

M. Slaying 271

Chapter 271: Flow of Time

“Jiangjiang!”

Numerous spectators cried out in shock. Their hearts were tense as they feared for Jiang Yuebai’s safety!

From the moment Scholar Sun saw Ling Ao place his hand on Jiang Yuebai’s sword and use dragon blood to pull the sword away, his eyes had filled with astonishment.

Scholar Sun muttered, "The Divine Dragons’ Great Blood-Burning Technique...?"

The Divine Dragons’ Great Blood-Burning Technique was a secret technique that a dragon clan had created. The user of the technique burns the spiritual energy in their blood in exchange for a temporary but massive boost in power. However, the user will become extremely weak after each use.

By using this technique, Ling Ao made it clear that he wanted to end the duel quickly!

"Yeesh." Elder Huang's expression turned from sunny to gloomy. "This young man has a really strong fighting spirit. In contrast, Jiangjiang's mental state is too peaceful. That puts her at a significant disadvantage when she’s in a fight. She won’t lose, will she?"

In the time it took him to say that, another sudden change occurred on the stage!

As the sight of the sword piercing Jiang Yuebai pierced the hearts of the spectators, Jiang Yuebai cracked, turning into a shower of shattered ice.

It was an ice clone!

There shouldn't have been ice in the arena. Nonetheless, with Jiang Yuebai's continuous spellcasting, the platform had turned into a world of ice in just a short time.

Her efforts were definitely not futile. In such an environment, her opponent's movements would be greatly impeded. This was why Ling Ao was trying to use the blood-burning technique to bring a swift end to the duel!

Unfortunately for Ling Ao, Jiang Yuebai had learned many spells and was very proficient in all of them. Her ice clone had looked so flawless that it almost seemed like a perfect copy of her.

The stage wasn't that large, but Jiang Yuebai wasn't there. Where did she go?

Ling Ao raised his gaze slightly. Then he suddenly stomped on the ground!

Boom! Crack!

The thick layer of ice on the ground cracked and shattered to pieces!

Was Jiang Yuebai in the sky? No, she was underground!

Jiang Yuebai emerged from the other side of the stage, with her white robes still spotless.

She'd used the spell Underground Escape Route!

The stage had been constructed with extremely solid materials and had been reinforced with various enchanted formations. This was to ensure its durability and prevent any problems from occurring that may disrupt the matches.

Nevertheless, it also inadvertently limited the use of some divine techniques and spells. For example, if they were fighting on the ground, Jiang Yuebai would have been able to escape through the ground easily by using Underground Escape Route. However, having to go through this extremely solid stage first made escaping into the ground a very difficult feat.

That was why Jiang Yuebai had continuously covered the stage with ice spiritual qi. It hadn't been simply to reduce Ling Ao's speed. She had been waiting for a very thick layer of ice to form on the ground—thick enough for her to move freely within it so that she could use Underground Escape Route!

It turned out that she'd been strategizing this whole time!

Ling Ao had a fast reaction speed, so he quickly realized what Jiang Yuebai had been doing. Jiang Yuebai's actions had caused Ling Ao to waste a lot of time, and now the distance between them had reverted to almost the full length of the platform.

Meanwhile, Jiang Yuebai was already forming a sword seal with her hands.

She wasn't holding a sword though. That left the spectators puzzled.

Nonetheless, a moment later, everyone knew where the sword was.

Crack, crack, crack...

In the blink of an eye, the frigid air condensed before her and formed a huge sword of spiritual qi. Despite having been made on the spot, the sword managed to contain immense spiritual qi without shattering!

Normally, swords that were made on the spot from condensed qi were very fragile and could not be used for sword seals like real flying swords.

Yet, Jiang Yuebai could do it with hers because she had perfect control over her foundational qi and spiritual qi, allowing her to flawlessly execute the Heavenly Sword Seal!

Shrouded in a tremendous amount of swordlight, the ice sword soared up into the sky!

Jiang Yuebai was no longer suppressing her aura; she was now unleashing all of her cultivation prowess!

Everyone present could sense that Jiang Yuebai was at the Realm of the Five Elements!

It turned out that Xu Ziyang wasn't the only one at this year's Mount Shu Summit who had reached the Realm of the Five Elements. Jiang Yuebai had reached this level too!

Everyone was taken by surprise.

The enormous beam of swordlight pressed forward with the full power of the fifth realm. Ling Ao seemed so small in comparison.

He didn't seem to have any way to fight back!

...

"The fifth and third realms are worlds apart," Scholar Sun said.

"Nevertheless, we cannot underestimate Ling Ao. Instead of viewing him as a third-realm cultivator, we should see him as a fifth-realm martial artist. He doesn't have a strong foundation in martial arts, but after burning his blood, his physique is now on par with a martial artist's," Elder Huang replied.

"So, you think he has a chance of winning?" Scholar Sun asked.

"Of course not." Elder Huang chuckled. "It might be different if Jiangjiang hadn't reached the fifth realm, but she was just hiding her true strength. Now that she's not suppressing her cultivation prowess anymore, how could Ling Ao possibly win? The power of her Transcendent Spirit will become more prominent as she advances to the higher cultivation levels."

When Elder Huang was done speaking, another dramatic change occurred on the stage.

For powerful cultivators of their level, it would have been an easy feat for them to figure out that Jiang Yuebai had been concealing her aura this whole time. In fact, they would have found out if they had just activated their divine sense and observed her earnestly.

However, it was a rather discourteous thing to do, so it was not something the powerful cultivators on Mount Shu would have ever done. Even if they had noticed, they wouldn't have mentioned it. That was probably how Jiang Yuebai had been able to conceal her true strength all this time.

Ling Ao hadn't expected Jiang Yuebai to be at such a high cultivation realm, but it didn't intimidate him in the slightest.

After all, Xu Ziyang was in the fifth realm too, and Ling Ao had thought about defeating him before. So, what difference was there?

As Jiang Yuebai's enormous Heavenly Sword Seal flew toward Ling Ao from the other side of the stage, its momentum sent a gust of wind over to him. It lifted Ling Ao's hair, revealing a pair of eyes filled with fighting spirit.

Ling Ao wasn't just unafraid; he was excited!

He ditched Jiang Yuebai's flying sword and pulled out an enchanted tool instead. Astonishingly, it was a white saber tooth half the length of his arm. It was scuffed, covered in nicks and cracks.

This was Ling Ao's first time using his enchanted tool in the fighting tournament. He used the tooth to cut his wrist!

Blood gushed out of the wound. Nevertheless, not a drop was wasted; the tooth absorbed all of it. Then the tooth radiated a brilliant blue and gold light.

A dragon's deep roar suddenly reverberated throughout the venue. "Raaaaaar!!!"

A blurry apparition rose from the dragon tooth, looming over Ling Ao. It gazed out fiercely with chaos-filled eyes.

This apparition was actually a dragon Battle Soul!

The soul itself appeared to be a remnant soul. Nevertheless, with the sustenance of dragon blood, which contained powerful spiritual energy, it might temporarily regain some of its former might!

The pressure that this remnant soul emitted was incredibly terrifying, so much so that just the pressure alone was enough to make everyone at the venue feel like they were suffocating.

With a wide swing of his arm, Ling Ao flew forward and gave an order to the dragon soul above his head!

"Go!"

The gigantic dragon soul moved even faster than Ling Ao. It collided explosively with Jiang Yuebai's Heavenly Sword Seal, producing what looked like sparks of lightning and fire!

Boom, boom, boom.

Thunderous sounds rang out when the enormous sword struck the gigantic dragon, but the dragon soul was simply too powerful. It was crushing the Heavenly Sword Seal inch by inch. The sword couldn't withstand the dragon's overwhelming strength!

While Jiang Yuebai was preoccupied with forming hand seals to maintain her sword seal, Ling Ao had already closed the distance between them. Without Jiang Yuebai's interference, flying the length of the stage was something he could do within the mere blink of an eye.

Ling Ao's qi flames were burning so hot that waves of heat radiated from him. All the blood in his body had become so boiling hot that it felt as though it could melt through metal and stone.

Bathed in the blood-red glow of his aura, Ling Ao looked like a madman!

In the blink of an eye, the distance between them had reduced to less than a meter!

...

In the spectator's stand, the Weapons Master muttered, "An ancient dragon tooth? So, he was the one who bought it."

"What kind of enchanted tool is that?" Elder Huang asked anxiously. "It looks like just a broken tooth. How can it contain such a large dragon soul?"

The Weapons Master explained, "That is something our disciples found years ago in an ancient dragon lair. The tooth is indeed quite extraordinary. A powerful remnant soul is attached to that broken tooth, but it can only be activated with the blood of dragons or draconic descendants. The stronger the spiritual energy of the blood that's used, the stronger the dragon's soul will be.

"Ordinary people can't use that tooth, so it had been kept in the Hall of Weapons ever since its discovery. But it was bought recently. Ling Ao's destiny must involve a True Dragon, and that's why he bought the tooth to enhance his strength."

Pure Summoned Battle Souls, like Chu Liang's Old Fei, were not permitted into the fighting tournament. However, Battle Souls like Ling Ao's were different, as they needed to be sustained with the summoner's cultivation prowess or blood. That meant the Battle Soul's power was essentially the summoner's power, so that's why they were permitted in the fighting tournament.

"It's great that he took it; it's just right for him. Most people can't use that enchanted tool, but in his hands, it is quite a powerful tool," Scholar Sun said with a nod. "However, this puts Jiang Yuebai in danger."

"Ling Ao used the Blood-Burning Technique earlier and then summoned the dragon soul. He will certainly collapse after sustaining the dragon soul for just a while. Nevertheless, with the dragon soul attacking alongside him, Ling Ao's offensive power will be tremendous. Will Jiang Yuebai be able to withstand it?"

"Oh dear, oh dear..." Elder Huang furrowed his brows. "It looks like Jiangjiang is going to lose!"

The situation on the stage has an ominous atmosphere like dark clouds descending upon a city.

The dragon soul was about to smash Jiang Yuebai's Heavenly Sword Seal to pieces. Meanwhile, Ling Ao was nearing Jiang Yuebai and ruthlessly threw out a punch, bringing with it a burst of whistling wind!

Even from a meter away, Jiang Yuebai could feel the scorching heat of Ling Ao's qi flames. Her expression finally changed for the first time in this fight. She frowned slightly.

Jiang Yuebai relinquished control over the Heavenly Sword Seal and formed a different hand seal, switching to another divine skill.

In the sky, the dragon soul was descending with great force, and on the ground, Ling Ao was approaching with ferocious momentum. All the spectators were breaking out in a cold sweat, feeling anxious for Jiang Yuebai.

As the enormous shadow of the dragon soul cast over her, Jiang Yuebai finished forming her new hand seal and then made one simple movement. She gently extended a finger, pointing it at Ling Ao.

Boom.

It seemed as if there was something rotating in the air.

One second, Ling Ao's qi flames were running rampant, and the next, he collapsed to the ground. Supporting himself with his arms, he kneeled before Jiang Yuebai.

The chain of movements was so fluid that it seemed as if this had been his intention from the start—to rush over and greet Jiang Yuebai with great respect.

Meanwhile, the dragon soul didn't even have time to let out a roar before it vanished, turning back into a wisp of blue smoke and returning to the ancient dragon tooth.

"Ah..." Ling Ao gasped for breath, panting heavily.

He tried to stand up, but no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get back up.

What happened?

Ling Ao was bewildered by the sudden onset of his weakened state. It wasn't the weakened state that puzzled him though, as it always followed after each time he burned his blood.

Using his training sessions as a gauge, it should take at least fifteen minutes before the onset would occur.

So, why did it come so suddenly?

He tried hard to lift his head. With his sweat clinging to his hair and obstructing his vision, Ling Ao only caught a blurry glimpse of Jiang Yuebai's swaying skirt as she turned and walked away.

Ling Ao couldn't see clearly, and he didn't understand what had happened.

She only used one move, but she totally ruined my plan. How exactly did she do it?

...

"This is... Flow of Time!" Scholar Sun exclaimed. "Yes, it's that immortal art!"

The immortal art Flow of Time could alter the effects of time on a person's body, temporarily reversing or accelerating time.

"The Great Dao of Time is mystical and elusive. Flow of Time can be said to be one of the hardest immortal arts to master. Has she really mastered it?" Elder Huang said in amazement.

