“Indeed, what World’s Edge? It makes me cringe just by listening to it!”

It was impossible to determine a person’s true identity through the Ethereal Token, but nevertheless, through casual conversation and exchanging blows, it was still possible to roughly gauge a person’s true strength and standing as long as the person was not intentionally hiding it.

Those who had interacted with Shadow Lurker before knew that he was a fairly powerful cultivator.

As such, they did not think too well of the fellow he was going to face.

“Let’s begin!” Shadow Lurker gazed at the young man before him coldly and taunted, “I won’t be going easy on you!”

He was planning to make use of this opportunity to forge a name for himself in the Ethereal Hall.

Just like those experts who had made their fame there by achieving achieved consecutive victories, he would do the same and make the name ‘Shadow Lurker’ resound across the entire Ethereal Hall!

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan lifted his hand and beckoned him. “Let’s start then!”

Hu!

With light footsteps, Shadow Lurker flitted toward Zhang Xuan with bizarre footwork that caused his silhouette to appear a little illusory.

Seeing the other party’s moves, Zhang Xuan nodded slightly.

While the occupations in the Azure were not as developed as the Master Teacher Continent, their grasp of battle techniques and combat skills were clearly superior.

Any single one of them would be more than a match for the combat masters of the Combat Master Hall!

Of course, this might be due to their possession of the Ethereal Token too. After all, not even combat masters could keep fighting on and on without getting injured.

I can’t win right away, or else it’ll be hard for me to get matched with my next opponent, Zhang Xuan thought.

As profound as Shadow Lurker’s moves appeared to be, Zhang Xuan was still able to see at least eight flaws in them without relying on the Library of Heaven’s Path. It would be a walk in the park for him to achieve victory.

But this was an open duel. If he won in a single move, it would be difficult to find his next opponent. Without an opponent, how could he make his fortune?

And if he did not earn sufficient money that day, the tenth direct disciple that he had just taken in could very well breathe his last breath tonight!

Coming to realize all of this, Zhang Xuan swiftly charged forward to trade blows with his opponent.

Peng peng peng!

In the blink of an eye, he had already started clashing with Shadow Lurker.

“Oh? It seems like World’s Edge isn’t too weak!”

“The move that Shadow Lurker executed earlier is the Spacebreaking Footwork, right? Is it really possible for a Saint 1-dan to execute such a powerful battle technique?”

“Is that... the Drifting Palm? Has it always been so powerful?”

“Those two moves are incredibly ingenious, and yet, World’s Edge managed to dodge them so easily... Is it just luck, or does he actually have something in him?”

...

When the battle first started, everyone thought that it would be completely one-sided. However, when the situation did not go as expected, everyone slowly widened their eyes in incredulity.

Just as they had previously guessed, Shadow Lurker was indeed a powerful cultivator. His every single maneuver carried exceptional might. Despite that, even though World’s Edge’s moves were ordinary and a little flustered even, he was still able to dodge every one of Shadow Lurker’s attacks and even find windows of opportunity to retaliate!

This really cast doubt over the matter.

If it was just luck, World’s Edge could not have dodged Shadow Lurker’s attacks by just a millimeter each and every

time. But if World's Edge was truly doing it intentionally, just how powerful must he be to pull off such a dangerous feat each and every time?

"Look, World's Edge is going to counterattack!" someone suddenly shouted.

In the first ten blows or so, Shadow Lurker had been the one on the offensive, and World's Edge could only defend against his blows. But right now, the tables had turned.

As Shadow Lurker found that his offense was not reaching his enemy at all, he slowly lost his patience, and World's Edge made use of this opportunity to control the flow of the battle.

At that moment, Zhang Xuan wobbled unstably on the spot for a moment before abruptly thrusting his right palm forward.

On the other hand, Shadow Lurker seemed to have expected this abrupt attack and was not caught off guard. Without any hesitation, he thrust his left palm forward to meet the other party's attack.

Just as the two palms were about to meet, World's Edge suddenly pulled his right palm back and redirected the momentum of his strike to his left palm instead. Before anyone could even react, World's Edge had managed to strike Shadow Lurker squarely in the chest.

To think that the previous right palm thrust was another feint!

"To be able to switch between feints and real attacks so freely... not even the lord of Starlight City is capable of such a feat, right?"

"You are underestimating the lord of Starlight City too much. I have watched some of the city lord's open duels over the past few years, and he has used similar moves before. What appeared to be a feint would suddenly turn into a real strike if one failed to guard against it, and vice-versa... This is a move that requires perfect control over your body, otherwise it would be impossible to exert and retract strength so freely. Countless cultivators desire to learn this technique, but very few of them are able to get to the point where they can execute it in a real battle. I have practiced this technique for more than

three years, but even I'm not completely confident in pulling it off safely. Yet, World's Edge actually managed to do it so easily."

"Frightening! Allow me to take back my earlier words, World's Edge is definitely a true expert!"

"Could he possibly be the lord of Starlight City in disguise?"

"How can that be? I know the nickname used by the city lord in his open duels, and it definitely isn't this... Someone who has won countless duels like the city lord wouldn't have any reason to pass himself off as a minor figure who hasn't even won a single match, right?"

...

The ability to switch freely between feints and real attacks might not seem too difficult, but throughout Starlight City, there were no more than a handful of cultivators who were able to pull it off. Thus, it was inevitable that the crowd would be shocked to see such a high-level feat being executed by an unknown figure.

Peng!

The Shadow Lurker staggered backward several steps as fresh blood dripped from his lips.

While it was impossible for cultivators to die for real in the Ethereal Hall, they would still experience pain and vomit blood after incurring injuries. This was to ensure an accurate simulation of reality.

"I have lost..." Knowing that he would only lose more tragically if the battle continued, Shadow Lurker willingly admitted his defeat.

He had intended to make use of this opportunity to make his name, but who could have known that he would be defeated in his very first battle?

Right after, a young lady's voice sounded from the outside.

"Do you wish to proceed on to the next duel or leave the dueling ring?"

After clearing the first battle, one had the choice to continue battling or give up.

“I’ll proceed on to the second round,” Zhang Xuan replied without hesitation.

While he did exert himself a little in the last battle, he still had plenty of strength left. Besides, he had not raked in the money that he needed to buy the Bluesun Pill yet, so how could he leave?

Very soon, he had been paired up with an opponent. This time, his opponent was no longer a newbie but a veteran who had already fought several battles.

His opponent seemed to have realized that he would not be easy to deal with, so as soon as the battle began, he immediately dashed forward and launched a barrage of relentless attacks, hoping to suppress him right from the start.

This left Zhang Xuan with no choice but to dodge again and again. After all, he had to drag the battle on for a bit so as to not scare his next opponent away.

...

“That’s Infinitesimal Maneuver!”

The crowd exclaimed in astonishment.

“Infinitesimal Maneuver refers to the feat of dodging an opponent’s attack by a hair’s breadth each and every time. This allows one to conserve as much energy as possible, and it puts one in a better position to launch a counterattack. Of course, it is a double-edged sword as the slightest carelessness could spell the end. To think that World’s Edge would actually be able to utilize such a high-level skill...”

“That must have taken him decades of tough training, right?”

“Hah, it would already be an incredible feat if one could achieve it within decades of training!”

“I have a cousin who is determined to master Infinitesimal Maneuver. He has trained for thirty years in order to pull it off, but nevertheless, he still doesn’t dare execute it in a real battle. This maneuver doesn’t just test the precision of one’s control;

more importantly, it's a test of one's state of mind. Without absolute confidence in one's abilities, there is no way one would dare use this combat skill!"

Many cultivators among the crowd were already rendered speechless.

In the Ethereal Hall, it was no exaggeration to say that those two combat skills were the marks of a true expert.

Oblivious to the shock outside of the dueling ring, Zhang Xuan dragged the match on for roughly ten blows before defeating this opponent with a swift strike.

While waiting for his third opponent, Zhang Xuan could not help but nod in satisfaction at his own performance.

It was tough, but I think I should have disguised my strength quite well. It is really stifling to have to exert only a twentieth of my true strength like this, but it is all so that I'll have enough opponents to last me to the eighth round...

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan raised his head to face his third opponent.

[1] This is the English translation of Tianya.

1924 Sword Tossing

The third opponent was a young lady dressed in green, but she fell in defeat soon enough.

The fourth opponent was an arrogant young man, but he too did not persevere beyond ten moves.

Seeing how he was staying in control, not scaring away the other challengers from fighting him in a duel, Zhang Xuan nodded in contentment at his self-control.

What he did not know was that, to the others, being able to spar with an expert of such caliber with just five hundred Ethereal Coins was an invaluable opportunity for them, so there was no reason for them to pass on it.

It could be said that they were earning a huge profit just by challenging Zhang Xuan in a duel.

It was not as if they could die in the duel, so they had nothing to lose.

“Senior, what’s your opinion on that World’s Edge?”

Outside the dueling ring, two figures leaning on a nearby pillar watched the live feed on the screen as they spoke.

The person who was speaking was dressed in green, and he was hugging a sword. Despite his slackened posture, his eyes reflected a sharp Sword Intent that was at odds with his demeanor.

The ‘Senior’ whom he was speaking too was also holding a sword in his hands, and the Sword Intent that he emanated was even more intense. It was clear that he was a skilled sword practitioner just by his presence.

Both Xuanjiang City and Starlight City were under the jurisdiction of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so there were many sword practitioners among the populace. In fact, even in the dueling ring, many of the challengers chose to wield a sword.

“The fact that he’s able to alternate between feint and real attacks, as well as his ability to carry out Infinitesimal Maneuver, shows that the precision of his control over his strength has reached an incredible level, not paling in comparison even to me. There’s no doubt that he’s an expert!” The senior nodded with a smile. “However, he’s still lacking in comparison to the disciples of our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

“Those two skills are the elementary requirements one has to meet in order to officially become a disciple of our sect. Most menial disciples are capable of pulling that off. It’s only in a remote location like this that people make such a huge fuss over this matter!” the junior said.

“Junior Huang Tao, go and sign up for the dueling ring and show that fellow that there’s a wider world out there!” the senior instructed.

“Rest assured! If I can’t make him admit within three moves, I’ll spend the pay on the tab for our alcohol tonight and practice the Transient Swordsmanship from scratch once more!” the junior known as Huang Tao replied with a confident smile.

“Don’t drag the battle on for too long. We have yet to choose the new outer disciples and menial disciples, so we are very tight on time. Furthermore, our actions can be viewed as no different from bullying the local populace, and if Elder Lu learns of it, he’ll surely reprimand us!”

As geniuses from a major sect, it was inappropriate for them to come to such a remote area and challenge the newbies in the area. This was no different from national players dropping by a local community club to challenge its team. It was beneath them to do something like that, and it would only sully their reputation.

“I understand!” Huang Tao nodded as he walked toward the female attendant.

It did not take long for him to be confirmed as Zhang Xuan’s fifth opponent.

“Look at Dire Swordsman’s win ratio!”

“He’s only lost five matches out of a hundred? Isn’t that insanity?”

“What a ridiculous score this is! It seems like World’s Edge has really met his match this time!

“Since he’s holding a sword, this duel will likely be a sword duel. We’ve only seen World’s Edge’s expertise in hand-to-hand combat; we haven’t seen his expertise with the sword.”

Every single competitor would have their past record in the dueling ring reflected on the screen. Dire Swordsman’s feat of losing only five matches out of a hundred swiftly raised a commotion among the crowd.

The crowd initially expected it to be a one-sided battle just like those before, but the opinions were soon divided in now.

Some believed that while World’s Edge had displayed exceptional hand-to-hand combat skills, that was no indication that he would be good with a weapon in hand.

Given his opponent’s name, Dire Swordsman, and his score to date, he was likely an exceptional sword practitioner.

“Pick up your weapon!”

In the dueling ring, Huang Tao held onto his sword as he gestured to Zhang Xuan.

“Very well!”

Without much hesitation, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and a sword from the nearby weapon rack swiftly flew into his hands.

There were no tiers to the swords in the Ethereal Hall. They were only tools used to execute one’s swordsmanship, so things such as weapon spirit did not exist within them.

“I’ll give you two chances before I draw my sword. If you can’t get close to me before then, I’ll defeat you within a single strike!” Huang Tao remarked calmly.

As a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he had his own honor to uphold.

“You aren’t going to draw your sword right away?” Zhang Xuan taken aback. With a frown on his forehead, he muttered, “But you might lose your life if so...”

“Audacious!” Huang Tao exclaimed with a darkened face. “Make your move, or else you won’t have to a chance to do so very soon!”

“Alright then!” Zhang Xuan sighed helplessly.

He raised the sword in his hand and flicked it around casually, as if he was trying to get used to it. Without taking a single step forward, he flicked his finger all of a sudden.

Weng!

The sword flew out of his hand.

Before he could even make his first move, he actually lost his grip over his sword!

This was one of the greatest taboos in battle! Once a cultivator lost their weapon in battle, they would have to face their opponent bare-handed, thus putting them in a disadvantageous position!

“That’s too reckless!”

“Is that fellow trying to admit defeat?”

The crowd watching the duel were stunned by what they were seeing.

They had never expected to see such carelessness from the seemingly powerful World’s Edge.

“Look, World’s Edge has turned his body around!”

“You’re right! What does he mean by that?”

“Is he trying to admit defeat just like that? Does he not have the slightest shred of sportsmanship in him?”

Amid exclams of astonishment, the situation grew more and more ridiculous.

On the stage, the young man known as World’s Edge turned around and raised his hands after tossing out his sword, as if

celebrating something... Was this a mark of surrender? Was he giving up after seeing Dire Swordsman's impressive record?

The problem was, it was one thing for World's Edge to surrender, but why was he raising his hand so triumphantly? Did he view it as an honor or something?

Standing on the opposite end of the stage, Huang Tao was taken aback by the situation as well.

He had no idea what his opponent was up to or what was going on. Even if his opponent wanted to admit defeat, the latter should say so verbally instead of displaying such uncertain gestures!

Just as he was deep in thought, his senior anxiously yelled, "Huang Tao, don't let your guard down! Be careful!"

That remark immediately brought Huang Tao back from his daze, and he quickly gathered his attention once more. However, before he knew it, the sword that his opponent had tossed ever so casually had already slowly made its way to him.

The movements of the sword felt incredibly slow, giving one the feeling that it was floating quietly in the air. When it was just three meters away from him, the sword abruptly accelerated, bolting toward him as if a flash of light.

Alarmed, Huang Tao immediately drew the sword in his embrace to protect himself, but before he could move, there was already a splitting pain in his head.

Putong!

His body fell uncontrollably to the ground as his consciousness swiftly vanished. The sword had already pierced his head and ended him.

Hu!

Huang Tao's corpse swiftly dissipated into light particles before vanishing altogether, leaving only the sword that he had been holding earlier on the ground.

Dying in the Ethereal Hall would not cause any harm to one's real body, but the Ethereal Token that one wielded would

shatter and lose its function. Similarly, one's avatar and consciousness in the Ethereal Hall would vanish as well.

In other words, dying in the Ethereal Hall was not completely without cost.

Silence!

There was a deathly silence that lingered in the area.

Everyone stared in shock at the dueling ring before them with slackened jaws.

They had expected to see an intense fight between Dire Swordsman and World's Edge, but as if a farcical play, the latter had tossed his sword out, and the former had gotten his head impaled.

What the heck was that?

Hula!

After a moment of bizarre silence, roaring cheers filled the surroundings.

While most of the spectators were unable to make sense out of what had happened in the earlier duel, it was as clear as day to them that World's Edge had won the duel.

"Long live World's Edge! I love you more than anything in the world!"

"Dire Swordsman must have underestimated his opponent far too much. He was probably caught off guard by the sudden offense from World's Edge..."

"I thought that Dire Swordsman would be a formidable figure, but who would have guessed that he's nothing but talk? To be impaled by a sword just like this... there's probably no one other than him!"

"And to think that he actually had a win ratio of 95% out of one hundred matches... Did he get such a record by rigging the system, or did he intentionally lose the battle so as to give us a good laugh?"

To all the spectators, the sword toss that Zhang Xuan had performed earlier looked perfectly ordinary, so it was

inexplicable to them how Dire Swordsman had ended up getting killed by it. Thus, there was only one possibility in their mind, and that was that Dire Swordsman was simply too weak!

“That’s impossible!”

The senior leaning against the pillar hurriedly straightened his posture.

He had noticed that something was amiss as soon as the sword was tossed. He could sense traces of Sword Intent behind the sword toss, which meant that it was a sword technique in itself.

Still, was it really possible to kill Huang Tao so easily with the toss of a sword?

The senior tried to recall the trajectory behind the sword toss, but the harder he tried to think about it, the more sweat that trickled down his forehead.

To his astonishment, he was unable to map out the trajectory of the sword toss at all! It was as if everything had simply happened. His mind could process the start and the end, but everything in between was a blank.

Even with his eye of discernment, he was unable to tell how the young man had managed to win with that single sword toss!

“Do I have to fight him personally in order to tell?” the senior muttered as he clenched his fists tightly together.

Most formidable swordsmanship would require a person to experience it themselves in order to know how powerful it truly was. Most likely, this move had also reached such a level.

With that thought in mind, the senior unhesitatingly walked over to the registration counter and signed up for the duel. A moment later, he appeared in the dueling ring.

“Soaring Clouds?” Zhang Xuan read from the screen not too far away.

He could not help but notice that his newest opponent had a sword in his grasp. It was just a moment ago that he had gotten

rid of a swordsman when another one appeared before him. Did he accidentally poke a beehive or something?

“I am Soaring Clouds (Yun Feiyang). It’s both my nickname and my real name!” Yun Feiyang nodded in response.

Without any hesitation, he drew his sword, and a cold sheen appeared on the surface of the sword. “Pick up your weapon!”

Seeing that his opponent was as narcissistic as his previous opponent, Zhang Xuan picked up the sword that he had used for the previous battle from the weapon rack once more before looking at his opponent.

Yun Feiyang clasped his fist and requested, “Please use the same sword art as before!”

He wanted to experience the same sword art that had killed his junior in an instant earlier so that he could find a way to decipher it. As a sword practitioner, he could not stand the idea of a sword technique existing in the world that he was unable to make sense of.

“The sword art that I used earlier?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

“That’s right!”

“Well... I guess that’s fine!” Zhang Xuan sighed helplessly.

He did not think that the sword toss that he had executed earlier could be considered a sword art at all. It was really just a casual toss of his sword, and there was no particular skill or deep conceptualization behind it.

That being said, it was still a sword toss that harnessed the essence of the Heaven’s Path Sword Art, and that was how it had pierced Dire Swordsman’s head with impeccable accuracy.

This fellow wanted to give the same menu a try?

Did he think that his head was tough enough to survive the impact?

Regardless of the reason behind his opponent’s request, it really did not make much of a difference to him at all.

He swung the sword in his hand a bit to get used to the grip before pointing it toward Soaring Clouds.

Hu!

With a flick, the sword flew out of his hand.

“It’s coming!” Yun Feiyang narrowed his eyes as he swiftly brandished his sword.

In an instant, with the loud roaring of wind and swift afterimages of a blade, his silhouette was completely covered by his sword, preventing even the slightest droplet of water from getting to him.

“What formidable swordsmanship!”

“How can he swing his sword so quickly?”

“I can’t even follow the movements of his sword with my eye! How can anyone breach a defense like this?”

The crowd below were astonished by Yun Feiyang’s defense.

His swordsmanship was so fast that it felt as if a light sphere of a radius of two meters had formed around him.

Under such tight defense, it would be nigh impossible to harm him.

Under the shocked gazes of the crowd, the tossed sword slowly advanced through the air to a distance of three meters away from Yun Feiyang.

Hu!

With a loud whoosh of the wind, the sword abruptly vanished from sight. Unbeknownst to the crowd, it had pierced right through the light sphere formed by Yun Feiyang’s swift sword.

“What’s going on?”

“Did he manage to stop it, or did he fail to stop it?”

The crowd were stunned to see that the sword had vanished but the light sphere was still maintained around Yun Feiyang.

With their eye of discernment, they could not tell what was happening on the stage.

Before the crowd could finish their words, the light sphere abruptly popped, revealing a young man with a sword lodged in his head.

The person in question had already breathed his last breath.

Peng!

The corpse collapsed to the ground and dissipated.

Gasps of shock echoed through the crowd.

1925 Astonishmen

In the City Lord Residence of Starlight City, two young men were chatting with one another as they made their way toward a courtyard.

“Where did Yun Feiyang and Huang Tao go to this time?” The young man on the left harrumphed. “They have been acting mysteriously for a while now, refusing to attend even our gathering. If they knew how many beautiful young ladies were there earlier, their guts would turn green with regret!”

He had a tall but skinny figure, reminiscent of a bamboo pole. One thing that was exceptionally eye-catching about him was the long arms that hung by his sides.

“Why would they regret it? They bought two Ethereal Token as soon as they arrived and assumed the identities of Dire Swordsman and Soaring Clouds to challenge the locals!” the young man on the right replied impatiently.

He had a squarish face and a boorish voice. From his tone, it was clear that he disapproved of the actions of the two.

“They went to challenge the locals?” Bamboo burst out laughing. “They are disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but they came here to challenge these countryside bumpkins? Has their pride been gnawed by dogs? What honor is there in that even if they win?”

“I really don’t know what they are thinking either. In the entire city, I reckon that only the lord of Starlight City would be a match for us in our swordsmanship. Yet, they lowered themselves to challenge a bunch of ordinary folks. Are they suffering from an attention deficit or something?”

While shaking their heads, Square-face and Bamboo walked into the courtyard.

As soon as they entered, they saw one of the people whom they had been talking about, Huang Tao, sitting before a stone table with his eyes in a daze.

“Did you have fun dominating the cultivators of Starlight City? Did they kneel down and beg the hero you are for mercy?” Bamboo walked up to Huang Tao and teased him.

Square-face patted Huang Tao’s shoulder and asked, “You have always been quite the gentleman. How many moves did you let them have?”

Seeing that it was those two, Huang Tao lowered his head in embarrassment as he drew circles on the table. With a voice that indicated that he could still hardly believe what had just happened, he said, “I lost!”

As if serving as proof of his defeat, there was an Ethereal Token shattered into several fragments on the table.

“You were killed in the Ethereal Hall?”

Square-face and Bamboo widened their eyes in disbelief.

They were disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! In terms of technique, they would never lose to any of their peers. Their combat skills should be enough to awe any of the locals, but Huang Tao had actually ended up dying.

The entire matter was so incredulous that they found it hard to accept.

“Did you wield your sword?” Square-face asked.

“I did! But I still got defeated by a sword tossed right at my head... I didn’t even have a chance to display my swordsmanship at all!” Huang Tao felt like diving into the ground at this humiliation.

“You couldn’t even execute a move before you were stabbed in the head?”

Those two felt as if they were mishearing things.

Seeing that those two doubted his words, Huang Tao added, “Senior Yun Feiyang was with me when it happened, but he isn’t out yet. I reckon that he’s challenged that fellow. You can ask him about it when he finally comes out.”

“Feiyang was there as well? He’s the one among the four of us who is most likely to become an inner disciple. Given his

formidable prowess with the sword, he should be able to quell any opponent here with ease,” Bamboo consoled.

Following which, the three of them stood up to head over to the neighboring courtyard to see how it was going for Yun Feiyang. As soon as they walked in, they saw the person whom they had been full of praises earlier staring at a shattered Ethereal Token in front of him, just like Huang Tao had been doing. His expression was a mix of shock and confusion, and it seemed as if he had just been inflicted with severe mental trauma.

With twitching lips, the crowd rushed forward and exclaimed, “It can’t be... You were killed, too?”

Yun Feiyang was the strongest of the four of them. If even he had been killed, how powerful must the person who had made the move be?

“I executed the Boundless Flowing Water, but I still wasn’t able to withstand his sword toss! That single move... was more beautiful than anything I have seen in the world...” Yun Feiyang’s thoughts drifted off as he recalled the earlier sword toss.

“You executed the Boundless Flowing Water?” the crowd exclaimed in shock.

That could be said to be the most advanced defensive swordsmanship among the outer disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. The swordsmanship would wrap one’s surroundings in a dense layer of water vapor, reminiscent of flowing water. No matter how the opponent attacked, the defensive layer would either repel or redirect the attack.

It could be said to be a move that no one of the same cultivation realm could break.

Despite having executed the move, Yun Feiyang was still defeated in a single strike. Was the enemy really that formidable?

More importantly, even though he had been so brutally killed, he still thought that the swordsmanship was beautiful. That

intoxicated look on his face was as if he was passionately reminiscing about a lover!

“I would like to see that sword art with my own eyes. Feiyang, do you have any other Ethereal Token that I could use?”

After a moment of shock, Bamboo and Square-face found themselves trembling with curiosity. They were filled with anticipation to meet the person whose swordsmanship was superior to even that of Huang Tao and Yun Feiyang.

“I sent my men to purchase some Ethereal Tokens as soon as I awoke. We should be able to get some soon,” Yun Feiyang replied.

Every single Ethereal Hall had their own Ethereal Token. It was using the specific Ethereal Tokens that one could connect to the ‘regional network’.

It did not take long for a servant to rush in with eight Ethereal Tokens in hand.

Every single of these Ethereal Tokens was worth tens of thousands of Ethereal Coins, but while it was a huge sum to Dan Xiaotian and the others, it was nothing of note to the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

Hu!

The four of them hurriedly connected to the Starlight City’s Ethereal Hall before rushing toward the dueling ring.

“The seventh round, World’s Edge is the winner!”

“I wish to move on to the eighth round!”

As soon as they entered, they saw that World’s Edge had won his seventh match.

His seventh opponent was a renowned figure in the dueling ring, Windherder. Windherder was known for his exceptional light and swift movements, reminiscent of a breeze. At the very start of the duel, his silhouette had vanished from view, making it impossible for any other spectators to locate him. Yet, with a sudden upward kick into thin air, World’s Edge had managed to strike the other party squarely in his crotch...

And well, that had spelled the end of Windherder.

“Is there anyone who wishes to participate in the eighth round?”

Not a single person among the crowd replied.

It was true that crossing blows with an expert could temper one's skills, but that was only if the gap in fighting prowess was not too huge. What was the point if they were just going to be finished off a second after going up onto stage? No one had that much money to waste on something futile.

“I'll do it!”

Bamboo quickly registered with the female attendant, and in a moment's time, he was already standing in the dueling ring.

Seeing that there was an opponent, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He had earned quite a substantial sum by winning seven rounds consecutively, but it was still insufficient for him to purchase the Bluesun Pill. If no one accepted his challenge, he would really have some trouble trying to accrue sufficient money.

Standing on the stage, Bamboo assessed the young man before him carefully.

The other party looked extremely ordinary; there was nothing of particular note about him. How did the other party manage to defeat two of his seniors just like that?

“Another sword practitioner?” Zhang Xuan asked when he saw the young man before him whipping out a sword.

The Bamboo nodded as he drew his sword from his scabbard. Without any hesitation, he drove his sword forth.

Based on Yun Feiyang and Huang Tao's accounts, it was clear that the person standing before him was a true expert. Thus, he decided to make the pre-emptive strike.

Alas, before his sword could even come close to the opponent, there was a brilliant glow in front of him that was reminiscent of the dawn sun. Its radiance left him stunned for a moment.

Peng!

Another body collapsed weakly to the ground.

Square-face's face twitched.

He had thought that Huang Tao and Yun Feiyang had overexaggerated the strength of their opponent, but from the looks of it, they had possibly even understated it!

Yun Feiyang's defensive ability was one of the strongest among the outer disciples, but when it came to defense, Bamboo was definitely ranked at the top. Even so, he had still been defeated before he could even touch his opponent's sleeves.

This could not even be described with terrifying!

Huang Tao looked at Square-face and asked, "Do you wish to give it a go too?"

"I..." Square-face shook his head bitterly and said, "If even the three of you aren't a match for him, I don't think I'll fare any better than the rest of you... I'll pass!"

The price was not the problem. It was just that Bamboo and Yun Feiyang were already the two strongest individuals among the outer disciples, but they were not even close to being a match. He would just suffer the same fate as them if he challenged the other party.

"When did such a powerful expert appear in the ranks of Starlight City? We must report this matter to Elder Lu," Square-face said.

"You're right!"

Nodding in agreement, the three of them swiftly backed out of the Ethereal Hall and disappeared.

...

"Finally, I'm done with my eighth opponent..." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He had worried that a lack of opponent could hinder his money-making, but fortunately, another fool had leaped

forward at the last moment. There sure were plenty of generous people in the world!

He waited in the dueling ring a little longer, but no one was willing to challenge him for the ninth round. Thus, he could only back out of the dueling ring in disappointment.

He returned to the earlier store, and when he met the male attendant once more, the other party's attitude was completely different.

Given the huge commotion that he had caused in the dueling ring, the male attendant had already heard of the matter.

He had thought that the customer was just a naive poor bloke who thought too highly of his abilities, but it turned out that the other party was a true expert!

Cold sweat poured down the male attendant's forehead as he feared that the customer before him would pick a grudge with him due to his earlier disrespect. However, looking at the amiable smile on the other party's face, seemingly not blaming him at all, he quietly heaved a sigh of relief.

"Elder World's Edge, you still have 105,500 Ethereal Coins on your card after purchasing a Bluesun Pill!" the male attendant replied after processing the transaction.

"I still have more than a hundred thousand Ethereal Coins?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

The returns of the duel should only total up to around 25,500 Ethereal Coins, so he should only have had 5500 Ethereal Coins remaining. Where did the extra 100,000 come from?"

"Elder, the opponents you faced in your fifth round and sixth round were equipped with weapons that they specially purchased. Due to their deaths, the swords were automatically sold back to the Ethereal Hall, and each of them was worth 50,000 Ethereal Coins. As you are the one who killed them, the sum was credited to your account, which is why you still have an excess 100,000!" the male attendant replied.

"They bought their swords? But the specifications of their swords didn't appear to be any different from the ones provided in the dueling ring..."

It was not as if their swords were sharper or were imbued with some special properties, so why would they be so expensive?

“While the swords do have identical attributes to one another, their swords were inscribed with a unique design, and the color of their handles was different. Just the design itself makes them worth 50,000 Ethereal Coins each...”

Zhang Xuan’s lips twitched upon hearing those words.

So, it was possible to buy ‘skins’ too, and the price was not cheap at all.

Those darned capitalist gaming companies.

Then again, there were plenty of vain people in the world, and those who had the money to do so often liked to set themselves apart from the masses. While they were unable to alter their cultivation and item attributes, they could at least set themselves apart through their clothes and weapons.

“How can I take out the pill that I have bought?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Elder World’s Edge, you just have to communicate telepathically with your Ethereal Token after leaving the Ethereal Hall and activate the Teleportation Formation on it. The items you have bought will immediately be brought to you!” the male attendant replied.

“That’s convenient!”

Not expecting such convenience from this service, Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Having acquired what he needed, he quickly backed out from the Ethereal Hall and returned to the silent chamber.

Crossing his legs, he placed the Ethereal Token in front of him and communicated with it telepathically.

Weng!

With a light buzz, a jade bottle appeared in front of him. Inside the jade bottle was the Bluesun Pill.

I should be able to recover quickly after consuming it, Zhang Xuan thought as he uncorked the bottle and placed the pill on

his palm.

He was just about to swallow it when he suddenly felt a cold sensation on his palm. A gourd suddenly appeared and devoured the pill whole.

“The heck...” Zhang Xuan’s face immediately turned red.

1926 Dan Xiaotian's Advancemen

This gourd was the very same Dongxu Gourd which shamelessly chose to linger inside his dantian, refusing to leave at all! The last time, it leaped out and devoured the Dragon Blood he had acquired from Sovereign Chen Ling whole, and the same thing was happening this time too...

Of all times to appear, why did it have to appear now and eat the recovery pill which he just so needed so much at this instant?

Did I offend you in my previous life or something?

How in the world did I end up being plagued with a dastardly thing like you?

With his body trembling uncontrollably, Zhang Xuan spat through gritted teeth, "Vomit. It. Out. Now!"

He grabbed the middle part of the gourd and exerted his strength angrily, but it was unfortunate that the amount of strength he could exert was limited due to his injuries.

"Already swallowed it. I can still poop it out if you want it though," the Dongxu Gourd shook its bottom gleefully.

"Poop your head!"

Zhang Xuan threw the Dongxu Gourd on the ground and stomped on it angrily twice before his anger finally subsided slightly, "Let me warn you. If you dare interfere in my recovery once more, I'll throw you right into a pool of feces!"

"You were injured by spacetime turbulence, and its devastating power still lingers in your body. Do you know how long it'll take for you to recover using that kind of pill?" the gourd snorted impatiently.

"Are you telling me that the Bluesun Pill isn't enough to heal my injuries?"

He couldn't check his own condition using the Library of Heaven's Path, and he was unable to drive his zhenqi to carefully check his current internal condition either. As such, he was unable to accurately discern how severe his injuries were.

"Duh! It can heal up normal injuries, but for those caused by spacetime turbulence... Even if you were to eat a cart of them, it wouldn't make much of a difference at all!" the gourd replied.

"That... Then what kind of medicine will I need?" Zhang Xuan asked.

He knew that there was something extraordinary about the Dongxu Gourd, so he decided to seek the latter's opinion this time around. Perhaps, something good might come out of this.

"You need pills that are specialized in treating wounds caused by spacetime turbulence. However, those are incredibly rare and extremely expensive. It's impossible for someone like you to find it... However, you are in luck. As long as you bring me a few more of the earlier pill and let me have my fill, I'll tell you how you can cure your injuries..." the gourd replied proudly.

But before it could finish its words, Zhang Xuan had already struggled his way to the doorway of the chamber and shouted, "Dan Xiaotian, bring a chopper over!"

"A chopper?"

"I have a gourd over here that needs to be sliced to two. If you don't have a chopper, an axe will do too!" Zhang Xuan bellowed.

As soon as an ax was delivered into Zhang Xuan's hands, he immediately brought it down on the Dongxu Gourd, smashing it furiously as if a person went berserk.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was serious about it, the gourd immediately surrendered, "Fine, fine! I'll tell you how you can solve the problem... Actually, the reason why I want those pills isn't because I'm greedy at all. It's because my energy is

weak, and I need to consume some pills in order to recover a little before I can heal your wounds!”

“Don’t try to play games with me...” Zhang Xuan glared coldly at the gourd as he pressed the tip of the ax against the gourd.

“O-of course not! Why would I...” the Dongxu Gourd quickly replied.

Shooting the Dongxu Gourd with one last vicious glare, Zhang Xuan returned back to the Ethereal Hall and spent all of his remaining 100,000 Ethereal Coins on buying five Bluesun Pills before returning.

After swallowing the five pills, the Dongxu Gourd burped in satisfaction before instructing lazily, “Prepare a pot of water and boil it together with me. Drink the water two hours later, and your wounds will recover...”

“You want me to drink your bathwater?” Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Was this a legitimate healing method?

“Un!” the Dongxu Gourd said as it lay lazily on the ground. “Hurry up. If you aren’t going to do it, I’m going to head back in to rest...”

Knowing that the darned Dongxu Gourd would really do as it had said, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply. He didn’t really believe in the method which the Dongxu Gourd had provided him, but he had no better alternatives at the moment either. Thus, he decided to just give it a try.

He swiftly instructed Dan Xiaotian, who was waiting outside, to bring a pot of water into the room.

Soon enough, Dan Xiaotian came into the room and placed down a pot filled with water. He was slightly perplexed as to what his teacher was doing... First, his teacher asked for a chopper and an ax, and now, he wanted a pot of water... Was he intending to prepare a hotpot?

With such thoughts in mind, the caring Dan Xiaotian immediately asked, “Teacher, do you need lamb meat, fishball,

or that sort? I can get someone to prepare it right away!”

“...” Zhang Xuan.

It took him quite a bit of effort to convince the overly welcoming Dan Xiaotian that he wasn't intending to having a hotpot. After he finally managed to send this tenth direct disciple of his out, he started a flame beneath the pot before tossing the Dongxu Gourd inside.

The Dongxu Gourd didn't seem to be affected by the temperature at all. One moment, it would be swimming freestyle inside, and the next moment, it would dive underwater. It was as if it was having the time of its life.

This ridiculous image made Zhang Xuan clasp his forehead as he wondered if he was really sane to actually heed the Dongxu Gourd's instructions.

He was such an imposing figure on the Master Teacher Continent, but up here in the Azure, he felt like he was at the beck and call of the Dongxu Gourd, and this made him feel extremely stifled within.

To make things worse, he still hadn't figured out the true identity of this bizarre gourd?

While the other cultivators were able to order their artifacts around, this fellow bolted right into his dantian as soon as they met, and it refused to come out no matter how he ordered it around. Furthermore, it had no hesitation in putting all sorts of stuff in its mouth...

It felt like the Dongxu Gourd would do him in as soon as he let his guard down, and the fact that he could do nothing about it made him feel deeply exasperated. He had no idea how he ended up getting stuck with this dastardly thing.

Two hours soon passed, and without requiring Zhang Xuan to fish the Dongxu Gourd out from the pot, it dashed right out of the pot and shook its body to get rid of the water on its surface before bolting back into Zhang Xuan's dantian on its own accord.

Heaving a deep sigh, Zhang Xuan carried the pot up and took a sip. It immediately sent a refreshing sensation across his

body, alleviating the aches caused by his injuries significantly.

It really works... Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He had already prepared an ax in case the Dongxu Gourd had scammed him, but to his astonishment, it was really effective!

The Dongxu Gourd is an artifact related to space, so that might be the reason why it's able to heal the wounds caused by spacetime turbulence... Zhang Xuan deduced.

It didn't take him long to finish the pot of water, and his injuries were beginning to heal at a visible pace.

In less than an hour's time, the bandages around his body unwrapped themselves and fell to the ground.

My injuries are finally healed, but I haven't regained my zhenqi yet... Zhang Xuan thought.

He was finally a sickly man no more, but his depleted energy hadn't been restored yet.

Thus, he sat down on the ground once more and carefully felt the mercury-like spiritual energy around him. He opened up his acupoints and began taking it in slowly.

Tzzzzzz!

As the energy gushed into his body, he felt some weight pulling down his meridians, but fortunately, he didn't experience the same ripping sensation he felt previously.

Is my body starting to adapt to this energy along with the recovery of my wounds? Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He was driving the normal Heaven's Path Divine Art at the moment instead of the reverse version. The last time he did so at the Kunxu Domain, he nearly ripped his meridians apart. However, the recovery from his wounds seemed to have enhanced the resilience of his meridians, allowing him to take in the mercury-like spiritual energy without any trouble now.

Gugugu!

As the spiritual energy entered his body, Zhang Xuan swiftly circulated it around his body and converted it into zhenqi.

“At this rate, I should be able to make a full recovery within three days!” Zhang Xuan quickly calculated his rate of absorption before heaving a sigh of relief.

As a Celestial Saint and the World’s Teacher, the capacity of his zhenqi had reached an alarming level. Even with the Heaven’s Path Divine Art and the mercury-like spiritual energy in the air, it would still take him three days to regain all of it back.

However, as long as he had some zhenqi, he would be able to exert the strength of a Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage cultivator. In other words, there was no longer anything for him to fear in Xuanjiang City.

He continued cultivating for a while till he finally had a hundred surges of zhenqi in his dantian before finally calling Dan Xiaotian in.

As soon as Dan Xiaotian walked in, he noticed that his teacher’s bandages had fallen to the ground, and the feeling of frailty he previously sensed from the other party had vanished. His eyes lit in excitement as he asked, “Teacher, you have recovered?”

“Un, that’s right. I want you to execute a punching routine for me right now. I’ll determine the location of the gu in your body and eliminate it for you!” Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

With a nod of his head, Dan Xiaotian swiftly executed a punching routine.

After taking a swift look, Zhang Xuan determined the resting location of the gu and placed his palm lightly on the spot.

Hu!

A surge of Heaven’s Path zhenqi immediately gushed into Dan Xiaotian’s body through his acupoints. In just a moment’s time, it had already arrived at the gu’s hiding spot.

Tzzzzzzzz!

As if the arrival of a natural disaster, the gu that was lazing around a moment ago immediately fled in fright upon sensing the overwhelming energy coming its way. However, before it

could get far, another surge of zhenqi gushed in from its path of escape.

It was surrounded.

Under the onslaught of the two surges of zhenqi, the gu was reduced to a heap of pus.

Hong long long!

As soon as Zhang Xuan forced the pus out of Dan Xiaotian's body, the latter began inflating at a terrifying pace as if someone was blowing him, and his body swelled up like a balloon.

"Teacher, what's happening to me?"

Feeling the tremendous energy that was about to tear him apart from within at any moment, Dan Xiaotian's face paled in fright.

"I told you before. The reason why your cultivation hadn't risen despite the hard work you have put in over the past ten years isn't because you aren't hardworking. Rather, it's because the spiritual energy you were absorbing has been stolen by the gu inside of you. Surely you can imagine the amount of energy it has stolen from you over the past ten years!" Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

"It's all returned back to you right now, so it's a given that you would feel bloated with energy. Don't hesitate and absorb all of this energy with this cultivation technique I'm going to impart to you!" Zhang Xuan said as he imparted a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art into Dan Xiaotian's mind.

There was no time for Dan Xiaotian to carefully look through the manual he had just received, but he believed that his teacher wouldn't harm him. Thus, he began driving his zhenqi according to the instructions on the manual.

As soon as he began to absorb the energy in his body, he realized that something was amiss.

Typically speaking, when one was assimilating spiritual energy into one's own zhenqi, one would have to refine and

adapt it to one's physical condition... However, the energy which he had obtained from the gu didn't require such steps at all!

It was as if the energy belonged to him in the very first place, allowing him to control and absorb it with ease.

"You were the one who cultivated this energy in the first place, so it goes without saying that you would be able to drive them easily. Hurry up, and you might be able to finish before nightfall!" Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

"Yes!" Dan Xiaotian closed his eyes and focused his efforts on absorbing the energy in his body.

Hong long long!

His meridians were swiftly opened up, allowing energy to flow through his body with ease. His cultivation which had stopped at Saint 6-dan previously began growing at an unbelievable pace.

Saint 7-dan!

Saint 8-dan!

Saint 9-dan!

He had reached Saint 9-dan in an instant, but his cultivation still wasn't showing any signs of settling down yet.

He doesn't have any cultivation ordeal? Zhang Xuan frowned.

Back on the Master Teacher Continent, those who had reached Saint 8-dan would face the Dimension Sundering Ordeal, and those who had reached Saint 9-dan would be struck by the Macrocosm Ascendancy Ordeal. Back then, he spent quite a great deal of effort in order to overcome it.

Yet, his tenth direct disciple was able to advance through the ranks without any problems at all.

It could be because the heavens of the Azure is much stronger. To them, Saint 8-dan and Saint 9-dan might be no different from Zongshi realm and Zunshi realm, so it doesn't necessitate it to send down cultivation ordeals in response... Zhang Xuan figured.

Considering how even ordinary citizens were able to reach Saint 9-dan upon maturity in the Azure, the heavens would probably die of exhaustion if they had to send down lightning bolts for these realms too.

While Zhang Xuan's thoughts were wandering around the area, Dan Xiaotian finally achieved a breakthrough to Great Sage.

Introspective Convalescence realm, Aureate Body realm, Intuitive Impulse realm...

His cultivation raced all the way to Great Sage 3-dan before slowing to a halt.

The gu had consumed ten years worth of his hard work, and when it was finally released, it allowed him to soar through six realms in a single shot, reaching a level comparable to Xue Qin!

1927 Elder Lu Yun

“Not bad!” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

Just like Lu Chong, this direct disciple of his had a resolute heart.

Putting everything aside, anyone else who had faced such hardships would have likely already given up on themselves and despaired at life. On the other hand, even though Dan Xiaotian knew that he wasn’t making any progress at all, he still persevered on and absorbed spiritual energy every single day.

It was due to such willpower that allowed for his current accomplishment!

Only those who had put in the effort would receive returns. There was no such thing as a free lunch in the world.

“Teacher!”

The tremendous strength coursing through his body and the sensations he was finally feeling in his left leg made Dan Xiaotian’s eyes glisten with tears. Unable to hold himself back anymore, he kneeled down and cried.

Despite his exceptional willpower, he was still a teenage child.

He thought that he would die in humiliation after being rejected by his fiancée, but his teacher actually changed the trajectory of his entire life.

“Kindness begets kindness. You were the one who reached out a helping hand to me, and you deserve everything that you are receiving right now...” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

“Since your cultivation has reached Intuitive Impulse realm, allow me to impart you with some protective battle techniques!”

It was futile if Dan Xiaotian had powerful cultivation but no corresponding battle technique to go along with it.

Take Xu Zhu for example, he had two hundred years of inner energy but he was unable to use it at all, which brought him much trouble later on.

“I noticed that you have been practicing your swordsmanship, and it happens that I have created a sword art recently. I want you to give it a try and see if you are able to learn it.”

Ever since he was ten, Dan Xiaotian devoted his time equally to his cultivation and practicing his swordsmanship. While his mastery of swordsmanship was so-so, he had long gotten used to the weapon, so there was no need for him to intentionally switch to another weapon anymore. Besides, he felt that Dan Xiaotian would be a good fit for the sword art which he had come up with earlier in the Ethereal Hall.

It didn't take long for Dan Xiaotian to go through the sword art manual.

There was only one move in the sword art manual, and that was tossing his sword. However, this move was much more complicated than it seemed. It required one to have precise control over one's strength in order to exploit the enemy's opening to bypass the enemy's defenses.

Dan Xiaotian instinctively knew that the path to mastering this technique was fraught with difficulties.

First and foremost, he needed to have a deep understanding of his enemy's strength and moves in order to launch a pre-emptive strike. Secondly, speed was also of key importance in this move.

Huhuhu!

As difficult as the technique was, Dan Xiaotian was a person with great willpower. He put his all into every single practice throw he made, fearing that he would displease his teacher.

“Good!” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

The direct disciple he had just accepted didn't come anywhere close to Zhao Ya, Yuan Tao, and the others in terms of his talents, but he surpassed them in his positive attitude and diligence.

After practicing for two hours, Zhang Xuan noted that Dan Xiaotian had achieved a primary understanding of the technique before indicating that it was time for them to return back to their residence.

“Continue feigning to be crippled,” Zhang Xuan sent a telepathic message over to Dan Xiaotian to remind him.

Dan Xiaotian, who was walking normally a moment ago, immediately began limping once more, just like how he had been for the past ten years.

With the breakthrough in his cultivation, not only was his leg fixed, his height had also increased by a fair bit. While he still wasn't as tall as Zhang Xuan yet, he was already around the same height as his peers. Nevertheless, knowing the rationale behind his teacher's instructions, he intentionally slouched his body so as to appear shorter than he was. Those who weren't familiar with him wouldn't have noticed the difference in his condition from before.

By now, the day had already darkened. When Elder Yi rushed over with a horse carriage, the first thing he noticed was the difference in Dan Xiaotian, and he froze in astonishment.

He was just about to say something when he saw the Third Young Master shaking his head.

Knowing the meaning behind the latter's gesture, Elder Yi swiftly concealed his astonishment and joy. Nevertheless, he still quietly kneeled to the ground and kowtowed to Zhang Xuan several times before standing up once more and gesturing for the two to get onto the carriage.

He was still thinking that the Third Young Master was too kind to help another person despite the plight their clan was in, but who could have thought that it would be the latter's kindness who actually changed their lives?

“Old Master, the Third Young Master is finally well again...” Elder Yi muttered quietly to himself as his eyes reddened.

Wiping away the tears of joy brimming in his eyes, Elder Yi walloped the horse to quickly return back to the Dan Clan.

Shortly after they left, several shadows appeared by the corners of the street. They flitted through the darkness to track the movement of the carriage.

...

Starlight City.

“Have you heard? A formidable expert has appeared in the Ethereal Hall today! He achieved eight consecutive victories in the dueling ring, and eventually, he had no choice but to leave because there was no one who was willing to fight him!”

“He won eight rounds straight? Holey heavens! It must have been several hundred years since such a formidable expert appeared amongst us. Thinking about it, the cultivators of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion are currently recruiting outer disciples in our city, aren’t they? Could they be the ones behind it?”

“I doubt so. The cultivators of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion challenged that expert too, but they were utterly destroyed in a single move!”

“Are you for real? How do you know?”

“Of the four cultivators from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, there’s one called Yun Feiyang, right? There was a character named Soaring Clouds in the Ethereal Hall, and his appearance is identical to that of Yun Feiyang. Furthermore, the move that he executed clearly belongs to the Sword Pavilion... but even so, his head was impaled within a single move, and he died on the spot...”

“That expert is that powerful? What’s his name?”

“His name? Let me think... I think he’s called World’s Edge!”

“What an excellent name! Vast and unfathomable; just listening to the name is enough to send shudders down my spine!”

“...”

...

News spread swiftly. In less than two hours since Zhang Xuan left the Ethereal Hall, nearly all of the experts of Starlight City had already heard of his feat there.

In an instant, the Ethereal Hall was filled with huge crowds of sword practitioners. They waited before the dueling ring, hoping for the expert known as World's Edge to appear once more so that they could witness his transcendental swordsmanship.

Starlight City, City Lord Residence.

This was where the esteemed guests from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were assigned to stay at.

In a vast courtyard, an old man was currently practicing his swordsmanship.

His movements were extremely slow, seemingly devoid of strength. Yet, every single time he moved his sword, it felt as if the fabrics of the world were being strained. The air currents in the courtyard were stirred up under his movements, and they circled together to form a massive tornado.

They were plenty of flowers and grass growing in the courtyard. As the air currents brushed by, there was surprisingly no damage to them at all. Yet, the dew that was above them seemed to vanish from sight.

To get rid of the water dew without hurting the flowers and grass, this was truly an unbelievable level of control over one's strength.

Hu!

The elder finally halted his swordsmanship and exhaled a mouthful of white smoke. The white smoke rose for over thirty meters before vanishing in the midst of the dark night.

"Come in!" the elder called out as he washed his hands clean with the bucket of water by the side of the courtyard.

He had already noticed some visitors standing at his doorway a long time ago, and he knew that they were the juniors whom he had brought out together with him. However, as he was in

the midst of his swordsmanship practice, he kept them waiting for a while.

Jiya!

Yun Feiyang, Huang Tao, Bamboo, and Square-faced walked in, and they hurriedly bowed down and greeted, “Paying respects to Elder Lu!”

The old man standing before them was no other than Elder Lu Yun, the man in charge of handling the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s recruitment.

“Un!” Elder Lu Yun walked up to the stone table in the courtyard and sat down. “Speak, what’s your reason for visiting me so late in the night?”

This group of young men behaved as if a bunch of canaries being released from their cages as soon as they left the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. They were more eager than ever to avoid him usually, fearing that he would limit their freedom. Yet, on this very day, all of them were gathered together outside his courtyard... Something had to be up.

“Elder Lu, just earlier on, Yun Feiyang and Huang Tao went to... the Starlight City’s Ethereal Hall, and they fought with someone on the dueling ring...” Square-faced stepped forward and reported.

Elder Lu’s face immediately darkened in disapproval, “I can understand your feelings. Have learned so many new techniques, it’s inevitable that you would want to boast about it. However, as disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, you have to get your priorities straight. The reason why you are learning swordsmanship is to temper yourself and uncover the secrets of swordsmanship. Your diligence is the key for you to becoming an inner disciple and eventually bringing glory to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“Today, you might be proud of being a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but tomorrow, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion could be proud of having a disciple like you... Let me tell you this straight, you are wasting your precious time on futile pursuits!”

If a professional gamer were to come to an ordinary internet cafe, it would be inevitable that he would like to show a hand or two to win some respect from the other gamers... but while such actions were thrilling, they didn't value add at all. One learned absolutely nothing out of those experiences.

Hearing those words, Yun Feiyang and Huang Tao's faces reddened in shame.

"I'll let you off the hook this time around, but this must never happen again, understood?" Elder Lu Yun instructed with an authoritative wave of his hand. At this moment, his eyebrows suddenly shot up as he realized something, "In the past, when I brought other disciples out, such matters did happen too. While I don't approve of such actions, it isn't at odds with the rules of our sect... Did the four of you get into some sort of trouble?"

Yun Feiyang fidgeted a little in embarrassment as he replied, "Elder Lu... when I went onto the dueling ring in the Ethereal Hall earlier, I executed the Boundless Flowing Water against my opponent!"

"You executed the Boundless Flowing Water? You would need such a move to defeat the cultivators of Starlight City? It appears that you have met an expert!" Elder Lu Yun was slightly stunned for a moment before he picked up a teapot and filled his teacup.

"I created this move unintentionally while I was observing a flowing river back in my younger years. While its conceptualization is simple, it harnesses a fragment of the laws of nature, making it extremely difficult to cultivate. It's impressive that you are able to execute it... Of course, the opponent who is able to force you into making this move must be quite skilled too. Since you have executed this move, I trust that you have cornered your opponent and forced him to admit defeat?" Elder Lu Yun said with a smile before sipping on his tea.

He was extremely confident of the sword art he had created. The cultivators of Starlight City were bound to be scared into submission upon encountering this move of his.

Seeing that Elder Lu Yun had gone on another one of his narcissistic streaks, Yun Feiyang's awkwardness intensified. With hesitation in his voice, he said, "When I executed the move, the opponent... he impaled my head with a throw of his sword..."

"Pu!"

Elder Lu spat a mouthful of tea at the face of Square-faced, causing his face to appear larger than ever. With widened eyes, Elder Lu Yun asked anxiously, "What did you just say?"

"I... At the very start of the duel, I executed the Boundless Flowing Water, but that fellow tossed his sword toward me, and the sword passed through the defense of the Boundless Flowing Water and pierced my head, causing me to die on the spot!" Yun Feiyang explained once more.

"T-t-t-t-this... How is this possible?" Elder Lu Yun was on the verge of going crazy.

Such a powerful defensive sword art was actually unraveled by the single toss of a sword... Was this for real?

"Does that person specialize in offense?" Seeing that Yun Feiyang didn't seem to be lying, Elder Lu Yun questioned on.

"Un, it seems so. His offensive prowess is quite formidable!" Huang Tao replied with an affirmative nod.

Till now, he was still a little traumatized at how easily he was killed. If he were to meet that person in real life...

"If that's the case, it might be because you have used the wrong move to counter him. While Boundless Flowing Water is a defensive sword art, blindly attempting to defend against a determined assault is not a wise move. You would eventually reveal an opening for the enemy to exploit!" Hearing that they had only lost in the face of exceptional offensive prowess, Elder Lu Yun slowly regained his calm.

"Against such an opponent, you have to grasp the initiative and make the first move so as to corner the enemy with your overwhelming momentum. If you had used the Meteor Steps in parallel with my Bamboo Shattering Swordsmanship, you

should have been able to turn the tables around and defeat him easily!”

“Regarding that... Elder Lu, I have crossed hands with that person too, and I executed the Meteor Steps together with the Bamboo Shattering Swordsmanship right from the start...” Bamboo said with a reddened face.

These were the two moves he executed against World’s Edge as soon as the duel started.

And of course, it went without saying that those two moves were created by Elder Lu Yun too.

“How is it? Did you overwhelm him with absolute might and defeat him in an instant?” Elder Lu Yun asked as he took another sip of water.

Bamboo scratched his head and replied, “Well... before I could even get to him, he had already head shot me...”

Pu!

This time, Square-faced’s clothes were drenched too. His resentful expression made his face look larger than ever.

“Regardless of whether you went on the offensive or defensive, you were still defeated by the other party in a single move?” Elder Lu Yun dropped his teacup as he rose to his feet in astonishment. Xu Zhu is a character in Jin Yong’s Demi-Gods and Semi-Devils. He was a monk from Shaolin Temple, but by sheer coincidence and luck, he deciphered a Go formation and inherited the strength of a legendary expert. However, as he had never really practiced martial arts before, he was unable to tap into his strength properly.

1928 Sharpshooter

“Let me take a look at the video from the Ethereal Hall!”

Knowing it was impossible for all four disciples to have the guts to band together with one another and lie to him, Elder Lu Yun instructed.

Usually, he wouldn't have even be bothered to enter the Ethereal Hall of a remote place like this, but with three out of four of the disciples that had come with him been sniped so easily—not to mention that they had been using his technique—he had to take a look for himself.

If that person was a talented sword practitioner, he would have earned merit for himself bringing that person back considering that he was the elder in charge of recruitment.

After taking out the Ethereal Tokens he had purchased, the five of them entered the Ethereal Hall and swiftly purchased the videos of their earlier battles.

The Ethereal Hall would record down all of the matches on the dueling ring for sales and reference purposes.

It didn't take long for them to finish looking through the battle between the three disciples and World's Edge—each battle lasted for barely a few seconds after all—Elder Lu Yun swiftly came to understand the reason behind their defeats, and he shook his head in bitter disappointment, “The other party saw through the flaws in your moves, and that's why he managed to defeat all of you so easily...”

Hearing those words, Yun Feiyang and the others hung their heads in shame.

They knew that it was likely to be something of that sort too. But no matter what they did, be it to launch the pre-emptive strike, dodge, or fend against it, as long as they were in face of that tossed sword, they found that there was no correct countermeasure they could have taken that would allow them to turn the tables around!

The move looked simple enough, consisting of just a sword toss aimed toward the head, but those who had stood in the dueling ring against World's Edge knew that it was much more than that.

“Yun Feiyang's Boundless Flowing Water is executed exquisitely, but there's a huge problem in the fluidity of his movements. Those who know the slightest bit about swordsmanship would be able to see through the flaws and exploit it. As for Hu Bin's Meteor Steps and Bamboo Shattering Swordsmanship, while it appears powerful on the surface, the problem is that you are unable to bring out even a tenth of its true prowess once your power has been scaled down to Saint 1-dan. Given so, it's inevitable that the two of you would be killed so easily!” Elder Lu Yun harrumphed coldly.

“Tonight, I expect you all to practice those two sword arts and movement art a hundred times. If you were to miss even a single time, don't bother coming to find me ever again!”

“Yes, Elder Lu!”

The four of them nodded solemnly.

“Also, I want you to keep a close lookout at the Ethereal Hall. If World's Edge appears again, inform me right away!” Placing his hands behind his back, Elder Lu Yun emanated an air of indomitability as he spoke, “Does he think that he'll get away so easily after harming the disciples of our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion? How can there be such a convenient thing in the world? Even if he's a good bud, I'll first grind his arrogance down and let him know that the swordsmanship of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is far more profound and advanced than what he can ever imagine!”

“Yes, Elder Lu!” Hearing those words, Yun Feiyang and the others heaved a sigh of relief.

Without a doubt, Elder Lu had chosen to make a move personally against that person.

While Elder Lu Yun might only be one of the minor elders in charge of recruitment and overseeing the training of the outer

disciples, his comprehension of swordsmanship was not to be underestimated. Putting aside everything else, even the four of them combined wouldn't be a match for Elder Lu Yun when their cultivations had been suppressed to the same level.

With him making a move, World's Edge was bound for a trip of misfortune.

And as reality would have it, it wasn't Elder Lu Yun and the others who were waiting in anticipation for World's Edge's appearance. The entire Starlight City and the experts from the third-tier cities beneath it had all heard of the news, and they were excited to see what would happen when that legendary man appeared once more.

...

"He defeated Junior Yun Feiyang in a single move? Interesting..."

In the City Lord Residence of Xuanjiang City, sitting in front of a Narra wood desk, a gray-robed young man had just heard of the news too, and a gleam flickered in his eyes.

This was the same gray-robed young man whom Zhang Xuan had met previously at Hongyan Market.

He was the First Senior of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's outer disciples, Huo Jianghe!

"Help me keep a close eye at the Ethereal Hall. As soon as World's Edge appears, no matter what I am doing, inform me right away... A countryside bumpkin actually thinks that a simple toss of a sword can also be considered as swordsmanship? Hmph! Let me give him a lesson of what true swordsmanship is!" Huo Jianghe stood up as Sword Intent flared from his presence.

Weng!

A sudden burst of sword qi shot out from him and sliced the thick table before him into two.

"Get me a new table!" Huo Jianghe commanded imposingly before walking loftily out of the room.

...

“You wench! Softer!”

Pah!

A resounding slap echoed in the air as Xue Qin glared at the maid whom she had just struck with fury in her eyes.

She instructed this wench to apply medicine for her, but the latter actually dared to inflict pain on her. Unforgivable!

“Second Young Mistress, please have mercy on me!” the maid quickly knelt on the ground and cried out desperately.

“Scram!” Xue Qin kicked the maid in the chest before ordering the guards to throw her out of the room.

After which, she turned around and looked into the mirror, only to see her beautiful face was hopelessly swollen. Her body trembled with rage as deep resentment flowed out of her. Glaring at her reflection furiously, she spat with clenched jaws, “Dan! Xiao! Tian!”

It was because she was engaged to a trash that she had been mocked by her peers ever since she was at a younger age.

It wasn't easy for her to win Senior Huo Jianghe's appreciation and become a menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion... but everything was ruined just because of that blasted Dan Xiaotian's interference!

Was that bastard really that unwilling to see her getting along well?

If not for the marriage agreement, he would have already been dead by now! He should learn to be grateful!

Yet, instead of repaying her grace, he colluded with that mummy and had Senior Huo slap her in public... Her honor was completely shattered today. There was no way she could forgive him for this!

“Dan Xiaotian must die! That bandaged mummy must die too! And that servant, Dan Yi, must die as well!” Xue Qin cursed viciously.

At this moment, Xue Chen walked in with a confident smile on his lips, “Rest assured, Second Young Mistress, I have

everything in my grasp. I promise you that they won't live to see sunrise..."

"That would be for the best!" Xue Qin replied. She looked into the mirror once more and asked, "Teacher, do you think that this will leave a scar on my face? Will Senior Huo lose interest in me and despise me if I were to become ugly?"

"Second Young Mistress, there's no need to worry. Senior Huo has just sent someone to deliver this healing cream over. Your swelling will swiftly subside after applying it on your face," Xue Chen replied as he passed a jade bottle over.

"It's from Senior Huo?" Xue Qin's eyes lit up in agitation. "It seems like he still has feelings for me..."

From her tone, it was obvious that she was more concerned about her looks and whether she would be despised by Senior Huo than Dan Xiaotian's life.

...

Dah dah dah!

The carriage raced through the streets.

After stepping out of Hongyan Market, Elder Yi could feel an inexplicable pressure in his chest. It felt like an omen that danger was right upon them.

It was precisely due to such a feeling that he didn't dare to rest at all. He forced the horse to gallop toward the Dan Clan Residence as quickly as it could, hoping to find security there.

Sou sou sou!

At this moment, a series of piercing hum echoed in the air as countless arrows rained from both sides of the street.

Ordinary arrows couldn't hope to harm a Saint cultivator, but these arrows were the specially-crafted Feather Arrows. Every single one of them carried might comparable to Saint 9-dan experts. With so many of them raining down from above, not even Great Sage experts would be able to stand their ground.

"Teacher..."

Dan Xiaotian knew that this was a clear indication that the enemies had begun making their move. With clenched fists, he looked at the young man beside him for guidance.

“Don’t get distracted. What you have to do now is to comprehend the swordsmanship which I have imparted to you!” Zhang Xuan instructed calmly.

“Yes, teacher!” Knowing that his teacher had a solution in mind, Dan Xiaotian closed his eyes and concentrated on the teachings his teacher had imparted to him. Just like that, his comprehension of the sword improved at a tremendous rate.

“How dare you harm the Third Young Master? I’ll pit my life against you!”

Elder Yi didn’t hear the conversation between those two. As soon as he saw the sky filled with arrows above him, he couldn’t hold himself back anymore. With a furious roar, he raised his whip and flicked it around the air, hoping to fend off the arrows that threatened to hurt Dan Xiaotian.

He knew that even though his cultivation was at Saint 9-dan, his physical prowess had already declined due to the stress and hardships he had to face while protecting Dan Xiaotian over the years. Furthermore, he had also sustained significant injuries during the tragedy back then. It would already be a remarkable feat if he could exert strength comparable to a Saint 8-dan in his current state.

Against the sky filled with arrows above him, it was likely that he wouldn’t even last a couple of seconds.

But so what?

Perhaps, as long as he could buy that much time, the Third Young Master might be able to get away alive!

Wuuuuuuuuu!

As if possessed, Elder Yi stood up and flung the whip around, but the sheer weight behind the arrows swiftly knocked the whip out of his hands. Desperate, he leaped up to the top of the carriage, hoping to use his body to knock away as many arrows as he could, but it was at this moment that the queerness began.

The arrows that were darting right toward the carriage somehow magically brushed by the carriage. Despite their close proximity, none of them struck the carriage or the horse galloping in front.

“Are they really... assassins?”

Elder Yi blinked his eyes in confusion.

He thought that they were doomed, but who could have thought that none of the arrows from the assassins would strike the target at all. It was as if they were intentionally trying to miss the carriage?

How could there be such amateurish assassins in the world?

Elder Yi wasn't the only one who was stunned. Even the head of the assassins was starting to doubt if what he was seeing was real.

“What the hell are you lot doing? Aim properly!” the head of the assassins hollered.

“Roger that, boss!”

The assassins swiftly loaded their bows once more and shot out another rain of arrows.

Wuuuuuuuu!

But the same mystical sight happened yet again. As if they were blinded, the arrows curved ever so slightly and circumvented the carriage.

Puhe! Puhe! Puhe!

This time, the assassins weren't as lucky as before. The arrows coming from both sides ended up striking the assassins on the opposite end of the street. With arrows impaled in their heads, they looked no different from porcupines.

“I don't believe that we can't hit the carriage. Continue shooting!” the head of the assassins ordered.

And again, another bunch of assassins collapsed to the ground from been struck by too many arrows.

“The hell! Continue!”

“Boss, we mustn’t! At this rate, all of us will be killed before we can even strike that carriage!” a subordinate cried out desperately.

Snapping out of his berserk state, the boss of the assassins finally took a look around him and realized that almost all of his subordinates had been killed. Every single one of them had an arrow precisely lodged into their heads.

The various groups they had spread out in the area had also gone utterly quiet. It seemed like they had been thinned out by the earlier shootings too...

I have ordered you all to strike the carriage and destroy Dan Xiaotian... Why the heck are you all shooting our own people?

Trembling with rage, the boss nearly went frenzied with anger.

Unable to take it any longer, he snatched a bow from his subordinate and aimed directly at Elder Yi’s heart before releasing the arrow.

As a Great Sage 2-dan cultivator, the arrow that he shot out carried destructive might. It whizzed across the air as if a shooting star.

Noticing the swiftly approaching arrow, Elder Yi narrowed his eyes as his body stiffened in fear... But once again, the arrow simply brushed him by.

“Ahh!”

There was a cry of agony, and another one of whatever survivors there were left on the other side died.

“What the heck is going on here?”

The boss of the assassins loaded his bow once more, but this time, instead of aiming at Elder Yi, he shot toward the sky.

“Ahh!”

Two breaths later, another cry of agony sounded as a survivor fell victim to his arrow.

“ ... ”

The boss of the assassin clutched his hair in a frenzy. He turned to his back and shot two arrows, and...

“Ahh!”

“Ahh!”

There were two cries of agony, marking the end of another two assassins.

“What the hell is this sorcery...”

The boss of the assassins was on the verge of losing the last shred of his sanity.

It was because he was unskilled in archery that he didn't bring a bow over. When in the world did he become such a formidable sharpshooter that he could strike his own people no matter where he was aiming at?

More importantly, there should have been no one behind him, but somehow, the arrow did a perfect u-turn and accurately lodged itself into the head of one of his subordinates...

Something was really wrong here...

1929 The Culprit is the Horse!

“Stop shooting! Charge at them instead!” the boss of the assassins finally threw his bow to the ground and ordered.

If they were to continue shooting, all of them would definitely lose their lives. Since that was the case, they would be better off charging over to kill them.

Huala!

Upon hearing the order, the remaining survivors amongst the band of assassins whipped out their weapons and leaped out from their hiding spots.

Looking at the few figures who jumped out, the boss of the assassins felt as if someone had plunged a dagger into his heart.

In order to ambush Dan Xiaotian, he had mobilized over thirty men, and he thought that it would be a walk in the park to assassinate a cripple like Dan Xiaotian. Who could have thought the rain of arrows would end up thinning out his men instead?

Right now, he only had eight subordinates left, and two of them had arrows sticking out of their heads. They were wobbling weakly from side to side with each step they took, and blood was trickling profusely from their heads down to the ground.

What a bitter sight this was!

The hell! If he knew that Dan Xiaotian was such a difficult opponent to deal with, he would have never accepted this deal!

They were bandits living outside the city, and earlier this afternoon, someone visited them with a huge sack of Ethereal Coins, requesting them to eliminate Dan Xiaotian. They thought that it would be a minor issue, but it turned out to be the worst mistake he had ever made in his life!

After the huge death toll on their end, he couldn't allow himself to retreat anymore. By hook or by crook, he was determined to complete this mission!

"Chop those scoundrels in the carriage into minced meat!" the boss of the assassins hollered angrily.

Hula!

The remaining eight assassins immediately dashed right for the carriage.

"You'll have to step across my body if you wish to kill the Third Young Master!" Elder Yi hollered.

He was about to jump down from the carriage, but before he could do so, another figure had made a move ahead of him—the horse.

It was as if the horse was angered by the earlier rain of arrows too. Without any hesitation, it freed itself from the carriage and dashingly leaped over a distance of ten meters to stand before the eight bandits.

Peng!

It kicked out its hooves and struck the two fellows with arrows lodged onto their heads. This strike pushed the arrow deeper into their heads, bringing them instantaneous deaths.

"The heck..."

The remaining six bandits were frenzied.

To think that a horse would actually kill two of their comrades... If anyone were to learn that they were from the same group, they would die of shame!

A short and stout middle-aged man whipped out his saber and dashed forward, intending to slice the horse into two. But before his strike to reach, the horse suddenly kicked its hooves forward once more.

Pah! Crack!

It struck the middle-aged man's crotch squarely, and the sound of an egg shattering echoed loudly in the surroundings. The middle-aged man immediately kneeled to the ground as his

face scrunched up so tightly that it could crush even a fly in between the folds.

Hu hu hu hu!

While the middle-aged man was being incapacitated, the remaining five people swiftly closed in on the horse, intending to deal it a fatal blow. However, as if expecting their moves, the horse took two steps back to create some distance before kicking its hooves up once more.

Peng peng!

Yet another two more bandits collapsed to the ground while grabbing their severely injured crotches.

“That rascal!”

The remaining three bandits went insane.

It was one thing for their arrows to mystically miss the targets, but it was as if this horse had suddenly been possessed or something too!

Their legs trembled in fear as they slowly backed away fearfully, hoping to make their escape. But before they could run away, the horse abruptly charged right at them.

Padah! Padah! Padah!

In a moment's time, the remaining three bandits were incapacitated too.

After which, the horse sent a powerful kick to each of the kneeling bandits, and in less than two breaths, all eight of them were tragically killed, leaving only the boss of the assassins.

Padah!

The whip in Elder Yi's hand fell to the ground as he was shocked silly by the sight he had just witnessed.

Did I really use a whip to strike this fellow earlier?

Elder Yi felt a cold breeze breathing on his crotch as he stared at the horsewhip on the ground with a look of fright, not daring to pick it up at all.

If the horse were to remember the grudge and give him one good kick... Well, he was old and couldn't really have children anymore, but he still valued his manhood as much. It was the kind of thing that you would rather retain even just for decoration than to have it shattered!

Looking at the corpse on the ground once more, Elder Yi couldn't help but shudder.

These assassins were mostly at Saint 9-dan, and some of them had even reached Great Sage 1-dan... Yet, they were all destroyed by a horse just like that...

How in the world did something as ridiculous as this even happen?

When did the horse he took care of every day become such a formidable creature?

"You..."

On the other hand, the boss of the assassins nearly went insane upon seeing this sight.

"I don't believe that a great bandit like me who have ruled the Xuanjiang City for more than ten years would lose to a mere horse!" Trembling with rage, the boss of the assassins roared furiously and charged forth.

In response to his aggression, the horse also galloped forth furiously as well.

Hu!

But before the two could collide with one another, the boss of the assassins suddenly conducted an abrupt sidestep, allowing him to bypass the horse. In the next moment, he was already right before the carriage.

As expected of a Great Sage 2-dan expert, his reflexes were truly worthy of praise. The earlier attack was just a feint; his main goal all along had been to get rid of Dan Xiaotian!

As long as Dan Xiaotian was dead, he could claim the rewards to the mission, and with time, he would be able to build his band up once more... After the deaths of so many of his

subordinates, he couldn't allow himself to walk out of here without earning anything!

“Shit, that despicable scoundrel!”

Neither Elder Yi nor the horse expected the boss of the assassins to be so determined to get rid of Dan Xiaotian even after all that had happened. It was already too late by the time they realized it. They couldn't make it in time to save Dan Xiaotian anymore.

Sou!

A saber pierced right through the windows of the carriage. If Dan Xiaotian's guard was down, this attack could very well claim his life.

Hong long!

But at this crucial moment, the incomprehensible happened. As if a fairytale came to life, the carriage suddenly leaped up and crushed the boss' face with its wheels.

Peng!

That unexpected heavy strike caused the boss of the assassins to bleed profusely. Taken aback, he immediately attempted to retreat, but before he could make a move, the carriage was already charging in his direction.

Bam!

Seven molars were smacked out from his mouth as his saber flew into the distance.

The boss of the assassins quickly scrambled back to his feet and backed away from the carriage warily, but the latter didn't seem to have any intentions of letting him get away. Using its handles as a pair of hands, it seemed prepared to pummel him into the ground.

“What the hell is this...”

The boss of the assassins rubbed his eyes in disbelief.

The arrows didn't hit. Fine, there might be some kind of experts altering the trajectory of the arrow, I'll accept that!

The horse suddenly became so powerful. Fine, it might be because it had just undergone some kind of evolution or became a tamed beast. I can accept that too!

But a non-living carriage suddenly leaping around and executing martial arts as if it was the most powerful existence in the world... how in the world am I supposed to accept something as ridiculous as this?

Is there some kind of ghosts or supernatural forces behind this?

“I need to get away!”

Fearing that he would encounter more unbelievable sights remaining here, he quickly took out a jade token and crushed it.

Peng!

A brilliant glow of light burst forth, raising dirt from the ground. Swiftly, an energy barrier formed around him.

As a bandit, the most important skill he needed to have was not plunder or murder. It was self-preservation. Before engaging in any operations, he needed to identify all plausible escape routes and prepare protective measures beforehand in case anything went awry.

It was in view of this that he spent a hefty price to purchase this jade token. It had the ability to fend off even the attack of an Ancient Sage cultivator, allowing him to survive any danger.

Sou!

As soon as the energy barrier was formed, the boss of assassins immediately leaped toward one of the towering walls by the side to make his escape.

While he was on his escape, he didn't even dare to turn around to see if anyone was on his tail. He was afraid that he would see something that would scar him for life if he were to just so look back. At this point, not even death in the hands of an expert scared him that much anymore. However, if he were to

die to a horse or a donkey... he didn't think that he would be able to rest in peace!

The boss of the assassins sprinted with all of his might until he was finally out of breath, Perhaps it was the jade token working its charms, or that the enemy didn't bother chasing him at all, when he finally turned around, there was no one behind him. Patting his chest rapidly, he heaved a sigh of relief.

"Damn it, I have really been done me in this time around!"

When he first accepted the mission, the other party told him that it was a minor issue, and that he would be able to get rid of the target easily. Of course, someone as wary as him wouldn't just listen to a one-sided view of the story, so he specially investigated Dan Xiaotian and confirmed that there wouldn't be any problems before taking on the task. He never expected that things would end like that!

Dan Xiaotian was indeed not formidable at all, but his horse and carriage were freakishly powerful!

How was he supposed to complete such an assassination?

He swiftly fled outside of the city, to where he had agreed to meet the client after the job was done. He lit up a bonfire and waited patiently for the other party to appear.

There was no way he would be letting this matter go so easily!

...

Elder Yi's body had been so tense throughout the entire encounter that when everything ended, his body simply suddenly slackened and fell to the ground.

He felt like he had experienced a lifetime of shock in just a single night.

He was almost convinced that the assassination from that bunch of assassins would spell their end, but as if some sort of sorcerer was on their side, their horse and carriage suddenly came to life. It was as if a fairytale. Without having to make a move, the problem just somehow resolved itself...

Was there anything as exaggerated as that in the world?

While he was in the midst of his shock, the horse suddenly galloped back to the carriage, secured itself to it, and with its head tilted upward, it began galloping back to the Dan Clan Residence once more.

Watching the horse in front of him, Elder Yi's hands trembled in horror.

For such a fearsome horse to be pulling their carriage...

Even if you want to pull our carriage, I wouldn't dare to even think of driving you around!

"Master Zhang..." Elder Yi turned his head backward and asked.

In truth, he already had an answer in his mind.

The horse and carriage had been perfectly normal for all of these years, and the only thing that had changed from back then was Zhang Xuan's appearance!

"We'll talk once we're back at the Dan Clan Residence," Zhang Xuan's voice echoed quietly from within the carriage.

He knew that someone would ambush them on their way back, so he had the horse tamed and the carriage enchanted when he got onto the carriage earlier.

Even ordinary people were able to reach Saint 9-dan without cultivating, let alone horses who boasted stronger constitutions than humans. Upon maturity, they already wielded strength on par with Great Sage 1-dan cultivators. However, their intelligence was slightly lacking, and no one had been able to communicate with them thus far, which made it nigh impossible to tap into their strength in battle.

But as long as one could tame the horse and establish mental communication with it, one would be able to get it to do whatever one wanted to.

Putting aside killing those assassins, were it not for the boss running fast enough, it would have been able to destroy him as well!

"Yes!"

Suppressing his excitement, Elder Yi turned his head around and watched the carriage racing through the streets to return back to the Dan Clan Residence.

...

The bonfire blazed for quite a while before two figures suddenly approached.

One of them was a middle-aged man. The boss of the assassin recognized him to be the one who had entrusted him with the mission to assassinate Dan Xiaotian back then.

As for the other figure... while her face was masked, it was obvious to see that she was a young lady based on her physique, and a very beautiful one at that!

“How is it? Have you accomplished the mission?” the middle-aged man got straight to the point.

This middle-aged man was no other than the head instructor of the City Lord Manor, Xue Chen!

And the young lady beside him was, of course, Xue Qin.

Typically speaking, such matters wouldn't require her involvement, but after the humiliation she had suffered, she wished to see with her own eyes the heads of Dan Xiaotian and that mummy who dared to cross her!

Thus, she decided to follow Xue Chen here after concealing her appearance with a mask.

“Accomplished the mission? Look here, don't you think that you have some explaining to do? Is this what you mean by a simple task?” the boss of the assassins roared in anger.

“What do you mean by that?” Xue Chen frowned. “Is your group so weak that you can't even get rid of a severely injured old man and a cripple?”

“Weak my ass!” the head of the assassins spat. “More than thirty of my brothers have died in the earlier operation! If not for my fast reflexes, I would have died there and then too! How do you intend to compensate me for my loss?”

“More than thirty of your men died?” Xue Qin widened her eyes in disbelief. “Are you telling me that Dan Xiaotian’s group singlehandedly got rid of all of you? Does he wield such capabilities?”

“It isn’t him!” the head of the assassins harrumphed.

“Who else could it be then?” Xue Chen asked doubtfully.

He had investigated Dan Xiaotian carefully, and the latter shouldn’t have any backing in Xuanjiang City. Given the strength of this band of bandits, they should be able to deal with him easily.

These bandits were a pain to deal with when they plundered the merchants coming into Xuanjiang City, so why would they suddenly become so inept now when their target was just a mere Dan Xiaotian?

The head of the assassins spat on the ground and bellowed wrathfully, “The one who killed my brothers is their horse! No, that’s not it. Their carriage as well!”

“???” Xue Chen and Xue Qin.

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Xue Chen was confident in his plan. He had no doubt that the band of bandits would be able to eliminate the fallen remnants of the Dan Clan and cleanse the humiliation which the Second Young Mistress had suffered...

But what happened instead was the death of the bandits, and even its head seemed to have lost his mind...

The ones that killed you were the horse and the carriage?

How impressive? Why don't you add cannon and elephant into the list too?

Do you think that we are playing Chinese Chess over here?

"Are you trying to play games with me here? I'm asking you who is the one who killed your men. Answer my question!" Xue Chen bellowed.

"Haven't I already answered your question? It's a horse and a carriage!" the head of the assassins roared.

"Horse?"

"Carriage?"

Xue Chen and Xue Qin were more confused than ever.

"Dan Xiaotian's horse and carriage possess strength comparable to Great Sage 1-dan cultivators. They easily trampled my subordinates to death. Furthermore, it seems like there was some kind of supernatural force helping them. We shot out many arrows, but none of them struck the target..."

As ridiculous as the story sounded, the boss of the assassins still recounted everything that had happened earlier.

"A horse and a carriage that knows martial arts?" Xue Chen's face turned livid as he felt as if his intelligence was being challenged over here. He grabbed the boss by his collars and

pulled him up into the air, “You rascal, I don’t have the patience to be playing games with you! Even if you wish to back out from our request, you owe me at least a rational explanation!”

“You... You think that I’m lying to you?” the boss was on the verge of going insane.

Why did no one believe the words he was saying? He was being perfectly honest over here!

“Enough! Here is an Ethereal Card, and there are 500 Ethereal Coins inside. That should compensate you for your losses...” Xue Chen couldn’t be bothered to waste his time with this deranged fellow, so he tossed a card over nonchalantly.

“You are only going to give me 500 Ethereal Coins for the lives of thirty of my brothers?” the face of the boss twitched.

This bit of money wasn’t even enough to replenish the arrows and bows that they had used in the operation!

“You didn’t complete the mission we agreed on. I’m already being very magnanimous here to give you 500 Ethereal Coins. Now, scam from my sight right now, or I swear you won’t be getting a single coin out of me anymore!” Xue Chen spat with narrowed eyes.

“You...”

Sensing killing intent from Xue Chen’s eyes, the boss of the assassins knew that he might really be killed if he were to continue challenging Xue Chen’s bottom line. Thus, he picked up the card and departed into the dark night.

“Teacher, Dan Xiaotian isn’t dead yet! What should we do?” Xue Qin asked anxiously.

“Those bunch of useless trash! The only reason why I turned to them is just so to avoid any complications!” Xue Chen harrumphed coldly. “Let’s return back to the City Lord Manor first. Don’t worry, I have an idea in mind. That fellow will never become a stumbling stone in your path! If all goes well, you might even be able to build up your reputation in the city!”

...

The more the boss of the assassins thought about the matter, the more furious he felt.

If not for his greed, he wouldn't have suffered such a heavy loss, such that only he was left of his entire group.

Clenching his fists in fury, he quickly flitted his way back to his den, but just when he had barely arrived at the entrance, a voice suddenly echoed from the dark woods around him.

"After the deaths of so many of your brothers, you are willing to be sent off with just 500 Ethereal Coins?"

"Who is it?"

The boss of the assassins immediately drew his saber and scanned his surroundings. However, no matter how he searched, there was no one in sight.

"Who are you? Come out! Don't think that you can scare me just like that! Such ploys wouldn't work on me, Cao Chengli!"

"Don't bother searching. I'm on the tree branch right in front of you!" the voice continued.

Cao Chengli quickly raised his head, and through the dim illumination of the moonlight, he could vaguely see a book shaking its body, as if it had been possessed by a demon.

The voice had come from the book.

"Y-y-you... You are talking to me?" Cao Chengli's teeth clattered against one another.

How could he possibly not be frightened? On this single night, he saw arrows bending mysteriously away from their targets, a horse who could kill, and a carriage executing martial arts. He was thinking of having a good sleep and forget all of the nightmares he had just been through, but a talking book actually appeared before him at this moment!

"Indeed!" the book replied calmly.

"Who are you? Who sent you here? Don't think that you'll get away with following me! I'll be taking your life right here and right now!"

Cao Chengli roared with gusto, but he tossed his saber away and ran the opposite direction away.

He couldn't care that much anymore. What was important right now was for him to get away!

Peng!

But before he could get far, he suddenly stumbled on something and fell flatly to the ground. While he was scrambling to his feet, he saw that the book that was on the tree a moment ago was already right in front of him, and his body froze in despair.

"If you wish to die a premature death, be my guest. Run away then. I'll make sure to send you off with my utmost sincerity!"

As the book spoke, a heavy pressure suddenly burst forth from the book, leaving Cao Chengli feeling as if he was plunged into freezing water. His body trembled as he quickly replied through quivering lips, "N-no, o-of course not!"

He instinctively realized that the book before him wielded powers comparable to the strongest Ancient Sages... It was at Dimension Shatterer realm!

This realization made him resigned to his plight. He knew that no matter what means he utilized today, there was no way he would be able to get away from the book.

"Good boy!" the book complimented. "Those people you have just met, they hid crucial intelligence from you and caused you to suffer heavy losses. Do you not desire vengeance?"

"O-of course I do! If I could, I would have ripped them into shreds!" Cao Chengli's face warped in anger.

"At the very least, you should know their identities if you desire vengeance. Do you know who they are?" the book asked.

"This..." Cao Chengli was stunned.

When he received this request, the client had demanded his identity to be kept anonymous, and he was fine with it as long as the money reached his hands. Thus, he didn't probe deeper into the identity of his client.

“They shouldn’t have gotten too far away yet. Follow them,” the book instructed. “As the leader of a band of bandits, something as elementary as tracking someone shouldn’t be too much of a problem for you, right?”

“... I understand!” Cao Chengli nodded.

Those words affirmed his doubt that the book, just like the earlier horse and carriage, had come from Dan Xiaotian. Most likely, the reason why Dan Xiaotian hadn’t claimed his life yet was because the other party thought that there was still some value to be squeezed out of him.

“Move on then!” the book ordered.

Gritting his teeth, Cao Chengli quickly returned to where the bonfire was.

Even though his cultivation was way beneath Xue Chen and the others, as someone who thrived off plundering, he was skilled at concealment and tracking. It didn’t take him too long before he was standing before a majestic manor.

“This is... the City Lord Manor? It’s the City Lord Manor who commissioned the assassination request?” Cao Chengli widened his eyes in disbelief.

The lord of Xuanjiang City, Xue Yan, was well-respected in the region. He was known to be impartial and righteous... How could the other party possibly engage in something as vile as commissioning an assassination?

Alarmed, Cao Chengli quickly moved to the edge of the wall and leaped in stealthily. He got into a courtyard and saw a large group of people assembled together. The two figures he had met a moment earlier were standing in front of the group.

Controlling his breathing carefully, Cao Chengli made sure to erase every trace of his presence.

The one standing at the forefront of the group was a soldier dressed in magnificent armor. Judging from their appearance, it was clear that they were the elites of the City Lord Manor.

“Swap into the clothes of these men and get rid of Dan Xiaotian! I don’t wish to see that man breathing by dawn,

understood?” the deep voice of the middle-aged man resounded across the courtyard as he gestured to a bundle of black clothes placed by the side.

“Yes, sir!”

The soldiers swiftly took off their armor and donned those black clothes. Taking a closer look, Cao Chengli nearly fainted on the spot.

Those were the attire of his bandit band!

The elites of the City Lord Manor were actually going to pass off as them to kill Dan Xiaotian! He would never dare believe this if he hadn’t witnessed it with his own eyes.

Just what kind of grudge does the City Lord Manor has with Dan Xiaotian to go this far... Cao Chengli thought as he wisely made the decision to record the sight before him with a Record Crystal.

Very soon, the disguised soldiers of the City Lord Manor were already sprinting their way over to the Dan Clan Residence. It didn’t take long for them to surround the area.

“We’ll charge in together. Spare no one at all!” the leader of the soldiers commanded with a suppressed voice.

“Yes, sir!”

At the command of the leader, the soldiers dashed right into the residence.

Cao Chengli carefully climbed onto one of the lush trees outside and looked at the happenings in the residence through the dim moonlight. What he was going to see would be one of the most unforgettable sights in his life.

A young man was standing firmly at the center of his residence with a sword in his hand. Each time he flicked his wrist, a head would roll to the ground. The wind roared endlessly within the confines of the courtyard, and it felt like this force wouldn’t die down until every single one of the trespassers dropped dead.

In less than three minutes, the fifty elites dispatched by the City Lord Manor were already cold, hard corpses.

“That person is Dan Xiaotian? He’s supposed to be the weakling that I have to kill?” Cao Chengli’s face paled as his heart beat so swiftly that it felt as if it would leap out of his chest. “Damn those bastards from the City Lord Manor... They are trying to get me killed!”

It was fortunate that the ones who had made a move on him earlier were the horse and the carriage. If he had to face Dan Xiaotian personally, his head would have also been severed from his neck in a heartbeat.

The young man’s swordsmanship had already reached an unfathomable level where even a simple slash carried profound intents. He had never witnessed such a terrifying technique in his entire lifetime!

“Teacher...”

After slaying everyone, the young man, Dan Xiaotian, walked into the room with an incredulous look on his face, as if he couldn’t believe that he was the one who had massacred so many soldiers. It was also only then did Cao Chengli realize that there was a young man sitting in front of one of the rooms all along, spectating the battle. He actually didn’t notice the young man’s presence from the very start till now!

This young man appeared to be in his early twenties, and he had a graceful demeanor. In the face of Dan Xiaotian’s presence, the young man put down his teacup calmly before a disapproving frown made its way to his forehead.

“Just these few opponents, and you actually took more than two minutes to deal with them. That’s three breaths for every single one of them! If this is all that you got, how am I supposed to impart even more advanced swordsmanship to you? You won’t be able to make it at this rate. Tonight, you shall be practicing your sword out here till daybreak, understood?”

“Understood!” the young man lowered his head in shame.

Dan Xiaotian killed a person every three breaths, but he is still getting punished for that? Cao Chengli nearly choked on his saliva.

He had seen plenty of geniuses, and Dan Xiaotian definitely ranked at the top of his list. Yet, his teacher was still unhappy with his performance... Wasn't this teacher a little too harsh?

That wasn't all though.

While Cao Chengli was still trying to digest all that had happened earlier, he saw the horse, which had destroyed his subordinates earlier, galloping over to the young man's side. With a bright smile on its horse lips, it picked up the teapot and refilled the young man's teacup... After which, it even lifted up its hooves and carefully wiped them clean before massaging the young man's back...

Cao Chengli felt as if his rationality was being challenged right here.

Could that being over there really still be considered as a horse?

Was this how a horse was supposed to act?

I must never come to the Dan Clan ever again. Never ever... Cao Chengli made this spontaneous decision in his mind as he turned around to leave the area.

But at this moment, a voice sounded in his ears, "You know what you have to do."

This voice was gentle and soothing, but it left goosebumps rising all over his body. He quickly turned around to look back into the Dan Clan Residence, and he saw the young man sipping on his tea looking in his direction with a slight smile on his lips. It was as if the other party had peered through the concealment of the darkness to look right at him.

"I-I..." Cao Chengli found himself falling into incoherency at this abrupt happening.

"You just have to recount what you have seen today." The young man's lips didn't move at all, but his voice echoed clearly in his ears.

"I understand..." Cao Chengli replied with a deep bow.

"You have directed malevolent intentions toward me earlier. On the account that you have done it under another man's

bidding, I'll overlook it this once and spare you. However, be warned that I will not be so courteous if you dare harm the life of another man with those filthy hands of yours. I'll be watching you..." the young man said before his voice trailed off.

"Y-yes!" Cao Chengli replied before fleeing as quickly as he could.

1931 Entering the Ethereal Hall Once More

Watching Cao Chengli's frantically escaping silhouette, Zhang Xuan smiled quietly for a moment before rising to his feet and flinging his sleeves.

Hula!

All of the corpses lying around the residence burst into flames. In just a moment's time, they were all reduced to ashes.

With another fling of Zhang Xuan's hands, all of the ashes flowed into the underground drainage and vanished from sight.

All traces of the battle that had gone on earlier vanished entirely, as if nothing had happened at all.

Zhang Xuan walked into the room and sat down to meditate so as to replenish the zhenqi in his body. He had to say that the medicinal water from boiling the Dongxu Gourd was really effective. Not only had he recovered from his injuries, his body had also managed to adapt to the space and spiritual energy in the Azure, allowing him to move and absorb spiritual energy more easily.

He cultivated for roughly two hours before finally coming to a halt. He pondered quietly for a short moment before directing his consciousness toward his dantian and asking, "Gourd, what the hell are you?"

This question had bugged him for quite a while now.

He was well aware of how severe his injuries were, but just drinking the medicinal water from the Dongxu Gourd allowed him to make a swift recovery. Most likely, the Dongxu Gourd was a being more fearsome than he had ever imagined.

Thinking back, it was worth wondering why Ancient Sage Qiu Wu would set up a Spatial Formation just to nourish a Dongxu Gourd for tens and thousands of years. Most likely, there was more than meets the eye.

“There is a lot more stuff that I can eat here. As long as you can give me enough food, you’ll know in due time!” the Dongxu Gourd readjusted its position to find a comfortable spot before lying down leisurely.

Zhang Xuan tried asking a few more questions, but the latter simply ignored him. Sighing deeply, he took out his Ethereal Token and immersed his consciousness in it once more.

...

“Why aren’t they back yet?”

In the City Lord Manor, Xue Chen was pacing around with a tight frown on his forehead.

Under normal circumstances, the elites he had dispatched should have already killed that trash and returned by now. Two hours had passed since then, so why were there no one to be seen?

“You, head over to take a look!” Xue Chen turned to a nearby guard and ordered.

The guard swiftly put on a set of dark clothes and flitted away. Soon, he returned with a bizarre look on his face, “Sir, nothing seems to have happened to the Dan Clan at all. Dan Xiaotian and Dan Yi are completely unharmed!”

Xue Chen was bewildered by the report, “How can that be? Are my commands not clear?”

He had instructed the guards to eliminate those three at the Dan Clan Residence in the swiftest time possible, but nothing had happened even after two hours had passed? What was going on here?

“Investigate the matter! Find out where did the earlier team go to!” Xue Chen bellowed furiously.

The guard hurriedly rushed out, and an hour later, he returned and reported, “Based on the footsteps, all of them have entered the Dan Clan. However, there are no traces that they have left the premises... My guess is that they might have been killed, and their corpses have been disposed of too!”

“They have been killed? By those three?” Xue Chen was stunned.

Those fifty elites he had dispatched were all Great Sage 1-dan cultivators, and the leader was even at Great Sage 2-dan. Their combined strength would make them a match even for a Great Sage 4-dan cultivator. Yet, they were defeated silently like that, such that none of them even got to send a message back...

Given that the opponent was just the crippled Dan Xiaotian, weakling Dan Yi, and a severely wounded young man, this shouldn't have happened!

Or... could it be that the bandit was right? Xue Chen suddenly remembered Cao Chengli's words.

The latter mentioned that Dan Xiaotian had a formidable horse and a carriage that could use martial arts.

Could, by any chance, those two actually existed?

“Sir, what do we do now? Shall we continue dispatching people over?” the guard asked.

“There's no need for that... If the guards were really killed by them, their guard must be up by now. For the time being, we need to gather more information and reassess Dan Xiaotian's strength before making a move!” Xue Chen shook his head and said.

“Besides, the sun is about to be up soon. If we make a commotion now, we would risk sully the City Lord Residence's reputation.”

“But... are we going to let that bastard off after so many of our brothers have been killed?” the guard asked anxiously.

The City Lord Manor might be rich, but grooming fifty guards like that took up a great deal of effort and resources too. For all of them to be killed just like that... this was really a little hard to swallow.

With a livid look on Xue Chen's face, he said, “I want you to take a trip to Hongyan Market and check plausible ambush

points along the way. Try to find the corpses of the bandits or signs of battle!”

“Yes, sir!” the guard replied before leaving the room. A while later, he returned and reported, “Sir, in the frontmost alley near Hongyan Market, we found some corpses, bows, and arrows. They belong to the deceased bandits!”

“Good. Get your men to get rid of the corpses of those bandits. After which, I want you to smear some armor with blood and secretly bury them in places near the Dan Clan Residence!” Xue Chen harrumphed as a cold smile crept onto his lips.

“Sir, you want me to bury our weapon and armor around the Dan Clan Residence?”

Seeing that the guard was confused by the order, a glint flickered across Xue Chen’s eyes as he explained, “Dan Xiaotian has always been a weakling, and there’s no one in town who doesn’t know that. If it were to be found that many guards of the City Lord Manor has disappeared overnight, and the weapons and armor of both bandits and guards alike were found near the perimeter of the Dan Clan Residence, what do you think people will say?”

“What... people will say? They will probably say that Dan Xiaotian has colluded with bandits to kill the guards of the City Lord Manor...” As the guard spoke, his eyes slowly lit up in excitement.

If they were to do so, even without making a move on Dan Xiaotian straight, they would be able to corner him and force him to submit to them. If things go well, not only would they be able to sully Dan Xiaotian’s reputation, they might even be able to push for his execution!

Due to the evil committed by the bandits over the past decade, they were a bunch deeply abhorred by the ordinary civilians. If people were to learn that Dan Xiaotian had colluded with the bandits, he would surely be condemned for it.

And that would give the City Lord Manor a legitimate excuse to reject the marriage agreement.

After all, how could the noble city lord allow his own daughter to marry a person with questionable morals?

“That’s right! I want you to spread the news tomorrow morning, saying that fifty of our guards have found traces of the bandits and had set forth to take them down. However, they went missing in the midst of the operation, so we are going to launch a citywide search for their whereabouts... Make sure to hype the matter up as much as possible. It would be best if the entire city learns of the matter!” Xue Chen instructed with a smile.

“When the news has finally ripened enough, we’ll head to the Dan Clan and search their premises under the pretext of investigating the whereabouts of the missing guards. There, we’ll find the weapons of the bandits and the bloodied armor of our guards... There’s no way Dan Xiaotian will be able to free himself from this!”

“Yes, sir!” Hearing how Xue Chen was able to make such an ingenious move despite the disadvantageous situation they were in, the guard bowed deeply out of admiration. He pondered over the plan for a moment before asking, “But sir, what if Dan Xiaotian refuses to plead guilty to it even with those evidence in place?”

With chilling eyes, Xue Chen said, “He can deny it all he wants, but it will all be futile. As long as we can find a reason to drag him to the City Lord Manor, he’ll be ours to deal with. We can simply pin whatever crime we want on him and sentence him accordingly!”

“That’s true...” the guard nodded. “I’ll go make the arrangements right now!”

...

“Second Young Mistress, you were looking for me?”

While Xue Chen was arranging for Dan Xiaotian’s downfall, Xue Qin had returned to her bedroom, but she was unable to fall asleep. Eventually, she called for one of the youths serving by Huo Jianghe’s side to come into her room.

This young man was from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as well, and just like her, he was a menial disciple. He was in charge of attending of Huo Jianghe's needs so that the latter can focus his attention on cultivating.

"This money is a token of my goodwill. Please, accept it!" Xue Chen said politely.

With a wave of her hand, a maid quickly passed a sachet of gold coins over. Before passing the sachet over, the maid casually shook the sachet a little, and the resounding jingling of coins echoed in the air. From the looks of it, it appeared that there were at least a hundred coins inside.

"We are all from the same sect. Second Young Mistress, there's no need to stand on ceremony..." the young man's eyes lit up as he kept the sachet.

A menial disciple like him wasn't entitled to a lot of resources in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so naturally, he was more than delighted to accept Xue Chen's generous gift.

"May I ask you if Senior Huo has said after returning back to his quarters at night?" Xue Qin looked at the young man intently and asked.

"Senior Huo didn't say anything..." Perhaps it was due to his inexperience, it was only at this moment that the young man finally understood Xue Qin's true intentions. He pondered for a brief moment before adding, "Right, he told us to keep a lookout for a person called World's Edge in the Ethereal Hall. He sternly instructed us to inform him as soon as that person appears!"

"World's Edge?" Xue Qin frowned.

"It's like this..." the young man swiftly filled Xue Qin in on what had happened in the Ethereal Hall.

"I see! If World's Edge really appears, I would like to trouble senior to inform me in advance. I would like to be the one to deliver then news to Senior Huo!" Xue Qin said as she passed another sachet of gold coins over.

"Of course, that isn't a problem at all!" the young man nodded vehemently with light gleaming from his eyes.

In the first place, this matter was nothing to him at all. If he could benefit from this so easily, there was no reason for him to take up Xue Qin's arrangements.

Barely after saying those words, the young man suddenly lowered his head and took out a jade token. He took a look at it, and his eyes lit up, "Second Young Mistress, you are truly lucky. World's Edge has just entered the Ethereal Hall. Let's go look for Senior Huo together!"

"Yes!" Xue Qin quickly got to her feet and followed the young man into Huo Jianghe's residence.

It didn't take too long for them to arrive at their destination.

"He's there?"

Hearing their report, Huo Jianghe narrowed his eyes.

"Senior, this is an Ethereal Token from Starlight City..." Xue Qin quickly presented two Ethereal Tokens over.

As valuable as Ethereal Tokens were, it was a common commodity to the City Lord Manor.

"Un!" Seeing that the young lady was on the ball, Huo Jianghe nodded in approval before rising to his feet and saying, "Enter the Ethereal Hall with me. I'll show you what the true swordsmanship of our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion looks like!"

"Thank you, senior!" Seeing that the other party didn't blame her for what happened earlier in the day, Xue Qin heaved a sigh of relief before immersing her consciousness into the Ethereal Token.

Weng! Weng!

The two of them entered the Ethereal Hall simultaneously.

...

"It really is inconvenient bringing things around with me like that. Let's see if I can purchase a storage ring here!"

Too used to using storage rings in the Master Teacher Continent, he felt that it was a handful to lug his possessions

with him around everywhere. Thus, he returned to the Ethereal Hall in hopes of finding a storage ring here.

While it was late at night outside, the Ethereal Hall was filled to the brim with people. Furthermore, the surroundings remained extremely bright, as if the concept of day and night didn't exist here. Zhang Xuan made his way over to the front receptionist and posed his question.

"Of course, there are storage rings on sale in the Ethereal Hall too! Each of them costs 500,000 Ethereal Coins!" the attendant replied cheerfully.

"500,000 Ethereal Coins?" Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

That was exorbitant!

It was no wonder why even a huge clan like the Dan Clan didn't have a single storage ring with them!

"I won eight matches earlier in the day. If I were to join the dueling ring now, will I continue on from the ninth match, or will I be starting over from the first?" Zhang Xuan asked.

Currently, the dueling ring was the fastest way to earn Ethereal Coins that he knew of. However, he had left halfway through, so if the count were to start again from the first round, it would really be a huge pain for him.

It was likely that no one would want to challenge him anymore by the time he reached the eighth round again.

After all, the Starlight City only had that much experts. There weren't too many people who were willing to spend money just to lose a battle.

"Since you have won eight matches, participating in the primary level duels don't pose too much of a challenge to you anymore. Unfortunately, there are no more matches for the intermediate level duels yet, and the earliest one would be two days away from now. Furthermore, it seems like your tier isn't high enough yet too," the attendant assessed Zhang Xuan's profile for a moment as he remarked.

"Intermediate level duels?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

Primary and intermediate... Were there different tiers to the dueling ring too?

1932 Another Be

“Of course!” the attendant explained with a smile. “There can be significant differences in the fighting prowess of cultivators despite the cap of cultivation here, and there would be no one who would be willing to challenge a person whom they know they can’t win in the dueling ring. The main purpose of the dueling ring is to temper one’s combat techniques, and this can only be done with a suitable opponent. Thus, in order to allow for better pairing of opponents, the dueling ring is divided into various tiers too!”

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Take him for example, competition at such a level couldn’t even trigger his motivation at all, let alone sharpen his skills.

“The dueling rings are divided into primary, intermediate, and advanced. If you are able to win ten rounds consecutively in a certain tier, you will be allowed to proceed to the next tier,” the attendant explained.

“You currently have eight rounds under you, which put you very close to intermediate tier. However, given the prowess you have displayed, it’s unlikely that ordinary cultivators would dare to challenge you. If you really wish to push ahead, you might have to put down a reward, and as long as someone accepts the challenge and you are able to win two rounds consecutively, you will be qualified to enter the intermediate tier and fight with even stronger experts!”

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

Such a design was indeed logical. He would have done the same if he had been in Kong shi’s place too.

“I’ll propose a challenge then!”

“Sure. How much money do you plan to put at stake?” the attendant asked.

“5,500 Etheral Coins,” Zhang Xuan replied as he passed his Etheral Card over.

As he had spent most of his earlier fortune on buying pills for the Dongxu Gourd, he only had this much money left.

“5,500 Ethereal Coins?” the attendant shook his head with a bitter smile. “That’s too low. It’ll be hard to get anyone to take on your bet...”

If there wasn’t much to be earned from a duel, who would be willing to take it on?

Under normal circumstances, the reward would have to be at least 50,000 Ethereal Coins for it to attract anyone at all. Only then would cultivators be willing to try their luck even if the odds were way against them.

5,500 Ethereal Coins... That was way too little!

Just as the attendant thought that Zhang Xuan was being a little too stingy over here, a young man suddenly walked over with large strides and said, “I’ll accept his challenge!”

The young man appeared to be in his mid-twenties. There was a sword in his hand, which indicated that he was a sword practitioner. Beside him was a beautiful lady in her late teens by his side.

They were none other than Huo Jianghe and Xue Qin.

However, as those two had altered their appearances too, Zhang Xuan was unable to identify them either.

“You are willing to take up my challenge?”

Not expecting an opponent to come for him so quickly, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. Putting on a harmless smile, he asked, “Since that’s the case, are you willing to take up my bet too?”

Hearing that it was another bet, Huo Jianghe’s face immediately turned livid as he remembered the unpleasant situation he was in earlier in the day, “What kind of bet do you want to make?”

“Simple. If I were to lose, I’ll give you 100,000 Ethereal Coins. On the other hand, if you were to lose, you’ll have to give me 100,000 Ethereal Coins!”

Zhang Xuan's initial thought was to raise the stakes to 500,000 Ethereal Coins, but he was afraid that it would scare his prey away, so he eventually chose a lower amount. He could tell that the other party had come here specially to challenge him, especially given the fact that the other party had accepted his challenge so quickly despite the low returns. While he did need an opponent at the moment, his primary goal was still to earn Ethereal Coins, and the easiest way to do so was through a bet!

"100,000 Ethereal Coins? Can you even fork out such a sum?" Huo Jianghe sneered coldly.

As an expert of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, 100,000 Ethereal Coins was really nothing much to him. Nevertheless, he still had no intention of allowing others to take advantage of him.

"I think the problem over here is whether you are willing to accept my bet or not. I don't mind having a duel with you if you are willing to accept my bet, but otherwise, I don't really want to waste my time fighting with you..." Zhang Xuan waved his hand dismissively.

From the Sword Intent the person before him was emanating, Zhang Xuan could tell that the other party, just like Soaring Clouds and the others whom he had killed earlier, was a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

According to Dan Xiaotian, disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were highly esteemed in the Azure. The fact that the other party had come all the way here to challenge him likely meant that he was here to seek vengeance for those who were slain by his sword. Since that was the case, this meant that he could try pushing the other party a bit...

Besides, it was hard work to suppress his cultivation down to a twentieth of what it was. He couldn't execute most of his techniques, and it was extremely stifling for him. It was only natural that he should be rewarded handsomely for his efforts!

If he hadn't suppressed his strength, his opponent could very well be scarred for life.

“Audacious! It’s your honor that Senior Huo wishes to challenge you to a battle. How dare you put on such an attitude before him!” Xue Qin bellowed coldly, displeased at World’s Edge’s dismissive attitude.

It was very likely that Huo Jianghe would become an inner disciple by next year, and it should be the other party’s honor to have such a powerful expert challenging him. Yet, the other party still seemed so reluctant, even demanding to hold a bet for it...

Know your place!

“Alright, that’s enough,” Huo Jianghe raised his hand to stop Xue Qin. He looked at World’s Edge once more and said, “I don’t mind having a bet with you... However, if you were to lose, I don’t need your 100,000 Ethereal Coins. What I want you to do is admit your swordsmanship is beneath that of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and follow me back to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to become an outer disciple!”

100,000 Ethereal Coins was a sum that he could afford to squander, but the reputation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had to be protected at any cost.

News saying that Yun Feiyang and the others had lost were already going around town, and if he were to continue remaining idle as their First Senior, it wouldn’t be long before others begin saying that the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were weaker than mere unaffiliated cultivators. He couldn’t let a minor incident like this mar the reputation of the sect!

Besides, he had much to earn by recommending budding talents to the sect too. It would be considered a huge contribution from his part.

“Very well!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Those terms and conditions were nothing to him. Besides...

Lose? How is that even possible?

That’s a word which I have never written once in my life!

“Let’s head to the dueling ring then!”

Having come to an agreement, the two of them quickly made their way over to the dueling ring.

“Look! World’s Edge is here again... Is he going to fight with someone?”

“That’s great! I’m finally able to witness his transcendental skills once more... I can’t even tell you how impressed I am with his techniques...”

“Hurry up and call up those bunch of useless fools! If they were to miss World’s Edge’s match, they would probably hate us to death!”

“Who is the one he’s fighting with?”

“A River’s Glance? I don’t have any impression of this person at all... Hmm, but the young lady that’s beside him, Winter Zither, I think I have heard of her before...”

“Who is she?”

“Wait, let me think... Yes, that’s right! She’s the Second Young Mistress of Xuanjiang City. Her name seems to be Xue Qin or something. She’s quite a beaut, and her swordsmanship is amazing too...”

...

Discussions could be heard here and there.

Huo Jianghe’s nickname, A River’s Glance, was the same one that he used elsewhere too. It was just that he had never been to Starlight City’s Ethereal Hall, so no one here had heard of it before.

However, it was different for Xue Qin. As the daughter of the city lord, she was a frequent guest at the Ethereal Hall, and she had made quite a reputation for herself here too. Thus, many people were able to recognize her swiftly.

This was similar to how top eSports players were well-known both on the net and in person, such as One Autumn Leaf Ye Qiu and Heng Sao Tian Ya,

“Xue Qin?”

Those words weren't spoken discreetly, so Zhang Xuan heard all of them loud and clear. He couldn't help but stop in his footsteps.

Surely it couldn't be so coincidental?

He was here just to buy a storage ring, but he still managed to encounter this rejected fiancée?

Speaking of which, if Winter Zither was her, wouldn't that mean that A River's Glance was the fellow from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who was here to recruit disciples? Earlier, the other party mentioned something like wanting to bring him to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as an outer disciple too...

Just as they were about to reach the dueling ring, Zhang Xuan abruptly turned around to grab Xue Qin.

His movements were so quick that it caught the young lady off guard. She instinctively raised her sword to protect herself, but by the time her sword was up, the other party had already retracted his palm. There was a gentle smile on the other party's face.

"What are you doing?" Xue Qin questioned impatiently.

She thought that an expert who had caught Senior Huo's eyes would at least conduct himself properly, but who could have thought that the latter would attempt to make a move on her.

"It's nothing much. I saw a mosquito on your head, and I chased it away for you," Zhang Xuan replied cheerily.

"You..." Xue Qin's breathing hastened in anger, causing her chest to bounce up and down.

Mosquito? Mosquito your head!

We are in the Ethereal Hall, existing only in consciousness. How could there be any mosquitoes here?

Can you at least be any more insincere with your lies?

Paying no heed to Xue Qin's rage, Zhang Xuan turned his attention to the Library of Heaven's Path, and just as he had expected, a book had been compiled. It was filled with Winter

Wither's cultivation flaws, as well as a simple introduction about her.

"Xue Qin, the second daughter of the city lord of Xuanjiang City..."

Zhang Xuan's lips crept up.

While it was possible to conceal one's appearance and identity in the Ethereal Hall, it couldn't deceive the eyes of the Library of Heaven's Path.

In other words, as long as the other party executed a battle technique, the Library of Heaven's Path would be able to compile a book on the other party and peer into all of the other party's secrets.

"Since it's her, things are going to get exciting then..." Zhang Xuan thought. Turning to He Jianghe, he pointed at Xue Qin and said, "This lass was disrespectful to me earlier. Why don't we do this instead? If you were to lose, not only will you compensate me 100,000 Ethereal Coins, you will give her to me as a maid too!"

1933 Xue Qin's Father

“You...”

Xue Qin's rage immediately hit the boiling point.

She was the Second Young Mistress of the City Lord Manor, a person who was respected and adored wherever she went. To be used as a bet and be asked to serve as another person's maid... This was a grave insult to her!

“She isn't my subordinate. I have no right to make this decision!” Huo Jianghe replied with a frown.

“Is it? I guess it can't be helped then. The three fellows who came before you weren't a challenge at all. All it took was one blow, and I can't begin to emphasize just how boring it was. I doubt you would be any different from them. So, let's not waste each other's time and cancel the duel, alright?” Zhang Xuan stretched his back lazily as he spoke.

Huo Jianghe glared at Zhang Xuan coldly with narrowed eyes as he said, “As a skilled sword practitioner, how can you renege on your words so easily?”

“This woman looked down on me earlier. I feel deeply indignant at her actions, and this leaves me feeling stifled inside. Unless she becomes my maid, I won't be able to take this lying! Given my current state, I don't think that I'll be able to bring out the full prowess of my swordsmanship, which renders this entire duel meaningless... Given how important this matter is, don't you think that it's only right for me to consider it carefully?”

Placing his hands behind his back, Zhang Xuan looked at Huo Jianghe with his head upright, as if he was doing the latter a favor, “It's not that I want to offend the young lady beside you, but this is for the sake of the duel too. I can't think of a greater insult to one's opponent than to face him in a weakened state! You have approached with utmost sincerity, so I reckon that you would want to face me at full strength instead of defeating

me in my weakened state... Such a victory wouldn't reflect well on you either, isn't that so?"

Geji! Geji!

Huo Jianghe's knuckles cracked loudly.

How in the world was the other party spouting this bunch of bullsh*t without feeling embarrassed in the slightest? If he could, he would really like to give the other party a good pummeling!

So, what you are saying is that as long as I don't accept that bet, I would be bullying you. Even if I win, it would be because I'm taking advantage of you in your weakened state?

"Senior, you mustn't fall for his cheap provocations!" Seeing that Huo Jianghe was actually starting to rethink the matter, Xue Qin's face paled as she exclaimed anxiously.

"You all seem to be making me out to be the villain here... Fine, fine! Even if you don't agree with my request, I'll still have the duel with you, alright? All you want is to defeat me, right? I doubt that you care whether the duel is fair or not anyway..." Zhang Xuan shook his head in desolation. "I guess that's all there is to the pride of the experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. They would stoop down to anything as long as they can achieve victory..."

"Enough! I'll accede to your request, is that all?" Huo Jianghe bellowed furiously.

It might seem as if Zhang Xuan was grasping at straws, but in truth, he had managed to hit Huo Jianghe's weakness dead on. Huo Jianghe was someone with a lot of pride, and he couldn't bear the idea of anyone casting doubt over his abilities.

"Senior..." Xue Qin staggered in shock.

She was the Second Young Mistress of the City Lord Manor, a person blessed by the heavens... She was a person who had been accepted into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and there was a good chance that she could rise through the ranks to become a powerhouse of the continent in the future.

It was an unspeakable humiliation for her to actually be used as a wager like that!

But barely after she started speaking, she found herself met with Huo Jianghe's cold eyes as the latter uttered frostily, "Do you think that I would lose to the likes of him?"

"I..." That single glare sent alarm bells ringing in Xue Qin's mind as her face paled in fright. "O-of course not... Someone as powerful as you is bound to win him easily..."

"Hmph!"

Huo Jianghe grabbed the sword which Xue Qin was holding and drew it out. Fearing that he would die of rage the more he spoke, he stepped onto the dueling ring and said, "Let's hurry up and get it over with!"

"My thoughts exactly!" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he got onto the dueling ring too.

"I heard that you used a sword tossing technique the previous few times my juniors challenged you. I would like to witness the strength of that technique too!" Huo Jianghe said.

Since he wanted to salvage the reputation of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he would have to defeat the other party while the other party was using his most powerful sword art.

"Sure!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he pulled a sword out from the weapon rack.

...

"Elder! Elder! World's Edge appeared again!"

In Starlight City's City Lord Manor, Yun Feiyang barged into a room in a hurry.

Seated within the room was Elder Lu Yun. Upon hearing the news, his eyes lit up in excitement as he took an Ethereal Token and immersed his consciousness into it.

Yun Feiyang, Huang Tao, and the others quickly followed suit too.

As soon as they entered the Ethereal Hall, they could already hear an amazing bustle coming from where the dueling ring

was located. Crowds and crowds of people were rushing over as well.

“Let’s hurry over! The match between World’s Edge and A River’s Glance is about to start!”

“A River’s Glance? Who is that?”

“I don’t know either, but I heard that he’s an amazing swordmaster. I have a feeling that it’ll be an exciting match!”

“To dare to challenge World’s Edge despite knowing his remarkable results earlier the day, it would only mean to say that A River’s Glance is no newbie either. I wonder if he would be able to dethrone World’s Edge...”

...

“A River’s Glance? Isn’t that our First Senior?” Yun Feiyang’s eyes lit up in excitement.

“Jianghe is here too? He must have heard of your losses and came here personally to salvage the sect’s reputation!” Elder Lu Yun nodded in approval as he swiftly deduced what was going on.

