

I Am Loaded 211

Chapter 211: Could You Get Them to Stay Put?

It was indeed the Pill Compression Art that Elder Sang had passed down to Xu Xiaoshou.

From the looks of things, it would seem that Elder Sang was cooking his two opponents in the Dragon Melting Realm like he would when preparing a concoction of his medicines.

There were gasps heard from around Xu Xiaoshou. It was apparent that the Sovereign Stage masters were shocked Elder Sang would employ such a method.

Xu Xiaoshou had a closer look at the compressed scorching white fireballs and noticed the temperatures had spiked several times.

Xu Xiaoshou wondered if the masked man and Cen Qiaofu could still survive within them.

One fireball shook violently as soon as the thought occurred to Xu Xiaoshou, and a strange icy cold aura immediately emanated from it.

Everyone seemed shocked that an icy cold aura could still emit under such a high temperature in the fireball.

The Epitaph of City Snow!

As expected, a beam of icy sword aura burst from the fireball, cracking and then splitting it in half.

However, since the fireball was not of a solid substance, it immediately recovered to its original sphere form despite being sliced open.

The other fireball was shaking as well. It was Cen Qiaofu, struggling to get out in a frenzy. Even though the pliability of the sphere lessened over time, things still looked dire for Cen Qiaofu.

“Gosh, how disgusting is this?”

Xu Xiaoshou felt he could relate to the despair experienced by those two at the moment. If he were to be the one trapped in there, he would not know how to break free from the fireball as well.

Other than Lesser Fireball, perhaps there were still many more techniques out there waiting to be developed, Xu Xiaoshou thought to himself.

He already had intentions of taking a good serious look at Cooking Expert before that night. After seeing what Elder Sang had done, his desire to do so only intensified.

So long as the technique could be put to good use, it would seem that in a battle, Cooking Expert could be just as formidable as Sword Technique Expertise.

The fireballs crackled, lighting up the night sky. Everyone around saw a chance for victory.

The extreme temperature remained high and the fireballs would do massive damage to the two trapped inside them, even if they could hold for longer.

Elder Sang focused his gaze on his Dragon Melting Realm. In truth, he had not been so confident in trapping those two so easily.

It did not take long for the two trapped inside the fireballs to stop struggling altogether. The pliant, morphing Dragon Melting Realm finally settled.

The onlookers were on edge and their hairs stood on ends. They were well aware it was but a brief period of tranquillity. It was the calm before the storm.

The two who were trapped were about to give it all they had and break out.

Elder Sang could sense it was going to happen.

He chuckled as soon as the fireballs stopped moving. He blasted his spiritual source and threw out two punches.

“Explode!” Elder Sang commanded.

BOOM! BOOM!

Two massive explosions shook the night sky immediately lighting it up with brilliant white light.

The extreme temperature went out of control and swept across the ground, causing a vast swath of flora to wither in an instant.

The collateral damage from the explosions not only affected the Inner Yard but the Outer Yard as well.

The trees withered while the lakes and rivers boiled and steamed. The geese on the Goose Lake immediately took to the air before falling back into the boiling lake.

Everyone looked up at the sky at the same time. It was a restless night and even those who had just joined the Spirit Palace, and was unaware of what was going on, realized something was amiss that night.

“Enforcer Wang, are our brothers fighting inside?”

“Yeah.”

“Are you sure you are telling the truth? Could you bring about an explosion of such magnitude?”

Enforcer Wang remained silent.

“Say something!”

“Shut up and get to bed.”

...

[The mountains at the back of the Inner Yard]

Cough! Cough!

The sound of coughing filled the air following the explosion, and the swirling dust made everyone squint their eyes to see clearly.

“Did they survive such an attack?”

Xu Xiaoshou asked, looking quite stunned. He wondered if the masked man was like a cockroach.

He looked closer and found the man still had the familiar aura of Sword Will around him.

It was a similar situation to attacked both Elder Sang and Xu Xiaoshou had launched in the past. Their attacks could cripple their enemies but they could not do much more after reaching a limit.

It seemed to be impossible to blow the masked man to pieces.

“How could it be?” Xu Xiaoshou asked, looking somewhat baffled.

After all, the masked man’s attacks could not even compare with those of Elder Sang.

“Just what kind of weird spiritual technique is the masked man trying to pull?”

Xu Xiaoshou noticed the lingering Sword Will aura of the masked man and wracked his brains, trying to think things through.

If Sword Will Possession could indeed bring about such effects, Xu Xiaoshou decided he had to try it out for himself someday.

Elder Sang seemed to have expected the masked man to survive the attack. He then looked at the side where Cen Qiaofu was.

A wobbling figure hovered in midair. Cen Qiaofu was stooping and his hair was all silver. He looked so aged and withered that he seemed to have used up all of his life force.

The hand with which he held the ax seemed to tremble. The flames continued to dance around his body, and there was no extinguishing them.

“Y-You are really something, kid.”

Xu Xiaoshou almost burst out laughing, wondering if the aged man had suffered such an agonizing beating that his temper had left him.

Xu Xiaoshou saw how furious Cen Qiaofu looked. And yet, Cen Qiaofu did not attempt any further moves, despite wanting to do so badly. It was indeed a sight to behold.

The others were looking just as vindicated. Cen Qiaofu had been a nightmare to them, and his ax had left deep gashes all over them.

They had not expected that the aged man would suffer such a terrible defeat when he fought with Elder Sang.

“Qiaofu, we need to leave.”

Flames continued to consume the masked man and he had no intention of lingering around. He then turned to Elder Sang and spoke.

“Are you done venting? Can we go now?”

“You may.”

Elder Sang then tipped his hat and nodded. "You may go, but the sword stays behind."

"Times are such that I have to take the sword. Leaving it behind would only make your Spirit Palace suffer. Do you want to go through this every single night?" the masked man asked.

Elder Sang remained silent.

The masked man was speaking the truth, and it was exactly what concerned Elder Sang the most.

There was chatter all over the continent that the Spirit Palace's current level of powers could not provide adequate protection for the famed sword. And that the blade may bring about their demise one day.

There was a brief silence as Elder Sang pondered upon those words. Xu Xiaoshou tilted his head and looked at Elder Qiao.

"Are they familiar with each other?" Xu Xiaoshou asked.

The way they spoke to each other was less like enemies and more like an exchange between people who knew each other well.

He recalled the battle that night. Despite making his appearance, Elder Sang did not make any attempt to fight the masked man.

What does this mean...?

"Is that way these two get along?"

Xu Xiaoshou got a knock on his head instantly. Qiao Qianzhi then casually glanced over at Jiang Bianyan, looking a little hesitant.

Jiang Bianyan finally took the threat seriously. The way he saw it, the Holy Vassal had indeed become an organization that they had to eliminate. But was Elder Sang acquainted with those people?

"They indeed know each other."

Xiao Qixiu, who was at their side, chimed in.

Having a junior around when he explain matters meant that he and the others did not need to explain things again at the Holy Divine Palace.

"From what I can see, those two have known each other for a very long time, much like how you put it earlier..."

Xiao Qixiu turned to look at Xu Xiaoshou and continued, "They did not see eye to eye, so they went their separate ways."

"So, we are going to let him go just like that?" Xu Xiaoshou asked.

Xiao Qixiu looked stunned, wondering if the kid had deliberately said it.

Could he not tell that there were outsiders there? Why did he keep asking such loaded questions?

"Do you think we could do it any other way?"

Suddenly, Ye Xiaotian chimed in and said, "Anyone could tell that Cen Qiaofu did not unleash his actual power. It was the masked man who was adamant about leaving, obviously not wanting to fight any further."

"If they were to fight it out, I am afraid that they would attract a lot of attention." Ye Xiaotian glanced at Jiang Bianyan with a wry look.

Jiang Bianyan felt his skin crawl. The fellow had to rub it in.

Sure, Jiang Bianyan did not bring enough people there to assist the Spirit Palace. But did Ye Xiaotian have to hold a grudge like that?

However, he knew what Ye Xiaotian meant at the same time.

The battle between those at Sovereign Stage had already caused quite a commotion. If Elder Sang were to continue fighting his two opponents, the ones in white robes from the Holy Divine Palace would probably show up before long.

By then, it would be difficult for those of the Holy Vassal to escape.

It was apparent that those two from the Holy Vassal were not idiots, and they chose not to wait for such a thing to happen.

Jiang Bianyan wore a bitter grin. If he had taken the letter from the Spirit Palace more seriously back then, things would have probably turned out very different this night.

"It is indeed a pity."

Chapter 212: Wen Ming, Are You Coming with Me?

[In a sea of withered red magical poppy, amidst the rubble of the ruined residence]

Su Qianqian had a look of misery on her face as she cradled Rao Yinyin, whose aura had finally stabilized.

She looked at the sword wielded by the masked man hovering in the sky, and her eyes filled with longing.

The choice her family had made to take possession of the famed sword had ruined them.

To protect her family, Su Qianqian took the sword and left home. Because the sword was in her possession, many people whom she cherished died, one after another.

Things had gotten so bad that even her master was almost killed. If it had not been for Elder Sang showing up in the nick of time, perhaps even her Brother Xiaoshou might have met with that fate.

Su Qianqian clenched her fist tightly, and as much as she wanted to just let go, she could not do so.

It was still difficult to give the sword up.

She heard what the masked man had said. She already had such views even before that, for her grandfather had once told her that the wielders of such swords should expect to face death.

"Grandpa," Su Qianqian whispered sadly.

Her mind drifted as she thought of her father and her family. She recalled what the masked man said to her when he took the sword away.

“Was I wrong?” Su Qianqian asked herself.

Her eyelashes fluttered. Beads of tears dropped onto Rao Yinyin’s supple face and slowly rolled down to the corner of her lips.

Rao Yinyin opened her eyes, and she touched Su Qianqian’s face with her hand.

She gently scratched away the dried blood on the little girl’s forehead. While her voice was weak, her words were resolute.

“Sacrifice is a path chosen by those who protect. It is because such people have love in their hearts. Those who survive would always face unhappiness. But it is because of such sacrifices that you are deemed worthy,” Rao Yinyin said.

Su Qianqian shook her head slightly.

“There is no need to be sad,” Rao Yinyin said.

Su Qianqian could not contain her sorrow any longer and wept as she said, “But I do not want the sword. I want my family to be around!”

Rao Yinyin cradled Su Qianqian’s face and looked at the girl with gentle eyes. The young girl, who had been putting up a tough facade, finally let her guard down.

Rao Yinyin looked at her sympathetically and said, “There are times we have no choice.”

“I hate that sword! I hate those people who are after the sword.”

Su Qianqian broke down and cried, burying her face in Rao Yinyin’s chest.

Rao Yinyin had a look of empathy on her face as she gently squeezed the young girl’s shoulders.

She opened her hands and saw dried blood on them. It was from the ruins.

She visualized a vague silhouette from the dried blood on her hands as it glinted in the dim moonlight.

The silhouette looked like a girl dressed in red and bound in shackles, with her knees pulled into her chest and crying.

Rao Yinyin sighed without making a sound. Her Spiritual source wiped the blood off and the red on her hands disappeared before long.

