

Daily Life 1131

Chapter 1131: Tianshi Imperial High School

Fang Xing had transferred from Tianshi Imperial High School, but Headmaster Chen didn't know much about the school.

Tianshi Imperial High School, Imperial High for short.

Imperial High had given birth to numerous talented people throughout the generations, and was the first choice of cultivation high schools for the children of Jinghua dignitaries. However, Tianshi Imperial High School wasn't participating in the national body technique competition this time, which was a relief to the many high schools that were fighting for a place on the rankings.

If Tianshi Imperial High School took part, it would at least rank in the top four.

"Given Imperial High's reputation, there's no need for it to rely on this sort of national competition to make a name for itself. This is a dangerous event, and I'm guessing that some of the leaders didn't want their children to participate, so the school didn't sign up for it," Headmaster Jin said.

"You haven't told me; how did you poach them?"

"Imperial High has some special admission students every year who don't have to pay the tuition fee. If their grades and rankings drop in the first semester, they won't be able to enjoy the welfare benefit of free tuition the following year. These few came over because they couldn't afford the tuition fee," Headmaster Jin whispered.

Headmaster Chen raised his eyebrows and instantly understood.

He gazed at the few students from Imperial High. Although they had already transferred out, each of them still carried imposing momentum and had the aura of a prodigy.

The competition at Imperial High was extremely fierce. While they might have switched schools because their grades had dropped and they couldn't afford the full tuition fee, they were essentially still very outstanding.

As for why they had chosen No. 59 High, given Headmaster Chen's understanding of his junior brother, it was likely that Headmaster Jin had used his silver tongue and personally run over to poach these people... There was no one better than his junior brother at this.

Headmaster Jin: "When we get there, I'll pull in some other schools into our alliance. We have to fight for the top 50 at the very least!"

"..."

Hearing this, Headmaster Chen and San Yuan, who was on the side, couldn't help but mutter derisively—"The top 50... You aren't ambitious enough!"

...

At about one in the afternoon, the air immortal warship landed at the Nine Dragon camp earmarked by the Alliance of Ten Thousand Cultivation Schools. Several air immortal warships from other districts were already parked in the camp's large parking bay. Although No. 60 High and No. 59 High had arrived four hours ahead of time, they weren't the first to arrive.

Wang Ling looked around the camp and scanned the surrounding terrain with his King's Eye. The place had already been locked down, and except for the students participating in the competition, teachers, and staff responsible for maintaining order, there was no one staff member who was being idle. People from the Immortal Arts Mobile Squadron had even been dispatched to set up multiple defense lines outside the camp, and all vehicles passing through the camp had to undergo strict inspections.

The security precautions put in place for the national body technique competition this time were top notch. There were one thousand students from all over the country taking part; protecting the students was always the number one priority.

Of course, there was in fact another very important reason — the competition venue this time was Nine Dragon Mountain, which wasn't just any scenic region.

The legendary heavenly vein master valve was located here. President Qi and his teacher Huang Feng had seen through the plot behind the theft of Dark Ancestor Xie Sanxiao's skull a while ago, so naturally, security had been tightened for the national competition this time.

Thus, while Wang Ling and the rest had arrived beforehand, they weren't idle. Those who arrived first would be checked first, and no one could escape.

Wang Ling stood with the others in line, and very soon, a team of men in crimson Dao robes and who were arranged in an orderly immortal sword formation flew over from a distance.

Super Chen couldn't contain his excitement. "It's Nine Dragon Mountain's resident special forces!"

Someone asked, "Resident special forces?"

"Each person in the resident special forces has a remarkable history and is a talent who has been carefully selected. Any one of them could be a captain in Magnificent Immortal," Super Chen explained. "But the resident special forces aren't found everywhere. I heard that the spirit vein under Nine Dragon Mountain is very complex, so there is a resident special force team here which guards the vein all year round to prevent it from being plundered."

Hearing this, everyone instantly understood. These students from all over the country were awed by the heroic bearing of the Nine Dragon Mountain resident special forces. They gradually started to realize how much importance the Alliance of Ten Thousand Cultivation Schools had placed on this national competition.

Even the resident special forces had been assigned to maintain security. They simply couldn't be any more handsome!

Wang Ling and the others didn't wait long in the queue. These members of the resident special forces in crimson Dao robes first broke into pairs and started to set up an array in the rather empty encampment.

They carved cryptic and indecipherable runes into the ground one by one, and then stood on both sides of the array to skillfully make hand seals in a calm and composed manner. They were so handsome that no one could take their eyes off them.

"It's the Star Relocation Array!"

In the final moment before the array was completed, some of the more knowledgeable students were finally able to recognize what it was.

It was the Star Relocation Array! It was a teleportation array that could instantly teleport a building!

With a flash of splendid light, a pagoda-like building instantly appeared in the empty encampment. This pagoda would be where everyone would spend the first night.

A lot of the students present thought it was strange, however – after the resident special forces used the array to pull this pagoda over, they didn't do anything more, so the students stayed put and waited.

A few minutes later, a team of doctors in white robes slowly emerged from the base of the pagoda. One doctor who looked a little older stepped forward and finally gave Wang Ling and the others their first instructions since landing. "The Nine Dragon Pagoda will open at 5pm sharp. During this period, everyone is expected to line up at the door in an orderly manner to first go through an individual routine inspection."

The old doctor then pointed to two huge tents that had been set up nearby. "For the time being, you won't be divided according to schools for the inspection. Please line up according to gender: Boys queue in front of the tent on the left, and girls in front of the tent on the right. Wait for your number to be called."

What was this? A physical examination?

Many people didn't understand, since nothing like this had been mentioned in the itinerary that the schools had sent out.

But this was an official request, so everyone could only obey.

The truth was that this wasn't so much a physical examination as a verification of identity. There were a large number of students participating in this competition. In the previous military drill for six schools, that Old Devil had snuck in as a student, and President Qi and his Teacher Huang couldn't guarantee that some mole wouldn't appear in the national competition this time.

So there was nothing wrong with being a little more cautious.

The boys were divided into groups of five.

Wang Ling, Wang Zhen, Super Chen, Hero Guo and Gu Shunzhi were in one group.

Once they entered the tent, Wang Ling saw the old doctor who had been responsible for giving out the instructions.

The old doctor looked them up and down, then calmly said, “Now, everyone take off your clothes, except for your underwear.”

Wang Ling: “...”

It wasn't like Wang Ling had never gone through a physical exam before, but this was the first time he had to bare himself in front of other people.

At that moment, Wang Ling wondered if he should knead his body a little before he undressed in order to create a little bit of flab; he would be rather conspicuous if his physique was too good.

Chapter 1132: Wang Ling's School Record

It seemed like a very simple examination, but it was in fact profoundly complicated. The old doctor held up a Dao disc with a mirror on it and murmured an incantation. The disc swiftly projected a beam of light which scanned the five people in front of it.

This was an anti-terrorism Dao disc. This light beam had harvesting and storage capabilities, and could instantly extract the sweat from a person's body as well as any spirit energy molecules that were left on the skin, which would ultimately be run through a large database for identity verification.

Moreover, this beam emitted by the disc didn't just have the ability to “collect,” but also actually had the ability to “reveal monsters”—the disc would clearly detect if someone was trying to use transfiguration or shapeshifting to slip through.

Bathed in the beam's light, Super Chen, Hero Guo and the rest were all secretly apprehensive. Even an anti-terrorism disc was used... They felt that the competition this time was really strict! From beginning to end, it felt like there was a really tight lid on everything!

By the time Wang Ling and the others got dressed again, the results of the inspection were already out.

Identity has been verified! ✓

Confirmed that there is no transfiguration or shapeshifting! ✓

Confirmed that there are no stimulants in the body! ✓

Confirmed that there are no magic treasures hidden on the body! ✓

Confirmed that there are no cheats! ✓

...

After the group examination was over, the old doctor in charge of the session stamped and signed each person's report, and then it was over.

The old doctor, who had the air of an immortal, distributed the reports with a flick of his sleeve into the right hands. He then pointed to the screen behind him. "Your first round of inspection is over. Go behind the screen for the second round."