Those words made the four of them redden in shame, “We apologize for our lack of practice!”

It was embarrassing that they would need their First Senior to stand up for them after their loss.

“Jianghe has always been a stable fighter, and he has a lot of fighting experience too. I believe that he should be able to undo the negative influence this matter has on our sect...”

Elder Lu Yun stroked his beard and remarked.

Even within the Ethereal Hall, the character he assumed was also an elder too.

“Indeed. With our First Senior making a move, I believe that not even World’s Edge would stand much of a chance at all!”

“Let’s head over to take a look!” Elder Lu Yun gestured them forward.

They squeezed through the crowd and head to the forefront of the commotion, but all of a sudden, deafening cheerings filled

the air and tremored the clouds above.

“The match must have ended...” Elder Lu Yun remarked.

They hurried forward, fully expecting to see Huo Jianghe standing triumphantly on the dueling ring. Contrary to what they thought, they saw A River’s Glance lying on the ground with a sword impaled in his head instead.

It didn’t take long for the corpse to dissipate into light fragments.

“First Senior...”

Yun Feiyang and the others were stunned. Elder Lu Yun was stupefied too.

Didn’t the battle start not too long ago?

Why did it seem like it had ended in the blink of an eye?

Could it be that not even their First Senior was a match for World’s Edge and ended up being killed in a split second too?

Meanwhile, Xue Qin’s body was trembling nonstop. The situation before her was really driving her mad!

Being used as a wager was already displeasing enough for her, but who could have thought that the senior whom she respected so much would actually be subdued by the single toss of a sword... Everything ended so quickly that it almost felt like Huo Jianghe was conspiring with World’s Edge to do her in!

If that was the case... did this mean that she was now World’s Edge’s maid?

As if having read into her mind, the young man on the dueling ring suddenly called out, “My maid over there, what are you doing over there? Come over and massage my back!”

“You...” Xue Qin felt as if her face was burning up.

She had never felt so insulted in her life.

You want me to serve as your maid? Dream on!

Xue Qin stomped right onto the dueling ring and raised her hand, intending to slap Zhang Xuan in his face. But before her

strike could land, the other party's hand had already grasped her wrist.

Pah!

Sharp pain assaulted Xue Qin's face. Instead of the one slapping, she had become the one who had been slapped instead.

It was just a single slap, but it was a strike without anything held back at all. Her beautiful face immediately began swelling to the point that her left cheek looked like a huge, red bun.

Even though Xue Qin knew that this wasn't the real world, the pain and the humiliation she felt were more real than anything she had ever experienced. If there was a pit in the ground right now, she would dive right in without any hesitation.

She thought that she would be able to rise to the top with the support of Huo Jianghe and achieve her dreams. But just like a fleeting bubble, it felt as if everything had vanished with a pop...

She had never felt so pathetic in her life before.

"You sure are daring to dare lay your hands on your master!" Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly.

He didn't harbor the slightest goodwill for the vicious woman standing before her. If not for the fact that he was intending on leaving her to his disciple to deal with, he would have already gotten rid of her by now!

"I'll kill you!" Xue Qin roared with reddened eyes as she charged forward, intending to pit her life against the young man before her.

But at this moment, a cold bellow echoed across the crowd, "Enough. Haven't you embarrassed yourself enough?"

Xue Qin's body froze on the spot. Turning around, she saw a middle-aged man walking in her direction.

"Father..." Xue Qin muttered softly in a daze.

Out of sheer relief upon seeing her pillar of support, the young lady fell to the ground and began crying her eyes out. All of her indignance came gushing out at this moment.

“She called him father? Could this person be... the lord of Xuanjiang City, City Lord Xue Gan?”

“City Lord Xue Gan is an Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm expert! I have never thought that he would come here personally...”

“What would truly unthinkable is him remaining idle after hearing that his daughter has become the maid of another man!”

“If City Lord Xue Gan is making a move personally, World’s Edge would really be a goner then...”

“Indeed. Not only did he insult Xue Qin, he even slapped her. Just on that itself, no one would be able to save him anymore...”

...

Paying no heed to the discussions of the crowd, Xue Gan looked at Zhang Xuan and said, “This friend over here, why don’t we call it quits here? It’s normal for younglings like you to be hot-blooded, but it would be good to keep it under control. We never know what would happen in the future, so it’s better to make friends than enemies, don’t you think so?”

“You’re right. How great the world would be if everything could be resolved peacefully?” Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement. “What a pity that we don’t live in an idealistic world. Besides, I have no interest in associating myself with dogs!”

Xue Gan’s eyes immediately turned livid as killing intent gushed forth from him.

The crowd had already revealed his true identity. As the city lord of Xuanjiang City, he was already lowering himself by making peace first, but the other party dared to snub his goodwill!

This was intolerable!

In truth, Zhang Xuan was also nowhere as calm as he seemed on the surface. Were it not for him, the kind Dan Xiaotian could very well be dead by now... and it was all because the latter had a marriage agreement with Xue Qin.

For the sake of preserving their reputation, there was nothing those two wouldn't stoop down to. He didn't have the patience in him to speak politely to vicious hypocrites like them.

"You seem to be very confident in your ability. Why don't we have a duel then?"

Seeing that more and more people were gathering around, Xue Gan knew that he couldn't back down just like that anymore. He had to protect his dignity as the city lord.

"The wager will be 400,000 Ethereal Coins. Well, it's up to you to decide whether you wish to accept it or not. If you even can't fork out this bit of money, I'll be going back to sleep. It has been a rough day on me, you know. The maid which has just come under me wouldn't heed my orders at all... To be honest, I don't know how you are able to manage a city of millions when you can't even manage your own daughter well!" Zhang Xuan sighed in disappointment.

Since your City Lord Manor has plenty of money to groom so many soldiers, why don't you bleed some of it out for me?

Geji! Geji!

Xue Gan had never wanted to kill a person so much before.

For many years, he had been held in high regard. Even his enemies dared not to talk back to him in his presence... This was the first time he had been put down publicly like this.

There was no way he was going to let the other party get away just after all those insults hurled at him.

"Young man, do you think that the anonymity provided by the Ethereal Hall is absolute? There are many cases in the world where a person has been hunted down and killed in real life after offending someone in the Ethereal Hall!" Xue Gan's voice was dripping with threat.

“You seem to be very fond of beating around the bush. If you don’t have the money to wager, I’ll have to ask you to scram. My time is very precious!” Zhang Xuan waved Xue Gan away dismissively.

“You...” Xue Gan gritted his teeth in fury. “Very well, I’ll take you up on your wager!”

To be honest, 400,000 Ethereal Coins was a huge sum to the City Lord Manor... but if he didn’t take up this wager and allowed the other party to leave just like that, the prestige he had built up with difficulty over the past few decades would be eroded just like that!

He had no doubt that the other party would surely give everything he had to sully the reputation of the City Lord Manor if he were to back down here!

Just how in the world did the City Lord Manor get involved with this troublesome lad?

1934 Recurring Number

Out of regard for their own honor, most experts were very heeding of rules and common courtesy. It had almost become a social convention expected of the higher echelons.

However, this lad clearly had no eyes for the rules at all.

Knowing that his daughter was the cause of this mess, Xue Gan shot a cold glance over at her, causing Xue Qin to shudder a little. After which, he turned to Zhang Xuan and harrumphed impatiently, "Hurry up!"

With a smile on his lips, Zhang Xuan took his position in the dueling ring and beckoned with a wave of his hand, "You may have the first move."

"Allow me to make it clear first. Our bet isn't based on the rules of this dueling ring but a life-and-death match!" Xue Gan said, not anxious to make a move yet. "You can be assured that I'll give you 400,000 Ethereal Coins if you were to win, but if I were to win, you'll have to tell me your true identity. Furthermore, I want you to come to the City Lord Manor and apologize to my daughter and me!"

As long as he knew the other party's identity, he would make sure to turn the other party's life into a living hell!

"Fine by me!" Zhang Xuan replied haughtily.

"Then, shall we put down our bets then?"

With a wave of his hand, Xue Gan flicked his Ethereal Card into the hands of the young lady in charge of registration.

Weng!

There was a brilliant ray of light, and a message surfaced in the air, indicating that Xue Gan had put 400,000 Ethereal Coins into the duel.

Seeing how candid the other party was, Zhang Xuan leisurely flicked his finger and passed the information regarding his identity and location into the hands of the young lady too.

Three was another brilliant ray of light, and words reflecting that Zhang Xuan had put in his end of the bet appeared in the air too.

Even though one's identity in the Ethereal Hall was anonymous, this anonymity only applied to other cultivators. Through the Ethereal Token, the system was still able to sense the exact location of the user and verify the user's identity through his blood.

“Good. Let's begin then!”

Having confirmed the bet, Xue Gan unhesitatingly walked over to the weapon rack and picked up a massive saber.

His true field of specialty lay not in his swordsmanship but his saber art!

“I won't take advantage of you either. Since you are using a saber, I'll follow you!” Zhang Xuan said as he grabbed an identical saber from the weapon rack too.

“He's able to use the saber too?”

“But he's a sword practitioner! Isn't he handicapping himself by equipping a saber?”

The crowd was appalled.

After nine remarkable battles, there was no one amongst the crowd who didn't know that World's Edge was a true swordmaster who could stand his ground even against the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

And for a swordmaster to actually wield a saber instead... Was he insane?

“You really are courting your own death!”

Xue Gan was confidently in his abilities, but even he was a little hesitant to face Zhang Xuan's sword toss after seeing how many formidable enemies had fallen before its prowess... But of all things, the other party actually foolishly chose to challenge him to a battle of saber arts. Xue Gan couldn't help but scoff coldly.

Saber and sword might seem similar, but the vast difference in their sizes and weight meant that they were intended to be wielded in vastly different manners. As such, those who were used to holding a sword often found themselves unable to bring out the true prowess of a saber, and vice-versa.

It was extremely rare to see someone who had reached the peak in both swordsmanship and saber arts.

To forsake your strengths and voluntarily handicap yourself... Very well, I'll make you regret your decision dearly!

Hula!

With a flick of his wrist, Xue Gan immediately flicked his wrist and shot out multiple saber qi. The saber qi adeptly wrapped itself around Zhang Xuan's surroundings, sealing the latter's path of movement. At the same time, Xue Gan himself dashed forward to bring his saber down upon Zhang Xuan.

Elder Lu Yun's eyebrows shot up, "I guess it's not completely without reason that he was able to become the lord of Xuanjiang City."

This saber art did appear to be ordinary and straightforward on the surface, but Elder Lu Yun could clearly discern that there were 49 transformations in the technique. No matter how Zhang Xuan moved, Xue Gan would have a way to deal with it and press his offense on.

Eventually, Zhang Xuan would find himself cornered and overwhelmed.

Even Elder Lu Yun himself would have some trouble coping with such a move.

"That's City Lord Xue's Solace of the Silver Winter!"

"I heard of that story before! It's said that back when City Lord Xue was still 27, there was a night in which the silver moon hung beautifully above the snowy fields, seducing all eyes that fell upon it. It was that night which City Lord Xue was inspired to create this ultimate move!"

"Just like the silver moon illuminating the snowy fields, there's nowhere to run or hide from this saber art. It's with this

technique that City Lord Xue dominated the dueling ring here!”

“Do you think World’s Edge would be able to withstand this move?”

...

All of those who had the resources to purchase the Ethereal Token and enter here were mostly experts. While they were still severely lacking in comparison to Zhang Xuan, their eye of discernment was at least still on par.

They could tell that there was much more to Xue Gan’s move than what was shown on the exterior, and most of them felt that World’s Edge had finally met his match.

“Not bad, I really should give you some recognition for being able to come up with this move...” Similar to the crowd, Zhang Xuan was slightly surprised by Xue Gan’s move too. With a deep frown on his forehead, he fell into deep thoughts.

Should I use a tenth of my strength, or should I use a fifth?

After all, the person standing before him wasn’t the weakling that had come before. He clearly had much more combat experience than the others though he seemed to have hit his bottleneck... A tenth might not be enough to block him, but a fifth was likely to be too great that it might one-hit knockout him!

Such fame wasn’t what he wanted!

If others were to learn that he had the strength to instakill even a city lord, there would be no one who would accept his duel and deliver free money to him anymore.

Yes, humility and low profile is the way to go!

“Forget it. I should play safe and start with an eighth first. I’ll first drag the fight for a while before finding a good opportunity to naturally defeat him later on...” Zhang Xuan quickly made up his mind before charging forth with his saber.

His moves were neither glamorous nor profound. In his hands, the saber seemed perfectly ordinary. Yet, as if an impenetrable

barrier, he was able to fend against Xue Gan's relentless offense each and every time.

In the blink of a few eyes, they had already traded twenty blows.

"Elder Lu, who do you think will win?" Yun Feiyang, who didn't have much understanding of saber, asked.

The rest of the gang quickly turned their heads over as well.

"I reckon that City Lord Xue is in an advantageous position!" Elder Lu replied with a wise nod.

"So, City Lord Xue is going to win?"

"Most likely so. While World's Edge has managed to stand his ground so far, it's apparent that he isn't as adept with the saber. This is the reason why he has been forced to be on the defensive thus far, unable to launch a proper counterattack against City Lord Xue. On the other hand, City Lord Xue's saber balances speed together with strength perfectly. Each move he makes results in more momentum building up within the saber, and it would eventually reach a level that overwhelms World's Edge defense!" Elder Lu replied calmly as he stroked his beard.

Those who were qualified to become a city lord and could hold on to the position for so long were bound to possess extraordinary abilities that surpassed the others.

"I see..." Yun Feiyang and the others nodded in realization.

Analyzing the duel from Elder Lu's perspective, the happenings in the duel suddenly made sense to them.

Meanwhile, on the dueling ring, it felt like a snowstorm had descended upon the world, sending chilling air into the surroundings. With each strike, City Lord Xue's movements were growing faster and faster, such that cracks started to appear on the dueling ring.

"Incredible!" Zhang Xuan nodded in excitement.

He was already using an eighth of his strength, but Xue Gan was still able to tightly control the flow of the battle through the sheer strength of his technique.

In fact, it would likely still be a prolonged battle even if he were to use a seventh of his strength.

He would have to at least use a sixth of his strength in order to guarantee a swift victory.

This was probably the strongest expert he had encountered ever since he arrived on the Azure... It had only been a day since he had regained consciousness after all. In any case, this was a good opportunity for him to try his skills.

While Zhang Xuan was getting more and more high on the battle, the horror in Xue Gan's eyes gradually deepened.

Just like what the others had said, the saber art he was executing at the moment was indeed the Solace of the Silver Winter. This technique allowed him to retain the momentum of his previous swings to heighten the might and speed of the subsequent attacks. As long as he had sufficient time to build up, he would become the berserker of the battlefield, tearing down everything in sight.

But things didn't seem to be going in the direction he had expected today. He thought that he would be able to defeat the other party once he had compounded his strength and speed to his limits, but who could have thought... the young man was growing stronger and stronger throughout the battle!

His hand had already been jolted numb by the sheer strength of his swings, and the webbings in between his fingers were bleeding profusely!

"I'll end this fast!"

The slow buildup in his injuries would hinder his fighting prowess, and that would present a chance to World's Edge to turn the tables on him. Knowing that he mustn't allow this battle to drag any longer, Xue Gan decided to go all out. With a furious roar, he drove his saber forth.

Weng weng!

All of the saber qi he had sent at Zhang Xuan earlier swiftly gathered together to form a massive tornado.

The true prowess of Solace of the Silver Winter lay not in the compounding strength of his saber strikes but the lingering saber qi in the area with each move made. If he were to gather all of the saber qi together, he would be able to launch a devastating strike far beyond his current limits!

“Struggle all you will, but your defeat is already sealed!” Xue Gan sneered at Zhang Xuan coldly though his heart was beating wildly on the inside.

This is his ultimate technique?

Seeing that the other party’s moves had become more powerful, such that it would be hard for him to keep up even with a sixth of his strength, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he made up his mind, “Forget it, I’ll use that same move too!”

After giving it some thought, he still felt that the Heaven’s Path Saber Art that he had practiced was too powerful. So, with a light flick of his finger, the saber in his hand shot across the air.

“The technique works on sabers too?” Yun Feiyang and the others were stunned.

They could tell that the young man was intending to toss his saber just like how he had tossed his sword at them.

But would it really work out? The weight and shape of a saber and sword were different from one another, and the slightest difference could mean the largest difference in the outcome. Was it really alright?

Before their doubts could blossom, the saber whooshed across the air with a choking sound.

Hula!

It took only an instant for it to appear before Xue Gan.

With a reddened face, Xue Gan hurriedly raised his saber to block against it, only to realize that his strike had landed empty.

Puhe!

The saber pierced right through his head.

Even though Xue Gan was defeated in that instant, by the sheer strength of his willpower as a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator, he was able to keep himself from dissipating into light fragments for a brief moment.

“You... were already able to defeat me right from the start?” Xue Gan stared at Zhang Xuan with eyes so wide that they were almost bulging out.

He had long heard the rumors that the other party was skilled in tossing swords.

He thought that the reason why his opponent hadn't thrown his weapon at him was because of his inability to execute the technique with a saber... But his assumption didn't hold true. His opponent was able to do the same with a saber, and with utmost ease at that...

The tossed saber was so powerful that he was unable to deflect it even with all the momentum he had built up thus far. If his opponent had used it right from the start, he wouldn't have been able to last so long at all...

In other words, his opponent had only been playing with him thus far. Everything he had done must have looked nothing more than a farce to the other party.

“You have forked out 400,000 Ethereal Coins for this duel, wouldn't it be a huge pity if you were to lose in a single move? I thought that it would give you more value for money by dragging out the duel a little for you...” Zhang Xuan confessed in embarrassment.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted out of Xue Gan's lips.

Value for money your head!

If you were really want to give me more value for money, you should at least say that you have used your full strength! To reveal that you have been going easy on me all along... am I supposed to thank you for that?

Shameless humblebragging!

“I’ll admit my defeat, but it’s clear that you didn’t use your full strength either. I would like to know how much of your strength did you use?” Using his last breath, Xue Gan asked.

The fact that the other party was able to keep up with him despite the increasing strength and speed of his saber likely meant that the other party had been matching his fighting prowess. Given so, he couldn’t help but wonder just how powerful the other party was.

“How much strength did I use?” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment, but eventually, he decided to reveal it honestly.

“You aren’t much of a person, but at least you weren’t too shabby of an opponent. You were able to make me bring out 0.1666666666... Well, you get the idea of recurring numbers, right?”

1935 The Cultivation Realms in the Azure

“What?” Xue Gan was stunned.

I asked you how much of your strength did you exert, but what the heck are you doing giving me such a long string of 6s?

Peng!

Unable to stand it any longer, Xue Gan’s body finally dissipated on the spot.

The surroundings were completely silent as the eyebrows of the crowd leaped around the place.

They didn’t think that World’s Edge was speaking the truth either. Otherwise, how the heck did he go down to so many decimal points? There was no one in the world who could possibly control their strength to such a fine extent!

And what the heck are recurring numbers? Recurring your head!

Can you conduct yourself more like an expert?

While the crowd was rolling their eyes at World’s Edge, Xue Qin’s face had already paled completely from fear.

She could still understand why Huo Jianghe lost to World’s Edge. After all, the latter was still young and hadn’t fully unleashed his potential yet.

However, her father was the lord of Xuanjiang City, an Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator! In terms of comprehension of cultivation and mastery of battle techniques, he had already reached an incredible level even when compared to the experts of Starlight City. Yet, he was still unable to defeat World’s Edge when their cultivation was at the same level as one another...

Just when in the world did this fellow pop out from? How could he be so powerful?

If there were really such a figure in Starlight City, he should have already made a name for himself by now!

“At the very most, I’ll just stay out of the Ethereal Hall over the next few days. I don’t believe that he would dare make a fuss at the City Lord Manor... If he does so, he’ll just be courting his own death!” Xue Qin clenched her fists tightly as she made up her mind.

What maid or not maid? As long as she didn’t enter the Ethereal Hall, what could the other party do about her?

While World’s Edge had managed to outmaneuver and defeat her father here, she didn’t think that World’s Edge would actually be stronger than him.

Reassuring herself as such, Xue Qin felt as if the boulder weighing down her heart had finally been released.

Hu!

There was a flash of light before her figure vanished from the spot.

“How weak-minded are you lot? Why bother asking for the truth when you can’t take it?” Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly and sighed.

He could tell from the looks on Xue Gan and the crowd’s face that no one believed him at all. As a perfectionist, if he said he was going to exert a sixth of his strength, he would really exert exactly a sixth of his strength, which would be equivalent to 0.1666666...

He was being perfectly honest over here, but no one would just believe him... It sure was hard to be a good person in this world!

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan walked down from the dueling ring and headed to the registration counter. He first destroyed the object which contained information regarding his whereabouts and identity before passing his Ethereal Card over.

As Huo Jianghe had died with Xue Qin’s weapon in his possession, the item was automatically sold back to the system

and the sum was deposited into Zhang Xuan's card. With that, he had a total of 600,000 Ethereal Coins in his card.

He quickly traded his money for a good storage ring, and just as he was about to leave the Ethereal Hall, a person whom he had once defeated on the dueling ring, Soaring Cloud, walked over with a name scroll in hand.

"Elder World's Edge, Elder Lu from our sect wishes to meet you privately. May I know if it's a convenient time for you now?"

"Elder Lu?" Zhang Xuan murmured.

Considering that Soaring Cloud was from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, wouldn't that mean that the Elder Lu whom he was referring to was an elder in the sect?

"Very well!" With this thought in mind, Zhang Xuan nodded his head without much hesitation.

A person who could become an elder in one of the Six Sects was bound to know quite a lot about the Azure. This was a good opportunity for him to learn about the various powers in the Azure, especially the Spirit God Palace.

During his time at the otherworldly battlefield, through Wu Chen's sacrifice, they summoned a deity from the Azure, and the latter said that she would reveal Luo Ruoxin's whereabouts to him if he could reach the Spirit God Palace. This was currently the greatest clue he had to find Luo Ruoxin.

Following behind Soaring Cloud, they soon arrived in a tightly sealed room.

Aside from officiating duels, the Ethereal Hall also had special locations that allowed cultivators to converse privately with one another. Privacy was absolutely guaranteed in these private chambers. No matter one spoke inside these rooms, those who were outside would not hear a single word of it.

There was already an old man seated at the center of the room. There were four people standing behind him, four of whom Zhang Xuan recognized to be challengers he had already defeated on the dueling ring. With awkward looks on their

faces, neither of them seemed willing to meet Zhang Xuan in the eye.

Surprisingly, A River's Glance was amidst the group of four too. It seemed like he had found a new Ethereal Token and got back in.

As soon as Zhang Xuan walked in, Elder Lu Yun immediately stood up and introduced himself politely, "I am an external elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Lu Yun!"

"It's my pleasure to meet you, Elder Lu!" Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and greeted him. "I am World's Edge!"

As the other party's motives for inviting him over weren't clear, he was reluctant to reveal his true identity just yet.

While he was confident that there would be no one who would be able to best him in the Ethereal Hall, back in the real world, his strength as an Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator would only be enough for him to dominate the small Xuanjiang City. Moving up to Starlight City and beyond, there were bound to be many experts who wielded powers far beyond him.

"There's no need to restrain yourself before him!" The fact that World's Edge had chosen to introduce himself by his nickname instead of his real name told Elder Lu Yun that the other party was still wary of him.

With a gentle smile, he said, "I have already watched the videos of your duel with them. Your comprehension of swordsmanship has truly reached a formidable level... However, if I'm not mistaken, you have already hit a bottleneck in your swordsmanship. For someone of your level, advancing further than where you are is no easy feat. You will need resources and guidance in order to do so. If you remain as an unaffiliated cultivator, it's highly likely that you'll never overcome your current bottleneck..."

"So, I would like to extend my sincere invitation to you to join the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!"

One's swordsmanship often reflected one's personality. What Elder Lu Yun felt from Zhang Xuan's swordsmanship was

decisiveness, so he decided to get straight to the point.

“You wish to invite me to join the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?” Zhang Xuan was half-convinced that Elder Lu Yun was calling him over in order to teach him a lesson, so he was a little caught off guard when the latter extended such an invitation to him.

“Huo Jianghe and Xue Gan are not a match for you at the same cultivation realm. Given your level of expertise in swordsmanship, you are already able to apply for the role of an inner disciple as soon as you enter the sect. As an inner disciple, you’ll be entitled to access advanced sword arts, and there will be plenty of fellow sword practitioners whom you can spar and trade insights with. I believe that you’ll be able to grow at a much faster pace than you currently are!”

Just on the account that Zhang Xuan could defeat the First Senior of the outer disciples so easily meant that he was already qualified to join the ranks of the inner disciples.

“This... I’m afraid I’ll have to think the matter over carefully!” Zhang Xuan didn’t give a response right away.

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was one of the major powers in the Azure, and if he could borrow their connections to look for Luo Ruoxin, things would likely be much easier and more convenient for him.

However, this was a give and take. In return for receiving the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s goodwill, he would have to repay them with his loyalty. However, he had no interest in getting involved with the politics among the Six Sects, and he didn’t want to get involved in their affairs either. It would likely be a whole string of trouble if he chose to join the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“Of course. This is a huge matter, so I don’t expect you to give me an answer right away,” Elder Lu Yun nodded in response.

“Elder Lu, there are some questions which I would like to ask you. I hope that I am not overstepping my boundaries over here,” Zhang Xuan looked at Elder Lu Yun as he spoke.

“Of course not! Please feel free to speak!”

“May I know... if you have ever heard of a place known as the Spirit God Palace?” Zhang Xuan asked nervously.

“Spirit God Palace?” Elder Lu Yun pondered deeply for a moment before shaking his head, “I’m afraid I have never heard of such a place before.”

“I see...” Zhang Xuan looked at Elder Lu contemplatively for a moment as he replied. A slight tinge of disappointment could be heard in his voice.

“I am just an external elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. My duties lay mainly in guiding the younger disciples, so I’m afraid I’m not as knowledgeable about the other affairs on the continent... However, our sect does have plenty of books that study the relationships and various powers on the Forsaken Continent. As long as you are able to obtain clearance, you will be able to browse through them. I believe you should be able to find what you want in there,” Elder Lu Yun was flustered for a split moment, but he swiftly regained himself and replied calmly.

Even though he was honored as one of the elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, the truth was that he was of the lowest tier. He didn’t have the right to access privy information and learn more about the matter.

Given that the Spirit God Palace which the other party spoke about carried the word ‘God’ in it, it was likely to involve something greater. Someone of his level wouldn’t be able to know about it.

“I understand,” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Considering that the other party was an external elder tasked with the responsibility of recruiting menial and outer disciples, it was indeed unlikely that he would have too deep of an understanding regarding the secrets of the higher echelons.

“Oh, there’s also another question which I would like to seek enlightenment to. I know that cultivation realms are Saint, Great Sage, and Ancient Sage, but I am curious to know what lies beyond that,” Zhang Xuan said.

“The highest realm of Ancient Sage is Dimension Shatterer realm, and beyond that would be Pseudo Immortal realm. Pseudo Immortals are invulnerable to flames, and their souls are as pure as true gold. With their thoughts, they are able to make things happen. I am currently at Pseudo Immortal realm, and the same goes for the lord of Starlight City as well. Pseudo Immortal realm can be divided into four stages, namely Lesser Pseudo Immortal, Greater Pseudo Immortal, Earthly Pseudo Immortal, and Heavenly Pseudo Immortal.

“Above the Pseudo Immortals are the True Immortals. True Immortals are considered as real experts on the Forsaken Continent, and most elders in the Six Sects are at this level. Those who manage to take a step further from there and transcend to greater heights are known as High Immortals. They are also termed as the King of Immortals... Only the core elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has reached this level!”

At this point, Elder Lu Yun paused for a brief moment before continuing on, “Well, these are the realms that I know. The heavens are boundless, so I have no doubt that there is something beyond the High Immortals, but that’s not something I am privy to know about anymore... Cultivation is not easy. It’s hard to go too far without powerful backing, and cultivation resources are simply too limited in the world! Just take this for example, the questions you have just asked are common knowledge amongst ordinary disciples, but you had to specially ask me to find out about it!”

“Ancient Sage, Pseudo Immortal, True Immortal, and High Immortal...” Zhang Xuan nodded as he jotted those realms down in his head.

“With your swordsmanship and my recommendation, I have no doubt that you’ll be able to become an inner disciple with ease. May I know where you are at the moment? If possible, I think it would be better for both of us to sit down in person to have a chat about this. After all, this matter is of grave importance to your future!” Elder Lu Yun said.

In the end, no matter what was discussed here, it would be all but empty agreements. He had to meet the person in person in

order to know how powerful the other party was, whether he was a guy or a girl, or even whether he was a human or a beast!

“I am currently at Xuanjiang City. I believe we’ll eventually meet one another if you were to come over... Besides, I think that I might have something which I need to trouble Senior Huo over there for!” Zhang Xuan said with a mysterious smile.

“You are at Xuanjiang City?” Elder Lu Yun subconsciously shot a glance at Huo Jianghe as doubts surfaced in his mind.

There was actually such a powerful expert at a place as backward as Xuanjiang City?

“As long as it’s within my abilities, I’ll try my best to help you!” Huo Jianghe clasped his fist and said.

He could tell that Elder Lu Yun was determined to bring World’s Edge into the sect. As such, while he wasn’t too fond of World’s Edge himself, he knew better than to throw a tantrum here.

“Well, it’s like this...” Zhang Xuan discreetly sent a zhenqi telepathy to Huo Jianghe, and at the end of which, he clasped his fist and bowed, “I’ll be troubling Senior Huo on this matter then. I still have some matters to attend to at the moment, so I won’t impose on you all any longer. Farewell!”

After finding all he wanted to know, Zhang Xuan didn’t linger in the private room.

He returned back to the front reception of the Ethereal Hall and asked, “May I know if there’s anything here that would allow a cultivator to recover his strength quickly?”

“If you are an Ancient Sage cultivator, you could try low-tier Immortal Pills. It costs 100,000 Ethereal Coins each!” the receptionist replied.

“Even a low-tier one costs 100,000 Ethereal Coins?”

It was as if the Ethereal Hall couldn’t get enough of shocking Zhang Xuan with how exorbitant its goods were. He felt like

the entire organization was out to rob every single one of those Ethereal Coins that he earned painstakingly!

Being indignant consumer Zhang Xuan was, he immediately inquired into the exorbitant price, and it turned out that the pricing was perfectly normal here.

Basically, Immortal Pills were treated as the currency in the upper echelons of the Azure because of how general its use was. There was no cultivator who wouldn't need it, so the demand for the good was relatively stable. In a sense, it was similar to the spirit stones of the Master Teacher Continent.

Immortal Pills could be divided into four tiers. Basic Immortal Pills corresponded to Pseudo Immortals, Standard Immortal Pills corresponded to True Immortals, and Superior Immortal Pills corresponded to High Immortals. As for Premier Immortal Pills, it was so rare that it would be difficult to buy it off the market even if one had the money for it. Not too many people have seen it before.

Given that it was a currency used mainly for the higher echelons, as well as an important cultivation resource for Pseudo Immortals, it was understandable that its pricing would be a little steep. Nevertheless, if he had to spend 100,00 Ethereal Coins for each of them, the little fortune that he had just earned would really be gone in an instant.

Zhang Xuan used his remaining money to buy a Basic Immortal Pill before looking at the receptionist curiously, "If I may ask, it appears that the Ethereal Hall sells all kinds of goods. Does it sell cultivation technique manuals and the sort as well?"

"Of course!" the attendant nodded. "However, the cultivation techniques that we have are those commonly practiced on the continent. As for the core cultivation techniques of the Six Sects, I'm afraid that it's beyond our means too!"

There was no way the Six Sects would allow their cultivation techniques to be leaked. Even if the Ethereal Hall had copies, they would swiftly face the wrath of the Six Sects if they dared to put them on sale.

If it was just dueling and interaction, the Six Sects would still allow for the existence of the Ethereal Hall in the world. After all, there was no conflict in their interests. However, if the Ethereal Hall dared to threaten their foundation, it would be an all-out war.

It was also for this reason that the Ethereal Hall was able to grow so big over the years, with branches spanning across the entire Forsaken Continent.

“I understand. I’m fine with common cultivation techniques too... If I were to just browse through the cultivation techniques for a short moment of time instead of purchasing them, how much would it cost?” Zhang Xuan asked in agitation.

While he had achieved a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm, he was unfortunately limited by the fact that he didn’t have any cultivation techniques in the realm itself.

If he could just browse through the collection of cultivation technique manuals here, as long as he had sufficient Basic Immortal Pills, he was confident that he would be able to reach pinnacle within a few hours. That would make it easier for him to navigate around the Forsaken Continent and find Luo Ruoxin.

“There are pricing differences depending on the tier of the cultivation techniques. For Dimension Shatterer realm cultivation techniques, the most basic ones would cost at least 50,000 Ethereal Coins each. Also, I’m afraid that our cultivation techniques are for sale only. We don’t offer browsing services here!”

“50,000 Ethereal Coins for the most basic cultivation technique manual?” Zhang Xuan’s lips twitched in horror.

He was still thinking of buying a huge bundle of them if they were inexpensive, but who could have thought that the price would be so horrifying.

Based on rough estimation, he would probably need over a thousand ordinary books in order to compile a perfected Dimension Shatterer realm Heaven’s Path Divine Art. That

would equate to 50,000,000 Ethereal Coins! Even if he were to tire himself to death on the dueling ring, he wouldn't be able to earn that much!

Besides, he had just harvested a new group of challengers. He had no idea when the next group of challengers would be ready for his harvesting.

It seemed like purchasing cultivation technique manuals here for his advancement was really not too feasible.

“Do I really have to join a sect?” Zhang Xuan rubbed his forehead in exasperation.

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Each of the Six Sects was bound to have their own libraries containing innumerable cultivation techniques. Zhang Xuan would surely be able to gather thousands of books over there easily... It was due to such readily available resources in there that so many cultivators desired to join the ranks of the Six Sects.

Just like what Elder Lu Yun had said, with his comprehension of swordsmanship, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to become an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. In fact, he would probably be able to join any of the Six Sects easily, and he was confident that he could rise through the ranks easily. However, there was no such thing as a free lunch in the world.

Joining a sect meant that he would have to adhere to the rules and regulations of the sect.

If it was just a few trivial rules here and there, it still wouldn't be too much of a problem. However, if one of the rules somehow prevented him from looking for Luo Ruoxin, or that the sect was hostile toward the Spirit God Palace... he would really be shooting himself in the foot then.

Wait... What if Dan Xiaotian joins the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and I follow him as his servant? That should work as well, right? Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

It was said that there would be a selection in Xuanjiang City two days later for cultivators to join the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as menial disciples... If Dan Xiaotian were to display sufficient talent, he should be able to get in as an outer disciple. Most outer disciples were assigned with servants to take care of their necessities. So, as long as Dan Xiaotian succeeded, he should be able to get into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as well.

Once he was in, he could adapt accordingly to the situation to acquire what he needed. At the same time, he could supervise

his disciple's learning and ensure that he didn't stray down the wrong path. Not to mention, as a servant of an outer disciple, he was a character so minor that he wouldn't be officially recognized by the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, which also meant that he wouldn't be bound by its rules too.

That was three birds with a stone!

"It's settled then!"

Zhang Xuan gave the matter some more thought and confirmed that there were no major problems with this course of action. Heaving a huge sigh of relief, he left the Ethereal Hall.

...

While Zhang Xuan had made up his mind, Elder Lu Yun and the others in the private room had come to a decision as well.

"We have to head to Xuanjiang City right now! Let me see... It's a little past midnight now, and with the fastest aerial beast we have, we should be able to arrive in the afternoon. Since that's the case, let's not delay it any further and conduct the selection in Xuanjiang City today then! Jianghe, I want you to send down the announcement to those in Xuanjiang City that we'll be conducting the selection today as soon as dawn breaks. There's no need to wait for us, understood? Nothing must go wrong with this. We have to find World's Edge by hook or by crook!" Elder Lu Yun instructed sternly.

"Yes!" Huo Jianghe replied with a nod.

Bringing back such a talented genius was far more significant than taking in a hundred above-average outer disciples. If he were to allow World's Edge to slip past his fingers, and World's Edge ended up joining some other sect instead, he would surely be severely punished for his lapse in responsibility!

"As for the rest of you, pack up your things right now. We'll be setting off in five minutes, got it?"

Hu!

All of them vanished from the Ethereal Hall swiftly.

...

Returning back to his room, Zhang Xuan quickly activated the Ethereal Token to claim the storage ring and Basic Immortal Pill he had just purchased.

The Basic Immortal Pill had a slightly silvery color, and it was densely packed with the pure mercury-like spiritual energy. Just taking a whiff of it was enough to leave one's meridians trembling in agitation, as if encountering an oasis in a desert.

Knowing that it was of utmost importance to him in recovering his strength, Zhang Xuan swallowed the pill without any hesitation.

As soon as he ingested the Basic Immortal Pill, he felt a warm flow of energy gushing into his limbs. The pure mercury-like energy was swiftly being converted into concentrated zhenqi.

In the midst of his cultivation, Zhang Xuan couldn't help but realize that the zhenqi he had formed from the mercury-like spiritual energy was much more powerful. Due to its greater density, the techniques he executed with it were much mightier.

While the capacity of his dantian hadn't changed, the quality of the zhenqi he was taking in was much greater. This meant that he was capable of bringing out much greater prowess in a battle than before!

It was no wonder why the experts in the Azure were so extraordinarily powerful, such that he could only barely scrape a victory after using all of the means at his disposal. Not only was the mercury-like spiritual energy able to enhance one's constitution, it also played an important role in tempering one's zhenqi.

After cultivating for some time, the energy harnessed in the Basic Immortal Pill was finally all used up. Exhaling deeply, Zhang Xuan slowly opened his eyes.

While the Basic Immortal Pill was rich in energy, it was still insufficient for him to make a full recovery.

"From the looks of it, I reckon that I would need another one in order to fully recover..." Zhang Xuan murmured.

If he needed two Basic Immortal Pills just to recover his strength, just how many of it would he freaking require in order to make a breakthrough?

Cultivating was really a money-sucking abyss. No matter how rich one was, it would never be enough!

Zhang Xuan glanced at the windows and found that it was already dawn. As soon as he walked out of the room, he saw that Dan Xiaotian was still carefully practicing his swordsmanship.

Despite having not rested for a night, Dan Xiaotian's movements did not reflect any exhaustion. If anything, his movements were much more stable, and he was able to drive his zhenqi much more smoothly now.

“Not bad. I see that you have worked hard!” With just a glance, Zhang Xuan could tell that Dan Xiaotian had followed his instructions strictly, not slacking off in the least.

In truth, he didn't ask Dan Xiaotian to practice his swordsmanship just to punish him. He had just achieved a breakthrough of six realms in the span of a day, and this abrupt breakthrough inevitably meant that his mind and reflexes would be unable to keep up with his newfound power. As such, he needed sufficient practice in order to fully adapt to the changes in his body.

While practicing the same move again and again for thousands of times was extremely monotonous and grinding on one's patience, it was an essential step for Dan Xiaotian to precisely discern the flow of zhenqi in his body. This would allow him to sharpen his control over his strength, thus gradually breaking him into his newfound powers.

And clearly, his aim had been achieved.

In a night of practice, Dan Xiaotian had already fully adapted himself to his current Great Sage 3-dan cultivation.

“Teacher!”

Hearing the opening of the door, Dan Xiaotian quickly walked over, knelt down, and greeted Zhang Xuan.

He was no fool either. He could clearly sense the changes in his body, so how would he not understand his teacher's intention?

Alarmed by this huge reaction, Zhang Xuan quickly reached out to help Dan Xiaotian up. But at this moment, there was a sudden jolt in his head.

A golden page appeared in the Library of Heaven's Path.

It seemed like it was only at this moment that he had truly won Dan Xiaotian over as his disciple.

This means that I'm able to acquire golden pages in the Azure too. This is good news! Zhang Xuan thought in delight.

He thought that the differences in the environment might hinder some of the functions of the Library of Heaven's Path, but fortunately, that didn't seem to be the case.

The golden page represented a crucial trump card. As long as he had it in his grasp, he would have nothing to fear for now.

"How far have you gone with the sword art I have imparted to you? Show it to me!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile after helping Dan Xiaotian up.

He had taught Dan Xiaotian the 'sword toss' technique he had created yesterday in the Ethereal Hall, and he was curious to see how far his disciple had come with this technique over the night.

"Yes, teacher!"

Dan Xiaotian took a few steps back before flicking his wrist lightly.

Sou!

His sword flew across the air.

While the speed of his toss wasn't on par with Zhang Xuan's, it was still fast enough to produce numerous afterimages in his path. In the blink of an eye, the sword pierced into the trunk of a nearby tree, and all of a sudden, the huge tree exploded, creating a huge crater in where it previously stood.

“Not bad. You have already reached the level of an Initiate. If you wish to further your mastery in the art, you should try practicing it in battle. Observe your opponent’s flaws carefully before making your move. If you could reach the level where you are able to discern multiple openings in your opponent’s move with a single glance, you will have reached Major Accomplishment in this technique. By then, none of your peers would be a match for you anymore!” Zhang Xuan said.

This sword toss appeared to be a simple move, but it harnessed the crux of the Heaven’s Path Sword Art within it. As long as he was able to find a flaw in the movements of his opponent, no one would be able to block it.

It was precisely for this reason that Huo Jianghe and Xue Gan were completely helpless before it.

“Yes, teacher!” Dan Xiaotian nodded in agitation.

After a night of practice, he had also come to realize just how powerful and profound this single sword toss was. Everything he had learned before was really nothing in comparison. He felt almost as if he had been living in a pineapple under the ocean all this while!

“Alright, I’ll impart to you some other sword arts too. Learning more sword arts would be beneficial in widening your perspective, thus granting you a deeper insight into your swordsmanship. This is crucial in your advancement as a sword practitioner,” Zhang Xuan said.

Just as he was about to impart some elementary sword arts to Dan Xiaotian, a flurry of footsteps suddenly sounded outside.

Jiya!

The entrance was knocked open, and ten armored soldiers rushed into the courtyard and swiftly surrounded Zhang Xuan and Dan Xiaotian.

“Who is the owner of this residence?” the commander standing at the forefront asked coldly.

He was a young man in his thirties, but despite his young age, his cultivation had already reached Ancient Sage 1-dan Blood Continuation realm.

“I am the owner of this residence!” Noting that the group that had barged in were guards from the City Lord Manor, Dan Xiaotian walked forward with a frown.

“Men, capture him!” the commander ordered.

Huala!

Two guards immediately rushed out from behind with drawn swords in their hands. Their faces reflected belligerence that indicated that they wouldn’t hesitate to hurt Dan Xiaotian.

“I advise you not to retaliate. We do have the discretion to kill criminals who attempt to resist arrest!” one of the two guards sneered coldly as he approached Dan Xiaotian with chains in hand.

“What crime did I commit?” Dan Xiaotian was taken aback by the situation before him.

“Yesterday night, the sentries of the City Lord Manor found the bandit Cao Chengli sneaking into the city with his band. It was clear that he was up to no good, so the City Lord Manor immediately dispatched a group of fifty elites to eliminate them. However, those fifty never returned. After investigating the matter the entire morning, we found that the footsteps of those fifty elites led straight to your residence. Thus, I have obtained an arrest warrant from the City Lord Manor to arrest you on the ground of colluding with bandits to kill our men!” the commander sneered coldly.

Dan Xiaotian widened his eyes in shock for a moment before exclaiming furiously, “Colluding with bandits? That’s nonsense! I would never do something like that!”

Yesterday night, if not for his teacher, he might have been killed by those bandits. Yet, these guards actually claimed that he was colluding with them?

You must be joking with me!

In his view, even the chances of the City Lord Manor colluding with the bandits were greater than his!

“It’s fine, I don’t expect you to admit to it either. Men, bring the evidence over!” the commander bellowed with a wave of

his hand.

Huala!

Several guards immediately marched forward and tossed the items in their hands over.

It was a bunch of bloodied and soiled weapons and armor.

“We found these around your residence. There are the weapons of the bandits and the armor our guards. It’s apparent that they have clashed with one another here, and someone has intentionally concealed the evidence... What else do you have to say for yourself?” the commander harrumphed.

“This... How could this be?” Dan Xiaotian was stunned.

His teacher had already gotten rid of everything yesterday, so how could there still be such stuff lying around?

“Those weapons and clothes are indeed from the bandits living in the mountains outside. It was robbed by them several times while making shipping my goods, so there’s no way I would mistake it!”

“Those armors are definitely from the City Lord Manor too. They patrol around my place every day, so how could I possibly get it wrong?”

“How could he stoop so low to colluding with bandits? Despicable!”

“We have to punish such behavior severely! Right, we should also force them to confess their ploy as well. If the bandits had really succeeded in achieving whatever they set out to do, who knows how many casualties there would be in our city...”

“The Dan Clan sure has fallen from its former glory. I was still feeling sympathetic to their plight, especially given that their final remaining member isn’t able to cultivate at all, but it turns out to those who are pitiful have a reason for being in the plight they are in. Colluding with bandits? It serves them right to be destroyed like that!”

...

Before Dan Xiaotian could explain, a bunch of notable figures in the city suddenly sprouted forth from behind the soldiers.

Merchants, tavern owners, medicinal herb peddlers, teahouse owners... These were the people who propped up the lifeline of Xuanjiang City's economy.

They had been harassed by bandits many times in the course of conducting their businesses, so they had the greatest say in the matter too.

"What else do you have to say for yourself?" the commander sneered. Turning to his guards, he commanded, "Grab him and bring him to the City Lord Manor! Make sure to interrogate him properly!"

Huala!

The guard holding on the chain began advancing toward Dan Xiaotian once more.

"All of you are shameless! The upright City Lord Manor actually wants to..." Dan Xiaotian was just about to lash out furiously when he suddenly halted his words. There was a moment of silence before he nodded, "Fine, I'll follow you to the City Lord Manor. I hope that you can redress my grievances. I trust that you will uncover the truth and punish those who are truly guilty of this!"

"Hmph, let's go!" The commander appeared to be a little disappointed to see Dan Xiaotian complying with him so easily. He shot a glance at the crowd before saying, "The act of colluding with the bandits threatens the peace of our city. Given how severe the implications are, as well as the fact that you have been harmed by Cao Chengli before, I would like to invite all of you to follow me to the City Lord Manor to testify in the court... At the same time, this is to ensure that the proceedings are fair and impartial, and we would not side with Dan Xiaotian just because he's engaged to the Second Young Mistress!"

"Very well!"

The crowd nodded in agreement

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“The rest of them are likely to be accomplices as well. Capture them and bring them to the City Lord Manor too!”

The guards quickly handcuffed Zhang Xuan and Elder Yi before leading them out of the residence.

Zhang Xuan didn't resist the arrest. Instead, he sent some more instructions over Dan Xiaotian, and the latter visibly calmed down upon hearing those words. With a hunched back to make him appear smaller, he limped his way out of the Dan Clan Residence. His cultivation was also concealed through a certain method which his teacher had just imparted to him.

In the eyes of others, he was no different from an ordinary Saint 6-dan cultivator.

After leaving the Dan Clan Residence, they were escorted into a carriage, and it didn't take long for them to arrive at the City Lord Manor.

At this moment, the City Lord Manor was already completely packed. There were over a thousand people present discussing the issue concerning the bandits worriedly.

Clearly, Xue Chen's plan had worked out.

“The City Lord Manor is also very worried about the bandits entering the city. After careful investigation, we found that the Dan Clan has a hand in this matter as well. As you know, Dan Xiaotian is engaged to the Second Young Mistress. Thus, in order to ensure impartiality, we'll be holding a public trial so as to allay your fears that we might be biased in our judgement!” Xue Chen spoke up to calm the crowd.

“As expected of the City Lord Manor! They sure are efficient to root out the culprits so quickly!”

“Those who collude with the bandits deserve to die. I thought that Dan Xiaotian looked quite honest, but it seems like a wretched heart is concealed beneath his honest face!”

...

When Dan Xiaotian was finally escorted into the court by the guards, everyone swiftly hushed down.

There was almost no one in the city who didn't know of the engagement. However, the very act of colluding with the bandits was a vile and unforgivable act. Countless lives could have lost if anything had gone wrong. Thus, they wanted to see if the City Lord Manor would still maintain its impartiality even when judging someone close to them.

After Dan Xiaotian limped into place and was forced to kneel down, Xue Chen glanced at the guards and ordered, "Bring in the evidence!"

Several guards immediately rushed in and placed the bloodied armor, bows, and arrows on the ground. Following this, a well-groomed middle-aged man walked into the court and said, "Lord, I have already inspected every article here, and the bows and arrows are indeed used by Cao Chengli and the others. There are clear signs that it had been used by them. As for the armor, there is no doubt that they are the ones used by the guards of the City Lord Manor too, and judging from the freshness of the blood, they were left on the armor last night!"

Another person stepped forward and added on, "Lord, I can also testify to this matter. While I was cultivating last night, I heard some movements outside. I secretly peeked through my windows and found many black-clothed individuals sneaking toward the Dan Clan. It does seem like they are conducting some kind of transaction between them!"

Dan Xiaotian shot a glance at the testifying witness, and he recognized the latter to be from a neighboring family not too far away from the Dan Clan Residence. They were usually on close terms with one another.

"Lord, I saw it too. There were several dozen people, and I couldn't help but feel that something was amiss. Thus, I recorded the entire scene!"

Another person stepped forward too, and he was Dan Xiaotian's neighbor as well.

That person activated his Record Crystal, and the video taken down was displayed before everyone's eyes.

Beneath the night of full moon, a group of black-clothed bandits was silently sneaking into Dan Xiaotian's residence. After they entered the premises, there was no commotion. There was only absolute silence, as if the owner of the residence had implicitly permitted their presence.

"I was still wondering if there were some other secrets involved in this issue, but to think that it's actually true!"

"But why would Dan Xiaotian collude with the bandits?"

"I also found that weird too. The Dan Clan might be declined, but Dan Xiaotian should still be able to live an ample life with the riches his predecessors have left behind. There shouldn't be any reason for him to take such a risk!"

A huge commotion broke out after the video in the Record Crystal was displayed.

Those who knew Dan Xiaotian's character and thought that there might be some conspiracy involved in the issue stared at the young man kneeling at the center of the court with a look of disbelief in their eyes.

The Dan Clan had its roots from Baiye City, but they had moved to Xuanjiang City several decades ago. Over the years, it grew swiftly, and it eventually reached its peak ten years ago, becoming an unrivaled power in Xuanjiang City.

Back in that era, there were countless experts in the Dan Clan. Just the three Dimension Shatterer realm experts that they had was enough to frighten any enemy into submitting to the Dan Clan. Not even the City Lord Manor would have dared to make an enemy out of the Dan Clan then, choosing to make peace through a marriage agreement instead.

Everything had changed after that unfortunate incident that caused the deaths of nearly all of the experts of the Dan Clan. The fortunes of the Dan Clan were swiftly devoured by others shortly after. Nevertheless, it still held substantial wealth due to its massive accumulation over the years. There was no reason for it to collude with the bandits!

As such, most of the more rational-minded individuals amongst the crowd found the matter inexplicable.

“Second Young Mistress...”

Just as everyone was harboring doubts, hurried footsteps suddenly echoed from afar. Raising their heads to take a look, the crowd saw the Second Young Mistress of the City Lord Manor, Xue Qin, rushing over with an anxious look on their faces.

This sight left bizarre looks on the faces of the crowd.

Considering that the marriage agreement between Dan Xiaotian and Xue Qin, it was only right for Xue Qin to stay out of this trial so as to avoid hindering the impartiality of the trial. Yet, she actually rushed out just like that...

Sprinting behind Xue Qin were the maids of the City Lord Manor. They had flustered looks on their faces, as if they didn't expect the Second Young Mistress to act so recklessly as to barge into the trial.

“Why?”

Shaking away the grasp of the maids trying to hold her back, Xue Qin stared at Dan Xiaotian with reddened eyes, as if she was unable to accept the latter's betrayal.

“We have been engaged to one another since a young age. While you have become unable to cultivate, I have never snubbed you before and treated as per before. This time, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has come to our town to recruit disciples. I thought that it was an opportunity for us, so I worked hard to win Senior Huo's approval to become a menial disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion... I was thinking that I could obtain even better herbs for you to recover from your affliction so that you can cultivate once again and rebuild the glory of your Dan Clan...” Xue Qin shook her head melancholically, disappointed by the betrayal of her loved one.

“I thought that you would be proud of me, so I sent my men to inform you of the matter. Yet, why did you collude with the bandits to stop this from happening? You even kidnapped me

and had the bandits beat me up, attempting to force me to change my mind... Did you think that I would forget you just because I got into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion? I'm doing this not just for myself but for our future! This would have been the key to changing our fates!"

As Xue Qin spoke, the tears brimming in her eyes began trickling down. She averted her gaze from Dan Xiaotian, as if she couldn't bear to look the man in the eye anymore.

"So, it was because the Second Young Mistress has cleared the selections for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and that had crushed Dan Xiaotian's self-esteem. Thus, he chose to collude with the bandits to stop it from happening..."

"Dan Xiaotian is truly foolish. Does he not know that there are many enemies of the Dan Clan out to kill him, and the only reason why he can live to this day is due to the City Lord Manor and the Second Young Mistress' protection? Or perhaps... it was because he realizes the fact that he worries about what would happen to him once the Second Young Mistress leaves. That's why he chose to make this risky move, hoping that he could retain the Second Young Mistress here!"

"As long as the Second Young Mistress goes missing, she wouldn't be able to enter the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion anymore once those from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion left. With that, as long as he seals the marriage as well, his safety would be guaranteed. No one would dare to touch him anymore!"

"Everything makes perfect sense now... That explains why the Second Young Mistress' face is slightly swollen. She must have suffered quite a bit under the bandits' captive."

"That must be the case. Who else would dare to lay their hands the Second Young Mistress of the City Lord Manor?"

"Those group of bandits would dare to do anything as long as one pays them enough. If not for his carelessness, no one would ever think of suspecting Dan Xiaotian. He really has thought things out carefully!"

...

Hearing those accusations, everyone nodded in realization as they turned to look at Dan Xiaotian once more with looks of disgust on their faces.

A young lady had done so much for you, but you don't know the slightest thing about gratitude. Can you still call yourself a human after what you did?

"She would have won an Oscars back in my previous world!" Zhang Xuan was about to fall asleep from boredom when the Second Young Mistress entertained him with such a marvelous performance.

With such a few words, she had managed to evoke the emotions of the crowd and win their sympathy. With such acting skills, he would have surely blamed the judging panel for under the table dealings if she hadn't won a prize.

It was human nature to sympathize with the weak and women, not to mention a person as beautiful as Xue Qin. All it took was some rousing words and a few tears to establish an emotional connection with the crowd.

Initially, the evidence and witnesses presented wouldn't have been enough to indict Dan Xiaotian of his crimes. After all, most of what was presented was circumstantial, and there was no clear motive that would justify his involvement. Who in the right mind would collude with the bandits to act against the City Lord Manor for no reason?

But with even Xue Qin testifying against him as well, the odds were way against Dan Xiaotian's favor. Even the City Lord Manor wouldn't be able to back down from this anymore. They would have no choice but to bow down to the will of the people and sentence Dan Xiaotian.

And this conveniently explained why the Second Young Mistress had been accepted as a menial disciple into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion even prior to the official trial.

With this, not only was Xue Qin's reputation not sullied in any way, she would even be praised as a strong and sentimental lady! On the other hand, Dan Xiaotian would have become a

jerk who snubbed the Xue Qin's kind intentions and even attempted to harm her. This would provide the City Lord Manor with the required justification to annul the engagement.

It was indeed a remarkable scheme with many layers to it. An ingenious ploy from a true villain indeed!

On the other hand, Dan Xiaotian was on the verge of exploding from rage.

I have agreed to cancel our engagement, but you were unsatisfied with just that and wanted to trample all over me so that you can walk out of it cleanly. When I rejected that, the first thing you thought of is to kill me instead. And when that failed too, you tried to pour dirty water over me to frame me of something I have not done...

There really is nothing you wouldn't use against me!

"Second Young Mistress, don't waste your tears on a person like him! He isn't worthy of that!"

Seeing that they had managed to pull the crowd sentiment to their side, Xue Chen knew that his plan had already succeeded. At this point, no matter what else Dan Xiaotian said, he wouldn't be able to salvage the situation anymore. Heaving a sigh of relief on the inside, he consoled Xue Qin before ordering the maids beside her, "What are the two of you waiting for? Hurry up and bring the Second Young Mistress back!"

"Yes!"

The two maids quickly escorted the crying Xue Qin out of the court.

Xue Chen finally his head back to Dan Xiaotian, and with a frosty look in his eyes, he said, "With the evidence in place, what else do you have to say for yourself?"

Knowing that whatever he said would be meaningless at this point, Dan Xiaotian calmly looked back at Xue Chen and said, "So, based on what you all have said so far, it's out of my low self-esteem that I was jealous of Xue Qin for clearing the trial of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Thus, I sought to collude with the bandits in order to stop her from going over?"

“Are you acknowledging your intentions? Or do you still intend to argue your way out of this even when there is an overwhelming number of evidence and witnesses testifying against you?” Xue Chen sneered.

“Acknowledging my intentions?” Dan Xiaotian shook his head and sighed a little, as if he couldn’t be bothered to argue with someone of the likes of Xue Chen. “I wish to meet Senior Huo Jianghe from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

“Audacious! Who do you think you are to dare ask for an audience with Master Huo?”

Xue Chen thought that Dan Xiaotian would raise the matter about them attempting to annul the marriage agreement previously. Regarding that, he had already prepared a countermeasure that would have the latter cornered in a single move!

But instead of that, the other party was asking to meet Senior Huo instead... Why?

“I am indeed unqualified, but I heard that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is accepting menial disciples. As long as one clears their trial, one would be able to join them. As someone from Xuanjiang City and is of suitable age, I believe I have a right to participate in the trial too, right?” Dan Xiaotian said.

“Anyone of Xuanjiang City would stand a chance to become a menial disciple of Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but you, Dan Xiaotian, don’t stand a chance at all. I don’t know what you are trying to pull here, but the City Lord Manor is answerable to the citizens of Xuanjiang City. With the vile deeds you have committed, there’s no way the City Manor will condone your crimes!” Hearing those words, Xue Chen immediately burst into laughter, as if he had heard the greatest joke in the world.

A Saint 6-dan trash actually wanted to participate in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s trial? How in the world did he find the courage to say something as ridiculous as that?

“Besides, do you think someone as important as Master Huo would specially conduct the trial for a trash like you?” Xue

Chen continued.

“He really doesn’t know his place at all!”

“All those who are allowed to join the trial are the greatest talent of our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. That fellow is a cripple and can’t cultivate... Does he want to make our city a laughingstock in the region?”

“Master Huo is busy selecting the true geniuses from our city. How could he possibly have time to assess a cripple like him?”

“He must have knocked his head somewhere...”

Derisive laughter could be heard from amongst the crowd.

“You better drop whatever thought you have in your mind. There’s no way Master Huo would come here to test a trash like you. I advise you to confess to your crimes, and we can at least spare you from some suffering...” Xue Chen bellowed loudly.

But halfway through his words, a composed voice suddenly echoed from the courtyard outside...

“Why can’t I be here to conduct the trial for him?”

A tall figure walked into the court with widened strides.

Huo Jianghe.

1938 Turning Tables

There was a middle-aged man walking behind Huo Jianghe. This middle-aged man had a tall silhouette, and he was donned with majestic armor. His eyes emanated imposing authority, reminiscent of a person in power.

Xue Qin had been slowly walking away so as to listen to the proceedings when she heard the voice as well. Turning her head around, she was stunned for a moment before bowing deeply, “Father. Senior Huo.”

The middle-aged man was no other than the person who was killed by Zhang Xuan with a single toss of saber back in the Ethereal Hall, the lord of Xuanjiang City, Xue Gan.

There were ten or so young men following behind the two. They were in their early teens, roughly sixteen to seventeen years old. Despite their young age, they seemed to wield incredible might in their grasp.

They were the examinees participating in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s trial.

“Master Huo...”

Upon seeing the two, Xue Chen turned a bewildered look to City Lord Xue Gan.

As the trial of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was of utmost importance, as the city lord, Xue Gan was required to be present at the venue to supervise the event. Yet, who could have thought that barely after the preliminary selection was completed, Huo Jianghe suddenly insisted on heading over to the City Lord Manor’s court. This had left Xue Gan bewildered too!

“We’ll conduct the second round of selections here. I can see that there are many people present here to witness the proceedings, and I believe that it would be good to showcase the fairness of our trial,” Huo Jianghe arbitrarily made the

decision himself as he walked right up to the centermost position in the room.

If it was any other situation, it would be a breach of formalities for Huo Jianghe to make this decision on his own accord, especially given that City Lord Xue Gan was present here. However, while this trial was underway, his words would represent the will of the entire Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. As such, even Xue Gan had no choice but to accept his judgement.

On the other hand, seeing that the court proceedings were suddenly interrupted in such an unexpected fashion, Xue Chen was stunned.

What was he supposed to do now?

“Senior Huo, I am a citizen of Xuanjiang City as well. May I know if I am qualified to join the trial as well?” Dan Xiaotian asked with a resounding voice.

“Of course!” Huo Jianghe nodded.

“Master Huo, Dan Xiaotian is a mere Saint 6-dan cultivator. It would be a waste of time for you to invigilate someone of his caliber. Furthermore, he colluded with the bandits to harm the interests of the city. It would be an insult to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion if someone as vile as him was permitted to participate in the trial as well!” Xue Chen said anxiously.

He knew that Dan Xiaotian wouldn’t be able to clear the trial even if he were to participate in it... but it would undermine the legitimacy of the trial if Dan Xiaotian were to suddenly participate in the trial as well. Furthermore, he could tell that Dan Xiaotian had something up his sleeves, and while he was confident of his plan, he knew better than to allow Dan Xiaotian to get his way.

“You are saying that I’m weak?” Dan Xiaotian looked at Xue Chen and asked.

“Of course! As a crippled Saint 6-dan, your strength can’t even compare to the ordinary civilians of our city. What else can you be other than weak?” Xue Chen’s eyebrows shot up.

“Since that’s the case, I would like to ask what’s your opinion of Xue Qin’s abilities then?” Dan Xiaotian asked.

Even though the situation was still against him, confidence seemed to be slowly building up in his voice. Initially, he was just timidly obeying whatever Zhang Xuan told him to do and say, but in face of Xue Chen’s oppression, his words were slowly becoming firmer and more powerful.

“Our Second Young Mistress is, of course, a genius! Despite only being sixteen this year, she has already reached Great Sage 3-dan consummation, and she could very well achieve a breakthrough anytime soon!” Xue Chen replied proudly.

“Is that so?” Dan Xiaotian replied calmly.

Weng weng weng!

Bursts of sword qi shot out from the tip of his fingers, slicing the handcuffs around his wrist into shreds in an instant.

At the same time, Dan Xiaotian released the seal on his cultivation, causing the aura around him to grow stronger and stronger till the equivalent of a Great Sage 3-dan consummation expert. His hunched back also slowly straightened, causing his perceived 1.6 meters height to rise to that of around 1.75 meters. While he wasn’t as tall as Zhang Xuan, he appeared much more dignified than before.

More importantly, when he slowly walked forward, the limp in his leg had vanished without a trace as well!

Even his appearance seemed to have undergone some changes. Despite the glaring birthmark on his face, his features became more defined and elegant, giving him a masculine undertone.

“This is impossible...” Xue Qin’s eyes nearly plopped to the ground.

All along, she had viewed Dan Xiaotian to be synonymous with weak and useless. She never thought that he could undergo such a huge transformation one day.

Paying no heed to the shocked Xue Qin, Dan Xiaotian walked straight up to Xue Chen. His lips curved upward as he asked, “Even though the two of us have the same cultivation realm,

you think of me as a trash but Xue Qin as an unparalleled genius... I really wonder how you came to a judgement. Do you think with your toes?"

"You..." Xue Chen shook his head in disbelief as he took a step back.

When had this fellow become able to cultivate? Not to mention... Great Sage 3-dan consummation?

It wasn't just them. The crowd had fallen completely silent as well.

The previous motive they had attributed to Dan Xiaotian was based on the premise that he was unable to cultivate, such that he needed the support of the City Lord Residence in order to survive. However, if Dan Xiaotian was actually an expert himself, such a reason would be invalidated.

"All of you should come at me together!" Dan Xiaotian told the youths that had come with Huo Jianghe with a light chuckle.

"You want to fight all of us at once?"

These youths were startled by the suddenly challenge. They turned to look at Huo Jianghe, and the latter gave a slight nod of approval. Thus, they raised the swords in their hands and charged forth.

On the other hand, using his finger as his sword, Dan Xiaotian jabbed forth and snatched the sword from the hands of one of the cultivators. With the sword in his hand, he easily deflected the offense coming from the others.

TZZZZZZ!

Numerous surges of sword qi shot out from the tip of Dan Xiaotian's sword simultaneously.

While he had spent most of his time deciphering the 'sword toss' technique his teacher had imparted to him, he didn't neglect to work on his foundations as well. Even without using his trump card, his fighting prowess was still one to be reckoned with.

Dang lang! Dang lang! Dang lang!

With the outburst of sword qi, the swords that the other youths held were knocked out of their hands, falling to the ground amidst metallic clatter. The youths couldn't help stare at Zhang Xuan in horror.

The sword art which Dan Xiaotian had executed actually disarmed all of them in an instant.

It was fortunate that he had gone easy on them, or else it could have been their wrists that were severed instead.

Hu!

With a flick of his finger, the sword in Dan Xiaotian's hand flew out and stabbed into the ground right in front of Xue Qin. With an air of loftiness, he looked at Xue Qin and asked, "May I ask if the talented Second Young Mistress is able to do what I, a trash, am able to do?"

"..."

The crowd fell silent.

Under the encirclement of over ten opponents, Dan Xiaotian was able to steal a sword and knock out the swords in the hands of the others without even taking a step... The strength and swordsmanship he had displayed were truly terrifying!

If such a person was considered as a trash, what would they count as?

Xue Qin's face paled as her body trembled in fear.

Even though she was a Great Sage 3-dan consummation cultivator, she knew that she would definitely be incapable of such a feat.

If she were to attempt to do the same, she had little doubt that she would be overwhelmed in an instant and fall in defeat.

Xue Chen was silent for a moment before he swiftly rebutted, "Even if you aren't a trash, it's a fact that you have colluded with the bandits. Even your own neighbors have stepped forward to testify that they have spotted bandits entering your residence in the middle of the night!"

Hearing those words, Dan Xiaotian turned to look at the two witnesses and asked, “Are you certain that you have witnessed with your own eyes that there are bandits entering my residence?”

“Yes... There’s no mistake about it!”

“We have seen it for certain!”

Under Dan Xiaotian’s piercing gaze, the two neighbors cowered fearfully a little.

If Dan Xiaotian was still unable to cultivate, they would still have nothing to fear. But given the prowess that Dan Xiaotian had just displayed, they couldn’t help but recall the imposing authority that the Dan Clan commanded ten years ago...

Even though they were just revealing what they had seen, just the possibility that Dan Xiaotian could exact vengeance on them in the future for this made their words sound much less confident than before.

While their hearts were thumping fearfully, Dan Xiaotian spoke out, “The fact that you saw it means that... you are very sharp-eyed!”

“Huh?”

The two neighbors were stunned.

Sharp-eyed?

Boy, do you know what you are saying?

That’s equivalent to admitting that you have colluded with the bandits! No matter how talented and powerful you are, there’s no way the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would accept a person who has moral issues!

As though a rock had been thrown into a pond, a huge uproar broke out amidst the crowd in that instant.

“Hahahaha! Look, Dan Xiaotian has finally admitted to his crimes! Since that’s the case, I believe we need not continue on with the interrogation anymore. Men, capture that scoundrel who dares to collude with the bandits and lock him

up!” Xue Chen was also stunned for a moment before his eyes lit up in ravenous joy.

From the moment that Dan Xiaotian revealed his true prowess, he knew that things had gone awry. If Dan Xiaotian were to vehemently refute their claims from then on, it would have been a very difficult fight for him.

The fact that they had chosen to hold a public trial was a double-edged sword to them. They would have to find conclusive evidence in order to indict Dan Xiaotian, or else the reputation of the City Lord Manor could be sullied as a result of this matter.

Yet, who could have thought that Dan Xiaotian would foolishly admit to the matter at this moment... Not to mention, in front of so many people at that!

With this, Dan Xiaotian’s fate was sealed. Just by this confession in itself, they would be able to push for Dan Xiaotian’s execution!

“Aren’t you being too hasty over here? I didn’t know that the City Lord Manor has a habit of jumping to conclusions!” Dan Xiaotian sneered coldly. Turning to Huo Jianghe, he clasped his fist and asked politely, “Senior Huo, I would like to summon an eye-witness to the court.”

“Go ahead!” Huo Jianghe nodded.

“Come in!” Dan Xiaotian glanced outside and ordered.

A figure covered tightly in a black robe and a straw hat walked from the midst of the crowd. Standing at the center of the court, he slowly took off his hat.

“He’s Cao Chengli!”

“You mean the leader of that band of bandits?”

“He actually dares to walk right into the City Lord Manor? How dare he! Kill him!”

“He’s the eye-witness that Dan Xiaotian is summoning? It seems like the two of them are really colluding with one another!”

...

Upon catching a closer look at the silhouette, the crowd went completely frenzied.

The person who had just entered was no other than the leader of the bandit band, Cao Chengli!

This fellow's hideout was hidden in the depths of the mountain forest, and he was extremely skilled at navigating around the complex geography. As a result, the previous attempts by the City Lord Manor to apprehend him fell empty. Yet, he actually dared to walk right into the City Lord Manor... Just who in the world gave him the guts to do so?

"Is everyone seeing this sight? Cao Chengli is actually heeding Dan Xiaotian's words! It's obvious that they are in collusion!" Xue Chen was so excited that he nearly leaped into the air.

Everything that had been presented thus far was just speculations and circumstantial evidence. Yet, that fellow actually brought the leader of the bandit band right in...

Was there a worse move that one could make in this situation?

"Collusion?" Dan Xiaotian suddenly roared in laughter as he looked at the black-robed bandit. "Why don't we hear from the person in question who he was truly colluding with?"

"It's him!" Cao Chengli stepped forward and pointed to Xue Chen and Xue Qin. "She was involved in it as well!"

"What nonsense are you spouting? Don't you dare spout falsehood in this sacred place of justice!" Xue Chen's eyebrows shot up and he swiftly denied Cao Chengli's claims.

"Spout falsehood?" Cao Chengli's fists clenched tightly together from rage. He turned to the crowd and began recounting his story loudly, "Yesterday night, Xue Chen paid me a visit and requested that I kill a man for him. As long as I successfully assassinated the target, he would pay me a handsome sum of 50,000 Ethereal Coins. I did a bit of investigation and found that the person I was intending to assassinate is a weakling, so I swiftly agreed to his request!"

"Assassination?"

“Weakling?”

There were plenty of smart individuals amongst the crowd who had already roughly guessed what had happened, and their eyes swiftly turned to Dan Xiaotian.

In recent years, those were the words that had been used far too often to refer to him.

“Indeed, the target of assassination was no other than Dan Xiaotian!” Cao Chengli answered the doubts of the crowd.

“So, I prepared an ambush for him last night... but Dan Xiaotian turned out to be much stronger than I thought, resulting in the failure of my assassination attempt. My entire band of bandits was slain by him...”

It would simply be too shocking if he were to say that his subordinates were killed by a horse and a carriage... Since that was the case, it would be more viable for him to spin up a more believable lie.

“It was out of sheer luck that I managed to escape with my life. I immediately went to meet up with Xue Chen, and I demanded compensation from him for his inaccurate information that led to the deaths of my subordinates. Yet, he only paid me 500 Ethereal Coins... Infuriated, I followed him all the way back to his place, hoping to uncover his identity, but what I saw instead was Xue Chen entering the City Lord Manor, and that was when I finally deduced his true identity. Furthermore, by sheer coincidence, I managed to record this scene down on a Record Crystal. Please have a look!” Cao Chengli said as he began playing the Record Crystal he had recorded the previous night.

The video reflected the courtyard of the tightly-guarded City Lord Manor. The first thing that came into sight was a huge group of soldiers standing in a neat formation. Under the commands of a middle-aged man, Xue Chen, standing at the forefront of the formation, these soldiers stripped their armor and donned the clothes of the bandits. After they had all changed into black garments, Xue Chen emphasized imposingly that Dan Xiaotian and those around him must be killed by hook or by crook in this operation!

1939 Elder Lu Arrives!

The video didn't just stop there.

The person recording the video followed the suspicious-dressed soldiers as they snuck across the streets, all the way to Dan Xiaotian's residence!

"That video is extremely alike to the one that was played earlier. It's likely that they were taken at the same timing..."

"I thought that they were really bandits due to the clothes they were wearing, but who could have thought that they were actually the guards of the City Lord Manor..."

"Wait a moment, doesn't this mean that the guards of the City Lord Manor intentionally disguised themselves as bandits to murder others?"

...

It didn't take long for some to notice that the scene reflected in Cao Chengli's video was similar to the one displayed earlier, just that they were taken from different angles.

Due to the dress up, they instinctively assumed that those black garment individuals were bandits... but it turned out to just be a cover. They were actually the guards of the City Lord Manor!

Hu!

The video stopped right after the guards entered the Dan Clan Residence. Taking the Record Crystal back into his grasp, Cao Chengli looked at Xue Chen and asked, "What else do you have to say for yourself?"

"You... That's fabricated evidence!" Xue Chen's face paled in fright.

He never thought that someone would follow him and record this sight down!

“Fabricated evidence? You sure speak as if it’s that easy to fabricate such evidence. Why don’t you try making one for us?” Cao Chengli spat.

It was impossible to alter the content recorded by a Record Crystal, and the presence of corroborating evidence from the neighbor’s recording further proved the authenticity of Cao Chengli’s recording.

“I...” Xue Chen’s face paled as he took a step back. “This is all utter nonsense! You are engaged to the Second Young Mistress, and given how talented you are, why should we kill you? Isn’t it foolish for the City Lord Manor to take such a course of action?”

“Xue Chen’s argument does make sense as well...”

The crowd quickly turned their heads over to Dan Xiaotian, wanting to see how he would explain himself.

Considering that the two of them had a marriage agreement with one another, it should be a blessing for the City Lord Manor that Dan Xiaotian was actually a genius. Taking a step back, even if Xue Qin and Dan Xiaotian had some disagreement with one another, they could have just annulled their agreement. Did the City Lord Manor really have to go to the extent of killing Dan Xiaotian?

This didn’t seem too rational to them.

“You are asking me why you want to kill me? It seems like your memory really isn’t too good. Maybe this will help jog your memories a little!” Dan Xiaotian chuckled as he took out a Record Crystal too and played the video stored within.

“You know the reason why I am coming here, but instead of coming out to welcome me personally, you dispatched a lowly servant to send the marriage agreement over instead. Do you think that this matter can be resolved that easily?”

In the video, Xue Qin’s attitude was cold and haughty, as if she had her head in the clouds.

“What I want from you isn’t much. I just need you to announce to the entire city that you were the one who chose to back out of the marriage agreement on your own accord

because you feel that you aren't worthy of me. It's after a series of careful deliberation before my father finally decided to respect your opinion and end the marriage agreement... By giving me the mere sheet of paper, are you expecting me to tell everyone that I, Xue Qin, refuse to marry you? How could I allow the noble City Lord Manor to have such a stain on its reputation?"

"Well, it's very simple! Over these years, the Dan Clan has offended quite a few people, isn't that so? You should also know that if not for your engagement with Xue Qing, you should have already died many times over!" Xue Chen sneered coldly in the video.

"How would your death affect the City Lord Manor's reputation? Let me see. Our city lord would be enraged to learn of your demise, and he would dispatch men to exact vengeance for you. As for our Second Young Mistress, she would be in deep sorrow for a long time, and eventually, she would decide to depart from this land of grief and head to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!"

...

The Record Crystal displayed the haughty attitudes of both Xue Chen and Xue Qin clearly, be it their words, their expressions, or their gestures!

"This..."

"It turned out that she wanted to annul the engagement, but she wasn't satisfied with the other party rejecting her. In order to preserve her reputation, she would stoop down to even killing him..."

"What a venomous heart she has!"

"The reputation of the City Lord Manor has remained pristine over the years, but who could have thought that they would conduct such vile acts beneath the surface?"

"How embarrassing... I have never felt so embarrassed to be a citizen of Xuanjiang City before!"

...

There was no one who didn't understand what was going on after watching the video. Their eyes gradually turned hostile as they shifted their gazes toward Xue Chen and Xue Qin

“Y-you...”

With a pale face, Xue Qin felt as if her strength had receded from her body, causing her to slump to a heap on the ground.

She thought that everything would be settled after this. She would be free from the trash, and her reputation would soar as well... But things ended up in a direction she hadn't expected. Everything that she did was exposed so blatantly in public!

From this day on, her reputation would be completely shattered!

Everyone would only remember her as the cold-hearted woman who would stoop to colluding with the bandits in order to murder her fiancé in cold blood...

Who would dare to marry her with such a reputation to her name?

If such a matter could happen to Dan Xiaotian, how could they guarantee that they wouldn't be next?

“A bunch of nonsense! Today, I'll teach you a lesson for daring to fabricate lies about the City Lord Manor!” Xue Chen roared furiously as he abruptly charged at Dan Xiaotian and Cao Chengli.

With a powerful gust of wind, his palm struck forth with impressive might.

After everything that had happened, Xue Chen knew that he had been cornered. In such a scenario, the best thing he could do was to silence Dan Xiaotian and Cao Chengli. Only with their death would he be able to start salvaging the situation.

With his Ancient Sage 3-dan cultivation, he swiftly sealed everything within the room. In that instant, both Dan Xiaotian and Cao Chengli felt as if a ravenous wolf had set its sights on them, and it left them trembling from instincts.

“Audacious!”

Huo Jianghe's eyes turned cold in fury. He didn't think that Xue Chen would dare to kill those two in his presence.

It seemed like the other party was really looking down on him!

Huo Jianghe immediately grasped his sword, intending to stop Xue Chen, but in the next instant, he felt a palm pushing his hands down, preventing him from unsheathing his sword. He glared at the person beside him, only to see City Lord Xue Gan looking at him with a composed smile, "Master He, there's no need to worry. Xue Chen is just scaring the two of them, he won't really make a move on them. As a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it would be beneath you to get involved in the affairs of our city!"

Those words made Huo Jianghe narrow his eyes frostily.

There was no way he could mistake Xue Chen's killing intent. It was definitely not a bluff but a true strike to kill. If that palm were to land, the two of them would be killed on the spot.

After those two were eliminated, City Lord Xue Gan would step forward and expressed his regret at failing to keep his subordinate in line. He would then imprison Xue Chen until the matter finally died down...

By then, Dan Xiaotian and Cao Chengli would already be dead, so who would dare to question the City Lord Manor's judgement over two dead men?

And once everything blew over, Xue Chen would be released as if nothing had happened at all...

"No!"

In the face of Xue Chen's devastating palm strike, Cao Chengli's face paled as sweat washed down his forehead.

He had only come to redress Dan Xiaotian's grievances under the orders of that mysterious book... He had no intention of losing his life here!

Just as he thought that his fate was sealed, the imposing momentum that was headed his way suddenly dissipated without a trace. Fearfully raising his head to take a peek, he

saw the Ancient Sage 3-dan expert in front of him collapsing powerlessly to the ground.

“H-huh?”

Alarmed, Cao Chengli warily approached Xue Chen, only to see a small piercing from his forehead to the back of his head. He carefully placed his fingers in front of Xue Chen’s nostrils, only to realize that the latter had already breathed his last! His fingers immediately jerked back out of shock.

He was dazed for a moment before he began frantically looking around for the murder weapon. However, the only thing he found was a mysterious stalk of grass stabbed into the ground. There were traces of grayish matter on the stalk of grass. As unbelievable as it may seem, it seemed like it was the weapon that had robbed Xue Chen of his life!

For a flimsy stalk of grass to pierce through the head of an Ancient Sage 3-dan cultivator... Just how powerful must one be to achieve such a feat?

The comprehension that there was a powerful expert around who could take his life at any moment filled Cao Chengli’s mind with utmost horror. His body stiffened in fear, not daring to move in the least.

On the other hand, Huo Jianghe rose to his feet as he looked upon the scene in disbelief.

He was an Ancient Sage 4-dan primary stage expert just like City Lord Xue Gan, but even he knew that he would be unable to pull off something like that.

The flimsy structure of grass prevented one from exerting significant strength through it or infusing zhenqi into it. Yet, it actually breached an Ancient Sage 3-dan’s zhenqi protective layer and pierced through his head...

More importantly, even though the matter had happened right before his eyes, he was actually unable to discern who the culprit was, or where the grass had come from at all!

It was almost as if the stalk of grass had appeared out of nowhere!

City Lord Xue Gan was as shocked as Huo Jianghe was, and he felt his body turning icy cold.

He knew that if he had been in Xue Chen's place, that strike would have ended his life with ease as well.

The only one present in the court that wasn't surprised was likely only Dan Xiaotian. He heaved a sigh of relief as he thought, "My teacher... is truly formidable!"

He knew that his teacher was an extraordinary cultivator, but he didn't think that he would actually be this powerful!

Suppressing his agitation and astonishment, Dan Xiaotian was just about to continue speaking when he saw City Lord Xue Gan rising to his feet with an indignant look on his face. "How dare Xue Chen commit such atrocities? To think that I have trusted him and entrusted him with the important position as the chief instructor of the City Lord Manor! I must have been blind back then. This is truly a huge disgrace... Such black sheep must be killed in order to send out a stern warning to the others!"

Dan Xiaotian was taken aback by Xue Gan's sudden outburst.

Was the latter claiming that he was the one who had killed Xue Chen?

Just how shameless could that fellow get?

"Xiaotian, I apologize for the suffering you have been through as a result of Xue Chen's willful actions. It's fortunate that you are smart enough to undo his ploy, or else our City Lord Manor would have fallen into disgrace as well!"

Xue Gan walked over to Dan Xiaotian, and assuming the role of a caring elder, he said with a warm voice, "Your engagement with my daughter was decided by your grandfather and my father. They might be gone now, but as their offspring, we cannot let their expectations down. I believe that the reason why Xue Qin committed such foolishness is because of Xue Chen's beguilement. That fellow has always been skilled at manipulating the hearts of others..."

Dan Xiaotian couldn't help but sneer upon seeing how swift Xue Gan was adapting to the situation. As expected of the city

lord, Xue Gan was a wily old fox.

It was only because his teacher valued his privacy that he didn't want to step forward in this situation. Of everything that was gathered here, the one who boasted the greatest strength was Xue Gan, so it was only natural that everyone thought that he was the one who killed Xue Chen.

Making use of this mentality, Xue Gan immediately pushed all blame onto Xue Chen, making it sound as if the City Lord Manor wasn't involved in the matter at all... After this matter blew over, he would then placate everyone with a mixture of fear tactics and incentives, so the public sentiments against the City Lord Manor would die down soon enough.

Nevertheless, to be able to cast away his loyal subordinate so quickly, Xue Gan sure was a callous man.

"City Lord Xue Gan, you sure are a good jester," Dan Xiaotian chuckled a little before his eyes suddenly turned utterly cold, "The fifty elites dispatched by the City Lord Manor has died overnight, and a huge investigation was carried out right after. Are we to believe that this was all orchestrated by Xue Chen without your knowledge?"

The death of fifty elites was a heavy cost to the City Lord Manor. There was no way Xue Gan would have been completely oblivious to the matter!

While there were various smart individuals amongst the crowd who had already figured out as much, Dan Xiaotian's act of pointing it out candidly could be considered as a direct challenge toward the City Lord Manor.

"Hmph!"

Not expecting Xue Chen to continue harping on this matter even though he had already proposed a peaceful resolution, Xue Gan's face turned livid. He immediately sent a warning to Dan Xiaotian via zhenqi telepathy, "Is Xue Chen's death not enough for you? Are you intending to bring me down as well? Naive! Do you even have evidence to prove that I was involved in this matter too?"

Dan Xiaotian fell silent.

While Xue Qin's attitude had been awful, it was true that most of the ploys were planned and executed by Xue Chen. As a result, there was no direct link to indicate that Xue Gan had played a part in it as well... In fact, it was likely that even Xue Qin would be able to shirk responsibility off her too. After all, what she had mainly done was just to annul their engagement!

Her actions thus far might have been reprehensible from a moral standpoint, but it didn't infringe on the law. Unless he could prove that Xue Chen was acting under Xue Qin's commands, he wouldn't be able to indict her under any crime.

"If you don't have any evidence, I advise you not to run your mouth. I know that you have a formidable expert backing you, and that's why you were able to kill Xue Chen so easily. However, I am the lord of Xuanjiang City, and this is a title conferred to me directly by the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! Only the elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion have the right to judge me! If the expert behind you dares to lay a hand on me, that could be interpreted as intervening in the internal affairs of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion... Do you think that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would allow someone who challenged their authority to get off scot-free? Or do you think that the person backing you have the ability to withstand the pressure coming from one of the Six Sects?" Xue Gan sneered.

"If you don't want the person backing you to get in trouble while trying to help you, I advise you to obediently heed my words and let this matter go. That would be the perfect ending, wouldn't it? Your marriage with Xue Qin will go on as planned, and you need not worry about the Dan Clan's enemies either!"

Dan Xiaotian's eyes reddened in fury, but he was unable to speak a word at all.

In truth, he had also guessed as much that City Lord Xue Gan had played a huge role in the incident that resulted in the deaths of his family back then, and he had been wanting to exact vengeance too!

But... what Xue Gan said made perfect sense too!

Through proper channels, none of them had the right to judge Xue Gan. And if his teacher were to dare make a move on Xue Gan privately, that would be no different from falling out with the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

While his teacher was powerful, he didn't think that his teacher was strong enough to stand against the entire Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

"Even if I don't say anything more, I believe you should know what you have to do, right?" Seeing that Dan Xiaotian was beginning to waver, Xue Gan harrumphed coldly. "In case you foolishly think that you still stand a chance, allow me to reiterate this fact for you once more. Unless an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion hears your prayer and appears right now, otherwise you'll just be digging your own..."

Hu!

Before Xue Gan could finish his words, the resounding call of a beast sounded from the air. Several individuals descended from the sky right after.

"Elder Lu!"

Upon seeing this group of people, Huo Jianghe's eyes lit up, and he swiftly rushed forward and clasped his fist.

Elder Lu had finally arrived here from Starlight City!

Seeing this sight, the words that Xue Gan had wanted to speak ended up clogging inside his throat instead.

1940 The Trial of Inner Disciples

While Elder Lu Yun was in charge of only managing the outer disciples, there was no denying that he was a real Pseudo Immortal realm cultivator. Originally, he was only in charge of the outer disciple trial in Starlight City; he wouldn't have even come to a place like Xuanjiang City where only menial disciples were recruited!

Unless there were exceptional circumstances, he would only pass by the area at most.

So why would he suddenly drop by at this moment?

Xue Gan couldn't believe what he was seeing, but he dared not to show the slightest disrespect toward Elder Lu Yun either. Thus, he quickly rushed forward and bowed down, "City Lord Xue Gan pays respects to Elder Lu Yun!"

"Un," Elder Lu Yun waved his hands casually before turning to Huo Jiange. "How is it? Has he appeared yet?"

"Elder, I'm still uncertain exactly who that person is, but my guess is that he has something to do with that young man over there!" Huo Jiange said as he gestured toward Dan Xiaotian.

Yesterday night, while he was still at the Ethereal Hall, World's Edge had asked him for a favor, requesting him to appear here at this timing. In the end, there was indeed a court case happening here, and it was due to his presence that Dan Xiaotian was able to redress his grievances... Thus, even if Dan Xiaotian wasn't World's Edge, it was likely that he was related to him in one way or another!

"Him?" Elder Lu Yun looked at Dan Xiaotian doubtfully.

With his eye of discernment, he could instantaneously tell how powerful Dan Xiaotian was... Great Sage 3-dan consummation!

A person of such cultivation was actually able to kill all of his disciples with ease?

“It’s like this...” Huo Jianghe began recounting everything that had happened to Elder Lu Yun.

After hearing the story, Elder Lu Yun’s face darkened.

To think that there would be someone who would dare to act so audaciously in the territories of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion... There was no way he could let this matter slide so easily!

Taking a deep breath, he suppressed his displeasure before turning to look at the young man standing at the center of the court, “You are Dan Xiaotian?”

“That’s right, Elder Lu!” Dan Xiaotian bowed deeply as he replied.

“Do you have any intention of joining the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?” Elder Lu Yun asked.

Dan Xiaotian was stunned for a moment as he discreetly glanced at his teacher. Upon receiving a nod from his teacher, he immediately bowed down and replied, “It would be my honor to join the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

“Very well!” Elder Lu Yun nodded. “From this day onward, you are an outer disciple of our sect! Anyone who dares to oppress you will be an enemy of our sect as well, and you can be certain that he will face the full wrath of our sect!”

“Ah...” Dan Xiaotian was stunned.

He thought that Elder Lu Yun would want to test his prowess before coming to a decision, but who could have thought that he was accepted so easily. Everything happened so fast that it almost felt like a scam.

Were it not for his knowledge that the person standing before him was an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he would have definitely thought it was a farce!

He had long heard that Elder Lu Yun, who was in charge of recruiting outer disciples, was a hot-blooded and

straightforward person, and it seemed like those rumors weren't completely unfounded...

"Xiaotian, congratulations on becoming a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!"

The first one to react was Xue Gan. He congratulated Dan Xiaotian with a bright smile on his face, not showing any sign of awkwardness due to their earlier argument.

Paying no heed to Xue Gan's act, Dan Xiaotian took in a deep breath, and as if coming to a major decision, he knelt down on the floor and cried out indignantly, "Elder Lu, I beseech you to redress my grievances!"

"Feel free to speak your mind!" Elder Lu Yun replied.

"Our Dan Clan used to be a major power in Xuanjiang City. However, due to our great strength and influence, the City Lord Manor has always viewed us as a threat. Thus, the City Lord Manor set us, and that eventually caused the death of all of my family members... This is the evidence of their evildoings!" Dan Xiaotian passed a jade token over to Elder Lu Yun.

After the Dan Clan had been destroyed, Elder Yi had devoted himself to uncovering the truth behind the fall of the Dan Clan. However, the more pieces of evidence he gathered, the more suspicious City Lord Xue Gan became.

He dared not to reveal it in the past fearing that the City Lord Manor would silence them, but with an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion standing before him at this instant, he knew that there was no better opportunity for him to resolve this regret of his.

This was the will of his teacher as well.

Elder Lu Yun took the jade token and took a look at it. A moment later, his eyes narrowed in fury.

Every evidence stored in the jade token indicated clearly that the deaths of all 97 members of the Dan Clan had an inseverable relationship with City Lord Xue Gan's doings.

“What do you have to say for yourself?” Elder Lu Yun spat as he tossed the jade token over to Xue Gan.

Xue Gan hurriedly picked up the jade token, and upon seeing the contents, his eyes widened in astonishment. He swiftly knelt onto the floor and cried out, “Elder Lu, these are all lies! I am framed! Everyone in Xuanjiang City can testify to the friendly relations between the City Lord Manor and the Dan Clan! The very fact that there’s a marriage agreement between Xiaotian and Xue Qin is more than enough to show that. I have nothing to gain by making a move against the Dan Clan!

“There must be a misunderstanding somewhere... It could be because Xiaotian is angered by my daughter’s foolishness in listening to Xue Chen’s words and attempting to annul her engagement... Elder Lu Yun, I beg of you to investigate this matter carefully and return me justice!”

“Hmph! Rest assured that I’ll give you a satisfactory answer!” Elder Lu Yun harrumphed before turning his attention away from the kneeling Xue Gan. He looked at Dan Xiaotian and said, “While the evidence you have compiled is convincing, most of them can’t be verified anymore due to the long interval since then. Furthermore, given that Xue Gan is the city lord, if he were to intentionally hide his trails, I wouldn’t be able to do anything about it either!”

“I understand,” Dan Xiaotian replied with his head lowered.

He knew that this would be the case. He knew it all along.

It had been ten years since tragedy struck the Dan Clan, and Xuanjiang City had changed a lot since then. Even if the evidence compiled was convincing, the passing of time would render most of them unverifiable, which meant that they couldn’t be used to indict Xue Gan anymore.

Furthermore, Xue Gan was a person who was willing to kill even for a mere annulment of engagement just to protect the reputation of the City Lord Manor. Considering how huge the massacre of the Dan Clan was, he would have surely dealt with it promptly so that it would be impossible to link the incident to him anymore.

“It would undermine the authority of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion if I were to sentence a city lord to death without proper justification! However, there’s an exception to the rule!”

At which, a glint flashed across Elder Lu Yun eyes as he continued on, “And that is... true strength! As long as you are able to display overwhelming talents that would make you an asset to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, you can be assured that the sect will side with you instead of a third-tier city lord. The only way you can do that is to become an inner disciple of our sect. If you are able to do so, you can be assured that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would resolve any problems you are facing so that you are able to focus on your cultivation!”

“Inner disciple?” Dan Xiaotian was stunned.

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was only accepting menial disciples from Xuanjiang City.

Even this role of a lackey was enough to puff Xue Qin up with pride, leaving her feeling as if she had risen to the top of a peak. It was due to this that prompted her to annul her engagement with him in the first place. If he were to become an inner disciple, his standing would be higher than even Huo Jianghe and Xue Gan.

Naturally, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would feel more obligated to side with him instead of Xue Gan.

Just that...

It was simply too difficult.

Huo Jianghe was already an Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator, but he still remained an outer disciple. Considering that Dan Xiaotian was only at Great Sage 3-dan consummation, would he stand a chance at all?

“Indeed. Every single inner disciple is an asset to the sect. Their standing is even higher than an outer elder like me! As long as you successfully become an inner disciple, even if you kill City Lord Xue Gan without any justification, no one would question your judgement at all!” Elder Lu Yun said.

“This...” Not expecting Elder Lu Yun to suddenly say such words, Xue Gan’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

It couldn’t be that... the other party intended Dan Xiaotian to take the examination to become an inner disciple?

But the examination for inner disciples was no joke. Dan Xiaotian might be talented, but it was nigh impossible for him to succeed!

“Elder Lu, may I ask how does the examination for inner disciples work? I’m willing to give it a try!” Dan Xiaotian pondered for a moment before asking.

“The examination for inner disciples focuses not on the cultivation of the individual but his potential. As long as one’s potential is sufficiently high, even if one’s cultivation is lacking, one would still be able to join the ranks. It’s also possible for an outsider to become an inner disciple right away after joining the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion; there’s no need for one to become an outer disciple first before progressing upward.

“There are two criteria which one has to meet in order to become an inner disciple. Firstly, one has to reach Ancient Sage before seventeen. Secondly, one has to clear the inner disciple swordsmanship examination!”

At this point, Elder Lu Yun turned to Dan Xiaotian and asked, “How old are you at the moment?”

“I am sixteen right now, but...” Dan Xiaotian was just about to continue speaking when Elder Lu Yun suddenly interjected.

“It’s fine as long as you aren’t seventeen yet. Since you are already at Great Sage 3-dan consummation, there’s a good chance that you should be able to become an Ancient Sage before your seventeenth birthday! As for the swordsmanship examination for inner disciples... Huo Jianghe is the first senior for outer disciples, and his swordsmanship mastery already meets the requirement. As long as you are able to defeat him in the same cultivation realm, you can be deemed to have cleared the examination!”

“I have to defeat Senior Huo in the same cultivation realm?”
Dan Xiaotian was a little nervous.

He had only learned a night of swordsmanship with his teacher whereas the other party was an expert from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, having studied swordsmanship for at least twenty years.

It would be extremely difficult for him to defeat Senior Huo even if the latter were to suppress his cultivation down to the same level as him.

Elder Lu Yun nodded, “Indeed. Do you wish to give it a try?”

“Yes, I would like to give it a try!” Dan Xiaotian hesitated for a moment before nodding firmly.

This was the greatest opportunity in his life to exact vengeance for his parents and brothers!

Once this opportunity slipped past his fingers, it would be nigh impossible for him to redress the grievances of the Dan Clan anymore.

After all, there was no way Xue Gan would quietly sit here and wait to be killed. By the time he rose through the ranks, the other party would have long made his escape.

Given how large the Forsaken Continent was, trying to find Xue Gan again would be no different from searching for a needle amidst the boundless ocean.

“Very well!” Elder Lu Yun nodded. He turned to Huo Jianghe and said, “Suppress your cultivation down to Great Sage 3-dan and fight him with everything you got. Don’t hold back anything at all, understood?”

“Yes, Elder Lu!” Huo Jianghe nodded.

He began walking toward Dan Xiaotian while suppressing his cultivation down to Great Sage 3-dan. Getting into his position, he drew his sword before beckoning for Dan Xiaotian to come at him with a wave of his hand, “Come!”

“Teacher...”

This was the first time Dan Xiaotian was fighting with a real expert, so he couldn't help but feel a bit nervous. He turned to look at his teacher for support, but the latter was staring quietly into space, as if everything that was happening at the moment had nothing to do with it.

From the looks of it, it was obvious that he didn't plan on interfering in this duel!

"Forget it, I'll just have to give it my all!" Dan Xiaotian gritted his teeth in resolution.

His teacher had already given him a lot. He would have to take the last step himself in order to become an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so he couldn't back down at this crucial moment!

Hu!

In this short moment, Huo Jianghe was already charging toward him with incredible speed. It was almost as if a raging current was gushing toward Dan Xiaotian.

However, after seeing Huo Jianghe's swordsmanship with his own eyes, what Dan Xiaotian felt wasn't trepidation but surprise.

Huo Jianghe's sword art might appear to be complex on the surface, but this was all things that his teacher had spoken about before. With this knowledge, he found that he was able to swiftly deconstruct Huo Jianghe's move, stripping it of all of its elegance and complexity. It no longer held any secrets from him anymore, as if it was standing stark naked in his face.

With this, everything else was a walk in the park.

Staring right through the facade to peer into the enemy's intention, Dan Xiaotian was able to find eight ways to overcome Huo Jianghe's swordsmanship in a moment's time.

Thus, he drove his sword forward toward one of the core weaknesses in Huo Jianghe's swordsmanship.

Taken aback, Huo Jianghe immediately leaped backward.

To Dan Xiaotian, this was concrete evidence that his teacher's impartation was effective. So, he sent yet another pierce forward.

Once again, Huo Jianghe was forced to retreat.

Just like that, with one side advancing and the other side retreating, the cycle repeated for more than twenty moves. Their swords hadn't even clashed with one another once, but Huo Jianghe had already retreated forty steps thus far.

"That swordsmanship..."

"It's truly formidable!"

Huang Tao, Hu Bin, and the others were stunned by Dan Xiaotian's fighting prowess. They looked at one another as if they had seen a ghost.

1941 Dan Xiaotian's Birthday

Huo Jianghe, Huang Tao, and Bamboo had fought with World's Edge back at the Ethereal Hall.

World's Edge's swordsmanship was like an enigma to them. It rendered them completely bewildered. They could tell that his swordsmanship was formidable, but they just weren't able to discern what was it about it that made it so formidable.

To put it in other words, they only knew of the result but not the causes behind it. As such, they weren't able to accurately interpret his strength, much less evaluate it.

But such was not the case for Dan Xiaotian. They could clearly see that every single strike he executed was aimed directly at Huo Jianghe's weakness, so Dan Xiaotian's strength was easy for them to comprehend.

In less than ten seconds, the twenty blows that were executed rendered Huo Jianghe unable to retaliate at all.

Even true inner disciples wouldn't have such sharp swordsmanship!

Even terrifying wasn't a sufficient adjective to describe this anymore.

"Is he World's Edge?" Square-faced asked.

He had never crossed blows with World's Edge, so he didn't know the latter's moves and means. However, the others had fought with him before, so they might be able to see something that he couldn't.

"World's Edge defeated us as soon as the battle began... He didn't really execute any ordinary moves, so I can't really tell either. Unless he were to execute that move again, or else it would be difficult for us to verify it!" Yun Feiyang said.

It was not that their eye of discernment was lacking, but that sword toss was simply too powerful!

Everything ended so quickly that they couldn't even gauge the true strength of the one executing the move. As such, they weren't able to evaluate his strength through his normal swordsmanship either.

"But given the current circumstances, it doesn't seem like Senior Huo would be able to force the other party into using that move either..." Huang Tao remarked with a bitter smile.

The crowd fell silent.

The other party was already able to force Senior Huo back without using that technique. At this rate, even after Senior Huo lost, they would still be unable to confirm that if Dan Xiaotian was World's Edge.

"Actually, there's a way to test that. Just watch..." Square-faced turned his head over and shouted, "Senior, use A River's Glance!"

A River's Glance was both Huo Jianghe's nickname in the Ethereal Hall, as well as the sword art he was the most skilled at.

This skill was reminiscent of a river that flowed relentlessly until every boulder that stood in its path was crushed into bits.

It was with this sword art that Huo Jianghe dominated over all of the outer disciples, solidifying his position as the First Senior.

"Alright!"

Huo Jianghe's immediately understood his junior's intentions. With a furious roar, he infused his zhenqi furiously into his sword and drove it forth. In an instant, it was as if he had morphed into a vast river that threatened to sweep away everything that stood in his way.

Seeing that Huo Jianghe had used his ultimate technique, Dan Xiaotian unhesitatingly flicked his sword forward.

If he wished to defeat the other party, he would have to first crush the river before it reached him.

Hu!

Dan Xiaotian's sword pierced across the air.

He had cultivated this move for the entire night, practicing it at least a thousand times. His sword immediately vanished from the spot, and by the time it appeared once more, it was already right before Huo Jianghe's throat.

"Crap..." Huo Jianghe widened his eyes in alarm.

He had been so engrossed in trying to get World's Edge into using his ultimate technique that he forgot about the risk it posed. He immediately released the seal on his cultivation.

In an instant, the might of an Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm expert poured forth.

It was only after regaining his true strength did he manage to block the sword outside. Nevertheless, cold sweat still poured down his back.

If it had been an opponent of the same tier, that move would have already taken his life!

"It's him..."

Huang Tao and the others trembled in agitation upon seeing that move.

There was no doubt about it anymore. Dan Xiaotian was definitely World's Edge!

Xue Gan's body also swayed weakly from side to side before falling to the ground.

Ever since he returned from the Ethereal Hall yesterday night, he had been wondering who the expert known as World's Edge could be... He would have never thought that it was the son-in-law whom he despised and looked down on!

Xue Qin also nearly went insane at that moment.

She was with Huo Jianghe yesterday night when the latter challenge World's Edge, so there was no way she wouldn't recognize that move... If Dan Xiaotian was World's Edge, didn't it mean that she had become his maid?

Instead of being his fiancée, she had fallen to become his maid instead...

At this moment, she really wanted to dig her eyes out!

There was once such a brilliant jade before her, but she actually thought of it as nothing more than a concrete brick and cast it away!

Watching the proceedings of the whole match, Elder Lu Yun nodded in excitement as he announced the results, "Dan Xiaotian has won the duel!"

It was no wonder why the other party didn't agree to join the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion right away back then. It turned out that he was waiting for an opportunity to slap this city lord's face!

He wanted to make the other party dearly regret the vile deeds he had committed in the future!

Youths nowadays sure were hot-blooded... But again, considering that his family was torn apart, anyone in his place would have probably done the same as well!

"The fact that you were able to defeat Huo Jianghe means that you would be able to clear the inner disciple examination with ease. Given that you were able to reach Great Sage 3-dan consummation by sixteen without ample resources, it's almost a certainty that you'll be able to advance to Ancient Sage by seventeen!"

The more Elder Lu looked at the young man before him, the more satisfied he was with the latter. Thus, he declared loudly, "In my position as an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, I announce that Dan Xiaotian has cleared the inner disciple trial. He has been accepted as one of the inner disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and he'll enjoy all of the privileges that inner disciples possess!"

"Thank you, Elder Lu!" Dan Xiaotian heaved a sigh of relief before kneeling onto the ground to thank him.

With this identity, even if he didn't have concrete evidence, he would still be able to kill Xue Gan and exact vengeance for his parents!

Noticing the cold gaze Dan Xiaotian was directing toward him, Xue Gan's face warped in horror as he retreated fearfully, "What are you going to do? You still have a marriage agreement with Xue Qin. I am your father-in-law!"

"Senior Huo, I beseech you to help me take him down. I want to exact vengeance for all 97 members of my clan!" Dan Xiaotian gritted his teeth furiously.

While you were killing my family members, have you ever thought that you were my father-in-law?

While Xue Chen was colluded with the bandits and nearly had me killed, have you ever thought that you were my father-in-law?

To only recognize it right now, don't you think that it's far too late?

Huo Jianghe and the others moved in unison to take down Xue Gan. While Xue Gan was a formidable foe, Yun Feiyang, Huang Tao, and the others weren't weak either, not to mention that they possessed superb swordsmanship as disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. They were able to curb him with ease.

"I don't kill the innocent. The jade token doesn't just contain the evidence of Xue Gan plotting against the Dan Clan; it details all of the vile deeds he has committed over the past few years!" Dan Xiaotian said.

He took out the jade token once more and infused his zhenqi into it. In an instant, a huge chunk of text appeared in the air, showing all of the crimes which Xue Gan had committed over the years.

"He was the mastermind behind the Autumn Grassfield Disaster? All along, I thought it was the deeds of the bandits..."

"He was actually the culprit who plundered and murdered the Liu Clan! That was a huge family of forty members!"

"The young daughter of the Chen Clan was violated before her death... How could he have the cheek to claim that it was a

deviant pervert who did it? For a city lord, he really has no decency at all...”

“It’s a pity that I viewed him as my idol all this while... I respected him, thinking that he was an upright and honorable individual. I would have never thought that he has committed so many atrocities in the shadows...”

...

The words revealed in the air invoked a huge commotion amongst the crowd.

Xue Gan valued his reputation a lot, so he had done a lot of things in order to build a good name for himself, thus making him a highly respected figure in the city. Thus, when all of his deeds were revealed at this instant, everyone felt goosebumps rising on their arms.

It was as if everything they had believed all along was just a lie!

“What else do you have to say for yourself?” Dan Xiaotian glanced at Xue Gan and said.

He slowly walked up to the subdued Xue Gan and placed his sword against the latter. As long as he pushed his sword a little further in, he would be able to easily impale Xue Gan’s throat and exact vengeance for his family members!

“I...” Xue Gan trembled in fear.

Even though he had done a lot of cover-up work, he knew that it was impossible for him to destroy all evidence. As long as the crowd investigated those matters carefully, they would surely be able to find bits and pieces of evidence.

If Dan Xiaotian was only an ordinary cultivator, he would still be able to take measures to silence Dan Xiaotian and quell the crowd, forcing them to stay silent. However, with Dan Xiaotian becoming an inner disciple, there was no way he could make a comeback anymore.

It was the end.

“N-no! You can’t kill my father!”

Just as Xue Gan had closed his eyes, resigned to his fate, Xue Qin suddenly rushed over and howled madly.

“Do you want to try that and see?” Dan Xiaotian narrowed his eyes in scorn.

“You can’t kill him! You aren’t qualified to be an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so you have no right to pass judgement on my father!” Xue Qin cried out desperately.

“What do you mean by he’s not qualified to be an inner disciple? Are you questioning my authority as an elder of the sect?” Before Dan Xiaotian could speak, Elder Lu Yun had already interjected with a darkened face.

He had supervised the duel right in front of such a huge crowd, and it was obvious that Huo Jianghe had used his full strength too. Xue Qin had no right to question this judgement of his!

“N-no, that’s not what I mean!” Realizing that she had misspoken, Xue Qin hurriedly raised her head and replied anxiously. “Elder Lu, you mentioned earlier that there are two conditions Dan Xiaotian has to fulfill in order to become an inner disciple. The earlier trial was fair and impartial, so I dare not to question anything about that... However, I disagree with the first condition, which states that Dan Xiaotian has to become an Ancient Sage before his seventeenth birthday!”

“Oh?” Elder Lu Yun looked at Xue Qin, indicating for her to go on.

“I am engaged with Dan Xiaotian, so I know his Eight Birth Characters. His birthday happens to be on today’s Shen hour, which means that he would seventeen by the time the Shen hour passes!” Xue Qin said with tightly clenched fists.

“There’s only another hour till the Shen hour, but he’s only at Great Sage 3-dan consummation at the moment. How could he reach Ancient Sage by seventeen at this rate? Given so, I believe that he’s unqualified to become an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!”

“This...” Elder Lu Yun was stunned.

He turned to look at Dan Xiaotian, only to see the latter with a reddened face.

“My birthday is indeed on today’s Shen hour....” Dan Xiaotian said awkwardly.

He had wanted to say it earlier, but he was interrupted by Elder Lu.

So, he thought of pushing ahead with it so that he could exact his vengeance. At most, he would just have to work doubly hard to make up for it in the future. He didn’t think that Xue Qin would remember his birthday.

Seeing that Dan Xiaotian had admitted to it, Elder Lu Yun looked at the sun by the horizon and noted that it was already on the verge of setting. It was already afternoon, which meant that there were less than two hours left to Dan Xiaotian’s seventeenth birthday!

To advance from Great Sage 3-dan consummation to Ancient Sage within such a short span of time...

That was practically impossible!

If Dan Xiaotian couldn’t become an Ancient Sage by his seventeenth birthday, he wouldn’t be able to meet the criteria required for him to become an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, which meant that he had no rights to sentence Xue Gan either.

This meant that his vengeance would have to fall through.

“It seems like it is heavens’ will...” Elder Lu Yun shook his head and sighed.

He thought that he could finally recruit an inner disciple and make a huge contribution to the sect, but who could have thought that there would be such a hiccup.

“However, you need not worry. Even if you can’t become an inner disciple now, there’s still another chance. As long as you cultivate hard and reach Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm before thirty, you’ll still be able to become an inner disciple!”

There were different phases where one could be promoted as an inner disciple. After all, there were cultivators who displayed tremendous potential only later in their lives. If not for this, Huo Jianghe and the others wouldn't have stood a chance anymore either.

However, if Dan Xiaotian were to go after this instead, he wouldn't be able to exact his vengeance anymore.

Of course, as an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he could report this matter upward, but by the time an investigation team is sent down, quite some time would have already passed. Most likely, Xue Gan would have already gotten away by then.

"Yes, I understand..." Dan Xiaotian clenched his fists tightly as his eyes reddened in regret.

In the end, he was still unable to exact vengeance for his family members. Was everything really going to end just like that?

At this moment, a calm voice suddenly sounded.

"There's still another hour. Are you going to give up like this?"

Dan Xiaotian hurriedly raised his head, only to see that his teacher, who seemed to be dozing off all this while, had already stood up. There were still metallic chains tied around his arms, but his face had a smile that reflected composure and confidence. The Eight Birth Characters are the eight characters that depict one's date and time of birth. Shen hour is 1500-1700.

1942 Dan Xiaotian Pushes For a Breakthrough to Ancient Sage

“Tea...”

Overwhelmed by his agitation, Dan Xiaotian was just about to call out ‘teacher’ when he saw the latter shaking his head, so he swiftly halted what he was saying.

His teacher had instructed him earlier that he wished to keep a low profile and didn’t want to stand out too much. So, while it was fine for him to greet his teacher normally in a private setting, he should address the latter as his friend before outsiders.

Considering that there wasn’t too huge of an age gap between the two of them, it was unlikely that others would suspect him.

“Paying respects to Elder Lu. I am Zhang Xuan, Dan Xiaotian’s friend,” Zhang Xuan said as he walked over.

It was only at this moment that Huo Jianghe got a good look at Zhang Xuan’s face too, and his expression turned a little unnatural.

They had crossed one another back at Hongyan Market, but as the other party was tightly wrapped in bandages back then, he didn’t recognize the other party instantly. However, putting the physique together with the voice, it was obvious that the person standing before him was the same person who had put him down at Hongyan Market!

“You asked if Dan Xiaotian is going to give up... Do you think that it’s possible for him to become an Ancient Sage within an hour?” Elder Lu Yun asked with a frown.

“That’s right,” Zhang Xuan replied with a nod. “I was injured previously, and he was the one who saved me, so I know of his true strength. In truth, he has already reached Ancient Sage a

long time ago, but he overexerted himself while trying to treat me, resulting in his cultivation plummeting back to Great Sage 3-dan. As long as he receives the appropriate treatment, I believe that it shouldn't be too hard for him to return back to his peak within an hour's time!"

"Dan Xiaotian is actually an Ancient Sage?" Perplexed, Elder Lu Yun turned to look at Dan Xiaotian once more.

Are you sure this is how an Ancient Sage should be like? Even if you are making up lies, you should come up with something more believable! Is it really alright for you to be spouting nonsense just like that?

Dan Xiaotian was also completely caught off guard by what Zhang Xuan had said.

It was only yesterday that he was still an insignificant Saint 6-dan cultivator, and he thought that it was already an incredible feat how his cultivation could rise all the way up to Great Sage 3-dan after the gu inside him was killed. Yet, his teacher was telling him that he was actually already an Ancient Sage?

When did I become an Ancient Sage? Why do I not know of it?

"Give me an hour and don't allow anyone to interrupt me. I guarantee that I'll bring him back to his peak!" Zhang Xuan insisted despite the skeptical glances that others were shooting at him.

He knew that it sounded ridiculous to most of them here, especially since it was obvious to almost everyone here that Dan Xiaotian was indeed a Great Sage 3-dan cultivator. However, if he were to claim to raise Dan Xiaotian's cultivation by two realms within an hour instead, that would make an even more unbelievable story...

And things would only get worse if he succeeded. Such an alarming deed would bring unwanted attention to him. Others might try to do him and Dan Xiaotian harm in hopes of figuring out his secret.

Thus, after much consideration, he decided to go with the story that Dan Xiaotian was already an Ancient Sage.

After all, the notion of a person recovering his strength wouldn't be as shocking as otherwise.

Sigh, it sure is troublesome to maintain a low profile. But what can I do about it? I, Zhang Xuan, am the type of person who likes to silently help others from the shadows without expecting anything in return!

"That's no trouble at all." While Elder Lu Yun felt that there wasn't much hope, he still decided to go along with the other party this once, considering how confident the other party appeared to be. He turned to Huo Jianghe and said, "Bring them to a quiet location. Meanwhile, I'll test the other examinees!"

"Yes, Elder Lu!" Huo Jianghe replied before leading Zhang Xuan and Dan Xiaotian away.

He had been residing in the City Lord Residence the past few days, so he was extremely familiar with its layout. The residence he was allocated with was in a relatively quiet region, and rarely would there be anyone walking around there. It was the ideal place to bring Zhang Xuan and Dan Xiaotian to.

Entering Huo Jianghe's room, Zhang Xuan emphasized once more that they mustn't be interrupted before sending Huo Jianghe away and shutting the doors. As soon as the doors were closed, Dan Xiaotian immediately kneeled down in front of his teacher and cried out, "But teacher, I am not an Ancient Sage..."

"Are you saying that I'm lying earlier?" Zhang Xuan refuted.

"This..." Dan Xiaotian's face reddened.

It was extremely disrespectful for a disciple to claim that his teacher was lying... though the issue became rather subjective when the teacher was truly lying.

"You are indeed not an Ancient Sage just yet, but that doesn't mean that you won't be one an hour from now!" Zhang Xuan added with a confident smile.

"Does teacher believe that I am able to advance two cultivation realms within an hour?" Dan Xiaotian was still a

little hesitant.

It was not that he didn't believe in his teacher's capabilities, but he didn't believe in himself.

If it was that easy to advance one's cultivation, the Forsaken Continent would have been filled with Ancient Sages by now.

"Hush. From now onward, you are to heed my instructions strictly. Don't hesitate or go against whatever I tell you to do. Just do as you are told, got it?" Zhang Xuan said.

"Yes, teacher!" Dan Xiaotian replied with a nod.

From the moment Zhang Xuan freed him from his affliction, he had already made up his mind to never go against his teacher's commands.

Zhang Xuan took a look at Dan Xiaotian from head to toe before starting, "You have been taking in spiritual energy over the past ten years, but you didn't refine them into zhenqi. The unrefined spiritual energy has been tempering your body all this while, causing your body and meridians to be far stronger than the other cultivators. As long as we alter your meridian network a little, it shouldn't be too difficult to induce a breakthrough in your cultivation!"

Dan Xiaotian was confused, "Alter... my meridian network?"

Was it possible to change something innate like that?

Wasn't it supposed to be fixed at birth? Wasn't one's meridians supposed to be very delicate?

The so-called 'cultivation going berserk' was the result of one accidentally channeling one's zhenqi into the wrong meridians for one reason or another, thus resulting in a violent backlash from one's body.

If even directing one's zhenqi wrongly could induce such severe consequences, was it really alright to simply alter one's meridians like that?