There were some distinct differences between the various immortal arts. Some featured a Great Dao that was incredibly mysterious and difficult to comprehend, while others were relatively simple. For instance, Dimension Compression, the immortal art that Jiang Yuebai had taught Chu Liang, was usually treated as "a youth's first immortal art" because it was one of the easiest to learn.

Flow of Time, on the other hand, was on a completely different level.

"Flow of Time is difficult to master, and it rarely succeeds on the first go. So, cultivators usually use it to recover their peak condition during battle," Scholar Sun explained. "But she managed to use it on her opponent instead. Moreover, she accelerated his time. It was the perfect counter against Ling Ao's blood-burning technique. A truly brilliant move!"

"If it wasn't for the Flow of Time, she would have been in quite a dangerous situation. It's fortunate that she'd already mastered this immortal art and could actually turn the tables in one move. Truly, it's a lucky coincidence," Elder Huang remarked, sighing in relief.

Young disciples of Jiang Yuebai's age would usually only have a few immortal arts mastered. It appeared to be a lucky coincidence that one of the few Jiang Yuebai had mastered could subdue Ling Ao. In that case, it truly seemed like Jiang Yuebai had great luck.

Elder Huang had genuinely thought that Jiang Yuebai had been in danger just a moment ago.

"Luck?" Scholar Sun said with a deep gaze. "Rather than that, couldn't it be that perhaps she has mastered many immortal arts and simply chose the most suitable one from among them?"

Chapter 272: Double the Arrogance

"Ugh—"

Ling Ao lay weakly on the arena stage, face down and unable to move even as a few disciples from the Hall of Alchemy carefully carried him down.

The exhaustion from burning his blood was intense. Even with a dragon's strong recovery abilities, it would take time to heal, especially since his body was still fundamentally that of a frail human.

Old Man Sikong, leaning on his cane, approached Ling Ao and gently placed a hand on his shoulder.

Ling Ao felt a warm surge of qi flow into his meridians, soothing the pain in his limbs and bones from his extreme frailty. However, the deep-seated weakness in his blood persisted. This would have to heal gradually on its own.

"Esteemed teacher..." he murmured, unwilling to lift his head, "I've let you down."

"Silly child," Old Man Sikong said with a smile, patting his head. "Making it to the top four is already enough to satisfy me. The only thing you've let down is your own ambition."

Ling Ao stayed quiet, keeping his head bowed.

Old Man Sikong said no more, letting Ling Ao walk away in his dejection as he himself returned to the spectator stand.

It wasn't that he didn't care about his disciple. He knew Ling Ao was prideful and ambitious, and any extra attention at this moment of failure would only make him feel more dejected.

This was essential training for strengthening one's character and mindset. It was something he had to overcome on his own.

"Haha, your disciple did well! This only disciple of yours made it to the top four. But why does he look so sad? Did you scold him?" Di Nufeng, who sat next to Old Man Sikong on the spectator stand, asked.

"Why would I scold him?" replied Old Man Sikong. "He's just struggling to accept the failure himself."

"Your disciple is still not as good as mine," Di Nufeng said, shaking her head.

"Hah, your disciple's chances of winning aren't that great either," Old Man Sikong chuckled without getting angry.

"I'm not talking about winning or losing," Di Nufeng replied. "Trust me, even if my disciple spouted arrogant words and was crushed in defeat, he would still step down from the stage with a silly smile, not taking the defeat to heart."

Isn't that just being shameless? Why are you so proud of this? Old Man Sikong blinked, thinking to himself.

Of course, as an old man who had cultivated for several hundred years, he knew that this kind of character was also a form of strength.

In the long journey of cultivation, who would win every battle? Since ancient times, the truly powerful have had the trait of not being defeated by failure.

I hope Ling Ao can get through this. Old Man Sikong thought to himself.

...

Ling Ao walked by himself to a corner of the mountain wall outside the public square on Heaven-Reaching Peak. He sat down, leaned against the rock, and gazed at the sky.

WHY?

Must I have cultivation aptitude to win?

He had joined Mount Shu at a very young age and had been following Old Man Sikong ever since. His teacher's evaluation of him was that he had above-average aptitude. With a lifetime of diligent effort and perhaps an extraordinary encounter, he might be able to touch upon the Great Dao.

As for prodigies like Jiang Yuebai, she had been showered with great expectations since childhood and was destined to become a future leader of the Mount Shu Sect.

But Ling Ao refused to accept this fate.

Why was his life determined to be inferior from the very start?

With the determination to excel, he dedicated himself to cultivation, striving to compete with others. Since achieving the Body Refinement Realm, he had set his sights on matching the prodigies, using them as benchmarks to push himself.

In the first realm, he could still keep up with them, but by the second realm, the gap widened. By the third realm, he had fallen so far behind that he couldn't even see their backs in this race.

When news of Xu Ziyang reaching the fifth realm spread, he was still stuck at the pinnacle of the Spiritual Awareness Realm.

Actually, at his age, being able to reach the pinnacle of the Spiritual Awareness Realm showed that he wasn't weak. For instance, Shang Ziliang, who was at the same level as him, was already considered outstanding among the younger disciples of Mount Shu. Lin Bei, on the other hand, had only reached this level due to a fortunate encounter[1].

But Ling Ao was in so much pain.

Like what his name meant, he was full of pride, yet he had to endure being more inferior than others.

Old Man Sikong had tried multiple times to counsel him, saying that cultivation aptitude was predestined. Even if one was lacking in natural talent, it was still possible to surpass others through perseverance and hard work.

That was exactly what Ling Ao believed.

He continued spending every day cultivating arduously, yet he remained unnoticed.

But things changed one day—his teacher successfully fished a dragon for the Mount Shu Sect.

That was when Ling Ao felt that his opportunity had arrived.

If cultivation aptitude was predestined and could only be changed by some extraordinary opportunity or encounter, the True Dragon had to be one of those encounters.

Ling Ao refused to believe in fate.

He wanted to fight for his own destiny.

Being a member of the Solitude Peak, he was near the dragon. Through some ancient books, he found rituals about draconic descendants worshiping True Dragons in ancient times.

Since then, he prayed to the True Dragon daily.

Finally, through his persistent efforts, the True Dragon blessed him with the Dragon-Blood Body Refinement.

The Dragon-Blood Body Refinement was not done by bathing in dragon blood. Instead, the True Dragon would infuse a drop of its blood essence into his body. This essence blood would boil and merge within him, constantly refining his own blood, rapidly enhancing his body's strength.

In ancient times, True Dragons used this method to reward and empower their loyal servants. Now, Ling Ao had received such an opportunity, elevating his physical body to an extraordinary level.

He felt that he had finally returned to the same starting line as those prodigies and was determined to prove that he was not inferior to them!

But shortly after, another incident occurred.

The White Dragon gave not one person, but two, its primordial dragon scales.

And those two did nothing to earn it. They didn't pray to the True Dragon like he did. In fact, it was the True Dragon that begged them to accept the legacy.

His esteemed teacher instructed him to keep this matter absolutely confidential.

Still, he couldn't understand this.

Why did that person and that fish get better things than him without even doing anything?

If the Dragon-Blood Body Refinement was a blessing that the True Dragon bestowed to its servants, then the gift of the primordial dragon scale was how the True Dragon imparted its cultivation legacy. If this were an immortal sect, he would be the servant while the others would be the successors.

These thoughts consumed him while he had no idea about the Dragon Orb. By the same analogy, obtaining the Dragon Orb would be like receiving the position of sect leader.

Of course, in this era, there were no longer dragon servants. All of these were just methods to enhance power.

However, the Dragon-Blood Body Refinement only enhanced the body once, with limited potential for continuous growth.

The primordial dragon scale was different. With it, one could continue cultivating endlessly just by breathing, promising boundless prospects.

If you say that I am no better than Chu Liang from the Silver Sword Peak, I can accept that since he does have an ultimate-tier Golden Core. But how am I inferior to a fish? These were his thoughts then.

Anger surged in Ling Ao's heart. He began racking his brains, searching for martial arts techniques, seeking enchanted tools that belonged to the dragons, and trying every possible way to increase his strength. He wanted to trample all those prodigies beneath his feet at the Mount Shu Summit!

To prove that he was not weaker than anyone!

Then, Jiang Yuebai shattered his dreams effortlessly with an immortal art.

Anyone with an eye could see that she was keeping up the engagement only to conceal her abilities. With her cultivation and divine techniques, it wouldn't have been difficult for her to defeat him if she had gone all out.

She didn't even take out her enchanted tool.

And all his painstaking preparations seemed like a joke.

Was one's fate truly predestined?

Just as he was sighing in despair, a figure in white robes suddenly appeared in front of him.

"Junior Brother Ling, it's just a minor defeat. Why are you so disheartened?" the person asked with concern.

"What?" Ling Ao looked up and asked.

"I have an idea that will give you a chance to become the head disciple of Mount Shu. Are you interested?"

...

"Senior Brother Xu will win!"

"Senior Brother Xu will win!"

"Senior Brother Xu will win!"

When Xu Ziyang stepped onto the stage, chants of support and cheers erupted all around, sounding like the wind on the mountain and the crash of tsunami waves.

He was also dressed in white, standing with a posture so straight that his back resembled a sword. His handsome face exuded an impressive presence, and his eyes shone brightly like lightning. Yet, his expression remained cold and hard as ice.

His popularity on Mount Shu was always second only to Jiang Yuebai's. Given Fairy Jiang's beauty, it could be said that Xu Ziyang received the most recognition purely based on his strength.

Most people believed he deserved the title of head disciple.

Moreover, his opponent was Chu Liang, someone who had very few supporters.

Only Lin Bei and a few others cheered for Chu Liang from the sidelines, chanting slogans like, "Chu Liang, Chu Liang! Mount Shu's strongest!" and "Chu Liang, Chu Liang! Handsome and elegant!"

But their efforts were in vain, completely drowned out by the overwhelming support for Xu Ziyang.

Some even shouted things like, "Chu Liang, Chu Liang, insane and deranged," trying to disrupt their rhythm and break their resistance.

In the midst of overwhelming support for the other side, Chu Liang stepped onto the stage with a confident smile.

Amidst the clamor, he raised his left hand, tilted his head back, and pressed a finger to his lips.

It was the same gesture Ling Ao had made.

Silence!

The entire crowd gasped in shock!

A brief moment of silence hung in the air.

Despite the knowledge that Ling Ao had made the same gesture in response to the crowd previously and faced humiliation, Chu Liang boldly replicated it. This act demanded even more courage.

He displayed double the arrogance!

Chapter 273: Triple Dose of Astonishment

As Chu Liang faced the silent crowd, he placed his finger down and cleared his throat. "Everyone, be quiet for a second and listen to me..."

"Recently, I've noticed some gift boxes of spirit fruit claiming to be specialty products of Mount Shu circulating in the market. We're not prohibiting others from selling fruits.

"However, the gift boxes of Golden Vein Berries that the Eminent One robbed from those travelers were exclusively supplied by the Silver Sword Peak. You can't buy these gift boxes elsewhere. Please make sure to check that the berries are Golden Vein Berries to avoid being scammed.

"Make sure they're the Golden Vein Berries from the Silver Sword Peak! Don't let them trick you!"

Chu Liang repeated the warning. "Make sure they're the Golden Vein Berries from Silver Sword Peak..."

Hearing this, the entire crowd felt speechless.

For some reason, when he was done shouting, the crowd became even quieter.

So that's what you wanted to say?

What was with the arrogant posture then? What was the point of making that expression?

Seriously...

"Hahaha," Scholar Sun, who was watching the arena, couldn't help but chuckle. He then remarked, "This young fella does show the recklessness of Ah Feng, except that he is a bit more cunning."

Elder Huang, however, looked cautious and murmured, "This fella will surely become a major problem in the future..."

He seemed to have envisioned some catastrophic scenarios.

A strange expression even appeared on the face of the supervising elder standing in the center of the arena. He urged, "Stop talking. Just start already."

"Alright." Chu Liang nodded hastily.

When he arrived in the morning, he discovered several gift boxes of other spirit fruits being sold, taking advantage of the fame of their own berry gift boxes. They probably saw that their berries were popular and wanted to jump on the bandwagon.

But Chu Liang, who was building his brand value, had painfully decided not to restock. How could he let others profit off his reputation? Naturally, he needed to seize this opportunity to promote his berries.

He didn't dare to say much more.

Getting a few dozen seconds of advertising on the main competition stage, with all eyes watching, was already a big win. It was best to stop while things were still good.