"There's more?"

Super Chen was surprised.

"The first round was just to verify your identity. The second is to inspect your respective records." The old doctor said, "If you have a criminal record, your movements will be significantly restricted during this competition, and you will receive extra supervision."

Super Chen: “Criminal record?”

The others were also puzzled.

But the old doctor didn’t answer Super Chen’s question. There was no way he could explain it to every single person. More and more students had gathered at the Nine Dragon camp by now, and all the inspections had to be completed by five o’clock.

Puzzled, Wang Ling and the others behind him walked toward the second screen, only to see a familiar person as soon as they stepped behind it.

Odd Zhuo was the chief inspector for the second round.

He had already sensed his *shifu’s aura in the first round. Now, Wang Ling saw Odd Zhuo, who naturally, beamed at him.

The master and disciple didn’t need to say any unnecessary words; at that very moment, they shared a tacit understanding.

“Senior Zhuo!” After Super Chen and the others saw Odd Zhuo, their initially tense nerves gradually relaxed. Odd Zhuo was the pride of No. 60 High. As long as he was around, any student from No. 60 High couldn’t help straightening their backs and sticking out their chests.

Furthermore, Hero Guo had also gotten hold of very reliable gossip that when No. 60 High was refurbished, the old stone sculpture at the school gate would be replaced with a life-sized statue of Odd Zhuo in order to encourage all the students of No. 60 High to learn from him!

Odd Zhuo smiled apologetically. “You should call me Commander Zhuo here.”

“Yes!” Super Chen and the others nodded cheerfully. This sort of friendly behavior certainly wouldn’t look good in public.

But everyone was still quite confused about the inspection of their records.

They couldn't help but think back to when several high schools had gone to Beast King's Remains. There had been criminals who had tried to disrupt the activity back then, so no one could say for sure that there wouldn't be anyone who would come to stir up trouble again this time.

This was just what Super Chen was thinking, and he hadn't gotten to the point yet of validating it.

Of course, Odd Zhuo had heard some whispers. He wasn't just the chief inspector for the second round of inspections this time; he was also responsible for security in one part of the competition.

Naturally, it wasn't convenient for him to disclose the details, since he had signed a nondisclosure agreement.

Students generally wouldn't have a criminal record, but the standards for the activity this time were very high. It naturally went without saying that everything would be rigorously inspected. This 'criminal record' wasn't a record in the ordinary sense. Even if it wasn't recorded down as a crime, all cases on school grounds counted, such as cheating in exams, school violence, organized bullying, forming factions, shaking down juniors for money, and so on.

Odd Zhuo was only responsible for the inspection; whether or not a student would be monitored during the competition if they had a criminal record largely depended on how serious the circumstance was.

This round had been added into the competition after discussion by a panel of experts, who felt that students who had committed offenses before would be more easily used by criminals, so the extra supervision was necessary.

But the students who could take part in the national body technique competition this time were the elites of various major schools, and were Senior One students as well. Theoretically speaking, there shouldn't be any problems, but there were always exceptions in this world.

For example, word had recently spread about a high school student named Zha Tuotuo from the famous cultivation school Wind Devil High School who hit his girlfriend[1]. This was a rare case, but it was an utter shock for society.

This inspection round started with everyone taking out their IDs so that Odd Zhuo could check their records via the public security and school systems.

Gu Shunzhi, Zhen Yuan, Wang Zhen... All of them had just transferred to the school and had blank records. It was Odd Zhuo and Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal who had helped create identities for these three on Earth, but even then, they still had to go through the process.

When it was Super Chen's and Hero Guo's turns, Odd Zhuo finally no longer saw blank records, although what was noted down wasn't much.

Odd Zhuo couldn't help laughing when he saw the record on file. "Student Super Chen, you get up very early every morning."

Super Chen laughed along insincerely. "Getting up early... is very normal! I take great pains not to be late for school!"

"Is it to not be late for school, or to copy homework?" Odd Zhuo asked.

Super Chen was surprised. "You can also suss that out..."

"If you don't want anyone to know what you did, don't do it," Odd Zhuo said. He then turned to look at Hero Guo. "Also, Student Hero Guo, please don't act so dangerously when you copy homework. It's really very dangerous to copy homework with a pen stuck in your nose!"

Hero Guo: "..."

Their main offenses were waking up early to copy homework and some cheating at dictation; these were all small issues, which far from required extra supervision.

After checking the two boys' files, Odd Zhuo typed in Wang Ling's ID number.

He had specially left Wang Ling for last.

Who was Wang Ling?

He was Odd Zhuo's shifu. How could there possibly be a problem?

In the end, when Odd Zhuo opened Wang Ling's file, the dense words in it almost made him faint in front of everyone.

“Wow! So many notes?”

The surrounding examiners thought that they had caught something big, and gathered around curiously for a look.

The only thing written in Wang Ling's file was:

This year, April 3rd, Student Wang Ling secretly ate crispy noodle snacks in class...

This year, April 4th, Student Wang Ling secretly ate crispy noodle snacks in class...

This year, April 5th, Student Wang Ling secretly ate crispy noodle snacks in class...

...

Today, Friday November 14th, Student Wang Ling secretly ate crispy noodle snacks while boarding the air immortal warship...

Chapter 1133: The First Elimination Round

As the saying went, “If you don't want people to know what you did, don't do it.”

No one could have expected these minor issues to actually be recorded in their school files. Of course, these were the school's internal records, which generally wouldn't be made public. Besides, only trivial things were recorded, and the students' background data wouldn't be directly included in their files. If people really wanted to know more, they could only get the secret key for the files from the schools themselves for a look.

Moreover, most of these trivial notes were usually written by the teacher-in-charge.

Each person's teacher-in-charge had eyes. Wang Ling sat at the back of the class, and naturally, had experienced this for himself; during the countless times that he had eaten crispy noodle snacks on the sly, he had seen Teacher Pan looking at him through the back window...

But Teacher Pan had never really stopped him. This was the stage when youngsters were growing. Studying also consumed brain cells, and students sneakily eating a little during class was very normal. As long as the teacher who was teaching didn't catch them, it was fine.

But Wang Ling didn't expect his eating on the sly to actually be recorded in such detail... It could only be said, as a teaching pioneer and a double gold-class teacher of No. 60 High, as expected of Teacher Pan.

After the second inspection round, Wang Ling and the others went through a third round of inspections before the entire thing could be considered over.

It was far stricter than they could ever have imagined.

Super Chen remembered that when they had gone to Beast King's Remains before, the only thing that had been used was a special magnet to collect electronic devices and magic treasures; it had been far less strict and heavily guarded.

"I guess the Dark Network could be plotting something again... that's why it's so tense." Super Chen thought nothing of it when he said this, but everyone around him suddenly became nervous.

Wang Ling was well aware of this attribute of Super Chen's. Plus, he had used his Mind-Reading Ability to learn a few things from Odd Zhuo.

Everything stemmed from the theft of Dark Ancestor Xie Sanxiao's skull. Furthermore, Huaxiu Alliance speculated that the mastermind behind this incident was trying to draw on this Dark Ancestor's strength to act against the heavenly vein master valve that was under Nine Dragon Mountain.

Moreover, this matter could in fact also be related to the black shadow army...

Wang Ling himself speculated that the leader of the black shadow army and the mastermind behind the theft should be the same person.

The other party had a miraculous ability to resurrect the dead. It was because of this tricky ability that the Dark Network, which had already suffered multiple losses at the hands of the authorities, might borrow this strength to take revenge.

Last time in Beast King's Remains, several experts of the Dark Network had been caught one after another: Myriad Faces Old Man, Bloody Butterfly, and Lord Dark Fragrance who cast the "Cells At Work Spell"... One by one, they had been arrested, and were currently waiting to be punished according to the law.

After putting everything together, a bad feeling sprouted in Wang Ling's heart...

...

More and more students from around the country arrived on air immortal warships at the Nine Dragon camp. Everyone lined up neatly for the inspection under the direction of dozens of resident special force soldiers in red clothes, who maintained order.

After the inspection, Wang Ling and the other students were divided according to school and district, and gathered together in neat square formations.