"Indeed. It's a method which I have just thought of, but I haven't tested it out yet. Would you like to give it a try? If you succeed, it'll be a direct stairway to the top. You'll become an esteemed Ancient Sage of this world. But if you were to fail...

you could very well become crippled and unable to cultivate!” Zhang Xuan said grimly.

“...” Dan Xiaotian felt like tears were threatening to pour from his eyes.

After all his teacher spoke of, his plan was still only in the realms of theory. It hadn’t been tried out in practice at all...

To actually try something that is untested on me...

My teacher sure is courageous! But teacher, the thing is that I am not sure whether I’ll be able to match your courage...

While Dan Xiaotian did think that this teacher of his was unreliable from time to time, his teacher had been there for him when it truly counted. Thus, it didn’t take long for him to nod hesitantly in agreement, “Teacher, my life belongs to you. If not for you, I could have very well be dead by now. I am willing to entrust my life into your hands once more!”

“Good! Let’s get it over and done with then!” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction.

And the truth was... Zhang Xuan really wasn’t lying. He only thought of this method a moment ago.

He was confident that he could get any cultivator to achieve a breakthrough to Ancient Sage with his guidance and ample resources within a few days, but to achieve a breakthrough of two realms within an hour... Not unless the other party practiced the complete Heaven’s Path Divine Art like him!

But of course, there was no one in the world who could practice the complete Heaven’s Path Divine Art other than him. If Dan Xiaotian were to do so, he might just end up dying from being crushed by the heavens.

So, Zhang Xuan could only search for other alternatives.

Through his careful examination, he found that the meridians of those in the Azure were even more perfect than those of the Otherworldly Demonic Tribe, but they hadn’t reached the level of perfection yet.

There were many flaws in the meridians of mankind, and that was why even at maturity, they still remained ordinary

humans. Those in the Hundred Schools of Philosophers had slightly fewer flaws, so they were able to reach Zongshi realm at maturity. As for the indigenous population of the Azure, their meridians had the fewest mistakes, so they were able to reach Saint 9-dan by adulthood.

It was clear that if the perfection of one's meridian network came with a lot of advantages. It put one at a starting line ahead of the others, and it allowed one to cultivate faster than the others as well.

Previously, Zheng Yang and the others also only managed to reach Dimension Shatterer realm swiftly due to the modification of their meridian network too.

But of course, there were also other circumstances at play over here, so he couldn't say for sure that things would work out for Dan Xiaotian as well. It was not to say that Zhang Xuan wasn't confident in his theory, but it was just that there was a very, very small possibility that things might not go the way he wanted to, so he felt that he had to warn Dan Xiaotian in advance.

With a flick of his wrist, a huge pot and a stack of firewood appeared in the room. It was only then that he realized he forgot to store water in his storage ring as well, so he quickly left the room to fetch a pail. Before long, the water was already boiling in the pot under the stack of burning firewood.

"Alright, come out and take a bath..."

He sent a telepathic message toward his dantian, and soon, the Dongxu Gourd appeared before him. It dived right into the pot of water and exhaled deeply in pleasure.

While his Heaven's Path zhenqi was able to swiftly heal one's wounds, he wasn't certain that it would be enough to heal a wound as major as the total rupturing of one's meridians within just an hour.

Furthermore, perhaps it was because the constitutions of those in the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent were different, or that those in the Azure were too adapted to the mercury-like spiritual energy in the environment, somehow, the mercury-

like spiritual energy in the air was less effective on them for healing purposes. Otherwise, all Ancient Sage cultivators in the Azure would be a pain to deal with if they could just keep healing up swiftly in the middle of the battle.

Thus, he thought of using the Dongxu Gourd for that purpose.

That pot of water was effective even on a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator like him. Thus, it shouldn't have any problem with Great Sage cultivators like Dan Xiaotian.

While Zhang Xuan was boiling the water, he turned to Dan Xiaotian and said solemnly, "You have to bear with the pain."

"Yes!" Dan Xiaotian nodded.

Following Zhang Xuan's instructions, he sat on the floor unmovingly.

Zhang Xuan walked up and placed his palm on the young man's abdomen. He infused his zhenqi into the young man's body and jolted it forcefully.

Pu!

Blood spewed frenziedly out of Dan Xiaotian's mouth.

In an instant, all of the meridians in his body were ruptured by his teacher.

The overwhelming pain caused a blackout in his head, and he nearly fainted just like that.

Any other sixteen-year-old would have fainted by now, but after all of the challenges he had gone through since six, his willpower was already as tough as steel. Gritting his teeth forcefully, he was able to barely retain a sliver of his consciousness.

"Remember this, you mustn't pass out no matter what happens!" Zhang Xuan emphasized once more.

He began to drive his Heaven's Path zhenqi into Dan Xiaotian's body in order to connect his meridians together according to a more perfect network.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi that was formed from the mercury-like spiritual energy was much purer and denser from before.

As it made its round through Dan Xiaotian's ruptured meridians, it swiftly mended them back together in a more perfect network mapping.

"It does work! I was able to reconnect his meridians, but it seems like the rate at which my Heaven's Path zhenqi is healing his injuries is not able to catch up..." Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief when his job was finally done.

The Heaven's Path zhenqi could heal internal and external injuries, but it was much less effective in healing those whose foundations had been shaken. The rupturing of one's meridians happened to be one such major injury that even the Heaven's Path zhenqi could only do much about.

Without at least half a month of rest, Dan Xiaotian wouldn't be able to make a full recovery! Of course, this was already an amazing feat considering the severity of the condition.

However, there was only an hour to go before Dan Xiaotian was seventeen, so time wasn't on their side.

Thus, he brought the Dongxu Gourd's bathing water to Dan Xiaotian lips and said, "Drink it..."

Gritting with the pain, Dan Xiaotian forced himself to swallow the water.

Just like what Zhang Xuan said, his body was extremely tempered such that it was no different from that of an Ancient Sage anymore. As such, while drinking water was extremely painful for his current fragile state, it didn't pose a threat to him.

Gugugu!

As the bathwater seeped into his body, his injuries swiftly healed up at a visible pace. In less than a minute's time, he was already healed up and back to normal.

"This..." Dan Xiaotian widened his eyes in disbelief.

He dared not believe that a gourd's bathing water would actually be so formidable.

Seeing that Dan Xiaotian still had the leisure to be dazing off when they were already shot on time, Zhang Xuan smacked

his head and berated, “Hurry up and absorb some spiritual energy and push for a breakthrough!”

“Y-yes!” Dan Xiaotian hurriedly focused his attention back to cultivation.

Even though his meridians had ruptured earlier, it didn’t affect his cultivation at all as his zhenqi was stored within his dantian. As such, he had already regained his Great Sage 3-dan consummation cultivation as soon as his meridians had healed up.

Barely after he started cultivating, he found that the bottleneck that had limited him previously was already loose, allowing him to push for a breakthrough at any moment.

“Break!”

Without any hesitation, he drove his zhenqi and crash down the bottleneck. The limitation on his cultivation was released, and he successfully broke into Great Sage 4-dan Sempiternal realm.

His breakthrough didn’t stop there.

Sempiternal realm primary stage.

Intermediate stage.

Advanced stage.

Pinnacle.

Perfection.

Consummation.

In less than an hour’s time, he was already a foot into Ancient Sage, seemingly on the verge of achieving a breakthrough at any moment.

However, it was also at this moment that Zhang Xuan felt the energy within Dan Xiaotian’s body gradually dying down, reminiscent of a receding tide. It was just one last step, but Dan Xiaotian had already lost the momentum to push it through.

“It seems like I have been underestimating this matter. No matter what, a breakthrough to Ancient Sage is still a major leap. Even in the Azure, it’s no easy feat to take this step forward...” Zhang Xuan thought as his heart tightened up.

1943 Xiaotian's Revenge

A breakthrough to Ancient Sage required Aeon of Ancient Sage, but this energy was everywhere in the Azure, so it wasn't a concern at all. However, a breakthrough to this realm was much more than just having the required amount of energy. Just like his breakthrough to Zongshi realm back then, it required one to have sufficient accumulation.

Dan Xiaotian's talents and mental resilience were decent, but he lacked accumulation.

If they had another month's time, Dan Xiaotian would surely be able to make a breakthrough even without relying on any artifacts or special processes, but one's age waited for no one. Dan Xiaotian was on the verge of reaching seventeen soon, and once the momentum fully died down, all hopes would be dashed.

"Swallow it!"

Zhang Xuan took a deep breath slitting his own wrist with his sword qi. Blood spurted out like a fountain, but he quickly gathered the blood together into a sphere before delivering it into Dan Xiaotian's mouth.

The sudden loss of so much blood caused his face to pale a little.

Dan Xiaotian opened his mouth and swallowed the fresh blood. In the next instant, he felt incredible energy pulsating within his body. As if someone had sparked up a blazing flame within him, the receding momentum immediately came back with greater vigor than before.

As an Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivator, every single droplet of Zhang Xuan's blood essence contained an incredible amount of power. The sheer amount he had just given Dan Xiaotian was at least comparable to that of a Basic Immortal Pill. With such energy fueling him on, it took only a breath for Dan

Xiaotian to return back to his peak, and his zhenqi swiftly built up at a frightening speed.

Boom!

The final bottleneck to Ancient Sage eventually succumbed under the heightening pressure, and a powerful shockwave gushed out from Dan Xiaotian. His aura surged up rapidly, not stopping at all just because of his breakthrough.

It continued for quite a while before finally trailing to a halt.

At this moment, Dan Xiaotian's cultivation had already reached Ancient Sage 1-dan Bloodline Continuance realm consummation, a step away from reaching Great Philosopher realm.

Dan Xiaotian quickly reinforced his cultivation a little before turning to the young man before him in agitation, "Teacher..."

In order to allow him to achieve a breakthrough, his teacher had really sacrificed himself.

He didn't know whether he could repay this massive favor to his teacher in his lifetime.

"I'm fine... The time is about to be up, so you should head out now... Given that your cultivation has reached Ancient Sage 1-dan consummation, no one should dare to doubt you anymore... Cough cough!" While Zhang Xuan was relaying some instructions to his student, he couldn't help but cough a little.

He had really overexerted himself this time around.

Just the blood essence he had lost would take several months for him to recover.

"Teacher, please have a good rest. I'll head out now!" Dan Xiaotian said before leaving the room.

Watching as Dan Xiaotian's figure disappeared outside the doorway, Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly. He was just about to absorb the surrounding spiritual energy to recover his strength when he noticed that there was still a lot of gourd bathwater left in the huge pot.

He hesitated for a moment before walking over and swallowing the rest down.

Gugugu!

He felt a buzz running through his body as his weakened body swiftly recovered. In the blink of an eye, his blood deficiency had been resolved, as if he had never been injured in the first place.

“This is...” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in shock.

The energy he had lost didn’t return, but he was more than pleased with the current outcome.

The Heaven’s Path zhenqi could heal one’s injuries, but it couldn’t replenish the deficiencies in one’s body. Yet, the gourd bathwater was able to do it so easily... Didn’t this pretty much mean that he had an endless supply of Senzu Beans in his hands?

That was really incredible!

“Just what in the world are you?” Zhang Xuan asked the gourd, which was swimming in the remaining water left in the pot.

“This gourd is just an avatar I’m using at the moment. I’m afraid that I’ll scare you out of your wits if I tell you the truth! My real body is actually a heaven-crushing earth-shattering top-tier beast. You should kneel down right now and worship me like the divine being I am!” the gourd shook its bottom gleefully.

“...”

That didn’t sound trustworthy at all to Zhang Xuan. Deciding to ignore the delusional Dongxu Gourd, he stored the remaining water into bottles before keeping his stuff and walking out.

As soon as he stepped out of the room, his face immediately turned yellowish, and his body wobbled from side to side with each step that he took, as if he would collapse to the ground at any moment.

Many had already expressed their skepticism when he claimed that Dan Xiaotian was already an Ancient Sage whose cultivation plummeted as a result of overexertion. Of course, they might be more inclined to believe it now given that the latter was already at Ancient Sage 1-dan consummation, but there would still be those who held their reservations. If the both of them were to walk out completely fine, there were bound to be those who would try to probe deeper into this matter in order to find out the truth.

Thus, he decided to feign injury. This way, he would send out the message that even if Dan Xiaotian had really forcefully raised his cultivation to Ancient Sage within the span of an hour, one would have to pay an extremely heavy price for that. That should at least deter most people.

...

“Do you think that Dan Xiaotian will succeed?”

The trial for the menial disciple selections concluded rather swiftly, leaving Elder Lu Yun and the others with some time on their hand. Huang Tao looked at the direction where Zhang Xuan and Dan Xiaotian had disappeared toward and asked.

“It’s impossible to raise one’s cultivation from Great Sage 3-dan to Ancient Sage in just an hour’s time!” Yun Feiyang shook his head, pessimistic about the odds.

“Indeed. Such a thing is unheard of even in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. In any case, I don’t think Dan Xiaotian stands a chance at all!” Square-faced nodded in agreement.

Regarding this matter, even Elder Lu Yun harbored some reservations too.

“There’s no need to wait anymore. Unless the gods were to make a move personally, it’s impossible for him to achieve a breakthrough to Ancient Sage within an hour...” Knowing that it was impossible Dan Xiaotian to become an inner disciple anymore, Xue Gan also lost his fear and sneered coldly.

But before he could finish his words, footsteps echoed outside as a young man approached the court.

“How is it?” Knowing that it was Dan Xiaotian, Elder Lu Yun hurriedly turned his gaze over and asked.

“It was not easy, but I managed to do it!” Dan Xiaotian replied with a smile as he began circulating his zhenqi.

The energy within his body immediately burst out, and his aura pierced right into the heavens.

Boom!

The sudden outburst of zhenqi caused the entire court to shudder nonstop, producing a frightening creaking noise.

The thousand spectators that were gathered here felt great pressure crushing down on them. It was as if a compelling force was trying to force them to their knees.

“Ancient Sage 1-dan... consummation?” Xue Gan’s face froze.

All of the words he was intended to say were clogged at the back of his throat, and he looked stupefied.

Putong!

Not too far away, Xue Qin’s body slumped to the ground as her lips quivered fearfully. She couldn’t find a word to say at all.

The fiancé whom she had looked down on for so long, over the span of a single day, in the most forceful method possible, crushed every shred of her dignity without any mercy. She had never felt that a day could be that long before...

Had she known that this would happen, she would have never dared to lay her hands on Dan Xiaotian...

If she hadn’t been so foolish as to attempt to break her engagement the previous day, things wouldn’t have ended up like this either...

“Xiaotian, we are in-laws. Surely you wouldn’t...” Even at this point, Xue Gan was still determined to make a final struggle.

“In-laws?” Dan Xiaotian interjected with a cold sneer. “My apologies... This is my divorce letter! Xue Qin has shown

herself to be a depraved individual lacking any shred of decency, and for that reason, I am unwilling to have her as my wife!”

With a flick of his finger, he threw a piece of paper into the air, and it floated quietly to the ground. The crowd could clearly see the two words ‘Divorce Letter’ written at the top of the paper. This was yet another heavy blow on Xue Qin’s pride.

Instead of annulling the engagement, she ended up being divorced instead... There was probably no greater fool in the world than her!

She was so desperate to protect her pride that it ended up making her the greatest laughingstock of Xuanjiang City. What an irony!

Pu!

Unable to take it any longer, Xue Qin spurted a mouthful of blood.

“Elder Lu, I can be considered to be an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion now, right?” Dan Xiaotian looked at Elder Lu Yun and asked.

Elder Lu Yun responded with a nod of his head.

“That’s good. I’d like to trouble Junior Huo to strip Xue Gan of his cultivation and hang him outside the City Lord Residence. I’ll announce his crimes and have him publicly executed for his vile deeds!” Dan Xiaotian instructed.

“Yes!” Huo Jianghe replied with a nod.

Now that Dan Xiaotian had been confirmed as an inner disciple, it was only natural that he had become the other party’s junior. The difference in seniority also meant that he had to heed the other party’s instructions too.

...

“Father, mother, and my brothers... I have finally avenged all of you...”

It didn’t take long before Xue Gan’s head was publicly decapitated. Kneeling down on the floor, all of the emotions

that Dan Xiaotian had bottled up within him finally came pouring out all at once.

For ten whole years, he had sealed all these feelings deep in his heart, but right now, he couldn't contain them any longer. He cried loudly like a little child, but gradually, the heaviness that had weighed him down all this while was disappearing. He was finally free.

By the time he finished his venting his emotions, he saw his teacher standing a distance away with a pale face.

Astonished, he hurriedly got up and rushed over.

If not for this young man, he would have never been able to see the light at the end of the tunnel. He would just have been another pitiful soul killed by the City Lord Manor.

It could be said that everything he had right now was given to him by the other party.

He really wanted to shout out to the world and tell everyone that this person was his teacher, and all of his accomplishments were due to his teacher's guidance. But knowing that his teacher's desire to keep a low profile, he could only hold himself back.

But while he was swiftly making his way over to the teacher whom he deeply respected, he saw the shaking young man reaching his palm out to Yun Feiyang and the others and saying, "Dan Xiaotian is now an inner disciple of your sect. As outer disciples, shouldn't each of you offer a couple of Basic Immortal Pills to him as congratulation? This is not a gift but an investment for the future. As long as he gets a footing in the sect, it'll do you much good in the future too..."

"..." Dan Xiaotian's passionate run screeched to a halt.

Is my teacher... trying to collect protection fees from Yun Feiyang and the others?

Is this really my low profile, stern, and righteous teacher?

Why does he seem so superficial to me right now?

"..." Yun Feiyang and the others were dumbstruck too.

When they saw Dan Xiaotian's cultivation leaping two realms in an hour, they thought that it was the credit of the young man before them. So, they approached him in hopes of asking about the details, but who could have thought that the other party would cheerily ask them for pills instead...

That crushed the grand image they had formed of this young man in their minds.

It seemed like Dan Xiaotian was really an Ancient Sage right from the start, and this young man had only used some kind of secret art in order to help him regain his strength!

Otherwise... how could such a formidable expert possibly be so shameless as to ask for protection fee right in front of so many people?

There was just no way the utterly shameless man before them could be capable of such a formidable feat! Impossible!

"Cough cough!"

Elder Lu Yun also couldn't bear watching the sight any longer. He coughed lightly to dispel the awkwardness in the air before saying, "Xiaotian, inner disciples are allowed to bring their servants with them to the sect. I believe there's no reason binding you to Xuanjiang City anymore, so why don't we head over to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion now?"

"Yes, Elder Lu!" Dan Xiaotian replied.

Having exacted his vengeance, there was nothing left for him to reminisce about Xuanjiang City anymore. It was time for him to head to the larger world out there and experience new things.

"I wish to bring Elder Yi and Brother Zhang along," Dan Xiaotian informed Elder Lu.

There was no doubt that he had to bring his teacher along with him. Elder Yi had also served him for many years, so he couldn't just abandon the other party either. To him, these two were more than enough. He didn't need any menial disciple or the sort to serve him.

Besides, his teacher valued his privacy. It would be jarring on him if he were to bring more people with him.

“Alright. You should head back and make some preparations. We’ll set off from here two hours from now!” Elder Lu Yun said.

Dan Xiaotian nodded before finally walking over to his teacher. He couldn’t help but notice that there was a slight tinge of disappointment on his teacher’s seemingly nonchalant face.

Clearly, he didn’t receive the protection fees he had demanded earlier.

“Teacher, let’s return home for a while. I would like to pack some stuff and take one last look around the residence before leaving for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!” Dan Xiaotian said.

By now, they were already far away from Elder Lu Yun and the others, so there was no need to conceal their identity anymore.

Zhang Xuan nodded in response.

In truth, the reason why he demanded protection fees was so as to divert attention away from him, and it seemed like it was working out fine. He really wasn’t disappointed that he didn’t receive anything at all!

“I wonder how long I’ll be able to conceal myself in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion for... Being too talented can be exasperating at times!” Zhang Xuan rubbed his forehead as he thought.

If he had a choice, he wouldn’t want to be so conspicuous either. But people were simply too easily dazzled whenever he made a move... it was not something that he could help!

Putong!

While Zhang Xuan was deep in thoughts, the bandit, Cao Chengli, suddenly rushed over and knelt onto the ground in front of him. His eyes were filled with sincerity and expectations.

“Young Master, please accept me as well. It would be my greatest honor to serve as your humble servant!”

“Look. I am simply too outstanding that even bandits can’t help but fall for my charms...” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply. Reference to Dragon Ball Z, it’s a medicine that heals one up quickly

1944 Arriving at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion

Others might not know Zhang Xuan's identity, but Cao Chengli had seen Dan Xiaotian addressing him as 'teacher' with his own eyes.

To be able to make a trashy Saint 6-dan who could not even cultivate advance to Ancient Sage 1-dan consummation within a single day... Even though he had seen it happen with his own eyes, he still found it hard to believe.

If he were to follow such a person, there was no doubt that he would be able to soar through the ranks!

Furthermore, nearly all of his subordinates had been killed, and he was currently in the middle of the city himself. At this rate, it was likely that he would be lynched and killed by the furious mobs before he could even leave the city.

After all, he had done quite a number of evil deeds over the years since he dominated the mountain range. There were plenty of people who would be more than happy to skin him alive.

"You want to become my subordinate?" Zhang Xuan frowned. "Do you think that I'll accept you as my subordinate? I suggest that you drop that ludicrous idea!"

The only reason he had spared Cao Chengli for so long was so that the latter could reveal Xue Chen's ploy. Now that everything was over, why should he bother wasting his energy to save a bandit who had committed so much evil in his life?

Do I look like some kind of holy saint to you?

"Master, I'll kneel here till you are finally willing to accept me!" Cao Chengli insisted resolutely.

“Kneel here till the day you die then.” Zhang Xuan waved his hand coldly.

“Master!” Cao Chengli did not think that the other party would reject him so flatly. With a sorrowful look on his face, he cried out, “It’s not as if I wanted to become a bandit. I had no choice but to turn to this! I used to be a kind businessman, but there was one time I drank myself silly, and my wife ended up not allowing me to return to the house.

“So, I had to sleep in the carriage outside, but it was so freezing that I was forced to get a room at the nearby brothel instead. In the end, due to my intoxication, I ended up calling for seven women at once, and it was a night that I would never forget. But after that...”

“Enough! Stop trying to win us over with your sob story. My teacher is an upright person who abhors evildoers like you. Accepting you as his subordinate would only sully his reputation. Scram! Otherwise, I’ll sever your head right now!” Dan Xiaotian yelled furiously.

Just who does Cao Chengli take my teacher to be?

My teacher might be greedy, but he is still a dragon in the sky, a figure in the clouds who towers over the world! My teacher’s reputation would only be tarnished if he accepted a bandit like you as his subordinate.

Even if my teacher agrees to it, I’ll never agree!

Besides, are you sure that you are telling a sob story?

Why does it seem like you are boasting instead?

Seeing that Dan Xiaotian was ready to make a move on him at any moment, Cao Chengli’s face paled. However, he knew that he would not be able to live if he did not become Zhang Xuan’s subordinate, so he gritted his teeth and presented his trump card.

“Master, the others will surely tear me apart if you don’t accept me as my subordinate. Since I’m going to die anyway, I’d rather give everything that I have to you instead. Over the years, I have chosen to plunder only from the wealthier businessmen, but I have still managed to save quite a bit of

wealth myself. There are ten Basic Immortal Pills in this storage ring, and they are my entire fortune. I am willing to present all of them to you, Master...”

“Don’t think that you can bribe my teacher with this. He won’t fall for such shallow tricks!” Dan Xiaotian spat coldly.

But just as he was about to push Cao Chengli away, his pale-faced teacher suddenly shook free from his support and stood upright. Like some kind of magic trick, the storage ring suddenly vanished from Cao Chengli’s hand and appeared in his teacher’s.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly wiped away the Soul Imprint on the storage ring and took a look at the contents within. A moment later, he nodded in satisfaction and said, “Fine, I’ll accept you as my subordinate. Come with me!”

With each single Basic Immortal Pill costing 100,000 Ethereal Coins, ten of them would be worth 1,000,000 Ethereal Coins. Furthermore, they were all stored in a storage ring that was priced at a hefty sum of 500,000 Ethereal Coins at the very least. Who would have thought that this bandit actually had such wealth with him?

With so much money, he could make an exception just this once and take in Cao Chengli as his subordinate.

“Teacher!” Dan Xiaotian was stunned.

Is this man really my teacher?

If so, why do I find him so embarrassing at this very moment?

A person who could make him advance two cultivation realms within an hour and possessed exceptional skills in both medicine and swordsmanship... He should have been a transcendental being who cared not for material possessions at all! How could he be taken in by just a couple of pills?

Where is his bottom line?

Where is his dignity as an expert?

...

Dan Xiaotian did not have too many things that he wanted to take with him, so after taking one last look at the place in which he had grown up, he returned to the City Lord Manor with Elder Yi, Zhang Xuan, and Cao Chengli.

Initially, the horse and carriage had insisted on coming along as well. They threatened to kill themselves if they were left behind. But seeing that their threats were simply shrugged off as if they were nothing at all, they eventually gave up and headed into the wilderness to live together.

Considering that Zhang Xuan and the others were going to take an aerial beast to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it would indeed be inconvenient for them to take a horse and a carriage with them.

As for Xue Qin, it went without saying that her slot as a menial disciple had been canceled after everything was exposed. It was fortunate that she had not done too many bad things in the past, so no punishment had come upon her. However, with her father's death, she would lose the protection of the City Lord Manor. Her life probably would not be too easy from now on.

Seeing this, Dan Xiaotian also lost his interest in settling the score with Xue Qin. He was more interested in the life ahead of him instead of pursuing whatever that had happened in the past.

“Let's go!”

With all preparations ready, the massive aerial beast flapped its wings and carried Zhang Xuan and the others away from Xuanjiang City. Before long, they were already well on their way to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“It'll take roughly ten days of flight to reach our sect!” Elder Lu Yun told them.

The aerial beast that they were riding on was at Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm. With its strength, it could easily cover several hundred thousand li despite the heavier space in the Azure. Yet, for them to still require ten days

before reaching their destination... It seemed like the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was really far away!

From the looks of it, it was likely that the Forsaken Continent was even larger in scale compared to the Master Teacher Continent.

Due to Dan Xiaotian's esteemed position as an inner disciple, he was allocated a private room on the flight. Naturally, he shared it with Zhang Xuan and the others.

During the flight, Zhang Xuan swallowed two of the Basic Immortal Pills that he had received from Cao Chengli and managed to return to his full strength. He also made sure to reinforce his cultivation again and again with the mercury-like spiritual energy, to the point that he was ready to make a breakthrough at any moment.

However, as he still did not have any suitable cultivation techniques on hand, he could only hold himself back for the time being.

After several days of careful inspection, while he had already sensed it previously, he was finally able to confirm that the time flow in the Azure was indeed different from that on the Master Teacher Continent. To put it in a ratio, it was 1:10.

In other words, a day in the Azure would be equivalent to the passing of ten days in the Master Teacher Continent.

So, tens of thousands of years on the Master Teacher Continent equated to just several thousand years in the Azure. That corresponded to the time when the Ethereal Hall was first founded too.

As a result of the pressures of time and space in the Azure, the lifespan of the cultivators there was significantly reduced as well.

Saint cultivators could live for up to a thousand years on the Master Teacher Continent, but a hundred years was the limit for them here. Similarly, Ancient Sage cultivators only had a lifespan of slightly more than a hundred years here.

As for Pseudo Immortals like Elder Lu Yun, his lifespan was also only three hundred years.

That might be the reason that so many of them desired to descend to the Master Teacher Continent despite the severe damage that they would sustain as a result.

Over the next few days, other than focusing on his own cultivation, Zhang Xuan also spent some time offering pointers to Dan Xiaotian and Cao Chengli. As for Elder Yi, due to his advanced age and huge deficiencies that he had suffered over the years, he needed some time to recuperate. Thus, it was not suitable for him to cultivate for the time being.

Just like that, ten days passed in a flash.

As the morning sun rose from the horizon, the crowd saw a massive mountain gate towering in front of them.

It was almost ten thousand meters tall and several thousand meters wide. Due to its hulking size, the top of the gate was concealed amid the clouds. This reminded Zhang Xuan of the Southern Gate of Heaven.

At the very center of the gate was a massive sword made out of concrete piercing into the earth.

Even before coming close, they could already feel an incredible Sword Intent coming from it. It seemed to wield the strength to shatter even space itself, and the pressure it exerted could easily render any cultivator immobile.

“How formidable!” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

As expected of one of the Six Sects of the Azure. There was just no way this massive gate and sword could have been created on the Master Teacher Continent.

A formidable Sword Intent that was even more powerful than any of the Sword Quintessence he had practiced previously pulsed from the massive sword. If he were to meet an expert who practiced the swordsmanship carrying this Sword Intent, even he would be defeated easily.

It seemed like the Six Sects were indeed terrifying powers!

Out of curiosity, Zhang Xuan activated his Eye of Insight and took a closer look at the massive sword. He could vaguely see

an illusory sword hidden in the depths of the massive concrete sword.

That was probably the physical manifestation of the tremendous amount of Sword Intent gathered within the massive concrete sword.

To his surprise, the conceptualization behind the Sword Intent was rather similar to the Heaven's Path Sword Art, but it was clearly something of an even higher level. It felt profound and transcendental even by Zhang Xuan's standards.

Just by looking and perceiving it, Zhang Xuan was able to gain a deeper understanding of the crux of swordsmanship.

While it was impossible for him to truly understand the Sword Intent with just a glance, due to the similar conceptualization, he was confident that, as long as he had sufficient time, he would be able to infuse this Sword Intent into his Heaven's Path Sword Art, thus raising his swordsmanship to another level.

"The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is just right ahead. This sword was left behind by our founder. It harnesses his understanding of swordsmanship and the Sword Intent he comprehended. Even to this day, his accomplishments continue to awe generations of sword practitioners!" Elder Lu Yun said as he looked at the massive gate and sword with admiration in his eyes.

Dan Xiaotian's body also stiffened a little as his eyes reddened.

Even in the days when he was practicing his swordsmanship alone, from time to time, he would dream of visiting the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion one day to practice the best swordsmanship in the world. This was a dream come true for him.

There was still some time before the aerial beast flew through the gate, so Elder Lu Yun turned to Dan Xiaotian, Zhang Xuan, and the others and said, "Before we enter the sect, I would first like to inform you of the rules of our sect.

“The disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion can mainly be divided into four tiers, namely menial disciples, outer disciples, inner disciples, and core disciples. While inner disciples are already highly respected within the sect, the standing of the core disciples exceeds that!”

“Core disciples?” Dan Xiaotian’s eyes glowed with anticipation.

“That’s right. To be honest, there isn’t much you have to do as an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. You can freely allocate your time to practicing your swordsmanship or cultivating. If you require any resources to study, you can browse through the books in the inner disciples’ library. Otherwise, you can also approach any of your seniors or elders and request their help. Of course, most of the resources don’t come free. You’ll have to pay with Sword Pavilion Coins!” Elder Lu Yun said.

“Sword Pavilion Coins?” Zhang Xuan repeated quietly with a hint of exasperation in his voice.

He had not expected there to be another currency used within the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and he had a feeling that he would have to spend quite a bit of effort to earn it in the near future. It really felt like he would never be free from monetary problems at this rate.

“The Sword Pavilion Coin is a virtual currency used only within the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. It can be used to buy whatever you need, be it pills, weapons, cultivation techniques, or even lessons from elders. However, earning them can be quite troublesome. You have to either participate in the dueling ring, complete missions, answer the questions of others, or guide others on their cultivation. In any case, the most important thing you have to know is that everything within the sect requires Sword Pavilion Coins. Without them, you’ll face obstacles in whatever you do. On the other hand, if you are able to earn sufficient Sword Pavilion Coins, you’ll be able to claim an endless supply of cultivation resources. Naturally, you’ll also be able to advance your cultivation faster than anyone!” Elder Lu Yun explained.

Dan Xiaotian was a little surprised as well.

Things were a little different from what he had envisioned it out to be. He had imagined the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to be a transcendental sect where material needs would be of secondary concern. Everyone would be fully immersed in exploring the profoundness of cultivation and swordsmanship. Contrary to his expectations, there seemed to be quite a capitalistic economy in there?

“Wait a moment, Elder Lu. You mentioned earlier that Sword Pavilion Coins is a virtual currency... Does that mean that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has its own Ethereal Hall?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“You can think of it that way. We have our own private Ethereal Hall that the disciples can access. Similar to the other Ethereal Halls out there, it’s a place where our disciples spar and trade with one another. The only difference would be that our Ethereal Hall is controlled internally by our own people, and it has its own currency and system. It’s independent of the other Ethereal Halls out there!” Elder Lu Yun replied.

Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

To use an analogy from his previous world, the Ethereal Hall within the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was like a local area network in a PC cafe. Only those on devices belonging to the PC cafe could access this isolated network.

“Oh right, the standard level of cultivation in our own Ethereal Hall is different, too. Our Ethereal Hall can only be accessed by inner disciples and above, so the standard level of cultivation inside the Ethereal Hall is not Saint 1-dan but Ancient Sage 1-dan,” Elder Lu Yun said.

For those who entered the Ethereal Hall in Starlight City, no matter how powerful they were outside, their cultivation realm would be reduced to Saint 1-dan. However, it was different here. No matter how powerful or weak a person was, their cultivation would be set at Ancient Sage 1-dan within the Ethereal Hall.

This made sense since a lot of the more formidable swordsmanship could not be executed if one's strength was capped at only Saint 1-dan. That would also render the dueling ring meaningless.

“Other than that, everything else is pretty much the same. You are able to hide your identity and change your appearance, too, such that others will be unable to tell who you are and vice versa... However, this also means that the person whom you are talking to could be an elder or even the sect leader himself. Thus, you must make sure not to act audaciously within the Ethereal Hall. While our elders and sect leader aren't vindictive people, you can still get into a fair bit of trouble if you overstep your bounds!” Elder Lu Yun warned gravely.

“Elder? Sect leader?”

Hearing that explanation, not only was Zhang Xuan not nervous in the least, his eyes even lit up in excitement. He could not help but wonder, If I beat up an elder or the sect leader... will it be more exhilarating than beating up ordinary cultivators? It's said that there are four gateways into the heavens, and the Southern Gate of Heaven is the gateway between the mortal world and the heavens. It has appeared in many classic Chinese works like Journey to the West, Eight Immortals, Legend of the White Snake, and so on.

1945 Ten Li Sword God

Against those of the same cultivation realm, Zhang Xuan could be said to be pretty much invincible.

Even if the opponent he was facing was an elder or the sect leader, he was confident that he would not lose with his abilities. Since that was the case, he should be able to bully them a little.

Those people were likely to have quite a few good items on them, and they were bound to have important information as well. As long as he could defeat them, he should be able to get some stuff out of them.

He might even be able to gather some news regarding the Spirit God Palace through this.

It seemed like his very first target after entering the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would be to acquire a suitable Ethereal Token and enter their Ethereal Hall. Then, he would find the highest-ranking person possible and coerce the other party into giving him what he needed.

With such thoughts in mind, Zhang Xuan struck his leg in excitement before standing up. “That’s truly a wonderful idea. I’ll do just that!”

“Huh? What are you going to do?” Elder Lu Yun turned to look at Zhang Xuan with doubt in his eyes.

I just warned you that you might meet the elders or the sect leader in the Ethereal Hall; what are you getting all so excited about?

Are you possibly mentally retarded?

Elder Lu was still wondering if he should accept Zhang Xuan into the sect as well, but over the past few days, he had found that the latter had a tendency to suddenly go on an insanity streak. Each time Zhang Xuan acted in such a manner, his conviction to do so would waver a little, and by now, it had already dissipated entirely.

“Ah, it’s nothing at all. My thoughts just wandered a bit,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

On the other hand, Dan Xiaotian clasped his face in embarrassment.

Passing through the towering gates, the aerial beast eventually landed on a tall mountain. Leaping down from the back of the beast, Elder Lu Yun swiftly arranged a residence for Dan Xiaotian.

“The rest of you should rest here for the time being. Dan Xiaotian, come with me. You have to take the examination first!” Elder Lu Yun said as he gestured for Zhang Xuan, Cao Chengli, and Elder Yi to stay in the residence for the time being.

“Examination?”

“The examination I conducted for you earlier only shows that you have the qualifications to become an inner disciple. In order to formalize the process, you have to head to the Sword God Hall to display your swordsmanship!” Elder Lu Yun said.

“The Sword God Hall?”

“Yes, it’s the place where disciples are tested. Be it menial disciples intending to become outer disciples or inner disciples hoping to become core disciples, they have to showcase their swordsmanship at the Sword God Hall. It’s similar to my intentions when I got you to spar with Huo Jianghe, but the evaluation at the Sword God Hall will be far more accurate. It’ll reflect your current strength more clearly!” Elder Lu explained with a smile.

“In a battle, a sword practitioner’s swordsmanship is influenced by their physical state, mental resilience, reflexes, and so on. However, these factors are disregarded in the Sword God Hall. As long your comprehension of the sword has reached a satisfactory level, the results will reflect so!”

Dan Xiaotian widened his eyes in realization.

“Let’s go!” Elder Lu Yun said as he beckoned Dan Xiaotian to follow him.

Zhang Xuan walked over and said, “Elder Lu Yun, I’m also interested in the Sword God Hall. Would it be inappropriate if I were to follow you?”

He had never heard of something that could test one’s comprehension of swordsmanship before, and he was genuinely curious about how the system worked.

“This...” Elder Lu Yun hesitated for a moment before nodding. “I guess it should be fine!”

Under normal circumstances, no outsiders would be allowed in the Sword God Hall. However, considering how even menial disciples were able to enter the premises to take the examination, it should be fine for Zhang Xuan to tag along and have a look in his capacity as Dan Xiaotian’s friend.

Thus, they got onto the back of the aerial beast once more and flew toward another mountain peak.

What was particularly striking about this mountain peak was that there was a sword-like building lodged into the ground on it, reminiscent of a tower.

“This is the Sword God Hall. Every day, numerous menial disciples, outer disciples, and inner disciples come over to have their swordsmanship evaluated,” Elder Lu Yun said as they walked into the tower.

As soon as they entered, they saw quite a few people standing around the lobby with swords on their backs. Sword Intent could be felt in the aura they emanated. Shockingly, most of their cultivation was actually not beneath that of Zhang Xuan’s!

As expected of one of the Six Sects of the Azure, it’s indeed filled with plenty of experts! Zhang Xuan thought.

He had thought that his Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivation was not too bad, but it turned out that it could only be considered average at best.

Furthermore, those who were present were still not the most powerful of all. It was hard to imagine how powerful the core disciples, elders, and sect leader were.

Knowing that the two of them did not know anything about the Sword God Hall, Elder Lu Yun explained, “There are many rooms in the Sword God Hall, and every single one of them has a Sword God Pedestal. As long you pay an ample number of Sword Pavilion Coins, you’ll be able to enter the room and test your swordsmanship!

“Of course, the first test you take is free. It’s the subsequent ones that require money!”

“Ah!” Dan Xiaotian heaved a sigh of relief.

He had just arrived at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and he still had no idea what the Sword Pavilion Coins looked like. There was no way that he could have forked out the money required.

“Wait here for a moment, I’ll open a room. Dan Xiaotian, you can enter first. Zhang Xuan, if you wish to give it a try, you can enter after he’s done. The Sword God Pedestal can only assess one cultivator at a time, or else it will interfere with scanning the Sword Intent,” Elder Lu Yun said before heading to the front receptionist.

Before long, they were already standing before an ornate door. Elder Lu Yun turned to Dan Xiaotian and said, “After you enter the room, hold the sword tightly and unleash your Sword Intent and conceptualization of your swordsmanship. If the manifestation of your Sword Intent surpasses one meter, you will be eligible to become a menial disciple. Ten meters, and you’ll be able to become an outer disciple. Thirty meters, and you are qualified to join the ranks of the inner disciple. Right now, thirty meters is the goal you should set for yourself!”

“Thirty meters?” Dan Xiaotian nodded slowly.

He did not have much of a gauge on difficult it would be to reach thirty meters.

Noticing the contemplative look on Dan Xiaotian’s face, Elder Lu Yun explained with a smile, “Don’t worry, the manifestation of Sword Intent depends on your comprehension of swordsmanship, not your sword qi. With your cultivation, it’s impossible to produce thirty-meter-long sword qi!”

“Ah, I see!” Dan Xiaotian scratched his head awkwardly.

With his current swordsmanship prowess, he could only exert sword qi of around two to three meters in length. Thirty meters was far beyond his current capabilities.

So, the ‘manifestation of Sword Intent’ that Elder Lu Yun was talking about was not referring to sword qi.

Jiya!

Dan Xiaotian pushed the door open and walked in.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan turned to Elder Lu Yun and curiously asked, “May I ask what the best record for an inner disciple’s manifestation of Sword Intent is?”

If thirty meters was the minimum requirement to clear the selection, what was the record of the best sword practitioners in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?

“Under normal circumstances, one would be qualified to become a core disciple if the manifestation of his Sword Intent reached a hundred meters. That being said, there are quite a few inner disciples who have surpassed that record, and some of the best inner disciples have even reached three hundred meters and beyond,” Elder Lu Yun said.

“Three hundred meters?” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

He had no idea how this ‘manifestation of Sword Intent’ was calculated, but if even outer disciples had trouble reaching thirty meters, those who could achieve a record ten times that had to be truly terrifying existences.

“Of course, that’s only among the inner disciples. There are plenty of formidable experts among the core disciples, and some of them have even exceeded five hundred meters. Anyone who exceeds that record is bestowed the title of ‘Sword God’. That’s also where the titles ‘One Li Sword God’ and ‘Two Li Sword God’ come from. It’s said that in the entire history of the sect, the most talented person once materialized his Sword Intent across a distance of ten li, and thus, others respectfully addressed him as ‘Ten Li Sword God’!” Elder Lu Yun explained with admiration gleaming in his eyes.

“Ten Li Sword God?” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

While other sword practitioners were frustrating over how short theirs were, that expert actually reached over ten li. That was truly inconceivable!

“May I know how far your Sword Intent is able to materialize, Elder Lu Yun?” Zhang Xuan asked out of curiosity.

“Me?” Elder Lu Yun was slightly surprised by the question. A bitter look appeared on his face as he shook his head. “I don’t have much talent for swordsmanship, so I didn’t even make it as an inner disciple back when I was in my younger years. It was through my relentless hard work that I eventually reached my current level of cultivation and got myself the position of an external elder. Even though I have practiced the Way of the Sword for many years, I am still unable to reach the hundred meters mark. Currently, I’m only at ninety-seven meters.”

“97 meters? That’s already a formidable feat,” Zhang Xuan remarked as he turned his gaze toward the sealed room in front of him.

This disciple of his had only learned swordsmanship from him for a night, and he had barely grasped one of his techniques. Given that his disciple did not have a deep understanding of the Way of the Sword yet... he could not help but wonder how well his disciple would perform.

...

The first thing that Dan Xiaotian noticed upon entering the room was a round pedestal with a sword lodged tightly at the center.

This must be the so-called Sword God Pedestal that Elder Lu Yun spoke of.

The space directly in front of him was a vast wilderness.

There were no walls at the front and top of the room in order to allow one’s Sword Intent to traverse beyond several meters. Otherwise, it would have been terribly expensive to construct a room that could contain the manifestation of Sword Intent.

Stepping onto the pedestal, Dan Xiaotian drew the sword and took a deep breath. Focusing all of his attention, he began driving his energy.

Sword Intent was built upon one's comprehension of swordsmanship.

He had been practicing his swordsmanship for a decade ever since he was still young, so he carried deep comprehension and sentiments toward swordsmanship.

Just by holding onto the sword, he felt as if his hand was melding into it. Instead of a weapon, it was an extension of his arm.

Weng!

Sensing his conceptualization, the sword began buzzing loudly as a milky white glow gathered around the Sword God Pedestal before advancing forth.

With resolute eyes, Dan Xiaotian drove his energy to its limits.

Po!

The Sword Intent burst forth.

Dan Xiaotian quickly opened his eyes to look into the distance, but what he saw made his face stiffen.

“A chi? In other words, a third of a meter?”

He had pushed his strength to his limits, but it turned out that the manifestation of his Sword Intent was only a third of a meter. If that was the case, did it not mean that his comprehension of swordsmanship could not even compare to that of a menial disciple?

“T-this can't be... Even Huo Jianghe wasn't a match for me back then!” Dan Xiaotian's head nearly exploded.

Elder Lu Yun had kept emphasizing how fair the Sword God Hall was, but in a real battle, his swordsmanship was able to best even Huo Jianghe. How could his limit be just 0.33 meters? That was impossible!

“Wait a moment, I defeated Huo Jianghe with the sword toss. Maybe I should try that move...”

After a moment of hesitation, Dan Xiaotian remembered that he still had that powerful trump card. Thus, he took a deep breath before flicking his finger.

Weng!

The sword in his hand floated into the air.

Hong long long!

As soon as the sword left his grasp, an overwhelming Sword Intent burst forth from his body. In response, the sword also emanated its Sword Intent as well, and the room was swiftly filled with white mist. A powerful current gathered around the sword, like a swirling hurricane.

“This...” Dan Xiaotian was stunned once more.

When he pushed the Sword Intent within him to his limits, the manifestation was only 0.33 meters, but as soon as he used the sword toss technique that his teacher had imparted to him, before he had even shot out the sword, it had already caused such a huge commotion. If he finished executing the technique, what kind of results would he receive?

Was there really such a huge difference between the swordsmanship that he had comprehended with ten years of hard work and what his teacher had imparted to him?

“Go!”

With an awkward look on his face, Dan Xiaotian flicked the sword, and it immediately bolted into the distance.

Hong long!

White Sword Intent also flurried furiously forth along with the movement of the sword, vanishing from sight in the blink of an eye.

“This...” Dan Xiaotian blinked in bewilderment.

His own Sword Intent was only enough to reach 0.33 meters, but with his teacher’s swordsmanship, the Sword Intent flew all the way out, till his eyes could not even see it anymore...

This was definitely way more than thirty, fifty, or even a hundred meters!

“Is it still flying?”

After waiting for a moment, the Sword Intent did not seem to have reached its end yet. This left Dan Xiaotian was a little stupefied.

Did it shoot out a little too far, such that his results were invalidated?

Weng!

But while he was worrying over this matter, the wall beside him jolted a little before reflecting his results.

“499 meters!”

He was just a meter short of becoming a Sword God! Ten Li Sword God is also the author of Rebirth of the Urban Immortal Cultivator. The two authors are close friends with one another.

1946 Zhang Xuan Takes the Examination

Coming to realize what was going on, Dan Xiaotian sighed deeply in lamentation.

It seems like I have only managed to learn my teacher's sword art, but I haven't grasped the fundamental Sword Intent and the like yet...

He had thought that with his ten years of hard work, it would not be too difficult for him to become a menial disciple in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. However, it seemed like he had overestimated his own capabilities.

He was a long way off from reaching the mark!

It was no wonder Xue Qin, despite not lacking resources and being under the guidance of Xue Chen, had barely made it as a menial disciple. Considering how he had practiced swordsmanship alone and could not even use zhenqi back then...

Most likely, the 0.33 meters was also the result of his training ever since he came under his teacher. If it had been before then, it was likely that he would not have scored anything at all.

I have only learned the movements behind teacher's sword art, not the theories behind it, but I'm already able to bring the Sword Intent this far. If I understand the full conceptualization behind it, I wonder how powerful I'll be able to become, Dan Xiaotian thought.

The current Dan Xiaotian was reminiscent of a child who had learned how to solve mathematical problems through rote learning. He could derive the answer, but when asked why he had used a specific model or the details behind his solution... well, his face would turn completely blank.

A person could be well-versed with Ode to Gallantry, reciting it so soulfully that it evoked the emotions of others. However, that did not necessarily mean that they had become a poet like Li Bai, capable of coming up with verses that transcended time.

Despite being in such a position, Dan Xiaotian's Sword Intent was able to reach 499 meters. If he had mastered the true wisdom of his teacher, he had no doubt that he would have been able to achieve way more than that.

Speaking of which, did this not mean that his teacher had already far surpassed the five hundred meters mark, reaching a level that far exceeded those from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?

I should quickly swap with my teacher so that he can give it a try too! Dan Xiaotian thought in agitation as he rushed out of the room.

Even the swordsmanship that he had learned for a day or two was so formidable. He had no doubt that his teacher would be able to set a new record!

Upon seeing Dan Xiaotian, Elder Lu Yun anxiously asked, "How is it? Did you exceed thirty meters?"

While he was confident that Dan Xiaotian would meet the prerequisite, his heart could not help but tremble in trepidation till he finally received the answer.

"I did..." Dan Xiaotian nodded with a reddened face.

In truth, his own comprehension of swordsmanship only produced a manifestation of 0.33 meters, but if he admitted that, he would be driven out immediately. Thus, after much contemplation, he had decided to go along with it for the time being.

He would just have to work a lot harder to make up for his weakness in the future!

Elder Lu first heaved a sigh of relief after hearing that Dan Xiaotian had cleared the examination before enquiring for further details. "How long was the manifestation of your Sword Intent?"

He had witnessed Dan Xiaotian's swordsmanship the other day. It was an incredible work of art, such that even the First Senior of the outer disciples, Huo Jianghe, was no match for it!

That in itself should be enough to put Dan Xiaotian among the top few inner disciples.

"Well... This is my result!" Dan Xiaotian replied as he passed a jade token over.

He had recorded the results reflected on the wall when they appeared earlier.

Seeing that Dan Xiaotian was so embarrassed as to present him with the jade token instead of saying out loud, Elder Lu Yun instinctively assumed that Dan Xiaotian's results would be horrible. "You need not be too concerned about your current results. You are still young, and as long as you are able to join the ranks of the inner disciples, there's no doubt that you'll be able to improve swiftly in the future..."

But before he could finish his words, he caught sight of what was written on the jade token, and his eyes nearly bulged out. "4-499 meters?"

"Un!" Dan Xiaotian nodded with a crimson face. It sure was embarrassing to lie so blatantly.

"..."

Elder Lu Yun alternated between Dan Xiaotian's embarrassed expression and the jade token in his hand, and he clutched his hair in frenzy.

Is there something wrong with you?

Your embarrassed look made me think that you have barely reached thirty meters or so... but the hell, your score is actually 499 meters!

Do you know how many freaking core disciples would love to achieve the same result as you but are unable to do so?

You are already on the verge of becoming a Sword God, do you know that?

Despite being so powerful, your face still reddened in embarrassment at your score... What am I then? A walking manifestation of humiliation?

Elder Lu Yun felt as if his dignity had been hung upside down and hammered back and forth.

He had seen plenty of disciples who were upset by their poor results, but this was the very first time that he had seen someone with such a good result putting on such an expression.

The scenario was felt just like how, on the day the examination results were released, you spotted a student who started bawling nonstop, so you went over to console him. After much consolation, the student finally revealed the true reason behind his sadness.

In an examination of a hundred marks, he has only scored ninety-nine.

But you, who went over to console him, only scored nine.

Elder Lu Yun had never desired to simply vanish from the spot as much as he did at that instant.

He took two huge breaths before asking, "Are you feeling... embarrassed by your results?"

"Yes... It's simply too awkward..." Dan Xiaotian covered his face shyly.

Elder Lu Yun's heart began thumping so wildly from rage that he had to strike his chest heavily again and again in order to calm himself down. Not wanting to talk to this fellow anymore, he took another deep breath before turning to Zhang Xuan and asking, "Do you want to head in to give it a try as well?"

He was afraid that he would start getting violent if he continued talking to Dan Xiaotian.

"This... Alright then!" Zhang Xuan nodded as he made his way in.

Along the way, he could not help but think, While this student of mine hasn't learned much of my swordsmanship, he did

learn my humility and low-profile attitude well. Not bad.

It seemed like he was a talent that could be molded.

Closing the doors, Zhang Xuan walked up to the Sword God Pedestal.

“Hm? Why is there no sword here?”

Zhang Xuan took a look around, but the room was utterly empty. There was no sword to be seen at all. According to what Elder Lu Yun had said, there should have been a sword there.

Could it be that the swordsmanship evaluation did not require a sword? That did not sound quite right. Then again, Dan Xiaotian had been there earlier, which meant that it should be possible to do it without a sword.

“But still, to be able to produce a manifestation of 499 meters without a sword, I might have been underestimating Dan Xiaotian’s talent...”

Perhaps the Sword God Pedestal did not provide swords to use. Thinking back, most of the disciples whom he had seen outside were carrying swords on their backs. Without a doubt, it would be a huge handicap without a sword in hand...

To achieve a result of nearly a li despite that, his student really did not let him down.

Since his student was able to do it without a sword, as his teacher, he should at least be able to do the same!

Thus, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath before releasing all of his Sword Intent at once.

The Sword Quintessences that he had learned back on the Master Teacher Continent revolved in his mind as he raised his finger slightly.

A cluster of incredibly condensed sword qi began gathering on his fingertip.

Along with the accumulation of his sword qi, a white mist burst forth from the pedestal and swiftly gathering around

Zhang Xuan. But instead of shooting forth, the white mist fused together with Zhang Xuan's sword qi.

It was as if the white mist had submitted to Zhang Xuan's Sword Intent and dared not take a step further without his instructions.

Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan's lips twitched.

What the heck was going on?

If this was the case, did it not mean that his manifestation of Sword Intent was not even a single meter long?

Surely he was not inferior to his own direct disciple, right?

If that was really the case, it would really be a huge embarrassment.

"This is unacceptable. I need to gather more Sword Intent and surpass my limits!"

Zhang Xuan recounted the swordsmanship that he had learned back at the Sword Lagoon, the Zhang Clan, and the conceptualization that he had felt when he first entered the clan earlier...

Those Sword Quintessences revolved around his mind, and an indomitable aura burst forth from his body. In an instant, it felt like he had become a massive sword that could hack the world in two.

Hong long!

As his Sword Intent heightened to its limits, the amount of white mist gathering in the room was growing at a terrifying rate. In the blink of an eye, it was as if the room had become the scene of a disastrous fire. With the sheer concentration of Sword Intent there, the thick white mist was starting to condense into fluid.

"Is it still less than one meter? Impossible!"

Zhang Xuan had already gone to such an extent, but when he looked in front, the manifestation of his Sword Intent was still less than one meter!

How was that possible?

His lips twitched, and he nearly fainted on the spot.

It could not be that despite his formidable swordsmanship, he was still not on par with a menial disciple, right?

But if that was the case, how could Dan Xiaotian reach 499 meters with that third-tier swordsmanship of his?

“I don’t believe it! Sword Intent of the world, come under my command!” Zhang Xuan roared deeply as his zhenqi and soul morphed into the form of a sword. He absorbed the lingering Sword Intent in the air and focused them on the accumulation of sword qi on his fingertip.

If his disciple could achieve so much without a sword in hand, he would be embarrassed to death if he could not even do the same!

No matter what, he could not lose!

This was for his reputation and dignity as Dan Xiaotian’s teacher!

...

A young man was standing amid the crowd in the Sword God Hall with a sword on his back.

As soon as he stepped into the lobby, there was not a single person who dared approach him. It was as if he had a natural disposition that pushed the crowd away from him.

Crisp laughter echoed in the air, and the crowd dispersed once more, opening up a path for another young man to walk through.

“Junior Ye Lian, are you here to evaluate your swordsmanship again? Are you interested in competing with me?”

This young man had a powerful-looking silhouette. Due to his height that towered over the others in the room, he stood like a crane standing in the midst of a pack of chickens.

“Senior He Yan, if you wish to compete with me, I’m more than happy to accompany you,” the young man known as Ye Lian replied calmly.

“Please!” He Yan gestured toward the rooms with a bright smile before taking the first step forward.

Ye Lian gracefully followed him and entered the room adjacent to He Yan’s.

There was a partition between the rooms, but as there was no wall at the front, they were still able to see the manifestation of Sword Intent of those in the nearby rooms, allowing them to make comparisons.

Seeing the disposition of the two, a newly-arrived inner disciple asked those around him, “Are they the famed Senior Ye and Senior He of the core disciples?”

“Yes, that’s them. I heard that they have been trying to achieve the level of Sword God, and they have been competing with one another for the past five years to see who can reach that level first!” one of the more knowledgeable disciples in the area replied with a nod.

Ye Lian and He Yan were a few of the more well-known core disciples due to their unique dispositions and formidable swordsmanship. Due to their similar proficiency in swordsmanship, the two of them had been competing with one another for many years, especially in recent years when they were only a few steps away from reaching Sword God.

That had brought them into the focus of all of the disciples in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Everyone was interested to see who would reach that illustrious height first.

“Senior He, why don’t you go first?” Ye Lian said quietly as he stepped onto the pedestal and drew the sword.

One had to use the sword on the Sword God Pedestal for the test in order for the results to be reflected. The reason most disciples chose to carry their swords on their back was to better channel their Sword Intent through the use of a familiar medium and achieve a higher level of Sword-Man Union.

“Let’s begin together!”

From the adjacent room, He Yan chuckled heartily as he grabbed the sword from the pedestal and channeled his Sword Intent into it.

Hong long!

An endless stream of Sword Intent gushed out from his acupoints and flowed through the sword in his hand.

Tzla!

The manifestation of his Sword Intent shot out of the room, covering dozens of meters in an instant.

Seeing He Yan's manifestation of Sword Intent, Ye Lian also began the test, and his manifestation of Sword Intent swiftly shot forth and caught up with He Yan's. From afar, it looked like two divine beings were racing alongside one another.

Seeing that Ye Lian was on the verge of catching up with him, He Yan chuckled softly. "Your speed isn't too bad, Junior! You've clearly been working hard these past six months!"

"Senior, you clearly haven't been slacking either. The speed of manifestation is much faster than before," Ye Lian remarked calmly.

"I guess we are about equal then. Fine, let's see who will reach five hundred meters and become a Sword God first!"

With a roar, He Yan released all of his Sword Intent at once, causing his manifestation to charge forth with incredible momentum. However, before it could get far, the manifestation of his Sword Intent suddenly halted. It shuddered intensely as if it was standing before a superior being, similar to how a serpent would grovel before a divine dragon.

No matter how He Yan exerted himself, the manifestation of his Sword Intent simply would not go any further.

Narrowing his eyes, he glanced He Yan's way and saw that the same situation was happening to He Yan. His Sword Intent manifestation was shuddering nonstop, and it would not inch forward at all.

"What's going on here?" He Yan was taken aback.

But at that moment, the manifestations of their Sword Intent suddenly shattered with a resounding buzz.

Pu!

Fresh blood spurted from their mouths as they collapsed to the ground. Ode to Gallantry is a famous poem by Li Bai.

1947 Sealing a Sword Inten

Clutching his wounds tightly, He Yan slowly rose to his feet.

“This is... Suppression of Sword Intent?”

As a genius sword practitioner, a core disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he swiftly realized what had happened. The Sword Intent that he had cultivated with great difficulty had been utterly suppressed by the Sword Intent of another man.

But this was mystifying to him, too. What he had cultivated was none other than the unparalleled Sword Intent of the sect!

How could he possibly be suppressed to such an extent? That should have been impossible!

“Ye Lian, are you the one who did it?” He Yan asked in astonishment.

The only core disciples who had gone there to assess their swordsmanship were him and Ye Lian. Could it be that the latter had cultivated some kind of formidable swordsmanship over the past half a year, resulting in his Sword Intent paling far in comparison?

He Yan turned his gaze over, only to see that the manifestation of Sword Intent in the adjacent room had been suppressed as well. Seemingly under great pressure, it stood motionlessly like a snake groveling on the floor.

“It’s not me... I can’t control my Sword Intent either... Pu!”

Before he could finish his words, Ye Lian’s manifestation of Sword Intent suddenly dissipated, causing him to spurt a mouthful of blood.

Seeing such a sight, He Yan widened his eyes in astonishment.

Sword Intent could be depicted as a conceptualization.

Naturally, there were different levels of conceptualization.

Take poetry as an example. Back in the Tang Dynasty, even while Li Bai was worried about the plight of the country following An Lushan's rebellion, he had to first soar into the heavens and have a good time with the goddesses before ending with a 'Flowing blood dyes the lush field red, depraved beasts dressed in silk coronets'. For those who were a bit lacking in conceptualization, they would be shouting 'The sh*t, those b*stards'.

Of course, that was just an analogy. There was a hierarchy among true Sword Intent. When Sword Intents of lower conceptualizations encountered Sword Intents of higher conceptualization, it was only natural for the former to cower in fear.

In a sense, it was similar to the Bloodline Suppression that existed within the Dragon Tribe. If there was too huge a gap between the conceptualization of Sword Intents, the weaker Sword Intent would have already lost without even being able to put up a fight.

Both He Yan and Ye Lian were experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but their Sword Intents were still suppressed to such a frightening extent. Just what the hell was happening?

Could there really be a person in the sect who wielded such formidable ability?

"I won't accept it. There's no way there would be someone in the world who can surpass me that much!" He Yan roared furiously as his Sword Intent burst forth once more.

Peng!

But this time, before the white mist could even gather, he could already feel an omnipresent sword of unparalleled sharpness eyeing him. If he showed the slightest hint of retaliation, the sword would tear through his guts and bring him a swift death.

Huala!

Cold sweat poured down He Yan's forehead as he dared not move at all.

The little bit of Sword Intent that he had comprehended could not compare to this overwhelming force. It was like candlelight trying to pit its brightness against the majestic sun!

Any comparison would just end in his humiliation!

When did such a powerful expert appear in the sect?

Even those monsters among the core disciples were not capable of such a feat.

...

The same sight was happening in the other rooms as well.

In an instant, all of the examinees in the Sword God Hall had been suppressed by the Sword Intent, and they found themselves unable to move at all.

Cries of agony filled the tower.

...

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's Compendium of Sword Wisdom was a massive library with innumerable books.

Walking amid the shelves was Elder Wei, who had been busy packing the books by its classifications over the past few months. It had taken him a great deal of effort to complete this grand operation.

"Elder Wei, it's really been tough for you. With your new classification system, it will be much easier for others to find the resources they require in the library!" an elder said with a smile as he walked over.

He was the other elder of the Compendium of Sword Wisdom, Jiang Yuan.

"Indeed. The books of the Compendium of Sword Wisdom contain the Sword Intent from many generations of predecessors. Depending on one's innate talent and experiences, the Sword Intent that each sword practitioner comprehends can vary greatly from one another. It has indeed been tough trying to classify all of these books," Elder Wei said as he stretched his back lazily. "After so many months,

it's finally done! But this is the only time that I'll be doing this. I'd rather commit suicide than reshelve these books!"

Elder Jiang Yuan nodded. "The Sword Intent is sealed within the books, such that sword practitioners can comprehend the strength of our predecessors by opening the books and perceiving them closely.

"Unfortunately, there are simply too many different Sword Intents in the world, and if the books aren't classified properly, a sword practitioner might accidentally grab a book that is at odds with their sword cultivation. Not only would that be not beneficial to their cultivation, they might even sustain great damage as a result!

"To be honest, I'm impressed by how detailed your classification is. You even labeled the genre and sword art... I can't begin to imagine how much effort you have put into this. I believe that the sect leader will reward you handsomely once we report this to him!"

"Indeed. I feel like my eyes are going blind after looking at these books day in and day out!" Elder Wei complained.

"Please keep a close eye on these books. I'll just go and rest for a moment..."

"Un!" Elder Jiang Yuan nodded.

Hualala!

All of a sudden, the books on the shelves began rattling nonstop. It was as if some kind of force was summoning the books, causing them to float in the air. Sword Intent gushed out and filled the entire library, producing the metallic reverberations caused by the clashing of swords.

Elder Wei's body stiffened upon seeing this sight. His months of hard work...

You b*stards! Do you know how much trouble I went through trying to compile all of you? Why are you leaping out all of a sudden?

Huala!

But it had not yet ended.

The books all turned in the same direction and bowed deeply, as if servants paying respects to their king!

Pilipala!

The problem with this bow was that it caused the compiled books to collapse onto one another. In fact, some of the bookshelves even fell to the ground as a result of the trembling, turning the entire library into a huge mess.

“The heck!” Elder Wei nearly blacked out from sheer horror at this sight.

Are you joking with me?

Do you know how hard it was for me to compile all of these books? What should I do now?

“Someone has probably comprehended a higher level of Sword Intent, and these books are bowing down to express their submission,” Elder Jiang Yuan muttered.

“I know... But of all times, this just had to happen when I just finished reorganizing all of the books!” Elder Wei clutched his hair in frenzy.

Looking at the huge chaos around the room, Elder Jiang Yuan sighed helplessly as well. “So... do you want to try reorganizing it again? Forget it, I think you’ll be better off killing yourself!”

“...” Elder Wei.

...

Before the massive gates that towered at the entrance of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, two figures were floating in the air.

Those two figures were elders that appeared to be in their fifties.

The elder on the left was dressed in a silk robe with a jade belt wrapped around his waist. There was a sharpness in his eyes that seemed ready to cut down anything that stood in his path.

The one on the right had a bubbly appearance, and there was an amiable smile on his face. He seemed like someone who

was easy to get along with.

The space in the Azure was extremely stable, which made it exceedingly difficult to warp the laws of the world. Even a Pseudo Immortal like Elder Lu Yun was unable to fly. Yet, those two men were able to float in the air. There was no doubt that they were top-notch experts.

“Elder He, you have been cultivating here for thirty years. Have you comprehended the Sword Intent left behind by our founder yet?” the bubbly elder asked with a smile.

“How can it be that easy for us to grasp the Sword Intent of our founder?” Elder He shook his head. “The reason I choose to cultivate here was just to use the Sword Intent of the founder to temper my spirit, thus refining my Sword Intent...”

“It has been so many years, but no one has been able to match up to the talents of our founder...” The bubbly elder nodded.

Before he could finish his words, his eyes suddenly widened in shock. He quickly raised his head and looked at the massive sword in front of him.

Boom!

The massive sword suddenly began to shake nonstop, and it seemed as if it would rise up and soar into the heavens at any moment. At the same time, the towering gate also began trembling, seemingly on the verge of collapsing due to the tremors.

Those two elders narrowed their eyes in shock.

This massive sword symbolized the greatness and prestige of their Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. If it crumbled, they would become the laughingstock of the other five sects!

“It’s Sword Intent... Our founder’s Sword Intent seems to have sensed something...” Elder He clenched his fists tightly together.

“Is it possible for our founder’s Sword Intent to sense something?” The bubbly elder was taken aback. Following which, his body tensed up as he murmured, “Cr*p...”

Huala!

The massive sword before them seemed to have suddenly lost its support, resulting in it swiftly crumbling to the ground.

Naturally, the massive sword in front of the entrance was not a real sword. It was made out of granite and concrete stacked together. The reason it had stood for thousands of years was because their founder's Sword Intent had been keeping it in place.

However, with their founder's Sword Intent pulsating furiously, seemingly on the verge of bursting out at any moment, this massive but delicate structure immediately lost its support.

Hong long long!

As the sword collapsed, the massive gates also came to the limits of their durability and came crumbling down. Countless rocks of all sizes came pattering down to earth, producing craters of massive proportions one after another.

At the same time, with the collapse of the structure containing it, the Sword Intent within the massive sword darted into the distance and vanished without a trace.

“What the hell just happened?”

Looking at the wasteland and clouds of dust beneath them, the two elders were completely frenzied.

The majestic sword and grand mountain gate that our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion pride ourselves for... have been destroyed just like that?

...

“Why? It still isn't working at all!”

Running through all of the Sword Intents that he had experienced in his lifetime, he looked at the manifestation of Sword Intent before him, and it still had not exceeded a meter. This left him feeling so frustrated that he could have exploded on the spot.

He was a renowned swordmaster on the Master Teacher Continent!

If others found out that his was only a meter long, he would die of embarrassment!

Zhang Xuan felt so exasperated that even his will to live was starting to wilt.

“Forget it, I guess this is my limit then...” Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan was just about to retract his Sword Intent when a blur suddenly flashed across his eyes.

His head suddenly jolted back a little as it felt like something had entered his head, and the next moment, he felt an excruciating sharpness assaulting his consciousness.

Hu!

The golden page in the Library of Heaven’s Path flew out.

Padah!

It quickly sealed whatever had entered Zhang Xuan’s head.

“W-what? My golden page!” Zhang Xuan nearly fainted from shock.

That was the golden page that he had received not too long ago from Dan Xiaotian’s earnest acknowledgement. It was going to be his greatest trump card on the Azure. He would rather fight many duels and drink the bathwater of a stupid gourd in order to recover from his injuries than use the golden page.

Yet, it had suddenly flown out of its own accord to seal something. What a waste!

An intense ache assaulted Zhang Xuan’s heart, and he nearly stopped breathing.

Why were things not going his way at all?

He had been thinking of going into the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s Ethereal Hall to challenge their sect leader and elders, but without the golden page, he would not be able to protect himself if those old fogeys came looking for him to exact vengeance!

While one’s identity was concealed in normal Ethereal Halls, it would be naive to assume that it was the same for the

Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's. Considering that it was an independent server under the complete control of the sect, it should not be too difficult for the upper echelons to track him down.

"Let me see what the nonsense that wasted my baby is..." Gritting his teeth furiously, Zhang Xuan quickly retracted his sword qi before opening up the Book of Heaven's Path.

In it, he saw a pure congregation of sword qi swimming around like a goldfish in a fish tank.

"A golden page was wasted just on this thing?" Zhang Xuan felt the pressure clutching his heart tightening further.

It was already frustrating enough that he could not even manifest a meter, but who could have known that even his greatest trump card would be wasted on this nonsense?

Sighing deeply, he was just about to close the Book of Heaven's Path when he noticed something. He took a closer look at the sword qi, and his eyebrows suddenly shot up. This surge of sword qi felt strangely familiar to him.

"It seems to be from the same source as the Sword Intent that I felt from the massive sword at the entrance of the sect."

He was just about to reach out and touch it when flurried footsteps sounded outside.

"Brother Zhang Xuan, are you fine?"

Turning his head around, he saw that the door behind him was rattling nonstop. It felt like if he did not open the door soon, Elder Lu Yun and Dan Xiaotian would barge in to check on his safety.

"I'm fine!" Zhang Xuan shouted back.

He quickly slipped the Book of Heaven's Path back into the library before walking out. An Lushan was an official in the Tang dynasty. He held incredible power back then, serving as one of the regional commanders, which meant that he is able to mobilize the regional military at his own discretion. He eventually exploited that power to stage a rebellion, creating a rival Yan Dynasty and crowning himself as its emperor. His

rebellion is viewed to be one of the main reasons for the eventual downfall of the Tang dynasty. This is a reference to the 19th Poem in Li Bai's fifty-nine Ancient Style Poetry. This poem is portrayed from Li Bai's perspective, showing the contradictions of a poet in desiring to stay out of secular affairs yet still pained by the problems that plague his own country. The poet envisions himself living a transcendental life, meeting and enjoying life with the gods and goddesses of the world. Yet, when he gazes down, he sees enemy troops marching on his homeland and the evil An Lushan wearing the noble coronet of an official and using his power for vile deeds.

1948 There Was a Sword During Your Examination?

Opening the door, Zhang Xuan saw Elder Lu Yun and Dan Xiaotian looking at him with tense looks on their faces.

“What’s wrong?” Zhang Xuan frowned upon seeing the solemn looks on their faces.

He just went in to have his swordsmanship evaluated. Was there a need for the two of them to be this worried?

On the other hand, Elder Lu Yun heaved a sigh of relief upon seeing that Zhang Xuan was unharmed, but he couldn’t help but ask doubtfully, “You aren’t injured?”

“Injured?” Zhang Xuan was slightly baffled by Elder Lu Yun’s abrupt question. “I just went in to try out my swordsmanship... Is there anything that could have injured me inside?”

Was there actually some kind of trick to this examination that requires the sword practitioner to pit his life on the line? So, if one didn’t get injured, one’s manifestation of Sword Intent wouldn’t be able to get too far?

“No, that’s not it. I mean... Teacher, just take a look at it for yourself...” Seeing the confused look on his teacher’s face, Dan Xiaotian scratched his head as he gestured to the surroundings.

Zhang Xuan looked around him, and he couldn’t help but widen his eyes in shock.

Cultivators were streaming out from the rooms all around, and every single one of them had pale faces and were coughing out mouthfuls of blood. Their faces looked so withered that it seemed as if someone had just violated them again and again.

Just what kind of a disaster had happened here?

“Is the swordsmanship evaluation... supposed to be so extreme? I mean, Xiaotian, you didn’t cough any blood earlier when I saw you earlier...” Zhang Xuan was appalled.

“No, this is not due to the swordsmanship evaluation. Earlier, during the midst of your test, an extremely powerful Sword Intent suddenly emerged. Due to the vast disparity in the tier of their Sword Intents, the others had their Sword Intents suppressed, thus resulting in the current situation!” Elder Lu Yun explained.

As an external elder, Elder Lu Yun had a deep understanding of swordsmanship. While he wasn’t in one of the rooms earlier, he could still clearly feel the tremendous strength of that Sword Intent.

It felt almost as if a regal dragon were gazing down on all of them. In that dragon’s eyes, all other Sword Intents were probably no different from mere ants.

“An extremely powerful Sword Intent? Could it be something that has reached the level of Sword God?” Zhang Xuan was stunned for a moment before he hurriedly asked.

Something that exciting actually happened while he was concentrating on his examination?

“It would be of the level of a Ten Li Sword God at the very least!” Elder Lu Yun replied grimly.

He had never seen a Ten Li Sword God before, but this was the level of the most formidable sword practitioner recorded in the history of the sect. The earlier pressure was enough to crush everyone’s Sword Intent, rendering them unable to retaliate at all... That was more than enough to show the sword practitioner’s unparalleled strength!

Even if that sword practitioner wasn’t a Ten Li Sword God, he probably wouldn’t be too far away from that.

As for anything higher than that... it was not something his mind could conceptualize anymore.

After all, in the past several thousand years of the sect’s history, there had only been a single man who had reached this level.

“Ten Li Sword God?” Zhang Xuan was astonished. An excited gleam crept into his eyes as he asked, “Elder Lu Yun, do you know who that person is?”

His manifestation of Sword Intent couldn’t even go beyond a meter, but the other party was able to extend it to an unimaginable length of ten li... He would love more than anything to witness the true strength of an expert of such caliber!

He was still thinking that he could use his superior strength amongst cultivators of the same realm to dominate the local Ethereal Hall, but from the looks of it, it seemed like he had been underestimating his opponents. There were actually plenty of formidable opponents here, and some of them might even be far stronger than him.

A Ten Li Sword God...

That was the title bestowed experts who had reached the very pinnacle of swordsmanship. Probably even he would have to kneel in defeat if he were to encounter a Ten Li Sword God!

“I’m afraid that I don’t have any idea...” Elder Lu Yun shook his head.

The results of the swordsmanship evaluation were private. Unless one was in an adjacent room and witnessed the feat personally, or one had somehow acquired the individual’s result jade token, otherwise there was no way of knowing how well one performed.

“Right, what is the result of your swordsmanship evaluation?” Elder Lu Yun asked curiously.

To be honest, he was extremely curious about Zhang Xuan.

While Dan Xiaotian had claimed that Zhang Xuan was his friend, he could tell that something was peculiar about the relationship between the two. For one, Dan Xiaotian was extremely heeding of Zhang Xuan’s words. Even good friends wouldn’t be so obedient to one another, right?

Another thing that sparked his doubt was the extreme level of respect that Elder Yi and Cao Chengli displayed toward Zhang Xuan.

It was just that Zhang Xuan had kept a low profile all along. He had tried several times to sound the young man out, but in the end, he felt like he had been the one who was sounded out instead. Furthermore, it felt like the young man knew nothing much about the Forsaken Continent, and he kept pressing for more details about what that should have been common knowledge here.

It was due to these doubts in his mind that he allowed Zhang Xuan to come along to the Sword God Hall too. He was hoping to catch a glimpse of the latter's strength.

Otherwise, there was no way he would bring an outsider in that easily. After all, using the facilities here weren't cheap at all!

"My results?" Zhang Xuan's face immediately soured. "I think that we can still remain friends if you don't ask this question."

"Even if you don't want to say, I can just head in to take a look myself..." Elder Lu Yun replied with a casual shrug.

He walked into the room, and a moment later, he came out with the result jade token in his hand. Inscribed on it was Zhang Xuan's earlier result.

It seemed like Zhang Xuan had come out in too much of a hurry that he forgot to take it when he left earlier.

With a triumphant smile, he lowered his head to take a look, only to find his lips twitching in the next moment.

"2.5 chi? You didn't even reach... one meter?" Even Elder Lu Yun couldn't help but feel terribly awkward in Zhang Xuan's place.

It was no wonder why Zhang Xuan refused to speak of his results. Such a result was indeed something that mustn't be spoken of!

Dan Xiaotian also took a glance at the jade token, but contrary to Elder Lu Yun's awkwardness, his eyes gleamed with admiration instead.

All along, his teacher had said that he was humble and wanted to maintain a low profile. This was solid evidence that what he

had been saying all this while wasn't just empty words! He was really the very personification of low profile itself!

Even by executing the sword art his teacher had taught him, he could acquire an unbelievable result of 499 meters with ease. Yet, when his teacher went in, he held himself back by so much that his result didn't even reach one meter... Just how transcendental must one's state of mind be to completely disregard honor and glory and live one's life solely based on one's principles?

On the other hand, he took another person's credit for his own and treated it as if his own accomplishment... Could it be that his teacher had seen through his facade and was trying to teach him a life lesson through this?

It seemed like he still had a lot to learn from.

On the other hand, when Zhang Xuan saw Elder Lu Yun taking out the jade token and flashing it in front of his disciple, in that very instant, the thought of simply crashing his head into the nearby wall and ending his life really flickered across his mind.

Never once in his entire lifetime since transcending over to this world had he been humiliated like that in front of his disciples before!

Stifled. My heart feels so stifled!!

"Alright, shall we return?" Elder Lu Yun was the one who broke the silent awkwardness in the air.

When he saw so many people spurting blood but that this fellow was perfectly fine, the notion that this fellow might have been the Ten Li Sword God crossed his mind for a moment. But when he saw the record on the jade token... he had indeed been thinking too much into it!

A Sword Intent of less than one meter was pretty much nonexistent. With such a weak Sword Intent, it wasn't surprising that he couldn't sense that overwhelming Sword Intent that was crushing down on the Sword God Hall earlier, and naturally, he wouldn't be harmed by the backlash from the suppression either.

As for whom the Sword God was... as an external elder, he wasn't privy to such information. A genius who had reached the level of a Sword God was already far beyond his jurisdiction. This was a matter for the top echelons to deal with.

After escorting Dan Xiaotian and Zhang Xuan back to their residence, Elder Lu Yun clasped his fist and bade farewell.

After Dan Xiaotian cleared his examination, he still had to bring his result jade token to the Elder's Conference to apply for an inner disciple token for him. For bringing in a genius whose manifestation of Sword Intent was able to extend for 499 meters, the rewards were bound to be handsome.

Perhaps, he could use this as an impetus to push for a promotion to become an internal elder!

Sitting on the aerial beast, it didn't take long for Elder Lu Yun to arrive at the Elder Council.

Before entering the premises, he saw quite a few elders whom he was familiar with rushing in his direction.

They were all internal elders of the sect. Prior to their promotion, they worked with the outer disciples as well, and it was then that they got close to one another. However, due to the differences in their job scope, it was hard for them to keep in contact with one another nowadays.

"Elder Mu, what are you in such a rush for? Did something happen?"

Seeing the flustered look on everyone's faces, Elder Lu Yun couldn't help but stop the elder whom he was closest to and asked.

"Such a huge matter happened, but you haven't heard of it?" Elder Mu was a scrawny old man with green beard. He was dressed in blue silk robe. "Oh right, I forgot that you are just an external elder. You aren't qualified to participate in the Elder Council, so it's only normal that you didn't hear of it..."

"..."

Elder Lu Yun suddenly felt an urge to punch the old man in front of him.

“Don’t get angry. You know that I have always been so forthright with my words, saying whatever I want to...” Elder Mu said with a light chuckle. “You should know of the First Elder He Tian, right?”

“Un!” Elder Lu Yun nodded.

As the First Elder, He Tian wielded a lot of power within the sect. While the sect leader was not present, he would have discretionary powers to make decisions on everything in the sect.

“It’s fine that you don’t know him too. There’s no need to go along with me just because you feel awkward. I mean, it’s only normal that you wouldn’t get to see him given that you are only an external elder...” Elder Mu waved his hand and said.

Veins bulged out on Elder Lu Yun’s temples as his knuckles cracked under the pressure. Taking in a deep breath, he interjected, “I think you can get right to point. What happened to Elder He Tian?”

“Elder He has just sent a message to all internal elders and above that, saying that... the mountain gate and the massive sword have collapsed!” Elder Mu exclaimed. Then, he suddenly tilted his head as realization seemed to have struck him, “Ah, that might be why you didn’t receive the message. You are just an external elder after all...”

“The mountain gate and massive sword collapsed?” Elder Lu Yun widened his eyes in astonishment.

The mountain gate and the massive sword could be said to be the insignia of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and it represented its motto ‘With ambitions above the clouds, shatter the Nine Heavens!’.

But those two actually collapsed...

This would be a huge blow to the prestige and reputation of the sect!

“Why would it collapse? What happened?” Elder Lu Yun asked anxiously.

“I have no idea either. Earlier, there was an incredibly powerful Sword Intent—you should have felt it yourself too. The Sword Intent seemed to have swayed the Sword Intent within the massive sword, resulting in its collapse...” Elder Mu was also not too sure about the details of the matter. Shaking his head, he said, “Alright, I need to attend the Elder Council that is exclusive for inner elders and above, so I can’t continue chatting with you anymore...”

After which, he quickly turned around and rushed into the Elder Council.

“That fellow really hasn’t changed at all...” Elder Lu Yun sighed helplessly.

Due to his mouth, Elder Mu had offended far too many people over the years. After so many years, he still hadn’t changed that bad habit of his.

But in any case, bearing through the pain, he still managed to acquire a crucial message from the other party—the massive sword and mountain gate had fallen!

“Sword Intent... Could it really be the doing of the Ten Li Sword God earlier?” Elder Lu Yun thought.

Having felt that Sword Intent himself, he knew that it was extraordinary... but he didn’t know that it was actually that powerful!

To be able to sway even the Sword Intent the founder had sealed within the massive sword...

Just who in the world could that Ten Li Sword God be?

“Since the elders are in a serious meeting at the moment, would it inappropriate if I walk in right now to report about Dan Xiaotian?” Elder Lu Yun thought.

Considering the severe implications caused by the collapse of the mountain gate and massive sword, it didn’t seem to appropriate for him to barge in at this moment to report about a new inner disciple.

“Screw it! I think I should still make the trip in. After all, it was Dan Xiaotian’s first try and he has already achieved a score of 499 meters. That is even more formidable than most core disciples. More importantly, his cultivation is only at Ancient Sage 1-dan at the moment... I think that the elders will regard this matter highly, and my reward should be generous too!” Elder Lu Yun eventually made up his mind.

The intake of talents was an important issue to the sect too. With all of the important elders around, there should be a greater chance of promotion for him.

Putting aside all of his hesitation, Elder Lu Yun began making his way into the Elder Council.

...

Meanwhile, in the residence of an inner disciple, Zhang Xuan was staring at his disciple intently. Eventually, unable to suppress the doubt in his heart anymore, he asked, “How did you manage to manifest your Sword Intent to 499 meters?”

This matter had been weighing on his mind all this while. He was unable to manifest it by even a single meter, but this half-baked disciple of his was able to get it that far. No matter how he looked at it, it simply didn’t make sense.

“I...” Hearing his teacher’s question, Dan Xiaotian scratched his head in embarrassment and said, “I used the sword art teacher has imparted to me and tossed the sword outward... I didn’t think that the manifestation of Sword Intent would fly that far as well!”

“You tossed the sword? The conceptualization behind that move is indeed not too bad... Wait a moment!” Zhang Xuan’s lips twitched as he noticed an anomaly in Dan Xiaotian’s words.

“You mentioned that you tossed a sword. Does that mean that you were holding a sword during your test?” “2.5 chi = 83.33cm

1949 Berserk

“Of course! How could a sword practitioner exert his Sword Intent and undergo the test without a sword in hand...” Before Dan Xiaotian could finish his words, the truth suddenly dawned on him, causing his lips to twitch. “Ah... I tossed the sword away after my test... Teacher, it can’t be that you tried the test without a sword in hand?”

Due to his usual swordsmanship being too weak, he had eventually resorted to the sword toss... and because there was no wall in front, he had no idea where the sword had gone, so he could not retrieve it.

He had not thought much into it then, but when his teacher asked that question, he suddenly found himself utterly dumbfounded.

How could one exert Sword Intent without a sword?

This was just like trying to squeeze milk out of a bull! How could you squeeze something that did not exist?

Even so, his teacher had still achieved the same result as him.

He really had managed to squeeze milk out of a bull.

How did he manage to do it?

Dan Xiaotian felt as if he was going mad.

“Cough cough...” Hearing Dan Xiaotian’s explanation, Zhang Xuan felt a stifled feeling in his chest.

The heck! After all of the effort I put into it, it turns out that the reason my result is so poor is because you lost the sword!

How did I end up taking in such an unreliable student?

It’s no wonder I couldn’t even reach one meter! In the end, it wasn’t my problem at all...

“Keep this matter to yourself. I’ll be going to cultivate!” Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan waved his hand before returning to his own room.

He meditated for a moment to assuage the stifled feeling in his chest before taking out the Book of Heaven's Path once more.

He had wasted a golden page just to seal some sword qi. No matter what, he had to make sense out of what was going on!

Thus, he flipped open the Book of Heaven's Path and tapped his finger lightly on the sword qi that was swimming around freely.

Hu!

A surge of knowledge flowed from the tip of his finger into his consciousness, leaving him with a splitting headache in an instant. It felt as if something was squeezing against his head, attempting to burst it open. Following which, the deep chime of a bell echoed loudly in his mind.

"The Way of the Sword is not a true path belonging to the heavens. It's a path created by humans..." A voice began speaking, and before long, Zhang Xuan found himself completely immersed in it.

This interpretation of swordsmanship was far more advanced than what he had learned, such that even the Heaven's Path Sword Art felt like a small hill standing before a true mountain.

While the Heaven's Path Sword Art was flawless, that was only so by the standards of the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent. In the face of this swordsmanship, it was truly full of flaws.

This was similar to how knowledge that one had learned in one's earlier years might not necessarily hold true by the time one reached university.

The pursuit of knowledge was an endless journey, and even the heavens were not a constant force that stagnated on the spot. New creations were constantly brought into the world, and the heavens assimilated those new creations into their system.

What was deemed the truth one day might become nothing more than a joke a hundred years later.

It's no wonder I was unable to adapt easily to the spiritual energy in the Azure back then even though I cultivate the Heaven's Path Divine Art... It turns out, to the heavens of the Azure, my cultivation technique is filled with flaws.

Speaking of which, if the heavens of each world have their own definition of what is right and what was wrong... does an absolute gauge of what is right and wrong truly exist?

Every single country had its own laws and culture. What was right in one country might end up warranting the death penalty in another. Was it the same for the heavens?

After all, what the heavens of the Master Teacher Continent deemed to be right was being rejected by the heavens of the Azure.

If so, does it mean that everything I have cultivated is actually flawed?

Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a splitting pain in his head.

Ever since he started cultivating two years ago, he had held unwavering trust in the Heaven's Path Divine Art. He had believed that it was right because that was how the Library of Heaven's Path reflected it to be, but it turned out that even 'perfection' was a relative concept depending on the heavens of each world.

This left him feeling a little terrified.

He tried to drive his cultivation technique, but in a momentary daze, he heard a voice in the depths of his consciousness shouting at him, This is flawed!

He tried to execute his battle technique, but the same voice shouted back at him, Flawed, flawed, flawed! They are all flawed!

His eyes slowly reddened as steam began rising from the top of his head. His zhenqi billowed furiously, and it seemed as if something was going to erupt from him.

If a cultivator was watching this scene, he would surely understand.

This young man's cultivation had gone berserk!

Zhang Xuan had never faced any hiccups practicing the Heaven's Path Divine Art, but less than half a month after he arrived in the Azure, his cultivation had actually gone berserk!

And from the looks of it, it seemed like he would be crushed if he failed to overcome this ordeal.

Hong long long!

As Zhang Xuan's faith started to crumble, the Library of Heaven's Path in his mind began trembling nonstop. It was as if an earthquake had struck, and the entire library was on the verge of falling apart.

His doubt was destroying everything within him.

Pu!

The pressure placed on his body finally reached a limit, and blood spurted from his mouth.

Weng!

Just as it felt like everything would descend into chaos, the red pendant that Zhang Xuan wore around his neck suddenly emanated a warm glow and embraced him.

This warmth felt soothing like the morning sun, and it swiftly calmed down Zhang Xuan's flustered mind. His reddened eyes also slowly reverted back to normal.

As his consciousness slowly cleared up, an answer slowly emerged before him.

I see. It isn't that what I have learned is wrong, but it was just limited in terms of perspective. When viewing things from a higher angle, one is able to get a more complete picture of everything...

This reminded him of the story of blind men touching an elephant. One touched the leg of an elephant and said that it was like a pillar. One touched the stomach and said that it was like a wall. One touched the tail and said that it was like a snake...

Were they wrong?

From an individual perspective, what they were saying was not wrong, but on the whole scale of things, their answers deviated from the truth.

This was the problem caused by being unable to view things from a broader perspective.

However, given how deep and profound cultivation was, it was impossible for anyone to get an oversight of what cultivation truly was. Perhaps the Library of Heaven's Path was the existence closest to achieving that, but even it was not entirely infallible. It was limited by the world that it was in.

The Azure was of a higher dimension than the Master Teacher Continent, and it harnessed a bigger trove of information for cultivators to work with in order to perfect their arts. That was why he was starting to find flaws in the techniques that he practiced.

It was not to say what he had practiced was wrong, but when what he had learned previously was applied to the greater and vaster world of the Azure, his previous knowledge proved somewhat limited.

It was the same as what was going on now.

This was similar to scientific knowledge in his previous world. There was no doubt that newer and more complete theories would eventually be formulated, but that did not render everything that they were currently learning meaningless.

Rather, the current scientific knowledge of today served building blocks that could be used, removed, added on to, or reshaped in order to broaden their horizons and further what they already know.

So, that's how it is, Zhang Xuan thought.

With this comprehension, the Sword Intent finally fused together with him, granting him an even deeper understanding of swordsmanship.

The Speed Sword Quintessence, Strength Sword Quintessence, and Defense Sword Quintessence that he had learned previously flowed through his head and swiftly fused together to create a complete swordsmanship system.

It's no wonder no one on the Master Teacher Continent was able to fuse the many Quintessences together as one. Back then, it was thought that it was an impossible feat due to the vastly different attributes of each Quintessence... but it turns out that isn't the case. The problem is that the angle at which they are looking at swordsmanship was simply too low!

He had heard from his father, Zhang Zhenxing, that there were very few people who had comprehended two Sword Quintessences, and those who had mastered three Sword Quintessences barely existed in the world. Given so, fusing them together felt nothing more than a pipe dream.

He had tried searching for a way then but to no avail. Eventually, he had attributed it to a lack of corresponding books and the limitations of his talent...

But from the looks of it, it simply meant that Master Teacher Continent had not been ready for it then.

Take the famous scientist, Isaac Newton, from his previous world for example. Did he discover gravity just because an apple fell on his head?

No, that was not entirely right. It was because he was already standing on the shoulders of giants. There were countless scientists before him who had propped up the accumulation of knowledge to a level where he could finally open the door to a new world.

The Master Teacher Continent simply had not reached a sufficient level of accumulation in order to open the door to new swordsmanship yet.

Weng!

As the understanding of the various Quintessences fused into one in his head, Zhang Xuan's aura swiftly grew. His presence was becoming more and more like a sharp sword. His physical body, zhenqi, and soul were undergoing immense refinement and tempering.

With such a level of swordsmanship, I'll be truly invincible within my cultivation realm!

The reason there was no one who was a match for him in the Ethereal Hall was simply because Starlight City was far too remote.

But as he traveled to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and felt the conceptualization from the massive sword at the entrance, he had come to realize that he was not as strong as he thought he was. However, in his current state, even if the Ten Li Sword God back at the Sword God Hall appeared before him, he was confident that he would be able to defeat the other party in a battle of swordsmanship.

Weng!

After fusing with the Sword Intent, the golden page suddenly blazed up and vanished with a puff of smoke.

“It wasn’t a waste at all...” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he opened his eyes once more.

That Sword Intent seemed to have put him on top of the shoulders of a giant in an instant, pushing his swordsmanship to levels that he would never have imagined possible before. From that alone, he had profited hugely.

Otherwise, even if he had ten years or a hundred years to himself, there was no saying whether he would have been able to comprehend this much.

“Ruoxin, thank you,” Zhang Xuan muttered as he clasped the red pendant hanging around his neck.

When his cultivation went berserk earlier, his mind had been a complete mess. He had already lost control over himself, and even the Library of Heaven’s Path had nearly been destroyed by that calamity. It was the pendant that Luo Ruoxin had given him that had saved him in that crucial moment.

Could it be for the same reason that she had placed the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn in the Library of Heaven’s Path? Did she anticipate some kind of scenario where he would require the Great Codex of Spring and Autumn in the future?

Anticipate?

Zhang Xuan lowered his head to take a closer look at the red pendant. With a crimson as deep as blood, it still looked as conspicuous as it previously did. But for some reason, Zhang Xuan felt like it had turned a little dimmer.

Just who in the world are you?

She knew about the Library of Heaven's Path, and it was clear that she had predicted that something like this would happen. The more he came to know about her, the more mysterious she seemed to become.

"I shouldn't waste time idling around here anymore. I should find the sect leader or the elders and challenge them. Hopefully, I can get some news regarding the Spirit God Palace from them," Zhang Xuan muttered as he stood up and walked out.

Walking into the courtyard, he found the subordinate whom he had recently taken in and issued him his first mission. "Cao Chengli, I have something I need you to do. I want you to look into how the Ethereal Token of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion can be acquired, and if it's convenient, I want you to bring a couple of them to me!"

1950 Kong shi? 1

In the Elder Council, all of the inner elders and above were gathered together. The atmosphere was a little heavy.

“The books that I organized with great difficulty in the Compendium of Sword Wisdom sensed the Sword Intent and bowed simultaneously to it. In the end, they collapsed together from the shelves and ended up getting messed up once more,” Elder Wei said indignantly.

“The massive sword that our founder left behind collapsed, causing the mountain gate to fall apart as well,” the bubbly elder reported.

Another elder clasped his fist and said, “The disciples who were having their swordsmanship evaluated in the Sword God Hall were all suppressed by that Sword Intent and ended up sustaining some injuries.”

After hearing the reports from all of the elders, Elder He, who sat at the centermost position in the room, stood up and gazed at the faces around him. “I believe all of you should have some understanding of what happened earlier!”

“Yes!” the crowd replied.

“Ever since the passing of our founder, who comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, no other sword practitioner has reached the same height as him,” Elder He said. “Even the most talented individual in our history was only able to reach Ten Li Sword God. But today, someone has comprehended our ancestor’s Sword Intent, causing the massive sword at the entrance to collapse and all of our Sword Books to bow in submission. I would like to hear your opinions regarding this matter!”

“I think that the emergence of such a talented sword practitioner is the blessing of our sect! Back then, our founder appeared from nowhere and came to fame with a single battle. He stole half a character of ‘神 (God)’ from the Hall of Gods,

and that's where the term 'Sword God Hall' and the title 'Sword God' come from!" an elder said in agitation.

"For thousands of years, our predecessors have tried to bring the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion back to its former glory, but it's a pity that no one was able to reach the same height as our founder. But today, someone managed to comprehend our founder's Sword Intent. This means that it's just a matter of time before our sect rises through the ranks!"

"Indeed. Of the Six Sects, even Starchaser Palace, which can communicate with the gods, dare not carry the name of 'god'. Our sect's Sword God Hall is the only exception! And right now, another person has comprehended the same Gods' Sword Intent that our founder did. As long as we nurture him well, our Sword Pavilion could very well complete the half a character, thus becoming the Sword God Pavilion. That would make us an existence equivalent to the Ethereal Hall!"

"For this half a character, many of our predecessors have fought hard and bled rivers, but success still eludes us so... Finally, a ray of hope is before us..."

Quite a few elders rose up in agitation.

"The person who has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent is indeed likely able to acquire the other half a character from the Hall of Gods, thus allowing our sect to bear the full '神 (God)' character! This is the wish, as well as the greatest honor we can bring to the sect!" Elder He nodded as he clenched his fists tightly.

The Forsaken Continent was a place that was abandoned by the gods. There was only one way to receive the recognition of the gods, and that was to acquire the bestowed character of the gods!

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was the only one among the Six Sects that had been bestowed with a character, but it was only half of one. That meant that they were unqualified to place it amid the name of their sect. So, they had chosen to put it within their examination hall instead.

The reason he had stood at the entrance for thirty years, cultivating diligently regardless of the weather, was in the hope of comprehending the conceptualization of the founder and grasping the crux behind the unparalleled Sword Intent.

However, his hard work did not pay off.

Eventually, the one who comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent was not him. Nevertheless, it was still a huge blessing for the sect for something like this to happen!

“Relay my orders! Investigate this matter carefully, and find out who released the Sword intent. If any of you uncover the identity of the person, you are to report the matter to me immediately. There mustn't be any delay at all!” Elder He instructed strictly.

“Also, this matter has to be kept with the utmost confidentiality. Anyone who reveals it to outsiders will be viewed as traitors of the sect, and they will be shown no mercy!”

“Yes!” The crowd nodded grimly.

“Before I end the meeting, let me re-emphasize the agenda. Uncover the person behind the Gods' Sword Intent and report it to me. I'll make sure to relay the matter promptly to the sect leader and ensure that the sect leader rewards him personally!”

“A personal reward from the sect leader?”

Everyone's eyes reddened in excitement.

The sect leader possessed unfathomable capabilities. A reward from him was bound to be extraordinary.

Just when everyone was getting hyped up about uncovering the identity of the mysterious sword practitioner, a voice suddenly sounded outside.

“Elder He, External Elder Lu Yun seeks an audience with the Elder Council!”

“Lu Yun?” Elder He frowned.

Given the scale of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, there were many elders to manage the administrative affairs of the sect. Generally speaking, external elders were unqualified to

seek an audience with the Elder Council due to their low standing.

“What’s the matter?”

“He said that he has discovered a talented sword practitioner, so he has come here to report it. He hopes to apply for the position of an inner disciple for him,” the voice reported.

“He has discovered a talented sword practitioner?” Elder He’s eyebrows shot up. “Summon him in!”

The reason he had gathered everyone to conduct this meeting was to uncover the identity of the genius who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. Elder Lu Yun’s sudden arrival at that moment sparked some hope in his heart.

It did not take long for Elder Lu Yun to arrive before the Elder Council.

“You mentioned that you have found a talented sword practitioner. What happened?” Elder He asked.

“First Elder, I am responsible for recruiting outer disciples and menial disciples. While I was passing by Starlight City...”

Elder Lu Yun swiftly went through the entire incident, including his encounter with World’s Edge, Dan Xiaotian easily defeating Huo Jianghe, and the manifestation of his Sword Intent reaching 499 meters.

“Here is the jade token he left behind in the Sword God Hall!”

“He’s only an Ancient Sage 1-dan cultivator, but he’s already able to extend his Sword Intent to nearly a li?” Elder He was visibly astonished.

He was not the one. The other elders in the council also widened their eyes in disbelief.

It was conventionally viewed that one’s ability to conceptualize higher swordsmanship was related to one’s innate talent. However, without sufficiently powerful cultivation, one would be unable to seal or drive a powerful Sword Intent!

For this reason, it was inconceivable for an Ancient Sage 1-dan cultivator to actually manifest his Sword Intent to nearly a li.

That was a feat that far surpassed that of other core disciples! This was indubitably talent at a terrifying scale.

The bubbly elder turned to Elder He and asked, "Could it be him?"

"A seventeen-year-old Ancient Sage 1-dan sword practitioner... I don't think that it's likely that he will have been able to comprehend the Gods' Sword Intent. Even if he's able to, he wouldn't be able to drive such tremendous power. Nevertheless, there's no doubt that he's a rare genius!" Elder He nodded.

Even someone of Elder He's cultivation realm might not necessarily be able to harness the tremendous might of the Gods' Sword Intent, let alone the fact that the other party was a seventeen-year-old Ancient Sage 1-dan young man.

Thus, he swiftly eliminated this possibility.

"Our sect welcomes talented individuals with open arms. Dan Xiaotian will hereby be promoted to an inner disciple, and he shall be bestowed with the privileges of a core disciple. When he reaches Pseudo Immortal realm, he'll be promoted directly without undergoing the examination!"

At this point, Elder He paused for a moment before continuing on. "Elder Lu Yun, your merit for discovering such a talent for the sect will not go unnoticed. You are bestowed with a Grand Divinity Pill, and Elder Wu and Elder Bai will aid you in pushing for a breakthrough to the True Immortal realm. Once you succeed, you will be promoted to an inner elder of the sect!"

Hearing that he had received such a huge reward, Elder Lu Yun immediately knelt onto the floor and exclaimed, "Thank you, Elder He!"

The Grand Divinity Pill was one of the most precious pills in the sect. Every single one of them was extremely precious, and

it was one of the few cultivation resources that one could not buy even with ample money.

If a Heavenly Pseudo Immortal cultivator used a single one of those, their chances at achieving a breakthrough would be increased by twenty percent. With this, the odds of him reaching the True Immortal realm would be greatly increased!

Not to mention, he would have the guidance of Elder Wu and Elder Bai too!

It could be said that he was not too far away from becoming an inner elder anymore!

“Those who have accrued merit are rewarded, and those who have erred are punished. This is the rule of our sect, so there’s no need for you to stand on ceremony. Until you become an inner elder, you’ll be in charge of managing Dan Xiaotian. If you notice anything peculiar, report it to me immediately!” Elder He instructed.

“Yes, First Elder!” Elder Lu Yun replied excitedly before backing out of the Elder Council.

“Un!” Elder He took one last look around the Elder Council before waving his hand. “Alright, you’re dismissed. Remember what I’ve said. As long as you find that sword practitioner, your rewards will be even more generous than those given to Elder Lu!”

“Yes, First Elder!” the crowd replied before leaving the Elder Council.

To them, while Dan Xiaotian was indeed a genius, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion did not lack people like him. There were plenty of those who could reach two li among the core disciples.

There was no doubt that they were surprised by Dan Xiaotian’s feat, but that was all. Unlike the sword practitioner who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, his presence would not change the sect at its core.

Everyone quickly left the room, leaving behind Elder He and the bubbly elder.

“Are you going to send a message to the sect leader?” the bubbly elder asked.

“Yes. This matter is of grave importance, so we must inform the sect leader of it as soon as possible!” Elder He replied with a nod.

“Our sect leader is currently with the leaders of the other five sects to discuss the once in a century ‘Azure Bridge’. Will we be disturbing him by contacting him at this juncture?” the bubbly elder asked worriedly.

“I doubt it. Even if we don’t inform our sect leader of it right away, those from the other sects will surely transmit the news too. It’ll be terrible if our sect leader doesn’t receive firsthand news from us directly!” Elder He replied.

He took out a special jade token and swiftly carved a message on it. After he was done, the special jade token suddenly burst into flames before vanishing from sight.

...

White clouds drifted peacefully on a mountain peak of unimaginable height. From afar, the melodious cries from a flock of divine cranes could faintly be heard. A small stream trickled not too far away, and the light refreshing fragrance of nature lingered in the air.

From afar, this place looked no different from paradise.

Beneath an ancient pine tree, several figures were gathered in a circle.

A beautiful lady raised her teacup and sipped on it gracefully before speaking nonchalantly. “I propose that we stick with our previous rules. There’s no need to waste our time bickering over the same matter again.”

“The rules we agreed on previously are fair and rational, but we have never succeeded even after so many attempts over the years. I fear that sticking to the conventions will get us nowhere,” an old man replied.

“Oh? You sound as if you have a better plan in mind. Why don’t you share it so that we can confer over it!” the beautiful

lady scoffed.

“Du Qingyuan, your Starchaser Palace is the only one among the Six Sects that is able to liaise with the Ethereal Hall. You should know that the main reason we are gathered here is to listen to your opinion on the matter. Could it be that you wish to remain here instead of finding a way out? If I’m not mistaken, your lifespan is already nearing its limits, right?” the middle-aged man seated opposite the beautiful lady said with a frown.

“It’s true that we are able to liaise with the Ethereal Hall, but you should also know what kind of existence the Ethereal Hall is. Just because we are able to liaise with it doesn’t mean that we have a complete understanding of the entity. Also, while my lifespan is indeed nearing its limits, if you think that our Starchaser Palace is a pushover just because of that, you can give it a try. I am more than happy to have a duel with you right here, right now!” The beautiful lady, Du Qingyuan, smirked coldly.

“Alright, calm down. We are here to discuss the matter, not to come to blows with one another!” The old man who spoke previously swiftly mediated between the two. “Sect Leader Qin, you should cool down a little. Palace Master Du, you also know that Sect Leader Qin has always been a little extreme with his words, so do bear with him a little. I don’t think that we’ll be able to come to a conclusion discussing the matter like this. Thus, I have already liaised with Hall Master Kong from the Ethereal Hall, and he should be arriving soon enough...”

Before the old man could finish his words, a scholarly middle-aged man dressed in a robe suddenly appeared before everyone. He had a faint smile on his lips.

“It seems like Brother Han understands me well...”

1951 Kong shi? 2

The arrival of the middle-aged man immediately prompted everyone to rise to their feet.

They might have been the leaders of the Six Sects, but they knew that there was a disparity in their positions compared to the middle-aged man before them.

The Six Sects were like six massive empires, each of them governing large swathes of land. However, the Ethereal Hall was an existence that covered the entire world. Wherever one could find humans, there was an Ethereal Hall and Ethereal Tokens.

Despite not possessing any land, its influence had already permeated the entire Forsaken Continent.

Not to mention, no one knew just how powerful the middle-aged man standing before them truly was.

Ordinary cultivators had a limit to their lifespan, but the concept of aging did not seem to apply to the middle-aged man before them. He first made his name several thousand years ago, such that there was no one in the world who did not know of him. Yet, he did not seem to have changed a bit since then.

Even though the few of them were powerhouses standing at the very top of the world, they still naturally deferred to him.

They clasped their fists and greeted him. "Paying respects to Hall Master Kong!"

"There's no need to stand on ceremony!" Hall Master Kong chuckled as he took his seat.

"The reason we have troubled Hall Master Kong to make a trip here is to discuss the matter concerning the Azure Bridge. Should we continue with the agreement that we made previously, or should we reshuffle the cards and negotiate a new arrangement?" the old man known as 'Brother Han' asked.

“Indeed. Four thousand years ago, you barged through the Azure Bridge and defeated the experts of the Hall of Gods, thus acquiring a single ‘神 (Ethereal)’ character. With that character, you created the Ethereal Hall. You have a greater understanding of the Hall of Gods than anyone else here, and there’s no one more suitable than you to clarify our doubts!” Sect Leader Qin said.

“I did enter the Hall of Gods, but the horrors that lie within aren’t something that can be summarized in just a few words. The Azure Bridge appears once every hundred years, but no one has succeeded in the past several thousand years. It’s about time to shake things up a little,” Hall Master Kong said with a chuckle.

He was just about to continue speaking when Brother Han suddenly flicked his wrist, and a jade token appeared in his hands.

Lowering his gaze to take a look, Brother Han’s eyes lit up.

“What’s wrong, Brother Han?” Sect Leader Qin asked.

“I just received a report from my sect members. A genius who has comprehended the Sword Intent left behind by the founder has just appeared!” Brother Han said with a chuckle.

“The Sword Intent left behind by your founder? You don’t mean... the Gods’ Sword Intent?” Hall Master Kong was slightly taken aback.

“Indeed!” Brother Han nodded in response.

“It’s said that the Gods’ Sword Intent can only be executed and comprehended by the gods. The person who has comprehended it is bound to achieve great things in the future!” Hall Master Kong’s eyes lit up as he asked with a smile, “May I know what’s the name of the sect member?”

“Well... I’m afraid that my elders are still looking into the matter at the moment. So far, they have only detected a resonance with the Sword Intent left behind by the founder,” Brother Han replied.

“I see!” Hall Master Kong nodded. “Since such a figure has appeared, I think there’s a greater need to change the rules concerning the Azure Bridge. Of course, we should discuss this matter only after you find that talented sword practitioner, Brother Han. We have to find out who the person is and what kind of abilities he wields in order to make concrete plans, right?”

“We concur.” The others nodded in agreement.

“Very well. We shall adjourn the meeting till further notice!” Hall Master Kong said.

“Un!”

Thus, the leaders of the Six Sects quickly went on their own ways.

Brother Han was just about to head back to the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion when he suddenly heard a gust of wind coming his way. The next moment, Hall Master Kong was already standing before him.

“Hall Master Kong!” Brother Han clasped his fist and bowed.

“Brother Han, there’s something that I wish to pass on to you. The person who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent is bound to play an essential role on the Azure Bridge. While I have no idea how powerful he is at the moment, as an elder, I would still like to bestow a gift upon him. This is a token representing my identity. If you find the person in question, please do give it to him. With this token, he’ll be able to purchase anything in the Ethereal Hall without spending any money!” Hall Master Kong smiled as he passed a jade token into Brother Han’s hands.

“Allow me to thank you on behalf of our disciple!” Brother Han clasped his fist and bowed grandly.

The Ethereal Hall was a power with influence all over the world. The fact that this jade token could purchase any cultivation resources for free meant that its value was inestimable!

It could be said that as long as a cultivator had this jade token in hand, all of the resources of the Forsaken Continent would

be in their possession. They would have no need to worry about money and the like anymore.

There was truly no greater gift than this!

“You’re too courteous,” Hall Master Kong replied with an amiable smile. “You should also know that the purpose of the Ethereal Hall’s existence is to strengthen cultivators. I view it as my responsibility to nurture the experts of the world.”

“Hall Master Kong, you are truly a magnanimous person. I am truly in awe. Pardon me, but there are some matters I have to attend to back at my sect. If there’s nothing else, I’ll be taking my leave.” Brother Han clasped his fist before flitting away swiftly.

Hall Master Kong placed his hands behind his back as he looked at Brother Han’s departing figure. It was impossible to tell what was running through his mind.

A moment later, he raised his head and looked into the sky. He could have been talking to another person, or perhaps it was just mumblings to himself. “I’ve waited so many years, and finally, my patience has paid off... Do come out soon. I don’t know how much longer I can wait...”

Hu!

With a gust of wind, Hall Master Kong vanished from sight.

...

Zhang Xuan was completely oblivious to what had happened at the Elder Council or the mountain. At that moment, he was looking right at Cao Chengli with a terribly displeased look on his face.

He had dispatched the latter to gather some news, but that fellow had ended up returning with a swollen face. If not for the surge of Heaven’s Path zhenqi that he had infused into the other party’s body previously, the other party might have died.

“I told you to gather news regarding the Ethereal Token, didn’t I? Just what did you do to land yourself in such a state?”

Zhang Xuan asked in vexation.

Even his previous butler, Sun Qiang, was more capable than this. He knew that any task that he entrusted to Sun Qiang would be accomplished impeccably. While Sun Qiang did love to brag, at the very least, he had never ended up getting pummeled so badly within an hour after heading out!

“This... I...” Cao Chengli’s face turned incredibly awkward.

After hearing Cao Chengli’s explanation, Zhang Xuan was rendered completely speechless.

In the end, Cao Chengli was still true to his nature as a bandit. While he was trying to gather information, he had seen a beautiful menial disciple and tried to flirt with her.

As a result, he had nearly gotten killed on the spot.

“Cao Chengli, I made an exception back then by taking you in. No matter how you were before, I expect you to keep yourself in line as long as you are under me. I don’t need someone unprincipled under me,” Zhang Xuan said sternly.

Cao Chengli was truly far too brazen!

The menial disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were at least at Great Sage 3-dan, and to dare to flirt with them with his current cultivation realm... he was courting death!

If others did not know that he was Dan Xiaotian’s servant, all that would have been left of him was just a cold, hard corpse.

“But Young Master, you also know that I have held it in for more than ten days. Furthermore, I didn’t lay my hands on her at all! I asked her as gentlemanly and politely as I could...” Cao Chengli’s face reddened in embarrassment.

He had always been an unrestrained man with a powerful libido, and his record of taking down seven women together with him at the brothel back then spoke a lot about him. Asking him to hold back for ten days was really pushing him.

He had thought that with his dashing looks, he could at least seduce one of the female menial disciples to get together with him. Yet, who could have known that he would be pummeled as soon as he started speaking?

Seeing how Cao Chengli was still adamantly insisting on his point on view, Zhang Xuan covered his head with his hand.

Dan Xiaotian was right; he should not have accepted this fellow.

He felt like his reputation was slowly being sullied by him!

“Enough! I don’t want to see such things happening again, understood? How did the matter I have entrusted to you go?”

Seeing that he had caught the Young Master’s ire, Cao Chengli did not dare run his mouth anymore. He quickly bowed slightly and reported, “Young Master, I have already looked into the matter, and the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s Ethereal Token is on sale in the inner disciples’ market. The price is roughly twenty Sword Pavilion Coins!”

“Twenty Sword Pavilion Coins?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

It did not sound like a lot of money, but he did not know the purchasing power of Sword Pavilion Coins either.

“How many Sword Pavilion Coins is a Basic Immortal Pill worth here?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Ah... I haven’t looked into that yet!” Cao Chengli replied with an embarrassed chuckle.

“Where is the inner disciples’ market then?”

“This...” Cao Chengli tilted his head and asked, “Should I look into that too?”

“What did you look into then?” Zhang Xuan’s face was growing more and more livid by the moment.

“The young lady who beat me up earlier is the subordinate of an inner disciple called Liu Lujie. She’s 1.7 meters tall, and her three sizes are 85, 74, 88. Her legs are at least a meter long, and they are fair and smooth. More importantly, their proportions are truly the work of a god. Young Master, let me tell you, I have seen a lot of women in my lifetime, and this lady definitely ranks among the top on my list.” Cao Chengli’s eyes lit up in excitement.

“Enough!” Zhang Xuan waved his hands furiously.

What the heck was that?

Instead of properly accomplishing whatever that was asked of him, he had spent his time uncovering such nonsense.

Just what the heck are your priorities?

Remember your responsibilities! You are here to serve us, not flirt with girls!

“Right now, head out and find where the inner disciples’ market is. If you dare return without finding it, I’ll have you castrated!” Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly.

With a flick of his finger, a surge of sword qi gathered above Zhang Xuan. It rumbled loudly as if it was ready to lay devastation upon something.

“Y-yes!”

Feeling a cold air around his crotch, Cao Chengli’s face paled as he immediately slammed his thighs shut in fear.

“And if you can’t find it by tonight... I’ll tame a stallion and let it have its way with you!” Zhang Xuan threatened menacingly.

Cao Chengli immediately clenched his bottom cheeks together in horror.

He had thought his new master to be a very prim and proper person. How could he have known that he would actually have such vile thoughts in mind?

To actually think of taming a stallion and using it against him...

All of a sudden, Cao Chengli remembered the horse that night who could use martial arts and was able to serve Zhang Xuan tea. If his master put his mind to it, he would really be able to do it!

No, I can’t allow that to happen! I’ll never be able to raise my head high as a man ever again!

“I’ll head out right now!” Without daring to utter a single useless word, Cao Chengli ran out of the room so quickly that it seemed as if he was fleeing from a monster.

This time, under Zhang Xuan's threat, Cao Chengli quickly returned with the necessary information.

"Young Master, the inner disciples' market is located at the foot of this mountain. I have also looked into the price of the Basic Immortal Pill, and a single one of them costs around two Sword Pavilion Coins!" Cao Chengli replied formally.

"A single Basic Immortal Pill is worth two Sword Pavilion Coins whereas the Ethereal Token costs twenty Sword Pavilion Coins? This... Isn't the disparity in price simply too huge?" Zhang Xuan was taken aback.

Back at Starlight City's Ethereal Hall, a Basic Immortal Pill was worth 100,000 Ethereal Coins whereas the Ethereal Token was only worth 20,000 Ethereal Coins!

Yet, the Ethereal Token was actually worth ten times more than a Basic Immortal Pill here!

This inflation was a little too frightening!

"I'm not too sure about the details, but these are the prices I have gathered so far," Cao Chengli explained as he squeezed his thighs tightly together, fearing that Zhang Xuan would make a move on him in a fit of anger.

"Bring me to the inner disciples' market! I want to take a look at it myself!"

Knowing that it was meaningless to waste his time on words, Zhang Xuan stood up and walked out of the room.

1952 Selling Bathwater

The inner disciples' market was an informal trading site managed and frequented by inner disciples. It was the place where inner disciples purchase and sell their possessions.

Under Cao Chengli's lead, it didn't take long for them to arrive at the destination.

The market looked rather shabby. In essence, it was just a small courtyard by the foot of the mountain. After flashing their tokens, Zhang Xuan and Cao Chengli were granted entry into the market.

