

Myriad 281

Chapter 281: Wind, Fire, Mountain, Forest (2)

Outside.

Zheng Hong coughed a mouthful of blood while Su Yu turned deathly pale with beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

All the spectators were astonished.

The gold and green on the ball were churning against each other. Clearly, the fight was getting very intense. All this had happened too fast.

"Is Zheng Hong being pushed back?"

A lot of people found that unbelievable.

Just a short moment ago, the gold on the ball had gained a slight upper hand, occupying a part of the space previously occupied by the color green. The crowd was in disbelief.

Su Yu had actually gained an upper hand against Zheng Hong. Looking at how pale he was and the mouthful of blood Zheng Hong had coughed, the fight was obviously very intense. That caught the interest of many people in the crowd. Everyone had thought that Su Yu would lose, so this reversal had naturally caught everyone by surprise.

Even the researchers were getting curious. They all focused on the ball before looking at Zheng Hong. One of them said, "His Divine Character was damaged. Su Yu's offensive prowess is incredible. The two are evenly matched."

"There is no need to come to a conclusion so fast. Zheng Hong has nearly 90 percent willpower. His willpower is stronger and he can last longer—"

Right at that moment, the gold on the ball churned, constantly invading the space that was previously occupied by the color green. The researcher stopped speaking mid-sentence, astonishment on his face.

Yet another intense clash had just happened.

Zheng Hong coughed more mouthfuls of blood. At the same time, blood was dripping out of the corner of Su Yu's mouth. His face turned more and more pale.

Clearly, the two were fighting intensely and both had suffered some injuries that were definitely not light. The fight was also rapidly draining both of them of energy. Just what was happening inside the ball?

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Inside the grotto.

With a giant black saber in hand, Su Yu was cleaving the world apart, severing both mountains and fire in front of him. The gale continued blowing fiercely while the fire raged.

A clump of black flame seemed to have erupted from Su Yu's body, but that was actually the aura of the kill character. With his thick killing intent, he assaulted Zheng Hong constantly.

Zheng Hong had an unsightly expression. Su Yu was using his character technique. But since this character technique had yet to be filled, it wasn't too destructive. But that was only in comparison with proper multiple character cultivators. This incomplete technique had still merged Su Yu's characters, granting him more strength than before.

"Four Divine Characters, and two second tier characters! Damn it!"

Zheng Hong cursed.

Was this fellow spending all his time nurturing his characters instead of forming more characters? Even so, this was too fast! He had two second tier characters! The killing intent was constantly assaulting and eradicating his willpower.

The illusions were constantly messing with his judgment. Of the two second tier characters, he could see that one was blood and the other was kill. Both were human characters. This fellow had actually nurtured two human characters into the second tier.

Zheng Hong clenched his teeth. The gale vanished. The raging flame vanished. The towering mountain vanished. The three Divine Characters reappeared before him. Then, they came together and turned into a spear.

Bang!

He grabbed the spear and charged toward Su Yu. The wind character increased his speed, the mountain character enhanced his strength, and the fire character continued burning. The charging human felt like a charging mountain to Su Yu's senses. And the charging mountain was moving with an incredible speed.

Fusion!

Zheng Hong had actually found a way to fuse his characters. Su Yu roared. Even though no sound could be made in the grotto, he still performed the action before swinging his saber with the Lightning Source Blade.

Boom!

Their willpower bodies clashed, and both bodies started dispersing.

...

Outside.

Both combatants were trembling. Su Yu coughed a mouthful of blood, his brows furrowed deeply. Zheng Hong was also coughing blood, dyeing the floor red.

A few researchers walked over. One of them said, "Let's stop this. These kids are fighting so intensely their Divine Characters are on the verge of breaking apart."

The two colors on the ball were still churning violently.

None of them seemed to be holding the upper hand.

Liu Hong frowned. Beside him, Wu Qi indifferently said, "Why stop them? As geniuses, they have their pride. They can lose as long as the defeat is not unfair. As for injuries, which cultivator has never been injured before?"

As a genius, she was absolutely qualified to say those words. If the two kids were really afraid of injuries, they would have withdrawn themselves. Xia Chan and the other freaks had already stepped forth with solemn expressions.

Zheng Hong was absolutely not weak. Even among the eight of them, he wasn't the weakest. But Su Yu was able to fight him to such an extent. In fact, there were even moments where Zheng Hong was being pushed back.

Yes. They could see that despite the violent struggles between the two colors, the color gold was much more stable in comparison. The color green, on the other hand, looked to be weakening.

Su Yu was akin to someone with inexhaustible energy. He had unending willpower that could constantly be sent into the ball. Meanwhile, Zheng Hong's transfer of willpower was only happening in bursts.

Suddenly, a Cloudbreach researcher from the Weaponsmithing Faculty asked, "Does Su Yu know my teacher?"

Liu Hong glanced at the researcher and said, "He minors in weaponsmithing. Senior Zhao is his teacher."

The Cloudbreach researcher was a middle-aged man. He was surprised to hear that. He had never paid much attention to the students minoring in the faculty.

And he had been quite busy lately. He just happened to have some free time today, so he decided to come take a look at the tournament. When he heard Liu Hong's words and saw that the pale Su Yu could still send a steady flow of willpower out, he said, "This is Su Yu's victory. If Zheng Hong continues fighting, he will only hurt himself more. That is all I have to say. You guys are free to decide what to do."

Many people turned to look at him after hearing his words. Those students were the most surprised. Had Su Yu won? But the two were clearly still fighting. And it still wasn't clear yet who would ultimately win. The middle-aged man did not elaborate.

Inwardly, he was greatly shocked. Had this kid cultivated the Soul Expanding Art? Had his teacher finally taught someone the Soul Expanding Art? Even he had not been taught that cultivation method.

"Would Teacher pick an inheritor so easily? Perhaps Teacher had only helped him expand his willpower instead of teaching him the cultivation method...This kid doesn't even have a 60 percent willpower but he seems to have better endurance than even a 90 percent cultivator. In that case, how many hammer strikes had he endured?"

Thus, his willpower was at least 1.5 times stronger than his opponent's. And his sea of willpower was at least one third larger than Zheng Hong's. If Su Yu's willpower had really been expanded, then he had definitely received a lot of hammer strikes.

The middle-aged man thought of all that in silence. Nobody dared to rashly end the match. Everyone watched silently, everyone thinking their own thoughts. Su Yu...was actually capable of defeating Zheng Hong?

It had been nearly three minutes since the match started. And both had been fighting at maximum intensity since the start. The gold and green boiled in the ball, constantly overtaking each other.

But Zheng Hong seemed to be slightly out of steam. Meanwhile, Su Yu looked like he could keep going on forever. Just what sort of a monster was this?

Some of the researchers who had heard of some rumors before looked toward the researcher from the Weaponsmithing Faculty. Was this the unique cultivation method of Zhao Li?

...

Inside the grotto.

Both Su Yu and Zheng Hong looked badly injured.

None of them was willing to concede.

Su Yu's battle intent had been growing stronger while his killing intent was growing thicker. The battle and kill characters were clearly characters that required combat to grow. The more he fought, the more excited the two seemed to be.

The tiny grotto was filled with a thick killing intent while a powerful battle intent raged on.

Zheng Hong was very exhausted. When he looked at Su Yu, he frowned. Not only was Su Yu's willpower shockingly tenacious, but it was pretty powerful as well. This was most definitely not something a 50 percent student was supposed to be capable of. His willpower was near the level of someone with 70 percent willpower or more. And coupled with the character technique, Su Yu was actually not weaker than him.

"Is it the Soul Expanding Art?"

Suddenly, Zheng Hong thought of something. His grandfather had once said that to grow stronger and last longer in combat, it would be better for him to cultivate the Soul Expanding Art. But unfortunately, Zhao Li would not teach the method to outsiders, so he had never gotten the chance to learn it.

But clearly, Su Yu had learned it.

"No wonder he can nurture four Divine Characters, with two of them being second tier characters..."

Suddenly, the world before Zheng Hong's eyes turned dark. This was not an illusion. Rather, the world had really turned dark. But this was a willpower body, not a body of flesh and blood. How could he suddenly lose his vision?

And illusions would only be able to create something like a dark night but not completely rob him of his vision. What was going on?

Zheng Hong was alarmed. Once again, his willpower erupted and broke through the darkness. Once again, he saw light.

But Su Yu was already charging at him with a saber in hand. Zheng Hong was about to react when he recalled something. This was the Secret Character Grotto. The bodies in this grotto were fake bodies. In that case, why was there a shadow?

Yes, a shadow. There was a shadow under Su Yu. And Zheng Hong had noticed it too late. He was alarmed, but he didn't know if he should attack Su Yu or the shadow. During that split second of hesitation, Su Yu's shadow rose up and wrapped around him.

At the same time, the saber in Su Yu's hands descended.

Bang!

Zheng Hong's body fell apart. With indignation and doubt, his willpower started withdrawing from the grotto. But before that happened, his gaze was fixed on the shadow on the ground. Damn it! Su Yu actually had one more Divine Character!

That bastard actually had five Divine Characters! Just how long had this fellow been in the academy? How was this possible? Wasn't it said that this fellow had only started learning about Divine Characters a few months ago? And this Divine Character had been kept hidden until now.

"It's related to shadows..."

With a sense of helplessness, Zheng Hong vanished from the grotto.

...

Splurt!

Yet another mouthful of blood was coughed out of Zheng Hong's mouth. When he opened his eyes, everyone was dumbstruck. The ball had been completely covered in gold. Zheng Hong had left the grotto and Su Yu had won.

Next, Su Yu opened his eyes. He gasped for breath. The two looked at each other without saying anything.

Su Yu had actually formed five Divine Characters. And two of them were second tier characters.

Zheng Hong had formed three Divine Characters with all three being extremely powerful. He was probably planning to form a fourth character to create a unique system for his characters. But he was clearly still in the process of doing so.

After a few seconds, Su Yu, who was still panting for breath, cupped his hands and said, "Thank you for the match."

Zheng Hong nodded silently. He was somewhat disappointed with his defeat, but he wasn't too discouraged about it. He had yet to reach the peak of his strength. Only after forming the forest character would he start his climb of the Top100 Ranking. He had full confidence he would be able to enter the ranking then.

For now, his series of Divine Characters were still incomplete. He could accept losing to Su Yu now. And if they really had to fight with all their strength, he was a seventh-stage Great Strength cultivator. His cultivation level was higher. He would not necessarily lose to Su Yu.

"He's a fifth-stage Great Strength cultivator...Without blood essence abilities, he won't be my match. And at the Infinite Strength Realm, his blood essence abilities would be rendered useless."

Zheng Hong did not bother uttering threats to Su Yu. These were not the words that should come out of the mouths of geniuses like that. The strong would always remain the strong. Due to his heavy injuries and exhausted willpower, Zheng Hong did not stay for long and left directly.

Defeat.

But a single defeat did not matter. As long as he could stand back up from his defeat, the future would still be as bright as ever. What was truly scary was the inability to stand back up after falling.

Chapter 282: Wind, Fire, Mountain, Forest (3)

Inside the hall.

The next match had not started immediately. Everyone was busy looking at Su Yu in disbelief.

Su Yu had won.

He had actually defeated Zheng Hong!

Su Yu ignored the crowd. He only smiled and nodded at Hu Zongji before looking at Lin Yao. When he saw how excited Lin Yao was, he flashed Lin Yao a smile in a less obvious manner that would not expose their relationship.

Both Lin Yao and Hu Zongji were trembling with excitement.

Su Yu had won.

Hu Zongji checked the time and noted that Su Yu had taken four minutes to defeat Zheng Hong.

Yes, Zheng Hong had not lasted as long as him.

What did that mean? That he was stronger than Zheng Hong?

Of course not. That signified that Su Yu had given him a lot of face. According to Hu Zongji's judgment, he was weaker than Lin Yao. Zheng Hong had defeated Lin Yao in five seconds and Su Yu had defeated Zheng Hong. Hu Zongji himself was weaker than Lin Yao. In that case...

Three seconds.

Hu Zongji gulped. If Su Yu had not shown him any consideration, that was as long as he could have lasted. And that would have been too embarrassing.

He felt incomparably good and even yelled, "Su Yu is a true freak!"

Yes. That was a true freak. Hu Zongji, someone who had been questioning Su Yu's evaluation as a high-high student, had become the first to publicly call Su Yu a freak.

He was basically slapping his own face, but he had no regrets. He even thought that his face deserved to be slapped. At least it was better to slap it himself than have others slap it for him. At the same time, Lin Yao was also wild with joy. His Brother Su had avenged him! Just look at that arrogant Zheng Hong. Hadn't he been defeated in the end?

...

Su Yu had a smile on his face, but inwardly, he was feeling very helpless. He had exhausted himself too much. And he had revealed all his trump cards. Fortunately, that was the first match of the second round. He still had some time to rest. Otherwise, he would probably be too tired to join the third round.

"Zheng Hong is really strong. At the very least, he is stronger than Zheng Yunhui in terms of willpower. If he can form his fourth Divine Character to complete his system of wind, fire, mountain, and forest, I probably won't be his match."

Su Yu knew himself very well. With one more character, Zheng Hong would be able to complete his system. The current Su Yu would definitely not be a match to a Zheng Hong like that.

But was Zheng Hong the only one capable of growing? He would keep growing as well. Also, if they fought for real, he was far stronger in physical cultivation. There was no need for him to fear Zheng Hong.