Wang Ling noticed that the number of special force soldiers in red had increased.

In fact, this current security arrangement was just the tip of the iceberg. Security for this entire competition, along with the team of doctors as well as the medical troops, had been deployed at the highest level; the Alliance of Ten Thousand Cultivation Schools had mobilized tens of thousands of people for this competition.

The number might seem like an exaggeration, but it was in fact a sign of the high priority which the Alliance of Ten Thousand Cultivation Schools placed on security. Nine Dragon Mountain's terrain was complex, and spanned a very large area. If students were to get lost here, they wouldn't be found right away if insufficient manpower was deployed for the search.

And in this sort of wild environment, once you were in danger, every minute counted.

The contestants were the future flowers of the cultivation world. It was for this reason that security measures had to be exhaustive, unlike a certain variety show which had severely neglected safety measures and caused the sudden death of a celebrity after a highly intense physical challenge[1]. The most infuriating was that the variety show had even dallied in the first four minutes after he collapsed, when he could still have been saved!

Roughly five minutes before 5pm, just before the pagoda opened, the last student to be examined came out of the tent.

Almost the moment the student returned to his group, the image of a familiar figure was projected into the sky by a magic treasure projector.

It was a face that Wang Ling was very familiar with... That was right, it was Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal himself!

The schedule and activities for this national body technique competition on Nine Dragon Mountain had also been jointly designed by the Alliance of Ten Thousand Cultivation Schools and the Office of Strategic Deception!

This wasn't a surprise to Wang Ling. Since becoming a True Venerated, Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal had had his finger in basically every pie. The Office of Strategic Deception's reputation had spread far and wide. As the first True Venerated cultivator as well as the leader of the number one sect in the world, Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal bore the heavy responsibility of building up the motherland. In addition to going out every now and then to maintain world peace, he also took some time out to go on variety shows and continue to spread the Office of Strategic Deception's fame.

The sect's growing fame wasn't entirely a bad thing for Wang Ling. At the very least, the Office of Strategic Deception now gave him extremely ample funds to buy crispy noodle snacks.

Wang Ling used his "Crispy Noodles Dao Monarch" clone to bear the title of leader of the snack team as well as head of the snack shop in the sect.

Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal's projection in the sky looked just like the real thing: he was sunny and dignified, and fully demonstrated the weight of the number one sect; the many students present were able to witness the elegant demeanor of the first True Venerated cultivator in the world for themselves.

This projection hadn't been pre-recorded, but was broadcast live. Hence, the moment Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal's image was projected out, he saw Wang Ling in the crowd at one glance, and was extremely happy.

"Wow! Is the first True Venerated Cultivator really so amiable?"

"This is my first time seeing this Great Death-Courting Senior!"

The students talked among themselves in the square formations.

Meanwhile, Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal began to announce how the first elimination round would work. "Welcome to Nine Dragon camp. The first elimination round is called: Climb the pagoda! You need to climb the pagoda's 700,000 steps in a set amount of time!"

Many students were already a little scared. "700,000 steps..."

"In addition, the competition has limited funds, so accommodation is limited. There are only four hundred rooms on the top floor, so in addition to climbing to the top, you also need to compete for rooms to ensure that you qualify for the next round. The rooms are all doubles, so there must be two individuals in a room in order for you to qualify," Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal said.

Saying this, Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal then said with a benevolent smile, "Then, let the first round officially begin."

As soon as he said the words, the thirty-two doors on the ground floor of the Nine Dragon Pagoda, which faced the students in all directions, opened...

Chapter 1134: Titan High School, Zhu Hanyun

With four hundred rooms at the top of the pagoda, that meant that two hundred participants would be directly knocked out in this first elimination round, which was equivalent to the number of people from twenty schools. This didn't mean that schools would be completely wiped out in the first round for sure, but what was certain was that some schools would lose some of their participants.

And with smaller teams, these schools would find it very hard to pass the second round.

It went without saying that a united front was very important.

But after the doors of the pagoda opened in all directions, these future flowers of the cultivation world, who were from all over the nation, clearly didn't think too much; most of them chose to charge forward and fight! In that moment, people surged forward and used all sorts of techniques to rush toward the main doors at the bottom from all directions.

"What are you waiting for? We don't have time!" Seeing Wang Ling and the rest still rooted to the spot, the students from No. 59 High and Imperial High hurriedly prompted them, but the scene was truly too chaotic. Even if No. 59 High and No. 60 High were currently in an alliance, they currently weren't in a position to consider too much.

Even for Foundation Establishment students, climbing 700,000 steps would shave off half their lives... This sort of strenuous test was like fat college student shut-ins, who never exercised, suddenly being told that they had to run 1000 meters for a physical exam; just hearing it was stressful enough, and frightened everyone.

But no one wanted to be eliminated in the first round. After understanding how the elimination worked, most people decided to seize the upper hand. Since the Nine Dragon Pagoda had spiral staircases, only those who were the very first to charge forward could grab hold of the initial momentum.

At that very moment, the bottom of the pagoda was packed with people.

At the same time, however, Wang Ling also noticed that some high schools were similarly also observing the situation for the time being, and didn't move.

No. 1 Devil-Subduing High School, Balance Flame Middle School, South Sea Sky High School and Titan High School – these schools, which Headmaster Chen believed would be formidable opponents, were also observing the situation.

Naturally, striking first to gain the upper hand was a basic battle strategy, but this was a national competition. Participating in a competition like this often meant breaking out of your old way of thinking and starting from scratch again.

No. 60 High choosing to bide their time at this moment was actually in line with the strategic thinking that Headmaster Chen had emphasized at the very start: to observe more, think more, and act cautiously, rather than be like those students who charged out at the very front without thinking.

Using normal means to climb 700,00 steps would definitely be very draining. Furthermore, this was an ongoing activity – after today’s elimination round, the real competition would start tomorrow. Thus, everyone wouldn’t have much time to recover their strength.

So after Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal made the announcement, No. 60 High had already concluded that there definitely had to be a quicker way to climb to the pagoda; it was possible that there was a barrier at the bottom of the pagoda which led to the top.

“So, how are we going to go up?” asked Hero Guo.

“I think we shouldn’t rush, and should observe for a while longer.” To everyone’s surprise, Super Chen, who was known for being hot-blooded, was instead able to keep a cool head in this critical moment.

It was one of the important reasons why Headmaster Chen had chosen Super Chen.

Super Chen had entered No. 60 High on the strength of his sports talent. He had participated in many competitions, large and small. since young, and thus had encountered plenty of situations. He had also participated in national competitions before, and a national-level contestant like this was exactly what the team needed — he could step forward in a crucial moment to analyze the situation based on his previous competition experience.

While No. 60 High was discussing the matter, some students from Titan High School had already made their move.

Climbing staircases would actually be quite painful for them, because they were too heavy. If there was a mishap while they were climbing the stairs and they tumbled down, the people behind them would also be done for.

Clearly, the students from Titan High School had also considered this, and out of the goodness of their hearts, hadn’t joined the battle from the very beginning.

Titan High School’s uniform was very idiosyncratic: It was made completely out of fur, and the shoulders were studded with the teeth of spirit beasts. The uniform also had a thick fur collar, just like the mink fur coats of the people in the north.

“Let’s get started.” At that moment, a young man with a lollipop in his mouth walked to the front; this was the captain of Titan High School’s team, Zhu Hanyun. Although he looked like he had a normal physique, he was in fact very heavy. Using his King’s Eye, Wang Ling estimated that the other party already weighed five thousand jin.

To be able to reach five thousand jin in Senior Grade One was proof that he had already cultivated the Titan Art to the fourth level at the very least; he was indeed a one-in-a-million talent.

Despite his massive weight, the ground didn’t tremble at all as he walked; it was amazing how he could pass for a regular person.

Walking to the very front, he casually stretched out his arms and called out lightly.

Everyone saw his arms actually start to contract like a spring. He then looked at the cute girl behind him and smiled. “Junior sister, you come up first.”

It was obvious that this wasn’t the first time the Titan High students were doing this. The little junior sister caught his meaning, and she walked to the front. However, her gait was far from as steady as Zhu Hanyun’s, and the ground shook violently as she walked.