As soon they entered, they saw quite a number of vendors around with a couple of goods placed before them.

Swords, cultivation technique manuals, medicinal herbs, pills, tamed beasts... It had most of the basic necessities that a cultivator would need covered!

Most of the goods they were selling weren't from the sect. Rather, they were the personal possessions that inner disciples had either acquired in the midst of their mission or brought over from their clans.

"We only accept Sword Pavilion Coins and not Basic Immortal Pills!"

This was the answer that Zhang Xuan received from the vendors when he tried to trade with them.

The main reason why they were selling their goods here was to earn some Sword Pavilion Coins so that they could enter the Compendium of Sword Wisdom and the Hall of Sparring Swords. Those were the places inner disciples would often head to in order to further their path in the Way of the Sword.

What should I do now? Zhang Xuan thought in frustration.

He thought that he would be able to exchange the Basic Immortal Pills he had acquired from Cao Chengli for money,

but who could have thought that none of them were accepting it at all!

What was most highly regarded in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was not one's cultivation but one's mastery in swordsmanship. Only with superior swordsmanship would a disciple stand out from his peers and be viewed as an asset to the sect. In return, the sect would provide him with ample resources required for him to advance his cultivation.

As such, cultivation resources such as Basic Immortal Pills were less valuable in contrast here.

"Young Master, should we just... resort to stealing? I saw a few people who aren't as strong as you back there. As long as we try to lure them to a corner and kill them, we should be able to acquire whatever we need..." Seeing the frustrated look on Zhang Xuan's face, Cao Chengli stepped forward and presented a solution to him.

"You... Snatch your head!" Zhang Xuan nearly fainted from rage.

Can you use more common sense when you speak?

We are in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! If you wish to die, go ahead and try stealing something then!

And dupe to a corner? Do you really think that inner disciples are fools?

The cultivators who have managed to make it here do have some skills, you know! You should already be thankful that they aren't trying to rob you!

"If that doesn't work, why don't I try seducing one of the vendors with my charm then? Just a while ago, I saw a beautiful inner disciple selling her stuff over there..." Cao Chengli continued presenting his solutions.

Zhang Xuan clasped his face. At this moment, he really wanted to kick Cao Chengli and get rid of him once and for all.

"Go ahead and do whatever you want. Just don't say that you are associated with me and don't come looking for me after

you get into trouble!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand impatiently as he continued walking through the streets.

After visiting quite a few vendors, he found that the price of Ethereal Tokens was standard. All of them were worth twenty Sword Pavilion Coins. The Basic Immortal Pill was also only worth two Sword Pavilion Coins each.

In other words, even with all the wealth he had on hand, he still wouldn't have enough money to buy an Ethereal Token.

“Why would the price of an Ethereal Token be so much higher than a Basic Immortal Pill?” Zhang Xuan asked one of the inner disciple vendors.

“Ah, you must be used to the prices of Ethereal Tokens from remote locations. Those Ethereal Tokens balances the cultivation to just Great Sage 1-dan, so their prices are of course lower. On the other hand, the Ethereal Tokens sold in our sect balances the cultivation to Ancient Sage 1-dan, so it goes without saying that it's worth a lot more.

“If you are already astonished by this pricing, you should take a look at the Ethereal Tokens used by core disciples. Their Ethereal Tokens balances the cultivation to Pseudo Immortal realm, and the cost is way higher than this!” the inner disciple vendor replied.

“I see!” Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

To be honest, he didn't think that the answer would be so simple.

He thought that all Ethereal Tokens were the same, but that was clearly not the case. With a cultivation realm of Ancient Sage 1-dan, a cultivator would be able to try out more powerful sword arts. Naturally, its price would be higher.

After asking a few more questions to familiarize himself with the vendor, he finally asked, “Well, the reason why I came to the market is because I urgently require an Ethereal Token. However, I don't really have any money on hand at the moment. Is there any fast way for me to earn money here?”

“Fast way to earn money? Tell me about it when you find one... If I had a better idea in mind, I wouldn't be here selling

my goods!” the inner disciple vendor rolled his eyes.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan scratched his head in embarrassment.

Taking his leave, he continued walking through the streets with a contemplative look on his face.

I only have seven Basic Immortal Pills and a storage ring at the moment... I won't be able to earn twenty Sword Pavilion Coins even if I were to sell all of it...

If he had valuable goods too, he could still consider setting up his own store too, just like what the other inner disciples had done. The problem with that was that he didn't have anything of much value on hand at the moment!

Take storage rings for example. Despite being a rare commodity in Xuanjiang City, everyone he had met in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion so far actually had one each. When he asked about the matter, he realized that it was actually possible to even rent one from the sect... There was no market for it at all!

As for his Basic Immortal Pills, even if he, by any chance, managed to find some buyers, he still wouldn't be able to earn enough money to purchase an Ethereal Token.

Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan began racking his brain once again over his ever-present monetary issues when a brilliant idea suddenly struck him.

“Right! The Dongxu Gourd's bathwater has the mystical effect of curing one's injuries swiftly. It should be able to fetch quite a good price if I were to sell it!”

To be honest, he hadn't really done much ever since arriving in the Azure. Other than fighting duels, he knew of no other ways he could earn money quickly. If there was anything he had that was of value to the others, it could only be the gourd's bathwater.

Fortunately, he still had several bottles of it in his storage ring.

This gourd's bathwater was exceptionally effective in healing wounds, such that there were probably no pills in the market

that could compete with it. As long as he could market it well and sell it out, he should be able to make enough money to purchase an Ethereal Token!

“It’s settled then!”

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan took out a few materials from his storage ring and set up a stand. He took out the jade bottles containing the gourd’s bathwater and laid it out neatly before him. He hesitated for a moment before taking out a cloth and writing the words ‘Godly Recovery Medicine’ before sitting down.

“Godly Recovery Medicine? Brother, you really don’t fear death! Don’t you know that the word ‘God’ mustn’t be used casually? You’ll be obliterated once the gods find out about it!” the inner disciple sitting beside Zhang Xuan took a look at his sign and exclaimed in horror.

“The word mustn’t be casually used? But... doesn’t the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion have a place called the Sword God Hall too?”

“The ‘神 (God)’ character that is used in the Sword God Hall was snatched from the Hall of Gods by the founder of our sect. However, as our founder had only managed to snatch half a character, he only had the right to use the character in the name of an ordinary building and not in the sect’s name.

“Of the entire continent, only the Ethereal Hall has the right to bear this character in its name! Legend has it that the founder of the Ethereal Hall singlehandedly barged into the Hall of Gods and forcefully took an entire ‘神 (God)’ character right beneath the eyelids of the gods!” the inner disciple explained.

“The Azure actually limits the use of certain characters too?” Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

After asking a few more questions, he finally came to understand what was going on.

The Azure, also known as the Forsaken Continent, was said to be a piece of land tossed away by the gods. The gods viewed this land in disdain and prohibited the beings living in it from

using the character, ‘神 (God)’. This rule applied to everyone, be it the Six Sects or ordinary civilians.

If one really had to use this character, there was only one way one could do so. One would have to enter the Hall of Gods and steal the ‘神 (God)’ character from the gods!

Over the past few millennia, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion and the Ethereal Hall were the only ones who had succeeded. The former managed to steal half a character whereas the latter succeeded in claiming an entire character from the Hall of Gods...

The other sects had tried their hand too, but they had never succeeded before.

From this, it could be seen just how frightening the Hall of Gods was.

It seemed like the ‘神 (God)’ character was indeed not to be used carelessly.

Thus, Zhang Xuan erased ‘Godly Recovery Medicine’ from the board and changed it to ‘Divine Recovery Medicine’. He pondered for a brief moment before adding a tagline below ‘All kinds of injuries and illnesses will be cured in the blink of an eye!’.

After that was done, he began waiting patiently for customers to arrive.

Two hours passed swiftly. There were quite a few customers who came over to his stand to take a closer look. However, when they uncorked the jade bottle and examined the contents inside, they shook their heads in disappointment and left.

Most recovery medicine sold in the market were overflowing with spiritual energy, but whatever that was in the jade bottle appeared to be no different from ordinary plain water. Who would want to waste valuable Sword Pavilion Coins to purchase something as useless as this?

Before long, the sun was already starting to set by the horizon. Sighing deeply, Zhang Xuan was just about to pack up for the day when a young lady suddenly walked over.

This young lady appeared to be in her early twenties, While her looks couldn't compare with Zhao Ya and the others, her tall stature and delicate features made her a rare beauty.

Zhang Xuan noticed that her eyebrows were tightly knitted together, as if there was something weighing down her heart.

"Is your medicine really effective?" the young lady walked up to Zhang Xuan and asked.

"Of course!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "It can heal any injuries in a heartbeat. If it doesn't work, I'll give you a full refund right away!"

"A close kin of mine has been injured by an immortal beast. We have tried using all kinds of medicine on him, but nothing worked at all... I guess I'll just give your medicine a try too. How much does each bottle cost?" the young lady paused for a brief moment before asking.

That close kin of hers had been diagnosed by the best physicians in the sect, and he had tried all kinds of medicine too. However, all of them proved to be ineffective. It was out of sheer frustration that she was roamed from market to market, hoping to stumble upon a miracle. As such, the board which Zhang Xuan had put up swiftly caught her attention. The tagline he had put up promised to cure all kinds of injuries and illnesses.

Thus, as unlikely as the chances were, she chose to give it a try.

Perhaps, this might just be the miracle that her close kin needed to recover. She had to give it a try.

"Each bottle costs twenty Sword Pavilion Coins!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Twenty Sword Pavilion Coins? Why don't you go rob a bank instead?" the young lady was astonished.

Ordinary recovery pills, even those at Pseudo Immortal-tier, were worth only ten Sword Pavilion Coins. Yet, this jade bottle filled with what that appeared to be no different from clear water actually cost twenty Sword Pavilion Coins?

You must be trying to scam me!

“Young lady, my goods are worth every single coin I charge. The reason why I dare to charge a premium price is because I am confident in my medicine. Otherwise, I would just be asking to be killed for setting up a stand like this!” Zhang Xuan replied to the young lady calmly. “You can choose not to buy if you find it too pricey, but just know that this price will never change!”

After which, Zhang Xuan closed his eyes once more, as if he could care less if the young lady wanted to buy or not.

He had never really done business himself, but having read many books, he knew of the common tricks and psychological manipulation that businessmen used. If he were to desperately try to promote his goods, it would make his product appear less credible instead.

On the contrary, if he maintained a lofty attitude that rendered it impossible for others to read him, there was a greater chance that he would be able to win the trust of others.

Besides, the bathwater he was selling was as miraculous as he claimed it to be!

And from the looks of it, it seemed like Zhang Xuan’s ploy was indeed working.

In any other circumstances, the young lady would have walked away without any hesitation. However, the fact that she was unable to see through the effects of the bottle of water and the bizarrely confident attitude the vendor had put up was making her hesitate.

The condition her close kin was suffering from was not something any ordinary medicine could cure, so the air of mystery around the medicine ended up reeling in the young lady instead. After all, what she was looking for was a miracle, a supernatural force that could somehow achieve the impossible.

After a moment of hesitation, she took a bottle and harrumphed, “Fine, I’ll buy your medicine. However, you should know that I’m not a person to be trifled with. If your

medicine doesn't work, I'll hunt you down and show you the consequences of daring to scam me!"

"Rest assured. If my medicine is ineffective, I'll smash my own store before you can even say a single word," Zhang Xuan replied with perfect nonchalance, almost as if he had heard far too much of such words in the past.

He was planning to sell the bathwater this once anyway. Once he acquired an Ethereal Token, he wouldn't have to resort to such means to earn money anymore.

After all, he was a professional at raking in money through duels!

"That would be for the best!" the young lady replied. She took out a bag and tossed it over casually, "Here is your twenty Sword Pavilion Coins!"

After which, the young lady turned around and left the inner disciples' market.

Zhang Xuan excitedly opened up the bag and counted its contents swiftly. There was indeed twenty Sword Pavilion Coins in there!

He thought that he would have to camp at the market for another few days before he could find a buyer, but things were going much more smoothly than he thought.

Rising to his feet, he was just about to pack up his stand when the vendor seated opposite to him suddenly his over and shook his head in pity.

"You should run away as quickly as you can. In fact, you should leave the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion for the time being. Otherwise, you might be smashed into meat paste very soon!"

1953 Elder Bai Ye

“Why do you say so?” Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully.

“Why do I say so?” The inner disciple looked at Zhang Xuan with sympathy. “Do you know whom the young lady that came by earlier is?”

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

“She’s the granddaughter of Elder Bai Ye, one of the Three Grand Elders of our sect, Bai Ruanqing!” The inner disciple shook his head. “Don’t let her appearance deceive you. She might have seemed gentle earlier, but she’s actually no different from a female dinosaur. Her notoriety has spread across the entire sect, and not even her fellow core disciples dare to cross her! To dare dupe her into spending so much money to sell that useless bottle of water of yours... there’s no way she’ll let you off as long as you stay in the sect. If you do, you can start writing a letter to your clan to get them to prepare your funeral now. At least there’ll be someone to collect your body for you!”

“Female dinosaur?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

He could not feel any of that from the young lady’s amiable attitude earlier though.

“You seem to be doubting my words. Last year, a core disciple named Su Tong went to confess to her, but she dragged him to the dueling ring and sent a vicious kick right to his crotch. Even now, he still hasn’t recovered from his injuries.

“A few months ago, another core disciple named Zhang Yue seemed to have offended her due to some matter, and he was pummeled to the point he was bedridden for an entire month! I was curious and snuck a peek at his ward, and I can tell you he looked more miserable than you can ever imagine!

“Right, there was this incident several weeks back where a core disciple named Xue Hai tried selling fake medicine, just like you. She thrust his head into the river water and nearly

drowned him. That wasn't all... She even cut off half of his tongue at the end to send out a stem warning to others.

"Given that even core disciples have fallen victim to her, do you think that you'll be able to get away scot-free after scamming her?"

"This..." Zhang Xuan scratched his head.

The young lady earlier had a delicate look that made it hard to associate her with the demoness that the inner disciple had just described.

Seeing that Zhang Xuan was still doubtful of his words, the inner disciple sighed deeply before asking, "Do you know how powerful she is?"

Zhang Xuan shook his head.

"Last year, when she fought with Su Tong, she had already reached Heavenly Pseudo Immortal. Whether she has taken another step forward since then, I'll leave that to your imagination!" the inner disciple said as he pulled his stand away from Zhang Xuan. "In any case, let me put some distance between us first. I don't want to be implicated when she finally comes over to massacre you. Sigh, it sure is getting hard to do business nowadays! Not only do I have to keep a low profile, I also have to guard against those seeking death... What a bother!"

Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

"It's fine, you don't have to move. I'll be leaving after getting myself an Ethereal Token!" Zhang Xuan packed up his stand and stood up.

The main reason he had gone to the market was to get himself an Ethereal Token. Since he had enough money, he just had to get what he had gone for, and he would be ready to leave.

"I want an Ethereal Token. Here's twenty Sword Pavilion Coins!" Zhang Xuan said as he walked over to the opposite vendor and tossed the bag of money over.

"That won't be enough. The price of the Ethereal Token has just gone up. You'll have to pay twenty-five Sword Pavilion

Coins now!” The inner disciple in charge of the store threw the bag of money back at Zhang Xuan.

“The price has just gone up? Didn’t you say it only costs twenty Sword Pavilion Coins earlier?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

“It was indeed just twenty earlier, but now that you have offended Bai Ruanqing, you’re pretty much certainly dead... What am I supposed to do if she learns that I’ve sold something to you and makes trouble for me? The additional five Sword Pavilion Coins is just a mental assurance and emergency medical fee for me. It’s only because I’m close to you that I hiked the price up by just a few Sword Pavilion Coins. If it was anyone else, I wouldn’t have even sold it to him at all!” the inner disciple said vehemently.

“You...” Zhang Xuan’s face twitched.

Was that supposed female dinosaur really that frightening?

Unwilling to give up just like that, Zhang Xuan walked over to the other stores selling Ethereal Tokens, but not a single vendor was willing to sell one to him.

Clearly, news that he had offended that female dinosaur had already spread. In order to avoid getting implicated, no one was willing to do business with him anymore.

“Those fellows!” Zhang Xuan gnashed his teeth angrily.

At that moment, he really wanted to do what Cao Chengli had suggested and simply rob them.

After all the effort that he had gone through, it turned out that no one was willing to sell the Ethereal Token to him anymore.

“Forget it...” Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

He would just have to find other means to obtain an Ethereal Token.

Just as he was about to leave, Cao Chengli suddenly walked up to him and said, “Young Master, I have successfully acquired the Ethereal Token that you requested!”

Following which, he passed two of them over.

Looking at the jade tokens in Cao Chengli's hands, Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in disbelief.

After his half a day of effort, he did not even manage to obtain a single Ethereal Token. How in the world did this unreliable subordinate of his acquire two then?

"Didn't I tell you earlier? I saw a beautiful inner disciple..." Cao Chengli laughed a little cheekily as he scratched his head.

Just as he was about to explain the situation, Zhang Xuan suddenly saw a gigantic woman of roughly three hundred jin walking over. "Darling, let's hurry. My bed is huge and spacious. Most importantly of all, it's extremely soft..."

(300 jin = 150kg)

"Yes, honey. I'll be right over!" Cao Chengli nodded sweetly in response. He turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Young Master, I'll be going over for a moment. I'll explain the details to you after I return..."

Then, he skipped out of the inner disciples' market excitedly with the lady on his arm.

Zhang Xuan clutched his forehead.

He felt like he had opened his eyes that day.

But regardless of how Cao Chengli had managed to do it, there was no doubt that he did have some capability. In just a few hours, not only did he acquire two Ethereal Tokens, he had even managed to get himself a reservation on that lady's bed.

But if he thought more deeply into the issue, for selling his subordinate out for material possessions, did that not pretty much make him a pimp?

Zhang Xuan shuddered a little as he quickly shook those thoughts out of his mind before leaving the market.

The shrill call of a beast echoed in the sky above Elder Bai Ye's residence. Leaping down from above, Bai Ruanqing quickly pushed the door open and rushed into the residence.

"Young Mistress!" An old man walked up to greet Bai Ruanqing.

He was Elder Bai Ye's personal butler, Bai Feng.

Bai Feng had grown up with Elder Bai Ye, and the two of them had entered the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion at the same time. Even though Bai Feng was not well-known in the sect, those who were acquainted with him knew that he was far more than an ordinary old man.

Seemingly aware that Bai Ruanqing had been out to find some recovery herbs for Elder Bai Ye once again, Bai Feng sighed deeply before advising, "Young Mistress, I understand your feelings, but the Old Master's injuries were left behind from his trip to the City of Collapsed Space. His wounds are infused with some kind of mysterious energy that tears him apart from within. The sect has already tried everything at its disposal, but it was to no avail. I really don't think that there's anything you can buy from the markets of the outer disciples and inner disciples that will be effective on the Old Master, Young Mistress!"

The City of Collapsed Space was one of the most elusive places on the Forsaken Continent. There were untold treasures hidden in there, but great peril awaited those who dared step onto its soil.

If it was just an ordinary injury, given Bai Ye's identity as the Third Elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, they would have been treated a long time ago. However, the peculiar nature of his injury complicated the matter.

Everything that they had tried on him had been futile.

Furthermore, his condition seemed to be worsening by the day, and most likely, he only had a few days ahead of him.

It was precisely for this reason that Bai Ruanqing went out every single day for all kinds of mysterious pills and medicine, hoping for a miracle to happen. But in truth, all of it was for naught.

Bai Ruanqing clenched her fists tightly as she said, "I know what you are saying is true, but..."

How could she not know that her efforts were unlikely to reap any reward?

But for her to sit idle and watch her only kin die just like that... her heart was not able to take it!

“Sigh!” Knowing Bai Ruanqing’s thoughts, Bai Feng sighed weakly and said, “So, what have you brought this time? Can you let me take a look at it?”

“It’s this...” Bai Ruanqing passed the jade bottle that she had just bought over.

Bai Feng took the jade bottle, uncorked it, and took a whiff. Soon, he shook his head and said, “Young Mistress, this isn’t medicine at all. I have lived for 150 years, and I have seen all kinds of medicine in my lifetime. However, this water has no spiritual energy at all. Could it be that you have been scammed?”

For a medicine to be effective, it had to contain spiritual energy in order to nourish one’s body. However, what was in the jade bottle seemed no different from clear water. There was no hint of spiritual energy.

Could it be that the Young Mistress had been too excited and gotten scammed?

“An internal disciple sold it to me. He said that it’s a divine medicine that can heal any wound and illness,” Bai Ruanqing said with a lowered head.

She did have her doubts when she purchased it, but her grandpa was already nearing his limits. She had to clutch onto every sliver of hope there was.

Not to mention, the person who sold her the medicine had been extremely confident, which indicated something.

After all, she was extremely famous in the sect, such that there was no inner disciple or core disciple who did not know of her. He should have known the cost of lying to her, and yet, he was still willing to make such a bold claim. He might really have something to substantiate his claims!

“A divine medicine that can heal any wound and illness? It doesn’t have a shred of spiritual energy in it, and he still dared sell it to you...” Bai Feng harrumphed. “That person sure is brazen! How much did it cost?”

“Twenty Sword Pavilion Coins,” Bai Ruanqing replied meekly.

“Twenty?” Bai Feng was stunned for a moment before blowing his top. “Young Mistress, I am certain that you have been scammed! With twenty Sword Pavilion Coins, you can buy ten Basic Immortal Pills! Yet, he actually charged such a price for this bottle of clear water. Which elder is that inner disciple under? I’ll head over there right now to demand an explanation! Does that person think that he can take advantage of us just because Elder Bai is injured?”

Boom!

Under his rage, immense energy poured out from his acupoints. The entire residence rattled unsteadily, seemingly on the verge of collapsing under his wrath.

Elder Bai might have been injured and on the verge of death, but as long as he, Bai Feng, lived, he would not allow anyone to take advantage of the Young Mistress! That inner disciple was courting death!

“I... I was willing to buy it. He didn’t scam me...” Bai Ruanqing’s face reddened.

The other party did say that she had the choice to buy it if she wanted to, and he did not force her into making a decision.

Those words did not quell Bai Feng’s rage in the least. “You were willing to buy it? Humph, he must have relied on some flowery words to dupe you...”

“Alright. Regardless of whether there is spiritual energy in it or not, since we have already bought it, let’s give it to grandpa and see if it works...” Bai Ruanqing interjected before walking right into the main bedroom.

Standing by the bedside, Bai Ruanqing looked at the withered face of an old man with a pained look. There was a gaping depression in his chest, and the flesh in that region had started rotting, emanating a pungent smell.

The eyes of this elder were tightly shut; even the earlier commotion was not enough to wake him up.

“Grandpa, you must get well,” Bai Ruanqing muttered as she helped the elder up and poured the water in the jade bottle slowly into his mouth.

After she was done, she waited for a moment, but the rotting flesh showed no signs on improving at all. Slowly, Bai Ruanqing’s face darkened.

“There is no spiritual energy at all, so the medicine is bound to be fake. Young Mistress, you mustn’t listen to the words of these scammers in the future. Even the sect elders who specialize in medicine have tried treating the Old Master, but they were unable to do anything at all. Given so, how can medicine sold by mere disciples possibly be effective?”

Bai Feng sighed deeply

At that moment, a feeble voice was heard. “Cough cough cough... What did you just give me?”

Bai Ruanqing and Bai Feng’s eyes slowly widened in shock before they hurriedly turned their gazes over. At some point in time, the unconscious Elder Bai Ye had opened his eyes once more.

He was still in a weak state, but he had finally regained consciousness after so long!

1954 Betting 1

1954 Betting (1)

“This medicine is effective?” Bai Ruanqing’s eyes reddened in agitation.

She was more than aware of her grandfather’s condition. If not for his superior cultivation, he would have already died. Even so, he was also coming to the end of his life. Most likely, he would breathe his last within the next two days. Thus, it was shocking to her that her grandfather would wake up and speak after drinking a bottle of clear water.

Even the most advanced Life Continuation Pill of their sect did not have such remarkable effects!

“Old Master!”

Bai Feng immediately rushed over to help Elder Bai Ye up. At the same time, he drove his zhenqi into the other party’s body to check his internal condition.

A moment later, his eyes widened in shock as he remarked, “Old Master’s injuries actually recovered a little...”

While the recovery was not too apparent, it was a fact that the medicine did work. The destructive energy that was corroding Elder Bai Ye’s organs, zhenqi, and soul had actually been curbed!

That destructive energy was a unique and unstoppable force of the City of Collapse Space, and there was no known medicine in the world that could treat it. Who could have known that the bottle of clean water that the Bai Ruanqing had brought over would achieve the inconceivable?

Young Mistress, where did you buy that bottle of medicine from?” Bai Feng asked anxiously.

“I bought it from the internal disciples’ market...” Bai Ruanqing quickly snapped out from her shocked state.

“You bought just one bottle?”

It was probably due to the insufficient quantity of medicine that Elder Bai Ye had only recovered a little. Nevertheless, it was obvious from the current situation that the clear water had the effect of curbing Elder Bai Ye's injuries. As long as they acquired a sufficient amount of it, it was possible for Elder Bai Ye to make a full recovery from the affliction that had all of the sect physicians stumped!

"I thought that it might be a scam as well... so I bought one just to try it out..." Bai Ruanqing's face reddened.

"It's not a scam at all. It's a true divine medicine in every meaning of the term. Quick, lead me there!" Bai Feng urged in agitation. "We have to buy as much of it as there is. If we gather enough of it, the Old Master will surely make a recovery!"

"Y-yes! Let's head over right now!"

Bai Feng's attitude made Bai Ruanqing realize that a miracle had really happened this time around. Thus, she quickly rushed out and leaped onto her aerial beast.

"That will be too slow! I'll take you over!"

But before the aerial beast could set off, Bai Feng's voice suddenly sounded in the air. Following which, Bai Ruanqing felt her body rising off the ground and dashing right toward the inner disciples' market at an astounding speed.

It took only a few breaths for her to arrive at her destination. The first thing she did upon landing was rush to where she had bought the medicine, but it had already been emptied out.

Widening her eyes in horror, she immediately turned to the adjacent vendor and anxiously asked, "Where did the person who sold the jade bottles of medicine next to you earlier go?"

The vendor was horrified to see the female dinosaur returning so quickly, and she even had an elder who could fly with her! The vendor cowered a little before fearfully replying, "H-he has already left..."

"Do you know which lineage he is from or which elder he is under?" Bai Ruanqing pressed.

“I don’t know!” the vendor replied anxiously. “He only arrived today, so we aren’t familiar with him. Even if he sold fake medicine to you, it has nothing to do with me at all!”

“That’s right, that’s right! We really don’t know him at all. We knew that he’d offended you, so we didn’t even sell him the stuff he wanted...”

“I knew that he wasn’t a good person... I’ll make sure to teach him a lesson the next time he comes so that he dares not step into the inner disciples’ market ever again...”

The other vendors immediately tried to distance themselves from the earlier young man.

They had been keeping a close eye on Bai Ruanqing ever since she arrived at the inner disciples’ market, so they had seen her buying that fake medicine from that young man earlier.

Considering how Bai Ruanqing had returned so hurriedly, chances were that she had realized that she had been scammed and went back to teach that young man a lesson.

In order to avoid being implicated, they had no choice but to distance themselves from the young man before putting him down in order to appease this female dinosaur.

Seeing how indignantly everyone was speaking up against the young man, Bai Ruanqing was stunned for a moment. With a hint of bewilderment in her tone, she asked, “What are you talking about?”

“Didn’t he sell fake medicine to you?” the adjacent vendor asked.

“His medicine is real. I came here to thank him, as well as to buy a few more bottles,” Bai Ruanqing replied.

“His medicine is real?”

The other vendors were all dumbstruck.

Such a casual store putting up such an exaggerated claim... was real?

“Wasn’t he here to sell his goods? Why did he leave so quickly?” Bai Ruanqing asked. She sharply noticed an anomaly on the expressions of those around, so she added with

a frown, "I want to hear nothing but the truth. I'm sure you understand the consequences of lying to me."

"This... The reason he came here to sell medicine was to buy an Ethereal Token. However, we thought that he had offended you, so we refused to sell it to him and urged him to leave..."

"You urged him to leave?" Bai Ruanqing finally understood what was going on, and her complexion turned incredibly awful. "He's the benefactor of my grandfather, yet the lot of you dared push him around. Since that's the case..."

Hu!

Bai Ruanqing's reputation as a female dinosaur was not just for show. As soon as she encountered something that she disagreed with, she made a move without any hesitation... and her blows were merciless.

In just a few moments, all the vendors in the inner disciples' market were lying on the ground, groaning in pain.

Placing her hands on her waist, she uttered in an icy-cold voice, "Find him. Right now. If you can't find him before nighttime, I'll have another round of beatings waiting for you. Don't try to run. It's futile. Other than those who have left the sect or are dead, there has never been a person whom I have eyed that has gotten away from me!"

"The crowd.

The heck! How were they to know that the medicine sold in such a shady store would actually be authentic?

Just what in the world did they do so wrong to deserve such treatment?

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan had returned to his residence.

He took out one of the Ethereal Tokens that he had obtained from Cao Chengli and dripped a droplet of blood on it. Following which, he immersed his consciousness into it.

Having prior experience activating the Ethereal Token, his movements were much swifter than before.

Unlike Starlight City's Ethereal Hall, there was no introduction from Kong shi when he entered the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's Ethereal Hall. He quickly checked on his physical condition and found that his cultivation was indeed at Ancient Sage 1-dan.

This felt quite relieving to him. He simply could not get used to having his cultivation suppressed at Saint 1-dan back in Starlight City's Ethereal Hall. There were so many maneuvers that he could not pull off due to the limitations on his strength and speed, so it had been quite frustrating for him.

I can't call myself World's Edge anymore, Zhang Xuan thought.

Back in Starlight City's Ethereal Hall, he had named himself World's Edge and fought with Huo Jianghe and the others. Currently, Elder Lu Yun and the others thought that Dan Xiaotian was World's Edge, so it would be incredibly dubious if this name appeared right now.

If he dared pummel the sect leader and elders with this name, they would probably come knocking on his door the next moment!

Since it's just a nickname in the Ethereal Hall, there's no need for me to put so much thought into it. Why don't I just go with a random one? Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before coming up with a nickname he was satisfied with. Let's go with 'I Am Low Profile'!

To be honest, he regretted calling himself World's Edge.

Whenever others called him with that nickname, he felt like his hair would fall off from the goosebumps rising all over his body. It was so cringy!

On the other hand, I Am Low Profile suited his disposition and humble personality well.

After choosing a name, Zhang Xuan proceeded ahead, and a large palace appeared before him. There was a huge plaque hanging on top that read 'Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion: Ethereal Hall'.

Zhang Xuan pushed the door open and walked in. The bustle that unfolded before him was amazing. Huge crowds walked on the streets. Nearly everyone had a sword on their back, and he could feel palpable Sword Intent lingering in the air.

He walked up to a passerby and asked about some basic information.

Just like the other Ethereal Halls, the fastest way to earn Sword Pavilion Coins was to fight in the dueling ring. This setting worked perfectly fine with Zhang Xuan.

Thus, the first place that he headed to was the dueling ring.

Ding ding ding ding!

At that moment, there were two young men fighting in the ring.

As it was possible to alter one's appearance in the Ethereal Hall, it was impossible to tell the true identities of either of the two fighters. So, in order for the crowd to better distinguish among the two fighters, the two fighters were wearing garments of different colors, one green and one white.

The swordsmanship of the green-clothed young man was forceful and sharp in nature, making it hard to face him head-on. On the other hand, the white-clothed young man was extremely nimble on his feet, and his swordsmanship was light and flexible.

Despite the vast difference in their swordsmanship, they were fighting on equal grounds with one another.

"Not bad!"

After taking a brief look, Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

As expected of the inner disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, their swordsmanship was indeed on a higher level than Huo Jianghe and the others. They had already forged their own individual path with their swordsmanship, and every movement they made had its own deep conceptualization behind it. Despite their young age, they were already carrying the dispositions of grandmasters.

Even the swordsmanship of Sword Saint Xing and the others from the Master Teacher Continent could not begin to compare to this.

“Brother, would you like to place a bet?”

While Zhang Xuan was studying their movements, a hushed voice suddenly echoed by his ears. Turning his head over, he saw a gray-robed young man looking at him with a sneaky look on his face.

Almost all the avatars in the Ethereal Hall had been put through beauty filters and photoshop, so it was no exaggeration to say that everyone within this space was decent looking. Nevertheless, this gray-robed young man had a suspicious gleam in his eyes that made him look incredibly dubious.

“How does it work?” Zhang Xuan asked.

As one of the Six Sects, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion maintained an upright and disciplined image before the world. Given so, it was unlikely that it would allow its disciples to engage in gambling, so there was no official betting service for the dueling ring. Most likely, this young man was working as an illegal broker for a private betting service in hopes of earning some extra money.

“Simple. The odds on the green-clothed young man are 1 to 1.5, and the odds on the white-clothed young man are 1 to 1.1. If you bet on a draw, the odds are 1 to 5,” the gray-robed young man replied.

“Why is the payout for the white-clothed young man so low?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

“His chances of winning are higher. He has fought over three hundred so far, and he has won over two hundred of them. This means that his swordsmanship is formidable!” the gray-robed young man replied. “Would you like to try putting a bet?”

“Sure!” Zhang Xuan took a look at the duo on the dueling ring before smiling. He raised two fingers and said, “I’ll bet twenty

Sword Pavilion Coins on the victory of the green-clothed young man.”

“You’re going to bet twenty Sword Pavilion Coins?” the gray-robed young man exclaimed in shock. He did not expect this unfamiliar young man to make such a huge bet all of a sudden.

Just as Zhang Xuan thought, the gray-robed young man was indeed an illegal broker. While the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion did not allow its disciples to gamble, its enforcement on its rules was not as strict. As long as the issue did not get out of hand, no one would bother about it.

Usually, the bets that private betting services received would not be too big, ranging from two to three Sword Pavilion Coins. This was the first time that the gray-robed young man had seen someone staking twenty Sword Pavilion Coins in a single go.

Zhang Xuan nodded calmly in response to the gray-robed young man’s doubt.

“I’ll first warn you that there’s no way to back out of the bet, alright?” the gray-robed young man said as he glanced at the dueling ring.

Currently, the white-clothed young man was clearly in an advantageous position. Under his relentless assault, the green-clothed young man was forced to retreat again and again.

With a delighted chuckle, the gray-robed young man took out a card with ‘20’ inscribed on it and passed it over, saying, “Pass your money to me first. At the end of the match, if you have won the bet, you can get your winnings with this card. Of course, if you lose, the card will become completely worthless!”

“Un!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

He already had his Ethereal Card prepared, and he had deposited his twenty Sword Pavilion Coins into it. With just a light tap, the twenty coins were transferred over to the gray-robed young man.

“Heh!”

Looking at the additional twenty Sword Pavilion Coins in his card, the gray-robed young man smiled in delight before weaving out of the crowd to take a seat by the side.

Soon, a young lady dressed in similar clothes walked over and asked him, “How’s it going?”

“I just met a fool. He bet twenty Sword Pavilion coins on the green-clothed young man’s victory,” the gray-robed young man replied gleefully.

“Twenty? That fool!” The young lady burst into laughter. “There’s no way the green-clothed young man can possibly win! Through our information network, we have found out that the white-clothed young man is Senior Mo He whereas the green-clothed young man is Junior Hu Xiao. The latter only joined the sect less than two years ago, so how could he be a match for Senior Mo He?”

“Indeed. It’s essentially twenty free Sword Pavilion Coins,” the gray-robed young man replied with a smirk.

However, at that moment, just as the green-clothed young man was pushed to the edge of the dueling ring, he suddenly charged forward and released a powerful spurt of sword qi.

Puhe!

The abrupt counterattack caught the white-clothed young man off-guard, resulting in a fatal blow to his chest. With that, the green-clothed young man had won the duel!

1955 Betting 2

1955 Betting (2)

“This...”

The smiling duo suddenly went completely silent.

How in the world did the green-clothed young man manage to achieve victory?

Had he not been losing a moment ago?

The green-clothed young man knew that his swordsmanship isn't on par with his opponent's, so he acted weak to numb the white-clothed young man while biding his time for an opportunity to strike!”

“Indeed. The duels over here are life-and-death battles, not just simple swordsmanship sparring. Even a stronger opponent can easily be killed in a moment of carelessness!”

Such discussions could be heard all around.

They were all disciples from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and they viewed observing such duels to be a form of training as well.

It was apparent to them that the green-clothed young man's swordsmanship was inferior to that of the white-clothed young man, but he was the one who had the last laugh.

In a true battle, it was not the one who was more skilled in swordsmanship that would always be the winner. There were far more factors involved than that.

“That fellow sure got lucky!” the gray-robed young man cursed beneath his breath.

How in the world did that fool manage to win ten Sword Pavilion Coins from him so easily?

It had to be beginner's luck! There could be no reason other than that!

“Hey, I would like to redeem my winnings!”

While the gray-robed young man was still cursing angrily, the ‘fool’ from earlier walked up to him and passed the redemption card over.

The gray-robed young man stared at the ‘fool’ for a moment before reluctantly passing him thirty Sword Pavilion Coins.

Meanwhile, the green-clothed young man and white-clothed young man had stepped out of the dueling ring, and another pair of opponents took their positions.

A glint flashed through the gray-robed young man’s eyes as he asked, “Would you like to go again?”

Luck might favor a person once or twice, but ultimately, what determined the final winner was the odds. That was also why the house was the one that always raked in money in casinos.

“Sure!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

Barely a minute after arriving there, without even lifting a finger, he had already earned ten Sword Pavilion Coins. Since he had stumbled upon such a convenient way to earn money, there was no way he was going to stop with just ten Sword Pavilion Coins!

Very well. This time, we shall each place a bet so that it’ll be fairer!” The gray-robed young man took a look at the dueling ring before remarking with a smile, “Let me see... I’ll bet on the victory of the black-robed middle-aged man!”

“Since that’s the case, I’ll put thirty Sword Pavilion Coins on the victory of the white-robed young lady then!” Zhang Xuan unhesitatingly placed his entire wealth into the bet.

“I’ll match your thirty Sword Pavilion Coins!” the gray-robed man replied.

On the inside, the gray-robed young man was already mocking Zhang Xuan on what a fool he was. As a broker of the dueling ring, he had a huge information network that provided him with the identities of those who frequented in the ring.

Of the two who had just stepped onto the stage, the black-robed middle-aged man was Senior Zhou whereas the white-

robed young lady was Senior Wang.

The two of them had fought with one another on multiple occasions in the dueling ring, and more often than not, Senior Zhou would outdo Senior Wang and win the duel.

Shortly after they decided on the bets, the duel began.

Just as the gray-robed young man had predicted, Senior Zhou was on the offense from the get-go. Every single strike from him was precise and sharp, heaping immense pressure upon Senior Wang. As a result, the latter was forced to back away again and again. It felt as if she would have no chance to retaliate at all.

The gray-robed young man glanced at Zhang Xuan and scoffed in his mind. Heh, just wait till you lose all of your money!

It seemed like he would be able to win back the ten Sword Pavilion Coins that he had lost with this and even make a huge profit!

Back to the dueling ring, it eventually came to a point where the white-robed Senior Wang was backed to the very edge of the dueling ring, and it felt like she was going to fall from it at any moment. However, with a sudden change in momentum, she pounced to the side like an agile leopard.

This maneuver resulted in the black-robed Senior Zhou's attack to fall empty. This attack was exceptionally heavy as he had intended it to be the finishing blow to end the duel, but when it missed, it turned into a huge liability. Realizing that he was exposed, Senior Zhou immediately halted his advancement and attempted to leap back so as to create some space for him to regain his momentum.

Unfortunately, before he could do so, a sword was already pressed against his neck.

With this, the black-robed Senior Zhou had lost!

"Pardon me, but I think I have won this bet too!" Zhang Xuan replied with a light chuckle.

Having lost two rounds consecutively, the gray-robed young man's face twitched wildly. Despite his reluctance, he still passed thirty Sword Pavilion Coins over to Zhang Xuan.

Duels were constantly happening in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion's Ethereal Hall. Barely after the previous one just ended, yet another pair of challengers had headed up.

The gray-robed young man hesitated for a moment before looking at Zhang Xuan once more.

"Do you dare continue our bets?"

The truth was that he had made quite a fortune from those bets, and this was the first time that he had lost so tragically.

"Of course! It should be my turn to make the first pick now, right?" Zhang Xuan asked with a smile.

"Go ahead!" The gray-robed young man nodded slightly.

"I'll bet on the victory of that white-robed fellow up there! I'll put sixty Sword Pavilion Coins into it!" Zhang Xuan said as he gestured to the dueling ring.

The gray-robed young man shot a glance over at the dueling ring before nodding in agreement. "Very well, I'll bet on the black-robed guy then!"

This time, he only recognized one of the two fighters on the dueling ring—the black-robed guy, Senior Du. As for the white-robed person, he really had no idea at all.

However, Senior Du's swordsmanship was known to be formidable in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. There were only ten people among the inner disciples who were a match for him. Since he was unable to recognize the white-robed person, it was unlikely that he was one of the ten people. Thus, Senior Du's victory was pretty much assured!

The two sides began clashing with one another, and soon enough, the battle came to an end.

Just as the other party had deduced, it was the white-robed person who won. Senior Du had actually lost!

"This... How can this be?"

Having lost three consecutive matches, the gray-robed young man was clearly starting to panic a little.

He had earned a small fortune for himself over the years, but even so, he could not afford to lose so much money just like that!

Zhang Xuan took a momentary glance at the gray-robed young man's flustered face before asking with a smile, "Shall we continue?"

"This..."

The gray-robed young man looked at the dueling ring once more, and another two challengers had gotten onto the stage. However, unlike his previously relaxed mood, sweat was seeping down his back.

He had lost three rounds so far. That was one hundred Sword Pavilion Coins! He wouldn't be able to stand losing any more money than that!

But if he did not continue, he would lose all one hundred Sword Pavilion Coins! That was something he could not accept either!

There was a momentary internal conflict in his mind before he eventually gritted his teeth and steeled his resolve.

Very well, I'll go with you once more! However, it should be my turn to choose first!"

Unbeknownst to the gray-robed young man, he had fallen prey to the same gambler's fallacy that he had exploited far too often.

The more a person lost, the more desperate they were to recoup their losses. There was a tiny thought at the back of his head that said, since he had lost so much, it was about time for him to make a comeback. However, it was this also very thought that would eventually sink him into the depths of despair.

"Be my guest!" Zhang Xuan gestured gentlemanly.

The gray-robed young man pondered carefully for a moment before saying, "This time, I'll pick the white-robed youth!"

Similar to before, he only recognized one of the two fighters onstage, and that was the white-robed Junior Luo.

Despite being age, Junior Luo was a formidable genius. It had only been two years since he entered the sect, but he had already made a name for himself among the inner disciples. Even he would have to admit defeat before Junior Luo!

If anyone had a better chance of winning, it would be indubitably Junior Luo.

“Since you picked the white-robed youth, I guess I will...” Zhang Xuan looked at the two fighters meaningfully for a moment before asking, “Would it be fine if I bet on the battle coming to a draw?”

“A draw?” The gray-robed young man was stunned.

Battles in the Ethereal Hall were vastly different from those in the real world. In the real world, in order to avoid incurring severe injuries or even death, opponents possessing similar strength were more inclined to agree to a draw.

On the other hand, there were no such worries in the Ethereal Hall. Thus, cultivators would usually fight to the very end, often concluding the match with the demise of one side.

Only in extremely rare circumstances would there be a draw.

Yet, this fellow actually wanted to bet on that unbelievably slim possibility? Was there something wrong with his head?

Nevertheless, the gray-robed young man suppressed the blossoming smile on his face and asked with forced nonchalance, “Are you certain?”

“I am. However, I am also aware of the fact that draws are extremely rare, so could I request my payout to be higher?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“You’re right. The norm for the payout in matches with a draw is five times the bet!” the gray-robed man replied. “Great. I’ll bet 120 Sword Pavilion Coins then!” Zhang Xuan said.

Fearing that Zhang Xuan would back out, the gray-robed young man quickly agreed to it. “Sounds fine by me!”

Betting on a draw was no different from delivering money right into his hands! Finally, he could recoup his losses!

Right after they agreed on the bet, the duel on the stage began.

From the very start, it was apparent that both fighters were formidable experts. Sword qi swiftly filled up the entire dueling ring, prepared to tear the flesh of the careless mercilessly. Exquisite sword maneuvers were displayed one after another, invoking roaring cheers from the crowd beneath.

The white-robed Junior Luo was indubitably powerful. His offense was vigorous, reminiscent of wild beast. However, the opponent whom he was facing was not weak either. Even though parrying Junior Luo's relentless offense had left him in a slightly unkempt state, he remained completely unharmed even after some time had passed.

Just like that, they traded over three hundred blows, but there was still no victor to be seen.

"Junior Luo, you can do it!"

As the fight dragged out longer and longer, the gray-robed young man started to panic. Perspiration trickled profusely down his back.

Such a long duel was extremely rare, perhaps occurring at most once a month. Who could have known that he would be so 'fortunate' as to bump into one of them at this critical juncture?

The two fighters continued clashing for over a hundred blows, but neither party was able to hold a decisive advantage. If anything, it seemed like they were just grinding each other's energy down.

Eventually, the white-robed Junior Luo leaped back and said, "Friend, I acknowledge that your swordsmanship is indeed extraordinary, and you have won my admiration. However, I don't think that there's much point in us continuing like this. Even if one of us emerges victorious, it will just be a miserable win. Why don't we settle it with a draw for the time being and spar together another day?"

The other party nodded in agreement. "My thoughts exactly!"

The gray-robed young man felt as if the world around him had gone dark, and he nearly passed out right there and then.

He had actually managed to stumble upon such a rare draw... and it was while he was betting against another person.

“Oh my, it seems like I have won again.” Zhang Xuan glanced at the gray-robed young man with a surprised smile.

Of course, the reason he could win was not just because of his eye of discernment. More importantly, he had the Library of Heaven’s Path on his side. Through it, he was able to peek into the sword arts, state of mind, and battle techniques each of them had practiced.

Given that everyone was of equal cultivation, the differences in mental resilience and battle techniques made a massive difference on everyone’s fighting prowess.

It was with the availability of such information that he had been able to accurately determine the winner for the past few rounds and win the bets.

“I placed my bet on a draw, and as you said before, the compensation of such a bet is five times what was in,” Zhang Xuan said. “Thus, you have to pay me a total of six hundred Sword Pavilion Coins!”

“600 Sword Pavilion Coins?” Hearing those words, the gray-robed young man’s body stiffened in horror.

That fellow had to be a hacker!

Otherwise, how could he possibly have predicted the outcome of every duel correctly?

He had always been the one earning as a broker, but who could have known that he would squander nearly all of his money within ten minutes... This was driving him crazy!

It had been ten years since he became an inner disciple, and he had been accruing his money by going through all kinds of missions and working as a broker. Despite that, his savings did not even reach a thousand, and before he knew it, he was already going to lose nearly all of it!

The gray-robed young man's face turned livid as he spat through clenched jaws, "I don't have that many Sword Pavilion Coins!"

"You don't have the money to pay up? It was a fair bet, but you intend to shirk off your payment?" Zhang Xuan asked as the smile on his face gradually grew a little eerie.

Yeah, that's right! I'm not going to pay you the six hundred Sword Pavilion Coins. So, what can you do about it?" the gray-robed young man scoffed coldly. "Do you even know who I am and where you can find me?"

As gambling was prohibited in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he made sure to switch to another Ethereal Token when he worked as a broker.

Other than a few others who worked alongside him to manage the entire business, practically no one knew of this persona of his.

"Heh..." Zhang Xuan shook his head, as if mocking the gray-robed young man's naivety.

Without any hesitation, he sent a kick right at the gray-robed young man.

Taken aback, the gray-robed young man hurriedly flitted to the side to dodge the attack. A hint of contempt flashed across his eyes as he said, "You are going to make a move on me now? Have you forgotten that we are in the Ethereal Hall? Even if you kill me, all I'll lose is an Ethereal Token. No matter what you do in here, it won't make a difference to me at all!"

"Is that so?" Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back and looked at the gray-robed young man. "I guess I should pay a visit to Elder Han of White Cloud Peak and inform him that an inner disciple under his jurisdiction has set up an illegal gambling den in the Ethereal Hall. Say, this is quite a major affair, isn't it? Don't you think that he'll immediately investigate the matter and nab those brazen fools who dare flout the sect rules?"

"I wonder what he'll do to those brazen fools... Well, if you ask me, I reckon that there's a good chance that Elder Han will

drive those brazen fools out of the sect! What is your opinion on the matter, Senior Zhu Yanzhi?”

You...”

The gray-robed young man, Zhu Yanzhi, tottered backward fearfully, as if he had seen a devil. Before he knew it, his entire back was already dripping wet.

“How in the world do you know who I am?”

1956 We'll Fight You!

There were many different lineages in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and each of them was under the jurisdiction of a certain elder.

The gray-robed young man was an inner disciple under Elder Han of White Cloud Peak, and his name was Zhu Yanzhi.

Knowing the dangers of working as an illegal broker, Zhu Yanzhi had taken a lot of precautions, altering his appearance, changing his voice, and even suppressing his habits. Under normal circumstances, no one should have been able to tell who he was. Yet, the young man before him was actually able to call out his name so clearly. How could he possibly not be shocked?

"I don't just know who you are, I also know that you have 973 Sword Pavilion Coins with you. Even if you lose six hundred of them, you still have plenty left. It isn't nice of you to lie to me like that. Don't you know that sincerity is of utmost importance in a trade?" Zhang Xuan said calmly.

Zhu Yanzhi felt like his body had been plunged into ice water. He instinctively took a step back.

There were only a few people who were working as illegal brokers in the Ethereal Hall, so if one investigated the issue, it was not entirely impossible to root him out. However, his personal wealth was a secret that only he knew about. Not even his closest friends were aware of it! How could this fellow possibly know about this?

"Who in the hell are you? Why are you investigating me?" Zhu Yanzhi asked warily with clenched fists.

If the other party did not know who he was, he could have just left the Ethereal Hall and ended things there. The other party would not have been able to find him anyway, but with his identity revealed, escaping was no longer of any use to him.

“I am ‘I Am Low Profile’! As for the matter of me investigating you... I must say that you are thinking too much into it. As long as you pay me my dues, I couldn’t care less who you really are!” Zhang Xuan replied.

“I Am Low Profile?” Hearing such a name, Zhu Yanzhi felt a little light-headed.

While cultivators were free to use any nickname in the Ethereal Hall, more often than not, they would choose a profound phrase with some deep significance or an anagram or their name. Yet, this fellow’s nickname was really...

Low profile your head!

You arrived not too long ago, but within ten minutes, you have already won seven hundred Sword Pavilion Coins from me. Do you have some misunderstanding about what the term ‘low profile’ means?

Can you not insult these two words?

Zhu Yanzhi hesitated for a moment. He was reluctant to do this, but he knew he had no choice. Thus, he lifted his head, looked at the other party, and said, “Fine, I’m willing to accept my defeat. However, as long as I pay you what I owe you, can I trust you not to reveal my secrets to others?”

He knew that even if he killed the other party right there, it would not make a difference at all. The other party would lose an Ethereal Token, but his lips would still be free to blabber about his affairs.

He was in an extremely disadvantageous position, but all he could do was attempt to make peace for the time being and pray that the other party would have mercy on him.

“Of course!” Zhang Xuan nodded.

He could not care less whether the other party was an illegal broker or not. It was not as if he was the sect leader or an elder. All he wanted was to maintain a low profile and rake in some money.

“I’ll trust you then...” Zhu Yanzhi said in uncertainty as he tapped his Ethereal Card lightly.

The next instant, Zhang Xuan saw an additional six hundred Sword Pavilion Coins appearing on his card. Nodding in satisfaction, he said, "If you still wish to bet against me, feel free to look for me anytime you want. Of course, you are free to bring any friends who are interested in it too. I'd be more than happy to go along with them too!"

"I-It's fine. Gambling is not good. I have decided to turn over a new leaf..." With a livid expression, Zhu Yanzhi turned around and fled in a fluster.

He did not dare remain there even a second longer. He feared that when his rage flared up, he would foolishly accept the other party's offer and continue gambling. He could not afford to lose what little money he had left!

While Zhu Yanzhi was walking away, the gray-robed young lady from earlier noticed him and quickly jogged over. With an envious smile on her face, she asked, "How was it? How much did you win from that fool?"

"Fool?" That word reminded Zhu Yanzhi of what he had said before, and he nearly burst into tears. "I am the one who lost money!"

It was just ten minutes ago that he had thought that he had found a sucker whom he could exploit, but if anything, it felt like he was the one who was the sucker now.

"You lost?" The gray-robed young lady was stunned.

Zhu Yanzhi nodded in a daze for a moment before indignantly sharing his story with the gray-robed young lady. By the end of the story, the gray-robed young lady's eyes were already on the verge of falling to the ground.

"You mentioned that this fellow didn't just predict the outcomes of the battle with complete precision, he even knew about your background?"

"That's right!"

"It seems like he does have some cards up his sleeves. He must be here to sabotage our operations! Humph! Does he think that he can take off with the money just like that? He's underestimating us! Yanzhi, do you want to earn back your

money?” the gray-robed young lady asked with a glint in her eyes.

“Of course! But... how can I get back my money from him?” Zhu Yanzhi sighed helplessly.

“Simple! We’ll continue betting against him!” the gray-robed young lady replied with a smile.

“Bet?” Zhu Yanzhi was rendered speechless. “That fellow was able to predict even a draw. How can we possibly win against someone like that?”

“Have you gone dumb? The reason he knew about the situation in the dueling ring must be because he has some inside info... There’s even a chance that they are collaborating with one another to cheat you!” the gray-robed young lady replied.

“This...” Zhu Yanzhi fell into deep thought.

Indeed. A person who could win again and again in a gamble could only be a cheater.

He had been so engrossed with his lost money that he had neglected this fact earlier. However, now that the other party had pointed it out directly, it was indeed suspicious how the other party was able to predict even a draw. He instantaneously realized that he had just been cheated!

Somehow, that fellow must have convinced those on the stage to go along with his ploys.

Otherwise, how could such coincidences happen again and again?

“What do you think we should do then?”

This realization erased the fear in Zhu Yanzhi’s heart, replacing it with rage.

He never would have dreamed that someone would attempt to cheat him like that. It seemed like he had been too nice for too long.

“He might be able to control the outcome on the dueling ring, but he’s unable to control you and me. We can challenge him

to a battle and set the conditions of the duel to him spitting out all the money and sealing his mouth regarding everything else; that should do the job! You might have lost a lot, but as long as you can win this one round, you'll be able to get everything back," the gray-robed young lady replied.

"This... Will he accept such a duel? Besides, I don't know how powerful he truly is. Will we definitely be able to defeat him?" Zhu Yanzhi was a little hesitant.

Of course, it would be for the best if he won, but if he lost again... he would really have nothing left!

"Rest assured, this is a gamble he'll definitely take! I don't know his identity, but since he dared collude with those that came earlier, I have my own ways of rooting him out! We can use his true identity to threaten him into agreeing to the duel. As for whether we'll be able to defeat him or not... that's even less of a worry! It'd be best if we can win the duel, but taking a step back, even if we lose the battle, things will still play out well for us!

"Our swordsmanship might not be the best among the inner disciples, but it's still not too bad. As long as we go all out from the start, we should be able to force him to use his ultimate technique even if we are unable to defeat him. As long as he reveals his trump card, won't it be easy for us to figure out who he is? Then, we will have plenty of ways to make him cough up your money!"

"This..." Zhu Yanzhi's eyes lit up in excitement.

Indeed!

As long as they could get the other party to duel with them, with their fighting prowess, there was no inner disciple who would be able to defeat them while holding back their true strength.

Once the other party revealed his ace, it would be easy for them to figure out who he was.

It was true that they had gambled, but the other party had participated in it as well. Furthermore, he had even tried to rig the duels, which was a far greater crime. In the worst-case

scenario, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion might even strip him of his cultivation in order to send out a stern warning to the others!

After all, such actions violated the very sanctity of the sect!

Even if he coerced the other party to spit out his every last Sword Pavilion Coin, the other party would not dare utter a word of complaint!

“It’s settled then!”

Zhu Yanzhi ran through the matter in his mind once more and confirmed that there was no issue with it. Thus, together with the gray-robed young lady, he excitedly walked up to Zhang Xuan once more and said, “Friend, I would like to propose another bet with you.”

“Another bet?” Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up.

He was a little surprised to see this fellow coming over to propose a bet after the major losses that he had suffered.

As expected of an inner disciple from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, they sure rebounded quickly!

“Simple! We will each have a battle with you. As long as you are able to defeat the two of us, we’ll admit defeat. On the other hand, if we win, I hope that you can return everything that I’ve lost and promise to seal your lips regarding my identity. Of course, since this bet is disadvantageous to you, we’ll allow you stake as much money as you like into this!” Zhu Yanzhi said.

To put himself in a safer position, he eventually decided to include the two of them in the bet. He needed greater assurance in order to make this bet.

There were quite a few inner disciples who were able to defeat them in a one-to-one, but there was definitely no one who would be able to defeat the two of them consecutively!

In other words, as long as the other party agreed to the bet, there was no way they could lose!

“You want to have a battle with me? As long as I can beat the two of you, you will accept any stakes that I put on the table?”

Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up in excitement.

He nearly burst out laughing on the spot!

This really reminded him of the saying 'delivering a pillow while one is on the verge of napping'. He had just been thinking about how he could earn more money when they delivered such a godsent opportunity into his hands.

It seemed like there were still a lot of Samaritans in the world!

"That's right! If you don't agree to it, regarding that bet we had earlier, I know that..." Fearing that Zhang Xuan would turn him down, Zhu Yanzhi was just about to add in a threat when he saw the young man nodding vehemently in response.

"I'll agree to your bet! I'll stake all 720 Sword Pavilion Coins on the duel. If you lose, you just have to pay me the same amount of money!"

"Ah?"

Zhu Yanzhi and the gray-robed young lady did not think that the other party would agree to their terms so readily. It felt like all the words that they had prepared to force the other party to oblige to their terms had been wasted.

For a moment, they doubted their decision. The other party was simply a little too enthusiastic, such that they could not help doubting their decision. However, they reassured themselves with the fact that there was no one among the inner disciples who could defeat them consecutively.

Thus, Zhu Yanzhi heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Come, let's register for the dueling ring!"

Of course, as they were in the Ethereal Hall, they registered with their nicknames.

Zhu Yanzhi's nickname was Zaozao.

The gray-robed young lady's nickname was Onset of Twilight.

Of course, neither of those were their real names.

As most duels usually concluded quickly, it did not take long before it was their turn.

“Next round, Zaozao vs. I Am Low Profile!” the announcer declared.

“Zaozao might be a weird name, but it’s at least within acceptable bounds... What the heck is I Am Low Profile?”

“I swear that I have never heard a worse name than that in my life!”

“Hah, low profile. You know, I really want to see how low that person can get...”

...

There was some chatter among the crowd when the names of the two fighters were announced.

It was the norm to choose a grand-sounding name that were profound and awe-inspiring, so a name like I Am Low Profile was truly unorthodox. Some were even wondering if he was an eccentric madman!

“Begin!”

In the dueling ring, Zhu Yanzhi glared at Zhang Xuan coldly as he flicked his sword forth. Wielding his sword as a rapier, he launched eight swift consecutive stabs, sealing off Zhang Xuan’s movements.

This was his ultimate technique, Sword of Forlorn Sentiments!

If one cultivated this sword art to the very peak, one would be able to deal nine pierces simultaneously, and there was a total of eighty-one transformations to the move. As long as he could reach that level, there would be no one in the inner disciples who was a match for him!

While he was still slightly lacking at the moment, his eight pierces and sixty-four transformations were still more than enough for him to defeat most inner disciples!

This was especially so in the Ethereal Hall. With everyone at Ancient Sage 1-dan, there was hardly anyone who could oppose him!

Zhu Yanzhi had no idea how powerful the other party was, and a huge bet was at stake. Thus, he did not dare lower his guard.

As such, he chose to use his most powerful move right from the start.

In face of Zhu Yanzhi's rapid pierces, Zhang Xuan nodded slightly in approval.

It was no wonder the other party dared make such a huge bet with him. It turned out that he did have some skill!

But that being said, using a technique of such caliber to deal with him... he could only say that this was far from sufficient to pose a threat to him.

Instead of dodging, Zhang Xuan chose to take a step forward.

Despite the furious onslaught of pierces hurtling in his direction, there was not a single one of them that landed on Zhang Xuan. It almost looked as if Zhu Yanzhi had intentionally controlled his sword not to hit Zhang Xuan.

H-he... He found the opening where the ninth sword lies? How can this be? Just who is that fellow?

Zhu Yanzhi could hardly believe his eyes.

1957 Please Call Me Gao Jin

Sword of Forlorn Sentiments was one of the top sword arts among the inner disciples. If one was able to execute all nine swords at once, this technique would definitely rank in the top three.

While Zhu Yanzhi had only cultivated it up to eight swords, it was still a force to behold. Yet, it was as if the other party knew the ins and outs of the technique. As soon as the other party made a move, he dashed right into the opening created by his inability to execute the ninth sword!

As powerful as the Sword of Forlorn Sentiments was, it had a major flaw. Until one mastered it up to the nine swords, it could only be considered an incomplete sword art!

The other party exploited this incompleteness and dashed right into this blind spot, rendering him unable to hurt the other party even if he wanted to.

Even the strongest sword practitioner among the inner disciples was incapable of such a feat!

Anxious, Zhu Yanzhi attempted to redirect his sword to launch another sword art, but the young man suddenly raised the sword in his hand and pointed it toward his glabella.

This simple movement deciphered his Sword of Forlorn Sentiments and all its transformations. All his moves were sealed, and there was nothing that he could do in this situation.

If the other party really pushed through with this strike, there was a good chance that he would lose his life right there!

“I...” Zhu Yanzhi felt his body turning ice cold with horror.

He had thought that he would at least be able to force the other party to reveal his true identity through his ultimate technique, but who could have known that he would be defeated right after the match just started?

Against such overwhelming prowess, would the two of them really be able to uncover the other party's identity?

And if they were unable to do so... goodbye 720 Sword Pavilion Coins!

Filled with regret, Zhu Yanzhi was just thinking that he should not have listened to the words of others and continued gambling when the sword that was directed toward his glabella suddenly halted.

Perplexed, Zhu Yanzhi looked over and saw a conflicted look on I Am Low Profile's face.

He had no idea why I Am Low Profile would suddenly lose his focus in the midst of the battle, but he knew that there was no better chance than this for him to make his escape and regather himself. Thus, he swiftly took a step back to avoid that killing blow before gathering momentum to execute yet another ultimate technique.

The Sword of Forlorn Sentiments was his trump card, but since it had been deciphered, there was no way it would pose a threat to his opponent anymore. This time around, the move that he executed lacked the might that Sword of Forlorn Sentiments possessed, but it had the advantage in terms of speed.

Berserk Gale Swift Sword!

Every move that he executed was faster than the previous. By the tenth strike, his movements were already reminiscent of a raging hurricane, tearing everything down with unstoppable speed.

In truth, this was a technique that was only suited for Ancient Sage 4-dan experts. Executing it with the zhenqi and body of an Ancient Sage 1-dan cultivator was truly pushing it a little, but given the dire situation, Zhu Yanzhi had still chosen to use it.

Wu!

The sword tore forth amid roaring wind, creating innumerable sword afterimages in the air. Zhu Yanzhi thought that the other party would fall into a fluster before his unstoppable barrage

of attacks, but contrary to his expectations... the other party simply took another step forward and hacked down with his sword.

With yet another simple movement, the other party struck the core weakness of the Berserk Gale Swift Sword. If the strike had landed, he would have been chopped into two and die on the spot.

In other words, barely after he had executed his second move, he was yet again on the verge of death.

Zhu Yanzhi was going insane.

Just when he was about to give up and resign himself to his fate, I Am Low Profile suddenly halted with a conflicted expression once more.

Zhu Yanzhi made use of this opportunity to roll to the side, thus surviving this calamity.

Unwilling to give up just like that, he executed yet another ultimate technique right after.

Having lived in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion for so many years, he had grasped plenty of formidable sword arts, and every single one of them boasted immense might.

But once again, barely after he had begun moving, the other party deciphered his sword art and aimed an attack at his core weakness. He would have died if it landed, but the other party simply would not push through with the attack.

Just like that, Zhu Yanzhi went through seven movement techniques and twelve sword arts, but the result did not change at all. He was really on the brink of going ballistic.

That was not just the case for him. The crowd beneath also stared at one another with flabbergasted looks on their faces.

“He could have won in a single blow. Why does he stop every single time just as he’s about to win?”

“I have no idea what he’s doing at all... Does he not want to win?”

“Initially, I thought that he was afraid of Zaozao’s counterattack, so he was playing it a little safe, but that’s clearly not the case at all!”

“Zaozao is obviously outmatched, so I think we can all agree that I Am Low Profile is doing it intentionally. Could it be that he’s teaching Zaozao a lesson?”

Everyone was rather mystified by the happenings.

As skilled sword practitioners, they could tell that I Am Low Profile could have won the battle, but he chose to stop at the crucial juncture each and every time. It was as if he had brought everything up to the peak. Just a bit more, and it would have been the climax. Yet, of all times, he chose to take a rest then.

If it was just once, they could still have attributed it to his weak stamina, but if it happened each and every time, even the densest person in the room could tell that it was on purpose.

After failing yet another strike, Zhu Yanzhi finally came to the limits of his patience and roared, “Just what are you doing?”

He had fought plenty of battles in the dueling ring, and this was the first time that he had desired to just be killed so that everything could come to an end.

Seeing that Zhu Yanzhi had halted his attacks, Zhang Xuan lowered his sword arm and replied, “What am I doing? Aren’t I sparring with you?”

“Sparring? You had so many chances to kill me, so why did you stop?” Zhu Yanzhi bellowed furiously.

Since everyone there was able to tell, there was nothing for him to hide anymore.

“Ah, was it that obvious to you?” Zhang Xuan scratched his head awkwardly. “If you’ve read my name, you should know that I am not a person who likes to attract attention to myself. If I killed you in a single strike, wouldn’t that be going against what I stand for? I don’t really want to cause a huge commotion!”

“You don’t want to cause a huge commotion?”

That ridiculous excuse nearly made Zhu Yanzhi's heart stop from sheer rage.

Is that what you meant by low profile?

Low profile my ass!

You exploited every single one of my flaws, only to let me go, as if a predator toying with his prey. This isn't keeping a but intentional bragging! Aren't you just trying to tell everyone how advanced your swordsmanship is?

And what? You don't want to cause a commotion?

Look around you and touch your heart. Is that really what you believe in?

Every single one of those faces below looks as if someone has stuffed an egg into their mouth... You would have been much more low profile if you had killed me with a single blow!

"I admit defeat!" Overwhelmed with frustration, Zhu Yanzhi shouted before turning around and leaving the dueling ring.

It was not that he did not want his money anymore, but any amount of money he had would be meaningless if he died of depression right now!

Honestly, while he was on the stage, he had really contemplated whether he should have just killed himself so that it would all end.

"Sigh, I seem to be terribly misunderstood here. If he knew how distressing it is when everyone's attention is on you, he would have surely sympathized with me..." Zhang Xuan shook his head helplessly.

Other than that, he also felt bad taking so much money from Zhu Yanzhi. Since the other party had put up so much money, would it not be rude of him to end the battle so quickly?

This was a win-win situation!

While he was able to earn his money, Zhu Yanzhi was also able to practice his techniques and have his pride spared.

After Zaozao admitted defeat, the gray-robed young lady, Onset of Twilight, stepped into the dueling ring.

“I have to admit, you are a powerful opponent...” Onset of Twilight looked at Zhang Xuan warily with narrowed eyes.

Their original plan had been to wear the other party down and force him to execute his strongest move. From there, they would have been able to deduce the other party’s real identity.

It was clear that their plans were in shambles. They had never thought that Zhu Yanzhi would lose without being able to inflict the slightest damage on the other party.

Given so, all the pressure was now on her.

“I have a request,” Onset of Twilight said. “I hope that you won’t hold back against me. I want you to use your strongest move to defeat me!”

You want me to use my strongest move?”

This request left Zhang Xuan slightly hesitant.

“That’s right!” Onset of Twilight nodded.

As long as the other party used his strongest move, even if she lost, she would still be able to deduce his identity at the very least!

This... Very well then!” Seeing the other party’s earnest eyes, Zhang Xuan eventually gave his word.

“Begin!”

Onset of Twilight took a deep breath and drove her zhenqi. Lifting her arm, she was just about to get into stance when a blur flashed across her eyes. Before she knew it, a sword was already pressed against her neck. The sharp glint reflecting off it blinded her eyes. It felt like she would be killed on the spot if she dared make a single move.

Onset of Twilight was stupefied. She could not even react to what had just happened. The heck!

Bro, when did you get here?

I haven’t even seen your move yet, so why do I have a sword pressed against my neck?

Onset of Twilight had thought that she could finally figure out the other party's identity, but even as the other party's sword was on her neck, she did not manage to see his movements, let alone deduce the sword art that he had used!

Do you have to be so fast?

"You have lost," Zhang Xuan remarked calmly.

He had thought of dragging the fight a little longer to make it more worth their money. However, since this young lady had made such a request, he would just have to accommodate her. After all, this was what good service was about!

"I..."

At this moment, Onset of Twilight was in complete panic.

With a sword against her neck, she could not even deny her loss. It was already over.

In two rounds, they did not even manage to come close to putting the other party in danger, let alone see through his sword art!

But it was not all for naught. They were not able to confirm the other party's true identity, but they were able to narrow down the scope of candidates.

Among the inner disciples, there were no more than five people who wielded such abilities!

However, those five, due to their superior fighting prowess and talents, were highly regarded by the sect. They did not lack resources, and there were far easier ways for them to earn Sword Pavilion Coins. They would not stoop down to the level of gambling just to earn some spare change. After all, why would they allow something like that to besmirch their name when there was such a great future ahead of them?

On the other hand, the person whom they had faced was like a slave to money. They had little doubt that if they threw Sword Pavilion Coins into the water, the other party would dive right in to get them.

This did not tally at all!

The more they thought about it, the more confused they became.

After leaving the dueling ring, Zhang Xuan walked up to them and demanded with outstretched hands, “You have lost. 720 Sword Pavilion Coins!”

He had learned both of their real identities through the duel, so he was not afraid of them shirking payment.

“Here you go...”

Seeing that their ploy had failed, Zhu Yanzhi and Onset of Twilight were despondent. However, they knew that they had met with a real expert. So, they could only pool their money together and repay the debt.

“Thank you for your patronage. Feel free to find me if you ever want to bet again,” Zhang Xuan replied gleefully.

Words could not begin to describe how thankful he was to his two Gods of Fortune. In just twenty minutes since entering the Ethereal Hall, he had already earned 1,400 Sword Pavilion Coins!

Seeing the other party’s sincere eyes, Zhu Yanzhi and Onset of Twilight felt a pain in their hearts.

Why does it seem like we are good people who are here to deliver money into your hands? No, we are here to get all your money!

They could not help but feel like they had become fools.

But thinking about it, they were indeed fools for giving away all their wealth in a brief twenty minutes.

“Can you tell me your real name?”

Seeing that I Am Low Profile was going to leave, Zhu Yanzhi could not help but give it one shot.

“Hmm? You want to know my real name?” Zhang Xuan met their expectant eyes for a moment before releasing the clip holding his hair and combing it backward. Placing his hand behind, he showed those two his imposing back profile.

“Please call me... Gao Jin!”

Without bothering to look at the two dumbfounded individuals behind him, Zhang Xuan walked away before retracting his consciousness from the Ethereal Hall.

The reason he had entered the Ethereal Hall was to earn some money to use, and now that he had a huge fortune of 1,440 Sword Pavilion Coins with him, it should be enough to last him quite a while. There was no need for him to idle around anymore.

“Gao Jin?”

“Is there an inner disciple called Gao Jin? Quick, go and check it!”

Perplexed, the two swiftly whipped out their information books and looked through the list of inner disciples that they had compiled. A few moments later, they looked as if an inferno was going to erupt from their eyes.

That fellow had scammed them!

“That b*stard! I shall make him spit out whatever he has taken from us, or else I shan’t be Zhu Yanzhi!”

The more he thought about it, the angrier Zhu Yanzhi became.

“But given how powerful he is, what can we do about him?” Onset of Twilight was infuriated as well, but the sliver of rationality in her told her that there was not much they could do to I Am Low Profile.

“Simple. He might be formidable, but there’s no way he can match up to the top experts of the inner disciples. Since that’s the case, we’ll just pay a visit to them and tell them that a remarkable sword practitioner has appeared in the Ethereal Hall and goad them into making a move. Meanwhile, we’ll make another bet with him on that!” Zhu Yanzhi said as a glint flashed across his eyes.

“You’re right! We can do that too!” Onset of Twilight’s eyes lit up in excitement. “It’s settled then!”

As powerful as I Am Low Profile might seem, there was no way he could compete with those monsters who ranked at the

top among the inner disciples. Since that was the case, they could engage their help to teach him a lesson!

After returning to his room, Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before walking out.

It had been some time since his cultivation had reached the Dimension Shatterer realm, so it was about time for him to push to higher realm!

However, in order to do so, he would require a sufficient number of cultivation techniques. It was too pricy to buy from the Ethereal Hall, so he could only hope to pay a visit to the Compendium of Sword Wisdom to take a look!

After all, it was for this reason that he had encouraged Dan Xiaotian to become an inner disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

So, he walked out of his room, and just as he was about to leave the residence, the door suddenly creaked open. Elder Lu Yun walked in with an excited look on his face.

At this moment, Elder Lu Yun's aura had become a little unfathomable, as if a veil of clouds were shrouding his true prowess. Astonishingly, he had achieved a breakthrough to become a True Immortal!

1958 Third Young Master's Swordsmanship

“Congratulations, Elder Lu!”

Hearing someone entering the residence, Dan Xiaotian walked out as well. He quickly noticed that something was different about Elder Lu, so he clasped his fist and offered his congratulations.

“Hahaha, it's all thanks to your blessing!” Elder Lu Yun chuckled. “Right, I have just returned from the Elder Council, and here is the token that represents your identity. With this, as long as you have sufficient Sword Pavilion Coins, you'll be able to access the library and other facilities! It's also a necessity if you wish to undergo any of the trial and earn some rewards.

“As for this storage ring over here, it's my personal gift to you. The gifts from the sect for becoming an inner disciple are within it. There are five Basic Immortal Pills, a bottle of recovery medicine, and a bottle of zhenqi pills!”

Taking the token and storage ring from Elder Lu, Dan Xiaotian's eyes lit up, and he quickly said his thanks.

Seeing that there were so many benefits to becoming an inner disciple, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows twitched a little.

Of course, he knew that those benefits did not come for free. Accepting those gifts meant shouldering the responsibilities that came with them. There was no such thing a free lunch in the world.

He could earn money quickly in the Ethereal Hall anyway, so it was not as if he was particularly envious of Dan Xiaotian or anything.

“This is the sect's cultivation technique and the Ascendant Cloud Sword Formula. You can try practicing them yourself

first. If you have any doubts, feel free to come to me!” Elder Lu Yun said as he passed another two books over.

“The cultivation technique of our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion is called the Art of Ascendant Clouds. It’s well-known for its might even across the entire continent. Our swordsmanship is, of course, number one in the world. However, just because the cultivation technique and sword art are formidable doesn’t mean that you’ll reach the top just by practicing them. What’s more important is for you to study diligently and comprehend the essences of those two techniques!”

Dan Xiaotian nodded in response.

A strong cultivation technique and sword art were not enough to guarantee that one would become an expert. It was what came after that truly mattered.

“Of course, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion doesn’t enforce its disciples to strictly follow its regiment. If you have a cultivation technique or sword art that is more suited to you, feel free to cultivate them too. As long as you are able to clear the annual examination, the sect will not restrict your freedom!” Elder Lu Yun said.

That sword toss technique was something that even Huo Jianghe was unable to withstand. In fact, Elder Lu had tried simulating the situation in his mind as well, but even he was not completely confident that he would be able to catch it.

It was clear that Dan Xiaotian had his own secrets.

However, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would never force out the secrets of its disciples.

As long as they were able to clear the examinations and did not flout sect rules, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was not too picky about what their disciples cultivated.

After all, there was no such thing as a ‘one size fits all’ when it came to cultivation techniques.

After chatting a little more about the sect rules, Elder Lu Yun finally turned around and left.

He had just achieved a breakthrough to the True Immortal realm, so he would have to spend some time reinforcing his cultivation.

“Teacher!”

After Elder Lu Yun left, Dan Xiaotian passed the Art of Ascendant Clouds and Ascendant Cloud Sword Formula over to Zhang Xuan.

Zhang Xuan tapped his finger on them and collected them into the Library of Heaven’s Path. Following which, he swiftly flipped through them.

Fearing that there would be a deviation in Dan Xiaotian’s cultivation, Elder Lu Yun had only given him the Ancient Sage 1-dan manual. It was top-notch in comparison to the cultivation techniques of the Master Teacher Continent, but it was still terribly flawed in comparison to the Heaven’s Path Divine Art.

In Zhang Xuan’s view, something of this caliber was not worth cultivating at all.

As for the Ascendant Cloud Sword Formula, it was indeed a decent move, but it was nothing compared to what he had comprehended thus far.

“For your cultivation technique, you should just practice what I have imparted to you. There’s no need to make any alterations. As for sword arts, continue practicing the sword toss. Once you master what you have, I’ll impart the next level to you!” Zhang Xuan said.

“Yes, Teacher!” Dan Xiaotian nodded obediently.

There was no one in the world whom he respected more than his teacher. Naturally, he was more than willing to do whatever his teacher told him.

Just as Zhang Xuan was about to leave the residence, Dan Xiaotian suddenly asked, “Right! Teacher, what is the name of the sword toss technique that you taught me?”

His teacher had taught him the technique, but the name remained a mystery to him.

Surely, he could not keep referring to this technique as ‘sword toss’, could he?

This question made Zhang Xuan frown.

To be honest, he had created this technique on the spur of the moment, so he did not put much thought into naming it. Thus, he did not have an answer to Dan Xiaotian’s question.

He pondered for a moment before replying, “Since you are the Third Young Master of the Dan Clan, let’s just call this move, Third Young Master’s Swordsmanship!”

“Third Young Master’s Swordsmanship? That won’t do! This doesn’t seem too appropriate,” Dan Xiaotian replied with twitching eyebrows.

That was way too perfunctory!

Who in the world would name their self-created swordsmanship in such a manner?

Not to mention, this technique was created by his teacher, so how could he use his name for it?

“What is inappropriate about it? I’m not too concerned about the name of the technique, so you can call it anything you want. In any case, I think Third Young Master’s Swordsmanship sounds fine!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand lazily.

He could not really be bothered to argue about something like this.

His father sucked at naming, otherwise he would not have been named Zhang Diaofei. As someone who had inherited those genes, it was obvious that he would not be any better. If he was, he would not have gone around naming his techniques Heaven’s Path Divine Art, Heaven’s Path Sword Art, Heaven’s Path Golden Body, and such. His nicknames also would not have been limited to Yang Xuan, Xuan Zhang, Tianya, and all those nonsensical names.

“Alright then...” Seeing that his teacher had made up his mind, Dan Xiaotian could only go along with it.

Seeing that this matter was settled, Zhang Xuan was just about to walk out when he suddenly recalled something. Turning to Dan Xiaotian, he said, “Pass me your inner disciple token for a moment!”

...

After acquiring the token from Dan Xiaotian, Zhang Xuan left the residence and headed right for the inner disciples’ library.

The library was located on a manmade plain constructed in a valley. It was a majestic tower that Zhang Xuan had caught sight of while he was on his way to the inner disciples’ market.

Upon arriving at the destination, Zhang Xuan passed his token over.

The elder in charge of the library took a look at the token before explaining impassively, “Two Sword Pavilion Coins for an hour. You can select a cultivation technique or battle technique during this period and copy it.”

Zhang Xuan passed two Sword Pavilion Coins over before walking into the room.

The lineage of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion could be traced several thousand years back. With such a history, the inner disciples’ library was filled with all kinds of sword art and cultivation technique manuals. After a swift estimate, Zhang Xuan reckoned that there were several million books within the tall tower.

There were some rooms that disciples could enter to flip through their books privately. As time was money, most disciples would first select the books that they wanted before entering and copy its content in the fastest time possible while they were inside.

As for Zhang Xuan... he did not have to go through so much trouble. All he had to do was to look at the books all around him and mutter ‘Flaws!’ in his mind.

Hula!

Just like that, the books were swiftly being collected into the Library of Heaven’s Path at a frightening rate.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief upon seeing that the Library of Heaven's Path's book collection function was still working fine. He had been afraid that some things regarding the Library of Heaven's Path might change after entering the Azure, but everything seemed to still be working well for the time being.

He walked up the levels of the library and collected all the books that he laid his eyes on.

As this was the inner disciples' library, most of the cultivation techniques and battle technique manuals available were at Ancient Sage-tier. There were no Pseudo Immortal techniques to be found there. Furthermore, most of them were regarding Ancient Sage 1-dan.

With each increasing realm in Ancient Sage, the quantity of corresponding books available decreased at a swift rate.

Zhang Xuan was currently at Ancient Sage 4-dan Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage, so it did not matter much whether he browsed through the earlier books or not.

It took him nearly four hours in order to collect all the books available.

Following which, he walked out of the library and paid eight Sword Pavilion Coins before returning to his residence.

"Alright, it's finally time for me to make a breakthrough!"

Having collected the necessary cultivation techniques, it was about time for his stagnated cultivation to move a little!

He sat on the bed with crossed legs before directing his consciousness into the Library of Heaven's Path. He quickly gathered all the Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivation technique manuals together.

"Compile!"

The books fused together to form a brand-new Ancient Sage 4-dan cultivation technique manual.

Zhang Xuan hurriedly flipped the book open to browse through the contents, and a moment later, he heaved a sigh of relief.

Just as he had hoped, the compiled manual was Heaven's Path tier.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out the seven remaining Basic Immortal Pills and swallowed one of them.

Gugugu!

Rich spiritual energy immediately gushed into Zhang Xuan's body. He drove his zhenqi in accordance to the newly compiled Heaven's Path Divine Art manual.

Tzzzzzzzz!

As the spiritual energy was converted into zhenqi, his strength rose, and his zhenqi became more compact.

Boom!

Some time later, there was a resounding buzz as he successfully made a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm intermediate stage. Thus, he continued swallowing a few more pills and continued pushing his cultivation forward.

"Hm? Is the effectiveness of the Basic Immortal Pill growing weaker?"

Less than half an hour later, Zhang Xuan's cultivation reached Dimension Shatter realm advanced stage. He had already consumed all seven Basic Immortal Pills, but due to the decreasing effectiveness, he had only managed to reach advanced stage in the end. He was still a way off reaching consummation.

"The Heaven's Path Divine Art does have a high demand on the quality of spiritual energy!" Zhang Xuan sighed deeply as he halted his cultivation.

Usually, Basic Immortal Pills would be highly effective even for Pseudo Immortal cultivators, but they were not of much use to him anymore.

To be honest, even without the Basic Immortal Pill, just by absorbing the mercury-like spiritual energy in the air, he would still be able to improve much faster than he did on the Master Teacher Continent. However, it would take him at least

two to three months before he could reach Dimension Shatterer realm consummation at this rate.

It would be a huge insult if he had to spend such a long period of time just to advance a few cultivation stages!

“Since I still have quite a few Sword Pavilion Coins, should I try buying some Standard Immortal Pills?” Zhang Xuan wondered.

He had just won 1,400 Sword Pavilion Coins, and he had only spent eight of them so far. Since he had no urgent need for Sword Pavilion Coins at the moment, it would be best for him to raise his cultivation to Dimension Shatterer realm consummation.

Zhang Xuan took out his Ethereal Token and entered the premises again.

This time, he did not head to the dueling ring but the shopping district.

...

“Standard Immortal Pill? They cost two hundred Sword Pavilion Coins!” the receptionist told Zhang Xuan.

“Two hundred Sword Pavilion Coins?” Zhang Xuan was flabbergasting.

What kind of freakish price was that?

Basic Immortal Pills were only worth two Sword Pavilion Coins each, but Standard Immortal Pills actually cost two hundred Sword Pavilion Coins. That was a difference of hundredfold!

“Standard Immortal Pills are only used by True Immortal cultivators. Those who have reached such a realm are either core disciples or inner elders, and to them, two hundred Sword Pavilion Coins doesn’t count as much!” the receptionist explained.

“Of course, the main reason it’s so pricy is due to the multitude of expensive medicinal herbs that are required in order to forge the pill. Furthermore, the forging process is

highly demanding on the apothecary, so its quantity is severely limited!”

Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

Even an inner disciple like Zhu Yanzhi had nearly a thousand Sword Pavilion Coins with him. Given so, for core disciples and elders, the price of Standard Immortal Pills might really be cheap to them.

“I’ll buy five of them!” Zhang Xuan said helplessly.

He had thought that his recently-earned fortune would last him quite a while, but the cruelty of the world struck him once more.

Backing out of the Ethereal Hall, Zhang Xuan activated the formation on the token, and the five Standard Immortal Pills appeared before him.

He took one out, placed it on his palm, and examined it closely. Compared to the Basic Immortal Pill, it was much richer in spiritual energy, and the quality of its spiritual energy was higher. Seeing that at least these Standard Immortal Pills were fairly high quality, he felt a little more balanced inside.

Taking in a deep breath, he was just about to swallow a pill to push for a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm pinnacle when a blur flashed before his eyes. The Dongxu Gourd had leaped out of his dantian once more, and it was staring at the Standard Immortal Pill in his hands with twinkling eyes.

“How fragrant.”

1959 Taming the Dongxu Gourd

“Hold it right there!”

Seeing that the Dongxu Gourd was about to leap over, Zhang Xuan hurriedly placed a hand up and yelled for it to stop.

He had become traumatized by the many times that the Dongxu Gourd had snatched his stuff.

As soon as he acquired anything good, the Dongxu Gourd would immediately sniff it like a hellhound, dash out, and devour it in the blink of an eye. He could overlook everything that had happened before, but this was the pill that he had spent a hefty two hundred Sword Pavilion Coins on!

If I let you eat my pills, how will I advance my cultivation?

“Give it to me. I want it!” the Dongxu Gourd exclaimed as it shook its bottom. “Didn’t I tell you that this gourd is just a temporary form? I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands! As long as I recover my strength, I can grant you power far beyond your imagination. No one will dare cross you anymore. So, giving it to me will be far better than raising that pathetic cultivation of yours.”

“Scram!” Zhang Xuan’s veins throbbed upon hearing those words.

Without any hesitation, he kicked the Dongxu Gourd away and ate the pill in his hand without any hesitation.

You want to steal my stuff again? Dream on!

Gugugu!

The pill swiftly melted in his mouth, supplying a powerful surge of energy. His cultivation that had come to halt began to charge forth once more.

Dimension Shatterer realm advanced stage!

Dimension Shatterer realm pinnacle!

Dimension Shatterer realm completion!

Dimension Shatterer realm consummation!

It took two Standard Immortal Pills before his cultivation reached Ancient Sage 4-dan consummation, a step away from reaching Pseudo Immortal.

Feeling the rich energy coursing through his body, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He knew that his current strength was nothing compared to the real experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but at the very least, he should be unmatched among the inner disciples.

Of the three Standard Immortal Pills remaining, Zhang Xuan gave two of them to his clone to allow it to achieve a breakthrough, and he gave the final one to Vicious. The two of them successfully advanced their cultivation to Dimension Shatterer realm consummation.

No matter what, they were still his trump cards in times of danger, so it was important to raise their cultivation.

“Where’s mine?” the Dongxu Gourd cried out resentfully upon seeing that it had received none of the five pills.

“All you do is eat and eat. Is there anything you can do other than that? Too bad for you, I don’t have any more pills!” Zhang Xuan shrugged nonchalantly.

“But you drank my bathwater!”

“What can you do other than that? Have you ever done anything meaningful? Even in times of danger, you don’t come out to lend a helping hand. Why should I give any pills to you?”

“But you drank my bathwater!”

“Don’t think that I don’t know you’ve been stealing my Heaven’s Path zhenqi! Hiding in my dantian and stealing my energy, you are no different from a parasite! How in the world can you be so brazen and act so self-entitled? You should be glad that I haven’t driven you away yet!”

“But you drank my bathwater!”

Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless. “Can you please stop talking about your bathwater?”

“The water I have bathed in can cure injuries. You even sold it to other people and profited off it!” the Dongxu Gourd protested indignantly.

Zhang Xuan felt his head panging in pain. “Fine, let’s assume that what you’ve said is true, that you are really a legendary beast who has ruled over the lands. I can buy you the pill you want right now, but you’ll have to acknowledge me as your master and follow my orders from now on. In the future, I can even help you acquire better medicine so that you can recover as quickly as possible!”

“You want me to acknowledge you as my master?” the Dongxu Gourd asked as it shook its bottom.

“Indeed. There’s no such thing as a free lunch in this world. As long as you become my tamed beast, I’ll allow you to absorb my zhenqi freely, and I’ll earn enough money so that you can get the pills you need to recover!” Zhang Xuan said.

He had no idea what tier the Dongxu Gourd was or what it even was at all, but the fact that its gourd soup was able to recover injuries more remarkably than the Heaven’s Path zhenqi could meant that it was anything but ordinary.

Even if its claims that it was a legendary beast that had ruled over the lands was an exaggeration, it was unlikely to be Otherwise, he would not have been so helpless against it.

In any case, his priority for the time being should be to take the Dongxu Gourd in as his tamed beast. Otherwise, the Dongxu Gourd could very well run amok after it recovered.

“I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands! Instead of groveling and worshipping me, you want to tame me? Just how insolent can...” the Dongxu Gourd harrumphed coldly.

But before it could finish its words, Zhang Xuan suddenly flicked his wrist, and a Standard Immortal Pill appeared on his palm.

“Humph, I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands! Do you think that I’ll submit to you over a mere pill?” The Dongxu Gourd was salivating, but it was trying its darn hardest to hold itself back.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist, and yet another Standard Immortal Pill appeared on his palm.

He had spent his remaining four hundred Sword Pavilion Coins on those two pills.

“Humph, two pills aren’t enough. You will need at least... at least... at least twenty of them! No, there should at least be a hundred!” The Dongxu Gourd turned its head away haughtily.

“A hundred? Alright then. You can go and play with the dirt over there. I’ll be taking a rest now.” Zhang Xuan shrugged nonchalantly as he placed the pills back into his storage ring.

Knowing that the Dongxu Gourd possessed peculiar spatial abilities, he made sure to seal it with his zhenqi.

A Standard Immortal Pill cost two hundred Sword Pavilion Coins, so a hundred of them would be cost a hulking twenty thousand coins! Even if he tired himself out in the dueling ring, he would not be able to earn that much money!

Since that was the case, why bother in the first place?

“Wait, are you giving up just like that? I mean, why not negotiate a little more? I am not an unfeeling legendary beast after all...”

Shocked that Zhang Xuan would give up like that, the Dongxu Gourd immediately turned its head back and cried out. The determination in its voice had vanished, and in its place was a fawning tone. “Why don’t we do this instead? You can give those two remaining pills to me, and I’ll consider whether I should take you in as my master or not.”

While this young man’s cultivation was not that high, the zhenqi in his body felt extremely warm and comfortable. Furthermore, it could feel a force that transcended nature harnessed within his body. So, it actually was not all that against this young man becoming its master.

Just that, what kind of legendary beast would it be if it acknowledged the young man as its master just because the latter told it to?

It might just be a gourd for the time being, but it still wanted its pride!

“Here!”

Seeing that the Dongxu Gourd had finally loosened its mouth, Zhang Xuan took the two Standard Immortal Pills back out and flicked it over.

Hu!

The Dongxu Gourd swallowed the two Standard Immortal Pills simultaneously, and a slight burp sounded from its insides. With a slightly unsatisfied look on its face, it said, “While this pill is not too bad, its tier is still a little too low. I need something with more oomph!”

Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

He had eaten two pills too, and his cultivation had risen from Dimension Shatterer realm advanced stage to Dimension Shatterer realm consummation. On the other hand, the Dongxu Gourd ate two pills, but it did not seem to have undergone any changes at all. Just how powerful was it at its peak?

Would it really require a hundred Standard Immortal Pills or something more potent than that for it to return to its ‘true form’?

In any case, the fact that he’s able to remain unchanged after swallowing two Standard Immortal Pills mean that his tier must be much higher than what I imagined. I’ll just tame it first before anything happens, Zhang Xuan thought.

He knew that the Dongxu Gourd was very different from the beasts that he had tamed previously. His renowned Beast Pummeling Taming Method would not work on it.

After a moment of hesitation, he allowed the Dongxu Gourd to return to his dantian whereas he immersed his consciousness back in the Ethereal Token to enter the Ethereal Hall.

Within less than four hours, he had squandered away all the wealth. It was no wonder they said that unaffiliated cultivators would not be able to get too far!

All in all, he only had thirty-two Sword Pavilion Coins left, which was not enough to buy a fifth of a Standard Immortal Pill.

When can I finally be free from poverty? Zhang Xuan thought as he made his way toward the dueling ring yet again.

At the highest peak of the mountain where the inner disciples resided, a residence was located right at the edge of the cliff.

In its courtyard, a white-robed young man named Liu Lujie was seated on the floor with his eyes tightly shut.

The rich spiritual energy from the surroundings slowly gathered around his body and formed a huge vortex around him. He opened the acupoints all over his body and ravenously devoured this congregation of spiritual energy.

Some time later, he opened his mouth wide.

Wu!

A surge of sword qi shot out and sliced through a boulder located not too far away.

If one took a closer look, this surge of sword qi contained exactly the same amount of energy as the spiritual energy that he had just absorbed.

Instead of refining the spiritual energy into zhenqi, he had converted it into sword qi and shot it out.

After doing all of that, he slowly opened his eyes.

By the entrance of the courtyard, he glanced at the blue-robed young man who had been waiting there for quite some time.

The blue-robed young man walked in and asked, “Are you still unwilling to make a breakthrough? How long do you plan on suppressing your cultivation for?”

“I still wish to continue refining my Sword Intent. As for a breakthrough, that’s not something that is on my mind at the moment,” Liu Lujie replied.

“You have been refining your Sword Intent for three years now,” the blue-robed young man remarked.

“Three years is still not long enough. I heard that the Ten Li Sword God in our sect refined his Sword Intent for a whole ten years before pushing for a breakthrough to Pseudo Immortal. It’s with such accumulation that he was able to cause such a huge uproar! Even though my talent pales in comparison to his, I still believe that my patience will bring me somewhere further,” Liu Lujie replied.

“Speaking of which, it sure is unusual for you to visit me. Do you want to have a spar?”

“Nay, it’s not as if I stand a chance against you,” the blue-robed young man replied with a wave his hand. Following which, a gleam twinkled in his eyes as he said, “Zhu Yanzhi and Wei Suifeng came to see me earlier, and they told me something that I found really interesting. Would you like to hear about it?”

“Those two have always wasted their time on useless nonsense instead of cultivating; I doubt there’s nothing they can say that will be truly meaningful,” Liu Lujie said. “I still need to cultivate, so I’ll have to ask you to leave.”

“Hey hey hey, don’t be in such a rush to chase me out. At least let me finish my words, alright?” As if knowing that Liu Lujie would react in such a manner, the blue-robed young man waved his hand calmly and continued with a smile. “They said that a particularly powerful sword practitioner has recently appeared in the Ethereal Hall of the inner disciples. Despite the two of them going at that sword practitioner one after another, they were unable to force the other party to reveal his ace!”

“Oh? The two of them were actually outclassed to such an extent?” Liu Lujie was slightly taken aback by the news.

“While Liu Yanzhi and Wei Suifeng often waste their time on meaningless pursuits, it has been quite some years since they arrived in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“Their cultivation is at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation, and their comprehension of swordsmanship

can at least be considered above average. Yet, they actually weren't able to force their opponent to reveal his ace before falling in defeat? That... shouldn't be possible!"

"They brought a video with them, and it was indeed as they said. Would you like to see?" the blue-robed young man asked.

"Fine, I'll allow the two of them to come in!" Liu Lujie nodded.

"Alright!" The blue-robed young man turned to the doorway and shouted, "Did you hear that, come in!"

Shortly after, a young man and a young lady walked in. They were the two opponents whom Zhang Xuan had faced at the Ethereal Hall, Zhu Yanzhi and Onset of Twilight.

Of course, Onset of Twilight was just a nickname; her real name was Wei Suifeng.

"Paying respects to Senior Liu and Senior Wang!"

As soon as they walked in, the two of them immediately bowed deeply.

Those two who had been speaking earlier were none other than rank one Liu Lujie and rank three Wang Jiandong!

"You said that a remarkable sword practitioner has appeared in the Ethereal Hall?" Liu Lujie looked at the two of them coldly.

"That's right, Senior Liu!" Zhu Yanzhi nodded. He quickly took out a Record Crystal and passed it over. "This is the recording of our battle with him. Please take a look!"

Liu Lujie took a glance at Wang Jiandong before tapping his finger lightly on the Record Crystal to infuse a surge of zhenqi in.

Weng!

The Record Crystal immediately began playing.

After watching for a brief moment, Liu Lujie's eyes shot up in astonishment. "He was able to see through the flaws in your ultimate techniques and overcome them with the simplest of moves?"

1960 I Challenge All of You Here!

As the strongest cultivator among the inner disciples, Liu Lujie's comprehension of swordsmanship had already reached an astounding level. The battle between I Am Low Profile with Zhu Yanzhi did not last too long, but Liu Lujie was still able to tell that the other party's swordsmanship was not beneath his!

To see through the openings of the Sword of Forlorn Sentiments with just a glance... this was something that even he would have difficulty doing!

Of course, he could not deny the possibility that the other party might have had some understanding of the sword art beforehand. After all, as long as one was an inner disciple and had sufficient Sword Pavilion Coins, one could freely access the book and jot down its contents.

But even if I Am Low Profile had managed to decipher the Sword of Forlorn Sentiments, he could not have done the same for Berserk Gale Swift Sword and the ten subsequent sword arts too!

Over the past several millennia of development, the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had gathered at least a hundred thousand sword arts that inner disciples could access. In order to stand out from others, most disciples would choose a unique sword art that was different from the rest.

Even if I Am Low Profile had coincidentally studied the Sword of Forlorn Sentiments and Berserk Gale Swift Sword before, he could not possibly have done the same for the remaining ten sword arts. Just what were the odds of him having learned the exact same sword arts as Zhu Yanzhi!

Putting everything aside, he would not even have had sufficient time to do so!

From that alone, it could be deduced that I Am Low Profile did not overcome those moves based on his familiarity with the sword arts. Instead, his comprehension of swordsmanship had reached an extremely high level that allowed him to see through the swordsmanship of others.

After that was the battle between I Am Low Profile and Wei Suifeng. This battle was even shorter. In a split second, a sword was already pressed against Wei Suifeng's neck.

"This person's fighting prowess is nowhere beneath mine!" Liu Lujie remarked with narrowed eyes as he tossed the Record Crystal back to Zhu Yanzhi.

"Indeed. I also thought that this person is quite remarkable, so I came to find you right after watching the video," Wang Jiandong said. "How is it? Are you interested in having a duel with him?"

"Of course!" Liu Lujie said as an intense fighting will ignited in his eyes. "My mastery of swordsmanship has already reached a bottleneck. I need to fight with someone of similar strength to me in order to trigger my potential and achieve a breakthrough. I believe that he'll be the best opponent for me!"

The reason he had suppressed his cultivation all this while was to sharpen his Sword Intent and further his comprehension of swordsmanship.

However, it was a pity that there was no one among the inner disciples who was a match for him anymore. When he was fighting against other inner disciples, he would have to intentionally hold himself back a little. Thus, he could not help but tremble in agitation upon seeing a fitting opponent before him.

He instinctively knew that this was a person who was worthy of having him fight at full strength!

"Who is this person though? If he has such a deep understanding of swordsmanship, it's weird that we have never met him before. Could he be a core disciple in disguise?" Wang Jiandong asked curiously.

“Unlikely,” Liu Lujie replied with a shake of his head. “Core disciples hold their positions in high regard. None of them would be so bored as to come to the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall to flaunt their skills!”

“But... if there was really such a formidable figure among us, we surely would have met him by now given how long we have been in the sect,” Wang Jiandong said in incomprehension.

Liu Lujie shared the same opinion.

Core disciples stood at the very peak of the sect, so they would not be so bored as to head to a lower Ethereal Hall just to tease a couple of inner disciples while lowering their standing at the same time.

“The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion has been around for several thousand years now, and there are many inner disciples who are devoted to just cultivating their Sword Intent. They are nonchalant toward fame and fortune, and they are unwilling to bring attention to themselves. It might seem like I’m the number one expert of the inner disciples, but in truth, there are plenty of other disciples who don’t pale in comparison to me when they exert their true strength,” Liu Lujie said.

He was famed for being the number one expert of the inner disciples, but he did not allow that to get to his head.

There were many disciples in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who were true sword ascetics. Just like ascetic monks, they put themselves in the toughest environments in order to temper their state of mind and Sword Intent, all in hopes of perfecting their understanding in the Way of the Sword!

Those people often disregard the ranking system, choosing to immerse themselves completely in their training after clearing the inner disciple examination. As a result, their rankings were not very high.

But those who were foolish enough to underestimate them would be in for a shock.

Even Liu Lujie himself would not dare get carelessness upon encountering one!

“Indeed, those sword ascetics are truly fearsome.” Wang Jiandong nodded in agreement.

Liu Lujie looked at Zhu Yanzhi and Wei Suifeng and instructed, “Inform me when I Am Low Profile appears in the Ethereal Hall once more. I wish to meet his sword!”

“Rest assured, Senior Liu. My men are already on the lookout. As soon as they spot him, they’ll inform me right away,” Zhu Yanzhi said with a smile.

All of a sudden, he flicked his wrist and took out a Communication Jade Token. Lowering his gaze to take a look, his eyes lit up in excitement. “Senior Liu, I just received word that I Am Low Profile has entered the Ethereal Hall!”

“Jiandong, let’s head there together to take a look!”

Liu Lujie took out his Ethereal Token and swiftly connected to the Ethereal Hall. The others around him swiftly followed suit.

Hu! Hu! Hu! Hu!

The four of them appeared one after another in the Ethereal Hall, and they quickly made their way over to the dueling ring.

“Senior Liu, that person over there is I Am Low Profile,” Zhu Yanzhi said as he pointed forward.

Liu Lujie looked in front of him and saw a young man standing in front the dueling ring with a bored look on his face. The young man was yawning endlessly, almost as if the battles that were happening on the stage were too dull for him.

Another disciple behind him was displeased with his disinterested attitude, so he lividly berated, “Why bother hanging around here when you aren’t even interested in watching? You might as well free up this slot for someone who is more interested in the duel...”

The next moment, though, I Am Low Profile turned toward the disciple and smiled. “Do you want to make a bet with me? We don’t have to play too big. A few hundred Sword Pavilion Coins will be enough!”

“You...” The disciple clenched his fists angrily.

Arrogant!

The other party was way too arrogant!

Even illegal brokers would only make dealings in the shadows, fearing that the elders would go after them. Yet, this fellow had actually asked such a question in public.

It was as if the rules of the sect meant nothing to him at all!

“A few hundred Sword Pavilion Coins? Why don’t you just go and steal instead!” the disciple bellowed with reddened, puffed up cheeks.

I Am Profile was visibly taken aback for a moment before asking, “Ah, is that possible?”

“Of course!” the disciple sneered coldly at the young man’s haughty response. “See, there are so many of us here. If you are able to defeat all of us singlehandedly, all of their Sword Pavilion Coins will be yours!”

“Are you being serious here?” I Am Low Profile’s eyes lit up excitement. He was really moved by this thought. “Will this... be a breach of the sect rules?”

“If you robbed a single person, that might still be breaching the sect rules. However, if you are able to defeat everyone here singlehandedly, the sect will only blame all of us for our weakness!” the disciple scoffed.

While he was saying those words out of anger, his words had some truth to them.

Stealing among fellow disciples was against the rules of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. However, if one was able of challenging everyone simultaneously and defeating them... even the sect would not say anything if that person took everyone’s Sword Pavilion Coins!

Kill a man, and one would be a murderer. Kill a million, and one would be a hero who rose above a million.

Those who are strong were envied, but those whose strength surpassed imagination were revered.

Rules were important in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but what was even more important than rules were the people. The sect had a soft spot for talented individuals.

There was such a precedent in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. In the past, the disciple who eventually become the Ten Li Sword God had challenged thirty inner disciples all at once. He had defeated them with ease and made his name known throughout the entire sect.

The inner disciple who said those words to Zhang Xuan had thought that he would back down after hearing those words, but what happened instead was that the latter's eyes began glowing brighter and brighter in agitation. "If that's truly the case, it would really be for the best..."

"Best?" The inner disciple was completely stumped.

Was this fellow a fool or something?

There were plenty of hidden experts among the inner disciples! Challenging and defeating all of them at once...

You really should pull your head out from the clouds!

Even the top geniuses from the core disciples would not be able to achieve such a feat!

It was not because they were not strong, but the Ethereal Hall had limited their cultivation and zhenqi capacity. Dealing with one or two people was not an issue, subduing four to five people was still inherently possible, but to fight dozens at once... that was simply impossible!

Even if one had the skill to do so, one would not have sufficient zhenqi to last the entire battle!

Not to mention, all the inner disciples in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were geniuses who boasted superior swordsmanship! Even defeating one of them was difficult, let alone defeating everyone at once.

You are really daydreaming!

Just as the inner disciple was going to ask Zhang Xuan to wake up and not let unrealistic thoughts devour his mind, the latter suddenly burst into laughter. He turned around and

declared in a resounding voice, “Right here, right now, I challenge all of you to a battle. The stakes will be all the Sword Pavilion Coins we have on us. Does any of you dare take up the challenge?”

“Am I hearing things? That fellow wants to challenge all of us?”

“And the stakes are all of the Sword Pavilion Coins we have?”

“That’s practically plundering, isn’t it?”

“He’s not just plundering; he wants to steal all of our fortunes! Who the hell is that brazen lad who dared spout such arrogant words?”

“Not even the number one Senior Liu would dare issue such a challenge!”

“This son of a mutt is way too conceited! I can’t take it anymore... I’ll accept your challenge, you rascal!”

The challenge that Zhang Xuan had issued to all the inner disciples present immediately sparked a massive explosion of rage.

Most of those who were there had fought at least a dozen matches and watched several hundred duels, but they had never seen anyone who was so pompous as to challenge all of them at once. Such fellows had to be beaten to the ground so that they would never act so haughtily ever again!

“What in the name of the heavens... Is that what he means by ‘low profile?’”

Meanwhile, Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong had just arrived on the scene, and they nearly spewed fresh blood upon seeing that.

The heck!

When they heard the other party’s nickname, they assumed that the other party would be a reserved man who did not like to bring attention to himself. After all, even they did not know of the other party’s existence.

Yet, before they knew it, the other party had already issued a challenge to everyone. Not only so, it was obvious that he intended to snatch away all their money.

Please, your actions aren't even slightly synonymous with "low profile!"

You show off!

It took a long while before Wang Jiandong finally managed to close his agape mouth once more. He turned to Liu Lujie and asked, "Are we joining in?"

He was really taken aback by how audacious I Am Low Profile was.

He knew that he was already one of the strongest cultivators among the inner disciples, and very few could beat him in an actual battle. However, he would never dare issue such a public challenge.

Even if they went at him one by one, his stamina, zhenqi, and concentration would still be unable to take it!

A smirk crept onto Liu Lujie's lips, and he chuckled a little. This was the first time that he had felt so excited in a while.

"Since we are present, don't you think that it would be disrespectful for us to turn down such an earnest challenge? Jiandong, hand your card and my card over to the front receptionist. If he's able to defeat me, I have no qualms about him taking away all my Sword Pavilion Coins away with him! If he's unable to defeat us, even if we don't make a move, the sect won't tolerate such blind arrogance among its ranks. He will be accorded with the most severe of punishments!"

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had a soft spot for talents, but that was only if one was able to pull one's own weight. If I Am Low Profile managed to accomplish something amazing out of this, the sect would turn a blind eye to his actions... but if he suffered a tragic defeat, he would surely be severely punished.

Even the talented had to recognize their own limits and act their worth.

Otherwise, if everyone emulated his actions, the entire sect would fall into anarchy!

1961 Come At Me!

“Yes!” Wang Jiandong nodded as he took Liu Lujie’s card and walked up to the receptionist.

There were many others who had been provoked by Zhang Xuan’s words. They quickly took out their Sword Pavilion Coins and placed them in the hands of the receptionist. This way, even if they were killed, they would be able to complete the bet.

“That fellow is really asking for it...”

Upon seeing this sight, Zhu Yanzhi and Wei Suifeng were so exhilarated that they could have exploded from glee.

The reason they had taken Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong there was incredibly simple. They wanted to borrow their strength to teach the other party a lesson, as well as to force the other party into revealing his identity so that they could coerce him into returning the money that they had lost. Who could have known that the other party would make such an audacious move? Did he think that he could singlehandedly defeat all the inner disciples there?

He must have gone mad!

It was undeniable that the other party was powerful, but as the saying went, ‘it’s hard for two hands to cope with four hands....Furthermore, there were over a thousand hands there!

Even if that fellow doesn’t display his ultimate technique, there’s no way he’ll be a match for everyone here. There’s no doubt that he’ll be severely punished by the sect for his preposterous actions...

With such a thought in mind, the two of them felt a lot more balanced inside.

They had initially been rather furious at having their money taken away just like that, but just imagining the pathetic plight that awaited that conceited brat quelled their anger completely.

“That fellow might be formidable, but it’s a pity that he has a loose screw in his head!”

“How could a person possibly defeat so many people at once? He must be bonkers!”

“Nevertheless, regardless of the outcome of this battle, his name will probably resound across the entire sect after this...”

Most of the disciples were infuriated by Zhang Xuan’s provocations, but there were a few who admired his courage.

At the very least, there was no one in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who had dared make such an audacious challenge for the past few centuries.

“Who wants to come first?”

Paying no heed to the discussions from the crowd, Zhang Xuan leaped into the dueling ring before looking at the crowd all around him, as if challenging them to take him on.

If he had known that he could challenge everyone and take all their wealth, he would have long made such a move. He would not have wasted ten minutes hesitating over what he should do.

“What arrogance... I can’t take it anymore. I’ll kill him!”

Unable to take it anymore, an inner disciple leaped into the dueling ring.

“I am Wu Feng. In the previous Inner Disciple Tournament, I was ranked 157th. I might not be the strongest among the inner disciples, but I won’t allow the likes of you to insult me!”

Unleashing a ferocious roar filled with killing intent, the inner disciple drove his sword toward I Am Low Profile.

Since the other party had made such a bold claim, it was likely that he had the strength to back his words up. Wu Feng instinctively felt that he would not be a match for the other party... but so what? Even if he died there, he would not allow himself to be insulted in such a manner!

Hula!

In the blink of an eye, he had already launched eighteen consecutive slashes, and each of them was faster than the last! Sword Art: Eighteen Curvatures of the Mountain Route!

This was his strongest battle technique, and it was with this sword art that he had defeated many opponents on this dueling ring.

His execution of the technique was smooth and refined, and sword qi flowed out from the edge of his blade like flowing water.

“Show your move!” Wu Feng roared ferociously as he wrapped his sword qi around his body.

“Show my move?” Zhang Xuan shook his head with a light smile. “I’ve already made my move.”

You have already made your move?” Wu Feng was stunned.

It was only at that moment that he felt a sharp pain intensifying on his throat. He tried to lower his head, but fresh blood suddenly spurted forth like a fountain.

Padah!

His head fell to the ground.

“How is this possible?”

Those were the last words murmured weakly from Wu Feng’s mouth before his body dissipated into fragments of light.

He had put up an absolute defense, but the other party had still managed to lop off his head without him noticing. How was that possible?

The crowd was also flabbergasted.

They had thought I Am Low Profile too arrogant for challenging them all at once, but from the looks of it, it seemed like his arrogance was not unfounded!

Even though their eyes had been on the dueling ring, no one actually saw how I Am Low Profile managed to lop Wu Feng’s head off!

“Remarkable!”

“But so what if he’s powerful? Even if we go at him one at a time, it’s just a matter of time before he runs out of zhenqi!”

“Indeed! There’s no need to be afraid of him. We’ll only lose an Ethereal Token at most!”

“Let’s slowly grind him down. I don’t believe that he can continue spouting such smug words after facing a couple of us!”

The crowd slowly recovered from the shock of Wu Feng’s death. Before long, there were a few roars that roused the morale of the crowd, and a new challenger stepped into the dueling ring.

If their lives were really at risk, most of them would probably have been hesitant. However, as the duel was held in the Ethereal Hall, the worst that could happen to them was losing an Ethereal Token. As long as they killed that fellow, they could accept such a loss.

Even if they had to slowly wear I Am Low Profile down with heaps and heaps of corpses, they were determined to finish him off!

“I am...”

The inner disciple who leaped onto the stage raised his sword as he began to introduce himself. However, before he could even finish his words, he felt an itch at his throat, and before he knew it, he was staring at his own feet.

His head had been lopped off as well.

“What about the rest of you?” Zhang Xuan frowned in displeasure. “Honestly, I think its a huge waste of time for you all to come up one by one. How long will it take for me to slaughter all of you at this rate? Just come up all at once!”

While he was glad that there were people taking on the challenge, this was taking way too long. If he had to kill them one by one, he would not be done even by daybreak! Why in the world were they wasting his time by dawdling before?

You b*stard! You are asking for it!”

Meanwhile, the crowd beneath was really on the verge of losing their rationality.

It was for the sake of fairness that they had decided to go at him one by one. Yet, that fellow actually wanted all of them to go at him at once. Was he asking for a lynching?

“Let’s go together!”

Huala!

In an instant, five inner disciples leaped into the dueling ring.

Those five inner disciples were not too weak. They were ranked in the top three hundred of the Inner Disciple Tournament.

The de facto leader of the group harrumphed coldly. “Rest assured, we won’t use a collaborative formation against you!”

It was already beneath them as proud inner disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to gang up against a single opponent. They could not lower their pride any further to resort to using a collaborative formation.

“Whatever.” Zhang Xuan raised his sword and slashed it horizontally through the air. Following which, he turned to the crowd and shouted, “Next!”

Putong! Putong! Putong! Putong! Putong!

Right after those words were spoken, the heads of the five inner disciples fell to the ground before their bodies dissipated into light fragments.

Zhang Xuan also knew about the limitations of his stamina and zhenqi. If it had been his main body, having cultivated the Heaven’s Path Divine Art and undergone the Saint Ascension Ordeal and such, he would have had no worries about depleting his zhenqi at all. However, the body that he was given in the Ethereal Hall did not enjoy such a luxury.

So, he unhesitatingly chose to kill them within a single move, not giving them a chance to retaliate at all. This saved him quite a bit of zhenqi and stamina.

“Next!”

“That fellow’s swordsmanship is pretty fast. We mustn’t waste our time talking cr*p with him. We need to unleash our strongest sword arts as soon as we step into the dueling ring!”

“Indeed. Everyone, don’t bother holding back at all. Release your strongest moves! Even if you can’t kill him, at the very least, try to deplete as much of his stamina and zhenqi as possible!”

Not expecting the five inner disciples to be killed before they could even make a move, a huge commotion broke out amid the crowd.

Determined not to give Zhang Xuan a chance to rest, yet another group of five quickly leaped into the dueling ring.

At this point in time, there was no one who dared underestimate I Am Low Profile anymore.

However, they were still unwilling to believe that the other party could singlehandedly defeat all of them. If they could not defeat him with their combined might, what would others think of them? Their dignity would be completely crushed! They could not back down there!

Weng weng weng weng weng!

Without any hesitation, the five who had just stepped onto the stage immediately unleashed an ocean of sword qi into the dueling ring. Driving their zhenqi to their limits, they executed the strongest moves that they knew.

This prevented them from coordinating with one another through a collaborative formation, but as experts, they were still able to control their attacks such that they would not hinder one another. Their torrential offense had Zhang Xuan’s movements completely sealed, such that there was nowhere he could escape to.

Seeing that at least this batch of opponents was a little smarter than the last, a slight smile finally emerged on Zhang Xuan’s lips. He took a step forward.

Puhe! Puhe!

No one saw him move his sword, but two heads had already fallen to the ground.

Zhang Xuan took a step back, and yet another head fell to the ground.

The two remaining opponents in the dueling ring were a piece of cake. With a swift slash of his sword, they disappeared from the dueling ring in less than a breath.

“This...” Upon seeing this sight, Liu Lujie’s body trembled in shock. “He could tell that the collaboration between the five wasn’t complete, so he redirected their attacks to kill one another!”

“This saves him quite a bit of zhenqi, reducing his energy consumption to the minimum!” Wang Jiandong’s eyes were also widened.