"All is good as long as I win."

Su Yu glanced at Liu Hong who smiled and nodded at him. Liu Hong's expression was basically saying that he had arranged for the match to help Su Yu win prominence among the public. Su Yu was really speechless. This fellow had obviously been scheming against him again.

Screw him! He would rather not have that "help" from Liu Hong. After all, there were seven other freaks in the tournament.

If those freaks ended up encountering each other as well, then Su Yu would consider the possibility that Liu Hong was perhaps really helping him. Otherwise, he would be able to confidently declare Liu Hong a scumbag that was deliberately making things difficult for him. Did that scoundrel think that he wouldn't realize that?

After spending a short time cursing Liu Hong inwardly, Su Yu started focusing on recovery. When the others looked at him now, the look in their eyes was completely different from before.

They could attribute Su Yu's victory over Chen Qi to luck and the blood essence ability. But his victory over Zheng Hong had truly elevated him into the ranks of the freaks.

Su Yu shut his eyes and ignored the crowd.

He didn't even bother watching the matches of the other freaks. It wasn't like he could see anything apart from a ball with changing colors so why bother?

"It's not going to be easy for me to get first place."

Unless...he used the soul devouring bug blood essence, giving his willpower some corrosive power that could corrode his opponent's willpower. That was a good method against enemies, but these were all his fellow students.

Even among those from the single character faction, Huang Qifeng was probably the only person Su Yu planned to be heavy-handed with. As for people like Chen Qi and Zheng Hong, Su Yu didn't really intend to do anything too bad to them.

As long as they didn't provoke him, he would have no reason to make things difficult for them. Even against someone like Huang Qifeng, he only aimed to make that person bedridden for a few months like his senior sister, nothing else.

"Soul devouring bug..."

Su Yu muttered before returning his focus to his recovery.

"I need to get some five elemental blood essence as soon as possible to strengthen my willpower."

...

The matches continued as Su Yu rested.

It also became increasingly clear that someone was manipulating the draws. In the second round, none of the freaks had encountered each other. The students were no fools so they started cursing inwardly. But this was to be expected.

They could only blame themselves for not being important enough to have the matches rigged in their favor as well. For them, it was only a matter of an earlier or a later defeat. And with the matches being rigged, they couldn't even rely on their luck to survive longer than they actually could.

But Su Yu, who had greatly exhausted himself from his fight with Zheng Hong, was still hoping that he could get lucky when drawing his next opponent.

In the second round, the unlucky Wu Lan met Wan Mingze.

Wan Mingze had taken three minutes to defeat her. He was most likely being polite, which was the only explanation for the match to actually last that long. And she looked completely discouraged after leaving the grotto. She had suffered a crushing defeat.

When she witnessed Su Yu emerging as a black horse and defeating Zheng Hong, she thought that there was hope for her to do something similar as well. When she encountered Wan Mingze, she decided to defeat Wan Mingze and show Su Yu her prowess. Alas, reality proved that she had been too optimistic.

Apart from Zheng Hong, not one of the freaks had been defeated. All of them had easily defeated their opponents. All 46 matches took only an hour to finish.

Although one hour wasn't enough for Su Yu to fully recover, he had still recovered significantly. He opened his eyes and exhaled in relief.

Fortunately, the matches were taking some time to finish. He wouldn't have been able to defeat anyone if he had to fight in his previous condition.

Hu Zongji was actually still beside him after an hour. When he saw Su Yu waking up, he asked in excitement, "Su Yu, how are you feeling?"

Su Yu smiled and nodded, "I'm fine. Thank you for guarding me while I was recovering."

"I definitely wasn't doing something like that." Hu Zongji replied awkwardly, "There are teachers here. Who would dare to create trouble for you?"

No student would be stupid enough to disturb Su Yu's rest in front of all these teachers.

Su Yu smiled and said nothing else. He looked around before asking, "It's over?"

"Yeah. The third round is going to start soon." Hu Zongji looked at Su Yu with an odd look and said, "Su Yu, you actually defeated Zheng Hong. But isn't your willpower..."

"Weak?" Su Yu smiled, "Yeah. My willpower is weak, but it is very durable. And I also have a lot of Divine Characters, including second tier characters. Zheng Hong is definitely not weak, but he was careless when facing me."

Hu Zongji nodded, "Well, you're still very strong. My elder brother said that all the freaks in this batch are already strong enough to challenge the top 100. They are far stronger than the freaks of the previous batches. Your willpower is strong enough to defeat Zheng Hong while your physical cultivation is at third-stage Great Strength Realm. If you can reach the seventh stage, you might be able to challenge the top 100 as well."

Third-stage Great Strength Realm. Yes. Most ordinary students thought Su Yu was at that level. The more connected ones thought that Su Yu was at the fifth-stage Great Strength Realm. Some also believed that he had already reached the sixth stage by now.

As for his actual cultivation level of ninth-stage Great Strength Realm, very few people knew about that.

Su Yu smiled and softly said, "I'm not at the third-stage Great Strength Realm anymore. But keep this a secret for me."

Hu Zongji was slightly alarmed, but immediately after, he felt greatly touched. Was this a show of trust toward him? Why would Su Yu had told him that otherwise?

"Don't worry. You can trust me, brother!"

Hu Zongji smiled happily. Sure enough, Su Yu was still as sincere and reliable as ever. From this moment onward, their past would be left in the past. In fact, the more he thought about his past, the more ashamed he felt.

He lowered his voice and said, "Su Yu, my elder brother is quite close to Liu He and the others. Don't worry. The next time they try to pull anything against you, I'll notify you."

Su Yu was pleasantly surprised to hear that. He said, "Then I'll be in your care from now on, Zongji!"

He then recalled something and said, "Zongji, I have something to talk to you about later. Let's have a chat after this."

Hu Zongji blanked out. What was the matter? But when he saw how mysterious Su Yu was making it sound, he decided to not ask. They could talk later.

Chapter 283: Top Ten (1)

While they spoke, the third round began.

Once again, the bucket with all the slips was brought to the students. Of the 46 victors, some were too weakened to continue and gave up. After all, they had fought two fights in such a short period of time. Those who had faced opponents with similar strength as themselves would be too exhausted to recover in a short period of time.

That was especially true for the ones who had fought toward the end of the second round. Even the victors of those matches were only participating in the third round hoping to get lucky during the draw. If they were lucky enough to draw a late match, they might be able to rest longer. Otherwise, they wouldn't be able to keep fighting.

Su Yu stared at the bucket for a while before shooting the instructor holding the bucket a glance. Suddenly, he looked behind the instructor and his eyes widened in shock. The instructor's expression changed and he hurriedly looked behind him.

But there was nothing there. When he looked in front of him again, Su Yu had already drawn his slip of paper with a smile on his face, as though nothing had happened earlier.

Silence descended. Nobody had anything to say. The instructor did not know whether to laugh or cry. He said nothing and walked toward the next student.

Su Yu exhaled in relief. He shot a glance at Liu Hong, cursing at Liu Hong inwardly. Since Liu Hong had insisted on making things difficult for him, he naturally needed to take his precautions. If he was still faced with a freak after doing all that, he could only accept his fate.

...

In front of the students.

Liu Hong was quite speechless. Why was that kid looking at him? He had not tampered with anything this round! Also, if he really wanted to do something, would that kid be able to do anything?

Beside him, Wu Qi was amused as well. She laughed and said, "This is a very interesting fellow. Liu Hong, you seem to have met your match. It's a pity that he was born a bit too late."

If Su Yu was born a few years earlier, things would be a lot more interesting for their generation.

Liu Hong did not mind her words. He smiled and said, "Yes, things would have been very interesting if he was born a few years earlier. But he wasn't born too late either. In the path of cultivation, a junior catching up to a senior is very common. We are both only Skysoars. There are still the Cloudbreach, Mountainsea, and other realms above us. Who's to say that he won't catch up to us one day?"

"Do you have such a high opinion of him?"

Wu Qi looked at Liu Hong curiously. From his appearance alone, Liu Hong was pretty unassuming. He liked to smile, he was quite prideful, and he also seemed quite silly at times.

In fact, for a lot of people in the academy, Liu Hong was quite dumb. After all, he had been competing against Bai Feng for years yet he had suffered a lot of losses. But the truly smart ones knew that the mere fact that he could compete with Bai Feng for so many years was in itself proof of his competence.

Wu Qi knew that Liu Hong was definitely not as simple as he seemed. And Liu Hong was also an extremely prideful person. Very few people could actually earn his respect. He looked down on most people.

In fact, Wu Qi knew that even she herself was probably only a slightly strong individual with an ordinary level of intelligence in Liu Hong's eyes. Some people wore their arrogance outwardly. Some kept their arrogance deep inside.

Liu Hong was the latter.

Liu Hong smiled, "Not really. He is still too young right now. We'll see. Perhaps I can make a judgment after he reaches the Skysoar Realm."

"Skysoar?" Wu Qi muttered, "Do you know about the incident in Great Zhou? Would this kid be able to smoothly reach the Skysoar Realm?"

"I heard, but I haven't been paying much attention to it." Liu Hong nonchalantly said, "It's not that big of a deal. Unless the single character faction produces an actual Invincible, the multiple character faction would not be fully exterminated. Unrivaled with a single Divine Character is still not impressive enough. Would that fellow be able to remain unrivaled among his peers at the Sunmoon Realm? No matter what, the multiple character faction had produced someone capable of fighting Invincible experts as a Sunmoon."

Wu Qi nodded, "Unrivaled? If he really dares to come, I...forget it. By that time, I would have probably reached the Cloudbreach Realm already. What a pity. I would love to teach that brat a lesson and let him have a taste of reality."

Unrivaled? Had that kid asked her permission before calling himself that? If she couldn't even acknowledge Xia Yuwen's superiority, how would she acknowledge the fact that a kid was superior to her? Just look at Bai Feng. He was a genius of the multiple character faction. Had she ever shown any fear toward him?

...

Meanwhile, Su Yu checked his slip and saw the number 12. He was going to fight in the sixth match. In this round, only 20 matches would be held as the other students had withdrawn. And a match would last between five minutes to only a few seconds.

Initially, Su Yu wasn't paying much attention to the matches since there was nothing he could see. But soon, someone caught his attention.

Xia Huyou! That fellow had been keeping a low profile, but he had actually entered the third round as well. Su Yu noticed him because he was the combatant for the next match.

The opponent wasn't someone Su Yu knew, so that was probably someone from a different faculty. He looked at Hu Zongji and softly asked, "Who is Xia Huyou's opponent during the previous round?"

"A high-middle student from the Pillmaking Faculty."

Su Yu nodded and looked at the smiling Xia Huyou with a pensive look.

"Cao Hui, why is a Willpower Faculty fellow like you cultivating Divine Characters? Just surrender." Xia Huyou was in no rush to start the fight. He laughed heartily and said, "If you surrender, I'll pay you three merit points. What do you think?"

The student called Cao Hui merely glanced at him silently. One of the researchers berated, "Xia Huyou, compete properly. Stop babbling nonsense."

Xia Huyou smiled, "Fine. You sure are a bad businessman. I am very strong. I need to win in this match to enter the top 20. And I need to get into the top 10, at the very least. My apologies, friend. The next time you buy anything from me, I'll give you a five percent discount as an apology for this."

Cao Hui's face turned stiff as he hurriedly clarified, "I have never bought anything from you!"

"Sorry, sorry!" Xia Huyou apologized, "Yes, definitely. You have never bought anything from me. It was my mistake. Fine, you can have 10 percent off for your next purchase."

That left Cao Hui even more speechless. Whatever. This could be a good thing. He would remember this offer. Damn fatty. If this fatty ended up reneging on the offer, he would not let it slide.

The two thus started the match. But Su Yu was wondering if the two would complete their transaction inside the grotto instead. Sure, they couldn't talk inside, but they could still form words with their willpower. In any case, nobody could see what was happening inside.

Meanwhile, Jia Mingzhen and the others were feeling greatly troubled.

"Liu Hong's black market business is doing quite badly recently. This little fatty has been eating into his market share. And this little fatty is too crafty. The academy has performed several investigations on him, but he was able to escape capture every single time, though there were a few close calls. When we schemed against Liu Hong that one time, this kid had taken the advantage and profited off it."

"He's just like his second granduncle." The sole woman in the group cursed and said, "But this kid is very picky with who he does business with. Is he starting to build his network of supporters as preparation for his ascend into the prefect's position already?"

Xia Huyou did not do his business with just anyone. All these elders had noticed that. People like Su Yu and Zheng Yunhui were the targets of Xia Huyou. Cao Hui was also a genius as someone capable of entering the third round, so he was also one of Xia Huyou's targets.

As for the others, even if they could afford to buy from Xia Huyou, Xia Huyou might not be interested in doing business with them.

Jia Mingzhen nodded, "Prefect Xia probably won't take long to step into the Eternal Realm after leaving seclusion. So he might step down in a few years."

"Would this kid be able to step up to that position? Xia Yuwen is already in the Cloudbreach Realm..."

"We never know." Jia Mingzhen stared at Xia Huyou for a while before saying, "It's very hard for us to judge the strength of this kid. But for the position of the prefect, strength is not the only thing that matters. Other aspects are very important as well. He can be weaker now and keep growing his strength. What's truly important is his outlook and charisma..."

Sure, Xia Yuwen was stronger, but some things were not so simple. He might be strong enough to suppress those in his generation, but suppression did not mean respect. Of people like Bai Feng and Wu Qi, which of them truly respected him?