She stroked the little girl’s head and spoke in a gentle tone. “Cry to your heart’s content. Vent out all your pain and frustration.”

“There are times when you are not the one in the wrong, but the world itself is.”

...

Voom!

The Epitaph of City Snow shook in the masked man's hand. At that moment, every swordsman present could sense its sorrow.

A drop of blood trickled from the sword, ran along its snow-white blade, and fell off its tip.

The sword trembled violently and shook itself free from the masked man's control, trying to chase after the drop of blood.

SWOOP!

But the masked man quickly reached his hand out and seized the snowy-white sword back.

He ran his fingers along the blade and after quite some time, the quivering sword finally settled down again.

The light in Xiao Qixiu's eyes dimmed.

In the end, he still could not protect what his disciple treasured the most. For now, it was the sword. But what of the future?

"Am I too powerless to protect her?"

Qiao Qianzhi rested his hand on Xiao Qixiu's shoulder. The silence at that moment was the greatest of consolation for him.

Xu Xiaoshou took notice and realized what was happening. He used his Sense to locate Su Qianqian and he could not help but sigh in sorrow.

Sometimes, people had to force themselves to do what they need to do.

"Seems like you do not need an answer. The owner of the sword has already made her choice." There was a glint of laughter seen in the eyes of the masked man.

Hehe, hehe. Cen Qiaofu chuckled.

Elder Sang's mouth twitched. The longer he looked at the two of them, the angrier he got. He clenched his fists tightly.

BOOM! BOOM!

The white flames were still burning on the two of them, and it promptly blew up. Mists of blood instantly sprayed from the two.

"Cough! Cough!"

The masked man was injured right away, but he summoned the Sword Will again and it immediately repaired the damage.

"Pfft!" Cen Qiaofu spat blood. He glared at Elder Sang with angry eyes. "You..."

"Qiaofu!"

The masked man immediately interrupted Cen Qiaofu. He was afraid that the two aged men might fight it out again. If they were to keep fighting, both he and Cen Qiaofu would probably not have the chance to leave anymore.

“Both of you! Get lost!” Elder Sang growled.

It was the second attack by the Holy Vassal, and Elder Sang wondered if these people thought that they owned the Spirit Palace.

Turning up and leaving as and when they pleased. What was the meaning of this?

But judging from the outcome, it seemed to be the case.

Elder Sang then glowered at Ye Xiaotian.

Ye Xiaotian had told Elder Sang that he would ask for help, yet all the support they received was nothing but trash!

Ye Xiaotian wore an innocent look on his face, not expecting that the Holy Divine Palace would have treated his request with so little regard. He then glared at Jiang Bianyan.

His glowering look said it all. What a bunch of retards!

Jiang Bianyan was speechless.

...

“Let’s go.”

Cen Qiaofu, who looked withered and did not seem to care about his lifespan. He swung his ax at the sky and ripped the massive array.

An enormous gash appeared at the array, and Qiao Qianzhi winced at the sight of the cut.

“Hold on,” the masked man said.

“There is one more thing to take care of.”

“Huh?” Cen Qiaofu turned around.

The masked man turned his eyes and looked at the only young man present on site.

“Wen Ming, are you coming with me?”

Everyone looked stunned, and it took a while before Xu Xiaoshou realized what was happening.

What the f*ck? Xu Xiaoshou wondered why the masked man dragged him into it at the end.

Xu Xiaoshou backed away immediately, finding comfort when he saw the four Sovereign Stage seniors standing before him.

“Wen Ming? Who is Wen Ming?” Xu Xiaoshou asked, darting his eyes around.

The masked man looked at a loss for words.

“You are bringing the hedgehog with you?” asked Cen Qiaofu, looking shocked.

Jiang Bianyan turned around with a startled expression, surprised that the Holy Vassal had their eyes on the kid. He wondered what was so special about him.

Was it because he dared to stand around watching the fight?

Elder Sang’s face became stony. He knew who the masked man sought, yet Elder Sang was surprisingly quiet. He did not seem to have any intention of interfering.

Xu Xiaoshou was feeling flustered. When the masked guy had come for him the last time, Elder Sang had been very concerned.

Why was he not doing anything now?

Xu Xiaoshou thought that perhaps Elder Sang did not care about him anymore.

Huh, men!

The masked man’s eyes were still fixed on Xu Xiaoshou, and he continued to speak as if there was no one else around. “Kid... if you are willing, I could take you away from here right now.”

“Nope, I am not going anywhere,” answered Xu Xiaoshou, rejecting the offer outright.

“...”

“Take a little longer to consider,” coaxed the masked man.

“I refuse!” Xu Xiaoshou shot back.

What was there to consider, eh? Regardless of how glorious an evil terrorist organization was, they would always end up being annihilated in the end.

Xu Xiaoshou’s mind was clear. Only those with no choice would consider such an option. Besides, he had no intention of making himself a public enemy.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

Jiang Bianyan looked shocked and thought that the kid had guts. He dared to speak so bluntly even after witnessing what the masked man was capable of.

After hearing their exchange, Cen Qiaofu looked surprised.

“Damn, kid. Among all the young ones I have met, you are undeniably a hedgehog with the most courage. You have earned my admiration.”

Xu Xiaoshou said nothing.

Everyone who knew him was familiar with how he behaved. Even the masked man had gotten used to the way Xu Xiaoshou spoke.

“Why are you not coming with me?”

The masked man ran his fingers over the massive sword in his hand and pressured Xu Xiaoshou further.

Xu Xiaoshou pretended as if he felt nothing and replied indifferently, "I am having a good time here in the Spirit Palace. So, why would I want to leave with you? It is a question you should think about instead."

The answer left the masked man speechless.

He looked stunned. The kid was sharp-tongued.

Despite having gotten used to the way the kid spoke, there were still times where he could not respond with a comeback.

"It would be a waste of your talents if you stayed here. Come with me. I will reveal to you all the ways of the sword that you could only dream about."

"All the ways of the sword?"

Xu Xiaoshou raised his eyebrows, thinking that the masked man was bragging.

But the cheeky lad had other ideas in mind.

"Sorry. But my way of the sword is not something that needs teaching from others," he retorted.

Chapter 213: Yapping Away

There was a sudden lull after Xu Xiaoshou cheeky retort.

Everyone could sense the confidence he exuded just from the tone he used. The kid seemed cocksure about the path he intended to take in the future.

"Am I hearing things here?"

Xiao Qixiu was rather baffled. He glanced at the masked man and then at Xu Xiaoshou. He wondered whether he would speak in such a manner to his Elders if he were decades younger.

No, there was no way he would utter such words!

The corners of Elder Sang's lips twitched. The others might not believe it, but he believed every word the kid said.

It was why Elder Sang had initially taken a liking to Xu Xiaoshou. Despite presenting an eccentric, happy-go-lucky personality, the kid had immense fortitude and confidence deep down.

Truth be told, the measure of his confidence was only a tad lower than his own.

Everyone was shocked, so much so that even Jiang Bianyan saw the young man in a different light.

Using such pompous words when addressing a prominent member of the Holy Vassal, who happened to be armed with a famed sword, was not for the faint-hearted. This was no average person.

"You know the man who stands before you, right?" asked Cen Qiaofu.

Unlike everyone from the Spirit Palace, those pompous words utterly irked Cen Qiaofu.

"Oh? Who may he be?"

Xu Xiaoshou's eyes glinted. It was a question that had bothered him for some time.

He would honestly be grateful if the aged man were to give him an answer.

"He is..."

The masked man put out his hand in front of Cen Qiaofu, stopping him from saying any more.

He had no intention of making his identity public as there was an outsider present at the scene.

The masked man now liked the kid even more because of the confidence which the kid exuded.

The kid was quite something indeed.

"I think you might have met Lei Shuangxing. Come with me, and you will get to know more of such geniuses," said the masked man as he continued persuading Xu Xiaoshou.

"The blind guy?" asked Xu Xiaoshou. He paused for a while and continued, "He is still alive?"

Despite being a Master Swordsman, there was no certainty that Lei Shuangxing could escape from the spatial turbulence after the attack by Ye Xiaotian.

The masked man seemed shocked, but before he could say any more the young man on the ground continued to speak.

"If he is still alive, please tell him he needs more training and to focus on his state of mind."

"The guy gets riled up too easily and is too impulsive."

Ye Xiaotian smirked and almost chuckled. He could already predict the expression on the faces of the two from the Holy Vassal after they heard what Xu Xiaoshou said.

As expected, Cen Qiaofu wobbled in the air as soon as he heard that.

The blind kid was probably the steadiest and firmest of the young ones he had ever met. Other than the blind kid addressing him as a Senior, they hardly ever interacted.

Impulsive?

Was the boy kidding?

The masked man also looked baffled and did not know what else to say.

Could it be that Xu Xiaoshou and Lei Shuangxing not only met, but they have fought as well?

"Impulsive? Huh!"

The masked man then mumbled something under his breath and found nothing else he could say to sway the kid who seemed to have set his mind in stone.

"I am giving you one last chance."

The masked man took a deep breath and said in a solemn tone, "Come with me, and I will guarantee that you become a Master Swordsman within a year."

Gasp!

Everyone was shocked to hear him make that pledge.

Master Swordsman!

Within a year!

It was more than just an incentive!

Everyone knew Sword Will training depended on one's capacity to understand, and one's fate.

They wondered just how powerful the masked man had gotten to make such an audacious promise.

Xiao Qixiu looked stunned as well.

Even he dared not make such promises. Even if he were to repeat all of his training, he would still not be confident enough to make such guarantees.

"A year, eh?"

Everyone saw Xu Xiaoshou lowering his head, and he appeared to look rather intrigued.

Was he intrigued?

Xu Xiaoshou did not need to crack his head to know that he definitely did not need a year to earn 50000 passive points.

He probably would not even need a month to do so.

"A year is kinda long."

Xu Xiaoshou could not help mumbling aloud. When he saw everyone giving him dirty looks after he said that, he explained right away. "I am just telling the truth here. Do not go about twisting what I say."

The masked man remained confused.

Did he say twisting?

What was there to twist with what he had said?

: Doubted, Passive Points +7.

At that moment, not only had the two from Holy Vassal feel that the kid had gone too far, even those from the Spirit Palace had thought the same.

There were limits to how far one could toy with another person!

Haha, haha, haha, haha!

Qiao Qianzhi could not stop himself from laughing out loud. He caught Xu Xiaoshou's head in a headlock and said, "Xiaoshou, know your limits, man. You are going too far."

Was he going too far?

Xu Xiaoshou looked at the masked man, whose eyes looked like they were about to zap him with fire. He quickly hid behind Elder Qiao. He stuck his head out and asked, "How about a month, then?"

Huh?

Was that smoke coming out of the guy's ears?

"Mm, Half a year, then."

"If you can promise me I'll become a Master Swordsman in half a year, then I might... consider it," Xu Xiaoshou replied hesitantly.

Infuriated, Cen Qiaofu's face lost all its color. He turned as white as a sheet.

"You b*st*rd, what do you take us for?"

In great anger, he immediately raised his ax to make a move.

Crackle! Crackle!