What I Am Low Profile had done was use a little bit of force to redirect the offense of the five against one another. While those five were trying to coordinate with one another, it was still impossible for them to constantly keep track of each other’s movements and attacks in the midst of a dynamic battle. This was the very opening that I Am Low Profile exploited to defeat those five.

But as simple as it sounded, it was far more difficult than it seemed to put into practice.

Firstly, I Am Low Profile had to have a deep understanding of the moves of the five, such as the trajectories of their attacks and the next move they would take. Otherwise, there was no way he could step into the midst of their attacks without guaranteeing that he would not be hurt.

Secondly, his calculations had to be absolutely precise. Amid the barrage of five powerful attacks, he had to maintain a tight overview of the chaotic situation and determine the ideal move that he should make.

Thirdly, he had to have absolute confidence in his abilities. The slightest hesitation could result in a mistake in his redirection, and the one who would be killed could very well be him!

Those three points had to be met in order to achieve this feat.

Wang Jiandong was confident that he would be able to defeat those five inner disciples, but there was no way that he would be able to do it with such ease!

He could not help but turn his gaze to Liu Lujie, hoping to know whether the number one expert of the inner disciples would be able to achieve this feat or not.

“I couldn’t do it.” Liu Lujie shook his head. “He has only used a single surge of zhenqi to kill those five, but I would require at least five surges...”

He would have been able to charge into the attacks of the five and swiftly slay all of them, but it was beyond his means to redirect their attacks against one another and defeat them without even lifting a single finger.

Naturally, it was obvious which fighting style was superior.

Liu Lujie paused for a moment before adding, “The precision of his control, his overview of the battlefield, and his swordsmanship skills are truly formidable. However, as long as I can uncover his ultimate technique and trump card, I should be able to kill him with my full strength!”

There was no doubt that the other party’s movements were swift and unorthodox, but he could do the same. In terms of swordsmanship skill, he did not think that he was beneath I Am Low Profile at all.

As long as he could uncover what the other party’s strongest move was and take precautions, it should not be too difficult for him to achieve victory given his strength!

Slowly, the other cultivators among the crowd also saw through the crux behind Zhang Xuan’s earlier actions, and they exclaimed in horror.

“Everyone, be careful! Don’t use collaborative formations or go at him in a group! Otherwise, he’ll just redirect your attacks against one another!”

If they continued going at him as a group, instead of expending his zhenqi and wearing him down, they would only

become his murder weapon.

“What should we do then?”

“If we don’t go at him as a group, we’ll just die much more pitiful deaths going up one by one!”

All of a sudden, the area around the dueling ring fell silent. No one dared to head up anymore.

One by one would not work, and going as a group only backfired on them. It was like there was no way out of this at all! No matter which way they chose, the outcome was still a tragic defeat!

Seeing that no one was moving at all, Wang Jiandong glanced at Liu Lujie before walking over to the dueling ring with widened strides. “Allow me!”

However, before he could step in, he discreetly sent a telepathic message to Liu Lujie and said, “I’ll try to force him to use his strongest move. Take a good look and try to decipher it. When it’s your turn, make sure to kill him in a single blow! Don’t give him any time to react!”

Knowing Wang Jiandong’s motives, Liu Lujie nodded. “Alright!”

Those who had challenged I Am Low Profile so far were not too strong. Not a single one of them was ranked in the top fifty among the inner disciples.

On the other hand, Wang Jiandong was ranked third place. With his strength, he should be able to force I Am Low Profile to reveal his true strength, thus allowing Liu Lujie to make a more wholesome assessment of the other party.

This way, Liu Lujie would stand a better chance of defeating the other party when it was finally his turn.

“I am Wang Jiandong. Please allow me to witness your strongest move,” Wang Jiandong said.

The leisurely aura around him vanished as soon as he stepped into the dueling ring. The zhenqi in his body roared, and his aura rose into the heavens. In an instant, it felt as if he had transformed into a War God.

As if responding to his Sword Intent, his sword reverberated in agitation. It sounded like the growl of a massive dragon. “It’s Senior Wang Jiandong!”

“He’s actually here! This is wonderful!”

“He’s ranked third among the inner disciples, right? With his formidable swordsmanship, he should be able to end the other party quickly!”

“Well, even if I Am Low Profile wins the match by chance, he’ll probably expend a huge chunk of his zhenqi in this battle!”

Hearing the name, the crowd began cheering excitedly.

Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong did not frequent the dueling ring, and they used aliases for the names of their avatars.

Thus, unless they declared their names, no one would be able to recognize them.

Hearing the discussions amid the crowd, Zhang Xuan said, “Wang Jiandong? You are ranked third among the inner disciples?”

“Indeed! Shall we get started?” Wang Jiandong asked.

He channeled his sword qi into the sword in his hand, ready to launch a devastating strike on his opponent. “Sounds good!” Zhang Xuan replied.

He took a step forward.

Padah!

Wang Jiandong’s head fell to the ground.

Silence.

1962 The Number One Inner Disciple

“W-what ...”

Watching as the world rotate around him, all that was in Wang Jiandong’s mind was incredulity.

Even in his moment of death, he did not believe what was happening to him.

He had driven his Sword Intent and sharpened his concentration to their limits. He had been prepared to meet anything that came his way. He had intended to last as long as he could against his opponent and put up a good fight.

But as soon as the other party made his move, the world had begun rotating around him. Everything had ended before he knew it.

When did the other party make the move? How did the other party make the move? He realized that he knew nothing at all!

Was such a swift sword humanly possible?

Lujie, I’m sorry. I was thinking of sounding out the other party’s moves for your reference, but strength is limited. To the other party, I am probably no different from an unmoving target...

With a heart filled with regrets, Wang Jiandong dissipated into light fragments.

Beneath the dueling ring, Liu Lujie witnessed everything that had happened clearly with his eyes, and he nearly blacked out.

That was the third strongest expert among the inner disciples!

Yet, he had helplessly been killed in a single move.

How in the world did something like this happen?

Will I really be a match against such a fast sword?

Liu Lujie fell into deep thought. Deep inside, he already had a clear answer in his mind. There was no way he could block that blow.

However, he was unwilling to give up just that. His tenacity did not allow him to give up just because a stronger opponent was standing before him. There had never been an obstacle that had brought him down before, and he did not think that this would be any different.

All of sudden, the fighting will in his eyes flared up once more. “I get it... I get it! Jiandong, your death wasn’t in vain.

You didn’t manage to force him into revealing his trump card, but I have managed to uncover the flaws in his swordsmanship!”

Liu Lujie clenched his fists tightly as his zhenqi roared within his body. He had finally found a way out of this quandary.

Based on his analysis so far, the other party’s so-called trump card was much simpler than what they had assumed... and that was his swiftness!

His sword was so fast that most opponents he faced would not even be able to react to his attack.

Most likely, the other party had comprehended the Speed Quintessence.

Even the greatest might could be overcome, but absolute speed was undefeatable!

He had been so interested in finding out what kind of move the other party had executed that such a simple fact had eluded him. In truth, the other party only had a single move, and that was his swiftness.

As long as one’s sword was swift enough, even an expert of Wang Jiandong’s caliber could be decapitated in an instant.

“There’s only one way to avoid a swift sword, and that’s to take the initiative. In other words, I just have to be faster!”

Coming to understand the crux of the other party’s strength, Liu Lujie swiftly stumbled upon the answer to overcoming the other party’s swordsmanship.

Defense was not enough to curb a swift sword, so the only true way to do so was to match its speed. Only by outmaneuvering the other party would he be able to force the other party into revealing his openings!

Closing his eyes, Liu Lujie swiftly formulated several offensive maneuvers in his mind, and eventually, he settled upon one of them. He felt that as long as he executed it properly, his chances of victory would be over seventy percent.

While Liu Lujie was still in deep thought, another twenty people had stepped into the dueling ring one after another. Just like those that had gone before them, their heads ended up rolling off their necks. None of them managed to last a single breath!

By this point, the crowd was already trembling fearfully as the frightening strength of I Am Low Profile started to seep into their minds.

In less than three minutes, I Am Low Profile had already killed forty opponents, and seven of them were ranked in the top hundred. There was even the third ranker Wang Jiandong among the victims.

Yet, no one had managed to land even a single blow on I Am Profile so far. Not only that, no one had been able to make sense of how the other party had managed to kill them!

Initially, they had thought that they could eventually grind down this fellow with sheer numbers, but right now... their confidence was wavering.

In their minds, I Am Low Profile had already transformed from an ordinary human into a callous grim reaper.

Every move he made would signify a decapitation.

It was almost as if this had become a rule on this dueling ring. It did not matter how many opponents he was facing or how powerful his opponent was.

Seeing that morale had fallen to an all-time low, Liu Lujie shouted, "Everyone, don't panic. He's only a single man. We have more than enough people to take him down. Even if we

stand here and allow him to kill us, how many of us will he be able to take down?"

"Indeed... He might be powerful, but he's only a single man!"

"We can't lose. Otherwise, what will other people think of us?"

"Losing our money is a small deal. What's more important is that the sect will surely punish us for our weakness!"

Liu Lujie's shout made everyone snap out of their fear, and their eyes began blazing with fighting spirit once more.

"Everyone, I have been analyzing his swordsmanship thus far, and the crux of his strength is simply his speed. It's not as complicated as what you are imagining. As long as we are able to move faster than him, he will be a goner!" Liu Lujie said as he slowly made his way over to the dueling ring.

"I'll kill him right now so as to show you that there are plenty of experts among the inner disciples!"

Hearing Liu Lujie's words, the crowd swiftly widened their eyes in realization.

Indeed! It was their inability to comprehend I Am Low Profile's attacks that made him seemed more frightening than he truly was. However, if all the other party had was speed... as long as they were able to move faster than the other party, the other party would be nothing at all!

A swift sword was formidable, but it was highly demanding on one's vitality and zhenqi. Given the limitations on his cultivation imposed by the Ethereal Hall, how much longer could I Am Low Profile keep up with such speed?

"To be able to see through all of this, it seems like that friend over there is a true expert!"

"I wonder if he'll be able to defeat I Am Low Profile."

"It doesn't matter whether he's able to defeat I Am Low Profile or not. The knowledge that I Am Low Profile is using speed to overwhelm his opponents is a crucial piece of information. This means that the sacrifices of those that came

before haven't been in vain. As long as we go at him relentlessly, he will eventually wear himself out!"

As Liu Lujie made his way to the dueling ring, the crowd instinctively opened up a path for him as they roared cheers of support.

Liu Lujie was currently using a new Ethereal Token, and the nickname that he was using was different from before. As such, no one knew that he was actually the number one expert of the inner disciples!

Hearing the confident declaration from the new challenger, Zhang Xuan could not help but chuckle softly. "You said that speed is the crux of my strength?"

How was his move fast at all?

This was nothing more than an ordinary slash from him after comprehending that Sword Intent.

The more powerful one's Sword Intent was, the greater the burden on one's zhenqi, physical body, and soul. His current Ancient Sage 1-dan would not be able to bear the burden of executing a truly swift sword!

In fact, even his real Ancient Sage 4-dan consummation body would not be able to bear the pressure from unleashing the Sword Intent that he had captured with his golden page!

As such, all he could only showcase a sliver of what he was truly capable of!

Nevertheless, while the other party's analysis wasn't completely accurate, it was a good attempt. From the looks of it, it appeared that the new challenger was a fairly decent sword practitioner.

Usually, he would be interested in seeing what the other party was capable of, but it was a pity that

currently a little too feeble. He could not afford to squander any of his strength. Furthermore, he was pressed for time, so he could only end this quickly.

"Let's begin!"

While such thoughts were running through Zhang Xuan's mind, Liu Lujie had already gotten into the ring and readied himself.

Hu!

He swiftly harmonized together with his sword before dashing forth like a burst of wind. Due to the sheer speed that he was moving at, the tip of his sword released a deafening rumbling reminiscent of the roar of thunder.

"Swift!"

"But this move looks rather familiar. I feel like I've seen it somewhere before..."

"It's the Sword of Thunder Call!"

"Legend has it that the elder who created this technique was inspired by a streak of lightning in the sky. This swordsmanship allows one to move with speed as fast as lightning and strength as frightening as thunder..."

"That swordsmanship is one of the top three sword arts within the inner disciples' library, but it's simply so hard that most who try give up eventually. So far, among the inner disciples, there's only one person who has succeeded..." "Wait a moment, you can't mean to say that the person in the dueling ring is..."

The new challenger moved with such agility that the crowd could hardly keep up with his movements. A huge uproar broke out among them.

It was a well-known fact that only Senior Liu Lujie had mastered this move. This was more than enough to verify the identity of the new challenger!

It seemed like even the number one expert of the inner disciples had decided to make a move to teach that arrogant fellow a lesson!

"That brat is finally done for!"

That fellow's tricks will be swiftly unraveled under Senior Liu's ingenuity!"

Everyone's eyes lit up in excitement as they cheered for Liu Lujie.

In their hearts, Liu Lujie was an undefeatable legend. He had dominated the number one spot for seven years now, and no one had come close to even shaking his position so far.

With such an expert making a move, I Am Low Profile would surely fall into defeat. With that, there was no way he would act arrogantly anymore!

Back to the dueling ring, Liu Lujie was completely oblivious to the fact that his identity had been revealed. At that very moment, his complete attention was focused on his sword art.

Knowing that his opponent's sword was capable of moving at inhuman speeds, he dared not let his guard down for even a second. Any opening that he showed could very well become his undoing.

With his incredible speed, he covered over a dozen meters in the blink of an eye, but for some reason, perhaps because I Am Low Profile was caught off guard or was simply that confident in his abilities, the other party remained rooted to the spot, not moving at all.

"Are you still not going to make a move, or are you unable to make a move?"

It seemed like his guess was right. The only thing that the other party had was his speed! With him outdoing the other party's speed, there was no longer anything the other party could do.

Victory was his to claim!

Huala!

But as this thought was circling in his mind, he suddenly felt a chilling sensation ahead of him.

Glancing upward, his eyes widened in disbelief. At some point in time, the other party had lifted his sword and placed it in the trajectory of his movement, waiting for him to crash into it.

"Wh ..."

As he was moving too fast, he was not even able to pull off a sidestep. Before he could say a word, the sword had already plunged right through his head.

Putong!

His body fell lifelessly to the ground.

“Next!” Zhang Xuan shouted out.

The other party’s movements were rather fast, so he had chosen to place his sword in the path of the other party. As he had expected, the other party had ended up running right into his blade, thus allowing him to achieve a headshot without even exerting much strength.

“Senior Liu was killed just like that?”

“What’s even more frightening is that I Am Low Profile didn’t even exert any strength! All he did was hold his sword in position, and Senior Liu simply ran right into it!”

“Didn’t Senior Liu say something about defeating speed with greater speed?”

The crowd shuddered in fear. At this moment, they were on the verge of a mental breakdown!

Even the number one expert of the inner disciples had been killed with such ease. Just how powerful was I Am Low Profile?

“What’s wrong? Is there no one who dares fight me anymore? Can I take it that all of you are admitting defeat?” Zhang Xuan could not help but realize that the crowd had gone completely silent after he defeated the previous opponent, so he could not help but ask them that with a frown.

Even when he defeated Wang Jiandong, the crowd did not react in such a manner!

Could it be that the earlier opponent was a famous figure among the inner disciples?

Thus, he turned to one of the more vocal inner disciples and asked, “Is the person whom I just killed... someone who is deeply respected among the inner disciples?”

Y-you...M Hearing those words, the inner disciple nearly fainted on the spot. “Did you not feel anything different while fighting him?”

You were going against the number one expert of the inner disciples! Surely you felt his extraordinary aura and superior strength!

“Feel anything different?” Zhang Xuan’s frown deepened. “Was I supposed to feel anything about him? Other than his decent speed, it doesn’t seem like there’s anything special about him at all!”

It was true that the previous challenger was fast, but his inability to control his speed properly made him extremely easy to kill.

The current situation was just like a bunch of ants trying to oppose a human. Would a human be able to sense who was the stronger one among the ants?

It was not like it made any difference at all!

“H-he... He’s the number one expert of the inner disciples, Senior Liu Lujie!” the inner disciple cried out.

“Oh... He’s the number one expert?” Zhang Xuan frowned doubtfully. “Even though he’s so weak?”

“...“The crowd.

1963 Bai Ruanqing Is Here

In the courtyard located at the peak of the inner disciples' mountain, Wang Jiandong slowly opened his eyes. Feeling a little giddy, he clutched his head for a moment.

Wang Jiandong meditated for a moment to recover from his abnormal condition before murmuring with a bitter smile, "It doesn't feel too good to have my head lopped off."

He would usually be the one killing others in that dueling ring, and it was his first time experiencing his head being sliced off. While physical harm incurred in the Ethereal Hall would not be transferred into the real world, the mental pressure in that moment still left his heart thumping wildly.

"Even though I lost an Ethereal Token, I hope that I have allowed Senior Lujie to see through that fellow's swordsmanship. It would be good if he's able to achieve victory," Wang Jiandong muttered.

To be honest, he was full of awe toward Liu Lujie.

Over the years, no matter how many formidable moves he had learned or what kind of maneuvers he executed, it was all futile in the face of Liu Lujie's absolute strength. It was as if he was a kid trying to fool around with an adult.

To him, Liu Lujie's strength was as unfathomable as an abyss.

It was just like how in a school exam, even if you scored ninety-nine marks whereas a genius scored one hundred, the difference between you and the genius would not just lie in that single mark. It was just that the paper only had a hundred marks for the genius to score.

As long as Liu Lujie could see through the other party's moves, he should be able to win with ease!

Dong dong dong!

While Wang Jiandong was still in deep thought, he suddenly heard knocking outside.

“Who would visit at such an hour?” Wang Jiandong murmured as he stood up and walked to the entrance of the residence.

Usually, as this was Liu Lujie’s residence, it would be inappropriate for him to receive the door the other party’s place. However, as Liu Lujie was currently dealing with I Am Low Profile in the Ethereal Hall, he could only receive the guest in his place.

Jiya!

Opening the door, Wang Jiandong saw a few inner disciples looking at him with their heads lowered fearfully. One of them anxiously said, “Senior Liu, we beg your pardon for visiting at such an ungodly...”

But before they could finish their words, they realized that the person before them was not Liu Lujie. With an awkward chuckle, they quickly corrected their words. “Our apologies, Senior Wang. May we know if Senior Liu is inside?”

“What’s wrong?” Wang Jiandong asked with a frown.

He recognized these fellows, but they had never interacted with one another before. They were not even in the top thousand among the inner disciples. Why were they looking for Senior Liu?

“Senior Liu is the number one expert of the inner disciples, and he boasts great influence here. There’s a matter that we would like to trouble him with,” the inner disciple said with a reddened face.

“He’s not free!” Seeing that they were here to ask for a request, Wang Jiandong replied impatiently and prepared to close the door.

It was true that Liu Lujie possessed great influence among the inner disciples due to his position, but how busy would he be if he helped anyone who came knocking?

A precedent could not be set, or else it would cause a great deal of trouble in the future.

“Not free? What haughty words! Are all inner disciples nowadays so arrogant?”

As soon as Wang Jiandong finished his words, a cold feminine voice sounded behind the inner disciples. Raising his gaze, he saw a demure-looking young lady walking over with a displeased expression on her face.

Upon taking a close look at the other party's appearance, Wang Jiandong's eyebrows shot up in horror. He quickly clasped his fist and greeted, "Senior Bai!"

The person who had appeared was none other than the renowned tyrant of the core disciples, Bai Ruanqing!

She was neither the strongest nor the most talented among the core disciples, but she had a formidable grandfather, who happened to be one of the Three Grand Elders, Elder Bai Ye!

Even though Elder Bai Ye had been injured recently, no one would dare take their chances.

As such, even though Bai Ruanqing had beaten up a lot of core disciples, no one dared do anything to her. Instead, all of them kept their distance from her and tried their best not to cross her path.

She had never involved herself in the affairs of the inner disciples before, so why would she suddenly pay Senior Liu a visit?

Seeing through Wang Jiandong's doubts, Bai Ruanqing explained, "I am here to engage Liu Lujie's help in finding an inner disciple. He should be able to do it, right?"

"Of course, Senior Liu and I would never turn down a request from you, Senior Bai." Wang Jiandong nodded.

How could he possibly turn this female dinosaur down?

If he angered the other party, he would risk having his eggs of life crushed by a kick! No matter how frustrated he was, he could only bear with it.

Even core disciples did not dare turn down a request from Bai Ruanqing lightly, let alone inner disciples like them!

"Senior Bai, please come in!" Wang Jiandong quickly invited her into the residence to have a seat.

After settling down in the main hall, Wang Jiandong leaned forward a little and asked, “May I know which foolish inner disciple has offended you, Senior Bai? Feel free to name him, and I’ll have my men investigate the matter right away!”

“He didn’t offend me, but I have some business with him,” Bai Ruanqing said with a frown, but she did not bother to waste her time explaining the matter. With a flick of her wrist, she took out a painting and said, “This is a painting of his appearance.”

Bai Ruanqing was not just a skilled sword practitioner; she was also an expert in ink painting. Her drawing of Zhang Xuan was accurate to the finest detail, making it seem extremely lifelike.

“His painting?” Wang Jiandong took the painting and examined it carefully. A moment later, he shook his head and said, “My apologies, but I have never met this person before!”

He had been an inner disciple for many years, and he practically knew all the inner disciples in Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. However, he was certain that he had never seen this person before.

“You’ve never seen him before? What about Liu Lujie? Where is he? Bring him here to check the painting,” Bai Ruanqing said.

“Senior Liu is currently sparring with someone in the Ethereal Hall!” Wang Jiandong quickly replied.

“Sparring?” Bai Ruanqing frowned. “Isn’t he the number one expert of the inner disciples? Is there anyone who is a match for him in the Ethereal Hall?”

As the number one expert of the inner disciples, would Liu Lujie not simply defeat all of his opponents with ease? Was there any point to sparring with others there then?

“Not too long ago, an arrogant sword practitioner named I Am Low Profile appeared in the Ethereal Hall. However, it shouldn’t be an issue anymore. With Senior Liu making a move, he should be able to defeat the other party swiftly...” Wang Jiandong said with a smile.

Halfway through his words though, the sound of a stool falling to the ground echoed from the courtyard. Looking over, he saw Liu Lujie walking over with a ghastly pale face.

“Senior Liu...”

Wang Jiandong and the other inner disciples quickly rose to their feet and greeted him.

Still seated calmly in her chair, Bai Ruanqing glanced at the young man who had just entered the main hall and asked, “Are you Liu Lujie?”

Noticing the esteemed guest in the room, Liu Lujie quickly clasped his fist and greeted her. “Paying respects to Senior Bai!”

“Senior, how did it go? Did you manage to get him?” Wang Jiandong asked anxiously.

However, Liu Lujie shook his head and gloomily replied, “I was defeated by him.”

“Y-you were defeated?” Wang Jiandong recoiled in shock. “Senior Liu... did you manage to force him into showing his true sword art?”

“Well...” Liu Lujie shook his head bitterly once more. “I charged at him as swiftly as I could, but he ended up piercing my head with his sword... Just like that, I died.”

“He pierced your head with his sword?” Wang Jiandong was stunned.

He was willing to admit his defeat, but this was Senior Liu they were talking about. He was the number one expert of the inner disciples!

Yet, he had been defeated in a single move.

Just who in the world was that fellow?

From which hole did he pop out of?

Noticing the slight change in the atmosphere, Bai Ruanqing asked, “What happened?”

“Senior Bai, it’s like this...” Liu Lujie quickly recounted the entire matter to Bai Ruanqing.

“Someone haughtily challenged all of the inner disciples at once in the Ethereal Hall?” Bai Ruanqing was stunned by the explosive news. “There’s actually another person who is even more arrogant than me in the sect?”

All in all, there were over ten thousand inner disciples in the sect... and he had actually challenged all of them at once.

That was insane!

She had thought that she was already the cockiest person in the sect due to her grandfather covering her, but to think that there was actually someone who could top her act!

More importantly, despite being so pompous, he still sarcastically used the nickname I Am Low Profile, as if mocking everyone else...

Vicious!

There was truly no one more condescending than him!

“I would like to meet that fellow!” Bai Ruanqing stood up with fighting will flaring in her eyes.

The reason she was called a female dinosaur was not just because of her explosive temper. More than that, it was because she liked fighting and was darned good at it!

With such an expert appearing among the inner disciples, how could she possibly not be moved? Her fighting will had been ignited, and it would not be quelled until she exchanged blows with the person in question!

“Senior Bai, you are a core disciple. It would be a breach of the rules if you headed over...” Liu Lujie’s face reddened.

No matter what, this was a battle among the inner disciples. It did not feel appropriate for Senior Bai to involve herself in this.

“I’ll just head in there to take a look and see if it’s a core disciple pretending to be an inner disciple to cause trouble!”

Bai Ruanqing swiftly found herself an excuse. "Of course, I'll just take a look at what kind of moves he has!"

"This..." Liu Lujie hesitated a little.

While he did say earlier that I Am Low Profile could not be a core disciple, but what if that was really the case? After his fight with the latter, such doubts had started popping up in his mind.

The excuse that Bai Ruanqing had come up with was legitimate, and it was not a huge deal for her to head in to take a look. This was a good chance for him to determine if the other party was actually a core disciple in disguise.

If that was truly the case, it would be meaningless for him to pit himself against the other party.

"I'll be troubling you, Senior Bai!" Liu Lujie replied.

He took out two Ethereal Tokens and passed one to Bai Ruanqing. As for the other one, he was going to use it for himself.

In order to better disguise themselves, most inner disciples chose to carry a couple of tokens with them. In a sense, it was similar to how some people had multiple social media accounts for different purposes.

"It's no trouble at all. While I take a look at who that fellow is, I'll help you find the flaws in his moves so that you can defeat him. Then, I need you all to help me investigate who this person is," Bai Ruanqing said as she gestured at the painting. "I don't like owing favors to others, so let's call it even with this!"

Yes, Elder Bai!" Liu Lujie nodded.

Together with Wang Jiandong, the two of them quickly entered the Ethereal Hall once more.

Using another Ethereal Token, the both of them assumed different nicknames and appearances. Bai Ruanqing did not forget to conceal her appearance in order to prevent others from identifying her as well.

After their disguising work was done, the three of them quickly headed for the dueling ring.

By the time they arrived, there was already a massive crowd around the area.

While they were gone, news had been spreading like wildfire among the inner disciples, and those who were absent quickly entered the Ethereal Hall. There was a tense and fiery atmosphere in the air.

When Liu Lujie and the others first arrived on the scene, a group of twelve happened to step into the dueling ring. However, they were killed by I Am Low Profile in the blink of an eye. In the next moment, yet another wave of opponents stepped into the dueling ring. It felt never-ending like the relentless tides.

Liu Lujie swiftly grabbed a nearby disciple and asked, “How many people has he eliminated so far?”

“Probably around two hundred, I think... Those who get into the dueling ring are pretty much killed in an instant. No one has been able to last more than a single move against him. Even Senior Liu Lujie was sliced in two with a single move from him!” the inner disciple replied agitatedly.

While he felt enraged by this fellow’s arrogant challenge, there was no denying that he was extremely powerful!

Even the number one expert of the inner disciples had been killed so easily, so there was no way the others could be a match for him. They could only hope to rally more people and swarm him with sufficient numbers. Slowly, they would grind him down before dealing a killing blow!

“He has already eliminated two hundred people?” Liu Lujie’s eyebrows shot up.

How long had it been since he left? Three minutes? Five minutes?

Yet, that fellow actually eliminated 170 people within this short span of time?

The heck!

That was too much!

It was as if inner disciples were no different from ants to the other party!

Liu Lujie turned to Bai Ruanqing and asked, “Senior Bai, could that person really be a core disciple in disguise?”

“This...” After assessing the figure in the dueling ring for a moment, Bai Ruanqing shook her head and said, “None of you are able to force him into showing his hand, so I can’t say for sure!”

1964 We're All In This Together

In terms of appearance and gestures, Bai Ruanqing could not think of any core disciples who were similar to I Am Low Profile. Then again, the other party would have surely disguised himself well before entering this Ethereal Hall, so it was meaningless to make deductions based on that. The best way to figure out his identity was to force him into revealing his true capabilities!

I Am Low Profile had been fighting for quite some time, but the moves that he had used so far were practically no different from the action of swatting flies. With each swing, he would reap the life of an opponent or two. There was nothing that one could discern from such a simple action. Even with her deep understanding of the core disciples, there was no way she could recognize the other party from a simple slash!

“He’s simply too powerful. We aren’t able to cause him any stress at all,” Liu Lujie remarked bitterly.

They had thought that Wang Jiandong would be able to force him into showing his hand, but he had been decapitated in a single slash. When Liu Lujie went up, he had been sliced in two. They were the first and third of the inner disciples! If even they did not stand a chance, what could the others hope to do?

Furthermore, the other party had killed two hundred inner disciples so far, but he did not even look tired. With the other party’s skills, it felt like it would not make a difference no matter how many people they piled into the dueling ring!

“Don’t worry. Let me give it a try!” A glimmer of excitement surfaced in Bai Ruanqing’s eyes.

As a core disciple and the granddaughter of one of the Three Grand Elders, she had a deep understanding of swordsmanship despite her young age. If it was in the real world, she would be

able to pull off what I am Low Profile was doing, killing an opponent with a single slash each. However, with the pathetic body that was allocated by this Ethereal Hall, she would not have the stamina or zhenqi to kill so many people and still be standing at the end of it!

In other words, there was a good chance that the person in the dueling ring was even stronger than her. Before such an expert, as a battle maniac and a female dinosaur, it was only natural that she would want to test the other party herself!

“Senior Bai...” Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong looked at one another awkwardly. “You are a core disciple. If you are caught interfering in a conflict among inner disciples...”

It was true that they had some lingering doubts about I Am Low Profile being a core disciple, but there was also a chance that he might really be an inner disciple who had cultivated hard over the years. In the first place, it was already disadvantageous for him to have to face so many opponents at once. If they brought a core disciple in as well, their reputation would really be torn to shreds!

Just the sheer embarrassment would be enough to kill them!

“I’m using your Ethereal Token at the moment. As long as neither of you say a word, no one will know a thing!” Bai Ruanqing said with a grand wave of her hand. “There’s no need to say anything more. I’m just going to test that fellow and verify his identity. As soon as I confirm that he isn’t a core disciple, I’ll immediately admit defeat. You can rest assured that I have no plans of interfering with this matter. Of course, if he’s a core disciple, I’ll get rid of him for you in view of the sect rules!”

“This...” Liu Lujie hesitated for a moment before bowing deeply. “We’ll be troubling you, Senior Bai!”

What the other party said made sense. If she was just going into the dueling ring to test I Am Low Profile’s skills, it would not contravene the rules of the sect.

“Senior Bai, be careful. That fellow’s sword is extremely fast,” Wang Jiandong advised softly.

“Fast? Hah, that’s one thing that I’m not afraid of! From the age of five, Grandpa Bai Feng would take me to the northernmost winterlands to practice the Heavysnow Swordsmanship every year. It has been fifteen years since then, and I have already mastered the technique to Major Accomplishment. With such swordsmanship, do you think that I would fear the speed of his sword?” Bai Ruanqing replied proudly.

The other party might be skilled in swift maneuvers, but that was even more so for her!

It was through the swiftness of her movements that she was able to strike the vitals of the other core disciples before they could even react.

“Heavysnow Swordsmanship?”

Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong had heard that Bai Ruanqing was a formidable sword practitioner, but they had not been aware of the swordsmanship that she practiced. So, when they heard the name of the sword art, their eyes lit up in excitement.

The Heavysnow Swordsmanship was renowned within the sect. It had been created by an expert a thousand years ago during a snowy day. If one cultivated it to the peak, one would be able to deal six slashes in the time that a snowflake took to descend to shave off its six tips!

Without its sides to cushion its fall, a snowflake would become no different from a snowball, resulting in the acceleration of its fall. This was also the inspiration behind the name of the technique, Heavysnow Swordsmanship.

Snowflakes were known for their lightness, such that even the slightest gust of wind could blow them away. As such, the sword practitioner had to control their strength to the finest degree, and the speed of their movement needed to be incredible.

As someone who had achieved the level of Major Accomplishment in a technique like that, Bai Ruanqing’s

speed and control had long reached a level far beyond their comprehension!

“If that’s the case, I Am Low Profile will surely be no match for Senior Bai!” Liu Lujie remarked with a nod. He lowered his back once more and earnestly said, “Senior Bai, pardon me for saying this, but I beseech you to halt after testing his identity. Please allow the inner disciples to deal with him instead!”

Regardless of whether I Am Low Profile was a core disciple or not, it was still a fact that he had challenged and insulted all the inner disciples. If they had to rely on an outsider to deal with him, it would reflect badly on them.

“I didn’t know that you were so noisy. Fine, fine, I’ll leave him to you!” Bai Ruanqing waved her hand impatiently as she walked up to the dueling ring.

“Everyone, stop! I’m going to have a solo fight with I Am Low Profile!” Bai Ruanqing commanded.

As a core disciple, her comprehension of swordsmanship far surpassed that of everyone on the scene. Even without making a move, she was able to exert an indescribable pressure on those around her.

“I don’t really know who she is, but she seems to be very powerful. I feel like my Sword Intent has been suppressed to the extent that I can’t even drive it properly anymore!”

“It’s the same for me. I’ve never felt such powerful Sword Intent from the other inner disciples before, so she could very well be a sword ascetic. In terms of swordsmanship, it’s very likely that she’s on par with Senior Liu!”

“Let’s just step back and watch the situation for the time being. She might just be able to get rid of that fellow and exact vengeance on our behalf!”

...

In deference to the powerful Sword Intent that Bai Ruanqing was emanating, those who were intending to climb into the dueling ring chose to heed her words and back down.

True sword ascetics were rare, but they would still show up from time to time among the inner disciples, so most of the cultivators there knew of their existence. Despite their lack of fame, their true strength could easily rival the top ten sword practitioners among the inner disciples!

It was highly likely that both the senior who had just stepped onto the stage and I Am Low Profile were sword ascetics.

Seeing yet another self-assuming sword practitioner coming onto stage, Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed impatiently. "Hurry up if you wish to make a move. You can also see that there are many people queuing behind you, waiting to be killed too!"

This kind of opponent was particularly troublesome. It was as if they were born with a natural inclination for fanfare and sticking out like a sore thumb. Otherwise, why would they have to specially demand a one-to-one battle and waste everyone's time?

"It's been long since I've met someone as brazen as you!" Bai Ruanqing scoffed as she swiftly drew her sword and released a powerful slash toward Zhang Xuan.

Heavysnow Swordsmanship!

Right from the very start of the battle, she had already utilized her trump card. Sword qi burst forth and formed a violent snowstorm in the dueling ring. White snowflakes descended from the sky, blurring one's sight.

"How is it? Am I fast?"

Bai Ruanqing did not rush into continuing with her offense after executing her swordsmanship. Instead, she looked at Zhang Xuan with a confident smile on her lips.

Even though she had boasted to Liu Lujie and the others that she had reached Major Accomplishment in the Heavysnow Swordsmanship, the truth was that her mastery was still a little lacking. She was unable to bring out such prowess every single time.

This time, she knew that she was facing a powerful opponent, so she pushed herself to the very limits. Under this pressure,

she actually managed to bring forth a might beyond what she was usually capable of. Even out of ten executions, it was unlikely that even one would be as powerful as this.

As such, she was extremely excited to see how well things were turning out this time.

If it was just a moment ago, she would not have dared claim that she would be able to defeat I Am Low Profile with utmost confidence. However, with the current momentum that she had built up, victory would be a piece of cake for her!

“Fast?” Zhang Xuan sighed in exasperation. “Yes, you are very fast. Are you done executing your technique already? I am pressed for time!”

After which, he raised his blade and slashed it horizontally.

Puhe!

As soon as Zhang Xuan raised his blade, Bai Ruanqing immediately got into a defensive position to protect herself. But before she knew it, there was a sharp pain on her throat, and the next moment, she was already staring right at her toes.

Putong!

A corpse collapsed to the ground.

Bai Ruanqing had been killed as if she was nothing more than an insignificant ant being squashed.

Seeing how the crowd was building up faster than the rate at which he was eliminating his opponents, he shook his head in frustration at how inefficient the current system was. He pondered for a moment before making up his mind.

“Forget it, this is really too slow. All of you should come up at once! Or is the dueling ring a little too small to hold everyone? Shall I come down to fight all of you?”

Then, without any hesitation, he leaped right into the midst of the crowd.

The dueling ring was simply too small, such that it could only fit ten or so people at once. Anything more than that would be

far too tight. At this rate, it would take too long for him to get rid of the thousands that had gathered around the dueling ring.

Not to mention, there would be some hero wannabes coming up from time to time demanding a solo duel.

What a pain in the ass! He might as well just dash right into the crowd and fight everyone all at once!

“W-what? You’re asking for it!”

“Everyone, let’s make a move together! I don’t believe that his two hands will be able to deal with thousands of us all at once!”

...

The crowd could hardly believe that the seemingly powerful senior would be unable to last even a breath before I Am Low Profile. And before they could even process this shock, the latter suddenly leaped down of the stage and began massacring everyone.

In an instant, the entire situation descended into chaos.

In truth, the small size of the dueling ring worked to I Am Low Profile’s advantage. It would prevent anyone from easily getting behind him and assaulting him. Yet, that fellow had actually abandoned that advantage and dashed right into the crowd.

This meant that he would have to defend against attacks from every direction!

Was that even possible?

No matter how fast I Am Low Profile was, there was no way he could keep up with twenty swords, fifty swords, or even a hundred swords at once!

Huala!

In an instant, all kinds of sword qi came raining down on I Am Low Profile from all directions. It was as if the entire world was denying his existence!

“Senior Bai...”

Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong were utterly frenzied to see that even the Heavysnow Swordsmanship executed by this female tyrant of a core disciple would fail to stop I Am Low Profile.

They were still afraid that Senior Bai would go too far and end the opponent... but from the looks of it, it felt like it made no difference to I Am Low Profile at all. Whether the latter was slaughtering them or Senior Bai, there was simply no pressure to him at all!

They would never have thought that the day would come when they would see core disciples, Pseudo Immortals or possibly True Immortal experts, actually get slain so easily.

Wang Jiandong shook his head and said, “Well, I have to admit that I Am Low Profile is indeed formidable, but he’s simply too arrogant. His arrogance will only eventually lead to his downfall. There’s no way he’ll be able to cope against the encirclement of so many inner disciples at once!”

No matter how powerful one was, there would eventually be a limit to one’s strength, right?

They were all Ancient Sage 1-dan cultivators in the Ethereal Hall. In terms of strength, they were to equal to one another. No matter how skilled a person, there was no way he could fight against an army of thousands who boasted the same strength as him!

Even a powerful martial artist would be overwhelmed by an army of a thousand grannies!

“He’s probably done for...” Liu Lujie shared Wang Jiandong’s view as well.

He did not think highly of I Am Low Profile’s actions.

“Senior Liu, there are a lot of people here. Should we make use of this opportunity to sneak in an attack against him?”

Wang Jiandong asked as he pulled his thumb over his throat to make a gesture of killing.

1965 Elder Mu

“That won’t do!” Liu Lujie shook his head adamantly.

“We have already fought and lost to him. We only entered the Ethereal Hall as spectators this time. If everyone could return endlessly after being defeated, there would be no fairness in this duel at all!”

I Am Low Profile had challenged all the inner disciple at once, and as embarrassing as it might be, it would still be fair for them to go at him one by one. However, if they continued challenging him in a different identity after they had already been killed, they would really become laughingstock once others knew about it.

They might have lost, but they had to lose with pride and dignity!

At the very least, this was his bottom line as the number one expert of the inner disciples!

“Senior Liu, you’re right. I asked an inappropriate question...” Wang Jiandong lowered his head in embarrassment.

He had been so engrossed in the idea of the getting rid of I Am Low Profile that such a notion had crossed his head. Thinking about it once more, he did agree that it would not be appropriate to take such a course of action.

The sword was the conqueror of all weapons. The foundation to mastering the Way of the Sword started from tempering one’s heart. If a sword practitioner could not even conduct themselves with pride and dignity, their Sword Intent was bound to be weak and impure.

“Speaking of which, since Senior Bai has been defeated, we should quickly return. Otherwise, I fear that Senior Bai might go berserk after returning to the real world,” Liu Lujie said.

He was just about to leave the Ethereal Hall when he suddenly felt a stabbing pain in his throat. He tried to turn his head, but

before he knew it, he found himself staring right at his own bottom.

“The hell!”

In his peripheral vision, he could see I Am Low Profile marching forth like a relentless war machine. With each step he took, a huge bunch of heads would fly into the air, as if a lively blood-fest.

The reason he had been killed was because he had simply been too close to the battle. Some of the sword qi that escaped from the center of battlefield had struck and decapitated him.

Even a hint of sword qi leaking out from the other party was enough to kill him. How were they supposed to assassinate the other party like that?

Assassinate your head!

They would not stand a chance at all!

With a resentful look on his face, Liu Lujie’s head bounced up and down several times before eventually settling in a patch of grass not too far away. In his last sight, he saw Wang Jiandong’s head also bouncing up and down...

The expression on the other party’s face was also one of melancholy.

They were just innocent spectators who had come here to watch the commotion.

Where did the law in the world go to? Why would innocent people like them be caught up in this mess?

Hu!

Their consciousness retreated from the Ethereal Hall, bringing them back to the real world.

While his consciousness was being pulled back into his body, he could not help but remember his encounters with I Am Low Profile. The first time, he was impaled in the head. The second time, his head was decapitated while he was watching from a distance.

He was a person who had retained the position as the number one inner disciple for the past ten years. His eyes were set on the Ten Li Sword God! When did he become a side character who could be defeated so easily?

While he was still feeling exasperated over everything that had happened in the past hour, he finally opened his eyes once more. The first thing he saw was Senior Bai Ruanqing trembling before him, and when he took a closer look, he realized that the entire room was a huge mess.

It seemed like he was not the only one who could not accept the outcome. A certain someone who had been decapitated right after she had executed her ultimate move was unable to take her defeat and was currently venting her anger on his furniture.

It was fortunate that those items were not worth much, or else he would have really suffered a huge loss this time around.

“Senior Bai, please calm down...” Liu Lujie quickly stood up and clasped his fist.

With a frosty look on her face, Bai Ruanqing glared at Liu Lujie with tightly clenched teeth. “Calm down? Do I look angry to you?”

Liu Lujie’s heart immediately turned cold. While he was still at a loss as to how he should respond to the question, his vision blurred.

Pilipala!

The sound of fists and kicks sinking into flesh echoed loudly in the air.

Before long, all the inner disciples within the residence, including Zhu Yanzhi and Wei Suifeng, were lying on the ground with bruised cheeks and broken noses. It was a truly miserable sight.

“Alright, I feel a little better now...”

The beating that she had just dished out alleviated the suffocating feeling in Bai Ruanqing’s heart a fair bit. Taking a deep breath, she assumed her lofty attitude once more and

instructed, “Keep a close lookout for the person I told you to look for. Also, make sure the news that I visited you tonight doesn’t reach the ears of another person. If I hear anyone talking about this matter, I’ll make you regret having been born in this world!”

Liu Lujie, Wang Jiandong, and the others cowered in fear as they squeezed their thighs together.

“I’ll be leaving now!”

Hula!

The next instant, Bai Ruanqing had already left the area on an aerial beast, disappearing from everyone’s sight.

To think that a proud core disciple like her would be defeated in a single move in the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall... She would only have embarrassed herself further by staying there!

Wang Jiandong double checked that the female dinosaur had really left the area before asking with a bitter smile, “What should we do?”

“What else can we do? Given how huge this matter is, we can’t possibly hide it any longer. We have to report it to the elders!” Liu Lujie said.

Even though I Am Low Profile killing them was a huge affair, it would not be too big an issue. However, right now, I Am Low Profile had already killed over a hundred inner disciples and even destroyed a core disciple with ease. The situation was far beyond their control!

If they did not report it to the elders soon, they would not be able to bear the consequences!

“You’re right! We should report it to the elders and leave the matter to them...” Wang Jiandong quickly nodded in agreement.

After coming to an agreement, the two of them quickly made their way out to the courtyard, intending to ride an aerial beast to the quarters of the elders. But at that moment, a sharp beast call came from above.

Raising their heads, Liu Lujie and the others saw ten elders heading toward them on the back of an aerial beast. When they were finally directly above the residence, they quickly leaped down and landed lightly in the courtyard.

They were the elders who were responsible for managing the affairs of the inner disciples.

“Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong, what’s going on in the Ethereal Hall?” the elder standing at the front asked.

This elder had a slightly sunken face and a long green beard. He was dressed in a light gray robe that flowed lightly with his movements.

He was the strongest and highest ranking elder in charge of the affairs of the inner disciples, Elder Mu!

He was also the ‘friend’ whom Elder Lu Yun had encountered outside the Elder Council that kept putting him down.

If Zhang Xuan was there, he surely would have noticed that Elder Lu Yun was standing amid the ten elders who had just arrived at Liu Lujie’s residence.

He had just been promoted to an internal elder. Under normal circumstances, he would have had no right to follow behind the rest of them, but due to his merit from having just recruited an exceptionally talented disciple, the sect had made an exception just for him.

“Elder Mu, a sword practitioner known as I Am Low Profile has appeared in the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall, and he has challenged all of the inner disciples...” Liu Lujie immediately recounted the entire story to Elder Mu.

As he had watched the deeds of I Am Low Profile from the very start to the end, he knew the details of the matter.

“A person challenged all of the inner disciples and has killed several hundred people so far. Even when the two of you went up, you were no match for him as well?” Elder Mu frowned as his face turned terrifyingly livid.

“To think that I have taught you for so many years. How can the two of you be so useless?”

“We...” Liu Lujie’s face reddened in embarrassment.

“Regardless of whether that fellow is an inner disciple or a core disciple, his cultivation is bound to be capped at Ancient Sage 1-dan upon entering the Ethereal Hall!” Elder Mu exclaimed in exasperation. “Against an opponent of the same realm, how are several hundred of you not able to defeat him? This is a huge disgrace to the inner disciples! It seems like none of you have taken my teachings to heart at all!”

“Elder Mu, I beg your pardon, but I Am Low Profile is simply too powerful a sword practitioner...” Wang Jiandong protested indignantly.

“A load of bullcr*p!” Elder Mu interjected furiously. “How powerful can the opponent possibly be? No matter how formidable his moves appear, they are still from the swordsmanship of our sect! Stop finding excuses for your own weaknesses; it’s a pathetic sight!”

“This... Fine!” Wang Jiandong still indignantly wanted to protest against Elder Mu’s words, but Liu Lujie gestured for him to stop with a tug on his sleeves. Thus, he could only reluctantly accept it.

In truth, he knew that Elder Mu was actually a warm-hearted person who spoke awful words. Often, the things that he said did not reflect his true thoughts. Nevertheless, Wang Jiandong still felt deeply indignant at being criticized in such a manner to his face!

After Elder Lu finished speaking his piece, Liu Lujie looked at him and asked, “Elder Mu, what should we do?”

What they needed most was to resolve this matter as soon as possible. Otherwise, the ones who were disgraced would not only be the inner disciples but the elders as well.

They enjoyed so many resources from the sect, but the disciples whom they had groomed had ended up being defeated so easily. It would not reflect well on them if word spread!

“Since we’re here, we should go in to take a look as well. I’m curious to know where this fellow came from, conducting

himself so lawlessly!” Elder Mu waved his hand.

If you are really that powerful, you could easily apply for a promotion to become a core disciple or even a sect elder. You would be granted all the fame and fortune you desire... Yet, you chose to challenge the inner disciples instead. This doesn't make sense at all!

Somehow, this entire matter felt weirdly fishy to them.

They wanted to find out the identity of the person who was messing with them.

“After confirming the other party's identity, we'll pay him a visit and inquire about the matter. We must try our best to suppress this matter as much as we can. Otherwise, you lot will go down in history as the most worthless batch of inner disciples!” Elder Mu harrumphed coldly.

“Yes!” Liu Lujie and the others nodded.

“Prepare some Ethereal Tokens for us! It wouldn't be appropriate for us to enter the Ethereal Hall in our capacity as elders,” Elder Mu said.

The inner disciples' Ethereal Hall was a place for inner disciples to acquire resources and battle with one another. Under normal circumstances, elders were not allowed to enter the premises.

If they entered the Ethereal Hall as elders to resolve the matter, it would only blow the matter up. More people would begin talking about the matter, making it harder to suppress the news.

“Elder Mu, please hold on for a moment...” Liu Lujie quickly walked back into the main hall, and before long, he returned with more than a dozen Ethereal Tokens in hand.

Even though Bai Ruanqing had already left the premises, the inner disciples who had led her there had not managed to find an opportunity to leave yet. They were vendors in the inner disciples' market, so they had plenty of Ethereal Tokens on hand. Given that this was a request from the elders, they would not dare turn down the request.

Each elders quickly activated an Ethereal Token before immersing their consciousness into it.

Similar to Bai Ruanqing, they also made sure to conceal their true appearances, disguising themselves as ordinary inner disciples.

Under Liu Lujie's lead, the large group swiftly arrived in the vicinity of the dueling ring.

At that moment, the entire area was swamped with people. Sword qi flew all around as if it was the end of the world. Countless heads flew through the air as light fragments dissipated here and there.

While Liu Lujie and the others were away, at least eight hundred more inner disciples had been slaughtered.

In other words, so far, I Am Low Profile had already killed more than a thousand people, which was equivalent to a tenth of the inner disciples!

This was too brutal!

"His zhenqi and stamina don't seem to have been depleted too much," Liu Lujie remarked in astonishment as he looked at the center of the crowd, where I Am Low Profile was strolling calmly.

He would never have believed that a cultivator could kill a thousand of his peers without exhausting himself to death prior to this incident... but such a thing was happening right before his eyes!

Liu Lujie felt that he would not be surprised by whatever I Am Low Profile pulled off at this rate.

"Elder Mu, you can also see that the crowd is riled up. There's nothing much we can do at the moment..." Liu Lujie sighed deeply.

This battle could not be stopped that easily anymore. It was not just a one-sided slaughter from I Am Low Profile; the provoked inner disciples were burning with fighting will as well. Even if Elder Mu stepped in and ordered the fight to

stop, it was unlikely that the crowd would simply heed his orders.

“The only reason you feel that there’s nothing that can be done is because you are weak. Just take a good look instead!”

With a displeased look on his face, Elder Mu ordered, “Elders, follow me to stop that fellow from slaughtering any more people!”

“Yes!”

The ten strongest inner disciple elders nodded before proceeding forward.

Even though their appearance looked no different from ordinary inner disciples, it was obvious that they were true experts just from the Sword Intent they emanated. The crowd swiftly opened up a path for them.

Walking right up to Zhang Xuan, Elder Mu waved his sword and shrouded the entire area with a sphere of sword qi.

“Enough, you have already done enough today. It’s about time for you to step down,” Elder Mu commanded.

Seeing how the new group of challengers haughtily walked in to stop the battle, Zhang Xuan shook his head impatiently. “Yet another bunch of hero wannabes? Do you want to fight another one-on-one? My apologies, but I really don’t have that much time to waste on you all!”

“You...”

Not expecting the other party to put them down in such a manner, Elder Mu flew into a rage. He lifted the sword in his hand, intending to teach the young man before him a lesson. But all of a sudden, he felt a sharp pain along his neck.

The next moment, his head slid down to the ground. Before his consciousness dissipated, he saw the heads of the elders who had gone over together with him falling to the floor as well.

1966 Indeed an Inner Disciple

“Elder Mu...” Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong froze on the spot.

Elder Mu and the others were there to solve the matter on their behalf, but they had actually been killed as soon as they had made a move.

Yet, they could be considered among the strongest people in the entire sect!

Bro...

Don't you feel any difference fighting them at all? Do you not sense any difference in the intensity of their Sword Intent?

Shouldn't it be obvious that they aren't ordinary disciples just from their disposition?

Yet, you still killed them so easily...

What made the situation even harder to accept was that Elder Mu and the others had clearly attempted to retaliate against I Am Low Profile's attack, but the outcome was the same as before, killed with a single slash.

It was still understandable that a core disciple might not be his opponents, but those were True Immortal realm elders! To kill ten of them with a single slash of his sword... this was utterly ridiculous!

Just how freakishly powerful was I Am Low Profile?

It was laughable how he, at one point, had thought that he could possibly defeat the latter...

Liu Lujie's teeth just would not stop clattering as he stared at I Am Low Profile. He could not begin to imagine just what kind of monster was hidden beneath that humanlike exterior.

As for I Am Low Profile, right after defeating the ten elders, he charged forth to engage the other inner disciples. It was as

if he had not been affected by the earlier encounter at all... or rather, he did not even notice that the ten people whom he had just faced were esteemed elders of the sect!

It was as if they were all small ants trying to stand against a giant.

“Wow, there sure are a lot of people here...”

Just as Liu Lujie had guessed, Zhang Xuan was completely unaware that the ten people whom he had just faced were elders of the sect.

They were dressed just like the other inner disciples, and they seemed to be in their early twenties from their appearances. Not to mention, they did not seem strong at all.

Of course, if it was on any other occasion, Zhang Xuan would surely have been able to tell the difference. However, it was unfortunate that he was in too much of a hurry. He knew that his zhenqi was limited, so if he did not quickly end them, he might just end up losing the battle.

If he lost, not only would he not receive a single Sword Pavilion Coin, he would also lose the only thirty-two Sword Pavilion Coins that he had on him!

That was his entire fortune!

There was no way in hell that he would allow himself to lose that!

Thus, he couldn't allow them to stall for time.

You want to fight me one-on-one?

Don't waste my precious time!

You want to have a chat with me?

Spare me your nonsense!

If you can at least withstand a strike from me, I can still consider giving you the privilege of fighting me in a one-on-one battle. Otherwise, spare me from those unnecessary filler-ish speeches!

As such, when Elder Mu and the others were defeated in a single strike, he automatically assumed that they were no different from ordinary disciples. If there was any difference, it was just that they were much more supercilious.

“I have already expended a third of my zhenqi. I need to speed up...”

Lifting his head, Zhang Xuan saw that the crowd, from eight hundred at the very start, had grown to a humongous five thousand. With the passing of time, more and more inner disciples would surely gather there. He could not afford to waste a second.

Hu!

His silhouette vanished into an afterimage as he sped up his movements.

“Even Elder Mu and the others aren’t a match for him. It seems like I Am Low Profile is a far more formidable figure than we thought. Let’s hurry up and return. Otherwise, if Elder Mu throws a tantrum during our absence...” Liu Lujie said.

“Un!” Wang Jiandong nodded in agreement.

The situation was clearly way out of their control. There was no meaning in them staying there anymore.

But just as they were about to leave, a sharp glint bolted through the air, heading their way.

Padah! Padah!

Yet again, there was a sharp pain in their necks, and their heads bounced several times on the ground before coming to a stop.

“Sh*t!”

“This is already the third time!”

The two of them were on the verge of tears.

Just what in the world did they do so wrong to deserve being decapitated three times within an hour?

It was ridiculous!

They had never suffered such a huge setback ever since they started practicing the sword. Yet, shortly after I Am Low Profile made an appearance, they had already died three times back-to-back!

Those two experts felt as if they were going berserk.

As their consciousness retreated from the Ethereal Hall and returned into the main hall, Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong found themselves awakening to a very still, heavy atmosphere. Elder Mu and the others were seated silently on the stools, not saying a word at all.

It was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

There was an awfully long silence that left Liu Lujie feeling deeply uncomfortable. Eventually, he was unable to take it anymore, so he meekly called out, “Elder Mu...”

It was then that the petrified elders finally seemed to come back to life.

“Was I beheaded by that fellow?”

“It seems so...”

“How were we defeated so quickly?”

“I didn’t even have time to react...”

“Neither did I...”

The ten elders had dazed expressions on their faces, as if they had just been through an unbelievable dream.

As True Immortal cultivators, they had spent long years immersed in the profoundness of swordsmanship. They might not be the strongest sword practitioners within the sect, but their skills were far beyond the level of ordinary core disciples.

Even if their cultivation had been suppressed to Ancient Sage 1-dan, they never would have thought that they could have been defeated that easily.

Yet, just a moment ago, before they could even say their piece, their heads had already rolled.

Implausible! Inconceivable! Impossible!

It was as if the common sense that they always lived by had suddenly failed them.

This was especially so for Elder Mu. He felt so embarrassed that he wished that he could simply meld into his shadow and disappear.

It was a moment ago that he had confidently declared that Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong had lost to that fellow due to their weakness. He had spoken as if everything would be settled now that he was there. But in the end, he was slaughtered before he could even finish his sentence, as if a half-assed villain.

How humiliating!

He had never felt so ashamed in his many years as an elder!

There was another long silence in the air before an elder finally asked the golden question. “What should we do now?” “This...” Elder Mu pondered for a long while before turning to Liu Lujie and asking, “What’s that fellow called?”

“I Am Low Profile!” Liu Lujie replied.

“Low profile?” Elder Mu suddenly felt spasms in his heart. He had to clutch it tightly in order to prevent himself from fainting on the spot.

A person who had caused such a huge commotion by challenging all the inner disciples and unhesitatingly killing even the elders...

Low profile?

Why did this term sound particularly prickly to his ears?

Elder Mu stood up as he sternly commanded, “Don’t tell anyone that we were here!”

“Ah?” Liu Lujie was taken aback.

Did this mean that... not even Elder Lu and the others were going to bother about this matter either? “Let’s leave!” Elder Mu said before walking out.

In just a few moments, the ten elders had already vanished from the residence, as if they had never been there in the first place.

“Senior Liu...” Wang Jiandong’s face was warped in utter shock.

“Elder Mu had no other choice. As an elder, he was supposed to resolve this matter, but he ended up getting killed instead. Given what has happened, the only thing he could do is feign ignorance. Otherwise, how is he supposed to keep his head up in the sect in the future?” Liu Lujie said with a bitter smile.

It was not that they did not want to bother about this matter, but there was nothing that they could do!

If others learned that they had been killed by an inner disciple, they would be laughed at by their peers!

On an aerial beast, one of the elders turned to the silent Elder Mu and asked, “Are we... really not going to interfere in that matter?”

“Of course not,” Elder Mu replied. “We are heading to the Sword Gazebo to check what exactly is up with I Am Low Profile!”

“Sword Gazebo? That’s the place where the sect controls the internal Ethereal Hall, right? It would indeed be possible to track down I Am Low Profile’s exact locations from there... but as inner elders, we don’t have the right to access such private information!” the other elder replied.

If the Ethereal Tokens were the devices used to enter the local network, the Sword Gazebo was where the central computer and the server were located.

Through the central computer, it was possible to track the exact locations of those who were in the Ethereal Hall. However, such information was not allowed to be accessed easily.

The reason the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had chosen to establish an Ethereal Hall internally was because of the benefits it brought. They wished to create an anonymous

world where their disciples could interact and fight with one another regardless of their identity and standing.

As such, even the sect leader would not dare access the information lightly. Otherwise, the very nature of the Ethereal Hall would change if the disciples felt that their anonymity on the platform was being threatened. It would go against everything that the Ethereal Hall stood for!

“I don’t need his personal particulars or where he is.” Elder Mu shook his head. “All I need to know is his exact strength!”

“His exact strength?”

As activating the Ethereal Token required one to drip a droplet of blood on it, it was possible for the system to detect the strength of the cultivator to a very precise degree.

An elder swiftly realized what Elder Mu was up to. “Are you trying to verify if he’s an inner disciple?”

“Indeed. Given I Am Low Profile’s swordsmanship, I am really wondering if this is a prank pulled by a core disciple. If his cultivation hasn’t reached Pseudo Immortal, it means that he’s truly an inner disciple. If so, there’s no need for us to interfere any further in this matter,” Elder Mu said.

The crowd nodded in realization.

If I Am Low Profile was a core disciple, it would only be right for them as elders to intervene, or else it would be a huge blow to the inner disciples.

On the other hand, if I Am Low Profile was an inner disciple, at the very least, it would just be inner disciples losing to an inner disciple. It would be an internal affair, and it would not be too shameful.

In fact, it might even be a blessing in disguise.

The incredible strength displayed by I Am Low Profile would serve as a perfect example of how powerful an inner disciple could actually be, and perhaps, it might even motivate them much more than before to push for greater heights after seeing that the sky was the limit!

It did not take long for the aerial beast to arrive at the Sword Gazebo.

Elder Mu placed his identity token down and said, “I would like to check the strength of the cultivator who uses the nickname ‘I Am Low Profile’!”

Weng!

There was a flicker on the wall, and a line of words appeared—Dimension Shatterer realm consummation.

“He’s at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation?”

“If that’s the case... he really is an inner disciple.”

“The minimum requirement for becoming a core disciple is for one’s cultivation to reach Pseudo Immortal. He clearly hasn’t reached that mark...”

“But when did such a formidable figure appear among the inner disciples?”

All ten elders were stunned by the result before them.

After witnessing I Am Low Profile’s tremendous strength, they had really thought that the other party might be one of those overpowered geniuses of the core disciples. But the result reflected in the Sword Gazebo told them clearly that the other party was a true inner disciple!

But as elders, how could they be unaware that there was such a powerful existence among the inner disciples?

In Elder Bai Ye’s residence, upon seeing Bai Ruanqing, Bai Feng immediately rushed forward and asked, “How is it? Have you found that medicine seller?”

He had to take care of the Old Master, so after taking the young lady to the inner disciples’ market, he had quickly rushed back to the residence.

“Not yet...” Bai Ruanqing shook her head.

Noticing that something was amiss with Bai Ruanqing’s current state—for some reason, she appeared to be a little subdued—Bai Feng worriedly asked, “Did something happen?”

“Yes... Earlier, there was someone who issued a challenge to all of the inner disciples. When I heard of the matter, I entered the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall and challenged that person to a battle...” Bai Ruanqing quickly went through what had just happened.

“You were defeated in a single move even after executing the Heavysnow Swordsmanship that I have imparted to you?” Bai Feng’s eyes widened in shock.

“That’s right,” Bai Ruanqing replied awkwardly. “I can’t really describe it, but the other party’s swordsmanship made me feel as though the Heavysnow Swordsmanship is completely useless.”

“How can that be?” Bai Feng frowned. “Even though the Heavysnow Swordsmanship is not the most powerful sword art in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it’s still not something that an inner disciple would be able to withstand...”

He pondered silent for a moment before saying, “Do you have another Ethereal Token? I would like to take a look myself!”

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“I don’t have any on hand at the moment...” Bai Ruanqing shook her head. “Grandpa Feng, you wish to head in to take a look, too?”

“The Heavysnow Swordsmanship is profound and powerful. I find it hard to believe that someone was able to overcome it that easily,” Bai Feng replied. “I reckon that he might have resorted to some kind of underhanded means. I would like to challenge him and see it for myself!”

As diligent as Bai Ruanqing was, she was still limited by her age. Despite having reached Major Accomplishment in the sword art, the truth was that she had only barely scraped the surface of its true essence.

Bai Feng felt that if he used the sword art personally, he should be able to defeat the person whom Bai Ruanqing was talking about. Through this, he would be able to restore Bai Ruanqing’s faith in the sword art.

“He’s only an inner disciple... Grandpa Feng, even though you aren’t an elder, your strength is even above that of most of the elders. I don’t think it would be appropriate for you to make a move on him!” Bai Ruanqing said awkwardly.

It was already beneath her to make a move in the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall. If Bai Feng made a move too, regardless of whether he won or lost, it would reflect badly on him.

“I’m just heading in to take a look at that fellow’s swordsmanship. Depending on the situation, I might not necessarily make a move,” Bai Feng replied with a smile. “Besides, I am just an old servant. Nothing’s inappropriate for me!”

No matter how powerful Bai Feng was, he was just a servant of Elder Bai Ye.

He was not restricted by the rules and regulations of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“This...” Seeing that Bai Feng’s mind was made up, Bai Ruanqing knew that it would be hard to talk him out of the matter. She nodded and said, “Alright then, I’ll make preparations.”

Thus, together with Bai Feng, she made her way back to Liu Lujie’s residence.

When Liu Lujie saw the female dinosaur appearing before him moments after he had seen Elder Mu and the others off, he suddenly felt a lump in his throat. It had been so, so long since he felt like crying.

Why are you all walking in and out of my residence so freely?

I am an inner disciple, not the owner of a bed and breakfast!

Of course, there was no way that Liu Lujie would respond with a ‘no’ to Bai Ruanqing’s request, so he could only obediently get his men to prepare an Ethereal Token.

Soon, the entire group was back in the Ethereal Hall.

To be honest, he did not want to return to that wretched place anymore, but under Bai Ruanqing’s watchful glare, he felt like he would be pushed to the ground and violated if he did not enter.

Thus, with a helpless sigh, he entered the Ethereal Hall once more together with Wang Jiandong, and they led Bai Ruanqing and Bai Feng to the dueling ring.

Around ten minutes had passed, and it seemed like yet another thousand inner disciples had been eliminated.

This time around, the encirclement had clearly grown much smaller.

No matter how furious and indignant the inner disciples were, with two thousand of them getting eliminated, it was inevitable that some of them would start cowering away.

In their eyes, I Am Low Profile probably seemed no different from a perpetual motion machine who knew not of exhaustion. It felt like he could continue slaughtering for days on end without resting at all.

“This swordsmanship...”

After examining I Am Low Profile’s movements for a moment, Bai Feng frowned.

There was only one word that he could use to describe the swordsmanship before him—basic! He could see through it with a single glance. There was no technique or skill involved at all, almost as if the other party was a child who knew no swordsmanship brandishing a blade.

But for some inexplicable reason, he was able to bring forth astonishing might with such simple movements. Those who stood in his path could only end up dying helplessly.

This was the first time that Bai Feng had felt so conflicted upon seeing a swordsmanship. He had no idea whether it was powerful or not.

More precisely, the difference in the strength between I Am Low Profile and his opponents was simply too great, such that it was impossible to truly put that swordsmanship to the test.

It was just like how, no matter how powerful the martial art one used against a three-year-old was, it would still be impossible to assess if one was truly powerful or not.

“Grandpa Feng...” Bai Ruanqing looked at Bai Feng.

“His swordsmanship is indeed formidable, but if we want to know the true extent of his abilities, I will need to test him personally!” Bai Feng replied.

Test him personally?” Liu Lujie’s eyebrows shot up. “Elder Feng, there’s no need for that. I fear that...”

“What do you fear? Rest assured, I won’t kill him and put you in a tough spot!” Bai Feng replied with a frown.

“No, that’s not it. I’m not afraid that you will kill him but that...he will kill you! That will make the situation even more awkward,” Liu Lujie said with a bitter smile.

“Audacious! Do you know how powerful Grandpa Feng is? How could he possibly be killed? How dare you even insinuate this possibility!” Bai Ruanqing flew into a rage.

Bai Feng might not be an elder of the sect, but his strength was far greater than that of an average elder!

Such a possibility was so preposterous that it should not even be spoken of! Liu Lujie seemed to be itching for a beating!

“I... I apologize for my disrespect. Please, feel free to go ahead...” Liu Lujie shook his head and sighed.

Elder Mu and the others had come by earlier, but they had ended up being slaughtered. Elder Feng might be a formidable individual, but it did not seem too likely that he would be able to defeat ten inner elders of the same cultivation realm simultaneously!

However, since it did not seem like his words were going to go through, he did not want to waste his breath. After all, he could not reveal the fact that Elder Mu and the others had come by earlier.

Bai Feng could not help but burst into laughter upon hearing those words. “If you are worried that I will be killed, I must say that your worries are groundless. Other than the Old Master and a few other elders in the sect, I have never feared anyone!”

While he was not well-known in the sect due to his humble personality, that did not mean that he was a weakling!

He had been personally taught by Elder Bai Ye, and he had cultivated for over a hundred years. His understanding in the Way of the Sword had already reached an astounding level. There was hardly anyone in the world who could scare him!

Releasing his Sword Intent, Bai Feng began walking toward the center of the crowd with widened strides.

There had never been any need for him to prove himself to others. The only reason he had gone there was to see how the other party managed to overcome the Heavysnow Swordsmanship.

On the other hand, as Bai Feng walked toward the center of the crowd, Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong's lips twitched a little, and they hurriedly backed away and hid behind a wall.

"What are you two up to?" Bai Ruanqing frowned upon seeing the peculiar actions of those two.

"It's nothing much... Senior Bai, why don't you come over as well? We are able to see everything clearly with our eye of discernment anyway, so there's no need for us to stay so close to the battlefield," Liu Lujie advised nervously.

He might not have suffered any physical harm, but the pain from having one's head decapitated was not something that one could ever get used to. He had no intention of letting it happen a fourth time!

"Cowards! To think that you are the top rankers among the inner disciples, how embarrassing!" Seeing through the thoughts of the two, Bai Ruanqing shook her head in disdain as she continued spectating the commotion from where she was.

It was hard to tell what Bai Feng had done, but the crowd that was gathered around I Am Low Profile quickly opened up a route for him to walk through.

Hula!

Before reaching I Am Low Profile, Bai Feng raised his sword and gathered his sword qi at the tip of his sword. With a slash of his sword, he stirred up a powerful snowstorm in the surroundings.

On the receiving end of the technique, I Am Low Profile visibly narrowed his eyes a little. After which, he took a step forward and slashed his sword horizontally.

Puhe!

Bai Feng's head fell to the ground.

Bai Ruanqing was flabbergasted.

Even when executing his strongest technique, Grandpa Feng was not able to withstand that I Am Low Profile's offense. She rubbed her eyes to check if she was seeing things, but the next instant, a sharp pain sliced through her neck.

Her head fell to the ground as well.

Even in her death, she could not believe what had just happened. She had been positioned thirty meters away from the culprit, but she had still lost her life just like that.

It was no wonder Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong had chosen to hide behind the wall. It seemed like they had already guessed that such a thing would happen.

As her head fell to the ground, she glanced backward and saw another two surges of sword qi flying past her.

Puhe! Puhe!

With resentful eyes, the heads of those two plopped to the ground as well.

It seemed like hiding behind the walls did not work either.

“How shameless!” Zhang Xuan cursed beneath his breath.

To be honest, he was already getting tired of eliminating those fellows.

The body given to him by the Ethereal Hall was simply too weak. He had been trying to conserve as much energy as possible, but after facing so many opponents, he had still ended up depleting a half of his zhenqi. At the same time, his mind was starting to feel a little fatigued.

Since he was the one who had issued the challenge, he planned to fully complete it. But there were some shameless inner disciples who had switched to another Ethereal Token after being killed to join the fray once more.

That was ridiculous! If everyone did that, he would have to eliminate everyone at least five times.

How was that fair?

This was especially so for those two shameless fools who kept lurking around the perimeter. He had already killed them three times, but they kept going back to find an opportunity to assassinate him! Did they think that he would not notice that it was them just because they had changed their appearance?

He was a swordmaster for god's sake! It was the bare minimum to be able to discern cultivators by their Sword Intent! And that girl that was with them too! He was certain that he had eliminated her once already!

Those shameless, cheating, lying lumps of dung!

“Forget it!” Taking several deep breaths, Zhang Xuan calmed himself down.

They might be shameless, but he was a gentleman. He was a principled person, and he would not stoop down to their level. At the very most, he would just kill them every single time they appeared. There was no need to lose his temper over this.

Just that... he did not have enough zhenqi to play around. It would not be defeating inner disciples any longer but destroying all their Ethereal Tokens!

“It seems like I'll have to end this all at once!” Zhang Xuan finally came to a decision.

If he eliminated them one by one, they would just return with new Ethereal Tokens in hand. As long as there were Ethereal Tokens lying around, this would never come to an end.

Since that was the case, there was only one way that he could win this duel—he had to end all of them at once!

If he could just eliminate everyone present in a single minute, he should be able to end the duel!

“There are still roughly three thousand people around. How can I end them all in a minute?”

It had taken him nearly half an hour to eliminate two thousand inner disciples, and his energy had already dropped by half. If he went on as he had been, it would ultimately end in his loss.

“It seems like I can only use that move then...” Zhang Xuan gritted his teeth determinedly.

He did have a move that was particularly effective at AOE mob clearing, but this move was very demanding on his zhenqi. Once he executed it, there was a good chance that his zhenqi would be completely depleted. As there were enemies

constantly joining the battle, he had not dared to use the move so far.

But since he had been forced into a corner, he had no other choice.

Otherwise, there would be no end to the duel!

“I’ll be going all out!” Zhang Xuan quickly calculated the timing a little, then without any hesitation, he threw his sword.

Seeing that I Am Low Profile had suddenly released his grip on his sword, all of those around him were stunned. For a moment, they even forgot to press on with their attacks.

Zhang Xuan quickly drove his zhenqi before tapping his finger lightly in the air.

Hu!

An incredibly concentrated surge of sword qi shot forth from the tip of his finger and rose into the air. Following which, it abruptly split into several thousand smaller strands of sword qi that floated quietly in the air, like floating guillotines.

This move was not from the Sword Intent that he had just comprehended but the fusion of the Sea Severing Sword, Ocean Cataclysm Sword, and Heaven Desecration Sword that he had comprehended back at the Sword Lagoon of the Master Teacher Continent.

Previously, he had only been able to use one of them at once, but after comprehending the Gods’ Sword Intent, he was able to combine the three of them together and bring forth destructive prowess that was many times greater than before!

Back then, he had manipulated 108 swords simultaneously with each of them executing a different sword art to overwhelm his opponent. However, the move that he was currently executing was even stronger than that.

But that being said, it was already the very limits of his current body to control three thousand surges of sword qi simultaneously. If it was any more than that, he could very well dissipate on the spot.

Seeing the massive formation above them, the closest inner disciple felt goosebumps rising all over his body. He could not help but cry out desperately, breaking the silence in the air.

“He’s up to something. We can’t let him succeed! Quick, get...”

But before he could finish his piece, I Am Low Profile issued an imposing command to the thousands of sword qi in the air. “Destroy them!”

Hu!

The thousands of strands of sword qi immediately plummeted from the sky.

Puhe! Puhe! Puhe! Puhe!

Three thousand cultivators and three thousand heads fell to the ground simultaneously before dissipating into light fragments. The vast Ethereal Hall became emptier than it had ever been.

1968 The Details of the Battle

1

1968 The Details of the Battle (1)

“Grandpa Feng, how... is that person’s strength?” Bai Ruanqing asked anxiously.

It had been ten minutes since they returned from the Ethereal Hall, but as soon as their consciousness was brought back, Bai Feng had closed his eyes and fallen into deep thought. Seeing this, no one dared to say a word at all.

“Brilliant! It was truly brilliant!” Bai Feng slowly opened his eyes, revealing the excited gleam within.

“Brilliant?”

Everyone’s lips twitched a little.

Had this old man been shocked silly from being beheaded?

Liu Lujie could not help but look at Wang Jiandong as they touched their necks. Even though they knew that it was in a virtual world, being beheaded four times consecutively still left them feeling a little shaken.

That being said, their heads had already been sliced off four times, but they did not feel any shred of the ‘brilliance’ that Bai Feng was exclaiming about.

“I have cultivated the Heavysnow Swordsmanship for a hundred years now, but I still can’t help but find it an amazing work. Its speed is just one of its many strengths. What is more important is its ability to imbue one’s zhenqi into a sword and control it with impeccable smoothness. This allows for the execution of seemingly inhuman moves, thus making it extremely difficult to deal with!” Bai Feng looked into the air with a hint of admiration and reverence in his voice.

“For many years, I was convinced that the Heavysnow Swordsmanship is flawless. Yet, who could have known that

the other party would overcome it in a single blow? That sword of his was truly ingenious! It was a breathtaking work of ingenuity!”

Even though Bai Feng had been killed in a single strike, he was still able to discern a sliver of the other party’s swordsmanship, and that was enough for him to be immersed in it for many hours, as if a child stumbling upon a new

“This...” The crowd blinked their eyes blankly.

Bai Ruanqing looked at Bai Feng uncertainly for a moment before asking, “Grandpa Bai, are you not angry at all?”

To be slain in a single move by a minor figure who had not even reached Pseudo Immortal yet, should an expert of his caliber not feel embarrassed and humiliated?

“I am more than grateful to see such a formidable swordsmanship. Why should I be angry?” Bai Feng was slightly surprised by the question.

He glanced at the three faces around him, and as if seeing through their thoughts, he chuckled softly. “Humility, and not pride, is of the utmost importance to a cultivator. The Way of the Sword is vast and profound. An entire lifetime is not enough for us to fully uncover its wonders, so why should we allow such transient pride to affect our emotions? If I truly desired prestige and honor, I would have been a core elder at the very least by now!”

Yes!”

Bai Feng’s wise teaching made their faces redden in shame.

In terms of strength, Bai Feng was more than qualified to become a core elder. However, in order to serve Elder Bai Ye, he had stayed true to his responsibilities as a servant, not overstepping his bounds in the least. It was hard to find another person like him in the world.

“Grandpa Feng, you seem to have a really high opinion of I Am Low Profile’s swordsmanship. Could it be that... he’s even more formidable than you?” Bai Ruanqing asked curiously.

“More formidable than me?” Bai Feng shook his head. “I’m not even qualified to be compared with him! Alright, I have really widened my perspective with this duel, so I’ll be heading back to take care of the Old Master. Ruanqing, try to find the medicine seller as soon as possible!”

Following which, Bai Feng stood up and left the main hall. It did not take long for him to vanish over the horizon.

On the other hand, Bai Ruanqing did not think that Bai Feng would leave just like that. She had still been thinking of asking him a few more questions. Sighing deeply, she turned to Liu Lujie and the others and said, “Since you aren’t able to defeat I Am Low Profile, just leave him be for the time being. I need you to help me check who this person is!”

Then, she took out the painting once more.

“Right now, all the disciples are fighting with I Am Low Profile, so it won’t be too easy to look into it. Once the duel finishes, I’ll start spreading the word to look for this person!” Liu Lujie said as he stood up.

However, Bai Ruanqing frowned after hearing his words. “There were at least three thousand disciples surrounding I Am Low Profile when we left the Ethereal Hall earlier. Furthermore, there are more inner disciples joining in the battle with each passing moment. It’ll take too long for I Am Low Profile to finish all of them!”

It was apparent that Bai Ruanqing did not think that the inner disciples could win against I Am Low Profile.

Displeased by those words, Liu Lujie protested indignantly. “No matter how long it takes, the inner disciples will surely persevere. We won’t allow ourselves to be defeated just like that! This is our pride and dignity!

“I believe that as long as we push on, no matter how powerful I Am Low Profile is, he’ll eventually be worn down and killed. The final victory will be ours to claim!”

But just as Liu Lujie was making this impassioned speech, Wang Jiandong suddenly took out a jade token, and upon taking a look, his mouth fell open. His lips twitched a little, as

if he had something to say, but he had no idea how to approach it.

“What’s wrong?” Liu Lujie asked.

“Senior Liu, I just received a message saying that the duel has ended. I Am Low Profile killed the remaining three thousand people with a single move. So, the system is currently processing the results,” Wang Jiandong said.

“W-what? He killed three thousand people with a single move?” Liu Lujie nearly fell to the ground from shock. He stared at Wang Jiandong intently as he asked, “Are you certain?”

Liu Lujie was not the only one taken aback by this piece of news. Bai Ruanqing seemed to be on the verge of losing her mind, too.

It was understandable if a person was able to kill a person with one strike. Two was still a logical number, and ten was still barely acceptable. But to kill three thousand cultivators of equal cultivation realm in a single move...

Are you messing with me?

“The matter has already been confirmed. All of the killed inner disciples have returned to the Ethereal Hall to wait for the final verdict,” Wang Jiandong said.

As the third strongest inner disciple, he had subordinates that were loyal to him, so he did not doubt this intelligence.

“This...” Liu Lujie’s eyebrows shot up. He quickly turned to Bai Ruanqing and clasped his fist. “Senior Bai, the fact that everyone has been killed simultaneously means that the duel has already come to an end. All of us who have participated in the battle have to enter the Ethereal Hall to accept the verdict. Please pardon me for a moment...”

“Go ahead!” Knowing the rules, Bai Ruanqing gestured for him to go ahead.

To be honest, she could still hardly believe it.

To defeat three thousand inner disciples with a single move and achieve victory in this seemingly impossible challenge...

Just who in the world was I Am Low Profile?

More importantly... after causing such a huge uproar in the sect, did he really think that he was still as low profile as he claimed to be?

In the Sword Gazebo, Elder Mu and the others had just recovered from their shock.

The revelation of I Am Low Profile's cultivation realm showed that he was indeed an inner disciple, but for an inner disciple to kill a thousand cultivators consecutively and even defeat them with the utmost ease... what was with that ridiculous strength of his?

"However, no matter how formidable he is, there's no way he can win. There are at least ten thousand inner disciples within the sect, and in order to protect their dignity, more and more people will eventually join the fray. Eventually, he will be worn out and fall in defeat!" Elder Mu shook his head.

Thus, no matter how long I Am Low Profile perseveres, the only outcome that awaits him is defeat!"

The other elders nodded in agreement. They shared Elder Mu's opinion as well.

It was difficult enough for a person to single-handedly defeat all the inner disciples, and they were even in the Ethereal Hall, where everyone's cultivation was equal. This was simply too difficult!

No matter how powerful I Am Low Profile was, there was simply some things that were fundamentally impossible! Weng!

Just as Elder Mu was thinking about this matter, the Communication Jade Token in his hand suddenly buzzed. After looking at the content of the message, he froze on the spot. "T-this... The duel has ended... I Am Low Profile defeated three thousand inner disciples in a single strike, thus signaling the end of the duel... How is this possible?"

"You said that he killed three thousand inner disciples in a single move?"

Stupefied, the elders fell into silence once more.

Huhuhu!

People were swiftly appearing in the Ethereal Hall one after another.

Most of those who had participated in the duel only to be killed had rushed back as soon as they heard the news. They looked at the seemingly paralyzed young man sitting at the very center of the dueling ring with a complicated look in their eyes.

Earlier, when that young man challenged all of them at once, they had thought that he was unbelievably arrogant, perhaps delusional even... But after going through a battle with him, they realized that the young man did wield the strength to obliterate all of the inner disciples!

The duel has ended. I am Low Profile has defeated everyone present at the moment of challenge, and thus, he's awarded all the Sword Pavilion Coins of everyone who participated in the duel. The exchange will be conducted now!" the person who was managing the dueling ring walked out and declared.

"I hereby announce that I Am Low Profile has achieved victory!"

"Is this for real? He's really won? Is there no one among the inner disciples who is a match for him?"

"This must be the most humiliating day for all of the inner disciples!"

"Five thousand inner disciples actually fell in defeat just like that... How did things end up like this?"

Hearing the outcome, a lot of people found themselves suffering severe mental breakdowns.

As inner disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, they were extremely prideful individuals. However, that pride of theirs had been shattered so easily by a single man on this very day.

"I don't agree with the verdict!" someone amid the crowd shouted angrily. "I rushed here as soon as I heard the news,

and I haven't even participated in the duel yet! I don't believe that he has the ability to defeat five thousand people single-handedly! Even if he has managed to do so, it's likely that Senior Liu Lujie and the other experts haven't made their appearance yet. Otherwise, how could that fellow possibly win so easily?"

Most inner disciples had rushed over upon hearing the challenge in the Ethereal Hall, but for various reasons, an entire half of the inner disciples were unable to make it in time.

A lot of them had just entered the Ethereal Hall when the announcement that the duel had concluded sounded. They had not participated in the battle, yet they had to bear the shame of defeat. They could not accept such a verdict!

"Senior Liu Lujie has dominated the number one rank of the inner disciples for seven years now. I don't believe that I Am Low Profile would be able to win if he made a move!" another person shouted in agreement.

Liu Lujie had been killed before he could even reveal his identity. As such, while many people recognized him by his swordsmanship, there was no guarantee that the person who had fought back then was really Liu Lujie!

These chants caused a sliver of hope to blossom in the hearts of the crowd. Could it be that I Am Low Profile had won because Senior Liu did not make a move?

"Are you trying to refute the bet?" the person managing the dueling ring asked.

"We dare not refute the results of the duel. There's no doubt that I Am Low Profile is a formidable sword practitioner, but he only beat those who were present then. What we disagree with is the judgement that he has defeated all the inner disciples! Many of the experts of the inner disciples didn't make a move. If they participated in the battle, there's no way I Am Low Profile could've lasted till the very end!"

No matter how they refuted the matter, they could not deny the fact that I Am Low Profile had defeated five thousand inner

disciples. Since that was the case, as long as they insisted that the other party had not managed to defeat all of the inner disciples, they would at least be able to retain some of their dignity.

“There are ten thousand inner disciples in total, and five thousand of you have been defeated by him. Is that not considered as a victory against all the inner disciples? Don’t you think that you are trying too hard to refute the truth?” the person managing the dueling ring replied calmly.

He was an elder of the sect, but he was independent from the external elders, internal elders, or core elders. As such, he would only make an impartial verdict based on facts and reasons.

“What we are saying is that the more formidable experts among the inner disciples haven’t made a move yet. They represent the pinnacle might of the inner disciples. If even they did not make a move, we can’t accept the outcome of this duel to be representative of all of us!” a voice shouted out angrily.

“How can you prove that they didn’t participate?” the person managing the dueling ring rebutted.

“I am unable to prove it, so I beseech the Ethereal Hall to reveal the details of the battle. Only with this will we be able to accept the outcome of this duel!” the same voice cried out.

“Indeed! Please show the details of the battle. We want to know who participated in the battle. The rest of us just weren’t able to make it in time to participate in the battle too, so we don’t wish to bear the blame for the loss!”

“I think that it’s only fair that the Ethereal Hall reveals the details of the battle given that our reputation is on the line!”

“What if all who participated in the battle are actually the weaker inner disciples? We are unwilling to bear the blame for their weakness!”

Such angry exclamations could be heard from the crowd.

1969 The Details of the Battle

2

1969 The Details of the Battle (2)

Most of those who were speaking up at this moment were those who had not participated in the battle and only made it in time to hear the outcome.

To be honest, it was hard for them to believe that a single person could defeat five thousand inner disciples within the short span of half an hour. How were they supposed to accept something as inconceivable as this out of the blue?

Unless the details of the battle were revealed, no one could accept it!

The person managing the dueling ring turned to the rest of the crowd and asked, “Are you certain? Can I verify if the other inner disciples are willing to accept this?”

The identities of those in the Ethereal Hall were anonymous, but the battle details would reveal one’s true identity!

Of course, it would not go in depth to describe the details of the battle—the duel recording was there for this function—but just the revelation of one’s real name had already infringed on the privacy of others.

“We are agreeable to this!”

“Same here! We might have lost, but we want to know who he has won against!”

“We need to know the results of this duel in order to accept it! Otherwise, it’ll always remain a question in our minds!”

There were many cheers of agreement. Perhaps due to peer pressure, not a single person disagreed with the motion.

“Since there’s full consensus for the matter, I will proceed with your request!” The person managing the dueling ring nodded.

He turned to the person behind him and issued an instruction. The latter quickly turned around and left. A moment later, the person returned with a jade token in hand.

This is the list of opponents whom I Am Low Profile has killed in the past half hour. Please feel free to take a look!” the young man said as he tossed the jade token into the air.

Huala!

A huge list of names appeared before everyone’s eyes.

“Look! Senior Liu Lujie is at the very top,” someone among the crowd shouted.

Everyone quickly turned their gazes over, only to see a glaring name at the very top: Liu Lujie, four times!

“This means that Senior Liu has been here before! Just that... what does the four times behind mean?” another person amid the crowd asked.

“Four times refers to the number of times he has been killed. Most probably, he was indignant after dying once, so he returned with another Ethereal Token in another identity, only to be killed again. In the end, he was killed four times in total,” the manager of the dueling ring replied nonchalantly.

“He was killed four times consecutively? The heck! Doesn’t he feel shameful at all?”

“That’s not shameful anymore. It’s more like he has a complete lack of shame!”

“Wait a moment, Senior Wang Jiandong has been killed four times too?”

Many faces amid the crowd reddened in embarrassment.

They had been saying that Liu Lujie did not participate in the duel, and being proved wrong the very next moment left them feeling as if they had been smacked in the face.

It was on the grounds that the number one Liu Lujie had not been here that they insisted that it was unfair to claim that I Am Low Profile had won against all of the inner disciples.

Who could have known that the other party had actually come again and again even after being killed?

What a shameful act this was!

“Hmm? Who is Bai Ruanqing? I don’t recall seeing this name among the inner disciples before... But it seems like she has been killed two times over the course of the duel?” someone among the crowd said.

“Her name sounds incredibly familiar. Isn’t she Elder Bai Ye’s granddaughter? You know, that core disciple!”

“Wait a moment, you are telling me that a core disciple snuck into our Ethereal Hall to challenge I Am Low Profile, and she ended up being killed twice?”

Yet another wave of commotion was raised among the crowd.

Just a moment ago, they had thought that it was shameful for Liu Lujie to be killed four times in the duel, but who could have thought that a core disciple would actually sneak into a duel among inner disciples... even get killed twice!

“There’s another unfamiliar name over there. Bai Feng... I don’t think I have heard of that name... Does any one of you know this person before?”

“I have heard of Bai Feng! He’s Elder Bai Ye’s servant. Even though he isn’t an elder, in terms of strength, he’s far stronger than most core elders!”

“He’s even stronger than most core elders, but he still ended up getting killed here?”

As the inner disciples looked down the list, a lot of them looked as if they were on the verge of a mental breakdown.

They could understand Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong getting killed four times. After all, the reputation of the inner disciples was at stake, so it was understandable for them to be a bit more shameless at a moment like that.

However, even a core disciple was killed twice, and someone as powerful as a core elder was killed once. Wasn’t this getting a little out of hand?

It was as if some powerhouses had snuck into this little party of theirs!

“Given the huge commotion, why did none of the inner elders come by to resolve this matter?”

“Indeed. No matter how slow the information network of the elders is, half an hour should be more than enough for them to learn of the matter...”

The same doubt emerged in everyone’s minds.

Even core disciples had gotten involved in this battle, only to be killed in the end. Why were the inner elders not intervening in something as huge as this?

“Wait a moment, there are still names below!” someone suddenly shouted out, and the crowd turned their gazes over. At the very bottom of the list, several more names were slowly appearing.

Mu Xuan, Huang You, Zhang Lingbo, Lu Yun...

“If I recall correctly, Mu Xuan is Elder Mu’s full name, isn’t it?”

“Huang You is the name of the elder in charge of our peak!”

“Zhang Lingbo is the inner elder who has been teaching us!”

In an instant, everyone’s face turned livid from sheer frustration. They felt like their hearts were going to burst from how stifled it was becoming.

“I thought that it was weird that none of the elders intervened in this issue, but to think that they hid as inner disciples to challenge I Am Low Profile too. Yet, they still ended up getting killed!”

“They were the ones who taught us swordsmanship, but they were defeated...”

“What the hell? How monstrously powerful is I Am Low Profile?”

Everyone was really on the verge of losing their mind.

This was especially so for the inner disciples who demanded to view the battle details earlier. They really wished to slap themselves to death.

They had thought that this revelation would restore some of their reputation, but it ended up doing the contrary.

It was their duel, but they had ended up bringing core disciples and even their own elders to fight on their behalf. It would have been one thing if they won, but they had actually lost!

It was just like a child challenging the kindergarten he was in, but instead of mediating in the duel, the teachers and adults ganged up with the other children against the child, only to end up being beaten up themselves...

How humiliating!

There was nowhere they could put their face anymore!

They really should not have asked for the details of the battle. Now, they felt like they were ready to wither from embarrassment.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xuan was also listening to the conversation among the crowd, and he was browsing through the battle details.

He was flabbergasted by what he saw.

When did that core disciple and those elders appear before him?

Why did he not notice their presence at all?

Logically speaking, if those people had made a move, he should have noticed it! But in the half an hour that he had been battling, everyone had pretty much been ended in a single slash. He did not feel much resistance at all!

Oh well, it doesn't matter. As long as I managed to earn a decent sum, everything is fine...

Unable to figure it out, Zhang Xuan decided to simply stop thinking about it altogether.

Instead, he turned to look at his Ethereal Card.

He had killed five thousand people over the course of the duel, and under the rules of the duel, the Sword Pavilion Coins that they had with them would have to go to him. Since that was the case, he should have made a killing with this.

With trembling fingers, he tapped on the Ethereal Card. A series of number quickly appeared on top of it.

283,764!

I earned 280,000 Sword Pavilion Coins? Zhang Xuan nearly burst out laughing like a maniac.

Given that he had killed five thousand people, that would average out to around fifty Sword Pavilion Coins for each kill he made. In any case, he had half of the total fortune of the inner disciples with him now!

If he used this money to buy pills, he should be able to tame the Dongxu Gourd easily!

“Farewell!”

Seeing that his body was so depleted that it was on the verge of dissipating at any moment, Zhang Xuan quickly walked over to the receptionist to buy a couple of Standard Immortal Pills before finally leaving the Ethereal Hall.

Since he had already acquired what he wanted, there was no need to dawdle in there anymore.

Returning to his room, he took out the pills before releasing the Dongxu Gourd once more.

“Here are ten Standard Immortal Pills. Acknowledge me as your master, and I’ll give them to you!” Zhang Xuan uncorked the jade bottle, allowing a whiff of concentrated spiritual energy to flow out.

This left the Dongxu Gourd feeling deeply tempted.

“Why? Are you going to renege on your words?” Zhang Xuan looked at the Dongxu Gourd and smiled.

“Ahahaha, of course my words count. It’s nothing for me to acknowledge you as my master. However, you must promise to give me ample medicine and treasures so that I can recover

to my full strength!” the Dongxu Gourd said with a shake of its bottom.

“That’s a given!” Zhang Xuan replied.

A small droplet of liquid melted from the Dongxu Gourd’s exterior before flying right into Zhang Xuan’s glabella. Weng!

Zhang Xuan sealed the contract, and the next moment, his consciousness was already linked up with the Dongxu Gourd. Even without opening their mouths, they were also able to communicate with one another telepathically.

“Just what in the world are you?”

However, despite their telepathic communication, Zhang Xuan still sensed a barrier between him and the Dongxu Gourd.

It was hard to describe what kind of feeling it was, but if he really had to put it into words, it felt like the Dongxu Gourd was an egg. He was able to communicate what was outside, but he could not peer through the shell to see what lay inside.

“Didn’t I tell you that already? I am a legendary beast who once ruled over the lands!” the Dongxu Gourd replied proudly.

“Stop bragging. Alright, here are your pills!”

Seeing how the Dongxu Gourd was only able to repeat the same few words again and again, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless. With a helpless sigh, he tossed the Standard Immortal Pills over to the other party.

Opening its mouth, the Dongxu Gourd swallowed all the pills in a single mouthful. Following which, it looked at Zhang Xuan with a pitiful look as it whimpered, “I still want more... Give me more... More...”

“Alright alright, I’ll get more for you!” Zhang Xuan replied in resignation.

Since he had plenty of money, it was not that big a deal. Thus, he returned to the Ethereal Hall and purchased another ninety Standard Immortal Pills, which he tossed to the Dongxu Gourd so that the latter could slowly work its way through them. Meanwhile, he sat down quietly by the side and began pondering over what had just happened.

To be honest, he had benefited a lot from the earlier battle against the five thousand inner disciples.

It had allowed him to reinforce his understanding of swordsmanship and sharpen his control over his strength.

He tried driving his zhenqi a little, and he could immediately feel that the bottleneck limiting him before loosening up. He was ready to push for a breakthrough to Pseudo Immortal at any moment.

To think that practicing my swordsmanship in the Ethereal Hall would be useful to my cultivation too, Zhang Xuan thought in excitement.

Normally, considering that he had only achieved a breakthrough to Dimension Shatterer realm consummation a few hours prior, it should have taken several days for him to reinforce his cultivation even with the Heaven's Path Divine Art. However, after going through the earlier battle, he managed to condense his zhenqi to the limits, and he was able to control it freely.

Just like that, the Pseudo Immortal realm, which should have been a long distance away, was suddenly within reach!

As long as he found a suitable cultivation technique, he would be able to push for a breakthrough to the Pseudo Immortal realm!

Only after achieving a breakthrough to the Pseudo Immortal realm is one able to become a core disciple.

The cultivation techniques in the inner disciples' library only went up to the Pseudo Immortal realm. If an inner disciple wanted to push for a breakthrough to Pseudo Immortal, they would have to consult an elder to find the corresponding book that they required.

Dan Xiaotian is currently only at Ancient Sage 1-dan consummation. He's simply too far away from reaching the Pseudo Immortal realm!

As a low profile and humble individual, Zhang Xuan was unwilling to reveal his identity and cultivation. Thus, he could only entrust the heavy responsibility of becoming a core

disciple to his tenth direct disciple. However, his student was only entrust the heavy responsibility of becoming a core disciple to his tenth direct disciple. However, his student was

Even if Dan Xiaotian cultivated a simplified version of the Heaven's Path Divine Art and had plenty of resources to squander, it would still take at least two months for him before he was ready to push for a breakthrough to the Pseudo Immortal realm!

Otherwise, if he advanced too fast, his cultivation would be shaky. That would adversely affect the future progression of his cultivation.

He could not possibly compromise his students for his own needs.

Other than approaching an elder for a cultivation technique, there's another way for one to become a core disciple, and that's the Valley of Falling Rain! Many inner disciples who seek to make a breakthrough head there as there are many insights on advancing to the Pseudo Immortal realm!

Since Zhang Xuan was unable to count on his disciple, he would just have to rely on himself. He could not help but remember a book that he had read previously in the inner disciples' library, and his eyes lit up in excitement.

Even if Dan Xiaotian did reach Dimension Shatterer realm consummation, it was hard to say whether he would be able to gather enough Pseudo Immortal realm manuals required for him to compile a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art.

On the other hand, the Valley of Falling Rain was a popular place for inner disciples to achieve a breakthrough, and those who successfully made a breakthrough there would inscribe their own experience and insights there. As such, it had become a treasure trove of wisdom.

While those insights and experiences were not cultivation techniques, if he could compile enough of them, he should still be able to push for a breakthrough to the Pseudo Immortal realm!

It was fortunate that his current cultivation realm tallied with the inner disciples. This allowed him to move around openly by blending in with the inner disciples without anyone doubting his identity.

I should head to the Valley of Falling Rain to take a look!

With that thought in mind, Zhang Xuan stepped out of his room.

Young Master!”

At this moment, Cao Chengli had finished his business with the other three hundred jin^[1] female disciple and returned to the residence.

The intense battle that he had just been through caused his presence to feel a little withered. From the looks of it, the female disciple was no weakling at all. Despite Cao Chengli’s remarkable skills from his many years of experience and his superb stamina, the clash still left him severely weakened.

Most likely, he would have to rest for quite a long time before making a comeback.

Zhang Xuan looked around the residence, but he was unable to find his disciple. Thus, he turned to Cao Chengli and asked, “Where’s Dan Xiaotian?”

Cao Chengli quickly bowed slightly before responding to Zhang Xuan’s question. “The inner disciples have been gathered for an urgent meeting, and the Young Master has already headed over there!”

[1] 300 jin = 150kg

1970 Find Out Who I Am

Low Profile Is

“They have been gathered for an urgent meeting?” Zhang Xuan asked doubtfully.

“It seems like some fool challenged all the inner disciples at once, and that has left the elders extremely infuriated. They are pushing the inner disciples to investigate the matter and catch the culprit,” Cao Chengli replied.

While he was battling with three hundred jin, a subordinate had reported this matter to her through the door. As such, he still knew a thing or two about this matter.

“Fool?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up.

You are the one who is a fool! Your entire family are fools!

It’s just a bet... Do you really need to go so far as to hold an urgent meeting just to apprehend me?

It’s fortunate that I had the foresight to change my name in advance. Otherwise, if they got me, I’d be in deep trouble.

With his comprehension of swordsmanship, it was no exaggeration to say that he was invincible among those of the same cultivation realm. However, it was unfortunate that his cultivation was still too weak.

Previously, when he heard from one of the inner disciples that it was possible to earn money so easily, greed had gotten the better of him for a moment, and he had ended up getting too engrossed in the fight. If they uncovered his identity, it might lead to a great deal of trouble and danger.

Currently, he was not completely confident in protecting himself against True Immortals or even High Immortals, so he could not allow his true identity to be revealed.

“What have you heard so far? Is there any news on where the person who challenged the inner disciples lives or who he is?”

Zhang Xuan asked with a nonchalant look on his face.

“So far, the only thing I got is that the person is called I Am Low Profile. Seriously, what an eccentric name that is. He calls himself low profile when there’s no one as boastful as him in the world. As for who he is and where he is, there’s still no updates on that at the moment!” Cao Chengli replied with a shake of his head.

Seeing that his true identity had not been compromised so far, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief in his mind. He lowered his head contemplatively for a moment before asking Cao Chengli, “Do you know where the urgent meeting is held?”

“It’s held at the sparring field located at the top of the mountain!” Cao Chengli replied.

“Got it...” Zhang Xuan nodded as he slowly walked over to Cao Chengli.

Pah!

Clutching the back of his head, Cao Chengli was shocked. “Young Master, why did you hit me?”

That strike was so powerful that he felt his teeth loosening from his gums.

I answered what you asked me without hiding anything at all, and my news was timely this time as well! What did I do wrong to warrant this beating?

You stepped into the residence with your left foot instead of your right. I don’t like it.” Zhang Xuan threw those words at Cao Chengli before walking away coldly.

“He struck me just because I entered the residence with my left foot?” Cao Chengli’s eyes widened in bewilderment. What kind of nonsensical rule was this?

Was the Young Master experiencing his andropause early? Otherwise, why would he make up such a ridiculous rule?

“Jot it down, jot it down... I must make sure to remember it!” Cao Chengli murmured to himself as he patted his heart to console his wounded soul.

After leaving the residence, Zhang Xuan did not head to the Valley of Falling Rain but the mountain peak where the sparring field was located.

He had to find out how the elders intended to find him and how much they had found out so that he could prepare countermeasures. Otherwise, it would be extremely dangerous if he did not even know when the other party was already onto him.

“Being low profile is the most important thing in the world. I must make sure to never act as I did earlier in the future...”
Zhang Xuan sighed deeply in regret.

It was indeed exhilarating for him to defeat so many people at once, but the implications sure were troublesome! If they traced the matter back to him, he would be a goner!

After acting so prudently all his life, why did he give in to recklessness this time?

Argh!

Seated at the very center of the Elder Council was First Elder He Tian, and the other elders who sat by his side carried imposing presences that weighed down on those before them.

At the bottommost of the council was Elder Mu, who managed the inner disciples.

Elder Mu was no weakling, but he paled in comparison to the elders who sat the topmost region. Even from a distance away, he could feel immense pressure crushing down on him, causing cold sweat to form all around his forehead.

At this moment, another elder walked into the hall and took his seat. After which, he asked, “Elder He, may I know the reason you have gathered us so urgently?”

“It looks like everyone is here. Elder Mu, I’ll be troubling you to relay what you said earlier to the council once more!” Elder He Tian looked at Elder Mu and nodded.

“Yes!” Elder Mu quickly rose to his feet and said, “Greetings, fellow members of the council, I am Elder Mu Xuan of the Inner Disciples Section. During the previous Elder Council,

Elder He instructed all of us to search for the genius who comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent. Shortly after the announcement, a formidable sword practitioner appeared among the inner disciples. We suspect that the person might be the genius Elder He talked about!"

"Oh? On what basis are you presuming that?" an elder in the council asked with a frown.

The Gods' Sword Intent was viewed to be the very zenith of swordsmanship across the entire Forsaken Continent.

Even if anyone comprehended it, they should be from the core disciples at the very minimum. It did not seem too likely for it to be an inner disciple.

"In the inner disciples' Ethereal Hall, he issued a challenge to all of the inner disciples, and he slew five thousand of them within half an hour..." Elder Mu swiftly recounted the matter that had just happened.

After hearing that the person had slain three thousand inner disciples with a single move and eventually achieved victory, intense discussion immediately broke out among the Elder Council.

Not long ago, Elder He had said that someone had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, and then such a figure appeared and caused such a huge uproar. Could they be the same person?

If that was really the case, that incident would not be a mockery to the inner disciples. On the contrary, they might even be viewed in reverence for such a powerful figure appearing from their ranks!

Losing to a person who had comprehended the same divine swordsmanship as the founder was not an embarrassment but an honor!

"He eliminated five thousand fellow inner disciples in the Ethereal Hall within half an hour? Are you certain?"

Some of the elders stood up as they questioned the authenticity of Elder Mu's statement.

This matter was simply too inconceivable!

It was a fixed rule that all of those who entered the Ethereal Hall would be of the same cultivation realm. Putting aside whether it was possible to slay five thousand people alone or not, the fact that he was able to pull it off within half an hour was already an absurd notion!

Was it possible for someone to be so much more powerful than his peers on the basis of his skills alone?

“I have the video of the fight here,” Elder Mu said as he presented a Record Crystal to the Elder Council.

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s Ethereal Hall also had a video recording function, similar to the Ethereal Halls outside too. Cultivators could purchase the video recordings at a set price.

Knowing that this matter was of grave importance, Elder Mu had made sure to purchase the recording of the battle between I Am Low Profile and the inner disciples beforehand.

With a tap of his finger, the crystal immediately reflected the details of the earlier battle. Due to time constraints, he skipped the earlier segments of the battle to show the final move, where countless strands of sword qi each morphed into a sword art, decapitating the heads of three thousand cultivators in a flash.

This sight caused everyone’s eyebrows to shoot up in astonishment.

Even they would be unable to pull off a move of such imposing might once they suppressed their cultivation to Ancient Sage 1-dan!

Yet, that fellow was able to pull it off so easily. Just how deep was his comprehension of swordsmanship?

“That swordsmanship isn’t our founder’s Gods’ Sword Intent though. Nevertheless, the fact that he’s able to cultivate his swordsmanship to such a level likely means that he’s the man we are searching for!” the elder who spoke earlier remarked.

Even though he found it bizarre that someone who had achieved such a formidable level of swordsmanship was still only an inner disciple, all of the evidence pointed in the same direction.

“That’s what I thought as well...” Elder He nodded in agreement. “Thus, I would like to confirm I Am Low Profile’s identity and trace his location!”

“But such actions are strictly prohibited by the sect rules. It would undermine the significance of the Ethereal Hall!” the elder earlier replied with a frown.

The Ethereal Hall was incapable of identifying a person directly. Even for the battle details that were reflected previously, that was achieved through cross referencing the blood droplet used to activate the Ethereal Token together with the inner disciples’ identity token.

An exception was made earlier because the people presumed to be involved in the duel had expressly consented to having their identities revealed, but this was not the case for I Am Low Profile. As such, this matter had to be viewed separately.

“I understand this as well. Thus, I gathered all of you here to discuss this matter!” Elder He said. “This is an extenuating circumstance. If the experts of the Hall of Gods find him earlier than we do, it might lead to unnecessary complications!”

“As someone who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, if he’s allowed to grow, he will eventually obtain the strength to challenge the authority of the gods. The experts of the Hall of Gods won’t allow for that. It’s likely that they will make a move on him in advance!”

“Such matters have occurred in history before. Many talented geniuses have been killed by the Hall of Gods because their sects failed to protect them!”

The atmosphere in the room grew a little heavy following Elder He’s speech.

Elder Mu’s body stiffened from the pressure, and he did not dare breathe loudly.

His standing was such that he was not privy to the secrets of the Forsaken Continent. However, from the discussion in the council, he was able to figure out the situation.

He immediately understood the severity of this matter and why this issue had to be kept confidential by any means. Otherwise, a disaster might really strike the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

An elder stood up and proposed, “I suggest that we liaise with the sect leader and have him make the decision on this matter. I think this is the safest move we can make!”

“Indeed. Such a major decision requires the judgement of the sect leader...” another person echoed in agreement.

“I have already informed the sect leader of the matter, and this was his response!” Elder He replied as he took out a Communication Jade Token and flashed it to the crowd.

There were seven words on the token—‘Deal with it as you deem fit.’

“This...”

“Since the sect leader has already made such a call, let’s look into that person’s identity and location them!”

“This is so that we can offer him greater protection from the Hall of Gods. Like the First Elder said, this is a special circumstance, and we need to deal with it accordingly!”

Since the sect leader had entrusted the decision to them, the other elders quickly nodded in agreement.

“Alright, let’s head to the Sword Gazebo!”

Seeing that there was a majority agreement in the council over this issue, Elder He stood up and walked out of the room.

The crowd also rose to their feet, and they swiftly made their way over to the Sword Gazebo.

As for Elder Mu, due to his inability to fly, Elder He wrapped him within a surge of his zhenqi and pulled him along with the group.

Since that genius was likely to be among the inner disciples, it would be helpful for Elder Mu to be with them as well. They quickly arrived at the Sword Gazebo.

Without any hesitation, the elders quickly passed their identity tokens over and placed them on the wall. After which, Elder He commanded, “Reveal I Am Low Profile’s identity and exact location!”

Weng!

There was a slight buzz as light flickered on the wall for a moment. However, nothing appeared.

“What’s going on?” Elder He frowned.

With so many elders together with them, they should have had the authority to uncover I Am Low Profile’s identity and location. Why was nothing appearing at all?

“It could be because he isn’t in the Ethereal Hall at the moment, that’s why nothing is reflected on the wall!” someone said from afar.

Everyone quickly turned their heads around, and they saw an elder descending toward them.

He was none other than the leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Sect Leader Han!

He had finally returned!

“Paying respects to the sect leader!”

The elders quickly bowed respectfully. After which, Elder He looked over and asked, “Sect Leader Han, you mentioned earlier that the person in question is not in the Ethereal Hall. What does that mean?”

Most of them had never used the Sword Gazebo to find the identity and location of a person before, so they were unaware of the details surrounding it.

The Ethereal Hall uses one’s consciousness to determine the location of the body. If the consciousness is not within the Ethereal Hall, how can you check the person’s whereabouts?” Sect Leader Han replied.

Elder He and the others widened their eyes in realization.

Previously, the reason Elder Mu had been able to check I Am Low Profile's cultivation without any problem was because the latter had still been fighting with the other inner disciples. However, now that I Am Low Profile was no longer in there, it made sense for the search to fail.

Looking at the frustrated faces around him, Sect Leader Han chuckled softly before saying, "Don't worry, we just have to wait here patiently. As long as I Am Low Profile enters the Ethereal Hall once more, we'll easily be able to uncover his position!"

Hearing those words, the other elders quietly nodded.

Given the huge fuss that the other party had caused, as well as the humongous wealth that he had earned through the duel, it was just a matter of time before he appeared in the Ethereal Hall once more. As long as they bided their time, they would eventually be able to catch him!

"Since that's the case, we'll just stay here for the time being to keep a lookout. Elder Mu, since this matter concerns the inner disciples, you should remain here!" Elder He instructed.

Yes!" Elder Mu quickly nodded.

Just like that, the strongest experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion ended up waiting quietly at the Sword Gazebo, waiting for Zhang Xuan to enter the Ethereal Hall once more.

1971 It's Him! It's Him!

Meanwhile, the person in question, Zhang Xuan, was unaware that the top experts of the sect were on a stakeout for him. He was rushing all the way up to the sparring field on the mountain peak.

A huge crowd had already gathered around the area. All ten thousand or so inner disciples had halted their cultivation and rushed over as soon as they received the news!

Following the crowd, Zhang Xuan found a corner and hid himself. There were many people around the area, so no one would really notice an ordinary person like him.

"I believe that most of you should have guessed why I have gathered all of you here!"

There was an old man at the very center of the crowd. His voice echoed loudly in everyone's ears.

He was the second-in-charge of the Inner Disciples Section, Elder Huang You!

Upon hearing the elder's words, all the inner disciples lowered their heads in embarrassment.

Just a moment before being gathered, they had been defeated by an individual in the Ethereal Hall. Even the slowest of minds could easily understand what was going on.

"This is the first time that something like this has happened in the long history of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion! I don't know which of you is I Am Low Profile, but the fact that he was able to triumph over five thousand people alone is huge for the sect. He's worthy of praise! As for the rest of you, despite five thousand of you ganging up on a single person, you couldn't even kill him? Let me ask you this... what have you been learning in the sect over the years? Have you just been idling your time away?"

Elder Huang You's face was completely nonchalant, which made it hard to read whether he was angry or excited. The

crowd was not too sure what they should expect from him.

However, his words caused all of them to lower their heads in embarrassment.

It was indeed a humiliation that they were unable to defeat a single person. There was no way that they could argue their way out of this matter.

Just that...

If we recall correctly, Elder Huang You, you also snuck there and ended up being killed. Is it really fine for you to lecture us like this?

Of course, none of the inner disciples dared say those words out loud.

“It’s true that we are not a match for ‘I Am Low Profile’, but... given how formidable he is, is there a chance that he’s a core disciple in disguise?” one of the inner disciples asked.

As soon as this question was asked, it immediately sparked a lot of nods of agreement from the crowd.

As fellow inner disciples, they knew each other’s standards. If someone who was slightly stronger than that appeared, it would still be believable to them. But I Am Low Profile had far, far, far exceeded that level! As such, this got them thinking.

Knowing that the inner disciples would pose such a question, Huang You calmly waved his hand. “Elder Mu and the rest of us paid a visit to the Sword Gazebo to check on the matter, and his strength is indeed only at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation. This is the result of our investigation...”

Weng!

A recording surfaced in the air. It showed the sight of the ten elders heading toward a wall to check on I Am Low Profile’s strength. Very soon, the wall reflected a result corroborating what Elder Mu had said.

“He really is a Dimension Shatterer realm consummation cultivator... An inner disciple, just like us!”

“Is it really possible for inner disciples to be this powerful?”

“I can’t believe that skills can make one so much more powerful than others!”

...

This sight vanquished any doubts that I Am Low Profile might not be an inner disciple.

“What else do you have to say for yourselves?” After playing the recording, Elder Huang You looked at the inner disciples around him coldly. “As soon as you think that you are unable to defeat him, you think that he’s a core disciple. Have you tried searching within you for the reason behind your defeat?”

Before the crowd could even answer, his aura grew even sharper and more imposing, leaving the crowd feeling a little suffocated. “Why do you think that I Am Low Profile was able to become so much more powerful than the rest of you? That’s because, just like his nickname, he has humbly trained harder than any of you without fussing over transient things like fame and honor. He has never wasted his time flaunting his skills in public or engaging in useless politics. All that was in his heart was cultivation, cultivation, and cultivation! It’s by shedding more blood, sweat, and tears than any single one of you here that he managed to reach his current level. What about the rest of you?”

Elder Huang You’s voice gradually got louder with every word he spoke. “You are obsessed with honor and glory. Fighting can improve your skills, but you content yourselves with picking weaker opponents and staying within what you are used to so that you can win your duels. You view loss to be something more frightening than remaining stagnant. With such mindsets, how can you possibly cultivate the best swordsmanship in the world? How can you become real experts?”

Those words struck a chord in everyone’s heart. Realizing how much time they had wasted on pursuing honor and glory among themselves, they lowered their heads in shame.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless by the high praise being heaped on him.

The reason he had never appeared in public or engaged in useless politics was because this was only his first day at the sect. He could not have done it even if he wanted to!

That being said, the thing about him shedding a lot more blood, sweat, and tears in order to reach his current level was indeed true.

“Don’t be content with what you already have. Don’t restrict yourself to what you already know. Don’t blame others when you find yourself outmatched. Don’t lament that you aren’t talented when you aren’t even close to being as hardworking as he is!” Elder Huang You’s voice reverberated across the crowd. “From this day forth, I hope that you can throw away all the needless baggage weighing you down and make the Inner Disciples Sector stronger than ever! Are you able to do it? Do you have the confidence to do it?”

“Yes, Elder Huang!”

“We have the confidence to do it!”

With fists that were tightly clenched, the crowd roared in agreement.

Seeing the high morale among the crowd, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He had thought that the elders were going to investigate his identity, so he had come running over out of fright, but in the end, they were just using him as an antagonist in order to spark everyone’s motivation.

“That’s all I’m going to say today. I have heard your response, and I’m looking forward to what you can achieve!” Elder Huang You replied. “One last thing. Whoever I Am Low Profile is, I hope that you can take the initiative to look for me!”

“Alright, you are all dismissed!”

Seeing that his identity had not been compromised yet, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He left his hiding spot, and just

as he was going to make his way over to the Valley of Falling Rain, an anxious voice suddenly sounded behind him.

“It’s him! It’s him!”

This voice was extremely abrupt and urgent, such that it caught everyone’s attention.

Zhang Xuan also turned his head over, only to feel cold sweat raining down his body. He nearly fainted in that instant.

The person who had shouted out loud was currently pointing agitatedly at him, and everyone’s eyes were centered on him.

“The heck?” Zhang Xuan felt goosebumps rising all over his body.

Surely, he would not be recognized just like that, right?

If that was the case, how was he going to continue being low profile?

More importantly, once his identity was confirmed, it was likely that he would not have time to cultivate anymore. Challengers would come buzzing to him like incessant flies, hoping to fight him again and again. If it was possible for anyone to die out of annoyance, that would probably be the way.