Then, the Supervising Elder shouted, "Chu Liang from Silver Sword Peak versus Xu Ziyang from Jade Sword Peak, begin!"

Immediately, the supervising elder soared into the air.

At that very moment, Chu Liang locked gazes with Xu Ziyang.

Boom.

It was as if there was an explosion in the air!

The explosive energies from both sides were about to clash!

"Wang Xuanling, you won't be the grand peak master tomorrow. Do you have anything to say?" Di Nufeng loudly taunted from the spectator stand.

Beside her, Wang Xuanling, the master of Jade Sword Peak, frowned and retorted, "You should say your goodbyes to the Phoenix Spirit Blood Jade first."

Di Nufeng sneered and said, "Don't worry. It's impossible for you to win it. To be honest, my disciple is already analyzing the opponent for the finals."

Wang Xuanling snorted and couldn't be bothered to respond.

It wasn't the first day he knew he couldn't beat Di Nufeng in trash-talking.

As for the outcome of the competition, he wasn't too worried.

He had absolute confidence in his beloved disciple.

How could Xu Ziyang lose? Wang Xuanling simply couldn't imagine it happening.

"I simply can't imagine how Xu Ziyang could lose," Elder Huang said with a smile. His tone carried a hint of contempt as he discussed the potential outcome of the battle.

"Oh?" Scholar Sun also smiled. "Elder Huang, are you really that confident in Xu Ziyang?"

"Based on their previous performances, the gap between them is as vast as the difference between heaven and earth," Elder Huang said, shaking his head. "A true expert should be daring enough to make judgment. As long as Xu Ziyang is mindful of Chu Liang's little tricks, Chu Liang won't stand a chance of winning."

"Although I also think Xu Ziyang has a great chance of winning, I still hope Chu Liang can put up a good fight," Scholar Sun said. "After all, my bet is on him."

"Heheh," Elder Huang chuckled smugly, "Sorry, but I'm certain I'll win."

...

Xu Ziyang stared at Chu Liang, who stood before him, reminiscing about how he was just a minor disciple in the Spiritual Awareness Realm when they first met.

Back then, he seemed smart, but he wasn't powerful.

Who would have thought that in such a short time, Chu Liang would form an ultimate-tier Golden Core and now stand opposite him on the semifinals stage?

In reality, he had already approved of Chu Liang.

So when he made his move, he didn't hold back at all, launching a Heavenly Sword Seal as his initial attack!

Boom—

Among the techniques ranked below immortal arts, the Heavenly Sword Seal was the strongest sword technique!

A massive sword beam swept towards Chu Liang with overwhelming force!

Like everyone else, he believed that as long as he watched out for Chu Liang's schemes, there would be no issue.

Therefore, he opted for a powerful and direct divine technique as his opening move, intending to overpower Chu Liang head-on!

He intended to give Chu Liang no chance to play any tricks or schemes.

In the face of this powerful move, Chu Liang simply smiled.

Did he have any tricks up his sleeve?

The answer was no.

Chu Liang swiftly drew the Dustless Sword and, with a similar hand gesture, raised his flying sword high!

Boom—

A massive platinum sword beam roared forth with equally majestic momentum!

It was also a Heavenly Sword Seal!

The two massive sword beams collided in mid-air!

Jiang Yuebai, who had just won her match, sat in the spectator stand. She had intended to watch them calmly as they fought for the chance to face her, but a flicker of surprise crossed her face.

Most of the divine techniques that Chu Liang knew were the result of her teaching. They hadn't had much contact recently, so she assumed that Chu Liang had not learned any new divine techniques.

But now, it seemed he had been secretly learning!

Boom!

The sword beams clashed with a thunderous roar, causing the tips of the swords to disintegrate. Soon, both swords shattered into bright dust in the air, and scattered sword qi filled the surroundings.

The clash of the two swords left everyone gaping in astonishment, their mouths hanging open!

They couldn't believe that Chu Liang knew how to execute the Heavenly Sword Seal!

His execution of the Heavenly Sword Seal, being on par with that of Xu Ziyang, was enough to shock everyone.

Before this very moment, their impression of Chu Liang had always been that of someone who lacked real strength and fought relying on tricks and schemes!

This was exactly what Chu Liang wanted them to think!

Like how Senior Sister Jiang had used the Flow of Time in her previous match and caught her opponent off guard, achieving the effect of defeating the opponent with just one strike.

If Ling Ao had known she could use that immortal art, would he have been so unprepared and fallen for it?

Certainly not.

A duel between masters of equal skill was like a game of cards. The one with more hidden trump cards stood a better chance of winning. Considering Xu Ziyang's higher cultivation level, he needed to conceal even more of his strength.

The clash of the Heavenly Sword Seal had yet to finish when Chu Liang swiftly dashed towards Xu Ziyang.

Xu Ziyang, being at the fifth realm of cultivation, was physically strong. However, in terms of endurance and sheer physical prowess, Chu Liang outmatched him by a significant margin.

With the Power of Ten Tigers and the enhancement of the Secret Dragon Blood Technique, his strength had reached a level beyond the imagination of others at his cultivation level.

This scene resembled what happened in Jiang Yuebai's fight.

Chu Liang dashed forward to close the distance, while Xu Ziyang attempted to block his advance.

However, his move was completely different from that of Jiang Yuebai. Jiang Yuebai used the sword qi from the talismanic character for ice to obstruct Ling Ao's movement. On the other hand, Xu Ziyang was summoning the sword and unleashing the sword qi from the geng metal!

Swish! Swish! Swish!

The first level of the Realm of the Five Elements was the geng metal phase[1].

Xu Ziyang had completed the integration with this level. Currently, his sword qi was far sharper than that of any normal cultivator at the fourth realm! At this moment, if he used the Ten Thousand Swords Seal, the multitude of sword shadows, if grazed or touched, would result in death.

Furthermore, countless sword shadows formed a cage-like wall, leaving no chance for anyone to dodge!

As Chu Liang faced the barricade formed by the myriad of sword shadows and sword qi, he didn't hesitate. With two swift movements, he disappeared into the air.

He used Dimension Compression!

Even if Xu Ziyang had a very solid and tough barricade, it couldn't stop the Dimension Compression from shortening the distance between him and Chu Liang.

"This dude is able to perform Dimension Compression?" The spectating crowd gasped in shock.

What surprised them even more was yet to come. Chu Liang's figure flickered twice in succession, appearing in mid-air in front of Xu Ziyang.

However, when he flickered out, it was as a single shadowy figure, but upon landing, it multiplied into five.

Five Chu Liangs surrounded Xu Ziyang in an instant!

Simultaneously, they began to swing their fists and feet.

All five of them were poised to kick as they encircled him.

"Clone technique?" Elder Huang hesitated for a moment, but then his expression changed as though he had witnessed something extraordinary. "No! It's the Army of Beans!"

"His qi is different now. He is at the middle stage of the Golden Core Realm. He had been concealing his strength all along!"

He had concealed both his divine techniques and cultivation levels remarkably well all this time!

If it were just an ordinary clone technique, the clones wouldn't exude such a powerful aura.

If it were the Immortal Art: External Manifestation, and Chu Liang generated five clones, he should have had the ability to fly as well, which clearly wasn't the case.

In addition to those two, there was another immortal art called the Army of Beans!

This immortal art allowed the cultivator to transform any refined tiny objects into puppets that could be manipulated. Unlike the Immortal Art: External Manifestation, the advantage of this technique lay in its ability to create a greater quantity of clones. Additionally, compared to the typical clone techniques, the clones generated by this immortal art were more complete and individually more powerful.

With proficient mastery, one could even turn a handful of beans into an army of celestial soldiers!

Chu Liang can use immortal arts!

And he knows two!

And he used both in succession!

Heavenly Sword Seal... Dimension Compression... Army of Beans... A combination of moves that sounded almost extravagant. In an instant, Chu Liang completed the encirclement of Xu Ziyang.

From the audience's perspective, Chu Liang had clearly gained a significant advantage!

This was beyond everyone's expectations!

Within moments, everyone in the arena was repeatedly stunned. The feeling of surprise hit them again and again—a triple dose of astonishment!

With this, it was no longer surprising that Xu Ziyang seemed unprepared. Anyone who had to counter this series of moves by Chu Liang would have undoubtedly suffered.

Even Wang Xuanling on the high platform looked shocked and puzzled as he turned to glance at Di Nufeng.

It wasn't unusual for Di Nufeng's disciple to possess formidable cultivation energy, as this could be attained through independent cultivation.

However, mastering immortal arts was an entirely different challenge. Without guidance, learning immortal arts on one's own would be even more challenging than reaching the heavens.

Wang Xuanling was familiar with all the cultivators capable of performing the Army of Beans immortal art. If any of these cultivators had taught Chu Liang, there was no way he wouldn't have heard about it.

Where did Chu Liang learn this immortal art?

Di Nufeng had no clue about this either. Nevertheless, as she met Wang Xuanling's gaze, she smirked knowingly. Her expression seemed to imply, "See? I knew it all along."

Chapter 274: I Taught Him That

Seeing Di Nufeng's triumphant expression, Wang Xuanling looked annoyed.

He snorted coldly and said, "I wonder which one of our sect's members was so kind that they taught your student for you."

It was no wonder that Wang Xuanling was unhappy. His position as Mount Shu's grand peak master brought him considerable prestige among the thirty-six peak masters. He wasn't very close with the other peak masters, but at least, his relationships with them were a hundred times better than his relationship with Di Nufeng.

Army of Beans was no ordinary immortal art; only a handful of Mount Shu's elders had mastered it. Di Nufeng definitely couldn't have taught Chu Liang this immortal art. The only powerful person she was relatively close to was Daoist Yan, but Wang Xuanling knew that Army of Beans wasn't part of Daoist Yan's repertoire of immortal arts, as she focused more on swordsmanship.

That meant someone else, who was well aware of the bet Wang Xuanling had with Di Nufeng, had secretly helped teach Di Nufeng's disciple for her. It was clear that the person in question was helping Silver Sword Peak deal with Jade Sword Peak.

That's why when he made that remark, he'd raised his voice, ensuring that all the peak masters sitting in the spectator stands could hear him. Wang Xuanling had done it to show them a little of his displeasure, as there was nothing else he could do.

Right then, a faint voice rang out from above. "I did."

Wang Xuanling turned to look and found that it was a Guardian Elder sitting in a seat that was even higher up in the spectator stands. It was the Alchemy Master!

Wang Xuanling's stern face froze slightly.

The Alchemy Master taught him?

Then there's no issue.

Wang Xuanling was aware that the Alchemy Master had mastered the Army of Beans, but he hadn't considered at all that the Alchemy Master might be the one who taught Chu Liang. Everyone on Mount Shu knew that Silver Sword Peak and the Hall of Alchemy had gotten into a conflict a little while back. Di Nufeng had even stormed into the Hall of Alchemy, and in the end, the Alchemy Master had suffered a minor loss.

After that incident, the enmity that the Alchemy Master harbored toward Di Nufeng was even greater than Wang Xuanling's!

Nevertheless, now...

But why is the Alchemy Master siding with our enemy?

While Wang Xuanling was feeling stunned, the Alchemy Master actually felt a little surprised too.

This matter had actually all started when the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony ended. The Alchemy Master had approached Chu Liang, wanting to teach him the Dao of Alchemy. Chu Liang ultimately agreed to become an attendant disciple of the Hall of Alchemy, but it would have to wait until the Mount Shu Summit was over.

Chu Liang said he wanted to participate in the Mount Shu Summit, but he was still weak in combat. He hoped to use this time to learn more divine skills and spells, especially immortal arts.

The Alchemy Master then replied that he had an immortal art that he could teach Chu Liang, and Chu Liang was naturally overjoyed about that.

That immortal art was Army of Beans.

Of course, the Alchemy Master had his own reasons for teaching Army of Beans to Chu Liang. A cultivator could use Army of Beans to turn a handful of beans into puppets, but how much spiritual energy could beans have?

Unless the cultivator was an extremely powerful Eminent One, they would have to refine some special materials and turn them into puppets. For instance, the Alchemy Master often used a type of Puppet Pill.

The Alchemy Master wanted to make use of this opportunity to first have Chu Liang learn how to concoct that Puppet Pill. The purpose of that was to have Chu Liang spend more time understanding the Dao of Alchemy.

In any case, getting Chu Liang to learn how to concoct the pill was the main objective. As for the immortal art, the Alchemy Master simply didn't think Chu Liang would be able to master it.