Before he could hew down at Xu Xiaoshou, formless flames danced on the surface of his body again. It was enough to scare him, and he shirked away as he tried his best to avoid the blaze.

"You want more?"

Elder Sang sneered at Cen Qiaofu from where he was standing. If they wanted to keep fighting, he could still oblige them.

However, the entire Tiansang Spirit Palace would be reduced to ruins. But they could rebuild another one and recruit more disciples.

He did not mind it.

The masked man was also fuming at his words. He thought the kid was infuriating enough with the way he kept asking for more. But such arrogance was another thing altogether.

"You remind me of how I was, many years ago. I like you."

"Thank you."

Xu Xiaoshou darted his head out again to answer. He paused and then said, "But you are only the second person to say that to me."

"Huh?"

The masked man was intrigued. "The second person?"

Xu Xiaoshou tilted his head and looked at Elder Sang, who coincidentally was merely taking in all that was happening, like a spectator.

The place fell silent again.

And it seemed like you could cut the air with a knife.

Elder Sang blushed and lowered his hat.

This kid!

Could he not tell friend from foe with his verbal attack?

Haha, haha... Mmmf!

Qiao Qianzhi bit down on his laughter in time to avoid adding to their troubles.

Getting on the wrong side of Old Man Sang would be far more terrifying than offending the masked man. Elder Sang was at the Spirit Palace all year round and could make his life difficult. The thought alone terrified Qiao Qianzhi.

Then everyone turned to look at the distant sky.

Jiang Bianyan felt pleased and said, "They are here."

The two from Holy Vassal had dread written all over their faces. They knew they could not afford to stay around any longer. The ones with white robes from the Holy Divine Palace were already on their way.

"We must leave."

Cen Qiaofu rushed the masked man. If they were to stay around any longer, the chances of being able to escape would diminish.

The masked man was still not giving up. "Wen Ming!"

"You have already said it was my last chance just now. What are you doing now?" Xu Xiaoshou replied.

The masked man was silent.

: Cursed, Passive Points +1.

He finally gave up, not understanding why he had been so insistent on taking the kid with him. The kid was quite a piece of work!

All his efforts were for naught.

The masked man sighed, and the two of them from the Holy Vassal were about to leave. Then out of the blue, Xu Xiaoshou said, "Perhaps I could leave with the two of you?"

All eyes immediately glared at Xu Xiaoshou. He shuddered from their stares. But he could sense the weird phenomenon coming from afar.

If formidable people were coming their way, then why not have these two intruders remain here?

Xu Xiaoshou puzzled the masked man.

"You are changing your mind?" the masked man asked.

Xu Xiaoshou spoke in a thoughtful tone when he saw the dubious look in the masked man's eyes. He said, "But I have conditions."

"What conditions?"

The masked man smirked. Despite all his jabbering, the kid eventually could not resist the offer.

“Hand me the sword in your hand first, then I will leave with you,” Xu Xiaoshou replied.

It surprised everyone. And Elder Sang was rather amused by it.

“Damn you, brat! Are you not asking for too much?”

Cen Qiaofu growled, rather startled at his audacity. The kid was so full of himself and acted so arrogantly. He was not even worth a strand of hair on the sword!

Hold on.

What was he thinking? The sword did not have hairs.

The masked man chuckled and said, “Sure. Leave with me, and I will hand the sword over to you.”

Cen Qiaofu looked shocked and said, “You are out of your mind!”

“Hand me the sword first. Then, I will leave with you,” replied Xu Xiaoshou, looking unfazed.

Huh!

“So, you are playing me for a fool after all, eh?”

The masked man shuddered, finally realizing that the young man before him had no interest in following him. The kid was merely toying with him.

He gripped the snowy-white sword tightly in his hand and went for the kid.

“Hold it!”

Cen Qiaofu pulled the masked man’s hand. If they continued to linger around, the two of them would end up at risk. What, all because a junior held them back?

“Let go!”

“We need to leave!”

“Let me go!”

“We leave first!”

“I know!” The look on the masked man’s face was turning sullen, and his voice was shaky. “I’ll have you know the flames on you are burning me!”

Chapter 214: After the Battle in the Dark of Night

The array flickered, and the two from the Holy Vassal disappeared into the sky.

“Why did you guys not keep them around?”

Xu Xiaoshou asked with a puzzled tone. Then he noticed the four seniors standing before him, all caked in blood.

They have fought long and hard. So, why did the seniors not do their best in those last moments to hold back the masked man and Cen Qiaofu? Why just let them go instead?

Were reinforcements not already coming our way?

Had they kept them for a little longer, maybe those two would have been defeated.

“Xiaoshou.”

Qiao Qianzhi slapped his shoulder and elaborated, “If those two at Sovereign Stage wanted to leave, there was no guarantee that we could hold them back. We might fail even if we doubled up the number of fighters on our side. So, how can we do it with just a few of us here?”

“Besides, those two are anything but ordinary.”

Xu Xiaoshou looked stunned.

He wondered if those at Sovereign Stage were so powerful.

Having killed those at a higher level than he was, Xu Xiaoshou could not grasp the concept well. However, he thought about it from another angle.

Not everyone was like him. With that thought, he could let it slide right away.

“Are they not arriving soon?” Xu Xiaoshou asked as he looked into the far distance.

“You can sense them?”

Qiao Qianzhi appeared startled as he continued, “There was indeed a chance of keeping them around until those from the Holy Divine Palace got here.”

“But the two from Holy Vassal were going easy on us.”

Ye Xiaotian finished what Qiao Qianzhi was saying with no thought of maintaining their dignity. All of them sighed. Then Ye Xiaotian continued, “If Cen Qiaofu had gone all out, the few of us would already be lying outside the Spirit Palace right now.”

All of them had angry looks on their faces as soon as Ye Xiaotian said it.

Apparently, in taking on those at Cutting Path Level of Sovereign Stage, they were still not powerful enough.

Xu Xiaoshou looked stunned, wondering if the withered, aged man with the ax was indeed so powerful.

“He had a golden opportunity then. Why did Cen Qiaofu not just get rid of you all then?”

Xu Xiaoshou quickly realized he said the wrong thing as soon as the words flew out of his mouth. As expected, Qiao Qianzhi immediately slapped him.

“You brat! You like the idea of us dead so much, is it?”

“How else are we going to figure out what is going on in the minds of those people? Maybe it was just...” Xu Xiaoshou replied in defense.

At that moment, Elder Sang flew down like a gentle breeze blowing, with one hand holding onto his hat.

Everyone turned to look at him. The old man's eyes looked like they had large, dark circles around them. He stared at Jiang Bianyan, causing the latter to feel his skin crawl. Elder Sang then spoke.

"You are from the Holy Divine Palace?"

Jiang Bianyan began to feel anxious.

He wondered what was with these folks from the Spirit Palace. Granted, he did not bring enough people with him, but did they need to hold such a grudge?

And why were they all being so damn blunt? Did they not know how to be subtle?

His eyes darted around. Before he could speak, Elder Sang said with a grim grin.

"Good work."

Jiang Bianyan was so surprised he did not know what to say.

He gave a slight nod in response. But in his mind, he thought it might be better if Elder Sang did not smile as he looked terrifying.

"Alright, we will call it a day and get someone to fix up the place later," Elder Sang said aloud to everyone present.

He was in no mood to say much to Jiang Bianyan. Elder Sang was no longer in charge of matters related to public relations, which meant that he did not need to go all out to be nice to their guest.

He would let Ye Xiaotian deal with such headaches, as he figured Ye Xiaotian had little else to do otherwise.

The fight was over, and there was no reason for them to keep hanging around. Ye Xiaotian sent Jiang Bianyan off, and everyone else dispersed.

The place was in ruins after their battle, but given that it was still the middle of the night, there was no need to rush to fix anything up then.

They expected that when the sun came up, the disciples of the Outer Yard would gleefully take up their tools as they came inside the Inner Yard to have a firsthand view of the place.

It was what the Outer Yard disciples all looked forward to, after all.

Yeah, they looked forward to their assignments.

...

Elder Sang and Xu Xiaoshou were the only ones left there.

"Why did you not leave with them?" Elder Sang asked.

Xu Xiaoshou looked at the massive array of the Spirit Palace in the sky, which was patching itself up. He felt slightly confused.

"They took a liking to you. It means that you are indeed something after all," Elder Sang added. He was not beneath giving compliments when warranted.

“Could I really leave?”

Xu Xiaoshou looked at Elder Sang. He did not believe that the old geezer would have just kept watching and do nothing. The silence from Elder Sang earlier might have been a test.

Had he left with the masked man, he wondered if Elder Sang would have stopped him.

Elder Sang chuckled and said, “It is not like I have got you on a leash. How would you know whether you could leave if you do not try it out?”

“Leash, eh?”

Xu Xiaoshou mulled over the word. He really could not figure out Elder Sang’s temperament.

There was little doubt that Elder Sang had been nice to him. However, regardless of what Elder Sang did, it always seemed that there was a plan behind his actions.

Was he imagining things?

Xu Xiaoshou could not deny that Elder Sang treated him well since he had come to his rescue many a time.

Elder Sang looked like he did not care about the Spirit Palace. And yet, his mind was constantly on the Palace. He was not about to allow outsiders to do as they pleased.

Xu Xiaoshou wondered what truly mattered deep down for someone like Elder Sang.

Xu Xiaoshou kept silent for quite some time. Then he said, “I knew what would happen. So, why bother trying at all?”

“It all depends on whether the outcome is something others bring about or something you carve out for yourself,” said Elder Sang.

“Is it not all the same?” Xu Xiaoshou asked curiously.

Elder Sang pulled his hat down and straightened out whatever hair was left on his head. He chuckled and answered, “Still worth a shot, don’t you think?”

“Is there not a saying that goes ‘you only live once,’ or something to that effect?”

“How would you learn just how real fate is if you do not struggle a little, eh?”

Xu Xiaoshou was silent.

He knew that nothing good would come from Elder Sang’s mouth. Despite all he had said before, he essentially had a pessimistic outlook on life.

Was the ending set in stone, though?

Xu Xiaoshou stopped thinking about it any further and changed the subject. “The guy had come here twice now.”

“Yes, twice.” Elder Sang’s face looked troubled.

Xu Xiaoshou mulled over the expression he saw on the old man's face and said, "Don't you think that it is rather embarrassing? Letting someone else trample over your turf repeatedly and washing your dignity down the drain."

Suddenly, the troubled look on Elder Sang's face changed into a glum one.

He slapped Xu Xiaoshou right away, but the latter chuckled away.

Xu Xiaoshou knew it would happen and extended an arm to block the slap.

BOOM!

The ground blew up. A crater appeared and dust kicked up everywhere.

Elder Sang held his hat down and looked at Xu Xiaoshou, who had sunk into the ground. There was a smirk on the aged man's face.

"Master Physique, eh?" Elder Sang said sarcastically.

Pfftt! Ptui!" Xu Xiaoshou spat the dirt out of his mouth and was thoroughly shocked.

The old geezer is more than just Master Physique, then?

He had initially thought that he could somehow take on the withered, aged man after making a breakthrough into Master Physique.

Instead, he was instantly pummeled into the ground.