More importantly, Xia Yuwen tended to cross the line when doing things. He wouldn't have spent his time beating up all the top 10 students in the ranking twice before breaking through into the next realm and leaving the ranking otherwise.

In short, the prefect needed to be strong, but not all strong cultivators were qualified to hold that position.

"Xia Yuwen is someone that is never willing to take a loss. In my opinion, he somewhat resembles the prefect. But in that case, he would need enough strength to suppress everyone like the prefect. Otherwise, he would be a bad fit for the position."

While they were talking among themselves, a few minutes passed. Finally, Xia Huyou opened his eyes and started cursing, "Cao Hui, you're a Willpower Faculty student. Why do you secretly cultivate three Divine Characters? Are you crazy?"

Cao Hui had an unsightly expression.

Xia Huyou smiled and said, "Whatever. At least I won. I'm in a good mood today. Call me later. I can give you a 20 percent discount instead."

Once again, Cao Hui was rendered speechless. Yes. He had lost. And this fatty was too infuriating. But when he recalled the 20 percent discount the fatty was offering, he decided to swallow his anger. It almost looked like they were messing around instead of fighting in a match.

The others were also rendered speechless. The next match involved Xia Chan. While stepping forth, she glanced at Xia Huyou with an ugly expression. Acting like she didn't know him, she walked past him without saying a word to him.

What a clown!

Xia Huyou merely smiled indifferently. He even loudly said, "Good luck, Little Sister! Everyone, look at her! This is my little sister, a freak of this batch. She will most definitely place in the top three in the tournament. If she can't...well, so be it."

The crowd roared with laughter. And Xia Chan's expression turned uglier. Who the hell was his little sister?

Thanks to her grumpy mood, her opponent suffered. In less than 10 minutes, the opponent withdrew from the grotto while coughing blood. The first thing the opponent did after leaving was shooting Xia Huyou with a gloomy look.

Why would this fellow provoke her? He was nearly beaten to death by her! Not one of the students who had entered the third round was a weakling, but he had still been delivered such a miserable beating.

But as a response, Xia Huyou merely signaled the opponent with his eyes before making the gesture for 10 with his fingers.

That person was no fool. He instantly understood what Xia Huyou was trying to say. He wiped the blood off the corner of his lips and decided to let this slide. After all, a 10 percent discount was quite a good offer. He wasn't Xia Chan's match in the first place anyway, so he wouldn't be able to win this match no matter what.

Chapter 284: Top Ten (2)

Su Yu felt like laughing witnessing the antics of Xia Huyou.

That guy...

"Zongji, do you know which branch of the Xia Family is he from?"

Hu Zongji was a lot friendlier than before. He smiled and said, "I think he descended from Great Xia King's cousin. He is quite far away from the main branch. Xia Chan is the one from the proper main branch as her grandpa is Marquis Xia. She's Prefect Xia's niece."

Su Yu nodded. He had heard of that before as well. Xia Chan was indeed from the main branch. She was Great Xia King's great granddaughter. Yes, her great grandfather was an Invincible.

But he could also see that Xia Huyou was probably quite close to Xia Chan. All the stuff he sold in the academy probably came from the Xia Trade Company, and the Xia Trade Company was run by Marquis Xia.

As they spoke, two more matches ended. Finally, it was Su Yu's turn to fight once again.

This time, he had decent luck. His opponent was someone from the Pillmaking Faculty. The opponent looked slightly pale, clearly not fully recovered from his previous match.

When that student saw that his opponent was Su Yu, he had hoped that Su Yu had yet to fully recover as well. But when he saw that Su Yu's complexion had returned to normal, he was disappointed. Instead of him taking advantage of Su Yu's exhaustion, the opposite was probably going to happen.

Su Yu took only one minute to defeat his opponent.

It was a rather easy victory. First, he produced illusions. Then, he revealed himself, smiled apologetically, and struck his opponent down with a bolt of lightning. He was already being very considerate by letting his opponent last one minute.

After leaving the grotto, the opponent merely smiled bitterly. He could clearly feel the gap between them and said nothing. He only cupped his hands in greeting before walking away.

Of the 40 students in the third round, 20 would advance. And only about 20 minutes had passed before all the matches were over. Apart from the unlucky Zheng Hong, the other freaks had all advanced.

Su Yu, Xia Huyou, and a few Faculty Character students had advanced as well. The three rounds had taken about three and a half hours. It was already around 11 in the morning.

Suddenly, Liu Hong said, "There is no need to draw your opponents for the fourth round. The seven freaks, Su Yu, Xia Huyou, and Huang Fan will form a single group. The rest of you can challenge a random opponent from this group. The winner can advance into the top 10."

Many pairs of eyes landed on Xia Huyou and Huang Fan.

Xia Huyou paled and hastily said, "I am only a high-middle student. I'm not a high-high or a freak! Why put me in this group as well?"

"You're a member of the Xia Family. Is that reason good enough?" Liu Hong said, "Is someone from the Xia Family afraid of something like this? If you can't enter the top 10, you can only blame yourself for being too weak. Are we supposed to help you enter the top 10?"

"Sure, if you want to do that." Xia Huyou replied unhesitatingly.

Liu Hong's face fell. Many people looked at Xia Huyou in astonishment. Meanwhile, Xia Chan looked away in embarrassment. Xia Huyou was feeling very gloomy. What was so embarrassing about that? Liu Hong was the one who had given the offer!

Liu Hong ignored him and looked at the other students before saying, "Pick any opponent you want. Don't aim for the top 10 just for the sake of entering it. The opportunity to exchange pointers with these geniuses and freaks is very rare. This is your true reward here. Do you think they would waste any time entertaining you at any other time? This is your best chance to face them in combat."

Those words sent many people into thought. Then, they started focusing on the freaks. Liu Hong was right. Normally, these freaks would not spare them any attention. This was the perfect chance for them to spar against these geniuses.

In any case, it wasn't like they could guarantee a victory even against Xia Huyou. And if they missed this chance, they might not get another chance to spar against these geniuses.

"I pick Wan Mingze!" Soon, someone made his choice with a burning gaze. Evidently, this person had been setting his eyes on Wan Mingze for quite a while.

"I pick Zheng Yunhui!"

With his arms crossed, Zheng Yunhui lazily said, "Think it through. I specialize in killing. Don't blame me for not warning you if I accidentally injure your willpower."

Everyone ignored him. His willpower strength was rather ordinary among the freaks. What was the point of being so cocky? Nobody here was truly afraid of him if they had to fight with only willpower.

...

And before long, Su Yu was challenged as well. The challenger was a student from his own class.

Meanwhile, Wu Lan was watching regretfully as everything unfolded. Since she hadn't entered the top 20, she naturally couldn't have her pick of an opponent. Otherwise, she would have picked Su Yu as well. She just couldn't accept the fact that Su Yu was growing so quickly.

And thus began the fight for the top 10.

The first match involved Xia Huyou.

With a sullen face, he spent about seven or eight minutes before barely defeating his opponent. Then, he collapsed onto the ground while panting heavily, looking like he could no longer fight another match.

Su Yu was suspicious. Was this fellow really that weak? Each time he won, he would act like he was dying. But each time, he would also recover in no time. But Su Yu didn't put much thought into it. Everyone had their secrets. He had his own secrets as well.

The second match involved Wan Mingze. And he had handled his opponent as easily as his previous opponents. That was the same for the other freaks. They were all incredibly strong.

As for Su Yu, he didn't bother using his illusions this time. He directly used the kill and deceit characters to first stun his opponent with killing intent before ambushing his opponent while shrouded in shadows, snatching an easy victory.

He did not drag the fight out. That was because he would most likely face one of those freaks the next round so he had to keep his strength.

One match after another ended. Before anyone knew it, the top 10 was birthed.

Both Xia Huyou and Su Yu had won their matches. The seven freaks had won as well. Huang Fan was the only person in their group who had been defeated. His opponent was someone from the Willpower Faculty.

...

Gradually, the atmosphere turned solemn.

The top 10 had appeared. Including Su Yu, eight freaks had reached this far. In everyone's eyes, Su Yu was already a freak.

The researchers looked more and more interested as the following matches would finally be more exciting than before. In fact, there was nearly no suspense in the previous matches so they had been rather bored up until now.

Liu Hong looked at the top 10 students and smiled, "Is anyone withdrawing?"

"Teacher, I'm withdrawing."

The Willpower Faculty student withdrew. In order to defeat Huang Fan, he had nearly drained all his willpower. He could no longer fight another match.

"How about you, Xia Huyou?"

Xia Huyou rolled his eyes. Why was Liu Hong mentioning him out of all the students?

He turned his head to look at the others before smiling, "I'll be withdrawing as well. I'll let them enjoy the remaining fights. Teacher, are they drawing or picking their opponents this time? Or will you be arranging their opponents for them?"

The remaining eight students were all experts. He was quite happy to be reduced into a spectator.

Liu Hong looked at the other eight and asked, "What do you guys think? This is only a small tournament. Your main gains here would be the chance to exchange pointers with the others and grow further. Do any of you have a suitable opponent in mind? Or are you curious as to who among you is hiding their strength and Divine Characters?"

When he said that, he looked at Su Yu with a smile on his face. He was basically suggesting that they pick Su Yu as their opponent.

Zheng Yunhui impatiently said, "I'm challenging Wan. Let's see if Wan is really better than me in Divine Characters."

Zhao Shiji indifferently said, "Then I'll be challenging Hu Qiusheng. Someone from the Hu Family should be quite strong in Divine Characters, right?"

Xia Chan did not even spare Su Yu a glance. She also ignored the person from the Talisman Faculty. Instead, she looked at Su Meng and said, "Su Meng, we are the two girls left. How about we fight each other?"

Su Meng was the freak from the Willpower Faculty.

She looked gentle and refined, and she nodded with a friendly smile, "Sure thing, Sister Xia Chan. I'm quite interested in exchanging pointers with you as well."

Su Yu and Zhang Hao exchanged looks with each other. Both did not seem to mind who their opponent would be. Since they were the only ones without a challenger, they wouldn't mind fighting each other.

Talisman Faculty...

On Su Yu's second day in the academy, he had witnessed that this was not a weak faculty. Back then, the talisman demonstration by that researcher had been quite impressive. But this also wasn't a proper fight. They were going to be fighting within a unique grotto. How was this person supposed to use his talisman inside the grotto?

But Zhang Hao seemed to have won his previous matches quite easily. Was this person that strong?

Liu Hong did not mind that the students had picked their opponents. He said, "Since you have all picked your opponents, we'll respect your choices. The winners shall advance into the top four. After that, the top four will fight for the top two positions. And finally, the top two will fight for first place. The ones in the third and fourth places will also be determined with a match between the two losers of the top four matches."

He then looked at Su Yu and said, "Su Yu and Xia Chan, both of you better not lose. Generally, the top three have always been occupied by the Character Faculty. Don't blame me for punishing you if you perform poorly."

...

Su Yu's face fell. Was he not ashamed of saying that after rigging the earlier round? Meanwhile, Xia Chan completely ignored those words. She couldn't be bothered to spare any of her attention on someone as shameless as Liu Hong.

Su Yu did not say anything and merely nodded at Zhang Hao. His opponent returned the greeting with a nod as well. There was no need for them to rise to Liu Hong's provocations.

They were all geniuses. None of them was stupid enough to let such provocations create a feud between them. This was merely a spar. Many of the researchers also rolled their eyes. This fellow was filled with these cheap tricks. What a shameless person.

Wu Qi was the only one who was cursing at Liu Hong inwardly. This fellow was acting up again! He was already a Skysoar. Even the Cloudbreach Realm was not that far away for him. What was the point of playing these tricks?

No matter how he pretended, he wouldn't be able to hide the fact that he was a treacherous snake.

Chapter 285: Second Place Together (1)

There were only four matches in the fourth round.

Zheng Yunhui and Wan Mingze fought in the first match.

Even though Su Yu couldn't see the fight, he couldn't help but to feel excited.

He had fought Zheng Yunhui before so he had a rough idea of what Zheng Yunhui's strength was. Of course, Zheng Yunhui wasn't too weak in terms of willpower and Divine Characters, but strictly speaking, he wasn't too strong in those two aspects either. In fact, Su Yu felt like Zheng Hong was stronger in those two aspects. Thus, he was curious as to the result of this fight.

The moment they sent their willpower into the ball, the two colors started moving furiously. The color white represented Wan Mingze and the color blue represented Zheng Yunhui. The two colors were undulating violently.

Zheng Yunhui had a solemn expression as he constantly sent his willpower into the ball with an unsightly expression. Meanwhile, Wan Mingze looked completely calm. Su Yu and the others instantly noted that Zheng Yunhui seemed to be the one losing here.

The violent confrontation lasted around five minutes. Then, the color blue retreated instantly.

Zheng Yunhui opened his eyes and looked at Wan Mingze solemnly. He said, "Wan Mingze...very good. I lost. I will see you again in the Top 100 Ranking. I am not afraid of defeat. But what kind of man wins his fight with willpower and Divine Characters?"

“...”

Everyone was speechless. And many researchers rubbed their heads in exasperation. Had this kid forgotten that this was the cultural research academy? This was not the Zheng Family, the family of brutes.

Here, they all specialized in Divine Characters and willpower. That kid had claimed that he could accept defeat, but he was in actuality a sore loser. He did not believe in a fight utilizing only Divine Characters.

