

Cultivating with Top Enlightenment

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Chapter 43: Chapter 39: Challenge Invitation

The return of Qin Yun to the True Martial Sect caused quite a stir. After all, he had been away for more than half a year and did not even return during the year-end.

The disciples missed him dearly.

The true disciples on the mountain all gathered around Qin Yun.

"Good for you, Ba, staying so silently down the mountain for so long. You must have been dazzled by the worldly pleasures."

Qin Yun looked at the familiar faces and felt as if a lifetime had passed.

He was about to speak.

Ye Qinghe smiled and said:

"If you drink this jug of wine, we'll forgive you."

Looking at the wine Ye Qinghe handed over, Qin Yun felt his scalp tingle. He had been a victim of Ye Qinghe's wine-brewing experiments before. He braced himself to drink it, but surprisingly, it was quite good.

"Third senior sister, your wine-brewing skills have greatly improved!"

Qin Yun did not hold back his praise.

Ye Qinghe's smile widened, but after seeing the others' sly smiles, Qin Yun roughly understood what was going on. His gaze fell on the White Ape and then on Ning Qi.

His instinctive perception wanted to gauge Ning Qi's depths, but he couldn't see through.

"Jiu."

He smiled brightly, just like in the past.

But Ning Qi felt that Qin Yun seemed to be suppressing something.

Subsequently, Qin Yun went to see Taoist Longshan, and unexpectedly, perhaps due to being down the mountain for too long, Taoist Longshan ordered Qin Yun to be confined for closed cultivation. Even Luo Wentian's subtle persuasion was met with scolding.

The true disciples were all astonished, as this was a rare occurrence.

They could only hope the master would calm down soon.

Ning Qi sighed a bit.

The human heart is hard to fathom.

He vaguely felt that the master's actions might be related to the eighth senior brother's state.

But he couldn't manage these matters and didn't have the capability for now.

Ning Qi could only train quietly.

Hoping Qin Yun would recover soon.

Time flowed by gently.

Before he knew it, the year-end was approaching again.

Ning Qi underwent two more fake deaths, completing two rounds of stacking strength.

Two months ago, he successfully advanced to the Fivefold Realm, officially surpassing the seventh senior brother Song City in cultivation.

"With one more round of stacking strength, I can advance to the Great Success of the Inner Essence Realm. Ordinary martial artists in the Great Success of Inner Essence Realm can start transferring strength to add characteristics to their inner strength, but I could do this even at Small Success."

"Now my inner strength is increasingly solidifying. If I reach the Great Success Realm, I might be able to extend my inner strength outside my body just like others in the Perfection Realm."

This made Ning Qi somewhat expectant.

Inner Essence Ninefold Perfection allows the extension of inner strength nearly ten feet outside the body, significantly increasing power. He estimated that he wouldn't be much different, perhaps exceeding even that.

"However... should I be able to contend with experts in the White Mist Realm now?"

Ning Qi wasn't entirely sure, but he had this hope.

The Gang Qi in the Gang Essence Realm was too strong, but he felt he had the strength to fight.

He hadn't forgotten the target of the Blood Rain Tower. When the day came that he could easily defeat his master, he might avenge it then.

"But the transferring strength technique of the Great Dream Nine Deaths Strength is still just a prototype and needs more time."

Ning Qi wasn't in a hurry about this.

His requirements for transferring strength were high because it involved future cultivation in the Gang Essence Realm.

He hoped his inner strength attributes could encompass all things.

This was difficult.

But with the Myriad Phenomena Origin Stance as a precursor, it wasn't impossible, just requiring time to summarize and deduce. If not for Ning Qi's extraordinary comprehension, it would almost be impossible.

Ning Qi felt confident that he could succeed next year.

"Let's go, Tiansheng."

Noticing the diligent White Ape beside him, Ning Qi smiled and called out.

The White Ape was now at Bone Refining Perfection and breaking through the bottleneck of Refining Organ. Maybe in six years, it could complete Body Tempering. This speed was fast, faster even than the chubby Zhuang Chen, not to mention Qin Yun.