Why was there still such a vast difference?

"What kind of physique do you have now?" Xu Xiaoshou could not help asking. Still trapped in the dirt, his face was all smudged.

"Take a guess," replied Elder Sang.

Xu Xiaoshou deliberated over the question.

"Sovereign Physique?" he replied.

Elder Sang chuckled.

Xu Xiaoshou looked a little dumbfounded.

He knew for a long while that the old geezer was bluffing when he told him that Master Physique was the highest stage in the continent.

He wondered how Elder Sang had broken through such a limit and made further breakthroughs.

What kind of monster was he?

Did Elder Sang have some types of cheats too?

Xu Xiaoshou took a deep breath and suppressed the raging shock contained within him. Elder Sang's achievement certainly startled him.

Everyone focused on Elder Sang's Infernal Heavens skill and believing there was no way to get near him without getting burned to a crisp.

However, none of them knew the white flames might not be the most powerful of his powers.

The Infernal Heavens was a technique that was all about breaking limits. Its ultimate purpose was to enable a spiritual cultivator to make breakthroughs beyond the limits of their physical bodies.

The Infernal Heavenly Flames were but an accessory to his skill.

Huff!

Xu Xiaoshou could not help heaving out a deep breath at the thought.

"All of them are hiding their skills so damn well..." he muttered.

Chapter 215: Quick, Get Elder Qiao!

Ahhh... sunshine!

The young man had a good stretch as he sat up in his narrow wooden bed. He picked up a bronze mirror to check his looks even as the morning sunbeams filtered through the room.

The young man had a glow that emanated radiantly with spiritual energy.

"Such a handsome face!"

Xu Xiaoshou pushed the window open and looked at the rising sun. He then realized that he had probably slept for two nights.

Xu Xiaoshou had gone through a harrowing journey of testing situations beginning with the battles in the Tianxuan Gate, right up to when the Holy Vassal attacked the Spirit Palace. The experience left him mentally drained and there was no way just sleeping for half a night would have helped him recuperate and get back in top shape.

He stared at the gaping hole in the ceiling with sunlight streaming through and heaved a heavy sigh.

"Hm, good thing it did not rain last night. Otherwise, I would have had to sleep in the library," Xu Xiaoshou murmured.

Everything at the back of the mountain was in shambles. Xu Xiaoshou's new home was already in ruins—he had not even had time to get acquainted with it. And it was for this reason that he remained in the Outer Yard.

He was sleeping in a guestroom.

It was a room with no roof or windows.

Elder Sang had said little that night. He left as soon as he learned what Xu Xiaoshou went through in the Tianxuan Gate.

Judging from the prickly reaction of the Elder, it appeared that he was looking to find fault with the Holy Vassal.

Xu Xiaoshou wondered if anything would come of it.

Su Qianqian and Rao Yinyin were both in critical condition. When Xu Xiaoshou paid them a visit, Su Qianqian was still unconscious.

Rao Yinyin was hardly any better, and she was in a dazed, semi-conscious state.

He left them a jar of honey and left soon after.

With Rao Yinyin around, he reckoned Su Qianqian would be somewhat comforted. So he headed off and decided he would be back later.

It was a pity that Xu Xiaoshou could not dupe the masked man into handing him the famed sword.

Yes, the sword was still in the possession of the masked man.

...

He walked out of the guestroom and found the compound laid waste from the devastation of the Holy Vassal. He frowned at the sight of countless craters that marked the ground.

He had an immediate urge to fix the damages, for it was still his property after all. There would be occasions in the future where he might need to stay in the Outer Yard.

It was a thought he harbored as he pushed the door open and considered going to the Spiritual Affairs Division to see to it.

A place of his own, in both the Inner Yard and the Outer Yard.

Not bad... not bad at all.

People streamed in and out of the Spiritual Affairs Division all the time. The process of getting anything done there was exceedingly complex. Around a hundred people could enter the building at once, and outside, there was constantly an endless stream of people waiting.

And, given that the Spirit Palace had just recruited a group of new trainees recently, people were excited as many were there to either give or accept assignments.

Whatever the reason, the place was filled with people.

"Look! It is Xu Xiaoshou, our Big Brother Xu!"

"Where? Where?"

"Huh? Why does he only have one head?"

"Yeah, and where are his wings?"

"Wings? Did he not have golden horns and dragon scales? Does he need wings to fly?"

"Huh?"

As soon as Xu Xiaoshou made his appearance, the place was abuzz with chatter.

: Doubted, Passive Points +146.

: Impressed, Passive Points +66.

: Envied, Passive Points +48.

Xu Xiaoshou was at a loss for words.

There was a flood of confusing information pouring into his Information Bar. Listening to the others gossiping about him, Xu Xiaoshou wore a sullen expression as he stepped inside the Spiritual Affairs Division building.

Well, it looked like I'm already famous, huh?

But why are the rumors making me out to be like I'm some other-worldly creature?

He mulled over that.

What's all this talk about me having three heads and six arms, golden horns, and dragon scales?

What sort of nonsense is that? They know I'm still human, right?

The only solace he got from all the uproar was that he had racked up his passive points, and his numbers skyrocketed as expected.

The trip he made to the Spiritual Affairs Division building had already racked him several thousands of points.

: Passive Points: 19899.

Just as he expected, not leaving with the masked man had been the correct choice, after all.

And evidently, the Spirit Palace was the best place for him to develop himself.

...

[At counter number one]

"Huh? Isn't Elder Qiao around?"

Xu Xiaoshou was rather startled the Elder wasn't there. He saw the girl in front of him appearing quite nervous.

Elder Qiao hardly ever left the place without good reason. After all, there was hardly anywhere else for him to go, and it was not like he could go out on a whim.

"The guy sure is taking his sweet time, given all that has happened in the Spirit Palace... He really is carefree."

The girl who wore a green dress blushed, stealing glances at the young man before her as her heart raced madly.

It seemed like Brother Xu did not quite have the poisonous tongue, as everyone claimed he had.

Honestly, he had a pleasant voice, and he sure looked handsome. Even the troubled look on his face was enough to make anyone's heart flutter.

He was like the Prince Charming in her dreams, whose face she could not see clearly.

“Umm...”

“Hm?”

Xu Xiaoshou looked at the girl. It was not the first time he saw someone fidgeting in such a fashion. He had encountered a stream of them on his way in.

What was wrong with them, anyway?

“What’s up?”

The girl was all flustered. Her hands trembled as she fished out a small book from her chest and said, “Could you?”

Oh, she wanted an autograph, eh?

Xu Xiaoshou smiled then. Well, there was no reason she’d have to be so scared about asking for an autograph. Did he look like he ate people?

He took her book and flipped it open, and asked, “Where do you want me to sign?”

The girl immediately looked stunned. She got surprised that he was so amicable. She gleefully took out a brush.

“Anywhere would do!” the girl gushed excitedly.

Xu Xiaoshou waved the brush away dismissively. He brought his own with him.

He took out the brush that he got from his first fan in the ring. But when he saw how disappointed the girl looked, he instantly flashed an awkward grin.

“Man, why is this brush suddenly not working? Well, I’ll have to use yours, then.”

The girl flashed a beaming smile after he took her brush.

He signed quickly and nodded with satisfaction. It looked like he was gaining experience at it as his strokes were increasingly more elaborate.

That should do!

However, he quickly sensed that something was amiss.

: Envied, Passive Points +44.

: Envied, Passive Points +86.

: Envied, Passive Points +177.

“...”

He turned around to find a gaggle of girls flocking behind him, glaring with bloodshot eyes. And that was not all.

There were also guys among them!

Huh?

What was going on? Should they not be jealous of her? Why was it all on him?

“Xu Xiaoshou signed his name? Does he not treasure his words like gold and is a man of few words? I heard he could blow someone at Innate level to death as soon as he speaks!”

“Man, I had thought he was not that nice. G*dd*amn it, I should have asked him for an autograph when he was on his way.”

“Huh? G*dd*amn it!”

“No, no, no. You heard wrong!”

“Huh?”

“Oh my gosh, I am so envious! I want an autograph, too!”

“Me too! Me too!”

“Get lost. You are a guy. Don’t even bother!”

“Yeah, I am a guy. So what? What’s wrong if a guy wants an autograph too? Do not go about discriminating against me! I will, I will... hey, hey!”

“What the hell?”

The crowd was in a frenzy as they rushed toward him.

Xu Xiaoshou was shocked and finally learned about the trials of being a superstar.

He thought of pushing all those hysterical people back with Recoil. But these were his fans, and in any case, his passive points were skyrocketing like crazy.

It meant that using his Recoil would be a disservice not only to his fans but to himself.

It was not like Xu Xiaoshou could use his powers as he pleased in the Outer Yard. If he caused any injury, he would be sent to the Tribunal of Spiritual Law Division even though he had technically been admitted into the Inner Yard.

It would be the end of him.

With that thought in mind, he saw no other option. He then gathered his spiritual source, causing his clothes to flutter, and shouted at the top of his lungs.

“Silence!”

Everyone stopped speaking.

The place fell into a brief silence.

“Wow, he is so overpowering!”

“Xu Xiaoshou, I love you. I have been cheering for you since you participated in the group matches. Please give me an autograph!”

“Get lost! Xu Xiaoshou is mine!”

“You get lost!”

Gasp!

The crowd quickly overwhelmed the young man, and with the people rushing toward him, Xu Xiaoshou got lost amid the sea of bodies.

“Holy sh*t, whose hand is that? Do not touch me!”

“Damn it, do not box me up, or I will be forced to use my powers!” yelled Xu Xiaoshou.

No one paid any heed.

The entire building was rumbling, and it felt like it was about to collapse at any moment.

The disciples serving behind the 108 counters were all dazed, looking at the sea of people with a befuddled expression.

“Quick, get Elder Qiao!”

A terrified head bobbed amid the sea of people, looking ashen and shouting as loud as he could.

“Help me... Oof!”

Chapter 216: What Do You Think of This?

“Xu Xiaoshou?”

When Zhao Xidong arrived at the Spiritual Affairs Division, he was in complete shock.

The crowd was getting hysterical, and it was because of Xu Xiaoshou. How did he suddenly possess such charisma?

Nobody had even asked for Zhao Xidong’s autograph when he became the Head of the Inner Yard Thirty-three!

A sea of people kept flooding into the Spiritual Affairs Division. And soon, it became overcrowded, and people piling one on top of the other.

Of course, nobody had realized that the person at the center of all the attention had sneaked away a long time ago.

Xu Xiaoshou grabbed Zhao Xidong along with him and hid in a shady, discreet corner, away from prying eyes.

“Had I not possessed all these passive skills...”

He shuddered and looked worried.

“What is wrong with you? Why are you covered in blood?” Zhao Xidong asked. He looked at Xu Xiaoshou anxiously as he checked his body.

“There were no fights, and this is not my blood,” answered Xu Xiaoshou, shrugging his shoulders.

He did not want to hurt anyone, but it was one of his passive skills. He could not control it.

Undoubtedly, there were people with naughty hands who wanted to touch him. So naturally, they bled when they got pricked by his human-hedgehog form.