Army of Beans was an immortal art derived from the Dao of Illusion and Reality, elusive and incredibly profound—so much so that even training for a year or two wouldn't be enough to master it. Yet, Chu Liang thought he could master it in just a month or two? It was simply wishful thinking.

The Alchemy Master imparted the immortal art to Chu Liang and gave him a bit of guidance on the key points. Then the Alchemy Master waited for Chu Liang to get stuck and return to him for advice, but Chu Liang never did. However, as a Guardian Elder, it wasn't appropriate for someone of his status to lower himself and take the initiative to follow up on a disciple, so he let things be.

Unexpectedly, the Alchemy Master ended up seeing Chu Liang use that very immortal art in the main competition today! Moreover, Chu Liang had already concocted four Puppet Pills, which meant he could control four puppets simultaneously!

No one else knew how much time Chu Liang had spent on learning how to concoct the pills and mastering the immortal art, so they might think that he had been hiding his skills for a very long time. The Alchemy Master was the only one who knew that Chu Liang had spent less than two months on the pills and the immortal art!

His astonishment quickly turned into delight.

The Alchemy Master said to the Conservation Master beside him, "Our sect has gained another peerless genius!"

...

"Heavenly Sword Seal... Dimension Compression... Army of Beans..." Elder Sun said in amazement. "Chu Liang is showing an astonishing level of power right from the start."

Chu Liang was at the middle stage of the Golden Core Realm. Additionally, he had mastered more than one immortal art. Just these two points were enough to place him among the best in the nine provinces!

"Wow," Elder Huang uttered in surprise. "This kid sure hid his abilities well! Pulling off a move like that so suddenly... I bet Xu Ziyang didn't see it coming."

"Heheh. Are you panicking?" Elder Sun asked.

"Not yet." Elder Huang shook his head, still feeling confident that he bet on the right person. "Chu Liang is unexpectedly powerful, but if he thinks he can defeat a fifth-realm genius at his level, he's just dreaming."

Right then, Xu Ziyang, in the middle of the enchanted formation, finally regained his composure. He had indeed gotten caught off guard by Chu Liang's explosive display of power.

Even a cultivator who had mastered two immortal arts would find it difficult to use them simultaneously. Chu Liang had used Dimension Compression twice and Army of Beans once. That was the same as if he'd used three immortal arts in the blink of an eye.

Using immortal arts consumed a frighteningly large amount of foundational qi. For the average cultivator at the middle stage of the Golden Core Realm, using three immortal arts in succession was enough to drain their Sea of Qi dry!

Yet, Chu Liang looked as composed as before; it didn't seem like he was even struggling at all. Was this the power of an ultimate-tier Golden Core?

Chu Liang had truly gone to great lengths to hide his abilities for so long... but that all came to an end here.

Surrounded by five Chu Liangs, Xu Ziyang was indeed under great pressure. If it were purely a matter of physical strength, he might not even be a match for Chu Liang, let alone against him and four of his puppets.

Nevertheless, would Xu Ziyang sit and wait for death?

Despite being surrounded by the five Chu Liangs, Xu Ziyang remained totally calm. He swiftly formed hand seals, and a split second later, he was encompassed by a shimmering light.

A second head suddenly sprouted from one of his shoulders! Then it was followed by another on his other shoulder! Simultaneously, two additional arms emerged from each of his shoulders, making his physique much larger and quite bizarre. This was the Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form!

It was a rather unseemly divine skill. Although it was not an immortal art, it was said that if a martial artist mastered this skill, it would be on par with an immortal art.

The forte of this divine skill was that it eliminated one of the cultivator's key vulnerabilities—their unguarded back. With three heads and six arms, the cultivator would have three lines of defense, allowing the cultivator to fend off enemies from all directions. The cultivator wouldn't need to be afraid of getting surrounded by enemies! The Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form was a brilliant choice for a cultivator when they were outnumbered!

The transformation happened quickly, much quicker than it took to describe.

At this moment, Chu Liang and his puppets had already launched their attacks on Xu Ziyang. They were punching and kicking him simultaneously!

Xu Ziyang's Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form easily fended off the four puppets, but Chu Liang didn't hold back. He threw a speedy punch, accompanied by a burst of wind. The force of his punch was on par with Ling Ao's in the previous match!

Boom!

Xu Ziyang managed to catch the punch with his hand. However, the force of the punch wasn't neutralized, and the collision produced a thunderous bang! It was like a meteor crashing into a towering mountain!

...

Below the stage...

Ling Ao, who had returned at some point, was standing quietly on the sidelines as he watched the match.

He realized that if Chu Liang had wanted to, he could have brought the battle to a swift end with his physical strength alone. Instead, he had held back and waited to give Xu Ziyang this huge "gift."

Ling Ao was the only one who could sense the presence of a True Dragon's aura on the stage. Chu Liang's destiny was what Ling Ao had been incredibly hungry for. For the first time, Ling Ao compared himself to Chu Liang and wondered if he was lacking anything else other than talent[1].

...

After receiving Chu Liang's punch, Xu Ziyang took two steps back.

Meanwhile, Chu Liang's right fist was trembling uncontrollably.

He had already been running the Secret Dragon Blood Technique on full blast since a while ago. His qi and blood had gotten so hot that flames of qi were rising from his body. The immense power that his punch contained was absolutely not something an ordinary person could withstand!

Nevertheless, Xu Ziyang wasn't physically weak. He had clearly put a lot of effort into the foundation of his cultivation. Moreover, he gained a new mystical ability after entering the first phase of the Realm of the Five Elements.

His geng metal spiritual qi spread through his whole body, and his skin turned bronze. He exuded a powerful divine light as his body became as hard as metal and stone! This was the Metallic Body of the fifth-realm!

Chu Liang was more powerful than Xu Ziyang, but Xu Ziyang's Metallic Body provided incredible defense and prevented Chu Liang's attacks from dealing any damage to Xu Ziyang. Now, neither one of them had the upper hand.

At this moment, Xu Ziyang stood tall with his three heads, six arms, and metallic body, looking as imposing as the God of War!

The five Chu Liangs surrounded Xu Ziyang. With Chu Liang's real body taking the lead and his puppets assisting him, they fought with reckless abandon at close quarters, unleashing a barrage of punches and kicks onto Xu Ziyang!

No one could have expected that this match would turn into such an intense fight focusing on hand-to-hand combat!

Boom, boom, boom—

Chu Liang hadn't learned any special punching techniques, but he had learned the Turbulent Stream Movement Art and the Brick Combat Technique from Yun Chaoxian, so he knew some martial arts principles.

Xu Ziyang, on the other hand, had obviously studied some martial arts before, specifically for such situations. He was pretty skilled!

In the blink of an eye, the two had exchanged hundreds of blows, each one landing a solid hit!

This was clearly a duel in a fighting tournament, yet it had the atmosphere of a brawl!

Boom, boom, boom!

The more they fought, the fiercer their attacks became. It got so bad that the stage beneath their feet actually cracked!

The spectators were stunned.

The only exception was a tall and well-built disciple of the Great Astral Sect. He was beaming with joy as he watched the match.

Pointing at the rather dashing and heroic Chu Liang, Yun Chaoxian said to Tang Shi beside him, "Did you see? I taught him all that."

Wham.

Chu Liang was hit with a punch at that moment.

Seeing that, Yun Chaoxian calmly added, "I taught him a movement art. I didn't teach him punching techniques."

Wham.

Chu Liang was hit with another punch.

That was when he realized something was off.

Chu Liang had grown bolder with his attacks as the fight went on, but Xu Ziyang's attacks had become fiercer as well.

His attacks are getting more powerful than mine! It hurt way too much when that rock-hard metallic body punched me in the face!

It seems like he's gradually implementing a martial arts technique!

That was indeed the case.

In the past, Xu Ziyang hadn't studied punching techniques much. However, having seen Chu Liang use Forbidden Ground to defeat Mu Yueting, Xu Ziyang realized he needed to be more diligent in his preparations for his match with Chu Liang.

Aware that Chu Liang had that move in his repertoire, Xu Ziyang had to find a way to defend against it. So, he learned and practiced an ancient punching technique before the match.

Xu Ziyang thought that with his fifth-realm Metallic Body and a special martial arts technique, he would be able to hold out for at least a while regardless of how strong Chu Liang was physically. He just needed to hang on until the effects of Forbidden Ground wore off.

Chu Liang had no intention of using the same trick twice though. He didn't even have the Forbidden Ground stored in his art-storing jade talisman.

So far, Chu Liang had carried out all of his plans successfully. He had caught Xu Ziyang off guard and closed the distance between them in an instant, engaging in close combat with the smallest possible gap between them.

Yet, Chu Liang hadn't expected that he wouldn't be able to defeat Xu Ziyang in hand-to-hand combat. If they continued fighting like this, Chu Liang would end up at a disadvantage.

Of course, this wasn't the result of Xu Ziyang's hastily learned martial arts technique but rather Chu Liang's lack of understanding of the fifth-realm's Metallic Body.

In the geng metal phase of the fifth realm, Xu Ziyang's foundational qi enhanced his corporeal body and made it unexpectedly powerful!

Under these circumstances, Chu Liang could only change to a different tactic.

When he noticed that the cracks in the stage were deepening, he leaped backward, creating some distance between him and Xu Ziyang.

Then Chu Liang stomped with one foot!

Thud!

The part of the stage beneath his foot broke into pieces instantly. He picked up one of the broken chunks of brick and felt its weight in his hand for a moment. Then Chu Liang revealed a satisfied smile.

The stage had been made with a very solid material. He was only holding a chunk of it, but it was still quite hefty. This was rather convenient for him.

Xu Ziyang watched puzzledly as Chu Liang and his four puppets all picked up half a broken brick.

Their fists should be just as hard as those bricks, so what's the point of using the brick as a weapon? Xu Ziyang wondered inwardly.

Nonetheless, Chu Liang didn't think the same way.

Holding the half-brick, his eyes lit up with confidence as he darted forward.

When I have a brick in my hand, the world is mine!

With his three heads, six arms, and metallic body, Xu Ziyang braced himself for the oncoming attack. A moment later, he heard a thud. The back of one of his heads had been ruthlessly smashed with a brick.

It seemed that Chu Liang's attacks had suddenly become more fluid.

Thump, thump, thump...

Chu Liang didn't give Xu Ziyang much time to react. He smashed Xu Ziyang's three heads with the brick eight times in just a short amount of time!

With a brick in hand, Chu Liang's combat power had increased by at least fifty percent!

The spectators wore bewildered expressions as they watched this scene. They had already seen many shocking things in this match thus far, but this scene was way too bizarre for them to watch calmly.

There was a person with three heads, six arms, and a metallic body. Despite resembling a deity, this person was being chased by a group of youths wielding broken bricks, swinging them wildly. It looked like a street brawl, with heads being smashed with loud thumps.

It appeared that Chu Liang had done some specialized training in this brick technique, but who would train with such a weapon...? Even if a brick could be called a weapon, wasn't it too strange to be used as one? What kind of fighting technique was this?

A certain burly man in the spectator stand grinned proudly. "This is the Brick Combat Technique. I taught him that too."

Chapter 275: A Fight that Shook the World (I)

As the fight grew more complex, the audience watched in stunned silence, their hearts in their throats. They didn't even dare to breathe.

On the other hand, Di Nufeng, who was on the spectator stand, was getting more and more riled up and active. She was constantly cheering and shouting loudly, "Hit him! Hit him!

"Do a right hook! Yes! Try to hit the midline of his body[1]!"

"Oh no, be careful!"

"Eh? Why are you picking up a brick? That thing...Oh, nice! Good job, my disciple! That's the right force! Do a left hook with the brick!"

As Wang Xuanling sat next to her, he was feeling increasingly annoyed. Yet, the act of shouting at her would just embarrass himself. At this moment, he wished he could just block his hearing.

It was almost as though Di Nufeng's blood boiled with a love for battle. The more physical the fights became, the happier she seemed.

Even Scholar Sun, who was watching from a spectator stand farther away, heard her shouts. "Haha! Ah Feng sounds so happy!"

"You don't seem to realize the seriousness of the situation, do you?" Elder Huang frowned.

"She is already a problem of the Mount Shu Sect. If she has a genius helping her..."

"Yikes." Scholar Sun gasped, feeling the bone-chilling air from the top of Mount Shu enter his lungs. "Given the current situation, it looks like Chu Liang might actually defeat Xu Ziyang..."