Moreover, the White Ape's strength exceeded others of the same level.

Because its physical foundation was quite solid, though not as strong as Ning Qi's, he believed even those practicing the True Martial Stance were no better.

Ning Qi noticed that as the White Ape's cultivation level increased, subtle changes seemed to occur within its body, possibly activating its bloodline.

This aroused Ning Qi's curiosity further.

He thought.

Once his inner strength could extend outside his body, he might attempt some exploration.

With thoughts churning in his mind, Ning Qi and the White Ape arrived at the Martial Arts Arena.

The year-end competition last year yielded quite satisfactory results.

With Luo Wentian's encouragement, this excellent tradition was set to continue.

Upon Ning Qi's arrival, he realized.

Qin Yun was there too.

He had been confined by Taoist Longshan for half a year, but was allowed out for the year-end, and was chatting with the other true disciples.

Everyone advised him that if anything upset the master, he should lower his head and not be stubborn.

Qin Yun just smiled and agreed.

Upon seeing Ning Qi.

Qin Yun naturally glanced over, sensing.

"Jiu."

He noticed Ning Qi's aura had significantly enhanced compared to six months ago, but the specific realm wasn't clear unless Ning Qi acted.

Ning Qi sat over as well.

The group engaged in conversation.

The competition among the Outer Sect disciples began anew.

Compared to the previous year, the Outer Sect disciples' overall strength had again improved, with a few standouts emerging, pleasing everyone.

Then it was the Inner Sect disciples.

After awarding the top twenty disciples, the true disciples sparred and clarified doubts for others.

But this time, Qin Yun was included.

Luo Wentian fought Jiang Baishan again, and this time Luo Wentian's defeat was even more decisive.

Jiang Baishan thoroughly established his position as the second strongest in the True Martial Sect.

The current Jiang Baishan had the prospect of breaking through to Gang Essence Realm by the age of forty, becoming the second Gang Essence expert of the True Martial Sect.

At forty, in this world where martial artists have long lifespans, one is still considered the young generation, with great momentum.

But watching their battle, Ning Qi felt calm, more convinced that combining first and fifth senior brothers would likely still not be his match.

However, after Luo Wentian's defeat, Qin Yun unexpectedly challenged Jiang Baishan.

As expected, Qin Yun lost.

But what shocked everyone was.

Qin Yun showcased the realm of Inner Essence Sixfold!

It should be known.

Qin Yun was just in his twenties, already at Great Success of Inner Essence. At this rate, he might break through to Gang Essence Realm before thirty-five, or even sooner.

Everyone in the True Martial Sect was elated.

Praising Qin Yun loudly.

This was a sign of True Martial's prosperity.

Only Taoist Longshan looked on with slight worry in his eyes.

Ning Qi also found it surprising; Qin Yun's cultivation speed seemed overly fast, perhaps due to an adventure during his time down the mountain?

After Jiang Baishan stepped down.

Qin Yun stood at the center of the Martial Arts Arena, without stepping down, looking at Ning Qi, he issued an invitation:

"Little junior brother, why not give it a try? Your senior can offer you some guidance."

In his eyes was an inexplicable look, even the other disciples vaguely sensed something was off.

A year ago, Jiang Baishan extended the same invitation, which Ning Qi could easily decline with a smile.

But a year later, with Qin Yun's renewed invitation.

It made Ning Qi somewhat hesitant.

Qin Yun was different from Jiang Baishan; he felt Qin Yun's changes over the recent years might relate slightly to himself.

Chapter 44: Chapter 40 Heart Demon

Ning Qi could sense it.

Eighth Senior Brother Qin Yun was extremely curious about his cultivation progress. Although the other senior brothers and sisters were also curious, it was within normal bounds. But Qin Yun was different; Ning Qi often felt Qin Yun's probing gaze.