“Senior brother, is this really ok?” Some of the other Titan High School students came over to help the little junior sister up so that she was finally perched on his contracting arms.

“No problem, junior sister. I’m going to fire!” When Zhu Hanyun called out, two more students came forward and arranged themselves behind him as they bent forward and braced against his back.

Zhu Hanyun then started counting down from three.

Three...

Two...

One!

Bang!

Zhu Hanyun's arms erupted with the deafening sound of a missile blast, and everyone around him staggered at the fierce shock wave. The little junior sister who had been standing on Zhu Hanyun's arms was sent flying like a cannonball.

In everyone's eyes, this little junior sister looked a lot like a meteor shooting upward in broad daylight, and they were dumbstruck.

A few minutes later, a deafening blast could be heard from the top of Nine Dragon Pagoda, which was followed by quite a number of broken tiles falling from the air and smashing on the ground below.

It was obvious that this little junior sister had already reached the top of Nine Dragon Pagoda.

With one cannon blast, Zhu Hanyun had sent his little junior sister to the finish line!

But it wasn't over yet; Zhu Hanyun smiled at the other junior brothers and sisters behind him. "Quick! Next!"

Zhu Hanyun excitedly got ready for the second shot.

On the other hand, the heads of the teachers who were invigilating were already drenched in sweat.

They had no doubt at all now that the students from Titan High School could reach the top.

But the problem was that if this bunch climbed the pagoda this way...

Nine Dragon Pagoda might be reduced to a sieve...

Chapter 1135: The First Team To Qualify

Such a rough way of climbing the pagoda dumbfounded the surrounding crowd. The students who were already climbing the stairs looked out the window and saw a meteor streak upward past them, which was then followed by the sound of a huge explosion at the top. Everyone had completely stunned expressions on their faces.

“The hell? What was that?!”

“The hell? A human cannonball?”

“It’s Titan High... This... So they can fly that far?”

“It was definitely Zhu Hanyun who did it... He’s the only Titan High Senior One student in this competition who’s a warship!”

Many suddenly realized that they had underestimated the strength of Titan High’s warship students. Zhu Hanyun was the only warship student in his team, and had sufficiently shocked everyone here. This was still only the strength of a warship student. If there were students participating in this battle who cultivated the Titan Art and had reached the aircraft carrier level, did everyone else still even stand a chance?

While everyone was still feeling amazed, Zhu Hanyun, who had turned himself into a barrette, had already launched a second person, his junior brother.

Like the junior sister earlier, the junior brother had the momentum of a fiery meteor crossing mountains, oceans and vast multitudes, as he directly leapt over the entire 700,000 steps to accurately land at the very top of the pagoda.

The students who were still climbing the stairs were petrified. Even the teachers in charge of maintaining order as well as the dispatched resident special forces marveled.

Not only did Zhu Hanyun have explosive power, he also had pinpoint accuracy: the junior brother who had been fired out went right through the hole created by the junior sister’s collision.

His explosive power, shooting angle and accuracy were all flawless.

As one of the hottest contenders for the championship, Titan High revealed its astonishing strength in the first round.

“This is a little over the top...” Super Chen and Hero Guo shivered as they stared at the Titan High students as if they were monsters.

For a moment, both of them were a little disheartened. Zhu Hanyun’s refined skills here were in fact an act of psychological warfare. Titan High had a very distinctive character, and so did Devil-Subduing High and Balance Flame Middle School. In contrast, Super Chen and Hero Guo felt that their No. 60 High didn’t seem that great.

The “study of spirit swords” was initially one of No. 60 High’s defining characteristics, but it still remained to be seen if they could use spirit swords in this body technique competition. The support spells from Headmaster Chen also paled in comparison.

At that moment, Hero Guo even wondered if No. 60 High would be able to survive the first round.

After Zhu Hanyun sent his junior brothers and sisters to the top one after another, everyone saw his legs start to contract like springs, and with a resounding explosion, he also sent himself to the top.

This was an unexpected situation. No one had thought that Titan High’s hulking students would conversely be the first team to qualify, with all their members surviving the first round.

“It’s our turn.”

At that moment, the students of Devil-Subduing High suddenly stepped forward.

Their black school uniforms were especially eye-catching and instinctively deterred people from approaching them.

“The person leading them is Gao Tianming; he’s Devil-Subduing High’s captain this time,” Hero Guo said as he gazed at the tall, thin boy standing at the very front of the Devil-Subduing High group.

As his full name suggested, Gao Tianming was very tall[1]. He was nearly three meters tall, and was like a walking giant in the crowd.

“Why is he so tall?” Super Chen was a little astonished. Height was largely determined by genetics. Super Chen was only about 1.75 meters tall now, but boys could still grow a little more at this stage. Maybe by the time he was in Senior Three, he would be able to join the 180-meter club?

Although he expected to grow taller himself, Super Chen thought that Gao Tianming’s height was a bit too much. When this guy looked for a girlfriend, how tall would she have to be? Otherwise, he would have to squat down to kiss her. How tiring that would be!

Not only would it be tiring, he would look very funny.

At that moment, Gao Tianming was at the very front. After the Devil-Subduing High students waited for a moment, spirit power abruptly burst out at the top of the pagoda, like ripples from a stone thrown into a lake.

What happened?

The students who were climbing the stairs were surprised as they felt the pressure from the spirit power above them.

“It’s an array.” At that moment, Lotus Sun had seen something. “And it’s probably a teleportation array...”

She squinted, but couldn’t see very clearly. Nevertheless, she was able to make a guess based on just the runes along the edge of the array as well as her own experience and intuition.

Standing at the front of the Devil-Subduing High team, Gao Tianming was clearly a little stunned when he heard this, and he sized up Lotus Sun out of the corner of his eye, before stepping forward with the group of junior brothers and sisters behind him.

A teleportation array had also been set up in front of the group at some point, which was connected to the array at the top of the pagoda.

Devil-Subduing High School became the second team to qualify by directly using a teleportation array.

“???” For one moment, the surrounding students were dumbfounded.

A lot of them didn't understand. "How did Devil-Subduing High manage to set up a teleportation array at the top?"

Someone speculated, "They must have used the puppet technique. At least one person in Titan High has come under their control. After Titan High went up, they set the stage for Devil-Subduing High, which took advantage of it to reach the top."

For a moment, there was a hubbub of discussion, and some of the students who were still climbing the stairs felt the pressure.

They hadn't even climbed 50,000 steps, and two high schools had already qualified for the second round ahead of everyone else.

"They're too strong... How can we keep up?"

"Don't give up. It's only the first round. When it comes to the real battle for survival, there will be all sorts of restrictions. Also, I think we should hurry up and talk to everyone about forming an alliance to cripple these strong schools as much as possible, or we won't stand a chance."

Plenty of the students on the pagoda stairs were feeling extremely apprehensive after seeing how powerful Titan High and Devil-Subduing High were.

A lot of them didn't forget to look for allies as they climbed the steps, and discussed joining forces.

"It's our turn now," Lotus Sun took a deep breath and said.

"What's the plan?" Super Chen asked.

"I've thought up a way that'll save us effort." Lotus Sun said, "I can send us up with Mysterious Sea's water column, but the distance is a little far, and my spiritual energy alone might not be enough, so we'll need to work together... But this is the first time I'm trying this. If the ten of us together don't have enough spiritual energy, there's a chance we might fail and fall midway."

"Is it that bad..."

“It’s fine, just listen to the class monitor.” Gu Shunzhi smiled at that moment.

Lotus Sun clearly didn’t realize that Wang Zhen, Liu Qingyi, Gu Shunzhi, Zhenyuan... were like universal-grade nuclear-powered motors...

Sending everyone to Mars wouldn’t be a problem, let alone the top of the pagoda!

And besides these people, even less needed to be said about Wang Ling...

His spirit power reserves could send Mysterious Sea’s water column around the universe several times over...

Chapter 1136: Mysterious Sea’s Appearance

Lotus Sun’s ability to control her spirit sword had already reached perfection, to the point that she could regularly open up a sword spirit space as well as summon her sword spirit even if her sword wasn’t with her.