"If he becomes the head disciple and Ah Feng becomes the grand peak master..." Elder Huang gazed into the distance and continued, "I can't even imagine how the Mount Shu Sect would turn out in the future."

Xu Ziyang could never have imagined that, in the eyes of some, he already bore the heavy responsibility of safeguarding the future of the Mount Shu Sect.

As he tried to counter the sudden explosive power of Chu Liang's Brick Combat Technique, he found himself overwhelmed. Even with three heads, he couldn't withstand such repeated strikes.

He needed to change his tactics and moves now.

Compared to Chu Liang, his change of moves would have to be much more drastic.

Suddenly, this explosive force of qi unleashed from within him and he forced Chu Liang back with his six arms, fighting to create that brief opening.

Then, he formed seals with his six hands at the same time.

Bam...

A pale blue ripple spread from his body, as if some kind of shackle had been unlocked.

Then, a storm started brewing!

Whoosh!

In the blink of an eye, Xu Ziyang's body expanded in size by several times over, transforming into this colossal golden figure with the height of seven or eight zhang. Still, he maintained the Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form.

If his previous form resembled a celestial deity, he now resembled a real celestial soldier!

He used the Immortal Art: Form of the Heavens and the Earth!

The effect of this immortal art was straightforward: it simply resulted in a growth in size! Legend has it that when this art was mastered to the highest level, one could become enormous enough to reach the sky, filling the entire world!

At this moment, Xu Ziyang was merely seven or eight zhang[2]

Thankfully, a restriction was already in place on the arena. As his body grew larger, the arena expanded accordingly, preventing him from stepping into the audience area.

However, the distance between him and Chu Liang remained the same.

Chu Liang watched as Xu Ziyang transformed into a giant.

He didn't panic or run, knowing that escaping at this moment would be meaningless.

With his godlike Metallic Body, towering eight zhang high, just one step would allow Xu Ziyang to traverse the distance that would otherwise require several uses of Dimension Compression.

It was terrifying!

Some might think that such a giant figure would be clumsy, but this was not a struggle of the Form of Heaven and Earth. He remained agile as he strode forward.

Chu Liang wouldn't even consider the childish notion of a mouse playing tricks on an elephant.

A bigger size didn't necessarily mean better, but overall, it was countless times stronger than a smaller size.

With his six hands, Xu Ziyang could form the Heavenly Sword Seal while two of his hands performed the Form of the Heavens and the Earth. While he executed the Heavenly Sword Seal, his body expanded crazily in size!

The flying sword, which he had yet to summon back, ascended into the sky, transforming once again into a massive beam of light.

At this moment, the beam of sword light fit perfectly in the giant's hand.

With his enormous Metallic Body, Xu Ziyang brandished the colossal sword.

He swung the sword down with the might of an awe-inspiring divinity!

This strike was powerful enough to slash gods and devils!

...

When Xu Ziyang, in his divine form, unleashed his full power, Chu Liang stopped concealing his own abilities. With a single thought, he instantly fused a Dragon-Blood Crystal into his body.

Boom!

His cultivation level had already reached the peak of the middle stage of the Golden Core Realm. With the activation of the Dragon-Blood Crystal, his strength instantly elevated to the later stage of the Golden Core Realm!

This alone was astonishing. After all, many remembered when he achieved Core Formation. At that time, he was renowned for forming an ultimate-tier Golden Core.

How long had it been since then?

He had already reached the later stage of the Golden Core Realm?

What kind of speed was this?

However, in the face of the immense power unleashed by Xu Ziyang, even a cultivator at the later stage of the Golden Core Realm would not be strong enough to fight back.

The audience watched as Chu Liang formed a seal with his hands, and an ancient, profound formation diagram suddenly materialized out of thin air behind him.

Simultaneously, the four puppets under Chu Liang's control mimicked his actions, each one conjuring a formation diagram imbued with spiritual qi behind them.

Metal, wood, water, fire, earth...

The five formation diagrams materialized and immediately connected, forming lines in the air. As they converged, a huge vortex of spiritual qi formed, trapping Xu Ziyang's giant body within.

"It's the Five Elements Formation Diagram: Celestial Trap!" someone exclaimed.

Indeed. It was the Celestial Trap!

This was the reward they received after winning the Mountain God Memorial Ceremony and this formation was intended to be used by an entire team. However, after Chu Liang successfully mastered the Army of Beans, he discovered that each puppet possessed a set of comprehensive abilities and he could activate the formation diagram with these puppets.

The only challenge was that he had to divide his attention five ways to set up this formation while controlling his four puppets.

However, there were advantages. Since he controlled both himself and the other four, the execution of the formation diagram was as smooth and coordinated as moving his own arms and fingers. This made it far more synchronized than if five separate people were attempting it.

At the very least, the power Chu Liang could wield on his own was definitely much stronger than leading an entire team with Lin Bei and the others. This was why he had the confidence to challenge a disciple of a higher cultivation level.

Rumble—

The vortex grew stronger and stronger, gradually forming a barrier of spiritual qi that blotted out the sky and covered the sun. A chaotic mass created from the five elements transformed into a raging storm that swept everything away. Everything on the stage was engulfed, making it nearly impossible to see inside!

The audience in the spectator stands fell silent in shock time and again, their eyes wide as they watched the shadowy figure within the storm on the stage. No one had expected the fight to reach this level. Regardless of whether Chu Liang won or lost, his performance in this fight had conquered the hearts of every single spectator present.

As of now, they considered him a prodigy!

Every spectator knew that his name would undoubtedly stand out among the younger generation of the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten!

Boom—

Xu Ziyang swung the massive sword with both arms, slashing fiercely at the chaotic mass within the vortex of the Celestial Trap, causing the ground to shake and the mountains to tremble.

After a brief stalemate, he brought his other two pairs of arms forward, forming seals with each pair of hands and pushing them ahead.

Rumble!

It was as though he held a dark golden thunder dragon.

With a fierce motion, he launched the thunder into the chaotic mass, causing the vortex to rumble and destabilize.

Chu Liang had all his puppets unleash their foundational qi in unison with his own. He had already exerted himself to the utmost.

With a fierce shout, he pushed the Celestial Trap forward again, the chaos imbued with spiritual qi clashing against the eight-zhang Metallic Body.

To everyone's astonishment, this force of attack matched the power unleashed by Xu Ziyang!

The heavens shifted dramatically! The heaven and earth echoed with a mighty roar!

Finally, this fierce struggle reached a critical point and exploded violently. A terrifying chaotic storm spread out! If it weren't for the restrictions in place, everyone would have had to flee!

Rumble, rumble, rumble—

Chapter 276: A Fight that Shook the World (II)

"This is beyond my expectations," Scholar Sun remarked. "I can't believe Chu Liang has managed to fight Xu Ziyang to this point."

"Even if he loses, it will be an honorable defeat," Elder Huang responded.

"Oh?" Scholar Sun inquired. "You still believe Xu Ziyang will win?"

"Of course!" Elder Huang replied. "The gap between the fifth realm of cultivation and the fourth realm is significant. It might seem like they are evenly matched, but that's due to the complexity of the techniques Chu Liang has used. These techniques have allowed him to keep up. The fact that he has fought this far is already remarkable. However, he will eventually run out of foundational qi."

The giant Metallic Body collapsed while the enchanted formation shattered.

When the storm in the arena calmed and the dust settled, a long while had passed.

At this point, Xu Ziyang had returned to his original form.

Even so, he stood on the stage with his usual straight posture. Although his expression remained calm, a hint of surprise was evident in his gaze.

The simultaneous activation of the Three-Headed and Six-Armed Form and the Form of the Heavens and the Earth, as well as the fifth-realm Metallic Body, exhausted a great amount of foundational qi. Thus, he couldn't sustain this form for too long.

But upon further contemplation, he realized that Chu Liang's consumption of foundational qi was even greater. Yet, even after using a series of immortal arts, creating the puppets through the Army of Beans, and utilizing the Five Elements Formation Diagram: Celestial Trap...

A fourth-realm cultivator wouldn't have this insane amount of foundational qi in their Sea of Qi.

Nevertheless, when Chu Liang reappeared, he still looked energetic. He was smiling as well.

The four puppets had already disappeared. He stood there quietly and said to Xu Ziyang, "Senior Brother, the execution of your divine techniques indeed unleashed great power. I really need to ask you for advice after this fight. Would that be okay?"

Xu Ziyang stared at him.

He pondered for a moment and said, "You are trying to buy time by talking, right? For someone at the fourth realm, the amount of foundational qi in your Sea of Qi is very impressive, but there is still a limit. No matter how strong you are, you must have exhausted all your qi by now."

Xu Ziyang immediately exposed Chu Liang's little trick.

No matter how powerful his ultimate-tier Golden Core was, it wouldn't change the fact that he was still at the fourth realm of cultivation. There was still a limit to how much his Sea of Qi could expand. Even if his qi replenished quickly, he still needed time.

If it was a normal amount of exhaustion, he could quickly replenish all the qi. However, the successive use of immortal arts resulted in continuous exhaustion at a terrifying level.

Even if his Large-Headed Doll toiled to the extreme, it was impossible for it to replenish all his qi instantly.

On the other hand, Xu Ziyang, being at the fifth realm of cultivation, had a much bigger Sea of Qi than a fourth-realm cultivator as well as a faster replenishing speed. At this moment, he was at a much better state than Chu Liang.

And now, Chu Liang just wanted Xu Ziyang to reply so that he could buy more time.

Obviously, Xu Ziyang saw through his scheme and refused to give him this opportunity.

Whoosh!

A beam of sword light slashed across the arena.

Xu Ziyang's flying sword, Force Slayer, was a renowned ancient sword with a distinguished battle record. It had accompanied several esteemed senior prodigies in the past.

Immediately, the beam of sword light multiplied into thousands, and the powerful sword qi instantly enveloped Chu Liang.

He used the Ten Thousand Swords Seal!

At this point in their fight, Xu Ziyang's condition wasn't great either, and his sword light was much weaker than before.

However, this sword light was strong enough to deal with Chu Liang, who was in an even worse state.

Yet, Chu Liang countered with the same level of force. He lifted his Dustless Sword and drew several talismanic scripts, controlling his sword light to fly towards Xu Ziyang!

Instead of setting up a defense, he chose to attack Xu Ziyang!

An exchange of attacks!

This was beyond Xu Ziyang's expectations.

As the Talismanic Sword Seal approached, he swiftly dodged and narrowly avoided the attack!

Rumble!

Simultaneously, Xu Ziyang's sword light advanced toward Chu Liang. At this moment, Chu Liang's eyes gleamed as he vanished in a flash!

Swish!

He used the Dimension Compression again!

With the same old tactic, Chu Liang broke through the barrier of sword qi, dashing toward Xu Ziyang!

Even after such intense exertion, he could instantly execute an immortal art!

At this point, Xu Ziyang found himself continuously astonished by the events of the fight.

Xu Ziyang had just dodged the Talismanic Sword Seal.

Before he could regain his balance, he twisted his fingers, merging the ten thousand sword lights into a single beam, directing it to chase after Chu Liang from behind!

When Chu Liang heard the whistling sound behind him, he didn't react at all. He still flew toward Xu Ziyang.

At this point, both were at their limits, but their fighting spirits burned brighter than ever.

Neither of them wanted to lose!

Boom!

In the blink of an eye, Chu Liang appeared before Xu Ziyang and punched him in the face.

Bam!

At that moment, Xu Ziyang had not activated the protection of his Metallic Body, and Chu Liang's punch immediately sent him flying.

Chu Liang, disregarding his own safety, was quickly caught by the Force Slayer!

Slash!

He only had enough time to dodge slightly when the flying sword slashed his right rib from behind, causing blood to splatter.

This exchange of injuries was clearly a loss for Chu Liang.

While everyone thought that Chu Liang was at the end of his rope, he suddenly smirked.

Xu Ziyang had just crashed on the ground after being hurled into the air.

When he saw the smirk on Chu Liang's face, an ominous feeling gripped his heart.

The blood that splattered from Chu Liang's injuries was imbued with his red and golden spiritual energy. As he moved the tip of his finger, the splatter of blood transformed into a golden arrow.

Swish!

Suddenly, Xu Ziyang felt his chest being pierced!

When Luo Yao and Pushan, who was at the spectator stand saw this, their eyes flickered.

When they first encountered this attack, they were fighting the Fiend of the Dark King Sect. At that time, the Fiend used the Great Blood-Refinement Art, which caused them a great deal of trouble.