After all, who would not want to make a name for themselves? If they could defeat him, who was reputed to have defeated five thousand cultivators, would that not immediately place them higher than him?

“No, it’s not me. Your eyes are bad, and you have the wrong person,” Zhang Xuan replied as he turned around and bolted off.

While everyone was still in a daze over what was going on, Zhang Xuan was already sprinting off like an unbridled horse, nearly disappearing in an instant.

“Don’t run!”

The inner disciple who had shouted earlier was stunned by how fast Zhang Xuan’s response was.

He was just about to pursue the other party when he suddenly felt immense pressure crushing down on him. At some point in time, Elder Huang had already arrived by his side and asked, "You mentioned that it's him. Who is he?"

"He's a fake medicine peddler... eh, no, I mean real medicine peddler!" the inner disciple quickly replied with a bow.

"..." Elder Huang You's eyelids twitched.

If he could, he would have slapped this fellow into the bottom of the ocean.

It was just a moment ago that he was talking about I Am Low Profile when this fellow shouted, "It's him!" His spirits were raised as he thought that he had finally found that powerful sword practitioner, but it turned out to be just a medicine peddler.

Do you really have to get so agitated upon finding a medicine peddler?

Realizing that Elder Huang You's face was getting more and more livid by the second, the inner disciple quickly clarified, "This is a request from Senior Bai Ruanqing. I've been unable to find him, so I couldn't contain my excitement when I finally saw him once more..."

Even though this inner disciple had not been located closest to Zhang Xuan at the inner disciples' market back then, he had still managed to catch a good look at the latter's appearance during his encounter with Bai Ruanqing.

It was just that Zhang Xuan had not really been paying much attention to those present in the market then, so he did not recognize this inner disciple.

"Bai Ruanqing is looking for him?" Elder Huang You frowned.

Even as an elder, he had also heard many things about Bai Ruanqing. Why would Elder Bai Ye's granddaughter look for a mere inner disciple?

"It seems like the medicine that she bought from him was still rather effective, so she wanted to buy a bit more," the inner

disciple replied.

“I see. Go on and find him then. Don’t get on Bai Ruanqing’s bad side.” Elder Huang You waved his hand helplessly.

Since the other party was not I Am Low Profile, he also lost his interest in pursuing this matter any further.

“Un!”

Knowing that there was no time to inform Liu Lujie and the others, the inner disciple immediately dashed down the mountain to pursue Zhang Xuan.

...

“That was a close one.”

After running for some time, Zhang Xuan glanced backward and saw that no one was on his tail anymore before finally coming to a halt. With a deep sigh, he rubbed his forehead in distress.

He just wanted to be an ordinary man living an ordinary life. Why was it so difficult?

It’s not as if I asked to be born so outstanding!

Anyway, if someone was able to recognize me, that means that my current identity has already been compromised.

He did not know how he had been revealed, but as long as he refused to admit it and did not display his true strength, the other party should not be able to prove that he was indeed I Am Low Profile.

I have to destroy the Ethereal Token.

If he did not destroy it, someone might just match his Ethereal Token to the records, and that would be concrete evidence of his identity. By then, there would be nothing that he could say that would salvage the situation.

It’s fortunate that the Sword Pavilion Coins that I’ve earned are stored inside the untraceable Ethereal Card, so I don’t need to rely on the Ethereal Token to withdraw my wealth, Zhang Xuan thought as he took out his ‘I Am Low Profile’ Ethereal Token and crushed it.

It was not uncommon for cultivators to be killed in the Ethereal Hall, so it was common sense to place one's wealth in an Ethereal Card instead. This way, they would at least be able to retrieve their wealth even after their Ethereal Token had been deactivated.

After all that was done, Zhang Xuan was finally able to relax a little. It was at this moment that the person who had pointed him out caught up with him.

Zhang Xuan looked behind that person, but strangely enough, there was no one following him. This was both relieving and bewildering at the same time.

Since this fellow had already pointed him out as I Am Low Profile, it would have made sense for Elder Huang You and the others to pursue him too, right?

Why did this fellow come alone then?

Were they afraid of scaring him or something?

Well, no matter what plans they had in store, he just had to deny everything! He had already crushed the Ethereal Token anyway. There was no way they could identify him!

“Brother, you sure run fast...”

Upon catching up with Zhang Xuan, the inner disciple lowered his body and panted loudly from exhaustion.

While Zhang Xuan had intentionally slowed himself down a lot to prevent anyone from noticing any anomalies with him, it was still not a speed that anyone could easily catch up with.

“It's fortunate that I was the first one to recognize and catch you. Hahaha, I have really struck gold this time...” Despite his exhaustion, the inner disciple looked at Zhang Xuan with eyes reminiscent of a treasure hunter staring at a treasure.

“Recognize me? Don't spout nonsense! There's no way I could be that incomparably handsome and hopelessly valiant I Am Low Profile! He's like a brilliant sun in the sky whereas. I am nothing more than an ordinary inner disciple, not even worth a mention at all. So, don't start spouting nonsense.

Someone will die because of that!” Zhang Xuan immediately waved his hand defensively.

“I Am Low Profile? What the heck are you talking about?”
The inner disciple was stunned by Zhang Xuan’s words.

1972 I Must Marry Him

“Ah?” Zhang Xuan’s body froze on the spot. “Then why in the world are you chasing me?”

If not because you recognized I Am Low Profile, why did you sprint after me so anxiously? You even scared me into crushing my Ethereal Token, you know!

“Didn’t you sell a bottle of recovery medicine to Senior Bai Ruanqing a while ago? She ordered us to look for you, or else she will give us a severe pummeling... Look at these bruises all over my body. They were all inflicted by her! If I didn’t find you soon, she might’ve tortured us to death...” The inner disciple pointed all over his body and cried.

Taking a closer look, Zhang Xuan noticed that the inner disciple was indeed wounded all over, and he nearly burst into tears, too.

You should have said it earlier if that was the case! Do you know how many years you have shaved off my life from the earlier shock?

I even crushed my Ethereal Token... That’s twenty Sword Pavilion Coins, you know!

It all turned out to be an empty scare.

It’s fortunate that I didn’t lose anything else other than that, or else I might just strangle you alive.

“Why is she looking for me?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“I’m not too sure. It seems like your recovery medicine is effective, so she wishes to buy a few more bottles from you,” the inner disciple said.

“She wishes to buy more medicine from me?” Finally making sense of the situation, Zhang Xuan heaved another sigh of relief.

Everything was fine as long as his identity as I Am Low Profile was not compromised. As for the recovery medicine

that he sold, of course it was effective! Otherwise, it could not have healed him so quickly either.

“Indeed.” The inner disciple nodded. “I’ll have to trouble you to visit Senior Liu Lujie with me. He’s the only one who is able to contact Senior Bai.”

Zhang Xuan’s initial thought was to turn the inner disciple down. After all, he felt that this matter would just be a load of trouble. However, an idea suddenly came to his mind, and he asked, “If I recall correctly, Senior Bai Ruanqing is the granddaughter of Elder Bai Ye, right? She has quite a high standing among the core disciples too, doesn’t she?”

The news concerning that female dinosaur had reached even his ears.

Possessing both standing and influence, she might just be able to secure him a trip to the core disciples’ library. If so, it would be much better than him making a trip to the Valley of Falling Rain.

“Indeed. Her standing is extremely high in the sect, such that no one dares to cross her. Your recovery medicine has won her approval, and she specially engaged us to look for you. I believe that you will surely be highly regarded by her, and it will be a great opportunity for you to rise through the ranks,” the inner disciple said with a hint of envy in his eyes. “Just make sure that you don’t forget about me once you reach the top.”

It was for this young man that Bai Ruanqing pummeled them to the ground. From the looks of it, it felt like Bai Ruanqing had already made up her mind to cover this young man. It was for this reason that he did not dare disrespect the young man standing before him.

“Let’s go then!” Having confirmed this matter, Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up as he nodded without any hesitation.

Following behind this inner disciple, it did not take too long for them to arrive at Liu Lujie’s residence.

“Are you the person who sold the recovery medicine to Senior Bai?”

When Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong saw that Zhang Xuan was even younger than them and was a foreign face, they were slightly taken aback.

“The recovery medicine is something that I acquired by chance, and it’s mostly used up,” Zhang Xuan said. “I found that it’s effective on most wounds and afflictions, so I have always viewed it as my greatest treasure. It’s only because I had an urgent need for money that I was forced to sell it. I didn’t think that it would end up helping Senior Bai!”

He knew about the analogy of the man with a jade. It was with no other choice that he had chosen to sell the gourd’s bathwater, but he knew better than to reveal its true source. In any case, he should first claim that its quantity was limited, or else it would be troublesome if everyone who was injured came to him for medicine.

(The analogy talks about how a person who flaunts their wealth, beauty, talents, or the like could end up bringing envy upon them, and thus provoking others to harm them.)

“I have already informed Senior Bai of the matter. She’ll be here in a moment. I hope that you still have some recovery medicine left, or else... I fear that even I won’t be able to protect you!” Liu Lujie said.

“Yes, I still do have some left,” Zhang Xuan replied with a smile.

“You should wait for Senior Bai here. I still have some matters to attend to, so I’ll be taking my leave first!” Liu Lujie said before heading to the courtyard.

Being killed by I Am Low Profile had made him feel deeply pressured. He realized that he was still sorely lacking. While he was a little fearful of Bai Ruanqing, he did not want to waste even a second anymore.

Stepping into the courtyard, he picked up his sword and began discussing a sword art with Wang Jiandong, who had been waiting for him for some time.

“This is the sword art that I Am Low Profile executed,” Wang Jiandong said as he swung his sword and released a surge of

sword qi.

“No, that doesn’t seem like it. I think it’s something more like this,” Liu Lujie said with a frown as he executed another move.

Through their exchanges, they tried to decipher I Am Low Profile’s move while analyzing the various flaws in their own.

Watching the entire process, Zhang Xuan murmured quietly with a nod, “Their talent’s not too bad...”

If one just looked at sheer talent, they were far above Dan Xiaotian. It was truly not easy to analyze that much just by observing.

However, his swordsmanship was far too deep and layered to be interpreted that easily. Not even Bai Feng dared claim that he really understood what was going on, so it was indeed a little too tough on the two inner disciples to comprehend the essence of his swordsmanship.

As a result, the more that they discussed, the more they deviated from the truth. As a teacher, Zhang Xuan’s eyelids began twitching as the urge to berate them welled up within him.

He really could not bear seeing those two straying further and further. However, if he spoke, he would risk exposing his identity. Thus, he shifted uncomfortably in his seat as he tried to tune out what those two were talking about. Hu!

At this moment, the call of a beast echoed in the air. Bai Ruanqing had arrived.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

It was fortunate that she had arrived, or else he might have succumbed to his urge and given those two a huge tongue-lashing.

For his swordsmanship to be distorted to such an extent... he really did not know what to say.

As soon as Bai Ruanqing leaped off the back of the aerial beast, she immediately recognized Zhang Xuan and rushed

over excitedly. “I’ve finally found you! Do you still have the recovery medicine that you sold me back at the market?”

With just that little bottle, her grandfather was already showing some signs of recovery. If she could procure more of the medicine, her grandfather might just be able to make a full recovery!

“I only have three bottles left at the moment...” Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out the few remaining jade bottles.

“I’ll take all three!” Bai Ruanqing said excitedly. She took the jade bottles and inspected their contents before heaving a sigh. With an expectant look on her face, she asked, “May I know if these bottles of recovery medicine were concocted by you, or... did you acquire them from somewhere?”

“I chanced upon them while exploring an ancient domain. These are the only bottles that I have left. If I hadn’t been strapped for cash, I would never have brought them out,” Zhang Xuan said.

It was not as if the other party would ever know of the truth anyway.

“What a pity...” Bai Ruanqing sighed.

She had hoped that she could buy a bit more, so she could not help but sigh in disappointment when she heard those words. She quickly took out sixty Sword Pavilion Coins and passed it over to Zhang Xuan.

Instead of receiving the money, Zhang Xuan looked at her and asked, “Senior Bai, I don’t really need money anymore. Instead, there’s actually a favor that I would like to ask of you.”

Those words immediately dampened Bai Ruanqing’s good mood. With a hint of displeasure between her eyebrows, she asked, “What is it?”

If the other party had accepted her money, the deal would have been sealed. However, if the other party was asking her for a favor instead, it was likely something that could not be resolved with just money.

Nevertheless, it was still a fact that the other party's medicine had saved her grandfather's life, so the other party could be considered their benefactor. As long as the request was not too overboard, she would try her best to help him.

"Senior Bai, you should be able to tell that my cultivation has reached Ancient Sage 4-dan consummation. I am only a step away from achieving a breakthrough," Zhang Xuan said.

"You want me to help you achieve a breakthrough?" Bai Ruanqing frowned. "An advancement to Pseudo Immortal signifies the gap between an inner disciple and a core disciple. The value is definitely not just sixty Sword Pavilion Coins."

"I understand that, and I don't intend to ask for such an insolent favor either," Zhang Xuan replied with a smile. "The current issue I am facing is a lack of reference material to refer to. I have been searching through the inner disciples' library for quite some time, but I have been unable to find the information I am looking for. Thus, I was hoping that perhaps you could bring me into the core disciples' library for a moment. I won't require too long—just six hours will do!"

"You wish to enter the core disciples' library?" Bai Ruanqing had been wondering what Zhang Xuan would ask for, but to think that this would be it.

She did mention that a breakthrough was worth more than sixty Sword Pavilion Coins, and that was a fact. However, if the other party had insisted on that favor, she still would have secured an Immortalhood Breakthrough Pill for him to increase the chances of him making a breakthrough.

If required, she could even have imparted some of her experiences making a breakthrough to him.

Yet, instead of requesting for that, he only wanted to enter the core disciples' library for six hours?

Even Bai Ruanqing felt like she would be taking advantage of this poor lad if she only gave him this much in exchange for such valuable medicine, so she said, "Choose another favor. That's too simple!"

Zhang Xuan clasped his fist and said, "That's all I require!"

There was nothing that was more valuable than books to him.

As long as he had books, achieving breakthroughs would be as easy as ABC to him.

Bai Ruanqing looked at Zhang Xuan for a moment before slowly nodding. "Alright then."

Everyone knew that great knowledge could be found in books, but reading was both tiresome and time-consuming. Thus, many sought to find shortcuts. It was hard to find someone who valued reading this much.

"Senior Bai!"

Just as the two of them were about to leave the area, Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong walked into the main hall and greeted Bai Ruanqing.

"Are you currently studying I Am Low Profile's swordsmanship?" Bai Ruanqing asked.

She had simulated her battle with I Am Low Profile in the Ethereal Hall many times in her mind after her tragic defeat. Earlier, when she was alighting from the aerial beast, she had seen the two of them practicing their swordsmanship, and she had quickly figured out what they were trying to do.

Yes, that's right!" Liu Lujie nodded.

"Did you manage to figure anything out?" Bai Ruanqing asked.

Yes, but there are also many doubts that we have in mind that we would like to consult you on, Senior Bai!" Liu Lujie said.

He might have been the number one expert of the inner disciples, but the young lady before him was a core disciple, as well as the granddaughter of one of the Three Grand Elders. Furthermore, there was a good chance that she might be a True Immortal expert. Her understanding of swordsmanship was bound to be much higher than his!

"Feel free to speak!" Bai Ruanqing gestured.

The horizontal slash that I Am Low Profile executed is simple and smooth. Despite its slow speed, it's somehow impossible

to avoid it. Wang Jiandong and I have discussed it for quite some time now, but we are still unable to grasp the principles behind it...”

As Liu Lujie spoke, he raised his sword and slashed horizontally. He repeated the same movement three times, but every single one of them appeared to be off the mark compared to what I Am Low Profile did.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless.

That was not a sword art at all but a simple movement of his sword. A horizontal slash would allow him to more easily dissipate all the sword qi coming his way while going from the defensive to the offensive in a single move, thus saving some energy. The key of the technique lay not in its speed but the angle and trajectory of the sword qi.

It was that simple a move, but the other party was unable to figure it out after spending such a long time on it.

To think that he had called them geniuses earlier!

“That technique combines offense with defense impeccably. Only the most ingenious of swordsmanship is able to achieve that. It’s perfectly normal that you aren’t able to comprehend it,” Bai Ruanqing said.

“Even after an intense discussion with Grandpa Feng, I’m still a little confused by the principles behind it. Nevertheless, I am just about able to execute it now!”

After saying those words, she raised her sword and conducted a horizontal slash.

While it did not carry the same absolute might that I Am Low Profile’s attack did, it had roughly forty percent resemblance to it.

“This attack isn’t a specific sword art but simply a casual move that I Am Low Profile executed!” Bai Ruanqing repeated what Grandpa Feng had told her earlier.

“It’s truly astounding how powerful even a casual move from him is. I really wonder just what kind of swordsmanship level I Am Low Profile has achieved. If you figure out who he is,

make sure to inform me immediately. He's the only person I have felt so much admiration for in my entire life. I have already sworn to the heavens that I shall marry him in the future!"

1973 Elder Bai Ye Wishes to Take In a Disciple

“Marry?”

Zhang Xuan’s entire face convulsed a little as he took a step back in horror. This was too much information!

Sis, you mustn’t joke around like this!

My heart isn’t able to take such stuff!

To be fair, Bai Ruanqing was quite a beautiful lady. Her long, slender legs drew the eyes of others to them, filling the minds of men with fantasies.

But he was someone who already had a girlfriend! Not to mention, there were many rumors that Bai Ruanqing was a female dinosaur who pummeled others when things did not go her way.

Not even the toughest of men would be able to take her on!

At the very least, he did not think that he had a masochistic streak in him.

“What’s wrong?” Noticing the horrified expression on Zhang Xuan’s face, Bai Ruanqing, who had been reveling in her fantasies a moment ago, turned to look at him doubtfully.

I only said that I’m going to marry I Am Low Profile. Why are you acting like this all of a sudden?

“Ah, it’s nothing much,” Zhang Xuan quickly replied as he wiped off the cold sweat on his forehead. At the same time, he made up his mind that he would take his other identity as I Am Low Profile to the grave.

Bai Ruanqing looked at Zhang Xuan weirdly for a moment before turning her attention back to Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong.

“Grandpa Feng explained the swordsmanship to me, and it should be something like that...”

Hearing Bai Ruanqing’s explanation, Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong widened their eyes in realization.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan found himself on the verge of vomiting after hearing the first few sentences, so he quickly turned his gaze away and tuned out whatever was being said.

It really pained him to see how his swordsmanship was being distorted into something so unseemly. If he continued listening on, he might just become a raging dinosaur himself!

To be honest, if not for the limitations of his cultivation, he would have loved to pry open the coffin of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion’s founder so as to see how he had groomed his successors for his heritage to end up like that.

I really should find an opportunity to guide them, Zhang Xuan thought.

A while later, Bai Ruanqing was finally done lecturing her two juniors. With a satisfied smile on her face, she gestured for Zhang Xuan to get onto the back of her aerial beast.

The peak where the core disciples lived was not located too far away. Nevertheless, it had a far more imposing presence than the inner disciples’ peak. The upper body of the mountain was completely concealed amid the clouds, giving the feeling of an unworldly utopia.

Zhang Xuan could clearly feel that the spiritual energy in the Core Disciple Sector was much more concentrated than in the Inner Disciple Sector, allowing one to cultivate much faster.

“The library is right ahead. Here is my identity token. You should be able to enter the premises with it. I’ll come and fetch you in six hours,” Bai Ruanqing instructed as the aerial beast landed before a majestic tower.

True to her reputation as a female dinosaur, while she admired those who read vastly, she was unable to find the patience within her to read. Instead of boring herself in the library, it would be better for her to deliver the medicine to her grandfather so that he would be spared from some suffering.

“You have my gratitude!” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

It was also preferable for him not to have Bai Ruanqing following him around. After all, he had quite an unusual way of reading.

Similar to the inner disciples’ library, he was granted entry into the premises after flashing the token and paying the required Sword Pavilion Coins.

The cost for the inner disciples’ library was two Sword Pavilion Coins per hour, but the price was ten times of that here. Every hour cost a hefty twenty Sword Pavilion Coins!

Fortunately, money was not an issue for him anymore. He paid the 120 Sword Pavilion Coins and entered the library.

The cultivation techniques and sword art manuals that the core disciples had access to were much more profound than those in the inner disciples’ library. There were plenty of Pseudo Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals in sight.

With glowing eyes, Zhang Xuan swept through all the books in sight and collected them into the Library of Heaven’s Path.

With the money that he had and those cultivation technique manuals, he would be able to advance his cultivation easily.

Returning to her residence, Bai Ruanqing immediately headed to her feeble grandfather’s side.

“Grandfather, I have brought the medicine back!” Bai Ruanqing said as she took out the three jade bottles that she had just acquired.

“Is it the same recovery medicine that you fed me previously?” Elder Bai Ye asked weakly as he uncorked the cap to examine the content.

Weird.

The sect physicians had forged many precious pills for his consumption, but none of them had been effective on his injuries. He had thought that something that could make him regain consciousness would surely be even greater in value, but it turned out to be something no different from clear water.

He could not sense the slightest hint of spiritual energy from it!

To be exact, he could not even sense medicinal energy in it.

Was this really effective on him?

“I know it might seem unremarkable, but it’s indeed what healed you previously. Hurry up and drink it!” Bai Ruanqing urged with a chuckle.

Back then, she had bought it because she did not know what it was. If she had not been desperate, she never would have believed that such medicine could cure the wounds of her grandfather.

“I’ll give it a try...” Elder Bai Ye nodded as he tilted his head upward and drank it.

As soon as the medicine flowed down his throat, he immediately felt the wounds that he had been helpless toward for so long alleviating a little. The energy that was relentlessly corroding his organs seemed to grow significantly thinner.

“Incredible...” Elder Bai Ye’s eyes glowed in exhilaration.

He immediately uncorked and downed the other two bottles.

“How is it?” Bai Ruanqing asked anxiously.

Hu!

Instead of responding to the question, Elder Bai Ye pressed his palm against his bed lightly, and the next instant, he was already in the courtyard with a sword in his hand.

Tzzzzzzz!

The movements of his sword drew the spiritual energy in the surroundings along like a gust of wind. Move after move, the sword in his hand seemed to flow smoothly like a flowing river. There was no hint of the sickly old man that had been lying on the bed from him!

Seeing how her grandfather had gone to the courtyard to practice his swordsmanship, Bai Ruanqing’s eyes turned red in agitation.

“Grandfather, have you fully recovered?”

As Elder Bai Ye’s swordsmanship came to a stop, he turned to his granddaughter and spoke with irrepressible delight in his voice. “I’m still a little way off from making a full recovery, but the destructive energy that I was unable to clear away previously has been cleared. As long as I nourish my body, I should be able to recover to my peak within a month!”

The bedridden him had already resigned himself to his fate back then. He had despaired at the thought that his life would come to an end just like that, but nothing he did had helped at all. He had never thought that this humble- looking medicine would bring him a miracle.

“Congratulations, Grandfather!” Bai Ruanqing cried out.

Elder Bai Ye continued practicing his swordsmanship for a moment as he felt spirit and strength swiftly returning to his body. Some time later, he finally turned to Bai Ruanqing and said, “The person who sold you this medicine is my benefactor. Where is he now? I would like to meet him!”

“He’s an inner disciple. I just took him to the core disciples’ library,” Bai Ruanqing replied.

The core disciples’ library?”

Noticing her grandfather’s incomprehension, Bai Ruanqing quickly recounted her conversation with Zhang Xuan earlier.

“Despite giving away such a potent medicine, all he requested was access to the core disciples’ library?” Elder Bai Ye found it hard to believe what he had just heard.

“Indeed!” Bai Ruanqing nodded.

She was also surprised by Zhang Xuan’s request.

It was such a good opportunity to ask for pointers on his cultivation and advance his strength, but he had given it up for this.

After asking a few more questions, Elder Bai Ye nodded and said, “Let’s head to the library to take a look... Wait a moment first. Ah Feng!”

Yes, Old Master!” Bai Feng quickly walked over.

“I have a Transmogrification Pill here. After consuming it, you’ll be able to alter your appearance temporarily for two hours. Suppress your cultivation to the same level as that young friend, and try to find an opportunity to test his skills! Elder Bai Ye said as he passed a jade bottle over.

“Test his skills?” Taking the pill, Bai Feng’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment as he asked, “Old Master, are you intending to take him in as your student?”

As a sect elder, Elder Bai Ye would not test the skills of a disciple for no reason, let alone the fact that he was indebted to the other party!

The only reason Elder Bai Ye would do this was because he was intending to take the other party in as his student!

“Despite knowing that Ruanqing needs the medicine, he didn’t make use of the opportunity to extort something valuable out of her. From that, it can be seen that he’s a person with principles. Furthermore, he’s saved my life. If I just turn a blind eye to him, won’t that mean that my life is actually worthless?” Elder Bai Ye placed his hands behind his back as he spoke deeply.

No matter what, he was one of the Three Grand Elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, a renowned figure in the Forsaken Continent.

He could not let his benefactor walk away without doing anything for him!

“I understand your intentions, Old Master!” Bai Feng smiled. “Even someone of your influence and strength was unable to overcome the wounds sustained in the City of Collapsed Space. If others learn that the young man has something that can cure that affliction, it could draw those with malicious intentions to him even if he claims that he has no more of the medicine. You fear that he might meet with a mishap as a result of this, so you want to accept him as your student. In a sense, this is your way of protecting him!”

Countless treasures were hidden in the City of Collapsed Space, making it a region that experts looked toward. However, the dangers were very real, too. Not even one in a hundred who dared venture into its depths managed to return alive. Most of the survivors also sustain severe injuries that were untreatable, and they eventually died with regrets.

Many talented individuals had sought to uncover a way to overcome the dangers that lurked in the City of Collapsed Space, but none had succeeded so far.

There was no doubt that a medicine that could cure the injuries sustained within the City of Collapsed Space would increase the chances of one's survival many times over. Thus, if the world learned that the young man had something like that, he would become the target of many experts; his life would be in grave danger.

By accepting the young man as his disciple, even if someone wished to touch the young man, that person would have to consider if they were willing to offend Elder Bai Ye for it. This identity would shelter the young man from many dangers.

Taking a deep breath, Elder Bai Ye said with a distant look in his eyes, "The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion might be relatively safe, but human greed must never be underestimated. It's always better to be safe. This is my way of repaying my debt to the young man while protecting him from the dangers of the world. Of course, I also have my own expectations of my students. If his comprehension of swordsmanship is far too lacking, I'll just have to repay him some other way!"

"I understand. I'll have it done!" Bai Feng nodded before leaving the room.

"Grandfather, are you really accepting him as your student?" Bai Ruanqing asked with a conflicted look on her face. "Wouldn't that mean that... I'm a generation younger than him?"

"I have never accepted any students before. Let's see if he's able to clear Bai Feng's examination before talking about that." Elder Bai Ye chuckled softly as he patted his

granddaughter's head. "If he succeeds, he will be your Senior Uncle. You must treat him as such, alright? I have heard a lot of stories about the things you've done in the sect, and I have only been turning a blind eye to them!"

"Senior Uncle..." Bai Ruanqing felt a little choked up within.

It was just a moment ago that she had thought that the other party's earnest appearance looked a little adorable, but just the thought of a person younger than her becoming her Senior Uncle filled her with rage.

A glint flashed within Bai Ruanqing's eyes as she quickly said, "Grandfather, since you're fine now, I'll be heading out to cultivate!"

"Go on!" Elder Bai Ye said with a wave of his hand.

As Bai Ruanqing walked out of the room, Elder Bai Ye sighed deeply before shaking his head. How could he possibly not see through his granddaughter's intentions?

He knew his granddaughter well. Even if he could stop her this once, she would still find some other way to make trouble for that lad. He could only hope that the lad would be able to find a way to cope with his granddaughter.

On the other hand, as soon as Bai Ruanqing left the residence, the obedient look on her face immediately vanished. With a devilish expression, she scoffed, "I should at least teach that fellow a lesson. At most, I'll just address him as Senior Uncle before grandfather, but elsewhere, he will have to address me as 'Senior'!"

As a famed female dinosaur, not once had she been taken advantage of before. She really could not bring herself to call a person weaker and younger than herself 'Senior Uncle'!

Whoever that person was, she would make sure to drive the difference in their seniority into his head!

Since her grandfather was going to test that lad anyway, she could be the first phase of the trial.

Riding her aerial beast, she swiftly arrived before the core disciples' library. With her standing, even without her identity

token, she could enter the premises right away.

“Didn’t he say that he was here to study?”

The entire core disciples’ library was bizarrely silent. It was as if no one was there at all. The sound of flipping pages, the retrieving and returning of books, or the strokes of a brush were nowhere to be heard.

Bai Ruanqing walked for quite a while before she finally found the person whom she was looking for walking down an aisle, glancing at the books around as he walked past. What was weird about this was how he had positioned himself at the center of the aisle, which meant that the books on both sides were out of his reach. This gave the feeling that he was not going to grab any books from the shelves at all.

Perplexed, she followed him for quite a while, but just like she had thought, the young man simply walked from aisle to aisle without taking any books.

Bai Ruanqing finally walked up to him and asked, “What are you doing?”

“Oh, you’re here...” Seeing that it was her, Zhang Xuan gestured to the shelves and replied with a smile, “I’m still searching for the book I want.”

To be honest, even he was impressed by the quantity of books in the core disciples’ library. After such a long period of time, he had not even collected half of what was in there.

It seemed like he would really need six whole hours to take everything in.

1974 Knocking Out Bai Ruanqing

“I’ve been to the core disciples’ library many times. What books do you need? Tell me and I’ll bring them here for you!” Bai Ruanqing said with a frown.

She could not possibly make a move there, where the valuable heritage of the sect was stored. However, she could not just keep following him around till the six hours were up either!

“It’s fine, I’m just looking around at the moment. I haven’t really decided on which book I want. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure to head out once the six hours are over!” Zhang Xuan said with a wave of his hand.

It had not been easy for him to get in there, so he definitely had to collect all the books. This would be extremely helpful for future advancement in his cultivation and battle techniques.

Seeing how the young man’s eyes had already moved on to the next shelf while he was speaking, Bai Ruanqing felt like ages would have passed by the time the young man was done.

So, she nodded for a moment as she said, “Is that so? Hmm, may I trouble you to come with me for a moment?”

She had never been a patient person. Waiting there for a few more hours could really cause her head to explode.

“Where do you want to lead me to?” Noticing the bizarre look on Bai Ruanqing’s face, Zhang Xuan finally tore his gaze away from the books and looked at her. “Is there a problem?”

“Not really... I can’t really say it here. Can you come with me to the silent chamber over there?” Bai Ruanqing gestured to the isolated space where cultivators could study and practice some of the theories in the books.

“Ah?” Zhang Xuan was slightly taken aback. “I’m not too sure if this is really appropriate. I don’t mean any offense, but I wish to focus on my cultivation for the time being...”

Bai Ruanqing's eyebrows leaped up. At that moment, she really wanted to strangle the fool before her to death. "You're misunderstanding something. I just wish to ask you some questions relating to cultivation!"

"Ah, I see!" Zhang Xuan visibly heaved a sigh of relief.

He valued his purity a lot. He could not lose it there.

"You..." Seeing how relieved Zhang Xuan was, Bai Ruanqing nearly punched him in the face.

She knew that she had a violent temper, but at the very least, she was pretty. Many in the core disciples would more than fancy the idea of having some private time with her, and yet... this fellow actually reacted in such a manner when she proposed going into a private chamber with him.

What do you mean by this?

Did you think that I would eat you up?

Bai Ruanqing took two deep breaths to quell the flames in her heart before walking toward the private chamber.

She might not have known this fellow for long, but this was the first time that she had met someone who could make one's blood pressure rise with every word that he said. It served him right to be single!

After the two of them entered the silent chamber, the doors suddenly closed.

"What are you going to do?" Zhang Xuan placed his hands defensively before his chest as he looked at Bai Ruanqing warily.

Bai Ruanqing rolled her eyes. She activated the sound isolation barrier in the room before turning to look at Zhang Xuan. "I want to ask you what your name is and what your current cultivation realm is."

"Didn't I tell you while we were making our way here? I am Zhang Xuan, and my current cultivation realm is Dimension Shatterer realm consummation," Zhang Xuan replied.

The other party had asked those two questions before, and thinking that there was no need to hide the truth, he simply replied honestly.

“Dimension Shatterer realm consummation, is it?” Bai Ruanqing muttered as her aura swiftly plummeted down to his level. “I have suppressed my cultivation to Dimension Shatterer realm consummation as well. I wish to have a duel with you. The losing party has to heed the words of the winning party obediently from now on!”

“You want to have a duel with me?” Zhang Xuan was confused.

He had thought that Bai Ruanqing was lusting over his flesh, but to think that she just wanted to have a duel with him. Just that... what in the world was this female dinosaur planning?

“That’s right!” Bai Ruanqing nodded.

You said that the losing party has to heed the words of the winning party from now on. Does that mean that I’ll have to commit suicide if you ask me to do so?” Zhang Xuan asked.

It was pretty much a guaranteed victory for him, but he did not like to engage in such duels.

“What kind of person do you think I am? Don’t worry, all I will ask of you is to address me as your senior no matter what kind of identity you assume in the future! Just like any junior, you shall treat me with the utmost respect and obey my orders!” Bai Ruanqing smirked as she began stretching her arms, causing cracking sounds to echo in the air.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was so bewildered by the request that one could almost see question marks above his head. “Haven’t I been calling you Senior Bai all along? Alright, I really have to finish browsing through my books, so I don’t really have time to spar with you. Pardon me, but I’ll be taking my leave...”

After saying those words, he turned around to walk out of the room.

“Where do you think you are going?”

With a bellow, Bai Ruanqing whipped out her sword and directed it right toward Zhang Xuan.

Regardless of whether he was willing to acknowledge it or not, there was no mistake in beating him into submission first!

As she was only suppressing her cultivation down to Dimension Shatterer realm consummation, she was able to execute more sword maneuvers than she could back in the Ethereal Hall. At the same time, she was also much more accustomed to her current strength.

This single pierce was far more powerful than the attack that she had executed in the Ethereal Hall, and it instantaneously sealed all of Zhang Xuan's path of retreat.

She had no intention of killing Zhang Xuan, but years of experience as a tyrant told her that people listened better after going through a beating. She would feel much more assured after beating the person in question into submission.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan was rendered speechless by Bai Ruanqing's actions.

It was no wonder others called her a female dinosaur. It was impossible to reason with her.

With a series of quick Z-shaped sidesteps, he dodged all of Bai Ruanqing's attacks as he shrugged helplessly and said, "Senior Bai, I really am no match for you. Let's not continue with this meaningless duel!"

"What?" Bai Ruanqing was shocked to see how easily Zhang Xuan managed to avoid all her attacks. Not only so, the latter even had the leisure to be shrugging and talking to her!

"Take out your sword and let me see your true prowess! Don't blame me for not going easy on you otherwise!"

Sou sou sou!

After saying those words, Bai Ruanqing executed three consecutive slashes toward Zhang Xuan, each faster than the previous. In an instant, the silent chamber was completely filled with sword qi.

When the library was built, there had been concerns that cultivators would suddenly release tremendous energy from suddenly epiphanies, resulting in the destruction of the building. Thus, the silent chambers were built to be extraordinary resilient. The Reinforcement Formation constructed around it was such that even core disciples would be unable to faze it. As such, even though Bai Ruanqing's attack was powerful, it did not tear down the wall at all.

Zhang Xuan's silhouette tilted from side to side as he adeptly dodged the three swords. At the same time, he spoke earnestly. "Look, you are a core disciple while I am just a mere inner disciple. There's no meaning in someone as powerful as you bullying me..."

"..." Bai Ruanqing was getting more and more astounded by the moment.

Zhang Xuan appeared to be far stronger than she had expected him to be. Her motivation to fight was growing with each passing second.

"Quickly draw your sword. I'm going to get serious now."

Hu!

A burst of sword qi gushed forth as Bai Ruanqing's sword pierced forth with even greater speed than before.

As someone who cultivated the Heavysnow Swordsmanship, she was capable of moving at extreme speeds with precision. Driving her current prowess at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation to the limits, numerous afterimages of her appeared all around the silent chamber, surrounding Zhang Xuan.

It felt like innumerable attacks would fall upon Zhang Xuan as soon as his guard fell.

But as swift as Bai Ruanqing's movements were, Zhang Xuan was even faster. It was almost as if she was constantly a step slower than Zhang Xuan. Be it her sword or sword qi, nothing was reaching Zhang Xuan at all.

"How can this be?" Bai Ruanqing remarked in astonishment as she hastened her movements further.

She had thought that she would at least be able to force Zhang Xuan into a corner with her attacks, but somehow, the other party simply yawned in boredom as he continued spewing the same nonsense. “Even if I draw my sword, it’s not as if I can defeat you. Aren’t you forcing me to commit suicide at this rate?”

“Argh!” Bai Ruanqing felt deeply stifled within.

If your forehead was laden with sweat and you were gasping for air, I might still be able to believe that you are really no match for me.

But here you are, yawning and scratching your back lazily, not even bothering to put on an act... Are you messing with me?

Frustrated, Bai Ruanqing’s movements grew faster and faster, but her opponent, despite repeatedly claiming that he was not a match for her, managed to match her speed with ease. It was as if he was a leaf on the ocean; no matter how powerful the waves and ocean currents were, they were unable to drown it.

“Draw. Your. Sword!”

This continued for twenty moves, but Bai Ruanqing was unable to even nick Zhang Xuan’s sleeves. Unable to stand being looked down upon like that, she was starting to lose her temper. “Don’t blame me for getting nasty!”

Hu!

With a flick of her sword, she executed her strongest trump card, the Heavysnow Swordsmanship.

She had never been a patient person, or else she would not have ended up crippling so many core disciples.

Her inability to harm the other party despite the moves that she had executed thus far had ground the little bit of patience she had down to nothing.

Her sword qi materialized as snow, causing the temperature in the surroundings to plummet.

“Sigh...” Walking calmly amid the other party’s swordsmanship, Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella as he sighed

deeply. “I really wish to live a low-profile life... but why do you have to force me so?”

All he wanted to do was to read his books and advance his cultivation quietly... Why was this simply so hard?

Even while he was just visiting a library, someone simply grabbed him from where he was and forced him into a fight. Just how in the world did I offend you for you to have to ruin my peaceful life like that?

“What are you saying?” Bai Ruanqing roared as she saw Zhang Xuan muttering to himself, seemingly unconcerned by her strongest move at all. However, the next instant, a thought came to her mind, and she widened her eyes in astonishment, “Wait a moment, it can’t be that you are actually...”

Within the same cultivation realm, most core disciples would not be able to withstand her Heavysnow Swordsmanship, let alone an inner disciple. Even Liu Lujie would be defeated swiftly under its might!

Yet, this little-known person was able to tread between her attacks without sustaining the slightest damage.

She could not help recalling the person who had killed her twice back in the Ethereal Hall—I Am Low Profile!

Could that mysterious person really be the young man before her?

Just as Bai Ruanqing spoke her doubts, the young man before her sighed deeply as his leisurely eyes suddenly turned frighteningly sharp. “Since I can’t hide it any longer, I’ll have to ask you to pardon me for my discourtesy...”

Hu!

The next instant, a palm strike appeared right before her.

His arm was not long, but it immediately sealed her sword qi. The immense force coming at her caused Bai Ruanqing’s breathing to become a little ragged as she struggled to catch her breath.

“No...”

Not expecting that a Dimension Shatterer realm consummation cultivator would be able to bring out such tremendous might, Bai Ruanqing narrowed her eyes as she swiftly released the seal on her cultivation.

Kacha! Kacha!

In an instant, her cultivation rose back up to the Pseudo Immortal realm, and it was still surging upward.

Lesser Pseudo Immortal!

Great Pseudo Immortal!

Earthly Pseudo Immortal!

Heavenly Pseudo Immortal!

Lesser True Immortal!

Just as many had guessed, she had overcome the limitations of the Pseudo Immortal realm and reached the True Immortal realm!

True Immortal realm experts were rumored to possess boundless zhenqi. Even in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, she was already more than qualified to become an inner elder.

Hu!

Even as her cultivation returned to normal, the first thing she did was retreat, but for some reason, no matter where she retreated to, the palm strike continued following her closely. It was almost as if the other party was able to predict her movements.

“How is this possible? Are you really a Dimension Shatterer realm consummation cultivator?” Bai Ruanqing was frenzied.

She could clearly feel that the other party’s cultivation was only at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation, but for some reason, despite having regained her true cultivation as a Lesser True Immortal, she was actually unable to dodge his attack!

It was as if the other party was able to read into her!

But how could that be?

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was filled with remarkable geniuses, and there were a handful of people were able to challenge those whose cultivation was beyond them. But usually, a cultivation stage or two was the limit. After all, everyone there was an expert, and the cultivation techniques and sword arts that they all practiced were the same.

Yet, as a Lesser True Immortal fighting against a Dimension Shatterer realm cultivator, she actually felt helpless.

Really, how powerful was this fellow?

“I don’t believe it!”

Releasing another powerful surge of energy, Bai Ruanqing’s prowess as a True Immortal pulsed into the surroundings. It was to such an extent that the Reinforcement Formation cast around the silent chamber was starting to creak under the pressure.

“Don’t bother, it’s useless.”

The young man’s voice echoed by her ear. Hu!

The palm strike abruptly vanished from view. Putong!

Bai Ruanqing’s body collapsed to the ground.

“What should I do?” Zhang Xuan sighed as he looked upon the unconscious Bai Ruanqing.

Due to the latter pushing him again and again, he felt like he might be pressured into doing something that he was reluctant about if he did not make a move soon!

But right after making a move, he regretted it.

If it had been any other inner disciple, he would still have had his own means of dealing with the other party... but the person before him was the granddaughter of one of the Three Grand Elders, as well as a Lesser True Immortal!

His soul arts would not work as well against such an opponent, and if any mishap came to the other party, he would surely suffer grave consequences.

He could not afford to become a wanted man less than a day after entering the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

“Outstanding people always have an endless source of trouble!” Zhang Xuan sighed helplessly.

1975 Too Weak!

If he was violated because he was not as strong as Bai Ruanqing, he would have no choice but to accept it.

However, it was clear that Bai Ruanqing was no match for him at all! If so, how could he possibly allow himself to be violated over here?

Unfortunately for him, his actions had also inadvertently exposed his identity as I Am Low Profile. If he failed to deal with this properly, it could spell major trouble.

“There are only two options for me now. I could choose to kill her and dispose of her corpse... No, that wouldn’t work. Her entry into the core disciples’ library would be logged, and someone might have seen us entering the silent chamber together. If she were to disappear all of a sudden, it’s very likely that someone might track the matter down to me!

“Otherwise, I can also force her to make a vow to never reveal this secret. It seems like I can only count on this then...”

Zhang Xuan stared at Bai Ruanqing’s unconscious body for a moment before sighing deeply yet again. It felt like sighs had been coming out from his mouth a lot more frequently over the past day.

With a flick of his finger, he shot a surge of Heaven’s Path zhenqi into Bai Ruanqing’s body, and the latter’s eyelashes immediately fluttered a little. Her eyes slowly opened, and she swiftly assessed her surroundings with a slightly confused look.

“Senior Bai, I don’t like to stain my hands with blood, but I’ll have you vow that you will never...”

Just as Zhang Xuan was going to control the Heaven’s Path zhenqi he had infused into Bai Ruanqing’s body to force her to heed his words, the young lady suddenly turned to him with an overexcited look and kowtowed, “Senior Zhang... No, it should be Senior Uncle Zhang instead! Can you teach me

swordsmanship? As long as you impart to me your swordsmanship, I'll do whatever you want me to!"

"Senior Uncle?"

Once again, Zhang Xuan found himself completely dumbfounded by Bai Ruanqing's actions.

Are you the weather? The way that you change your face is simply too fast!

It was not too long ago that you were so determined to kill me, but your attitude suddenly made a 180-degrees turn... Really, what is going through your mind?

Besides, where did you get the idea that you should be calling me Senior Uncle?

But that being said, Zhang Xuan's motive was to stop the other party from revealing his secret. As long as she was willing to keep her mouth shut, it didn't really matter how she addressed him.

He assessed Bai Ruanqing for a moment before asking, "Do you really want to learn my swordsmanship?"

Bai Ruanqing nodded her head vehemently.

In that instant that she was knocked out, she was absolutely certain that the young man before her was indeed I Am Low Profile. Only that man could overcome her Heavysnow Swordsmanship so easily despite the difference in their cultivation realms!

This young man's swordsmanship was far stronger than that of Grandpa Feng. If she could learn from him, the sky would be the limit for her mastery of swordsmanship. She would need not worry about those monsters from the core disciples anymore, and she might even be able to surpass them!

She couldn't allow such a precious opportunity to slip past her fingers!

"It's not entirely impossible for me to impart to you my swordsmanship, but I do have a condition!"

Through Zhang Xuan's Eye of Insight, he could tell that Bai Ruanqing was making this request with utmost sincerity. Knowing that there was a way to solve this amicably, he heaved a sigh of relief before saying, "I am a person who doesn't like to stand out. I don't wish for others to learn of my other identity and capabilities. If you are able to keep it a secret, I promise that I'll allow your swordsmanship to grow swiftly within a short period of time. Even the position as the number one sword practitioner of the core disciple would be easily within your reach!"

"Senior Uncle, you can be assured that my lips are sealed!" Realizing that the young man had already seen through her intentions, Bai Ruanqing's face reddened. She quickly straightened her back, held her palm up, and vowed solemnly, "I, Bai Ruanqing, swear to the gods that I will not reveal the slightest information regarding Senior Uncle Zhang Xuan. If I were to violate this vow, may thousands of arrows pierce through my heart!"

With this, Zhang Xuan's heart was finally settled.

In his short period of time here, he came to learn that the term 'god' had a special significance to the people of the Azure. No one would dare to go against a vow to the gods for fear of heavenly retribution.

Of course, that was just what he had heard and seen so far. As for whether it was indeed the case or just a superstition, that still required further investigation.

The horizontal slash that you have demonstrated and lectured Liu Lujie and Wang Jiandong on earlier is wrong. I'll explain it to you now..."

As if having finally found an outlet for the frustration building up in his chest, Zhang Xuan immediately went through the crux of his swordsmanship excitedly.

Listening to the explanation, Bai Ruanqing's body shuddered with zeal.

She never thought that swordsmanship could be utilized in such a manner.

Simple as it may seem, the prowess that one could draw forth was boundless!

“Alright, I’ll leave you here to slowly comprehend what I have said. I’ll head back to browsing through the books.”

Seeing that Bai Ruanqing had fallen into deep thoughts—she would stand up from time to time to test the theories of some of the moves to further her understanding—Zhang Xuan opened the doors of the silent chamber and walked out.

Just like before, he continued walking through the aisles to collect the books into the Library of Heaven’s Path.

Two hours later, he was finally done collecting all of the books.

Compile! Zhang Xuan willed.

All of the books relating to Pseudo Immortal realm immediately gathered together to form a new book.

Zhang Xuan anxiously flipped open the newly compiled book to take a look, and a moment later, relief could be clearly seen on his face.

Just like what he had guessed, the books in the core disciples’ library were enough to compile a complete Pseudo Immortal realm Heaven’s Path Divine Art. As long as he had sufficient Immortal Pills, he should be able to swiftly make a breakthrough.

There were also some True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals in the core disciples’ library too, but due to their lacking numbers, he was only halfway through compiling the perfected manual thus far.

I should be making my way back now... Zhang Xuan thought as he took a look at the time.

It had already been nearly six hours since he had arrived in the library. Stretching his back lazily, he headed back to the silent chamber and walked in.

As soon as he entered, a burst of sword qi flew right past him.

The movements of her slash appeared to be slow, but the trajectory of the movement seemingly formed a barrier that sealed the space ahead of her, keeping others at bay. At the same time, she released a burst of sword qi that carried the might of a serpent, severing everything in its path.

“Not too bad...” Zhang Xuan nodded in approval.

Bai Ruanqing had only practiced the technique for two hours so far, but her form and conceptualization were already 60% on point. That being said, it was still far from matching up to him.

“Senior Uncle!” Noticing Zhang Xuan’s arrival, Bai Ruanqing quickly halted her practice and rushed up to greet him.

The more she practiced that swordsmanship, the more astounded she was by its might. At this moment, she was filled with nothing but respect for the young man before her.

Her initial thoughts of marrying the other party had already vanished from her mind. She knew that she was unworthy of taking such an outstanding individual as her spouse.

“Un. I have already finished looking through the books, so I’m going to head back to cultivate now,” Zhang Xuan said. “I hope that you can keep my identity a secret from Bai Feng and your grandfather too. I don’t wish to get involved in too many things at the moment.”

“Yes, Senior Uncle!” Bai Ruanqing nodded obediently.

Obviously, she was only going to keep this secret to herself. Why would she even share it with anyone? If everyone were to bug her Senior Uncle Zhang to learn from him, the time that she would have learning under him would be reduced!

“That’s good, that’s good...” Zhang Xuan nodded before turning around to leave.

In any case, he had left a surge of Heaven’s Path zhenqi in Bai Ruanqing’s body, so he didn’t really fear her messing around behind his back either.

“Senior Uncle, please wait a moment. Grandpa Feng is waiting for you on your way back to your residence. He intends to test

your strength and swordsmanship!” Bai Ruanqing suddenly recalled a matter and hurriedly called out.

Test my strength and my swordsmanship?” Zhang Xuan was perplexed.

Was his identity already compromised?

But even if his identity was compromised, the ones who would make a move on him should be the inner elders instead of Bai Feng!

’Yes... Your recovery medicine has treated my grandfather’s injuries. As repayment, my grandfather hopes to take you in as his student. However, he fears that your capabilities might not be able to meet up to his expectations, so he instructed Grandpa Feng to test your strength!” Bai Ruanqing unhesitatingly gave her own kin away.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

Everything suddenly clicked together with puzzle pieces. That explained why this woman was so determined to make a move on him earlier, attempting to force him into addressing her as ‘Senior’ and heed her words. It turned out that she was afraid that she would be pushed down the hierarchy of seniority if he were to become her grandfather’s student...

This also explained why she addressed him as ‘Senior Uncle’ instead of ‘teacher’.

“What’s Bai Feng’s current cultivation realm?” Zhang Xuan asked.

With his superior swordsmanship, as long as he could dominate the flow of the battle right from the start, he would still stand a good chance at defeating Bai Ruanqing. However, it was clear that Bai Feng was stronger than Bai

Ruanqing, so he could be a little more troublesome to deal with.

“Just like my grandfather, Grandpa Feng is a High Immortal!” Bai Ruanqing replied.

“High Immortal?” Zhang Xuan’s lips twitched a little. “Are you certain that he would make a move?”

High Immortals were also known as Immortal Kings. Only the core elders of the sect would possess such a level of strength. Even though Zhang Xuan had made significant advancements in his swordsmanship, the overwhelming difference in their absolute strength would leave him no choice but to flee as far as he could against such an enemy.

He simply wouldn't stand a chance at all.

"Yes!" Bai Ruanqing replied. "It's a direct order from my grandfather. Grandpa Feng would not disregard his order." This set Zhang Xuan's mind thinking.

The current situation was yet another dilemma for him. If he were to win against Grandpa Feng, that would definitely discourage Elder Bai Ye from taking him in as his student. The downside to that plan was that it would expose his identity as I Am Low Profile. Given the current limitations of his cultivation, he knew that he didn't have the capability to seal Bai Feng's mouth.

On the other hand though, if he were to lose the battle, there was no guarantee that Elder Bai Ye wouldn't insist on taking him in as his student.

To be honest, after how far he had come, he was deeply reluctant to become the student of another.

Zhang Xuan closed his eyes for a moment before he turned to Bai Ruanqing and said, "I might need you to put on a show together with me."

"Sure!" Bai Ruanqing replied without any hesitation.

They quickly discussed the plans before Zhang Xuan walked out of the core disciples' library alone. He flitted forth swiftly, dashing from the Core Disciple Sector back to the Inner Disciple Sector.

Without an aerial beast to ferry one around, the trip would take roughly two hours.

As Zhang Xuan dashed ahead, he made a conscious effort to limit his speed to the level of an ordinary Dimension Shatterer realm consummation cultivator.

After traveling for roughly an hour, just as he was crossing a particularly remote region, Zhang Xuan suddenly felt a heavy might weighing down on him from the surroundings. Alarmed, he swiftly halted his footsteps and scanned his surroundings warily.

In the next moment, a young figure walked out from the woods and appeared before him.

He was no other than Bai Feng!

Having consumed the Transmogrification Pill, his current appearance was vastly different from before. Nevertheless, Zhang Xuan was still able to clearly see through the facade via his Eye of Insight.

Hula!

Without speaking a single word, Bai Feng drew his sword and lunged at Zhang Xuan. His cultivation had already been suppressed to the same level as Zhang Xuan, Dimension Shatterer realm consummation.

“W-what? Who are you? Why are you making a move on me? Don’t you know that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion prohibits anyone from making a move on its disciples?”

Caught off guard by Bai Feng’s sudden assault, Zhang Xuan’s face paled in horror. He swiftly retreated fearfully, but fear seemed to have gripped his legs, causing him to fall to the ground.

Hu!

Before he knew it, Bai Feng’s sword was already pressed against his neck.

Bai Feng wasn’t in a good mood at the moment.

It wasn’t easy for the Old Master to want to take in a student, but who could have thought that this fellow would actually be so weak!

He hadn’t even exerted a tenth of his full strength in his current cultivation realm yet, but the other party was already cornered by him... If such a person were to become the Old

Master's student, it would really sully the Old Master's reputation!

"Pick up your sword! If you can't withstand my strike, the only fate that awaits you today is death!" Bai Feng uttered coldly as he took a step back.

"Grandpa Feng, allow me to deal with him instead!"

In this instant, a masked lady dressed in a white robe descended from the sky.

Through zhenqi telepathy, Bai Feng knew that this masked lady was Bai Ruanqing. A slight frown formed on his face, but he eventually chose to back down.

Hula!

Bai Ruanqing tossed a sword over to Zhang Xuan's side before executing a series of relentless slashes against the latter.

The flustered Zhang Xuan hurriedly picked up the sword to parry Bai Ruanqing's movements, but his form and maneuvers were all around the place. It was clear that he had never really trained diligently in the Way of the Sword before.

It was hard to tell whether his skill was lacking or his strength was simply not up to par, but one particular clash caused the sword in his hand to fly off from his hands. It stabbed into the floor not too far away as it reverberated loudly with a metallic 'weng'.

Completely powerless after losing his weapon, Zhang Xuan's body stiffened as another sword was pressed against his neck yet again.

With a look of disappointment on her face, Bai Ruanqing retracted her sword before walking over toward Bai Feng. With a voice that expressed deep disapproval, she remarked, "... Too weak!"

1976 A Show

“I...” Zhang Xuan’s face reddened in embarrassment upon hearing those words.

He simply stood there with a confused look on his face, not knowing what he should do at all.

“Grandpa Feng, let’s go!” Bai Ruanqing said.

Bai Feng appeared to be a little conflicted at how things had gone, but eventually, he nodded slightly and left together with Bai Ruanqing.

“It seems like I have managed to fool him for the time being...”

Watching as the two figures departed into the distance, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He really had no intention of becoming a disciple of an elder or something! Well, if Elder Bai Ye wanted to become his student, he might still consider the matter a little.

Thus, he chose to put on the earlier show together with Bai Ruanqing. By feigning weakness and having Bai Ruanqing to report on the matter personally, it was highly likely that Elder Bai Ye would give up on the idea of taking him in as his student.

After settling the issue, Zhang Xuan quickly flitted all the way back to his residence.

When he walked through the residence doors, he noticed that Dan Xiaotian was still practicing his swordsmanship. The latter was making good progress with the Third Young Master’s Swordsmanship, having achieved a mastery of roughly 90% in terms of form and conceptualization.

With sufficient money on hand this around, Zhang Xuan bought several Basic Immortal Pills for him and provided him some guidance on his cultivation.

It didn't take too long for Dan Xiaotian to advance his cultivation to Ancient Sage 2-dan.

As for Cao Chengli, despite his lustful nature, he was much more hardworking than Sun Qiang when it came to cultivating.

As a bandit, he knew of the importance of strength. After receiving an ample amount of Basic Immortal Pills and high-tier cultivation techniques, his progress in his cultivation was extremely swift.

Over the past ten days since coming under Zhang Xuan, he had managed to advance his cultivation from Great Sage 2-dan to Great Sage 3-dan, and he was steadily progressing toward Great Sage 4-dan. At this rate, he should be able to push for a breakthrough to Ancient Sage within the next few days.

Zhang Xuan told them to keep up the good work with their cultivation before finally returning back to his room.

It's my turn to make a breakthrough now...

Using the second Ethereal Token he had, Zhang Xuan bought a hundred Standard Immortal Pills before swiftly browsing through the Pseudo Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art once more. Once he was ready, he calmed his mind and began his cultivation.

He first swallowed a few Standard Immortal Pills, which instantaneously dissolved into a relentless current of spiritual energy within his meridians. He swiftly circulated them around his body before refining them into his zhenqi.

His cultivation had already reached the zenith of Dimension Shatterer realm consummation previously. With the appropriate cultivation technique in hand right now, he would be able to overcome the bottlenecks in the way of his cultivation without any problems.

As he assimilated the spiritual energy from the Standard Immortal Pills, his zhenqi began to undergo a qualitative change.

Ten minutes later, when he finally built up zhenqi across the tipping point, his cultivation burst forward and tore through the final ceiling that was limiting it.

He had successfully reached Pseudo Immortal realm!

However, he didn't stop just there.

He consumed several more Standard Immortal Pills and continued cultivating.

Cultivating the Pseudo Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art caused his Standard Immortal Pills to deplete swiftly, but fortunately, he had enough money to sustain his cultivation this time around.

As soon as he sensed the momentum of his cultivation dying down, he would immediately consume a couple of Standard Immortal Pills to replenish his energy. Under the circulation of the Heaven's Path Divine Art, his cultivation rose steadily.

Lesser Pseudo Immortal!

Greater Pseudo Immortal!

Earthly Pseudo Immortal!

By the end of two hours, he had already successfully raised his cultivation by an entire realm, reaching Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm!

Nearly all hundred of the Standard Immortal Pills he had purchased earlier had been depleted in the midst of his cultivation. At the same time, he realized that Standard Immortal Pills were no longer effective enough to raise his cultivation anymore. If he wanted to advance his cultivation further, he would require something more potent.

Alacrity in thoughts, purity of soul, and invulnerability to flames... So this is the strength of a Pseudo Immortal! Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly in agitation.

His cultivation had only risen by another realm, but the increment in his strength was massive.

There was a qualitative difference between Dimension Shatterer realm and Pseudo Immortal realm. Be it his lifespan

or strength, they were completely different from before.

If what he was using before was Origin Energy, the energy that flowed through his meridians this very instant could only be described as Immortal Energy. This was the energy that only immortals were able to access.

It's really a huge stroke of luck that I was able to knock out Bai Ruanqing... Zhang Xuan thought in relief.

It was only after feeling the humongous strength in his body did he realize how tremendous the fundamental difference between him and Bai Ruanqing had been.

Had he not taken the initiative and strike out relentlessly back then, most likely, he would have been the one who would have lost the battle once Bai Ruanqing had regained her footing in the battle.

Putting aside True Immortals, even Pseudo Immortals were already at least ten times stronger than Dimension Shatterer realm cultivators.

At the same time, the massive growth in his cultivation also gave him a deeper insight into what the Gods' Sword Intent truly was. With the current might of his swordsmanship, he felt that he would be able to subdue even Heavenly True Immortals with ease now.

As for High Immortals, as he had never crossed blows with one before, he had no clear gauge of how powerful they actually were. Nevertheless, based on the records from books, it didn't seem likely that the current him would be a match for them.

It's also about time for Vicious and my clone to make a breakthrough too... Zhang Xuan thought.

He bought more Standard Immortal Pills before letting his clone and Vicious out to cultivate.

As for the Dongxu Gourd, it was still nowhere close to recovering its original body even after eating a hundred Standard Immortal Pills. As soon as Zhang Xuan let it out, it immediately began bawling for food.

Finding it too noisy, Zhang Xuan unhesitatingly stuffed it into his storage ring.

Just thinking about how he would have to deal with the annoying Dongxu Gourd left him with a huge headache. He must have sinned greatly in his previous life to deserve this!

And to make things worse, he still didn't know what it was capable of other than the fact that its bathwater could be used to heal injuries...

Maybe he could try letting a High Immortal split the Dongxu Gourd in the future. If it was able to survive even that, he could consider using it as a shield in the future...

While Zhang Xuan was still cultivating, Bai Ruanqing and Bai Feng had already returned back to Elder Bai Ye's residence.

"How is it?" Elder Bai Ye asked.

"The Young Mistress has tested the young man's skill personally, so I'll allow her to speak instead..." Bai Feng took a step back and said.

"Grandfather, Zhang Xuan's swordsmanship is truly horrid. He is incapable of even executing the most basic sword art.

I have suppressed my cultivation down to his level and tested him out with some of the most fundamental swordsmanships of our sect, but it's already more than enough to subdue him... He's unqualified to be your student!" Bai Ruanqing exclaimed.

As she said these words, she couldn't help but feel even deeper admiration for her 'Senior Uncle'.

Within the sect, there were countless who would bleed their heads dry just to become her grandfather's student, but her 'Senior Uncle' actually had no interest in it at all. He would go through so much trouble to put on an act just to turn it down... He sure was a humble person!

All cultivators should really learn from his example!

On the other hand, Elder Bai Ye frowned upon hearing his granddaughter's words.

“I have taken down a recording of the earlier battle. Do take a look!” Bai Ruanqing said as she passed a Record Crystal over.

Elder Bai Ye took the crystal and infused his zhenqi in. The earlier scenario surfaced on the crystal, showing how Bai Ruanqing had managed to easily subdue Zhang Xuan.

“Look! I’m not lying to you, right? His skill is really abhorrent. Grandfather, it would only undermine your authority if you take a person like him in as your student!” Bai Ruanqing exclaimed.

“Alright, I understand. You should take your leave for now. There are some private matters which I want to discuss with Ah Feng privately!” Elder Bai Ye replied with a wave of his hand.

Yes, grandfather!” Bai Ruanqing turned around and left the room.

Barely after she left the room, Elder Bai Ye turned to look at Bai Feng and asked, “What’s your view of the matter?”

“I’m confident of my disguise, but for some reason, I got a feeling that the other party anticipated my arrival. His eyes and gestures speak of fluster, but I can sense a hint of assurance from him. It’s like he isn’t worried that he would be killed at all...” Bai Feng revealed the doubts that had been in his heart.

He had always been a very discerning and meticulous person. Even though Zhang Xuan had put up a good act, he was still able to keenly notice that something was off.

“If he was really afraid, he would have tried to run away or desperately cry for help. He wouldn’t have reacted in the way he did...” Elder Bai Ye nodded in agreement.

He shared the same thoughts as Bai Feng too.

“Then, Old Master...” Bai Feng asked doubtfully.

“I have really spoiled that granddaughter of mine! She’s an intelligent and discerning child, but she often allows her emotions to overtake her rationality, resulting in that incredible reckless nature of hers. Usually, she would have probably gone to confront that young man straight, but this time around, she

waited patiently for you to appear before confronting that fellow. I find it hard to believe that this isn't an act between that young man and her..." Elder Bai Ye stroked his beard and he sighed bitterly.

"An act? Old Master, you mean that..." Bai Feng frowned upon hearing those words.

"That lass left the residence shortly after your departure, so I had someone follow her. My men reported that she had entered the core disciples' library and shared a private chamber together with Zhang Xuan. She ended up staying in the private chamber for nearly two hours straight..." Elder Bai Ye tossed a jade token over to Bai Feng as he spoke.

Bai Feng quickly caught the token, and after seeing the contents, his lips twitched in horror.

For a man and a woman to share a private chamber for such a long period of time... could there really be something between them?

"Old Master, are you suspecting that there might be some kind of unusual relationship between Zhang Xuan and the Young Mistress?" Bai Feng asked.

"I want you to discreetly follow her the next few days so as to find out what she's up to. Report anything that you find to me right away. Also, make sure to keep a lookout on Zhang Xuan as well... I would have never thought that an inner disciple would be capable of making that fearless granddaughter of mine obediently put on an act together with him. I sure would like to see what he's truly capable of!" Elder Bai Ye instructed.

To be able to become one of the Three Grand Elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Elder Bai Ye's ability to analyze situations was naturally superb as well.

He was afraid that her granddaughter would cause some kind of trouble after learning that he was intending to take Zhang Xuan as his student, so he had his men follow her... As a result, he caught wind of the happenings at the core disciples' library too.

The fact that they had been together with one another in the private chamber for quite some time, as well as his granddaughter's sudden appearance while Bai Feng was testing Zhang Xuan... It was very obvious that something was amiss here.

"Make sure not to follow her too closely. Otherwise, if she notices your presence, she would kick up a fuss with me once again. Also, I want you to investigate Zhang Xuan's background and identity. Somehow... I don't recall seeing his name amongst the inner disciples!" Elder Bai Ye said with a wave of his hand.

Yes, Old Master!" Bai Feng nodded before taking his leave.

Bai Ruanqing was completely oblivious to the fact that the act she had put up together with her 'Senior Uncle' had already been exposed. At this moment, she was busy practicing her swordsmanship in her room.

By the tenth move, a furrow was already gradually etching itself onto her forehead.

The swordsmanship imparted to her by her 'Senior Uncle' was truly profound. She was able to grasp the initial phases easily and improve swiftly, but as she progressed on, she realized that the swordsmanship was a lot more layered and veiled than what appeared on the exterior. There were far too many seemingly minor yet significant details that she was unable to make sense of, causing her to frequently bump into bottlenecks.

Let me consult him on this...

She continued cultivating for another hour, but it felt that she was really getting nowhere at all. Thus, she got onto her aerial beast and began making her way over to the Inner Disciple Sector.

Prior to their parting at the core disciples' library, she had asked the other party where he resided at. She was able to swiftly find her way, and it didn't take long for her to reach her destination.

She leaped down from her aerial beast and knocked on the doors of the residence.

Jiya!

A middle-aged man opened the door. Upon seeing Bai Ruanqing, his eyes immediately lit up as he asked in the most gentlemanly voice possible, “May I know you are...”

“I am here to find Seni-I mean Junior Zhang Xuan!” Bai Ruanqing said.

She knew that her Senior Uncle was unwilling to reveal his identity in public, so she dared not address him in a manner that would compromise his identity.

You are looking for our Young Master?” the middle-aged man asked in surprise.

Of course, this middle-aged man was no other than Cao Chengli. He thought that his fame as a skilled lover had brought this beautiful lady to his door, causing his heart thump in excitement for a bit. But it turned out that she was here for their Young Master...

He would have never thought that the dense-looking Young Master of his would actually have it in him after all...

There was a period of time which he thought that the eccentric Young Master of his belonged to a certain breed of humans whose special trait was ‘forever alone’, but who could have thought that the latter would actually get entangled with such a beautiful lady within less than a day after his arrival...

One must indeed not judge a person by his appearance... or his character!

“Our Young Master is inside. This way please...” Cao Chengli gestured Bai Ruanqing into the residence.

He was just about to take the lead to guide the guest in when he suddenly recalled something. With a slightly awkward shuffle, he switched to his right leg before stepping across the doorsill.

1977 Bai Ruanqing vs. Core Disciples 1

1977 Bai Ruanqing vs. Core Disciples (1)

After stepping across the doorsill himself, Cao Chengli turned to the young lady and said, "Pardon me, but please lead with your right leg when stepping across the doorsill."

Bai Ruanqing was confused.

"This is a rule set by our Young Master. I hope for your understanding," Cao Chengli said earnestly.

Bai Ruanqing was really bewildered by this ludicrous sounding rule. She could not tell if this middle-aged man was making fun of her or not. In the end, though, she did not go against this rule for fear of displeasing her Senior Uncle, so she made sure to step across the doorsill with her right foot.

Upon entering the courtyard, she saw a young man practicing his swordsmanship. The ground around him was drenched with sweat, indicating that he had been practicing for a very long time.

"This swordsmanship..." Bai Ruanqing looked at the young man's movements from afar for a moment, and her body could not help but stiffen.

Before she knew it, cold sweat was trickling down her back.

The young man before her should be around sixteen to seventeen years of age, and his cultivation was only at Ancient Sage 2-dan. He should have been nothing more than an ordinary inner disciple. Yet, his swordsmanship was wholesome and relentless. His movements were simple, but it was profoundly aligned with the surroundings around him.

She could feel the air of a swordmaster from him, as if he was someone who had immersed himself in the Way of the Sword for many decades.

In fact, perhaps it was just her seeing things, but she actually felt that his swordsmanship might be even more profound than that of Grandpa Feng's!

To think that a teenage lad would be able to match a veteran swordmaster like Bai Feng. This made Bai Ruanqing feel as if the swordsmanship that she had learned over the years was nothing more than child's play.

"He is... Dan Xiaotian?" Bai Ruanqing bit her lips.

"Yes, he is Young Master Xiaotian!" Cao Chengli replied with a nod.

"How long has it been since he has started learning swordsmanship from Junior Zhang?" Bai Ruanqing asked.

He must have been studying under Senior Uncle Zhang ever since he was born in order to comprehend such advanced swordsmanship!

"How long?" Cao Chengli began counting on his fingers before eventually lifting six fingers up. "It should be roughly this long!"

"Six years? It only took him six years to become so formidable?" Bai Ruanqing was astounded.

She had been learning swordsmanship ever since she was three, and it had been twenty years since then!

She had the privilege of being personally taught by her grandfather and Grandpa Feng, and she had never lacked precious cultivation resources. It was due to all of this that she had been able to come so far despite her young age. Yet, this young man had only been taught for six years, but it somehow felt like that he was already stronger than her!

This was really hard for her to swallow.

"Six years?" Cao Chengli was stunned. "You seem to misunderstand something. I meant six hours!"

Over the last few days of interaction, Cao Chengli had noticed that Zhang Xuan was a very busy person. Even though it was clear that Zhang Xuan did care a lot for Dan Xiaotian, he did not spend too much time guiding the latter on his cultivation.

More often than not, he would simply point out the flaws in Dan Xiaotian's cultivation before passing him a jade token for him to study by himself.

As a result of that, even though Dan Xiaotian had been Zhang Xuan's student for quite a few days, the actual time that the latter had spent guiding him was probably six hours at the very most!

"Hours?" Bai Ruanqing nearly fainted on the spot.

How could a person become so formidable after learning swordsmanship for six hours?

In that instant, she felt as if her mind had shut down. The information was simply too great for her to bear.

While Bai Ruanqing was shocked beyond words, Dan Xiaotian noticed the presence of the visitor and quickly stopped his sword practice. He quickly walked up to Bai Ruanqing and greeted her with a smile before explaining the matter. "Actually, the time that my teacher has spent teaching me is only two hours at most... As for six hours, I'm afraid that that I'm not worthy of my teacher spending so much time on me yet!"

The fact that Bai Ruanqing had come to this place in search of his teacher meant that she already knew about their relationship. Thus, there was nothing for him to hide.

"Two hours..." Bai Ruanqing was shocked beyond words. There was a long silence before she finally spoke once more. "Would it be fine if I challenge you to a swordsmanship duel?"

"Sure!" Dan Xiaotian nodded.

He had always been cultivating by himself, so he was more than happy to have someone spar with him so that he could check his own progress.

"Let's begin!" Bai Ruanqing quickly suppressed her cultivation to Ancient Sage 2-dan primary stage before drawing her sword.

Hu!

She kicked off the ground and lunged right toward Dan Xiaotian.

She had seen Dan Xiaotian's sword practice earlier, and she knew that his mastery of swordsmanship was superb. As such, she did not dare let her guard down. She decided to use her strongest move at the very start, allowing her to maneuver around at lightning speed.

Weng!

She quickly closed the gap between her and Dan Xiaotian, and just as she thought that she could clinch victory, Dan Xiaotian suddenly made a move. There was a momentary blur, and...

All of a sudden, there was a sword flying right toward her head!

All of Bai Ruanqing's danger senses sounded out in alarm. She hurriedly released the seal of her cultivation and regained her strength as a True Immortal. Under the protective layer of zhenqi around her, Dan Xiaotian's sword was jolted off.

If not for her speed, there was a good chance that the sword might have impaled her head!

That close brush with death left Bai Ruanqing gasping slightly for air.

She did not even manage to see how the young man threw out his sword and how it managed to come so close to her without her realizing!

In other words, if she had been facing another True Immortal, she would have been dead by now!

This was truly frightening!

Bai Ruanqing could not help but re-evaluate Dan Xiaotian with wary eyes once more. She thought that the sword art that he had been practicing earlier was already extremely powerful, but who could have known that he would have a stronger trump card than that?

Against opponents of the same cultivation realm, this move was truly a one shot one kill!

“I’m truly sorry! I have practiced this sword art for some time now, but I have never used it in a real battle before. Furthermore, I am still unable to control the strength of this technique freely yet, so...”

He had planned to halt the sword right before the opponent, but he had overestimated his own capabilities with the sword. As hard as he tried, he had been unable to stop it.

It was fortunate that the other party had reacted quickly and deflected his sword away with her protective zhenqi. Otherwise, if he had lodged a sword into a guest of his teacher, he would surely be berated for it!

You have only learned two hours of swordsmanship from him, but your swordsmanship is already far beyond mine...” Bai Ruanqing gulped in horror, but at the same time, she could not help but wonder, I also learned a horizontal slash from Senior Uncle... My skills are still not on par, and I still have a long way to go before grasping its essence, but I wonder how powerful it will be if I use it in a real battle...

She knew for certain that the horizontal slash was powerful, but knowing it theoretically was different from putting it into practice.

As soon as this notion came into her mind, her hands began itching to try the technique on someone.

She looked at the young man before her once more, but she eventually shook her head.

She did not want to risk having a sword plunged into her head. It was only due to her swift reflexes that she had managed to escape unscathed earlier. If her mind had wandered for a moment back then, she would have been a corpse by now!

“Are there any private chambers that I can use in this residence?” Bai Ruanqing asked.

“That room over there is empty, so you can use it as you deem fit. My teacher is currently cultivating, so please have a good rest in the room for the time being. I’ll call you as soon as he’s out,” Dan Xiaotian replied as he gestured at a nearby room.

As most inner disciples had servants to take care of their needs, the residences that they lived in were very spacious and had many rooms.

Bai Ruanqing thanked Dan Xiaotian before walking into the room. She took a seat on the bed before taking out an Ethereal Token.

This was the Ethereal Token to access the core disciples' Ethereal Hall!

Immersing her consciousness into the Ethereal Token, her surroundings swiftly faded into darkness.

When she came to once more, she was already standing in the midst of the Ethereal Hall.

Unlike the dueling ring of inner disciples, core disciples have the option of fighting in public duels and private duels, Bai Ruanqing thought. In the previous Core Disciple Tournament, I was only ranked seventeenth. Sixteenth place is Wang Hao, and so far, I haven't been able to defeat him yet. I guess this is a good opportunity to try my hand!

The reason Bai Ruanqing was well-known among the core disciples was mainly due to her grandfather, Elder Bai Ye. While she was considerably talented, the truth was that there were still many monsters among the core disciples who were stronger than her. In terms of fighting prowess, she would not be able to even make it into the top ten.

The top few core disciples even possessed strength that was above that of most elders!

Since she had not been able to defeat the sixteenth place Wang Hao thus far, he would be the perfect opponent to test out her new sword art on!

Thus, she walked up to the front receptionist and said, "I want to send a duel invitation to sixteenth place Wang Hao!"

Soon, the core disciple named Wang Hao walked over. Upon seeing her, his lips crept up. "What brings you here today? Did you learn some kind of new sword art that you think you'll be able to defeat me with? You can give it a go, but I doubt that

it'll make a difference. We had a duel half a month ago, and you clearly aren't a match for me..."

"I did learn a new move, and I wanted to find someone to test it on," Bai Ruanqing admitted frankly. "Regardless of the outcome, it'll be good training for you and me!"

She had no clear gauge of how powerful Senior Uncle Zhang's horizontal slash was, so honestly, she was not too sure whether she would be able to defeat Wang Hao or not.

"Sure, give it your best shot." Wang Hao chuckled. "Let's start!"

The two of them quickly found a private dueling ring and entered the room.

Every single one of the core disciples were spectacular existences within the sect. They were highly respected and had many fans around. As such, most of them preferred some privacy when it came to their duels.

After getting into positions, Wang Hao looked at Bai Ruanqing and said, "I'll be making my move!"

Hula!

The next instant, he drove his sword forth with incredible momentum.

It was true that Bai Ruanqing had not defeated him yet, but her skills were remarkable. It would be foolish to underestimate someone who had been personally trained by Third Elder Bai Ye. Not daring to get careless, he did not pull any punches at all.

"A frontal assault?" Bai Ruanqing could not help but chuckle a little.

The horizontal slash that she had just learned happened to be the best at dealing with such attacks. It was as if the other party was offering himself to her!

Without any hesitation, Bai Ruanqing executed the horizontal slash that she had just learned.

“Be careful. I haven’t really gotten the hang of this move of mine, but it’ll probably be quite powerful...” Bai Ruanqing remarked with a smile.

But before she could even finish her words, she felt the pressure coming at her suddenly dissipating.

Kacha!

A head rolled all the way to the corner of the room, and shortly after, Wang Hao’s body fell frontward to the ground.

“Ah?” Bai Ruanqing was stunned.

Putting aside the fact that she hadn’t mastered the horizontal slash, she had not even fully executed the technique yet... and before she knew, the enemy whom she had not been able to defeat was suddenly killed just like that.

The slain Wang Hao quickly returned with another Ethereal Token, and he asked Bai Ruanqing with an incredulous look on his face, “You... What happened?”

He was completely flabbergasted.

Bai Ruanqing had never been a match for him, but she actually managed to behead him just like that. This was really hard for him to accept!

“I’m not too sure either,” Bai Ruanqing replied in a daze.

She had executed the move just as Senior Uncle Zhang had taught her, and never in her wildest dreams did she expect it to be so powerful.

“I want a rematch! This time, I will go all out from the very start!” Wang Hao said adamantly as he drew his sword once more.

Huhuhu!

He immediately released a series of sword qi that lingered in the air, allowing him to tap into for both offense and defense at his will.

As the sixteenth place among the core disciples, his grasp of swordsmanship had reached an incredible level. Ordinary

sword practitioners would simply despair upon seeing his prowess.

On the other hand, Bai Ruanqing knew that Wang Hao was really serious this time around. If she used any other technique, it was unlikely that she would be able to achieve victory. Thus, she unhesitatingly executed the technique that Senior Uncle Zhang had imparted to her once more.

Padah!

Once again, before she could complete the technique, Wang Hao's head had already been lopped off. This time around, it rolled even further than it did before.

"This..." Bai Ruanqing was completely stunned.

Somehow, since she had grasped this move, it felt like the other party's neck had become incredibly fragile. Even a simple slash was enough to remove his head from his neck.

1978 Bai Ruanqing vs. Core Disciples 2

1978 Bai Ruanqing vs. Core Disciples (2)

Tang Yan was a highly esteemed figure even among the core disciples. He had ranked seventh in the previous Core Disciple Tournament. The swordsmanship that he practiced, the Immaculate Swordsmanship, was well known and feared throughout the world.

He had once pursued an infamous Heavenly True Immortal bandit into his den and destroyed all the sects and powers associated with him. Due to that incident, his name rung out loudly in the world.

He was fifty-one, but in terms of his outer appearance, he looked no different from someone in his early twenties. His zhenqi was condensed and wholesome, and it felt like he could whip up a devastating storm of sword qi with a wave of his hand.

Be it standing, fame, or strength, he lacked none of them.

At that moment, he was standing in the courtyard of his residence, drawing out beautiful strokes with his sword. It was an aesthetically pleasing sight, almost as if one was looking at a skilled painter.

Hu!

Tang Yan stopped his movements and retracted his sword.

Those strokes still floated beautifully in the air, reminiscent of drifting smoke.

Gua gua!

A wild bird unintentionally flew into the midst of the smoke.

Peng!

As if it had dashed right into the midst of a meat slicer, fresh blood splattered all around the area. In the blink of an eye, its entire body had already disintegrated into dust.

“Congratulations, Senior Tan! You have finally reached Major Accomplishment in the Immaculate Swordsmanship!” Applause sounded as a young man walked over.

He was ranked eighth among the core disciples, Guo Yi!

Even though he looked like he was in his twenties, the truth was that he was also in his fifties.

The lifespan of those who had reached Pseudo Immortal would exceed three hundred years. An advancement to the True Immortal realm would not increase one’s lifespan, but the further condensation of one’s energy and vitality would allow the cultivator to retain their strength and youth. As such, those in their fifties could still be considered young among True Immortal cultivators.

“After cultivating this technique diligently for thirty years’ I have finally accomplished something

should be able to get into the top five in the next Core Disciple Tournament!” Tang Yan nodded with a satisfied smile.

It was because he had failed to master this swordsmanship that he had been stuck in the seventh place during the previous tournament. However, now that he had reached Great Accomplishment, it should not be too difficult for him to get into the top five!

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had always been known for its fighting prowess, such that those who could get into the top five of the core disciples could already be considered to be within the top twenty of the younger generation!

“Those who manage to get into the top five of the core disciples will have a chance to become a core elder of the sect. Congratulations in advance, Senior Tang!” Guo Yi clasped his fist.

The core elders who managed the crucial affairs of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion mainly came from the top five experts of the core disciples.

For example, a hundred years ago, Elder Bai Ye had consistently ranked in the top three among the core disciples. The only one who was able to outdo him was Elder He Tian.

“Don’t worry, I won’t forget about you after I become a core elder!” Tang Yan chuckled a little before looking over. “It’s rare for you to visit me. Is there something up?”

“Well, the thing is...Senior Tang, you have always been interested in Bai Ruanqing, right?” Guo Yi asked.

“Yes, that’s right,” Tang Yan admitted frankly.

Bai Ruanqing might have a bad temper, but her background and looks were excellent. If he could marry her, it would be extremely useful to his future development. He might even become the successor of the sect. That would make him one of the top figures on the continent.

“She’s ranked seventeen among the core disciples, but for some reason, she suddenly challenged Wang Hao earlier today...”

“You mean the sixteenth rank Wang Hao?” Tang Yan asked. “That fellow can’t be said to be too powerful, but his Water Reminiscence Sword is still quite terrifying to deal with. His Sword Intent flows smoothly like a river, creating an impenetrable defense. Even I would require quite some effort to deal with it. I don’t think Bai Ruanqing will stand too much of a chance against him.”

“Wang Hao is indeed a difficult opponent to deal with, but I just received news that Bai Ruanqing just sliced off Wang Hao’s head twice. All in all, she took less than three moves!” Guo Yi exclaimed.

“In less than three moves, she killed Wang Hao twice?” Tang Yan was stunned.

He was acutely aware of Bai Ruanqing and Wang Hao’s capabilities, and it could be said that Wang Hao was firmly ahead of Bai Ruanqing even though they were only one rank away from one another. How could Wang Hao be killed by Bai Ruanqing in less than three moves, not to mention, twice?

When did that female dinosaur become so powerful?

“Bai Ruanqing didn’t stop after dealing with Wang Hao. She went on to challenge those above Wang Hao, and the news I have received is that she also used a single move to defeat rank fifteen Sun Jian, rank fourteen Yang Hu, and rank thirteen Du Chuan!” Guo Yi said.

“With a single move, she eliminated everyone from sixteenth to thirteenth? How is that possible?” Tang Yan could not believe what he was hearing. “Let’s head over to take a look!”

“Let’s go!” Guo Yi nodded.

The main reason he had gone over to look for Tang Yan was indeed due to this matter. They both took out their Ethereal Tokens and entered the Ethereal Hall.

Very soon, they arrived at the private duel sector. There, they saw quite a few people seated outside with gloomy looks on their faces.

“Hong Qing? Why are you here?”

One of them was a young man named Hong Qing, and he was ranked tenth of the core disciples. The fact that he could get within the hugely contested top ten positions of the core disciples showed that he was someone who possessed true capability.

There was an informal segregation of powers among the core disciples. The first rank formed the topmost echelon, the second and third place formed the second echelon, then the fourth to sixth place formed the third echelon, seventh to tenth place formed the fourth echelon, and the eleventh to twentieth place formed the fifth echelon.

Each of these echelons represented a huge power gap.

Ranked seventh, Tang Yan belonged to the fourth echelon, but the strength that he possessed was already enough to leave many despairing.

Did Bai Ruanqing not only defeat opponents up to the thirteenth rank? Why would Hong Qing be waiting outside with such a defeated expression on his face?

Considering that Hong Qing belonged to the same echelon as him, it should not be possible for Bai Ruanqing to defeat him!

“My head was just lopped off by Senior Bai in a single move,” Hong Qing said with a bitter smile.

Regardless of whether it was the inner disciples or the core disciples, it was a convention to address a person stronger than them than their senior. This was one of the unspoken rules within the sect.

“Are you saying that Bai Ruanqing challenged you and won?” Guo Yi’s eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

“She challenged the opponents above her one by one... I thought that it wouldn’t be anything much, but I ended up being decapitated with a single blow!”

“It’s the same for me!”

A few other young men and women in the area cried out as well. Glancing over, Tang Yan saw that ranks eleven and twelve were present as well. They had helpless looks on their faces.

Even they were unable to withstand Bai Ruanqing’s swordsmanship.

“In the Ethereal Hall, our cultivation is fixed at Lesser Pseudo Immortal. Yet, she was able to single-handedly subdue everyone from sixteenth place to tenth place without taking any rest at all. Does she still have the strength to carry on?” Tang Yan could hardly believe what was going on.

He could not believe that Bai Ruanqing’s swordsmanship had actually advanced to such a level.

Guo Yi suddenly thought of something, and his eyes widened in shock. “Wait a moment. The fact that all of you are actually out here... Does it mean that she is...”

“Indeed. She’s challenged the ninth rank Lu Yue. If she wins the battle, you’ll be...” Hong Qing nodded.

Before he could finish his words, the doors suddenly creaked open. A woman’s head peeked out. “Guo Yi, you are here. What good timing! Come on in!”

Guo Yi.

The casual tone sounded as if she was just inviting him in to have a talk...

You are challenging core disciples here, not interviewing candidates... Are you sure you don't need a rest?

"There's no need to go in. Why don't you have your duel here?" Tang Yan suddenly said.

"Indeed. Why don't we just have a public duel for everyone to see? There's just the few of us here anyway, so there's no need to hide anything!" someone echoed in agreement.

Since Bai Ruanqing was already going at them one by one, there was not much to hide anymore.

"A public duel?" Bai Ruanqing turned to Guo Yi and asked, "What do you think?"

"I'll follow Senior Tang's suggestion!" Guo Yi nodded.

"Fine by me!" Bai Ruanqing nodded as she walked out of the room.

"Let's head to the dueling ring outside then," Guo Yi said.

"There's no need to go through so much trouble!" Bai Ruanqing said as she raised her sword and walked right up to Guo Yi.

"Do you intend to make a move here?"

Guo Yi did not think that Bai Ruanqing was going to make a move there. Astonished, he quickly raised his sword to defend himself.

But before he knew it, he suddenly felt a stabbing pain in his throat.

Padah!

His head fell right to the ground. His eyes were widened in horror, as if he could not believe this to be true.

After dealing with Guo Yi, Bai Ruanqing turned right to Tang Yan and said, "Done. It's your turn next!"

Initially, she had been a little unfamiliar with the horizontal slash that Senior Uncle Zhang had imparted to her, but after slaying several core disciples one after another with ease, her confidence was soaring.

Her Senior Uncle had only taught her for several minutes, but her swordsmanship had already improved so much.

It was no wonder she was no match for Dan Xiaotian! She could hardly imagine how powerful she would be if she had been through two hours of guidance, too!

You want to challenge me here too?” Tang Yan’s face turned livid.

“This place will do... It’ll spare us quite a lot of trouble!” Bai Ruanqing replied.

“Aren’t you getting a little too arrogant?” Tang Yan replied menacingly.

It was true that he had not been too much stronger than Guo Yi in the past, but having cultivated the Immaculate Swordsmanship up to Major Accomplishment, he was already no longer the same person.

“I’m pushed for time. I still have to challenge the top five, so let’s not waste each other’s time, alright?” Bai Ruanqing said with a wave of her hand.

Tang Yan’s face reddened. “Since that’s the case, don’t expect me to go easy on you!”

With a flick of his wrist, he immediately released innumerable strokes of sword qi into the surroundings.

“Did he reach Major Accomplishment in the Immaculate Swordsmanship?”

“How formidable!”

“With such prowess, he should be able to get into the top five at the very least!”

“Indeed...”

Those present were skilled sword practitioners, so they quickly noticed the improvements in Tang Yan’s swordsmanship. Who

could have known that Tang Yan would have made such a huge breakthrough over the past few months?

“Formidable!” Bai Ruanqing remarked upon seeing the move as well.

The Immaculate Swordsmanship left traces of sword qi everywhere, such that those who barged into its area of attack would be sliced into pieces. Even though her horizontal slash was a powerful offensive move as well, it was not a good match for the Immaculate Swordsmanship.

“I never would have thought that you would have cultivated the Immaculate Swordsmanship to such a level. Give me a moment. I’ll head out for a while and come back to fight you!”

Then, her body dissipated into light fragments and vanished from sight.

“This...”

The crowd stared at one another in bewilderment, unable to comprehend what was going on.

Tang Yan was stunned, too.

He had thought that the other party would dash right over to sever his head, similar to what she had done with Guo Yi. If she had really done so, he would have counterattacked. In the end, it would boil down to who was faster.

He did not expect the other party to simply turn around and leave.

She even told him to wait for her before leaving.

“Senior Tang...” Guo Yi, who had just re-entered using another Ethereal Token, was stunned as well.

“Let’s wait here,” Tang Yan replied. “I don’t believe that she’ll be able to win just by having us wait here for some time.”

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Bai Ruanqing shook her head as her consciousness returned to the real world. She sat on the bed with a conflicted expression on her face for a moment before pushing the door open and walking out.

In the courtyard, Dan Xiaotian was still practicing his swordsmanship.

Ten meters away, Cao Chengli's legs were trembling with a walnut on his head.

Sou!

A sword flew forth, but it missed the walnut by a fraction and ended up grazing Cao Chengli's head instead. Fresh blood spurted out from the wound.

"I think I'm injured," Cao Chengli said as he touched his head.

"You're fine, it's no big deal. Who doesn't get injured?" Dan Xiaotian replied calmly. "Keep the walnut steady on your head."

"But I'm really injured..." Cao Chengli cried in despair.

Before he could finish his words, yet another sword flew past and grazed some other part of his head.

Seeing fresh blood trickling to the ground, Cao Chengli trembled as he bawled, "Argh, I'm going to die at this rate!"

"Don't worry, I controlled my sword very carefully that time. I only scraped the skin without hurting your skull," Dan Xiaotian said leisurely as he walked forth and retrieved his swords.

Just as Dan Xiaotian had said, Cao Chengli's wounds were indeed superficial, so there was no way that he would die from them.

He had been practicing the control of his sword toss after receiving his teacher's guidance, and he was proud to say that his training had been going well. Otherwise, he would not have dared use Cao Chengli's head to practice.

Bai Ruanqing could not help but shudder upon seeing the incredibly dangerous sight before her. Taking a deep breath, she walked over and asked embarrassedly, "Junior Dan, the truth is, I started learning under Senior Uncle Zhang recently. Is it fine for you to impart your sword toss technique to me?"

Dan Xiaotian was taken aback for a moment before nodding. "Is that so? Well, if my teacher is already teaching you, I guess it should be fine!"

While the time that he had spent with his teacher was limited, he knew that his teacher was an extremely magnanimous person. He cared not about fame and glory, choosing to name this Third Young Master's Swordsmanship after him. On top of that, he did not hesitate to impart the technique to Cao Chengli and Elder Yi, too.

Considering that his teacher was already teaching Bai Ruanqing, it was likely that his teacher would not have any qualms with him imparting the technique to her.

"It would be difficult for you to master the Third Young Master's Swordsmanship within a short period of time, but you can focus on the form and the zhenqi circulation pathway first. Once you grasp that, you can slowly study the various transformations and countermeasures," Dan Xiaotian said.

The Third Young Master's Swordsmanship was not too difficult to execute, which was also the reason he had been able to learn it despite being only at Great Sage 3-dan back then.

Under Dan Xiaotian's guidance, Bai Ruanqing grasped the fundamentals within three minutes.

Sou!

Without any hesitation, she tossed the sword in her hand, and the next moment, it appeared on the wall beside Cao Chengli.

"Ah..." Cao Chengli slumped to the floor out of sheer fear.

He nearly lost his wits from that unexpected attack!

If a sword carrying such speed and strength struck his head, he would really die on the spot!

Seeing Bai Ruanqing's execution, Dan Xiaotian began to go through some of the more important concepts.

"The key of the Third Young Master's Swordsmanship lies in the absoluteness of the attack, not the speed. Only when you are absolutely sure that you will be able to strike your opponent should you toss your sword. Of course, that means that you'll have to predict your opponent's next move and uncover the flaws in their maneuver."

The crux behind the Third Young Master's Swordsmanship was not its strength nor its speed. Rather, it was because it exploited the flaws in the enemy's movements.

That was where the crux of the sword art lay. The act of tossing the sword was just the most superficial layer of the technique.

"How long did it take you to grasp the technique?" Bai Ruanqing asked with a frown.

There were still a bunch of people waiting for her in the Ethereal Hall. It would not be appropriate for her to keep them waiting too long.

"I took an hour, but it's because it was my teacher who imparted the technique to me. My comprehension of the technique is still not wholesome, so if I do it for you, it will likely take two days at the minimum..." Dan Xiaotian scratched his head awkwardly.

While he had already practiced this move for ten days and was starting to see some success, he knew that he was still grossly lacking compared to his teacher.

In form, they might appear similar to one another, but when it came to the crux of the technique, they were on completely different levels from one another.

His teacher's lecture was superb in the sense that it used simple logic to construct an even larger system of knowledge,

breaking down something that was frighteningly large into digestible bits of information. He did not think that he had the capacity in him to do something like that.

“It’s fine, I’ll focus on learning it later. For now, I’ll just have to give it a try...” Bai Ruanqing pondered for a moment before shaking her head.

Following which, she returned to the room.

She had never been a patient person, or else she would not have come to be known as a ‘female dinosaur’ either. There was no way someone as hot-tempered as her would be able to put aside an ongoing duel for two days in order to learn a technique.

Hu!

Returning to the location of the duel, she saw that Tang Yan and the others were indeed waiting for her.

“I’m back. Let’s resume our duel,” Bai Ruanqing said as she drew her sword and got into position.

Seeing that Bai Ruanqing had only taken five minutes to come back, a hint of doubt surfaced on Tang Yan’s face.

Nevertheless, he still nodded and executed the Immaculate Swordsmanship once more.

Strokes of sword qi swiftly filled the sky in the form of fleeting smoke.

“Forget it, I have no choice but to give it a try...”

Bai Ruanqing was actually familiar with the flaws of the Immaculate Swordsmanship. She had never practiced the sword art before, but due to her grandfather being the Third Elder of the sect, she had access to many of the top-tier swordsmanship manuals.

The problem was that she had no way of exploiting the flaws.

It was similar to how, even if you knew that it was possible to kill a certain man who wore red underwear on the outside with a certain rock, it did not necessarily mean that you would be able to put it into action.

Most of Bai Ruanqing's swordsmanship was intended for close-quarter combat, which would require her to bypass the layer of drifting smoke created by sword qi. However, if she even approached, she would surely be torn into pieces by its sheer sharpness.

However, it was different now that she had a sword toss technique in her arsenal.

Without any hesitation, she flicked her wrist. Hu!

Her sword shot forth with incredible speed.

"What? She tossed her sword?" Taken aback, Tang Yan immediately raised his blade to deflect Bai Ruanqing's attack, only to feel a sharp pain in his head the next instant.

Sou!

With a sword lodged in his head, Tang Yan staggered a little before falling to the ground.

K.O.!

"The battle has already ended?"

"Even Tang Yan was killed in a single move?"

"My gosh, did you see the speed of the earlier sword? I was truly entranced... Does the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion have such a sword art?"

"I don't think I have heard of it before. In fact, it's not just this move. I have never seen the move that Bai Ruanqing used to kill us before either..."

The surroundings were plunged into silence.

"It worked?"

While the crowd was stunned speechless, Bai Ruanqing was taken aback by what she had just done.

She had only learned this technique a couple of minutes ago, and given how rushed it had been, she had been thinking of just using this technique to scare the other party into gathering the lingering sword qi around him in order to defend himself. Yet, the other party had died just like that.

That was way too formidable!

“Next!”

With eyes glowing with excitement, Bai Ruanqing’s confidence was boosted yet another notch as she issued her challenge to the sixth place

In Elder Bai Ye’s residence...

“How’s it going?” Elder Bai Ye asked.

“I followed the Young Mistress and found that she has entered the residence of an inner disciple. However, this inner disciple isn’t Zhang Xuan but... Dan Xiaotian!”

Passing a jade token over, Bai Feng said, “Here are his personal details!”

“Dan Xiaotian?” Elder Bai Ye quickly browsed through the content as he frowned in bewilderment. “I know of this young man. He was brought into the sect by Elder Lu Yun. A subordinate has been reporting the happenings in the Elder Council to me, and I’ve read through the minutes of the council too. Even though he’s only at Ancient Sage 1-dan, he was able to manifest his Sword Intent to 499 meters, just a step away from reaching Sword God!”

“Yes, that’s him... Based on my investigation, he brought a friend with him to the sect, and this friend is none other than Zhang Xuan. However, the cultivation of this ‘Zhang Xuan’ is at Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage, which doesn’t tally,” Bai Feng said as he passed another set of information over.

With Elder Bai Ye’s influence, it was a walk in the park for him to investigate a person’s background.

Even though it had not been long since Zhang Xuan had entered the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion behind Dan Xiaotian, his information was also logged in their records.

“That should be him,” Elder Bai Ye remarked after looking through the records.

He had no idea why there was a disparity between the cultivation recorded and Zhang Xuan’s real cultivation, but the

other details tallied with what he knew.

“Most likely, Ruanqing has gone to Dan Xiaotian’s residence in order to look for Zhang Xuan. I want you to continue investigating the matter. Despite not being an inner disciple, this Zhang Xuan impersonated one. I fear that he might have malicious intentions,” Elder Bai Ye said.

Yes, Old Master,” Bai Feng replied.

Rising to his feet, he was just about to leave the room when another old man abruptly barged in. “Elder Bai Ye, we are extremely delighted that you have healed from your wounds... but you really have to keep your granddaughter in check!”

“My granddaughter? What’s wrong?” Elder Bai Ye was taken aback.

“Stop feigning ignorance! After she entered the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall, she challenged everyone from the sixteenth rank onward and defeated everyone in a single blow. Right now, she has already reached the top five!” the elder said with a wave of his hand.

“She has reached the top five?” Elder Bai Ye and Bai Feng were stunned.

They were well aware of Bai Ruanqing’s strength, and to be honest, even reaching seventeenth place was no easy feat for her. Yet, she had actually gotten into the top five?

How was that possible?

The old man tossed a Recording Crystal over and said, “This is the recording of her duel... Take a look at it yourself!” Elder Bai Ye quickly opened the recording and viewed its contents.

Within the recording, he saw Bai Ruanqing killing the core disciples with just a slash each, causing each of them to suffer a mental breakdown.

All in all, his granddaughter had only used two moves in all the duels, a horizontal slash and a sword toss. Regardless of which one it was, it was bound to end in a sure kill as soon as she made a move.

This went to show just how powerful those two moves were... but who in the world did she learn them from?

“This... This is his technique!” Bai Feng narrowed his eyes in shock.

“Whose?” Elder Bai Ye asked.

Bai Feng quickly switched to a telepathic mode of communication before carrying on. “This is the technique that was executed by I Am Low Profile. I studied it and even interpreted it to her... I never thought that she would actually use it even more proficiently than me. It feels as if... as if...”

“As if what?”

“As if she has personally been taught by I Am Low Profile!” Bai Feng exclaimed.

The matter concerning I Am Low Profile had already echoed throughout the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, such that there was no one who did not know of the matter. Even though Elder Bai Ye was injured, he had already heard about how his granddaughter had been beheaded twice and his loyal subordinate had been decapitated once.

I Am Low Profile was a person who was very likely to have comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. As one of the Three Grand Elders, he could not possibly not keep a lookout on it!

Yet, at that very moment, he was being told that the swordsmanship executed by his granddaughter originated from that man.

“You are saying that there’s a good chance that I Am Low Profile has personally taught Ruanqing, and that’s why she dared challenge the other core disciples?” Elder Bai Ye swiftly came to a realization.

Indeed, there did not seem to be any other logical explanation.

“Yes, Old Master!” Bai Feng nodded.

“The entire sect has been looking for I Am Low Profile, but he actually managed to impart his swordsmanship to Ruanqing and challenged the core disciples through her. Interesting. Truly interesting!” Elder Bai Ye said with a smile.

“Say, who do you think that fellow might be?”

“I’m not too sure either…” Bai Feng shook his head, but halfway through his words, he suddenly widened his eyes in realization. With quivering lips, he asked, “It can’t be that… Old Master, are you thinking of Zhang Xuan?”

Elder Bai Ye nodded. “Other than him, who else could it be?”

1980 Zhang Xuan Is Out of Seclusion

“This...”

Bai Feng was rendered speechless after hearing the Old Master’s confirmation.

If they put it like that, everything made perfect sense!

The Young Mistress had left with the intention to challenge Zhang Xuan, but somehow, she had ended up willingly putting on an act with Zhang Xuan. After she returned, she had somehow managed to learn I Am Low Profile’s swordsmanship, and using his moves, she dominated all the core disciples.

Thinking back, it was indeed suspicious how Zhang Xuan had medicine that was capable of treating the Old Master.

Furthermore, it had just been a day since he entered the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, yet he had somehow managed to comprehend the Gods’ Sword Intent and challenge all of the inner disciples.

Thinking more into it, all the clues indeed pointed toward Zhang Xuan. They could not deny it even if they wanted to!

“Let’s not rush to conclusions. We still need to verify whether it’s truly him or not,” Elder Bai Ye said. “I’ll test him out myself!”

“Yes, Old Master!” Bai Feng replied.

As the two of them had been communicating via zhenqi telepathy all this while, the old man before them was unaware of the exchange that had just gone on between them.

“Do you not intend to interfere in this issue?” Seeing how they were ignoring him, the old man was so angry that he could have exploded on the spot.

“Of course not. We’ll head over there to take a look now.”

Elder Bai Ye instructed Bai Feng to fetch two Ethereal Tokens of the core disciples, and immersing his consciousness into it, he swiftly entered the Ethereal Hall together with Bai Feng.

Upon entering, they swiftly disguised themselves so that outsiders would not be able to tell.

At that very moment, the dueling location had already switched from the private rooms to the public ring.

Many core disciples had received the news about Bai Ruanqing's consecutive successful challenges, so more and more of them were gathering around the dueling ring. At this moment, there were already dozens of people. Their names were a little unfamiliar, presumably because they had used their spare Ethereal Tokens so that no one was able to tell who was who.

In the dueling ring, Bai Ruanqing was currently exchanging blows with fifth ranked Mo Xiangyun.

Just as her name suggested, Mo Xiangyun was a female disciple. But unlike Bai Ruanqing, she had a massive physique that towered over most men. Furthermore, she made no attempt to tidy herself up, resulting in her appearance being frequently unkempt.

If one did not hear her name, one might just mistake her for a male.

This was not limited to her appearance but extended to her swordsmanship. In contrast to the usual elegant and delicate swordsmanship that most female sword practitioners opted for, her swordsmanship was extremely brutish, almost reminiscent of the hack of an axe.

“Let's begin!”

As soon as they got into position, Mo Xiangyun could not be bothered to waste any time on words. Without any hesitation, she dashed forward like a tank while swinging her sword forcefully.

Her sword was different from that of most sword practitioners. It was freakishly huge, standing at seven chi[1] long. Sonic

booms echoed along with its movements, leaving one with no doubt that it would smash everything in its path.

Bai Ruanqing knew better than to face Mo Xiangyun in a direct encounter. She skillfully deflected Mo Xiangyun's first attack with a horizontal slash before decisively flicking her sword outward.

She was basically betting everything on the sword toss.

It was one of the two strongest moves that she had. She knew that her other sword arts would not work against the top five of the core disciples. If anything, it was likely that the other party would exploit the openings in that swordsmanship to corner her instead. As a result, she knew that she had no choice but to use her trump cards right from the start.

"Heh, that move is useless against me!" Mo Xiangyun said as she swiftly swept her sword upward.

Dang lang!

The incoming sword was deflected away.

Astonished, Bai Ruanqing quickly backed off.

As expected of an expert from the top five! Each of them had their own trump cards. She could not hope to defeat them just by learning the bare basics of Senior Uncle Zhang's swordsmanship.

Not to mention, the other party had watched her previous battles and knew that she was only capable of those two moves. Naturally, it was much easier for the other party to take precautions!

"If you dare, why don't you wait here a moment... I'll come right back to fight you in a moment's time!" Seeing that it was impossible for her to defeat Mo Xiangyun with just two moves, Bai Ruanqing decided to make a strategic retreat.

"Bring it on! I'll be here whenever you wish to pick a fight!" Mo Xiangyun roared while laughing.

She had heard of what had happened previously, and she knew that Bai Ruanqing was not just joking around. She was curious

to see what Bai Ruanqing would be able to do once more within a few minutes.

Bai Ruanqing clasped her fist toward Mo Xiangyun before dissipating into light fragments. The next moment, she was already back at Zhang Xuan's residence.

"Junior Xiaotian, teach me another two moves," Bai Ruanqing shouted as soon as she rushed out of her room, but the next moment, she saw a figure who caused her face to immediately crumble from awkwardness. "Senior Uncle Zhang!"

That figure was none other than Zhang Xuan!

Having advanced his cultivation to Heavenly Pseudo Immortal, he had finally concluded his momentary seclusion! "What's going on here?" Zhang Xuan asked with a frown.

Why was this woman in his residence? Not to mention, she was even asking Dan Xiaotian to impart swordsmanship to her?

"Senior Uncle Zhang, I'm using your swordsmanship to challenge others in the core disciples' Ethereal Hall..." With a crimson tinge on her cheeks, Bai Ruanqing quickly filled Zhang Xuan in on the details.

After hearing the full story, the first question that Zhang Xuan asked was as followed.

"Did you place a bet on the battle?"

"Ah? I didn't..." Bai Ruanqing was surprised by that abrupt question, but she quickly shook her head.

I am using the swordsmanship you taught me to fight with others... Why are you asking me if I placed a bet on the battle?

She found that she was completely unable to keep up with Zhang Xuan's train of thought.

"If there's nothing on stake, what's there to fight over?" Zhang Xuan's face looked as if he could not have been more disappointed in Bai Ruanqing's stupidity.

He had been thinking of finding an opportunity to sneak into the core disciples' Ethereal Hall to earn another killing. After all, he was not so naive as to think that the Sword Pavilion Coins that he had earned would be enough for him to reach High Immortal.

Who could have known that this woman would do something so futile as to fight without earning anything in return? Are you running a charity? Do you have too much time on hands so squander around on meaningless pursuits?

“...”Seeing the look of disappointment on Zhang Xuan's face, Bai Ruanqing suddenly found herself utterly speechless.

All along, she had thought that I Am Low Profile was a low-profile expert who thought nothing of fame and glory... but it turned out that he was simply too absorbed in making money to care about anything else!

The reason I'm challenging them is to prove my own swordsmanship. Yet, somehow, you make it seem as if I'm foolishly missing out on an ideal opportunity to rob them of their money.

Would I, the granddaughter of one of the Three Grand Elders, need to rob others of their money?

Oblivious to the fact that his transcendental image was crumbling at the moment, Zhang Xuan continued asking, “Do you have any core disciple Ethereal Tokens left? Give me one, I'll head in to challenge them. The core disciples should be rather wealthy, right?”

He felt that he should clarify some matters first so that he would not be too disappointed by the results later.

Y-yes, I guess so...” Bai Ruanqing could not help but clasp her face.

That being said, most of the core disciples in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion were indeed rather wealthy. Given that even the weakest of them was at the Pseudo Immortal realm, there was no way the wealth of inner disciples could begin to compare to theirs!

“Good. Where’s my Ethereal Token?” Zhang Xuan stretched out his hand.

“Even the weakest core disciple is a Lesser Pseudo Immortal... In other words, there’s a strict limitation that only those who have reached the Pseudo Immortal realm are able to access the Ethereal Hall. This is to ensure that inner disciples aren’t able to sneak in by any chance,” Bai Ruanqing said hesitantly.

When she fought against Zhang Xuan four hours ago, the latter had only been at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation. It was clear that his cultivation was still insufficient to enter the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall!

“That won’t be a problem at all. I have already achieved a breakthrough,” Zhang Xuan said as he allowed a hint of his aura to flow out.

“Heavenly Pseudo Immortal?” Bai Ruanqing nearly fainted on the spot.

She was extremely certain that the other party had only been at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation when she fought him earlier! Yet, in just four short hours, he had actually managed to advance an entire cultivation realm... What the holy cow!

Even a pill junkie would not be able to advance his cultivation that fast!

“Amazing!” Cao Chengli muttered as his eyes glowed in excitement.

Dan Xiaotian also clenched his fists tightly.

They knew that Zhang Xuan was extremely powerful, but they did not think that he would actually be that formidable!

“Given Young Master’s incredible strength and superior swordsmanship, he would definitely be able to defeat that I Am Low Profile fool easily!” Cao Chengli exclaimed in agitation.

Over the last few hours, he had kept hearing others talk about how powerful I Am Low Profile was, but no matter how

strong I Am Low Profile was, could he be any more powerful than the young master?

Look at how our young master advanced from Dimension Shatterer realm consummation to Heavenly Pseudo Immortal within a day. Is there anyone in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who could match this accomplishment?

Pah!

But barely after Cao Chengli said those words, he suddenly felt yet another painful smack on the back of his head. He indignantly turned his head around, only to see the livid face of the young master looking back at him.

“I saw you stepping into the residence with your right foot earlier. You broke my rules, so you deserve to be punished!”

“But you said that I can’t step in with my left leg too! How am I supposed to get into the residence?” Cao Chengli nearly burst into tears from sheer indignation.

It was like there was no correct answer at all!

“Let’s go!”

Paying no heed to that thick-skulled, lustful bandit, Zhang Xuan walked into a room together with Bai Ruanqing. With a flick of his finger, he infused a droplet of his blood into the jade token. His consciousness faded from reality, and the next moment, he was standing in the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall.

I caused a huge fuss previously with the nickname ‘I Am Low Profile’, so the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion will surely be keeping a close lookout for that name. Thus, I should avoid using it again.

Zhang Xuan fell into deep thought.

Given that inner elders were on the lookout for him, he could not use that name again. Thus, he had to find a new, fitting nickname for himself.

It sure is difficult to find a good nickname. Since I can’t use low profile, I’ll just have to find other strengths of mine instead... Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before he finally nodded affirmatively. I guess I should just call myself I

Am Very Handsome... It might not be as low profile, but it's honest at the very least!

He was fairly satisfied with this new name that he had put so much thought into.

Of course, nothing would beat I Am Low Profile in his mind. That was the name that perfectly embodied his ideals and dreams.

Nevertheless, I Am Very Handsome was still able to capture his disposition to some degree, so it was acceptable to him.

On the other hand, seeing the name that her Senior Uncle had come up for himself, Bai Ruanqing clasped her face for the umpteenth time that day.

Bro... can you come up with something that sounds a little more pleasant and humbler?

It feels almost like some sort of humiliation play walking beside someone with such a nickname...

With an awkward and conflicted look on her face, Bai Ruanqing walked toward the dueling ring together with I Am Very Handsome.

While walking over, Bai Ruanqing sent a telepathic message to Zhang Xuan. "I am going to fight with Mo Xiangyun right now, but I'm no match for her. What should I do?"

She had come back without learning anything at all, so there was no way there would be any difference in the outcome of the match.

"Simple. What you have to do right now is make a bet with her where the loser must give all of their Sword Pavilion Coins to the winner. After that, I'll give you some guidance during the duel so that you can easily achieve victory!" Zhang Xuan replied telepathically.

"During the duel?" Bai Ruanqing's lips twitched in disbelief.

The situation in a battle was everchanging, such that every decision had to be made instantaneously. Would it not be way too late to give her guidance only during the duel?

Even an expert of her grandfather's caliber would not dare do something like that. How could her Senior Uncle be so sure that he would be able to do it?

If it was just an ordinary battle, she would have had no qualms about it. After all, she had been killed plenty of times in the dueling ring. However, it would be completely different with that bet in place.

She had no desire to go bankrupt!

"Indeed!" Zhang Xuan nodded. "Go on, you won't lose!"

"Alright then!" Bai Ruanqing was not too sure if it was the right decision to heed Zhang Xuan's words, but eventually, she decided to trust him.

With a heavy heart, she marched back up to the dueling ring.

"Since you're back, let's resume our duel!" Mo Xiangyun replied as she raised her sword with a resounding screech.

"Wait a moment!" Even without turning her head over, Bai Ruanqing could feel the piercing glare that Zhang Xuan was shooting at her. It almost felt like he would skin her alive if she failed to propose the bet. Thus, she pursed her lips tightly for a moment before saying, "Since we're going to have a duel, I think it would be good if we spice things up with a bet!"

"A bet?" Mo Xiangyun frowned.

"Indeed. If I win, you must give all your Sword Pavilion Coins to me! On the other hand, if I lose, I'll give you all my Sword Pavilion Coins!"

As Bai Ruanqing said those words, her face turned as red as it could get.

She dared not go against her Senior Uncle's words, but still... it just felt so shameful saying those words aloud! "You want me to bet all of my money?" Mo Xiangyun widened her eyes. "Are you trying to rob me?"

"Y-yeah!" Bai Ruanqing thickened her skin. "That's exactly it!"

The old man earlier had come into the Ethereal Hall with Elder Bai Ye and Bai Feng. At this very instant, he could not help but look at Elder Bai Ye in utter shock.

“Your granddaughter... has she gone mad from being too poor?”

“Erk...” Elder Bai Ye was stunned, too.

To gamble on a duel in front of so many people... Was this really the obedient and filial granddaughter he knew?

[1] 2.33 meters

1981 Liu Yulian

If there was a volcano right there, Bai Feng would have leaped into it without the slightest hesitation.

The Old Master is one of the Three Grand Elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. With his influence, even those of the top echelons would not dare disrespect him. Did he limit your pocket money, or did he starve you of food?

To think that you would resort to gambling...

Not to mention, you even proposed such a thievery-like conditions to the bet...

"She couldn't beat Mo Xiangyun earlier. It hasn't even been two minutes since she left, so I doubt that there will be any difference in the outcome!"

"Despite knowing that it's a certain loss, Bai Ruanqing still made such a bet. She can't possibly have gone mad, can she?"

"Probably not. She might be intentionally trying to humiliate Senior Mo so as to make the latter lose her temper..."

"That could very well be the case. After all, one's mental state is extremely important in a battle. However, there's no way that someone of Senior Mo's caliber could be emotionally affected that easily. Such a bet is completely meaningless!"

The rest of the crowd looked at one another as they tried to figure out Bai Ruanqing's true intention.

Which of the top five core disciples had not struggled through countless battles to reach the top? If they lost their rationality just because of such a provocation, they would have lost long ago. They would not have been able to hold onto their position so securely and become figures highly respected within the sect.

Just as everyone else thought, not only did Mo Xiangyun not lose her temper, she even looked at Bai Ruanqing playfully.

“Very well, the bet sounds wonderful to me. Let’s see who will take whose money, shall we?”

“Ah, sure...” Bai Ruanqing’s face was so red that she could have died from embarrassment.

While she was violent and reckless at times, her straightforward temperament made it hard for her to do something as embarrassing as this.

This should have been a sacred swordsmanship duel to compete for the top spot, but as soon as Senior Uncle Zhang came... Somehow, something just feels really off right now!

It feels like a cheap underground duel!

It was fortunate that she was fighting in the Ethereal Hall, and her grandfather was unaware of her actions. Otherwise, she would surely be beaten to death!

What was done was done. It was already too late to take back her words, so she could only push on.

“Let’s carry on with our duel!” Mo Xiangyun roared as she dashed forward once more.

It was the same move as earlier, and it carried the same tremendous might.

Gritting her teeth tightly, Bai Ruanqing was just about to execute the horizontal slash to deflect the attack, as she had done earlier, when she heard a voice in her head.

“Toss your sword!”

The one speaking was none other than Senior Uncle Zhang!

“This...” Bai Ruanqing’s eyebrows shot up in bewilderment.

Mo Xiangyun’s sword was rushing over with thunderous roars from the frightening momentum of its movements. It was about to land on her head. If she chose to toss her sword instead of deflecting the attack... should the sword fail to land on target, she would be doomed!

After all, once the sword left her hand, she would be completely defenseless.

“Hurry up!” Senior Uncle Zhang’s voice urged her impatiently in the midst of her dilemma.