Lotus Sun was the only person in No. 60 High’s elite stream who already had a sword spirit. This was what everyone currently understood... Of course, this knowledge obviously didn’t take Wang Ling and the others into account.

Lotus Sun planned to summon Mysterious Sea to send them up in a column of water, so she definitely had to summon Mysterious Sea’s true sword spirit form.

And this would actually be everyone’s first time seeing Mysterious Sea’s appearance.

“Has anyone ever seen Classmate Lotus Sun’s sword spirit?” Li Youyue asked curiously.

Mysterious Sea... It sounded like the name of an uncle, but a sword spirit took after its master, and its specific appearance was based on what its master preferred.

Could it be that Classmate Lotus Sun was actually a secret uncle fan?

Li Youyue didn't think it was impossible.

In an era bursting with fresh young meat, a lot of girls were actually tired of male stars with fair faces, high nose bridges, straight eyebrows and double eyelids. Conversely, the suave uncle look was even more attractive!

But everyone else also had their own ideas about what Mysterious Sea looked like.

Hero Guo: "I haven't seen Mysterious Sea either, but it shouldn't have dead fish eyes, right?"

Hearing this, Wang Ling's eyelids twitched violently, as he felt that there was something implied in the words.

Lotus Sun deliberately kept them guessing. She closed her eyes and began the summoning in earnest. Like everyone said, she had never revealed Mysterious Sea's real appearance in public, and had sometimes even gotten Mysterious Sea to disguise itself for its own protection.

But this was a national event, and so many people were watching. Lotus Sun felt that there was no longer any need to hide.

She was the captain of the team this time. In the face of the initial show of strength by Zhu Hanyun, captain of Titan High, and Gao Tianming, captain of Devil-Subduing High, she naturally wouldn't admit defeat easily.

In terms of momentum at least, she wouldn't be the first to lose!

"Boundless sea, eastward tide..." The incantation was followed by a ray of blue light that started to glow behind Lotus Sun.

For a moment, it was as if everyone could smell the salty scent of the rolling sea; it really was as if they were next to the sea and could vaguely hear the sound of the rolling waves.

The teachers maintaining order on the field noticed the activity here and were astonished.

A Foundation Establishment student had actually produced a sword spirit?

It was unfathomable to them. Moreover, judging from the aura, this sword spirit clearly hadn't been formed recently; this was an old sword spirit with a very "mature" aura.

It was very easy to discern whether a sword spirit was a newborn or not; a newly conceived sword spirit was just like a newborn baby, and would give off a "milky" scent.

Mysterious Sea didn't have this scent.

After the blue light glowed for a while, a girl in a sea-blue dress fell from the sky; even her hair was dark blue with silver streaks, and she radiated a youthful vitality.

Looking at Mysterious Sea's appearance, everyone was enlightened.

So, Mysterious Sea's true form was that of a magical girl?

This was a reasonable outcome. After all, Mysterious Sea had been conceived early, and Lotus Sun hadn't been very old at that time. The magical girl transformation was something every girl had probably imagined at one point in their childhood. Looking at Mysterious Sea's appearance, Wang Ling instantly recalled the very nostalgic "Clow Cards."

It was something that people of Wang Ling's age would remember from their childhood, at least.

"Then, next, please lend me your spiritual energy, everyone!" Lotus Sun smiled. The two girls, Liu Qingyi and Li Youyue, were the first to step forward and grab her hands. One after another, each of the boys put their hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them.

This was in fact the pose that two chuuni kids who read wuxia novels would act out to pass strength to each other, which was also indescribably nostalgic.

Super Chen felt a little bashful. He put one hand on Li Youyue's right shoulder and covered his face with the other.

“Everybody, stand firm.” After a few moments of preparation, Lotus Sun repeated the incantation again. Tremendous waves of spirit power burst forth from Mysterious Sea, and a huge column of water bubbled up like a fountain under the feet of the No. 60 High students.

And then, boom! With a loud bang, a huge column of water shot into the sky!

“It worked!” Lotus Sun was thrilled! She had thought that the combined spiritual energy of ten people might not be enough, and had never expected it to be so effective!

Soon, No. 60 High’s water column also drew the gazes of countless people. The students climbing the stairs were attracted by the water column... and then were horrified.

“WTF? Which high school is this? The school uniform is so ugly! It even has the word ‘ELITE’ on the back...”

“Why does it look like No. 60 High?” Someone tried to make out the figures of the No. 60 High group who flew past the window.

“You’re right, it’s No. 60 High! That’s where Odd Zhuo graduated from! But I remember that their overall ranking isn’t very high. How can they be this amazing?” Someone was puzzled.

All the students on the stairs made “lemon[1]” sounds.

Someone scoffed. “Amazing? Their captain is Lotus Sun; she’s the only one who’s slightly more amazing. The rest don’t look like much. They still can’t compare with Titan High and Devil-Subduing High.”

Some people snorted disdainfully.

Because No. 60 High’s overall ranking wasn’t high, the students who were still climbing the stairs absolutely refused to admit that No. 60 High could surpass them.

No. 60 High?

How could it?

A cultivation high school that wasn't even a key city high school...

But no matter how sour they felt, facts were facts, and they felt very helpless. No. 60 High was a dark horse no one had expected. No one could imagine that a high school which had always ranked last in the district ranking would actually stand out in the first round of a national competition.

Just then, there was another loud bang in the air!

It was followed by a violent shock wave which almost caused some of the students climbing the stairs to fall.

"Now what?" someone asked uncomprehendingly.

"It's Titan High! And Devil-Subduing High! It looks like they're attacking No. 60 High!"

Hearing this, everybody turned their eyes to the window, and poked their necks out to look at the top.

It seemed that the two schools that had been the first to reach the top really were attacking No. 60 High, which was charging upward.

A dazzling array of spirit lights glowed at the top, and a wave of attack spells were aimed right at No. 60 High's ascending column of water!

Chapter 1137: Mutual Probing

Wang Ling had long anticipated that the people from Titan High and Demon-Subduing High would attack them midway; this was in fact the tactical plan which the headmasters of the two schools had separately come up with to deal with No. 60 High.

Theoretically, a cultivation school with a mediocre overall ranking like No. 60 High wouldn't be a target of hot favorites like Demon-Subduing High and Titan High. When it came to picking a strategy, however, students from both schools ultimately listened to their headmasters' advice.

As an old acquaintance No. 60 High's Headmaster Chen Tianxiang, No. 1 Demon-Subduing High's Headmaster Li Qingxi had formulated a focused and detailed strategy, which included ways to suppress No. 60 High School in the first elimination round.

While No. 60 High was currently being disrupted by Demon-Subduing High and Titan High, it was clear that the two schools had yet to truly join forces.

This was evident in the spells cast; almost all the students from both schools were acting on their own, and there wasn't any sense of cooperation at all.

Spirit power bombs and fireballs were thrown non-stop at No. 60 High's water column, and Mysterious Sea created a water shield to block or change the trajectory of the spells.

The truth was that Lotus Sun had already long been on guard against a combined attack from both schools. However, she realized that it would be hard for her to maintain their current situation by relying on just Mysterious Sea's strength alone.

"This bunch is really..."

As the team leader, Lotus Sun was naturally anxious; two hot favorite schools attacking them together was really bullying them!

Wang Ling was going to take some action.

It was actually a simple situation; he simply needed to cast a rebound field, and it would be fine.

But Fang Xing didn't give Wang Ling any chance to act at all.

Fang Xing twisted his neck a little, and some sparkling and translucent snake scales that were almost invisible to the naked eye instantly fell off his body; this was the magical treasure which he had inherited from True Immortal She Pi. The scales moved unusually fast and charged to the front to block the combined attack of the two schools, practically sending all the balls of magic flying.

This time, it was Titan High's Zhu Hanyun and Demon-Subduing High's Gao Tianming to be astonished.

No. 60 High was indeed tougher than they had imagined.

The most important point was that they couldn't figure out how the spells had been sent flying.

Mysterious Sea's power alone wasn't enough to resist the combined attack of the two schools!

...

