

Chapter 561: A Refining Warrior

“I’ve already condensed the holy source. It wouldn’t be much of a loss to give you a Golden Beast Essence Pill. Besides, I have six Golden Beast Essence Pills myself. Giving you one would simply mean a little loss of cultivation. I can easily reclaim it through practice.”

Zhu Hongtao may have looked carelessly unconcerned, but he might get upset if Zhang Ruochen rejected the Golden Beast Essence Pill.

Zhu Hongtao was an archaean survival. Furthermore, he had practiced two forms of exercises, enabling him to condense Golden Beast Essence Pills as well as cultivate a holy source.

Zhang Ruochen wouldn’t accept the Golden Beast Essence Pill, however. He said, “Although I would very much like to attain the Half-Saint Sacred Realm, I wouldn’t use this shortcut. Ingesting this Golden Beast Essence Pill would be no different from sucking your blood.”

Zhu Hongtao’s expression froze a little, but he nodded. He admiringly said, “Your moral character is truly commendable, junior fellow apprentice. But since it’s only between us, you need not treat me as an outsider.”

Zhang Ruochen shook his head wryly and took a step backward instead.

Noticing Zhang Ruochen’s actions, Elder Xuanji nodded his head in satisfaction. He said, “Hongtao, what you have just done is indeed quite inappropriate.”

“Your junior fellow apprentice has just broken through to the Fish-dragon Realm. For now, a Golden Beast Essence Pill might help advance his cultivation remarkably. However, in the long run, excessive enthusiasm only ruins matters. No good will come out of it.”

Zhu Hongtao’s face changed color. He took back the Golden Beast Essence Pill immediately and then bowed. “You’re scaring me, Master. Surely it can’t be this serious?”

Elder Xuanji nodded, and said, “Your junior fellow apprentice is a genius. His future achievement will totally outstrip that of you people. Obviously, we shouldn’t train him like an ordinary warrior. Instead of giving him something, why don’t you protect him in the future? That will shield him from any secret harm.”

Zhu Hongtao clapped his chest and bellowed thunderously. “Since Master says so, I shall be his Cultivation Protector, watching over him in the next 30 years. I shall teach manners to anyone intending him harm.”

Demi-saint Lingshu raised her glance, and sneered. “That’s a careless boast, Second Senior Brother. It’s not easy to be someone’s Cultivation Protector for 30 years!”

“I’m not boasting carelessly. I’m perfectly serious.” Zhu Hongtao replied.

All inheritors of powerful Saintly families must be looked after by a Protector in secret whenever they underwent experience outside.

Most of the time, this Protector stayed in the background and didn't intervene. He would only show up if the inheritor faced life-threatening danger.

Of course, to train an inheritor to resolve his problems independently, a Protector wouldn't escort him all the time.

Hence, even though Protectors watched over them in secret, many Saint inheritors from powerful families still died from unforeseen circumstances.

Seeing as the holy source had emerged from his practice, Zhu Hongtao's cultivation had now reached the realm of a Saint.

Furthermore, he was an archaean survival. His natural strength was magnified by this fact.

If a superior like Zhu Hongtao were to protect Zhang Ruochen for 30 years, the Black Market and Moon Worship Demonic Sect would need several Saints to attack Zhang Ruochen simultaneously in order to kill him before he was able to achieve great prowess.

Zhang Ruochen quickly said, "Thank you, Second Senior Brother."

"No need for such politeness. Protecting you is a vital task. Otherwise, Master would again complain that I'm frittering away my time." Zhu Hongtao gave a bizarre smile. He sent a soft voice transmission over to Zhang Ruochen. "When you are back in the Eastern Region, Second Senior Brother shall bring you around. Then you will know the world better."

Zhang Ruochen smiled. He knew that the "good places" his Second Senior Brother referred to, might not be so good.

It didn't matter. After all, seeing the world was a good thing.

Seeing as Zhu Hongtao had promised himself as Zhang Ruochen's Protector, Third Senior Brother Wan Ke had to match this with a big gift. However unwilling, he had to offer Zhang Ruochen the Shooting Star Invisible Cloak.

With both hands holding up the Shooting Star Invisible Cloak, Wan Ke stood up, pursing his lips and giving a stiff, unnatural smile.

Finally, he explained to Zhang Ruochen how to use the Shooting Star Invisible Cloak. After this explanation, he handed the cloak over.

"Thank you, Third Senior Brother."

"No need for... such politeness. We are all brothers..." Wan Ke could not help but sigh inwardly, beginning to fret. What better gift could he offer on Zhang Ruochen's wedding day?

Zhang Ruochen knew this treasure was very valuable but he didn't refuse it. Any protest would seem like an affectation.

Certain meeting gifts could be accepted while others could not.

“Clip-Clop!”

Heavy footsteps resounded from outside Qinghe Palace, like heavy iron bricks hitting the floor.

Moments later, a tall brawny man strode in through the gate.

The man had a tiger’s back and a bear’s waist. He was dark-skinned and clad in black armor from head to foot. A keen martial spirit blazed out from his eyes, and an icy, murderous air emanated from his body.

Zhang Ruochen turned his eyes toward him. He realized that though the man had entered alone, he gave one a feeling as if thousands of troops and stallions were rampaging forward.

Most warriors would have taken a step backward, frightened by the invisible majestic air emerging from this being. They might shiver, urinate in their pants, or even faint.

“Your disciple Qing Xiao pays his respect to Master.”

The man’s iron-like fists were clasped firmly together. Head and back bowed, he was paying the utmost respect to Elder Xuanji.

“So he is Eldest Senior Brother, Saint Qing Xiao,” said Zhang Ruochen to himself.

Elder Xuanji nodded and raised an arm lightly. “No need for more ceremony, Qing Xiao.”

Saint Qing Xiao raised his head. With a solemn look and a heavy voice, he said, “I have something really important to say. I want to speak to Master alone.”

He gave a slight emphasis on the word “alone.”

Second Senior Brother apprentice Zhu Hongtao glanced at Saint Qing Xiao, and openly bellowed, showing his displeasure. “Eldest Senior Brother, you shouldn’t treat us like outsiders! Can’t you speak straight? Must you guard against us?”

Saint Qing Xiao gave him an icy stare, and said, “This is a matter of grave importance. I’m afraid your big mouth couldn’t keep a secret.”

“Hey... are you blaming me... ”

Zhu Hongtao muttered under his breath.

He seemed a little afraid of Saint Qing Xiao and didn’t dare to say more, immediately bowing his head.

Saint Qing Xiao’s look softened as he fixed his glance on Zhang Ruochen. “This must be our junior fellow apprentice. I have no great present for you. A refining warrior can serve as my meeting gift.”

Saint Qing Xiao took out a black iron ball the size of a fist from the armor scales under his arm. He handed it over to Zhang Ruochen.

This black iron ball was cast out of some unspecified material and weighed several thousand catties. As Zhang Ruochen had received it without any warning, the ball weighed his hand down with a jerk, nearly breaking his wrist bone.

Zhang Ruochen reacted very quickly. Within a second he had adjusted his hand muscles and sinews to grip the ball firmly.

Saint Qing Xiao and Elder Xuanji left Qinghe Palace looking like they had something really important to discuss.

The only people left inside Qinghe Palace were Zhang Ruochen, Zhu Hongtao, Demi-saint Lingshu, and Wan Ke.

The atmosphere within the palace suddenly became quite inhibited.

Wan Ke laughed and said, "Eldest Senior Brother has always had a frosty temperament but he still treats us, junior apprentices, very well."

"He has given you a refining warrior, a great gift and a very practical item. Do you need us to teach you how to use it?"

Zhang Ruochen smiled and said, "No, I don't. Although this is the first time I've received a refining warrior, I know how to use it quite well."

Zhang Ruochen squeezed the adamantine iron ball in his palm, injecting Genuine Qi into it, and then activated the inscription on the ball.

"Swoosh!"

The top and bottom halves of the adamantine iron ball started spinning in opposite directions. A tiny fissure could be seen along the middle. Out emerged an iron framework that kept expanding and extending until it became a giant steel humanoid three meters tall.

The giant steel humanoid stood in the center of the palace, looking most dignified and full of physical strength.

It was a refining warrior, a war weapon forged by the Divine Work Ministry of the First Central Empire.

By and large, only the Ministry of War could use a refining warrior.

Unsurprisingly though, certain people related to the Ministry of War, like Zhang Ruochen, could still receive one. So long as only a few were outside, the High-levels at the Ministry of War wouldn't make a fuss.

A groove was set in the refining warrior's chest for storing Spiritual Crystals as an energy source.

Of course, for a refining warrior, even a top-grade Spiritual Crystal wouldn't contain enough Spiritual Qi to last one battle.

Thus, the Ministry of War usually used Holy Stones as their energy source.

Although a Holy Stone was precious, it could still be obtained at the Martial Market Bank, provided you pay through the nose for it.

Therefore, Zhang Ruochen decided to return to the Saint Academy and buy a few Holy Stones to test out the warrior's power. Eldest Senior Brother's gift must be quite exceptional.

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Upon leaving Qinghe Palace, Saint Qing Xiao and Elder Xuanji immediately soared and broke through a long, immense stretch of void space. They landed on a meteorite over fifty meters wide.

With a wave of his sleeve, a gust of Holy Qi emerged from Elder Xuanji, forming a huge spherical light screen that enclosed the entire meteorite.

Elder Xuanji saw Saint Qing Xiao's stern look and said, "It looks like the evil weapon from Xuanwu Primitive World is no mean weapon! This would spell serious trouble, and may implicate many in some big affair."

The Ministry of War had sent three War Saints to secure the Pillar of the Vicious Sea from Xuanwu Primitive World.

Saint Qing Xiao was one of them.

Saint Qing Xiao nodded, and said most solemnly, "No one expected something like this to exist in Xuanwu Primitive World. I would say it must have been immersed for 100,000 years at the bottom of the sea.

"They must have arrived at Kunlun's Field 100,000 years ago but we didn't notice them at all. It's so frightening!"

With his hands behind his back, Elder Xuanji shook his head. He said, "Maybe someone did know, just that they didn't record this occurrence in history books. Many great events happened 100,000 years ago. They might all be related to this. Have you forgotten how the Medieval Ancient Times ended?"

Saint Qing Xiao remained silent for a long time. Then, knitting his brows, he said, "I can feel a crisis approaching, yet no one knows when that day will come."

Elder Xuanji smiled and said, "Don't worry too much. Kunlun's Field is experiencing an unprecedented Peak under the rule of the Empress. So many geniuses have emerged, and so many Saints. Martial Arts is flourishing, and so is the Holy Road.

"Furthermore, I've heard that the Empress has issued a secret order. She is choosing ten Heirs of Kunlun Field, I believe, to cultivate ten new emperors in the near future. This is to recreate the heyday of the Nine Emperors 800 years ago."

Chapter 562: Spiritual Crane Pears

Saint Qing Xiao shook his head and said, "I've heard a little about this, but I don't think it's a good idea. Can people like the Nine Emperors be cultivated simply by accumulating resources?"

"Furthermore, the powerful families have started contending with one another, through both open and covert means. They would all like to have an Heir of Kunlun's Field. Even Taiji Sect, Thousand Buddhas

Sect, and Confucian Sect now send their best disciples into the world to vie for a seat. This secret trend has overwhelmed the entire Kunlun's Field. No one can say if it's a good thing."

Elder Xuanji said, "The fact that you see this point proves you have really matured. You can indeed hold your own. However, even within Saint Academy such infighting isn't unusual!"

Saint Qing Xiao understood Elder Xuanji's intentions at once. "Could it be... that Master wants our junior fellow apprentice to fight for a seat?"

Elder Xuanji nodded and smiled. "Once he becomes an Heir of Kunlun Field, he will have vast quantities of practice resources. He might even become the Empress's personal disciple and succeed her to the throne. He can be the Dominator of Kunlun's Field! Such an opportunity cannot be missed. There may never be another chance!

"Besides, your junior fellow apprentice has just reached the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm. This is easily the best moment to strike. Even if he doesn't vie for the seat, someone would ask him to."

Saint Qing Xiao's expression turned rather grave. "Concerning our junior fellow apprentice, I have one more thing to report."

"What is it?" asked Elder Xuanji.

Saint Qing Xiao replied. "The altar of the Wood Spirit Primitive World was wrecked by heretic Half-saint Tongxu. I thought the matter was closed, but intelligence from the Ministry of War revealed something more after the investigation. At the time the altar was wrecked, our junior fellow apprentice was visiting the Wood Spirit Primitive World. He had visited the Primitive World's altar, too.

"The specifics have been recorded in a top secret file by the Imperial History Board. I can't claim to know the details well. The file has already been dispatched to Kunlun's Field, to our sovereign."

The words made Elder Xuanji assume a solemn expression. He pondered for some time, and then said, "Your junior fellow apprentice has already been carefully investigated by Saint Academy. His background is utterly clean. He can't be a spy from the heresy. You don't have to worry about this.

"Besides, given his cultivation level back then, it was unlikely that he could destroy the Primitive World's altar.

"One more thing. Even if this has something to do with him, the Empress would most likely not punish him over this trivial matter. Your junior fellow apprentice is elevated in status now. By dealing with him harshly, the Empress would displease the Saint Academy and East Region Saint Mansions. Weighing the pros and cons, I'm sure she would make the correct decision."