Even though he didn't want to admit it, he felt that Eighth Senior Brother might be jealous of him, leading to an obsession with his heart demon.

His strange state might be related to this.

Ning Qi knew that Qin Yun always took reviving the True Martial Sect as his duty. Before Ning Qi came to the mountain, Qin Yun was the most promising among the many True Disciples, with talent even surpassing Jiang Baishan, being the center of attention.

But ever since Ning Qi gradually revealed his Martial Path.

Things started to change gradually.

From the initial practice of Stance Skill, his performance already shocked everyone. Later, Taoist Longshan asked the disciples not to inquire about Ning Qi's cultivation progress and let him live alone near the Scripture Pavilion.

Such exceptional treatment made everyone aware of Ning Qi's extraordinariness.

However, while others felt relieved, Qin Yun perhaps felt a tinge of bitterness and jealousy amidst his happiness.

Ning Qi could feel the complexity in Qin Yun's heart, and Qin Yun probably couldn't control it himself.

At this moment.

Qin Yun extended an invitation.

If he didn't attend, it might cause Qin Yun to overthink.

If he did, even with using the Silence Technique to conceal most of his cultivation, he still needed to show a talent-appropriate realm, at least revealing the Bone Refining Realm; otherwise, it would be like treating Qin Yun as a fool.

Neither approach seemed very good.

Ning Qi hesitated slightly.

Fortunately.

Taoist Longshan spoke.

"Alright, today's competition ends here. Ba, come with me, I have something to discuss with you."

Qin Yun was stunned, then nodded respectfully.

The two figures left.

Luo Wentian was slightly taken aback, then began summarizing this competition.

Ning Qi's eyes flashed, and he sighed slightly in his heart.

Taoist Longshan's actions basically confirmed his suspicions; Eighth Senior Brother Qin Yun likely had developed an obsession heart demon.

"Go to the Scripture Pavilion and see if there are any records about heart demons. If I can understand what a 'heart demon' is, perhaps I can try to create a method to eliminate it."

Before Ning Qi embarked on the Martial Path, only Ye Qinghe and Qin Yun were close to him. Although Qin Yun grew distant after practicing martial arts, Ning Qi still hoped for Qin Yun's well-being.

If within his ability, he would not hesitate to help.

...

Late at night.

Qin Yun's residence.

Qin Yun sat cross-legged on the bed, five hearts pointed towards the sky, running his cultivation technique.

The scene at the Bright Martial Pavilion floated back into his mind during the day.

Taoist Longshan earnestly instructed him:

"Yun'er, as your master, I know what you're thinking. You have unparalleled talent and are ambitious, viewing revitalizing the True Martial Sect as your duty, but sometimes you must remember not to be too impatient, or it could lead to irreversible consequences."

"Reaching the Great Success of Inner Essence is a good thing for your cultivation, but you must also solidify your foundation and not rush."

"Although I hope for the revival of the True Martial Sect, you are equally important to me, you True Martial Nine Sons should be as close as brothers, weathering storms together."

"This is the Purifying Heart Technique. I know your thoughts have been chaotic lately; reciting this spell might help you focus and calm down."

Recalling these words, Qin Yun felt somewhat moved.

He slowly recited it silently.

"The greatest virtue is like water; purify the heart as if void, reduce thoughts and clear the mind..."

The previously chaotic thoughts gradually faded.

But for some reason, the scene from the day kept replaying, with Ning Qi's figure enlarging in his mind.

"Little Junior Brother... what is his cultivation now?"

As soon as this thought surfaced.

He immediately felt intense agitation and a throbbing headache, disrupting the slight comfort and peace brought by the Purifying Heart Technique.

Qin Yun used the Heaven-shaking Strength, circulating the inner strength through his body, trying to relieve his discomfort this way.

But even he hadn't realized.

Tiny threads of black aura surfaced all over his body, and the way he operated the Heaven-shaking Strength changed unknowingly.

This was from a scroll fragment he got during a trip down the mountain.

