

## F Disciples 631

### Chapter 631: A Weird Person

Tang Liang's sword moved too swiftly for the other party to complain. Before the members of the Falling Leaf Sect could react, she had already started her swordplay. To everyone's astonishment and amazement, the first few movements were exactly the same as the Falling Leaf Sword Dao they had seen just prior.

Her body was small but she gave off vigorous sword energy as she dashed and leaped. Her sword moved quickly, with precise movements that rivaled experts. As a member of the House of Armament that specialized in all kinds of weapons, this was expected of her but it was still something to copy another's sect's sword art with such perfection.

"Wait! That's not right!" The old man suddenly shouted.

Tang Liang had started the second form and it was obviously different. Her first three movements didn't exist in the version the sect had performed. Some of the details of subsequent movements were also different. Expert sword cultivators could immediately tell and they could also tell that her version felt cleaner, smoother, and much stronger. The proof was all in the sword, there was no room for spurious judgments.

Zhou Ziyun's eyebrows steadily raised as she watched the little devil prance around. She paid close attention to each difference between the two versions. She recalled her analysis of the sword style and matched her estimations to Tang Liang's so-called reality.

It was an exact match!

Although Zhou Ziyun's comprehension wasn't able to create sword movements from nothing, she had accurately guessed the places where there was a gap between movements. She had also rightly deduced which movements were incorrect and made up by the second, less capable, author at a later date. She didn't miss a single one. Perfect score.

She was amazed and delighted. She didn't think her mind could perform such a feat and she believed that normal people couldn't either. Unless they were an immortal sword master, anyone else would not be able to point out the flaws in the Falling Leaf Sword Dao as accurately as her. At least, they would not be able to if they had never encountered it or the original sword art before in real life or in text.

Just this one event was enough to make this trip worth it. If she was able to do it once, she was confident she could do it again. And in the future, if her fellow sisters had any trouble, she could definitely lend a hand!

Tang Liang ended her demonstration to great applause. She only performed the forms and movements one time but it was enough. As she returned to her seat, the ten members of the Falling Leaf Sect had all fallen to their knees. Their expressions were ashen and they didn't dare to look up.

"Hehe, well that's that." She said arrogantly, "We can end this event here. There is no need for anyone else to try and beat me. The absolute best way to solve the Falling Leaf Sword Dao is to simply replace it with the Falling Leaf Sword Style that is available within the Central Association Library."

This was followed by a long silence. No other participants stood up or even showed a faint desire to do so. The three other geniuses also didn't. Huang Yaoying yawned, feigning boredom, while Ming Yuqi still had her eyes closed. Only Deng Lun was eyeing Tang Liang fiercely as if she had offended him.

"Excellent, excellent!" The announcer's booming voice came back, not lacking a bit of enthusiasm, "Little Devil Tang Liang truly lives up to her name. Such a fearsome memory, it is simply flawless. As long as she saw it once, she would be able to tell you every detail, even years later. Amazing!"

"Our next event is for our young geniuses to analyze individual sword cultivators instead of a sect's secret art. You may help our guests improve their strength using any method you can think of. We will bring out a strength-testing totem so that we can test your theories immediately. Now, let's take a quick break while we get everything ready!"

After that, the participants relaxed and started conversing with each other. At the same time, workers arrived and began setting up tall tree trunks that were carved with the faces of beasts and demons. These totems were also filled with inscriptions and gave off a heavy spiritual aura.

"Sister Zhou, Sister Zhou! Did you see their faces? Hehe!" Tang Liang bounced up and down on her tree trunk like a little girl.

Zhou Ziyun smiled wryly, "I did. Sister Tang Liang's perfect memory is a remarkable ability. This is the first time I have experienced something like this. I am amazed."

"Hehe, you praise me too much..." Tang Liang eyed Zhou Ziyun with a curious expression, "Sister Zhou, if I had not gone up, do you think you would have? Did you have any insights into that sword art?"

Zhou Ziyun maintained a gambler's passive face and shook her head, "How can I compare to Sister Tang Liang? I had some minor thoughts that were similar to the first two that preached their Dao. Not much else. So, I did not dare to stand up and make a fool of myself."

A loud snort interrupted their conversation. The two women looked up to see that Deng Lun had wandered over for some reason or another.

"What do you want?" Tang Liang asked without a hint of friendliness.

Deng Lun snorted again as he twirled his ink brush in his hands. He looked down at her and said, "Is this fun for you?"

Tang Liang scoffed, "Heh, what?"

Deng Lun's gaze was cold, "This is the Great Dao Preaching Convention where a Dao Genius will be crowned. This isn't a place for you to act like a child."

"Hoh... are you speaking for the Lotus Tower or are you speaking for yourself?" Tang Liang retorted.

The young man shook his head, "I am speaking for the people of the Eastern Sanmu Metropolis and of the subcontinent. You should treat this event more seriously. You can't fool everyone with your memory trick. Cultivation is not just about memorizing useless information and regurgitating it. It is about patient study and quiet comprehension. The great Dao cannot be achieved simply by copying others."

The two glared at each other. There was obviously some previous beef between the two and they were simply keeping it going. Zhou Ziyun didn't want to get involved but she was mercilessly dragged in by Tang Liang's next words.

"Sister Zhou, what do you think?"

Zhou Ziyun cursed inwardly but offered a weak smile, "Sister Tang Liang, my learning is shallow and my knowledge is limited. I don't think I can offer an adequate opinion. I apologize."

She thought this was the best response. But instead of Tang Liang, it was Deng Lun who responded.

"Miss Zhou Ziyun, I think you know where the truth lies. Your mind is something that I don't think anyone here can compare to. Although you didn't have an opportunity in the last event to showcase your talent, you will have plenty more opportunities. I will eagerly wait until then."

"Um... thanks?"

Tang Liang laughed, "Don't listen to him. Everyone knows he's a weirdo."

Deng Lun turned away with a loud humph. He returned to his seat and conversed with Huang Yaoying who started laughing.

Zhou Ziyun was left baffled by the exchange, unsure of how to judge this Deng Lun character. He had an attractive, studious appearance on the outside but his personality was jarring. Perhaps Tian Liang was right, he really was a weird person.

## Chapter 632: Visualization

The preaching event soon resumed with great enthusiasm. An additional one hundred guests had joined the preaching participants in the middle of the meadow. These were the individual cultivators that had been selected by a wide lottery to participate in the Grand Dao Preaching Convention, to showcase their individual abilities and receive advice in return. They came from all kinds of backgrounds and all throughout the metropolis and nearby provinces. The only requirement to be chosen was that they were unrelated to an immortal sect.

These one hundred faces were all glowing with excitement and anticipation. It was amazing luck to be chosen. The chance was one in a billion if not more. Although they would not win any money or prizes, they had a chance to receive generous guidance from these young talents. That was far more precious than a few taels of gold.

In addition to the guests, an eye-catching contraption had been erected in the middle of the clearing between the two parties. It was a totem made out of a straight tree trunk. The color was dark red and it was carved with many fearsome faces of beasts and demons. It was over ten meters tall and gave off a strange mix of spiritual auras. This was the famous strength-testing totem, a specialty of the Forest District.

The announcer regained the crowd's attention and began the event. One of the guests was chosen at random to go first. He was a slender man in his late forties with wispy gray hair. He wielded dual sabers and had a strong martial aura like that of a killer.