Saint Qing Xiao remained rather cautious and said, "Shouldn't we question him about the details? In that way, we can prepare ourselves for the possible ire of the Empress."

Elder Xuanji thought about it and then shook his head. "Better not. It might give him unnecessary pressure."

Saint Qing Xiao and Elder Xuanji continued to discuss other important matters before leaving the meteorite and returning to Qinghe Palace.

Qinghe Palace was the personal palace of Eldest Senior Brother apprentice Saint Qing Xiao. It was also a manpower and administrative headquarters of the Ministry of War. Therefore, after the gathering, Zhang Ruochen and his senior fellow apprentices took up lodging at Ten Thousand Fields Tavern instead.

Upon reaching his room, Zhang Ruochen immediately took out the Yin Yang Wooden Graph and entered its inner world.

The Yin Yang Wooden Graph looked like an ordinary scroll painting on the wall. No one would guess it contained an independent inner world.

Under Blackie's leadership, the first city within the Scroll World had already taken shape, facilitated by the three Fish-dragon Realm Monks' hard labor.

The Monks of the Fish-dragon Realm were indeed excellent workers. They were exceptionally efficient laborers. One could match several hundred ordinary workers.

The entire city was constructed from huge rocks stacked to form palaces, streets, and towers. Inside lofty mountains with plenty of Spiritual Qi, so many abodes of fairies and immortals were created. Nearby streams were drawn in to form a waterfall about 100 meters high.

Blackie had planned to build first a small city that could accommodate 50,000 people. It wasn't that big a project.

Currently, it was just beginning to take shape. To truly construct a city would require lots of time to buff the place up, sculpt, and embellish.

Zhang Ruochen had some doubts. He asked, "Blackie, I'm curious. Why are you constructing a city within the Scroll World? Do you want many people to practice here?"

Blackie looked cheerfully enthusiastic but didn't give any reason. He simply smirked. "We aren't just building a city. We need to build other edifices too. And, oh! I forged two armors out of the scales of the Black Skeleton Flood-dragon King and gave them to the two girls."

Blackie pointed his paw forward.

In the direction of its claws, Ao Xinyan and Orange Star Emissary were each seen clad in a scarlet Flood dragon armor. They soared across and descended to the foot of the city.

Both had completely recovered from their injuries.

Zhang Ruochen stroked his chin and smiled. "Why did you only forge armors for the two of them?"

Blackie replied. "Because they need to accompany me to the Battlefield of Primitive World. You and your fiancée are returning to Kunlun's Field. You two won't need an armor."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Are the three of you going to the Battlefield of Primitive World?"

Blackie nodded, and said, "Do you remember the altar we discovered at the Wood Spirit Primitive World? That altar is weakly connected with other Primitive Worlds. It's an important matter. I need to get to the bottom of it."

Zhang Ruochen said, "Let me go too!"

“No need. You are now in the limelight. The major forces are all paying attention to you. If you come along, you will give us unnecessary trouble.” Blackie continued. “I am taking them along to help them gain experience in the Battlefield of Primitive World.”

Zhang Ruochen fixed his gaze on Orange Star Emissary. He asked, slightly worried, “Are you sure you can keep them under control?”

“Are you worried about that Black Market girl? Don’t worry. I’ve already taken her in as my disciple. I am teaching her some ancient unique techniques. I’m quite sure she will bear with me at least until she has mastered the techniques. She will not fall out with me.”

Zhang Ruochen said, “Very well! Since you know what you are doing, I shan’t say more. When are you leaving?”

“Right now,” said Blackie.

Blackie, Ao Xinyan and Orange Star Emissary walked out of the Scroll World and entered the Battlefield of Primitive World that very day.

Huang Yanchen had already regained consciousness. She had largely recovered from her injuries. Now, she strolled out of Scroll World with Zhang Ruochen.

On that same day, the three seniors Zhu Hongtao, Wan Ke and Ling Shu, led by Elder Xuanji, boarded a Primitive World shuttle together with Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen. All six left through a wormhole for the East Region Saint City.

They would naturally head for the Saint Academy upon arriving at East Region Saint City.

At the heart of Saint Academy was the lofty Saint Mountain.

The Saint Mountain wasn’t isolated but was part of a mountain chain with dozens of fantastic peaks and deep valleys. Only someone of the Half-Saint realm could take up abode in the Saint Mountain.

Elder Xuanji’s abode was situated at the Spiritual Crane Pear Garden, in Saint Mountain.

In the garden were 3,600 Spiritual Crane Pear trees.

It was the season of full bloom. With the cool breeze came a sighing sound as white petals fluttered to the ground like snowflakes.

And of course, crystalline Spiritual Crane Pears were growing on many trees, giving off a seductive fragrance.

At this moment, only Zhang Ruochen and Elder Xuanji were in the Spiritual Crane Pear Garden.

The old man and the young man sat facing each other.

Elder Xuanji looked at something nearly six meters away. A Spiritual Crane Pear tree with a diameter of three embracing men stood there. Seven green Spiritual Crane Pears were on that tree.

All of a sudden, one of the Spiritual Crane Pears seemed to come alive. It began absorbing the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Qi, and gradually took on a rich golden hue. An even stronger fragrance wafted from the fruit.

“Ha ha! So a Spiritual Crane Pear has ripened today.”

Elder Xuanji chuckled. Raising an arm, he grabbed into the air.

The next moment, a ripe Spiritual Crane Pear appeared in his hand.

Elder Xuanji spread out his hand and handed the Spiritual Crane Pear to Zhang Ruochen. He said, “The Spiritual Crane Pear tree blossoms once every 300 years, bears fruit for another 300 years, and its fruits take 300 years more to ripen. One Spiritual Crane Pear can help raise your cultivation, improve your spiritual intelligence, and extend a Monk’s life expectancy by 30 years.

“I might not give one, even to a Half-Saint looking to extend his life. But today you’re lucky! Take this, and enjoy its taste.”

The Spiritual Crane Pear, so named because it resembled a spiritual crane, had a long, curvaceous neck, and a full belly. On closer examination, one could make out its wings, beak, eyes and legs.

Without even tasting, just the smell was enough to make one salivate. The air was filled with its sweet scent.

The fact that it prolonged life for another 30 years was a good indication of how valuable it was. This was aside from its other benefits. No wonder even a Half-Saint would desire one.

Zhang Ruochen took one good look and then stretched out both hands, receiving the Spiritual Crane Pear from Elder Xuanji’s hands.

Then, he placed the Spiritual Crane Pear gingerly in a jade casket. He covered its lid to prevent the essence from escaping.

Elder Xuanji was slightly surprised and asked, “Your Second Senior Brother would often steal a Spiritual Crane Pear to eat after they ripened. Why aren’t you tasting it now?”

Zhang Ruochen lifted his head and smiled. “I would like to bring it back for my mother.”

It suddenly dawned on Elder Xuanji. This boy, he said to himself, was dutiful.

Since Zhang Ruochen’s mother hadn’t unlocked her Sacred Mark, she was an ordinary person. Eating a Spiritual Crane Pear would do her incalculable good.

Although it might seem wasteful to let ordinary people take a Spiritual Crane Pear, such filial piety was priceless.

From Elder Xuanji’s eyes came a look of admiration. He now held this youngest disciple in higher regard. He asked, “Why do you think I wished to see you alone?”

Zhang Ruochen said, “Your disciple does not know.”

Elder Xuanji stood up, gazing at the pear blossoms in full bloom. "I've heard you are practicing a very formidable sword technique, the 'Swift and Neat.' Could you demonstrate your technique to me?"

Startled, Zhang Ruochen was momentarily at a loss.

Swift and Neat was the Sword of Time integrating a Time Mark – it represented the power of time.

Others might not be aware of the power of time. But Elder Xuanji was no mean superior. Even the most minuscule fluctuation of time couldn't escape his eyes.

Chapter 563: The Wordless Sword Manual

Zhang Ruochen was pondering if he should disclose the secret that he had unlocked the Space-Time Sacred Mark to Elder Xuanji.

Just then, the elder continued, "Do you know the difference between a sword practitioner and a mere swordsman?"

"Is there a difference between a sword practitioner and a swordsman?"

Zhang Ruochen gave a slight start and immediately stood up, bowing to the elder. He said, "Your disciple do not know. Please enlighten me, Master."

Elder Xuanji looked at Zhang Ruochen with a glance that was pregnant with meaning and said, "A sword practitioner practices the sword, while a swordsman practices merely sword techniques."

"And what is the difference between the sword and sword techniques?" asked Zhang Ruochen curiously.

Elder Xuanji replied, "In this world, countless warriors and Monks wield swords as their weapon, yet very few can be called real sword practitioners.

"Admittedly, some subtle sword techniques can unleash infinite power once you succeed in mastering them. But by simply practicing sword techniques at the Ghost Level, or even the King's Stage, do you think you would be regarded as a sword practitioner? Those who practice such techniques are still merely swordsmen.

"In the face of a true sword practitioner, the sword technique that a swordsman is so proud of would not be able to withstand a single strike. Even a sword technique in the King's Stage can be defeated in one move."

"Even a sword technique in the King's Stage can be defeated in one move." Had this sentence been uttered by anyone else, Zhang Ruochen would surely have regarded that person as arrogant.

Even a sword technique at the Ghost Level was quite abstruse and unique. Such techniques could cleave mountains and break up streams in one sword strike.

Let alone a sword technique in the King's Stage!

If a sword technique in the King's Stage were to make it into this world, even a Saint would probably try to seize it. Getting hold of one strike of this King's Stage sword technique would mean that you would rule the martial fraternity with this technique that you had mastered.

Yet the person who said this was Elder Xuanji, one of the Three Great Sword Saints of the Eastern Region. Zhang Ruochen had now no other choice but to re-evaluate the truth of this statement.

"Can a sword practitioner really defeat a King's Stage sword technique in one strike?"

Elder Xuanji continued, "Saints abound in the entire Eastern Region, and many of them are swordsmen. Why do you think your Master has become one of the Three Great Sword Saints, while other sword Saints haven't?"

Zhang Ruochen pondered and replied, "Could it be because Master is a true sword practitioner? What you practice is the sword, and not merely sword technique."

"You are right."

Elder Xuanji nodded and continued to ask, "Do you know how sword practitioners practice their sword?"

Zhang Ruochen shook his head.

Elder Xuanji asked again, "Have you heard of the *Wordless Sword Manual*?"

Zhang Ruochen's eyes lit up, and a look of yearning could be seen on his face. He said, "Yes, I've heard a little about it. Legend has it that the *Wordless Sword Manual* is the supreme sacred manual of the Taiji Sect. It is kept in the Holy Land of the Tao of the sword, the Sword Pavilion.

"No one knows the origin of the *Wordless Sword Manual*. All that is known is that it has been kept at the Sword Pavilion since the inception of the Taiji Sect. It is said that a person could become invincible if he could uncover all of its profundities.

"However, I have heard that only a person who has achieved an extremely high realm in the Tao of the sword can truly understand the sword skill within the *Wordless Sword Manual*. And every sentence of this sword skill is so hard to grasp. Even a Half-Saint might not understand it."

Elder Xuanji nodded and said, "What sword practitioners practice is the *Wordless Sword Manual*."

Zhang Ruochen said, "But... isn't the *Wordless Sword Manual* the sacred manual of the Taiji Sect? How did it end up circulating in the external world?"

Zhang Ruochen was truly in the dark about the fact that sword practitioners practiced the *Wordless Sword Manual*. Although he was Emperor Ming's son in his last lifetime, knowledgeable and extremely well read, his cultivation was too low for him to enter the periphery of sword practitioners.

He had only heard a little about the *Wordless Sword Manual* and had not seen it with his own eyes.

Elder Xuanji smiled and said, "You certainly wouldn't know. In fact, the Taiji Sect holds a Sword Technique Conference every century and invites all swordsmen to converge at the Sword Pavilion to try to discuss and uncover the profundities behind the *Wordless Sword Manual*. The Taiji Sect wants to

pool together all the wisdom of humanity to try to crack the mysterious sword skill behind this *Wordless Sword Manual* .

“But only Half-Saint Class swordsmen are eligible to be invited. How would you juniors ever know about the conference?”

“It is simply owing to the Sword Technique Conference that the sword skill within the *Wordless Sword Manual* has been circulating outside.”

Zhang Ruochen asked, “Since the sword skill within the *Wordless Sword Manual* has been circulating outside, why have so few people attained the level of sword practitioners?”

Elder Xuanji sighed and said, “How can anyone hope to understand it, even if they get hold of the *Wordless Sword Manual* ? And even if they do succeed in understanding it, how many could reach the beginner level?”

“In today’s world, what swordsmen are pursuing are the power of sword techniques and the ingenuity of sword moves. How many are willing to spend long hours studying the Tao of the sword itself?”

“Ruochen, you are extremely gifted, and your comprehension ability is also excellent. You would be the best candidate to practice the Tao of the sword. I also wish to bring you as my disciple for the next Sword Technique Conference to demonstrate your innate talents before the world’s swordsmen—just like that legendary Sword Emperor of the past, Xue Hongchen. You will amaze the world with your sensational skills.

“Therefore, you mustn’t go astray and pursue those sword techniques emphasizing one move and one style, forgetting the roots of the Tao of the sword.”