After instinctively operating it once, he discovered that his cultivation speed was much faster than with the Heaven-shaking Strength. However, he also noticed that cultivating this fragment seemed to cause unpredictable changes in his mindset, which he hadn't mentioned to Taoist Longshan.

Again and again, he circulated it.

The explosive pain Qin Yun felt finally subsided, but he didn't notice the thickening black aura on his body, even clouding his eyes.

The chaotic thoughts at last converged.

"I will secretly test the Little Junior Brother."

Qin Yun smiled strangely, changed into night attire, and headed towards the Scripture Pavilion.

...

At this moment, inside the Scripture Pavilion.

Ning Qi had found everything related to heart demons and methods.

"Heart demons trigger due to thoughts and are essentially amplified negative emotions that undergo unknowable changes. If a heart demon isn't removed, one probably won't progress on the Martial Path?"

"In severe cases, one might even bleed from the seven orifices and die?"

Ning Qi felt a chill.

Heart demons were more serious than he had imagined, but according to these records, heart demons have several stages.

"To remove it, one must address the root cause, dispelling obsession to eliminate the heart demon. However, according to these records, those who removed heart demons

did it through coincidental opportunities, with no pattern to follow. Some sects even created methods to accelerate cultivation using heart demons..."

"Only a few techniques like the Purifying Heart Technique in the Scripture Pavilion offer some calming effects to suppress chaotic thoughts, no wonder Master took the Purifying Heart Technique."

"Creating a method to thoroughly eliminate heart demons is difficult, mainly because I don't understand in what form heart demons appear or exist, and also, my own cultivation isn't enough..."

Various thoughts welled up in Ning Qi's heart.

He planned to spend some time each day researching this, striving to create a Secret Technique to eliminate heart demons soon.

As he pondered.

Ning Qi's brows furrowed, looking into the distance.

He sensed a strange aura quietly approaching, heading towards the direction of the Scripture Pavilion and Seeking Tao Institute.

"A late-night visitor, likely with ill intent."

The Body Shifting and Bone Changing technique silently activated, instantly transforming Ning Qi into an ordinary-looking middle-aged Taoist in the Scripture Pavilion.

Ning Qi moved his body, acclimated, then concealed his presence and disappeared.

...

Qin Yun, masked in night attire, blended covertly into the night. He was extremely familiar with the True Martial Sect and easily avoided the patrolling disciples.

His thoughts were burning, yet he retained some rationality.

"I will pretend to be a thief attacking my Little Junior Brother. He mistakenly thinks he's in mortal danger and naturally won't hold back. At that point, I can observe his true cultivation, but he must not be harmed."

Qin Yun's gaze turned slightly complex.

He felt a great internal conflict, but he knew that ever since his Little Junior Brother learned the Vengeance Stance effortlessly from him, their relationship couldn't return to what it was before.

"Perhaps, I am inherently narrow-minded and vengeful."

Qin Yun felt a pang of bitterness.

But suddenly, he halted abruptly, shock surging in his heart.

He saw a figure standing with hands behind, as if waiting for him all along.

Chapter 45: Chapter 41: Suppressing with a Swing of the Palm

"What is your intention sneaking in and out of the True Martial Sect at night?"

The voice was calm, yet it exploded in Qin Yun's ears like a thunderclap.

Qin Yun's pupils contracted sharply.

He looked at the unfamiliar middle-aged Taoist who had turned around, his heart set off with tumultuous waves.

"Since when did the True Martial Sect have such a strong person?"

"Can't see through him, can't see through him at all!"

Qin Yun instantly became serious.

Within the True Martial Sect, his master Taoist Longshan was absolutely the strongest, and among the other senior brothers and sisters, even if it was the first brother and the fifth brother, he prided himself on being able to match a few moves.

But this person before him, he had never seen before.

The barely perceptible sense of oppression was not fake in the slightest.

Qin Yun coldly said:

"You are not from the True Martial Sect, you are neither Taoist Longshan nor one of the True Martial Nine Sons. Who are you?"