“Forget it!”

Recalling the various miracles that the other party had pulled off in the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall, managing to slay even Grandpa Feng in a single blow, Bai Ruanqing gritted her teeth furiously as she tossed out the sword without paying any heed to the swiftly incoming strike.

Hu!

The sword shot right out of her hand.

“What?”

It was completely out of Mo Xiangyun’s expectations that Bai Ruanqing would not try to protect herself at all. Just as she thought that she would be able to smash Bai Ruanqing into a flattened pancake, a sharp pain suddenly assaulted her head. Before she knew it, a sword had already plunged right into her forehead.

Sou!

Her sword was just a finger’s length away from Bai Ruanqing when her body, together with her sword, suddenly dissipated into light fragments.

She was off by just that little bit!

“What a close shave!” Bai Ruanqing’s heart was beating so wildly that she could hardly tell if it was out of fear or exhilaration.

She had thought that she was a goner, but who could have known that her Senior Uncle’s calculations would be so spot-on!

It was the same two moves, but she had been unable to win earlier. Under Senior Uncle Zhang’s guidance, everything had happened so smoothly that she could hardly believe what had just happened.

Even with the best swordsmanship, if one was unable to grasp the flow of the battle, one would still be unable to seal the

battle with it!

Her Senior Uncle Zhang had already taught her a valuable lesson in swordsmanship—even the most ordinary move could be used to achieve victory if it was utilized well.

“Bai Ruanqing won?”

“Are my eyes playing tricks on me? Senior Mo really lost just like that?”

“What sharp grasp of timing that is! If she was off at all, the results would have been vastly different...”

“It’s this seemingly infinitesimal difference in timing that is the crux to Bai Ruanqing’s victory. When did she become so formidable?”

“Her swordsmanship capitalizes on big movements in order to bring forth superior might. However, this means that her defense is weakest while her offense is the strongest, thus making it the ideal moment to strike. Challenge fourth place... and don’t forget to place a bet!” Senior Uncle Zhang’s voice echoed in Bai Ruanqing’s mind.

“Un!” Bai Ruanqing replied telepathically before turning to a young man amid the crowd, who had been watching the commotion. “Senior Hu, it’s your turn!”

The fourth ranked core disciple, Hu Chen!

Hu Chen knew that Bai Ruanqing would challenge the rest of them if she won against Mo Xiangyun, so he had chosen to use his real name.

Hu Chen unhesitatingly walked into the dueling ring.

A challenger had already come knocking on his door. He could not turn down this battle, or else he would risk losing his honor and prestige.

“Just like before, I wish to propose a bet between the two of us with all of the Sword Pavilion Coins we have. Senior Hu, may I know if you are willing to accept this bet?” Bai Ruanqing asked.

It seemed like daylight robbery, and that sort of naughty stuff just needed some getting used to. She was visibly much calmer when she proposed the bet this time around.

“As you wish!” Hu Chen nodded.

“Let’s begin then!” Bai Ruanqing said.

The two of them quickly got into position and grabbed a sword each.

Bai Ruanqing was just about to grasp the initiative when her Senior Uncle’s voice suddenly echoed in her ears once more.

“Retreat seven steps. Toss your sword toward your left!”

“Retreat? Toss my sword to the left?” Bai Ruanqing was confused.

Hu Chen hasn’t even moved at all, seemingly trying to prepare a huge move. Is it really fine for me to retreat and toss my sword before even seeing what he’s up to?

Isn’t it foolish to use my one-time off trump card so recklessly?

Bai Ruanqing could not comprehend what her Senior Uncle was up to at all, but she did not dare disobey his words. She hurriedly retreated seven steps without any hesitation.

Hu!

The moment that she moved, the silhouette right before her abruptly vanished from sight.

“That’s the Steps of the Ghost Sword Saint!” Elder Bai Ye exclaimed with a grim look.

“Steps of the Ghost Sword Saint? Are you talking about the Ghost Swordsmanship created by that remarkable genius eight hundred years ago?” the old man not too far away exclaimed in horror. “That move rattled the entire continent back then! But ever since then, no one has succeeded in cultivating it... Are you saying that Hu Chen has managed to do it?”

“That seems to be the case. Otherwise, it would be impossible for him to move at such speed. Even I am unable to figure out

where he has flitted off to and where he's going to appear from!" Elder Bai Ye remarked.

"The crux of the Ghost Swordsmanship lies in its stealth. It's a sword art that's intended for assassination. There are many experts who viewed it with disdain, thinking that it's underhanded, but there's no denying its strength," the old man said deeply. "I think that your granddaughter is going to lose the battle."

"It's beyond Bai Ruanqing's current ability to overcome this..." Elder Bai Ye sighed deeply.

The fact that Bai Ruanqing had chosen to retreat right from the start likely meant that she had seen through Hu Chen's attack... but what was truly fearsome about the Steps of the Ghost Sword Saint was how it was impossible to track at all. It did not seem like there was any plausible way she could win this battle.

After all, by the time she finally caught sight of the opponent to launch her attack, she could already have been killed!

It could be said that this move was enough to make Hu Chen nearly unrivaled among those of the same cultivation realm.

In fact, the main reason the top three were able to defeat him back then was because they were swift enough to make the pre-emptive move and suppress him right from the start.

On the other hand, his granddaughter had only learned two moves so far, a horizontal slash and a sword toss. Neither of them seemed to be of much use in this situation.

Amid the discussions, Bai Ruanqing had finished retreating seven steps, but she was still unable to see Hu Chen. However, she could not care as much at this moment. Gritting her teeth, she decisively tossed her sword to the left without any warning.

Hu!

The sword shot forth like a shooting star.

Elder Bai Ye was rendered speechless.

He knew that the chances of his granddaughter winning were indeed extremely slim, but to toss her sword before even seeing anyone... even if she was leaving it to fate, this felt a little too ridiculous!

Sighing deeply, he was just about to cover his eyes when the air in the dueling ring suddenly distorted. A silhouette abruptly appeared in the trajectory of the flying sword.

“Die!” Hu Chen bellowed frighteningly as he lunged forth, but before he could even take a single step, a sword had already plunged right into his head.

“Holy sh*t ...”

He could barely utter a curse before his body burst into innumerable light fragments.

The surroundings fell completely silent.

It was yet another one-hit K.O.!

This was Hu Chen, the fourth strongest core disciple in the sect! Those who knew of the Steps of the Ghost Sword Saint knew just how frightening the technique was, such that even the top three would have a huge headache trying to deal with it.

Yet, Bai Ruanqing defeated Hu Chen in a single move? That was insane!

“I really won?” Bai Ruanqing also scared herself with this feat.

She had been convinced that she was a dead woman, but somehow, everything had turned out fine just by following her Senior Uncle’s words strictly!

It was as if her Senior Uncle was able to peer into the future and predict her opponent’s future moves to make preparations in advance.

Having won two battles with ease, Bai Ruanqing was more confident than ever. She turned to a young lady among the crowd and said, “Senior Liu, it’s your turn!”

The third strongest core disciple, Liu Yulian!

Liu Yulian was a ravishing lady, carrying the demure charms of a traditional beauty. In terms of appearance, she did not lose out to Bai Ruanqing at all.

However, those who had exchanged blows with her would know better than to judge her swordsmanship by her delicate appearance.

Her defensive swordsmanship was airtight, such that even Hu Chen, when executing his Steps of the Ghost Sword Saint, was unable to breach her defenses at all. Eventually, he had ended up revealing an opening, which she had unhesitatingly exploited to subdue him.

Liu Yulian stepped daintily into the dueling ring.

Bai Ruanqing chuckled softly and said, “I have long heard that your Lotus Swordsmanship is inviolable, Senior Liu. I’m eager to see for myself.”

Rising above the water, the proud lotus refused to allow the slightest droplet of water to stain its surface. It was such a conceptualization that gave rise to Liu Yulian’s Lotus Swordsmanship.

“You are too courteous. Junior Bai, if you are able to breach my defense, I’ll admit my defeat and give all of my Sword Pavilion Coins to you!” Liu Yulian replied with a subtle smile.

Knowing that the other party would want to make a bet, she decided to be the one proposing it instead.

“Thank you, Senior Liu!” Bai Ruanqing nodded.

Ah... Her reputation was probably going to go down to the drain after this.

Her motive had been very innocent at the start. She just wanted to challenge the core disciples and climb to a higher position. But right now, she probably looked no different from a greedy thief who wanted to steal money from everyone else!

It sure was difficult to keep up a good reputation. All it took was a moment for everything to come crashing down. “Let’s begin!”

With a flick of her wrist, Liu Yulian flicked her wrist, and innumerable sword afterimages appeared around her as if blooming lotuses rising above the dirt.

Lotus Swordsmanship!

Only those who had reached Major Accomplishment in the swordsmanship were able to carve out blooming lotuses around them.

Bai Ruanqing could feel goosebumps rising all over her body as she looked at the swordsmanship display before her. Against this impenetrable defense, she really had no idea where she should start.

The other party's sword qi was stacked upon one another, forming a multi-layered barrier that one could hardly see the end of. If one made a bad move, one could be easily caught within the multi-layered barrier and slowly ground to a pulp.

“Toss your sword!”

Just as Bai Ruanqing was at a complete loss, her Senior Uncle's voice echoed in her head once more.

This time, without any hesitation, she threw out her sword.

Pu!

The lotuses abruptly dissipated as a sword mystically plunged into Liu Yulian's head. Her eyes were widened into large beads as she stared at Bai Ruanqing in disbelief.

Then, her corpse fell heavily to the ground.

The third strongest core disciple had been defeated!

1982 You Want Me To Give Up On My Money?

The crowd went completely quiet. Not a single person in the area was able to utter a single word in this instant.

“Is that really your granddaughter? Are you sure she isn’t someone else in disguise?” the old man turned to Elder Bai Ye and asked.

He knew about Bai Ruanqing’s condition very well. Even if she had managed to learn two extremely powerful sword arts from somewhere else, there was no way she could have been so powerful as to perform an OHKO[l] on Liu Yulian ...

Wouldn’t this mean that Bai Ruanqing already possessed fighting prowess that rivaled the top three of the core disciples?

To rise from the seventeenth place into the top three in less than half an hour... That was enough for her name to go down in the history of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

“I-I think so...” Elder Bai Ye was also a little overwhelmed by the current situation.

He had guessed that his granddaughter had received I Am Low Profile’s direct impartation... but it was hard to believe that just those two moves were actually enough for her to get into the top three!

After Liu Yulian was defeated, the second place disciple voluntarily walked up to the dueling ring.

His strength was pretty much equal to Liu Yulian, so under Zhang Xuan’s guidance, he also ended up getting one- shotted by a sword toss.

The top ranker of the core disciples is a person named He Jingxuan. He’s the grandson of First Elder He Tian!”

“It seems like we’re going to witness an exciting wrestle over the first place of the core disciples!”

“Even if Bai Ruanqing is rise to the top spot of the core disciples in the Ethereal Hall, she still isn’t necessarily the strongest of the core disciples. After all, the cultivation of all of the fighters is suppressed to Lesser Pseudo Immortal in here. I heard that He Jingxuan has already reached Heavenly True Immortal, and he’s only a step away from becoming a High Immortal!”

You are being too short-sighted over there. I heard that Bai Ruanqing has also reached True Immortal realm as well.

As long as she’s able to surpass He Jingxuan in the field of swordsmanship, given Elder Bai Ye’s identity, he should be able to acquire the cultivation resources for her to swiftly reach Heavenly True Immortal within a short period of time too...”

“It’s indeed easier to advance one’s cultivation than to refine one’s swordsmanship to greater heights...”

...

Watching as the representative of the highest fighting prowess of the core disciples walked onto the stage, the crowd couldn’t help but chatter excitedly amongst themselves.

If even He Jingxuan were to be defeated, it would be no exaggeration to say that Bai Ruanqing had triumphed over to the entire Core Disciple Sector.

“I’ll make the same bet with you,” He Jingxuan said calmly, unaffected by the many victims before him.

“Thank you for your understanding, Senior He!” Bai Ruanqing nodded. “Let’s begin then!”

“Un!”

Taking a deep breath, He Jingxuan took the first step forward.

His movements were not fast, and his swordsmanship didn’t look fanciful at all. The impression he gave out was reminiscent of a sealed Black Tortoise. No matter how one

tried to strike him, it felt like there was nothing that could pierce through his defense barrier.

“It’s the Spirit Tortoise Swordsmanship!”

Someone swiftly recognized the move.

“The Spirit Tortoise Swordsmanship is centered around defense. It seems like Senior He is also fearful of the enemy’s flying sword...”

“Well, it can’t be helped. It has never missed so far. As soon as it’s thrown, it would strike a head. Who wouldn’t be wary against a technique like that?”

“That’s true... In any case, I would probably be doomed if I had to face it...”

There were fervent discussions amongst the crowd.

Even though the Spirit Tortoise Swordsmanship was centered around defense, there was no one who would think that He Jingxuan was weak. Instead, they felt that it was a good idea that he chose to use this move.

Those who allowed their pride to get in the way of their decisions in a duel were subpar fighters. In the end, it was the ones who won in the end that would retain their dignity.

Seeing how the other party’s swordsmanship was reminiscent of a tortoiseshell, leaving her no way to attack, Bai Ruanqing panicked.

How could she overcome a defense like this? If she couldn’t overcome He Jingxuan’s defense, how would she be able to achieve victory?

While Bai Ruanqing was still looking at the situation before her worriedly, her Senior Uncle’s voice sounded in her ear, “Have you ever killed a tortoise before?”

“Killed a tortoise...” Bai Ruanqing repeated those words slowly beneath her breath.

She had never killed a tortoise before, but she had heard about it before.

“You need to lure it with food. Attract it so that it would reveal itself. Create the opportune moment to slay it with a fast blade!” Zhang Xuan’s voice continued.

“Such is the current situation too. If your opponent wishes to defeat you, he would have to eventually make a move. So, what you have to do is to use yourself as a bait to lure the other party in. His offense would be the best moment for you to strike... I have already shown you a way, and whether you are able to achieve victory or not, that would be up to you.”

Yes, Senior Uncle Zhang!” Bai Ruanqing nodded gratefully.

She knew that this was a test that her Senior Uncle had set for her.

He had already told her the way to fight the battle. If she was still unable to win the fight, even if she were to obtain the highly contested number one spot, she would still lose it soon enough.

As long as she could win this battle, regardless of whether it’s her swordsmanship or her state of mind, they would elevate to new heights. She would become an existence whom none could rival amongst the core disciples!

This was similar to how Ximen Chuixue’s swordsmanship, despite its formidable prowess, could not be considered to be number one. However, after he killed Ye Gucheng, his state of mind changed. As time passed, he eventually became the sword god of his generation, rising to become an unsurpassed existence in the world![2]

Such was the situation before Bai Ruanqing too.

She had won battle after battle under her Senior Uncle’s guidance, but this only built up a mindset of dependency within her. If this went on, it would form a notion in her mind that she was incapable of winning a battle with her own capabilities. So, she urgently needed a personal victory so that she could affirm herself, as well as her swordsmanship.

Sou!

Knowing that her Senior Uncle was doing all of this with her welfare in mind, Bai Ruanqing unhesitatingly bolted toward

He Jingxuan.

This... Is she intending to use her body to lure He Jingxuan out?" Elder Bai Ye narrowed his eyes.

It went without saying that he, as one of the Three Grand Elders, would be able to see through the flaws of He Jingxuan's swordsmanship too... It was just that he didn't think that her granddaughter could make such a decisive move.

One had to know that charging over like that was no different from presenting oneself to the opponent. The slightest carelessness could easily end in one's death!

"I thought that the reason why your granddaughter was able to win battle after battle is due to the bizarre swordsmanship she has learned from somehow. Even if she were to get into the top three, she wouldn't be able to secure her position for long. She doesn't have the stable foundations of the other core disciples, and the others would swiftly overtake her once they uncovered the flaws in her swordsmanship... But it seems like my judgement is wrong!" the old man beside Elder Bai Ye said with a bitter smile.

Challenging from the sixteenth rank all the way up to the second rank, the only moves that Bai Ruanqing had used were either the horizontal slash or the sword toss... There were no skillful maneuvers involved at all. She was relying completely on the prowess of her swordsmanship to push forward.

Even if she were to take the first place, would anyone recognize her?

Would she even be able to recognize herself?

But in this instant, Bai Ruanqing had seen through the opening in the other party's swordsmanship and chose to charge right in to bait He Jingxuan out despite the threat of death. Just on that itself, it could be seen that her comprehension of the Way of the Sword had reached an even higher level. She wasn't just relying solely on the sheer strength of her sword art.

Huhuhu!

While the two of them were chatting with one another, the situation on the dueling ring was changing. He Jingxuan could discern Bai Ruanqing's intents, so he refrained from taking the offense. Instead, what he did was to slowly back away.

He wouldn't reveal any opening that would allow Bai Ruanqing to breach his defense. Until he was absolutely guaranteed of victory, he wouldn't make a move.

Such a countermeasure is not too bad either... Zhang Xuan nodded.

It seemed like He Jingxuan's instincts were quite sharp too. It was no wonder why he could become the number one amongst the core disciples. His state of mind was indeed not too bad.

The current him was reminiscent of a patient hunter, lying in wait in the grasses for the ideal opportunity to slay his opponent!

Any other opponent would have leaped at the opportunity to claim the tides of the battle and pressure Bai Ruanqing on. However, that would have given Bai Ruanqing the opening she desperately needed in order to launch a decisive attack too.

On the other hand, if he were to drag the battle out, Bai Ruanqing would have no choice but to bide her time as well. Right now, what they were competing on was their patience.

Both sides traded a few blows, but they were all shallow attacks that left no opening for the other to exploit. Seeing how He Jingxuan refused to make the first move, Bai Ruanqing began to get anxious.

She had never been a patient person, and all of this waiting and shallow clashes were really grating on her nerves.

Right now!

He Jingxuan keenly perceived that Bai Ruanqing was getting more and more impatient by the moment, and her movements fully reflected her mood as well. He knew that the opportunity to strike had finally surfaced itself.

Amidst the bizarre calmness of the battle, he abruptly dashed forth to strike down Bai Ruanqing.

It was as if a predator pouncing on a prey. The calmness before was nothing more than a facade to make the other party put down her guard. As soon as the true hunt began, his speed surged to the extent where one could hardly perceive his movements anymore.

He's coming! Bai Ruanqing gritted her teeth tightly together as she shot out her sword.

It was true that she had been getting more and more frustrated as time ticked by, but she didn't neglect to abide by her Senior Uncle's teaching. All this while, she had been keeping a close lookout for He Jingxuan's move as well.

Puhe!

He Jingxuan's sword stabbed right through Bai Ruanqing's chest, but at the same time, Bai Ruanqing's sword had already been plunged into He Jingxuan's head.

Padah!

He Jingxuan was dead.

But Bai Ruanqing had been defeated too.

The battle had ended in a draw!

She's still too weak... Zhang Xuan shook his head.

He had already pointed a way out for her, so he thought that she would be able to achieve victory... But who could have thought that she would end with a mere draw.

How embarrassing!

It was lucky that she wasn't his student, or else he would have surely given her a good tongue-lashing!

But speaking of which, it sure was a huge pity. She could have taken the money of the top-ranking core disciple as well, but all of that money had slipped past her fingers due to her weakness.

In contrast to Zhang Xuan's frustration, the crowd was utterly silent. Everyone was shocked beyond words.

It was apparent that all of them found it hard to believe that Bai Ruanqing was actually able to equal He Jingxuan in a battle.

Watching as the two figures on the dueling ring dissipated into light fragments, the old man turned to Elder Bai Ye and said, "Congratulations, you really have a good granddaughter!"

"Hahaha, it seems like she has been enlightened recently!" Elder Bai Ye replied cheerfully.

Of course, he was proud that his granddaughter was able to fight on equal grounds with the number one core disciple.

"She's indeed formidable, but it's just not too good that she made a bet against the core disciples to take their Sword Pavilion Coins. It doesn't reflect too well on you either!" the old man said.

It would be fine just to have a normal duel, but to bet money on that as well... That would undermine the spirit of sportsmanship amongst fellow core disciples!

You are already the Third Elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and yet, your granddaughter is actually so desperate for money that she goes around gambling with others. Those who heard of the matter might even think that you are mistreating your own granddaughter!

"This... I'll make sure to give her an earful later on!" Elder Bai Ye replied.

"Old Master, I'm afraid that it might be too late by then..." Bai Feng said worriedly.

Those words made Elder Bai Ye ponder deeply for a moment.

Indeed. The matter would have spread far and wide by then, and his granddaughter's achievements would be sullied by the news of her gambling.

"You're right. I should deal with it right away." Elder Bai Ye nodded as he took a step forward to address the crowd, "Please listen to me!"

His voice was loud and clear, and it immediately drew everyone's attention to him.

The bet that Ruanqing has made earlier with the rest of you concerning your Sword Pavilion Coins is just a jest. Her motive is to motivate you to give your all to the fight so as to ensure the fairness of the battle. Since it's just a jest, you need not take it too seriously!" Elder Bai Ye said with a chuckle.

"Need not take it too seriously?" As soon as Elder Bai Ye said those words, a displeased voice echoed from the crowd. "What rights do you have to tell them not to take it too seriously? Who do you think you are?"

Elder Bai Ye turned his head over with a frown, only to see a young man walking over.

"Well... I am only an ordinary core disciple. However, I believe that these are the thoughts that Bai Ruanqing had in mind when she proposed the bet to her opponents. May I know who are you?"

Seeing how this young man had confronted him angrily, Elder Bai Ye's first reaction was to reveal his true identity. However, after a moment of hesitation, he still decided to conceal his identity and probe on first.

As an elder, it was best for him not to get involved with the matters concerning the disciples, or else it might reflect badly on him.

"I am I Am Very Handsome, and I'm a good friend of Bai Ruanqing's! My words represent her will!" Zhang Xuan replied. "Since it's a bet, what meaning is there if the other party doesn't pay up? This is no longer an issue about the bet but the fundamental trust between humans. If we start undermining the sanctity of promises over here, who would take them seriously in the future? If you don't wish to pay up, sure! Just see if my sword agrees to it or not!"

How could he give up on the money that he had so painstakingly earned just like that?

You must be joking with me!

Whoever asks me to give up on my money, be prepared to have the sh*t beaten out of you!

[1] One-hit Knockout

[2] These two are famous swordsmen from the Lu Xiaofeng series. Ye Gucheng was known to be the Sword Immortal back then, and there was no one who could rival him back in his era, but Ximen Chuixue rose through the ranks. They eventually had a fight with one another, and it ended up with Ximen Chuixue's victory.

1983 Killing the Core Disciples

“Audacious! Do you know who you are standing before?”

Seeing how this fellow dared to step forward and utter such arrogant words, the face of the old man standing beside Elder Bai Ye immediately darkened.

Elder Bai Ye was Bai Ruanqing’s grandfather, so he had the right to speak on behalf of Bai Ruanqing... It was just that it was inconvenient for him to reveal his identity due to his standing in the sect.

Who do you think you are to interfere in the affairs of their family?

“I’m talking to him. An outsider like you should just scram aside!” Zhang Xuan scoffed as he swung his sword toward him.

The old man didn’t expect Zhang Xuan would dare make a move toward him, and he couldn’t help but roar in furious laughter, “What audacity you have! Come then, let me see just what you are capable of then! I’ll acknowledge you if you can just withstand three blows...”

Putong!

But before the old man could finish his words, his head had already slid to the ground.

He had already drawn his sword to deflect the young man’s offense, but clearly... the young man somehow still managed to slip through his defense!

“What a load of nonsense!” Zhang Xuan scoffed after decapitating the old man with a single strike. “That fellow is just spouting rubbish, so there’s no need to pay him any heed. Owe money pay money, there’s nothing more natural than that in the world. If even esteemed disciples of our sect were to shirk from their debts, what would become of our credibility?”

“This young man over here, we don’t disagree with what you are saying, but I don’t think that you have the right to speak on Bai Ruanqing’s behalf. We want to hear her direct opinion!” a core disciple harrumphed.

There was no way they would willingly part with the money they had earned so painstakingly. When someone stood up and said that it was all a jest, they felt like they had finally seen a ray of hope. But before they could even start celebrating, that fellow suddenly stood forward to refute those words. Naturally, they wouldn’t feel any goodwill toward the fellow standing before them.

Furthermore, none of them was conscious of just how powerful the young man before them actually was.

The young man had killed the old man standing with Elder Bai Ye with a single strike, but as the old man was disguised as a young lad in the Ethereal Hall as well, everyone simply thought that he was an unimportant cannon fodder that was not worthy of a mention. He was killed too easily that it highlighted his weakness instead of the young man’s strength.

No one could have possibly imagined that the old man was actually one of their elders.

“Oh? Judging from what you are saying, it seems like you are quite reluctant to pay up?” Zhang Xuan asked lividly.

He never thought that he would witness such shamelessness from the core disciples!

They had agreed to the bet earlier, but they refused to admit it just because Bai Ruanqing had been killed and hadn’t returned yet...

Really, some people can become so shameless when money is involved!

“It’s not that we want to shirk on our debts, but you don’t have the final say in this matter. Instead, I think the words of that friend over there makes more sense. As the granddaughter of the Third Elder, Bai Ruanqing is not someone who lacks money. Surely the only reason why she would be prompted to make such a bet is to heap pressure on us?__ The core disciple

who had spoken earlier turned to Elder Bai Ye and asked, “Isn’t that right, that friend over there?”

“Yes, that’s indeed the case...” Elder Bai Ye said, “The only reason why Ruanqing did what she did was to place more pressure on you all in hopes that it would be a fairer battle. There’s no reason for her to take anyone’s money...”

But before Elder Bai Ye could finish his words, the glint of a sword suddenly flashed over.

“What?”

Hurriedly turning his head over, Elder Bai Ye saw I Am Very Handsome slashing his sword toward him.

His eyebrows shot up in displeasure as he reached out to grab his sword in order to deflect the blow. But before his hand could even reach, he suddenly felt a chilling sensation at his wrist.

When he finally lowered his head, he realized that his wrist had already been severed. Dang lang! The sword in his hand clanged on the ground.

“This...” Elder Bai Ye narrowed his eyes in horror.

As one of the Three Grand Elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, his cultivation had long reached High Immortal realm, making him one of the strongest experts on the Forsaken Continent.

This was especially so for his swordsmanship. In the field of swordsmanship, there were simply not many who were a match for him...

But right now, before he could even make a move, his hand had already been severed at the wrist!

It was true that the other party had assaulted him abruptly, but with his mastery of swordsmanship, he should have been able to deal with it easily! It seemed like the other party was much stronger than he had thought...

It was no wonder why his old friend would be killed in a single slash. He thought that the latter did not retaliate out of

fear of exposing his identity, but from the looks of it now, it seemed more likely that he was unable to retaliate at all!

Of the entire sect, other than the sect leader, there was only one more person who could render his old friend completely helpless and sever his wrist with such ease... The genius who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, I Am Low Profile!

I Am Very Handsome, I Am Low Profile...

As these two names revolved in Elder Bai Ye's head, the truth swiftly came to him. "So it's you, I Am..."

The reason why Elder Bai Ye was unable to think of it till now wasn't because he was slow-witted, but that it was a known fact that I Am Low Profile was at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation. On the other hand, the minimum cultivation requirement to enter the core disciples' Ethereal Hall was Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm.

Given the vast disparity between the two realms, it was hard to imagine that I Am Low Profile would actually be able to achieve a breakthrough within such a short period of time.

However, after the profound swordsmanship displayed by the other party, he would really be a fool if he was still unable to draw the links!

But before Elder Bai Ye could finish his words, he felt a sharp pain on his tongue. A sword was entered his mouth, and with a swift flick, his tongue and teeth were crushed by a surge of sword qi. Blood flowed profusely out of his mouth as he was rendered incapable of words by the excruciating pain.

"Don't you try to mess around with me. Even I would get frightened of myself when I get nasty!" Zhang Xuan glared at Elder Bai Ye coldly.

"Wuuuu!" Elder Bai Ye cried out.

There were words that he wanted to speak, but he was unable to do so as a result of his current condition. He tried to speak to the other party via telepathic communication, the other party was completely warding him out.

Despite the illusory nature of the Ethereal Hall, the pain was extremely real. Just the severing of one's wrist was enough to make one scream for hours at end, but his tongue and teeth had been torn apart by sword qi too... Cold sweat dripped from his forehead as his body trembled uncontrollably.

To think that he, a powerful High Immortal, as well as one of the most esteemed powerhouses on the Forsaken Continent, would have been placed in such a state by two simple slashes...

"You are seeking death!"

Everything happened within just two short breaths, and it was only around this moment did Bai Feng finally recovered from his shock. Overwhelming rage erupted from him.

Insolence! How dare this arrogant lad make a move on Elder Bai Ye? You are asking to be killed!

Hu!

Bai Feng charged forth with his sword directed toward Zhang Xuan. But before the tip of his blade could even come close, he felt a sharp pain on his neck.

Padah!

His head fell to the ground.

"You are..."

In the moment that Bai Feng found himself faced with his own feet, it finally dawned on him who the other party was too.

To think that he would be killed twice by the same people within the span of a day...

He really felt like crying.

After dealing with the three meddlesome fellows, Zhang Xuan looked at the crowd and uttered coldly, "Is there anyone else who thinks that Bai Ruanqing is simply joking around?"

He wanted to maintain a low profile and not get into any trouble either, but these fellows had the audacity to not pay up... They must be unaware that they were provoking a sleeping dragon!

Have you never heard of the saying ‘never touch the inverted scales of a dragon’?

He knew that his words held little power, so it was important for him to establish his authority first. Thus, he acted decisively and slew the three loudest naysayers right away. If he hadn’t done so, the others would have shrugged him away as if he was a nobody.

That friend over there, don’t you think it’s inappropriate for you to make such a vicious move on them? May I know who you are?” a core disciple stepped forward and asked.

Upon seeing that this person had stepped forward to mediate the situation, everyone immediately fell silent.

She was no other than the third strongest core disciple, Liu Yulian!

After being killed, she quickly returned with another Ethereal Token. To ensure that the others were still able to recognize her, she chose to assume the same appearance as before.

You don’t wish to pay up either?” Zhang Xuan looked at her and sneered.

“I believe in Bai Ruanqing’s character. There’s no way she would accept money over a...” Liu Yulian was only halfway through her words when she suddenly found herself faced with her bottom.

Padah!

Her head fell to the ground and rolled around the area.

“Done. Is there anyone else who doesn’t want to pay up? It’s fine by me if you don’t want to pay up either. Just be warned that I’ll kill you each time I see you in the Ethereal Hall until you finally pay up!” Zhang Xuan flicked his sword coldly to the side as he spoke.

You must have been thinking that you can gang up on me and pressure me into forgetting your debts... But too bad for you, what you have provoked is not an ant but the devil himself!

You...”

The reason why they thought little of I Am Very Handsome was because they had no clear notion of how powerful he was. Elder Bai Ye, Bai Feng, and the old man were in disguise, and they were killed so easily that it appeared like they were weak instead...

They thought that no matter how powerful I Am Very Handsome was, there was no way he could have matched the top experts of the core disciples.

However, this was Liu Yulian they were talking about over here. She was actually decapitated just like that...

Everyone was horrified!

It was only in this instant that it dawned on them that the young man was no ordinary core disciple at all.

"This fellow is extremely weird. We should move together to kill him!"

"I think it's very likely that he's not one of the core disciples!"

The crowd shouted.

Even the strongest amongst the core disciples, He Jingxuan, was incapable of slaying Liu Yulian with a single slash! Yet, this fellow was able to do so. Something was surely wrong here...

"The lengths which people will go to shirk payment sure is frightening!" Zhang Xuan scoffed.

Who could have thought that this bunch of fellows would be so shameless as to come up with all kinds of excuses to kill him just so that they could avoid paying up?

I wanted to solve this amicably, but it seems like the world only talks with strength.

Since that's the case, let me give you all a lesson that you will never forget!

This shall become the worst decision you have ever made in your life. As long as you refuse to pay up, I'll kill all of you until none of you dares to enter the Ethereal Hall any longer!

Hu!

Zhang Xuan leaped right into the midst of the crowd.

In an instant, sword qi gushed around the area, and the ground quaked furiously.

Elder Bai Ye, who had his tongue sliced and wrist severed, looked at the sight before him with a pale face. At this rate, it felt like the entire Ethereal Hall would be destroyed!

This fellow is getting way out of hand. After causing a commotion at the inner disciples' Ethereal Hall, he wishes to do the same over at the core disciples' side too... Elder Bai Ye thought furiously.

Bearing with the pain, he was just about to step forward and reveal his identity when he suddenly felt a sharp pain stabbing into his neck.

Padah!

A sliver of sword qi leaked out from the heart of the battlefield and decapitated him.

Elder Bai Ye.

By the time he opened his eyes once more, he had already returned back to his own residence. In front of him, Bai Feng and the old man were staring at one another face-to-face with incredulous looks on their faces. Somehow, their faces seemed to appear more wrinkled than before, as if they had aged a decade.

As High Immortals, they were top experts of the Forsaken Continent who could influence the politics of the world with every move that they made... But earlier in the core disciples' Ethereal Hall, they were subdued in just a single move by the young man...

They were simply no match for the young man at all!

You... You have been killed too!" the old man exclaimed when he saw Elder Bai waking up once more.

"Un..." Elder Bai Ye nodded slowly.

"How many moves?" the old man asked.

He was asking Elder Bai Ye how many moves from the other party he had survived. As he had died the earliest, he was unaware of the happenings afterward.

Elder Bai Ye stuck out three fingers.

“Three moves? That’s already a lot...”

Just recalling how he was killed within a single move left the old man feeling so stifled that he could die on the spot. He found it hard to believe that Elder Bai Ye could actually withstand three moves from the other party, so he asked,

“What sword art did you use in order to survive three moves?”

While Elder Bai Ye was indeed stronger than him, he didn’t recall the gap between the both of them being so huge.

“I didn’t use any sword art at all,” Elder Bai Ye replied with a bitter smile.

“You didn’t?” the old man shook his head in disbelief. “That’s impossible. Given how fast that fellow’s sword is, it’s impossible for those of the same cultivation realm to evade it. There’s no way you would have been able to survive his attacks if you hadn’t counterattacked...”

“The first move he made, he severed my wrist, causing my sword to fall to the ground,” Elder Bai Ye said. “The second move, he stabbed into my mouth and severed my tongue, preventing me from speaking!”

Hearing those words, the old man’s goosebumps rose up and he felt feeble all over, “But those aren’t killing moves!”

“Indeed, they aren’t killing moves at all. It’s because he didn’t intend to kill me in the first place that I was able to survive the first two moves...” Elder Bai Ye closed his eyes and exhaled deeply.

“Then, you...” the old man continued asking.

“I was intending to step forward to reveal my identity and mediate in the conflict while he was killing the other core disciples, but I ended up getting killed by a random surge of sword qi that escaped from the center of the battlefield...” Elder Bai Ye said.

You were killed by a random surge of sword qi...” the old man was stunned.

What was with this situation?

A random surge of sword qi leaking out from the center the battlefield actually killed one of the Three Grand Elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion...

Was such a thing even possible at all?

“He’s the genius who comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent?” the old man narrowed his eyes as realization struck him.

1984 Elder Bai Ye's Breakdown

Even though he was a core elder, his mastery of swordsmanship didn't stand out within the sect.

While he did feel a little stifled at being killed within a single move, it was still something he could accept.

But for Elder Bai Ye, one of the Three Grand Elders, to be killed by a random sword qi that leaked out of the battlefield... Just how powerful must the other party be?

No matter how dumb he might be, he knew that such a thing was impossible for an ordinary sword practitioner! Heck, not even the sect leader would be able to do it!

There was only one person in the world who could possibly achieve this feat...

And that was the man who had sent the entire Elder Council into an uproar over not too long ago... that genius who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent!

"That's very likely to be the case!" Elder Bai Ye nodded.

Previously, he had heard Bai Feng lavishing compliments on I Am Low Profile. While he knew that Bai Feng was not one to exaggerate, he felt that the latter might have overstated I Am Low Profile's strength by a little too much.

However, in the short encounter that he had with I Am Low Profile, he realized that those compliments were not excessive at all!

Despite the other party's seemingly ordinary swordsmanship, his maneuvers were precise and spot-on. Every single flaw that could be exploited were exploited, thus rendering whatever moves he could execute completely meaningless.

It was as if he had been stripped clean before the other party. There was nothing he could do that would possibly deceive the

other party.

“No, something is not right. Did you mention earlier that he was killing the other core disciples? Does that mean that he’s challenging everyone at once, similar to what he did back at the inner disciples’ Ethereal Hall?” the old man narrowed his eyes in horror as a thought struck his mind.

“What are we idling around here for? We have to stop him!”

“It’s already too late...” Elder Bai Ye shook his head and sighed deeply. “He has already killed all of the core disciples by now...”

“He has already killed all of them?”

The old man and Bai Feng were stunned by what they had just heard.

All in all, it was probably less than a minute since they had been forcefully ejected from the Ethereal Hall... and within this short period of time, dozens of core disciples had been killed?

“We should hurry up and inform Elder He and the others of the matter then! They are probably still unaware of this matter at the moment. They should be at the Sword Gazebo at the moment, so they should be able to confirm I Am Low Profile’s location right away...” the old man was silent for a brief moment before he exclaimed in agitation.

“There’s no need for that. I have a good idea of who that person is. Let’s head over to find him right now!” Elder Bai Ye said as he rose to his feet. He looked at the old man once more and instructed, “Look for Elder He and report everything that had happened at the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall earlier to him in detail. After which, I need you to request him to return to the Elder Council with the other elders. Meanwhile, Bai Feng and I will be looking for I Am Low Profile. Most likely, we should be able to bring him over very quickly...”

After saying those words, he gestured for Bai Feng to follow him before quickly walking out of the residence.

Back at Zhang Xuan’s residence...

Shortly after Bai Ruanqing was killed by He Jingxuan, she swiftly grabbed another Ethereal Token and returned back to the core disciples' Ethereal Hall.

“... Where is everyone?”

She was surprised by how empty the area around the dueling ring was.

It was just a moment ago that a crowd was gathered around this area, so why would all of them disappear in the short interval that she was gone?

While she was brooding over this matter, the person who had died together with her earlier, He Jingxuan, appeared not too far in the distance with a dazed look as well.

“What happened over here?” Bai Ruanqing asked in astonishment.

“I just received news that a person named I Am Very Handsome has made a move against all of the core disciples...” He Jingxuan replied with a dazed look in his eyes.

He was still pondering over the battle he had earlier with Bai Ruanqing when he received the news that a formidable opponent had challenged all of the core disciples. Thus, he immediately returned to the Ethereal Hall, intending to lend a hand...

But who could have thought everyone would actually be killed so quickly!

Wasn't the other party's swordsmanship a little too powerful?

“So, I Am Very Handsome killed everyone that was here?” Bai Ruanqing suddenly felt a little light-headed, and she nearly fainted to the ground.

Senior Uncle, are you trying to stage a revolt here?

It's like you didn't have enough fun dominating the inner disciples, so you came over to bully the core disciples as well... Are you intending to challenge the Elder Council next then?

“I’ll head out to take a look...”

Bai Ruanqing rubbed her glabella in frustration as she backed out from the Ethereal Hall. Just as she finally returned back to the room, she saw Zhang Xuan rising to his feet, stretching his back lazily.

“Senior Uncle, did you, by any chance, kill all of the core disciples in the Ethereal Hall?”

“They were despicable people. They have lost the duel, yet they refused to pay up. Thus, I had all of them killed in order to teach them a lesson. It’s not as if they could be harmed in the Ethereal Hall anyway,” Zhang Xuan harrumphed coldly.

Bai Ruanqing was frenzied.

Was there really a need for you to go so far over something as minor as this?

“Right, I need you to check if they have paid you yet? Quickly transfer the money over to me if they have done so... Otherwise, I’ll return to the Ethereal Hall later to purge them again later on!” Zhang Xuan waved his hand coldly.

There was so much frustration bottling up in Bai Ruanqing’s chest that she could hardly breathe anymore.

Why would such a formidable expert stoop so low as to kill all of the core disciples over mere money?

Shaking her head, she took out a jade token and glanced at it before replying, “They have already paid me. The total sum is roughly 100,000 Sword Pavilion Coins!”

“100,000?” Zhang Xuan nodded in satisfaction. “It seems like the core disciples are quite wealthy after all!”

He had killed half of the core disciples, only to earn 200,000 Sword Pavilion Coins in total. On the other hand, just by defeating five core disciples, he was able to make a killing of 100,000 Sword Pavilion Coins... It seemed like the wealth disparity was really no joke!

Well, it seemed like he had just found himself a reliable avenue to resolve his monetary issues once and for all...

It didn't take long for Bai Ruanqing to transfer the money over, and Zhang Xuan couldn't help but celebrate a little gleefully on the inside over the mini fortune he had earned within a single day.

A while later, he raised his head and looked at Bai Ruanqing, "Your swordsmanship is still not too bad, but the sword toss you have learned from Dan Xiaotian is riddled with far too many problems. I'll correct it for you now. Later on, I need you to return to the dueling ring and earn more money back for me, understood?"

"..."Bai Ruanqing.

She was conflicted on whether she should feel happy that she should be delighted that her Senior Uncle would be teaching her personally or that she was being used as a tool to earn money... but eventually, her desire to learn advanced swordsmanship won over.

She quickly stood up and prepared herself to listen to her teacher's impartation when she suddenly heard several knocks coming from the main entrance of the residence. Following which, Cao Chengli's shout echoed loudly, "Who are you?"

"We are here to find Zhang Xuan!" a voice replied.

Upon hearing the voice, Bai Ruanqing immediately felt goosebumps rising all over her body. With quivering lips, she exclaimed, "Senior Uncle... it's my grandfather! He's here!"

"Your grandfather?" Zhang Xuan was stunned. "You are referring to Elder Bai Ye?"

Based on what he knew, Elder Bai Ye was one of the Three Grand Elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, a true expert of the continent.

Why would such an esteemed individual come knocking on his door?

Was the acting he had put on earlier not good enough to convince the other party not to take him in as his student? That should be the case, right?

After all, he had only been at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion for a single day, and he had made sure to maintain a low profile all along. He didn't seem to have done anything really excessive yet. So, there didn't seem to be any reason why Elder Bai Ye would want to pay a visit to him!

"That's right!" Bai Ruanqing nodded.

"I reckon that the reason why he's here is because he still wishes to take me in as his student... Since that's the case, I'll need you to feign as if you are trying to teach me sword art later on. You'll criticize me for my weak mastery of swordsmanship and express your disappointment in me for having let down your grandfather's expectations..." Zhang Xuan said.

"This..." Bai Ruanqing was conflicted.

She had never been good at acting and deceiving others!

"It's settled then. Otherwise, don't expect me to teach you any swordsmanship anymore!" Zhang Xuan replied.

"Alright then..." Hearing those words, Bai Ruanqing had no choice but to agree to his request.

She would do anything as long as she could learn from her Senior Uncle. The latter's swordsmanship was simply that formidable!

She had only learned two sword arts so far—and they were only the two most basic moves—but it was already enough for her to fight the number one core disciple to a draw. If she were to just study a bit longer under him, even she would dare not imagine how powerful she could possibly become!

This was an opportunity that she couldn't give up on!

While they were still discussing the matter, Bai Feng stepped forward and flashed his token to Cao Chengli.

"Why? Do you think that you can enter by keeping mum and showing me a token?" Cao Chengli frowned in displeasure.

He was still angry at having his head smacked, so his attitude toward the two guests wasn't too nice either.

To shove a token right in my face when I'm asking you a question, do you think that this is a place for you to show off? Tsk! As if you are the only one who knows how to show off!

"I am an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. I'm here to pay a visit to your Young Master, Zhang Xuan!"

Seeing that the other party didn't recognize the Elder Token, Elder Bai Ye explained calmly.

Considering how Dan Xiaotian, Zhang Xuan, and the others had only entered the sect a day ago, it was understandable for them to have never seen such a high-tiered Elder Token.

"You are an elder of the sect?" Cao Chengli was still at the peak of his rage when those words scared his wits out of him. His face immediately paled as he bowed down respectfully, "Pardon me for my previous disrespect! P-please, this way..."

Cao Chengli was different from Sun Qiang. As a bandit, he had been through many life-and-death situations, so he was extremely wary about offending those who were stronger than him. Naturally, there was no way he would dare to cross an elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!

If the other party were to make a move on him, he would be dead before he knew it!

Pulling his weight before such a figure? Forget it!

There were still many carnal pleasures in the mortal world waiting for him to explore! He had no intention of losing his life just yet!

Elder Bai Ye nodded as he raised his feet to enter the residence, but Cao Chengli suddenly rushed forward to stop him.

"My apologies, but the Young Master has a rule that those who walk into the residence aren't allowed to enter with their left leg or right leg alone. I beg your pardon for this!"

After which, he took the lead and hopped across the doorsill with both his feet.

"This..."

Elder Bai Ye and Bai Feng glanced at one another in confusion.

What kind of eccentric rule was this?

“Geniuses usually have their own quirks. Since we’re here to visit, I guess it would be good for us to abide by the other party’s rules...” Bai Feng said.

Back then, the Ghost Sword Saint was known to have an extremely eccentric temper as well. Considering that Zhang Xuan had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, it was still understandable that his personality would be a little peculiar.

Putong! Putong!

The two of them hopped into the residence too.

As soon as they stepped into the residence, they were just about to ask where Zhang Xuan was when they suddenly heard a harsh voice sounding from one of the rooms.

“How can you be so dumb? I have been explaining it to you to this for two hours now, but it seems like nothing has gotten into your head at all... How do you expect my grandfather to take you in as his student like that? You are really daydreaming!”

Peng!

In the next moment, the door to the room opened, and a young lady stomped out furiously.

Following behind her was a young man with his head lowered in shame.

Elder Bai Ye and Bai Feng stared at each other silently...

The heck! What in the world are these two up to this time around?

“Grandfather and Grandpa Feng, why are the two of you here?”

While the two of them were still trying to figure out what kind of act those two were trying to put up here, Bai Ruanqing turned to them with a surprised expression on her face, as if

she had only noticed their presence. She quickly walked up to them.

“We came here to...” Elder Bai Ye was just about to reveal the purpose behind his arrival when Bai Ruanqing abruptly interjected impatiently.

“Grandfather, it’s good that you are here. This person over here is the person who sold me the medicine, Zhang Xuan.

I’m extremely grateful to him for having saved your life, but I must say that his swordsmanship is truly mediocre... I have already taught him for several hours now, but he hasn’t even understood the most basic sword art yet!” Bai Ruanqing said as she glared at Zhang Xuan in disappointment, as if she couldn’t believe that there could be such a useless disciple in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“I’ll give you one last chance. Execute the sword art which I have just taught you to my grandfather. As you know, my grandfather is one of the Three Grand Elders of the sect. If you can just do well this once, you will be able to acknowledge him as your teacher!”

“Y-yes, Senior Bai!”

Zhang Xuan hesitantly lifted his sword and slashed down.

His movements were incredibly awkward, and they carried not the slightest hint of sword qi at all... It would be an insult to call even something like this a sword art.

Elder Bai Ye looked at Bai Feng once more with a conflicted look in his eyes.

Do we look like fools in their eyes? I don’t even know if they are really trying to fool us or mock us... It doesn’t even seem like they are putting any effort into their act at all!

I’m really starting to feel a little offended over here!

“Grandfather, look! His skills are really disappointing, and he doesn’t have the slightest talent for swordsmanship at all. Such a dumb person isn’t worthy of being your student at all! I do know that he’s our benefactor, and this debt must be repaid somehow, but we shouldn’t do it at the expense of your

reputation either! Or else... why don't we just give him some money instead?"

Seeing that her grandfather and Grandpa Feng had gone completely silent, Bai Ruanqing thought that she had managed to fool them with her acting. Heaving a visible sigh of relief, she monotonously repeated the script which Zhang Xuan had forced her to remember a moment ago.

"Dumb?"

"Isn't worthy of being my student?"

Elder Bai Ye nearly choked on his saliva.

It was one thing if he didn't know a thing at all, but this was the young man who had severed his head with just a stray surge of sword qi... If there was anyone here who was unworthy, it would have to be him!

It was lucky that there was no crater here, or else he would have dived right like like an ostrich!

"I am deeply ashamed of my weakness, but I fear that I really don't have any talents in the Way of the Sword... I'm truly apologetic to have let Third Elder down..." Zhang Xuan lowered his head in shame.

In the depths of his eyes, one could see a hint of regret and low self-esteem, reminiscent of a person who had tried time and time again, only to be struck down by the cruelty of reality each and every single attempt.

His eyes were so expressive that it almost felt as if he was the protagonist of some kind of hot-blooded youth drama.

Seeing this, Elder Bai Ye and Bai Feng felt their chest getting even more stifled. They were convinced that they were going to bottle up some sort of severe internal injuries at this rate.

What the hell was this?

It turned out that this young man was not only a vastly talented sword practitioner, he was also a born actor!

With such talents, he was already set for his life!

Elder Bai Ye took several deep breaths to assuage the stifled sensation within him so as to ensure that his veins wouldn't suddenly rupture from high blood pressure before finally speaking up, "If you are lacking in your swordsmanship, it's indeed inappropriate for me to take you in as my student.

"However, it's not for show that the sword is known as the Conqueror of Weapons. There's nothing that can replace what it is capable of. If you do want to acknowledge me as your teacher, I can start teaching you from the basics. I trust that you'll soon reach Bai Ruanqing's level under my guidance..."

"This..." Zhang Xuan didn't think that the other party would still want to take him in as his student even after all the acting he had put on. Speechless, he hurriedly waved his hand and said, "I'm deeply honored, but I dare not accept your offer. Given my lack of aptitude, I am not confident that I'll be able to meet up to your expectations... I don't mind sully my reputation, but I dare not besmirch Third Elder's name!"

"It's nothing much. I am indebted to you for saving my life, and it's only right for me to repay your favor... Or could it be that you are interested in other weaponry instead?"

It was not that Elder Bai Ye was toying with Zhang Xuan, but he wanted to force the latter to admit to his identity as I Am Low Profile. Otherwise, if the latter were to deny it to the bitter end, there was very little that he could do either. He could try resorting to force too, but it would carry the risk of possibly pushing this talented sword practitioner away from the sect.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up upon hearing Elder Bai Ye's words, "Indeed, I'm not too interested in swordsmanship... I don't mean to be rude, but my true passion actually lies in the Way of the Saber!"

1985 Meeting the Sect Leader

“Third Elder, I dare not lie to you. It’s truly my earnest wish to learn the saber. The Way of the Saber crushes everything in its path with overwhelming might, and I find it extremely fitting of my personality and temperament...” Seeing the slight doubt in the other party’s eyes, Zhang Xuan quickly added on with an earnest look on his face.

The agile sword and the forceful saber; it was a conventional notion that it was impossible for a man to master both weaponry together.

Since the other party was intent on making him learn swordsmanship, there was no better excuse than to claim that his true passion lay in the Way of the Saber... It was not as if he was a disciple of the sect, so it didn’t contravene the rules of the sect.

As long as he could show that he was skilled in the Way of the Saber, he should be able to convince the other party to give up on the notion of taking him in as his student.

“Cough cough! If that’s the case, may I ask you to display your saber art? I’m quite interested to see how adept you are in the Way of the Saber!” Elder Bai Ye took another deep breath to calm himself down before asking.

I know that someone as formidable as you would surely be unwilling to become my student, but of all excuse you can come up with, you are telling me that you wish to learn the Way of the Saber instead? Very well, let me see what you can do then!

Just watch as I spot traces of Sword Intent in your saber art! I’ll see how you are going to explain yourself afterward!

To be honest, he wouldn’t have minded if Zhang Xuan had turned him down directly. But to put up all these acts and toss

him so many ridiculous excuses, it would be a lie to say that he wasn't displeased.

"I'm afraid that I don't have any saber with me..."

"Don't worry, I have one here."

Zhang Xuan was just about to turn Elder Bai Ye down with a wave of his hand when the latter suddenly whipped out a saber.

Even though Elder Bai Ye specialized in swordsmanship, he still had some other types of weapons with him. This was a part of his swordsmanship training as well.

A useful way to better understand the strengths and limitations of swordsmanship was to try out other weapons too. Through uncovering the possibilities of other weapons, one could uncover unconventional ways to exert one's swordsmanship.

This was similar to how the Nine Swords of Dugu[1] had Saber Subduing Stance, Whip Subduing Stance, Arrow Subduing Stance, Palm Subduing Stance...

"... Alright then!"

Seeing that there was no other way out of this, Zhang Xuan took the saber and flicked it lightly. A powerful Saber Intent swiftly suffused his entire body, contrasting him to be an incomparably mighty saber that would even smash a hole into the heavens above.

Elder Bai Ye and Bai Feng narrowed their eyes in speechlessness.

At this very instant, they felt the Sword Intent in their body being suppressed by the other party's Saber Intent to the extent such that they couldn't even lift their heads up!

To put it in other words... Zhang Xuan's Saber Intent was actually even purer and more powerful than their Sword Intent!

But the young man before them was supposed to be the person who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent! How in the world was it possible for his Saber Intent to be so formidable as well?

It almost felt as if their years of hard work had gone completely to waste...

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan carefully assessed the shocked expressions on the two elders before nodding in satisfaction. From the looks of it, it seemed like he had finally managed to convince Elder Bai Ye of the matter.

“As I have mentioned, my true expertise lies in saber arts instead of swordsmanship...” Zhang Xuan said as he flicked his saber and retracted his Saber Intent.

He had really gone all out so that he wouldn't have to become Elder Bai Ye's student this time around!

You are indeed more skilled in saber art...” Elder Bai Ye swallowed a mouthful of saliva. Knowing that he was going nowhere at this rate, he decided to just come clean with the matter, “To be honest, the reason why I'm here is not to take you in as my student. Instead, it's to confirm your identity and bring you over to the Elder Council!”

“Confirm my identity?” Zhang Xuan's heart skipped a beat, but he concealed it with a confused look. “What do you mean by that?”

“If I'm not mistaken, you are I Am Low Profile and I Am Very Handsome, right?” Elder Bai Ye asked.

“Huh? Pardon me, but I'm not really catching what you are saying over here,” Zhang Xuan was panicking a little inside, but he maintained a look of bewilderment on his face, “What do you mean by low profile and handsome?”

“There's no need for you to deny this matter any further. I know my granddaughter very well. She's an impatient and reckless person, and she has never been really serious about learning swordsmanship before... Otherwise, she wouldn't have only reached the level she's currently at after years of training. However, within a short hour after meeting you, she gained the strength to confront the number one expert of the core disciples. Other than I Am Low Profile, the genius who has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, I can't think of

another person in the world who could pull off a feat like this!” Elder Bai Ye said.

“I...”

Zhang Xuan’s panic quickly turned into embarrassment before eventually culminating into burning rage.

Your mum!

If you have already known my identity right from the start, why didn’t you just say it out loud?

You made me put on an act and display my saber art, are you treating me like a monkey for your entertainment?

In order to alleviate Zhang Xuan’s worries, Elder Bai Ye hurriedly added, “I bear no ill will toward you. If I did, I would have already made a move. While you have comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, your cultivation is only at Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm at the moment. I don’t mean to be rude, but you wouldn’t be able to pose a threat to me with your current strength.”

He had no idea what kind of methods Zhang Xuan used in order to achieve a breakthrough within such a short period of time, but the fact that he was able to enter the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall meant that he had managed to advance his cultivation to Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm.

“Fine then, I’ll admit to it!” With an irritated sigh, Zhang Xuan tossed away his excessively respectful attitude and replied.

He did notice that the other party had failed to see through his cultivation, but he chose not to clarify the matter. He didn’t want to give himself away until he finally discerned Elder Bai Ye and the sect’s intentions.

If it was possible, he would have preferred not to reveal his identity as I Am Low Profile at all, but he could sense the conviction in Elder Bai Ye’s words. The latter was definitely not just trying to sound him out.

Since he had already been revealed, there was no point in him struggling so desperately to conceal his identity. He might as

well just admit to it candidly.

Furthermore, there was some truth in what Elder Bai Ye had said. He had no gauge of a High Immortal's prowess at the moment, but at Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm, it didn't seem like he would have a good chance of triumphing over Elder Bai Ye. For the time being, it didn't seem that Elder Bai Ye harbored malicious intentions toward him.

"Indeed..." Seeing Zhang Xuan admitting to it, Elder Bai Ye clenched his fists tightly together.

While he was confident in his deduction, he was still unable to curb his heart from beating in agitation when he heard the news.

The man who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent was really standing before him...

Ever since the founding of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion several thousand years ago, there had been no one who had reached such a height other than the founder!

"Would you be willing to accompany me to the Elder Council? As the person who has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, your existence is of great significance to our sect. If nothing goes wrong, it's very likely that you would become our sect leader in the near future!" Elder Bai Ye clasped his fist and spoke respectfully.

The way in which the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion chose its sect leader was extremely simple—it was determined by one's mastery in swordsmanship.

As the one who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, as long as Zhang Xuan was able to raise his cultivation up to par, it was only a matter of time before he became a sect leader.

"It's likely that I would become your sect leader in the near future?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

He had thought of many possibilities, but he never thought that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would actually be looking for him to become their new leader...

To be honest, he was indeed moved by this offer. This identity would grant him greater protection to survive in the Azure. Furthermore, with the influence of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it would be much easier for him to unearth Luo Ruoxin's trails too!

"Un!" Elder Bai Ye nodded.

"I understand. I'll follow you to the Elder Council... However, I do have a request. I understand that I'll be facing the other elders, so it's inevitable that they would learn of my identity too. But as far as possible, I hope that this matter doesn't reach the ears of too many people," Zhang Xuan said.

Even if Elder Bai Ye and the sect had no intention of harming him, it would still be best for him to act prudently. As the saying went, 'a tree rising above the forest will eventually fall to the fiery wind'.

It was for practical reasons why he was so determined to conceal his identity. If others were to learn of his abilities, there was no guarantee that some might attempt to harm him.

"Don't worry, we have no intention of doing anything that would put you in the way of harm!" Elder Bai Ye replied with a nod.

He understood the dangers of drawing the attention of others onto one as well.

He turned to Bai Ruanqing and instructed sternly, "Ruanqing, do not speak of whatever that has happened here to anyone else. I'll be heading out with Brother Zhang for a while!"

After which, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, "Let's go!"

Elder Bai Ye quickly wrapped Zhang Xuan around in his zhenqi before soaring into the sky.

Watching as Zhang Xuan disappeared in the horizon, Dan Xiaotian couldn't help but fall into deep thoughts over what he had just heard, "There's a chance that teacher might become the next sect leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion?"

He had always known that Zhang Xuan was a highly talented individual with extraordinary fighting prowess, but still, he

had never imagined that the latter would actually have comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent!

Despite his young age, he was already next in line to become the leader of one of the Six Sects!

As for Cao Chengli, he suddenly widened his eyes in utter shock as a realization finally struck him. It dawned on him why the Young Master had so many weird rules, prohibiting him from entering the residence with both his left leg and right leg...

He actually had the audacity to criticize I Am Low Profile loudly before the Young Master... Wasn't that equivalent to insulting the Young Master in his face?

Cao Chengli hurriedly stroked his chest to calm himself down. He thanked the heavens for allowing him to survive what that could have very well been a fatal mistake.

Sword Gazebo.

Sect Leader Han, Elder He, and the others were staring at the wall before them with such intent gazes that it almost seemed as if they would bore a hole in the wall.

Deng deng deng deng!

A series of flurried footsteps echoed from the outside.

Elder He quickly glanced at the arriving elder and asked, "Is there an update on 'I Am Low Profile'?"

"No, that's not it... Someone has challenged all of the core disciples!" the old man exclaimed anxiously.

It was the very same old man who had visited Elder Bai Ye just a moment ago.

"Someone challenged all of the core disciples? Could he be 'I Am Low Profile'?" Elder He narrowed his eyes in shock as he swiftly rose to his feet. "No, that's not right. Isn't his cultivation supposed to only be at Dimension Shatterer realm consummation?"

"That person is called 'I Am Very Handsome'! He challenged dozens of core disciples simultaneously and slew all of them.

Elder Bai Ye and I have headed there discreetly, but we ended up getting killed as well..." the old man said with a reddened face.

"He was able to kill dozens of core disciples and even defeat Bai Ye and you... He must indeed be the genius who has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent," Sect Leader Han nodded slightly. He turned to the wall before him and ordered, "Find where I Am Very Handsome is at the moment!"

If it was just killing dozens of core disciples, it was still well within his means to do so as well. However, if his opponent included Elder Bai Ye and the old man before him, even he would have a fairly tough time dealing with them.

There was no doubt about it. 'I Am Very Handsome' and 'I Am Low Profile' were likely to be the same person!

Weng!

The wall in front flickered, but nothing appeared.

"Sect Leader Han, that person has already left the Ethereal Hall after killing the core disciples!" the old man explained. "However, Elder Bai Ye seems to have confirmed that person's identity. He's looking for that person at the moment, and he requests for you and the other elders to return to the Elder Council to await his return. He believes that he would be able to bring that person over soon enough!"

"Bai Ye has already confirmed that person's identity?"

The few elders looked at one another with a look of disbelief on their faces.

It was a known fact that Elder Bai Ye was severely wounded, and his life was hanging on a thread.

Due to his physical condition, he was even excused from the Elder Council. How did he manage to confirm the identity of that person ahead of them?

"Well, it's like that..." the old man began explaining the matter.

He was unaware of the matter regarding Bai Ruanqing purchasing the medicine from Zhang Xuan, but he did know

about what that came afterward. He felt that it was the basis behind Elder Bai Ye's deduction of that person's true identity.

"Bai Ruanqing has only learned two moves from that person, but her ranking swiftly rose from the seventeenth place to the first place. She even fought my grandson to a draw?" Elder He widened his eyes in disbelief.

If he was still a little uncertain a moment ago, right now, he was utterly convinced that Elder Bai Ye had gotten the right person.

"Let's quickly return then!"

Knowing that this matter had been resolved, the crowd quickly made their way back to the Elder Council.

Barely after they took their seats, the doors opened. Elder Bai Ye walked in with a young man beside him.

"Sect Leader Han, you are back!" Elder Bai Ye's eyes lit up after seeing the person sitting on the center seat. He quickly gestured to the young man beside him and introduced, "This is the person who has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, Zhang Xuan!"

"Zhang Xuan?"

The crowd quickly glanced over out of curiosity.

To their surprise, the other party was only in his early twenties. That was an unbelievably young age for a cultivator who had reached the zenith of swordsmanship in the Azure!

"Zhang Xuan, this is our sect leader, Han Jianqiu!" Elder Bai Ye gestured to the old man sitting at the center of the group and said.

"Sect leader?" Zhang Xuan gazed over.

Han Jianqiu had the appearance of someone in his sixties. He was dressed in a green robe, and his presence seemed to be suffused with sharp Sword Intent, making it difficult for one to gauge the depth of his cultivation.

[1] The Nine Swords of Dugu are depicted to be nine independent sword stance to counter a wide range of martial

arts. It's known to be formless and flexible, containing only several basic moves that can be put together to construct endless variations, making it impossible for the opponent to predict and counter the swordplay.

1986 Devastating the Elder Council 1

1986 Devastating the Elder Council (1)

There were no records of what came after High Immortals in the books that Zhang Xuan had accessed so far, and Elder Lu Yun had no idea what was there either. Nevertheless, his gut feeling was that the old man before him, Sect Leader Han Jianqiu, had already reached that unknown level.

He could tell that Han Jianqiu did not bear him any ill will, but if the latter really wanted to make a move against him, he would be completely helpless to retaliate.

“Zhang Xuan, is it convenient for you to display your swordsmanship to us?” Han Jianqiu asked with a chuckle.

“May I know how you wish for me to display my swordsmanship?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“Your cultivation is only at Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm, so it would be impossible for you to enter the elders’ Ethereal Hall. Since that’s the case, let’s enter the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall and have a duel there. I think that there’s no better way to demonstrate one’s swordsmanship than a real battle!” Han Jianqiu replied.

The elders also had an exclusive Ethereal Hall, but there was a minimum cultivation to enter its premises. Clearly, the young man had not reached the minimum requirement, so they could only make do with the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall instead.

Seeing that the other party did not notice that he had intentionally suppressed his cultivation, Zhang Xuan replied with a smile, “Entering the core disciples’ Ethereal Hall? That’s too troublesome. Why don’t you just suppress your cultivation and have a fight with me here?”

“Here? Are you certain?” Before Han Jianqiu could say anything, Elder He had already interjected with a frown.

“Everyone’s cultivation, zhenqi capacity, and physical prowess are at the same level as one another in the Ethereal Hall, so it’s indubitably the fairest battlefield for all of us. On the other hand, here, even if we suppress our cultivation, there will still be some differences in the resilience of our bodies, souls, and purity of zhenqi. Those are not factors that we can control.”

Entering the Ethereal Hall only required a sliver of one’s consciousness, and one would be instantaneously paired with a body whose attributes were identical to everyone else. In a sense, it was similar to one’s consciousness being brought over to a puppet’s body. It was only under such circumstances that the differences in the prowess of one’s swordsmanship would show clearly.

But in reality, even if they suppressed their cultivation, their physical bodies and souls as High Immortals would still grant them a decisive advantage in the battle. There was no way a Lesser Pseudo Immortal would stand a chance against them!

“It’s fine,” Zhang Xuan replied.

While he could uncover the other party’s identity from their sword arts in the Ethereal Hall through the Library of Heaven’s Path, the information that he received was limited. If he used the Library of Heaven’s Path in reality, he could even track down the other party’s ancestors. If anything happened, this information could become the key for him to preserve his life.

“Humph! Since you have already made up your mind, we also want to see just how powerful the Gods’ Sword Intent is!” an elder said as he stood up.

The Gods’ Sword Intent was the swordsmanship comprehended by the founder, and just the fact that the founder was able to steal half a character from the Hall of Gods spoke a lot about its prowess. Unfortunately, over the past several thousand years, no one had been able to reach the same level as the founder.

In fact, even they, despite being the strongest sword practitioners in the sect, were unable to tell just how powerful it was!

Since the person before them wanted to challenge them outside the Ethereal Hall, that would be for the best! They were more than willing to test the prowess of the Gods' Sword Intent for themselves.

In any case, given the resilience of their physical bodies and souls, even if they suppressed their cultivation, the other party would not be able to hurt them anymore!

"I am Chou Huo, the First Elder of the Core Disciple Sector. My cultivation is at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, and I wish to test your swordsmanship!"

The elder named Chou Huo stepped forward and swiftly suppressed his cultivation to Zhang Xuan's level. With a simple flick of his blade, a crisp metallic reverberation echoed through the air.

It was customary for each elder to be bestowed with a sword from the Elder Council. The swords that elders received were identical, and they were intended for dueling purposes. The reason behind that was to ensure that the prowess of the weapon did not interfere in the results of the duel.

Zhang Xuan looked at Chou Huo calmly, not drawing his blade at all. Instead, he chuckled lightly and said, "You won't be enough. The rest of you should come down as well!"

"Not enough?"

The eyebrows of the other elders shot up in astonishment. Among them, Elder Bai Ye even clasped his forehead.

To think that this fellow actually called himself I Am Low Profile...

Just tell me, how the heck is this low profile at all?

Those who are present aren't just the top sword practitioners of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion; they are renowned even across the entire Forsaken Continent! Even if your swordsmanship is formidable, any single person here would be enough to be an opponent for you...

Yet, you actually want to fight everyone, including the Sect Leader Han?

Is there any limit to your arrogance?

“It seems like you all dare not face me?” Zhang Xuan’s eyebrows shot up, and a provocative smile crept onto his lips.

Seeing how Zhang Xuan was snubbing him, Chou Huo’s complexion did not look too good. “I admit that the Gods’ Sword Intent is indeed formidable, but it’s not for no reason that I was able to become the First Elder of the Core Disciple Sector. Not to mention, only my cultivation has been suppressed here. If you wish to fight everyone else, you would do well to defeat me first!”

In the first place, it was already beneath a Heavenly High Immortal like him to challenge a Lesser Pseudo Immortal, but the other party thought that he would not be able to put up a fight.

This was as good as slapping him in his face!

Furthermore, it was the kind that utilized a skillful combination of backhand and forehand to create a rhythmic ‘Pah! Pah! Pah!’ kind of face slap!

“Is that how it works here? I see!” Seeing that no one else intended to join the battle, possibly due to their confidence in Chou Huo’s strength, Zhang Xuan smiled lightly as he raised a single finger up.

“What does that mean? Do you intend to defeat me in a single move?” Chou Huo was stunned for a moment before he roared furiously in laughter. “Aren’t you being a little too arrogant?”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan shook his head and clarified himself. “You misunderstand. What I’m saying is that without using a sword or moving an inch, I can defeat you with a single finger in a single breath.”

You...” Chou Huo nearly exploded on the spot.

As the First Elder of the Core Disciple Sector, he had tempered his state of mind to a level where he could remain unfazed to most matters... but he had never met someone as infuriating as the other party!

It was not just the other party's words that were leaving him so maddened. Even the other party's gaze and gestures were incredibly condescending, almost as if he was looking at an ant.

He was a Heavenly High Immortal, one of the strongest experts on the Forsaken Continent!

Yet, why did it feel as if he was a nobody attempting to challenge someone far beyond his league?

"Very well, allow me to assess your prowess. I'm looking forward to seeing how you defeat me with a single finger in a single breath!" Chou Huo harrumphed as he glared at Zhang Xuan.

...

"Isn't that young man a little arrogant?"

"Arrogant? More like his head is up in the clouds!"

Han Jianqiu and Elder He looked at one another as they traded bitter smiles.

For a Lesser Pseudo Immortal lad to remain unfazed in the presence of so many Heavenly High Immortals and even utter such haughty words... Did he have a screw loose in his head, or did he have the skills to back his words?

"The Gods' Sword Intent is known to be powerful enough to deal with even the deities... Let's hope that this young man's strength is enough to awe us!"

"I guess that's all we can do now!"

Shaking their heads, the two of them turned their gazes back to Chou Huo and Zhang Xuan.

Seeing how no one else was coming even after his provocation, Zhang Xuan was a little disappointed, "■at a pity...

He knew that his words were a little arrogant, but he was doing it on purpose.

He wanted everyone to make a move so that he could gather the flaws of everyone on the Elder Council. This would allow

him to be prepared for whatever came his way in the future. Otherwise, the duels would probably end after he defeated around three enemies and proved his strength.

He did not think that he had the strength to oppose a Heavenly High Immortal in his current state, so he could only find other means to escape from them in case any of them intended him harm.

Forget it... I should defeat this one before challenging the rest of them again. I believe they should all come down after this...

Seeing how snugly seated the elders were, Zhang Xuan knew that it was impossible for him to convince them to come down for the time being.

Thus, he turned his gaze to Chou Huo and said, "Let's not waste any time and get it over with!"

Hu!

Right after he said those words, Chou Huo moved.

Even though Chou Huo had suppressed his cultivation to the Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm, his movements were still swift like a hurricane. The sword in his hand seemed to pierce right through the limitations of space, arriving before Zhang Xuan's face in an instant.

In terms of prowess, there was no doubt that he was many times stronger than the number one core disciple, He Jingxuan.

But just as Chou Huo's sword was about to reach Zhang Xuan's throat, Zhang Xuan raised his finger and flicked it lightly.

His movements were not too fast, but they felt solemn and incredibly heavy. In an instant, Chou Huo felt as if a comet was crushing down on him, leaving him feeling as if he was facing a force that he could never hope to oppose.

"How is this possible?" Chou Huo widened his eyes in disbelief.

He was a Heavenly High Immortal expert. Even if he suppressed his cultivation, his mental resilience would still be

at a much higher level. It should have been impossible for the other party to make a move that would have left him feeling so helpless... but that single finger actually made him feel as if he was facing something far beyond him.

How did the other party manage to do that?

Kacha! Kacha!

With a furious roar, Chou Huo tried to shake away that feeling in his mind and push through with sheer courage. However, as the finger came into contact with his sword, the zhenqi infused into the sword immediately dissipated. The sword swiftly bent into an awkward angle, causing cracks to appear all over it before it shattered into innumerable fragments.

As for Chou Huo himself, he tried to move but the overwhelming feeling kept him bound to the spot. He could only watch helplessly as the other party's finger slowly approached his glabella.

On the seats above, Han Jianqiu was slightly stunned by the sight for a moment before the edge of his lips curved up a little. This fellow... Interesting!"

"Sect Leader Han, this is..." Elder He glanced at Han Jianqiu in confusion.

Ignoring the fact that Chou Huo had the body and soul of a High Immortal, even if one assumed that they were of the same cultivation realm, how could Zhang Xuan possibly destroy Chou Huo's sword with a single finger and seal his strength too? What were the principles behind this move?

"If I'm not mistaken, his expertise lies not only in swordsmanship but in formations as well," Han Jianqiu explained. "Formations?" Elder He was even more confused.

"Un. That move made use of not just his Sword Intent but the formation around the entire Elder Council. He used the formation to refine his Sword Intent to a tremendous level, far beyond what Chou Huo could stand against," Han Jianqiu explained. "The reason he used his words to goad the other party earlier was, in truth, to stall for time. He was in his process of refining his Sword Intent then..."

At this point, Han Jianqiu remarked, "It's no wonder he was able to comprehend the Gods' Sword Intent. His ability to tap into whatever resources are around him is truly formidable!"

"This..." Elder He's cheeks twitched a little.

How long had it been since the other party entered the Elder Council? All in all, not more than ten minutes.

But within this period, not only did he see through the formation cast around the Elder Council, he was even able to make use of it to nourish his Sword Intent.

This was too remarkable!

Previously, he had thought that it was impossible for someone to be so much more powerful than them in the same cultivation realm, but it seemed like he might have been underestimating the other party!

Peng!

While they were shocked beyond words, the battle between the two people fighting below had already come to an end. As Zhang Xuan's finger fell on Chou Huo's forehead, the latter was sent flying into the distance.

Chou Huo hurriedly released the seal on his cultivation while he was flying back, or else he would have sustained severe internal injuries.

"How is it?" Zhang Xuan placed his hands behind his back as he looked at Chou Huo impassively.

All in all, from the moment he made his move to the moment that Chou Huo was sent flying, he had spent exactly one breath.

"I... have lost!" Chou Huo lowered his head and surrendered.

Even though he felt that the other party did not triumph over him on the grounds of just swordsmanship alone, he felt that it was an embarrassment to even point that out. After all, it was a great humiliation for a High Immortal like him to be defeated by a Pseudo Immortal within a single breath.

“Hahaha!” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he suddenly turned his gaze to the other members of the Elder Council. His voice echoed loudly in the ears of every single elder present.

“I wonder if I could have the honor of facing the rest of you. Won’t you allow me to give each of you a good pummeling with my sword?”

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1987 Devastating the Elder Council (2)

You...”

“He’s way too arrogant! I have never felt like hitting someone so much in my life before!”

“In my two hundred years alive, I have seen countless geniuses, but this is the first time I’ve wanted to strangle someone so much!”

“Have we made a mistake by bringing him here?”

Hearing those words, Han Jianqiu, Elder He, and the others were so furious that they gnashed their teeth together.

When they first heard that someone had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, they had been so excited that they had immediately put everything aside and even breached the conventions of the sect just to find him... but when they finally found him, it felt like they had just made the worst mistake of their lives.

By saying that you’ll pummel us with your sword, what you mean is that we won’t be a match for you even if all of us combine our might together, is that so?

Conceited!

Pompous!

Low profile your head!

Taking a deep breath, Elder He stood up and said, “That being said, even though he used the formation of the Elder Council to his advantage, the fact that he could defeat Elder Chou with a single move does show that he has superior battle senses. Allow me to give him a try...”

At that moment, Han Jianqiu shook his head and stood up. “He wishes to challenge all of us at once. Let’s not waste any time and fight him together.”

“Sect Leader Han...”

The faces of the elders around immediately stiffened. They had never thought that they would hear such words from the mouth of their sect leader.

They were the strongest experts on the continent! If someone learned that they had suppressed their cultivation to challenge a Pseudo Immortal realm lad... They would be mocked for their entire lives by their peers!

“One who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent is capable of reaching the gods with his blade. It’s not an embarrassment for all of us to face him together,” Han Jianqiu replied calmly.

The crowd hesitated for a moment before eventually nodding in agreement. “Yes!”

The Forsaken Continent was a land abandoned by the gods. Comprehending the Gods’ Sword Intent meant that one’s mastery of swordsmanship had already reached a level that could compete with the gods.

Even though their cultivation was indeed much higher, there was no doubt that the other party had something in him that far surpassed the rest of them. Otherwise, it would not just have been the founder who had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent in the several thousand years since the founding of the sect.

Huala!

Several elders walked down to the open space at the center of the Elder Council with a sword each in hand.

They were Sect Leader Han Jianqiu, Elder He, Elder Bai Ye, and two other elders. All in all, there were five people.

Those five people represented the highest fighting prowess of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Every single one of

them was ranked within the top thirty strongest cultivators of the Forsaken Continent.

“Wait a moment...” Despite the formidable line up before him, Zhang Xuan did not seem nervous in the least. Instead, he seemed to heave a sigh of relief before speaking up. “Don’t you think that a plain battle is too boring? Since we are going to fight, we might as well put something on the line to make things a little more interesting!”

“You want to make a bet?” Elder Bai Ye’s eyebrows shot up as an ominous premonition loomed over his mind.

This money-minded fellow could not be thinking of cleaning them out as well, could he?

As the sect leader and the four strongest elders of one of the Six Sects, if even they got robbed despite putting their strength together... Elder Bai Ye was not too sure if he would still be able to find the strength to continue existing in this world.

They would surely become the greatest joke in the Forsaken Continent in all of history!

“Bet? What kind of bet do you wish to make?” Han Jianqiu asked.

“If I win the duel, there’s something that I would like to ask you. If you know the answer, I hope that you can answer it honestly. If I lose, I’ll apologize for my earlier disrespect,” Zhang Xuan replied.

Hearing those words, Elder Bai Ye’s heart finally settled down a little. “All is fine as long as no money is involved...”

To be honest, he felt like he had already been traumatized by the word ‘bet’. Each time someone said that word, he would immediately jolt in horror.

“You wish to pose a question? Even if you lose this battle, I don’t see any harm in answering your doubts,” Han Jianqiu replied. “Also, there’s no need for you to apologize for your disrespect. It’ll suffice as long as you don’t speak of whatever that has happened here today!”

“Sounds fine to me.” Zhang Xuan nodded.

“It’s settled then,” Han Jianqiu smiled. “Let’s begin the duel!”

Taking a deep breath, Zhang Xuan drew his sword from its sheath.

The reason he had made the bet was to inquire about Luo Ruoxin. Since the other party had agreed to it, what he had to do now was win the battle!

While Han Jianqiu had said that he would answer his question even if he lost the battle, Zhang Xuan knew that the matter concerning Luo Ruoxin was likely classified as the most confidential secret of the Forsaken Continent. After all, the fact that the Spirit God Palace had the character •神 (God)¹ in its name spoke volumes about the significance of its existence.

As such, he could not just rely on Han Jianqiu’s goodwill. He needed a compelling reason to force the latter to answer his questions. He could not afford to lose this duel!

While he had been putting up a leisurely front all along, he knew that defeating the opponents before him would be no easy feat. Dealing with one of them would be well within his means, but dealing with all of them at once would definitely pose some trouble.

Meanwhile, Han Jianqiu glanced at the other four elders and said, “He is the man who has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. It would be a horrible mistake to underestimate him. We have to go all out right from the start!”

“Agreed,” the other four elders replied solemnly.

They, too, understood this. Just the fact that Zhang Xuan was able to defeat Chou Huo in a single move proved his prowess.

Sou!

Han Jianqiu’s sword burst forth as he claimed the first move.

While he had suppressed his cultivation to the Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm, his Sword Intent still gushed forth like a boundless ocean. His very presence left one feeling as if one was falling continuously in the endless abyss. Even escape was impossible.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes warily.

As expected of the sect leader. Han Jianqiu's mastery of swordsmanship was too much higher than the earlier Elder Chou Huo.

As soon as he made a move, Zhang Xuan could already feel great pressure being heaped upon him.

Flaws! Zhang Xuan willed.

The main reason for him challenging all of them at once was to analyze their flaws. This was the perfect opportunity for him to do so.

Weng!

There was a light buzz before a book materialized within the Library of Heaven's Path. Tapping on it lightly, knowledge flowed into his head.

"Han Jianqiu. 23rd Sect Leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Semi-Divinity realm cultivator. Comprehended the Emerald Ripple Tides Swordsmanship, resulting in the relentless nature of his swordsmanship. There is a total of twenty-three flaws, namely..."

Semi-Divinity realm cultivator? Zhang Xuan nodded in realization. So, that's the realm that's above High Immortal...

He had previously noticed that Han Jianqiu's strength was far above that of Elder Bai Ye and Elder He, and that was indeed the case.

While there was the prefix 'Semi' in front, the fact that it carried the term 'Divinity' showed what kind of frightening existence he was.

But as powerful as Han Jianqiu was, once his cultivation was suppressed down to Pseudo Immortal realm, there was no way he could be a match for him.

Just the flaws reflected in the Library of Heaven's Path would allow Zhang Xuan to defeat him without any trouble.

Zhang Xuan flicked his sword toward one of the flaws reflected in Han Jianqiu's swordsmanship.

His movements were imposing like a great dragon, and his swordsmanship carried the indomitable aura of the Gods' Sword Intent.

Due to the limitations of his cultivation, he had not been able to utilize too much of the prowess of the Gods' Sword Intent. However, with his cultivation rising to Heavenly Pseudo Immortal, it had already fused together with his body, allowing him to exert seventy to eighty percent of its true might!

“Hmm?”

Han Jianqiu did not expect Zhang Xuan to be able to see through the flaws in his moves with just a glance. Taken aback, he retreated a step as he hurriedly gestured for the others to join him. “Let's attack him together!”

At this point, the others had also finished their preparations. Four swords bolted toward Zhang Xuan from four different directions. A metallic screeching sound reminiscent of the cry of a banshee echoed throughout the room.

Flaws!

With just a slight sidestep, Zhang Xuan was able to evade their collaborative offense with ease. At the same time, four books materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path with a jolt.

Before long, he gained some degree of understanding of the four elders too.

Other than Sect Leader Han Jianqiu, Elder He was the strongest expert within the group. His cultivation had also reached the Semi-Divinity realm.

Elder Bai Ye and Elder Huang Qing were both at the Heavenly High Immortal realm, and they were just a step away from reaching the Semi-Divinity realm.

The fifth elder shared the same surname as him, and his full name was Zhang Wushang. His cultivation was conspicuously lower than the rest of the group, being only at Earthly High Immortal. However, just because his cultivation was at a lower level did not necessarily mean that he was the weakest of the group.

On the contrary, Zhang Wushang's mastery of swordsmanship was actually above that of Elder He. While he was still some way off from matching Han Jianqiu, the gap was not extremely large. As a result, of the four elders he was facing, the one who posed the greatest threat to him was actually Zhang Wushang.

Each of their swordsmanship has its own flaws and problems, but the issue is that their reflexes are simply too quick. Before I can even finish exploiting one of their weaknesses, the other one will swiftly step in to intervene...

After trading a few blows, Zhang Xuan's complexion was looking more and more awful. He knew that it would not be easy to win against them, but they were tougher opponents than he had expected.

As expected of the top experts of the Forsaken Continent. The likes of He Jingxuan and the others could not begin to compare to them.

I'll have to calculate their openings as a collective group in order to deal the conclusive blow, Zhang Xuan thought.

Back on the Master Teacher Continent, he had noticed that it was possible to view a collaboration among multiple individuals as an entity and have the Library of Heaven's Path compile a book on that. Naturally, that would be much more useful than analyzing each of the individuals.

The Library of Heaven's Path jolted, and a book materialized. It was filled with the information and flaws of the collaboration of the five sword practitioners.

"I see..." Zhang Xuan nodded in realization.

After coming to know the flaws of their collaboration, it was as if everything before him suddenly cleared up.

Hu!

He flicked his wrist and took out a piece of black cloth.

"What is he intending to do?"

Han Jianqiu and the others were having a difficult time as well. The young man had been striking at their flaws one after

another in quick succession, such that they had their hands full just trying to defend themselves. Thus, they had been brainstorming ways to turn the tables around and at least push the duel to a draw when they noticed Zhang Xuan's anomalous actions.

Frowns of bewilderment filled their faces.

"Sect Leader Han and Elder He, hurry up and attack him! He's intending to cover his eyes!" Elder Chou Huo shouted by the side.

"He's intending to cover his eyes?"

"He feels that he can cope against the five of us even without his vision?"

"Screw this, I'm going to kill that b*stard!"

The five sword practitioners were astounded for an instant before something erupted within them. You can't humiliate us like that!

It's already beneath the five of us to gang up against an individual like you, but you still want to cover your eyes to fight with us?

Sou sou sou sou!

Under the effects of their rage, their swords grew even faster and mightier. They swiftly sealed Zhang Xuan's surroundings with their sword qi, such that numerous holes would be punctured into the young man if he took the slightest misstep.

But for some reason, even as the other party was tying the black cloth around his eyes, every step that he took evaded their sword qi with such incredible precision that it seemed as if he had measured every step with a ruler. Even though their offense crashed down like raging tides, it did not seem to have fazed him in the least.

It was almost as if he was a specter treading around their wrath rage without sustaining the slightest bit of damage.

Hu!

After tying the black cloth over his eyes, Zhang Xuan continued treading around their attacks, but vaguely, it seemed like his movements were getting more and more agile.

His eyes were no longer distracted by the feints executed by his opponents, and he could ignore all the baits that his opponents laid out before of him. All he had to do was focus on the flaws listed in the Library of Heaven's Path and execute his moves one after another.

Deng deng deng deng!

With the flaws of their collaboration exploited again and again, it did not take long for their teamwork to fall apart. Seeing that the time was ripe, Zhang Xuan decided to end the battle.

“Break!”

Infusing the Gods' Sword Intent into his blade, Zhang Xuan executed eight stabs consecutively. Each strike was aimed at the flaws of their collaboration once more.

Dang lang! Dang lang! Dang lang!

The sounds of swords falling to the ground echoed loudly in the Elder Council.

The five experts felt a sudden numbness in their hands, which caused them to lose their grip on the sword in their grasp.

Making use of this opening, Zhang Xuan moved with such agility that he seemed to have warped into five silhouettes as he stationed five surges of sword qi right next to their throats.

Of course, as High Immortals, it was likely that sword qi of such a level would not have been able to harm them... but the same could not be said now that they had suppressed their cultivation to the Pseudo Immortal realm.

If the other party willed it, he could have killed them all!

“We have lost,” Han Jianqiu conceded with a bitter smile.

The five of them, despite being the strongest existences in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, had actually been defeated by a blindfolded individual. It seemed like Zhang Xuan was a

much more fearsome sword practitioner than they had imagined!

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Seeing that the sect leader had admitted his loss, Zhang Xuan quietly heaved a sigh of relief as he removed the black cloth.

It might have appeared as if he had beaten the five of them easily, but in truth, it was much more complicated than that. In terms of difficulty, this would definitely be far above that of slaying five thousand inner disciples in the Ethereal Hall. If he had shown the smallest opening, there was no doubt that those five would have exploited it right away to crush him!

It was fortunate that everything turned out well in the end.

“The Gods’ Sword Intent is indeed formidable!” Returning to his seat, Sect Leader Han Jianqiu chuckled softly. It did not seem like the earlier defeat had induced any negative emotions in him at all.

“I thank you for going easy on me,” Zhang Xuan replied with clasped fists.

“A loss is a loss...” Han Jianqiu shook his head. “So, what’s the question you would like to ask?”

“Sect Leader Han, I would like to ask if you have heard of... the Spirit God Palace?” Zhang Xuan asked nervously.

The person before him was the leader of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, one of the top figures of the Azure. The things that he knew of were likely well above what Elder Lu Yun knew.

There was a good chance that Han Jianqiu would be able to provide him with some clues to Luo Ruoxin’s whereabouts. “The Spirit God Palace?” Han Jianqiu frowned a little before shaking his head. “I’ve never heard of this place before.” This left Zhang Xuan a little taken aback.

“The Six Sects of the Forsaken Continent are namely the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Starchaser Palace, Myriad Beast Hall, Sevenstar Pavilion, Blackmirror Citadel, and Evanescent Immortal Sect,” Han Jianqiu said. “Of the Six Sects, the only one who is qualified to use the ‘卒申 (God)’ character is our Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. None of the other five sects would dare use the word carelessly.

The only existence that towers above the Six Sects is the Ethereal Hall. It was founded by Hall Master Kong four thousand years ago, and he single-handedly entered the Hall of Gods to steal the (God)’ character.

“It’s precisely due to this that the Ethereal Hall was allowed to expand throughout the world, and not even the Six Sects dare oppose it. However, in the thousands of years since, no one else has been able to pass through the Azure Bridge, let alone enter the Hall of Gods to grab the character. Given so, there’s no other major power in the Forsaken Continent that would dare use the ‘神 (God)’ character. There are only two possibilities. One, the Spirit God Palace doesn’t exist at all. Two, it’s not a power that’s located on the Forsaken Continent!”

As the Forsaken Continent was a world cast away by the gods, the usage of the ■神 (God)_ character was an extremely sensitive issue. Without the explicit permission of the Hall of Gods, there was no power that would dare carry the word in its name.

If the Spirit God Palace really existed, there was no way he would not have heard of it.

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan’s face paled upon hearing those words. Could it be that what the summoned deity had told him back then was all lies?

Did the Spirit God Palace not exist at all in the Azure?

Han Jianqiu could see that Zhang Xuan was particularly concerned about this matter, so he asked out of curiosity, “Where did you hear about that place from?”

“I happened to overhear someone speaking of it...” Zhang Xuan shook his head in disappointment.

If even someone of Han Jianqiu’s standing had never heard of the place before, it was likely that no one in the entire Azure would know about it!

If so... where could the Spirit God Palace be? Did it even exist?

Where could Luo Ruoxin be?

Han Jianqiu paused for a moment before replying, “If the news you have heard isn’t false and the Spirit God Palace is truly existent... perhaps you could try asking Du Qingyuan. She might know a thing or two.”

“Du Qingyuan?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“She’s the head of the Starchaser Palace. In the Forsaken Continent, she is the one who has the deepest understanding of the Hall of Gods. It’s rumored that she has even communicated with real gods before and was rewarded by them,” Han Jianqiu replied.

“She has communicated with real gods?” Zhang Xuan froze as a thought came to his mind.

If Luo Ruoxin was not in the Azure... could she possibly be a real god?

This mysterious girlfriend of his knew about the existence of the Library of Heaven’s Path and was able to fuse Kong shi’s Great Codex of Spring and Autumn together with it. If one looked at her abilities, she seemed to surpass even Sect Leader Han!

If so, it seemed to make perfect sense to say that she was a real god.

“However, Du Qingyuan is not a person with a good temper, and she treads very carefully when it comes to matters regarding the gods too. She might not necessarily be willing to answer your question,” Han Jianqiu warned.

“Considering that the Forsaken Continent is a land cast away by the gods, the thing that they abhor the most is us

investigating their affairs. If the Hall of Gods notices such a thing, there's a good chance that they might come after us!"

Zhang Xuan frowned as he nodded grimly in agreement.

The books that he had read did give him some understanding of the Forsaken Continent. It was said that those living on this continent had disobeyed the rules of the gods, which resulted in this entire piece of land being cast away. It would not be inaccurate to say that all lifeforms living on this piece of land were exiles.

The descendants of the exiles worked hard day and night cultivating, hoping to cleanse the name of their ancestors and return to the Empyrean, the world where the gods lived.

Their hope lay in what was known as the Azure Bridge. It was the only pathway leading to the Empyrean, but it would only connect once every hundred years. Furthermore, the Hall of Gods stood in their way at the other end of the bridge.

There were guardians in the Hall of Gods that denied entry to those from the Azure.

It was from there that Hall Master Kong and the founder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion had stolen the ■卒申 (God)' character.

"The Hall of Gods seals this world away, preventing any of us from becoming real gods. Furthermore, if anyone dares probe into the secrets of the gods, the Hall of Gods swiftly finds out about it and takes action. In fact..."

At this point, Han Jianqiu suddenly lowered his voice grimly, as if fearing that someone would overhear him, before carrying on. "A person like you, who has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, is deeply feared by them. If they learn of your existence, it might provoke them to make a move as well..."

Surprised by the revelation, Zhang Xuan asked, "Why?"

"I don't know either. Perhaps, they don't wish to see anyone questioning their divine authority. Those who have comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent will eventually gain the

strength to challenge them, and they don't wish to see such a thing happening. All in all, it's best to stay away from matters concerning the gods wherever possible," Han Jianqiu said.

"So, I hope that you will avoid drawing the attention of those from the Hall of Gods. Until you possess the strength to stand on equal grounds with the Hall of Gods, it's best to ensure that as few people know of your identity as possible!"

"This..." Zhang Xuan closed his eyes for a moment before nodding slowly. "I'll watch my words."

"It's not just your words. Don't reveal your strength easily either. Being too high profile will kill you!" Han Jianqiu continued.

"Don't worry, it's my nature to remain a low profile!" Zhang Xuan replied with a confident smile.

"... Cough cough!"

Seeing how much Zhang Xuan was lacking self-awareness, Han Jianqiu's face turned red as he suddenly found himself not knowing how to respond to the other party's remark.

In a single day, Zhang Xuan had caused the mountain gate to collapse. Following which, he challenged all the inner disciples and core disciples in the sect. Not too long after that, he proceeded to provoke the entire Elder Council and defeated the sect leader and the four strongest elders.

He had probably caused a far greater uproar than an ordinary person would in their entire lifetime, and yet, he dared to say that he was low profile?

Where is your face?

Knowing that he would faint from anger at this rate, Han Jianqiu took out a token and passed it over. "Hall Master Kong from the Ethereal Hall learned that you have comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, so he asked me to give this token to you. With this, you'll be able to acquire any resources in the Ethereal Hall you need to advance your cultivation at no cost at all!"

“It’s given by Hall Master Kong?” Zhang Xuan’s body tensed up a little, and he could not help mumbling to himself, “Is that Kong shi? Is he... still on the Forsaken Continent?”

The lifespan of a Pseudo Immortal was only three hundred years, and even those who had reached the High Immortal realm or Semi-Divinity realm would not live too much longer than that.

Kong shi had left the Master Teacher Continent tens of thousands of years earlier, and using a 1:10 ratio, it meant that he had been there for several thousand years at the very least. Was it possible for him to still be alive after so many years?

“Kong shi? Well, people did use to address him like that in the past!” Han Jianqiu chuckled. “Of course, he’s on the Forsaken Continent. As for where he resides at the moment, I fear that I’m not too aware of that. For the past several thousand years, he has been roaming the lands, rarely appearing before others. It’s only in recent decades that he’s begun appearing in public once more, and it’s only then that people knew that he’s still alive!”

“This...” Zhang Xuan’s eyes lit up in excitement.

This was probably the best news that he had heard the entire day! If Kong shi was still alive in the Azure, it would only be a matter of time before they met one another.

Taking the token from Han Jianqiu, he touched it lightly and felt a surge of warmth flowing into his body.

“It’s him...” Zhang Xuan’s body trembled a little.

If he still harbored some doubts as to whether Hall Master Kong was truly Kong shi or not, from the moment that he came into contact with the token, he knew that was definitely the case!

As fellow Celestial Master Teachers who had originated from the Master Teacher Continent, there was some kind of inexplicable connection between them.

“Hall Master Kong has always been generous to those who possess superior talent. As the sect leader of the Ascendant

Cloud Sword Pavilion, I would be mocked if I didn't offer you something as well!" Han Jianqiu chuckled.

With a flick of his wrist, he took out a sword and said, "This sword is called Tongshang. While it's nowhere in comparison to my Ruantian, it's still a Heavenly High Immortal artifact. I'll give it to you now. Try to decipher it, and if you can claim it as your own, it'll be highly beneficial to your cultivation and your fighting prowess!"

Hu!

The Tongshang Sword floated in front of Zhang Xuan, emanating immense pressure. It was almost as if a High Immortal expert was standing right before him.

"Thank you, Sect Leader Han." Zhang Xuan bowed deeply.

He had been worrying that he would be helpless if a High Immortal came after him, but with such a sword in hand, it would be no different from having a Heavenly High Immortal constantly protecting him by his side.

Of course, that was only if he managed to tame the Tongshang Sword. Swords of such a tier possessed their own spirit, and given the current limitations of his cultivation, it would be no easy feat for him to win it over.

Nevertheless, with the Library of Heaven's Path, he should still be able to pull it off.

Zhang Xuan swiftly placed the Tongshang Sword away in his storage ring for the time being.

Most likely, Han Jianqiu must have placed some kind of seal on the Tongshang Sword as well, or else it would not have allowed him to store it in his storage ring.

Han Jianqiu nodded as he watched Zhang Xuan depositing the sword into his storage ring. A moment later, he suddenly thought something and asked curiously, "Oh right, which peak are you under at the moment? Who is the elder managing you?"

The elder of the peak had really done well to nurture such a talented disciple. There was no doubt that the elder had to be

handsomely rewarded!

“I am currently still residing in the peak where the inner disciples live in... As for the elder... I believe that it’s Elder Lu Yun,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“Lu Yun?” Han Jianqiu frowned.

Seeing that the sect leader had never heard of Elder Lu Yun before, Elder He quickly filled him in on the details. “He was an external elder who was promoted earlier today for his meritorious contribution in bringing in a highly talented disciple. As he managed to achieve a breakthrough to the True Immortal realm, I promoted him to inner elder.”

External elders were not allowed to participate in the Elder Council, so it came as no surprise that Han Jianqiu did not know of the other party.

“An external elder? If that’s the case, does it mean that you were previously an outer disciple?” Han Jianqiu looked at the young man before him in disbelief.

An outer disciple had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent?

Was this for real?

When did the outer disciples of the sect become so formidable?

It was no wonder he wanted to challenge the inner disciples, core disciples, and even the elders. He must have been really frustrated at having his talents buried like that!

“Outer disciple?” Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan’s face reddened as he replied, “To be honest, I’m not a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion...”

As soon as he said those words, he noticed that everyone around him went completely silent. So, he hesitated for a moment before reluctantly asking, “Should I... give this token and the Tongshang Sword back to you?”

1989 The Requirements to Upgrading the Tongshang Sword

Elder Bai Ye did not have the time to report Zhang Xuan's true identity before everything happened, which resulted in this huge misunderstanding.

As such, no one in the room had known that this incredible genius who had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent was not a core disciple, not an inner disciple, not an outer disciple... Heck, he was not a disciple of the sect at all!

Well, this sure made things awkward.

A person who was not even a disciple of the sect had comprehended the Sword Intent of the founder and pummeled everyone from the inner disciples upward.

The faces of Han Jianqiu, Elder He, and the others turned bright red as their breathing became a little ragged. They were contemplating if it was possible to vanish on the spot.

What the heck was this?

They would be utterly humiliated if others learned of this matter!

"Have you really been in our sect for a single day? Furthermore, you comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent while passing by the massive sword?" Elder He was on the verge of crying.

He had stood outside the mountain gate to comprehend the profoundness of the Sword Intent for more than thirty years, only to make hardly any advancement at all. On the other hand, this young man had managed to comprehend it while he was walking by.

Was there anything in the world that was more traumatizing than this?

“I guess so... I reckon that it took me several breaths!” Zhang Xuan replied.

Elder He immediately felt everything around him becoming dark.

“It seems like the Gods’ Sword Intent is not something that can be comprehended with time,” Han Jianqiu consoled when he saw the desolate look on Elder He’s face.

Following which, he turned to Zhang Xuan and said, “The fact that you have comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent means that you are the next leader of our sect. In a way, it’s good that you aren’t a disciple. From this moment on, you will be a core elder of our sect, and you’ll enjoy all the privileges of one!”

Whether the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would be able to become the Ascendant Cloud Sword God Pavilion or not depended on the young man before him. Naturally, there was no way he could allow the young man to leave like that

The young man was not a disciple yet, but it was clearly inappropriate to place him among the inner disciples or core disciples. After all, as someone who had defeated the five strongest experts of the sect, there was no one there who was qualified to teach him swordsmanship.

Since that was the case, he might as well confer the young man the position of core elder. With such a position, it would be easier for him to succeed him as the sect leader in the future.

“Core elder?” Zhang Xuan was a little stunned. I have become the core elder of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion just like that?

“Indeed. Of course, due to safety concerns, it will be an honorary role for the time being. We won’t be announcing the matter until your cultivation finally reaches the High Immortal realm!” Han Jianqiu replied.

It was just a moment ago that it was revealed that a genius had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent. If a Pseudo Immortal

realm cultivator was abruptly promoted to the position of core elder, would it not be as good as telling the entire world that this person was the very same genius?

Thus, while it might bring about some inconvenience, it was still best to maintain a low profile for the time being.

“If so, can I access the library of the elders?” Zhang Xuan asked.

He was perfectly fine with the current arrangements; he did not like being in the spotlight after all. As long as he could get whatever he needed, the rest was unimportant.

“Of course,” Han Jianqiu replied. “This is your Elder Token. Your name isn’t inscribed on it, but I have imprinted my aura on it, so you will still be able to access any facilities available to the core elders. At the same time, you can use the resources available in the sect freely, but of course, I’ll have to ask you not to use them wastefully!”

“Thank you, Sect Leader Han!” Zhang Xuan received the Elder Token delightfully.

With this, he should be able to gather True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals and successfully push for another breakthrough!

As long as he could reach the Heavenly True Immortal realm, he would be able to put up a fight even against High Immortals, thus allowing him to ensure his safety.

“Un. Usually, every elder is allocated their own independent residence, but for your own safety, we’ll have to ask you to bear with your current residence for the time being,” Han Jianqiu said awkwardly.

Considering that it was their future sect leader, such treatment was unacceptable.

“It’s fine. There’s no need to worry about it,” Zhang Xuan replied calmly, paying the matter no heed at all.

If he was allocated an elder’s residence, it would be no different from having his identity announced. It would be hard for him not to catch anyone’s attention.

After dealing with this issue, Han Jianqiu hesitated for a moment before saying, “Since you are a core elder, I hope that you can avoid entering the inner disciples’ and core disciples’ Ethereal Halls too often...”

Zhang Xuan replied with an affirmative nod.

With the token given by Kong shi, he would not lack cultivation resources. Naturally, he would not have to earn money from those inner disciples and core disciples anymore.

“I’ll be taking my leave then!”

After asking all that had to be asked, Zhang Xuan turned around and walked out of the Elder Council. Elder Bai Ye quickly followed along to escort him back to his residence.

As soon as Zhang Xuan left the room, the surroundings turned incredibly silent. Not a single person said a word or moved at all.

It was some time before Elder He finally turned to Han Jianqiu and said, “Sect Leader Han, considering that Zhang Xuan has comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, it would be best to take him into the Palace of Sword Intent to cultivate. That way, he would be able to advance his cultivation faster. He has already met the prerequisites to do so. But why did you...”

The Palace of Sword Intent was the most elusive location of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Generations of sect leaders had tempered their Sword Intent at that venue in order to achieve a breakthrough to the Semi-Divinity realm.

Since Zhang Xuan had comprehended the Gods’ Sword Intent, it was a done deal that he would become the sect leader. Thus, their priority should be helping the young man advance his cultivation as quickly as possible’ and the most direct route to doing so was indubitably the Palace of Sword Intent. But why did Han Jianqiu not raise the matter at all?

“Stored in the Palace of Sword Intent are the precious Sword Intents of the preceding leaders of our sect. They are there for the later generations to learn from and temper themselves. It would indeed enhance the growth of normal cultivators, but...”

A bitter smile crept onto Han Jianqiu's lips as he continued. "Zhang Xuan has comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, and it's likely that his conceptualization of swordsmanship has reached a level higher than our predecessors. I fear that if he enters the Palace of Sword Intent, not only will he learn nothing at all, he might even end up unintentionally destroying the place. Considering his previous track record, I think that it will be for the best to preserve the dignity of our predecessors..."

"...“Elder He's eyebrows shot up.

What Han Jianqiu said made perfect sense.

That fellow had gone around challenging everyone that he saw. If he headed to the Palace of Sword Intent and challenged the predecessors instead of learning of them, what would become of the dignity of their predecessors?

It was fortunate that Sect Leader Han had thought things through properly, or else, if a mishap occurred, they would not dare face their predecessors after their passing.

"Elder He and Elder Chou, even the sect might not necessarily be safe anymore. I'll need to trouble the two of you to keep a lookout and take care of Zhang Xuan. He has already comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent a day after arriving here, so I believe that he might be the key to restoring the sect's glory. If it really happens, we might become an existence similar to the Ethereal Hall, towering above the other five sects!" Han Jianqiu said agitatedly.

While Zhang Xuan did not seem too reliable as a human being, his strength was indeed formidable. His mastery of swordsmanship was far above theirs and anyone else on the Forsaken Continent.

As long as he could advance his cultivation to the same level as the rest of them, it was likely that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would be able to snatch the other half of the 神 (God) character from the Hall of Gods and rise above the Six Sects. There was no saying that it might even surpass the Ethereal Hall and the Hall of Gods.

The possibilities were endless!

“Rest assured, Sect Leader Han!” Elder He and Elder Chou replied with a nod.

For the sect, they would do everything they could to help and protect Zhang Xuan!

After returning to Dan Xiaotian’s residence, Zhang Xuan quickly looked over Dan Xiaotian and Bai Ruanqing’s swordsmanship and gave them some pointers before returning to his room.

He set up an isolation barrier around the area before taking out Kong shi’s token with a flick of his wrist. He dripped a droplet of blood on the token in order to claim ownership of it. Soon, he found out the true purpose of the token.

Unlike what he had thought, this token was not an Ethereal Token, so he could not enter the Ethereal Hall through it. Rather, it was some kind of insignia.

With it, if he entered any Ethereal Halls outside, he would be able to freely purchase any resources from the Ethereal Halls without spending any money at all.

In other words, it was like a black card that he could swipe again and again without paying a single cent!

Kong shi sure was generous!

I’ll have to try it out when I finally leave the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Zhang Xuan thought as he placed it back into his storage ring.

It was possible to access external Ethereal Halls within the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, so he would have to leave the area in order to enjoy the benefits of endless credit.

After placing the card back into his storage ring, Zhang Xuan flicked his wrist and took out the Tongshang Sword that Han Jianqiu had given him.

As soon as the sword appeared, slight cracks immediately appeared in the surrounding space. It was as if the fabric of the world could not withstand the tremendous energy that the

sword was emanating, causing it to seem as if it was being torn apart.

As expected of a Heavenly High Immortal artifact, its prowess was indeed formidable.

The Tongshang Sword harrumphed coldly. “Brat, it’s under Han Jianqiu’s orders that I have reluctantly come along with you. You are still far from strong enough to tame me, so I advise you not to waste your strength. Also, you’d better not bring me out for no reason, or else I fear that I’ll lose my temper and beat you up!”

It felt that it was a huge humiliation for a Heavenly High Immortal artifact like itself to acknowledge a Pseudo Immortal realm lad as its master.

“You’ll beat me up?” Zhang Xuan burst into laughter. He tapped his finger lightly on the Tongshang Sword’s blade and said, “If I’m not mistaken, you were forged by Ouyang Qingfeng, the third greatest blacksmith on the Forsaken Continent, right?”

“Indeed!” the Tongshang Sword replied proudly.

Ouyang Qingfeng was a renowned blacksmith of the Forsaken Continent, and the weapons that he forged were much sought after by those in the top echelons. In his entire life, he had forged seven High Immortal artifacts, thus becoming a legend in his field.

It was precisely due to this that the Tongshang Sword was extremely proud of its origins.

“Ouyang Qingfeng’s sword forging technique is indeed formidable. He combined the rare Xuanyang Metal and Oceanbed Xuan Crystals together using his superior forging techniques in order to create you. However, given how valuable the materials that were used to make you are, don’t you find it regrettable how you have only reached Heavenly High Immortal-tier?” Zhang Xuan asked.

The materials that were used to make the sword before him were incredibly precious on the Forsaken Continent, and the forging method was ingenious as well. With enough luck,

there was a chance that the eventual product would have reached Semi-Divinity. It was honestly a huge pity that it had only reached Heavenly High Immortal-tier.

“Only reached Heavenly High Immortal-tier? Do you know that only a handful of Semi-Divinity artifacts exist across the entire continent? The conditions required to forge a Semi-Divinity artifact are so extreme that it’s nigh impossible to succeed. Don’t bother using such words to beguile me!” the Tongshang Sword sneered.

“If you think that you can win me over with just a few words, don’t bother. You are wasting your time!”

An artifact of the Tongshang Sword’s tier had its own pride, so it would not easily acknowledge anyone as its master. Even its previous master had gone through a lot before he eventually won its recognition.

“Beguile? You are really thinking too much. All I am doing is stating a fact. Given the materials and forging method used to make you, the chances of you becoming a Semi-Divinity weapon are roughly ten percent, and that’s under the assumption that the conditions are perfect!” Zhang Xuan replied with a nonchalant shrug.

“But with me, as long as I will it, I can ensure that you’ll be able to reach the Semi-Divinity realm with zero percent chance of failure!”

“You seem to be very confident. Sure, I’ll listen to what you have in mind then!” the Tongshang Sword replied coldly, clearly harboring no confidence in Zhang Xuan.

If it was that easy for a weapon to reach Semi-Divinity, there would not be so few of them on the Forsaken Continent.

Even the powerful Han Jianqiu was unable to do so, so there was no way a mere Pseudo Immortal realm cultivator would be able to pull it off.

“It’s very simple.”

Zhang Xuan focused his Sword Intent on the tip of his finger before infusing it into the Tongshang Sword.

It was the Gods' Sword Intent that he had comprehended!

Feeling the deep conceptualization behind the Sword Intent, the Tongshang Sword felt as if it had been kissed by the gods. It was a profound yet warm sensation. It exclaimed in astonishment, "You have comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent?"

"Indeed. You should also be aware that a sword practitioner who possesses the Gods' Sword Intent wields the power to oppose even the gods. You should also know how likely you are to reach Semi-Divinity if I nourish you with the Gods' Sword Intent," Zhang Xuan said.

If a High Immortal-tier sword wished to advance to higher realms, there was no better way than for it to be nourished with Sword Intent. Naturally, there was no better Sword Intent than the powerful Gods' Sword Intent for this.

1990 The Elders' Library

“You...” Not expecting the Dongxu Gourd to be so vicious as to swallow even a Heavenly High Immortal-tier sword just like that, Zhang Xuan anxiously whipped out his axe and struck down on the Dongxu Gourd furiously. “What the heck are you doing? Hurry up and spit it out!”

This sword was to become the trump card that would guarantee his safety! It would be a huge loss to him if it was swallowed just like that!

After all, there was no way he could depend on the Dongxu Gourd to protect him!

“It’s just a lousy lump of metal, but it sure acts as if it owns the world. Why don’t you just let me eat this fool?” the Dongxu Gourd protested with a shake of its bottom.

“Hurry up and spit it out! Otherwise, you won’t be getting anything from me at all!” Zhang Xuan was on the verge of erupting like a fiery volcano.

What the heck was with the Dongxu Gourd? It was as if eating was the only thing on its mind!

But as infuriated as Zhang Xuan was with the Dongxu Gourd, he was also extremely shocked by the matter.

All along, he had thought that the only use of the Dongxu Gourd was its bathwater, but who could have known that it would actually be capable of swallowing a High Immortal artifact whole?

If it was capable of pulling off such a feat... did this not mean that it was stronger than even High Immortal-tier artifacts?

Under Zhang Xuan’s threat, the Dongxu Gourd hesitated for a moment before reluctantly spitting the Tongshang Sword out.

It had no choice but to do it after all. It knew that whatever its master gave it in the future would definitely be worth much

more than this tiny little sword over here. It could at least weigh the losses and gains of a situation.

Putting everything aside, just the zhenqi of its master was already something that no mere sword could compete with.

“Who the hell are you?” The spat out Tongshang Sword was nearly scared out of its wits.

It was a Heavenly High Immortal-tier sword, a renowned artifact of the Forsaken Continent... but it had actually been swallowed whole by a mere gourd! To make matters worse, it had found that it was completely helpless!

Just thinking about it was enough to send shivers down its glistening surface!

The Dongxu Gourd harrumphed coldly. “You piece of sh*t. If you don’t acknowledge this lad as your master, I’ll really swallow you whole and turn you into a literal piece of sh*t!”

“I...”

The Tongshang Sword shuddered for a moment before it abruptly straightened its blade and declared, “From the first time I set my sights on Master, I already knew that he’s an extraordinary man who will achieve great things in the future. In that instant, I made my mind up that I would acknowledge no master other than him. I only refused earlier to test his resolve!”

Zhang Xuan covered his face from sheer speechlessness.

He never would have thought that a High Immortal artifact could be so shameless!

Zhang Xuan quickly conducted the acknowledgement ceremony, and before long, he felt the Tongshang Sword coming fully under his control.

It seemed like the Dongxu Gourd was not just a glutton. It still had its uses after all!

While the Library of Heaven’s Path was able to see through the flaws of the Tongshang Sword, which made Zhang Xuan confident that he would eventually be able to tame the latter,

he knew that it would not have gone so smoothly if not for the threats of the Dongxu Gourd.

However, it seems like wielding a High Immortal-tier sword is still far beyond my current ability. Even with the Gods' Sword Intent, I am unable to utilize its full prowess, Zhang Xuan thought.

Only after placing the Tongshang Sword under his control did he realize just how frightening an existence it was. That would explain why it was so reluctant to submit to him.

In comparison to the power it wielded, the strength of a Pseudo Immortal was indeed not much more than an ant.

With his current strength, he would not even be able to draw out a hundredth of the Tongshang Sword's full prowess!

Nevertheless, with this sword in hand, no one beneath High Immortals would be able to pose any threat to him. In fact, he might even be able to slay High Immortals if he caught them off guard.

With this, he finally had the means to protect himself.

"Keep!" Zhang Xuan placed the Tongshang Sword back into his storage ring.

He turned to the Dongxu Gourd and nodded in approval.

"You've done well this time around. I'll buy you some pills later on as reward for you!"

After appeasing the Dongxu Gourd and putting it back into his dantian, Zhang Xuan walked out of his room.

From what he had gathered from Han Jianqiu earlier, it seemed like there was a good chance that Luo Ruoxin was a god. This left him feeling even more pressured. He felt an urgent need to raise his cultivation once more.

It had already been two hours since he reached Heavenly Pseudo Immortal... Quite some time had passed since his last breakthrough. It was about time for him to start looking for True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals so that he could push for another breakthrough!

As long as he could reach the True Immortal realm, with the sheer purity of the Heaven's Path zhenqi, the Gods' Sword Intent, and the Tongshang Sword, he should be able to stand on equal footing against even High Immortals.

So, he walked over to Bai Ruanqing and requested to borrow her aerial beast. After which, he quickly made his way over to the Elder Peak.

Just like how most of the books in the inner disciples' library were beneath the Pseudo Immortal realm, most of the books in the core disciples' library were beneath the True Immortal realm. If he wanted to gather sufficient True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals or even that of High Immortal realm, he would have to head to the elders' library.

Upon arriving at his destination, he passed the identity token that he had obtained from Han Jianqiu over, and as the latter mentioned, he was immediately granted entry.

The elders' library was not as large as that of the core disciples' library. It was only a two-story high building with a couple of bookshelves scattered around the room.

A slight frown formed on Zhang Xuan's face as he swiftly glanced at the books around him.

There were indeed True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals around, but it did not seem like there were too many there. It did not take him too long to collect everything into the Library of Heaven's Path.

"Only six hundred?" Zhang Xuan sighed.

It was far from the usual thousand that he required to form a complete Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Shaking his head, he proceeded up to the second floor.

The cultivation technique manuals of High Immortals were stored there, but the quantity was even more limited. All in all, there were only twelve books.

"This..." Zhang Xuan found himself extremely conflicted.

It was true that most cultivators only needed a single good cultivation technique manual to advance to greater heights, but

he needed as many books as possible in order to perfect his Heaven's Path Divine Art...

To be fair, the cultivation technique manuals of True Immortals were incredibly rare. Aside from major sects such as the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, there was probably nowhere on the Forsaken Continent where one could find so many of them lying around... But it was still far from what Zhang Xuan required!

Compile!

Not bearing too much hope, Zhang Xuan tried putting all the True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals together. He flipped open the compiled book, and very soon, his face sank in disappointment.

Just as he had thought, the compiled cultivation technique was incredibly flawed. There were shockingly seven flaws in it! There was no way he could cultivate something as disgusting as that!

It seems like I'll have to find ways to gather more True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals.

Zhang Xuan rubbed his glabella in distress.

Most likely, he would need another four hundred True Immortal cultivation technique manuals in order to complement those flaws, but they would surely cost quite a hefty sum. At the very least, the Sword Pavilion Coins that he had just earned would be far from sufficient.

He continued walking around the library and ensured that he had taken all the books into the Library of Heaven's Path before leaving the premises with a helpless sigh.