Finally, Zhang Ruochen understood why Elder Xuanji had made him learn the Swift and Neat Sword Technique earlier on.

How elevated the status of Elder Xuanji was! As one of the Three Great Sword Saints of the Eastern Region, hadn’t he witnessed all sorts of ingenious sword techniques? Did he really want to see that one-move sword technique of Zhang Ruochen?

Apparently not.

He was just worried that Zhang Ruochen would be too intent on pursuing those “one move and one style” sword techniques. He would then go astray, and be led further and further away from the true roots of the Tao of the sword.

Elder Xuanji saw Zhang Ruochen contemplating and he nodded.

He knew that Zhang Ruochen was a clever person that just needed a little reminder to realize his error.

But Zhang Ruochen was, after all, merely a young man who had just reached the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm. It could be said that he achieved immediate fame overnight.

Any young person would inevitably be complacent after performing such feats.

And so, Elder Xuanji decided to batter Zhang Ruochen's confidence a little by saying, "Ruochen, you must be 21 this year. How do you feel after achieving such fame overnight?"

Zhang Ruochen had thought that Elder Xuanji would hand him the *Wordless Sword Manual* at once. He had not expected such an abrupt question.

Zhang Ruochen replied frankly, "Your disciple is still very far from a true superior. I would like simply to continue practicing hard, and seek the Holy Road with a devout heart."

In his last lifetime, Zhang Ruochen was ranked first on the Heaven Board at the age of 16. He had achieved fame long ago.

Therefore, he had not been distracted at all achieving fame this time.

Elder Xuanji continued talking. "800 years ago, the young Empress Chi Yao had once stepped into the Battlefield of the Primitive World alone and massacred almost every living creature within the Primitive World. Carcasses and corpses were piled up high, and blood flowed and converged like the sea. She obtained 90,000,000 military merits for it, far outstripping the military merits offered for the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm.

"That year, she was only 16.

"So your present achievement is still considered a mere trifle before hers. You must set the Empress as your role model, and remember not to be arrogant or maniacal."

Zhang Ruochen was rather disdainful and he gnashed his teeth. He remarked coldly, "If she was already so addicted to killing at 16, goodness knows how much innocent blood has already stained her hands! How different from a psychopath would I be if I were to set her as a role model?"

With a cold look in his eyes, Elder Xuanji reprimanded him. "Stop talking nonsense. Her Excellency the Empress's work merits will be handed down through millenniums. They aren't something you can slander."

The eyes of Elder Xuanji then softened a little, and he said, with much gravity and meaning, "Young people are just too impudent. As the case is, you ought not say any more in the future. Your life would be in grave danger had some outsider overheard these remarks."

Zhang Ruochen gradually suppressed his emotions.

After a long while, Zhang Ruochen finally regained his calm.

Elder Xuanji shook his head and no longer spoke with Zhang Ruochen about Empress Chi Yao. He took out a book of about six inches from inside his sleeve and handed it to Zhang Ruochen.

Zhang Ruochen took the book and held it in both hands. Two words could be seen written on its cover:

"Sword One!"

Slowly, Zhang Ruochen flipped open its pages, and focusing his eyes intently, was instantly attracted by the contents of the book.

It took him about two hours to entirely go over its contents one time.

Zhang Ruochen then shut his dry eyes and closed the book, raising his head. He asked, "What an ingenious manual on the Tao of the sword! So vast, profound, and truly astounding! Master, could this be the sword skill from the *Wordless Sword Manual*?"

Elder Xuanji nodded and said, "It is, truly. But the contents in this book are merely what I have unraveled myself personally. The real sword skill of the *Wordless Sword Manual* is even more profound and mysterious than what is recorded here.

"You can take a look whenever you like, but you should not practice this completely according to what is written here from my experience. Otherwise, it would be very difficult for you to master 'Sword One'."

Zhang Ruochen said, "There is much within 'Sword One' that I cannot understand. I hope Master can offer me some advice."

Elder Xuanji just smiled and asked, "'Sword One' is such a profound text. It is natural that you cannot understand it. What I would like to know is... how much of it have you really grasped?"

Zhang Ruochen frowned and sighed deeply.

When Elder Xuanji saw Zhang Ruochen's expression, he knew that this disciple, whom he was so proud of, had been baffled by Sword One.

Sword One was the real Tao of the sword and the threshold guide for a sword practitioner.

Even a Half-Saint upon his first reading of Sword One would think that he was reading a book from heaven. It would be impossible for him to understand anything at all.

A Monk in the First Change of the Fish-Dragon Realm would be considered quite amazing if he could grasp the meaning of just a few sentences.

Although Elder Xuanji had handed Sword One over to Zhang Ruochen, he had merely wanted him to flip through the text once in a while to prepare his path as a sword practitioner. He did not expect Zhang Ruochen to be able to understand any of it right now.

Of course, what Elder Xuanji had really wanted to do was to use Sword One to crush Zhang Ruochen's arrogance, lest complacency ruin his grand future.

And quite evidently, his aim had been achieved.

Chapter 564: Sword One

Elder Xuanji noticed Zhang Rouchen's distress and assumed he had demoralized him too much. He was about to console him.

But Zhang Ruochen, looking very solemn, instead gave a sigh. "Sword One is very difficult to understand. Your disciple is too dull-witted; I could only comprehend three-tenths of it."

Elder Xuanji was stunned.

What?

He had looked through it once, and was able to understand three-tenths of the contents?

Elder Xuanji himself had not even understood one-tenth of it when he first read through Sword One.

He called himself dull-witted, after comprehending three-tenths of the book? This boy deserved a thrashing!

Elder Xuanji sized Zhang Ruochen up carefully and asked in disbelief, "You're certain you understand almost a third of it?"

Zhang Ruochen said, "I understood only three-tenths of its contents. Why are you so surprised?"

Elder Xuanji knew Zhang Ruochen would not lie. He could only sigh inwardly to himself. This youngest disciple had such astoundingly high endowments in sword skill.

Elder Xuanji stroked his white beard and smiled. "If you could understand three-tenths of Sword One, your level of understanding surpasses that of many Half-Saints."

"But it only means you are highly qualified to practice the Tao of the sword. It doesn't mean you will necessarily master Sword One."

"Understanding is just the first step. Only by mastering Sword One can you achieve the Beginner level of a sword practitioner."

Only now did Zhang Ruochen realize his achievement. It must be quite some feat for him to have understood three-tenths of Sword One.

But what Master said was reasonable. To understand the manual completely was not a big deal. The true achievement was to master it.

Zhang Ruochen said, "You said that many Half-Saints can't understand Sword One. Does this mean that only someone in the Half-Saint realm can successfully master Sword One?"

"Not really," Elder Xuanji replied. "If you are talented enough, you can master Sword One even in the Fish-dragon Realm. Then by the time you attain the Half-Saint realm, you could start practicing Sword Two."

Zhang Ruochen asked curiously, "There's a Sword Two?"

"Of course."

Elder Xuanji nodded. "Sword One represents 'oneself', while Sword Two represents the 'Yin and the Yang'. After that come Sword Three, Sword Four... After mastering each sword manual, a Monk's understanding of the Tao of the sword rises to a whole new level."

Zhang Ruochen continued asking questions like a schoolboy. "What do you mean by 'oneself'? What do you mean by 'the Yin and the Yang'?"

Elder Xuanji shook his head. "I can't teach such interpretations. You can only comprehend them yourself. All I can tell you is that unless you master Sword One, you can't be considered a true sword practitioner."

“Your Fifth Senior Sister is highly gifted in the Tao of the sword too. But she has practiced for several decades and has barely reached the Beginner level of Sword Two. Don’t yearn for higher manuals at this level. Master Sword One first; that will help augment your actual strength.”

Zhang Ruochen recalled the sword skill mantra Fifth Senior Sister had recited when she defeated the Ember Kylin in the Xuanwu Primitive World. He repeated it now. “The two Qis of Yin-Yang divide the heaven and the earth; the natural Tao of the sword is the destination of all practices.”

This was the verbal formula that Fifth Senior sister apprentice had recited.

Elder Xuanji said, “Yes, that’s a formula used in Sword Two.”

Zhang Ruochen could not help gripping Sword One tighter in his hands. “I will surely master Sword One in the Fish-dragon Realm.”

Elder Xuanji said with a laugh, “You must know that in the past thousand years, only 34 people have mastered Sword One in the Fish-dragon Realm.”

Zhang Ruochen asked, “Are you one of them?”

“Yes.”

Elder Xuanji looked rather proud of himself. After all, to have mastered Sword One at the Fish-dragon Realm was no mean feat.

“In addition,” he continued. “Among the 34, there were two who also mastered Sword Two in the Fish-dragon Realm.”

Zhang Ruochen had seen the contents of Sword One. He knew how profound and abstruse it was.

One could deduce that Sword Two would be even more extraordinary.

To master Sword One was already exceedingly difficult. To think that people had managed to master Sword Two in the Fish-dragon Realm!

Could it be... him?

Someone from 800 years ago materialized in Zhang Ruochen’s mind.

He was one of the Nine Emperors.

And Elder Xuanji’s words indeed confirmed Zhang Ruochen’s guess.

Elder Xuanji said, “The two people were the Sword Emperor and Empress Chi Yao.”

“I don’t expect you to match them. I would be most content if you could master Sword One in the Fish-dragon Realm.”

The name Sword Emperor reverberated in Zhang Rouchen’s ears like thunder.

Xue Hongchen, the true Sword Emperor, was the son of Fragrance City’s governor. Matchless in talent and sword technique, he was also a most debonair figure. At the age of 36, he had surpassed his father, the city governor of Fragrance City and become the world renowned Sword Saint Hongchen.

He later attained higher and higher achievements in the Tao of the sword, finally hitting an unsurpassable realm. He became the Sword Emperor of his era.

And Xue Hongchen was the youngest of the Nine Emperors.

The reason Emperor Ming had given his son the name “Zhang Ruochen”, was because he had wanted him to emulate Sword Emperor Xue Hongchen’s outstanding achievements.

A saying had circulated in Kunlun’s Field during that time: “Just as Sword Saint Hongchen mocks the Red Dust [1], one’s own son ought to be like Xue Hongchen.”

Although Zhang Ruochen had not met the Sword Emperor, the latter had been his role model since boyhood.

So when he heard Elder Xuanji’s second mention of the Sword Emperor, Zhang Ruochen could not resist asking, “Master, what realm did the Sword Emperor attain during his time?”

Elder Xuanji looked to the distance. A hitherto unknown but yearning look appeared in his eyes. “The Sword Emperor hasn’t appeared in Kunlun’s Field for many years. No one knows what heights he has attained. But I’ve heard that he mastered Sword Ten 800 years ago. Others say that he has cultivated Sword Eleven. There are many rumors, yet no knows what realm he has truly reached.”

Zhang Ruochen asked again, “So which realm do you need to reach before one would regard you as a sword saint?”

“You must master at least Sword Seven. Only then could you be considered a sword saint.”

Zhang Ruochen was somewhat astonished. “You mean only three people have managed to master Sword Seven in the entire Eastern Region?”

“Yes.”

Elder Xuanji sighed and remarked, “So don’t feel disappointed even if you fail to master Sword One in the Fish-dragon Realm. It’s just a hope of mine.”

Zhang Ruochen and Elder Xuanji continued discussing the Wordless Sword Manual.

It wasn’t until nightfall that Zhang Ruochen left the Linghe Pear Garden with the Sword One manual. He walked out of the Saint Academy towards the Avenue of Kings.

The Half-Saint mansion Kong Lanyou had given him was situated on the Avenue of Kings.

Zhang Ruochen walked along the middle of the main street, rife with busy traffic. His mind was still trying to unravel Sword One. He had reached a stage of crazy obsession.

His eyes fixed blankly ahead, and all sorts of thoughts crept into his brain.

Before he knew it, he had arrived in front of his mansion. He pushed the door open and walked in.

“SWISH!”

He had barely entered through the door when the noise of a sword resounded.

A piercing sword Qi broke through the air. A white streak of sword radiance, two fingers wide, could be seen above Zhang Ruochen's eyes.

The sword radiance was dazzling. Zhang Ruochen could not help but shut his eyes.

"CLANG!"

Sensing danger, the Ancient Abyss Sword flew out of the sword scabbard by itself.

Zhang Ruochen reacted almost instinctively, his finger pointing forward. The Ancient Abyss Sword arced its way towards the foot of a grove shade to the left of the gate.

"BOOM!" A loud noise resounded.

The Ancient Abyss Sword fell down. The other person's sword had broken into two, with a clang.

Zhang Ruochen opened his eyes and was about to thrust his sword forward when he suddenly discovered the assailant was a little girl of just five or six.

It was Han Xue.

She stood under the tree holding a broken sword in her hands. Her small, tender and fair hands were dripping with blood. Holding back her pain, she stepped back swiftly.

In a flash, Zhang Ruochen recovered himself. He quickly controlled the Heart of the Sword and recalled the Ancient Abyss Sword back into its scabbard.

"Han Xue, what are you doing here?"

He dashed forward to examine her injury.

Although it had only been a random thrust, his sword strike contained remarkable power.

Han Xue was too young to withstand the power of Zhang Ruochen's strike.

Fortunately, the Ancient Abyss Sword had only slashed her sword into two. The pulcrue on her right hand had ruptured from the blow, but it was nothing serious.

