

## Chapter 71: The School of the Martial Market

Zhang Ruochen's Spiritual Power was so strong that he could immediately sense the dangerous aura drifting in the air. A heightened sense of alertness then arose in his heart.

When one's Spiritual Power had reached the 30th level or above, he could sense an imminent danger in advance. He could also perceive the blessings and misfortunes of his surroundings.

The feeling of uneasiness grew stronger, even Zhang Ruochen's hairs were standing on end. He stood up reflectively, startling Zi Qian who was sitting next to him. She instantly withdrew the Poisonous Bee Needle from her fingertips and hid them.

"Perhaps he sensed it? How is it possible?"

Zi Qian's heart skipped a beat. She dared not make a move without planning things through.

Chen Libing's eyes narrowed as he saw Zi Qian not taking any action. A murderous light flashed across his eyes.

Hiding his fingers in his sleeves, he ran his Genuine Qi and gathered it between two of his fingers. Quietly, he flicked out a Poisonous Bee Needle without making a sound.

Chen Libing was actually sitting right behind Zhang Ruochen, and the distance between them was extremely close.

In addition to that, the Poisonous Bee Needle was as thin as a cow hair. Even a warrior of the Black Realm would not be able to follow its flying path with their eyes.

If he was hit by the Poisonous Bee Needle, Zhang Ruochen would surely die!

However, a shocking reversal happened as Zhang Ruochen extended a hand and caught the Poisonous Bee Needle between his fingers.

It was worth mentioning that, up to now, Zhang Ruochen had never turned around. It seemed as though he had eyes on his back. He simply twisted his arm, extended two fingers, and caught the Poisonous Bee Needle with ease.

"No way! Even a warrior at the Completion of the Black Realm couldn't have sensed the Poisonous Bee Needle at such a short distance, never mind catching it." Chen Libing seemed shocked to his core.

Little did he know, Zhang Ruochen had Space Domain. He was aware of everything in his surroundings within a 10-meter radius, as it would be perceived by his Martial Soul.

The instant Zhang Ruochen felt a sense of danger, he quickly stood up and released his Space Domain.

Zhang Ruochen held the Poisonous Bee Needle between his fingers and turned around. With a cold glare, his eyes found Chen Libing and said, "Poisonous Bee Needle, no wind, no sound and can kill without a trace. Indeed a deadly poison. Are you a professional killer?"

Once Chen Libing knew his identity had been exposed, he immediately struck again. Holding the sword hilt, he sent a beam of sword radiance flying from his sleeve straight to Zhang Ruochen's heart with a lightning speed.

Fish Intestines Sword Hidden in Sleeve!

The sword was hidden in the sleeve.

The blade was as slim as a fish intestine.

Even though Chen Libing's marital cultivation was only at the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm, he had once assassinated a warrior of the Dawn State of the Black Realm. He undoubtedly had achieved a high attainment in his sword technique.

One strike from his sword shed 13 sword shadows.

In a flash, the sword's cold tip landed right in front of Zhang Ruochen's chest.

Many people around them could not help but gasp in surprise.

Sitting cross-legged on top of the Blood-feathered Eagle, Elder Xie let out a roar and said, "How dare you!"

"Swish!"

A streak of Sword Breath flew out from Elder Xie's hand and went through Chen Libing's body.

A muffled shriek escaped Chen Libing's throat. His body convulsed into spasms, and he fell flat on the Blood-feathered Eagle's back.

Liu Chengfeng placed his fingers near Chen Libing's nose, and said solemnly, "He's already dead!"

Everyone's gaze immediately turned to Elder Xie.

Elder Xie's cultivation was incredibly strong. With just one strike, he killed a warrior of the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm. Adding to that, there was not a single wound found on Chen Libing's body, which was very strange.

Elder Xie sheathed his sword in its scabbard, cast a cold glance at Chen Libing's body, and said, "Since he used the Poisonous Bee Needle and Fish Intestines Sword Hidden in Sleeve, he must be a killer from the Hades Department. The Hades Department has long wanted to sneak their killers into the School of the Martial Market. Never thought today I would run into one. Death was too good for him."

Then, Elder Xie's gaze switched to Zhang Ruochen and asked, "Who are you? Why would the killer of the Hades Department want to assassinate you?"

Zhang Ruochen did not even have a chance to reply before Liu Chengfeng blurted out and said, "Uncle Xie, he is the Ninth Prince of Yunwu Commandery, also known as the Genius of Martial Arts."

"Genius of Martial Arts?"

Elder Xie gave Zhang Ruochen a thorough once-over. To have reached the Initial Stage of the Black Realm at the age of 16 was indeed prodigious. However, that was far from being a Genius of Martial Arts.

The Yunwu Commandery's Genius of Martial Arts, Elder Xie had only heard of one. That was Yunwu Commandery's seventh son, who had reached the Black Realm at the age of 12.

The Ninth Prince who stood before him was far behind in comparison to the Seventh Prince. In Elder Xie's opinion, even Zi Qian was more talented than Zhang Ruochen.

After giving a final glance to Zhang Ruochen, Elder Xie withdrew his gaze and said, "Throw the body of the Hades Department's killer off the Blood-feathered Eagle."

Elder Xie once again closed his eyes and did not say another word after giving his order.

"So strange, I swear I saw the Sword Breath passing through his body. Why didn't it leave any wounds?" A warrior asked curiously.

Liu Chengfeng said in a scornful tone, "What do you know? That's a martial technique of the low-class Spiritual, known as "Heart Broken Sword Technique". Plus, Uncle Xie has already mastered this martial technique. "Killing only requires severing the heart, and there will be no blood after death. If you don't believe me, go and feel the killer's heart!"

The warrior went to touch Chen Libing's chest and found that his heart had been shattered into two pieces.

Even though Zi Qian and Chen Libing were both genius killers of the Hades Department, there was little interaction between them. Therefore, they had no emotional attachment to each other. Zi Qian made no move and appeared very calm even after witnessing Chen Libing's death.

"Luckily, I wasn't the first one to launch an attack, otherwise, I would be dead by now."

Zi Qian stole a quick glance at Zhang Ruochen. Even until now, she still could not understand how Zhang Ruochen managed to catch Chen Libing's Poisonous Bee Needle.

Normally, only a strong warrior of the Earth Realm would be able to tell the sound of the poisonous needle with their heightened sense of hearing. Also, only a strong warrior of the Earth Realm would be able to dodge the Poisonous Bee Needle sent out by Chen Libing.

But, Zhang Ruochen was not a strong warrior of the Earth Realm.

He must have some other secrets that no one knew about. She could not afford to make any hasty decision before finding out his secret. If she failed, she would probably share the same fate as Chen Libing and die an unnatural death.

For Zi Qian, the most important task was infiltrating the Hades Department's internal operation. As for killing Zhang Ruochen, of course, if she succeeded, that would be ideal. She would receive a great reward for that. But if she could not do it, it would not be too much of an issue either.

If Zi Qian could not kill Zhang Ruochen within a month, the Hades Department would naturally assign another more powerful killer to carry out the assassination.

“Now that Chen Libing is dead, my identity is even more secured. I must not let my identity be exposed,” Zi Qian murmured to herself.

Chen Libing’s body was thrown off the Blood-feathered Eagle. Upon seeing this, the crowd began to discuss the Hades Department. Many of them wore a serious expression that mingled with fear.

In Yunwu Commandery, the Hades Department was part of the Western Nine Prefectures and was one of the biggest assassination organizations. They once successfully assassinated a Commandery Prince. It caused a great uproar at the time, and ever since then, the name of the Hades Department had spread far and wide.

Of those who had been targeted by the Hades Department, very few managed to stay alive beyond a month.

Liu Chengfeng said, “Your Majesty, don’t worry. Once you enter the School of the Martial Market, even if the killers of the Hades Department have supernatural abilities, they won’t be able to get to you.”

“Hopefully that will be the case!” Zhang Ruochen smiled and said.

If the Hades Department’s killers could sneak into the exams and hide among the candidates, they certainly could infiltrate the School of the Martial Market as well. Zhang Ruochen simply did not believe that he would be safe and sound in the School of the Martial Market.

Just before this, the Hades Department’s killer was sitting right behind him but he had no idea. If it was not for the fact that his Spiritual Power had reached level 30 and his practice of Space Domain, he would be a dead person by now.

To be able to deploy the Hades Department killers, an immense price must have been paid.

Zhang Ruochen knew who it was. The Queen was surely involved in this.

“When I’ve reached the Heaven Realm, I’ll be sure to settle the score with her.” Zhang Ruochen clenched his fist tightly, a gleam of icing air visible in his eyes.

Omen Ridge was an ancient mountain range that stretched more than 120,000 miles. It was a vast territory, rich with Spiritual Qi. It resembled a great dragon, reclining at the north of Yunwu Commandery.

Including Yunwu Commandery, the 36 Commanderies were all located on the outside of Omen Ridge. They encircled Omen Ridge like a myriad of stars clustered around a moon.

Omen Ridge was the land of savage beasts. There were hundreds of millions of savage beasts within this vast territory. The 36 Commanderies would often send soldiers to guard the border of the Omen Ridge all year round. That was to prevent savage beasts from running out from the Omen Ridge and killing peasants.

Some large Suzerains were built along the boundaries of Omen Ridge.

For one, it was to prevent the savage beasts from invading the land of humans; for two, it was easier to train their disciples.

The School of the Martial Market was also built on the outside.

The Blood-feathered Eagle flew its passengers to the School of the Martial Market. The students were dumbstruck as they took in the scenery before them.

At first glance, they would see the ground dotted with old buildings. Some were colored glaze towers built in deep valleys; some were garrets built on cliff sides. There were also martial training arenas built on mountaintops.

Although they had not yet entered the School of the Martial Market, they could already feel great waves of power.

Elder Xie rose to his feet and stood tall on the back of the Blood-feathered Eagle. Withdrawing a token, he called out loudly, "I am Xie Nantian. Who is guarding the array now? Why haven't you opened the doors?"

A young man around 20 years old, who was standing on a two-headed griffin, flew up from the ground and said, "Greetings, Master Xie! How come there are so few candidates from Yunwu Commandery this year? Master Situ has brought over 600 candidates from Square Commandery, and among them are some top martial arts geniuses."

Meanwhile, the young man raised his hand slightly toward the ground, and let out a loud whistle.

The seven colored glaze towers located on different sides of the School of the Martial Market emitted a bright stream of light from their tips. The seven light columns were connected to form a huge array.

"Boom!"

At the edge of the array, a door of light, more than 100 meters long, was opened.

The Blood-feathered Eagle who was carrying the 67 candidates from Yunwu Commandery went into the door of light, and flew toward the White Stone Square built in a valley.

The moment the Blood-feathered Eagle flew into the School of the Martial Market, the light from the tips of the seven towers immediately disappeared. With a bang, the door of light also vanished into the air.

## **Chapter 72: Provocation**

The moment Zhang Ruochen jumped off the Blood-feathered Eagle, the first thing that came into sight was the four big characters carved on the cliff to the south of the White Stone Square, "Drill Ground of Western Yard".

Each character was around seven meters tall and was carved deeply into the stone wall, with a strong Sword Comprehension.

It seemed as if these characters were carved by a top warrior with his sword.

"The Sword Comprehension of that warrior must have reached the Heart Integrated into Sword Realm then." Zhang Ruochen thought to himself.

Zhang Ruochen had just entered the Advanced Stage of the Sword Following the Mind Realm. Only if he progressed into a higher realm could he reach the Heart Integrated into Sword Realm.

Reaching that realm was no easy task, even some powerful warriors of the Heaven Realm could not make it.

In other words, if the Sword Comprehensive of a Heaven Realm warrior could reach the Heart Integrated into Sword Realm, he must be among the top-tier Heaven Realm warriors.

“Is this what Yunwu Commandery have for the entrance exam of the School of the Martial Market this year?” A disharmonious voice rang out.

A handsome young man came into sight. Seeing Zhang Ruochen, Liu Chengfeng, Zi Qian and other young warriors from Yunwu Commandery, he sneered.

A sturdy-looking warrior from Yunwu Commandery was irritated by his comment. The man sank his voice and said, “What do you mean?”

That spirited young man laughed and said, “I’m Shen Mengxi from Square Commandery. No offense, but I think the young warriors of Yunwu Commandery are getting worse every year.”

“What did you say?”

Hearing those words, the Yunwu Commandery’s young warriors all grimaced and crowded around him.