They hadn't expected Chu Liang to master this divine technique.

After returning home from the Southern Bastion Mountain, Chu Liang had persisted in learning the Blood-Refinement Technique: Divine Light.

With the Secret Dragon Blood Technique enhancing the spiritual energy in his blood, he had achieved minor success in the learning of this Great Blood-Refinement Technique.

At this stage, where both he and Xu Ziyang had exhausted their means, this technique was finally put to use, helping him achieve success.

Plop!

Xu Ziyang's body fell backward, and Chu Liang also collapsed.

Both of them fell to the ground.

...

"What is going on?" The audience was baffled. "Who won?"

"It was Chu Liang who won," Scholar Sun said with a smile as he sat in the spectator stand. "Chu Liang was able to dodge, preventing Xu Ziyang's attack from hitting his vital points. However, Chu Liang's blood arrow intentionally avoided Xu Ziyang's vital points. If this had been a fight to the death, Xu Ziyang would have been killed."

"Haaa," Elder Huang sighed deeply.

The entire audience stared in shock. The disciples of the Hall of Alchemy didn't even know whether they should rush forward to help.

Then, they saw someone staggering to their feet.

To their surprise, it was Chu Liang!

The wound on his rib had already stopped bleeding, yet despite his unsteady steps, there was no sign that he had just suffered a serious injury!

What kind of terrifying recovery speed is this?

Because Chu Liang had been fighting with Xu Ziyang, who was of a higher cultivation level, they hadn't realized how physically strong Chu Liang was until this very moment.

Is this the body of a human?

Chu Liang approached Xu Ziyang, leaning forward with a smile on his face, and offered his hand.

Xu Ziyang weakly raised his arm and took hold of Chu Liang's hand.

Clap!

As Chu Liang pulled him up, the setting sun cast a golden glow over the arena. Xu Ziyang looked up and suddenly smiled gently.

Chapter 277: I Am Not Telling You

"Mount Shu..."

"For some reason, ever since the Mount Shu Sect lost the Demon-Suppressing Pagoda, they have been at a disadvantage in the competition for resources, and the sect's strength has been declining. If it were another sect, they would have fallen into such a state of decline that they would lose their title as one of the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten. This is what should happen according to Heavenly Law.

"However, every dozen years or so, a few prodigies capable of restoring the sect's glory appear in Mount Shu. These prodigies carry the banner of Mount Shu as if defying fate and changing destiny."

As Scholar Sun watched the young men standing on the stage, he suddenly remarked emotionally, speaking at a slow pace.

Scholar Sun wanted to express that this was what generally happened in the world of immortality cultivators. Regardless of how prosperous the sect once was, it would inevitably fade away from the historical stage once its prosperity waned.

This wasn't something to feel sad about as this had always been the way of things since ancient times. There were never any immortal sects that would remain standing forever. The story of the Heavenly Star Divine Cult would be the best example.

Despite experiencing several thousand years of prosperity and enduring severe damage, the Mount Shu Sect should have faded into obscurity. Yet, there were always one or two individuals standing at the foot of the stage, propelling Mount Shu back onto the platform during crucial moments, adamantly refusing to let it exit the spotlight.

"Yes. Ah Feng, Daoist Yan, and that man appeared sixty years ago. And now, we have Jiang Yuebai, Xu Ziyang, and Chu Liang..." Elder Huang said, nodding emotionally. "The similarity is striking."

"It's like the sparks that linger long after the fire has died down. They may seem like mere embers, but even the slightest breeze can reignite their brilliance," Scholar Sun added.

"This must be the spirit of a sect being passed on to the next generation," Elder Huang said, pondering. "A prodigy can guard a sect for a few hundred years, and a legendary artifact can safeguard the sect for several thousand. However, only the spirit of the sect can persist and be passed on to the next generation for all eternity."

"The spirit of the Mount Shu Sect..." Scholar Sun muttered.

"Wang Xuanling! Where's Wang Xuanling? Talk to me!"

"..."

As the two elders were deep in contemplation, a loud, arrogant shout from the other side abruptly silenced them.

Di Nufeng tilted her head and looked at Wang Xuanling.

"Xiao Wang, you don't need to worry," she said with her chin lifted. "When I become the grand peak master, I won't be targeting you."

Wang Xuanling's expression darkened, and it took him a moment to respond.

"There's no need for arrogance, Di Nufeng," he said. "Our original bet was that your disciple would become the head disciple. Only then would I consider passing the position of grand peak master to you."

As Di Nufeng reflected on their agreement, she realized that Wang Xuanling was right.

During that heated argument when she made the bet with Wang Xuanling, he had been concerned that if the wager was based on a direct fight between their disciples, Silver Sword Peak disciple might be eliminated before ever facing his own.

As a result, the bet was made on their disciple securing the position of head disciple.

Although Chu Liang had defeated Xu Ziyang, Wang Xuanling had merely lost the chance of winning; it wasn't an actual defeat yet.

The act of thinking ahead back then ended up giving Wang Xuanling a lifeline.

"Hmph," Di Nufeng grunted, not going back on her promise as she nodded. "Let's wait and see."

After a pause, she turned to Daoist Yan beside her. "But whether my disciple or Yan Zi's disciple wins, it's all the same. Our peaks are like one family."

Daoist Yan's pupils visibly dilated, and her lips twitched slightly, as if the words "Who said we are like family?" were at the tip of her tongue.

However, she still held back, turning to the side, pretending as though she had not heard Di Nufeng.

Feeling stifled sitting in the spectator stand, Wang Xuanling flew up and landed beside the stage.

At that moment, Xu Ziyang, freshly bandaged by the disciples from the Hall of Alchemy, descended the stage with a feeble gait.

Upon catching sight of Wang Xuanling's darkened expression, he lowered his head slightly, maintaining his composure, and said, "Esteemed Teacher, I couldn't win."

"How are your injuries?" Wang Xuanling asked.

"They are just external injuries, nothing severe," Xu Ziyang answered.

"Good," Wang Xuanling said without a tone of harshness. "This defeat doesn't mean anything. Don't take it to heart."

"I know..." Xu Ziyang said as he looked up at his teacher. But he noticed an expression of unhappiness on Wang Xuanling's face, even a hint of feeling wronged. It was the first time he had seen this type of expression on his teacher's face.

Xu Ziyang's lips trembled. He didn't know whether he should say it.

"Esteemed teacher, you are the one who shouldn't take it to heart," Xu Ziyang said inwardly.

...

This defeat did not evoke a strong sense of failure in Xu Ziyang. Since he began following this Dao, he had never been defeated before. He was considered the talent for immortal cultivation, destined to lead Mount Shu to prosperity.

Whether it was the pressure from the world or self-imposed, Xu Ziyang felt immense stress. He constantly felt as though there was a heavy weight on his shoulders.

As he lay collapsed on the floor earlier, a scene from his childhood flashed through Xu Ziyang's mind.

During that time, he lay on the grass on the hill near the back area of the Jade Sword Peak, watching the clouds float in the sky, feeling as though he was one of the clouds.

That was the only time he had ever felt such an emotion.

As Xu Ziyang's extraordinary cultivation aptitude became evident, both his teacher and the sect started having higher expectations of him. Sometimes, these expectations felt like a force heavier than any command.

It seemed as though his destiny was to revive the glory of Mount Shu.

As he collapsed on the ground, there was a sense of relief. Xu Ziyang realized that he wouldn't have to be the one to carry the banner for Mount Shu. There were others who could do it, and perhaps even do it better than him.

Xu Ziyang always had a good impression of Chu Liang.

Xu Ziyang was a very righteous person, and he never disliked Chu Liang's way of doing things. In fact, he admired Chu Liang's creativity and unrestrained ideas.

Losing to an opponent like this didn't seem that hard to accept.

Of course, it was necessary to remain brave after feelings of shame.

He resolved to work even harder at cultivating. While he hadn't lost in terms of cultivation level, he had learned a valuable lesson from this fight: never underestimate any opponent.

Even when a lion hunts a rabbit, it would use its full strength.

Throughout the entire fight, he was at a disadvantage because he had underestimated Chu Liang, which allowed Chu Liang to deliver a series of successive attacks. In the end, he wasn't able to recover in time. In reality, he still had techniques he had yet to reveal.

It wasn't that he didn't want to use them; he simply never got the chance. Once the fight started, Chu Liang never gave him an opening.

During this fight on the stage, Chu Liang intentionally avoided attacking his vital points. But if it were elsewhere in the nine provinces, who would show him mercy?

These were things he needed to reflect on. Without much thought, he continued walking with a straight posture, joining the group of Jade Sword Peak members.

This was the last fight of the day. The crowd dispersed one by one, leaving only the disciples of the Jade Sword Peak waiting there, staring at him with expressions of concern.

All the disciples of the Jade Sword Peak knew that their eldest senior brother had never lost before. Today, he was defeated by someone of a lower cultivation level, and everyone was worried.

As Xu Ziyang approached, he appeared nonchalant as he spoke, "Let's go."

"Ah?" Xu Ziqing froze. "Where to?"

"The Jade Sword Peak of course," Xu Ziyang responded, patting her on the head. He then added, "I want to eat hotpot."

"Hehe." Seeing that her brother wasn't feeling devastated by the loss, Ziqing smiled and said, "Yay!"

The two walked side by side, surrounded by a big group of their peers from the Jade Sword Peak, all heading back together.

As they walked, Xu Ziyang leaned over to Xu Ziqing and whispered, "Chu Liang is a good guy. If you like him, I approve of this relationship."

"Eh?" Hearing this, Xu Ziqing raised her eyebrows and said, "What are you talking about?"

Her reaction surprised Xu Ziyang, leaving him stunned as he asked, "Don't you...?"

"How could I possibly like Senior Brother Chu? He already has a partner," Xu Ziqing said confidently.

"Is that so?" Xu Ziyang asked. "Who is it?"

"Heh," Xu Ziqing chuckled, a hint of smugness in her voice. "I know who it is, but I am not telling you."

Chapter 278: A Challenging Operation?

The match had ended, but it left the spectators a lot to think about. In fact, they might even talk about it again after a long time had passed.

As the visiting members of the sects in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten discussed the match, they expressed it was a great pity that Xu Ziyang had lost. However, Monk Pushan was smiling and shaking his head.

"What's all this talk about the weak defeating the strong? Do you think that Chu Liang showed everything he had?" Monk Pushan wore an enigmatic expression. "Far from it."

"What?" Everyone who heard him looked at him. "Does he still have other tricks up his sleeve?"

Monk Pushan just laughed without speaking. "Hehe."

Back then, he and Luo Yao had witnessed how Chu Liang, who had been at the third realm, had killed fifth-realm cultivators like they were ants and had probably been capable of challenging even sixth-realm cultivators as well.

In comparison, what Chu Liang had shown so far at the Mount Shu Summit was at the level of an average genius.

Nevertheless, Monk Pushan and Luo Yao knew that Chu Liang had likely used some special divine skill or enchanted tool to kill the fifth-realm cultivators. They concluded it was probably that flying sword with the intense murderous intent.

Considering that Chu Liang had been able to use it to defeat cultivators two levels higher than him, it seemed certain that some stringent requirements had to be fulfilled in order to use that special flying sword. It was impossible that such a powerful weapon could be used casually.

Nonetheless, Chu Liang wouldn't reveal the details, and they wouldn't ask, so they just kept these speculations to themselves. Of course, that meant they wouldn't leak his secret and publicize it either.

However, by leaving the details of the secret unsaid, it left the other spectators wondering endlessly about it. They made countless guesses as to what other terrifying hidden powers Chu Liang might possess.

Previously, Chu Liang had been a bit famous in the Mount Shu Sect, but he had been fairly unknown in the world of immortality cultivators. That would change after today's match; he was bound to become famous across the world.

After all, Chu Liang was now one of the top two disciples of a sect in the Divine Nine. No one would dare to underestimate him anymore!

In addition to the enigmatic Monk Pushan, there was a robust and handsome man walking around, acting a little strange.

He asked everyone he met, "Friend, have you heard of the Brick Combat Technique?"

Of course, those who were asked that question felt baffled by it.

Then the man would go on to explain the martial arts technique that Chu Liang had used in the duel.

When the other party was confused by the explanation, the muscular man would then follow up with, "I created it."

"..."

Chu Liang did not hear any of those discussions about him, nor did he linger on Heaven-Reaching Peak. Instead, he returned straight to his cabin on Silver Sword Peak.