She was not crying either. She pursed her lips and said in a pitiful voice, "Master, what were you thinking? You exerted so much force you could have killed me."

"Sorry, I was so deep in my swordplay comprehension that I didn't realize it was you. By the way, why did you ambush me?"

Zhang Ruochen stretched out his hand and pressed it on her wrist. He injected a flow of Genuine Qi into her hand Meridians, trying to aid her recovery.

But he realized that even before his Genuine Qi had injected into her Meridians, the wound on her wrist had begun to close by itself.

"Eh?!"

How did that happen?

Even Zhang Ruochen with the Dragon Pearl in his body could not heal himself as well as she did.

In a moment, her wound had healed. There wasn't even a scar.

More to his astonishment, Zhang Ruochen's sword strike had only severed her sword. The shattering force had not made her drop her sword.

Her hands were still gripping onto the broken sword tightly.

One ought to remember that she was not even six. Her level of cultivation was shockingly outrageous.

"How powerful her Thousand-bones Physical Quality is! Truly remarkable!" Zhang Ruochen reflected.

Han Xue revealed her gleaming white teeth and her eyes fluttered. "Sister Yanchen visited Master's mansion and told me that you have returned to the East Region Saint City. I wanted to show you my recent practice achievements. That's why I ambushed you on purpose. But my cultivation is too low! I can't match yours level at all. Do you think I'm a good-for-nothing, Master?"

With these words Han Xue bowed her head, looking very distraught.

Zhang Ruochen shook his head, smiling. He extended an arm and caressed her head, saying, "If you are considered useless, there aren't any useful people in the world! And oh, why did your Sister Yanchen call?"

Han Xue addressed Zhang Ruochen as "Master," but Huang Yanchen as "Elder Sister." It was really quite odd.

But Zhang Ruochen did not ask her why.

He was more curious about the purpose of Huang Yanchen's visit.

Han Xue shook her little head and bent her fingers. "I don't know. I saw Sister Yanchen with a middle-aged uncle. When I was with them, they kept mentioning things like 'bridal gifts'... 'guests'... and 'marriage pledge'.... Anyway, I didn't quite get it."

Zhang Ruochen's expression turned solemn. He understood the probable intention of Huang Yanchen's visit. He walked into the courtyard, holding on to Han Xue's small hand.

Chapter 565: The Seventh Day of the Next Lunar Month

Zhang Ruochen's mansion was very large, with pavilions, lakes, rockeries, martial arts fields, savage beast rings, spiritual dose gardens, and more.

In addition, the mansion had various arrays scattered about. Besides the Defensive Array, the mansion had a Spirit Gathering Array and an Attack Array. Even a Half-Saint would pay an enormous price to enter the mansion.

This mansion was as good as a Half-Saint family's.

At the moment, Huang Yanchen and the Qianshui Commandery Prince were in the lobby of the inner court.

The Qianshui Commandery Prince looked like he was in his forties, full of energy. He had sharp eyes and a neat mustache on his lip. Even if he had deliberately suppressed it, he still had the aura of a powerful man.

Concubine Lin was sitting on the left side of the Qianshui Commandery Prince, looking quite calm, dignified, and unrestrained.

Zhang Ruochen came in, immediately bowed in salutation, and said, "Your Excellency Commandery Prince, I'm so honored to meet you here."

With a half-smile, Qianshui Commandery Prince chuckled. "Your Excellency Commandery Prince... Zhang Ruochen, what should you call me now?"

Zhang Ruochen smiled and bowed again, saying, "It's my honor to see you here, uncle."

Qianshui Commandery Prince knew that it would be difficult for Zhang Ruochen to call him something else right away, so he did not push him. He came straight to the point. "Zhang Ruochen, do you still remember your engagement four years ago?"

Zhang Ruochen answered, "Engagement is an important event in life, and I definitely remember it."

Qianshui Commandery Prince nodded and said, "That's why I came to the East Region Saint City. Your engagement has been delayed for a year, you know. Your mother and I have discussed it. We agreed that you two should get married as soon as possible. What do you say?"

Zhang Ruochen glanced at Huang Yanchen sitting beside the Qianshui Commandery Prince and said, "I agree with you, and I will act upon your wishes."

Qianshui Commandery Prince nodded with satisfaction. Actually, he was quite satisfied with his future son-in-law. It would be best if their wedding could be settled fast.

Even though Zhang Ruochen had only been the prince of an inferior commandery, the Qianshui Commandery Prince was quite optimistic about him. He had believed that this boy would definitely be extraordinary in the future.

Now, only a few years later, Zhang Ruochen had become known all over the world.

He not only acknowledged Sword Saint Xuanji as his teacher, but he also became the first of the Six Great Kings of the new generation in the Eastern Region. Recently, he had become the first of the "Heaven Board" and reached the Ultimate Realm.

Numerous powerful factions intended to put him under their command. And numerous favored daughters of the gods regarded him as a dream lover.

Fortunately, his daughter and Zhang Ruochen had already been engaged. Otherwise, with only her ordinary natural talent and birth, how could his daughter compete with the other girls from the main clans and powerful Saint families?

After all, the Huangs from Qianshui Commandery were only an outside addition to the Chen family. Their status was rather low among the Chens.

The Chens were a large, wealthy, aristocratic family from the Middle Age. Their clansmen were all over the Eastern Region. It was a strict, hierarchical empire.

Among them, the main clan had the highest status in the whole family.

They had the purest blood of the Chens, and they were also the absolute rulers of the Chens. Their bloodline was the most noble, and they had the most say, of any of the Chens.

Under the main clan were the branch clans.

The branch clans had the same family name "Chen," but their bloodline was more distant. Some of their ancestors were only descendants of the Chens. They had discovered their origin and become branch clans of the Chens.

Because of the large number of the branch clans, their leaders also had a certain say in the Chen family. Some powerful branch clansmen could even become top leaders in the family.

Under the branch clan were the outside clans.

The Huangs of Qianshui Commandery were one of the outside clans attached to the Chens.

The Chens, also known as the "East Region Saint Mansions," were in charge of the whole Eastern imperial court system, including more than 12,000 commanderies and 36 mansions in the Eastern Holy Land. The Chens were so powerful that they could be called the uncrowned kings of the Eastern Region.

Due to the great influence of the Chens in the Eastern Region, a large number of clans, suzerains, and commanderies arranged marriages with the Chens, so as to become their outside clans.

The so-called outside clans were mainly attached to the external strength of the Chens.

The status of the outside clans was similar to that of the Chen servants and slaves, and sometimes even lower.

Fortunately, Huang Yanchen's mother had reached the Half-Saint realm. Thus her status in the Chens had been greatly elevated, and she became a senior member. Therefore, Huang Yanchen was able to go back to the East Region Saint City to practice.

However, Huang Yanchen and the Qianshui Commandery were still just outsiders to the Chens. Their identity and status were rather embarrassing.

But now, it would be different. Their status was likely to change unprecedentedly.

Because, Huang Yanchen and Zhang Ruochen were going to get married.

Zhang Ruochen was a disciple of Sword Saint Xuanji, and also the No. 1 conqueror of the new generation in the Eastern Region. He was sure to have a bright future.

No matter how much the Chens looked down on the outside clans, they would try hard now to cozy up to the Qianshui Commandery Prince and Huang Yanchen in order to show their respect for the Huangs.

The reason was that they had such a talented son-in-law.

Therefore, the Chens' attitude towards the Qianshui Commandery Prince had changed significantly when he came again to the East Region Saint City.

The Qianshui Commandery Prince knew clearly that the Chens' change of attitude was not merely because of Huang Yanchen's mother's reaching the Half-Saint realm.

What mattered more was that Huang Yanchen's fiancée was Zhang Ruochen, the disciple of Sword Saint Xuanji.

Qianshui Commandery Prince stared at Zhang Ruochen and said, "The seventh day of the next lunar month is auspicious. I have discussed it with your mother, and your wedding will be on that day."

Zhang Ruochen said, "It is fine with me."

The Qianshui Commandery Prince laughed. He said, "In that case, don't forget to choose a time to come over and bring your betrothal gifts. It is getting late. I must be going."

Zhang Ruochen escorted the Qianshui Commandery Prince and Huang Yanchen all the way to the outside the mansion before returning to the inner yard.

He walked past the lobby and found the candles in the hall still lit. He went in the hall and saw Concubine Lin sitting alone.

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Mother, what are you doing up this late?"

Concubine Lin sat there, looking at Zhang Ruochen carefully and asked, "Chen-er, are you dissatisfied with this marriage?"

Zhang Ruochen was a little puzzled, and then he smiled. He said, "Mother, it's not what you think! Senior sister apprentice and I have got along well with each other for so long. Why would I be dissatisfied?"

Concubine Lin shook her head and said, "Well then, why don't you seem overjoyed?"

Zhang Ruochen seemed to say to himself, "Wasn't I happy just now?"

Concubine Lin said, "Chen-er, I know that you are capable now, and that many women like you. So, you could expect a better choice. However, you must keep your words. If it weren't for the help of Qianshui Commandery Prince and Commandery Princess Yanchen, Yunwu Commandery would have perished. And you and I wouldn't have lived to this day, either. Do you understand?"

Zhang Ruochen came to Concubine Lin and said, "Mother, I am really happy to marry Senior sister apprentice. I will take the Betrothal Gifts to the Huangs in person in a few days. Are you relieved?"

A smile finally spread across Concubine Lin's face.

She reached out her hands and held Zhang Ruochen's hands tightly. A tear flowed out of her eye. For the first time, she felt that Zhang Ruochen had really grown up.

Zhang Ruochen chatted with Concubine Lin, and then took out a Spiritual Crane Pear. He watching her eat it.

Zhang Ruochen did not go back until midnight.

Back in his own room, Zhang Ruochen could not stop thinking about his marriage on the seventh of the next lunar month. He could not focus on perceiving " *Sword One* " at all.

So Zhang Ruochen took the Yin Yang Wooden Graph out, unfolded it, and laid it flat on the table.

Then, he opened a space portal and entered the Scroll World.

Although he was unable to meditate on " *Sword One* ", he could do something else.

Zhang Ruochen first spent a whole day sitting cross-legged under the Yin Yang Wooden Graph to forge ten Auspicious Vases.

Then, he came to the lower part of the bodies of Black Skeleton Flood Dragon King and Cyan Fire Xuanwu, lined up the ten Auspicious Vases, and began to collect the flood dragon blood, Xuanwu Sacred Blood, and Xuanwu Qi.

The collection of flood dragon blood and Xuanwu Qi was very easy.

However, collecting Xuanwu Sacred Blood was a little troublesome.

The Spiritual Blood of a Cyan Fire Xuanwu was quite exuberant, and every drop of blood contained extremely powerful strength.

A drop of Holy Blood would cut through a rock weighing 5,000kg.

Moreover, Xuanwu Sacred Blood had been corroded by the evil spirit of the Pillar of the Vicious Sea. Thus, it needed to be purified drop by drop before being stored in the Auspicious Vase.

Zhang Ruochen spent three exhausting days refining only thirty drops of Xuanwu Sacred Blood.

"The Xuanwu Sacred Blood contains so much power. With my present cultivation, only ten drops can be purified in a day. It is just a waste of time."

Zhang Ruochen stopped purifying Xuanwu Sacred Blood, and he decided to wait until his cultivation became higher in the future.

"A bottle of Half-Saint flood dragon blood, eight bottles of Xuanwu Qi, and thirty drops of Xuanwu Sacred Blood are enough for a long time."

The body of the Cyan Fire Xuanwu was a giant treasure house.

Only one-tenth of the Xuanwu Qi would fill eight Auspicious Vases.

Each Auspicious Vase had plenty of room.

It took Huang Yanchen only a little refined Xuanwu Qi to go from the Medium State in the Heaven Realm all the way to the Second Change in the Fish Dragon Realm.

Now, each of the eight Auspicious Vases in Zhang Ruochen's hands contained 3,000 times the amount of Xuanwu Qi she had refined.

Of course, the higher the realm, the more Xuanwu Qi one needed to break through to the next realm.

Even a whole bottle of Xuanwu Qi might not be enough to support a Monk at the First Change in the Fish Dragon Realm breaking through to the Ninth Change in the Fish Dragon Realm.

Furthermore, each of the Nine Changes in the Fish Dragon Realm was a bottleneck. Thus, not everyone could change a fish into a dragon.

“There are eight bottles of Xuanwu Qi here, one bottle for senior sister apprentice Yanchen, one for senior sister apprentice Duanmu, one for elder brother Chang, one for senior brother, one for Master, one for Han Xue, and one for Kong Xuan. The last bottle... could be saved for the time being.”

Zhang Ruochen smiled with satisfaction, holding eight bottles of Xuanwu Qi in his hands.

Chapter 566: The Second Change in the Fish-dragon Realm

Absorbing Xuanwu Qi could quickly improve a monk’s cultivation. Of course, Zhang Ruochen would not enjoy such a treasure alone. He had already thought about who to give the treasure to.

He wanted to give the last bottle to the ninth sister and fourth brother in Yunwu Commandery. But Zhang Ruochen wasn’t sure if they could make it to the East Region Saint City before his wedding.

Zhang Ruochen walked out of the Scroll World with eight bottles of Xuanwu Qi.