Shen Mengxi’s expression remained calm and unaffected. He said with a smile, “Am I wrong? It’s true that young warriors of Yunwu Commandery are getting worse and worse every year. Last year, there were at least 100 students joined the exam. Now, only 60 of you are here, which is less than one-tenth of that of our Square Commandery. Ha-ha!”

The strong and sturdy young warrior from earlier snorted coldly and said, “How dare you insult our Yunwu Commandery’s young warriors. I’ll challenge you and beat you down with my own hands.”

“Great! If you can take three hits from me, I’ll take back what I’ve just said.” Shen Mengxi laughed.

“Three hits? How dare you belittle me like that. You’ll regret such attitude!”

With a loud roar, the Genuine Qi in the sturdy young warrior’s body ran fast and surged into his arms through his meridians.

Within seconds, his arms turned scarlet, emitting a faint heat wave.

Making his hands into a fist, the sturdy young warrior charged forward and gave a punch. Loud cracking sounds could be heard as the air hissed under the pressure of his punch.

A young warrior’s expression flickered briefly before saying, “Jiang Heng had reached the Initial Stage of the Black Realm three years ago. His Genuine Qi is certainly strong. Plus, his practice of Fire-dragon Fist had reached the Small Success Realm. He can totally fight more than 10 rounds against warriors who have reached the Mid Stage of the Black Realm.”

That strong and sturdy young warrior was Jiang Heng.

It must be noted that all the young warriors who joined the exam of the School of the Martial Market were under the age of 30. Therefore, the cultivations of 70 percent of the warriors were in the Initial Stage of the Black Realm. As for the remaining 30 percent, almost all of them were in the Mid Stage of the Black Realm.

Only a very few young warriors were in the Advanced Stage and the Dawn State of the Black Realm.

Among the Yunwu Commandery's 67 warriors, there was only one warrior who had reached the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm and one for the Dawn State of the Black Realm.

That young warrior who had reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm was Zi Qian.

The other warrior of the Advanced Stage of the Earth Realm was already 29 years old and had nearly no chance to be a student of the School of the Martial Market. Since he was too old, it was impossible for him to reach the Earth Realm before turning 30.

If the external students of the school could not reach the Earth Realm before 30, they would not be able to continue their practice in the School of the Martial Market.

Shen Mengxi of Square Commandery had also reached the Initial Stage of the Black Realm. But surprisingly, he was stronger than Jiang Heng in terms of battle prowess.

He waved his arms and released a sword-like Genuine Qi blow which landed directly on Jiang Heng's chest.

"Boom!"

Jiang Heng let out a scream. He was sent flying backward and fell to the ground with a loud thud.

His chest was cut by the Genuine Qi blow, leaving a three-meter-long wound. Two of his meridians had been broken. Crimson blood continuously gushed forth from the fresh wound.

Jiang Heng was badly hurt by just one hit. He surely could not continue the exam tomorrow.

"Haha! A good warrior from the young generation of Yunwu Commandery couldn't even take one of my hits. That's so disappointing!" Shen Mengxi laughed and said.

The Square Commandery's young warriors all laughed after seeing the Yunwu Commandery's young warrior was easily beaten down by Shen Mengxi with just one strike.

"Only three Yunwu Commandery's warriors made it to the School of the Martial Market last year. I'm afraid there will be none for this year."

"With Shen Mengxi's strength, perhaps he can defeat everyone in Yunwu Commandery."

"If this continues, Yunwu Commandery will be taken over by Square Commandery very soon. Haha."

Zhang Ruochen walked over to Jiang Heng, took out a Saint Stone Pill and gave it to him.

The Saint Stone Pill was a Second Class healing pill with a rather strong medical potency. Although it could not help Jiang Heng to regain the two damaged meridians, it could heal his external injury quickly. As long as the meridians were not completely broken, they could still be repaired.

After taking the Saint Stone Pill, Jiang Heng's pale complexion turned better with a hint of red. He said gratefully, "Thank you so much, Ninth Prince."

"Not a problem. It's just a pill." Zhang Ruochen gave a faint smile and helped him to his feet.

"The Ninth Prince? It's surprising to see a prince among the Yunwu Commandery's candidates this year. That's great!"

Shen Mengxi's eyes lit up the moment he heard Jiang Heng's words. He turned to look at Zhang Ruochen and said, "I've heard about the 'Innate Skills', the treasure of Yunwu Commandery. Since the Ninth Prince reaches the Black Realm at such a young age, you must have practiced the 'Innate Skills'. Do you mind showing me a little bit?"

Seeing that Shen Mengxi was ready to provoke Zhang Ruochen, the Elder Xie, who was standing at the edge of the drill ground of Western Yard, frowned and wanted to stop him.

After all, Zhang Ruochen was the prince of Yunwu Commandery. His status was much higher than Jiang Heng. If he was wounded badly before the exam, the School of the Martial Market would have to take full responsibility.

Elder Situ stopped Elder Xie. "These young men are learning from each other by exchanging their martial techniques. Why should we intervene?" He smiled and said in a casual tone.

Elder Situ was the receptionist for the Square Commandery's candidates. He was in a good relationship with Square Commandery; of course, he would defend them.

The more Square Commandery's young warriors enrolled in the School of the Martial Market, the more rewards the receptionist could get from the School.

Therefore, every exam of the School of the Martial Market was not only a competition among candidates from different commanderies but also a competition among each receptionist.

Elder Xie was displeased and said, "He is the Yunwu Commandery's prince. If something bad happens to him, do you think they will just let it go?"

"Elder Xie, you worry too much. Nothing will go wrong. If it did happen, I would take the responsibility. How about that?" Elder Situ laughed and said.

"Humph!"

Elder Xie snorted coldly and stepped back.

Elder Xie did not want to offend Elder Situ because his cultivation was one realm higher. Since Elder Situ had said that he would take the responsibility if anything bad happened, Elder Xie would certainly do him this favor.

"The Yunwu Commandery's young warriors are indeed too weak. I'm afraid no one can be Shen Mengxi's opponent." Elder Xie took a quick glance at Zhang Ruochen and shook his head.

"Reaching the Black Realm at the age of 16, he is definitely gifted. But he is too young to compete with Shen Mengxi. He is going to lose."



“Since Shen Mengxi knew his status, I think he won’t make it too hard for him. He would just defeat and humiliate him so as to bring down the confidence of the Yunwu Commandery’s young warriors.” Elder Xie thought and sighed again.

Having heard that Shen Mengxi had asked Zhang Ruochen to exchange techniques, the young warriors of Square Commandery all laughed. They believed Shen Mengxi was undoubtedly going to win.

Prince Huo Xing of Square Commandery, who was standing in the center of the drill with his hands folded behind his back, laughed and said, “Shen Mengxi, if you can defeat the Ninth Prince of Yunwu Commandery within three strikes, I will reward you with a Genuine Martial Arm.”

“Why three? I need just one.”

Shen Mengxi wanted to perform well in front of Prince Huo Xing. He fixed his gaze on Zhang Ruochen again, smiled, and said, “Ninth Prince, I believe you’ve heard it. If I defeat you within three strikes, I can get a Genuine Martial Arm. So, I will be fighting with all my strength later. If I ever offend you...”

Zhang Ruochen interrupted Shen Mengxi and said, “Shen Mengxi, I’m afraid you misunderstood the situation. I’ve never said I’d fight with you.”

Shen Mengxi was briefly stunned before he realized something. Sneering to himself, he thought, “This Ninth Prince surely knows when to yield. He must be afraid of my powerful cultivation after witnessing the fight from earlier. That’s why he rejects my challenge. Well, how can I let you go?”

Before Shen Mengxi could continue, Zhang Ruochen added on and said, “It’s not even exam yet. You’ve wounded the Yunwu Commandery’s warrior, you have to pay for his medical expenses. I won’t blackmail you. 30 thousand silver coins as compensation for Jiang Heng, and I will let it slide!”

It was a reasonable price. Zhang Ruochen asked neither more nor less.

Shen Mengxi was stunned again.

“Is the Ninth Prince joking with me?”

All the Square Commandery’s young warriors burst into laughter. They looked at Zhang Ruochen as if they were looking at a fool. The Ninth Prince was too naive.

Liu Chengfeng stepped out and scolded him in a loud voice. “Shen Mengxi! The Ninth Prince asked you to take out 30,000 silver coins as compensation. Will you do it or not? If you don’t, do believe I will break your legs.”

30,000 silver coins were all Shen Mengxi had. How could he take them all out?

Shen Mengxi knew that Liu Chengfeng was once a Warrior of Yellow Board. He knew that he himself could not defeat him. So, he turned to Zhang Ruochen again and said as he sneered, “The Yunwu Commandery prince turns out to be a coward. He doesn’t even have the courage to fight with me. That’s a huge embarrassment to the Yunwu Commandery Prince.”

Zhang Ruochen frowned slightly.

Liu Chengfeng smiled faintly and said, "Shen Mengxi, aren't you too shameless? You think too highly of yourself. You'll surely lose even if we were to fight. If so, how dare you challenge the Ninth Prince?"

Shen Mengxi said in a sarcastic tone, "Great! If the Ninth Prince can defeat me, I will immediately give 30,000 silver coins to the Yunwu Commandery's wounded warrior as well as apologize to him. If the Ninth Prince loses, well, how can the strong say sorry to the weak? Doesn't everyone agree with me?"

"Shen Mengxi's right. The strong should never say sorry to the weak."

"If the Ninth Prince doesn't even have the courage to fight, he should go back to the Yunwu Commandery Palace and suckle! Haha!"

All the Square Commandery's warriors jeered and mocked Zhang Ruochen in order to provoke him to accept the challenge. If Shen Mengxi really did beat the crap out of the Yunwu Commandery's Ninth Prince, it would surely be an interesting show to watch.

### **Chapter 73: The Consequences of One's Own Deeds**

The young warriors of Yunwu Commandery all knew that Ninth Prince was ranked first on the Yellow Board before breaking through to the Black Realm. He was stronger than a warrior in the Mid Stage of the Black Realm.

Now that Ninth Prince had reached the Black Realm, his cultivation must now be on another level. How could Shen Mengxi hope to challenge him?

As Zhang Ruochen had only become first on the Yellow Board during the past two months, the news had not yet been spread to other commanderies. Shen Mengxi naturally did not know his true abilities.

Young warriors of Yunwu Commandery had curious smiles on their faces, believing Shen Mengxi did not know his own limits. However, no one said anything.

Zhang Ruochen stared at Shen Mengxi and said, "Since you wish to fight with me, then I agree. However, if you lose, you will not just pay 30,000 silver coins for your defeat, but 100,000 silver coins instead."

"Why?" Shen Mengxi asked.

Zhang Ruochen replied, "You had so much shooting your mouth off earlier. You think you don't need to pay?"

"Hmph! Never mind 100,000 silver coins. It doesn't matter even if it's 1,000,000 silver coins. You have no chance of defeating me!"

The Genuine Qi in Shen Mengxi's body began to circulate, flowing along his arm towards his palms.

He closed his fingers, forming a knife with his hand, and struck at Zhang Ruochen.

Palm Knife, a Superior-Class Human Stage martial technique.

It was Shen Mengxi's Palm Knife that had heavily injured Jiang Heng.

Just as Shen Mengxi's Palm Knife was about to stab his chest, Zhang Ruochen suddenly struck out with even higher speed. With a flick of his hand, he struck his palm out and hit Shen Mengxi on the face.

"Snap!"

A well-landed slap on the face.

Shen Mengxi flew out and turned 360-degree turn in the air, before landing on the ground with a thud.

The smiles of the young warriors became frozen. They could not believe their own eyes. Many of them did not even clearly see how Shen Mengxi flew out.

Zhang Ruochen's strike was too quick!

"You... You..."

Pushing the ground with two hands, Shen Mengxi raised his head with difficulty. His mouth was full of blood and the left side of his face began to swell purple and red. His head looked just like a pig's head.

Zhang Ruochen's strike earlier was very harsh. It knocked out Shen Mengxi's teeth and broke his jaw and cheekbones.

At this moment, Shen Mengxi could not even speak clearly. The wind whistled through the gaps in his teeth.

Liu Chengfeng laughed loudly. "Good hit! Shen Mengxi, I told you earlier that you should be aware of your limits. With your training, how could you think of challenging His Majesty Ninth Prince? Now that you've lost, hand over the 100,000 silver coins."

"I... I don't have..."