As he returned to his residence, he pondered deeply.

Even in a place like the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, becoming a True Immortal was enough to land one the position of an inner elder. Among the core disciples, there were not too many who had reached this level. It would be no exaggeration to say that True Immortals were strong enough to become a regional powerhouse in most parts of the Forsaken Continent!

Using the context of the Master Teacher Continent, it would be equivalent to the significance of the Great Sages.

It was perfectly normal that the cultivation technique manuals at this realm were severely lacking. It was only due to the great influence of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion that it was able to gather six hundred books like that.

But as long as he could not perfect his Heaven's Path Divine Art, he would not be able to continue cultivating. He would rather die than cultivate a technique that had seven flaws in it!

Kong shi did give me a token that allows me to acquire anything from the Ethereal Halls. I should be able to purchase cultivation technique manuals through it, right? Zhang Xuan thought.

Based on what Han Jianqiu had said, the token that he had received from Kong shi had endless credit. Since that was the case, could he make use of it to purchase all the cultivation technique manuals that he required?

He did try in the past, but it was simply too expensive for him to do so back then. However, with this token in hand, money was not a problem!

With such a thought in mind, Zhang Xuan's eyes lit up. But the next moment, his face crumbled into bitterness as he muttered, "But I'll have to leave the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion first..."

It went without saying that he could not use this token for the internal Ethereal Hall that the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion operated. He would have to head to the Ethereal Halls outside in order to exploit its privileges.

I should do some information gathering before deciding on my next move, Zhang Xuan thought as he finally arrived back at the residence.

Seeing that Bai Ruanqing had yet to leave, Zhang Xuan walked up to her and asked, "May I know where the nearest city to the sect is? Is there an Ethereal Hall there?"

"You wish to head out?" Bai Ruanqing was slightly taken aback.

“I do have such intentions in mind,” Zhang Xuan replied frankly.

“The nearest town to the sect is called Wuhai City, and it’s roughly three thousand li away. Its name originates from its proximity to the Wu Sea. It’s a huge, first-tier city, so it does have an Ethereal Hall,” Bai Ruanqing replied.

“Hmm, it’s not too far away...” Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

At a distance of three thousand li, he could reach it with just two hours on the back of an aerial beast.

“It’s indeed not too far away, but the sect doesn’t allow disciples to leave its premises freely. There’s a lot of administrative processes that one must go through before one is permitted to leave the area. In fact, depending on the nature of business, it might even require a judgement from the Elder Council. The entire process can easily take several days,” Bai Ruanqing explained.

“Several days?” Zhang Xuan frowned. Darn bureaucracy! With a deep sigh, he asked, “What about elders? Are they allowed to freely leave the premises?”

“They don’t have such privileges. Unless they have some important business, they aren’t allowed to freely leave the sect either,” Bai Ruanqing replied. “Unless...”

Knowing that she was a troublemaker, her grandfather, Elder Bai Ye, had made sure to pound the rules of the sect into her so that she would not get into too much trouble.

“Unless what?”

“Unless they have a mission! Usually, elders and disciples who are entrusted with a mission are able to leave the sect easily without too much trouble,” Bai Ruanqing replied.

“Mission?”

“When inner disciples and core disciples find themselves in need of Sword Pavilion Coins, they head over to the Hall of Missions. As long as they have a Mission Token with them,

they are able to freely leave the sect without any restrictions,” Bai Ruanqing explained.

Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in realization.

He did previously hear that it was possible to earn Sword Pavilion Coins through missions, but he had found it a little too slow for his liking.

“Senior Uncle, if you really wish to head out, I can grab a mission and take you to Wuhai City,” Bai Ruanqing said.

She had wanted to leave the mountain range to explore the world for a long time, but it was a pity that her grandfather had never allowed it. While she had taken on quite a few missions so far, she had never been able to travel far from the sect. However, now that she had Senior Uncle with her, her grandfather was unlikely to stop her.

Wuhai City was an extremely prosperous city near the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. She had long heard of it and wanted to visit the area to take a look.

“Alright, let’s head to the Hall of Missions together then.” Zhang Xuan nodded in agreement.

Given his current identity, it would be incredibly inconvenient for him to take on a mission. Thus, it was better to leave it to Bai Ruanqing.

“Let’s go!”

Bai Ruanqing excitedly leaped up onto the aerial beast, and the two of them swiftly made their way over to the Hall of Missions.

The Hall of Missions was the place where the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion allocated missions. It would set the difficulty of mission based on the description of the request and determine the reward accordingly.

Browsing through the various posters pinned on the boards, they swiftly found a couple of missions regarding Wuhai City.

The missions from Wuhai City tended to be harder, but the compensation was extremely tempting.

“An Appraisal Mission from Wuhai Market with a reward of thirty Sword Pavilion Coins. Let’s take this then,” Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

The other mission would take up quite a bit of time and effort, whereas this one only required him to appraise several items. It should be a piece of cake for him. After completing the mission, he would have plenty of time to explore the regional Ethereal Hall.

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“Senior Uncle, I fear that it isn’t as simple as it seems!” Bai Ruanqing frowned.

“There’s a total of seventeen missions from Wuhai City, and most of them are only priced at around twenty Sword Pavilion Coins or so. Even this one, saving the City Lord’s daughter, is only worth twenty-five Sword Pavilion Coins. Don’t you find it weird that an appraisal mission is actually worth so much?”

Even she, who was rarely meticulous, had noticed that something was wrong with the request. She found it hard to believe that her Senior Uncle had not noticed that something was wrong.

“It’s fine,” Zhang Xuan replied with a wave of his hand.

Naturally, he could tell that something was amiss. However, as long as it was something in the fields of appraisal, it should not pose a problem to him since he had the Library of Heaven’s Path.

“Since you’re confident, I’ll be leaving the mission to you. I’ll first say in advance that I know nothing at all about appraisal!” Bai Ruanqing got straight to the point.

She had close to blind admiration for this Senior Uncle of hers. Since the latter had no qualms about it, there should not be too much trouble.

After confirming the mission that they wanted to take on, Bai Ruanqing quickly applied for it with the receptionist.

Soon, she obtained the Mission Token. Once the mission was accomplished, it would automatically be reflected on the Mission Token, and the reward would be transferred over to the applicant’s Ethereal Card.

One thing to note was that there was a time restriction as well. As Wuhai City was relatively close and the mission did not involve adventuring and the like, if the mission was not completed within three days, one would have to pay a late compensation fee of three Sword Pavilion Coins.

Carrying the Mission Token, the two of them got back onto the aerial beast and headed straight for Wuhai City, leaving the premises of the sect.

Hearing the report from the elder in front of him, Han Jianqiu pinched his glabella tightly.

This future sect leader of theirs sure was one to make them worry. It was just a moment ago that he indirectly told the other party not to cause trouble within the sect, but in the blink of an eye, that fellow had already flown over to Wuhai City.

Why could he not just obediently stay within the sect and cultivate patiently?

The fact that he had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent meant that his understanding of swordsmanship had already reached the peak. What he had to do right now was raise his cultivation. As long he could reach the High Immortal realm, even Han Jianqiu himself might not necessarily be a match for him. By then, he could be considered unrivaled in the Forsaken Continent then.

But this fellow would not rest at all. After bullying the inner disciples, he carried on and bullied the core disciples, the elders, and eventually even the sect leader himself. Once he was done, he freaking went on to Wuhai City!

Would he die if he simply gave his tendency to humblebrag a rest just for a day?

Besides, even if he did not want to cultivate, he had just been given a Heavenly High Immortal-tier sword. Surely he should cultivate some feelings with the sword so as to lay the groundwork to tame it in the future?

"Should we capture him and force him to cultivate?" Elder He's face was also frighteningly livid.

“It would be best if we could bring him back...” Han Jianqiu nodded before he abruptly halted. He pondered deeply for a moment before asking, “How is his speed of cultivation? If he’s able to reach Lesser Pseudo Immortal in his twenties, that means that he has his ways to advance his cultivation, right? If that’s the case, we should not interfere in his plans. It might be slower, but it will at least temper his will.”

Comprehending the Gods’ Sword Intent was dependent on one’s intelligence and luck, but cultivating was centered around relentless diligence. One had to take a step at a time and travel forward steadily.

The fact that the other party was able to reach the Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm at such a young age likely meant that he was quite a disciplined individual. Why would he become so unruly all of a sudden?

“Ruanqing is with him at the moment. I’ll ask her,” Elder Bai Ye said.

Han Jianqiu nodded in response.

Elder Bai Ye sent a message over, and it did not take long for him to receive a response. When he saw the response, he suddenly rubbed his eyes intensely, as if fearing that he was seeing things.

Noticing Elder Bai Ye’s bizarre response, Han Jianqiu asked with a frown, “What’s wrong?”

“Bai Ruanqing told me that Elder Lu Yun and the others told her that Zhang Xuan’s cultivation was only at Ancient Sage 4-dan primary stage when he entered the sect yesterday!” Elder Bai Ye replied in bewilderment.

“Ancient Sage 4-dan primary stage? Wait a minute, are you telling me that in the span of a day, he raised his cultivation from the Dimension Shatterer realm to the Pseudo Immortal realm? That’s an entire cultivation realm!” Han Jianqiu narrowed his eyes.

It was true that Ancient Sage 4-dan was not too high a cultivation realm, but to advance a single realm in the span of a day was still a nigh impossible feat.

“It’s not only that... According to what I have heard from Ruanqing, it seems like he has already reached the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm!” Elder Bai Ye said.

“Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm?”

Everyone was stunned.

It was just an hour ago that they had fought with him, and he should only have been at the Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm. Just when in the world did he find the time to advance his cultivation so much?

Han Jianqiu pondered for a moment before instructing, “Call Elder Lu Yun over!”

Under the direct order of the sect leader, it did not take long for Elder Lu Yun to arrive before the Elder Council.

“I want you to go through what happened back in Xuanjiang City in detail,” Han Jianqiu said with a wave of his hand.

“Yes, Sect Leader Han!” Elder Lu Yun swiftly explained everything that he had seen and heard in detail.

“You mentioned that... Zhang Xuan allowed Dan Xiaotian to achieve a breakthrough from Great Sage 3-dan to Ancient Sage within just an hour?”

Everyone was trembling so much that their wrinkled cheeks were tingling.

As High Immortals, they had seen far more things in the world than they would have liked, but it was completely unheard of for a cultivator to achieve a breakthrough of two cultivation realms within an hour!

“Yes, I understand how ludicrous it might sound, but I witnessed the scene personally!” Elder Lu Yun said. “I am certain that Zhang Xuan’s cultivation realm was only at Dimension Shatterer realm primary stage then!”

“Alright, I understand. You can rest for the day. Make sure not to speak of what has happened today to anyone else,” Han Jianqiu said as he dismissed Elder Lu Yun.

With his departure, the Elder Council was suddenly plunged into silence.

They had thought that fellow was capable of nothing but bragging all day long, opting to neglect his cultivation... But who could have known that while causing all those incidents within the sect, he had also managed to advance his cultivation from Ancient Sage 4-dan primary stage to the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm!

Such a rate of advancement... Even the founder of the sect would be pouring down buckets of cold sweat when compared with him!

“This...” An elder suddenly broke the silence. “Should we capture him then?”

It was just a moment ago that Han Jianqiu and Elder He had been discussing plans to drag Zhang Xuan back so as to stop him from messing around and force him to cultivate properly. Yet, in the end, it turned out that Zhang Xuan’s rate of cultivation was far more frightening than they had thought. In comparison, it felt like they were mere snails...

If so, should they go ahead and capture him?

“The reason he can cultivate so quickly must be because he has his own way of cultivating. Let’s put that matter aside for the time being.” Han Jianqiu pondered for a moment before instructing, “Elder Chou, I want you to follow him discreetly. Make sure that he doesn’t notice you, and you must guarantee his safety by any means. Understood?”

“Yes, Sect Leader Han!” Elder Chou clasped his fist before quickly leaving the Elder Council.

Once again, silence descended upon the Elder Council as they tried to reassess the current situation.

To be honest, the shock that their future sect leader had brought them was truly tremendous.

An invincible swordsmanship paired with an invincible rate of cultivation...

Just how many more surprises were in wait for them?

“It seems like he has a really strong understanding of saber arts as well. He was able to even suppress my Sword Intent easily,” Elder Bai Ye remarked as he recalled what had happened earlier today.

“He suppressed your Sword Intent with his Saber Intent? Tell me more about it!” Han Jianqiu said.

The others quickly turned their gazes over as well.

It did not take long for Elder Bai Ye to go through what had happened earlier in detail.

Everyone was rendered speechless once more.

Sword arts, formations, saber arts... How was that fellow capable in everything?

“Bring Dan Xiaotian here!” Han Jianqiu ordered.

Very soon, Dan Xiaotian was brought before the Elder Council.

“Tell me honestly, the sword toss that you specialize in, did you learn that from Zhang Xuan?” Han Jianqiu asked.

Knowing that it was impossible for him to hide the matter anymore, Dan Xiaotian decided to come clean. “That’s right. Even though I claim that he’s my friend to others, in truth, he’s my teacher.”

“Just as I thought!” Han Jianqiu nodded. “Since that’s the case... I want you to use that sword toss against us so that we can test its prowess!”

“Ah? To be honest with you, I have only studied under my teacher for several hours, and the knowledge that I was able to absorb from him is quite limited as well. However, if you wish, Sect Leader Han, I’m still willing to give it a try,” Dan Xiaotian said hesitantly.

“Several hours? I see... Don’t worry, we’ll go easy on you!” Han Jianqiu said with a smile.

Three minutes later, the doors to the Elder Council opened and out came Dan Xiaotian.

Within the room, Han Jianqiu, Elder He, and the others had a sword each on their head. While their vitals were not hurt, the swords still managed to scrape their skin, causing blood to ooze from the tops of their heads.

The crowd reached out to pluck the swords from their heads as the room fell silent once more.

A very long time later, Han Jianqiu's hoarse voice sounded. "He has only learned from Zhang Xuan for several hours, but we already aren't a match for him..."

It almost sounded as if he was going to burst into tears.

Based on what they had heard from Dan Xiaotian, it seemed like he had known next to nothing about swordsmanship prior to meeting Zhang Xuan, but after several hours of teaching, they were no match for him.

As for Bai Ruanqing, she had only learned from him for an hour now, but she was practically unrivaled among the core disciples.

Was this not a little too exaggerated?

Why did it feel like all their cultivation over the years had been nothing but mindless meandering?

The atmosphere within the Elder Council grew so heavy that it was getting rather tough to breathe.

"Shall we... ask him to teach us after he gets back from that mission?" Elder He asked hesitantly.

They knew that Zhang Xuan had comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent, but they had thought that he was only adept in a single type of swordsmanship. In terms of overall comprehension of swordsmanship, that fellow should not have been able to compete with them. After all, they had immersed themselves in the profound world of swordsmanship for countless years.

But from the looks of it, they could not have been any more wrong than that!

As depressing as it was to them, they knew that it signified an opportunity as well.

If they could put their pride aside and humbly request for his teaching, they might be able to make significant advancements in the Way of the Sword!

“Very well, we shall request for his lessons after he returns from his mission!” Han Jianqiu nodded deeply.

Oblivious to the fact that his fake cultivation had already been exposed by Bai Ruanqing, at that very moment, Zhang Xuan was staring at the immense city before him in agitation.

As expected of the largest city in the vicinity of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. In terms of its scale, it would not pale in comparison to even the capital of Conferred Empires!

Stretching over a span of two thousand li, the massive city was protected by layers of ingenious formations. Experts could easily be spotted here and there, hinting at the terrifying military power of the city.

“The City Lord of Wuhai City is a High Immortal, and he’s said to be no weaker than my grandfather!” Bai Ruanqing explained.

Even though she had never been there before, she had already built a mental image of what it would be like based on the stories that she had heard from her grandfather, so she was not particularly surprised by what she was seeing.

“High Immortal?” Zhang Xuan nodded slowly.

It was no wonder that it was able to become a first-tier city on the Forsaken Continent. Just the strength of the City Lord was enough draw talents and powerful cultivators in, laying the groundwork required for a prosperous city.

Most likely, there should be plenty of True Immortals in the city as well.

“That’s right!” Bai Ruanqing nodded before turning to look at Zhang Xuan grimly. “As such, even though we are disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, we have to make sure to tread carefully...”

“Un!”

Where many experts gathered, there were bound to be politics and factional rivalries. Things could turn out horribly if one accidentally crossed one of the powerhouses in the city.

Then... Senior Uncle, will we be heading to Wuhai Market right now to complete the appraisal mission?" Bai Ruanqing asked curiously.

"There's no hurry for that. Where can we acquire an Ethereal Token here? Let's pay a visit to the local Ethereal Hall first!" Zhang Xuan said with a smile.

1992 Disciple Bai Ruanqing!

You wish to enter the Ethereal Hall?” Bai Ruanqing did not think that her Senior Uncle would be so anxious regarding this matter. She pondered for a moment before nodding. “Alright then!”

In any case, they had three days to finish their mission, so there should not be any trouble.

Besides, they were out there to explore the region. Given their wealth, it was inconsequential whether they accomplished the mission or not.

Bai Ruanqing quickly took out a map and scanned it carefully before directing her aerial beast accordingly. Roughly thirty minutes later, they arrived before a towering building.

It was the Wuhai branch of the Ethereal Hall.

“The local currency in Wuhai City is similar to the Ethereal Coin used back in Xuanjiang City, just that its value is greater. As the value of the local currency has been pegged to our sect’s Sword Pavilion Coin in a 1:1 ratio, it’s possible to purchase resources here using Sword Pavilion Coins,” Bai Ruanqing explained with a smile.

Hearing that, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

He was still worrying that he would have to find some way to earn some money in order to purchase an Ethereal Token, but it seemed like his worries were unfounded.

He had plenty of Sword Pavilion Coins with him, so purchasing an Ethereal Token should not be too much of a problem for him.

The two of them quickly headed over to the front receptionist.

“The price of the Ethereal Token differs according to its tier. It’s twenty Ethereal Coins for Ancient Sage 4-dan, two hundred Ethereal Coins for the Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm,

and two thousand Ethereal Coins for the True Immortal realm,” the receptionist explained.

The prices were slightly cheaper than that of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

“We’ll buy two Lesser Pseudo Immortal realm Ethereal Tokens,” Zhang Xuan said as he transferred four hundred Sword Pavilion Coins over through his Ethereal Card.

Receiving the money, the receptionist quickly passed two jade tokens over and said, “Do you two need a room, too? There are silent chambers over there. They cost an Ethereal Coin every two hours!”

Zhang Xuan requested a single room. After making payment, he quickly headed over into the room with Bai Ruanqing. Already familiar with how the Ethereal Token worked, it did not take long before they entered the Ethereal Hall.

The layout of the Ethereal Hall was similar to the branch in reality, which left one feeling slightly taken aback. Shaking off that bizarre feeling, Zhang Xuan proceeded to the front receptionist and revealed the token that he had obtained from Kong shi.

“Can you show me what I can purchase with this?”

The receptionist took the token, and a moment later, her eyes widened in shock. “Esteemed guest, this way please. I’m afraid that the value of your token is too great, so I have to invite my superior over to serve you personally!”

Zhang Xuan and Bai Ruanqing were swiftly led to a spacious room, and a moment later, an elder rushed in with an anxious look on his face.

“I am an elder of Wuhai City’s Ethereal Hall. I have seen your token, and it’s definitely an insignia bestowed personally by our hall master. It entitles you to the right to purchase any cultivation resources required for you to advance your cultivation without incurring any cost!” The elder bowed deeply as he presented the token back to Zhang Xuan.

This token could be said to be a physical representation of their hall master himself, so they had to show the utmost

respect to the person who carried it. As such, the elder dared not display the slightest discourtesy to the person before him despite his young age.

“Un!” Seeing that the token was indeed real, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. With a smile, he said, “Since that’s the case, I would like you to bring me a hundred Superior Immortal Pills!”

After reaching the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm, he realized that Standard Immortal Pills were no longer effective in advancing his cultivation anymore. If he wanted to further his cultivation, he would need to acquire Superior Immortal Pills at the very least.

At the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, each Superior Immortal Pill was valued at a whopping 20,000 Sword Pavilion Coins. Despite the huge wealth that he had accrued thus far, it would dry out swiftly if he spent his money on it!

“A hundred Superior Immortal Pills?” The eyebrows of the elder shot up. “Superior Immortal Pills are invaluable cultivation resources that are sought after by even High Immortals. I fear that our Wuhai City Ethereal Hall doesn’t have the means to bring out so many of them!”

“How many of them do you have then?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“I’d say...roughly twenty of them!” The elder paused for a moment before continuing. “If you aren’t in any hurry, we should be able to gather the required amount within three days!”

“Alright then. Bring me the twenty first and begin preparing the rest,” Zhang Xuan instructed.

He knew that using this token would not be exactly ‘free’. Even though he shared the same origin as Kong shi, he was not so naive as to think that the latter would express such generosity to him without expecting anything in return.

Most likely, he would have to repay this favor somehow in the future.

However, what was more important for him at the moment was to advance his cultivation. After speaking to Han Jianqiu,

he knew that he was in a precarious position, so he had to strengthen himself and secure his position in the Forsaken Continent as soon as possible.

“Yes, I understand!” the elder replied before quickly left the area.

Some time later, he returned with a storage ring in hand. He passed the storage ring over to Zhang Xuan, and with a deep bow, he asked once more, “Esteemed guest, may I know if there’s anything else you require?”

“I would like to browse through the True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals... May I know if this token will allow me to purchase them?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“This token can only be used to purchase consumables that would aid in the advancement of your cultivation. I fear that it’s impossible for you to purchase books with it...”

At this point, the elder suddenly thought of something, so he quickly added, “Furthermore, the consumables you have purchased cannot be resold. If you are found to have broken this rule, the privileges of your token will be permanently revoked!”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan shook his head bitterly.

When he heard the elder using the term ‘cultivation resources’, he had already had a hunch that he would not be allowed to purchase cultivation technique manuals with the token. Nevertheless, he could not help but feel a little disappointed when hearing it directly.

Other than cultivation technique manuals, there was nothing that Zhang Xuan really needed anymore, so he could only back out of the Ethereal Hall. Using the Teleportation Token on the Ethereal Token, he withdrew the Superior Immortal Pills.

The Superior Immortal Pills were indeed overflowing with concentrated spiritual energy. One could feel tremendous energy pulsating from them, giving one a feeling of incredible richness. In comparison, Standard Immortal Pills did seem to pale far in comparison.

“Here!” Zhang Xuan casually tossed a Superior Immortal Pill over to Bai Ruanqing.

“Thank you, Senior Uncle!” Bai Ruanqing’s face reddened in agitation.

She had only seen Superior Immortal Pills in her grandfather’s place, but due to their immense value, she had never used one before.

Looking at it with a leaping heart, she opened her mouth and swallowed it whole.

Gugugu!

The pill melted in her body, releasing an incredible surge of spiritual energy. Her eyes narrowed in astonishment as her body trembled uncontrollably from the sheer energy. Sweat was raining down from her body.

Noticing the anomalies in her condition, Zhang Xuan asked with a frown, “What’s wrong?”

“Senior Uncle, the spiritual energy in the Superior Immortal Pill is simply too concentrated... I can’t handle it!” Bai Ruanqing cried out with a pale face.

Even the spiritual energy within a single Standard Immortal Pill would take her quite a while to assimilate, let alone that from a Superior Immortal Pill.

It was similar to attempting to stuff an entire car into the mouth of a baby. It would be a wonder if the latter did not explode!

At this moment, she finally understood why her grandfather had never allowed her to use a Superior Immortal Pill before. It was not because he could not bear the price but because it would be a huge waste of resources given her Lesser True Immortal realm cultivation, and if things went wrong, her life would be at risk!

“Ahhh!” a cry of agony sounded from Bai Ruanqing’s lips.

Due to the overwhelming energy gathered within her body, some traces of it were leaking out from her acupoints. Her face

reddened as her body inflated like a balloon, seemingly ready to explode to any moment.

Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up in astonishment. He has not expected to encounter such a situation.

He had only given the Superior Immortal Pill to Bai Ruanqing in order to repay her for doing him this favor, and he had not thought that such a situation would occur.

If Bai Ruanqing really exploded from eating the Superior Immortal Pill that he had given to her, how was he supposed to explain this to Elder Bai Ye in the future?

"Hurry up, execute a battle technique!" Zhang Xuan roared in command.

Knowing how critical the situation was, Bai Ruanqing immediately gritted her teeth and forced herself to display a sword art.

With a quick glance, Zhang Xuan's consciousness immediately dived into the Library of Heaven's Path to view the book that was compiled on her. A frown swiftly formed on his forehead.

It seems like the only way out of this is for her to swiftly cultivate the rampaging spiritual energy and convert it into zhenqi, Zhang Xuan thought. This way, she will be able to place it under her control and deposit it safely into her dantian.

Given Bai Ruanqing's current condition, it was too hard to release the energy from her body. The buildup was too great for Zhang Xuan to guarantee that he would be able to facilitate the flow of energy out of her body safely. The safest way was for her to assimilate the spiritual energy into her body.

However, the current issue was that she was limited by her own cultivation technique.

Ordinary cultivation techniques were like a straw. No matter how much one tried to suck water out of an ocean using a straw, it would not make much of a difference.

So, what was most important was finding a sufficiently powerful cultivation technique for Bai Ruanqing so that she

could swiftly place the rampaging spiritual energy under her control.

It seems like I'll have to take her in as my student! Zhang Xuan sighed helplessly.

It was fine to him that Bai Ruanqing had learned a couple of sword arts from him without acknowledging him as her master. It simply was not of much concern to him. However, the same could not be said about the Heaven's Path Divine Art. It was one of his greatest secrets, and he would not allow the slightest bit of negligence concerning it.

As such, he had already made up his mind to only impart the simplified versions of the Heaven's Path Divine Art to his direct disciples.

While Bai Ruanqing was reckless at times, he could tell that she was still a kind person at heart. She would not waver on her own principles, and once she had found a goal, she would work tenaciously toward it.

As such, he was not too reluctant to take her in as his direct disciple.

The True Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art has seven flaws at the moment. While it's hard for me to cultivate something like that, it is at least much better than what she was cultivating previously, Zhang Xuan thought.

While the True Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art still was not perfect, it was at least a complete cultivation technique. In terms of quality, it was on par with the simplified Heaven's Path Divine Art that he had imparted to his other direct disciples thus far.

Of course, it was not that he did not want to impart the perfected Heaven's Path Divine Arts to his direct disciples, but he was the only one who could cultivate them in the entire world.

Without any hesitation, Zhang Xuan quickly sent a telepathic message to Bai Ruanqing. "I can resolve your current crisis, but you have to acknowledge me as your teacher before I can impart the cultivation technique of my lineage to you!"

“Student Bai Ruanqing pays respect to Teacher!” Bai Ruanqing immediately knelt onto the floor and cried out.

She had long wanted to acknowledge Zhang Xuan as her teacher, but the latter had never expressed anything regarding that matter, so she had been unable to find an opportunity to broach the subject.

As such, when this opportunity presented itself before her, she delightfully grasped it without any hesitation.

“Good. This is my cultivation technique. Practice it well!”

After accepting Bai Ruanqing’s bow, Zhang Xuan swiftly modified the Heaven’s Path Divine Art to suit her constitution before imparting it into her mind. At the same time, he whipped out innumerable silver needles and infused them with Heaven’s Path zhenqi before inserting them all over her body.

Gugugugu!

The rampaging spiritual energy swiftly calmed down under the Heaven’s Path zhenqi’s guidance, thus alleviating the excruciating pain from the energy inflation that Bai Ruanqing was suffering from.

“This cultivation technique...”

Bai Ruanqing swiftly browsed through the cultivation technique that she had just been imparted, and she could not help but narrow her eyes in amazement.

This cultivation technique was fundamentally similar to what she had been practicing at the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion all along, but it was much more profound and powerful.

If the spiritual energy that she could absorb after driving her old cultivation technique was nothing more than a small trickling stream, with this new cultivation technique, she could foresee her capacity expanding to that of a raging river.

Knowing that this cultivation technique would be able to save her life, she quickly closed her eyes and began practicing it.

Her cultivation immediately began soaring.

Lesser True Immortal!

Greater True Immortal!

Earthly True Immortal!

Six hours had passed, and her cultivation progressed without the slightest resistance until it finally reached Heavenly True Immortal!

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“Since you have become my student, you have to heed my instructions from now on,” Zhang Xuan said solemnly. “Also, you mustn’t impart the cultivation technique I have just taught you to anyone else, and this includes Elder Bai Ye. Are you able to do that?”

“Yes, I can!” Bai Ruanqing nodded anxiously.

The fact that a golden page had formed meant that Bai Ruanqing was sincerely thankful to him and was unlikely to leak his secrets, so he was not too worried.

The concept of lineage was important in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion as well. A student was expected to follow their teacher’s words, and the debt of nurturing was something that must never be forgotten.

“Good. I’ll need to head out for a while. You should remain here to reinforce your cultivation,” Zhang Xuan said.

Following which, he opened the door and left the room.

He had managed to acquire the Superior Immortal Pills required for him to advance his cultivation, so what he had to do now was find more True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals to perfect his Heaven’s Path Divine Art.

The current destination that he had in mind was the Wuhai Market as he thought that it might be possible for the books that he required to be on sale there.

Of course, these books were likely to be pricey, but he did not need to buy the books, just collect them into the Library of Heaven’s Path.

He had looked at the map beforehand, so he knew that the Wuhai Market was located nearby. Even without riding on an aerial beast, it only took him an hour of leisurely strolling in order to reach his destination.

As expected of a market in a first-tier city, the Wuhai Market was bustling with huge crowds. It was already teeming with people even before making his way in.

The first floor was filled with normal vendors, selling stuff like medicinal herbs, precious ores, weapons, and the like. After taking a swift look around, Zhang Xuan shook his head in disappointment.

There were simply too many counterfeit products. Even without using the Library of Heaven's Path, he could see through them easily.

Furthermore, most of them were below Pseudo Immortal-tier, so they were of no use to him at all.

Zhang Xuan walked up to a vendor and passed a Sword Pavilion Coin over. "May I know if there are any places here that sell cultivation technique manuals?"

"The cultivation technique manuals are usually sold at auction," the vendor hurriedly replied, accepting the coin in delight. A single Sword Pavilion Coin was enough for him to live comfortably for a month!

"The cultivation technique manuals don't have to be particularly profound. Ordinary ones would do as well," Zhang Xuan added.

The cultivation technique manuals that needed to be auctioned were bound to be invaluable.

But to him, whether a cultivation technique was high-tier or rare did not matter at all. What he needed was quantity, not quality!

Of course, there was no doubt that higher quality cultivation techniques had fewer flaws, which meant that they could more easily perfect his Heaven's Path Divine Art. However, the issue with that was that their numbers were too limited, so it was simply not worth the time sourcing for them, and their prices were scarily exorbitant.

"Ordinary cultivation techniques too? Well, there are plenty of those over there at the Boundless Knowledge Pavilion. With just a single Sword Pavilion Coin, you can read all the books

you want in there. However, the cultivation technique manuals there are quite ordinary, such that even I won't cultivate them. Most of us go there to read those kinds of books instead," the vendor replied with a knowing smile.

Considering how the person before him could casually tip him a single Sword Pavilion Coin, it was likely that he was an inner disciple or even a core disciple!

If so, his expectations on cultivation techniques were bound to be very high. Considering how the cultivation technique manuals in the Boundless Knowledge Pavilion could not even catch the eye of a fake medicine peddler like him, there was no way that the other party would be interested in them.

Most likely, the 'cultivation techniques' that this young man spoke of were referring to something else.

Zhang Xuan was perplexed by the mysterious smile the vendor was directing toward him, but he still waved his hand and said, "Take me over to take a look!"

"Alright!" The vendor chuckled a little as he quickly led the way.

Soon, as they arrived before a bookstore, the vendor gestured and said, "We have arrived!"

Zhang Xuan took a brief glance inside, and there were indeed many different books on display. Cultivation technique manuals, battle technique manuals, old newspapers and magazines, notebooks and diaries...

Of course, there was also those stuff that the vendor was referring to, which made Zhang Xuan immediately comprehend the meaning behind the vendor's earlier licentious smile. The covers of those books were particularly eye-catching, such that they seemed to leap out at those passing the bookstore.

Zhang Xuan passed a single Sword Pavilion Coin over and walked in.

He quickly swept through the contents on the shelves, and it did not take him long to collect all the cultivation technique manuals.

A moment later, he shook his head bitterly.

There was a huge number of cultivation technique manuals, but they were all of Pseudo Immortal realm and below. There was not a single True Immortal realm cultivation technique manual, so of course, those books did nothing to resolve the flaws in his Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Thus, Zhang Xuan left with bookstore with a gloomy look on his face.

"How was it? Those cultivation techniques are horrible, aren't they?" the vendor, who had yet to leave, asked. "If you want higher-tier cultivation techniques, there's indeed one way to acquire them."

"Oh?"

"Not too long ago, the Wuhai Market Auction acquired a treasure. They brought many appraisers in, but none of them were able to ascertain what it was. If someone is able to accurately appraise exactly what the treasure is, they will be specially authorized to enter the auction's treasury and choose any cultivation technique manual they wish," the vendor said in a hushed voice.

"A treasure?" Zhang Xuan was stunned.

That reminded him of the mission that he had taken on before coming over to Wuhai City. If he had known that there was actually such an opportunity involved, he would have come way earlier!

Nevertheless, it was still better to clarify the matter lest he was disappointed like he had been before. So, he asked, "It sounds like the auction has an impressive collection of cultivation technique manuals. Do you know if they have any True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals?"

"Of course! The Wuhai Market Auction has five hundred years of history, and the strongest expert they employ to guard the treasures are already at the Half-High Immortal realm. They are bound to have plenty of True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals!" the vendor exclaimed vehemently.

Then, he looked around him before lowering his voice slightly. “There are often auctions where cultivation technique manuals are sold, and based on my guesses, I think that the Wuhai Market Auction has secretly been making copies of them...”

The auction house did not have the right to make copies of the cultivation technique manuals that their clients were selling, so the Wuhai Market Auction had to be doing this behind their clients’ back.

However, under the rules of the auction, the items that were sold during the auction would have to be placed under the custody of the auction house prior to the auctioning, so there was no way the client would know or verify whether a copy had been made.

According to what the vendor was saying, it seemed like making copies of cultivation technique manuals had already become one of the implicit rules within the auction house. It was just that no one was willing to point it out.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

No matter what, it was good news that the auction house had True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals. It was truly good luck that they had taken on the appraisal mission.

After confirming the location of the auction house, Zhang Xuan bade the vendor farewell before quickly making his way over.

“Do you have an invitation letter?”

At the entrance of the auction hall, Zhang Xuan was halted by a guard.

“I am a disciple from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, and I have taken on the mission of the Wuhai Market to appraise its artifact,” Zhang Xuan said as he took out his Mission Token.

The guard took a look at the Mission Token before bowing deeply. “Welcome. This way, please.”

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was one of the Six Sects, and Wuhai City happened to be under its jurisdiction.

On top of that, it was a known fact that the sect only took in top-notch geniuses as their disciples.

Naturally, the guard would dare not be discourteous to Zhang Xuan.

Under the guard's lead, Zhang Xuan entered a room. Within the room, there was an old man standing before an artifact, examining it closely.

"Elder He, this young man over here is a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. He has come here to take on the appraisal mission," the guard reported to the old man.

"Let him wait there for a moment."

Without even turning around, Elder He continued examining the artifact before him with an agitated look on his face.

With a slight frown, Zhang Xuan assessed the old man who was addressed as Elder He carefully. The latter appeared to be in his sixties, and the aura that he emanated felt heavy and powerful. He was a High Immortal realm expert.

The artifact before him was a sculpture of roughly a chi tall. It was painted with beautifully contrasting colors that accentuated its aesthetics. Just accounting for the painting skills, it was definitely the work of someone who was as competent as a 9-star painter of the Master Teacher Continent.

Zhang Xuan could not really recognize what it was, but he could feel a fleeting aura from it that felt serene and calming.

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" Elder He could not help but exclaim in delight.

Not too far away, a smile slowly formed on a middle-aged man's lips as he saw Elder He's reaction. With a respectful tone, he asked, "Elder He, may I know if it's authentic?"

"Based on my appraisal, this sculpture was indeed left behind by High Immortal Du He. He used the Calmheart Stone to carve this sculpture, so if one uses it at the core of a formation, it could be used to bring serenity to one's mind, so one need not worry about facing inner demons during one's cultivation," Elder He said with a smile.

You have my deepest thanks, Elder He!” Hearing that the sculpture was indeed authentic, the middle-aged man delightfully raised his hand, and a subordinate quickly walked up and passed a bag of jingling Ethereal Coins over.

“Auction Master Wang, you are too courteous!” Elder He said.

“No, no, it’s only right for me to offer this to you. I have troubled you to appraise for me, Elder He, so this is just a small sum that represents my appreciation for your help,” the middle-aged man addressed as Auction Master Wang quickly replied.

Following which, he walked up to the sculpture and carefully stored it in a cushioned container, intending to move it somewhere else.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan could not help but shake his head. However, he chose not to say a word.

At the same time, after finishing his appraisal, Elder He turned around and saw that it was a young man behind him. In that instant, a slight frown could be seen between his brows. “Are you the disciple from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion who took on the mission?”

Zhang Xuan nodded. “May I know what treasure you wish for me to appraise?”

He could not be bothered to waste his breath on things that did not involve him. Right now, he just wanted to quickly finish his appraisal so that he could access his books.

“No need to hurry,” Elder He said as he took a seat in a nearby chair. He lifted his teacup and took a sip before turning to look at Zhang Xuan with a hint of disdain in his eyes. “Disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion are formidable in their swordsmanship, there is no denying that. However, their appraisal skills seem to be sorely lacking. Two of your peers came not too long ago, but they couldn’t discern anything at all, so I kicked them out. Are you here to give it a try, too? If you don’t have any capability, I advise you say so now so that we don’t waste each other’s time. It would be troublesome for me and humiliating for you if we had to do this the hard way.”

Those words cast a slight shadow over Zhang Xuan's eyes.

It was clear that the other party was making light of him!

"I know that my words might not sound nice, but I'm sure that there's some truth to my words. I have heard much about how talented the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion are, but I'm afraid that your expertise stops at swordsmanship. I'll have to humbly ask you not to insult us appraisers!" Elder He shook his head.

He waved his hand and said, "Yuan Qing, take these two Sword Pavilion Coins, give them to that young man over there, and invite him to leave. I don't need anyone causing any undue trouble here!"

Yes!" The guard who had brought Zhang Xuan in took two Sword Pavilion Coins from Elder He's hands and passed them over to Zhang Xuan. "Here!"

Paying no heed to the guard's actions at all, Zhang Xuan looked at Elder He deeply and scoffed, "Causing undue trouble?"

He did not want to get involved in unnecessary matters, but this fellow just had to stretch his face over for him to slap. Did the other party's cheek feel itchy or something?

He walked over to the middle-aged man, who was in the midst of packing the sculpture, and said, "Friend, I advise you not to take this item with you just yet."

"Oh?" Auction Master Wang stopped his actions and turned to look at Zhang Xuan with a perplexed frown.

He had heard the conversation between the two of them, and while Elder He did not fear offending the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he was not so audacious.

"I'd just like to give you a word of warning. The item in your hands isn't an artifact from High Immortal Du He at all, nor is it a sculpture made out of Calmheart Stone. If you use it as the core of a formation, it won't take long for your cultivation to go berserk!" Zhang Xuan remarked calmly.

“What do you mean by that? I just appraised the artifact, and it was certainly left behind by High Immortal Du He. Do you have any questions about the results of my appraisal?” Elder He’s face darkened.

He had been appraising for over a hundred years, and he had hardly made any mistakes to date. Yet, a twenty-year-old man dared challenge his judgement? Naive!

“Questions about the results of your appraisal?” Zhang Xuan shook his head with a pitiable smile on his face. “No, I just have two words for it—utter bullsh*t. If Auction Master Wang really listens to your words here, he will surely lose his life within three days!”

1994 Bloodsoaked Stone

“Audacious!” Elder He’s face reddened in fury.

He had been the chief appraiser of this auction house for nearly a hundred years, and the artifacts that he had looked at numbered at least eight thousand. Even if his knowledge was lacking from time to time, his appraisals had never been too far off the mark. Yet, this young man was actually saying that Auction Master Wang would die within three days if he believed his words. There was no greater insult to his professionalism than this!

You are the one who is audacious! You were hired to appraise an artifact, but an error you have made ended up putting your client’s life at risk. You should know the consequences of that, right?” Zhang Xuan replied coldly.

Having read through the books of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he had learned quite a bit about the occupations in the Azure. While the appraiser occupation did not have a specific heritage, unlike the Master Teacher Continent, and there was no particular guild managing it, there were still some strict conventions surrounding the occupation.

If an appraiser made a mistake, not only would they lose their reputation, they might even be demanded to pay a huge compensation fee, which could bankrupt them. In extreme cases, the appraiser might even be dealt with through the law!

With the current situation, if someone lost their life as a result of Elder He’s appraisal error, he might be stripped of his cultivation and banished from the land.

“Utter nonsense!” Hearing the words of the young man, Elder He’s face warped in fury. He flung the sleeves of his robe and bellowed, “Do you know the consequences of attempting to besmirch an appraiser’s reputation? I demand that you give me an explanation right now. Otherwise, even if I have to make a scene before Sect Leader Han, I’ll make sure that you are severely punished for the lies you dared spout about me!”

Considering how important reputation was to appraisers, it was also a convention in the Azure that those who dared carelessly besmirch the reputation of an appraiser would be severely dealt with.

These conventions were made out of necessity for fear that the markets would fall into turmoil, so they were acknowledged by most cultivators of the Azure. As such, even a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would have to be severely punished if he dared infringe it!

“Besmirching an appraiser’s reputation?” A playful smile crept onto Zhang Xuan’s lips, and he shook his head. “We’ll see!”

Meanwhile, Auction Master Wang was a little conflicted about the situation before him. He could not afford to offend this young man or the esteemed Elder He, which placed him in a terribly difficult position.

“You mentioned that my teacher has erred in his appraisal, but are you able to prove it? If you can’t prove me, that will leave us no choice but to suspect that you are intentionally sully my teacher’s reputation!” the guard named Yuan Qing cried out indignantly.

He was apprehensive of confronting a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, but he could not watch by the side as his teacher was being insulted by another man.

“Don’t worry, that’s what I’m just about to do!” Zhang Xuan chuckled softly. He turned to Auction Master Wang and asked, “Do you have any Test Rats or the like here?”

Similar to the Pill Sample Beast on the Master Teacher Continent, there were also creatures in the Azure that could be used to test the effects of certain medicine on living beings. As an auction house, there was bound to be something of the sort there for appraisal purposes.

“We do have some!” Yuan Qing was the one who replied. He looked at his teacher, and seeing the lack of reaction from the latter, he quickly backed out of the room.

Soon enough, he returned with a rabbit-like saint beast in his hand.

It was only at Saint 1-dan, which was equivalent to the strength of a powerless child in the Azure.

Seeing that what he needed had been prepared, Zhang Xuan turned to Auction Master Wang and smiled. "Pardon me, but may I trouble you to bring your sculpture out once more?"

Auction Master Wang hesitated for a moment, but he eventually followed Zhang Xuan's instructions.

Without touching the sculpture at all, Zhang Xuan took out a brush and calmly drew out a bizarre pattern in the surroundings.

Taking Zhang Xuan's actions into sight, Elder He was stunned for a moment before he suddenly burst out laughing. "Isn't that the Calming Heart Formation? You are intending to create the formation using a brush?"

He immediately understood Zhang Xuan's intentions as soon as he recognized those bizarre patterns. The latter was simply trying to construct a Calming Heart Formation on the spot to test the validity of his appraisal.

Just that...

Setting up a Calming Heart Formation required formation flags and all kinds of treasures. What could mere brush and ink possibly do?

What a joke!

"The effects will be reduced through an ink formation. Otherwise, I fear that this saint beast won't even last a single breath," Zhang Xuan remarked impassively.

It did not take long for him to complete his formation, and he quickly threw his brush back into his storage ring. With a light tap, he infused his zhenqi into the Calming Heart Formation.

Weng!

The brilliant light glowed from the ink formation, and it swiftly engulfed the sculpture as well, turning it into the heart

of the formation. In an instant, a calming energy rippled within the perimeters of the formation.

Without a doubt, cultivating in such an atmosphere would surely enhance one's rate of cultivation significantly.

"This..." Elder He did not think that the other party would actually successfully create the Calming Heart Formation with just a brush and ink, and his eyebrows shot up in astonishment.

Even the cultivator who was the most skilled in formations there would not be able to pull off a feat like that!

Just how deep an understanding did the young man have regarding the formation, the surroundings, and the sculpture in order to pull this off? This would not have worked if there was even a single error!

At that moment, he suddenly felt an ominous premonition.

On the other hand, after the formation was activated, Zhang Xuan turned to Yuan Qing and said, "I'll have to trouble you to place the saint beast into the formation."

Yuan Qing quickly headed forward and placed the rabbit in his hand into the formation.

Under the effects of the calming energy, the slightly agitated rabbit swiftly calmed down. Soon, its eyelids drooped down, and it seemed like it would fall asleep at any moment.

"Didn't you say that the sculpture is fake?" Seeing the current state of the rabbit, Elder He harrumphed in glee.

Through his appraisal, he had deduced that the sculpture complemented well with the Calming Heart Formation, and it would accentuate its effects. Yet, this fellow accused him of lying and even claimed that doing so would place one in danger. The rabbit in the formation was proving that his words were right!

"There's no hurry, just enjoy the show!" Zhang Xuan chuckled softly as he turned around and took a seat on a nearby chair. Making himself at home, he turned to Qing Yuan and said, "Brew me a pot of tea."

Qing Yuan clenched his fists tightly

“Go on!” Elder He looked at Zhang Xuan with narrowed eyes, but he still gestured for Qing Yuan to do as the young man had said with a wave of his hand.

While he was not terribly fond of the young man before him, the latter was still a disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

At his teacher’s command, Yuan Qing quickly left the room and brought a pot of tea back.

Zhang Xuan sipped on it calmly as he waited patiently. Roughly an hour later, the sleeping rabbit finally opened its eyes, and it seemed to be a little agitated.

“What’s happening?” Elder He was stunned.

Under normal circumstances, any beast that was placed in the perimeter of the Calming Heart Formation would remain absolutely silent. The fact that it was starting to get a little agitated showed that something was off.

Hu!

The rabbit abruptly rose to its feet, and with reddened eyes, it leaped straight toward the sculpture before it.

Kacha!

Crashing right into the sculpture, its stubby legs twitched a little before it finally breathed its last.

Kacha!

The teacup that Auction Master Wang was holding was crushed into bits as tea seeped through the cracks between his fingers.

With a livid voice, he asked, “Elder He, what’s going on?”

He could almost see himself in the place of the dead rabbit in the formation. If he had really cultivated using that sculpture, that might have been his outcome.

Elder He was also stunned by the sight before him.

Nothing should have been wrong based on his appraisal. Why would such a situation occur?

There was completely no chance for the disciple from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion to have tampered with the formation under their close watch. All the latter did was draw the Calming Heart Formation.

It was true that the way in which the formation was set up was a little bizarre, but there was definitely nothing wrong with the formation.

In other words... the rabbit's death was related to the sculpture!

Seeing that Elder He did not have an answer for him, Auction Master Wang turned his gaze upon the young man in the room. "What's going on?"

You wish to know the reason?" Zhang Xuan asked with a mysterious smile.

"That's right." Auction Master Wang nodded.

This was simply too terrifying! He had paid such a hefty sum to purchase this sculpture so that he could calm his mind and dispel himself of his inner demons. Yet, such a matter actually happened instead...

Unless he made sense out of it, there was no way that he would dare use this sculpture ever again!

"If you want to know the reason, you just have to lift the sculpture up!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Alright," Auction Master Wang replied as he picked the sculpture up.

Even though the saint beast had crashed into it earlier, it did not leave the slightest scratch on it due to its overwhelming resilience.

"Lift it over your head," Zhang Xuan instructed.

Thus, Auction Master Wang lifted it even higher.

"Now, with all of your strength, smash it on the ground!" Zhang Xuan said.

"Smash it on the ground?" Auction Master Wang was stunned.

It was true that the sculpture was exceptionally resilient due to being forged of Calmheart Stone, but it would still shatter if one threw it on the ground forcefully!

This was something that he had spent a huge portion of his savings on! How could he smash it like that?

“Indeed. Don’t you want to know what it is? Smash it!” Zhang Xuan replied nonchalantly as he sipped on his tea. “If you can’t bear to part with it, you can take it back home and use it just as Elder He said.”

Auction Master Wang’s eyes twitched.

By the side, Elder He’s body also stiffened up. He wanted to refute Zhang Xuan’s words, but he was unable to find any words to say.

With the rabbit smashing its head against the sculpture, who would dare use it anymore?

“If you still aren’t able to explain it after it’s shattered, are you going to compensate Auction Master Wang for his losses?” Elder He asked.

“If I explain it, are you going to compensate Auction Master Wang?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“If your explanation makes sense, I’ll admit that I have made a misjudgment and compensate him accordingly!” Elder He harrumphed.

It was only right for an appraiser to be punished if he erred in his judgement.

Very well. I’m willing to compensate for the sculpture if I am unable to explain it,” Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

“Alright then...”

Gritting his teeth, Auction Master Wang threw the sculpture down with all his might.

Kacha!

The sculpture immediately shattered into many fragments upon impact.

Hu!

But as the rock crumbled, a malicious aura gushed out from within, causing the crowd to shudder a little.

Elder He quickly lowered his head, only to see that the shattered portion were crimson in color. His face immediately drained of color as realization struck him.

“This is... Bloodsoaked Stone?”

Bloodsoaked Stone was known to appear on battlefields or places where massacres had occurred. Over time, as fresh blood seeped into the stone, a tremendous amount of killing intent would be accumulated in a single place.

More importantly, it was shrouded by the malicious intent of vengeful spirits. Putting aside coming into proximity with it, the malicious intent could even afflict others from a distance. Carelessness could easily lead to one's cultivation going berserk, and in even more extreme cases, there were those who lost their rationality and eventually went insane.

Bloodsoaked Stone could be said to be the exact opposite existence of Calmheart Stone.

He had been certain that the sculpture before him was forged out of Calmheart Stone, so why would it suddenly turn into the former after it was shattered?

Elder He immediately found himself completely dumbfounded.

1995 Zhang Xuan's Explanation

The others in the room were flabbergasted.

Even though Auction Master Wang was not an appraiser and did not know too much about appraising, the fact that he had gone to the extent of sourcing this sculpture showed that he knew a fair bit about Calmheart Stone. Naturally, he could discern that the material that was before him was its polar opposite, Bloodsoaked Stone.

To think that he had ended up buying the complete opposite of what he intended to purchase... and to make matter worse, Elder He had even claimed that it was Calmheart Stone!

If he had not met this young man, it probably would not have been long before he was afflicted by the malicious intent lingering around the sculpture. Soon enough, he might have committed suicide just as the rabbit had done earlier!

A mixture of fear and rage surged into Auction Master Wang's head as he turned to the old man before him and bellowed, "What's going on here? Elder He, is this what my trust in you amounts to?"

Usually, he would not dare speak to Elder He in such a manner, but he was just moments away from sealing his fate. There was no way that he could remain calm under such circumstances!

"I..." Elder He's body trembled.

He did not know what to say. He squatted down to pick up fragments of the rock, but no matter how he examined them, they were all Bloodsoaked Stone. There was no trace of Calmheart Stone to be seen at all.

In an instant, he looked as if he had aged a decade.

After a long moment of silence, he finally turned to Zhang Xuan and asked, "May I know... how I should address you?"

“I am Zhang Xuan,” Zhang Xuan replied.

“Brother Zhang, I was certain that what I saw in the sculpture earlier was Calmheart Stone,” Elder He said, “so why would...”

He was no longer maintaining the haughty attitude from before, and the way he addressed Zhang Xuan had also turned into a more polite ‘brother’.

He was certain that there was nothing wrong with his judgement, but somehow, things still turned out this way. Given that the other party actually knew of this in advance, he must have known where things had gone wrong.

His prejudice against the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was not completely unjustified. Two inner disciples had gone there before Zhang Xuan to try their luck, but it turned out that they did not know anything about appraisal at all. Not only did they make a fool out of themselves, they even accidentally destroyed an invaluable artifact.

As a result of that, even he had been implicated.

For this reason, he really did not have a good opinion of disciples from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion trying to act as appraisers.

When he saw how young Zhang Xuan was, he had immediately assumed that the latter was there to try his luck as well. Who could have known that he would stumble upon a true master?

In terms of eye of discernment, this young man seemed to be far ahead of him.

On the other hand, seeing that Elder He had finally put away his superior attitude, Zhang Xuan could not be bothered to keep up with his scornful attitude. He picked up one of the fragments on the ground and began explaining. “Calmheart Stone and Bloodsoaked Stone are like two sides of a coin. Despite their opposing natures, they are able to affect the psyche of others through the energy they emanate. I don’t need to explain any more about this, right?”

The crowd nodded in agreement.

In the strictest terms, Calmheart Stone and Bloodsoaked Stone could be considered spirit stones. Ordinary spirit stones were filled with attributeless spiritual energy that provided energy for others to cultivate whereas these two stones were stored with special kinds of energy that would affect one's psyche.

"Elder He's appraisal was not completely off the mark. This sculpture is indeed an artifact from High Immortal Du He, and it was a piece that the latter personally made. In fact, even the layer of painting was done personally by him," Zhang Xuan explained.

"If it was left by him, then..." Elder He was perplexed.

Since that was the case, he should not have been wrong! Why did things turn out like that?

"Do you know who High Immortal Du He is?" Zhang Xuan asked.

"I have heard of him..." By the side, Yuan Qing spoke up. "High Immortal Du He was known to be a divine physician a hundred years ago. He had saved countless people in his lifetime, and as a result of that, there were many people who worshipped his idol. Praying to him is not just a gesture of respect to him—it's also viewed to be a prayer for safety. Why would someone as benevolent as High Immortal Du He create such an artifact to poison others?"

Given all the good deeds that High Immortal Du He had done, it was hard to believe that he would disguise a Bloodsoaked Stone as a Calmheart Stone in order to mislead others into disaster!

"Poison? You are misunderstanding something." Zhang Xuan shook his head. "The reason High Immortal Du He created this artifact wasn't to harm others but to save people!"

"Save people?" Zhang Xuan's words were only making the crowd get more and more confused.

"This artifact is indeed created out of a Bloodsoaked Stone, but you have neglected something. It's for a reason that High Immortal Du He put so much effort into painting the artifact.

While it might seem to be for aesthetic purposes, he was, in actuality, inscribing a unique formation on the artifact with his ink in order to suppress the killing intent within, similar to what I did earlier. Not only so, he even imbued it with energy so that it would continuously emanate a calming aura,” Zhang Xuan explained.

“Under normal circumstances, it would be impossible to see through the killing intent. That’s also why Elder He misunderstood that it was Calmheart Stone.”

Elder He nodded in agreement to those words. He was indeed unable to discern the presence of killing intent in the stone.

“And indeed, the killing intent sealed within the artifact wouldn’t affect one typically. However, if you used a formation and attempt to draw out the energy within the stone, that would be a different story. Your actions would damage the ink formation that High Immortal Du He painted on the surface of the sculpture, and to make matters worse, you wouldn’t even notice anything is wrong initially as the killing intent is sealed too deeply within. As you cultivate with the sculpture, it’s inevitable that the killing intent would slowly seep into your body. Your rationality would gradually be eroded, causing you to descend into lunacy. Not only would you attempt to kill yourself, you might even bring harm upon your family and friends!”

Just imagining the possible consequences was enough to leave Auction Master Wang shuddering uncontrollably.

Before he knew it, his hair was already drenched with sweat.

This was also why appraisers were of the utmost importance in the world. An artifact, when used well, could be an invaluable treasure to a cultivator. However, if a cultivator failed to recognize the true nature of an artifact and used it recklessly, the consequences could be disastrous!

This was a perfect example of that!

“I don’t dare claim that I have a deep understanding of High Immortal Du He, but my guess is that his purpose for creating

this artifact was to save patients who have fallen into a coma!” Zhang Xuan explained.

“There’s no better way than this to stimulate the consciousness of patients who have fallen into a coma and can’t be woken up through any other methods. This sculpture would first release a calming aura to lower one’s guard, allowing killing intent to discreetly creep into one’s soul. The killing intent would agitate one’s soul, causing one to swiftly awaken.”

This reminded him of how Wei Ruyan had fallen into a coma back then because she was unable to withstand the prowess of the two unique constitutions that she was born with. In the end, he had needed to resort to other medicine before he succeeded.

If he had such an artifact with him back then, it should have worked as well.

A body would still be protected by its reflexive defense mechanisms even in an unconscious state. If one attempted to afflict a soul with killing intent directly, one’s soul would automatically guard against it. At the same time, if the concentration of killing intent was too great, it was more likely to kill a patient before even awakening them.

Thus, High Immortal Du He had to come up with such a method.

It was because Zhang Xuan had a similar experience in the past that he felt that the other party had created this artifact for treatment purposes.

“This... I have studied High immortal Du He’s life, and his young daughter once fell into a coma due to an incident, and no matter what he did, she just wouldn’t wake up. The situation continued for half a year till he finally found a method to successfully rouse his daughter’s consciousness. He never revealed the trick, so this matter became a huge mystery among the local physician community back then... Could this be the reason?” Elder He was stunned.

As an appraiser, he had studied the history of famous figures as it helped him in identifying artifacts. He had read about

High Immortal Du He's affairs, so he knew about the incident back then regarding the other party's daughter.

It was only after hearing Zhang Xuan's words that he finally came to a realization.

"That should probably be the case. There's no such thing as a 'good' or an 'evil' artifact—it all depends on how the user utilizes it," Zhang Xuan replied with a nod.

"I see..." Elder He nodded in realization. He looked at the young man before him with a complicated expression on his face before sighing deeply. "I concede. I have lost to you. Auction Master Wang, allow me to compensate your loss!"

"Elder He, you are too courteous!" Auction Master Wang quickly replied.

Following which, Elder He turned to Zhang Xuan and bowed deeply in gratitude. "Brother Zhang, I am extremely grateful to you. Not only have you saved Auction Master Wang, you have indirectly saved me as well!"

While the young man did question his professionalism and put him down before Auction Master Wang, thinking back, it was such an action that had saved him. Otherwise, if something had really happened to Auction Master Wang in the midst of his cultivation, his career as an appraiser would have come to a screeching halt!

Zhang Xuan nodded politely in response to Elder He's words. "May I know if I'm qualified to complete the mission that was assigned to my sect now?"

"Of course, of course!" Elder He nodded. "This way please!"

Considering how the young man was able to see through something that had escaped his notice, there was no doubt that the young man's eye of discernment was indeed far sharper than his.

He might really be able to resolve the issue that had rendered him helpless all this while.

Following behind Elder He, Zhang Xuan walked out of the room.

1996 Luo Ruoxin?

It did not take long for the two of them to arrive before a sealed chamber. There were many layers of formations constructed over it, and there were four True Immortal realm guards standing outside.

A middle-aged man dressed in a thick fur coat noticed Elder He's presence and quickly walked over to greet him.

Elder He introduced the middle-aged man to Zhang Xuan. "This person here is Boss Hu of Wuhai Market. Boss Hu, this young man over here is a core disciple of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, Zhang Xuan. He might be young, but his expertise as an appraiser is far above mine!"

"Far above yours?" Boss Hu was surprised by Elder He's high evaluation of Zhang Xuan, such that he could not help but reassess the young man before him once more.

Elder He was the chief appraiser of the Wuhai Market, and the two of them had known each other for several decades. As such, he was very familiar with the other party's temperament.

Considering how formally Elder He was introducing this young man to him, it was likely that this young man was the real deal!

It was just that he could not help but harbor a hint of doubt at the back of his mind. Appraisal was highly dependent on the scope of one's knowledge; the older one was, the more knowledgeable one was likely to be. It was a little hard for him to imagine a twenty-year-old being truly proficient as an appraiser.

Despite his doubts, he did not show any sign of making light of Zhang Xuan at all. Instead, he turned to the latter and bowed slightly. "Brother Zhang, it's a pleasure to meet you. For Elder He to have such a high opinion of someone as young as you, you must be a truly capable individual!"

"Boss Hu, you are flattering me," Zhang Xuan replied calmly.

The middle-aged man before him did not have a particularly impressive presence, having sealed his zhenqi deeply so as to not reveal any hint of it. Nevertheless, through the Eye of Insight, Zhang Xuan was still able to see that the other party had already reached Half-High Immortal!

With such a level of cultivation, the middle-aged man could be considered among the top echelons of Wuhai City. “Come, follow me!”

After trading some pleasantries, Boss Hu took the two of them into the room ahead.

Without wasting too much time, Boss Hu gestured toward the object ahead and said, “Brother Zhang, this is the artifact that I would like you to appraise.”

At the center of the room was an object around the height of a person wrapped in a layer of black cloth.

Pulling the cloth off, a glistening rock dyed in the striking color deep crimson was revealed. It seemed to have been worked on before, such that the gleam reflecting off the rock was particularly bright. It was slightly similar to a blood jade, but again, it did not really seem so either.

“It’s just a piece of rock?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

Considering the exceptionally high reward for the mission, as well as the fact that a skilled appraiser like Elder He was unable to discern its true nature, he had expected an invaluable treasure of some kind... but it turned out to be a piece of rock instead!

This was truly surprising.

“Don’t underestimate it just because it’s a piece of rock. It has an appearance similar to a blood jade, but the blood jade doesn’t have a glow as warm as it. Its texture is reminiscent of that of a blood crystal, but blood crystals are known to exist in smaller sizes. I have browsed through innumerable books, and there was nothing that tallied with this rock. At least a hundred appraisers have been brought in to appraise the rock, but none of them have been able to discern its origin or name. As such,

we chose to seek the help of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion!” Elder He said.

There were several reasons that they had chosen to engage the help of core disciples.

Firstly, most core disciples in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion came from illustrious clans, so there was a chance that they might have chanced upon something similar to it.

Secondly, core disciples were not as powerful as the elders, so even if they appraised the rock to be something valuable and attempted to take it for themselves, they would still be able to do something about it.

It was a survival of the fittest world that they lived in, so this was something that could not be helped. Besides, it would be truly scary if the enemy feigned a lack of interest but resorted to underhanded means to acquire it. That would really be extremely troublesome.

Dealing with a core disciple was simply much easier.

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan nodded slightly.

While they were speaking, he had already tried assessing the rock with his Eye of Insight, but to his astonishment, he was unable to discern it.

He had read all the books in the libraries of the inner disciples, core disciples, and elders. In terms of general knowledge, even elders who had lived on the Forsaken Continent for centuries would not be a match for him. Yet, he was actually unable to identify the rock through his Eye of Insight. There was indeed something amiss with it.

“Have you tested the rock’s attributes yet?” Zhang Xuan asked.

If it was just an unidentifiable rock, Boss Hu would not have gone to the extent of gathering so many appraisers and even seeking help from the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. There had to be some sign that hinted to him that this rock was not an ordinary artifact.

“We did. The most intense flames used by the strongest blacksmith in Wuhai City are unable to faze it, and High Immortal-tier weapons can’t even leave a scratch on it,” Elder He said.

Knowing that such information was crucial to appraising the artifact, they chose not to withhold any information at all.

“It’s impermeable to flames, and even High Immortal-tier weapons aren’t able to scratch it?” Zhang Xuan was astonished.

High Immortals could already be considered the top existences on the Azure, but even a weapon of that tier was unable to leave a scratch on it. Could this stone have reached Semi-Divinity or even beyond?

That would explain why Boss Hu was willing to spend so much money on it. Most likely, he was planning on selling this item for an astronomical sum after confirming what it was.

“Brother Zhang, I’ll have to trouble you to take a good look at the stone and help us figure out what it is!” Elder He clasped his fist.

“Very well,” Zhang Xuan replied as he walked up to the stone.

The crimson-emerald stone had a heavy presence that weighed down on one. Without even coming into contact with it, Zhang Xuan could tell that even he would have trouble trying to lift it with his current cultivation realm.

While he was only at the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm, his strength should be comparable to a Heavenly True Immortal. Despite that, he was still incapable of lifting it up. This stone was really getting more and more interesting to him.

“Brother Zhang, do you need a compass or any other equipment for your appraisal?” Elder He asked as he watched Zhang Xuan approaching the rock without any tools in hand.

Usually, when it came to appraising stones, one would try to measure its density, weight, and other properties using all kinds of tools in order to make a more informed deduction regarding the identity of the artifact.

Yet, Zhang Xuan was completely empty-handed. It was almost as if he thought that he could figure out what the rock was just by staring at it.

In response to Elder He's question, Zhang Xuan waved his hand and said, "There's no need for that for now..."

He slowly circled the rock contemplatively before reaching out to touch it lightly.

Weng!

A book materialized in the Library of Heaven's Path.

He quickly touched the compiled book, and its content flowed into his mind. The next moment, his eyes suddenly narrowed as his body froze on the spot.

"Elder He, this young man doesn't seem to be too reliable," Boss Hu complained with a frown as he watched the young man walking around without taking any measurements at all.

As the head of an entire market, he had seen many top-notch appraisers at work, but this was the first time that he had seen any appraiser working in such a manner, not to mention that the other party was oddly young.

"His means might be a little bizarre, but there's no denying that his eye of discernment far surpasses mine!" Elder He replied.

The sculpture earlier had also been made of a rock, and even through the ink formation, the young man had been able to discern the truth of it. That was more than enough to verify the young man's capabilities.

The young man might be able to do the same for this rock as well!

While the two of them were talking with one another, the young man turned around and looked at them with a tense expression. "Where... did you acquire this rock?"

Seeing that Zhang Xuan might have figured something out, Boss Hu replied honestly. "I bought it from a wandering cultivator. Based on what he said, it seems to be from the Sea of Exiled Stars!"

“Sea of Exiled Stars...” Zhang Xuan mumbled beneath his breath.

The Forsaken Continent was simply too huge, and the books in the libraries that he had accessed only consisted of the territories in the vicinity of the Ascendant Cloud sword Pavilion. As such, he had never heard of the Sea of Exiled Stars before.

“The Starchaser Palace, one of the Six Sects, is located on an island in the midst of an ocean. The name of the ocean around them is known as the Sea of Exiled Stars,” Elder He explained.

“Starchaser Palace... Du Qingyuan?” Zhang Xuan clenched his fists tightly.

Previously, Sect Leader Han Jianqiu had told him that if he wanted to know more about the gods, there was no one better to consult than the head of the Starchaser Palace, Du Qingyuan. It was just that the latter might not be willing to talk.

After all, speaking carelessly about the gods could cost one’s life.

And this thing had suddenly appeared in the Sea of Exiled Stars at such a moment.

Could there be some kind of link between them?

“Brother Zhang, have you managed to identify the rock?” Elder He asked.

From the moment he first saw this young man, he had remained perfectly calm, as if there was nothing in the world that could faze him. But at this very moment, it was clear to see that he was slightly shaken. Could it be that he had managed to identify the artifact before them?

Taking a deep breath to calm himself down, Zhang Xuan nodded. “Yes.”

“What is it?” Elder He asked in agitation.

Boss Hu hurriedly turned his gaze over as well.

Zhang Xuan closed his eyes for a brief moment before replying, "This is a... Godblood Rock."

"Godblood Rock?"

Elder He and Boss Hu looked at one another as their faces slowly warped in astonishment.

The term 'god' was not something that could be used carelessly in the Forsaken Continent, or one might risk bringing the wrath of the gods upon oneself.

Godblood Rock... This was an artifact that they had never heard of before. Was such a thing really existent in the world?

"Indeed." Zhang Xuan nodded.

The reason he had lost his cool for a moment earlier was not because of the association between the rock and the gods... but that there was a chance that this artifact might have something to do with Luo Ruoxin!

It was not to say that Luo Ruoxin's name was written in the book, but the anomaly concerning the Godblood Rock was simply too similar to the situation with Luo Ruoxin. He was indeed able to compile a book on the Godblood Rock, but other than its name, the book was completely empty.

After the Library of Heaven's Path had been upgraded, he could discern Heavenly High Immortal-tier artifacts with ease, and he could even compile a book on the Semi-Divinity realm Han Jianqiu. However, anything else that was related to Luo Ruoxin, such as the crimson pendant that he was wearing, reflected only a name and no other details.

This rock was the same!

This meant that there was a chance that the so-called Godblood Rock was related to her!

Of course, just this much would not be enough to faze him so. After all, the Library of Heaven's Path had a lot of mysteries that he had not uncovered yet, such that it was not possible for him to predict its behavior entirely.

What had really convinced him about the relationship between Luo Ruoxin and the Godblood Rock was the slight warmth

emanated by the crimson pendant hanging in front of his chest when he came into direct contact with it. He would really have to be a fool if he still could not make the link with this compelling evidence!

“Does the Godblood Rock have something to do with the gods?” Boss Hu asked with a hint of fright in his eyes.

He would have been more than delighted if this rock was any other treasure. He was confident that something of the quality of this rock could be sold for an exorbitant price. However, if the gods were involved in this...

That was really a cause for concern!

As someone from the Forsaken Continent, he knew that it was a huge taboo to get too close to the gods. The dissemination of knowledge and objects associated with them was heresy, and it would draw their wrath.

If this rock was really related to the gods, auctioning it would surely draw the attention of the Hall of Gods. That could very well be an act of suicide!

“Given its name, I have no doubt that it’s related to the gods. As for how it’s formed and what its uses are, I fear that I don’t really have an answer to that at the moment...” Zhang Xuan shook his head.

The only thing he had received regarding the artifact was its name. There was no detailed explanation regarding its properties or flaws in the compiled book, so he did not know whether it could be forged into a weapon or whether it had some unique effects or not.

However, he knew one thing for sure. If even the Library of Heaven’s Path was unable to compile a complete record on the artifact, it was definitely related to the gods.

“This...” Boss Hu hesitated.

He could tell that there was something special about the rock, so he had spent a heavy price to buy it. After that, he invested huge sums into having it appraised.

If it was really related to the gods, what should he do? Should he still sell it or not?

With a livid complexion, Boss Hu asked, “Brother Zhang, you mentioned that it’s called Godblood Rock, but do you have any evidence to prove that? Pardon me for asking such a question. It’s not that I’m doubting your judgement, but that... character has huge implications. I have to be absolutely careful when dealing with this...”

“Evidence to prove it?” Zhang Xuan pondered for a moment before nodding slightly. “It should be possible to prove it!” “How?” Boss Hu asked anxiously.

“It’s simple. Since it’s named the Godblood Rock, it must contain some traces of a god’s blood. If you have the blood of the most ferocious immortal beast on the continent, you can place it in contact with the Godblood Rock and see how it reacts. If the blood displays instinctive subservience toward the Godblood Rock, that should be enough to prove that my judgement is not wrong!” Zhang Xuan replied.

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Even though he did not know the exact properties of the Godblood Rock, he did have a deep understanding of immortal beasts.

Since this artifact had the name 'Godblood', it must have something to do with the blood of the gods. If so, even the more terrifying of beasts on the continent would instinctively fear it due to bloodline suppression.

This was a method that he had learned from the libraries of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

Over the past thousand years, there was not a single immortal beast that had dared move in close proximity of the Sword God Hall due to the aura that it emanated. The reason for that was the aura of the gods from the half character that the founder had snatched from the Hall of Gods.

"This... I'll go look for some right now!"

This method sounded feasible and logical, and it was not too difficult to carry out. Boss Hu and Elder He glanced at one another, and the former nodded slightly before quickly taking his leave.

He was extremely anxious to verify whether the artifact was truly the Godblood Rock or not.

If it was truly Godblood Rock, even if he would make a huge loss, he would not dare put an artifact associated with the gods up for auction.

After all, there was no amount of money that he could earn that would save him from the wrath of the gods.

An hour later, Boss Hu returned with several jade bottles in hand.

“These few bottles are filled with the blood essences of High Immortal realm beasts,” Boss Hu said.

There were not many High Immortal realm beasts in the world, so it was impossible to find one on the spot. However, if it was just acquiring their blood, there were still some channels for it on the market.

The blood of High Immortal realm beasts harnessed an incredible amount of energy, making them treasures to raise one’s cultivation. As long as one was able to fork out the money, it was still possible to acquire some from the markets or the Ethereal Hall.

“This bottle is filled with the blood of a mature Inktiger Immortal Beast, which is known to possess the cultivation of Heavenly High Immortal,” he explained as he dripped a droplet of blood on the Godblood Rock.

Even though it was just a single droplet, due to the overwhelming amount of spiritual energy it harnessed, it was as heavy as gold. Even as it dropped, one could hear it compressing the air with a sharp wheeze.

Hu!

Just as it was about to fall on the rock, it suddenly diverted away and flew aside. It was as if it had encountered something that it deeply feared, forcing it to flee.

This sight caused Boss Hu’s face to stiffen.

If he had still harbored some doubts in the past, at that moment, he was already almost certain that Zhang Xuan’s words were right. Of the various bottles of immortal beast blood that he had bought, the Inktiger Immortal Beast was the strongest of all.

On the off case that it might just be an exception, Boss Hu carried on experimenting with the other bottles of blood, but all of them reacted in the same manner. Before reaching the Godblood Rock, they would flee away, as if they did not dare taint its divine presence at all.

This was more than enough to show that the Godblood Rock harnessed some kind of might that commanded the deference

of those immortal beasts!

Other than the gods, there was really no other existence that they could think of that would induce such an extreme reaction!

“This proves what you said. It’s indeed the Godblood Rock,” Boss Hu remarked with a deep sigh before raising his gaze to look at Zhang Xuan.

This young man was able to infer that the rock had something to do with the blood of the gods without using any tools at all. This showed that his eye of discernment was frighteningly powerful.

“Regarding this artifact... do you have any information on when it was acquired, and what was the exact location of its procurement?” Zhang Xuan asked.

“When I bought it, that person only mentioned the Sea of Exiled Stars. He didn’t reveal too much information aside from that,” Boss Hu replied.

“Well... is it possible for you to get in touch with the man who sold you the stone now? There are some questions which I would like to ask him,” Zhang Xuan asked.

“I’ll give it a try!” Boss Hu took out his Communication Jade Token and attempted to send the other party a message. However, after waiting for a while, there was still no response. Thus, he could only shake his head helplessly and say, “He isn’t replying. I haven’t seen him around in the city since acquiring the rock, so it might be hard to get in touch with him.”

Hearing those words, Zhang Xuan sighed deeply.

He had thought that he would be able to question the other party to find out more about the matter, but from the looks of it, it was not possible at the moment.

Zhang Xuan proceeded to ask a few more questions, but he was unable to receive any useful clues regarding the issue, so he could not help but feel a little disappointed.

“Then... Do you know how long it has been since the other party acquired that rock?” Zhang Xuan finally asked.

“It has been roughly a month since I bought the rock, and I recall the seller saying that the rock had been with him for almost a month. All in all, it should be roughly two months since this rock was first found!”

“Two months?” Zhang Xuan did a swift mental calculation, and slowly, his hands tightened into fists.

All in all, it was roughly a year and four months after Luo Ruoxin left the Master Teacher Continent that he entered the Azure.

Going by the 1:10 ratio between the time of the Azure and the Master Teacher Continent, a year and four months translated to roughly five hundred days, which was equivalent to fifty days in the Azure. It had been ten days since he arrived in the Azure, so that would add up to a total of two months!

This evidence seemed to suggest that the Godblood Rock had something to do with Luo Ruoxin.

Of course, whether that was truly the case or not, he would have to personally make a trip to Starchaser Palace to verify it for himself.

Coming to understand all that, Zhang Xuan exhaled deeply before moving on to the other matter at hand. “Boss Hu, do you have any True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals here? If possible, could you allow me to browse through your collection? I just need to take a rough look at them, and I can assure you that I won’t copy or take them away with me.”

This was the primary reason he had come here to appraise the artifact. If he wanted to continue tracking Luo Ruoxin’s footsteps, it was of the utmost importance for him to raise his cultivation!

Only upon becoming a True Immortal would he finally have the strength to protect himself in this world.

“True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals?”
Hearing the request, Boss Hu pondered for a moment before

nodding. "I do have some here. They are copies that I have made prior to the auction. If you wish to take a look,

Brother Zhang, I would be more than delighted to share them with you!"

Considering how the young man was able to identify something as rare as this, his eye of discernment could be said to be truly formidable.

If he could convince the young man to work at their market, it would surely be a huge boost to their reputation and business!

As such, he agreed to the request right away.

Besides, the young man was only having a quick browse instead of copying or taking anything away. This was a request that would not hurt him in any way.

"Thank you, Boss Hu!" Receiving the other party's approval, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief. He took one last look at the crimson rock and advised, "Boss Hu, the Godblood Rock is deeply linked to the affairs of the gods, so it would be best for you not to auction it. Use a formation to seal it, and ensure that no one else learns of its existence. If, by any chance, I unearth the way to use the Godblood Rock, I'll come back and inform you!"

"I'll be troubling you then, Brother Zhang!" Boss Hu replied with a nod.

Even if the young man had not said such a thing, he would have done the same. Even if one inflated his guts tenfold, he would not dare do something as disrespectful as auction something with the blood of the gods!

While his cultivation had reached Half-High Immortal, he knew that the Hall of Gods could easily destroy everything that he possessed. It would be wise not to risk crossing those experts.

More importantly, even if the Hall of Gods chose not to interfere in this matter, the existence of the Godblood Rock would surely draw the attention of the Six Sects.

He was just a merchant. He did not want to get involved in the dangerous politics of the continent.

Since that was the case, the only option left for him was to seal all news.

After arranging for his men to seal the Godblood Rock away, Boss Hu led Zhang Xuan over to the market's book collection vault.

True to its name, there were many valuable manuals placed on its shelves. While its collection could not compare with the libraries of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, it could still be considered impressive.

There are only seventy books here... Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed deeply.

To be exact, there were more than seventy books in the vault, but only seventy of them were True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals.

It did not seem too likely that the seventy books would be enough to fix the seven remaining flaws in the Heaven's Path Divine Art.

Compile! Zhang Xuan willed as he placed the seventy books he had collected together with the compiled Heaven's Path Divine Art.

He did not bear too much hope regarding the matter, but when he flipped open the pages of the newly compiled Heaven's Path Divine Art, his eyes lit up in excitement.

To his astonishment, the seven remaining flaws had actually been resolved. The True Immortal realm Heaven's Path Divine Art had been perfected!

"This..." Zhang Xuan could hardly believe his eyes.

He had been thinking that seventy books would only be enough to fix a flaw or two, but they had actually resolved all of the problems at once! Why would that be?

Surprised, he quickly browsed through the seventy books that he had just compiled, and soon, he widened his eyes in realization.

Naturally, the books sold at auction were not as formidable as the ones available in the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. However, most of them went down an unorthodox route that strayed from the typical path that most cultivation techniques followed.

It was also because of this that these cultivation technique manuals could be sold at such a high price, and countless cultivators wanted to acquire them.

The six hundred books from the sect were orthodox whereas these seventy books were unorthodox. In a weird way, they complemented one another and covered whatever the other was lacking. As a result of that, all the flaws were resolved.

“Brother Zhang, may I know if there are any cultivation technique manuals that you are particularly interested in? I can fetch them for you,” Boss Hu said with a smile.

“It’s fine, I am done browsing through the books. Thank you for your generosity.” Zhang Xuan clasped his fist.

“You are already done browsing through the books?” Boss Hu was stunned.

The two of them had just entered a minute ago, and the young man had only shot a sweeping glance over all the books, but he was already done browsing?

It was almost as if he was leaving before the main show had even started! Was this not a little too fast?

Are you sure that you are here to browse through the books?

Unbelievable!

“I recently encountered some issues in my cultivation that I was unable to make sense of, so I wanted to look through some books in the hope that it would give me some inspiration. However, the books you have over here don’t seem to fit me too well, so rather than confuse myself further with them, I think that it would be better for me to steer clear entirely,” Zhang Xuan explained with a smile.

“This... Well, I can understand what you mean. These cultivation techniques do stray a little from the orthodox

cultivation techniques that the disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion practice.” Boss Hu nodded in agreement, seemingly accepting Zhang Xuan’s excuse.

Cultivation was not a field where one would be able to advance further simply by accruing more knowledge. It was a field of knowledge that was too vast for a human to fully understand, so reading too many books that portrayed contrasting views might just lead one to be unable to discern truth from falsehood, thus resulting in one’s cultivation going berserk.

“Brother Zhang, I’m indebted to you for sparing me from a possible calamity. This is a small token of my gratitude, and I hope that you won’t turn me down...”

Before leaving the room, Boss Hu passed a sachet of Ethereal Coins over. It seemed quite heavy, such that there were probably more than a hundred coins inside.

To offer so much money at once, it seemed like he was really determined to pull Zhang Xuan over to his side.

“Boss Hu, you are too generous. I’m just accomplishing whatever is expected of me.” Zhang Xuan waved his hand, not accepting the money at all.

He did love money, but this much money was not enough to draw him in. He did not really want to get too deeply involved with Boss Hu.

Besides, he had much more efficient ways of earning money.

“Farewell. May we meet again in the future!” Zhang Xuan said before making his way out of the market.

The reason he had gone to the Wuhai Market was to find True Immortal realm cultivation technique manuals to perfect his Heaven’s Path Divine Art, and he had accomplished what he had gone there for. Since that was the case, it was about time for him to return to start advancing his cultivation once more!

As long as he could raise his cultivation to the Heavenly True Immortal realm, with the Tongshang sword in hand, he would be able to put up a fight even if his opponent was a Heavenly High Immortal. By then, he would need not worry too much

about his safety when he went to the Sea of Exiled Stars in search of Luo Ruoxin.

It was only after leaving the Wuhai Market that Zhang Xuan realized that the sky had already darkened. A brilliant moon hung against a backdrop of twinkling stars. The surroundings were extraordinarily peaceful and quiet.

Walking along the streets, Zhang Xuan slowly made his way over to the Ethereal Hall branch. However, barely after taking a few steps, his eyes suddenly narrowed.

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Spatial manipulation?

A hint of horror flickered across Zhang Xuan's eyes as goosebumps rose all over his body.

If it was anyone else in the Azure standing before such a phenomenon, even if they were a High Immortal, they might not have managed to recognize what it truly was. However, having mastered spatial prowess in the Master Teacher Continent, he knew the reason for the happenings before him.

Someone had sealed his surroundings spatially!

In other words, he had been brought into a folded space, and no matter how big a fuss he made, no one in the external world would notice it at all!

If it was the Master Teacher Continent, even Saint 9-dan cultivators were able to control space to some extent... but in the Azure, not even the High Immortals would necessarily be able to pull spatial manipulation off.

If so, did it mean that the people who had captured him were...

Zhang Xuan quickly turned his sights to the figures before him, and there were four of them in total. They were all dressed in black robes, and they emanated a chilling air that left one feeling as if they had come from the depths of hell.

Three Heavenly True Immortals and one Heavenly High Immortal? Zhang Xuan frowned.

The opponents were weaker than he had expected, which was a huge blessing, but it was still beyond his means to deal with.

He was only at the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm. Even if the invincible Heaven's Path Divine Art was able to deal with Heavenly True Immortals... subduing three of them together with a Heavenly High Immortal would be pushing the limits!

Just who the hell were these people? Why were they coming for him?

Making sure to maintain a look of calmness, Zhang Xuan asked with a nonchalant voice, "Are you here to kill me?"

The killing intent that those people emanated was so overwhelming that even ordinary cultivators would have easily noticed it, let alone Zhang Xuan.

Without even turning to look at Zhang Xuan, the Heavenly High Immortal glanced at one of the black-robed Heavenly True Immortal experts and said, "I'll leave it to you. Remember what our master said!"

Yes!"

Hearing the command, the chosen black-robed expert charged forward and thrust his palm down upon Zhang Xuan. Boom!

A destructive force swept across the area like a tornado. Before the palm could land, Zhang Xuan could already feel a stifling sensation suffocating his chest.

"He's formidable!" Zhang Xuan narrowed his eyes.

He had never truly fought with a True Immortal before, but his swordsmanship duels with the others in the Elder Council had given him a rough gauge of how powerful an average True Immortal was.

Even though Zhang Xuan was only at the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm, with the various means that he possessed, he would still be more than a match for Heavenly True Immortal cultivators.

However, the might that the other party emanated actually left his chest feeling a little constricted!

There was no doubt that the person before him was far stronger than ordinary True Immortals, such that he might

even be able to stand on equal ground with an average Heavenly High Immortal!

“Retreat!” Knowing that there was no time for him to think, the first thing Zhang Xuan did was dodge the other party’s offense by leaping backward.

At the same time, he tapped his finger forward.

Huala!

A surge of sword qi immediately materialized and dissipated the other party’s offense, charging right toward the other party’s glabella.

Since the other party was bent on killing him, he decided to go all out in this attack. He did not infuse the Gods’ Sword Intent into the attack, but it harnessed his deep understanding of swordsmanship as well.

Given how abruptly the attack be launched, he should have been able to defeat this Heavenly True Immortal before him with ease. Then, before the others had a chance to encircle him, he would find a way to break this spatial seal and flee!

You do have some capabilities. It seems like this mission won’t be too boring!”

Just as the sword qi was able to pierce through the other party’s forehead, the black-robed expert chuckled softly as he stretched his hand out and swiftly grabbed the incoming sword qi between his fingers. No matter how the sword qi struggled, it was unable to break free of his grasp.

Seeing this, Zhang Xuan’s face turned completely livid.

With the might that he had put into the earlier attack, even the core disciples of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion would be caught off guard and killed within that single strike.

Yet, the Heavenly True Immortal was able to grab it so easily, as if he was just picking up a bug.

Just how powerful could he be?

“Go!”

Amid Zhang Xuan's bewilderment, the black-robed expert reversed the direction of the sword qi that he was holding and shot it back toward Zhang Xuan.

Hu!

This abrupt attack caught Zhang Xuan off guard. He immediately backed away.

Puhe!

But still, the sword qi still struck his shoulder, causing fresh blood to ooze out.

To think that the day would come when someone would be able to use his own sword qi against him!

"Not too bad. I was aiming for your throat." The black-robed expert smiled in approval when he saw that he had failed to kill Zhang Xuan with the counterattack.

Suppressing his astonishment, Zhang Xuan took a deep breath and willed, Flaws!

The other party was simply too weird. He would have to rely on the Library of Heaven's Path in order to overcome the current situation.

Weng!

The Library of Heaven's Path trembled, but no book appeared.

"What?" Zhang Xuan's body stiffened.

The fact that no book was compiled in the Library of Heaven's Path meant that the other party had either reached a level that surpassed the heavens of the Azure, or they were using some kind of technique that concealed them from the heavens.

Is it the effect of this folded space? Zhang Xuan thought.

He had encountered such situations in the Master Teacher Continent as well, and there was a good chance that the other party was using a similar method.

With the heavens sealed off, the Library of Heaven's Path would not be able to work its wonders! But this then led to another question—why would the other party do so?

Could it be that they knew about his Library of Heaven's Path as well, and that was why they had chosen to set up such a trap against him?

That should be impossible... Most likely, they are just afraid of the means of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. After all, those elders are bound to be keeping an eye on me in case I run into any danger, so they might be using this to stall for time...

He was certain that there was no one in the world other than Luo Ruoxin who knew about the Library of Heaven's Path, so that could not possibly be the reason. Most likely, it was just to ward off the experts of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion.

"I heard that you specialize in the Way of the Sword. Won't you show me how powerful your swordsmanship is?"

While Zhang Xuan's mind was still trying to make sense of the situation, the black-robed expert before him launched a follow-up attack with a flick of his finger.

Wuwuwuwuwu!

Five surges of sword qi shot forth from his five fingers, and they bolted toward Zhang Xuan with frightening speed. Zhang Xuan immediately pushed his feet against the ground and flitted to the side.

Heaven's Path Movement Art!

But despite his swift evasive maneuver, the five surges of sword qi reacted equally fast. No matter where he maneuvered himself to, the five surges of sword qi would swiftly return to his trail. He was unable to get away at all!

"His moves are truly impressive," Zhang Xuan murmured.

He knew that he had met the real deal this time around.

There was no way the other party could have controlled his sword qi manually to catch up with his Heaven's Path Movement Art. What the other party had done instead was lock his sword qi onto him through his Sword Intent.

As such, no matter where he ran off to, the sword qi would simply follow him!

Zhang Xuan was also capable of this move, but it was an advanced move that he would have to rely on his Gods' Sword Intent to pull off. He would have never thought that the other party would be this powerful.

The Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion was known to be the place where the strongest sword practitioners resided, but not even the strongest core disciples whom he had seen in the core disciples' Ethereal Hall yesterday would be capable of pulling this feat off!

This really got Zhang Xuan thinking. Just what was the background of the people standing before him? Why would they want to kill him?

A thought swiftly arose in his head, and he widened his eyes in astonishment. "Are you from the Hall of Gods?"

Sect Leader Han Jianqiu had told him that he must make sure to keep his true identity a secret, or else the Hall of Gods might set their eyes on him and make an attempt on his life.

Back then, he had thought that with how low profile he was, it would be a long time before trouble came knocking on his door.

But in less than a day, the enemies had already tracked him down!

It seemed like he might have been taking the Hall of Gods too lightly. Just the fact that they were able to confirm his identity and track him down within a single day meant that their means far exceeded his imagination.

Hu!

Instead of answering Zhang Xuan's questions, the black-robed expert flicked his fingers once more and sent several more surges of sword qi on Zhang Xuan's pursuit.

These few surges of sword qi swiftly merged together with the earlier ones, causing their strength and speed to be enhanced significantly. At this rate, it seemed like they were going to catch up with him and impale his body.

"Break!"

Zhang Xuan hurriedly channeled his zhenqi within the tip of his finger and shot it out at the sword qi behind him.

The two surges collided with one another with a resounding explosion.

I can't wait any longer! Zhang Xuan thought as he took the opportunity to create some distance between him and his opponent.

In order to dodge the other party's sword qi, he had to forcefully compress his zhenqi to the extremities and expel it swiftly. Just carrying out this move had inflicted minor internal injuries within him.

On the other hand, his opponent seemed to be in a leisurely state, clearly having yet to be pushed to his limits. This made Zhang Xuan realize that he would surely die at this rate. Thus, he took a deep breath and swallowed a Superior Immortal Pill.

Gugugugu!

A tremendous amount of energy immediately poured into his body.

"What?"

Noticing Zhang Xuan's peculiar actions, the black-robed expert was stunned for a moment. He could feel Zhang Xuan's zhenqi swiftly rising to a new peak before abruptly bursting apart.

Boom!

Thunderous rumbling echoed from Zhang Xuan's body as his cultivation began surging upward.

His cultivation was already at the Heavenly Pseudo Immortal realm, but usually, some preparations would be required before pushing for a breakthrough. However, given how critical the situation was, he decided to force his way through.

"Pushing a breakthrough on the spot? Interesting!" The black-robed expert was surprised, but he was not too shocked by the matter.

Without wasting any time, he proceeded on to launch another new wave of attacks.

If he could not even kill a Pseudo Immortal realm lad, there was no way his master would assign any other missions to him in the future.

Hong long!

The offense this time around was clearly much stronger than before. Even without a weapon in hand, the black-robed expert's sword qi was incredibly sharp and swift. In just a few moments, it was already right before Zhang Xuan.

Hu!

On the other hand, Zhang Xuan stood motionlessly on the spot as he exhaled a mouthful of turbid air. His breakthrough to the True Immortal realm had raised his fighting prowess significantly.

To make an analogy, the energy a Pseudo Immortal wielded was similar to snow. As long as it piled up, it would be able to crush anything beneath it.

But upon reaching True Immortal realm, the snow would have melted to form a flowing river. While it was lacking in decisive might, it made up for it through its relentless nature. Even the toughest of materials would give way under this relentless torrent.

Furthermore, this breakthrough did not just bring about a qualitative enhancement in his zhenqi. His soul and physical body had been tempered as well, allowing him to think faster and react swifter.

Just as the sword qi launched by the black-robed expert was about to pierce through his chest, Zhang Xuan lightly tilted his body and easily dodged the attack. After which, he quickly launched a counterattack with a flick of his finger.

Huala!

Sword qi of roughly the width of a human's arm darted straight toward the black-robed expert. It was the same move

as earlier, but the might and speed it harnessed were much stronger than before!

“Humph!” the black-robed expert harrumphed coldly as he lifted his palm and struck at the incoming sword qi.

A massive dust storm rose in the air, obscuring one’s sight. Under the sheer might of the palm strike, the incoming sword qi dissipated inch after inch.

Even though Zhang Xuan had managed to advance his cultivation to True Immortal, his strength as a Lesser True Immortal was still lacking to the black-robed expert’s Heavenly True Immortal.

“It’s about time to end the battle!”

Having finished testing the limits of Zhang Xuan’s strength, the edges of the black-robed expert’s lips curled up into a cold sneer as he charged right through the dust storm to launch the decisive move to conclude the battle.

But all of a sudden, goosebumps rose all over his body as warning bells rang desperately in his mind. His instincts were screaming at him that he was in grave danger.

He quickly looked upward, and only then did he realize that a real sword was concealed within the earlier burst of sword qi... and at that very moment, it was pointed right in front of his chest!

1999 Swallow Their Swords!

Fully trusting his instincts, the black-robed expert immediately retreated with a pale face.

He did not think that the earlier attack would only be a feint. The true threat was hidden amid the sword qi!

“It’s a High Immortal-tier sword!” The black-robed expert was stunned.

Weapons of such a tier were known to be incredibly prideful, so why would this sword submit to a mere Pseudo Immortal?

This was impossible!

However, this was not the time for his attention to be wandering away. He quickly turned around and backed away. “Where do you think you’re going!”

Driving the Gods’ Sword Intent within his body, the Tongshang Sword blurred into an afterimage, almost as if a drifting cloud that moved without leaving behind any traces.

Puhe!

Fresh blood spurted into the air as the black-robed expert cried out.

His hand had been severed.

However, Zhang Xuan did not show the slightest hint of relief despite having severed the other party’s hand. Instead, the look on his face turned even more livid.

He had brought out the Tongshang Sword and used the Gods’ Sword Intent, so he thought that he would be able to defeat the other party in a single strike. Yet, all that he had managed to do was sever one of the other party’s limbs!

This was not looking very good at all.

You... You are actually able to harm me?”

The black-robed expert looked at his severed hand on the ground with an incredulous expression. Gradually, his face warped into savagery, and with a furious roar, he whipped out a sword.

The only reason he had not used a weapon all that time was because he had thought that the other party was unworthy of him going so far. However, he realized that he might lose his life here if he continued underestimating his enemy.

Huala!

As soon as the sword appeared, the black-robed man slashed it down forcefully, producing a wheezing sound in the air. A golden burst of sword qi spanning several zhang[1] surged down on Zhang Xuan.

“This is a High Immortal-tier weapon?” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes in surprise as he quickly backed away.

He knew just how arrogant High Immortal-tier weapons could be—the Tongshang Sword that he was holding was one perfect example. If not for the means that he possessed, he would have had difficulty trying to tame it. Yet, the other party, despite being at the Heavenly True Immortal realm, was actually able to succeed.

This was truly terrifying!

Astonished, Zhang Xuan took out two Superior Immortal Pills and swallowed them.

Even though his cultivation had reached the Lesser True Immortal realm, he was still unable to seize a decisive advantage over the black-robed expert. Furthermore, there were three more powerful opponents lying in wait behind.

While dodging the offense of the black-robed expert, he made sure to keep a lookout for the movements of the other three, fearing that they would sneak an assault on him. However, those three remained completely motionless, impassive to the plight of their comrade at all.

He had no idea what those three were up to, but it was good news that they were not moving just yet. At the very least, this meant that he still stood a chance.

Heaving a sigh of relief, Zhang Xuan dodged the golden outburst of sword qi through his nimble movements while counterattacking with his own surges of sword qi.

Dang dang dang dang!

As the two swords clashed with one another, sonic booms echoed deafeningly in the air. The combined might of Zhang Xuan's zhenqi, physical body, and soul was so great that it felt like it could almost smash a mountain into bits, but somehow, every strike that he launched was easily deflected by the other party. It was as if the black-robed expert wielded boundless strength. No matter what was thrown at him, he would be able to take it without suffering any damage.

Zhang Xuan's face grew more and more livid.

He had cultivated the Heaven's Path Divine Art right from the start, which had given him extremely strong foundations. Furthermore, he had been through the Saint Ascension Ordeal and undergone multiple Ancient Sage Ordeals.

Typically speaking, his strength should have been able to easily match opponents whose cultivation was far higher than his.

Yet, this black-robed expert was actually fighting him on an equal footing. Not even the number one core disciple, He Jingxuan, would be able to do this!

In fact, even Sect Leader Han Jianqiu might not be able to match this black-robed expert's strength when his cultivation was suppressed to the Heavenly True Immortal realm!

Other than the Hall of Gods, there was probably no other organization in the Azure that had such powerful experts!

At this rate, I might really die here, Zhang Xuan thought.

Even with plenty of Superior Immortal Pills, he found that he was quickly depleting his supposedly almost endless zhenqi. This made his expression become even darker.

Once he depleted his zhenqi, even escaping would become impossible for him.

This was the very first time in a long while that he had felt so cornered. He had grown so used to being much stronger than his counterparts that he had severely underestimated the threats that lurked in the Azure.

I can't drag out this fight any longer. I need to find the opening in this folded space and find a way to escape, Zhang Xuan thought.

He had no idea why the other three were not making a move, but one of them was a Heavenly High Immortal. If even a Heavenly True Immortal was able to push him this far, he would surely die once the Heavenly High Immortal made his move!

No matter what, he had to get out of there!

The fact that the enemies had resorted to pulling him into a folded space meant that they were wary of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion. Most likely, the sect might have sent experts to follow him. He would be in a much safer position if he could regroup with them.

Even if that was not the case, with the mystical disguise amulet that Luo Ruoxin had given him, he was confident that he would be able to blend into the crowd and get away!

Just that... the Library of Heaven's Path could not be used there, which complicated things a little.

Eye of Insight!

Zhang Xuan began scanning his surroundings carefully, but nothing was coming to him at all. He was starting to get a little desperate.

Given how prepared the other party was, bringing him into a folded space in order to deal with him, there was no way they would allow him to break out of there easily.

The structure of the space in the Azure is much more stable than that of the Master Teacher Continent, but the fundamental theories must be the same, Zhang Xuan thought as he anxiously ran through everything that he knew about space in his mind.

Focusing his Eye of Insight on the structure of the space once more, he quickly deconstructed it with his eyes, turning it back into its most fundamental form.

That place... It seems to be a little brittle...

It did not take long for him to identify a certain spot that was visibly different from the others.

Thus, with a sudden outburst of strength, he launched a series of tenacious attacks that forced the black-robed expert to retreat continuously. Then, when he finally got close to this brittle spot, he abruptly redirected the trajectory of his sword to strike it with all his might.

Ding!

A resounding buzz reminiscent of a metallic clang echoed loudly in the air. Zhang Xuan felt a tremendous rebound gushing from the Tongshang Sword back toward his arm, forcing him to swiftly retreat several steps in order to ward off the force.

Hu!

The area that he had just struck warped a little, and another figure appeared in the folded space.

“Elder Chou Huo?” Zhang Xuan widened his eyes.

It was none other than Elder Chou Huo, the First Elder of the Core Disciple Sector whom he had wrecked back at the Elder Council!

He had been following Zhang Xuan, protecting him from the shadows. When these black-robed figures struck, he had noticed it right away and immediately rushed over, but the folded space had closed before he could make his way in. He had tried many ways to breach the folded space, but despite being a Heavenly High Immortal, he had been unable to find a way in.

He felt as if there were people reinforcing the folded space from within, rendering all his attempts futile. It was only when Zhang Xuan struck the opening of the folded space that he managed to find an opportunity to dash in.

After entering the space, he immediately cast a sweeping gaze across the area, and when he saw that Zhang Xuan was still unharmed, he heaved a huge sigh of relief and said, "It's great that you're fine!"

Following which, he took his stance in front of Zhang Xuan and looked at the four black-robed figures in front coldly.

"As High Immortal and True Immortals of the Hall of Gods, aren't you ashamed for ganging up on a mere Pseudo Immortal?" Elder Chou Huo scoffed disdainfully.

It took a mere glance for him to identify the background of the assailants.

"Kill him, and make sure that nothing gets leaked out!" the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal instructed.

"Yes!"

The other two True Immortals standing behind him clasped their fists and bowed slightly in acknowledgement of the command.

Hu! Hu!

Without any hesitation, they whipped out their swords and charged forth. Astonishingly, their swords were also at High Immortal-tier as well.

One of them moved left, and the other moved right. They swiftly flanked Elder Chou Huo and engaged him from both directions.

Ding ding ding ding!

Just like that, the three of them began a fight of their own.

"This..." Seeing this sight, Zhang Xuan's eyebrows shot up.

To his astonishment, the other two black-robed Heavenly True Immortal experts were actually able to fight the Heavenly High Immortal realm Elder Chou Huo as equals. Not only that, they seemed to be gradually gaining an edge over Elder Chou Huo!

The difference in the strength between a True Immortal and a High Immortal was equivalent to that between a Great Sage

and an Ancient Sage. The two existences were simply so far apart from one another that they could not be compared with one another.

A Lesser High Immortal could easily subdue a dozen Heavenly True Immortals.

As such, it was hard to believe that two Heavenly True Immortals were able to equal a Heavenly High Immortal like Elder Chou Huo in a fight. Even when he was witnessing it with his own eyes, Zhang Xuan could still hardly believe that this was really happening.

However, the situation did not grant him the luxury to be focused on another person's fight. The black-robed expert whose hand he had just severed had just begun executing a set of consecutive fatal attacks against him, forcing him to back away again and again.

Despite incurring severe injuries, it did not seem like the fighting prowess of the black-robed expert had reduced in the least. In fact, it seemed to have stimulated something deep within him, granting him boundless strength. He threw out slash after slash with frenzied might, reminiscent of a crazed berserker on a battlefield.

"Dongxu Gourd, don't feigning death! Don't you see what's going on here?" Zhang Xuan bellowed internally.

'Yeah, I do. So?' the Dongxu Gourd replied lazily as it swam around Zhang Xuan's dantian.

"So? Aren't you able to eat swords? Go and swallow the swords of those b*stards for me!" Zhang Xuan roared.

It was at this moment that he suddenly recalled that the Dongxu Gourd had swallowed the Tongshang sword once. If it could just swallow the sword of the black-robed expert, he should be able to turn the tables.

"Sure, sure," the Dongxu Gourd replied lazily. "Remember your words! Don't expect me to spit it out later, alright?"

"That's right, hurry up!"

"Wait, let me double check first. You want me to eat the swords of all of those b*stards, right?"

“Cut the cr*p and hurry up!”

Zhang Xuan felt like his blood pressure was going to hit the roof at this rate. How in the world could someone be so annoying?

If not for the fact that he was unable to do so, he would have hacked the Dongxu Gourd into pieces with an axe by now!

“Yes, yes...”

Receiving Zhang Xuan’s permission, the Dongxu Gourd looked at the swords before it with an excited gleam on its exterior before it began to make its move.

“I’ll never forgive you for daring to humiliate me. Pay for your insolence with your life!”

While Zhang Xuan was communicating with the Dongxu Gourd, the black-robed expert realized that his mind was wandering, and he gnashed his teeth so tightly that some bits of them chipped off. With a furious roar, he raised his sword and hacked it down with stupendous might.

His swordsmanship was sharp and aggressive. Every single strike came from a difficult trajectory, and it was aimed at a vital. Even though it was very different from the Heaven’s Path Sword Art, its might could not be underestimated.

Most likely, it was a unique sword art of the Hall of Gods.

Hu!

But halfway through his slash, there was a blur, and all of a sudden, he felt an empty feeling in his arms. Just like magic, the sword in his grasp vanished without a trace.

“Ah?”

The sudden change in weight caused the black-robed expert to stagger forward slightly, but he immediately regained his balance and backed away.

He had spent a tremendous amount of effort to tame this High Immortal-tier sword, and it had definitely been in his hand a moment ago. Where in the world could it have disappeared to?

With widened eyes, he looked around, but his sword was nowhere to be seen.

What the hell? Can anyone tell me what just happened?

Where is my sword? Where is my sword!

“You scoundrel! What kind of sorcery did you play on me?”

“Damn it! You are courting death!”

While the black-robed expert was still searching for his sword, he suddenly heard two bellows not too far away. Turning his gaze over, he saw that the swords of his other two Heavenly True Immortal comrades had vanished as well.

Right after, a flabbergasted voice echoed in the air.

“It isn’t me. My sword has disappeared, too!”

The sword in Elder Chou Huo’s hand had disappeared into thin air as well.

[1] 1 zhang = 3.33m

2000 A Bet?

Zhang Xuan nearly fainted from anger.

He knew that the Dongxu Gourd was unreliable, but he had never thought that it would actually be such a blithering idiot!

I told you to devour the swords of those b*stards! Why did you swallow Elder Chou Huo's sword too?

He's a sword practitioner, and his greatest strength lies in his swordsmanship! How do you expect him to fight his opponents without a sword?

Peng peng peng peng!

Just as this thought formulated in his mind, the two black-robed Heavenly True Immortals began clashing with Elder Chou Huo once more.

Without a sword in his hand, Elder Chou Huo's fighting prowess was severely affected. Under the assault of those two, he was slowly falling into a disadvantageous position.

I need to hurry up and defeat this one so that I can back Elder Chou Huo, Zhang Xuan thought.

Knowing that he was pressed for time, he decided to ignore the Dongxu Gourd for the time being and drove the Tongshang Sword toward the black-robed expert before him.

Deprived of his sword, the black-robed expert's fighting prowess was clearly crippled. After several blows, a few holes had already been punctured through his body.

While attacking the black-robed expert, Zhang Xuan kept an eye out on the Heavenly High Immortal expert, but the latter did not seem to be intending to offer his help at all. Heaving a sigh of relief, he intensified his offense.

Puhe!

After three moves, the Tongshang Sword pierced right through the black-robed expert's forehead. Zhang Xuan forcefully

twisted the sword sideward.

Peng!

The black-robed expert's head immediately burst apart, causing him to die on the spot.

Meanwhile, the Heavenly High Immortal remained unfazed, as if everything that was going on was none of his business at all.

"Those from the Hall of Gods have always been cold-hearted." Elder Chou Huo's voice suddenly sounded in Zhang Xuan's ears. "All they are concerned with is the accomplishment of their mission. In contrast, the fate of their comrades means nothing to them."

Nodding in realization, Zhang Xuan quickly charged toward the closest Heavenly True Immortal expert to alleviate Elder Chou Huo of his burden.

With his recent breakthrough to Lesser True Immortal realm and the Tongshang Sword, his true fighting prowess was on par with an average High Immortal. In a few moments, the Heavenly True Immortal expert had his hands full dealing with him.

As the burden on him alleviated, Elder Chou Huo swiftly knocked back the remaining Heavenly True Immortal expert with a strike of his palm before checking on Zhang Xuan's condition. Considering how he had difficulties dealing with these two, he was not too sure if Zhang Xuan would be able to stand his ground against one of them.

"You have managed to tame the Tongshang Sword?"

That was a sword that the sect leader had just given Zhang Xuan in the Elder Council, and the latter had run over to Wuhai City right after the bestowment. After arriving in Wuhai City, he had gone to explore the Ethereal Hall, and shortly after, he had gone to visit the Wuhai Market to appraise some artifact...

Despite his busyness, how in the world did he manage to find time to tame the Tongshang Sword? Furthermore, he had managed to achieve Sword-Man Union with it, which meant that the Tongshang Sword had fully acknowledged him!

When did it become so easy to tame a High Immortal-tier sword?

If that was the case, why in the world did he go through so much in order to tame that sword of his?

Putting aside the fact that he had expended several liters of his blood, he had squandered a good chunk of his fortune for it as well!

Just thinking about all he had spent on his sword disappearing with a poof, Elder Chou Huo felt his heart spasming painfully. He glared at the Heavenly True Immortal expert before him with fury burning in his eyes.

The culprit could not be anyone other than these two fellows! Otherwise, why would his sword suddenly disappear in the midst of battle?

You b*stard! Return my sword!”

Peng peng peng peng!

In a fit of rage, Elder Chou Huo launched devastating palm strikes one after another on his opponent.

He was a Heavenly High Immortal, one of the most powerful existences on the Azure. His full strength caused the folded space to tremor endlessly, as if the place would collapse very soon.

Pu!

Struck several times squarely by Elder Chou Huo’s palm strikes, the Heavenly True Immortal expert facing him felt so indignant that he could vomit blood.

Are you sick in the head? I’m not the one who took your sword!

Even if I did take your sword, why would my sword disappear as well?

You scoundrel, do you think that you’ll get away scot-free after stealing my baby? Return my sword right now!” Elder Chou Huo bellowed like a madman.

“I said that I didn’t take it! You are the one who should return my sword!” the Heavenly True Immortal expert shouted back indignantly.

Infuriated, he was just about to pit his life against Elder Chou Huo when he suddenly felt a stabbing pain in the aperture located in his lower body. He turned around, only to see Zhang Xuan, who should have been fighting with his comrade, standing behind him all of a sudden. Naturally, it went without saying that the stabbing pain came from the young man’s sword too.

“Ahhh!”

Fresh blood spurted out from his lower aperture.

“Ah, my bad. I accidentally penetrated you with my sword,” Zhang Xuan replied with an apologetic look as he pulled out his sword forcefully and bolted away to attack his comrade.

You...”

The Heavenly High Immortal expert was infuriated, but there was a Heavenly High Immortal expert standing right in front of him. He knew that this was an opponent he had to focus all his attention into dealing with, so he could only let the young man get away for the time being.

He dashed with incredible speed to strike down Elder Chou Huo, but barely after making two moves, he suddenly felt another stabbing pain in his alimentary canal.

Turning his head around, once again, it was an apologetic Zhang Xuan.

“Great heavens, I have made a mistake again!”

“Made a mistake your head!” the Heavenly High Immortal expert bellowed furiously.

I’m not even your opponent, so why do you keep coming over to violate me?

Made a mistake? Screw that! Would anyone make such a blatant mistake?

There’s no doubt about it, you must be doing it on purpose!

Exploding with fury, the Heavenly True Immortal was just thinking of putting his opponent aside down to kill Zhang Xuan when he suddenly felt a burst of pressure assaulting him. Elder Chou Huo had launched yet another attack on him.

A series of consecutive palm strikes rendered him unable to move, and fresh blood spurted from his body. His meridians were jolted from the impact from the strikes, and before he knew it, he was already severely injured.

This won't do. At this rate, I'll really die, the Heavenly True Immortal expert thought grimly.

With an awful look on his face, he racked his mind to think of a solution when he suddenly felt another stabbing pain on his bottom.

When he turned his head over, it was yet again another apologetic Zhang Xuan waving his hand. "It's a mistake, a mistake!"

"Mistake your head!"

Unable to tolerate it anymore, the Heavenly True Immortal expert completely ignored Elder Chou Huo and dashed right toward Zhang Xuan. However, before he could even attack at all, he suddenly felt a surge of sword qi bursting into his body through the latter's blade.

Pu!

His organs were immediately shattered. With a look of disbelief in his eyes, his corpse fell to the ground.

On the other hand, seeing that he had managed to get rid of another one of the Heavenly True Immortal experts, Zhang Xuan heaved a sigh of relief.

The experts from the Hall of Gods were simply too powerful. Even with his Lesser True Immortal realm cultivation and the Tongshang Sword, it would still be difficult for him to defeat them within a hundred moves.

Thus, he could only intentionally lure one away and harass the other one fighting Elder Chou Huo.

It had taken him several provocations before he managed to enrage the other party to reveal an opening, which he had then exploited to subdue the other party in an instant.

With this, the single remaining Heavenly True Immortal was a walk in the park. Collaborating with Elder Chou Huo, they managed to defeat him with ease.

Surprisingly, even as they killed the three Heavenly True Immortal experts, the black-robed Heavenly High Immortal expert from the Hall of Gods showed no signs of interfering at all. Instead, he smiled lightly and said, “You are indeed an extraordinary individual. Within such a short period of time, you were able to formulate a plan and slay three members from the Hall of Gods. It’s no wonder the leader wants us to capture you alive!”

Slowly, the Heavenly High Immortal expert began making his way toward Zhang Xuan.

“Capture me alive?” Zhang Xuan frowned.

He had been wondering why those black-robed figures did not whip out their weapons right from the start. It turned out that they were afraid of accidentally going too far and killing him, but eventually, they had realized that it was impossible for them to win without a weapon in hand.

Nevertheless, even when forced into a corner, they did not resort to exploding their cultivation or anything of the sort. Clearly, they were afraid of going too far.

“That’s right,” the Heavenly High Immortal expert replied with a leisurely voice. “It was their test to capture you alive, and I thought that they should be able to do so without my aid. I must say that your strength has exceeded my expectations. Since that’s the case... you shall have the honor of facing me!”

“You’ll have to get past me if you wish to make a move on him!” Elder Chou Huo stepped forward and harrumphed.

Even though he did not have a sword in hand, the Sword Intent shrouding his body was so great that it seemed as if it would pierce through the folded space.

“I have long heard that the experts of the Hall of Gods are unrivaled among their counterparts, and I have been wanting to verify those rumors for a while!”

You?” The Heavenly High Immortal expert shook his head and chuckled, as if mocking a fool who did not know his place.

He flicked his finger lightly.

Peng!

Elder Chou Huo’s body rose into the air helplessly as fresh blood spurted from his mouth. No matter what he did, he was unable to regain control of his body.

In that instant, his eyes were filled with horror.

When he realized that those two Heavenly True Immortals were able to fight with him on equal grounds, he had realized that this Lesser True Immortal would definitely be a formidable foe. However, he did not think that the latter would be so powerful!

To seal off the energy in his body with a single move, leaving no room for him to retaliate at all...

“It doesn’t seem like you are qualified at all,” the Heavenly High Immortal remarked coldly.

From the moment he made a move to the moment he finished his words, there was actually no pause at all. In other words, despite being one of the strongest elders of the Ascendant Cloud Sword Pavilion, he did not even last a breath before he was helplessly pinned in the air!

It was no wonder he did not make a move even when the three Heavenly True Immortal experts were being killed earlier. Given his strength, there was indeed no need for him to work together with others!

While holding Elder Chou Huo firmly in place with a single finger, the Heavenly High Immortal expert turned to Zhang Xuan and calmly asked, “Are you going to come with me, or are you waiting for me to make a move?”

Given his level of strength, there was no need for him to resort to vicious words. There was nothing that spoke louder than absolute strength!

Instead of answering the other party's question, Zhang Xuan looked at him intently and asked, "Why does your leader wish to capture me alive? Is it because I have comprehended the Gods' Sword Intent?"

"That's not something you need to know," the Heavenly High Immortal replied impassively.

"I guess there's no way you would reveal anything..." Zhang Xuan shook his head and sighed. "To be honest, you are probably the strongest person I have met in the Azure aside from Sect Leader Han. However, you aren't a match for me. All it takes is a single thought for me to obliterate you."

"I'm not a match for you?" The Heavenly High Immortal nearly burst out laughing. "Would you like to give it a try?"

There was no denying that the young man was indeed very powerful. In fact, he probably could have triumphed over all warriors that were of the same cultivation realm as him from their Hall of Gods easily.

Unfortunately, the young man's cultivation was simply too weak. They were not on the same level at all!

Yet, to claim that he was not a match for him...

What a joke!

The trapped Elder Chou Huo was also rendered speechless by Zhang Xuan's ridiculous words.

Bro, this is a life-and-death situation. Can you stop bragging and get serious?

If it was possible to defeat him by bragging, I would have long done so. Don't you see how I'm completely pinned down here before I could even finish my bragging?

"Indeed. If you don't believe me, shall we make a bet then?" Zhang Xuan asked calmly.

Chuckling softly, the Heavenly High Immortal expert's interest seemed to have been piqued. Placing his hands behind his back, he asked, "What kind of bet do you intend to propose?"

With strength of his level, he was not scared of any schemes that Zhang Xuan might try.

"It's very simple. I want you to stand on the spot and not move at all. If you are able to withstand my attack, I'll leave with you obediently. Otherwise... I guess that will be the end of you then," Zhang Xuan replied.

You are challenging me to withstand your attack?" The Heavenly High Immortal expert's eyebrows shot up. "Do you have a Semi-Divinity weapon with you?"

The fact that the other party dared make such a bet showed that he had some trump card up his sleeves. Most likely, it would be a Semi-Divinity weapon!

However, even with a Semi-Divinity weapon in hand, there was no way he could be defeated that easily.

"It isn't a weapon but a book. If you can withstand the weight of my book, I'll do whatever you tell me to. Otherwise... don't blame me for not going easy on you," Zhang Xuan replied.

"A book?" The Heavenly High Immortal expert burst into laughter. "You must be joking. Do you think a book can kill me?"