Four days in the Scroll World was equal to one night in the external world.

It was early in the morning, and there was a faint chill in the air.

Zhang Ruochen found Kong Xuan and gave the six bottles of Xuanwu Qi to her. Zhang Ruochen asked her to give five bottles away, one for Huang Yanchen, Duanmu Xingling, Chang Qiqi, Si Xingkong, and Lei Jing.

Before she left, Zhang Ruochen specifically told her to hand over the Auspicious Vases to those five people in person.

Zhang Ruochen felt at ease about letting Kong Xuan handle the affairs. Kong Xuan’s cultivation had reached the Heaven Realm, so Zhang Ruochen knew she was perfectly capable of handling the task alone.

After Kong Xuan left, Zhang Ruochen called in Han Xue, Greedy Rabbit, and Monster Ape. He took the three of them to the Scroll World.

Blackie had taught Greedy Rabbit and Monster Ape top exercises, so the strength of the two beasts was not what it used to be.

Greedy Rabbit practiced was *“Sky Swallowing Knack”*, while Monster Ape practiced *“Elder Devil’s Ten Skies”*.

The evil energy and brutish aura emanating from the two beasts were very strong. As they followed Zhang Ruochen into the Scroll World, they seemed like two ferocious beasts who had just come out of reckless waste.

Especially the Monster Ape.

It was an archaean survival. After practicing "*Elder Devil's Ten Skies*", the giant monster ape archaean spirit's Blood Meridian was activated.

Now, its body was more than 60 meters tall; it looked just like a black hill. Each step the ape took made a rumbling sound and shook the ground.

As for Greedy Rabbit, it looked rather funny with a big round belly and its two white, sharp teeth.

However, the Greedy Rabbit should not be underestimated, especially because it was able to swallow the Demon's Heart of Di Yi. Besides, the technique, "*Sky Swallowing Knack*" that the rabbit practiced was not any weaker than "*Elder Devil's Ten Skies*", so its strength should not be underestimated.

Zhang Ruochen took them to the lower part of Sacred Prime Tree and said, "In the future, you two should follow Han Xue and practice in the Scroll World. Do not cause trouble."

Zhang Ruochen then took out two bottles of flood dragon blood and handed them to Greedy Rabbit and Monster Ape.

In the Xuanwu Primitive World, Zhang Ruochen killed a number of redcloud pythons and collected a large amount of flood dragon blood. Now it was time to use it to help the two beasts improve their cultivation.

The enhancement of their strength would also help Zhang Ruochen a lot.

At the same time, Zhang Ruochen also took out a bottle of Xuanwu Qi that had already been prepared. He handed it to Han Xue, patted her little face, and asked her to practice alone over there.

Having arranged everything, Zhang Ruochen could finally relax and begin improving his cultivation.

Never slack off on practicing. Only by constantly improving one's own strength could one do more meaningful things.

The first step, of course, was to refine the Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil and continue practicing the Treasured Body of Three Spirits.

In the Completion of Heaven Realm, Zhang Ruochen's body would reach saturation due to refining only one jin and two liangs of Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil. But now, he had broken into the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm and reached the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.

Breaking through two realms in a row would allow him to refine more Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil.

With his current level of cultivation, could Zhang Ruochen succeed in practicing Treasured Body of Three Spirits?

The Treasured Body of Three Spirits was as powerful as a Saintly Being.

That was why Zhang Ruochen was very eager to materialize the Treasured Body of Three Spirits.

As long as he succeeded, he would become stronger in the same realm.

“Refining a kilo of Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil could save a year’s penance. Even if the Treasured Body of Three Spirits was not achieved, I would obtain at least several years’ worth of cultivation .”

He took out the Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil and started the refining process.

In a blink of the eye, they were already halfway through the month.

Zhang Ruochen refined seven jins of Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil into his body and integrated it with his bones, muscles, and flesh.

Together with the one jin and two liangs of Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil he had refined before, he got a total of eight jins and two liangs and was quite close to the Treasured Body of Three Spirits.

Zhang Ruochen let out a sigh of relief and said, “My body has reached saturation and can no longer absorb any Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil. However, refining seven jins of Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil is comparable to my seven years of penance. My cultivation has improved from the Initial Stage of the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm to the Intermediate Stage of the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.”

“Once my cultivation reaches the Advanced Stage of the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm, I will be able to refine more Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil. Perhaps I can even practice the Treasured Body of Three Spirits.”

In total, Zhang Ruochen had reached the Ultimate Realm four times, so he was strong enough to fight against a higher realm.

However, apart from the advantages, there were disadvantages as well.

The disadvantage was that when breaking through a realm, Zhang Ruochen took ten or even a hundred times more effort compared to other Monks.

In the same realm, he would consume ten times or even a hundred times more resources than other monks.

Therefore, refining seven jins of Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil could only improve his cultivation from the Initial Stage of the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm to the Intermediate Stage of the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.

Next, his goal was to break into the Advanced Stage of the the First Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.

With a normal practice speed, it would take him ten years to break into the Advanced Stage of the first Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.

However, now that he had many top cultivation resources, such as the Dragon Pearl of the Black Skeleton Flood-dragon King, the Half-Saint flood dragon blood, the Xuanwu Qi, and Xuanwu Sacred Blood, Zhang Ruochen would be able to save a lot of practice time.

Each one of them was priceless.

Among them, the Dragon Pearl of Black Skeleton Flood-dragon King was the most precious. Zhang Ruochen wanted to take it for when he would go for a higher realm in the future.

In the end, Zhang Ruochen decided to take Xuanwu Sacred Blood.

Cyan-fire Xuanwu was a level eight savage beast, comparable to the Saint King. Each drop of his blood was like a top-level Pill that contained great Saint Power and Spiritual Blood.

Zhang Ruochen poured the first drop of Xuanwu Sacred Blood out of the Auspicious Vase and made it suspend over the palm of his left hand with Genuine Qi.

Like a red gem, the Xuanwu Sacred Blood started emitting a dazzling red light.

“Swish!”

Swallowing Xuanwu Sacred Blood felt like swallowing a mouthful of flames.

In an instant, Zhang Ruochen’s internal organs and meridians burned with a spluttering sound. Zhang Ruochen could not suppress the great power of Xuanwu Sacred Blood, so traces of flame were gushing out of his pores.

The flames spread out, and fires were burning within ten steps away of Zhang Ruochen; centering around his body.

Even with the Dragon Pearl protecting his body, Zhang Ruochen still felt extremely uncomfortable and his whole body was aching. His heart, lung, liver, and gall, to each meridian, each blood vessel, and each bone—they were all burning.

It seemed like he would be burned to ashes by the heat from Xuanwu Sacred Blood anytime soon.

Zhang Ruochen clenched his teeth, bearing with the pain. He slowly moved his hands, put his palms together and shouted, “The fifth level of ‘*Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Empyrean*’, Devil-taming Mysterious Fetus Heaven.”

Zhang Ruochen controlled his body with the powerful Martial Soul. Then he started to run the Genuine Qi in his body according to the exercises of the fifth level of “*Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Empyrean*”.

As the Genuine Qi ran faster, the 36 meridians absorbed Xuanwu Sacred Blood faster as well.

Gradually, Zhang Ruochen devoted himself to the cultivation process. While experiencing the mystery of “*Scripture of Emperor Ming’s Empyrean*”, he ran the exercises to absorb Xuanwu Sacred Blood.

He didn’t know how much time had passed, but all of a sudden Zhang Ruochen’s pain completely disappeared. Instead, he felt a comfortable feeling spreading throughout his whole body through his 36 meridians.

After absorbing all the Xuanwu Sacred Blood, Zhang Ruochen opened his eyes again, letting out a long sigh of relief.

His clothes had been burnt to ashes by the previous flames.

Zhang Ruochen looked at his skin and saw a layer of golden luster on it as if there were golden stripes flowing on the surface.

He was like a man made of gold, sitting cross-legged under the tree.

“Bang! Bang!”

Zhang Ruochen hit his chest with his palm twice, making a noise of metal collisions, like an iron mallet hitting a golden bell.

“The Xuanwu Sacred Blood is such a powerful treasure! One drop enables me to break through to the Second Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.”

It was true.

Zhang Ruochen had reached the Second Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.

Zhang Ruochen did not think that a drop of Xuanwu Sacred Blood would be that powerful that he almost died in the refining process.

Fortunately, Zhang Ruochen didn't take the Dragon Pearl of Black Skeleton Flood-dragon King. Otherwise, the power would be too unbearable, he might even explode and die in an instant.

Zhang Ruochen learned a lesson from this.

However, Zhang Ruochen managed to survive. Moreover, he broke through to the Second Change in the Fish-dragon Realm, which could be regarded as a blessing in disguise.

The Second Change in the Fish-dragon Realm was called “Skin Refining to Gold”.

The so-called “Skin Refining to Gold” was a technique that formed a layer of golden armor on the whole body of a monk. Its defensive power was several grades higher than the Golden Bell Shield and Iron Cloth.

In particular, Zhang Ruochen's golden skin was a blend of Cyan-fire Xuanwu and Golden Dragon's strength. Not only was its defensive power much stronger than that of the Monks in the same realm, but his strength also multiplied.

Of course, as Zhang Ruochen had just broken through the realm, he was unable to control the wildly increasing power, which was why his skin shined with golden brilliance and became hard as iron.

As long as he spent more time consolidating his realm, he would be able to control his powers pretty well.

It did not seem like it took much time for him to refine Xuanwu Sacred Blood, but in reality, Zhang Ruochen spent a total of six months refining it.

Plus the time spent in refining Bloody Saint-cultivating Soil, Zhang Ruochen had stayed in the Scroll World for nearly seven months.

In total, twenty days had passed in the external world.

When Zhang Ruochen broke through the Fish-dragon Realm, he was able to take his Internal Qi and refine the Heaven and Earth Spiritual Qi to become his own food; thus reaching the Foodless Realm. Because of this, he did not feel hunger and felt more energetic instead.

After refining the exercises of the fifth level of " *Scripture of Emperor Ming's Empyrean* " for another half a month, Zhang Ruochen finally got full control of the realm.

"Cool down!"

The golden light on Zhang Ruochen's body gradually faded, and finally disappeared.

His skin went back to normal and was no longer as hard as iron. His defensive power was not weaker, but stronger.

"With my current realm, it should not be difficult for me to successfully practice Treasured Body of Three Spirits, but the wedding is coming up, so I can no longer seclude myself for refining. I must go to the Chens first to send the betrothal gifts."

Zhang Ruochen stopped practicing and began to think about the betrothal gifts. What kind of betrothal gifts could show his sincerity?

Chapter 567: Chords of Gods Once again

Wedding engagement is an important affair and it demands a lot of time and attention. It is a ceremonial occasion to show honor to the bride's parents, and of course, a generous dowry is expected.

After all, the Chen Family is an Aristocratic Family with a history spanning from the Middle Ages, respectable ancestry, and affluence. The family has eight clans, and each clan is further divided into 72 tribes; there are also countless family generals and servants. Needless to say, they are a big family.

It was difficult to estimate the number of families paying close attention to the marriage between Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen. Numerous people kept a watchful eye on whether Zhang Ruochen had prepared sufficient dowry and gifts. If Zhang Ruochen's gifts were not adequate, the members of the Chen Family were ready to ridicule Huang Yanchen's parents.

Zhang Ruochen dedicated his heart and soul into preparing for this marriage. He was very generous and made sure he prepared lavish dowries and gifts to be sent over to the bride's family.

Knowing that Zhang Ruochen was going to send the dowry and wedding gifts to the Chen Family, his friends and relatives gathered at Zhang Ruochen's mansion to help decorate the bridal chamber and the mansion.

Si Xingkong and Chang Qiqi, were first to arrive. They were two of Zhang Ruochen's closest friends, and they have been that way throughout the time they were in Omen Ridge to Saint Academy.

Although Zhang Ruochen far exceeded them in his level of cultivation, he did not have an air of arrogance around them. He personally went to the gates to welcome them the moment they arrived.

Zhang Ruochen saw Si Xingkong and Chang Qiqi from afar and said, "Eldest brother apprentice and Elder brother apprentice Chang, how did you know I am going to present the bridal dowry and gifts to the Chen Family tomorrow? You know so much!"

Si Xingkong had not changed much since the time he first came to the East Region Saint City. He is still as carefree as before, he carried a wine gourd on his waist and had a smile on his face.

While he looked like an alcoholic, he possessed an air of calm and composure. He said, "First of all, we are brothers. Secondly, we all have left our faraway hometown to come to East Region Saint City in hopes of achieving our dreams. It is only right that we support and help each other. We have to come to help you out with your wedding."

Laughing, Chang Qiqi commented, "That's right. Eldest brother apprentice and I may not be great help, but at least we are good at helping you carry your boxes of gifts. Are you rejecting our help, junior fellow apprentice?"

Zhang Ruochen knew that Chang Qiqi was just joking. He appreciates their sweet thoughts and sincerely said, "Thank you, my elder brothers apprentice."

Si Xingkong went to Zhang Ruochen's side and whispered, "Don't thank us, we should be the ones to thank you. We have received the Xuanwu Qi you sent to us through Miss Kong Xuan. Even eldest brother apprentice was at a loss for words; we are so grateful."

"From now on, no matter where and when, I, Si Xingkong will be there for you. You just have to say a word, and I will be there."