At this moment, Shen Mengxi wanted to cry. He only had 30,000 silver coins in total. How could he hand over 100,000 silver coins?

He never thought 16-year-old Zhang Ruochen could be so powerful.

Liu Chengfeng's expression darkened after hearing Shen Mengxi's words. Walking over, he stepped heavily on Shen Mengxi's hand, causing him to scream like a slaughtered pig.

Liu Chengfeng spoke in a threatening tone, "The fourth son of a seventh-class family, the Shen family, can't even hand over 100,000 silver coins? Do you think I'm stupid? Before you and His Majesty Ninth Prince duelled, you had personally promised the money. Are you going back on your words? Elder Xie, Elder Situ, both of you heard him earlier?"

Elder Situ looked uncomfortable. He did not expect Zhang Ruochen to be so strong. He only used one strike to send Shen Mengxi flying! Shen Mengxi was too useless.

Elder Xie was delighted. Zhang Ruochen rose in his esteem. But his expression was severe as he said, "I'm a witness to this matter. It's only natural to repay the money you owe."

Liu Chengfeng's foot remained on Shen Mengxi's hand. He smiled. "Did you hear? It's perfectly justified to repay your debt. If you don't hand over 100,000 silver coins, do you think I won't break your legs right here and now?"

Shen Mengxi was truly terrified. He knew that Liu Chengfeng was a brutal man that could do anything. He hurriedly said, "I... I... I have the money..."

Shen Mengxi quickly drew a purple pouch from his chest and handed it to Liu Chengfeng with trembling fingers.

Liu Chengfeng opened the pouch and saw 30 Spiritual Crystals and a few hundred silver coins inside.

He closed the pouch and kicked hard at Shen Mengxi. "Where's the 100,000 silver coins? There are clearly only 30,000 silver coins here. How dare you cheat me?"

"I... I dare not... Those are all I have. It's everything I own..." Shen Mengxi begged for mercy.

Liu Chengfeng handed the pouch to Zhang Ruochen. "Your Majesty, he only has this many silver coins. What do we do now?"

Zhang Ruochen accepted the purple pouch and glanced at Shen Mengxi.

"Understood."

Liu Chengfeng seemed to understand Zhang Ruochen's thoughts. He nodded at him and walked towards Shen Mengxi with a wicked smile.

"Understand? What did you understand? I haven't even said anything yet!"

Zhang Ruochen was speechless. He looked towards Liu Chengfeng and wanted to know what he had understood.

Liu Chengfeng believed that he had made a correct guess about Zhang Ruochen's thoughts. Thus, he stopped in front of Shen Mengxi and took away the Genuine Martial Arms grade weapon on his back.

"This sword has 12 lines of inscriptions. It can be more or less considered a fourth class Genuine Martial Arms weapon. I'll take 10,000 silver coins for it!"

Shen Mengxi cried. "That's a fourth class Genuine Martial Arms weapon and I spent 20,000 silver coins for it... Ah..."

Liu Chengfeng trampled on Shen Mengxi's hand again, and took his jade belt off. "Sea Stone Jade belt, worth 800 silver coins."

"Second level Genuine Martial Arms chest-protecting mirror, worth 2,000 silver coins."

...

Liu Chengfeng took away all of Shen Mengxi's treasures, even his clothing, and shoes.

"We'll consider it's 20,000 silver coins in total. You still owe the Ninth Prince 50,000 silver coins. You can write an IOU!"

Liu Chengfeng ripped off the last of Shen Mengxi's clothes and bit his forefinger, forcing him to write a bloody IOU.

"This... was what he had understood?"

Zhang Ruochen found him both funny and annoying. No wonder Liu Chengfeng was considered brutal; his tactics were too extreme.

He could only sigh to himself that the wicked would be punished for their deeds.

For people like Shen Mengxi, he would learn his lessons only when extreme methods were used.

Huo Xing, Prince of Square Commandery, looked extremely severe. "Enough! Ninth Prince, your methods are too extreme. Shen Mengxi is a warrior of Square Commandery. Even if he owes you 100,000 silver coins, how can you humiliate him like this?"

Zhang Ruochen felt puzzled. From the very beginning, it was Liu Chengfeng who was humiliating Shen Mengxi. Why did they pin the blame on him?

Liu Chengfeng folded the IOU and handed it to Zhang Ruochen. He said in a low voice, "Your Majesty, you should be careful! Prince Huo Xing was a warrior of the Yellow Board when he was in the Yellow Realm. Now he has cultivated to the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm, and he wields an imperial weapon. He's a difficult and sly enemy."

Zhang Ruochen naturally was not one to be afraid of conflicts. Taking a step forward, he said, "Prince Huo Xing, do you mean that only the Square Commandery warriors can humiliate the Yunwu Warriors? Are we not allowed to retaliate?"

Prince Huo Xing laughed coldly. "The strong can naturally humiliate the weak."

Zhang Ruochen smiled. "Since it is so, then what's wrong with us humiliating a warrior of Square Commandery?"

"Even if you're triumphant at this moment, so what? Tomorrow is the examination. I will return this humiliation with interest. This year, no warrior from Yunwu Commandery will successfully enter the School of the Martial Market." Prince Huo Xing swept his gaze across the tens of Yunwu warriors opposite him with a cold huff.

A cold gaze flashed through Prince Huo Xing's eyes. He already had the intention to murder Zhang Ruochen.

Afterwards, two warriors from Square Commandery carried Shen Mengxi away.

Liu Chengfeng looked at the retreating warriors from Square Commandery and said, "The situation doesn't look good! Looks like we'll be in great danger during the exam tomorrow."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Is killing allowed in the exam?"

Liu Chengfeng replied, "On the surface, the warriors are of course not allowed to kill each other. But every year the first round of the examination takes place in Omen Ridge. Warriors from Square Commandery will definitely try and assassinate us."

Standing on the side was Zi Qian. Holding her battle sword, she watched the warriors from Square Commandery, and asked coldly, "If they can try and kill us during the exam, why can't we return the favor?"

Zhang Ruochen turned slightly and glanced at Zi Qian.

He knew that Zi Qian's cultivation was very high and she had already reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm. But he did not expect that, as a woman, she would have such a hard side to her. It was rare to see.

Liu Chengfeng chuckled and said, "If you're willing to strike, you'll naturally be able to kill many of the Square Commandery warriors."

Zi Qian glanced at Liu Chengfeng and turned towards Zhang Ruochen. "Ninth Prince, if you're willing to work with me, we'll definitely destroy the warriors from Square Commandery. All the humiliation Yunwu Commandery has suffered all these years should be returned."

Zi Qian wanted to assassinate Zhang Ruochen. Naturally, she had to get close to him and gain his trust. Only when she found Zhang Ruochen's secret would she have the chance to kill him.

Zhang Ruochen looked like he was deep in thought.

Liu Chengfeng once again inserted himself before Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian. "Lady Zi, you shouldn't underestimate the young warriors from Square Commandery. According to reliable news, they have at least three strong warriors at the Dawn State of the Black Realm, and at least 10 warriors in the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm. If you go head-to-head with them, it'd be like attacking a rock with an egg."

Zi Qian used her sword to push Liu Chengfeng to the side, appearing very cold. Looking at Zhang Ruochen with her beautiful eyes, she waited for him to speak.

Zhang Ruochen rubbed his chin. Looking at Zi Qian, he smiled. "Since Lady Zi has such courage, I'll naturally accompany her to the end. Tomorrow on the examination field, it's time for Square Commandery to pay the price!"

## **Chapter 74: The Exam Begins**

In the Western Nine Prefectures, there were seven more commanderies besides Yunwu Commandery and Square Commandery.

Before dark, the warriors from the seven other commanderies were brought in and led to the drill ground of Western Campus. Each made their own camps away from the others.

The seven other commanderies were like Yunwu Commandery in that they were inferior commanderies. Some only had about 10 young warriors, while others had a few hundreds.

The number of young warriors joining the examinations naturally demonstrated the power of each commandery.

“In the entire Western Nine Prefectures, only Square Commandery is a medium level commandery, which is also the most powerful. Almost half of the young warriors here are from Square Commandery,” Liu Chengfeng said.

Zhang Ruochen looked around at the young warriors in the drill ground of Western Campus and estimated there were about 1,500 warriors or so. All of them were martial artists of the Black Realm.

Each person in the drill ground was a prodigy in their commandery. No one was a weakling.

Zhang Ruochen asked, “Why are there only warriors from the Western Nine Prefectures? Why don’t we see warriors from the South, East, or North Nine Prefectures?”

Liu Chengfeng laughed. “The Martial Market Bank has four campuses. The South, North, East, and Western Campus all examine their students individually. We, the warriors of the Western Nine Prefectures, can only enter Western Campus and become external students of this campus.”

“After your cultivation has reached the Earth Realm and you’ve become an internal student, you can then engage with the internal students of the other three campuses.”

Zhang Ruochen nodded and stopped asking. Instead, he sat cross-legged on the floor and began Practicing.

He fixed his gaze on the characters for “Drill Ground of Western Campus” carved onto a rock from a distance, feeling the aura of Sword Comprehension emitting from the carving. He used it to guide his meditation to understand the Realm of Heart Integrated into Sword.

Tonight, all the warriors from the Nine Prefectures would have to spend the night on drill ground of Western Campus.

Most warriors were sitting cross-legged on the floor, absorbing the Spiritual Qi. They were adjusting themselves in preparation for the examination tomorrow.

The next day, when the sky had only just brightened, three ear-splitting chimes rang through the School of the Martial Market.

Those who were practicing or sleeping were all shocked awake by the chimes.

They only saw a seven feet tall stage in the middle of the drill grounds, where 10 warriors of very powerful cultivation were standing. One of the elders wore a golden robe, while the other nine were in silver robes.

The nine warriors clad in silver robes were those who went to the nine prefectures to lead the examinees to the school. All of them were elders of the School of the Martial Market.

Liu Chenfeng spoke quietly. “The Martial Market Bank has a strict hierarchical system. People of different ranking wear different clothing. Only the elders of the Martial Market Bank can wear silver robes. As for the golden robed elder... only Headmaster of Western Campus can wear it.”

Headmaster of Western Campus was the golden robed elder of the Martial Market Bank.

As for Elder Xie, Elder Situ, and Liu Chengfeng's father, they were all silver robed elders of the Martial Market Bank.

Zhang Ruochen asked, "If we enter the School of the Martial Market, what color are our robes?"

"Plain white robes." Liu Chengfeng smiled.

Headmaster of Western Campus stood on the seven feet tall stage. The robe he was wearing began to emit a golden light as bright as the sun. Many of the warriors could not open their eyes.

It was clear that his golden robe was not a simple piece of clothing.

Headmaster of Western Campus looked over the entire drill ground, giving off an immense sense of power. "There are altogether 1,537 warriors in Western Nine Prefecture taking the exam this year. The exam is divided into two rounds, 'Hunting Savage Beasts' and 'Breaking Through the Wu Tower'. The 120 will be admitted as external students of the School of the Martial Market in the end. Elder Situ will now announce the specific exam rules."

He left after making his speech.

Liu Chengfeng let out a breath and smiled. "Thank God, the exam is the same as the past years."

Liu Chengfeng had prepared beforehand and was very confident in this exam.

Even though Liu Chengfeng was the son of a silver robed elder, he must still pass the exam to join the School of the Martial Market.

Of course, given his identity, he would be privy to many internal workings of the exam and was able to prepare beforehand. This gave him a better chance than the other warriors.

"1,537 examinees and only accepting 120 students. That's not even 10%. Given my cultivation, I probably won't make it." A warrior of the Initial Stage of the Black Realm gasped. He had already lost hope to pass the exam this year.

On the stage, Elder Situ bowed to Headmaster of Western Campus. He took a step forward and faced the young warriors below. "The examination for the School of the Martial Market has always been fair and just. We only accept talented prodigies. Even if your cultivation is slightly below average, you'll have a chance to pass the examination as long as you're sufficiently talented."

Those warriors, who had already lost hope, regained their fighting spirits upon hearing these words and gazed towards Elder Situ.

Elder Situ continued, "In half an hour, you'll enter Omen Ridge. You'll only be entering the outside boundaries in a specially marked zone. All savage beasts level three or above have already been removed from this zone.

"The first round of the Market School exam is hunting savage beasts. Initial Stage warriors of the Black Realm who can hunt down five low-class second level beasts will pass the first round.