There was a probing tone in his words.

Opposite, Ning Qi chuckled silently.

This middle-aged Taoist was naturally him in disguise.

In fact, he had already secretly observed this man in black, whose aura had a touch of eeriness. Initially, Ning Qi planned to directly take him down, but he found that this man seemed very familiar with the True Martial Sect's situation, so he showed himself.

Hearing the words of the man in black, Ning Qi was even more sure.

This person indeed knew the True Martial Sect inside out.

It further aroused the thought in him to capture this person.

If an enemy silently infiltrated the True Martial Sect, the consequences would be severe.

Ning Qi calmly said:

"The foundation of the True Martial Sect is not something you can comprehend. Since you have come uninvited, why not stay?"

Qin Yun's body trembled.

A strong sense of crisis welled up in his heart, yet at the same time, an inexplicable emotion arose within him.

"This Taoist... is a hidden expert of the True Martial Sect, and yet only appeared when I approached my junior brother's place. Doesn't this mean, he has been secretly protecting my junior brother?"

Once this thought came to mind.

Qin Yun felt utterly uncomfortable inside.

He wanted to know to what realm Ning Qi had reached to warrant such treatment from their master.

The inner jealousy and malice surged abruptly.

Black qi suddenly rose from Qin Yun's body, and there was nothing but darkness in his eyes.

"Then let me test this so-called foundation of the True Martial Sect!"

He let out a low, cold laugh.

His figure suddenly shot towards Ning Qi like a bolt of lightning. Though he carried no weapon, his two fists were wrapped in a faint black aura, full of malevolent energy.

"Such heavy murderous aura."

"Could this person be from the Demon Sect?"

Ning Qi had this thought flash in his mind. He had heard Ye Qinghe and others mention that the martial arts practiced by people from the Demon Sect were mostly like this.

If one could have inner strength with specific attributes, this person was at least at the Great Success level of inner strength.

However, Ning Qi wasn't overly flustered.

As long as he wasn't at the Gang Essence Realm, he was unafraid.

He didn't sense any danger from this person before him, and even had the leisure to observe the moves of the man in black opposite him.

Qin Yun drew closer.

Seeing the middle-aged Taoist opposite him standing there seemingly dumbfounded, Qin Yun coldly sneered, but in the next instant, he was stunned, and then he felt a chill course through him.

Ning Qi finally moved.

He moved with speed surpassing the first strike, reaching out his right palm lightly.

Like a true dragon probing with its claw, full of boundless power.

Ning Qi's physical body and inner strength erupted together.

Qin Yun couldn't help but open his eyes wide, though he didn't even detect a ripple of inner strength, he vaguely heard a terrifying rumble, as if one palm strike was going to suppress the world. From that palm, he saw a majestic giant mountain, saw divine elephants stepping across the sky.

With almost no resistance whatsoever,

Qin Yun was slapped and sent flying with a single blow.

With a muffled bang, his whole body was sent flying backwards, the sound of breaking bones extremely clear.

Two completely different thoughts arose in both their minds.

"So weak?"

Ning Qi was taken aback; had he not held back at the last moment, he might have slapped this person to death.

Meanwhile, Qin Yun was in disbelief.

"So strong?"

"Gang Essence Realm! Such terrifying capability—this person must be a Gang Essence Realm expert!"

He never imagined that besides his master Taoist Longshan, the True Martial Sect would have a second Gang Essence Realm master.

No wonder he dared to call himself the foundation of the True Martial Sect.

At this moment, his heart was filled with indescribable bitterness.

A Gang Essence Realm expert guarding his junior brother...

But that slap had also dispersed much of his jealousy and malice, and he gradually regained clarity, realizing he had committed such a foolish act, pretending to attack his junior brother at night to gauge his true cultivation.

But it was too late for regret now.

Seeing the middle-aged Taoist approaching step by step, Qin Yun knew he was certainly no match; if captured, he would be ashamed to face his master and fellow disciples.