“If it is not yours, then it is theirs?” asked Zhao Xidong, his eyes showing signs of anger. “So you struck them?”

“No, no... Anyway, it is a long story. Why don’t we just drop it?”

Xu Xiaoshou placed his hand on Zhao Xidong’s shoulder and asked, “Have you recovered fully? I saved your life the other day.”

Zhao Xidong was speechless.

Damn it!

There was no way he could not find any way to win an argument with this kid!

: Cursed, passive point +1.

“What’s up. Do you have anything for me?” Xu Xiaoshou asked.

Zhao Xidong certainly did not come to the Spiritual Affairs Division for the commotion.

Even a commotion of such a scale would never reason enough for a prominent person of the Spiritual Law Division to come to the Spiritual Affairs Division. So, he would have come for some other urgent purpose.

“Yup, the Dean is looking for you,” Zhao Xidong replied and nodded.

“The Dean?”

Xu Xiaoshou looked a little puzzled. The only time he got to speak with Ye Xiaotian was because he had miffed Lei Shuangxing so badly one time.

If there was nothing important, why would Ye Xiaotian look for him?

“Tell me. Is the Dean asking to see me for a good reason or a bad one?”

“Follow me. Do not ask too many questions.”

Zhao Xidong did not even look back as he walked off.

There were only two things he feared. The first was physically seeing Xu Xiaoshou, and the second was chatting with Xu Xiaoshou.

If the dean had not given him a direct order, Zhao Xidong would never have volunteered for such an errand.

Xu Xiaoshou gathered his thoughts and decided not to follow Zhao Xidong. Quietly, he sneaked away. His intuition warned him that if whatever it was could not be shared, then it couldn't be good.

He touched the iron ball in his arm as Jie had learned how to communicate with him through Spiritual Sense.

Although every line spoken by the puppet child was still "Mama," his spiritual presence had reduced significantly. There was no way anyone would discover his existence.

"What things had the Dean found out?" Xu Xiaoshou wondered aloud.

Xu Xiaoshou bit his lips and realized that even he could not recall every single thing he had done.

It did not seem right. Had Xu Xiaoshou done so much wrong that warranted the Dean to ask for him?

After walking for a few steps, Zhao Xidong realized that Xu Xiaoshou was no longer right behind him. He seemed to be sneaking off!

"Grr!"

Zhao Xidong shook with anger and couldn't help thinking what an incorrigible fellow he was!

It was an order from the Dean, yet it seemed Xu Xiaoshou thought he could defy it or get away with making up a random excuse.

If things screwed up because of this, he would be punished together with Xu Xiaoshou as well!

"Xu Xiaoshou! Where do you think you are going?" He turned around and his voice was colder than ice.

"Spiritual Library Division," Xu Xiaoshou said and pointed in that direction. "Elder Sang had told me..."

Zhao Xidong could feel a headache coming along, which even affected his teeth.

What? Elder Sang told him!

There he goes... Elder Sang told him again!

Did Xu Xiaoshou think he was Elder Sang's disciple? Was he Mu Zixi? Could he find a better excuse?

Zhao Xidong smothered his urge to beat Xu Xiaoshou up. Besides, he was a law enforcer, and committing a crime while aware of its consequences would only mean facing a greater punishment.

"Is your excuse more important than obeying the Dean?"

"It is not an excuse. Really."

Xu Xiaoshou felt wronged, as Elder Sang had distinctly told Xu Xiaoshou to look for him after their conversation that night. Elder Sang even told him to rest well first, then to proceed to the Spiritual Library Division and look for him.

Xu Xiaoshou could not defy Elder Sang's order, too!

"Fine, it is not an excuse. So is the Dean's order more important, or the Vice-Dean's?" Zhao Xidong laughed mirthlessly.

Xu Xiaoshou was hesitant, but instead of answering the question, he asked Zhai Xidong, "What do you think?"

Zhao Xidong was about to respond when Xu Xiaoshou continued, "If each of them gave you an order, which would you choose to follow?"

Zhao Xidong was speechless.

Xu Xiaoshou had caught him off guard.

This kid has so many f*cking problems, yet he also has so many killer questions!

: Cursed, passive points, +1.

"Xu Xiaoshou, Xu Xiaoshou..."

Executive Zhao, aloof and taciturn by nature, chanted his name like someone had cast spells on him. It made Xu Xiaoshou shudder.

Xu Xiaoshou frowned when he was asked to choose earlier. Especially when he knew Zhao Xidong had already made up his mind.

And true enough, he saw Zhao Xidong leap into the air. He grabbed Xu Xiaoshou by his neck and lifted him off the ground.

Zhao Xidong caught him off guard, and Xu Xiaoshou had no time to react to the sudden move.

"What the hell! What are you doing? You are enforcing the law through violent action!"

"Hehe, we employ unusual methods when dealing with unusual people."

"Why are you attacking me? Which part of me is unusual? Let go of me right now! Or, believe me, I'll retaliate passively!"

"Haha, why do you not try it then?"

Zhao Xidong laughed mirthlessly. He thought Xu Xiaoshou was naïve to think nobody could teach him a lesson once he had attained the Innate Stage.

He was a Grand Mas...

BANG!

A tremendous force hit his chest, and it made Zhao Xidong's mind go blank. Xu Xiaoshou made a sudden move that sent him propelling into the sky.

"Huh?"

It blew Zhao Xidong right out of the shady corner and he was immediately seen by the massive crowd in broad daylight.

Getting blasted into the sky was a rare occurrence in the Outer Yard, especially right after the Inner Yard's wildly popular Senior Brother's Martial Conference.

“Wow, look! There’s a flying man!”

“Wow, can that man fly? But why is his chest bleeding?”

“There’s a cost to flying. I heard that the Spiritual Library Division possesses a blood sacrificial spell that allows anyone who is Rank 3 of Spiritual Cultivation to fly after studying it.”

“Really?”

“I do not know. It is hearsay!”

“...”

Zhao Xidong almost vomited blood. That damn kid!

It’s clear they were not meant to be friends!

“Xu Xiaoshou, how dare you defy the Dean’s order!” Zhao Xidong yelled, reacting with surprise to the attack.

The fury in his voice shocked everyone there.

“Xu Xiaoshou?”

“Is he not in the building?”

Everyone looked over to the sea of people inside the Spiritual Law Division. The crowd inside had heard Zhao Xidong yelling as well. They stopped talking and looked in the direction of Zhao Xidong.

Cries were coming from the bottom of the heap of people cramped into the building.

“Please, get off me! I am bleeding. Who cut my fingers?”

“I have a fractured bone. Which of you used a spell to attack me? It was not so bad earlier, but now it is festering!”

“Help, I cannot breathe!”

“Please do not touch me. I am not Xu Xiaoshou... Ahhhh...”

“Eww!”

All heard the disgusting moan from the random buff guy, and there was a sudden deathly silence in the building...

Zhao Xidong heard the cries from the crowd, and it stirred a calling within this upright and prominent officer of the Spiritual Law Division to enforce the law. “Xu Xiaoshou, look at what you have done!” he bellowed.

Xu Xiaoshou gave him an innocent look. At that point, he felt lucky that he had escaped from the crowd, or he would probably be the one moaning.

“It is not my fault. Anyway, you were the one who used violence. I was trying to defend myself.”

“Huh!”

Zhao Xidong tried to calm himself by heaving out a deep sigh. He descended from the air and his voice returned to a composed tone.

“Tie yourself up. We are going to the Spiritual Law Division.”

“Why?”

“Why? Why do you not think so?”

Zhao Xidong pointed at the bloodstain on his chest with his shaky finger. He did not understand how a mere nudge with his back Xu Xiaoshou could injure him. It was as if he was cut open by a sword.

The kid! Was his astrological sign a hedgehog?

Xu Xiaoshou remained quiet for a moment, then said, “If I am not mistaken, you were the one who told me to try it.”

“I...”

Zhao Xidong realized he had once again committed a lethal mistake. He had unconsciously chatted with Xu Xiaoshou!

: Cursed, passive points, +1.

“I am sorry, but it does not matter anymore. The Dean is truly looking for you!”

Zhao Xidong buried the hatchet. He put on a genuinely warm expression and stared at Xu Xiaoshou.

“What do you think? Can you come with me?”

: Missed, passive points, +1.

Chapter 217: The White Cave Quota

Xu Xiaoshou became more cautious as he looked at Zhao Xidong, who was now getting mad. Xu Xiaoshou widely chose to be more subservient.

“Not really. We do not have to do that.”

“I will go with you, okay?”

Xu Xiaoshou temporarily put aside the matter of Elder Sang. Perhaps the Dean genuinely had something urgent for him, he thought.

Even if it was not the case, Xu Xiaoshou had the backing of Elder Sang. So, there should be no one in the Spirit Palace who would dare to harm him.

After seeing how powerful the aged man was that night, Xu Xiaoshou had a much clearer picture of who the actual leader behind the Spirit Palace was.

“Let’s go!”

Zhao Xidong then went silent, as he had promised himself he would not speak unnecessarily this time.

At that moment, the crowd from the Spiritual Affairs Division had all come out, and they were all looking pretty upset that Xu Xiaoshou left just like that.

However, there was nothing they could do as it was a law enforcer of the Spiritual Law Division who led him away. He wasn't someone to mess around with.

"Such a waste that Xu Xiaoshou got away. Now we can't get his autograph anymore."

"Haha, haha, are you sure that you were going after him for his autograph? Be honest. Why is your hand injured?"

"I do not know. Someone cut me. Is it not the same with you?"

"What?"

"Why is your hand fractured? Do you not know the reason?"

"..."

Everyone got into a heated discussion and then remembered that Xu Xiaoshou seemed to have left one autograph behind.

Instantly, hundreds of pairs of eyes turned to the girl who had shown Xu Xiaoshou around.

The girl fell to the ground in horror and asked with a trembling voice, "What... What do you guys want?"

"Hehe, hehe!"

"What do we want? What do you think?"

Everyone advanced toward her and had her cornered. Some people sensed things were not going right, so they ran off to seek help.

Out of the blue, a cry broke out from the crowd.

"Please, I beg you. Sell me the autograph. I will pay any price!"

"No! You must sell it to me!"

"F*ck off, the autograph is mine!"

"Mine!"

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Amid the chaos, a loud rumble shook the attic.

"Elder Qiao is back!"

Eh?

Then everyone slowly backed off.

"Run!"

...

[At the Council Hall]

“Pffft! Cough! Cough!”

Qiao Qianzhi spat out the tea in his mouth. He stared in disbelief at Jiang Bianyan, who was sitting right opposite him. He then slammed the teacup onto the table.

“Is Hallmaster Jiang kidding me?”

The quota for entering the White Cave is not just sought after by Tiansang Spirit Palace, but also by every other dominant power of the Tiansang prefecture!”

On top of the prefecture’s four great families and some idle forces, there are twelve other cities near the White Cave!”

After sharing with the other dominant powers, the quota given to the Spirit Palace every year is less than ten!”

Yet, here you are casually asking us for one-fifth of our quota?”

Ye Xiaotian quietly agreed with what Qiao Qianzhi had said and nodded. Elder Qiao was indeed the Chief Elder of the Spiritual Affairs Division. He was adept at handling such situations with his choice of words.