"Mid-level Black Realm warriors will need to hunt down 10 low-class second level savage beasts to get a pass.



“Warriors of the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm, 20 low-class second level savage beasts.

“Dawn State warriors of the Black Realm, 40 low-class second level savage beasts.

“If there are Medium State warriors of the Black Realm, then you’ll have to hunt 80 low-class second level savage beasts to pass the first round of the exam.

“One medium-class second level savage beast equals five low-class second level savage beasts; one superior-class second level beast equals 25 low-class second level beasts.”

Elder Situ stood above and announced the rules. Below him, the young warriors were all discussing among themselves.

One woman in the Initial Stage of the Black Realm smiled. “We only need to hunt five low-class second level beasts to pass the first round? That’s too easy!”

Another warrior gave a cold laugh. “You’re underestimating them! The savage beasts of Omen Ridge have long lived in harsh conditions. Not only do they have to fight human warriors, they also have to fight with other beasts for food. They’re much more powerful than savage beasts elsewhere and at least twice as strong. Each low-class second level beast has the same power as an Initial Stage Black Realm warrior. It’ll be very difficult to kill even one, much less five.”

Zhang Ruochen nodded and said, “Not only are there low-class second level savage beasts in Omen Ridge, there are also mid- and superior-class second level beasts. If we run into any superior-class beasts, it’s unlikely that we’ll survive.”

Superior-class second level savage beasts were even more powerful than warriors who have reached the Completion of the Black Realm. Even if it was Zhang Ruochen who ran into one, it was most likely a death sentence.

Everyone turned pale.

Liu Chengfeng smiled. “Don’t worry, everyone. The zone marked by the School is massive. Unless you’re unlucky, you’ll probably not run into one.”

An Initial Stage Black Realm warrior said with frustration, “If I meet even one medium-class second level beast, it’s all be over for me.”

The admission exam for the School of the Martial Market was cruel. Not only did one have to avoid strong beasts, he or she will also have to watch out for other warriors in case of sabotage.

Elder Situ continued to announce the rules. “Before entering Omen Ridge, each person will be given a Kylin Ball. If you meet a life-threatening situation, break the Kylin Ball and the rescue personnel from the School will arrive as soon as possible. Of course, once you break the Kylin Ball, it means you’ve forfeited the exam.”

“The exam will be three days long. Anyone who hasn’t killed the required number of beasts will be disqualified after the third day.”

“Now I declare the exam has officially started.”

Everyone was handed a fist-sized Kylin Ball. It was said that the ball contained Kylin Smoke. Once the ball was broken, the smoke would rush out of the ball and rise thousands of meters into the air.

At this moment, Elder Xie, along with 10 external students of the School of the Martial Market, approached the 66 examinees from Yunwu Commandery.

Yunwu Commandery originally had 68 examinees. Chen Libing was killed and Jiang Heng was wounded heavily and sent back to the commandery. Now only 66 examinees remained.

Elder Situ said, "The 10 standing before you are external students of the School of the Martial Market. They're also your brothers and sisters in training. They'll lead you to separate entrances to enter Omen Ridge.

"You can now choose to enter Omen Ridge alone or you can team up."

Entering either as individuals or a group had its pros and cons.

Entering as a group of two meant that when danger struck, you had someone to help you out. However, at the same time, you had to keep an eye on your teammate to make sure he or she would not backstab you.

Therefore, one must choose someone he or she trusted to form a group.

But everyone came from different places and many had never met each other before. Therefore no one knew who to trust.

"I choose to enter Omen Ridge alone!" a Mid Stage warrior of the Black Realm said.

Clearly, he did not trust anyone.

Following that, the warriors of Yunwu Commandery all made their choices. Most of them decided to enter Omen Ridge alone. Only 22 people chose to form groups. Among them were Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian.

Under the leadership of the 10 students, the 66 warriors from Yunwu Commandery walked towards Omen Ridge.

Prince Huo Xing stared at the departing Yunwu Commandery warriors. He sneered. "Everyone, listen up. After entering Omen Ridge, kill every warrior from Yunwu Commandery you meet without hesitation. For each person you kill, I'll reward you with a second-class pill. If you can kill the Ninth Prince, I will reward you with a Genuine Martial Arms grade weapon."

Hearing Prince Huo Xing's words, the warriors from Square Commandery all smiled coldly.

If they were able to kill all the warriors from Yunwu Commandery, it would probably enrage the Yunwu Commander. It was amusing just thinking about it.

## **Chapter 75: Posterity of Saints**

After two hours, all of the warriors from the Nine Western Prefectures had entered the dangerous ridge. Although they were only in the outskirts of Omen Ridge, they still could hear the roars of savage beasts.

1,537 warriors disappeared into the ridge within moments, like sand scattered into the ocean.

“You are a warrior in the Dawn State of the Black Realm. You need to kill 40 inferior-class level-two savage beasts to pass round one. Are you not at all in a rush?” Zhang Ruochen placed his hands behind his back, walking on the fallen leaves. He glanced towards Zi Qian who was in front of him.

Zi Qian had a tall figure. Both of her hands were holding her sword, and her eyes were on the surrounding ancient, towering trees. “How tiring would it be to kill 40 savage beasts? Wouldn’t it be faster to kill warriors of Square Commandery and steal their Beast Eyeballs?”

Zhang Ruochen looked steadily at Zi Qian and said, “You must know, this area of the ridge is huge, and everyone is scattered in all directions. It will not be easy to find warriors of Square Commandery.”

Zi Qian replied, “I have my ways!”

Suddenly, Zi Qian’s ears moved a little.

With a swish, she became a purple shadow and flew out, crossing a distance of 100 meters.

SWISH!

Her arm shook, and a streak of sword light flew from her hand, striking with great force into the ground.

Under the ground, there came a beast’s terrified cry.

A fountain of blood spouted from the earth.

Just as the fresh blood was about to stain her hand, her fingers twisted, and she changed her pace. Moving like floating clouds and flowing water, she returned her sword to her scabbard.

The entire process happened in mere seconds.

Sword out, strike, and sword returned, all in the time it took to take a breath. No flourishes, perfectly executed.

Zhang Ruochen squinted and stared at Zi Qian. Her sword technique was already at the Intermediate Stage of the Sword Following the Heart, not far from the Advanced Stage!

“Boom!”

Zhang Ruochen stomped on the ground, sending his Genuine Qi into the ground. With a boom, the earth split open. The body of an Iron Shell Rat about the size of a basin rose from the ground.

The Iron Shell Rat was an inferior-class level-two savage beast. Its entire body was covered in scales and it had 10-centimeter-long teeth that were as sharp as knives. It had a huge appetite and could eat an entire living person in one sitting, so it was known as a Death Rat.

If a normal warrior of the Initial Stage of the Black Realm met an Iron Shell Rat, it was likely that before they could even react, the Iron Shell Rat would sneak up on them and bite their legs off.

For a warrior, if both their legs were broken, it was pretty much a death sentence. It would be impossible for them to escape.

Zi Qian's sword managed to pierce through the Iron Shell Rat's neck arteries. It was extremely precise.

"Her hearing is incredible. She's able to hear the Iron Shell Rat from 100 meters away beneath the ground." Zhang Ruochen indeed found this difficult to believe. He raised his alertness subtly. Zi Qian's background was not common, and she was definitely not a normal warrior.

Without rigorous training, a warrior of the Dawn State of the Black Realm would not have such incredible hearing.

"Everyone has their secrets, it's no big deal. Your Majesty, since you are the one who could catch a Poisonous Bee Needle, you must also have secrets you cannot tell?" Zi Qian casually probed with her question.

Zhang Ruochen naturally could not tell her about the Space Domain, so he only smiled lightly and nodded gently.

"Swish!"

Zi Qian's sword swept out and removed the Iron Shell Rat's two eyeballs. She used a 10-centimeter-long box to store the eyeballs.

It must be remembered, a warrior of the Dawn State of the Black Realm needed to kill 40 inferior-class level-two savage beasts to pass through this exam.

The warriors would not be able to carry the bodies of 40 beasts. They could only take out the eyes and use those as proof of their kills.

Zi Qian then removed from within the Iron Shell Rat a walnut-sized piece of Spiritual Brawn.

It only weighed half a kilogram. It was snow white, and crystal clear. It had no scent of blood, rather, it carried a very light fragrance.

She hefted the Spiritual Brawn and looked towards Zhang Ruochen and said, "My cultivation has already reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm, eating a half-kilo of Spiritual Brawn won't help me much. Here, you have it!"

Finishing her sentence, she handed the piece of Spiritual Brawn to Zhang Ruochen.

Zhang Ruochen did not refuse. He took the Spiritual Brawn and swallowed it straight away.

After consuming the Spiritual Brawn, it was very quickly absorbed.

Zhang Ruochen felt his spirit becoming full, his body felt energetic, and all the Meridians inside him widened. Even the flow of his Genuine Qi increased in speed a little.

Zi Qian walked ahead. She walked and talked. "For a warrior who has just reached the Initial Stage of the Black Realm, consuming about two kilograms of Spiritual Brawn will allow them to break through to the Mid Stage of the Black Realm."

“You were able to rank first in the Yellow Board while you were in the Yellow Realm, your Body of the Martial Arts must be far beyond that of those in the same Realm as you. If you want to break through a Realm, you will need to burn through more resources. You probably need three kilograms of Spiritual Brawn to be able to break through to the Mid Stage of the Black Realm.”

Zi Qian assumed Zhang Ruochen had only just cultivated the Initial Stage of the Black Realm. She did not know that Zhang Ruochen had already reached the peak of the Initial Stage.

Zhang Ruochen estimated, according to his current Realm, he would need to consume at least five kilograms of Spiritual Brawn to be able to break into the Mid Stage of the Black Realm.

His Body of the Martial Arts was far more powerful than Zi Qian believed.

Suddenly, Zi Qian stopped and gently bent down. Stretching out two slender fingers, she picked up a broken leaf and placed it under her nose to smell it. Delight spread across her face. “This is the scent of a warrior of Square Commandery. A quarter of an hour ago, he passed by here. This leaf was stepped on and crushed by him.”

Zhang Ruochen asked, “You have studied the Tracking Occult Arts?”

“A little,” Zi Qian replied.

Zhang Ruochen asked again, “How do you know the scent of a warrior from Square Commandery?”

Zi Qian answered, “Last night, while you were all practicing in the drill grounds, I snuck into the camps of the warriors from Square Commandery and memorized all 667 warrior’s scents.”

“667 people’s scents, and you can tell them all apart? Even a warrior of the Heaven realm does not have this ability,” Zhang Ruochen said.

Zi Qian asked, “You don’t believe me?”

Zhang Ruochen said, “Unless you are the descendent of a Saint, and have saintly blood in your veins, you could only have such incredible hearing and sense of smell after rigorous training.”

Zi Qian said, “You’re right. One of my ancestors was a Saint. It is unfortunate that after they passed away, our family soon fell into ruin. Now, there is only me in this clan.”

Zi Qian’s words were both lies and truths.

“So that’s how it is.” Zhang Ruochen nodded his head gently.

If Zi Qian really was a descendent of a Saint, she could indeed cultivate a special physique and possess some supernatural abilities. It would not be so strange then.

Zi Qian and Zhang Ruochen sped forward, trying to catch up to the warrior of Square Commandery.

Zi Qian’s cultivation was at the Dawn State of the Black Realm and so naturally she was very fast, reaching a speed of 36 meters every second.

What she did not expect was that Zhang Ruochen was not much slower than her. He could reach speeds of 34 meters per second, and followed closely behind her.

“So fast. Only an Initial Stage warrior of the Black Realm and already so fast. If he reached the Dawn State, he would definitely be faster than me.” Zi Qian thought to herself.

A normal warrior at the Dawn State of the Black realm could run at about 36 meters per second. Zi Qian was actually much faster than the usual Dawn State warriors, but she held back in front of Zhang Ruochen and did not run as fast as she could have.

Very quickly, they caught up to the young warrior.

That warrior was currently battling an inferior-class level-two savage beast.

Zhang Ruochen slowed his pace and looked ahead. “Indeed, it is a warrior of Square Commandery. His cultivation has already reached the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm, he is definitely a strong opponent.”

Zhang Ruochen seemed to recognize the young warrior. He was one of the elite warriors of Square Commandery.

Zi Qian’s five senses were indeed very powerful, much stronger than those of normal people.

Zhang Ruochen had to use the power of his Martial Soul and extend the Space Domain to be on her level.