According to the procedure, the guest would first test his saber against the strength-testing totem. Next, the young geniuses of the metropolis could offer whatever advice they could think of. The guest would then immediately test out those theories against the totem to see which one was the most effective.

"I am Two Moons, captain of the Two Moons Mercenary Group." The man stated and brandished two rather large crescent blades, "Please guide me!"

In response, the strength-testing totem glowed with spiritual power. The face of an eagle near the middle of totem suddenly surged forth, creating a phantom image of a soaring eagle using dull-red spiritual energy. This was the most suitable one for testing saber arts which focused on attack and cutting power above all else.

The mercenary named Two Moons furrowed his brow as he concentrated. He twirled his weapons around his body to gather energy and then leaped into the air. The might of a cultivator at the 5th Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm came crashing down.

"Kill!"

Ka!

There was a clash of spiritual energy and a flash of light.

The eagle shimmered by remained otherwise unperturbed.

Two Moons retreated several steps and breathed out heavily. This one attack was the culmination of his entire cultivation journey thus far, his lifetime of achievement. It would be accurate to say that he had put everything on the line.

The disturbed spiritual air calmed down and several glowing balls appeared above the eagle's head. The announcer counted five before a sixth blinked weakly. After a few seconds, the sixth ball of light failed to consolidate and disappeared.

Two Moons hung his head. The result was disappointing, his attack power was flatly average for his level. He had a long way to go to hope to reach the sixth level. He had killed many people with his saber and had been confident in his strength. But he wasn't anything based on the standards of the metropolis.

After this display, it only took a few breaths for one of the youngsters to leap up. They spoke rapidly, pointing out several flaws in Two Moons' saber art including their grip as well as their movement. They even offered some improvements to the saber art itself.

This person's words were filled with confidence. They came from one of the branch sects of the House of Armament named the House of Blades. It was their specialty and the mercenary couldn't help but listen with equal enthusiasm.

Zhou Ziyun carefully followed the exchange between the two people. She absorbed their words and silently applied the concepts to her own experiences. She could be considered somewhat of a saber cultivator due to the Flying Dragon Saber Art. So, the conclusion came naturally to her.

She had to disagree with the youth from the House of Blades. The result of her analysis had nothing to do with the basics such as form or footwork. Even the improvement to the saber art was inconsequential. She felt that there was something inherently wrong with that mercenary but she couldn't grasp what exactly. Even if his saber art improved by leaps and bounds, his attack power still might not reach the sixth level.

True to her guesses, when Two Moons attacked the strength-testing totem again, there was barely any difference. The sixth ball of light did flash for slightly longer but that was it. It was still a long way from lighting up permanently.

Seeing this result, the other participants all lost their confidence. They had various ideas they wanted to add on top of the person from the House of Blades but if it was the completely wrong direction to begin with, then their advice would also be ineffective.

Cultivation was cruel like that. What worked for most of the population might not work for someone. Each person's circumstance was different. It was just bad luck that someone like Two Moons who did have a talent for saber arts would be stuck at the fifth level for a whole decade.

Even someone like Tang Liang couldn't add anything helpful. She used her memory to specialize in things she had seen before. But Two Moons' saber art was something he created so there was nothing to compare it to. What Deng Lun had said was true, Tang Liang had so much knowledge but not enough comprehension.

Zhou Ziyun, on the other hand, was the polar opposite. She felt that she still lacked so much basic knowledge about the cultivation world but she had confidence in her comprehension. And she had an inkling that her comprehension ability was only getting better and better.

Throughout the entire morning, her spiritual energy limits were constantly being challenged as she used her mind. It was an almost addicting feeling. The more she used her mind, the better she felt.

In her spiritual sea, two saber blades had materialized and were fighting each other according to her will. On one side was the might of the Flying Dragon Saber Art while on the other was the mortal blade concocted by a mercenary out of their desperate imagination. The two seemed unequal but both attacked ferociously, with neither one winning out. They slashed apart the spiritual environment and created great shockwaves that washed over her. And with each clash, she could feel her strength slowly rising.

Nobody could see this scene except her. If they could, they would be astonished. Even Chen Wentian would have been left speechless. She was visualizing both sabers perfectly. Her recreation of that mercenary's saber art was flawless. It defied anything that could be understood by common sense or convention.

While Zhou Ziyun was lost in thought and cultivation, a participant finally stood up to the challenge to preach their Dao. The crowd roared to life as they realized who it was.

It was the prince, Prince Huang Yaoying!

Chapter 633: All Possibilities

"Look!"

"It's the prince!"

"Oh, my heavens!"

"So handsome!"

"Yeahhh!"

The crowd made their opinion known loud and clear. The Huang Family was the most influential of the four king sects. Prince Huang Yaoying was the most famous of the four geniuses of this generation. He was a dragon amongst men. He was the object of desire for most of the female population.

He waved to the masses with a confident smile that dazzled under the morning sun. Whichever way he faced, the resulting roar from women would even shake the massive trees that surrounded the arena. He had yet to say a single word and it was as if he had already won and claimed the title of Dao Genius.

Huang Yaoying finished showing off and walked forward with his golden robes billowing behind him heroically. He arrived before the mercenary and gave the older man a hard stare.

"Captain of the Two Moons Mercenary Group, do you know what the Huang Family specializes in?" Huang Yaoying asked.

"I... I am not sure. Please teach me!" Two Moons said with great difficulty.

Huang Yaoying raised a hand and clenched it into a fist, "The Huang Family has many cultivation arts and a few of them deal with sword arts. Everyone should know of Immortal Ardent Duchess Su Tan who is a tremendous sword cultivator. There have been a few others in our family's history that were also quite accomplished with the sword."

"However!" He said with emphasis, "Our foundational cultivation art is a physical strengthening secret art. That's right, Gold Power Law. Everyone in the metropolis has surely heard of it, the strongest cultivation art of the Huang Family. It is the supreme physical Dao of this subcontinent. Even in neighboring subcontinents, I can say that my Gold Power Law is unmatched in terms of pure strength!"

Right as he said those words, golden energy burst out from his body. A wave of spiritual energy swept over the clearing as he showcased his ability. His eyes glowed and his figure was outlined by a golden aura. It was as if he was a deity that had descended from the heavens.

This performance was met with more cheers. The audience hung onto his every word and became even crazier. If there weren't protective arrays around the arena, some of the more desperate women might have invaded the meadow in hopes of meeting their prince charming.

Huang Yaoying pulled back his spiritual energy after satisfying his vanity and looked down at the mercenary, "Don't misunderstand. I didn't activate my Gold Power Law just to show off. I did it so that you would appreciate the words I am about to say and understand where they came from. Now, listen closely."

Two Moons knelt down reverently, "Prince Huang, please speak!"

The other participants also strained their ears to catch every word. Even Zhou Ziyun, who was having trouble not rolling her eyes at the situation, listened keenly to the exchange.

Huang Yaoying smirked and said, "Old mercenary, your saber art is what it is. No matter how anyone tries to improve it, you won't be able to improve because everyone is missing the fundamental issue. Your body has reached its limit and has started to deteriorate."

"What? What do you mean?" The older man blurted out.

Zhou Ziyun raised an eyebrow, also surprised. Could it be... that her guess was correct?