He gritted his teeth.

Reached from his bosom and pulled out two black spheres, hurling them at Ning Qi.

Ning Qi instinctively dodged.

Boom!

A muffled explosion sounded, and the black spheres exploded, a large amount of white smoke enveloping his front. An intuitive sense of danger arose in Ning Qi's mind, knowing the other party intended to flee.

With a light step, he instantly passed through the white smoke.

Ning Qi looked into the distance, seeing the man in black had already run quite a distance.

But it didn't matter; with the speed of his Misty Dragon Roaming Step, catching up with the man in black was extremely simple.

However,

Ning Qi only chased for a few breaths before he stood still, not pursuing further.

A complex expression rose in his eyes as he recognized the person's identity.

After the malice temporarily receded, the black qi retracted into the body, and the characteristics of Qin Yun's inner strength became particularly apparent, especially as he was fleeing with all his might, not bothering to hide his body technique. Ning Qi could see it all clearly.

"It's the eighth brother..."

"Why would he? Could it be that he came to find me..."

Looking at Qin Yun's attire, combined with everything he had seen today about discussions on the heart demon.

Ning Qi speculated that perhaps Qin Yun had developed a heart demon, wanting to probe his own capabilities.

He was just suppressed by one of Ning Qi's palms.

He felt somewhat relieved that he had held back; otherwise, if he had slapped Qin Yun to death, it would have been an unbearable regret for a lifetime. Although Qin Yun harbored the thought of visiting at night, he ultimately didn't carry any killing intent.

With the current injuries, a period of recuperation would suffice.

"The heart demon arises; he might not even realize what he's doing. The eighth brother is trapped in his obsession, wanting the True Martial Sect to thrive in his hands. He can accept that the sect has geniuses but cannot accept someone more talented than him."

Ning Qi sighed, having deduced the cause and effect.

He was somewhat at a loss as to how to proceed. Qin Yun posed no threat to him, but Qin Yun himself could be somewhat dangerous in this state.

Moments later, he made a decision.

At the very least, he had to inform Taoist Longshan about the night's events, to see if there might be a way to address Qin Yun's heart demon.

Ning Qi performed the Body Shifting and Bone Changing, returning to his true appearance.

A patrolling disciple arrived upon hearing the sound, and Ning Qi simply smiled, explaining he was just experimenting with martial arts and it got a bit loud.

...

Meanwhile, Qin Yun,

Once he sensed that the mysterious middle-aged Taoist wasn't pursuing him, let out a quiet sigh of relief.

"Why didn't he chase me?"

Qin Yun was puzzled.

"Perhaps it's due to the man's duties, preventing him from leaving that area casually?"

Yet, he couldn't fathom that the True Martial Sect's foundation that suppressed him with a single palm would be Ning Qi.

But soon, his heart was filled with endless remorse.

"Was I influenced by that cultivation technique again?"

"How could I do something so vile to Jiu? I've failed as an elder brother."

Qin Yun's heart was in unimaginable anguish. After obtaining that fragment, he had been influenced before, initially believing it was a technique to suppress the heart demon, but hadn't realized it was a bizarre Secret Technique that sowed the seed of a heart demon, a path that led one into darkness. The more he cultivated, the stronger the heart demon became, but with that fragment, he could barely control and retain some of his original intentions.

If he didn't continue cultivating, the heart demon would rebound and spiral completely out of control.

"I am not fit to stay in the True Martial Sect any longer. If I lose control again and harm Jiu or anyone else, I would never forgive myself for the rest of my life."

Qin Yun sighed deeply.

His entire body was in immense pain, with some bones shattered, and internal bleeding occurring.

Yet at this moment, the remorse and anguish in his heart were even greater.

After handling everything back at his place, Qin Yun looked in the direction of the Bright Martial Pavilion, bowing his head heavily, tears streaming down his face.

Then, taking advantage of the night, he left the mountain.

He no longer had the dignity to face his sect.