The battle ended quickly. The warrior chopped through the Silver Dragon-lion’s neck with one move and removed the beast’s eyeballs.

The warrior from Square Commandery held the eyeballs and with delight on his face said to himself, “Another pair of eyeballs. With this Silver Dragon-lion, I have already killed three savage beasts.”

Abruptly, he sensed something. He quickly put the eyeballs away, hefted his Third-class Genuine Martial Arms grade weapon, and called out. “Who’s there? Come out immediately!”

Zhang Ruochen stepped out.

The warrior of Square Commandery saw Zhang Ruochen and his face overcame with delight. Laughing he said, “Is that the Ninth Prince of Yunwu Commandery? Haha! This is great, I didn’t think my luck would be so good.”

Zhang Ruochen asked, “Is there a need to be this happy seeing me?”

“Your Majesty, you have no idea! Prince Huo Xing has set a price for your head. If someone brings him your head, he will reward them with level-five Genuine Martial Arms. Now you know how valuable you are, don’t you? Now you know why I’m so happy?” The warrior of Square Commandery smiled.

Zhang Ruochen frowned slightly and said, “Are you so confident that you can kill me?”

The warrior of Square Commandery gave a loud laugh. “You can defeat Shen Mengxi with one strike, but I can kill him with one strike. You must know, I’m a warrior at the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm.”

Zhang Ruochen replied, “OK, let’s battle!”

“You’re not running away? Since you are so confident, then I will show you the difference between an Initial Stage warrior of the Black Realm and one at the Advanced Stage.”

The warrior of Square Commandery concentrated his Genuine Qi into his sword, immediately triggering five lines of inscription. The flat of the sword glowed with fire.

He cut the air with his sword and a wave of heat billowed out, causing the leaves on the ground to be whipped into the air.

“Phew!”

The leaves caught fire, like fire rain caught in the void space.

Pieces of the fiery leaves joined together and became a giant dragon, surging towards Zhang Ruochen.

Zhang Ruochen held one hand behind his back, and used his other hand to collect a thick layer of Genuine Qi. Striking out once, he pushed out an invisible wave of Qi.

“Brute Elephant Return to Field!”

It was Dragon and Elephant Prajna Palm, the third strike.

Affected by the power of the strike, the leaves on the ground flew up and circled in the air. Hundreds and thousands of leaves joined together to form a five-meter-tall brute elephant, which charged forwards furiously.

## **Chapter 76: The More Illumination, The More Temptation**

“Boom!”

The two powerful forces clashed together, forming a violent collision.

All the leaves were completely powdered.

The warrior from Square Commandery took more than ten steps back and then managed to steady himself with effort. He had sustained severe internal injuries. He could feel the Spiritual Blood flowing inside him, like a huge hammer thumping him on the chest.

Zhang Ruochen, however, stood calm and still, with ease. Not even a fringe of his garb was damaged.

“It can’t be! A warrior in the Initial Stage of the Black Realm can’t be this powerful!” The warrior from Square Commandery clenched at his chest, staring at Zhang Ruochen in disbelief.

Zi Qian appeared behind him and said, “Don’t you know he once ranked first in the Yellow Board in Yunwu Commandery? Ignorance is also a crime.”

“Another powerful warrior?”

The warrior’s face changed color, and one word came to him.

Flee!

He immediately used a body martial technique. He stepped on the ground with his soles and dashed out suddenly. His speed reached 32 meters per second.

But Zhang Ruochen was even faster! He soon overtook the warrior and attacked him with one finger on his spine.

“Boom!”

The warrior gave out a shrill cry and fell to the ground.

“You... you destroyed my Mid-heaven Meridian...” Lying on the ground, the warrior shivered all over and stared at Zhang Ruochen with strong hatred.

If a warrior’s Mid-heaven Meridian was destroyed, he would never make further progress in his cultivation. In other words, he could be seen as a half-wreck from now on.

“Puff!”

Zi Qian beheaded the warrior with a slash. Red blood gushed out of his neck.

“You...”

Zhang Ruochen stared at Zi Qian. “He would have been disqualified from being in the School of the Martial Market, because I destroyed his Mid-heaven Meridian. He was no longer a threat to us. I don’t see the necessity of killing him!”

Zi Qian put her sword back with a cold look. “Since he could practice into the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm at such an age, there must be some sort of strong power supporting him behind the scenes. If he survived, he would seek revenge.”

Zhang Ruochen could not respond to that.

To be honest, Zi Qian had done nothing wrong. But Zhang Ruochen still believed the warrior’s death was completely unnecessary. The destruction of his Mid-heaven Meridian was a serious punishment for any warrior.

Zi Qian searched the warrior’s body and found 21 Spiritual Crystals, 500 silver coins, and a box with Beast’s Eyeballs in it.

She opened the box. Then her pretty face beamed with delight. “Six Beast’s Eyeballs! That’s three inferior-class level-two savage beasts.”

Zi Qian put the box away immediately. Then she glanced at Zhang Ruochen and asked, “You are a prince, so I assume you aren’t hard up?”

“No,” said Zhang Ruochen.

“Since that’s the case, I’ll take all the Spiritual Crystals and silver coins!” Zi Qian did not stand on ceremony and put the 21 Spiritual Crystals and 500 silver coins in her bag.

Zhang Ruochen was a little curious and asked, “Are you hard up?”



Zi Qian said seriously, "Even a warrior with high talent can't become powerful without Practice resources. But the resources cost a lot of money. Of course, a lofty prince like you who has never lacked any resource since birth, can't understand the importance of money."

"You can take his war knife."

Zi Qian kicked the war knife, a Third-class Genuine Martial Arm, towards Zhang Ruochen.

Zhang Ruochen caught the war knife unceremoniously and put it away in his Spatial Ring.

Zi Qian was slightly astonished seeing his ring. She stared at it and asked, "A spatial treasure?"

"Yes!"

Zhang Ruochen simply told her the truth. "Yes. I can give it to you if you like it."

Zhang Ruochen took the white phoenix-carved ring off and passed it to Zi Qian. He said with a smile, "To be honest, there are too many decorative patterns on this Spatial Ring. It suits women more!"

Zhang Ruochen felt nonchalant about it. It was just a semi-finished Spatial Ring. He did not love it dearly. He could make a new one anyway.

But to Zi Qian, a spatial treasure was priceless and extraordinarily rare.

"He could give it to me? For free! Was the Ninth Prince so short-sighted?"

Zi Qian stared at Zhang Ruochen intensely and found a gentle smile on his face. It seemed that he meant it from the bottom of his heart.

Zi Qian glanced at him coldly and did not take the Spatial Ring. She said, "Don't you know that men can't give women rings at will?"

After saying this, Zi Qian walked up to the Silver Dragon-lion and dug about a kilogram of Spiritual Brawn out.

Zhang Ruochen's hand stretched halfway in the air. He felt a little surprised at first, and then he laughed. "I want to give it to you simply because you are carrying too many things. It will be easier to store them in the Spatial Ring. What are you thinking about? I'm only 16. How can I have any other intentions?"

Zi Qian's look grew even colder. She threw the Spiritual Brawn to Zhang Ruochen, and then stretched out a hand. She said, "Pass me the space treasure."

Zhang Ruochen took the Spiritual Brawn and handed the Spatial Ring to Zi Qian.

"How does it work?" she asked.

"Just transfer your Genuine Qi into the ring," he replied.

Zi Qian transferred her Genuine Qi. A layer of white light began to glow immediately on the Ring's surface.

She put her hand into the ring and found that the internal space was not that big, only the size of a small house. It was different from the legends, which said you could put mountains, even heaven, and earth in these treasures.

But it was enough for putting away some personal belongings.

Naturally, Zi Qian liked the Spatial Ring very much and hated to part with it. She glanced at Zhang Ruochen with her beautiful eyes and asked, "What will you use if you give it to me?"

"I have others!"

With a gentle smile, Zhang Ruochen took all the things in the Spatial Ring out, and put them into the Spatial Crystal's internal space.

Zi Qian took the Spatial Ring again and started to put all her belongings into it. Soon, she had nothing on her hand but a phoenix-patterned jade ring.

"This is indeed a spatial treasure! How wonderful!" The more Zi Qian looked at the ring, the more she liked it.

She took out 30 Spiritual Crystals from the Spatial Ring and handed them to Zhang Ruochen. "I won't have it for free," she said. "Here, take these."

Zhang Ruochen shook his head, "If I wanted to sell it, I'd sell it for at least 200 Spiritual Crystals."

Zi Qian's face became cold. She looked at the Spatial Ring. "If that's the price, I won't take it."

Zhang Ruochen laughed. "If I wanted to sell it, of course, you'd have to pay me that much. But now, I want to give it to you, so you don't have to pay me even one silver coin."

"You..."

Zi Qian flashed her pearl-white teeth. "Okay! I'll take it! But why must you give me such an expensive treasure?"

Zhang Ruochen kept walking ahead. "Because we hit it off," he said blandly.

Zi Qian asked, "Don't you worry that I'll kill you and rob you of your other treasures?"

Zhang Ruochen glanced at her. "Most people don't return kindness with ingratitude. After all, there are more good people in this world than bad. I just don't believe I'll be so unfortunate to meet a bad person... What are you doing?"

Nobody knew when Zi Qian's sword was drawn from the sheath and pointed at Zhang Ruochen's neck. If she struck a little bit forward, Zhang Ruochen would lose his head.

But Zhang Ruochen stared at Zi Qian calmly.

He secretly transferred his Genuine Qi into the Vessel of Spirit, which formed a 10-meter Space Domain.

If Zi Qian ever dared to do anything, Zhang Ruochen could kill her faster.

Zi Qian, however, was not conscious of the Space Domain. She stared at Zhang Ruochen closely with a struggling look, and then put her sword away. "I just want you to know, you are too naive! People are dangerous, and one should always guard against the harm others might do. I suppose this is your first time practicing outside the palace?"

Seeing Zi Qian put her sword away, Zhang Ruochen scattered the Space Domain as well. He simply said, "Yes."

Zi Qian was speechless. She did not feel like talking to him about it anymore, so she said, "Let's keep hunting the warriors from Square Commandery!"

Staring at Zi Qian's receding figure, Zhang Ruochen rubbed his chin and smiled. "Her movement is exactly the same as Chen Libing from Hades Department. Only professional killers can train their hearing and smell to such an extent. I was right. She is also a killer from the Hades Department."

How could Zhang Ruochen be naive when he was a man who had already died once?

He was on guard against her when she got close to him intentionally. The only thing he wasn't sure about was whether she came from the Hades Department or not.

After constant probing, Zhang Ruochen was finally sure of her identity.

But even knowing the truth, Zhang Ruochen wasn't frightened at all. He saw it as a kind of experience.

"Miss Zi! Wait for me! Don't be so fast!"

Zhang Ruochen trotted after her.

The first round of the exam would take three days.

Before the first day darkened, Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian met another two warriors from Square Commandery. Needless to say, Zi Qian killed them both.

Beast's Eyeballs, Crystals, and silver coins were taken by Zi Qian.

All the weapons and Pills were taken by Zhang Ruochen.

"It's night. We can finally have a good rest," said Zhang Ruochen.

Zi Qian rolled her eyes at Zhang Ruochen. "Most warriors will do the same as you at night. They will find somewhere safe and prepare to sleep. This is the perfect time to hunt them down. We need to kill at least twenty warriors from Square Commandery tonight to finish the task."

"Task? What task?" asked Zhang Ruochen.

"It's the task we set for ourselves," Zi Qian replied. Square Commandery robbed Yunwu Commandery of our mines, and even seven of our cities. Countless soldiers and people died brutally. Don't you want revenge for them? What's more, Prince Huo Xing said publicly that he will kill you one day. Don't you want to kill him? Don't you want to teach Square Commandery a lesson?"

Zhang Ruochen could not respond to that at all.

After a while, Zhang Ruochen finally replied, "Let's fight!"

## Chapter 77: The Archery Master

Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian dashed through the danger-ridden jungle, searching for a trace of the warriors from Square Commandery.

From time to time, shrill screams could be heard in the dim light of the night.

“Who... are... you...?”

“I’m the son of General Wei Wu from Square Commandery! You... puff...”

...

The warriors from Square Commandery intended to kill those from Yunwu Commandery as a cruel lesson. They were killed, however, by two mysterious warriors first.

A foul wind and a rain of blood came overnight.