Si Xingkong said these words fervently and with firmness. He had a determined expression, almost as if he was taking a vow.

Chang Qiqi's expression turned somber, and he said, "Count me in too."

Both Si Xingkong and Chang Qiqi are faithful and trustworthy friends. To have them vouch for their loyalty was definitely more valuable than 10 million Spiritual Crystals.

A low voice rang from outside the gate, saying, "You guys sound so happy, what are you guys chatting about?"

"Swosh!"

A burly figure shuttled through the gate in a series of shadows.

Lei Jing walked down the stone steps with his hands behind his back and firm and steady footsteps in austere grandeur. Streaks of Holy Qi could be seen emanating from his pores.

With every step he took, the Spiritual Qi under his feet ripples outwards like water waves.

Zhang Ruochen, Si Xingkong, and Chang Qiqi immediately went forward to welcome him.

All you need is one glance at Lei Jing, and you could see into Lei Jing's internal body. He has opened five holy meridians and reached the Eighth Change in the Fish-dragon Realm.

He was just a step away from cultivating the Glazed Treasured Body.

Zhang Ruochen clasped his hands together and bowed, "Greetings, Master."

Si Xingkong and Chang Qiqi simultaneously bowed in unison, saying, "Greetings, Master Lei."

Lei Jing set his piercing eyes on Zhang Ruochen and nodded his head. His serious expression turned into a smile and he said, "Lad, now that you are a sword saint disciple, do you still have to address me as your master?"

"A teacher for a day shall be a teacher for life," said Zhang Ruochen.

Lei Jing was just joking with Zhang Ruochen. After all, he had also received the Xuanwu Qi sent by Zhang Ruochen, and he knew Zhang Ruochen was a dutiful child. He would never forget the grace he received.

With Xuanwu Qi, there was hope for Lei Jing to reach the Half-Saint realm in his lifetime.

Lei Jing's expression turned grave. He said, "I just received news two days ago that Chords of God had appeared once again in the Battlefield of Primitive World.

Si Xingkong was somewhat surprised and he said, "It hasn't been long since junior fellow apprentice Zhang reached the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm. Don't tell me someone else did so as well?"

Zhang Ruochen's eyes narrowed and he asked, "Is it Di Yi?"

Lei Jing nodded and said, "It's indeed Yi Di, the young master of Black Market Excellence Hall. People said that he has returned to Eastern Region, escorted by the Black Market Saints after he broke through the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm. This is a bad news for you, Zhang Ruochen."

Chang Qiqi snorted and said, "Did he dare cause trouble in the East Region Saint City?"

"Not only is Di Yi a man of strategy and courage. He is a man who is capable of actually doing something," said Si Xingkong.

Lei Jing started to worry, and he said, "Zhang Ruochen killed the Yellow God Emissary, captured Orange Star Emissary, and even the death of Green-robed Emissary was attributed to Ruochen."

"You can say Black Market Excellent Hall had lost all its honor to Zhang Ruochen. They wouldn't call themselves the Black Market Excellence Hall if they weren't going to come seeking revenge on Zhang Ruochen."

"The Black Market will not miss the golden opportunity to attack during Zhang Ruochen's wedding on the 7th of this month. They would do all they could to regain their honor."

"I've heard that some senior evil superiors had been spreading malicious rumors about killing Zhang Ruochen on his wedding day and taking captive of his bride. They wanted Zhang Ruochen to pay. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."

Si Xingkong snorted, clenched his fists and said, "What a bunch of arrogant scoundrels. How dare they plan to plunder in East Region Saint City, such outlaws."

Chang Qiqi stared at Zhang Ruochen and said, "Don't worry, junior fellow apprentice Zhang. East Region Saint City is not a place for these Black Market Evil Warriors to mess with."

Zhang Ruochen was not one bit fearful, but it does not mean that he was not worried at all. He said, "East Region Saint City is a relatively safe place. However, the Black Market is very powerful and has a

long history in Kunlun's field. The undercover agents they trained have infiltrated the major forces are deeply rooted within organizations. We have to be careful."

That evening, a family banquet was held in Zhang Ruochen's mansion.

Among the guests were Si Xingkong, Chang Qiqi, Lei Jing, Luo Shuihan, who were monks representing Saint Luo Gentry. Lu Fantian, was there too and he was the monk representing Sword Sanctum, and Nie Honglou, the deputy commander of Silver Sky Mercenary Group,... and so on.

Since it was just a family banquet, it was not grand enough for senior monks to attend. It was mainly a gathering for the younger generation monks.

Zhang Ruochen met with many familiar friends in the banquet, except Duanmu Xingling.

As he inquired about Duanmu Xingling, it was said that she had left East Region Saint City a few months back and had not returned since.

For some unknown reason, Zhang Ruochen felt a little lost.

After all, among all his senior apprentices, Duanmu Xingling was the one with the most intimate relationship with him.

Although Duanmu Xingling was part of the heresy sect, Zhang Ruochen treated her as his confidante.

Zhang Ruochen knew very well that Duanmu Xingling left East Region Saint City to carry out a task Zhang Ruochen had delegated to her, which was to protect Ninth Commandery Princess and Zhang Shaochu of Yunwu Commandery.

For several months in a row, Duanmu Xingling had not returned to East Region Saint City. Could it be because the masters sent by the Black Market to Yunwu Commandery was too powerful for her, or was she deliberately avoiding Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen's wedding?

A sacred mountain was suspended in mid-air above the Seventh District.

The sacred mountain was about 333 meters above the ground and it was surrounded by clouds of white fog. Looking up from the ground, one could vaguely see red vermillions and a vague image of the towers that lay behind the white fog.

Di Yi was wearing a long white robe and had a metal mask on his face. He was standing at the edge of the sacred mountain, looking down at the lights below with his sharp eyes.

His eyes came to rest on Zhang Ruochen's mansion on the Avenue of Kings.

Di Yi's voice had a magnetic draw as he smiled and said, "Cyan-Robe, Zhang Ruochen's mansion is magnificently lit up, and there's so much bustle and stir in it. It makes me want to join in the fun."

Cyan-robed Emissary was standing behind Di Yi, carrying a sword. Her slim figure cast a long shadow under the shining moonlight.

She said, "Young master, it seems like you can't wait to take on Zhang Ruochen."

Di Yi's lips curled up slightly as he said, "It's a good thing to be born in the same age as Zhang Ruochen."

“It if weren’t for his provocation, my cultivation may have not been able to reach Heartless Saint Being level. If not for the pressure he put on me, I may have not been able to break through the Ultimate Realm of the Heaven Realm.”

“He is like a millstone that continues to sharpen my knife.”

Cyan-robed Emissary said, “It’s a pity he’s not part of the Black Market, otherwise he’ll probably be your best friend, young master.”

Di Yi was an arrogant man. He looked up at the crescent moon and said, “There is no one in the world today who is worthy of my friendship. There are only six people who are fit to be my enemy. He’s one of the more important ones.”

Cyan-robed Emissary asked in curiosity, “Who are the other five and what is their status?”

“Of these five people, I would think you know some of them. However, there are some whose names you probably have never heard of. Regardless, they may not be lower than Zhang Ruochen and me in terms of their natural talent,” said Di Yi with a laugh.

“Tomorrow, Zhang Ruochen will be going to the Chen Family to deliver the bridal dowry and gifts. The day after will be the actual wedding. As his enemy, surely I would have to send my congratulations. Have you prepared my gifts for Zhang Ruochen?”

Cyan-robed Emissary’s expression subtly changed. She quickly knelt down before Di Yi and said, “Forgive me, young master. We have encountered some problems with Yunwu Commandery. None of the masters we sent forth had lived to return. Action... failed.”

Chapter 568: Saint Prince’s Mansion

The smile on Di Yi’s face immediately disappeared. He said in dismay, “Your only task was to capture two mediocre warriors, but you can’t even accomplish such a simple task. You have let me down this time round, Cyan-robe.”

Cyan-robed Emissary said, “Zhang Ruochen’s forth elder brother and ninth elder sister weren’t strong at all. However, there is a group of mysterious masters secretly protecting them.”

“On the first try, I sent out two teams of glazed knights. However, all of them mysteriously died before they even got the chance to exit the Eastern Holy Land.”

“On the second occasion, I dispatched 37 top-notch killers led by Xu Tiantu and divided them into six groups. Each group took a separate route, but they vanished before arriving at Yunwu Commandery, and we lost contact.”

On hearing this, Di Yi looked somber and said, “You may get up first!”

“Thank you, master,” said Cyan-robed Emissary as she stood up.

Di Yi said thoughtfully, "Xu Tiantu was well-known since 60 years ago, and he ranks seventh amongst the killer of Blood Cloud Tower. Even a killer like him disappeared... There must be some great force that is secretly helping Zhang Ruochen."

Cyan-robed Emissary said, "It had to be Martial Market Bank. They are the only ones who possess such great power in the Eastern Region; the only ones who can secretly annihilate the masters I sent out."

Di Yi nodded and said, "What about the third time?"

Cyan-robed Emissary said, "On the third occasion, it was predecessor Half-Saint Yuanyin who personally went to Yunwu Commandery."

"Since it was predecessor Half-Saint Yuanyin who went, I am sure he will complete his mission," Yi Di breathed a sigh of relief.

"Whoosh!"

A skinny old man, who looked like an enormous black bat, flew to the boundary of the sacred mountain towards them. He came to rest on a high plateau behind Di Yi and Cyan-robed Emissary.

Di Yi and Cyan-robed Emissary immediately saluted the old man, greeting him, "We pay our respects to you, Half-Saint YuanYing."

Half-Saint Yuanying's withered hands were covering his chest. Blood was pouring out from between his fingers, dripping onto the ground.

Di Yi and Cyan-robed Emissary were shocked to find that even Half-Saint Yuanying, someone with a high level of cultivation, could be wounded by his opponent.

"How did this happen, predecessor? Did Martial Market Bank send forth masters of Half-Saint Class just to protect two ordinary warriors?" asked Yi Di.

Half-Saint Yuanying shook his head and replied, "It wasn't the Martial Market Bank. It was Half-Saint Muhan from Moon Worship Demonic Sect. I did a thorough investigation and found that the two teams we sent forth had all been killed by masters of Moon Worship Demonic Sect."

"How could it be the Moon Worship Demonic Sect?"

Di Yi was taken aback. He started pondering and said, "Unless... could Zhang Ruochen be related to Moon Worship Demonic Sect?"

"I am badly injured, so I shouldn't be talking too much."

In a flash, Half-Saint Yuanying disappeared from the high plateau and transported himself to a three-story high palace to nurse his wound.

Cyan-robed Emissary was somewhat surprised, and she asked, "Young master, this is very strange."

Di Yi nodded and said, "There is no reason for Moon Worship Demonic Sect to wage a war against us, the Black Market, for the sake of Zhang Ruochen. Don't tell me, Zhang Ruochen... no, that's impossible."

Cyan-robed Emissary said, "Young master, are you suspecting that Zhang Ruochen is the Demon Son of the Moon Worship Demonic Sect?"

Di Yi shook his head and said, "That shouldn't be the case. I have acquainted myself with the Demon Son of the Moon Worship Demonic Sect. Their aura is completely different; they are definitely not the same person. However, Zhang Ruochen must have some deeper relationship with Worship Moon Demonic Sect even if he is not the Demon's son."

"Cyan-robe, I am handing this matter over to you to investigate and find out the truth."

"I will do that now."

Cyan-robed Emissary took three steps backward, turned around and left in an instant.

Di Yi looked down and stared intently at the brightly lit Seventh District once again. He narrowed his eyes and muttered, "Who exactly are you, Zhang Ruochen?"

The Blue Star Emissary approached Di Yi from the back, and said, "Young master, people from the powerful family of Four Saints are now preparing to capture the bride. I'm afraid tomorrow will be full of the hustle and bustle."

"Really? Hm Hm! Why don't you go prepare a bridal dowry on my behalf; I'm going to join in the fun in East Region Saint Mansions tomorrow," Di Yi said, laughing.

How audacious for the young master of the Black Market to go to the East Region Saint Mansions?

People who don't know Di Yi well enough would think that Di Yi is crazy.

However, Blue Star Emissary was sure his master had a plan before he dared approach Zhang Ruochen and take Huang Yanchen by force.

He must be confident that he would succeed if he dared to go ahead.

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Concubine Lin had already sent for servants to prepare the basic dowry, which filled up ten carriages.

Apart from that, Zhang Ruochen specially prepared three other important gifts and loaded them into three jade caskets respectively.

In the morning when the sun had just risen, Zhang Ruochen got onto his Ember Kylin at the first light of dawn. He traversed through the Avenue of Kings while carrying ten carriages, all trailing behind him as he moved toward East Region Saint Mansions.

Since Zhang Ruochen was on his way to present the bridal dowry and gifts, he had an array of men following him.

Sword Saint Xuanji sent Zhu Hongtao and Wan Ke, the two most senior disciples, to follow Zhang Ruochen to the Chens.

Lei Jing, Si Xingkong and Chang Qiqi also escorted Zhang Ruochen on this trip.

In order to establish a close relationship with Zhang Ruochen, the Chen family made sure to go all the way for the upcoming wedding. They had fetched Huang Yanchen into Chen family's main mansion within the East Region Saint Mansions.