If Ye Xiaotian had to respond to Hallmaster Jiang himself, he could not have come up with such a sharp reply.

It brought back memories of his deal with Elder Sang a few days back. It did not take a few days before he ended up losing everything.

Indeed, the Holy Divine Palace was not as selfless as he had imagined. Even the most influential forces on the continent were pretty calculative, as they should be!

In this world, people come and go for only one thing—benefits.

Their forefathers were indeed right about this teaching!

Ye Xiaotian discreetly peeked at Jiang Bianyan, who had put on a poker face. Then he took a sip of the tea and laughed silently in his heart.

The Holy Divine Palace was indeed a greedy bunch. They only helped a little but dared to ask for so many things!

The White Cave had been experiencing anomalies since the Fourth Sword’s rumor spread. This could be an excellent opportunity for the Spirit Palace.

If they could seize the opportunity, their ten quotas to enter the White Cave would be extremely valuable. So, how could they possibly give away any?

In addition, Tiansang Spirit Palace even had an added advantage.

Xu Xiaoshou had the Fourth Sword’s sheath!

Jiang Bianyan glanced at the two youngsters beside him. If it was just Chen Xingchu, then it did not matter to him who got the quota in the end.

But as Yu Zhiwen was there too, he rued not giving her the opportunity to be there.

Even if he had contributed little during the battle in the Spirit Palace, he had to send the girl into the cave.

“Well, I have underestimated the Holy Vassal’s capability. So, I have prepared something in advance. I believe that in terms of its value, it is definitely worth the two quotas.”

Jiang Bianyan took out a ring as he spoke.

Ye Xiaotian shook his head several times.

The Spirit Palace was rich with resources. As the most influential palace in Tiansang Prefecture, it had no intention to expand further. Hence, it was fully self-sustainable. And besides, it was considered quite affluent.

“It is not a matter of a ring. It is because the quota is so limited.”

Ye Xiaotian signaled for Jiang Bianyan to stay seated and continued to speak.

“We have already made preparations to go to the land of trial. The new Inner Yard Thirty-three shall form one group and the traditional people the other group. We have decided on the arrangements way ahead of time. There is no extra quota left at all.”

There are many internal conflicts among the younger generation for the trip to the White Cave. As it is, the quota is already not enough.”

If it was possible, even I would have liked to exchange our resources for more quotas to calm our restless kids!”

Ye Xiaotian chuckled as he spoke. He did not intend to accept the deal proposed by Jiang Bianyan.

Jiang Bianyan did not keep the ring but placed it on the table. He looked at everyone and spoke again.

“It looks like Hallmaster Ye is also aware of the anomaly being experienced by the White Cave. So, the danger level has increased by quite a fair bit. Can your new disciples manage it?”

Jiang Bianyan shook his head and continued to convince his audience. “I want to be frank. It is pointless for them to enter.”

He was blatantly suggesting that the disciples of Tiansang Spirit Palace were weak.

Chen Xingchu looked very cocky.

Since the Holy Vassal saga, he had toured around the palace and checked out the people there. He felt that the disciples of the new Inner Yard Thirty-three were rather weak.

He had fought every single one whenever he had the chance. And for those he did not fight with, he analyzed them.

There were some talents, but their abilities could only cope with the Tiansang prefecture, and it was only a small place.

If exposed to the outside world, these talents would be instantly defeated!

Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi looked at each other and smiled.

They were very clear on the Spirit Palace's position. Although they had talents, they were not so ignorant as to challenge the Holy Divine Palace, even if it was just their branch.

The Seniors from Spirit Palace did not bother with the Holy Divine Palace visitors looking down on them, since the two parties did not mingle with each other.

However, if any person left this small place, the person would have an unstoppable future. Even the people from the Holy Divine Palace would have to be vigilant.

Elder Sang was such a case, and so was Ye Xiaotian. In the future, there would also be more talents from other Spirit Palaces!

"It seems like Hallmaster Jiang is not giving up so easily?"

Ye Xiaotian looked down the hallway, expecting someone to arrive.

Jiang Bianyan smiled and nodded. How could he give up so easily?

Not only the quota, he even had his eyes set on the sheath!

"How about this? Let us have a bet," Ye Xiaotian said.

"What bet?"

Ye Xiaotian's spiritual senses had detected Zhao Xidong arriving. So, he turned to Jiang Bianyan and said, "Let us send one person each to a duel. We will settle the terms based on the outcome of the duel."

"Oh?"

Jiang Bianyan's smile blossomed even wider. A duel?

Had Chen Xingchu's performance over these past two days not been enough to teach the Dean of the Spiritual Palace a lesson?

Somewhat arrogantly, Chen Xingchu even asked, "You guys still have people who can fight me?"

When he spewed those arrogant words, everyone glared at him. The stares made him feel nervous for a moment.

"Sit!" Jiang Bianyan shouted.

He could joke with the Seniors with little thought, but who was Chen Xingchu? How could he be so rude?

"Oh."

The youngster touched the white jade on his waist and sat obediently.

“May I ask, Hallmaster Ye, who have you summoned?” Jiang Bianyan noticed the white-haired child on the first seat, who was looking into the sky.

Ye Xiaotian did not bother with Chen Xingchu’s rude remarks and said, “You have seen this person.”

“Oh?”

Jiang Bianyan tried to recall any outstanding person amongst the new Inner Yard Thirty-three. But he did not remember anyone. How could Hallmaster Ye look so confident?

“The old Inner Yard Thirty-three?”

Ye Xiaotian remained silent as he shook his head. He then looked out of the hall.

“He is here!”

Chapter 218: Shaking Hands

Thud. Thud. Thud.

The crisp sound of footsteps echoed from outside the Council Hall before a young man in a black robe strode in confidently.

The young man had a handsome face and a pair of dazzling eyes. His back was straight and upright, like a tall pine. He had the demeanor of a young and ferocious tiger.

Upon entering the hall, he immediately greeted Ye Xiaotian who on the first seat.

“Mr. Dean.”

Jiang Bianyan squinted his eyes, as he could barely recognize who the young man was.

He tilted his head and tried to recall where he’d seen him. It took a while before he came to realize that this man was the one he had encountered at the opening of the Tianxuan Gate.

The guy who was holding the plates?

Reminded of that, Jiang Bianyan had an awkward expression on his face.

Although this man had lost his ability to fight after being struck by thunder, he was still a grandmaster after all!

How was there such a person amongst the Inner Yard Thirty-three?

How could Chen Xingchu be fighting with him?

Although Chen Xingchu was quite a talent, even he would not risk challenging someone who was of a higher rank than him. It was a battle between one at the Peak Innate Stage and a grandmaster—it would prove very challenging.

Chen Xingchu looked a bit troubled as well. He had been observing the Inner Yard Thirty-three, and there was no such person of this rank among them.

“Senior Ye, so he’s the one I am fighting?”

“I am just at the Innate Stage rank. How could I go up against a grandmaster? This is so unfair!”

Chen Xingchu was extremely disappointed. This meant that Tiansang Spirit Palace did not actually want to have a duel with them and sent out an expert, albeit one who was not at the top of his game.

Why weren't they even trying to call up a good opponent for the duel?

And to call in a grandmaster—such a blatant trick. Who are they trying to fool?

Ye Xiaotian and Qiao Qianzhi were both taken aback by Chen Xingchu's outburst. Even Zhao Xidong was rather surprised by this young man.

What kind of idiot would go all out to seek a duel? Was he trying so hard to challenge himself?

When he was still in the Inner Yard Thirty-three, nobody had dared to be so arrogant!

Is this boy an inexperienced “virgin” who has not experienced the trials and tribulations of society?

The antics of Xu Xiaoshou already piqued Zhao Xidong. And he was now further provoked by Chen Xingchu's hostile words. He would tolerate no one showing such arrogance toward the spirit palace.

His eyes wandered to the young man before him, and he gave him the once-over, then said, “Huh, you want to duel with me?”

“First, go back and train for another ten years!”

Zhao Xidong's rebuke infuriated Chen Xingchu.

Where did this arrogant dude come from? Does he think he is invincible, just because he is a grandmaster? Is he letting his rank go over his head?

Just you wait, five years later...

No... three years!

I will...

Will...

“...”

Zhao Xidong waited for a while, but Chen Xichu still could not come up with a riposte. In the end, he laughed and said, “Why are you silent?”

Chen Xingchu could not say a word, but only clenched his teeth.

Is everyone in this spirit palace this toxic?

Ye Xiaotian, a blind man, and now a grandmaster pretending to be a newbie. Are they all here to mess with me?

“Zhao Xidong, that's enough!”

Ye Xiaotian, observing from the first seat, raised his hand and admonished Zhao Xidong. He then looked at Jiang Bianyan and suppressed his urge to smile as he spoke.

“Hallmaster Jiang had misunderstood. This man is merely the usher and not the actual fighter.”

Jiang Bianyan was quite puzzled.

Cheng Xingchu was confused as well.

The two were left speechless. Then why did this grandmaster look so impetuous, as if he was going to fight? He looked like he was going to beat the house down!

Wasn't he only supposed to lead the fighter in?

Why was he so riled up? Did someone provoke him?

Zhao Xidong was exasperated and still seething as he made his way to Qiao Qianzhi's side to take his seat.

Jiang Bianyan shrugged and looked a little confused as he stared at Ye Xiaotian. “So, the actual person is...?”

Ye Xiaotian did not reply. Instead, he looked over at Zhao Xidong.

“What happened to you?”

Qiao Qianzhi also turned his head and realized there was blood on Zhao Dongxi. He kept his voice low and asked, “Where's Xiaoshou? Was there an accident?”

“He's fine.”

Zhao Xidong took a deep breath and looked down the hallway and called out, “Come in now!”

Everyone looked in that direction and waited for a while before they saw a head sticking out from the side of the door.

Everyone was speechless.

Ye Xiaotian looked visibly annoyed. He couldn't help feeling that this boy was such a disgrace for the spirit palace. Why couldn't he conduct himself with more decorum?

With such a timid demeanor, how could he make it in life?

“Xu Xiaoshou, come in now!”

...

“Stared, passive points, +6.”

“Taunted, passive points, +1.”

“Cursed, passive points, +1.”

“Remembered, passive points, +1.”

Xu Xiaoshou had sensed that something was amiss the moment they summoned him and by eavesdropping outside the door he understood what the matter was about.

When he stuck his head out to observe what was going on, he captured the information he needed to form a better idea of the situation.

The taunt likely came from that young man clad in a fancy robe. He knew the curse was from Zhao Xidong, while the reminder came from...

“From who?”

Xu Xiaoshou looked over at the girl, who was sitting in a corner. She was still wearing a veil but looked much more haggard than when he first saw her.

She did not seem to be too well today. She barely uttered a single word and did not make her presence felt throughout the conversation.

But she was Xu Xiaoshou’s center of attention!

His Sense was detecting something from those mesmerizing starry eyes, and the signals were too strong to ignore.

It had been a long time since Xu Xiaoshou felt something so strange about a person.

The last time he felt this way was during the finals of the Windcloud Competition as he was battling it out with Momo.