No matter how secretly-hidden a warrior was, he would be eventually found out and slaughtered with Zi Qian’s outstanding Tracking Occult Arts and smelling.

By midnight, Zi Qian had already killed eight warriors. Blood dyed her purple outfit red.

Zhang Ruochen did not mind killing, but he would not easily kill someone who did not deserve death.

“I’ve killed eight. There are 12 to go.”

Holding her bloody sword, Zi Qian was ready to hunt more.

“Look out!”

Zhang Ruochen caught her by the shoulder and dragged her three meters backwards.

“Swish!”

A purple Thunder Arrow pierced through the void and crashed into a weighty stone.

With a huge “Boom!”, the stone burst into pieces.

If Zhang Ruochen had not dragged her away, that stone might have been her head.

Zi Qian was cold and sweating. She glanced at Zhang Ruochen with gratitude, and looked up from where the Thunder Arrow came. She said, “What splendid arrow technique! They almost managed to kill me. Among all the young warriors in Square Commandery, there is only one person who can do this. He’s Feng Zhiyi, from the Feng family.”

The Feng’s were one of the eight seventh-class families in Square Commandery. They settled where archery was famous in the Nine Western Prefectures. The Feng’s were known as The Family of Archery.

Feng Zhiyi was one of the top prodigies among the Feng family. He was only 24 years old, but he had already reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm. What’s more, his archery also reached the Intermediate Stage of Following the Mind.

Among all the young warriors in Square Commandery, there were only three who have reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm.

A man's voice came from the dark. It said, "Well, you deserve to be called the top one among the younger generation in Yunwu Commandery, because you know it is me. But the Ninth Prince surprises me more. I am really curious, how did you sense me in the dark?"

Feng Zhiyi was astonished, because few could escape from his arrow in the same realm.

Moreover, it was a sneak attack just now.

Of course, Zhang Ruochen would never tell Feng Zhiyi how powerful his Spiritual Power was.

Zhang Ruochen released his Space Domain and covered the 10-meter surrounding area with it, in case Feng Zhiyi shot another Thunder Arrow. He said, "Of course you can't shoot us, because you are so bad at archery."

"You are the first one to laugh at our family's archery! Don't you know that during the Mohe Battle two years ago, it was my grandfather who injured your father, the Yunwu Commandery Prince, with Deer Threatening Bow and Stele Breaking Arrow? Haha!" laughed Feng Zhiyi. "Unfortunately, he missed a little bit, or your loser father could have been a dead man!"

Zhang Ruochen's look became stone-cold. He said, "Looks like you are quite proud of it?"

Feng Zhiyi laughed and said, "Of course! Our generous king granted us a city for injuring the Yunwu Commandery Prince. There are over all 80,000 slaves in it!

"You know, that city originally belonged to Yunwu Commandery, and the 80,000 slaves once were the Yunwu Commandery's people. If we destroy you completely, our family will get more rewards. At that time, even you will become a slave in our family. If I asked you to bark, you wouldn't even dare to say a human word."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "Do you want to irritate me and find my weakness?"

"Haha! So what? You can't even kill me!" laughed Feng Zhiyi.

Zhang Ruochen replied, "That being the case, I'll kill once today."

"Swish!"

Zhang Ruochen took out the Flash Shinning Sword, and rushed into the dark woods at an extremely fast speed.

In only one breath's time, Zhang Ruochen found Feng Zhiyi who was hidden in the dark.

Of course, Feng Zhiyi didn't think Zhang Ruochen could be this fast. He was a little surprised, but quickly drew his bow and shot three times.

It was the unique martial technique of the Feng family, Triple Cloud-splitting Arrows, which was in the Superior Class of the Human Stage.

Three Thunder Arrows dashed out like three streams of purple light.

“Bang! Bang! Bang!”

Zhang Ruochen struck three times as well. Three shadows appeared in the air, and then the three Thunder Arrows were all knocked away.

“No!”

Feng Zhiyi was very confident of his archery. Even a warrior at the Medium State of the Black Realm could not survive all three arrows at such a close distance.

Zhang Ruochen, however, didn't hide. Rather, he knocked them all away.

Zi Qian just arrived, and she was also shocked by the scene. Even for a powerful warrior like her, she couldn't guarantee she would survive all three arrows at 20 meters.

Of course, they knew nothing about Zhang Ruochen's Space Domain. When the three arrows came into it, Zhang Ruochen could easily see their flight paths, so it was not that hard to knock them away.

After knocking away the arrows, Zhang Ruochen did not stop but kept rushing toward him.

In a single instant, Zhang Ruochen came to be right in front of Feng Zhiyi. He stretched his arm straight out and stabbed.

Zhang Ruochen burst out the Sword Comprehension at the Advanced Stage of Sword Following the Mind. It looked like he was possessed by the god of sword, and a strong radiance about two meters high shined from his blade.

Feng Zhiyi knew he had no chance of using the Thunder Arrow now, so he used his bow as a weapon and struck towards Zhang Ruochen.

After all, he was a warrior in the Dawn State of the Black Realm. There was no way he would be afraid of a warrior in the Initial Stage of the Black Realm.

“Boom!”

They were both shaken backward due to the clash of their weapons.

Feng Zhiyi looked at his scratched wrist. He slightly changed color and said, “What an outstanding sword technique! If I were a warrior at the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm, my arm would have been chopped off.”

“Your family took our city, but now I'll send your family's prodigy to hell,” said Zhang Ruochen.

Feng Zhiyi sneered and said, “My grandfather almost killed your father. Who do you think you are? I was only a little inattentive just now. The battle begins, now.”

The word “now” had just finished, and Feng Zhiyi spat a silver thin needle from his mouth.

The silver thin needle flew towards Zhang Ruochen's heart unexpectedly.

One had no chance to survive if the needle pierced the heart.

But who could he have known Feng Zhiyi had a needle in his mouth?

Any other warrior, even another warrior in the Medium State of the Black Realm, would have been killed by this ambush.

But Zhang Ruochen was not any other warrior. When the needle came into the Space Domain, Zhang Ruochen sensed the danger and blocked it with his sword.

The needle flew backward and scratched Feng Zhiyi's neck, leaving a shallow blood stain.

Feng Zhiyi touched his wound, and became even more surprised. He said, "Did you just block my Archery Tongue?"

Archery Tongue was a technique that allowed a person to shoot weapons from their mouth with their tongue. It could be very surprising, and it could kill people while talking.

Archery Tongue was a secret technique of the Feng family. It was said that no one had ever survived it, and many warriors with higher cultivations than the users were killed by it.

"Now it's my turn!

"Sacred Breaking Plum Sword!"

Zhang Ruochen stepped out and stabbed!

The gorgeous radiance was split into seven, like a plum blossom blooming in the void.

Feng Zhiyi quickly stepped back. But no matter how hard he retreated, the seven streaks of radiance kept approaching him like shadows.

Feng Zhiyi finally panicked. He widened his eyes and said, "The Spiritual Stage... How can you..."

"Puff!"

Seven Sword Breaths pierced Feng Zhiyi's glabella, penetrated his head, and flew away from the back of his head.

A small, bloody plum blossom appeared on his glabella. Seven drops of blood overflowed from there, looking like one stamen and six petals of a plum blossom.

Zhang Ruochen put away his Flash Shinning Sword. He walked towards Feng Zhiyi's standing body, and touched his body with his sword scabbard.

"Boom!"

Feng Zhiyi's body fell flat to the ground.

Staring at Zhang Ruochen's back not far away, Zi Qian let out a long sigh. After a long while, she finally said, "I thought you wouldn't kill!"

Zhang Ruochen replied, "He would kill me if I didn't kill him. What else can I do? What's more, you heard him, he asked for it. This is not my fault."

Zi Qian said, "You are in the Initial Stage of the Black Realm, but you can kill a warrior in the Dawn State of the Black Realm. If you don't get yourself killed, with your talent, you can definitely become a Warrior of Division Profound one day."

Zhang Ruochen said, "In fact, I won because Feng Zhiyi was an archery master. He had the advantage in long range combat, but not in short range combat. In short range combat, he could only be seen as a warrior at the Advanced Stage of the Black Realm."

Zi Qian nodded. She was also confident that she could kill Feng Zhiyi in three movements in short range combat.

"Feng Zhiyi was a top prodigy of the Feng family, and they have spent a huge amount of money in cultivating him. They have great expectations for him. Now that he has died in an exam of the School of the Martial Market, the older generations in his family will fly into a rage," said Zi Qian.

Zhang Ruochen squatted and found a small box from Feng Zhiyi's body. There were eight Beast's Eyeballs in it, which equaled to four inferior-class level-two savage beasts.

"I need 10 Beast's Eyeballs to pass this exam. Now there are only two to go." Zhang Ruochen smiled. He did not suffer from psychological trauma after his first killing.

Zhang Ruochen's psychological predisposition was even stronger than many warriors in the Heaven Realm.

Later on, Zhang Ruochen found 32 Spiritual Crystals and one two-star VIP card.

One had to save 100,000 silver coins in the Martial Market Bank to get a two-star VIP card.

"He was indeed a genius from a seventh-class family. Look at how rich he was!"

But there was no use in simply getting this card, because the owner had to drip a drop of blood on it to unlock the special Prohibition.

Only when the Prohibition was unlocked could the owner draw money from the Martial Market Bank.

There was no use in collecting Feng Zhiyi's blood now. After all, Feng Zhiyi was dead, and his blood would lose its essence of life very soon. But without blood activity, the Prohibition couldn't be unlocked.

Seeing the two-star VIP card, Zi Qian said, "Feng Zhiyi's lineal relatives' blood may unlock the Prohibition! According to what I know, one of his brothers is practicing as one of the external students of the Martial School. He is also a prodigy."

"In that case, I'll take it with me!" Zhang Ruochen put the two-star VIP card away.

For him, 100,000 coins was not a small fortune.

## **Chapter 78: Green Devil Hand**

Grievances ran deep between Yunwu Commandery and Square Commandery. Warriors of both places were natural enemies and held grudges.



While Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian went on their killing spree of warriors from Square Commandery, warriors of Yunwu Commandery were also being hunted down by those from Square Commandery.

Eventually, even other commanderies were involved.

At dawn of the second morning, Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian found a female body floating in a small creek. The body was naked, covered in bruises, and there were spots of blood on her legs. It was clear that she had suffered inhumane humiliation while she was alive.

The fatal wound on her body was on her neck; a small cut had been made on her arteries. Fresh blood continuously flowed out, dyeing the creek red.

The air held the scent of blood.

“Such a brutal way to kill someone.” Zhang Ruochen pulled his brows together tightly, feeling anger ignite in his chest.

He waded into the small creek and carried the body onto the shore.

He also recognized this female. She was the daughter of one of the elite families in Yunwu Commandery. Her cultivation had reached the Mid Stage of the Black Realm and was highly talented. It was likely that she would have made it through the examination.

Zi Qian had long become used to murder and said, “This style of killing should be that of the prodigy of the Qing family from Square Commandery. Also, there are definitely remnants of his scent!”

Zhang Ruochen was not familiar with the warriors of Square Commandery and so asked, “Who are you talking about?”

“Qing You. He is considered the most outstanding prodigy of the Qing family in the last hundred years. At age 15, he reached the Completion of the Yellow Realm. At 16, he became a Warrior of the Yellow Board, and at 17, he broke into the Black Realm. And now, he is only 21 and has already reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm.”

Zi Qian continued, “Rumor has it, he has cultivated a dark power that can absorb the Genuine Qi from women’s bodies. That is why his cultivation increases so quickly.”

Zhang Ruochen closed the woman’s eyes and buried the body near the creek. “There are only three warriors from Square Commandery who have reached the Dawn State of the Black Realm. I can’t believe we would meet another one so quickly!”

Zi Qian asked, “Do you want to kill him?”

Zhang Ruochen replied, “Don’t you?”

“You should know that Qing You is not the same as Feng Zhiyi. He’ll be difficult to defeat.”

Zi Qian continued, “Although Feng Zhiyi was a prodigy, he is miles worse than Qing You. Qing You’s cultivation has reached the peak of the Dawn State. Even warriors of the Medium State of the Black Realm are not his equal.”

Feng Zhiyi had just broken through the Dawn State, while Qing You had already reached the peak. The difference between the two was not usual.

Zhang Ruochen looked serious. He looked around and said, "Danger is coming close."

Zi Qian's ears twitched and her face changed. She drew her sword immediately and adopted a defensive pose. Staring into the forest, she said, "We've been ambushed."