East Region Saint Mansions was situated at the middle of Jinhong Mainland. Although it was said to be a mansion, it was more like an entire city as it covers 800 miles of land.

Zhang Ruochen rode on the back of the Ember Kylin and flew. An hour later, the city wall came into view at the horizon.

The wall was 99 meters tall and was carved out of white jade. Under the sun, it reflected the glaring sunlight which was rather piercing to the eye.

In fact, that was not even the city wall. It was the fence to the courtyard of the East Region Saint Mansions.

Flying closer, Zhang Ruochen could see that within the jade city wall, there were numerous closely packed, luxurious buildings that stretch along the horizon.

Moreover, there was even a holy meridian buried below the jade stone city.

Standing on the periphery of the city, one could easily feel the rapidly increasing concentration of Spiritual Qi. One could even see streaks of Holy Qi rising from the ground and dissipating into the air.

Staring at the gigantic city of jade stone, Chang Qiqi was awed, he could not help but be stunned by the view. He swallowed and asked, "Is this really... the East Region Saint Mansions?"

Zhu Hongtao, the second elder brother apprentice, threw Chang Qiqi a glance and laughed, "Are you intimidated already? To tell you the truth, the East Region Saint Mansions stretches over 800 miles of land. The holy meridian underground is the holy root of the entire East Region Saint City. It had been buried here for over hundreds of millions of years, and its thickness is twice that of Saint Academy's holy meridian."

"It is said that the East Region Saint Mansions nurtured a total of 200,000 government soldiers and that even the soldiers with the lowest level of cultivation had reached the Completion of the Earth Realm. All the servants, maids and governors totaled up to over five million, and there were countless precious Spiritual Doses and savage beasts.

"Don't treat East Region Saint Mansions as a mere mansion, but rather as a small country."

Lei Jing heaved a sigh. With a serious look in his eyes, he said, "Lord of Eastern Realm, you certainly live up to your reputation."

Zhang Ruochen smiled and said, "This family lasted from the medieval ages until today; it is obvious that they are a strong family. East Region Saint Mansions are but a small part of the Chens' possessions. It could barely represent the family's wealth."

Zhu Hongtao and Wang Ke, who were the second and third elder brother apprentice respectively, nodded in unison.

The East Region Saint Mansions were merely the Chens' headquarters.

The real strength of the Chen family was its control over the 36 mansions on Eastern Holy Land as well as 12,000 commanderies. On top of that, there were countless base warriors that submitted themselves to the Chens.

It was all because of the Chens' great power and deep influence on the Eastern Region that even Empress Chi Yao did not dare to touch them.

While they were still 30 miles away from East Region Saint Mansions, Zhang Ruochen and his escort landed and started walking towards the west gate of Saint Prince's Mansion.

The Chens had already sent people to welcome them. The people lined on both sides of the avenue were from different ethnicities and clans and there were also countless servants among them.

The Ember Kylin Zhang Ruochen was riding on was actually a medium level savage beast. When it transformed into its true body, it was like a moving hill of flames.

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

Each step it took leaves a large hole in the ground.

Today, Zhang Ruochen was in high spirits. He was full of vitality and looked dapper. With his hair tied up in a cap, he was dressed in a purple flying dragon robe, girded with a jade belt on his waist, and he wore a pair of colored glaze boots.

Adorned in such apparel, coupled with the fact that he was riding on an awesome Ember Kylin, made Zhang Ruochen look elegant and handsome.

When the young ladies of the Chen Family saw Zhang Ruochen, who was riding on the Kylin, they were all mesmerized. There had to be many who were secretly jealous of Huang Yanchen.

"Zhang Ruochen, the number one on the heaven board, truly match up to his talents."

"Not only is Zhang Ruochen a sword saint disciple, but he is also very handsome. Who is the lucky foreign girl who has won his heart?"

"That foreign girl is indeed not worthy of the sword saint disciple," a young woman, whose cultivation had reached the Completion of Heaven Realm, said jealously.

Her name was Chen Lingchan. She was the proud daughter the Chens. Not only was she talented, her good looks could render her one of the three most beautiful woman in the Chen Family, as she was even more beautiful than Yuan Yanchen.

In Chen Lingchan's opinion, among all the young women of the Chen family, she was the only one who is worthy to be paired with a sword saint disciple. As for Huang Yanchen, she was merely a foreign woman.

After seeing Zhang Ruochen, the other beautiful daughters in the Chen Family started to harbor the same thoughts as Chen Lingchan.

Their noble birth renders them worthy to be paired with a sword saint disciple.

However, for Zhang Ruochen, no matter how the other girls tried to flirt with him, he only had eyes for Huang Yanchen who stood far from him.

Today, Huang Yanchen was exceptionally beautiful. She adorned a long blue dress and her flawless fair skin made her look like a snow fairy.

Chapter 569: Marriage Proposal by Four Powerful Great Saint Families

Qianshui Commandery Prince and Half-saint Liuli stood side by side right at the front. They were Huang Yanchen's parents, but they were actually not expected to come out and receive Zhang Ruochen since they were the elders of the family.

However, Zhu Hongtao and Wan Ke, who were escorting Zhang Ruochen, were famous superiors in the Eastern Region—their power and seniority befitted the branch head of Half-Saint Liuli's tribe to welcome them in person.

Apart from the family's leader, each of the 8 major branches and 72 tribes had its own branch head.

The branch heads made up the high-level management of the Chen family. Each branch head was the leader of a tribe, in charge of its management.

The branch head of the tribe to which Half-saint Liuli, Huang Yanchen, and Qianshui Commandery Prince belonged was Half-saint Liuli's grandfather, who was also Huang Yanchen's great-grandfather.

His name was Chen Ji. He was almost 200 years old and was one of the superiors in the Eastern Region. However, due to old age, he now seldom went out in public.

The marriage between Huang Yanchen and Zhang Ruochen signified the union between the Chens and Sword Saint Xuanji, therefore their wedding was a significant event.

For this reason, Chen Ji, as the branch head, had to preside over the entire event no matter what.

Second and third elder brother apprentices Zhu Hongtao and Wan Ke walked right at the forefront of the company.

Zhang Ruochen, being a junior, naturally fell in behind the two elder brother apprentices.

Wan Ke had a relatively stable personality. He was cultured and well-mannered. Even when he was still some distance away, he saluted with his hands folded and respectfully greeted Chen Ji.

Consequently, a smiling Chen Ji, who was holding a walking stick, took three steps forward and saluted back with his hands folded, saying "Half-Saint Wan Ke and Saint Hong Tao, there is no need for you to stand on ceremony with me. Since we will be in-laws from this day on, we may do away with all the formalities, we don't want to act like strangers."

Although Chen Ji was much older than Wan Ke, his level of cultivation could not even compare with Wan Ke's.

In the Realm of the Holy Road, Wan Ke was at a slightly higher position than Chen Ji.

Beside Wan Ke was Zhu Hongtao, Zhang Ruochen's second elder brother apprentice. Although Zhu Hongtao was not human, he was still the Sword Saint Xuanji's second disciple and had lived over 600 years. Therefore his level of cultivation had reached the Saint's Realm.

In terms of seniority, Zhu Hongtao's position as a saint far exceeded Chen Ji's.

For these two reasons, even though he was a branch head representing the Chens, Chen Ji was careful not to be negligent in any way before these two people.

Wan Ke glanced at Zhang Ruochen, smiled and said, "Since our junior fellow apprentice is here at the Chens' to present his bridal gifts, rightfully our Master should have accompanied him. However, he had some matters to attend to at the last minute, therefore my elder brother apprentice and I have come on his behalf. I hope predecessor Chen Ji wouldn't mind."

Chen Ji was aware that Wan Ke said these words as pleasantries.

If Sword Saint Xuanji had been the one accompanying Zhang Ruochen, by virtue of his status and position, the head of the Chen family would have had to come out to receive them.

Smiling, Chen Ji said, "Let's go into the house first so we can discuss the wedding of these two youngsters in detail. This way please!"

The East Region Saint Mansions' western gate slowly opened, making a "buzzing" sound.

Moments later, the two bronze doors of the gate, weighing one million catties each and filled with carvings of dragons, were fully opened. They opened up to a 40-foot wide jade avenue leading all the way to the depths of the mansions.

At first glance, it looked like one would not be able to see the end of the jade avenue from that point.

Chen Ji, Wan Ke and Zhu Hongtao led the way while Half-saint Liuli, Qianshui Commandery Prince, Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen followed closely behind. Si Xingkong and Chang Qiqi were right at the back with the ten carriages of bridal gifts and dowry.

The line of people chatted and laughed as they headed for the main gate.

In the distance, two elders stood at the top of a twelve-story purple gold tower, looking over at the bustling scene outside the west gate.

The green-robed elder shook his head and sighed. "Elder Chen Ji is so fortunate to have one of his descendants marry a sword saint disciple. Because of this marriage union, I fear his tribe's opinion and words would carry more weight than those of ours from now on."

"This is so true. Chen Ji's tribe is one of the bottom tribes among the 72 tribes in the Chen family. However now they are backed by the sword saints, and they have in their midst Zhang Ruochen, who is God's favored son of this generation. I can't reconcile with the fact that their position gets to rise to the top so easily."

There was a chilling light coming from the eyes of the white-robed elder. His withered hand held on to the hard railing of the purple gold tower, leaving an impression on it as if it were made of clay.

Both the green- and the white-robed elders were branch heads of the Chen family, and they were both stronger than Chen Ji.

The two elders were naturally disgruntled about the marriage arranged between Chen Ji's tribeswoman and the sword saint disciple because this would disrupt the balance among the 72 tribes of the Chen family.

Within the Chen family, some were rejoicing, some were worried, and naturally, there were those who were jealous.

"Rumble!"

From the horizon, four teams of people on their carts and carriages were seen hurrying toward the west gate of East Region Saint Mansions.

A clear, loud voice came from one of the teams, saying, "We, Saint Xu Gentry, are here to propose marriage to the East Region Saint Mansions."

Subsequently, three more voices rang out in quick succession. "We, Saint Xi Gentry, are here to propose marriage to the East Region Saint Mansions."

"We, Saint Zuo Gentry, are here to propose marriage to the East Region Saint Mansions."

"We, Saint Shen Gentry, are here to propose marriage to the East Region Saint Mansions."

Moments later, the carts and carriages belonging to the four powerful Great Saint families gathered outside the west gate in a row.

Each team was immense—made up of thousands of people with 500 carriages of dowry pulled by 500 savage beasts.

Zhang Ruochen's ten carriages of bridal gifts and dowry seemed stingy compared to each of the teams' 500 carriages of bridal gifts and dowry.

The four Great Saint families had always been at loggerheads with Zhang Ruochen. Today, they had chosen exactly the same day to come to the Chen family to propose marriage with a dowry 50 times greater than that of Zhang Ruochen.

Anyone could see that they were here to make trouble.

Chen Ji's branch of the Chens, as well as Zhang Ruochen and his company, were clearly displeased.

In contrast, some tribes in the Chen family looked as if they were enjoying watching their predicament.

"What a surprise. The four powerful Great Saint families have come to propose marriage to the Chens on the same day. I wonder which God's favored daughters they have their eyes on?"

"As a sword saint disciple, Zhang Ruochen only prepared ten carriages of dowry. On the other hand, each of the four powerful Great Saint families prepared 500 carriages of dowry. They are obviously here to humiliate Zhang Ruochen."

“The four powerful Great Saint families are incredibly rude to come and mess with the East Region Saint Mansions. What outlaws they are! Aren’t they aware who the Lord is over the Eastern Region?”

...

Since the four powerful Great Saint families were here to propose marriage, the Chens had to receive them in a manner befitting an Aristocratic Family in the Middle Age and not offend them.

Chen Ji went forward to receive them on behalf of the Chens. As he looked toward the team from Saint Xu Gentry, he spotted Demi-saint Sandao in one of the luxurious carriages. Chen Ji said to him, “What a surprise to see you, Demi-saint Sandao. You actually came personally with such immense gifts. May I know who you are proposing to?”

Demi-saint Sandao emerged from the ancient carriage, saluted Chen Ji with hands folded, and smiled as he said, “You may not be aware, Brother Chen Ji, that a Saint Xu Gentry junior has fallen in love with a talented daughter from your family. Today, I have come with him to propose marriage to your family.”

Chen Ji’s face fell.

Chen Ji was very much aware of the grudges between Zhang Ruochen and the four powerful Great Saint families. He didn’t believe that their intention for coming here was to propose marriage to the Chens.

Why had the Great Saint families come to mess with this wedding?

“It is outrageous for Saint Xu Gentry to come here openly to make trouble. Is it trying to steal the bride?”

“Aren’t Zhang Ruochen and Huang Yanchen engaged already? It is grossly inappropriate for the four powerful Great Saint families to propose marriage to her.”

“Even if they are not here to steal the bride, they must have intended to provoke Zhang Ruochen. Didn’t you see the 500 carriages of dowry and gifts each of them brought?”

The members of the Chen family started murmuring among themselves after they heard Demi-saint Sandao’s words.

Zhang Ruochen, who was standing at the rear, tapped his chin gently as if he was hesitating. He did not know whether to laugh or not.

Saint Xu Gentry was one of the most stubborn families he had ever come across. It had sent two disciples into the Battlefield of Primitive World to kill him, but they ended up getting killed by him instead.