"That's right!" Huang Yaoying said loudly, "Others can't see but I can because I have cultivated my body since a young age. Your every movement and every detail, they have not escaped my notice. I saw it all."

And I can tell from your footwork that you had broken your left foot at least two decades ago and it wasn't able to heal properly. Your hips suffered a great wound from a piercing weapon and robbed you of about a fourth of your normal movement range. Your left arm has some lingering wounds that affected your meridians and the balance between the two sabers. Finally, you are deaf in your right ear which causes you to lose focus at certain points during your attack. Tell me... am I wrong on any of these points?"

Suddenly, there was nothing but silence. Two Moons was speechless. The participants behind Huang Yaoying were stunned. And as for the audience, they had no idea what was going on.

What kind of answer was this?

"No... no..." Two Moons said in a dazed voice, "You are right, completely right!"

The crowd went wild.

"No way!"

"Impossible!"

"How?"

What kind of answer was this? This was the answer of a genius!

Zhou Ziyun had to admit. She had also lost this time around even though she had remained silent. She had to give the arrogant young man his due. She only predicted that there was something inherently wrong with Two Moons unrelated to his saber art. She had chosen the correct path but had only taken a tentative step while Huang Yaoying had already walked the entire way and reached the end.

She couldn't say she was disappointed though. His answer was perfect but she had not been too far off. If she considered the physical attributes of the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms and combined them with the saber arts, perhaps she could have comprehended the truth more accurately. Her error was that she had focused too much on saber arts and did not incorporate other Daos into the fold.

She promised herself that she would take this lesson to heart. In the future, she would approach problems with a broad mind and consider all possibilities. The world was filled with strange things that were not what they appeared to be on the surface.

While Zhou Ziyun was lost in self-reflection, Huang Yaoying continued his victory speech.

"Mercenary Two Moons, you are in luck today. I have with me serum that can cure your right ear. I can't help your other injuries in such a short time but this should only take a few breaths. Take it and attack the totem again to see the improvement."

He withdrew a white jade bottle and tossed it over.

Two Moons caught it and looked at it with some trepidation. But he quickly got over and it poured the contents into his ear. His body reacted immediately and he shivered all over. He clenched his ear in panic for several breaths before gradually calming down.

He lowered his hand from his ear and turned his head left and right. His expression became one of amazement as he made a few noises to test his hearing.

"Wow... it really... I can really hear again!"

"Good, now wield your twin sabers once more!" Huang Yaoying encouraged.

"Yes, Prince Huang!"

Two Moons leaped to his feet, his crescent sabers turning into silver blurs. Inspired by the recovery from this old, debilitating injury, he became even more ferocious. His spiritual aura and saber energy rose and rose until it became a veritable storm of death.

With a flash, he shot toward the totem.

"Kill!"

The phantom eagle head screeched in protest and resisted the attack. The clash of spiritual energies sent out shockwaves like a rock falling into a calm pond. When calm finally returned to the meadow, six solid glowing balls remained above the eagle head.

#### Chapter 634: Specialization (I)

What a genius... Many sighs of admiration combined together to create a strange buzz of energy around the vast arena. This Huang Yaoying, this prince of the Huang Family, he was every bit as impressive as the rumors made him out to be. Once he stepped up, he dominated the competition and gave them no opening for a counterattack. His analysis of the mercenary's weakness was on point. His comprehension of the human body and physical ability was frightening.

And it didn't end with just that.

The next guest that came up wielded a heavy spear. Several participants tried their best to improve that mortal realm spear Dao but it was once again Huang Yaoying who pointed out the guest's numerous physical ailments. By addressing just one of them, he was able to raise their attack power one whole level.

This was the effect of one of the three core foundations of the cultivation, the body. Of the body, mind, and spirit, the body was the one everyone cultivated first. Immortal sects had the knowledge and experience to properly teach their disciples but mortal sects could not. Most if not all mortal cultivators had some flaw in their body, their deepest foundation. This was why correcting even one such flaw could result in such great improvement.

Zhou Ziyun could appreciate this approach to cultivation and the Dao. The first thing her master did was fix her foundation through the Twelve Meridians Body Tempering method. It allowed her to make steady progress from that point until now. She had no physical flaws which certainly made life easier.

After the guest with the spear, Huang Yaoying won two more consecutive rounds with sword cultivators. It was difficult for others to refute his words or stop his momentum. Since it was one of the three core foundations, cultivating one's body could always be considered correct on some level. There would be almost no situation where improving one's body would not benefit their cultivation or combat power.

But as he was attempting to secure his fifth win in a row with another sword cultivator, a new voice rose to the challenge.

"Brother Huang, I still have something to add."

The voice was female and the words were light but firm. They were tinged with a slight coldness but filled with energy like the rising sun on a cold winter morning. Everyone instantly knew who it was, Brilliant Blue Ming Yuqi!

The beauty who was clad in shimmering blue clothes rose and glided forward. Her steps were imperceptible and it was as if she was traveling over a beam of blue light.

Huang Yaoying's expression brightened at her appearance and he bowed respectfully, "Of course, Sister Yuqi. I am also eager to hear sister's wise words. After all, that is why I joined this event, because I had heard that you were going to participate.

He gave her a winning smile which she ignored.

Ming Yuqi played her part as the frosty beauty perfectly. She was still young and lacked the charm of Long Yifei. She was simply cold and indifferent. Her attitude created an impenetrable aura around her that most men wouldn't dare to approach.

Huang Yaoying wasn't affected by her reaction. His handsome smile remained as he stood to one side. It was as if he was simply happy to stand close to her. His entire body was giving off a joyful vibe that many observers couldn't help but shake their heads. Young love, even one-sided, was truly a sight to behold.

Ming Yuqi seemed to not notice and focused her attention on the female sword cultivator, a loose cultivator with a well-known reputation, "Sword Heroine Mu, I have recently heard of your achievements. Subjugating three different bandit groups within the Death Plateau and bringing peace to that province, you are an inspiration to us all."

The guest surnamed Mu fell to one knee and saluted, "Thank you, Lady Ming. Lady Ming's words are too kind for this one."

Ming Yuqi's expression softened ever so slightly, "Mmmm, please rise, Sword Heroine Mu. I wanted to speak with you today because I felt that I can help you. You've already received some advice to improve your Dao and your attack power but I feel that they are inadequate, especially for someone as deserving as you."

The middle-aged woman didn't reply. She was put in a difficult position as Ming Yuqi was directly challenging Huang Yaoying. She couldn't find any words that wouldn't offend either party. .c(o)m

The crowd also realized the same thing, that these two geniuses were directly clashing for the first time. Silence filled the air along with excited tension. These situations were exactly why everyone had paid the ticket price to come and watch this Great Dao Preaching Convention. They all wanted to see with their own eyes who would come out on top as the Dao Genius.

Huang Yaoying's expression didn't waver. He made a polite gesture with his hand, "Sister Yuqi, please speak."

Ming Yuqi glided forward, still ignoring him. She came to a stop in front of the swordswoman and unexpectedly put a slender hand on the other's shoulder.

The older woman trembled.

"Auntie Mu, don't be afraid. I just wanted to feel your spiritual aura. My Eastern Light Clan's core Dao has a component that involves mental arts. Therefore, I am especially sensitive to others' thoughts and emotions. I say this because I believe the greatest weakness to your current condition is your mental state and not anything with your body."