"Haha! You are very aware. I didn't expect you to discover it so quickly!" A clear laugh rang out.

"Swish!"

Prince Huo Xing flew out on the back of an inferior-class level-two savage beast, a green-shelled eagle, circling above Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian.

He stood arrogantly on the back of the green-shelled eagle, staring down at the two people below and said, "You two are quite incredible. There were at least 15 warriors of Square Commandery that died at your hands last night, right?"

Zhang Ruochen raised his head slightly to glance at him and asked, "How did you find us?"

"Tap tap!"

Footsteps rang out.

From the forest, out walked a man with a cold face. Wearing a red robe and holding a foot-long, curved machete, he laughed coldly and said, "Once we found the first person you killed, do you think it would be difficult to catch up to you? Haha!"

Zi Qian stared at the man in the red robe, and her eyes darkened. "Qing You."

Qing You's mouth curved up slightly. His gaze slid up her body before landing on her beautiful face. He leered and said, "What an exquisite specimen with a high cultivation. If I can absorb the Genuine Qi in your body, perhaps I can break through to the Medium State."

Zi Qian's gaze chilled and said coldly, "Since you've already laid an ambush, then show yourself, everyone!"

"Swish!"

From the forest, there was a chain of rustling.

In a flash, another seven streaks of human shadows flew out. Among them, three were at the Mid Stage of the Black Realm, and four at the Initial Stage.

The seven young warriors all stood at different positions, blocking all of Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian's escape routes.

Prince Huo Xing stood on the back of the green-shelled eagle and laughed. "Why don't you break the Kylin Ball? Do you think you still have a chance to live?"

Zhang Ruochen immediately sent out his Space Domain, sweeping his eyes across the nine people present. His heart sank a little.

Qing You's fighting force itself was more powerful than both Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian combined. It would be as difficult as climbing to the heavens if they wanted to defeat him.

Not to mention that Prince Huo Xing, who was circling in the sky, was more or less as powerful as Qing You. He could strike at Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian anytime and send them scrambling.

Other than that, there were another seven Black Realm warriors who had already blocked Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian's escape routes. They did not even have a way to escape.

Prince Huo Xing laughed. "Even if you did break the Kylin Ball and send up the Kylin Smoke, no one will come to save you. The external student guard of this section is a young prodigy of Square Commandery. I have already had a chat with him, and so even if he does see Kylin Smoke, he will not come."

Zhang Ruochen said, "Prince Huo Xing has thought of everything. I guess we must die today?"

Qing You's gaze became lecherous. Shaking his head and smiling, he said, "No! Your Majesty, only you will die without a doubt. As for that beauty in purple, it would be a shame to kill her. Haha!"

A Mid Stage warrior nearby leered and smiled, saying, "Mr. Qing, after absorbing her Genuine Qi, you must let us brothers have some fun."

"How dare you!"

Zi Qian turned into a deadly purple shadow. Moving at 40 meters per second, she charged with her sword towards the Mid Stage warrior.

Be mindful, a normal Initial Stage warrior could only reach 36 meters per second.

Only warriors of the Medium State could erupt to the speed of 40 meters per second.

It could be said that Zi Qian was truly angry. She demonstrated her fastest speed and aimed to kill the warrior with one strike.

Qing You huffed coldly. He moved even faster, reaching 44 meters per second, surpassing the speed of a warrior in the Final State of the Black Realm.

He was like a ghost appearing before Zi Qian.

He extended a green hand. His palm was covered with green scales, grown as if it was the claw of a savage beast.

"Clap!"

Qing You's hand-claw was as strong as iron clashing against Zi Qian's sword and sent up a giant shower of sparks.

"Boom!"

Qing You closed his fingers and caught hold of Zi Qian's sword bare-handed.

Zi Qian's countenance changed and tried to pull back the sword immediately. But Qing You's fingers were like iron and held tight to the sword. No matter how much strength Zi Qian exerted, she could not move his claw.

“Green Devil Hand!” Zi Qian called.

Qing You laughed. “You’re right! It is indeed the low-class Spiritual martial technique ‘Green Devil Hand’. I have already practiced this and have a little success. Swords will not pass, and flames will not melt.”

Zi Qian immediately gave up her sword and pulled back.

Qing You moved even faster. Stretching out his hand, he tried to grab her neck. A green shadow of his hand appeared in the air, striking together towards Zi Qian’s neck.

A breath of poisonous wind spread out from Qing You’s hand-claw. It gave off a slight stench of blood.

Zi Qian bent and dodged Qing You’s claw. Her hands hit the ground and a pair of long legs kicked out, landing a blow on Qing You’s chest.

“Boom!”

Qing You took the kick from Zi Qian and retreated three steps back. However, he was not injured. Rather, he gave a crazy laugh, ran his tongue across his lips, and said, “How interesting!”

Zi Qian immediately picked up her sword and began to circulate the Genuine Qi in her body, triggering the eight lines of inscription in the sword.

The surface of the sword began to glow with a pale light and gave off a bone-chilling aura.

“Strong Wind and Flying Snow!”

Zi Qian’s arms moved continuously, her sword drawing circles in the air and creating a strong wind. An endless stream of cold air spread from the sword. There were particles of frost appearing in the air.

The particles of frost continued to grow bigger, merging into flakes of snow.

“Spiritual Stage Sword Technique!”

Qing You’s eyes became very grim and yelled loudly. “Green Devil Hand!”

Qing You became a green shadow, flying as straight as an arrow towards Zi Qian’s sword circle.

With a bang, the green devil’s hand suddenly attacked the tip of the sword, emitting a gust of Qi billow.

Zi Qian let out a muffled yell. Her sword flew from her hand, falling into a small creek.

“Boom!”

Qing You’s strike landed on Zi Qian’s right shoulder, sending Zi Qian flying over 10 meters away.

In mid-air, she spat out a mouthful of blood and her face turned very pale. She had taken heavy internal damage.

“Haha!”

Qing You opened his mouth and laughed, and once again rushed forward. He grabbed Zi Qian’s ankle with one hand, wanting to trap her.

At this moment, Zhang Ruochen appeared in a flash from behind Zi Qian. Wielding the Flash Shinning Sword, he struck towards Qing You's glabella.

"Sacred Breaking Plum Sword!"

Qing You sensed the danger and immediately released Zi Qian's ankle. With a light smile on his face, he extended his hand to block the sword in Zhang Ruochen's hand.

Suddenly, Zhang Ruochen changed his strike, switching from piercing to chopping, calling out loud, "Sacred Guiding Sword."

A streak of Sword Breath, 10 meters long, flew out from the sword. In a flash, it was chopping towards Qing You.

Qing You's eyes narrowed. Immediately holding out both hands, he concentrated all his Genuine Qi on his palms.

A green ball of Genuine Qi gathered between his hands.

"Green Devil's Cry."

He sent out the green ball of Genuine Qi and created in front of him a green fog, clashing with the streak of Sword Breath.

Zhang Ruochen felt a great wave of power coming towards him and immediately held up his sword to block it, but still flew out seven meters from the powerful hit.

## **Chapter 79: The Shadow of Death**

Qing You was struck by the Sword Breath, it left a shallow cut on his palm.

The Sword Breath sliced open the green scales on his palm. The blood that flowed out was green and carried a deadly toxin.

"Haha! Your Highness certainly has unexpected depths. You managed to slice open my Green Devil Hand. Very interesting, truly quite interesting!"

Qing You circulated the Genuine Qi in his body and threads of Qi seeped out of his pores. They melded into a green light and enveloped both of his arms.

The green light flowed towards his hands.

Shortly after, the cut inflicted by Zhang Ruochen healed at a rate visible to the naked eye.

"Very powerful self-healing!"

Zhang Ruochen remained aware of Qing You while he looked towards Zi Qian and asked, "How are you holding up?"

Zi Qian's face was white and a trickle of blood stained the corner of her mouth. The most serious injury was on her right shoulder.

Qing You's palm contained a deadly toxin. It had burned a handprint into her clothes. The skin showing below was turning a green-purple color.

"I'm fine!" Zi Qian gritted her teeth, with coldness rife in her eyes. "Let's work together and kill our way out. I'll keep Qing You occupied while you go get rid of the other seven warriors. I can, at most, hold Qing You off for 10 strikes, so you must kill the seven people before that. After that, we will work together to defeat Qing You. Only this way will we have an opportunity to escape."

Zhang Ruochen saw Zi Qian's face grow even paler and said, "I'll take care of Qing You. You go to kill the other seven."

"No! Qing You won't kill me. That's why I can hold him for 10 strikes. But Qing You will definitely kill you. Forget 10 strikes, you will die at his hands within five strikes," Zi Qian said.

"Don't be so sure!"

Zhang Ruochen flashed a smile at Zi Qian. One hand lifted the Flash Shinning Sword while the other removed a long, black spear from the Space and Time Spinel.

This long, black spear was taken from the hands of a warrior of Square Commandery. It was a level-four Genuine Martial Armament.

Moving into his paces, Zhang Ruochen charged towards Qing You at his highest speed.

At the same time, Zi Qian also started attacking. Crossing the creek in a single step, she struck one warrior of the Initial Stage of the Black Realm in the throat.

That warrior's throat caved. He vomited blood and immediately collapsed into the creek.

In a flash, Zi Qian attacked another warrior.

Qing You stood on a two meter tall stone, staring at the charging Zhang Ruochen. He smiled delightedly and said, "Perfect! I'll kill you first! Then I'll ravage that beauty."

"Let's see if you have that ability!" Zhang Ruochen replied.

Qing You stared at Zhang Ruochen and said dismissively, "A sword in one hand and a spear in another, do you think you can multitask? If you can't, using two weapons will actually be a disadvantage in a battle."

"You'll see once you try me!" Zhang Ruochen challenged.

While Zhang Ruochen and Qing You were talking, Zi Qian had already killed two people in a row and was charging towards the third.

Qing You stopped wasting time talking to Zhang Ruochen. Jumping down from the giant rock, he prepared his Genuine Qi and slapped one hand against the rock.

The rock, weighing over 10,000 pounds, flew towards Zhang Ruochen.

He could not retreat. He must delay Qing You.

Zhang Ruochen's gaze sharpened. He circulated the Genuine Qi within his body, triggering four of the Inscriptions of Power series on his Flash Shinning Sword. The weight of the sword became 200 kilograms.

"Boom!"

Zhang Ruochen swung his sword and chopped straight down.

The giant stone was split open, flying off to both sides.

"Haha!"

Qing You flew out from behind the stone, grinning. He aimed a strike at Zhang Ruochen's head.

It must be noted, Zhang Ruochen had already activated the Space Domain. Naturally, he knew Qing You was behind the giant rock. When Qing You struck, Zhang Ruochen preemptively attacked with his spear, aiming it towards Qing You's chest.

Qing You did not think Zhang Ruochen would react so quickly. He had no choice but to withdraw his attack and instead strike at the long spear.

"Boom!"

Qing You was very strong, with one strike he knocked the long spear aside.

After that, Qing You turned, his body suddenly moving like a poisonous snake. He followed the spear, getting closer towards Zhang Ruochen. He stretched out two fingers to stab at Zhang Ruochen's throat.

Two green fire sparks spouted from the extended fingers.

It must be noted that Qing You's speed was at 44 meters per second while Zhang Ruochen could only reach 34 meters per second.

From Qing You's perspective, his fingers would definitely strike Zhang Ruochen's throat.

But, just at this moment, Zhang Ruochen's sword struck. Coming up from the bottom, it was directed at Qing You's throat.

If Qing You wanted to strike Zhang Ruochen's throat, his own throat will certainly be pierced. The final result would be death on both sides.

Qing You frowned slightly, again forced by Zhang Ruochen to retreat. "How is this possible? Your speed and strength are both no match for mine. How can you continuously avoid my killing strikes? Perhaps you really can multitask and simultaneously control the sword and the spear?"

Zhang Ruochen held a sword in one hand and a spear in the other and said, "I told you earlier. It won't be that easy if you want to kill me!"

Zhang Ruochen's speed indeed could not be compared to Qing You's, but he had the help of the Space Domain. Once Qing You came within 10 meters of him, Zhang Ruochen could clearly see Qing You's next moves. He was completely able to move one step ahead and block Qing You's killing strikes.

At this moment, Zi Qian had already killed three people.

“Then let’s see how many strikes you can block.”