Just like how losing the match hadn't given Xu Ziyang a great sense of defeat, winning it didn't bring Chu Liang much joy either. Through this match, Chu Liang gained a deep understanding of the gap between the fourth and fifth realms.

If they were to fight another ten matches, it was very likely that Xu Ziyang wouldn't lose a single one of them. While it was true that Chu Liang's victory wouldn't be repeated, it didn't matter, since he didn't need to fight Xu Ziyang again.

However, Jiang Yuebai definitely was not inferior to Xu Ziyang. Jiang Yuebai had her fifth-realm Transcendent Spirit, and it was still unknown as to how many divine abilities she possessed. Moreover, it was also a mystery as to how many immortal arts she had mastered. Yet, she knew about all of Chu Liang's skills.

The gap between cultivation levels might be unsurmountable, but that wasn't the case with divine abilities and skills. Since Jiang Yuebai had seen Chu Liang's divine skills, she would be able to find ways to counter them. In a way, Chu Liang was now standing in Xu Ziyang's position.

Defeating Jiang Yuebai wasn't as important to Chu Liang as defeating Xu Ziyang, but no one in Chu Liang's current position would want to lose.

Besides recovering and preparing for the finals the day after tomorrow, there was something else Chu Liang needed to deal with right now.

When he, Luo Yao, and Pushan left the Ghost-Face Chamber previously, the chamber master had given each of them a jade talisman for communication, and those jade talismans had just lit up.

Luo Yao and Pushan met up with Chu Liang on Silver Sword Peak. The trio, who were old partners by now, didn't say much. They flew out of Mount Shu and found a secluded place to change clothes.

Then the three mysterious figures set off together.

...

This time, the meeting place was close to Mount Shu, so it didn't take long for the trio to get there.

The scar-faced chamber master of the Ghost-Face Chamber stood high on a hillside. There were around twenty to thirty black-clad people in front of him, filling the air with dense yin qi. This seemed to be the Ghost-Face Chamber's entire force.

"Brothers, the time for us to achieve great deeds has arrived," Ghost Face said darkly, inciting his subordinates to take action. "If we do well with this, our sect's position within the diabolical sects will be solidified and made as immovable as a boulder! And we, who participated in this operation, will all become famous!"

As Ghost Face spoke, there were people distributing storage jade talismans.

Chu Liang received one too. He scanned it with his divine sense and found that it stored five hundred Vermilion-Bird coins and a sword-shaped token that contained spiritual energy.

Huh?

Chu Liang recognized the sword-shaped token.

Every cultivator that wanted to attend the Mount Shu Summit had to report to the Foreign Affairs Hall on Mount Shu first. The Foreign Affairs Hall would then issue them this sword-shaped token, which was treated as a visitor's pass on Mount Shu. This was necessary because, like all immortal sects, the Mount Shu Sect didn't usually allow many outsiders to freely wander around their sect.

"First, everyone will receive five hundred Vermilion-Bird coins. After we've completed the operation, you'll get another five hundred. There will also be additional rewards for those who get some kills. Everyone can rest assured. We, the Dark King Sect, will properly reward those who make great contributions."

There wasn't much talk of loyalty in diabolical sects, so Ghost Face was relying entirely on the potential benefits to lure these people into participating in the operation.

Before Chu Liang could express his curiosity, someone asked, "Chamber Master, what exactly is this operation that such great rewards are being offered?"

"Of course, it's a rather challenging operation," Ghost Face answered. "The Mount Shu Summit's final match is being held the day after tomorrow. The Dark King Sect wants us to infiltrate Mount Shu on that day. You just need to hold this visitor's pass and go to the venue of the final match. That's the day when Mount Shu gets the most crowded, so no one will pay any attention to you."

"You want us to infiltrate Mount Shu?" someone else asked, feeling hesitant about participating in the operation.

For these diabolical cultivators, they were fine with having to lurk in the shadows in their daily life. However, this operation required them, diabolical cultivators who had always been in hiding, to run through the gates of one of the immortal sects in the Divine Nine...

Knowing that, any diabolical cultivator would hesitate to participate in this operation.

Chu Liang was puzzled as well. They want to infiltrate Mount Shu...?

Great. Now, the problem isn't whether there's a lot of work or if the job is far from home. Instead, they're going to be working in my home??

This is not good.

Does the Dark King Sect want to make use of the Mount Shu Summit and use this chance to stir up some trouble? Could it be retaliation for that time when three major immortal sects besieged the White-Bone Hall?

No, the White-Bone Hall had been planning this ever since they increased their forces. They've always talked about making a big move. This is probably what they were talking about!

"What's wrong with Mount Shu? Are you scared?" Ghost Face gritted his teeth angrily and pointed at his scarred face. "A crazy woman from Mount Shu gave me this scar... Back then, she used the

Samadhi True Fire to kill some disciples of our sect. I managed to get away, but I didn't get far enough. I got singed by the flames and ended up like this. But do you think I'm afraid? I'm not afraid!

"I've waited thirty years for this. I want to tell those righteous cultivators that I will get payback for everything they've done to me, interest included!

"Since you've joined a diabolical sect, that means you've embarked on a path that goes against the laws of the heavens—a path filled with mountains of corpses and seas of blood. If anyone is afraid to go, put down the jade talisman and leave! I won't blame you!"

Ghost Face's subordinates felt moved by his impassioned speech.

Obviously, they hadn't joined a diabolical sect because they held the beliefs of the diabolical path; it had been purely for their own interests. If it wasn't because the righteous path couldn't offer the same benefits, who would be willing to live a life in the shadows?

Just as Ghost Face had said, the day they joined the Dark King Sect, they knew they were going against the laws of the heavens. Their hesitation was just them weighing the pros and the cons, which was a pretty normal thing for diabolical cultivators to do.

While the diabolical cultivators were hesitating, Chu Liang stepped forward and said, "All we have to do right now is infiltrate Mount Shu. It's not like Mount Shu is the underworld. What's so difficult about this? Chamber Master, you have my support!"

The rest of the trio followed suit.

"Yeah, mine too!"

"Mm."

Seeing the three new members supporting him enthusiastically, Ghost Face laughed heartily, "Haha! If only all the disciples of our sect were like you, we wouldn't have to worry about failing to make big achievements!"

Chapter 279: Back off!

The master of the Ghost-Face Chamber showered the three new members with praise. Their enthusiasm also inspired the fellow members of the chamber, encouraging everyone to participate as well.

Upon their return to Mount Shu, Chu Liang promptly informed the higher-ups about the new discovery. While other matters could be delayed, this was deemed too important to postpone.

The higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect attached great importance to this matter and immediately began a series of discussions. They instructed Chu Liang to remain calm and not divulge any information.

This was, of course, easy to do. The three of them were veteran undercover agents, so they naturally possessed the basic professionalism required.

Having reported the new discovery, Chu Liang was no longer worried. The higher-ups of the Mount Shu Sect would certainly start preparations. If the Dark King Sect dared to infiltrate Mount Shu to do harm, they would never make it out.

The next day arrived, bringing with it another day of competitions.

With the final match of the main competition of the Mount Shu Summit scheduled for tomorrow, the finals of the three recreational competitions were all arranged for today, making the schedule quite tight.

In the early morning, Chu Liang took his seat at the venue for the final competition of the Mahjong Tournament.

There were four people at the table: the innocent-looking Liu Xiaoyu'er, the smiling Chu Liang, a square-faced young man—surprisingly, Yuan Zhuo, a Senior Brother from the Hall of Conservation whom Chu Liang had met before—and a middle-aged man in a wheelchair.

This middle-aged man had a clear and thin face, exuding an air of elegance. With fair and clear skin and a bright gaze, he appeared to possess considerable wisdom.

His name was Tantai Jing. As the peak master of Rain Cedar Peak, he was renowned as a strategist among the peak masters.

Some believed that if not for a serious injury in his early years, which dashed his chances of attaining Dao, Tantai Jing would have had boundless prospects. In terms of intelligence, he might have been more suitable as the grand peak master than Wang Xuanling.

The finalists of the Mahjong Tournament were not simply adept at playing Mahjong. This final game served as a stage for those with extraordinary mental and spiritual prowess.

As Chu Liang faced these two opponents, he didn't dare to claim any advantage for himself. Naturally, he didn't expect to win either.

Of course, he didn't expect to win either.

Tantai Jing smiled faintly and jokingly remarked, "It's quite rare to have two young people from the Silver Sword Peak in the final game. You two better not discard the tiles the other needs when it's your turn."

Chu Liang smiled back and replied, "Why would we?"

On the other hand, Liu Xiaoyu'er looked puzzled as she muttered, "Discard tile?"

...

The Mahjong Tournament ended peacefully.

The game ended quicker than expected, with the result being obvious. This kind of game, akin to "arranging small blocks and then knocking them down," was still too simple for Liu Xiaoyu'er, a lesser demon with normal intelligence.

Before noon, Chu Liang had already arrived at the venue for the Flying-Sword Race. Unlike the group match, the race track for the final was extremely complicated.

Obviously, the finalists were much stronger, being the top players selected from each group.

The small team from Silver Sword Peak also came to cheer for Chu Liang. In addition, many spectators from both inside and outside Mount Shu came to watch. There were far more spectators than at the Mahjong Tournament.

In previous years, the Mahjong Tournament on Mount Shu, while not the most popular recreational event of the Mount Shu Summit, would never have had such a small audience.

This year, the games at the Mahjong Tournament were simply not entertaining to watch. The audience weren't the only ones feeling bored. If it weren't for the fact that four people were absolutely required to start the game, Chu Liang wouldn't even have wanted to be there.

The Flying-Sword Race was different. The thrilling race in the clouds was absolutely exhilarating.

Because he participated in the Mahjong Tournament, Chu Liang arrived relatively late. Many of the participants had already arrived. There were new faces as well as familiar ones, and they all looked like they were not easy to get along with.

Wen Yulong came up and asked, "How is it? Did you practice after going back last time?"

He seemed even more nervous than Chu Liang.

"I tried a few times, it's very difficult," Chu Liang admitted, referring to the technique of flying sword drifting. "Because time was tight, I didn't practice it again."

After losing to Chen Zheng last time, Chu Liang did study the technique of flying sword drifting around corners. However, the difficulty was too great, and he didn't have much time to delve into it, so he still didn't dare to say he had mastered it.

There was nothing he could do. With so many events he needed to participate, he obviously needed to prioritize the main competition.

"Haaaa," Wen Yulong sighed and said, "The fact that you managed to make it to the final despite having never tried flying-sword racing before is already very impressive. You shouldn't be too harsh on yourself with the results."

There were a total of ten finalists, all standing at the same cliff as before, with the clouds shrouding the pathway ahead.

This time, the race track was longer. In addition to simple turns, there was also a section of eighteen loops around the Divine Truncheon Peak. Moreover, on the way to the Azure Falling Peak, there would be random showers of sword qi.

With the length and complexity of the track greatly increased, the challenge was naturally greater. Only in this way could the true strength of the competitors be determined.

"This is the final of the Flying-Sword Race! Take off!"

With the command from the supervising elder, the flag waved, and ten sword lights instantly streaked across the sky!

"Wow!"

The shouts from the valley resounded through the sky!

With his hands strapped with the Hands Of the Azure Dragon and his ankle strapped to the flying sword with his Feet of the Azure Dragon, he controlled the Dustless Sword to fly to its maximum speed, instantly taking the lead at the forefront!

In terms of cultivation energy, he was the first among all the participants.

Among the ten participants, four of them were at the Golden Core Realm. Of the four cultivators at the Golden Core Realm, two were at the middle stage.

Considering that having an ultimate-tier Golden Core would amplify his cultivation energy, it wasn't wrong to say that Chu Liang was ranked first in terms of cultivation energy.

However, being first in cultivation energy did not guarantee being first in speed. Chu Liang had learned this lesson last time, so he didn't dare to be arrogant. He fully accelerated during the first straight where he had the advantage, hoping to gain as much of a lead as possible.

However, everyone flying in a straight line was extremely fast, so the gap was not huge. Soon, he arrived at the first turn.

Chu Liang took a deep breath. He pressed the tip of the sword down and swung the sword fiercely.

Swoosh, swoosh, swoosh—

The Dustless Sword traced a graceful crescent arc, smoothly bypassing the mountain peak. However, the turn was still too wide, and in the blink of an eye, four or five sword lights overtook him on the tighter inner loop!

It all happened in an instant!

His speed was just not quite enough.

Chu Liang maintained a steady expression. As he returned to a straight path, he activated both Golden Cores to their maximum speed, trying to make up for the slight lag from the previous turn. Nevertheless, he no longer had the lead.

Five sword lights advanced side by side, creating a curtain of colorful light ahead of him, like a rainbow bridge to the other side.

"Go, Chu Liang!" Lin Bei shouted loudly from the sidelines.

Wen Yulong remarked, "Senior Brother Chu's turning skills are still lacking. It looks like it will be difficult for him to win this time. Still, there's a chance he will make it to the top five."

Lin Bei said, "Chu Liang has participated in so many competitions, and consistently performing at a top level in each one is already extremely difficult."

Wen Yulong nodded, "Indeed."

If one were to look at Chu Liang, they might be deceived by his gentle and handsome appearance and think that he wouldn't show any aggression.

He wasn't someone who would stand out too much. However, if one were to check his past records in fights and competitions, they would feel this sense of fear.

Even if he couldn't win every event, he was still...

It was another abrupt turn in the sky!

"Wait a minute..." Wen Yulong's voice suddenly trailed off. "Seems like there's a change?"

...

Swoosh! Swish! Swoosh!

As another turn approached, Chu Liang did not fall behind. Instead, he lowered the tip of his sword, leaned forward, and drew an arc on the inside track, keeping pace with the several sword lights.

However, if they were neck and neck on the curve, once they reached the straight track, they would fall behind Chu Liang.

The two Golden Cores spun rapidly, generating foundational qi that filled Chu Liang's Sea of Qi to the maximum. This allowed him to exert explosive power with every acceleration!

Rumble!

As the straight track tore through the clouds, a deafening rumble filled the air!

In the blink of an eye, four turns had already passed, and at each curve, Chu Liang kept up with the pace. However, on the straight track, he widened the gap once more.

In just a moment, he had regained a significant lead!

In a Flying-Sword Race, participants would focus solely on their own flying sword. After all, this competition demanded complete concentration, as they used their divine intent to control their flying sword.

However, he was going so fast that everyone else was left behind. Every participant could see Chu Liang's back!

It's him again... They all thought.

Chu Liang had been standing out on Mount Shu in recent days, actively participating in every event of the Mount Shu Summit.

This had left some of the disciples specializing in flying-sword racing feeling a bit displeased.

The disciples of the Mount Shu Sect who practiced flying-sword racing had a tight-knit community and took great pride in their skills.

Even those with exceptional cultivation found it challenging to beat them in races, as this was their specialization, and they had dedicated so much effort to it.

All of them shared this thought: I don't care if you are a top cultivator of the Mount Shu Sect! Back off!

But at this moment, Chu Liang, who had never been part of this community, suddenly appeared and trampled on their pride. This sparked a sense of resentment and hostility towards Chu Liang among all of them.

They accelerated and tried to catch up, but to no avail.

Yet, everyone was thinking the same thing.

Even if you are in the lead, it's just temporary as the eighteen loops are right ahead!

Chapter 280: What Champion Are You?

The Divine Truncheon Peak of Mount Shu resembled a pitch-black, straight steel truncheon, with winding mountain roads spiraling around it. The cloudy racetrack traced these winding roads, forming eighteen intricate loops.

This was entirely different from the simple curve earlier; this section was the most challenging part of the entire racetrack!

Whoosh—

As Chu Liang dashed forward on the Dustless Sword, the competitors behind him eagerly waited to see him become the laughingstock.

In this section of the racetrack with eighteen loops, attempting to drift on a flying sword would lead to losing control after a few consecutive turns and being thrown off the track with their swords. In previous Flying-Sword Races, even experts often found themselves thrown off from this part of the track.

Most experts would fail after continuously drifting at full speed. In fact, even the top experts wouldn't be able to drift ten loops or complete over eighteen loops without reducing speed.

Only the sword god from the Falling Waterfowl Peak could achieve such a feat.

Whoosh—

In the blink of an eye, Chu Liang had already drifted through the third loop without slowing down.

The competitors behind him had all slowed down somewhat to ensure a stable passage, instantly widening Chu Liang's lead.

But no one was worried.

The faster he flew now, the farther his flying sword would be thrown off from this track later!

They waited, anticipating the turn at which his sword would be flung off the track.

The swordlight moved faster than their brains could process. As complex emotions crossed their minds, the Dustless Sword had already drifted through the tenth loop!

I can't believe he is this powerful... This thought of surprise appeared in many people's minds.

As Chu Liang passed the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth loop, the thought of his astonishing power soon grew stronger and more widespread among the onlookers.

Hey, hey, hey!

That's enough!

Everyone was shouting inwardly.

But Chu Liang still did not fail. He continued drifting at full speed. He passed the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth loop...

Boom!

Finally, at the eighteenth loop, his flying sword was flung off. Before the crowd could even revel in that moment, they realized something was amiss.

Eighteenth loop...

THERE ARE ONLY A TOTAL OF EIGHTEEN LOOPS!

Without decelerating, he drifted through all eighteen loops!

Chu Liang had achieved the same feat as the sword god from the Falling Waterfowl Peak! Had they accidentally witnessed history happening before their eyes?

At this point, all of them found themselves approving of Chu Liang's participation in the Flying-Sword Race. Their minds were so filled with shock that they didn't even care about their own rankings.

Whoosh!

The path after the eighteen loops was a straight pathway. With full foundational qi, Chu Liang dashed towards the end of the cloudy path in the time it took to inhale a breath of air.

In the blink of an eye, he reached the section of the track at the Azure Falling Peak.

Sword qi cascaded down like raindrops!

The purpose of this cascade of sword qi was to harass the sword riders flying at high speed, so it obviously wasn't too powerful.

Chu Liang kept his eyes wide open, enduring the onslaught and pushing forward with determination!

Even as the rain of sword qi fell densely, Chu Liang was flying at such a high speed that only two streaks of sword qi scraped him as he flew past the curvy path. Aside from a small cut on the corner of his clothes, he wasn't injured at all.

And now, Chu Liang's body had reached a certain level of resilience that this type of injury would just result in a faint white mark.

Rumble!

The final section of the track turned towards the base of Heaven-Reaching Peak, culminating in a thrilling dash to the summit. This stretch was the most exhilarating ascent race of the year!

Every year, the spectators watch from the mountain as the competitors race upwards like lightning, then witness the sword radiance streaking past them, soaring into the sky!

Unfortunately, this thrilling pursuit did not occur this time.

Rumble!

On the Dustless Sword, Chu Liang dashed past the cliff and soared into the sky.

"Woooooo!" Chu Liang exclaimed.

After such an exhilarating journey on the flying sword, the thrill of extreme speed made his heart beat intensely! As he soared high into the sky, he couldn't help but feel the urge to shout out loud.

Still, he controlled himself.

He sheathed his sword and turned around, staring back downward, which suddenly filled him with shock.

"Huh?" Chu Liang seemed somewhat surprised because, while flying on his sword, he had been focused on himself rather than paying attention to others. Although he had guessed that he would win, he hadn't realized he was so far ahead.

"I've already passed halfway up the mountain, why are they all still at the foot of the mountain?"

...

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

Beams of swordlight streaked across the sky, soaring to the peak before the spectators' eyes. However, this ceremonial scene did not spark even a hint of excitement in most participants.

Because a handsome lad had already dashed past earlier.

Just as Chu Liang landed gently on the ground, he suddenly heard a voice call out from behind, "Junior Brother Chu?"

He turned around and found that it was Chen Zheng.

If it weren't for him, Chu Liang wouldn't have noticed the techniques of how to drift on a flying sword. So, he smiled back and said, "Senior Brother Chen, can I help you?"

Chen Zheng was obviously a few years older than him. Chu Liang wouldn't lose anything calling him senior brother.

Chen Zheng's eyes were full of disbelief. Despite the exhaustion almost overwhelming him after the competition, he stepped forward and asked, "In the last group match, you didn't know how to drift with a flying sword, but now you're so skilled... you're simply impeccable. How did you do it?"

Chu Liang smiled and said, "I just practiced a few times."

"A few times?!" Chen Zheng was shocked.

Chu Liang might not have been the most skilled at flying-sword drifting, but his cultivation level was higher, and he had abundant foundational qi and strong divine intent. Obviously, he would be more powerful when performing the same technique.

However, Chen Zheng and the others had such skills in drifting because they had been specially trained for the Flying-Sword Race since they were young. Compared to them, Chu Liang would be considered an unorthodox cultivator.

He only practiced a few times?

Chu Liang wasn't lying. He had practiced a few times before and had a rough idea of the key points of flying-sword drifting, but he hadn't practiced enough to master it. When he was on stage, he tried it two more times and finally grasped the technique, allowing him to perform flying-sword drifting completely smoothly.

Because of Chen Zheng's surprise and doubtful tone, Chu Liang thought he was asking another question. And so, he pondered for a moment and muttered, "About three times..."

"But honestly speaking, the first three loops can be counted as practices. It was only after the first few loops that I really grasped the key point. If these three are counted, it should really be six times...Eh? Senior Brother Chen, are you okay?" As Chu Liang was talking, Chen Zheng suddenly collapsed and fainted.

It was unknown as to whether it was due to overexertion of qi or it was too much of a mental blow...

...

Zhang Xiaohan only came to Mount Shu today. As the disciple of the Wind-Catching Hall in the Celestial Pivot Pavilion, she was always very busy. If something big happened somewhere, she would need to check to see if there was anything newsworthy.

Before the commencement of the Mount Shu Summit, no one expected that this one person would lead in almost all recreational events and nearly become the champion in all of them. And Chu Liang was even competing for the position of head disciple!

However, when she heard news that this year's Mount Shu Summit was extremely exciting and dramatic, it triggered a sense of urgency. If she waited until the event ended, would all the first-hand interviews be taken by her fellow disciples?

So she hurried to Mount Shu. Using her familiarity with Chu Liang, she went straight to Silver Sword Peak.

She came here because the Silver Sword Peak was the biggest dark horse of the Mount Shu Summit despite having only one disciple.

Before the commencement of the Mount Shu Summit, no one expected that this one person would lead in almost all recreational events and nearly become the champion in all of them.

And Chu Liang was even competing for the position of head disciple!

When Zhang Xiaohan showed up, Chu Liang and Liu Xiaoyu'er had just come back. When they saw the girl, they were slightly surprised and confused.

"Miss Xiaohan," Chu Liang greeted with a smile. Zhang Xiaohan was indeed one of his familiars. "The Mount Shu Summit has not ended. What brings you here to the Silver Sword Peak?"

"Haha, I'm afraid I won't be able to catch you after the summit ends," Zhang Xiaohan laughed as well. "I heard that almost everyone from Silver Sword Peak has won a championship. I'd like to ask you about this; can I take a moment of your time?"

"Sure. You are welcome to ask any questions." Chu Liang greeted her warmly.

"Young Hero Chu, you have just won the championship of the Flying-Sword Race..." Zhang Xiaohan said. "Who is this young lady?"

"Liu Xiaoyu'er is a member of the Silver Sword Peak. She just won the championship at the Mahjong Tournament," Chu Liang said.

Although the Silver Sword Peak has only one disciple, there are a few other members. This was something Zhang Xiaohan had heard before.

Then, he pointed at the Big Head lazily lying at the side. "That is the Golden-Furred Hou. It has just won a championship at the Spirit-Pet Combat Tournament."

Aside from Chu Liang's championship, there were no arguments or disputes on the championship of Liu Xiaoyu'er and the Golden-Furred Hou.

In the Mount Shu Sect, there were spirit beasts at the sixth level. However, those were Eminent Ones. They would never join the Spirit-Pet Combat Tournament. In the Spirit-Pet Combat Tournament, the Golden-Furred Hou was the only one at the sixth realm.

In the entire tournament, there were no worthy opponents. When Chu Liang went to watch, he couldn't be bothered, as victory was guaranteed.

The Golden-Furred Hou was basically dominating, easily defeating the other spirit beasts.

"Eh? What are you guys doing here?" Di Nufeng walked over nonchalantly. She had just rushed here from Heaven-Reaching Peak and saw a few people gathered here, so she came by to join the fun. "This little girl is so cute. Where is she from?"

Zhang Xiaohan did not recognize Di Nufeng. When she saw this beautiful lady in a lazy posture and heard her calling herself cute, she smiled and greeted, "Big Sis, are you also a member of the Silver Sword Peak? What championship did you get?"