As a result, something significant happened afterward. It even brought out the grey mist figure and the demon beast, and it turned out to be very troublesome.

With that in mind, Xu Xiaoshou paid special attention to her.

“I surely felt nothing strange about that girl the other day. Why am I detecting these weird vibes today?”

“Could it be that... she didn’t rest well?”

Xu Xiaoshou frowned. He made some quick deductions in his mind before walking into the council hall.

“Hello, Mr. Dean and Elder Qiao.”

The two of them nodded with smiles, as it was rare for Xu Xiaoshou to be so polite. And it was indeed a rare sight!

While the seemingly civil young man had greeted the two heads of the spirit palace, he glaringly ignored Zhao Xidong at the end of the row and looked the other way.

“This is the hall master of the side hall of the Holy Divine Palace from Dongtianwang City, Jiang Bianyan. You can address him as senior Jiang,” Qiao Qianzhi said, making the introduction.

“Greetings, senior Jiang!” Xu Xiaoshou was still very polite.

“Hmm.”

Jiang Bianyan nodded and thought that this boy was pretty dense. He could have just greeted everyone all at once, but he had chosen the harder path.

Considering his act of eavesdropping by the door, he could not see how this lad could ever be a spiritual cultivator who aimed to achieve the great path.

Inwardly, he had already given Xu Xiaoshou a big red cross.

This boy will not make it!

Chen Xingchu leaned to one side of his seat and did not want to get up at all. As it turned out, he had just been waiting for this boy, merely a beginner Court rank.

Tiansang Spirit Palace was not just playing dumb; they were truly dumb!

Did they send someone of this lowly ranked person to compete with him?

Haha!

To his chagrin, Xu Xiaoshou walked right past him as if he was an invisible man, then greeted Yu Zhiwen, who was a little surprised.

“May I ask for your name?”

Chen Xingchu was shocked.

Did this boy just ignore me?

“Cursed, passive points, +1.”

He laughed mirthlessly and realized that Xu Xiaoshou was probably well-prepared for the match. He probably knew that he was up for a tough fight.

It seemed to him the battle had already begun with this display of posturing.

Looking at Xu Xiaoshou’s extended hand, he mocked him inwardly and expected that Zhiwen would never shake hands with such a lowly person.

You are eyeing someone you can never lay your hands on!

Zhao Xidong also observed keenly, but with not the best of intentions. For she had rejected his advances the other day, and as he thought Xu Xiaoshou look was worse than him, there was no way she would accept his handshake.

He wanted the satisfaction of seeing Xu Xiaoshou fail at least once. If for nothing else, it would at least quell the anger that had built up within him since fetching the lad earlier.

Creak...

The seat creaked slightly and echoed in the quiet hall when she pushed it back as she rose from her chair. But to Zhao Xidong’s ears, it was deafening.

Yu Zhiwen was blushing from ear to ear, embarrassed by the sound she created by her hurried attempt to stand up. But she quickly recovered and bowed gracefully before shaking hands with Xu Xiaoshou.

It was a gentle handshake, but a meaningful one.

She spoke with her lotus-like voice, a little bashfully. “Yu Zhiwen.”

“But Senior brother, you can just call me Zhiwen.”

The eyes of the two who awaited Xu Xiaoshou’s fall from grace popped, and it visibly infuriated Chen Xingchu.

How could this be possible?

He could not even shake hands with her. Why would she shake hands with this random boy? He even made her get up from her seat!

“Envied, passive points, +2.”

Xu Xiaoshou smiled immediately.

“Yu Zhiwen, what a nice name!”

He was not stingy with his compliments and went on to introduce himself. “I am Xu Xiaoshou, ‘Shou’ for gongshou!”

The entire hall fell into a dead silence.

The starry-eyed girl was stunned.

“Huh?”

Chapter 219: What Else Can You Win Me Over?

Zhao Xidong stared at Xu Xiaoshou as the lad rubbed his hands together while walking to take his seat. Zhao Xidong felt puzzled.

It is impossible!

How could the boy get to touch her hand, and he could not even get to first base? Zhao Xidong had countless girlfriends over the years. Why could he not impress this girl?

What could it be?

Could it be that Xu Xiaoshou was more handsome than he was?

Xu Xiaoshou felt the warmth on his hand, but his mind was not as lewd as those two had pictured.

Unlike Momo’s peculiar right hand, he felt nothing special when he touched Yu Zhiwen’s hand. So, her strength did not lie in her hands.

Hmm?

He wondered if he could poke at her eyes at their first meeting. However, it sounded so wrong.

It was simply too inappropriate!

Xu Xiaoshou was in a bit of a dilemma.

“What?” Xu Xiaoshou turned to ask Zhao Xidong when he felt the latter’s intense stare.

“Nothing.”

Zhao Xidong tried to get a hold of himself. Although he had many questions, he did not wish to speak with the boy—not even a single word.

It was still okay that he did not get to shake the girl’s hand. But if he started a conversation with Xu Xiaoshou, Zhao Xidong knew he would get so provoked that he’d feel sick.

Zhao Xidong could not help looking over to the opposite side of the room. He suddenly felt very relaxed and started leaning on the back of his seat comfortably.

The corner of his lips curled up. All he needed at that moment was a bag of chips to watch the unfolding drama in the room.

An interesting thing was brewing on the opposite side.

Chen Xingchu was infuriated, and fumes of anger seemed to rise from his head.

He was a straightforward person. So, he just could not contain his emotions.

And when he saw Xu Xiaoshou enjoying the handshake so much, he almost exploded on the spot.

Initially, Chen Xingchu did not have much regard for this beginner Court rank boy. However, things quickly changed.

He swore he would make sure that Xu Xiaoshou never walked out of the council hall alive!

Jiang Bianyan was slightly disappointed with Chen Xingchu’s behavior. But it pleased him that Yu Zhiwen was respectful to Xu Xiaoshou.

At the very least, they intended to take away the Fourth Sword’s scabbard later. So they should establish a good relationship with its present owner.

He was perplexed. Why was Chen Xingchu so piqued?

He had already lost his composure even before they began their duel.

But it did not matter, anyway. Fortunately, Xu Xiaoshou was only a beginner Court rank disciple.

Jiang Bianyan felt very confident about the bet. Still, he wanted to go the extra mile to secure the win.

“Hallmaster Ye, Xu Xiaoshou is barely a beginner at Innate Stage. Is it not too difficult for him and Chen Xingchu to...?” He did not complete the sentence, but he had conveyed his message.

“It is okay.”

Ye Xiaotian was aware of Jiang Bianyan’s shrewd tactics. Frankly, he was more afraid that they would not be willing to accept the challenge with Xu Xiaoshou because of his low Innate cultivation rank.

If that were the case, then it would not be ideal!

It was easy to invite them over, but difficult to send them away. Hence, Xu Xiaoshou was their last strategy!

Ye Xiaotian pointed at the young man who had just sat down and said, "You cannot simply judge Xu Xiaoshou's battle capability by his cultivation ranking. He is quite skilled."

"Oh?"

Jiang Bianyan raised his eyebrows and wondered if Xu Xiaoshou might have some hidden resources.

However, if his cultivation rank was not up to par, there was no way he could harm Chen Xingchu, two levels higher than him. There were two ranks above Innate—the Occupied Void and Upper Spirit. Xu Xiaoshou would not overcome those gaps easily!

Xu Xiaoshou was not the only one with resources. So it would not be so easy to deal with Chen Xingchu either!

"It still feels wrong. This duel could be too dangerous for the young man. It would be troublesome if he gets seriously hurt," Jiang Bianyan added softly.

"Eh, it's fine."

Ye Xiaotian raised his hand and sounded very confident in his reply.

"How about this? If Hallmaster Jiang is genuinely worried, why do we not let Xu Xiaoshou decide the format of the match?"

When Ye Xiaotian suggested it, Zhao Xidong got a surprise. He stared at the Dean in disbelief.

What on earth did the Dean say? Was he plotting for some commotion?

People might die!

Zhao Xidong wanted to get up immediately, but two fingers were pressing on his clothes.

He turned to look.

Qiao Qianzhi shook his head and signaled at him to stay calm.

"These old dudes..."

"Can we really do this? It is a person's life! Chen Xingchu is too naïve for Xu Xiaoshou!"

Zhao Xidong looked over to the other side and stared at Xu Xiaoshou, who looked a little lost. He felt bad.

"Has it already started?"

He leaned back in his seat, feeling powerless. Zhao Xidong had mixed feelings when he looked at the young man sitting opposite, still in high spirits.

Chen Xingchu, why do you still look so proud? Do you know you are as good as dead already? Zhao Xidong thought to himself and shook his head.

...

"It sounds quite reasonable."

Jiang Bianyan sounded like he was mumbling, but he was secretly over the moon.

As long as they take down Xu Xiaoshou, then the quota would be theirs. Ye Xiaotian would not have any excuse.

Then Jiang Bianyan intended to ask Yu Zhiwen to get close to Xu Xiaoshou and capitalize on her beauty.

“Cough! Cough!” What an opportunity to get that scabbard!

“What do you think, Xingchu?” Jiang Bianyan asked.

“I am fine either way.”

There was no way Chen Xingchu would reject the offer. All he was waiting for was the conversation to end and get down to the business of whacking the other young man.

“You set the rules. Do not hold back at all!” the arrogant Chen Xingchu declared.

Xu Xiaoshou looked at the high-spirited Chen Xingchu and he felt somewhat confused.

“Why are you staring at me? Did I say that I am dueling with you?”

Chen Xingchu staggered when he heard that. Even his stance wobbled a bit.

“Huh?”

Xu Xiaoshou looked at Ye Xiaotian with a questioning face.

He was not playing hard to get at all. What made them think he would fight? The Dean had summoned to see him. It looked like he got roped into a fight that did not concern him. What the hell was going on?

It would waste his energy and could risk revealing his resources. On top of it, there were no rewards.

With such conditions, what makes everyone think he would want to fight?

Everyone looked at the Ye Xiaotian in the first seat. Zhao Xidong once again felt the power of Xu Xiaoshou.

Not only did the lad dare to talk back to him, he even dared to do it to Dean Ye!

This Xu Xiaoshou was very precocious!

Ye Xiaotian was equally shocked. He had thought of every scenario but had not foreseen that Xu Xiaoshou would not be willing to fight.

It was a glorious opportunity to fight for the Spirit Palace!

Hm, wait a minute. It is not something Xu Xiaoshou would usually do.

Ye Xiaotian felt a slight headache. It is okay if others had defied him, he could punish them in a hundred ways.

But the boy had the backing of Elder Sang.

As he thought of Elder Sang, Ye Xiaotian came up with a trick on the spot. He sent a message to Xu Xiaoshou through telepathy. "How about this? If you can take down Chen Xingchu, then everything you picked up in Tianxuan Gate would be yours."

"Really?" Xu Xiaoshou screamed, and his eyes lit up.

His outburst left Ye Xiaotian speechless.

Phew!

The Dean told himself that he had to tolerate it!

Xu Xiaoshou did not know how to communicate with telepathy.

Jiang Bianyan felt secretly disturbed. They were communicating strategies already!