Qing You was angry. Both of his arms turned a dark green color. He executed a Superior-class Human Stage martial technique. He became three green shadows and charged towards Zhang Ruochen simultaneously.

A normal warrior would not be able to tell which of the shadows was Qing You’s true person.

Once the three shadows had come within 10 meters of Zhang Ruochen, he could see clearly that all three shadows were the true person. Only, Qing You was moving too fast and using a mysterious step, causing it to appear that he had become three people.

“Boom!”

Zhang Ruochen’s sword struck out and blocked the first shadow.

Another blow blocked the second shadow.

When the third shadow approached, Zhang Ruochen blocked it with both spear and sword. It was another mutual death strike, forcing Qing You to retreat again.

“Boom!”

From a distance, it appeared that Zhang Ruochen was standing in the same place, continuously striking out with sword and spear and battling three Qing You at once.

They had exchanged more than 20 strikes, yet Qing You was unable to defeat Zhang Ruochen.

Prince Huo Xing was standing on the back of the Green-Shelled Eagle. He looked down at the battle disappointedly and said. “Looks like I will have to do it myself!”

Prince Huo Xing raised the Silver Bone Crescent Bow and drew out a golden Carriage Breaking Arrow. He drew on all the Genuine Qi in his body, pulling the 300-pound bow into a full moon instantly and making it creak.

On the battlefield, the Carriage Breaking Arrow could destroy a 30-man chariot.

Prince Huo Xing stared at the Zhang Ruochen who was battling Qing You. His mouth revealed a small smile, and he pointed the arrowhead at Zhang Ruochen’s back, “Ninth Prince, farewell!”

His finger relaxed, and the Carriage Breaking Arrow flew out.

“Whew!”

The arrowhead caught alight, like a flaming meteorite. It rushed towards the ground.

## **Chapter 80: Breaking Through a Realm**

Qing You saw the carriage Breaking Arrow falling from the sky and his face revealed a trace of displeasure. He coldly huffed and said, “Mind your own business!”

He wanted to personally kill Zhang Ruochen, not have him be killed by Prince Huo Xing.



Since Prince Huo Xing has intervened, Zhang Ruochen was definitely going to die.

Qing You pushed off the ground with his toes, becoming a green shadow. He flew off, retreating far away.

Naturally, Zhang Ruochen felt the Carriage Breaking Arrow streaking through the air. All the hair on his body stood on end like a hedgehog, a chill went down his spine, and his scalp tingled. It felt like the sky was crashing down.

“Ice-fire Kylin!”

Zhang Ruochen felt Genuine Qi rush through 36 Meridians, all flowing towards the Ice-fire Kylin Armor he was wearing. Almost instantly, he triggered 10 lines of inscription within the Kylin Armor.

Ice-fire Kylin Armor was a level 6 Genuine Martial Arm. There were 38 lines of inscription in the Armor. However, with Zhang Ruochen’s current martial cultivation, he could only activate 10 at most.

“Swish!”

The armor on Zhang Ruochen’s body emitted red and blue light, spreading both cold and heat energy.

The roar of a Kylin emanated from within the armor and a seven-meter tall illusory image of a Kylin appeared. It shielded Zhang Ruochen with its body.

“Boom!”

Crashing into the illusory Kylin, it was clear that the force of the Carriage Breaking Arrow weakened slightly as well as slowing down.

By the time the Arrow had made it to Zhang Ruochen’s back, 90 percent of its power had been depleted, and only 10 percent was left.

Even this 10 percent of power was terrifying. It managed to send Zhang Ruochen flying into a nearby tree, which was one meter in diameter. The impact caused him to spit out a mouthful of blood.

Luckily the arrow was blocked by the armor. Otherwise, Zhang Ruochen would have been impaled.

“The Carriage Breaking Arrow is so powerful! It’s at least 10 times stronger than the Thunder Arrow.”

Zhang Ruochen used his sword and spear to hold himself up and spat out another mouthful of blood.

Prince Huo Xing stood on the back of the Green-Shelled Eagle holding the Silver Bone Crescent Bow. He softly exclaimed and said, “Ice-Fire Kylin armor! I had no idea he was wearing such a treasure, this is amazing! Qing You, kill him, and take the Kylin armor from him.”

Qing You let out a cold laugh and walked towards Zhang Ruochen and said, “Even the arrow couldn’t kill you. Looks like I’ll still have to do it personally.”

Zhang Ruochen glanced slightly at Zi Qian. She had already killed five of the Warriors of the Square Commandery. If he could delay just a little longer, she would be able to kill all seven.

“I’m leaving first, see you never.”

Zhang Ruochen turned and ran like an agile monkey. In a flash, he disappeared into the forest.

Escaping into the forest not only drew out time, it also provided a little cover against Prince Huo Xing. This prevented him firing another Carriage Breaking Arrow.

“Escape? In your dreams!”

Qing You chased after Zhang Ruochen, rushing into the forest at a speed of 44 meters per second.

As Zhang Ruochen could only move at 34 meters per second, he had no speed advantage. In a few seconds, Qing You had caught up and the two resumed their duel.

Qing You removed a foot long hooked knife from a bag at his waist, reminiscent of a scythe. He moved his fingers and the scythe rotated in the air, creating tens of knife shadows with a “swish” sound.

“A hit!”

Zhang Ruochen’s clothes were sliced open at the chest. Luckily, it did not pierce through the Ice-fire Kylin Armor. Zhang Ruochen was fortunate it had blocked the scythe as otherwise, his chest would definitely be bleeding from the cut.

“Heh heh! Your Highness can go die!”

Qing You was as fast as a ghost and there was a cruel smile in his eyes. With a wave of his arm, the cold, curved blade slashed towards Zhang Ruochen’s neck.

At this critical moment, all of the Genuine Qi within Zhang Ruochen’s body moved towards the Vessel of Spirit Meridian, communicating with the Martial Soul.

The space in front of Zhang Ruochen shimmered slightly.

It seemed as if Qing You’s curved knife was about to slice open Zhang Ruochen’s throat. But, because of the small spatial distortion, the trajectory of the knife changed slightly. It had sliced in front of Zhang Ruochen but did not touch his body.

This was one of the powers of the Space Domain, called the Space Warp.

“How is that possible?” Qing You hesitated briefly, feeling as if his eyes had played a trick on him and somehow Zhang Ruochen managed to survive.

At that brief moment Qing You hesitated, Zhang Ruochen struck with his sword and pierced through his left arm.

“Pfft!”

Qing You let out a muffled cry, his teeth clenched as he kicked at Zhang Ruochen’s chest and sent him flying back.

At the same time, Qing You was retreating rapidly. His left arm was in great pain and blood poured down it. In just a moment, half his body was numb.

“Unbelievable, you actually pierced through the Meridian of my left hand!”

Qing You's eyes were filled with rage. He had not expected to be harmed at the hands of a warrior at the Initial Stage of the Black Realm.

Even though he had remarkable self-healing powers, he was unable to reconnect the Meridians in his left hand in so short a time.

At this moment, Zi Qian walked out from the forest. Holding a bloody sword, she stood behind Qing You.

She had already killed the other seven warriors. The fresh blood drenched her clothes, causing it to stick to her body. It outlined her curves, hugging her slight waist, and outlining her long legs. Her black hair was also dripping with crimson blood.

Clearly she was a figure of great beauty, but right now she seemed more like a messenger of death, her whole body radiating murderous feeling.

Qing You laughed coldly and said, "Even if I only have one hand, it will still be easy to kill both of you."

From the air came Prince Huo Xing's voice. "Qing You, I will give you a hand."

Prince Huo Xing drew out a flute. Infusing his Genuine Qi into the flute, he began to play a melodious tune.

Following the sound of the flute, a rustling came from the forest. A fist-sized poisonous bee flew out, straight towards Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian.

A medium-class level-one savage beast, a Poisonous Bee.

Once poisoned by the Poisonous Bee, a warrior would have hallucinations.

If poisoned by three of them, a warrior would be in life threatening danger.

Even a warrior in the Dawn State would die within a quarter of an hour, if stung by five Poisonous Bees.

Although the Poisonous Bee was only a medium-class level-one savage beasts, Prince Huo Xing's flute had summoned over a hundred of them. Never mind a Dawn State warrior, even a warrior in the Final State would have to run for their lives.

"Run!" Zhang Ruochen yelled at Zi Qian.

After saying these words, Zhang Ruochen ran ahead to avoid being surrounded by the Poisonous Bees.

"Can you escape?"

Qing You chased after Zhang Ruochen and Zi Qian.

He had practiced Green Devil Hand and naturally had poison in his physique, so he was not afraid of the Poisonous Bees.

Zhang Ruochen glanced at the rapidly approaching Qing You and also glanced at Prince Huo Xing on the back of the green-shelled eagle and thought. "Prince Huo Xing is a Tamer. Although he is only an Advanced State warrior, he is more dangerous than Qing You. We must first get rid of him, otherwise, we are sure to die today. But he can ride on a green-shelled eagle, hovering in mid-air, how can we attack him?"

Just at this moment, a lazy voice spoke from within Zhang Ruochen's forehead. "Young man, if you can promise me one condition, I may be able to lend you a hand."

It was Blackie's voice.

Blackie was sealed within the Yin Yang Wooden Graph, and the Graph was suspended in the Qi Lake within Zhang Ruochen's glabella.

Zhang Ruochen asked, "What conditions?"

"From now on, you will not seal me within the Graph!" Blackie said.

Zhang Ruochen replied, "As long as you behave better, I can agree to this condition."

"Fine! We have a deal!" Blackie said happily.

Zhang Ruochen's Sacred Mark flared. An art roll flew out from his glabella and landed in his hand.

He waved his arm, and a giant black cat flew out from within the art scroll. It landed beside Zhang Ruochen like a massive black ball of yarn on the ground.

Dissolving the seal, Blackie was ecstatic and said, "Young man, I will aid you and get rid of the person flying in the air."

Zhang Ruochen asked, "You can attack him?"

Blackie rolled his eyes at Zhang Ruochen and said, "My title is the King of Slaughter. If I can't take on the sky and the earth, how can I be the King of Slaughter?"

Blackie began to glow darkly, making sounds like small firecrackers. His body grew larger and now was about the size of a lion.

A pair of black wings also grew on his back.

The black wings flapped, and Blackie rose into the air. He charged towards the flying Prince Huo Xing.

"He can transform!"

Zhang Ruochen was slightly shocked. It was his first time seeing a cat who could fly.

Behind him, Qing You was also shocked. Staring at Zhang Rouchen he thought. "Is he also a tamer?"

At this moment, the Poisonous Bees caught up.

"Slap!"

Zhang Ruochen swiped with his sword, and sliced a Poisonous Bee in half.

More Bees flew up.

"Sacred Bell Sword!"

Zhang Ruochen used a Spiritual Stage sword technique. Creating a three-meter tall illusion of a clock, it shielded his body in the middle.

The big clock rotated, sending out tens of lines of Sword Breaths.

Another dozen Poisonous Bees were struck by the Sword Breath and fell to the ground.

“Green Devil Hand!”

Qing You caught up and leaped. Crossing over 10 meters of distance, he struck towards Zhang Ruochen’s chest.

Zhang Ruochen struck with his spear in one hand while the other held his sword. He used both at the same time to block Qing You.

“Boom!”

Qing You was too strong. He shocked the spear from Zhang Ruochen’s hand.

Zhang Ruochen backed up a dozen steps to dissipate Qing You’s hit. He spat out another mouthful of blood. Already having taken some serious damage, Zhang Ruochen could no longer defend a full-strength attack from Qing You.

“No choice, the difference between our cultivations is too large. If I could break through to the Mid Stage of the Black Realm, it would be nowhere near this difficult.” Zhang Ruochen wiped the blood from his mouth. He did not feel discouraged, rather his feelings of bloodlust strengthened.

“Boiling Animal Spirits!”

The Genuine Qi in Zhang Ruochen’s body began to move; all the blood in his body began to boil.

Boiling Animal Spirits was the mark of an Initial Stage warrior of the Black Realm.

Qing You laughed coldly and said, “What about Boiling Animal Spirits? Warriors of the Initial Stage are weak. They are no competition for warriors of the Dawn State... you... broke through!”

Qing You’s expression changed. He watched Zhang Ruochen’s pores secrete threads of blood fog, becoming a blood rainbow and enveloping the body.

Power of Rainbow-like Animal Spirits was the mark of a Mid Stage warrior of the Black Realm.