Wan Mingze smiled, "Top 100 Ranking? Yunhui, there are a lot of experts in that ranking. Isn't it better to wait longer and gain more strength first?"

"Pfft."

Zheng Yunhui had a look of contempt as he said, "Only by bravely advancing and learning the strength of those above you would you be able to progress. If you keep turtling, you would one day turn into a real turtle. Even if I lose, I will learn from it and catch up eventually."

Wan Mingze smiled and said nothing. They were different. And they walked a different path.

Zhao Shiji exhaled lightly and said, "Looks like those from a family of cultural researchers are really quite strong. Hu Qiusheng, let me witness the strength of the Hu Family."

Zhao Shiji was the son of the Martial Dragon Guards' deputy general. He was a descendant of a family of warriors. Of this generation's freaks in the academy, both him and Zheng Yunhui were outsiders who came from non-cultural researcher families.

Hu Qiusheng smiled. At that moment, Su Yu noticed something. Those from cultural researcher families enjoyed smiling a lot. Meanwhile, people from warrior families did not enjoy smiling. At the very least, he rarely saw them smiling.

The two entered the grotto. The second match began. Like the previous match, the two colors started churning violently. Both Hu Qiusheng and Zhao Shiji looked solemn as they started sweating heavily. This match lasted quite a while.

When it was nearly 10 minutes, Zhao Shiji finally staggered as he withdrew his willpower. He opened his eyes and looked at Hu Qiusheng while panting heavily, "Looks like people from warrior families like us are really still lacking. We will catch up to you. Hu Qiusheng, let's challenge the Top 100 Ranking next month. What do you say?"

Nearby, Zheng Yunhui who was still recovering shouted, "Let's do it together! I feel like our batch should be able to at least get into the bottom 10 places of the Top 100 Ranking. We should just take the positions for ourselves instead of letting some weaklings sit in those positions and keep embarrassing themselves."

Some of the teachers present were rendered speechless.

Those words would definitely offend a lot of people. After all, some of the bottom 10 students in the top 100 were their students. For example, Wu Qi had a student in the bottom 10 of the ranking. Hu Qiusheng and the others merely smiled and said nothing. They were in no rush.

Seeing that, Zheng Yunhui looked at Su Yu and loudly said, "Su Yu, you're already at the sixth-stage Great Strength Realm. With your blood essence abilities and a second tier character, are you not going to challenge the ranking with me?"

The moment those words were said, surprised gasps rang out in the room.

Sixth-stage Great Strength Realm?

Wu Lan was completely stunned. Wasn't he still in the third-stage Great Strength Realm? Why was he suddenly in the sixth stage?

Su Yu looked at Zheng Yunhui and said, "Yunhui, are you dreaming? Why are you babbling nonsense?"

Zheng Yunhui said disdainfully, "What are you afraid of? Even if your strength is revealed, what could anyone do? Just fight any opponents before you. You might be a defeated opponent of me, you are still strong enough to beat up those garbage."

Su Yu gazed at Zheng Yunhui silently. This fellow was absolutely not a brainless brute. Why would he suddenly say all that? Of course, quite a lot of people were actually aware of his fight with Zheng Yunhui. But since everyone was pretending to be clueless, why was that fellow exposing it out of nowhere?

There were also a lot of people looking at Su Yu in astonishment. Some researchers even got the urge to try scanning Su Yu with their willpower, but since it was a taboo, they resisted.

Liu Hong was unaffected. He had guessed that Su Yu would have reached the sixth stage by now. That was not at all surprising.

Seeing that Su Yu wasn't saying anything, Zheng Yunhui impatiently said, "Fine, fine, keep acting like a turtle. You only have around two years left. A big opportunity will appear for all of us. You guys are not anxious about it, but I am. I still want to try fighting for a spot. Otherwise, am I supposed to wait 12 years for the next opportunity to come around?"

Instantly, Liu Hong and Wu Qi looked at him. How ambitious. A big opportunity in around two years. Yes, there was something like that. But they were also fighting for that opportunity. And Zheng Yunhui was setting his eyes on that opportunity as well?

Su Yu was probably the most clueless student among the geniuses. The rest would know at least a little about it.

Zheng Yunhui continued, "It would be best if you can reach the Skysoar Realm in one year and take the next year to reach the seventh-stage Skysoar Realm. Only then would you have a chance in getting that opportunity. The benefits you can get from the top 100 are unimportant. The true benefit of the ranking is the chance to face the experts on the cusp of reaching the Skysoar Realm. Do you think you can reign above your peers or even the geniuses a few batches before us by only cultivating behind closed doors? Are you dreaming?"

He pointed at Liu Hong and the other researchers before looking at the freaks, "These people will be our biggest opponents when fighting for that opportunity. Right now, they are high above us. Overlooking us. Looking down on us like we are children. Without entering the top 100, we aren't even worthy of being taken seriously."

Zheng Yunhui loudly asked, "What are you all afraid of? Isn't it just a matter of fighting it out? I never believed that they are better than us. Their only advantage over me is their age."

...

Su Yu truly had nothing to say. Had this fellow gone mad?

He was obviously asking for a beating here. Did he not notice the smile on Liu Hong's face? That wide smile?

Liu Hong said, "It is good to be ambitious. But the tournament has yet to end. Challenging the top 100 is your personal matter. Don't talk about that here. Su Yu, Xia Chan, which of you wants to fight first?"

Su Yu looked at Xia Chan before saying, "I'll go first."

Zhang Hao nodded and looked at Su Yu with an odd gleam in his eyes. "Su Yu, have you really reached the sixth-stage Great Strength Realm?"

Su Yu smiled, "Zheng Yunhui is getting impatient to challenge the top 100. I don't understand why he insists on involving me. I am not a sixth-stage Great Strength cultivator. I never lie. Don't listen to his lies."

Zheng Yunhui looked at Su Yu curiously. Was this fellow telling the truth? After all, he was saying that so publicly. Not a sixth-stage Great Strength cultivator...

The look in Zheng Yunhui's eyes changed as he wondered the meaning behind those words. Was Su Yu still in the fifth stage or was he already higher than the sixth stage? Damn it. He couldn't read this fellow at all!

As for the matter of him dragging Su Yu in, he naturally needed to drag someone over to share some of the hostility he would attract after challenging the top 100. And Su Yu was the perfect person for that task. After all, it was too difficult for a new student to challenge the ranking since everyone would immediately target him.

Some of the senior students occupying a higher position might even aim to give him a beating. But he would be fine if he got Su Yu involved. Everyone would be looking forward to seeing Su Yu getting beaten up.

...

Su Yu said nothing but he cursed inwardly.

Just you wait, Asshole Zheng! That bastard had thrown him under the bus without any hesitation. He had forgotten about the fortune he had made with Su Yu's help so soon after it happened. What a bastard.

Su Yu vowed to give that bastard a good beating the next time he got the chance.

...

Inside the grotto.

Su Yu and Zhang Hao appeared.

Explode!

Su Yu had just produced an illusion when it was instantly destroyed by an explosion.

Zhang Hao was standing there smiling at Su Yu. Looking at Su Yu who had reappeared after the illusion was destroyed, he was unsurprised. With a smile, he sent his explode character toward Su Yu.

Su Yu did not hold back and used his character technique directly. Five Divine Characters worked together as he swung his saber.

Explode!

Yet another explosion erupted, causing Su Yu to frown as he cut the explosion apart.

"What character is this?"

He was quite astonished. He could clearly feel the character exploding previously, so why would the same character reappear?

That thought had just crossed his mind when countless explode characters appeared around him.

Boom!

Su Yu's scalp went numb as he looked at all those characters. What was he looking at?

Talismans?

Was he facing a monster?

This fellow was using his Divine Characters like talismans?

Meanwhile, Zhang Hao demonstrated the prowess of a proper talisman master as he fought without even approaching Su Yu. Each time Su Yu tried to push forward, he would be swarmed by the explode characters.

The air in the grotto trembled as Su Yu was assaulted from all directions. He gnashed his teeth in anger. He sent his saber flying forward with electrical currents running along the blade. But Zhang Hao only needed to do one thing. Explode. He could solve anything with his explosions.

Before the saber could reach Zhang Hao, its momentum was exhausted by the countless explosions, forcing Su Yu to withdraw his character technique. This was such a frustrating opponent to fight.

Thus, he had his character technique take the form of an armor that he draped around him before sitting down cross-legged. He decided to turtle down. Fine. Was this fellow trying to compete with him in terms of willpower exhaustion? He refused to believe that this fellow would be able to defeat him with those explosions. After all, those explosions required willpower to produce as well.

Zhang Hao's eyes flickered in amazement before he laughed. This was actually quite a good way to deal with him. But could Su Yu really outlast him? He had witnessed Su Yu's fight with Zheng Hong and he knew Su Yu could last very long. But he refused to believe that Su Yu had better endurance than him.

What were talisman masters? They were people specializing in producing countless one-off Divine Characters that could be sealed off as talismans. Without thick willpower, they wouldn't be able to produce much talisman at all. Dozens of explode characters started bombarding Su Yu.

Chapter 286: Second Place Together (2)

Outside.

The color gold was defending while the color red was attacking furiously. The two seemed to be in a bitter fight. Both were constantly sending willpower into the ball, and both were individuals with thick willpower with a large supply of willpower at their disposal.

One minute. Two minutes...

Time passed slowly.

Everyone watched on silently. These freaks were indeed not to be underestimated. A normal Mental Tempering Stage cultivator would not last more than five minutes. But these two had surprising endurance, especially Su Yu.

The middle-aged man from the Weaponsmithing Faculty was more and more impressed. The kid really had excellent endurance. Right that moment, Su Yu trembled slightly. Everyone started wondering if this was his defeat.

But that thought had barely crossed their minds when Su Yu roared. His reaction was so intense that even his physical body was affected. His willpower channeling that was on the verge of stopping a moment before suddenly regained its vigor as more willpower surged into the ball.

The stream of willpower was pouring in unendingly. Within Su Yu's previously dry sea of willpower, new willpower was being produced.

...

Inside the grotto.

Su Yu was as still as a mountain. Seated cross-legged, he allowed himself to be bombarded by the explode characters.

Meanwhile, Zhang Hao's willpower body was starting to turn translucent. He looked at Su Yu in bewilderment. What was going on? Were all those explosions not enough?

Su Yu completely ignored Zhang Hao and focused on defending. A constant stream of willpower was flowing into the grotto from his body outside. He had a much higher recovery speed than Zhang Hao. Since he was already used to pushing himself to his limit, his recovery was very fast.

Additionally, he also had the book that helped enhance his willpower recovery. Furthermore, the mythic destruction beast skull had also increased his recovery. His willpower was slightly weaker than this opponent, but since he was focusing on defending, his rate of exhaustion was also much lower, which also helped him recover faster than his opponent.

Both of them knew that it was already nearly 10 minutes. According to the rules, if the fight dragged on for 10 minutes, the color that had occupied the most space would be the winner. Although they couldn't see what was going on outside, they both knew that the one with more willpower remaining would be the one to occupy more space.

Zhang Hao frowned. He had exhausted quite a lot of his willpower. Su Yu was much more tenacious than he had imagined. After thinking about it, he waved his hand and withdrew all his explode characters. Calm returned to the grotto.

Su Yu looked at him. He looked at Su Yu as well. Then, he smiled and sat down cross-legged, looking like he was trying to recover. He was going to change his approach.

In the air, a row of characters appeared: "Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem. It is hard for one of us to defeat the other. You want the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem, right? If you really end up losing this match, you won't be able to get it."

Su Yu frowned. A short while later, a row of characters appeared in front of him: "I am using my ultimate technique. If your willpower ends up damaged, don't blame me."

Zhang Hao didn't know what to think. Ultimate technique? Did this fellow still have more trump cards? What ultimate technique? Even the character technique had been used. What else did this fellow have?

...

Outside.

A portion of Su Yu's willpower withdrew. Instantly, the gold on the ball lost a large amount of ground. Everyone's eyes widened. Was Su Yu going to lose?

After withdrawing so much willpower, Su Yu could finally sense his physical body again. Suddenly, he crushed the drop of blood essence in his mouth. The aura of the blood essence appeared in a tiny burst before vanishing.

A few researchers hurriedly looked at Su Yu. Then, they saw the gold on the ball regaining its vigor and reclaiming half the space on the ball.

"Blood essence?"

Someone asked in astonishment, "What is he doing?"

This wasn't even a physical combat. How was blood essence supposed to help a willpower fight?

"Blood essence ability!"

Liu Hong muttered, "What blood essence is this? Is it a type of blood essence that is good in willpower combat?"

Many people appeared astonished to hear those words. Did willpower blood essence abilities exist? If there was, then it would be extremely valuable for cultural researchers.

The previous demonstrated blood essence abilities came from races such as the fire hog and iron-winged bird, but both were physical combat abilities. Had Wentan Research Center come up with a willpower blood essence ability as well?

"There are willpower racial abilities in existence. For example, the fire crow race is able to release fire attacks that can burn one's sea of willpower."

"The celestial eye divine race's Tricolor Ray is able to harm one's sea of willpower as well."

"The white civet's seduction ability is able to confuse one's willpower..."

One researcher after another spoke out, listing several races with willpower racial abilities.

"Back then, Elder Hong had captured many such creatures. Had he discovered something from them?"