"Wha... what?"

The swordswoman's skepticism was shared by many.

Even Zhou Ziyun had doubts. A cultivator's mental state did indeed affect their cultivation but how could anyone tell? Perhaps her master would be able to tell if she was in bad mood but was only because they

had been together for many years now. But what about this Ming Yuqi, she had barely met the guest for a few minutes!

Ming Yuqi continued smoothly, "Auntie Mu, there is nothing overly wrong with your sword. You managed to slay three large groups of bandits so that much is clear. As for your physical condition, that is due to your recent battles and that you have not completely recovered. The most important thing... if I am not wrong, is that you suffered a tremendous emotional incident recently."

"I..."

A pale blue light surrounded Ming Yuqi as her First Light of Zhulong activated. Her eyes closed even as she spoke slowly, "I feel tremendous sadness, anger, despair, and hopelessness. So many intense emotions... the source of your emotional state is a family member intimately close to you, your husband, your children, or your parents? Oh my, there is also so much pain and betrayal... Was it your husband? Am I right? Tell me, what did he do to you?"

The other woman gasped and froze up, "You... how... how?"

#### Chapter 635: Specialization (II)

The conversation between Ming Yuqi and the swordswoman was not loud. The audience could not hear it but the nearby participants could. Zhou Ziyun was among them and could discern the overall gist of it even if a few words here and there were washed out by other noises.

Ming Yuqi's emotional senses were on point. After some cajoling, the older woman admitted that the guess had been correct. The source of her mental distress was her family. And after hearing the details, it was no wonder. Any normal person would have found it difficult to move past it.

The incident happened two years ago when the swordswoman had gone to hunt those bandits previously mentioned. She left her young son and her husband at home to go on this mission which took several months. When she finally made it back, she found that her son had died under mysterious circumstances and her husband had taken in a concubine without prior warning.

She tried to find the culprit but the trail had gone cold. The people responsible disappeared into thin air. Her husband was also of no help, seemingly unbothered by the death of their child. She was the main

provider for the family and yet he dared to take in a concubine without her permission. He ate, slept, and spent her money every day, an utterly useless person.

Sadness and anger overtook her. Her only child, one she had after much difficulty, was gone. With the accumulated wounds of countless battles, she probably would not be able to conceive again. On top of it all, she finally saw her husband for who he was.

These heavy losses lingered on her mind all this time. They affected her body, mind, and spirit. Cultivation was difficult under normal circumstances so it was impossible after such a blow. She had not been able to make a single improvement since that time and had even regressed. And even after hitting the lottery and coming to the metropolis, she still found it impossible to cast away the pains of the past.

Ming Yuqi patted the older woman's shoulder, "I understand now. Thank you for sharing your story with me. I promise that it wasn't in vain. Here."

She flipped her palm upward and revealed a small jade slip, "Do you want to have another child? With this jade slip, you will be my guest at the Eastern Light Clan. You can get the medicinal treatment to allow you to conceive and I can help you find another, loyal, husband."

"You..." Tears fell down the other woman's face, "You'll do that for me?"

Ming Yuqi smiled ever-so-slightly, "I will. The only thing that you need to do for me... is to attack that strength-testing totem once more. Take my offer. Look towards a brighter future. Let it fill your thoughts and unleash all of your strength!"

"Yes, Lady Ming!"

Ming Yuqi stood and backed away.

The swordswoman leaped to her feet and brandished her sword. Sharp energy wrapped around her weapon and also her figure. The sword intent she emitted was far sharper and more concentrated than before. Without any more hesitation, she lunged toward the strength-testing totem which showed the armored head of a turtle. .c(o)m

The clash was over in a flash. Where it previously showed four glowing balls after Huang Yaoying's advice, there were now five glowing balls. It was an irrefutable victory!

"I admit defeat," Huang Yaoying said cheerfully, "Sister Yuqi's perception is so amazing. I am unable to keep up with regards to judging emotions."

Ming Yuqi still didn't engage with him. She gave him a sideways look and walked away. Huang Yaoying wasn't discouraged and followed after her like a pesky mosquito.

Zhou Ziyun didn't care about the one-sided love affair. Instead, her mind was focused on the swordswoman and what had just happened. She never expected one's mentality to affect one's Dao so much. It was an important learning opportunity.

If she had to describe herself, she was more oriented toward practicality. She didn't easily get emotional and she also looked down on other women who let their emotions affect them. She had difficulty connecting with others on a deeper level and it took a lot of effort on her part. Perhaps this was why her comprehension ability was not able to pick up the swordswoman's mental weakness.

She recalled something Wu Qianyu had said some time ago. Sister Wu was especially attuned to the emotion of pain. She could sense it when other living beings were suffering from tremendous pain, whether it was physical pain or emotional pain.

What Ming Yuqi had just displayed was somewhat similar to Wu Qianyu's ability. They both had sensitivity towards emotions. One came from the First Light of Zhulong, a powerful cultivation art born from divine dragons. The other could not yet be completely explained and was even more mysterious.

Zhou Ziyun sighed.

"What's wrong?" Chen Wentian's drifted over.

She glanced to her right and saw a shadowy speck on her shoulder. She shrugged and leaned back in her seat, "Just resting my mind a little. Trying to comprehend that previous swordswoman's emotions was way too tiring."

"Oh? What happened?" He asked

Zhou Ziyun gave him a brief summary through her own spiritual voice. She briefly wondered why she was doing this. With his shadow powers, he could see and hear everything she could. She humored him and it surprisingly paid off. After explaining everything, she felt as if she suddenly had a brand-new understanding of the situation.

Ming Yuqi was able to discern something she couldn't because of specialization. Ming Yuqi specialized in mind arts and mental abilities and this was why she seemed so impressive to the point of suppressing all others. Huang Yaoying had a similar effect on the competition because of his specialization in martial arts and cultivating the body.

The two geniuses were both amazing but they were two sides of the same coin. They both had a narrow specialization but neither could do anything in the other's area. Asking Huang Yaoying to connect with another person emotionally would probably be as effective as talking to a pig. Conversely, Ming Yuqi mostly likely had limited knowledge of the physical body and so she didn't dare to step up and challenge Huang Yaoying until she had found a suitable situation.

But Zhou Ziyun had no such need for specialization. Her comprehension ability seemed to work for a variety of subjects. She had seen it in action for different immortal cultivation arts. She had experienced it while studying so many different cultivators and their many flaws.

Chen Wentian's voice came again, "Smart girl. You managed to reach the correct conclusion even without any hints from me."

"Hmph." She snorted and crossed her arms, "Didn't you know? I am pretty smart."

He laughed.

She also relaxed and stretched her neck. The morning was almost over. She had gone into this Dao preaching event with total focus and seriousness. It would be difficult for anyone to maintain perfect concentration for so many hours.

He saw the opportunity and used his shadow to knead her tense muscles. She didn't protest and eventually sighed in a much more relaxed fashion. He knew how hard she worked. Out of all of his disciples, he relied on her the most. He was proud of her and he also would know what to do without her.

"Are you tired?" He asked.

"Mmm... a little."

"Alright, just relax. Leave it to me." He said as he activated more shadow energy.