At that moment, the headmasters of the various schools and the people primarily in charge of this event had gathered in an egg-shaped building not far from Nine Dragon Pagoda.

This was a temporary operations command center.

The chief commander this time was one of the Ten Generals, President Qi.

And the deputy commander was his shifu and Chief Protector of the heavenly vein under Nine Dragon Mountain, Huang Feng.

Although Old Huang wasn't one of the Ten Generals, everyone knew very well who he was

How could the shifu of one of the Ten Generals be an ordinary person?

What was more, Old Huang had been dispatched to watch over this event this time, which seemed to prove the rumor that had been going around lately — someone was going to try and disrupt this national competition, and attack the heavenly vein's main valve.

While the truth had yet to be confirmed —

Old Huang's appearance was already a clear answer.

As soon as Fang Xing acted, most of the headmasters could see the snake scales.

Since most of the headmasters present were top-notch Itinerant Immortal experts, it was impossible for them not to be able to see it.

“Who is this boy?” Huang Feng was quite curious as he gazed at the screen.

“Teacher, this is the child whom She Pi left behind back then,” President Qi drew close and whispered.

“So it’s him.” Old Huang was instantly enlightened.

He had naturally heard of Fang Xing’s story.

Back then, True Immortal She Pi had given birth to a child in prison before he was executed, and that child was Fang Xing.

It had caused quite an uproar back then, and a number of people thought that Fang Xing should be disposed of alongside She Pi. Ultimately, however, he was left alive.

In the blink of an eye, he had already gotten so big, which made Huang Feng feel a little sorrowful.

A lot of people in fact didn’t know the truth behind True Immortal She Pi’s matter. Now that his biological son Fang Xing had appeared here, President Qi wasn’t surprised if this drew opposition.

As expected, after President Qi told Huang Feng who Fang Xing was, a number of headmasters in the back voiced their objections.

“True Immortal She Pi’s child? Why is he allowed to participate? How could this have been approved?”

“True Immortal She Pi was the Old Devil’s disciple! The big villain back then!”

“Silence.”

President Qi cleared his throat.

After a moment, Old Huang said unhurriedly, “Don’t bring up this matter again. Since Student Fang has been allowed to participate, this is enough to prove that he has already passed every round of investigation. Furthermore, my understanding is that Student Fang has been under Huaxiu Alliance’s strict surveillance since young. If you are questioning this now, does that mean that you want to slap the face of the Huaxiu Alliance?”

The command center instantly fell dead silent.

When Old Huang said this, the headmasters in the back knew that they had spoken out of turn. One by one, they shut up obediently, and didn’t utter another word.

...

On the other side, the students of Demon-Subduing High and Titan High finally gave up on their fierce attack when they saw that No. 60 High was about to reach the top, but they made baffled noises.

“Strange — why do I feel like there was an extra force resisting us?” Gao Tianming murmured. He gazed downward, and couldn’t put his finger on the odd feeling he had.

“It turns out this team from No. 60 High has other talents besides Lotus Sun; the rest of them are also tricky to deal with.” At that moment, a young man from Demon-Subduing High stepped forward and said, “Right now, we still don’t know who’s stronger.”

He coolly analyzed the situation. “There are four transfer students in No. 60 High’s team this time. There’s no background information on them, and they might be hidden experts. As for the other members, the brawny fellow is a sports student, whose family runs a body technique dojo. He’s taken part in major competitions before, but it seems that he’s never won; people call him Forever No. 2.

“There’s a fatty called Hero Guo, whose family runs a pet shop. I heard he has a parrot that’s very hard to deal with, but I haven’t seen it so far. I’m guessing, however, that it can be summoned with a psychic technique.”

“How about the others?”

“I don’t know much about Xia Ming. There was a rumor about him and Lotus Sun not long ago. The one with the ponytail is Li Youyue; her family runs a restaurant, and she’s the class monitor of Elite Class Two in No. 60 High. Fang Xing is also in Class Two, and he transferred to No. 60 High in Senior Grade One. His family runs a noodle shop.”

After No.1 Demon-Subduing High School went through all the information, everyone felt that there were all sorts of strange people on No. 60 High’s team, but none of them seemed to be experts in particular.

If they had any real doubts, it would be about those four transfer students.

After this analysis, Gao Tianming took a deep breath, and finally turned his gaze toward Wang Ling. “Then that one with the dead fish eyes...”

“Oh, I’ve seen this person before; I remember him,” answered the young man. “He’s been in all the competitions that No. 60 High took part in. I heard that he’s their mascot; he shouldn’t be a big problem.”

“I see.” Gao Tianming nodded his head, and gradually calmed down.

Chapter 1138: A Strange Night

No. 60 High didn’t forget about their alliance with No. 59 High. After they reached the top, they drew a teleportation array, and summoned the students from No. 59 High who had been at the bottom.

“Why is it just the few of you?” Super Chen asked as he looked at Tang Jingze, He Bufeng and some other familiar faces in the teleportation array.

“Those transfer students from Imperial High ran too fast...” He Bufeng fell silent.

Those transfer students were new, but while they were quite strong, they clearly hadn’t completely integrated with the group. The moment the whistle sounded, they didn’t follow the plan at all, and followed the fervent crowd in climbing the stairs! This had directly led to No. 59 High being short of four members at the top of the pagoda...

But He Bufeng didn't think it was a big problem overall. It wasn't like these Imperial High students weren't strong; it was unlikely that they would be knocked out in the first round.

Just like that, No. 59 High's and No. 60 High's mediocre rankings actually went up.

In addition, no one had expected No. 60 High to be the third team to qualify with all their members.

Such fierce momentum was astonishing. Those who arrived at the top first naturally had priority in choosing rooms, but there was a problem for No. 60 High. These were all double rooms, and according to the rules, only after two participants checked into a room together would they qualify for the second round.

But the problem which No. 60 High faced was that there were ten of them and five rooms, but there were three girls... Did one guy and one girl have to share a room?

That might cause a misunderstanding.

Fortunately, No. 59 High also faced the same problem.

"What's the arrangement?" asked Li Youyue.

He Bufeng thought for a while, then said, "We also have three girls, but two are from Imperial High, who are still climbing their way up... How about one of you girls share with our female team member?"

After saying that, he pushed forward a girl with short hair that was dyed yellow and whose fierce expression looked a little terrifying. "Let me introduce you to my younger cousin, He Chun. She might look like a guy, but she's actually a girl."

After He Bufeng said that, He Chun directly punched him in the stomach.

Then, He Bufeng coughed up blood!

It trickled down from the corners of his lips...

“Are... are you alright...”

“It’s fine, I’m used to it.” Whenever and wherever, the gentle smile on the face of the rehabilitated He Bufeng remained the same.

Everyone: “...”

On No. 60 High’s end, Lotus Sun and Li Youyue were worried.

He Chun was too brash, and gave off the air of a female delinquent. It would be a little scary to stay with her.

In the end, however, the problem of dorm assignments was resolved happily.

Li Youyue and Lotus Sun shared one room.

And... Liu Qingyi and He Chun shared another.

It was Liu Qingyi who had proposed it.

Of course, there was a condition — Lotus Sun agreed to give Liu Qingyi a platinum member’s card for the Conch Lady restaurant chain, which would give her a twenty percent discount.

To Liu Qingyi, there was no better bargain than this at this point in time.

Wang Zhen was green with envy on the side; he also wanted a discount card!

And so, he howled at He Chun, “How about I sleep with you?!”

He was instantly punched in the stomach...

But this time, it was He Bufeng who punched him.

After being a delinquent for so long, there were times when it was still a conditioned reflex. However, Wang Zhen indeed hadn't been punched in a while. After all, this guy had taken regular beatings growing up; plus, there was a frivolous air about him.

In the end, Wang Zhen was the odd one out on No. 59 High's side, and he wound up sharing a room with He Bufeng.

He Bufeng's reason was that he was worried that Wang Zhen had indecent designs on his little sister.

This reason could be said to be utterly irrefutable, and no one present could dispute it.

In the end, the dorm assignments on the boys' side were: Wang Ling and Fang Xing.

Gu Shunzhi and Zhenyuan.