All these people grew excited. As for what blood essence Su Yu had used, the aura had only appeared for a split second. They weren't able to determine what it was. Meanwhile, Jia Mingzhen and the others had been able to sense what blood essence Su Yu had used.

"Soul devouring bug blood essence...in the Great Strength Realm."

Jia Mingzhen was able to easily determine what blood essence Su Yu had used. He shook his head and regretfully said, "It's a Great Strength Realm blood essence. Looks like even if there is a result, they are still not able to make something too powerful. Otherwise, Su Yu wouldn't have used only a Great Strength blood essence."

"The soul devouring bugs are able to corrode willpower. But the soul devouring bugs rely on quantity. Just a drop of blood essence is probably not too effective."

But Jia Mingzhen was still impressed, "Hong Tan is really quite talented for him to have created even something like this. Not even the Knowledge Seeking Realm has willpower racial abilities."

"Just what is that fellow doing in the Allheaven Battlefield?"

"I heard a new race has been discovered. There are very few of them in existence. This is probably a race that has recently connected their realm with the Allheaven Battlefield. Someone encountered them and said that they have a unique ability that can consume Divine Characters..."

Jia Mingzhen grew slightly excited as he said, "This consumption is one that destroys any trace of your character. You won't be able to reform it. I am also quite interested in this race. If I can research them for a bit, I might be able to form a powerful consumption-related character..."

"Is that even real? I heard the same thing, but the location has changed from the Allheaven Battlefield to Great Shang. And the people who had stumbled upon this new race is someone from Great Shang."

"Who knows? But I reckon Hong Tan won't come back easily before catching at least one of them."

The sole woman among the group said, "By the way, is there a possibility that these rumors are merely fake rumors intentionally spread to lure Hong Tan out of the academy?"

"Hmm?"

"Hong Tan has been performing a lot of research on the myriad races over the years. He has a high demand for blood essence, especially the rarer blood essence. Everyone knows about that. Any other person might find a new creature troublesome to capture, but Hong Tan is definitely not such a person. The moment he heard of a creature like that, he would most definitely leave."

"But I heard that Bai Feng was the one who had instigated him to leave..."

"You can't call that instigation. The rumors are already spreading. Even if Bai Feng stayed silent, Hong Tan would eventually find out. And he is the type of person that would definitely leave once he learns of it. Do you think this is the single character faction's work?"

They all sank into silence with pensive looks on their faces. That was very possible.

Bai Feng was not stupid, but at times, he could be very simple-minded. The moment he heard of that new creature, it was only a matter of time before Hong Tan learned of it as well. Bai Feng was not the type of person that would wonder why he had heard about the rumor. But these elders didn't really know that much about what had happened either.

Hong Tan was actually quite similar in nature to Bai Feng. And with his strength, it wasn't surprising that he would fearlessly head toward the Allheaven Battlefield after learning about the new creature.

While the elders were conversing, the colors on the ball kept changing. The two colors continued struggling against each other, but the color red was starting to be pushed back while a look of pain could be seen on Zhang Hao's face. His willpower had been corroded.

When the elders noticed that, they looked at Su Yu in astonishment. Did the blood essence ability really work?

...

Inside the grotto.

Su Yu created numerous bolts of lightning that were covered by some sort of dark energy. The moment Zhang Hao's explode characters got in contact with the dark energy, the characters would be corroded.

The darkness kept spreading.

Eventually, it started eating into Zhang Hao's willpower. With a look of pain on his face, Zhang Hao constantly retreated. He really wanted to punch someone in the face right now. Just what the hell was this? Everything had been fine just a moment ago. Why had this dark energy appeared suddenly?

The dark energy did not even look like something produced by a Divine Character. And after exchanging a few moves with Su Yu, he found that the dark energy was capable of corroding his willpower. Damn it! What in the world was this? If this continued, it wouldn't be worth it even if he could win.

He had to spend a lot of effort and time to repair his corroded willpower. And if his Divine Characters were corroded as well, he would lose even more. That wasn't something that a mere first place could compensate for. Thus, he raised his hand and surrendered.

"Let's have a chat outside."

When Su Yu saw that sentence in the air, he nodded at Zhang Hao. He was also relieved that this was over. Then, Zhang Hao withdrew from the grotto.

...

Both of them opened their eyes at the same time. Zhang Hao instantly grimaced in pain, his grace and elegance from before vanishing completely. His heart was aching. He could see several black dots on his core Divine Character. Damn it. If they kept fighting, his character would suffer even more corrosion. Just what the hell was that?

Su Yu looked at him apologetically and said, "My apologies, Brother Zhang. But I need to win. I have to get the book back for my grandteacher."

Zhang Hao helplessly said, "Don't worry about it. You relied on your strength to win. Even without that technique, you might still win anyway."

"We can hang out sometimes. I am very interested in what you used earlier."

Su Yu smiled and nodded, "Sure."

As for the questions he might receive about the special blood essence he was using, he wasn't too worried. He could easily give a random excuse such as he was prohibited from leaking the secret to outsiders by his teacher. It was not an issue at all.

The two did not waste any time and returned to the crowd immediately after. Both Xia Chan and Su Meng were giving the two a deep look. That was especially true when they were looking at Su Yu as both were looking at him with solemn expressions. After defeating both Zheng Hong and Zhang Hao, they found Su Yu more and more unfathomable.

The moment Su Yu returned to the crowd, Xia Huyou rushed over in excitement and softly asked, "Soul devouring bug blood essence? Blood essence ability? Come on, sell me a few drops. I can offer you 100 merit points per drop. No, 200 per drop! What do you think?"

"Nope. Not selling."

"Come on! Brother! I can gather the raw materials for you! This is definitely something Teacher Bai came up with, right? You definitely have more!"

Su Yu calmly said, "I'm not selling. The end product is still unstable. It can't last too long after production. It is still in the experimental phase."

"How about the iron-winged bird blood essence? Can you sell me a few drops?"

"Nope. Not selling."

Su Yu frowned, "My grandteacher is not back. We won't sell anything before he returns. Just give up."

When Su Yu thought about it, he felt quite helpless. He really needed to ask his teacher if he could get some actual special blood essence to act as a cover. He believed the research center had some of such blood essence, but these special blood essence were all at the Great Strength Realm. However, that didn't matter.

Su Yu ignored Xia Huyou and focused on the two girls who were about to fight instead.

There was a lot more interest in this fight.

A far larger crowd had gathered nearby to observe. Meanwhile, Xia Huyou was busy staring at Su Meng while clicking his tongue. When Su Yu focused, he noticed the fatty whispering to another guy who was fully focused on the two girls as well. "Su Meng is truly well-endowed. My little sister is such a disappointment. She should push Su Meng more, make her sweat so that I can have a better look, you know..."

"Your little sister is pretty decent as well..."

Bang!

Immediately after, Xia Huyou slapped that guy before whispering, "Are you trying to die? His grandpa is that fellow...Do you want me to snitch on you? Your entire family would instantly go bankrupt!"

"Have mercy, Brother Xia! I was just saying! Please don't! Let's focus on Su Meng! Yes, look at her!"

The guy was very nervous. Marquis Xia. He had almost forgotten about that person. Yes, that was definitely someone capable of killing his family financially.

Su Yu was speechless. He decided to ignore them and sat down cross-legged to recover. Wan Mingze and Hu Qiusheng were also doing the same.

Noticing that Su Yu had sat down, Wan Mingze suddenly said, "Su Yu, for us, it doesn't matter if we get first or second place. How about this? If either of us get first place instead of you, we can trade the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem with you for a drop of the special blood essence you used earlier."

Su Yu was starting to regret what he did. It would seem like he had attracted some trouble by using that blood essence. The soul devouring bug blood essence seemed to be even more valuable than the iron-winged bird blood essence even if it was only at the Great Strength Realm.

That was understandable as this was a cultural researcher academy. Everyone here placed a lot more importance on willpower.

The iron-winged bird blood essence he had used previously was in the Infinite Strength Realm yet people barely cared about it. But now, he had attracted the attention of people like Xia Huyou and Wan Mingze. Those teachers were probably just as interested as well. He realized that he might have stirred up some trouble.

He sighed inwardly. He had not expected that something like this would happen. He had thought that everyone's reaction would be the same. He had simply not considered things thoroughly enough. He really needed to reflect on himself after this.

While thinking of all that, Su Yu smiled and said, "No I can't. Don't make things difficult for me. I need my teacher's permission, but since my grandteacher isn't around, there is no way my teacher would agree. This is only an experimental product. And I only have that one drop on me."

They all silently gazed at him while smiling. Just a drop?

Chapter 287: Second Place Together (3)

Su Yu changed the topic, "So who do you think would win between Xia Chan and Su Meng?"

"Xia Chan, I suppose."

Wan Mingze allowed the change of topic and said, "Su Meng's willpower is slightly stronger, but she only has one Divine Character. Xia Chan has at least three of them, and one of them is a second tier character."

He looked at Su Yu again and said, "But even if she can win, this will be a difficult victory. In truth, this isn't a truly fair tournament. Everyone will encounter different opponents, and some will be less exhausted due to easier opponents. Even the coming round between the four of us wouldn't be fair."

Hu Qiusheng said, "You have fought both Zheng Hong and Zhang Hao. You are definitely more exhausted than us. In truth, winning you in such a condition isn't even something to be proud of. Zheng Yunhui was right about one thing. To truly prove yourself, the Top 100 Ranking should be your choice."

He then lowered his voice and said, "Initially, we aimed to wait a bit longer. But after what he said...perhaps...we might really start challenging the ranking next month."

He looked at Su Yu and asked, "Have you really reached the sixth-stage Great Strength Realm? Coupled with blood essence abilities, you might really have a chance to enter the ranking."

Su Yu smiled, "I'll see. I feel like I'm still lacking in some aspects. My friends, can we come to an agreement? If I'm not the one to win later, one of you would probably be the winner. When that happens, can you sell me that book?"

Hu Qiusheng smiled, "You're looking down on Xia Chan too much. Do you want her to start targeting you?"

Su Yu smiled, "She's the last one to fight in this round so she will be the most exhausted among us. I doubt she will have enough rest before the next round. But the two of you are already almost fully recovered."

Not willing to lose out on the smiling contest, Wan Mingze flashed a wide smile and said, "Sure. In truth, the book is useless for us anyway. Forget about the special blood essence. You won't sell it anyway. How about this? You still have a free entry into the grotto, right? Exchange that with the book."

"Hmm?"

Su Yu blanked out slightly. Yes, he still had one free entry into a grotto called the Devil Battling Field.

That was a grotto formed on a battle character of the devil language. It was left behind by the third principal of the academy.

Su Yu frowned and asked, "Can you give others these entry chances?"

"Yeah." Wan Mingze said, "It isn't even that expensive to enter. You only need to pay 200 merit points per entry. But if you don't have a free entry, you will need 200 total earned merit to enter. And we don't have enough total earned merit yet."

Su Yu looked at the two and said, "Can I buy the book with merit points?"

"We don't lack merit points." Wan Mingze replied, "If you want the book, you need to either use some unique blood essence or a grotto free entry. I mean, you're going to reach 200 total earned merit soon anyway. I checked your profile. You have quite a high total earned merit."

Seeing that Su Yu was still frowning, Wan Mingze smiled, "Don't mind me. I'm just being honest. And we are definitely not the only ones who had investigated you before in the academy."

"What's the purpose of the Devil Battling Field?"

"Battle, killing, and self-tempering." Wan Mingze explained, "We have experienced too little bloodshed. But we are also too weak to experience the Allheaven Battlefield. We can't even go to those seas in the Human Realm. Thus, the Devil Battling Field is the best place for us to increase our combat experience."

Combat experience...

Su Yu thought about it and nodded, "Sure. If one of you ends up winning, we can do so."

Of course, he would still try to win the tournament. This was just a backup plan. While they were talking, a muffled sound rang out. They immediately looked at the two girls. Xia Chan and Su Meng both looked incomparably pale. Blood was dripping out of Su Meng's mouth while Xia Chan was sweating profusely.

Xia Chan had won. But the victory did not come easy. It was obvious she had been greatly exhausted. Perhaps she wouldn't even be able to participate in the next round.

Sure enough, she wasted no time and said, "I am withdrawing from the subsequent matches."

She knew she was in a terrible condition. Even her Divine Characters were on the verge of collapse from the fight. She had only won slightly. Thus, participating in another match was simply asking for a beating. There was no need for that.

Liu Hong smiled, "In that case, we already have our top three? Wan Mingze, Hu Qiusheng, and Su Yu..."

Suddenly, Xia Huyou wailed. When everyone looked at him, he gave a hollow laugh before looking at Xia Chan sullenly. She was most definitely messing with him! Why hadn't she entered the top three?

A lot of people had bet on her failing to enter the top three. Xia Huyou, her great big brother, had trusted that she would be able to make it and accepted all those bets. But she had actually withdrawn from the tournament. He was going to lose hundreds of merit points as a result of her choice.

Xia Chan seemed to be aware of what he had been doing so she merely snorted and ignored him. What a clown! Served him right!

Liu Hong couldn't be bothered to entertain Xia Huyou and said, "What do you three have in mind? Do you want to fight each other one after another or do you have something else in mind? Or one of you gets to skip a round while the other two fight?"

Hu Qiusheng smiled and said, "Forget it. I'm not going to fight for first place. I know I'm not as good as Wan Mingze. Let Su Yu and Wan Mingze fight. If Su Yu wins, he will have the first place. If not, well, it doesn't matter who places second or third."