#### Chapter 636: Tormented

Chen Wentian's shadow energy slid through Zhou Ziyun's clothes and touched her bare skin. Unbeknownst to the other participants, a pair of master and disciple shared an intimate moment in full view of the metropolis. He wasn't too worried since he didn't plan on taking it too far.

He started out with her shoulders once again. Two blobs of shadow energy became like hands and gave her a firm but tender squeeze. He injected a tiny bit of dragon flames into the shadow to give her a steady stream of warmth. He wanted to burn away the collected tension so that she could return to peak form for the afternoon session.

Zhou Ziyun closed her eyes and sighed. It felt good. It was usually her serving him so this was a rare treat. This wasn't to say that he was an inconsiderate person. It was more that she preferred to be the proactive one to serve his needs.

Chen Wentian also didn't mind this change of roles. He might have not been able to imagine himself caring so much about others in his youth but he had changed a lot. He cared about her deeply and was more than willing to give her as many massages as she wanted. Perhaps he wouldn't openly advertise this fact but it was the truth.

His shadow hands slid down her back and rubbed her tense muscles. It was a very sensual touch and sent shivers through her body. He started at the base of her neck and went all the way down to her tailbone. Then he slowly went back up. Nothing was left untouched, nothing.

"How is it?" Chen Wentian whispered.

He could go further but he wasn't sure if she wanted it. There would have been no need to ask if they were back at the sect but this place was quite different. He would never do anything to embarrass his disciples even though he had many perverted thoughts.

"Good, keep going." Zhou Ziyun urged.

Far away, sitting in a private box, Chen Wentian grinned and rubbed his hands together. He then twirled his fingers around as he proceeded with his spiritual senses.

The shadowy hands moved according to his will. They came to rest on her hips and shuffled forward. He gave her flat stomach a healthy rub and slowly progressed upward in a dangerous trajectory. Since she said it was okay, he was going to oblige and give her the best treatment.

Unfortunately for Zhou Ziyun, Tang Liang decided to chat with her exactly when this was happening.

"Sister Zhou, are you tired?" The little imp asked.

Zhou Ziyun's eyes snapped open and she blushed slightly. She turned toward Tang Liang and shook her head, "Not too tired. But just trying to recover a bit of mental energy."

"Oh..." Tang Liang looked slightly apologetic but then seemed to quickly forget about it, "So, what do you think of that Huang Yaoying?"

"What... pardon?"

Zhou Ziyun's voice contained a large amount of surprise. But it wasn't because of the question. Instead, it was because a certain someone had chosen this exact same time to cup her breasts underneath her clothes. His hands had already been dangerously close but she didn't think he would be so daring after Tang Liang started talking to her. That pervert...

Tang Liang was oblivious and continued, "Just an honest question. What, do you have a crush on him?"

"No!" Zhou Ziyun replied sharply.

She then bit her lips to not say anything else as she felt sharp pains in her chest as he pinched her nipples. Upon her replying no, his fingers loosened their grip and returned to cup her breasts. She resisted the urge to roll her eyes but it was very difficult.

Chen Wentian snorted. Cheeky girl. Was there any other way to answer that question? Was there any reason to get so annoyed? As punishment, he kept playing with her breasts.

She fit perfectly in his hands, not too big but not too small. Her skin was soft. Her flesh was tender and pliant. His fingers sank in and squeezed. His palms warmed her, letting her know his desires. Occasionally, he would catch her erect nipples in his hands and give them playful rubs.

He was fascinated. He was captivated. If he had to admit, he would say that he found breasts very attractive. Large ones, small ones, tiny ones, he liked them all. He didn't discriminate. His disciples came in all sizes and he cherished them all. Ever since he touched his first pair of breasts thanks to Wu Qianyu, he was utterly obsessed.

That chatterbox named Tang Liang was busy bad-mouthing Huang Yaoying and Ming Yuqi at the same time. Oblivious to others, she harshly criticized her rivals for their specializations. Her opinion was that such focus would only limit their future achievements in exchange for short-term benefits. In contrast, she preferred a much broader approach utilizing her ability to memorize everything.

Zhou Ziyun could only nod along, not quite listening. She was being tormented by two people at the same time. One was filling her ears with noise while the other was filling her mind with pleasure.

Eventually, she was able to turn all outside noise into a dim, high-pitched whine. Only then could she fully focus on the other culprit who was doing whatever he wanted. One of his shadowy hands had even managed to slip between her legs without notice.

"Master, please."

She wanted to chide him but she realized too late that her words could be interpreted differently. It only became apparent when she felt tremors of pleasure that came from where he had touched her clit.

"Shit..." She blurted under her breath.

"That's right!" Tang Liang agreed, "They are total shit!"

Zhou Ziyun couldn't care less as she shut her eyes tight. Familiar waves of delight washed over her body, making her toes and fingertips tingle. He was focusing on her clit with dreadful focus. He wasn't going to let her go. He wasn't going to stop. It was as if he wanted to come right there and then.

"Master!" She complained loudly with her spiritual voice. Only he could hear her but he could hear her loud and clear, "Just you wait. I will get you back for this!"

"Oh yeah? You don't like it?"

"No! I don't even get any benefit from that. I'm not Sister Lin."

"Sure, sure. Let's just finish up here and we can talk later."

"Nooo..."

Her protests were useless. His fingers continued to play with her tender nub. Each touch sent sharp surges of ecstasy. It was slowly becoming unbearable.

He was relentless. He slowly turned her body into a shuddered mess. Her legs turned soft like tofu. Her hands clenched into fists, helpless to do anything else. The ball of pressure in her lower stomach desperately wanted to be released. It ached so much that it was almost painful.

She finally gave in and didn't hold back anymore. She let go of all of her resistance at the same time. All at once, it exploded like fireworks, turning her numb to everything but the pleasures of the moment.

Her breath turned into short gasps as she rode out a long, bucking orgasm. There were highs that almost made her lose her consciousness and there were lows that were akin to a joyful memory. All of her stresses melted away, leaving her with a wide smile on her face.

Chapter 637: Power of Comprehension (I)

"Sister Zhou, are you alright?" Tang Liang asked.

Zhou Ziyun's expression had turned unnatural. She wasn't used to such intimate moments in public and had forgotten to hide her reactions.

She hurriedly slapped her thigh and laughed awkwardly, "Ah, it's nothing. I think I got bitten by a naughty little bug. It's gone now."

"Oh." The little devil shrugged; her face was a mask of innocence.

Zhou Ziyun relaxed. She sighed and looked around. Another guest had just replaced the previous one and the preaching event was still ongoing. But to her surprise, her mental weariness had all but disappeared. She felt refreshed as if she had just woken up from a nap, with enough energy to last the whole day.

Her master had been right. Although he sometimes didn't behave like one, he always found opportunities to thoroughly impress her. She had been against his persistence at the beginning and still felt a bit weird about it. But the effects were clear. It ended up being exactly what she needed.

She had a lot to learn and a long way to go to catch up to him.

The guest displayed their martial arts. Several participants jumped up to give their advice. This time around, Tang Liang once again showcased her abnormal memory and correctly identified the root of their martial arts and details of the sect that created it, even down to the exact number of cats and dogs they kept as pets.