“Are they still not going to give up?”

From the looks of it, they must have been infuriated by the humiliation.

No one could guess what they intended to do at this moment.

Demi-saint Sandao looked at Zhang Ruochen’s 10 carriages of dowry with disdain. In a mocking tone, he said, “Brother Chen Ji, the 500 carriages of dowry and gifts I brought are all priceless treasures. If this marriage proposal is accepted, I will send another 500 carriages carrying Spiritual Crystals to you.”

Chen Ji quickly said, "It is not about the dowry. The crucial thing is—"

Before Chen Ji could finish his sentence, Demi-saint Sandao continued speaking. "I understand and please be at ease, Brother Chen Ji. This marriage proposal is coming from Saint Xu Gentry's most excellent young man."

Zhu Hongtao had been holding in his dissatisfaction until he could no longer bear it. He gently pushed Chen Ji behind him with his arm and said, "Elder Chen Ji, please stand back and let me reason with him."

Chen Ji was familiar with Zhu Hongtao's barbaric temperament, so he did not get angry and retreated instead.

Allowing Zhu Hongtao to deal with the situation was the wise thing to do since Chen Ji did not wish to offend the four powerful Great Saint families.

Zhu Hongtao, standing 4.3 meters tall, stood before Demi-saint Sandao and bellowed. "What do you want, Demi-saint Sandao? Do you intend to steal the bride?"

As Demi-saint Sandao lifted his head to look at Zhu Hongtao, he began to fret a little.

"Why did Sword Saint Xuanji send Zhu Hongtao to come to the Chens?"

"Why did Zhu Hongtao, who is in the class of Saints, have to be involved in such a trivial matter as the marriage of these youngsters?"

The four powerful Great Saint families had all thought that, at most, a Half-Saint class senior brother or sister apprentice would accompany Zhang Ruochen to the Chens to present the dowry.

They had not expected Zhu Hongtao to appear at Zhang Ruochen's side.

Chapter 570: Bu Qianfan?

Demi-saint Sandao frowned and thought he had made a miscalculation.

Not only was Zhu Hongtao widely known for being insolent and unreasonable, he was also terrifyingly strong. Demi-saint Sandao did not dare take him on so he took a step backward.

Demi-saint Sandao saluted with his hands folded and forced himself to smile as he said, "Of course not. How would I have the audacity to steal the bride in the presence of Saint Hongtao? Love between a boy and a girl is a natural emotion. Are you saying only Zhang Ruochen is allowed to propose marriage to the Chens but not our Saint Xu Gentry?... You... what are you trying to do?..."

Zhu Hongtao would have none of Demi-saint Sandao's nonsense. He stretched out his arm to grab Demi-saint Sandao.

Demi-saint Sandao's face fell and he made an attempt to dodge.

However, Zhu Hongtao's outstretched arm carried with it a great mysterious power. His palm enlarged so that Demi-saint Sandao was unable to escape, ending up in Zhu Hongtao's grip.

Zhu Hongtao seized the collar of Demi-saint Sandao's cloak, lifting him as if he were a small chick.

Instantly, Demi-saint Sandao felt his strength drain out of him, leaving him defenseless.

Zhu Hongtao opened his fist-sized eyes wide and glared fiercely at Demi-saint Sandao. Bringing the half-saint up to his face, he bellowed. "Don't you know that my junior apprentice is already engaged to the girl? How audacious of you to come here to steal the bride. Do you want me to tear you up?"

The sound waves produced by Zhu Hongtao were propagated outwards with great power as it traveled into Demi-saint Sandao's ears.

He felt great pain in his eardrums. Darkness came over him as he almost fainted due to Zhu Hongtao's bellowing.

"I didn't expect Zhu Hongtao's cultivation to be at such a terrifying level."

Demi-saint Sandao's face fell. By his estimation, even if Saint Xu Gentry's strongest warrior were here, he would not be able to withstand Zhu Hongtao.

Zhu Hongtao was too barbaric to even have a reasonable conversation.

More importantly, however, was that his level of cultivation was just too high.

The ferocious look in Zhu Hongtao's eyes intimidated Demi-saint Sandao. Fearing that he might be torn up at any moment, his face became drained of color.

Zhu Hongtao asked coldly, "Are you going to submit to me?"

Demi-saint Sandao clenched his teeth and refused to yield.

How could he, being a Half-Saint of a powerful family of Saints, surrender so easily?

Demi-saint Sandao turned pleading eyes toward Chen Ji who was standing afar.

The look in his eyes seemed to say that the Chens should handle the situation since it was happening in their territory.

However, Chen Ji pretended he had not seen what was going on. He ignored Demi-saint Sandao's pleading eyes and fixed his eyes on the ground as if he was counting the grains of sand.

Three other Half-Saints were present to propose marriage to the Chens on behalf of their respective Great Saint families.

However, seeing Demi-saint Sandao's miserable state, none of them could pluck up the courage to go forward and help resolve the conflict.

It was no joke to offend Zhu Hongtao, the second disciple of Sword Saint Xuanji. Even if the four Half-Saints from the four powerful Great Saint families worked together, they would be no match for him.

"Slap!"

Zhu Hongtao slapped Demi-saint Sandao's cheek and asked again, "Are you going to submit?"

Demi-saint Sandao's cap flew off his head and landed on the floor.

Instantly, his left cheek became red and swollen, blood tinged the corner of his eye and lips. However, the expression in his eyes remained firm and sharp, indicating that he would not bow to Zhu Hongtao's power.

It was outrageous! He was, after all, a prominent Half-Saint. It was humiliating for him to be given a tight slap in front of a huge audience.

Whatever will happen to his dignity as a Half-Saint?

How could he even show his face?

How was he to hold his head up?

To him, Zhu Hongtao's barbaric act was worse than death.

Demi-saint Sandao clenched his teeth as he began to harness a ball of red-hot flames within his Qi Sea.

Flames began to escape his nostrils, eventually wrapping around his entire body. Simultaneously, a great force of Saint Power exploded from Demi-saint Sandao's body and two streams of power surged forward from his arms.

In great rage, Demi-saint Sandao said, "How dare you humiliate me, Zhu Hongtao..."

"Slap!"

Once again, Zhu Hongtao slapped Demi-saint Sandao with the back of his hand. Only this time, it was on his right cheek.

His five fingers were like five iron pillars pushing the flames back into Demi-saint Sandao's body.

The power painstakingly gathered by Demi-saint Sandao dissipated in an instant. Both of his cheeks were swollen and bruised, and he was bleeding through his nose.

"Are you going to submit?" Zhu Hongtao raged.

Seeing Demi-saint Sandao's stubbornness, Zhu Hongtao gave him another slap that almost disfigured him.

Two bloody teeth rolled out of his mouth.

"Slap!"

"Slap!"

...

Each of Zhu Hongtao's heavy-handed slaps was accompanied by a question: "Do you submit?"

Even the bystanders felt excruciating pain on their faces.

Everyone jolted with every single slap on Demi-saint Sandao's cheek.

Half-saint Qingxi was an elegant and beautiful lady from Saint Xi Gentry who looked around 30 years old.

She could not bear to see what was happening and wanted to persuade Zhu Hongtao to stop.

As soon as she took a step forward, though, Zhu Hongtao lifted his head and glared at her. “Do you, the Saint Xi Gentry, intend to steal the bride too?”

Half-saint Qingxi’s heart dropped. She clearly saw the state Demi-saint Sandao was in, so she stopped in her tracks.

With a single look, Half-Saint Qingxi was deterred by Zhu Hongtao.

The two other Half-Saints from the remaining Great Saint families gave each other a knowing look and then retreated with their team of people.

It was just too brutal!

Zhu Hongtao proceeded to pin Demi-saint Sandao to the ground while continuously hitting him. No one dared to stand up and dissuade Zhu Hongtao.

Chang Qiqi and Si Xingkong secretly felt a sense of satisfaction.

Chang Qiqi said, “Second elder brother apprentice is too gruff. Demi-saint Sandao is totally helpless and unable to fight back. Isn’t he worried that he might offend Saint Xu Gentry? Demi-saint Sandao is a Half-Saint, after all!”

Si Xingkong smiled and said, “With second elder brother apprentice’s level of cultivation, why would he be afraid of a degenerated family of saints?”

Actually, Zhang Ruochen, of all people, was the most shocked.

Zhu Hongtao’s behavior went completely against Zhang Ruochen’s idea of a Saint. This was the first time in his life – both past and present – that he met such a barbaric saint.

However, when he remembered that Zhu Hongtao was not human, he was able to reconcile his thoughts.

After all, to fight until the opponent succumbs was the way of savage beasts.

As the saying went, “You may kill a man, but don’t insult him.” Moreover, Xu Sandao was a well-known Half-Saint.

It made people wonder how Xu Sandao was feeling at that moment.

“Are you going to submit?”

Zhu Hongtao raised his arm, about to strike again.

Demi-saint Sandao raised his bloody hand and said in a whisper, “Yes... I submit to you...”

“Finally!”

Zhu Hongtao released Demi-saint Sandao, rubbed his sore palm and said, “Since you submit, get up quickly and leave with your company! You must be out of your mind to even think of stealing the bride when my junior fellow apprentice is the groom-to-be.”

Demi-saint Sandao got up from the ground, looking like a swollen pig. As if he had been wronged, he said, "It's a misunderstanding... a misunderstanding. We are not here to steal the bride, but to make a marriage proposal."

Zhu Hongtao said, "Aren't they the same thing? My junior fellow apprentice is engaged to Miss Huang. Aren't you trying to steal the bride when you propose marriage to her?"

A young man from Saint Xu Gentry came forward and looked respectfully at Zhu Hongtao. He said in a cautious tone, "In response to Predecessor Hongtao's question, I would like to clarify that the lady this junior has a soft spot for is Miss Chen Lingchan, not Zhang Ruochen's fiancée, Huang Yanchen."

"Is that so?"

"It is so."

Zhu Hongtao was stupefied for a second before he glanced at Demi-saint Sandao and said, "So it was a misunderstanding? Why didn't you clarify earlier? Come, come, let me have a look at your injuries."

Demi-saint Sandao immediately shunned Zhu Hongtao and stared angrily at him. Filled with rage, he muttered under his breath. "Did you even give me a chance to speak?"

Although the four Great Saint families were wealthy and influential, they did not have the audacity to make trouble within the grounds of the Chens.

The most pressing reason they had come to propose marriage to the Chens was so that they can intermarry with the family.

Of course, having the opportunity to intimidate and humiliate Zhang Ruochen was icing on the cake.

Demi-saint Sandao never expected that he himself would be beaten up by Zhu Hongtao before Saint Xu Gentry's God's favored son could even do anything to intimidate Zhang Ruochen.

"This is such wonderful timing. While the four Great Saint families are not here to steal the bride, I have come to profess my love for Miss Yanchen. Even though I know she is engaged, I couldn't help but wish that I would get the chance to compete with Brother Zhang."

A handsome man in a white soft armor walked out from amongst the crowd.

Holding a jade fan in his hand and smiling, he walked directly toward Huang Yanchen.

The young man looked like he was in his twenties. He had a pair of sickle-shaped brows, deep-set eyes, and a sharp nose. He was indeed very handsome.

Even though he was smiling casually, he could not hide the smell of blood, murder, and war that was on him. It was as if he was a soldier who had just come from the battlefield.

"Who is this man? Where did he find the courage to come and steal the bride? Did he not see Demi-saint Sandao getting brutally beaten just now?"

"He looks rather familiar, we must have seen him before."

Zhang Ruochen looked a little puzzled when he saw the young man. He immediately went six steps forward to stand face to face with the man and said, "Bu Qianfan, I know you are here to look for me. Why must you impose on Senior sister apprentice Yanchen?"

This young man was none other than one of the Six Great Kings of the young generation in Eastern Region, Bu Qianfan.

Zhang Ruochen had crossed paths with Bu Qianfan once before because of Orange Star Emissary, therefore he was reasonably familiar with him.

Zhang Ruochen whispered to Bu Qianfan through a wisp of sound waves. "The rumors about Orange Star Emissary are not true. I will find a suitable time to explain it to you, so please do not make trouble here."

Zhang Ruochen did not dislike Bu Qianfan. On the contrary, he rather admired him. Although Bu Qianfan was aware that Orange Star Emissary and Di Yi were a pair, he still loved her deeply. Zhang Ruochen thought he was rather admirable, but just a bit silly for being so devoted to Orange Star Emissary.

For this reason, Zhang Ruochen did not wish to become enemies with him.

After hearing Zhang Ruochen's words, Bu Qianfan's mouth curved into a smile. He replied in a similar manner with a wisp of sound wave. "Do you think I will believe you, Zhang Ruochen? You snatched my woman away from me, so don't blame me if I do the same."

Zhang Ruochen suddenly felt uneasy when he saw the smile on Bu Qianfan's face.

Why did Bu Qianfan smile in this manner? His smile looked vaguely familiar. He must have seen it somewhere?

Where had he seen this smile before?

Bu Qianfan seemed unable to take his eyes off Huang Yanchen. "Brother Zhang, everyone loves beauty. To be honest, I fell in love with Miss Yanchen the first time I set my eyes on her. I can't help it. Even if it spells destruction for me today, I would still fight for it. I will never allow the woman I love to become another man's wife," said Bu Qianfan passionately.