Su Yu looked at Wan Mingze, who smiled and said, "Qiusheng is trying to get me in trouble by giving me excessive praise."

He then looked at Su Yu and said, "He's not fighting, but I'm still quite interested in this fight. Shall we?"

Su Yu looked at Hu Qiusheng, who said, "Don't look at me. I'm not doing this to set both of you up. I'm really not his match. We fought privately before and I had lost multiple times. Otherwise, I wouldn't have withdrawn. I'm not the type to give up easily."

He was speaking the truth. He had indeed been defeated by Wan Mingze before.

Su Yu frowned as his face turned solemn. Was Wan Mingze so strong?

Hu Qiusheng was definitely not weak. Su Yu was confident that not even Zheng Yunhui was Hu Qiusheng's match. And this Hu Qiusheng had also defeated Zhao Shiji, so he was probably even stronger than Zheng Hong. Yet he had actually given up without fighting?

Wan Mingze...someone from the Wan Family.

"Sure. Let's do it."

Su Yu said nothing else. No matter what, he had to give this a try. Even if he wasn't this opponent's match, he still wanted to take a look at how strong this person was. Both stood up and walked toward the ball.

...

White and gold each covered half the ball.

Inside the grotto.

Both of them appeared at the same time. With a smile on his face, Wan Mingze gestured at Su Yu to make the first move.

Su Yu did not hesitate. With a solemn face, his character technique appeared, his killing intent erupted, and electrical currents covered his saber. At the same time, he produced an illusion and covered Wan Mingze's sight with shadow. This was an attack with all his strength. He did not intend to test the waters before using his true strength.

Wan Mingze merely stood there smiling, and as though he was completely unaffected by the illusions, he reached for the saber. And caught it with his hand. Instantly, he was blasted by a bolt of lightning, but a golden layer appeared around his body.

Su Yu was alarmed. That was a second tier character. And it wasn't one that had recently advanced.

"Solid?"

Su Yu was able to barely recognize that character. Suddenly, he felt his saber being fixed in place. He was shocked and hurriedly unleashed more willpower to regain control over his saber. But right that moment, another burst of light erupted.

"There's more?"

Su Yu was greatly alarmed. There was another second tier character!

"Seal!"

The moment the second character appeared, Su Yu felt the space around him being sealed.

"Kill!"

With a roar, his killing intent erupted.

But right that moment, Wan Mingze summoned his third character, "Set!"

Su Yu cursed inwardly. How was he supposed to fight right now? He felt like he was being frozen right where he stood. Was he the multiple character faction member or was Wan Mingze the multiple character faction member here?

Wan Mingze had three Divine Characters and all of them were second tier characters. This was crazy.

That was not the end of it. Next, the solid and set characters came together and fully petrified his saber. The two characters had actually fused for real. Two characters became one, making it so that the saber was completely unable to move. Even though Su Yu also had two second tier characters, he was completely helpless. The seal character descended from the sky, completely sealing Su Yu's body.

All three of those characters were supportive characters. But they were even more terrifying than offensive characters. Su Yu could only watch helplessly as Wan Mingze walked toward him, one step at a time. He struggled with his willpower, but he was unable to break free.

With a smile on his face, Wan Mingze slowly approached Su Yu. His lips were moving, as though he was trying to say something.

When Su Yu focused, he could read from Wan Mingze's lips and saw that Wan Mingze was saying, "How lucky. I am not too great offensively and I have to rely on the path of sealing..."

Su Yu felt extremely sullen. Was this what he called not great offensively? If even this wasn't great, what could be considered great? But next, Wan Mingze proved that he really wasn't great offensively.

That bastard started kicking Su Yu. Su Yu could not move at all, but that bastard's kicks were incredibly weak. In fact, it almost looked like the bastard was exerting himself so much that he was sweating heavily, yet he couldn't deal Su Yu any damage whatsoever.

Even Su Yu was starting to feel bad for the guy. But eventually, a small knife appeared in Wan Mingze's hand. Then, he looked at Su Yu apologetically and moved his lips again.

"Sorry. You're too tough. It's so hard to kill you. I'll have to cut you down slowly..."

He then started cutting Su Yu with the tiny knife. Su Yu was collapsing mentally. He felt like he was the one who should be doing this. The bastard was smiling while apologizing while cutting his flesh off one slice at a time.

Damn this lunatic!

Yes. Su Yu felt like he was looking at a lunatic. No wonder Hu Qiusheng was unwilling to fight this person. Damn it. If he had known about this, he would have withdrawn as well.

Su Yu kept cursing inwardly. This person really was incapable of doing a lot of damage, but who could take this mentally? Who could stand watching on as their flesh was cut off one slice at a time? Even if this wasn't his actual physical body, he still felt terrible.

Then, Su Yu's body vanished from the grotto.

Wan Mingze had a look of regret. Alas, Su Yu wasn't around to see his lips moving, saying, "What a pity. It has been too short. Hu Qiusheng was able to last over 1,000 cuts before surrendering..."

Clearly, their spars had been conducted through a similar grotto as well. Otherwise, Hu Qiusheng would have died a long time ago.

...

The moment Su Yu opened his eyes with a dark expression, he saw the amused smile on Hu Qiusheng's face.

Did Su Yu lose? Did that fellow cut him? That fellow was a psychopath!

He was absolutely unwilling to face Wan Mingze. Although Wan Mingze did not have offensive characters, the characters he had were able to fully seal his opponents. Hu Qiusheng would rather die than experience such helplessness ever again.

Three second tier characters, each of them a sealing character. One would probably be completely helpless before him unless one was already a Skysoar cultivator. Of course, if it was a proper fight, one might be able to break free with physical cultivation.

Su Yu looked both helpless and disappointed. He had defeated Zheng Hong and Zhang Hao. Hu Qiusheng and Xia Chan had withdrawn from the tournament. He would be lying to himself if he said that he didn't intend to grab the first place.

But reality proved that his willpower wasn't strong enough. His Divine Characters also weren't strong enough. He was completely helpless against Wan Mingze. If Wan Mingze had one powerful offensive character, he would have been defeated instantly.

"But...does he really not have one such character?"

Su Yu was suspicious. He found that hard to believe. Perhaps...Wan Mingze really had one?

Right that moment, Liu Hong smiled and asked, "Su Yu, you lose? Do you want to fight Hu Qiusheng for second place?"

Su Yu was disinterested so he waved his hand lazily.

Hu Qiusheng smiled, "It's fine. We won't fight this time. We have plenty of time to spar in the future. Everyone is too tired today."

"Who will take second place, then?"

Su Yu said, "He can have it."

He could care less about that pill. It was useless to him. Rather, the talisman given as a reward for the third place might be more useful.

Hu Qiusheng helplessly said, "I don't want the second place as well. Can we share the second place? We will split the rewards among ourselves. It's pointless to fight for positions below the first place."

Su Yu and Hu Qiusheng exchanged glances. Both had a helpless look in their eyes. All below the first place was garbage. Someone said those words before.

But Su Yu was able to recover from his bad mood very quickly. This did not matter. He still had a long road ahead of him. This was merely the beginning. At that thought, his fighting spirit soared.

Chapter 288: Martial Technique Gained (1)

Defeat.

Su Yu had suffered a rather crushing defeat in Wan Mingze's hands. He sighed inwardly. Without relying on blood essence, he probably wouldn't even be Zhang Hao's match if he had to fight with only willpower and Divine Characters.

Wan Mingze, Hu Qiusheng, Zhang Hao...even Zheng Hong. He wasn't fully confident that he would be able to defeat Zheng Hong again if they had to fight a second time. Not one of these freaks could be underestimated.

Wan Mingze actually had three second tier Divine Characters. That was completely beyond Su Yu's expectations. He had not used the soul devouring bug blood essence during his fight with Wan Mingze since that thing was too conspicuous. It wasn't like he would win even if he used it.

Three sealing Divine Characters.

While Su Yu was deep in thought, Hu Qiusheng walked over with empathy and said, "A defeat does not matter. People like us can afford a defeat or two. That fellow is a freak. You must not know this but he

formed his first Divine Character at nine. And he spent nine whole years only cultivating supportive Divine Characters. I really don't know what he's thinking."

Nine years!

Su Yu was shocked. He said, "But to form a Divine Character, he needs at least 10 percent willpower. He also needs to read a lot of books and learn a lot of knowledge..."

When he was nine, he was still in elementary school. He was still playing mud with a bunch of snotty brats.

"He is Principal Wan's grandnephew. From a young age, he has the principal as his role model. He grew up worshipping the principal. And the principal has high hopes for him as well, so he benefits from numerous private lessons from the principal.

"With all that, his talent, and a willingness to work hard, it is normal for him to be this impressive. Half the reason I'm here is him. I was supposed to study at the Knowledge Seeking Realm."

"Hmm?" Su Yu blanked out. Studying at the Knowledge Seeking Realm?

"There is an academy there as well." Hu Qiusheng explained, "Most of their students are the descendants of some big shots. There, even Eternal experts would occasionally hold some classes when they feel like it. These Eternal experts would also personally write those students some willpower texts. But it is definitely not easy to enter that academy. My family had been planning to send me over. But I learned that Wan Mingze is going to enter this academy so I came as well."

Su Yu was shocked. Classes from Invincible experts?

"Why...why hadn't he gone there?"

He also looked at Xia Chan and a few other people curiously. All these people were definitely able to enter that academy if they wanted to.

Hu Qiusheng said, "The Knowledge Seeking Realm might not necessarily be better. Comparatively, that place is much more peaceful. And that might not be good for growth."

"Peaceful?"

"Yes." Hu Qiusheng nodded, "After all, you have Invincible experts around. Internally, most students there only focus on studying independently. The competition there is not as intense. Life is easy and comfortable there, unlike this academy where everyone is busy competing against each other all the time. Just the Top 100 Ranking alone is akin to a battlefield."

Su Yu nodded in understanding. Everyone had their own choice. There was no right or wrong. He himself had thought of joining the Great Xia War Academy not long ago.

Hu Qiusheng said, "Therefore, like I said, a single defeat is nothing. You only need to be able to stand back up. You're very talented. I feel like you have more potential than even that fellow. He has spent nine years reaching his current level. How long have you been cultivating?"

The look in his eyes changed into amazement as he said, "Su Yu, you have probably only known about Divine Characters for like a year, right?"

Su Yu flashed his usual honest smile and said, "More than that, I think. Teacher Liu Wenyan is my first teacher. In truth, I already learned something a few years ago, but I have only properly formed a Divine Character not long ago."

Hu Qiusheng nodded. He was aware of that. Even so, he was still quite amazed with Su Yu's growth. Even if Su Yu had learned about Divine Characters for a few years, he had only started forming Divine Characters very recently. Thus, his growth had actually been quite terrifying.

A lot of people were more concerned about Wan Mingze, but he was more concerned about Su Yu. Su Yu was simply growing too fast.

Su Yu ended the conversation and walked toward Wan Mingze. The Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem was his sole goal, not the first place. A single defeat wasn't important. He had plenty of chances to face Wan Mingze again in the future.

"Brother Wan!"

Su Yu called out. Wan Mingze was in the middle of a conversation with a researcher. When the researcher saw Su Yu coming over, he gave Su Yu a friendly smile before walking away without saying anything.

Wan Mingze waited until Su Yu was near him before saying, "I'll receive the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem later. Su Yu, consider my previous offer. If you agree to join, I can give it to you for free."

Su Yu smiled and shook his head.

Wan Mingze sighed, but he didn't force the issue. He smiled again and said, "Fine. I'll have to take advantage of you then. A free entry into the Devil Battling Field for the book. I hope you won't regret it."

Su Yu replied, "I won't. The grotto won't run away. I only need to work hard for it. But the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem is my grandteacher's favourite collection that has been stolen."

"..."

Wan Mingze couldn't say anything about that. Everyone knew the true story of how the book got out. Even if Su Yu was trying to wipe his teacher's ass, there was no need for him to lie through his teeth like that.

Suddenly, Wu Lan walked over. Surprisingly, her head wasn't held high in pride this time. In fact, she was hanging her head dispiritedly.

She didn't even dare to make eye contact with Su Yu. She kept glancing left and right as she hesitated to speak. After a long while, with an expression that looked like she was about to cry, she asked, "You're at the sixth stage?"

Su Yu shook his head.

"Really?"

"Yeah." Su Yu solemnly said, "Zheng Yunhui is full of shit. Also, there is no need for you to compete against me in everything. Don't you have a higher willpower cultivation than me? Just aim to reach the Skysoar Realm as soon as possible. Women have always been at a disadvantage in physical cultivation compared to men. You are more suited for willpower cultivation."

"Willpower..."

Wu Lan muttered. Teacher Liu Hong had told her the same. Was she really not suited for physical cultivation?

Su Yu smiled, "Wu Lan. You are very talented. Your willpower is growing at an incredible speed. You have split your attention too much recently. Aim for the Skysoar Realm. At that time, you can forge your body with divine or devil blood essence for a powerful physical body as well."

"Of course!"

Once again, Wu Lan's head was held high with pride. Yes. She had always been very talented.

Her talent simply did not lie on physical cultivation. Su Yu was right. She needed to focus on willpower cultivation. Sure, her physical body might be weak now, but after reaching the Skysoar Realm, she could still strengthen her body with some divine or devil blood essence!

"Su Yu, I will reach the Skysoar Realm before you!"