The next guest came up. It was Ming Yuqi's opportunity to showcase her affinity for emotions. Then another guest and it was Huang Yaoying's turn. Following that, it was Tang Liang once again. These top

geniuses alternated and ruthlessly suppressed the rest. They were the only ones vying for the title of Dao Genius and the others were left with scraps.

Zhou Ziyun made no attempt to challenge them, at least not yet. She felt that she wasn't ready yet. There was no need for her to try unless she could guarantee a win. It was better to stay silent and pretend to be dumb than speak up and remove all doubt.

Out of the forty-two participants, the only other person that had also not spoken was Deng Lun, the so-called gentle scholar. Unlike the other three big names, he was still a mystery to the crowd. Many were starting to doubt his ability. Perhaps he was just a pretty face that was favored by Immortal Gentle Lotus and not really talented at all. Perhaps he had reached his current position through special favors. A lecherous old granny and a young man, the possibilities were endless and endlessly salacious.

Zhou Ziyun also couldn't help but wonder. She wasn't the gossiping type but it was indeed strange. What was this Deng Lun waiting for? Unlike her who had nothing to lose even if she acted useless, he would actually run the risk of tarnishing the reputation of the Lotus Tower if he continued his silent act.

To her chagrin, her questions were soon answered by the next guest.

The person that stood up before the crowd did not carry an obvious weapon. There was no sword, saber, axe, or spear. Not even a scabbard could be seen. A lady with a youthful face, she looked more like a well-dressed noble than a powerful cultivator.

But this was only her outward appearance. None of the people chosen to appear today were weak in any way. Although they might not be able to compare to disciples of immortal sects, they could be considered elite in mortal circles.

"This one is named Hong Mei. I come from the Spring Joy Orchard. I hope I will be able to learn many things from the gathered heroes and heroines of the metropolis."

Her words were met with confusion by most. But for those in the know, there was a sudden and sharp rise in excitement. The Spring Joy Orchard had some fame in the River District. Although it was not affiliated with any immortal sect, it still managed to survive for over a hundred years as a high-class brothel.

The River District was the entertainment capital of the subcontinent. The competition was as fierce as real battles. Yet this kind of brothel could survive because all the women there were special in some way. They had been invited from all across the subcontinent and the rarest of the rare. There was no doubt for those in the know that this woman would be able to put on a show.

Without further delay, Hong Mei approached the strength-testing totem. Instead of the previous animal faces, a buzzing sound came from the totem as phantasmal energy formed into a swarm of small bees. This meant that her Dao couldn't be compared to those that came before her.

She stared at the bees intently for a moment before flicking her hand toward them. There was a surge of spiritual energy followed by several flashes of silver.

Pa! Pa! Pa!

Ten or so bees were hit and they evaporated.

She then leaped into the air, twirling her body around like an experienced dancer. Her exquisite robes fluttered in the wind and all the while; a barrage of silver needles shot out like rain.

More bees disappeared with each passing breath. The swarm contained tens of thousands of bees and yet they were still being cut down steadily. Before she had touched the ground again, she had already launched countless tiny yet lethal attacks.

When Hong Mei finished, the totem displayed eight glowing balls. It was an impressive feat for someone who was merely at the 5th Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm. The attack power of her needles far surpassed common sense. It was natural for someone's attack power to exceed their cultivation by one level or perhaps two. Three was touching upon realms that only immortal sects could reach.

She glanced at the score briefly and then turned towards the young geniuses. She gave a small bow and waited quietly.

Zhou Ziyun nodded in appreciation. She was greatly impressed by the demonstration. Hidden and thrown weapons encompassed a wide range of possibilities. They were popular but not always practical. These weapons were easy to make but difficult to master. Cultivation arts that utilized such weapons

were few and far between. Even if they could find one, it would rarely be any good. And as for immortals, she had yet to meet one that specialized in such a Dao.

This was a difficult problem. Zhou Ziyun didn't feel any confidence. This Hong Mei looked young but she was already past her prime. Her cultivation had long since become stagnant. To come up with any advice that could help her immediately improve would be a difficult ask.

She looked around and her thoughts were reflected in the others. Tang Liang looked bored. Huang Yaoying had a blank expression. Even Ming Yuqi no longer had her usual air of supremacy. Yet in this environment, it was the last person who stood up to the challenge.

"Miss Hong Mei, will you listen to a few words from this humble scholar?"

#### Chapter 638: Power of Comprehension (II)

It was Deng Lun. When nobody was interested in this difficult problem of a guest, he was the only one who stuck his head out. It took a certain sense of confidence to do this. There was no drawback to not offering Dao advice but there was clear danger if the advice given proved bad. Others had chosen to skip this guest while he had chosen this moment to shine.

Deng Lun strode forward without hesitation. He gave the guest a respectful bow and spoke, "Miss Hong Mei, before I can help you improve your silver needle Dao, may I ask that you help me with something?"

Hong Mei gave a formal curtsy as was customary of women of her line of work, "Scholar Deng, please speak. I will try to fulfill your request whatever it may be."

Although her tone was clear and without ambiguity, her words could still be interpreted in several ways if taken out of context. A young man with little experience with women might have blushed at this moment. Deng Lun remained calm as if he was well-versed in dealing with older women.

"Miss Hong Mei, please, can you go through your silver needle art routine again? Once more should be enough. From the beginning to the end without pause. But this time, you only need to launch a single needle at the totem."

"Alright. Watch closely."

Hong Mei began once more. Her flowery robes fluttered in the air with her as she leaped and twirled about. Once she had collected enough spiritual energy, a single silver needle disappeared from her fingers and impacted against the strength-testing totem.

It displayed only three glowing orbs, signifying that the attack power of a single needle was only at the 3rd Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm. The sharp contrast in attack power between many hundred needles and a single one was to be expected. Nobody expected such a tiny weapon to have overwhelming destructive power.

Hong Mei looked back at Deng Lun who was busy writing something down with the booklet and brush he always carried. Others couldn't figure out anything new this second time around. But seeing him so serious, they also tried to emulate him and ponder the performance again.

Hong Mei stood still and didn't say anything. She waited for Deng Lun or somebody else to speak up. She was the guest and she had already done her part.

Deng Lun finally looked up and started speaking, not to her specifically but to his competition, "All of you should understand that to cultivate the great Dao, each person's journey will be different. Although many people can practice the same secret art, their unique thoughts and experiences will forge a new path that only they can travel. Of course, I am speaking of inane generalities so let me get to the point. What makes the difference in the end given that we are all unique in this world is one thing, comprehension."

He paused dramatically. His competitors didn't look impressed. He stared pointedly at the three other geniuses and also Zhou Ziyun.

He then twirled his writing brush before continuing, "The power of comprehension is unmatched in the world of cultivation. You may attempt to learn everything there is to learn but if you don't have a lick of comprehension, you will not reach the immortal realms. If you have mastered body arts or mind arts but lack comprehension, you may be able to reach the 10th Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm but your progress will stagnate after."

"Comprehension is about understanding the world, understanding the spiritual energy that binds heaven and earth and all living things. It is not just the simple control and utilization of spiritual energy.

That is also not enough. If you are strong in the Spirit Initiate Realm, that might still not mean anything. You won't be able to touch the lesser realms, unless, you rely on the power of comprehension."

At this point, Tang Liang leaped up and shouted, "Enough blabbering, is this your way of preaching the Dao? We all know about this crap, hurry up with your useless advice to the guest and then roll out of the way!"