Super Chen and Hero Guo.

Tang Jingze and Xia Ming.

But No. 59 High was still waiting for the four Imperial High transfer students, and while the rooms had already been assigned, they still needed to go occupy the rooms first, just in case.

And so, after the two schools discussed it, Wang Ling, He Bufeng, Wang Zhen and Super Chen were sent to occupy the rooms.

Sitting in the room by himself at that moment, Wang Ling seemed unbearably lonely...

However, he had a strong feeling that this first elimination round wasn't that simple.

...

At 10.32pm, after the last student checked into the dorm, the list of participants who had qualified in the first round was announced.

Everyone from No. 59 High and No. 60 High had advanced, and no one had been eliminated, which was a good thing.

However, the really nerve-racking segment had yet to start — the second elimination round would begin at 1am!

In other words, most of the participants, especially the students who had climbed the stairs, basically didn't even have time to rest!

Having just completed such intense exercise, they had less than two hours to rest. For a time, there was the sound of numerous complaints.

“There's so little time! They really don't treat us as human beings!”

“Being a student is still good — it's after you graduate from university when life gets really hard. Do you know what it means to ‘graduate from one of China's top 985 universities, work 996 hours, get fired at 35 years old, be detained for 251 days, and your legal rights 404'ed...’” Someone brought up this topic which had been trending online recently, and revolved around an employee who applied for severance pay with his company before leaving his job, only to be charged with extortion once the company gave him the payout[1].

And then, that was it...

This employee was jailed for 251 days before he was acquitted, and received one hundred thousand in compensation from the state.

The whole story probably wasn't as simple as it seemed, as it involved a complicated network of interests. However, the arrogance of these sorts of large enterprises, which had been built on the support of their customers, had already left a deep impression on the people.

When they thought about it carefully now, the happiest was still to be a student.

There was no more time to complain; there was still a second elimination round at 1am, and the real competition would officially start at eight tomorrow morning.

No one knew the specific details of the second elimination round.

They heard that Grenade-Throwing Senior Immortal would announce it at 1am.

Wang Ling waited in the room as time passed, and he was quite satisfied with Fang Xing's unexpected silence. This was a worthwhile roommate; even if he did sneak glances at Wang Ling from time to time, at least he didn't bother him.

At around five to one, Wang Ling pricked his ears when a girl screamed in the hallway.

Many people were alarmed by the shriek. They opened their doors to see a boy from Titan High lying in a pool of blood and a girl crying as she held him. "Everyone, help me. My senior brother really is going to die!"

Everyone gathered round as she sobbed, and had a clear look at the dead boy's face.

Zhu Hanyun?!

How could it be him???

A lot of them covered their mouths in stunned shock.

Chapter 1139: The Second Elimination Round

Zhu Hanyun was dead. No one had expected something like this to actually happen when such strict precautions had been taken for this national cultivation high school body technique competition.

Hadn't they been assured at the very beginning that everyone would be safe?

Seeing Zhu Hanyun lying in a pool of blood, all the students had panicked expressions on their faces.

It wasn't just anyone who had died, but an expert – it was Zhu Hanyun! Titan High's team leader! A man who, by his strength alone, had directly hurled all his fellow brothers and sisters past 700,000 steps to the top of the pagoda!

There were more and more onlookers now. The surrounding students were seized by intense panic, and listening to the grief-stricken cries of the little junior sister from Titan High, they were suddenly at a loss, and didn't know what to do.

“Get a teacher! Hurry up and save him!” someone said calmly at that moment.

“He's already beyond saving.”

At that moment, an extremely tall boy crouched down and confirmed that Zhu Hanyun was dead. “There appears to be no external wounds. The bleeding from his stomach is probably a spillover from the massive bleeding caused by his spirit root breaking inside his dantian.”

“He's really dead...” Everyone was panic-stricken.

When a person died during a competition, everyone's first reaction was naturally to look for a teacher to take charge of the situation. However, the students who ran out to find a teacher quickly noticed something unusual.

“The windows are locked! And it looks like a forbidden array was set up and our spirit energy is restricted! We can't get out at all! The hole from earlier has also been filled up!” someone screamed.

This referred to the large hole which Zhu Hanyun had smashed open when he had been throwing people to the top of the pagoda.

But while the students had been resting in their rooms, the hole had been completely filled up. In other words, they had no way of letting the teachers outside know of the current situation here.

“What should we do?”

“Someone's died during this competition; can we even continue?”

“This is Zhu Hanyun! If the murderer is among us, and attacks, who would be their match?”

“And it’s already after 2am. Didn’t they say that they would announce the second elimination round now?”

At that moment, the crowd buzzed with discussion as everyone expressed their own opinions.

“Calm down first, everyone.”

At that moment, Gu Shunzhi stepped forward. “Everyone, calm down. Maybe the second round has already started.”

Everyone: “???”

What did he mean that it had already started?

“Normally, if someone really has died, it would be impossible for the teachers not to notice, unless Zhu Hanyun’s death was already planned earlier on.” Gu Shunzhi calmly analyzed the situation. He had in fact already picked up on something, but he couldn’t reveal it outright, and so tried to lead them in the right direction.

“Maybe the rule of the second elimination round is for us to find Zhu Hanyun’s murderer.”

When everyone heard this, they were struck with realization. However, looking at where Zhu Han’s body, which was still warm, lay on the ground, they all sucked in deep breaths.

If this was the assessment for the second elimination round, it really was too cruel... They had actually killed a person???

At that moment, No.1 Demon-Subduing High’s team leader Gao Tianming spoke up again. “This person isn’t Zhu Hanyun.”

Not Zhu Hanyun? What did he mean?

The crowd was a bit confused.

“Zhu Hanyun cultivates the Titan Art, and has long reached a weight of five thousand jin. However, the Zhu Hanyun who’s lying on the ground now...” With one hand, Gao Tianming easily flipped the body over. “As you can see, his body is very light.”

In light of this situation, Gao Tianming had already thought of a possibility, but just as he was about to share his guess –

On the other side, Gu Shunzhi abruptly said first, “Construction Spell.”

After Gu Shunzhi said that, Gao Tianming shot him a glance.

Everyone knew that this was one of No. 60 High’s transfer students. No one knew his background, but it was obvious that he wasn’t an ordinary person.

The Construction Spell was a relatively advanced spell which one usually only came across in university.

Thus, Gao Tianming kept silent and started to listen carefully to Gu Shunzhi’s explanation; he wanted to hear what Gu Shunzhi had to say.

But after being the one to open his mouth first, Gu Shunzhi felt that he had jumped the gun, and shouldn’t have spoken up so quickly.

This was in fact an occupational disease.

As the keeper of order for the universe, there were a lot of things that he had to investigate, which naturally included some odd cases. Thus, Gu Shunzhi had vast experience in deducing cases. In addition to this, he had actually already seen traces of the Construction Spell on Zhu Hanyun’s “body” before it was turned over.

But since he had already spoken, there was no need for him to go on pretending too much.

Gu Shunzhi could only continue and say, “The Construction Spell is a combined spirit and space spell. Space spells are rare, but the Construction Spell is actually the simplest of them all.

“It can transform spirit energy into an image in the spiritual world, and then project a material form that can essentially be touched, and which usually will gradually disappear in five hours.

“Nowadays, this spell is commonly used in film production in the cultivation world, and almost every props manager has to learn it since it not only saves on cost, but also on the time spent on creating props.

“In short, the body we’re looking at now isn’t really Zhu Hanyun’s – it’s just a prop that was created with the Construction Spell. However, we still need to find the real Zhu Hanyun.”

“Are you saying that Zhu Hanyun isn’t dead? Then why do we need to look for him? He might just be playing a prank on us!” someone said at that moment.

“That can’t be the case.” Gu Shunzhi shook his head. “You can’t create something out of nothing with the Construction Spell. For example, those prop managers have to study pictures of what they want to create first before they use the Construction Spell, or model it on the real thing.

“Therefore, Zhu Hanyun might not really be dead, but he is indeed lying in a pool of blood somewhere – this, we know for sure!”

After Gu Shunzhi said that, the atmosphere, which had already calmed down, tensed up again.

But the problem they faced now was that in order to find the “murderer” who had hidden the real Zhu Hanyun, and thus pass this round, they had to check everyone’s alibis one by one.

Apart from the missing Zhu Hanyun, there were still seven hundred and ninety nine students; trying to collect all their alibis clearly wasn’t realistic.

Thus, Gu Shunzhi decided to use a particular method of exclusion. “Now, those with friends who can provide mutual alibis, raise your hands. Also, perception-type students, please step forward. We now need to work together to pass this round.”

Why was he looking for perception-type students?

The answer was actually very simple.

After cultivators used spells, there would definitely be some spirit energy molecules left on their hands. This was from the spillover of spirit energy molecules, and there would often be residue on the hands that would gradually dissipate in thirty minutes.

These perception-type students just needed to check each person, and would be able to very quickly narrow down this large group of people.

Whoever had performed magic in the last thirty minutes would be suspected of having used the Construction Spell!

Chapter 1140: Narrowing Down The Scope

At the same time, all the headmasters in the command center were also discussing the “murder” that had taken place in Nine Dragon Pagoda, because this wasn’t what the second elimination match was supposed to be. According to the original plan, a limited number of pearls would be left on the 700,000 steps for the second match, and those who managed to grab a pearl would move on to the next round.

Now, the rules for the elimination match had changed, and a student had been harmed. The headmasters present were naturally anxious. The most agitated of them all was Liu Tian, headmaster of Titan High.

“President Qi... If the body lying there was created with the Construction Spell, then where is our school’s Zhu Hanyun now?” Liu Tian had been in the dark all this time, and he plucked up the courage to ask President Qi the question.

“Headmaster Liu, rest assured, Student Zhu is now very safe and under protection. Besides, the rule for this round is that as long as the killer is caught, everyone can qualify for the next round. It’s just that the murderer is still lurking among the students, which will test their deduction skills. Now, we can only wait and see. If we act rashly, it will only alert the enemy,” President Qi said.

The headmasters present were still baffled by this explanation.

After hearing President Qi’s words, however, their uneasy hearts relaxed somewhat.

It seemed that this was a plan the higher-ups had put in place earlier on. In that case, it naturally wasn’t proper for them to inquire too deeply into it.

Sitting at the back of the conference hall, the headmasters gazed at the images being broadcasted from Nine Dragon Pagoda on the big screen in front of them; for a period of time, each of them was lost in their own thoughts.

At that moment, a slip of the tongue would be their downfall. As headmasters, they should rack their own brains to decipher the higher-ups' objective rather than ask outright.

"Old Chen, what are your thoughts?" Sitting on the other side, Headmaster Li Qingxi of No. 1 Devil-Subduing High stared at the screen and smiled slightly, as if he had already picked up on something.

"Why are you asking me, Headmaster Li, when you already have the answer?" No. 60 High's Headmaster Chen chuckled and said, "Your school's Gao Tianming is really good, and he's the captain of the team this time as well. It looks like he's your prized student."

"Gao Tianming is indeed a promising seedling. After he graduates from high school, I'm planning to personally visit his place and accept him as my disciple." Hearing Headmaster Chen's praise, Headmaster Li Qingxi was instantly full of pride.

It was only when he came back to his senses that he realized that this wily old fox Chen Tianxiang hadn't answered his question, so he asked again, "Old Chen, don't change the subject. Tell me what you think. I want to see if your thoughts are the same as mine!"

This sort of behavior was a little like two top students comparing answers after an exam.

As the star support player back in the day, Headmaster Chen's view of the general situation and his understanding of the overall setup far surpassed that of the other headmasters, which was also the reason why Headmaster Li Qingxi insisted on knowing his opinion.

Zhu Hanyun's "death" was clearly a situation that had been arranged by the higher-ups; furthermore, it was clearly targeted at someone in particular.

Naturally, they couldn't draw a conclusion purely based on just what they were seeing, but factoring in the first elimination round, Headmaster Chen suddenly had a wild thought.

There were so many ways to test the students, but why had the higher-ups insisted on having them climb 700,000 steps?

There was only one answer.

“Hypnosis.” Finally, Headmaster Chen pointed out the “key” to the heart of the entire setup.

Hearing this, Headmaster Li Qingxi heaved a long sigh of relief in his heart.

They had pretty much the same conjecture.

There was no reason for the students to climb the 700,000 spiral steps other than to hypnotize all of them.

Of course, there were some students who hadn’t been hypnotized.

They were the students of No. 1 Devil-Subduing High, Titan High, Balance Flame Middle School and No. 60 High. They had all used their own ways to reach the top without climbing the stairs.

For hypnosis to work, it often took special mental suggestions given in a specific environment. Besides, it wasn’t easy to hypnotize hundreds of students in one go.

So this was something that probably had been arranged prior to the start of the competition.

As for those students who had directly reached the top in the first round without being hypnotized, Headmaster Chen speculated that they had probably been hypnotized individually through other means.

In short, everyone was clearly under hypnosis (except for Wang Ling, Wang Zhen, Liu Qingyi, Gu Shunzhi, Zhenyuan and Fang Xing, who were all faking it...).

Then what was the next step after hypnotizing so many students? As star support, Headmaster Chen naturally had his own guess. “Dream maker.

This was yet another keyword.

When he heard this, Li Qingxi was hugely relieved. “Sure enough!”

Their thoughts were a complete match at that moment.

Naturally, the next step after hypnotizing so many students was to construct a dreamscape! And there was only one person present who could do this! That was President Qi, who was known as Wisdom Saint!

So everything that everyone was seeing now was a fabrication!

It wasn't just Zhu Hanyun's corpse!

At present, all the eight hundred student participants in Nine Dragon Pagoda, including Zhu Hanyun himself, had in fact fallen into a dream after the first round!

...

On the other side, the investigation, led by Gu Shunzhi, was basically going well.

In the back, Wang Ling silently watched Gu Shunzhi work. At the same time, he was well aware that they were trapped in a setup by the officials.

All the students present were at the Foundation Establishment stage.

Cultivators had more stable mindsets than ordinary people, so hypnotizing them was a much more complicated procedure. The 700,000 steps were the key to directly hypnotizing the students so that they fell into the dream one by one.

As for Wang Ling and the other students who hadn't taken the stairs, President Qi had pretended to arrange room service for them afterward, and they were hypnotized individually.

Of course, the officials had no idea that this kind of hypnosis didn't work on Wang Ling.

A dream maker wasn't a rare profession in the current cultivation world, but in order to be able to trap so many people in the dream at the same time, this dream maker had to have strong mental powers.

In Wang Ming's absence, the only person capable of this was naturally President Qi.

At that moment, Wang Ling was silently watching Gu Shunzhi's performance.

After the first round of investigations, Gu Shunzhi had already ruled out nearly ninety percent of the students.

Of those that were left, the students from No. 1 Devil-Subduing High, Titan High, Balance Flame Middle School and South Sea Sky High were on the list of suspects.

"Explain: What were you doing before this?" Gu Shunzhi smiled gently as he stared at a boy from South Sea Sky High.

"Who are you? Why are you picking on us?" The boy was clearly unhappy that he was considered a suspect. He didn't know Gu Shunzhi's background, and at the same time, looked down on No. 60 High in his heart. A high school with an overall mediocre ranking was actually taking the lead in investigating this case? What right did they have?

"I hope you'll cooperate with the investigation; otherwise, it'll be very hard on you," Gu Shunzhi warned the boy softly. His voice wasn't loud, but shocking mental energy flooded the boy's mind.

This boy was stunned on the spot, and there was a loud buzzing in his head. He looked at Gu Shunzhi as if he were looking at a devil. In the end, he was so frightened that he started crying on the spot.

"..." Wang Ling sighed in the back.

Sure enough, Gu Shunzhi was still too young to set out on the road of staying low-key.

There were times when an initial show of strength was proper and necessary, but Gu Shunzhi had clearly gone a little overboard.

This group was following Wang Ling to learn from him... They wanted to learn how to keep a low profile, and to control their powers and grades, but it was obvious that there was still a long way to go.