Wu Lan declared arrogantly before leaving with her head held high. Did everyone hear that? Even Su Yu was saying that she was very strong and talented!

Wan Mingze laughed before shooting Wu Qi a glance. He said, "Wu Lan is really decently talented. But among those from the Wu Family, her elder sister is much more talented."

Su Yu also looked at Wu Qi. When he saw her conversing with Liu Hong, he asked in astonishment, "I thought she doesn't have a good relationship with Teacher Liu?"

"Don't think too much about it. In this entire room, Teacher Liu is probably the only person even capable of holding a conversation with her."

Wan Mingze's words seemed to hold some hidden meaning. Realization dawned on Su Yu. In Wu Qi's eyes, all those Cloudbreach and Skysoar cultivators present were nothing. She lived in an entirely different world from them. Geniuses had their own pride. In the entire room, Liu Hong was probably the only person worthy of conversing with her as an equal of sorts.

After a short while, Liu Hong ended the conversation with Wu Qi and walked over. He was holding a few items in his hands. One of them was a scroll. Su Yu's gaze landed on the scroll, but he maintained a calm expression.

Soon, Liu Hong reached them and said, "Congratulations. First place, Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem. Second place, soul stabilizing pill. Third place, an offensive Infinite Strength talisman with the destructive power of someone between the second and third stage of the Infinite Strength Realm.

"Those in the top 10 will be rewarded 10 merit points as well. These merit points can be added to your total earned merit."

For these people, 10 merit points weren't much. But they were all overjoyed to hear that these points would count as their total earned merit. At their level, there weren't many missions they could take. Thus, total earned merit points were very rare for them.

Su Yu hurriedly asked, "Is that applicable to us?"

Liu Hong smiled, "Of course. Even the five merit points you win per victory can all be counted as your total earned merit."

The students grew even happier upon hearing that. That was great!

Su Yu did a short calculation. He had fought five matches in total. He had lost the fight with Wan Mingze. There was also a match that he had not fought, the fight for second place with Hu Qiusheng. At that thought, he looked at Hu Qiusheng.

Then, he looked at Liu Hong and said, "Teacher, Hu Qiusheng and I still have a match, right? I think we should fight it, after all..."

Hu Qiusheng blanked out slightly before laughing.

Liu Hong narrowed his eyes and asked, "I thought the two of you had agreed to consider the fight a draw? That is the result we accepted. And the tournament is already over."

Su Yu felt regretful. In that case, he would be able to get 35 merit points this time. And all of them would count toward his total earned merit. That was actually a lot of points.

He suddenly understood why all these geniuses had participated. So the merit points here could increase their total earned merit. He had thought that they would only receive some regular rewards.

After doing a short calculation, Su Yu found that including his reward for last month's examination and his pay as a class monitor, his total earned merit had reached 103 points. That should be the case, right?

And with his recently earned 35 points, he now had 138 total earned merit points.

The next monthly examination was going to be held in the afternoon. If he could get first place, he would probably be able to push his total earned merit to 150 points after getting his class monitor pay for the month as well.

One needed 200 total earned merit points to enter the Devil Battling Field. This was too difficult for new students.

Even the Source Qi Secret Grotto wasn't easy to enter. Previously, Su Yu was probably the only new student to have ever entered. But after this tournament, there would probably be more new students

entering that grotto. After all, Wan Mingze and the others had earned quite a lot of merit points this time.

Wan Mingze did not say anything else and handed the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem to Su Yu. He said, "That's agreed, then. We only need to finalize the transfer later."

"Sure."

Su Yu nodded and took a look at the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem and felt the texture of the book, wondering if it was really made of silkworm thread.

But this was a public tournament. It was unlikely that they would give out a fake reward. This wasn't supposed to be a valuable item, anyway. With the book in hand, Su Yu was relieved.

As for the rewards for the second and third places, he picked the talisman as his reward. Hu Qiusheng was quite generous as he even gave Su Yu 20 merit points as the other reward was slightly more valuable.

All in all, he had earned 55 merit points and a talisman from this tournament. That was actually quite a decent harvest. No, that was an excellent harvest.

But Su Yu's standards had also increased considerably as of late. For him, 55 merit points were no longer a lot. Thus, for him, the merit points weren't the main rewards of the tournament.

It was worth noting that this wasn't a tournament that would be frequently held. It was only held with the intention of giving the new students some benefits in the first place. The old students would not waste their time on tournaments and focus on the Top 100 Ranking instead.

With the tournament over, the crowd started leaving the Secret Character Hall. They still needed to take their monthly examination later so they had to go back and rest before the examination.

For the senior class in particular, the contents of this month's examination would be different from the previous month's. Since there was no point asking about the contents of the examination, Su Yu did not waste his time and rushed back to the research center.

First underground floor.

Storeroom.

Nowadays, the storeroom had quite a lot of treasures, such as blood essence and willpower texts. These all belonged to Su Yu. As for Bai Feng, he was too poor to have anything to store in the storeroom.

Su Yu placed the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem in the storeroom as well. He was quite excited while doing so. He was in no rush to study it. He would do it when he came back later.

Additionally, he also had to buy some silkworm blood essence. According to the suanni's words, he would need the blood essence to unlock the Mountainsea Peace Seeking Stratagem. But it would only remain unsealed for a period of time.

"Heaven-grade martial technique!"

Su Yu inhaled deeply. What a treasure. Looking at the book, he resisted the urge to study it immediately and left reluctantly. He went to the filter room and started letting his willpower recover. He still had a monthly examination in the afternoon, after all.

Chapter 289: Martial Technique Gained (2)

Afternoon.

Senior class.

Liu Hong arrived.

"Everyone is pretty tired from this morning, so we won't do a Mark of Culture test today. As for the culture test, from this month onward, you will be required to proactively get certified instead of being tested during the monthly exam.

"Each course you get certified for will earn you 10 marks and 1 merit points that can be counted as total earned merit. From next month onward, another subject will be added to your classes. And the same applies to that new subject."

The students weren't really surprised as they had already heard about this before.

This month, Su Yu had taken a few certification examinations himself and had passed the tests of four courses thus far. He was quite happy with himself.

"As for your growth in willpower and Divine Characters, we have already witnessed the progress of most students during the tournament this morning. But some students had not participated..."

Liu Hong looked at Jia Mingzhen's group and said, "There is no need to overcomplicate things. We'll take the simplest approach. I'll suppress you guys with willpower. The one to last the longest will take first place. You will be graded in accordance to how long you last. You can get 10 marks per minute. If you can last 10 minutes, you can get the full 100 marks.

"Some of you are planning to challenge the Top 100 Ranking starting from next month. According to the rules, your position in the ranking will also be your class placing for the monthly exam. If only one student in the class has entered the ranking, then that student will get the first place of the monthly exam as well. That student wouldn't even need to take the monthly exam."

In the end, only strength mattered. The monthly examinations were only held to encourage the students to grow stronger. Thus, nobody deserved the first place in the monthly examination more than the only person in the class to enter the Top 100 Ranking.

"If there are more than one student in the Top 100 Ranking, the monthly exam placing will also be based on their placing in the top 100. For example, if there are 10 students here in the top 100, then those 10 will also place top 10 in the class.

"As for the students who had placed in the bottom 10 last month, I hope I don't see your names at the bottom 10 again this month. If this happens for three consecutive months, you will be advised to quit the academy or be dropped into the intermediate class. Your teachers will also receive a poor evaluation in their performance review."

At that point, he looked at Su Yu with a helpless expression. He had planned to make Su Yu sit at the bottom of the class, but this fellow had been doing better and better instead. There was no suppressing this fellow.

Not even the freaks of the senior class could do so. He had thought that his student, Lin Yao, was a high-high student who should probably be able to do something to Su Yu. But what happened when his student met Su Yu? He didn't want to talk about it anymore.

Lin Yao had basically transformed into Su Yu's loyal little brother. What else could Liu Hong say? His plan had obviously failed.

As for Wu Lan...forget it. This little sister of Wu Qi seemed really silly. She was probably silly enough to help Su Yu count the money he earned from selling her without even knowing what had happened.

Liu Hong asked, "Any questions for this new method of evaluating your performance?"

Su Yu raised his hand and asked, "Teacher, for the willpower test, will you be biased when you suppress us with your willpower?"

"..."

Liu Hong laughed and said, "Don't worry. I am not the only teacher carrying out the test. There will be more teachers coming later. Su Yu, do you think I will be biased against anyone?"

Su Yu said nothing. Of course this scoundrel would! Without any supervision, Liu Hong would most definitely be biased against him! Even with supervision, he still needed to be very careful.

At this time, a Skysoar teaching assistant arrived. The newcomer wasn't Huang Yao. That person had already left the academy for the Talent Fostering Bureau.

Liu Hong did not say much after his helper arrived.

He went straight to the point, "The monthly exam will start now. This will be similar to the Mark of Culture test. If you reach your limit, just withdraw." Then, a powerful willpower engulfed the students.

Su Yu felt a pressure weighing down on him. Suddenly, his expression changed as he hurriedly looked at Liu Hong.

Liu Hong had a calm expression. He was certainly being fair when allocating his willpower toward each student. But he was also taking the chance to scan the students with his willpower.

Su Yu could sense someone prying upon his secrets with willpower. He could only curse inwardly. No wonder that bastard had selected this method of test.

Su Yu did not hesitate to strengthen his shadow barriers. One barrier after another was strengthened.

He had been covering all his acupoints all along. But now, he was actually removing some of the barriers. He had decided to reveal a total of 76 opened acupoints. With the removal of the barriers, his cleansed acupoints started shining brightly.

Liu Hong was busy spying on Su Yu when his expression changed. He looked at Su Yu with shock in his eyes. What was going on?

Yes, 76 acupoints were a lot. Sixth-stage Great Strength, and only eight acupoints away from the next stage. But...why in the world were the kid's acupoints so pure? In fact, Liu Hong was not the only person who had noticed those acupoints. Quite a lot of students looked at Su Yu doubtfully.

Jia Mingzhen and company were also looking at him with astonishment. Such a pure source qi! The kid's source qi was so pure even his acupoints were shining.

"This kid...is definitely no weaker than some seventh-stage Great Strength cultivators. Or he might even be stronger."

It did not take long for them to reach their decision. As for Liu Hong's attempt to spy on them...pfft. He was like a clown to them. The elders all revealed a portion of their acupoints to him. Some revealed 80. Some revealed 90. Meanwhile, Jia Mingzhen revealed 108.

Oh, you're curious? Fine! Have fun! Are you surprised to see this? Are you shocked?

Ninth-stage Great Strength Realm.

Since cultivators could fuse their acupoints, they naturally could separate their acupoints again. As a Mountainsea cultivator, he could easily fool a mere Skysoar.

Liu Hong wasn't too surprised to see their revealed acupoints. So they were a bunch of fellows above the seventh-stage Great Strength Realm?

He was more surprised to see Su Yu's acupoints. The kid had been growing so quickly. How was he able to maintain such a high purity of source qi while also growing so fast?

Liu Hong had expected to see Su Yu's source qi filled with impurities. After all, the brat seemed to cultivate by consuming blood essence. And the Wentan Research Center's filter room was a room with concentrated blood essence. This did not make any sense.

Wan Mingze and a few others were also looking at Su Yu. Meanwhile, Su Yu appeared completely calm. There was still a need to show an appropriate level of strength when required. In any case, his pure source qi would be exposed the moment he started fighting.

It was just some pure source qi. Why were they looking at him? Had they never seen pure source qi before?

Nevertheless, Su Yu was not the one to swallow his grievances. He looked at Liu Hong gloomily and loudly asked, "Teacher, you have broken through my willpower defense with your willpower. Isn't that inappropriate?"

"..."

Liu Hong was speechless. He said, "You are the one who has failed to resist my willpower. You need to keep fighting against my willpower intrusion. If you wish to keep hiding yourself, you are free to give up on this test."

Su Yu had a sullen look.

He said, "I never intended to hide anything. I simply do not want to attract too much attention. Teacher, please pull out the willpower you are sending deep inside my body. This is inappropriate."

The other Skysoar teacher looked at Su Yu in surprise before saying to Liu Hong, "Assistant Liu, you only need to put some pressure on the outside of these students. Sending your willpower inside is indeed inappropriate. It is normal for these students to have their secrets. Do not cross the line."

Liu Hong smiled and nodded, "Sure. I went too far because I was simply too surprised and forgot to control my willpower. My apologies, Student Su Yu."

What else could Su Yu say if even a Skysoar was apologizing to him? He could only curse inwardly. Fortunately, he had still been able to hide his actual opened acupoints. The test continued. Slowly, some students started withdrawing after reaching their limits.

Jia Mingzhen and company appeared completely indifferent. Some were eating, some were chatting, and some were sleeping. Liu Hong couldn't help but to look at them and curse inwardly.

These fellows did not look like new students at all. They looked more like old foxes. But they were all Great Strength cultivators. Not one of them was at the Infinite Strength Realm.

That was an acceptable level of cultivation. Their willpower cultivation levels were pretty impressive as well. Even the weakest of them had more than 80 percent willpower. Two of them were already nearing 95 percent willpower.

"With their strength, they are most definitely freaks. But something just feels off about them."

If they were actual freaks, he wouldn't be too surprised about them. But their behaviors were too different from the actual youngsters like Su Yu and the rest.

They seemed like people who had witnessed and experienced a lot, looking at everyone around them with the eyes of a mere observer instead of an actual participant in the lives of these people.