It would be a lie if a majority of the other participants shared her sentiment. They just weren't brazen enough to shout it out loud. Nobody wanted to be called dumb, especially by an arrogant prick. He referred to himself as a humble scholar, a gentle scholar. Who knew how he actually got that name? Maybe he was gentle in bed with his old lady master?

Deng Lun seemed unbothered. He ignored the imp and turned back to the guest, "Miss Hong Mei, I have seen your needle art twice now. I can say with confidence that its quality is excellent. Given your background, I already have guessed but I understand if you do not want to divulge where you obtained this art."

A dangerous glint appeared in the woman's eyes, a sign of warning. She wasn't a pure, silly lass but a clever and experienced cultivator.

Zhou Ziyun watched the exchange with great interest. This was the conclusion she had also come to so she was slightly surprised that Deng Lun was able to do it as well. That silver needle art was indeed very good. It was of a far higher grade than all the arts of the previous guests. She must have obtained it through some lucky encounter. Perhaps she had a strong benefactor or perhaps she had robbed the grave of a cultivator at the lesser realms. Anything was possible and such knowledge would elicit envy and greed from the unsavory people she already had to deal with day to day.

Deng Lun put a finger to his lips and smiled, "I won't say anymore. I will speak generally. In ideal conditions, the peak for you will be the lesser realm of Spiritual Growth. Using so many needles requires great spiritual sense and spiritual control. It gives you an edge over ordinary cultivation arts in that sense. However, you lack spiritual power and this is a major flaw. All of your attacks together might be very powerful but each individual attack is pitiful at best. Against someone with a stronger spiritual force, your needles will not be able to penetrate their defense while you will be able to dominate many foes at your level or below with ease that many others cannot match."

"Therefore, I have two suggestions. One is to have a few special needles that are heavier than your normal ones. I know that if the needle is too heavy, it will affect your form. Your spiritual energy and

control won't be adequate enough to launch with the same speed which will negate the point. I do think that you will be able to manage a needle that is five times as heavy given enough practice."

"The second is attacking the same point with multiple needles. You are able to hit multiple targets in quick succession so your accuracy is good. This is also a feature of your needle Dao as it incorporates wide, sweeping motions to cover all angles. It will be challenging to modify your movements to attack the same point but not impossible. Let me show you."

Deng Lun's spiritual energy surged and he pointed his ink brush at the strength-testing totem. He gathered power in his chosen weapon and thrust ahead. A turtle head appeared and took the attack with a dull sound. But in the next moment, a stream of attacks followed, hitting the exact same point at least ten times.

"Did you see?" He asked, "It is all in the wrist. Try to limit excessive movement of your body and launch everything towards a single point. And as for the first point."

He twirled around and launched a single, powerful blast of spiritual energy. "This time, move with your hips and your core. Put your entire body into the throw instead of only your hands and wrists. That way, you can maximize spiritual power for a single attack."

Hong Mei nodded along, "I see... I understand..."

Deng Lun didn't stop there and gave some more pointers on her needle art. These details were difficult to understand for bystanders and it seemed that only Hong Mei was following along. One would need to be a practitioner of throwing weapons or hidden weapons to understand but it was as if he had already comprehended this field of martial arts without actually practicing it.

The other three geniuses also couldn't keep up completely. They all sported serious expressions as they listened intently.

As for Zhou Ziyun, her eyes were closed and she was imagining herself performing made-up needle art. Within her spiritual sea, a hazy figure made of pure energy engaged in battle with invisible enemies. Utilizing what she had seen from Hong Mei and from Deng Lun's lecture, she let her mind do the rest. She let her natural ability of comprehension take her to the unknown.

And unbeknownst to her, her spiritual energy was steadily surging to new heights.

### Chapter 639: Power of Comprehension (III)

At the end of it, Deng Lun was able to increase Hong Mei's single needle attack power by approximately half a level. This was considered a substantial improvement and something that nobody else could hope to match. With only one round, he had vaulted to the top and showed why the gentle scholar was placed in the same breath as the others.

His chosen path, comprehension, was a curious thing. At a glance, it seemed like a straightforward matter. All disciples that joined an immortal sect would be measured for their comprehension ability at an early age. This usually involved comparing how quickly they could learn basic martial arts or core meditation techniques. Those that learned the fastest were naturally thought to have the best comprehension.

But this was often a false measurement. All of the participants of the Great Dao Preaching Convention were supposed to be the best of the best with comprehension ability surpassing their peers. Otherwise, their sects would not have sent them up to compete.

However, none of them dared to stand up and challenge Deng Lun at this moment. Like a pack of deer meeting a tiger, which one was superior was clear at a glance. Deng Lun's talent wasn't simply the ability to learn and absorb knowledge. That was just the most basic requirement to be a cultivator.

Learning martial arts and cultivation secrets from detailed manuals curated over centuries, studying under the painstaking guidance of experienced masters, this wasn't comprehension at all. True comprehension came into play when there was a lack of knowledge, when things were uncertain. It was a person's ability to forge a path toward the true Dao through a forest of darkness.

The other competitors didn't know enough about needle arts so they didn't dare to stand up and make a fool of themselves. Deng Lun dared because he had already achieved some insights just by seeing the art twice. With little prior knowledge, relying purely on instinct and feeling, he was able to do this and this was his talent.

With this, he would be able to learn all kinds of martial arts and secret techniques. Even without specializing, he could discern the innate truths of a variety of Daos and make them his own. And if he met a bottleneck during his ascendance towards the immortal realms, he would have the confidence to break through with much less effort than others.

This was the power of Deng Lun's comprehension.

Zhou Ziyun's eyes suddenly snapped open. A strange energy emanated from her pupils and also from every pore. She felt that she finally understood something about herself. She understood just a tiny bit of her mysterious power of the mind.

In the process, she had come up with the same two methods of improvement for that needle art as Deng Lun. But unlike him, she had also come up with two more methods on top. And out of the four total, her instincts told her that one of hers would have the best effect. She couldn't come up with a reason for this determination but she felt strongly that it would be right, almost like instinct, like a hidden voice telling her that it was true.

There was only one way to test her new discovery. She had to speak up, right now, in front of these four geniuses and one hundred thousand spectators of the metropolis.

"Ziyun, do whatever you want to do. Master will support you." Chen Wentian's voice gave her the resolve she needed.

Zhou Ziyun stood up and a round of surprised gasps.

"Sister Zhou, you..." Even Tang Liang was speechless. f(r)eeweb(n)ovel

Deng Lun's expression froze and he gave her a hard look, "Do you wish to challenge me and the Dao advice I have given?"

Zhou Ziyun took a few steps forward and smiled lightly, "Why not? Is there a rule that says I can't?"

"Of course, there isn't," He then lowered his voice and spoke so that only she could hear, "But there is a reason that none of the others have come up. This is a difficult topic and if you are unable to provide Dao advice that surpasses mine, you will only bring ridicule to yourself and your sect."

"Are you looking down on me?" She asked.

He shook his head, "No, I just wanted to offer you some advice."

Zhou Ziyun tilted her head and studied Deng Lun. He was still a weird person, good-looking but with strange behavior. He seemed to be interested in her but he also seemed to dislike her. He offered her advice, perhaps as a show of respect or maybe there was something underneath. She felt that he was a conflicted person underneath but she had no time or interest to bother finding out what kind of conflict it was.