He looked over to the other side and thought that there was nothing much to advise, so Jiang Bianyan just remained still.

"If you can win Chen Xingchu, on top of the Black Scabbard, I can give you more rewards," Ye Xiaotian said through telepathy.

The gains from Tianxuan Gate had already belonged to Xu Xiaoshou, as it was the agreement between him and Elder Sang.

After all, there were many witnesses to the wager. Qiao Qianzhi was there as well. If Ye Xiaotian were to exploit that, it was inappropriate. So, he had to promise to give Xu Xiaoshou other rewards.

It made Ye Xiaotian feel his deal was more secure.

Xu Xiaoshou was a lot more excited.

The gains from Tianxuan Gate were more than just the Black Scabbard!

Since Ye Xiaotian had openly promised, then the Ring of Seal, the Spirit Mark of Life, and Jie did not have to remain hidden!

The rest was unimportant. But if Xu Xiaoshou could let Jie out to take a breather, it would be very beneficial for its growth.

He could also use it as his last option at critical moments. He had less to worry about when facing opponents.

As Xu Xiaoshou contemplated on the rewards, his purpose in fighting Chen Xingchu was pure greed.

Chen Xingchu was not merely a person. Instead, he was a seal to open the door to a vast array of treasures!

Take Chen Xingchu down, and everything would belong to him.

Openly and righteously!

"Come, fight!"

Xu Xiaoshou got up and became unusually excited. "So, how do you want to fight?"

Zhao Xidong held his forehead in one hand.

Oh no, Xu Xiaoshou seems very excited. Hopefully, he does not overdo it.

He was not the judge, though he had the heart for it. In his present frame of mind, Zhao Xidong was very prepared for anything.

Chen Xingchu, still unaware of his fate, stood up with hands behind his back and looked disdainful.

"I have said before. You set the rules!"

"Fine!"

Xu Xiaoshou roared in reply. He was excited and had assumed his stance, but he suddenly sat back in the chair.

Everyone looked confused.

: Suspected, passive points, +6.

"Duel!" yelled Chen Xingchu, looking provoked.

"What are we competing for?" asked Xu Xiaoshou, shrugging nonchalantly.

"I am giving you a chance. If we do not compete for cultivation, how else can you beat me?"

Chapter 220: After all, Chen Xingchu Had Finally Met Xu Xiaoshou, Getting Ignored and Outplayed

Chen Xingchu was stunned.

He had finally found somebody more arrogant than himself.

What on earth was he implying? That if they did not compete for cultivation, then Chen Xingchu would utterly lose in all other aspects...?

What kind of stupid joke was that!

What other aspect of him was Xu Xiaoshou implying as being inferior to him?

You are just a mere Innate rank. What gave you the right to speak so arrogantly?

And in the blink of an eye, Chen Xingchu found himself once again infuriated.

But it surprised him when he glanced at the two major figures of the spirit palace. They showed no reaction at all.

The one who was pouring tea seemed to be fixated on his drink, while the one who was resting with his eyes closed...

Their laid-back demeanor seemed a little too casual, and it was as if they had gotten used to such antics.

"Huh...?"

Chen Xingchu lost his composure right away.

And why did he feel this way?

Because he would get a thorough tongue-lashing from the hall master if he ever displayed such arrogance. Yet this nobody had blatantly done so, and the masters of the spirit palace acted as if they heard nothing!

Or could it be that they thought the “utter nonsense” this brat was spouting was true to a certain extent?

Besides, who does he think he is? Why is he staring at me as if I am some pitiful poor wretch...

Motherf****r!

Chen Xingchu was seething with indignation to the point his hair literally stood up like a fighting rooster. At that moment, he had a sudden urge to vent out his anger.

“Xu Xiaoshou! What, are you afraid to have the duel?”

Suppressing the anger in his heart with some effort, he used a disdainful tone to taunt Xu Xiaoshou. But the challenge came across as somewhat satirical.

Jiang Bianyan frowned when he saw the two masters of the spirit palace remaining pretty calm and simply observing the exchange nonchalantly.

How could they be so relaxed? Could it be that Xu Xiaoshou had some trick up his sleeve?

If that’s the case, then we better be a little more careful. The last thing we need is for something unexpected to happen!

He glanced at Yu Zhiwen, who was sitting at the end discreetly and the latter had nodded after receiving the sign.

She lowered her head, and her long eyelashes trembled lightly, shading her mesmerizing starry eyes.

After half a breath, she activated her starry eyes again, and they seemed to glow dimly.

Within her eyes, there seemed to be millions of stars being guided by a divine force. Then they started dancing and swirling in a circle of light before blazing outward brilliantly.

Then, in the next second, the light in Yu Zhiwen’s beautiful eyes faltered, and the radiant light was snuffed out without warning.

But it was not because she had detected some unknown horrifying presence. On the contrary, her eyes had come into direct contact with an even more terrifying existence.

Xu Xiaoshou was staring right at her up close, with his eyes wide open!

“Oh, f*ck...!”

Yu Zhiwen was so shocked that her whole body trembled and she staggered back unconsciously. And when she fell into her seat, the chair slid back slightly.

CREAK...

The piercing sound once again echoed in the silent council hall and attracted everyone's attention.

Yu Zhiwen instantly felt blushed and even her neck was flushed a vivid red now. She sat in her seat, feeling awkward and helpless.

When she got the attention of everyone's eyes, she felt so embarrassed that she wanted to cover up her eyes with her veil immediately.

How embarrassing!

She rued the fact that she caused such distraction at such a key moment. Being introverted by nature, she blanched and lost her composure.

"Are you feeling unwell?"

Xu Xiaoshou softened his intense stare. He showed some concern and asked, "Do you want some ginger tea?"

Everyone was taken aback.

So, direct?

"Suspected, passive points, +5."

"I'm good, thank you," she responded.

Yu Zhiwen tried to shrug it off, but she had replied with a high-pitched voice that ended flat and barely audible.

She placed her thin hands nervously between her thighs and was grabbing onto her skirt. And her entire body had stiffened.

Xu Xiaoshou almost laughed.

Indeed, there was something very unusual with this girl's eyes.

Although he did not know what function do they served, that pair of extraordinary starry eyes were probably something extraordinary.

Anyway, he had probably prevented her from properly activating her spirit skill.

As Xu Xiaoshou was assessing her, he did not notice another stiffened body before him. Standing next to the seated Yu Zhiwen, this graceful young man appeared to be petrified.

And Chen Xingchu certainly was, for he was completely shocked.

Here he was, once again being ignored!

His eyes twitched as he clenched his fists tightly.

"Xu, Xiao, Shou!" he bellowed.

"Called, passive points, +1."

Xu Xiaoshou raised his head and frowned.

“Hm? You’re still here?”

Chen Xingchu was piqued.

“Cursed, passive points, +1.”

“The match hasn’t started. Where could I go?” Chen Xingchu snarled, almost breathing fire.

“Huh? You mean you still want to compete? I think you have lost.”

“You f*cking...”

Chen Xingchu checked himself and stopped his ranting abruptly when he noticed a few pairs of scary eyes cast on him. And he cooled him down immediately.

“... It seems to me you have no courage to face me and just want to avoid the duel!”

Xu Xiaoshou looked cynically at his opponent and broke out in laughter. He stood up to his full height and asked, “You want to compete?”

“Humph!” Chen Xingchu turned his head.

“You’re sure that you won’t regret it?”

“Cut the crap, fight me!”

Xu Xiaoshou looked over at Ye Xiaotian and gave him a derisive look. It was as if to say he could not make sense of why the Dean had made him fight with a guy who had no heart or strength.

He thought it’d be better if he had been told to fight the girl beside Chen Xingchu. That way, he could figure out what her trump card was!

Ye Xiaotian nodded slightly, giving him the signal not to hold back.

Xu Xiaoshou understood.

“So, am I setting the rules?”

Looking at how Chen Xingchu behaved, Xu Xiaoshou thought he’d be the type to give it all he got in one go...

Chen Xingchu nodded.

“Mm.”

He sighed, then walked up to Chen Xingchu and circled him twice as if to assess him. Then he stopped when he got to Yu Zhiwen’s side.

“I am a gentleman and would like to settle matters peacefully. Why don’t we sit down and have a debate about the path?”

Yu Zhiwen was alarmed.

Why is he coming so close to her to debate about the path?

She wanted to shift her position but was afraid that she might interrupt the proceedings again by dragging her chair. So she remained next to Xu Xiaoshou.

Chen Xingchu did not expect Xu Xiaoshou to propose such a thing, but thinking that Xu Xiaoshou's cultivation rank was extremely low, it suited him well. He responded with a mirthless laugh.

"Fine with me!"

Xu Xiaoshou immediately grabbed Chen Xingchu's chair over and sat down next to Yu Zhiwen. His move caused everyone's faces to twitch.

In a casual tone, Xu Xiaoshou asked, "It seems to me, you specialize in swordsmanship?"

The east was famous for swordsmanship and the more renowned an organization was, the more likely its disciples specialized in swordsmanship. The Holy Divine Palace was no different.

Chen Xingchu clenched his teeth, seeing that Xu Xiaoshou had conveniently taken that his seat. It immediately put him at a disadvantage!

He grabbed his sword and dragged a seat next to Zhao Xidong, then sat down gracefully.

"That's right!" Chen Xingchu replied.

CREAK...

Zhao Xidong shifted his seat away as quietly as he could...

Chen Xingchu was vexed.

"Cursed, passive points, +1."

Zhao Xidong's gesture made Xu Xiaoshou almost break out in laughter. He pointed at the item in Chen Xingchu's hand, and asked, "Is this a sword?"

The question puzzled Chen Xingchu. He looked down and became annoyed again.

Fool! What else could it be if not a sword? A knife?

"Are you blind?" Chen Xingchu scowled.

"No, I mean, what rank is your sword?" Xu Xiaoshou clarified.

Chen Xingchu looked down his nose with pride, and replied, "It's ranked five!"

DANG!

Xu Xiaoshou suddenly trembled. He even lost his sense of balance and swooned, falling into Yu Zhiwen's arms.

"Oh, sorry, sorry..."

Yu Zhiwen frowned, unclear of Xu Xiaoshou's intention.

Chen Xingchu glared with a look of disdain.

Huh, what a bumpkin!

A mere rank-five sword sent him into such a shock. Had Zhiwen unsheathed her sword, would he pass away on the spot?

“Mocked, passive points, +1.”

Xu Xiaoshou ignored the information that flashed in his bar and continued to act shocked. “Rank five? Then is this sword psychic? Does it recognize its master specifically?”

“It’s not psychic, but as for recognizing its master...”

Chen Xingchu said no more. He lifted his chin slightly and his finger snapped at the guard of the sword in one sleek motion.

All they heard was a crisp ring and the spirit sword shot up to the air and circling the hall once before it returned to the sheath.

DANG!

To be honest, it impressed Xu Xiaoshou. Even Hidden Pain could not achieve such a smooth manipulation.

“Mm, since you specialize in swordsmanship and possess such a powerful item...”

Xu Xiaoshou made his voice sound cautious and tinged with envy. Suddenly his eyes lit up, and he said, “I suggest we compete with our body strength!”