Liu Hong did not say anything and continued suppressing the students with his willpower.

It could be easily seen which student was strong and which student was weak. One after another, the students who had just entered the Mental Tempering Stage withdrew. Eventually, only some strong students remained.

The ones who had done well during the tournament earlier were still in the class. But for this test, their physical strength was actually somewhat helpful. The Secret Character Grotto was a special grotto where only willpower and Divine Characters could be utilized.

But for this test, some of the students who had reached the Great Strength Realm were using the strength of their acupoints to help while they clenched their teeth and endured the suppression.

After 10 minutes, only a few students were left. Even among Jia Mingzhen's group, two had left, leaving three behind. Su Yu and the other freaks were still present.

Liu Hong continued suppressing them, and he was even slowly increasing the intensity of the suppression.

At the 12th minute, Xia Huyou ran out of the classroom.

At the 15th minute, Zhao Shiji clenched his teeth and unleashed all his strength as a seventh-stage Great Strength cultivator to last two more minutes before leaving with indignation.

At the 18th minute, Xia Chan frowned and left with disappointment.

At the 20th minute, Hu Qiusheng staggered out of the room helplessly.

Meanwhile, Zheng Yunhui was still in the class thanks to his eighth-stage Great Strength Realm cultivation.

At that point, only Wan Mingze, Zheng Yunhui, Su Yu, and Jia Mingzhen were left.

As for Zheng Hong, he had left around the same time as Zhao Shiji.

Su Yu's body was shining brightly, clearly revealing his cultivation of sixth-stage Great Strength Realm. Beads of sweat filled his forehead as he persevered. Thanks to his highly pure source qi, he had been able to last until now.

Su Yu waited until both Zheng Yunhui and Wan Mingze were reaching their limits before finally dragging his body out of the classroom. His sweat never stopped flowing.

Seeing that Su Yu had left, Wan Mingze and Zheng Yunhui exchanged glances before exhaling in relief. They did not force themselves to stay longer and hurriedly left the classroom as well.

With that, only Jia Mingzhen was left in the classroom. He was happily eating his snacks when he saw everyone leaving. He said, "So weak? I think I can last five more minutes."

"..."

Nobody said anything. The students ignored him completely. Jia Mingzhen did not spend much longer in the classroom. He waited for about three more minutes before running out of the classroom with a pale face while swaying about like he was drunk.

Liu Hong had a look of bewilderment in his eyes.

"Damn it! He ran out? He ran?"

Su Yu and the others had to walk one heavy step at a time when they left. But this fellow had actually run out of the classroom? What did that signify? Was he not at his limit yet? Was that fellow really so strong?

"Just what is wrong with this batch?"

Liu Hong really didn't know what to say.

In the previous batches, very few new students could last 10 minutes under his suppression. But this batch, there were actually plenty of such students.

Even among people from his generation like Xia Yuwen, Hu Wensheng, Bai Feng, Wu Qi, and himself, Hu Wensheng was probably as strong as the current Zheng Hong at the same age. Meanwhile, he himself was probably at Xia Huyou's level at the same age.

Xia Yuwen was very strong, so he was probably at Wan Mingze's level back then. But this Jia Mingzhen...just what was up with him? There was also Su Yu. His overall strength was probably strong enough to place him in the top five of the senior class already.

Chapter 290: Martial Technique Gained (3)

A short while later, all the students were recalled back to the classroom.

Liu Hong shot Jia Mingzhen another glance before announcing, "First place, Wan Mingze at 290 marks. Second place, Hu Qiusheng at 280 marks. Third place, Su Yu at 260 marks. Fourth place, Zheng Yunhui and Jia Mingzhen at 250 marks."

Jia Mingzhen had obtained all his 250 marks from the single willpower test alone. He had obtained zero marks for his culture test. As for Zheng Yunhui, his score for the culture test was lower than Su Yu's, resulting in his overall mark being 10 marks lower than Su Yu's as well.

After hearing about the scores, Zheng Yunhui rubbed his chin and looked at Jia Mingzhen before muttering, "I thought I'm the only brainless brute here. But it turns out...there is someone even dumber than me here."

He remembered that Jia Mingzhen had also done badly during the previous month's culture test. And this time, that fellow had basically obtained zero marks for the culture test.

Zheng Yunhui looked at Jia Mingzhen with contempt before laughing, "At the very least, I had still managed to get 30 marks for the culture test by getting three certifications. But some people are truly dumb, I suppose."

"..."

Jia Mingzhen glared at Zheng Yunhui furiously.

Damn this bastard! Should he get 100 certifications next month to stun this idiot?

That was merely his way of holding back against these juniors. And this rascal actually dared to look down on him? He swore he was going to throw a sack over Zheng Yunhui tonight and gave the brat a good beating.

Su Yu did not say anything. He was satisfied with placing third. He had done decently for the culture test, but Wan Mingze and Hu Qiusheng had also done very well. It was obvious they had all been working very hard for their studies.

"Therefore, people are lying when they say that geniuses don't have to work hard. All these bastards like to pretend they don't work hard, but secretly, they probably burn a lot of midnight oil."

Su Yu could only curse inwardly. These people were already so talented. If they were also hardworking on top of it, how were others supposed to compete with them?

They were even able to gain so many certifications for their culture subject. Just how were those from ordinary families supposed to rise and surpass them?

"This won't do. Looks like I need to decrease my sleep to four hours daily from now on."

Su Yu set a new goal for himself. Bastards like Wan Mingze were talented and rich yet instead of spending their time having fun and fooling around with girls, they were actually working incredibly hard in their cultivation and studies. Su Yu felt greatly threatened.

Even though he was already at the ninth-stage Great Strength Realm, he still felt very threatened. If he couldn't even become the strongest among the new students, how was he supposed to compete against anyone else?

"I'll cultivate the heaven-grade martial technique right away. After entering the Top 100 Ranking, I will give every single one of them a beating. It doesn't matter how many hours you spend daily studying. I will definitely spend more hours on my studies than you guys!"

Su Yu vowed to outwork every single one of these bastards.

...

As usual, Su Yu went to claim his merit points right after the monthly examination.

Merit Office.

The same girl was working the counter. When she saw Su Yu, she had an odd look in her eyes as she read from a list, "Second place in the Divine Character tournament, 30 merit points. Third place in the monthly exam, 8 merit points. Class monitor pay, 3 merit points. High-high student subsidy, 3 merit points. You can get 49 merit points in total. Please confirm, Student Su Yu."

Su Yu nodded.

He had also obtained 20 merit points from Hu Qiusheng, but those points were naturally not claimed from this office.

"Can you check my current total earned merit?"

"149 points."

Su Yu nodded. That was acceptable. He hadn't been able to reach 150 points since he didn't place first in the monthly examination. But he had still earned a lot. This time, he had earned 69 merit points in total. Originally, he had 2,670 merit points left. After the tournament, he had 2,739 merit points.

"I still don't have the five elemental blood essence yet."

It would be great if he could obtain a willpower cultivation method. Otherwise, his willpower would forever lag behind. It was very possible that his willpower might still be stuck below the Skysoar Realm even after his physical cultivation had reached the Skysoar Realm.

"There's also the silkwrym blood essence. I think there is a drop of this blood essence among the samples Xia Huyou gathered for me. Let's see what it does."

He still had a lot of blood essence samples remaining. And there was a drop of silkwrym blood essence among the collection. He would try to activate its page on the book first. That way, he could avoid buying too much unsuitable blood essence.

Wentan Research Center.

By the time Su Yu returned, the sky was already dark. Ever since he had moved into the research center, he had never returned to the Mental Tempering Garden. Before he could even enter the building, his communicator rang.

"Brother Su, you said earlier that you want to have a chat with me..."

Upon hearing Hu Zongji's voice, Su Yu slapped his own forehead. He had actually forgotten about that.

He smiled and said, "Zongji, I was just about to call you. Are you free now?"

"Yeah."

"Hmm. There's a Red Prosperous Restaurant in the Visitor District. Let's meet there for dinner later. The meal is on me."

"You are too polite..."

Su Yu hurriedly said, "I have something important to talk to you about. Don't be a stranger, Zongji."

"Fine. See you later."

After ending the call, Su Yu entered the research center. And after thinking about something, he went to the storeroom and retrieved a few items.

About half an hour later.

Second floor of the Red Prosperous Restaurant.

"Zongji, you're actually here earlier than me. Sorry for making you wait."

"Don't apologize." When facing Su Yu, Hu Zongji was no longer as arrogant as before. He said, "There is no need for the two of us to act like strangers. I still need to thank you for helping me save face today so let me get the bill tonight."

"How can I do that? Are you looking down on me?"

After exchanging some pleasantries, the two entered the private room.

And after a short chat, Hu Zongji asked curiously, "Brother Su..."

"Just call me by my name." Su Yu waved his hand and said, "We're brothers. And fate keeps bringing us together. There is no need for us to be overly formal when speaking to each other. I have to thank our previous conflict for helping us know each other better. Let's forget about all our misunderstandings from before."

"Fine. Then I'll be straightforward." Hu Zongji nodded and asked, "Su Yu, do you need my help with something? Just be honest. To tell you the truth, I have a bad temper. And I'm not that strong either. But I am absolutely loyal to my friends!"

Naturally, Su Yu did not take those words seriously.

After a short silence, he said, "Zongji, I know about you. Your family isn't too influential in the academy. You only have a second granduncle who is a Cloudbreach expert and an intermediate researcher in the academy. Am I right?"

Hu Zongji nodded and said nothing.

"Your elder brother, Hu Zongyu, is a second-stage Infinite Strength cultivator with at least 90 percent willpower. He also occupies the 65th place in the Top 100 Ranking. Additionally, he is also the deputy president of the Tianshui Club. Am I right?"

Hu Zongji started to frown.

Su Yu smiled, "Don't misunderstand. Everyone knows all that. Zongji, I'll be frank. You are in a far better position than me in the academy. But who do you think the Hu Family would prioritize? You or your elder brother?"

Hu Zongji said nothing.

"I don't mean anything. I only feel that life is too difficult for people like us. In the academy, every step we take forward can only be taken with great difficulty. We are akin to unwanted children of a large family. If we want to grow strong, we can only rely on ourselves."

Hu Zongji looked at Su Yu and said, "Su Yu, just get to the point. Why keep beating around the bush when you have already said this much?"

"Sure!" Su Yu said, "I'll be direct. In the academy, there are plenty of clubs. But are these clubs actually helpful? Each year, they recruit a bunch of new students. And each student is milked like a farm animal for their money. But after getting milked, apart from some sense of pride for being part of a large club, what do these new students get?"

"You mean..."

"I intend to found a secret club. A Mutual Aid Club! We will work together and grow together! Of course, since we are only new students, I won't be making the existence of this club public. I also won't be recruiting openly. I only intend to recruit those who have similar goals as us."

He solemnly said, "There is power in numbers. What can you accomplish alone in the academy regardless of your talent? Only by establishing a circle and network that would be helpful to you would you be able to reach the Skysoar Realm. With your own network, even when you enter the Allheaven Battlefield in the future, you would have comrades fighting alongside you. Even when accepting missions, you would be able to find trustworthy team members to carry out the mission together instead of worrying that you would be stabbed in the back."

The look in Hu Zongji's eyes changed several times as he looked at Su Yu. Slowly, he asked, "Why me? I'm not strong. My talent...is decent, I suppose. But I'm only a high-middle student..."

Su Yu smiled, "Every member picked to enter our club naturally has their own strength and brings some benefits to everyone else in the club. That is the point. Pooling together everyone's strength to help each other.

"Your elder brother is the deputy president of the Tianshui Club. Your second granduncle is the deputy head of the Missions Department. We are not accepting any missions yet, but what about the future?"

"We can get your second granduncle to save some good missions with high rewards and are less time consuming. We are not breaking any rules doing that, right? Meanwhile, my martial uncle is the head manager of the books depository. We can get his help and guidance when required. In any case, all this is better than stumbling forward alone."

Hu Zongji said nothing.

Su Yu continued, "Also, we can even perform a limited sharing of all our resources..."

As he said that, he took out a willpower text.

"This is a willpower text written by a Skysoar. It's not too valuable, but I have quite a lot of them. And I bought them all myself. After using it a few times, I might not need it anymore. If it still has some willpower left within, someone else can make use of it."

"But I'm not interested in selling these texts. Everyone has a unique style of cultivation. And using some specific willpower texts would be more helpful than attending those public classes. But doing so is too expensive."

"Do you have enough merit points? You're not even at the Great Strength Realm yet. Have you prepared the blood essence for your body forging? Are you planning to use some inferior blood essence? How about the willpower texts of your martial techniques? Have your family prepared them all for you?"

Hu Zongji was silent.

"Can you really rise into prominence relying on your family?"

Hu Zongji took a deep breath and said, "Su Yu, I'll be honest. I really don't have a lot to offer. The more you offer, the more worried I am. I am not as talented as you. I am also weaker. In the end, I will be the one dragging you down. And this club will fall apart because of that..."

Smart.

Su Yu nodded, "I know. But if we work together, we can go further. I am only afraid that you lack the motivation to go further. We all come from a different circle of people. Like you said, your elder brother has a good relationship with Liu He. In that case, you will be able to provide me with some important information.

"Just take the single character faction as an example. They have been targeting me so I won't be able to get into their circle. But you can. In this era, if you don't think of ways to help yourself, if you don't grab every opportunity available to you, are you hoping that others will pity you and give you some help?"