She turned towards the guest and walked up, "Miss Hong Mei, my name is Zhou Ziyun from the sect Ten Thousand Flower Valley. My advice for your needle art is slightly different from what Sir Deng gave. Are you willing to try it out?"

"Greetings, Miss Zhou." Hong Mei said with a courteous bow. "I am willing to try everything to find the correct and true path for my Dao."

"Very good." Zhou Ziyun then clasped her hands behind her back in the way she always liked to do when she was lecturing her fellow sisters. "Deng Lun provided you with two methods to improve your needle art. The first was to increase the needle's weight and thus attack power. The second was to modify your throwing technique to launch several needles at the same point to achieve the same attack power increase. And of the two, he suggested the first one as the best option. But in my eyes, it is not the best option because there are two more methods, one of which should give you better results."

"Two more?" Hong Mei breathed out, incredulous.

Her sentiment was shared by many. Comprehending two methods to improve a strange art was already impressive. Coming up with two more, what did that even mean? Few could believe that this was something within the ability of a disciple at the Spirit Initiate Realm.

Zhou Ziyun nodded, "My first method is actually quite obvious. I observed that you were able to throw needles with both your right and left hands. With such skill, why can't you throw two needles at the same time at the same target to instantly double your attack power?"

"This..." Hong Mei glanced at Deng Lun whose face had turned dark, "I would still have to modify my dance routine and also my throwing motion. I can indeed throw with both hands but it is usually one after the other, not both at the same time. I would have to practice this specific change."

Zhou Ziyun waved her hand, "No need. My second method should be the best method so you don't need to bother with the first. I only mentioned it as a possibility. Anyways, the second method is also straightforward. You simply need to increase your throwing speed. Instead of increasing the weight of the needle, if the speed of the needle increases, it will effectively provide the same increase in attack power."

"Speed... speed... it does sound simple but how do I increase my throwing speed when I am already at my limit?" The older woman asked.

Zhou Ziyun smiled. She already had the answer. And it was due to the power of her comprehension.

#### Chapter 640: The Great Dao

"It is like this, please watch closely." Zhou Ziyun said.

She collected a handful of saber energy and began to demonstrate. Her movements started slowly but quickly picked up speed. Her figure spun and leaped several times before she finally threw the blade of spiritual energy at the strength-testing totem.

The ghostly face of a tiger rose to meet it and the two sides clashed with a deep reverberation. The whole totem shook dangerously and when it stopped, ten orbs glowed at the top.

Zhou Ziyun's attack was so powerful that it drew gasps and murmurs from all over. She was at the 8th Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm and yet she was able to turn a dagger into a killing weapon with the power at the tenth level. This was talent on display. Even if she was terrible at preaching the Dao, her fighting ability was unquestionable.

In reality, Zhou Ziyun would not have been able to do this just a few moments ago. It was thanks to her sudden comprehension. She realized that her Flying Dragon Saber Art had a heavy focus on speed. All moves emphasized blinding speed. its footwork had to be performed in a sprint. And multiple attacks were expected in the span of a split second.

All she did was incorporate this extreme speed into throwing a dagger. If her weapon had been lighter, she was sure she could have thrown it even faster. It hadn't been simple but she had managed it somehow.

"I see... I see... this is speed." Hong Mei whispered, her eyes shining with excitement.

The older woman no longer held any thoughts about the advice Deng Lun had given. He was totally wrong. In her eyes, this one was the real truth!

She didn't waste any time and began to practice. Her movements were sluggish at first but Zhou Ziyun gave her pointers every step of the way. It didn't take long and she soon felt confident enough to give it a practical try.

"Wait!" It was at this point that Deng Lun finally butted in.

All eyes turned to him and even Hong Mei glared at him.

Deng Lun kept a straight face and said, "I have already given advice to Miss Hong Mei. Even if she is able to improve her attack power according to your words, how can we know that it was because of you or if it was actually because of me?"

"You are right." Zhou Ziyun said with an amused look, "Let's do this then. You managed to increase her attack power by half a level. If I can't increase her attack power one whole level, then it will be considered my loss."

Deng Lun was surprised for a moment but then smiled and nodded, "Good, agreed!"

The spectators returned as Hong Mei once again faced off against the dreaded strength-testing totem. After a dance of spiritual energy, a silver needle shot out and smashed into a tiger's head. There was a long pause that seemed to last forever until four glowing balls finally appeared at the top of the totem.

"Fourth Level!"

"She actually did it!"

"Amazing, one whole level!"

The Dao preaching arena erupted in cheers. A true dark horse had appeared and had actually taken down one of the four geniuses. One truly had to be here to believe it. In an instant, the common people of the Eastern Sanmu Metropolis all learned of her name; Zhou Ziyun, disciple of Ten Thousand Flower Valley.

"How did you do it?" Deng Lun asked sharply.

Zhou Ziyun tilted her head and grinned, "I am also quite good at comprehension. But unlike you, I comprehended the truth."

"The truth... the truth?"

She left the dumbfounded Deng Lun and returned to her seat. Also ignoring an excited Tang Liang, Zhou Ziyun closed her eyes and meditated on what had just happened.

What she had casually said was the truth but the key was in the details. Comprehension was indeed very important to cultivators but not always. The road toward the immortal realms was filled with twists and traps. There were countless wrong turns and pitfalls. There were innumerable ways to stray from the right path, the true path.

This was the essence of comprehension, to seek the true path. Anybody could pretend to be an expert and try to comprehend cultivation arts. Almost all of them would come to various wrong conclusions. Some might be able to get a little stronger while a few might be able to get a lot stronger. But none of them could actually obtain the truth, the true path that would let them leave behind their mortality. This was what she had done, she had looked at all the possible paths to improvement for that needle art and picked out the most correct one, the true path.

Comprehending the truth was even more important for immortals. Each immortal realm represented a greater truth, a more powerful and more complete Dao. And at the very end was the Great Dao, the

ultimate truth. In this sense, the Great Dao Preaching Event was actually a misnomer. Few people actually realized what the term Great Dao actually meant. Most mortals and commoners would assume it just meant a strong Dao that was about the same as any other Dao, just better. In reality, the difference was akin to that of heaven and earth.

The Great Dao was the true path. It was what all immortals sought. It was the supreme Dao, the one that could break through the limits of the Spirit Demigod Realm and reach Nirvana. It was something that had never been achieved in this world.

Zhou Ziyun's mind filled with these profound thoughts.

Her spiritual sea became chaotic as her energy surged.

She replayed every saber form of the Flying Dragon Saber Art. She imagined herself performing each move of the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms to perfection. There were also Dugu's Tenth Sword, Summer and Winter's Eternal Sutra as well as countless other lesser martial arts and secret manuals. All of it melded together within her, forming something new.

She had always helped other people with their cultivation. It started with Lin Qingcheng and moved on to the ice sisters and then Bei Yingluo. And now she was participating in a Dao preaching event and had analyzed the cultivation arts of several dozen people in a row. All of this made her realize something about herself that had been so obvious from the very start. It had simply seemed so impossible, too good to be true, for her to believe until now.

But she believed it now. She had just proved it. It was the truth. And once she broke through that mental limit, another one quickly followed right behind.

Boom!

9th Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm!